



B.B.R.A.G.

THE BROMLEY BOROUGH ROADS ACTION GROUP

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

Councillor George Taylor
Bromley Council
Stockwell Close
Bromley, Kent
BR1 3UH

cc. G. Hayward, Environmental Services
Councillor J. Wykes

6 July, 2004

The Traffic Calming Scheme in Old Hill, Chislehurst

Dear Mr Taylor,

Although the Old Hill traffic calming scheme has been installed for some months, it came to our attention before Christmas that a considerable number of local residents were very dissatisfied with certain aspects of the scheme. We therefore circulated a letter to about 330 local residents and businesses in Old Hill and the immediately adjacent streets to try and gauge the level of opposition and determine what their concerns were. A copy of the letter we circulated is enclosed.

Copies of all the responses received are enclosed, plus a summary report is attached. I think you will find this interesting reading.

I. To remind you of the history of this scheme and summarise our past submissions on this subject (of which there have been quite a number):

a - This scheme was first proposed prior to December 2000 - I suspect this was originally at the request of local residents in the era when traffic calming locations were chosen by "buggin's turn" principles, and certainly before the Conservatives took control of the council of course.

b - A consultation leaflet was issued to residents in December 2000. It is worth pointing out that this shows the scheme very much as it is now except that the two single cushions on the lower part of the hill are shown as twin cushions. These single cushions are a major problem and clearly the residents have not even obtained what they voted for.

c - BBRAG made a number of comments on the proposals, including adverse comments on the use of speed cushions where parking was clearly going to take place alongside. We did however support the proposed speed table at the junction of Brenchley Close.

d - A report on the public consultation was submitted to the Environmental Services (Operations) Sub-Committee on the 6th March 2001 (chaired by Bill Hawthorne at the time). With 191 total responses from residents (from 750 households which is a pretty poor response rate), some 83% were in favour of a traffic calming scheme, and 84% supported the speed table, but only 76% supported the cushions.

e - Note that our objections and those of road users were not included in the report to the committee and our views were therefore not taken into account which is a clear breach of the law as regards the need for consultation with bodies representing road users when introducing road hump schemes. I complained to Mr Hawthorne at the time about this, to no effect.

f - I believe that subsequently the scheme was delayed from lack of funds, but there were two housing developments which caused the scheme to be actioned. One was at 9/10 Brenchley Close which would have increased traffic from that exit into Old Hill, and the other, later, one was at 39 Old Hill which is on a dangerous bend where the road narrows and the exit to the development is hidden. I believe Section 106 agreements were concluded with the developers of both these sites to fund the full cost of the traffic calming scheme, but that the Brenchley Close development was delayed both on planning grounds and subsequent concerns about the site. Both developments went to appeal to a Planning Inspector and the council certainly objected to the second one on the grounds of traffic issues but were overruled by the inspector so long as the traffic calming scheme was implemented.

g - Note that the Section 106 agreement for 39 Old Hill only says that the developers will pay a sum not exceeding £30,000 "in respect of traffic calming proposals" which are shown in an illustrative plan attached. I do not believe it inhibits any changes or improvements to the scheme. In any case, any legal agreement of this nature can be replaced by a subsequent revised agreement to

which I doubt the developer would have any objection so long as he was not asked to pay any more.

h - The scheme as it now stands was therefore implemented around the end of March 2003, even though the council had adopted a “preference for non-vertical deflection traffic calming schemes” some time before then - in other words it was implemented contrary to adopted council policy which again I think is an abuse of local authority law by council staff. Clearly when the detail layout of the lower part of the hill was examined it was found that the road was not wide enough to support twin cushions (while still adhering to the minimum recommended hump widths and spacing) and so they were constructed as single cushions. This was clearly a mistake, for the reasons given below.

i - BBRAG complained about these single cushions to Mr Davies (and copied to yourself) via an email on the 12th April, but to no effect.

2. What are the problems with the scheme as it stands? These are:

a - The two single cushions on the lower part of the hill (either side of the development at 39 Old Hill) cause particular problems:

- (i) They cause a danger to traffic by encouraging vehicles to drive down the center of the road on what is a blind bend (particularly by larger vehicles that can straddle the cushions). This is clearly a potential safety problem.
- (ii) They also cause vehicles to drive onto the pavement to avoid crossing the humps - this has been noticed by many people.
- (iii) The abrupt edges of the cushions cause vehicles to jump sideways which causes collisions when there are two vehicles passing close together on the narrow road.
- (iv) They are causing damage to vehicles - see reports from more than one resident enclosed.
- (v) They create a large amount of noise when heavy vehicles cross over them, to the annoyance of nearby residents.

b - These two single cushions on the lower part of the hill are wider than the recommended maximum width of 2 metres for cushions (see government Traffic Advisory Leaflet 1/98 “Speed Cushion Schemes”). In fact they are considerably wider at approximately 2.1 metres. Also it is highly unusual, and not apparently recommended, to use a single cushion in the middle of the road unless the kerbs are narrowed to create a “pinch-point” with one way working. However, this would never normally be permitted on a bend where sight lines are so poor. It also seems likely (although we have not measured them) that these cushions are higher than the

75mm specified in the original consultation leaflet, and which was presumably the height given to the contractors in their brief.

c - The pairs of split cushions on the upper part of the hill also cause problems, although not quite to the same extent. Pairs of cushions are never a good idea when vehicles can park alongside them as it forces vehicles over the humps, or encourages them to drive on the opposite side of the road. Usually it is recommended that parking is restricted alongside cushions, if necessary by physical kerb build-outs, but that was not done in this case, even though it is known that the upper part of the hill often has cars parked on the southern side along most of its length.

d - The “three-across” cushions outside the parade of shops at the bottom of the hill also cause problems. Often cars are parked on both sides of the road, encouraging traffic to drive over the centre cushion, which is exactly in the middle of the road, thus creating a danger point. In addition, vehicles often change course at the last minute to avoid this cushion, causing a danger to pedestrians crossing the road at that point. These cushions are also just before the junction with Lower Camden which is a danger for traffic exiting the latter road.

e - There are also complaints from the shopkeepers that since the hump scheme was introduced, air pollution has got much worse and they can no longer keep their shop doors open as a result. This is probably because of traffic sharply braking immediately before these cushions and accelerating afterwards.

f - The scheme seems to have affected the trade of shops at the foot of the hill, probably because traffic is now avoiding use of the road.

g - All of the cushions seem to create excessive noise, particularly from larger vehicles, because of the inability of vehicles to straddle them correctly due to the presence of parked cars alongside.

h - Note that the speed table across the junction with Brenchley Close appears to work reasonably well.

3. In summary we therefore suggest that bearing in mind the problems with the existing design of this scheme, and the views of local residents which are attached, we ask that the scheme be reconsidered. It is normal to review all traffic calming schemes after they have been in operation for a few months, and on safety grounds alone we feel that this scheme should be reconsidered as soon as possible.

Despite the fact that many residents were, and still are, in favour of a traffic calming scheme in this road, it is apparent that many of them feel that there are some unintended disadvantages of the current scheme and it should accordingly be revised.

Some possible proposals for improvements are also enclosed, and we would suggest that we meet with you and some of the local residents to discuss this matter further.

Yours sincerely

Roger Lawson
Secretary & Treasurer
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Breakdown of Responses:

There have been 73 responses altogether from about 330 leaflets distributed (this may not appear high but it is similar to the response level to the original council consultation leaflet and higher than we have received from other similar exercises). Two of the responses were ambiguous, and one was clearly in favour of the scheme as it stands, but all others (ie. 70) were clearly opposed to the scheme to some extent. The breakdown of those responses is as follows:

Ticked box to indicate objection to the single cushions on the lower hill: 70

Ticked box to indicate objection to the dual cushions on the upper hill: 47

Ticked box to indicate objection to the speed table: 13

Note that we did not specifically ask them out the cushions outside the shops.

25 people indicated they would be willing to attend a public meeting on this subject so it may be worthwhile to consider that as an option (although I think the residents views are fairly clear from their comments on the notes that were returned).

Some comments from the responses:

“The single cushions in the lower part of the hill are also dangerous to pedestrians on the pavement. Vans in particular often almost mount the pavement to avoid the hump”. A. Maclean.

“The humps have made Old Hill more dangerous than it was before. The sooner they are removed, the sooner the risk of a major accident will be reduced/ Does no traffic official check on what effect these humps have?” E.A. Jeffery

“The speed humps have made no difference so should be removed” V. Smith

“With cars parked on the LHS as you descend Old Hill, the low lighting levels, it is hard to see the cushions. The chevrons are on the wrong side! Stop parking on upper hill.” G.P.Cullens

“The last but one speed bump on the Old Hill (next to the new flat development) is far too high and has actually damaged my wheel resulting in a cost to me to get it replaced! Not acceptable at all!” A. McCallister

“Why these humps? The ones at the bottom persuade drivers to stride the middle hump, the ones on the lower half of Old Hill scrape the bottom of car even at slowest speed. Why are they needed, safety is not the issue, it is another agenda!!” G. Griffiths

“Single cushions very poorly designed, too high, badly positioned, poorly signed, cause traffic to drive in middle of road, ie. dangerous”. Mr Sargeant.

“I have twice written to the local authority voicing my concerns. I have not even received the courtesy of an acknowledgement!” R. Dubbins

“I feel they are more of a HAZARD than a HELP! The car and yourself are shaken vigorously, from side to side!” J. Dunstan.

“I have witnessed cars mounting the pavement to get a smooth ride over the single cushions at lower Old Hill, and have twice narrowly avoided being struck myself whilst walking on the pavement. It is only a matter of time before someone is seriously hurt!”. M. Gower

“These lower single cushions are particularly vicious and are affecting car’s suspensions. Also, pedestrians are not safer since the traffic now comes closer to the pavement. They are counter-productive.” B.L. Knight.

“Traffic literally ‘races’ over these cushions, particularly outside the Station Master pub - to the point where it disrupts our sleep pattern every day. I would like this one in particular removed.” L. Roucos

“Twice after walking out of Conniscliffe Close onto Old Hill, I have faced cars coming up Old Hill that have mounted the pavement to avoid the speed bump. I have young children and this is dangerous in the extreme.” J. Mochine

“It has an effect on my trade as a shop owner”. K.M Patel

“Banging noise when the cars and trucks go over the bumps facing bedroom window. Our retail trade affected because few customers now use the Old Hill and Chislehurst Road.”
N. & J. Vaghela.

“The humps at shops in Old Hill/Chislehurst Road cause danger when turning right into Lower Camden as have to move to centre of road when cars parked outside pub.”
S.J. Thomas

“The single cushions cause severe jolting no matter how slowly a vehicle moves over them. I suffer from chronic PID (“slipped disc”) and travel over the cushions causes great discomfort and pain”. T.C. Carbery

“Absolutely stupid and dangerous” Mr Saleem