

LRAG News Update – 5 December 2023

Soon after the publication of last week's newsletter a strange thing happened. The reporting of only a very limited number of submissions (535) to Surrey CC's survey seemed to generate a sudden surge in responses. Within 24 hours the number had shot up to 627! (now showing 643 but still not much more than 10% of those who are supposed to have been sent letters by SCC). What was more interesting was that the timestamp on the comments indicated that only 4 had been posted in that intervening period.

Somewhere along the way 88 comments had been submitted, but either not added at the time, or removed and then re-added. LRAG can offer no explanation for this manipulation of data, but is extremely disappointed that someone has seen fit not to allow full and continuous scrutiny of all public opinions.

The mandate of LRAG from the outset has been to ensure that the results of the revised public engagement genuinely achieve an outcome of what the community wanted, as was the commitment made by the leader of the council, about not proceeding if there was a massive opposition.

Regrettably, many stakeholders believe that the style and content of the SCC survey questions are biased, and couched in terms that are designed to produce answers mainly supporting the Scheme. This is indeed evident, when reviewing responses to the questions, those which are able to be assigned positive or negative measurements.

However, LRAG has expertise in analysing commentaries in such surveys, and it seems that there is much contradiction to these simple, quantifiable measurements. What will be interesting will be the comparison with the analysis in the final report by the Consultation Institute, which will go before the Council to make the decision about proceeding.

There are now less than 2 weeks to the end of the engagement period, and one final drop-in event (6th December at George Abbot School from 6 to 8 pm) for the public to make their views known. Whether by [email](#), on [Surrey CC's Commonplace survey](#), or via [any verifiable method](#), Surrey County Council say they: *"welcome views on the scheme in any form that respondents feel enables them to have their say."*

Guildford Local Cycling And Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)

Some of you may be aware that concurrently a more extensive study is taking place, for cycling and walking throughout the whole of the borough. The London Road scheme is not featuring because of the existing proposal. Such actions to encourage active travel are laudable, but in a brief overview of the latest publication there still appears to be an aura that all solutions assume significant reductions in traffic flow. There is no mention of any planning how to achieve this reduction, other than probably a similar assumption to the one in the London Road Traffic Modelling report, that vehicle use will become unviable because of congestion.

If Guildford was a town of wide boulevards, which could easily give up space to allow harmonious co-existence of all travel means, or had an efficient and extensive public transport system, the solutions would be easy and feasible. But it isn't, and doesn't!

The government has recently published a policy paper [The Plan for Drivers](#), acknowledging that for many, life would not be liveable without their car. For those in rural areas, it is a lifeline. Thus, it seems ostrich-like not to have a realistic plan that deals with the fundamental issue of current traffic congestion throughout Guildford, before contemplating schemes that may worsen the situation.

Suggesting the creation of enhanced active travel facilities, which result in greater chaos and havoc in the hope that it will be a self-adjusting solution, is akin to offering to make omelettes whilst threatening the existence of the chickens! There does not appear to be a progressive plan and without one there seems to be an absence of logic.