

LRAG News Update – 31 October 2023

LRAG was formed last January as a result of Surrey CC's failure to engage and consult adequately with the local community about the development of improved cycling facilities along the A3100 London Road, from New Inn Lane roundabout to the York Road junction. This was because of SCC's abrogation of responsibility, in accordance with the written guidance given to them, that "When communicating the proposals be confident about it and absolutely be clear about your intentions, the benefits and disadvantages."

Subsequently, highlighting of SCC's shortcomings in not rigorously adhering to these responsibilities may have appeared as an opposition to the fundamental proposal. That has not been the intent, though many keen proponents of the scheme have seen it as such. Our mandate has always been to ensure that both pros and cons were available for public contemplation.

Matters came to a head when Surrey CC eventually published a Traffic Modelling report on 13th October, which declared in unequivocal terms that increased traffic congestion was inevitable as a result of the design. Drivers who did not revert to active travel would have to cope with London Road congestion or seek alternative routes (rat runs). The report was based on a plan to ban a right turn from London Road into York Road. Within 3 days of publication Surrey CC spokespersons were actively briefing that the idea had already been scrapped in favour of enhanced traffic light phasing. Eighteen days on, this flawed document remains published on Surrey CC's survey website, with no retraction, continuing to confuse and confound those who read it.

This inconsistency and repeated other flagrant misleading of the public has led leaders of some community groups, who interact with LRAG, to believe that outright opposition is now necessary and that LRAG's intent of impartiality is no longer viable.

This is a fine dividing line. The raising and publication of issues and concerns, not being properly publicised, will inevitably look like the authors are opposed to the Scheme. However, for the public to make balanced and informed decisions the most complete set of facts must be available.

Leaflets are being designed, highlighting areas of major concern, and will appear in due course offering an alternative survey. The aim will be specifically to allow an expression of support or opposition, in accordance with the Council Leader's commitment not to proceed against public opposition. LRAG has agreed to assist in compiling accurate, verifiable and non-opinionated statements and, once satisfied, publications will be identified as authenticated by LRAG's logo.

Highway Code Interpretation

In January 2022 an update to the Highway Code of Rule 163 stated that 1.5 metres space should be given when vehicles overtake a cyclist. LRAG has sought advice from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) about the relevance of this rule when cyclists were not on the carriageway but were in a segregated track.

The response has stated that this situation has never been tested in case law, and so unequivocal advice cannot be provided. However, they have stated: "From the perspective of allowing cyclists to feel that they have the space that they need to continue their journey safely, I would suggest still abiding by the passing distances detailed in the Highway Code".

SCC Survey Responses

LRAG monitors and reviews responses to the SCC survey. Not unexpectedly, because of the way that the questions have been couched in a leading manner, respondents have answered with affirmations of agreement, in a favourable ratio of about 2 to 1. Conversely, when analysing the written comments, it is much less clear cut and many more reservations, about the design and its construction, are expressed.

Stakeholder Group Design and Traffic Management Workshop

Following on from the debacle of the content of the Traffic Modelling report, which generated many stakeholders' advance questions, the workshop has been postponed until answers have been developed and a modelling specialist is available to explain.