

LRAG News Update – 27 March 2023

For those of you who regularly visit the Burpham Active Travel website, social media pages of local groups, your Inbox, or even your SPAM folder, in search of news of Surrey CC's progress in revising the design, its implementation and the new consultation process for the London Road cycle scheme, there must be frustration. There has been no update since 8th March, and yet this week Lrag have received 2 significant documents. The first was the **written responses** to the aggregated public concerns expressed at the public meeting on 5th January and beforehand, and the second was the details of the Agenda for the kick-off meeting of the Sustainable Travel Reference Group (STRG) and its Terms of Reference.

Firstly, from the written responses, it will come as no surprise to learn that most concerns have had the repetitive remarks: "We are reviewing the design of the scheme" and "We are currently revising the traffic management arrangements". Concerns about the narrowing of the carriageway and its potential effects on congestion, emergency vehicle access and pedestrian safety (on shared paths and at bus stops) have been batted away, with no presentation of evidence of modelling to support assertions of adequacy. There are even assertions about the sufficient widths of shared use paths, which appear to contain unjustifiable inaccuracies, when reading the Design Guidance.

Every single reference to the design philosophy makes it clear that "absolute minima" are to be the norm, and "desirable standards", from the Cycle Infrastructure Design manual, might just as well not exist. The potential effect may be that faster cyclists may find it necessary to revert to the main carriageway, negating part of the fundamental purpose of the scheme.

Whilst the original implementation plan was for a 5-month northbound closure, it has been assured that this will no longer be the case. It was interesting to note that statements were given that in the event of lengthy and/or prolonged diversions: "... making a temporary order does not require that we [the Highways Authority] undertake any modelling studies to support the making of the order", and "We do not assess the costs of disruption arising from works on the highway network it manages as there is no duty to do so" – so tough on all businesses and commuters!

Overall, it seems that the only part of the public message to have got through is carriageway width and diversion planning. Justification and feasibility are taken as read.

Turning to the STRG documents, we now know that as well as those identified in last week's update, there will be another 6 representatives making 14 in total:

- GBug
- Surrey Disabled Coalition of disabled people
- Surrey Chamber of Commerce (*sic!*) (Have a look at their website for the Guildford businesses represented)
- Stagecoach Bus company
- Clock house retirement home
- Surrey Youth Parliament

What level of influence will STRG have? Taken from the Terms of Reference for the role of the STRG: "The Reference Group is not a formal decision making body. The views of members will be recorded and the Chair (Councillor Matt Furniss) will ensure that they have been taken into account and have contributed to the engagement process by providing feedback from the council at each meeting".

LRAG would prefer readers to make up their own minds as to the probable effectiveness of the STRG, but this new engagement must concentrate on the exact details of the design and its implementation. Simply seeking to survey the principles of providing improved cycling facilities is not a fundamental issue. What adverse effects that the ATS design might cause, and how its installation is to be achieved are the crux of the matter, and asking the Group to have formulated survey questions by the end of April is totally dependent on Surrey CC having published finalised plans.

Please send feedback for raising issues at the STRG to chair@lrag.co.uk