

BBRAG NEWS

BROMLEY BOROUGH ROADS ACTION GROUP – No. 2 (Oct 99)

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This is the second edition of the BBRAG newsletter, which is designed to keep our members informed on what BBRAG is doing, and of any news that is likely to be of interest to our members. The major topic in this issue is the current status of the Blackbrook Lane traffic calming scheme where we appear to have had a major impact on raising public awareness on the scheme, and changing public opinion. Incidentally these proposals have resulted in a major growth in our membership because of the number of disgruntled objectors.

Also covered is some background information on traffic accident trends in Bromley and expenditure by the council on traffic management schemes. A brief review of the recently published Integrated Transport Strategy document is given, and news on a new bus lane proposal.

If you have any views on these subjects please send us a letter (or e-mail, or fax) and we will try and publish it in a future edition.

Roger Lawson, Editor

Blackbrook Lane, Bickley Traffic Calming Scheme

Information on the proposed scheme in this road was circulated to all members at the end of July (it consisted of 6 speed tables, 8 speed cushions, etc). The council distributed a consultation leaflet in Blackbrook Lane and the immediately adjoining streets, and also ran an exhibition at Bromley High School. We immediately made our objections known to council staff and to all Bromley councillors (members should also have received a copy). In summary our objections were based on:

- a – The measures being excessive in relation to the nature of the problem and too costly (about £79,000 in fact).
- b – Another major arterial route being obstructed.
- c – Would generate significant traffic diversion.
- d – Blackbrook Lane is not an accident black spot.
- e – Inadequate consultation with road users and residents affected by traffic diversion.
- f – Most accidents not caused by speed so not likely to be affected by the scheme.
- g – Poor detail design.

In essence, this seemed to be yet another half-baked scheme devised by independent consultants after about a days work. Little account had been taken of the local environment .

We also circulated a leaflet in the Bickley area and a large number of people who lived in Southborough Road and adjacent streets immediately realised that the practical effect of the scheme would be to divert traffic from

Blackbrook Lane to Southborough Road (they run in parallel). Southborough Road is probably more hazardous (narrower, with no pavements in some parts, pedestrian generators like the station being present, etc) and already has a worse accident record. The folly of this plan was immediately obvious to everyone. Incidentally thanks to all the volunteers who circulated the leaflets.

We held a public meeting on the 23rd August in Bickley which was attended by about 150 people (these were almost all local residents because our invitation leaflet was only circulated in the local area) including local councillors Mrs Buckley and Mr Gallop. After presenting our alternative proposals which are aimed at introducing measures to tackle the apparent accident problems without causing traffic diversion (and which consist primarily of two mini-roundabouts, some parking restrictions, and better signing), there was a wide ranging discussion. A lot of people argued that any scheme needed to take into account traffic diversion and should therefore also cover the Southborough Road area. A poll taken at the end of the meeting showed only 8% in favour of the councils scheme, 60% in favour of the BBRAG proposals and 29% in favour of doing nothing (ie. leaving Blackbrook Lane as it is). This seemed very conclusive, even if it is only the views of local residents whereas we would like to see the views of other road users also taken into account.

It has also become apparent that the local ward councillors (Gordon Jenkins, Irene Buckley and John Gallop) have moved from supporting the original scheme, to supporting an alternative proposal prepared by Mr Jenkins – his scheme is very similar to the BBRAG proposals and we would support that also. It is a much better compromise between the needs for some kind of traffic calming and the objections raised, and would be a lot less costly also.

We have yet to hear the results of the councils own consultation exercise, and details of how many objections they received but I think it will be clear that the objectors well outnumber the supporters of the council scheme. Let us hope that the people who will finally decide on this matter - the members of the Environmental Services (Operations) Sub-Committee – consider this matter properly, or at least take into account the views of the local ward councillors. The relevant committee meeting is in the evening of the 26th October (any members of the public can attend of course, if not speak – although you can submit written questions to the committee beforehand, which BBRAG is likely to do).

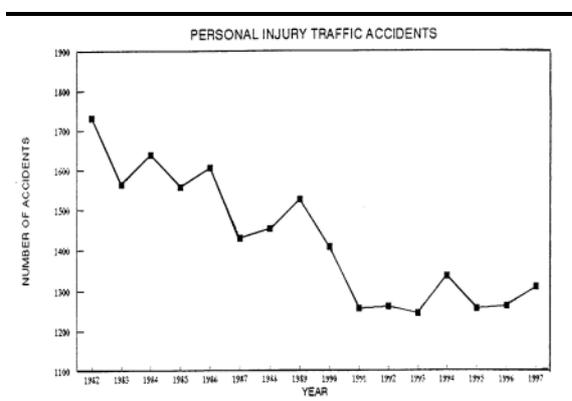
An Integrated Transport Strategy

Bromley Council have recently published their 44-page strategy document following extensive consultation. It contains laudable objectives such as reducing traffic by 10 per cent by 2008, and increasing the use of public transport – however it is very short on concrete proposals on how to achieve those objectives. With no firm budgetary commitments and a woolly policy framework, BBRAG is not convinced that any practical improvements will come from this document. Also, a lot of London transport policy will come within the new mayors responsibilities so any actions local to Bromley are likely to be limited.

Expenditure on Road Schemes and Accident Statistics

Did you know that Bromley Council spends £400,000 per year on traffic management schemes? Last year that included £70,000 on highway improvement schemes, £90,000 on traffic calming, £60,000 on pedestrian schemes such as refuges and tactile paving, £30,000 on cycling schemes, £20,000 on pedestrian

crossings, £70,000 on parking controls, £14,000 on environmental improvements, etc. With the proposed expenditure of £79,000 on the Blackbrook Lane scheme, you can see that the level of expenditure on traffic calming schemes has been quite considerable. What has been the effect of this expenditure on the personal injury accident statistics? Well the graph below is taken from a Bromley Council report entitled "Traffic Related Trends in the London Borough of Bromley"



The above graph shows that in essence there was a steady downward trend until 1991 (a lot of which can be attributed to the M25 taking through traffic of Bromley roads). In fact the injury numbers actually rose in the last two years even though traffic volumes fell. In the period from 1991-1997, when "traffic calming" schemes of the typical multiple speed bump type were widely introduced in Bromley, the accident statistics show that there was no overall benefit in traffic accident reduction. Why is this? Probably because most of these schemes simply cause traffic to divert (and in some cases to less safe alternative roads). Our conclusion is this: that the money wasted on such schemes would have been much better spent on actually tackling the worse locations, and the causes of such accidents.

More evidence to support this view can be obtained by looking at the locations of personal injury accidents in the borough. The council

report contains a list of the worse 115 locations from the years 1995 to 1997. Neither Blackbrook Lane in Bickley, nor Watts Lane/Manor Park Road in Chislehurst appear in those statistics.

Speed Contribution to Road Accidents

What is the contribution of excessive speed to the road traffic accident statistics? You may have heard some politicians say it is the major cause. Well the Transport Research Laboratory (TRL) have investigated this issue and their report TRL323 says that excessive speed was a definite contributory factor in just 6% of accidents. If you examine the details of the accidents in Blackbrook Lane over the last few years, it is clear that most of the accidents occur primarily for other reasons (inattentiveness or carelessness by drivers being very common ones). Slowing traffic in roads by using speed bumps will not reduce the number of accidents significantly, although the reduced speeds involved may cut some of the injuries.

Proposed Bus Lane

Bromley Council have recently published a proposal for new bus lanes in Widmore Road, and Bickley Park Road, with changes to parking, and other measures on the route between Bromley and Sidcup. This is partly aimed at overcoming severe congestion on that route during rush hours which delays buses, and is designed to be part of the London Bus Priority Network. BBRAG has no great objection to these proposals because we support measures to improve public transport. However, bearing in mind that only a small part of the route is being covered we doubt that it will improve bus timings significantly. Apparently central government is paying for the cost but even so it

seems an expensive measure that may only be a token gesture rather than having real practical effect.

If you would like more information on this scheme, please contact BBKAG (it wasn't widely publicised by the council).

Committee Members

The councillors who are members of the Environmental Services (Operations) Sub-Committee, who will decide on the Blackbrook Lane scheme for example, are: T. Bowman, M. Curry, S.Gosling, J.Hillier, J. Holbrook, J.Lewis, M.Lockwood, A.Michael, H. Rabbatts, G. Taylor, and J. Wykes. This has changed from our previously published list.

Watts Lane/Manor Park Road

Bromley Council are undertaking a review of this traffic calming scheme, now that it has been in place for some months. Our view has not changed from when it was first proposed. – namely that it is unnecessary and a waste of money. Apart from the inconvenience to road users, it has worsened the congestion in the road during school opening and closing times, has caused major traffic diversion with the result that Royal Parade and Bromley Road have even worse queues of traffic on them, and has therefore generally caused much worse pollution. To make sure your views are heard on this subject please contact Louise McDevitt, Environmental Services Dept, London Borough of Bromley, Civic Centre, Stockwell Close, Bromley, BR1 3UH (Tel: 0181-313-4500, e-mail: louise.mcdevitt@bromley.gov.uk).

Contact Information

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