

BBRAG NEWS

BROMLEY BOROUGH ROADS ACTION GROUP – No. 8 (February 2001)

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This edition contains as usual the latest news on various traffic calming schemes around the borough - more humps as usual.

There are also a couple of articles on recent DETR reports and likely future traffic offence penalties (and no doubt at least some of our car driving readers will have some penalty points on their licenses so may be interested in what might happen in future).

Please note that your editors email address has changed (see contact information for new one). Having recently installed a ADSL line from BT I can vouch for the improved performance you get from browsing the internet which may be of interest to some of our readers (if anyone thinks we should develop our own web site then please let me know).

Roger Lawson, Editor

Old Hill, Chislehurst

A consultation leaflet concerning the proposed traffic calming scheme in Old Hill has been circulated to local residents. They apparently are generally in favour of it, but the matter will probably be discussed at the next Environment Services (Ops) meeting on the 6th March. Also it is unlikely to go ahead if the proposed housing development in Brenchley Close is not approved by the Planning Committee (the developer has promised to pay for the traffic calming scheme). A number of residents of Brenchley Close have objected to the development which certainly appears excessive in a conservation area.

B.B.R.A.G. have objected to this scheme on the grounds that it is not well designed, and will not solve the basic problem of traffic being obstructed by parked cars which must be the cause of many of the accidents in this road.

At the back of this newsletter you will see some press coverage we obtained on this matter which includes a photograph of your chairman and the editor.

Kemnal Road Closure

In the previous newsletter, a list was supplied of several suggested "Priority Accident Remedial Sites". One of these was the junction of Bromley Lane/Kemnal Road. It was proposed to close Kemnal Road between Ashfield Lane and Bromley Lane. Apart from objections from B.B.R.A.G., there was many objections from residents of the further part of Kemnal Road

who would have found it exceedingly difficult to exit easily and safely into Bromley Lane. This scheme is now being reconsidered and alternative proposals are likely to be put forward.

St. Mary Cray Traffic Calming Scheme

Another "Priority Site" was St. Mary Cray High Street. The proposed scheme here includes a "pinch point" where the road is narrowed so that traffic can only flow in one direction at a time - there is usually a sign indicating who has the right of way if two vehicles arrive at the same time.

Such "pinch points" not only impede the flow of traffic (on what in this case is a local distributor road used by a lot of traffic), but also are notoriously hazardous. They tend to create lots of minor accidents, and a few major ones, from vehicles not being clear who has the right of way, or speeding to get to the pinch point first. They were used extensively in Finchley, where your editor has personal experience of them, but have now been abandoned for the above reasons. Attached is an article that appeared in the Daily Telegraph some time ago explaining the problems further.

Needless to state that B.B.R.A.G. has objected to this proposal. Yet again, Bullens, the consultants used by Bromley Council, have come up with a proposal which is going to create a lot of problems including no doubt numerous road rage incidents, when alternative proposals would have been much better.

There are also a number of speed bumps proposed for the High St, and a 20 mph limit proposed on a part of it and in some adjacent streets. This matter will probably be considered by the next Environmental Services (Ops) Committee meeting so if are affected by this proposal please contact your local councillor.

Note also that the adjacent streets (the Rookery Estate) will probably be the first "Home Zone" in Bromley, on a pilot basis. This is an area where priority is given to "walking, cycling, social interaction, sitting, children's play and where cars travel at very low speeds" (to quote from the council report). Your committee is not too familiar with that area so if any members have a view on this then please let us know.

Homesdale Road Congestion

Previous coverage was given to the problem of congestion in Homesdale Road caused by people queueing for the Waldo Road rubbish tip. Apparently following a meeting of Councillors from several local wards and council staff, a number of proposals were developed, one of which was to try and open up more space within the compound. This was done a few days later with the result that the queues disappeared. Congratulations to the councillors involved for solving a long standing problem so quickly!

Watts Lane Zebra Crossing

As previously mentioned, as part of the "Safer Routes to School" programme, it was proposed to place a Zebra crossing on top of the speed table in Watts Lane to assist pupils from Coopers and other schools. Some members may recall that BBRAG actually proposed such a crossing as part of our alternative proposals for a traffic calming scheme.

It has now transpired that such a proposal will not be implemented simply because there is an access road (from Rose Cottage) that runs into Watts Lane at that point and you can't site a zebra crossing at such a point for obvious reasons.

It's a good job someone noticed this before it was built. Alternative proposals may be forthcoming.

Camden Park Road Gates

Some of you may have noticed some new gates at each end of Camden Park Road, Chislehurst, including "Road Closed" signs. These have been put up by local residents. The gates have planning permission, but this was granted subject to the gates not being closed, and no actual closable gates being installed at the upper end. The latter condition has clearly been breached, and there appears to be a clear attempt by the local residents to obstruct through traffic and effectively make it a "gated community" closed to non-residents. As this road has certainly been a public right of way for many years, this development is clearly something to which one should object. The fact that it is a private road (ie. unadopted and hence maintained by residents) makes no difference to the legal position. Anyone who wants to object to this should contact Bromley Council, or write to Camden Park Estate Ltd, Derwent House, Camden Park Road, Chislehurst, BR7.

Chelsfield Lane Traffic Calming Scheme and Bexley Complaints re Speed Humps

Another series of speed bumps is proposed for Chelsfield Lane. Bromley Council continue to persist with such proposals despite the discomfort they cause, and the repeated objections from ourselves and other parties. This is used as the main measure to reduce accident statistics despite the lack of evidence that they have any positive effect overall.

In Bexley, disabled people have complained to the council about the pain they suffer from crossing such humps - see the press report enclosed which gives more details.

DETR Report - Tomorrow's Roads

The DETR has recently published a report entitled "Tomorrow's Roads: Safer for Everyone". This explains the government's policies over the next few years as regards to improving the road accident statistics and is certainly worth reading by anyone interested in this subject. Some highlights worth noting:

1. Despite traffic growing from 2.3 million motor vehicles in 1930, to 27 million today, the number of road fatalities have fallen from 7,000 to 3,500. (in fact, the UK is one of the safest countries in the world in terms of road deaths per car mileage with only Sweden among major economies any better). However there were 300,000 road casualties including 40,000 seriously injured last year.
 2. Britain is not as good as many other countries in terms of injuries to child pedestrians, and the government is trying to solve this problem both by researching the reasons and taking particular initiatives.
 3. Other initiatives are better driver training and testing; tackling drink, drugs and drowsiness; improving the infrastructure; reducing speeds; making vehicles safer; and better law enforcement.
 4. On the last subject here is an interesting quote from the report: "The sheer number of road traffic offences is staggering. In England and Wales in 1997 2.2 million motoring offences went to court, and 1.6 million offences were dealt with by official police action or fixed penalty notices." No doubt the figures are even greater now, so a significant proportion of road users are criminalised each year.
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Road Traffic Penalties Consultation

As pointed out above, about 5% of road users are prosecuted each year under criminal law for motoring offences, and have their licenses endorsed as a result. The DETR have now published a Consultation Paper on proposed new penalties. The new proposals will actually worsen this scenario and will likely further bring the law into disrepute. For example, it will be possible to be banned for being twice caught doing 76 mph on a motorway! If you want to see the full report and have access to the internet go to

www.lovejoy.demon.co.uk/lobbying/speed-proposals.html or contact B.B.R.A.G.

If you are unhappy with these proposals you may like to contact your local MP - write to Eriic Forth M.P., at the House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

Incidentally if it was the same "hard core" of road traffic offenders who get caught by these measures then it might make some sense, but unfortunately it's much more like a lottery. As the vast majority of drivers infringe the regulations in some way or other, it is more a question of who gets caught (note from editor: how else can one explain that my 85 year old mother recently got a speeding conviction despite many years of safe driving and very low mileage per annum, while I have a totally clean record).

It does not seem to make much sense to criminalise motoring offences such as speeding and waste many millions of pounds in enforcement when there is little clear evidence that speeding is a major contributory factor in most road accidents (TRL have published reports on this subject), or that you can change driver behaviour in this way.

The vast reduction in accident rates over the years have been achieved by safer vehicles, improved road infrastructure and better driver training. Why waste money on criminalising large swathes of the population at enormous cost in police time and money when it would be much better spent on alternative measures.

Contact Information

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