



BBRAG NEWS

Bromley Borough Roads Action Group - No. 17 (August 2002)

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Editorial

Worried about missing important local news while you are away on holiday? No need to fret as you can catch up by reading this newsletter.

This edition concentrates primarily on local events and topical items (well at least within London), with no long-winded, boring articles from your editor. Yes even I need a break sometimes, particularly from having to read all the turgid prose in reports from the Mayor of London.

Please send in your views on any of the items as we welcome feedback from readers (negative or positive).

Roger Lawson, Editor

Fatal Accident at Shortlands



Above is a picture of the scene of a fatal road accident on June 2nd, when Rossi Quick, 18, was killed. He was a passenger in a car travelling down Bromley Road when it left the road near the junction with Albemarle Road and hit a tree. Five other people in the car were injured.

This is a common type of accident that happens to young drivers, but in this case it was clearly an easily foreseeable one. The road has a relatively steep gradient, a tight bend at the bottom of the hill with a slightly adverse camber, and a tree placed almost exactly at the apex of the bend in the footpath. Obviously there may have been other factors at work to cause this accident to take place, but it should not have been fatal.

(Editors Comment: let us hope that suitable remedial measures such as an Armco style barrier to keep vehicles on the road, a change to the camber, and/or the removal of the tree be done as soon as possible. Expenditure on such measures is surely more justified than many of the traffic calming schemes in the borough).

Mayor Announces Plan for London



The Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, has recently announced a draft London Plan, or to be more exact, a Spatial Development Strategy. It will form the basis for future decisions on Unitary Development Plans in local areas such as Bromley, and for decisions on planning applications, so it is more important than might appear at first sight. It also will affect policies on transport, housing, business, the environment and many other areas of public life.

It anticipates that more than 600,000 new jobs will be created in London in the next fifteen years, and up to 700,000 more people. His aim seems to be to encourage such development so as to maintain London as a “world-class” city. This may require 459,000 new homes by 2016.

The strategy is to accommodate this growth by denser housing development and improved transport links, without encroaching on green belt or creating other adverse environmental effects. The Mayor put forwards Islington as an example of one of the best quality areas of London, and yet one of the highest densities, to show how acceptable this can be. *(Editors Comment: Clearly the Mayor’s views on the quality of life and the environment in Islington would be different to many who live in Bromley!).*

Note that London’s population has been growing rapidly for some years, particularly in the more central boroughs, primarily as a result of immigration from the rest of the country and overseas. More young people have been moving in, not sufficiently offset by older people moving out.

There will be a major emphasis on new housing development in former commercial sites for mixed use, and in reuse for residential development, plus small scale residential infill, and new developments in town centres and near transport links. A specific policy proposal is to have 35% of new housing in Bromley dedicated to “affordable housing” for low income families. Such policies will directly impact such plans as the proposed Aquila redevelopment. These proposals will also require substantial subsidy by taxpayers of course.

The major centres for additional job expansion seem to be the existing central London areas, a few peripheral areas such as Croydon and Stratford, plus business parks such as Chiswick, Stockley Park and Bedfont Lakes. So it looks like commuting will remain a way of life for most Londoners. As a result, further development of public transport is anticipated, including Crossrail 1, the Thameslink 2000 project, and Crossrail 2 (formerly the Hackney to Southwest line) - none of which will run anywhere near Bromley unfortunately.

Clearly such expansion will also create extra demand for waste disposal, water supply and sewage disposal, and possible air pollution problems so the plan also covers how those issues will be dealt with.

For more details on the Plan, or to submit your comments, go to web site www.london.gov.uk or telephone 020-7983-4100.

(Editors Comment: If you want a say in the future development of London then submitting your comments to the Mayor is very important. In my opinion he is suffering from “folie des grandeur”. These proposals will be very expensive for taxpayers, and will worsen the environment in London as a whole and in Bromley specifically. Providing for demand is one thing,, deliberately expanding London is another. There is a better way surely.).

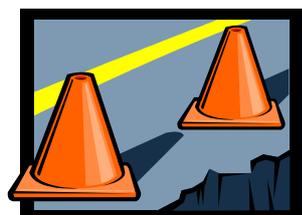
Orpington Car Park Redevelopment



The proposed redevelopment of the Station Road car park in Orpington (picture above) has been covered in a previous issue of this newsletter. The latest news is that Tesco have been selected as the preferred developer by Bromley Council. The mixed-use development will consist of a supermarket, medical centre, residential housing and parking. No further details may be available until an outline planning application is submitted.

(Editors Comment: As previously pointed out, the conditions laid down by Bromley Council are not likely to ensure that sufficient parking remains to cope with existing usage. Bearing in mind the proposed developer, it now appears to be very unlikely that sufficient long term parking will be provided at reasonable cost to accommodate adjacent office occupiers. Reduction in work place parking provision has long been a stated policy of the council. The result will no doubt be more pressure on current on-street parking capacity and the movement of businesses out of Bromley).

M25 Future Strategy



The government has hired consultants to devise a strategy to tackle existing and future traffic congestion on the M25. If nothing is done, it is forecast that traffic on this route will rise by 33 per cent by 2016. Their initial report can be seen at www.orbitproject.com.

Your comments are invited but these needed to be in by July 31st (unfortunately this report only recently came to your editor's attention - as our publication frequency is only bimonthly at best, it is worth checking the latest "news" on our web site for any urgent matters like this). To summarise the contents of the report, their recommendations are as follows:

1. The establishment of a high quality, frequent orbital coach network to provide an alternative to car travel.
2. Support for new rail infrastructure such as the Crossrail and Thameslink proposals.
3. Some widening of the M25, but only in conjunction with measures to control demand.
4. The latter might be either: a) controlled entry such as ramp metering, or segregated lanes for multi-occupancy vehicles, b) tolls for use of priority lanes, c) general motorway tolls, d) wide-area road user charging.

They also propose improved traffic management such as better response to and quicker clean-up of accidents, better signage on the motorway and of alternative routes, change of land use policies, more business and school travel plans, encouragement of staggered working hours and telecommuting, and more parking controls *(Editors Comment: I am strongly opposed to the latter).*

However, none of the proposals are costed, or the benefits valued, so it is difficult to determine what the advantages of most of them would be.

Neither is it at all clear how much of the existing commuting traffic in the rush hours (about 50% of current usage) would find alternative public transport practical or financially viable.

(Editors Comment: If practical, your editor would support on-ramp metering - in effect timed traffic lights on entry slip roads to stagger joining traffic as is commonly used in the USA. This has the benefit of maintaining a smooth traffic flow on the motorway as well as discouraging short on-off trips, one of the disruptive activities on the M25. However there are probably some practical difficulties in applying them on the M25. Your editor would accept on-ramp tolling also if the money used was spent on capacity

improvements, but he would be opposed to other forms of tolling - just look at the disruption caused by the Dartford crossing tolls which are totally unnecessary and should be abandoned)

If any of our readers have any views on how the M25 can be improved, or comments on the above proposals, then please write to the editor.

Gridlock in Crystal Palace and Blackheath

A new one way system in Crystal Palace has produced gridlock. A scheme to improve traffic congestion in the Upper Norwood triangle has resulted in long queues of traffic. It is hoped that when the work is completed next February, the situation will be substantially improved.

Meanwhile on Blackheath Hill (the A2 route into central London), road subsidence has resulted in closure of the road for some weeks. As this is one of the main routes into London, diverting traffic has created congestion over a wide area of south-east London. Investigation of the subsidence, which apparently is into old quarry workings, is taking some time and it is not known when it will re-open.

(Editors Comment: Apparently the congestion has even spread as far as Jamaica Road in Southwark according to Transport for London staff, but it might also be the new 24 hour bus lane on that road causing a new congestion problem which it never previously suffered outside the rush hours - we will no doubt see when the A2 is back in action as to what is the real cause).

One Way System for Petts Wood?

The Petts Wood Residents Association (see www.pettswood.org.uk) have produced some proposals to improve parking and traffic safety in Petts Wood. Although these have yet to be put to the council, it includes the suggestion for a one-way system. Fairway would become one-way northbound from Tudor Way (the Fairway/Tudor Way junction is alleged to be an accident black spot). New "Pay and Display" parking bays would be introduced, and the parking fees "adapted for longer term parking" in the car

parks in Bluston Parade and alongside Mega House.

Road Deaths Rise in 2001

Provisional figures for 2001 from the Department for Transport show that road deaths actually rose slightly in the country as a whole. Deaths were 3,443, an increase of 34 (a 1% increase). There were 313,046 casualties on roads in Great Britain, which represents only a 2% reduction on the previous year.

Child casualties fell by 4 per cent, but child deaths actually increased. Pedestrian casualties fell by 3 per cent, and pedal cyclist casualties fell by 7 per cent, although cycle traffic decreased by 4 per cent. *(Editors Comment: Clearly the encouragement of cycling as an eco-friendly and healthy transport mode is having little effect so far).*

Motor cyclist casualties increased by 2 per cent which is consistent with previous trends.

(Editors Comment: Ignoring the death figures, which can be statistical anomalies, the injury figures seem to show a continuing slight downward trend. For more details go to web site www.transtat.dft.gov.uk).

Another recent report from the Department of Transport showed almost half of all cars travelling on motorways or dual carriageways exceeded the speed limits. There was also a very high incidence of speeding by HGVs on main roads.

On urban roads with a 30 mph limit, 65 per cent of cars exceeded the limit (ie. broke the law).

(Editors Comment: Clearly there is widespread disrespect for existing speed limits, despite rapid escalation in enforcement by speed cameras, heavier penalties and other means in recent years. Presumably the public have not accepted that exceeding the technical speed limit is necessarily the cause of accidents. Your editor does not believe it is productive to continue with existing policies unless more realism is introduced into these strategies).

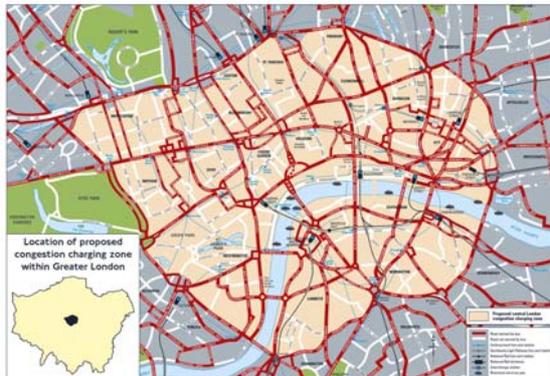
Night Flights Court Case

Mention has previously been mentioned in this newsletter of the campaign to stop night flights over London (officially these are flights between

11.30 pm and 6.00 am). Parts of Bromley are already affected by noise from incoming flights to Heathrow in the early hours, particularly if wind directions mean they arrive earlier than planned. With the possible expansion of Biggin Hill, the building of another London airport to the east of London quite likely, and further expansion of Heathrow already in the pipeline, such flights might affect Bromley residents even more in future.

HACAN Clearskies have campaigned against night flights and the general expansion of Heathrow for some years (see web site www.hacan.org.uk for more information). They won a European court case on the night flight noise issue last October, but the UK government has appealed. They need further funds to fight the legal appeal - up to £150,000 is required. Any donations for this cause should be sent to HACAN Clearskies, PO Box 339, Twickenham, TW1 2XF, with cheques made payable to HACAN.

Congestion Charging Court Case



Ken Livingstone's Congestion Charging Scheme which is part of his Transport Plan was recently challenged in the High Court by the City of Westminster and the Kennington Residents Association but the judge rejected the objections and therefore the scheme will likely go ahead as planned.

Westminster City Council claimed it was unlawful and likely to have a detrimental impact on the environment (the charging zone would bisect the borough).

Kennington residents would be affected because the zone boundary runs along Kennington Lane. They wanted the zone to be bounded by the

River Thames on the south so as to avoid traffic which is diverting to avoid the zone clogging up their streets. A public demonstration was supported by local MP Kate Hoey. Both objectors asked for a public enquiry.

Bromley Traffic Calming Schemes



Yes Bromley Council is still making work for road contractors, even though council policy is now clearly against traffic calming schemes that consist of numerous speed

bumps. To quote the exact wording of the relevant item: "having considered all the evidence for and against vertical speed reduction installations, preference be given to schemes that are predominantly non-vertical".

There were proposals for two schemes that were in the pipeline when the above policy was adopted. One was the Mottingham Estate scheme which consisted of over 80 speed bumps and the other was an extension of the existing scheme in the Birkbeck Road area with more speed bumps.

Detailed design and consultation with residents and other parties had already taken place, but further reviews were made and alternative proposals devised. They were then submitted to the new Environment Portfolio holder, George Taylor, for a decision at a recent meeting. The decisions were:

The Mottingham Estate scheme will proceed but speed cushions will be mainly used instead of humps, and they will be reduced in number and spaced out more (new totals are 72 speed cushions and 5 speed tables).. Cost will be about £170,000.

The Birkbeck Road scheme will likewise be changed to speed cushions from speed humps. Cost will be about £50,000.

In the case of the Mottingham Estate, the proposals include numerous cushions, tables and mini-roundabouts on Dunkery Road (which is used by through traffic and is in fact a bus route).

But they did not tackle one of the causes of accidents in that road - namely parking on both sides of the road on a bend that creates a one-way system and where sight lines are obscured. This and other comments that B.B.R.A.G. made were ignored and our views totally misrepresented in the report to the council so a written complaint has been submitted on this matter (we were not against a traffic calming scheme for the estate as a whole but we oppose excessive use of speed bumps and the imposition of such proposals on local distribution roads).

Council staff and the consultants they use continue to show total lack of imagination in coming up with alternative solutions to road safety problems. Whether such persistent flouting of the will of elected councillors will continue, remains to be seen.

(Editors Comment: Speed cushions were favoured because they are more acceptable to emergency service vehicles - you don't really want to go over a speed bump in an ambulance if you are a patient. However if that proves to be the general policy in future then I can see many people purchasing vehicles with a wide track - from past experience I would recommend the Jaguar XJ models, with the only minor downside being that they are so wide that parking is not easy and narrow lanes to be avoided).

In addition to the above decisions, it was also agreed to reinstate the speed bumps in Murray Avenue that had temporarily been removed for road resurfacing. However they will be replaced at the lower height of 75 mm (which is the new standard in Bromley) as opposed to the previous 100mm. There was a vociferous local majority of residents in favour of reinstatement. The council also stopped road users and asked them to complete a survey. Some 74% of those said they disliked speed bumps (and that includes over 25% of local residents who responded). They were also asked a question about whether the road humps should be replaced, but as it was phrased in a manner to encourage a certain response the answer will not be given here.

(Editors Comment: It is good to see the council actually asking road users how they feel about speed bumps, but it is a pity that they followed their usual tactic of asking questions in the survey form in a manner that predicated a certain response).

Note that some of the next roads to be targeted on safety grounds with traffic calming schemes are likely to be Elmstead Lane, Chislehurst, Poverest Road, Orpington and Queensway, Petts Wood. Let us hope that as these are all routes used by through traffic, that the typical multiple speed bump or cushion scheme is totally rejected in those cases.

New Bromley Road Safety Plan



Bromley Council have recently adopted a new Road Safety Plan. This document is based upon the Mayor of London's Road Safety Plan which includes targets to

reduce the number of killed or seriously injured (KSI) by 40% by 2010. Other targets are to reduce the KSI number for children by 50% and a reduction in slight casualties by 10%.

The main recommendations to achieve the above are:

1. Special attention to the KSI accidents.
2. Targeting of the main accident causal factors which are a) excess speed, b) careless right turns, c) following too close and d) pedestrians crossing without due care.
3. Special consideration for young people and elderly pedestrians when planning accident reduction measures.
4. Accident remedial measures will be concentrated on locations with high KSI numbers, or those with "vulnerable" road users.
5. Formation of an accident prevention working group.

There are numerous details in the report on the worst accident locations. For example, the junctions with the worst records are Crofton Rd/Starts Hill Road, Tweedy Road/East St/Sherman Rd and High St Bromley/Elmfield Rd/Ethelbert Rd.

Roads with high KSI figures are Beckenham Rd in Beckenham, High St in Beckenham and Hastings Road Bromley. The High Street and Anerley Road in Penge are also bad.

Generally high accident rates also occur in Southend Rd in Beckenham, Market Square in Bromley, Tweedy Road in Bromley and Kentish Way in Bromley.

(Editors Comment: The policies seem to be sensible on the whole, but the high risk areas seem to be mainly those with high concentrations of traffic or pedestrians, as you might expect).

Real Time Train Timetables



A new facility on the internet that has recently appeared is the ability to see actual train movements for certain stations. The site not just shows you the days timetable, but you can see which trains are cancelled or running late. For these "Live Departure Boards" go to www.nationalrail.co.uk/departures/fs_departures.htm

Orpington and St. Mary Cray are two of the stations already covered, and no doubt it will be extended to others if it proves popular.

Another useful web site for those people who are keen on improving the rail network is www.railfuture.org.uk That site also contains a number of useful links to other sites on rail transport. It looks like it is sponsored by certain rail companies though so it may not be totally unbiased in its opinions.

(Editors Comment: It is unfortunate that this web site contains comments that are against the expansion of the motorway network and other anti-car sentiments which implies that if one is in favour of improved railways then one must be against an improved road

network. As the article by John Redwood in our previous edition said, this is a mistake as the main problem in Britain is lack of all forms of transport. The Pedestrians Association have fallen into the same trap where a lot of its literature and campaigning activities are anti-car instead of being for more pedestrian facilities and encouragement of walking as a transport mode.)

Free Traffic Data on the Internet

There are a number of suppliers of traffic information which can help you avoid those annoying traffic jams. For example, via in-car displays or internet web sites from Trafficmaster (www.trafficmaster.co.uk) or Itis Holdings (www.itisholdings.com). In addition you can get information from mobile phone services - for example dial 1740 on Orange.

However there are also some free services that are available now on the internet. Although the Radio Data System now fitted to many car radios can warn you of jams or accidents soon after they occur, the advantage of using the internet is that you can check a route before you leave home or office, and reroute your journey or cancel it as appropriate.

The following sites provide information without charge:

Itis: live traffic information including incident details at: <http://62.189.42.31/itistraff/input.asp>

Vauxhall: data on main roads from Trafficmaster: <http://buypower.vauxhall.co.uk/trafficnet/>

Highways Agency: experimental data on M25: http://www.highways.gov.uk/news/m25_rt/index.htm

Note that these services cover mainly motorways and other primary routes. There is hardly any information on secondary or local roads so you can't currently see whether your route through Bromley or other parts of London is congested.

(Editors Comment: Perhaps Bromley Council should provide such a service if they are really serious about tackling congestion. It would enable road users to avoid stationery traffic by rerouting or staggering their journeys).

London Traffic Policies and News

Traffic lights in London are being reset to give pedestrians more time to cross. This is causing more traffic jams according to some people, but Transport for London (TfL) says it is only revising them to the national standard.

Traffic lights in London (particularly the centre) are computer controlled to reduce congestion but it is alleged recently that such control has been used to create more congestion prior to the introduction of the congestion charging scheme. Then such control will be used to reduce congestion and hence justify the scheme. TfL denies this, and it could just be extra congestion caused by the above rephrasing of lights.

A new crackdown on bus lane infringements is likely in Bromley following the recruitment of four extra traffic wardens, paid for by TfL (*Editor: ie. by the taxpayer*). Apparently it can take up to two hours to travel from Bromley to Crystal Palace by bus at present and it is hoped this will assist. (*Editors Comment: I can believe that, but you can work out the cost of 4 traffic wardens by yourself*).

Your editor is currently working on an article concerning how to improve transport in Bromley (and London as a whole). Any suggestions would be welcome - please write or email to the address below.



Contact Information

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B.B.R.A.G. Treasurer and Newsletter Editor: Roger Lawson (Tel: 020-8467-2686, fax: 020-8295-0378, Email: roger.lawson@btclick.com), Chairman: Peter Appleby. Contact either of the above for information on the aims and objectives of B.B.R.A.G. or for membership information (membership costs £7.50 per annum for individuals or £50 for corporate membership). B.B.R.A.G. would be happy to advise or assist anyone who is concerned about any traffic, transport or road safety issues in the borough.

Our internet web address is: www.bromleytransport.org.uk. This contains much useful information including articles extracted from our newsletters. It also contains a "News" page which is updated regularly with items of topical interest.

Where this Newsletter is supplied in electronic form (e.g. as a PDF file via email), then you are permitted to pass it on to up to 5 additional readers without charge. In the case of corporate members, the Newsletter may be copied or forwarded to all staff members.

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BBRAG Background Information

The Bromley Borough Roads Action Group (B.B.R.A.G.) stands for a more democratic and more rational approach to the traffic management problems of the London Borough of Bromley. Our initial formation some years ago was based on opposition to the kind of traffic calming scheme that was being introduced in the borough that simply caused more traffic congestion, and general inconvenience to road users, without any significant benefit in terms of road accident reductions. In fact, the money wasted on such schemes could have been much better spent on actual improvements to road safety in other areas. We now take a more general interest in all transport and associated environmental issues in the borough of Bromley and the greater London area. This includes traffic management schemes, public transport, road safety, parking policies, air pollution, other transport environmental issues such as noise, and associated local and central government policies. Our prime objective is to promote improvements in the transport infrastructure while stopping wasted expenditure on unpopular, ineffective or inappropriate policies.