

Questions , Answers and Actions – Mid Sussex County Local Forum – 7 June 2022

In Attendance:

County Councillors

Liz Bennett (Chairman), Richard Cherry, Joy Dennis, Ian Gibson, Stephen Hillier and Jacquie Russell,

Apologies

Pete Bradbury, Stuart Condie, Bruce Forbes, Kirsty Lord, Garry Wall and Sujan Wickremaratchi.

Question 1 from Jean Chamberlain:

My question is regarding the parking in Bourg de Peage Avenue, particularly between 2-3pm (school pick up time for the 2 schools Sackville and Estcott Primary). Parking on both sides of the street, causes disruption to normal traffic, residents etc. Especially as the Busses are sometimes re-routed down this road – causing chaos!

As a resident, it is difficult to get parking by my house, e.g. if I have tradesmen to do jobs, delivery of large items etc. As I have to park on my drive, so access for the aforementioned impossible.

I have to reverse onto my sloping drive, and if cars are parked either side, it is difficult at the best of times, but during 2-3 it is virtually impossible because of all the parking, traffic, pedestrians etc.

Also, but not as problematical, sometimes in the evening cars speed down this road, usually heading toward the A22.

Maybe a cctv camera (even for a trial period) may help both the situations.

Advice or a solution needed please?

Response to Question 1, provided by the local member Cllr Jacquie Russell:

Thank you for your query regarding the situation at Bourg de Peage Avenue, as you are probably aware this is an all-too-common problem with all schools. Historically West Sussex had a team of school travel advisors who would have supported schools through their travel plans in identifying both improvements and solutions, unfortunately this resource is no longer available and there is no clear team that could address all your concerns.

It is always difficult to answer these queries without sounding negative but it is very difficult to enforce behaviour on the public highway at school gates, we are reliant on parents and other users to follow the basic highway code and use common sense, we can encourage them to park and walk, we can point out surrounding roads with no parking restrictions away from the school gate but we cannot make people use them, so any intervention is frequently a recurring necessity.

Whilst enforcement can help target the hardcore parking, the strongest voice is the school who can remind parents through newsletters and in school through educating the pupils about sustainable travel and both safe and independent travel. The school can advise parents of other parents concerns and can identify within the community good park and stride locations.

If Schools and communities can identify physical improvements they can apply for these through either the Local Transport Improvement Programme (LTIP) or through the Community Highway Scheme (see link: <https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/leisure-recreation-and-community/supporting-local-communities/apply-for-a-community-highways-scheme>).

If the situation involves anti-social driving behaviours then we recommend these are reported through www.operationcrackdown.org, however if the situation is dangerous, this is a police matter and they should be called directly. I am not sure who would be the PSCO for that area, but it is always worth making sure they are aware of any concerns and can share them with the local policing team.

Parking issues should be reported as seen to Mid Sussex District Council parking team, the school has enforceable school markings at both gate lines and well as other timed local restrictions and most junctions are protected by Double Yellow Lines already. (see link: <https://www.midsussex.gov.uk/parking-travel/report-a-parking-problem>).

The current restrictions can be found on the West Sussex County Council website (see link: <https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/traffic-regulation-orders/about-tros/view-tro-restrictions-by-map/traffic-regulation-order-tro-map>) these were last updated in 2019.

It was expected that the school frequently reminded parents of safe behaviour at the school gate through their newsletters and they would usually be the central point of contact for any agency who could offer help with the ongoing issues.

The conversation would continue and it is acknowledged that the main issue was individual dangerous drivers. The County Council try to discourage car drop offs at schools; and encourage walking and other means to improve the situation.

Supplementary

Query if parking on the pavement was illegal.

Response to Supplementary

County Councillors confirmed that this could be reported to operation crackdown, but there would need to be an obstruction for action to be taken.

Question 2 from Paul Atkin:

We have 2 bus stops on Quarry Rise, East Grinstead. There is a stop next to our car park entrance. Every time a bus stops it blocks our entrance. Sometimes the driver parks and gets out. Blocking our drive again.

There is a bus stop opposite which would be a solution for starting and finishing this journey. This bus turns around and comes back to the stop opposite. It doesn't need to stop outside a residential property blocking our entrance everyday every hour.

Response to Question 2 provided by the local member Cllr Liz Bennett:

Thank you for your question. This is a well-established bus stop that provides important access to many people in the community. Whilst we understand there may on occasions be a bus at the stop when you are exiting the car park, this should only be a minimal delay and is similar to that when waiting for a gap to enter the flow of traffic. Bus stops in residential areas and town centres are common place and it is standard practice to expect drivers wait for buses to move off before pulling out.

Our website outlines the County Council's policy on the removal or relocation of bus stops - <https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/travel-and-public-transport/bus-and-coach-travel/travel-assistance/bus-stops-and-shelters/#removal-relocation-or-suspension-of-bus-stops>.

In response to this question, The Area Highway Manager (AHM) can consider the need for a bus stop safety assessment and will liaise with Bus Operators to make them aware of the issues raised by the community. Furthermore, the AHM will investigate any incidents/recorded casualties in the last five years that would raise concerns of safety. The AHM will also speak with the bus operators and see if it is possible for bus drivers to park in a way that does not block access.

Question 3 from Frank Berry:

On the 20th May 2022 Mid Sussex District Council refused the issue of a Lawful Development Certificate to allow use of land at Evergreen Farm, West Hoathly Road, East Grinstead as a caravan and campsite for up to 80 caravans and 80 tents. I note that at a Committee Meeting of WSCC in June 2021 an application at the same site (Reference WSCC/004/20) to restore the former Standen Landfill site with a woodland and pasture landfill cap system was recommended for approval. However, the WSCC website relating to this still says "Application Pending a Decision".

Please advise:

a) What decision has been made by WSCC for the latter application (or how and when will this be made)?

b) If approved, what measures will WSCC as the Highway Authority be taking to ensure compliance with the Construction Management Plan/traffic routing, to maximise public safety and to minimise disruption to residents and visitors for up to 2.5 years due to the high volume of HGV vehicles travelling on narrow roads with pinch - points and sharp bends?

Response to Question 3 provided by the local member Cllr Jacquie Russell:

Planning application WSCC/004/20 was originally considered by the Planning and Rights of Way Committee at the meeting on 29 June 2021. The Committee resolved to defer determination of the application to allow officers to explore with the applicant matters relating to highway capacity, road safety and traffic management and the need for the volume of importation of inert material.

The application was reconsidered by the Committee on 7 September 2021, which resolved to grant planning permission subject to conditions and the completion of a Section 106 Agreement relating to: (i) the routing of HGVs to and from the application site; (ii) road widening works and maintaining visibility along West Hoathly Road; (iii) road signage along the prescribed route; and (iv) the securing of a Section 59 Agreement (to repair any damage to the highway).

Discussions with the applicant are on-going with regard to the completion of the S106 agreement, hence the resolution of the Committee has not been implemented at this stage (including the issuing of the decision notice).

The Construction Management Plan, which needs to be submitted to and approved by the County Council prior to development commencing, and the S106 agreement are the measures/mechanisms that will be used to control the highway impacts of the proposed development.

Cllr Jacquie Russell confirmed that she spoke against the application as the local member at a Planning Committee meeting. Mid Sussex District Council were the decision maker and it was understood that the plans were going ahead.

Supplementary

Raised concern that the environmental plan did not include a construction management plan. Queried who was responsible for monitoring and enforcing the construction management plans.

Response to Supplementary

County Councillors confirmed that this had been raised with the planning team and that assurance had been given that a construction management plan would be in place with a clear route and specific timed control periods. County Councillors confirmed that they had witnessed enforcement action taken in the past following reports from the public.

Response to Supplementary subsequently provided by Officers

The enforcement of the conditions attached to a planning permission is the responsibility of the determining authority. This include compliance with any plans that are required under those conditions, for example, construction management plans. It also includes compliance with any legal agreements that are attached to the permission.

For further information, the County Council's Planning Compliance and Enforcement Plan addresses how the Authority control the development that it allows through the grant of planning permission (and also about how it

investigates 'unauthorised' development and takes appropriate enforcement action).

The Plan includes the following matters:

- the County Council's approach to controlling development and ensuring compliance with planning permissions;
- the legislative background and national policy context to planning enforcement;
- how the County Council will investigate alleged breaches of planning control;
- how the County Council will decide whether to take enforcement action against breaches of planning control;
- the County Council's approach to planning enforcement including the formal enforcement 'tools' available to it; and
- how the County Council will work with other regulators.

Question 4 from Chris Nichols:

As councillors you will no doubt be aware of the struggles and difficulties that have been experienced by disabled people in West Sussex and elsewhere, as a result of cuts to their services and the freezing of their benefits since the financial crisis of 2008, which has ushered in decades of austerity.

Disabled people's organisations (of which one, West Sussex Warrior Carers, I am a member), are these days hearing of more and more disabled people whose already difficult lives are being made even harder, on top of them having already experienced these decades of ever falling living standards, by now also being subjected to W.S.C.C.'s constantly increasing care charges (otherwise known as their "Client Contributions").

This situation is not sustainable for those disabled people who are suffering these ever increasing financial hardships. This impoverishes their lives, forcing them to rely on other family members for financial support, increases mental health problems and sometimes forces people either into debt or causes them to give up the support they desperately need but cannot now afford.

On top of this situation we now have the current cost of living crisis caused primarily by rising energy prices and world supply chain problems. This is having a knock on effect on a wide range of consumer products and especially basic food prices which means that the inflation rates being experienced by people on low incomes (which unfortunately applies to most disabled people), are well in excess of that being imposed by the 'standard' inflation rate.

Could councillors please provide me with a clear pathway which impoverished disabled people in West Sussex could use in order to access the extra financial help they may now need, from the funds which I understand central government has given local authorities for this purpose?

Response to Question 4 provided by the local member Cllr Liz Bennett:

It is appreciated and acknowledged that increases in the cost of living has impacted on all West Sussex residents. The Chancellor recently announced that the most vulnerable households across the country will receive £1,200 of one-off support in total this year to help with the cost of living. It is understood that the Department for Work and Pensions will administer additional payments, which will be paid directly to those eligible. A one-off payment of £150 to support households with rising energy bills for most Council Tax payers in houses in Council Tax bands A to D, or a band E property if in receipt of a disabled band reduction, is being administered by district and borough councils via refunds to bank accounts for those who pay Council Tax by direct debit. Those who don't pay by direct debit will be contacted by their district/borough council to make an application for the payment.

West Sussex County Council follows statutory guidance when calculating contributions towards a person's care. However, if anyone is experiencing hardship in meeting their assessed contribution they are encouraged to contact the County Council direct.

Community Groups were available for support, such as the East Grinstead Access Group who helped ensure that East Grinstead Train Station installed a lift. There was also the Quarry Community Café that provided fresh food and hot meals. 'Being Neighbourly' had been set up during lockdown to provide local support in East Grinstead.

Question 5 from Leo Beirne:

There has been a notable increase in the amount of domestic, medium sized and major developments are underway locally, bringing with them very large 35/40ton construction wagons on many of the local roads: some appearing to have become 'rat-runs'. The movement of these wagons has featured many times during regular meetings of the Town's Local Action Team (- i.e., the Town LAT) that I chair, by both local drivers and/or pedestrians - i.e.:

- some wagons - that appear to be empty, appear to be driven at speeds exceeding local limits particularly adjacent to school entrances - e.g., Imberhorne Lane, Turner's Hill Road, on the A22 past the illuminating '30mph' road sign at Woodbury, Dunning's Road, Brooklands's Way (where some park-up in the layby needing to put wheels on the pavement to keep the vehicle within the designated roadside layby markings), and on occasions turning from London Road into Moat Road towards/on to Holtye Road, to name a few;
- it should be noted that some locations where schoolchildren roads are/remain unsupervised;
- some drivers appear to be intolerant to reducing speed when behind smaller vehicles - again, apparently empty;
- on several occasions, wagons arrive at the cross-roads roundabout via the B2110 Turner's Hill Road, then turned left into Brooklands's Way, where the 3

sets of its rear nearside trailer wheels severely mounted the pavement – fortunately, no pedestrians;

- there appears to be a lack of visible enforcement by any of the contractors/traffic police/County Highways re. any traffic management, restrictions and/or compliance; and,
- Councillors are aware there are a few narrow county-type narrow roads particularly at the junction of Turner’s Hill Road with Vowel’s Lane.

There have been more specific comments made about some 40ton HGV wagon drivers leaving and/or entering the Hill Place Farm site, alleging that the size and speed of vehicles reportedly forced other road users to take evasive action to avoid a collision, especially at 'pinch points' such as at Saint Hill Road. This added specific detail to the previous comment above re. traffic management, begging the question from WDCC Highways as to what actions can be taken re.:

- a) to ensure vehicles comply with the above Construction Management Plan? and,
- b) to improve the safety of other road users, including pedestrians, from the number of HGV lorries that are seen in and around East Grinstead on a daily basis?

LAT members understand that the Construction Management Plan (re. CDM) for the housing at Hill Place Farm development, Turners Hill Road, specifies local routes that restrict how 40ton wagons move to and from the site - i.e.. Brooklands Way and the A22 from the north and Turners Hill Road (B2110) from the south. However, it has been noted that wagons regularly use other roads in both directions - e.g.. Saint Hill Road and West Hoathly Road.

I look forward to the meeting and hopefully, that will include some discussion on resolving/addressing some of the above.

Response to Question 5 provided by the local member Cllr Jacquie Russell:

Thank you for bringing your concerns to our attention.

Whenever there are allegations or concerns about dangerous or careless driving on the public highway, Sussex Police have asked that issues are referred to them. A Sussex Police initiative that you might find useful to know about is Operation Crackdown which can be found at www.operationcrackdown.org. This gives residents the opportunity to report and record specific incidents of anti-social driving that the Police can then follow up and investigate.

Whilst the concerns are understood, it is important to appreciate why any attempts to restrict the movements of HGVs would be both damaging to those communities and unenforceable in practice.

Under the law, HGVs are allowed to use any classification of road, including class B and C roads, in order to make deliveries. Indeed the businesses operating

across Mid Sussex, and the communities they serve, are reliant on these deliveries.

West Sussex County Council has developed a freight route map and would always encourage HGVs to use the most appropriate roads possible when travelling - usually motorways, dual carriageways and main roads. However, there will always come a point when some hauliers will need to travel onto B and C class roads to make deliveries to shops, restaurants and pubs within those rural areas.

Trying to determine which lorries are making legitimate deliveries and which are using a village route as a rat-run would be a near impossible task.

If the community can identify particular haulage companies they can prove are using their village as a through route, we can contact them to make them aware of those complaints and to highlight our freight route map.

It is also worth pointing out that those campaigning for restrictions run the risk of raising expectations across the communities that it would mean the end of HGVs travelling through their villages. That would simply not be the case. Lorries of all sizes have a legal right to deliver goods along smaller rural roads and that would continue.

It was commented that the traffic for Evergreen should not be near the Mead School.

Supplementary

Felt that the enforcement needed extra policing and that CCTV on the vehicles should be monitored. Residents had tried to log the vehicles registration numbers, but the number plates were dirty due to site traffic. It was reported that the vehicles were labelled 'Highways Maintenance'.

Response to Supplementary

County Councillors explained that 'Highways Maintenance' on the vehicles did not mean they were County Council vehicles. It was proposed that the County Council could collaborate with the police to see what could be done with the regard to control enforcement. An example was given for where residents in a rural village had logged all details of vehicle movements and this had been part of a liaison meeting with the developers. This had resulted in developer traffic reducing by 10mph and routes being adhered to. County Councillors agreed that conditions set by Planning should be followed, and that developers were financially penalised for breaking conditions.

Question 6 from Matt Jones:

A resident raised concerns on the restrictive budgets for pavement and road condition improvements and that the condition of Lynton Park Avenue and Gleave Close was particularly difficult to traverse in a wheelchair. There was also a lack of dropped kerbs in Bourg de Peage Avenue and Estcots Drive which made it impossible to traverse in a wheelchair. This led to the need to move on roads where potholes were encountered. Pot holes had been reported, but did

not meet the requirements for resolution. However, the hole dimensions were difficult for the height of wheelchair wheels. Budget needed to be made available in order to allow safe passage of wheelchairs. The Turners Hill four way intersection was also highlighted as a dangerous junction for wheelchair users.

Response to Question 6 provided by the County Councillors:

County Councillors were very sympathetic to the issues raised and recognised it was a difficult problem to solve. The resident was recommended to contact 'Highway Rangers' and also the action group 'Helpful' for assistance. It was acknowledged that the pavements should be accessible for all; but that budgets were never enough to resolve all issues on the network. County Councillors also acknowledged the difficulties with the Turners Hill intersection and understood that Turners Hill Parish Council were looking into the issues raised.

Question 7 from Patricia:

Would like to raise concerns over traffic in East Grinstead, particularly in Brooklands Way. Large vehicles such as construction, supermarket and large cars travel with great speed down the road and where there is little space, these vehicles dangerously mount the curb and it does not feel safe. Can something be done to stop this happening before an accident is caused?

Response to Question 7 provided by the local member Cllr Jacquie Russell:

The danger described is recognised and that for successful enforcement to take place the responsible companies needed to be identified and the collaboration with the police could begin. Food delivery vehicles should be reported to the local supermarket to make them aware of driver behaviour and the impact on local residents.

Question 8 from Rosemary Furley:

What progress has been made on prioritising Active Travel plans in the area and particularly in East Grinstead, and if none, please could you explain the reason for this?

Response to Question 8 provided by the local member Cllr Liz Bennett:

The previous work on cycle schemes in the area was discussed at that Mid Sussex District Council were progressing with their Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). County Councillors were working with the district to progress the plan, but acknowledged that there had been delays. The need for walking and cycling was recognised and that the district council had published an environmental and ecology strategy which looked to achieve carbon net-zero by 2050.

Question 9 from an Imberhorne Resident:

Raised concerns with the new development in Imberhorne which would add 750 houses and cause an impact on traffic? The County Council had rejected the plans but they have subsequently been approved by Mid Sussex District Council.

Response to Question 9 provided by Cllr Liz Bennett:

Explained that the County Council was a statutory consultee with regard to highway implications on planning developments. However, the district council remained the overall decision maker. Residents needed to ensure their voices were heard on planning applications. Reassurance was given that the County Council's Highways department flagged all issues to developers to review.

Supplementary

Commented on planning provisions and queried if residents could impact on developments.

Response to Supplementary subsequently provided by Officers

Planning for housing and most other development in West Sussex is the responsibility of the District and Borough Councils and the South Downs National Park Authority. The County Council is only responsible for planning for its own developments and for minerals and waste development outside the South Downs National Park.

Planning authorities are required to prepare local plans to guide the future development of their areas over the long-term (15 years). In addition to informal engagement with local community representatives (such as parish councils, and community and residents groups), the preparation of local plans must include public consultation, which provides the opportunity for local residents to comment on draft policies and any proposals for future development in their communities. Local residents can also participate in the independent examination of the draft local plan before it is adopted.

Similarly, all planning authorities are required to publicise planning applications to give third parties, including local residents, the opportunity to comment on development proposals in their communities. However, it is for the planning authority to decide whether the comments received are 'material' to the determination of the planning application and also to decide the weight that should be given to those comments in decision-making.

Question 10 from a local Resident:

Commented that the increase in population and cars resulted in the largest pollutants for the planet. Something that would help would be to approach a tram company to install a tram on the redundant East Grinstead to Tunbridge Wells railway line.

Response to Question 10 subsequently provided by Officers

Building a tram line between East Grinstead and Tunbridge Wells does not form part of the West Sussex Transport Plan 2022-36 and as far as we are aware, it does not form part of local transport plans covering East Sussex or Kent. Through our work with Transport for the South East, we are aware of potential for greater use of east-west mass transit services connecting Crawley and East Grinstead with destinations in East Sussex and Kent and are likely to investigate improvements in the future, subject to funding and any necessary agreements to work jointly with neighbouring authorities. However,

improvements are much more likely to take the form of improved bus services or 'fastway' style bus rapid transit. This is because the demand for travel between these places is unlikely to justify the very high cost of a tram type solution, which is more suited to an urban setting.

Question 11 from a Turners Hill Resident:

Asked if it was true that Turners Hill was imminently due for a long term road closure due to water company works?

Response to Question 11 provided by Cllr Ian Gibson:

Having attended the Southern Water meeting, Cllr Ian Gibson confirmed there was an 18 week road closure from 13 June to resolve water pressure issues.

The Forum was closed at 8.40pm