



B.B.R.A.G.

THE BROMLEY BOROUGH ROADS ACTION GROUP

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Committee Members: R.W.Lawson, M.J.Stilwell, P.Appleby, D. Andrews

Mrs Rue Butcher
Environment Dept – Traffic Section
London Borough of Bromley
Stockwell Close
Bromley
BR1 3UH

cc. Councillors C.Bloom, G.Jenkins, C.Rideout

12 September, 2006

Reference Proposed Traffic Calming Measures for Bickley – Ref ADE(TP)RAB/T52/4

Dear Mrs Butcher,

As regards the Bickley Traffic Calming scheme, we have the following comments:

1. Summary. We are not opposed to all aspects of the scheme, but we think that many parts of it are unwise or simply a waste of money. It has clearly been drawn up by independent consultants who seem to have little knowledge of the traffic problems in the area and have not talked to local residents. From the conversations I have had with a number of local residents, and listening to what others said when I visited the exhibition you ran, there are clearly some aspects of the scheme that many residents do not agree with.

Our specific criticisms are as follows.

2. The kerb “build-outs” and “throttles” on Hawthorne Road, Oldfield Road, Homestead Road and The Fairway. Such arrangements are positively dangerous in our view. They were tried extensively in Finchley some years ago (I enclose a copy of a press article on the subject), and there were so many accidents and road rage incidents that they were subsequently removed – at considerable cost of course.

Although it seems likely that traffic exceeds the permitted speed limit on Hawthorne Road and Oldfield Road, they do not appear by nature to be dangerous roads. But introducing various kinds of obstacles into them will surely make them less safe. BBRAG objects to measures that are likely to worsen traffic congestion and generally reduce traffic speeds when there is no benefit in doing so, and clearly these obstructions will tend to divert traffic onto other roads which are no safer.

As regards Homestead Road, we see no necessity for any traffic calming measures because we do not believe that the speed of traffic is excessive in that road, and neither do we believe that significant amounts of traffic use it as a diversionary route in any case. The best road safety measure for Homestead Road would be to install double yellow parking lines on the right angle bend at the northern end.

Our comments similarly apply to The Fairway where the “throttle” point is dangerous and unnecessary.

3. The closure of Highfield Road with the junction of the Fairway, or “one-way” operation. Although some residents claim that this is being used as a “rat-run”, other residents disagree. But I have personally walked the whole length of Highfield Road and The Fairway during the morning rush hour – there was very little traffic and most of it was clearly generated from residents of those or the immediately adjoining streets. In any case these roads are not especially narrow or dangerous. In fact if any traffic is using them to avoid the lower part of Southborough Road and the junction with Southborough Lane (which admittedly does get congested in rush hours), then diverting such traffic back onto Southborough Road is pointless. It will just move more traffic onto a road which is known to be especially dangerous so there is not going to be any road safety benefit whatsoever, probably the opposite.

Of course BBRAG has consistently objected to the needless obstruction and removal of roads from the road network, as this just causes congestion. The council now have a duty to minimize traffic congestion, or remove it where possible under the Traffic Management Act, and these kind of proposals are contrary to that duty.

In any case, the closure of that junction, or one way operation, will severely inconvenience many residents who would have to take longer and more circuitous routes.

4. The 20 mph speed limit and kerb build-outs on Blackbrook Lane. The former is an inappropriate speed limit for a main distributor road and will simply not be adhered to. Blackbrook Lane is the route used by traffic from the Chislehurst and Sidcup directions who are heading for Locksbottom, Biggin Hill, etc. There is no easy alternative route other than Southborough Road which is more dangerous and more congested, so diverting traffic onto that is silly (and both roads have potential problems with pedestrians with a school on one and a train station on the other).

Clearly Blackbrook Lane used to have a severe speeding problem but that has improved considerably since the speed tables were introduced, and I believe the accident record also improved as a result. Is there any justification for further measures, particularly as the proposed “pelican” crossing (which we support) will assist with safety?

As regards the kerb build-outs on the lower part of Blackbrook Lane, these are plain daft. This area is typically full of residents parked cars as they have limited off-street parking, and the build-outs will almost certainly cause them difficulties. The residents already complain about vehicles running into and damaging their parked cars and these build-outs are likely to make that worse, not better. The proposed build-outs appear to be similar to those recently constructed in Magpie Hall Lane which are positively dangerous as they cause traffic in both directions to meet head-on. I and other sensible people now avoid that road, but such similar diversion will again divert traffic from Blackbrook Lane onto Southborough Road, which is not going to help the road accident statistics.

Of course the council has past experience of such “horizontal deflection” measures in Crofton Lane where they were unsuccessful and the scheme had to be removed because of the number of accidents they caused, particularly in wet weather by vehicles skidding off the road sideways. But nothing seems to be learned from past experience in Bromley.

5. The CPZ on Hawthorne Road. It is not at all clear what the purpose of this measure is. As it is simply a parking restriction I presume it is primarily aimed at improving road safety and stopping obstruction, but the road is surely wide enough to permit parking on some sections on one side. The proposed parking bays would therefore be a good idea but the kerb build-outs should only delineate the bays, if they are required at all, and should not obstruct the carriageway as is proposed.

Note that we feel that restricting parking unnecessarily on Hawthorne Road will simply divert parked cars onto the adjoining streets or onto Oldfield Road. The latter has no restrictions and none are proposed so that would just seem to be moving the problem from one location to another.

Note though that if the purpose of the CPZ is to stop commuter parking of station users, then BBRAG has consistently opposed such measures. We believe that there is usually no justification for measures that discourage rail usage and that if there is a problem with such parking then the council should try and provide appropriate off-street parking nearby. Note that this might well be possible next to Bickley station where the goods yard seems to be underused. In any case, as residents mainly have off-street parking, it seems unlikely that they are inconvenienced significantly at present.

6. The build-outs of the Fairway at the exit onto Southborough Lane.

Constricting that junction does not seem particularly wise, and at present traffic has considerable difficulty with the restriction of Fairway by cars parking on both sides of the road near that junction (presumably they are cars of visitors to the nearby shops, or employees of those businesses). Some parking restrictions to rationalize that seems more appropriate.

7. The wide-area 20 mph zone. Although we do not object in principle to the imposition of a 20 mph zone over some parts of this area (other than Blackbrook Lane mentioned above), as it is surely appropriate to indicate to drivers that this is primarily a residential area, and many of the roads are relatively narrow, we think that this may cause problems with conformance on Hawthorne Road, Oldfield Road and some of the other roads. We believe that the roads should be individually examined to see if they are suitable for 20 mph speed limits.

It is simply wrong to consider 20 mph as appropriate for all residential roads – if they are relatively wide with good sight lines, 30 mph is much more appropriate.

In respect of Hawthorne Road and Oldfield Road we think that 20 mph would be inappropriate but that alternative measures to reduce speed on those roads to conform to the 30 mph limit, other than the use of kerb build outs and throttles, could be devised (bearing in mind that we are not in favour of vertical deflection measures of course).

8. Failure to consult Councillors. Clearly the public consultation of residents over a wide area on this scheme has been quite an expensive exercise. In our view it is a pity that ward Councillors or other leading local residents were not consulted about these plans before they were widely circulated. An informal discussion of what was being proposed would surely have highlighted some likely objections before the details were set in stone and publicly circulated. It undermines the reputation of the Council and Councillors if residents see these kind of proposals circulated when it is

immediately obvious to anyone with local knowledge of the roads concerned that the basis of some of the proposals is deeply flawed.

I also suggest that Bromley might like to consider the kind of organization that has been set up in Croydon – called the Croydon Road Users Forum (CRUF) which meets to discuss road proposals. The members are drawn from local “stakeholders” who meet with council staff on a regular basis. This again would bring more local and expert knowledge to bear.

Yours sincerely

Roger Lawson

Chairman

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