

LRAG News Update – 4 July 2023

We, at LRAM, applaud the fact that Surrey CC are making efforts to ensure that the public are well briefed on the “glossy brochure” elements of the Active Travel Scheme for London Road. This is certainly more comprehensive than the surreptitious, under-the-radar approach that was adopted at the end of 2022.

However, it should be recalled that it was not just the proposed 5-month closure of the Burpham section of London Road that so irked the public. A deep suspicion has been created by:

- failures to adhere to commitments made about providing evidence;
- false claims of majority support, unrepresentative of those most affected, and obtained without providing precise design and construction detail;
- false accident data;
- false reports that claimed adequate consultation had actually occurred;
- rejection of alternative proposals because they would not receive government funding;
- dismissal of local concerns about possible diversion routes;
- dismissal of empirical local experience of the congestion that is both regular and occasionally worsened by other local traffic interruptions.

Whilst the public will appreciate being given extensive information about revised designs and implementation, there still remain unanswered concerns about:

- short- and long-term disruption,
- congestion,
- safety,
- cost benefit, etc.

These concerns have been well documented and provided in writing by LRAM. They reflected the views of their public network, who count amongst those most likely to be affected by the scheme. However, they only included issues revealed at the time when modifications to just the Burpham stretch of London Road had been described. The sketches of this section, so far provided even without dimensions, are sufficient to suggest that the concerns have continued to be ignored.

This letter does not need to repeat all the concerns in detail, but they are an indication of the “other side of the coin”. Any perceived avoidance by Surrey CC, of presenting a balance of the benefits and disbenefits to an equivalent extent, risks a further reinforcement of this suspicion and mistrust, rather than alleviating it.

Current SCC plans were stated at STRG that concerns would be dealt with by offering **FAQs**. **This is not good enough**, and is seen as being biased, by not presenting both sides of the debate for the public to consider. Already there are letters appearing, in local online media [Letters - Guildford Dragon \(guildford-dragon.com\)](#), worrying about how conclusions of public opinion will be reached, given that Surrey CC have stated that there will not be a referendum.

Surrey CC are clearly the controllers of the debate and its presentation, and will be the final decision-makers. However, LRAM strongly believes that if appropriate balance is not clearly evident, the public will be persuaded into another email campaign and another public meeting. Those kinds of outcomes serve no useful purpose, as they ought to be avoided by suitable forethought from Surrey CC. The guidance offered in LTN 1/20, of which SCC do not seem to be taking sufficient heed, states: “Making the case for change to get schemes delivered” must be: “...frank about the disadvantages, to build trust and discourage misrepresentation.” LRAM does not detect that Surrey CC are yet prepared to properly “engage” with all aspects of the debate.