

LRAG News Update - 21 November 2023

It cannot have escaped one's notice that questions to Surrey CC produce "economical" answers. Whether people are for or against the London Road Active Travel Scheme, they ought to have confidence about any ramifications, before reaching a conclusion about the suitability of the design and its traffic management.

An evasive answer to a Freedom of Information (FOI) request was received today. A question was asked about how the decision to ban right turns from London Road into York Road was reached. The design, removing a right turn lane on London Road to accommodate a cycle track, had been revealed in June.

On October 13th the Traffic Modelling report revealed, **unequivocally**, that right turns would be banned. No answer was forthcoming in the FOI response about how the decision was taken in the first place. A classic chicken-and-egg scenario; the design planners hadn't thought the idea through, and had just gone ahead with allocating half the road space to a cycle track. Lo and behold, 3 days after publication of the report, after "thinking people" had identified the significant issue of potential heavy rat running, Surrey CC spokespersons denied that the ban would occur and **far from being unequivocal, it was merely an option**.

How many other examples of similar woolly thinking have there been?

Surrey CC's Traffic Modelling Report says: "The scheme reduces vehicle (road) capacity ... increases delay to vehicles ... so, (causes) fewer vehicles (to) travel ..."

How trustworthy are the conclusions about where vehicles will go, in dealing with the projected added congestion along London Road, before causing problems elsewhere? Will they divert to hitherto quiet residential streets and already overloaded junctions?

Surrey CC's FAQ says: "Approximately 45% of the Burpham stretch is shared use".

All the published guidance speaks strongly against deploying such a design, and it should only be used as a last resort. Who will benefit or suffer most – pedestrians (able-bodied, those with limited mobility, with audio/visual impairments), or cyclists?

Surrey CC is offering segregated cycle tracks that are 1.5 to 2.0 metres wide. Inevitably faster cyclists may need to overtake slower ones.

How should they overtake? Use the adjacent footway contrary to the Highway Code, or switch on to the road, but not be able to return to the cycle track because of the raised kerb?

Surrey CC Section 2 plans are for a Dutch-style roundabout. The safety record, of the only other UK example in Cambridge, initially proved worse than before modification.

Who will find adapting to this experimental design most difficult: pedestrians, cyclists or motorists? But who will be most at risk during the familiarisation period? It may all be about volumes of users, but it cannot be overlooked that over the 3 years, before and after its construction, Cambridge accident figures increased from 6 to 10 (3 serious), whilst both Boxgrove and New Inn Lane roundabouts, together, went from 6 to 3 (none serious). "If it ain't broke, don't fix it", just do something to polish it!

Surrey CC says that 9 parking spaces will be lost beside Stoke Park following the "upgrade". They will be only 1.8 metres wide, instead of the normal 2.0 metres, beside a 3.25-metre-wide carriageway. The width of a VW Golf without wing mirrors is 1.8 metres. [The measurement of the number of parking spaces is based on the reference bay length divided into the length available. Local residents have counted numbers of cars and found that this assessment method, compared to numbers of cars that actually do park, is of the order of 14% optimistic].

Will motorists be prepared to risk broken mirrors, or prefer to spend time in and out of the adjoining cul-de-sacs looking for one of the displaced 9 spaces that, however, may not be unrestricted for time? Suggestions have been made that the now defunct bus lane along Parkway may be converted to parking.

There are many more examples where the apparent benefits of the installation of dedicated cycle tracks actually have knock-on long-term effects. And on top of that, during the construction phase, Surrey CC designers have confirmed that carriageways will only be 6 metres wide, because of the need to protect partially completed work with plastic bollards.

Never mind, it'll only take 18 months ... possibly with a bit of over-run?!