

Additional statement – rep no.004

Matter 5

Q1. Are the SADPDs policies justified, consistent with national policies, and clearly written and unambiguous so it is evident how a decision maker should react to development proposals?

- a) I ask that decision makers refuse planning applications that add to the challenges faced by people living in homes in roads within a five or ten minute walk of the Mosque. A huge number of worshippers arrive at around 1.30 p.m. each Friday for a service. By 3.00 pm traffic at the roundabouts near the Lion Retail Park is at a standstill. Congestion continues with the school exodus. The congregation can be huge for religious events, particularly funerals and WBC is promoting the Mosque and Peace Garden. Some Mosque attendees do not see it as discourteous to park on private drives/roads. Lytton and Pembroke Roads take many overspill vehicles. Residents place rocks on their boundaries in Lytton Road to prevent parking. Ramadan is very busy and services can be in the middle of the night. Changes planned in GB6 (Six crossroads) will inevitably add to traffic/congestion and noise.

Little Riding is doubly challenged being a narrow cul-de-sac. As developments occur we can find several BT vans utilising our parking. This appears poor infrastructure planning. Cllrs Kemp and Bowes advise otherwise.

- b) Developments locally (particularly at Lion Retail Park (LRP)) add to the issues of pollution and pedestrian safety. For some reason, the wood fired pizza van that has been operating without planning permission for several months is not there now. Neither are the usual flags in evidence at the recycling unit. The advertising boards have gone. Has lighting been reduced? Doubtless soon back to normal to attract custom/traffic. There is an appeal to the Secretary of State against refusal for a 6 metre by 3 metre, neon, rotating, sign to attract more shoppers. (APP/A3655/Z/19/3236410 – Plan/2019/0502.) Site management is by British Land remotely. Ever longer opening hours and middle of the night deliveries add to the challenges for nearby residents.
- c) Double yellow lines painted on Oriental Road have moved traffic but not eradicated selfish parking. Although, the railway car park (UA32) usually has a few spaces, and free parking is allowed at the Lion Retail Park, many worshippers choose not to use them. There has been publicity to encouraging people in Woking to rent parking space in their gardens. Many commuters rented, but now park on council verges and pay nothing. An own goal?

- d) Minutes of the Joint Committee may be found on the Surrey County Council website. The minutes for March 2016 show that I posed a question regarding traffic and pedestrian safety. Currently the link is not working and so the text of the question and answer is here:

“Roads, speeding and maintenance of pavements – Oriental and Maybury Roads

I notice that there has been traffic calming in White Rose Lane and Pembroke Road and hear of future plans for similar in Maybury and East Hills, Mount Hermon Road and Albert Drive. I believe this useful investment followed speed measurement in these roads.

In the past I have expressed concern about congestion and speed of traffic in Oriental Road, which is in a residential area. Traffic has increased with developments both at the station end of Oriental Road and at the Mosque/church/retail park end. To add to the mix a large development has been approved for White Rose Lane. Maybury Road too suffers from speeding traffic as demonstrated by the plea for drivers to “Drive slow” painted by someone on a fence panel where the road joins Maybury Hill. It is worrying that slowing traffic in nearby roads may well lead to the creation of a race track around Oriental and Maybury Roads.

Speeding and increased traffic puts pedestrians at risk along Oriental Road since they must walk in the road when vehicles are parked on the pavement opposite the Mosque. Along the length of Oriental Road it can be difficult to cross the road. Even at pedestrian crossings there is a chance that speed will prevent cars stopping.

Uneven pavements in Oriental and Maybury Roads are challenging when walking from the town and railway station at night, particularly in areas where lighting levels are much dimmer than before. Dips in the pavement are not easy to see. Overhanging branches can be tricky to see in poor light. Hedging growing onto the pavement creates shadows. I was pleased that Ray Morgan undertook (at a recent Police Commissioner’s meeting) to help pedestrians, especially the disabled, by getting hedging cut back although action has not been taken where I live as yet.

All of this leads to the question:

11/11/2019 Could Oriental and Maybury Roads be subject to regular traffic speed measurement and, as a busy pedestrian thoroughfare, improvement in terms of provision of traffic calming (throughout its length), together with cutting back of overgrown hedging?

Answer from Chairman on behalf of the committee:

Oriental Road and Maybury Road are on our Speed Management Plan. The speeds that were recorded by Surrey Police in Maybury Road showed good compliance with the speed limit. However, the recorded speeds in Oriental Road are higher and the road is subject to speed monitoring and enforcement by Surrey Police, although reduced police resources mean that this is less regular than before.

An item already appears on our work programme for speed reducing measures on Oriental Road, although the current description suggests that this would be limited to the vicinity of the mosque's access. However, as has already been stated to Mrs Meinke in previous correspondence, personal injury collisions have occurred elsewhere along Oriental Road and the scope of any scheme could be expanded to include the rest of the road.

Footways are routinely inspected to identify safety defects and ad-hoc inspections will be made in response to specific enquiries. Undulations in a footway surface will not always fall within the category of a safety defect, which is usually defined as a trip hazard with a vertical upstand of 20mm or more. However, an additional inspection of the footways can be arranged, including an inspection of any overhanging vegetation. If any over hanging, obstructive vegetation is identified, the first step would be to issue a notice to the resident, instructing them to cut the vegetation back; only if this is not done will arrangements be made for Surrey County Council's contractor to cut back the vegetation. Woking Borough Council's approach should be the same, which is likely to account for the lack of any visible progress.

The single yellow line waiting restrictions in the vicinity of the mosque are only enforceable between 9.30am and 11.30am, Monday to Friday and the footway parking that Mrs Meinke mentions could possibly be addressed by the adoption of double yellow lines in this area, which the Joint Committee may wish our colleagues in the Parking Team to pursue in a future review of waiting restrictions."

<https://mycouncil.surreycc.gov.uk/documents/s29478/Item%205%20Public%20Questions.pdf>

- e) I met Liz Bowes, Surrey County Councillor for Mount Hermon, in Costa Coffee at the Lion Retail Park to share my worries about pedestrian safety, congestion, litter and overgrown hedges in local roads. She gave me contacts to manage the issues myself. Reading her comment that parking had improved (minutes of the Woking Joint Committee for 7th March 2019) I wrote to her. It had not improved. Cars are parking a little further along Oriental Road and in adjoining roads. I read also of an idea from Cllr. Hughes. Traffic should turn left at the Mosque exit and then return at the LRP towards the Mosque. Cllr Kemp represents Horsell and has chaired the Joint Committee, he replied on 11th May, 2019 my concern and asked where I had heard this information The roundabout behind my home is congested and

becomes clogged up with Mosque, shopper and through traffic There have been assaults on motorists nearby. Shoppers find it difficult to walk from the car park due to aggressive driving as people try exit the site. It seems that councillors are not in touch with the issues leading to changes for worse not better. It has taken friends over an hour to drive out of the car park on a Friday. The idea that the left turn was even suggested was frightening. At a recent planning meeting (Plan 2019/0585) Cllr Morales advised she was familiar with the Lion Retail Park and she saw absolutely no reason why the shops should not open longer.

N.B. Photographs to illustrate congestion are available.

- f) Every planning application gives an opportunity to mention that lorries are huge - some pull two containers and the LRP entrance was designed for smaller vehicles. There is more traffic; it is noisier and more intrusive to our lives. The hedge that formerly enclosed the car park and lessened pollution was removed. Schools locally have expanded. Our councillors have not conducted an effective review of the area. Instead we see plans that add dense housing developments such as UA32, with little or no green space, and easier access (GB6) for motorists from Six Crossroads roundabout and a reduction in grass/trees in Monument Road. This is likely to improve pedestrian and cycling routes the other side of the railway track, but is not going to help an area that is being allowed to deteriorate to become little more than a shopping area. See plans 2015/0159 and 2016/1204. One for a 52 room care home and the other an 82 room apartment block.
<http://cardiff-property.com/britannia-wharf-woking/>
- g) Whilst WBC have in the past received grants for upgrading the footpath beside St Paul's Church adding space for cycling, they now seem to be ensuring that we are all too worried by traffic to use bikes. The footpath was closed for 6 months recently despite the fact that there was no health and safety reason for this to happen. No work was going on and the path was clear. (Photographs available.) Friends living in Oriental Road tell me that it has been in use for 40 years – they used it to get to St John the Baptist School. I understand that the Mosque, St Paul's and schools are generally consulted about everything. But they are actually large polluters and speak for a relatively small number of people who live here.
- h) Although busy, Mount Hermon counsellors try to give support but are not kept abreast about all developments. They do not live this side of the ward. I read that one may have his main home in Scotland? Planners say WBC rely on neighbours to monitor the Lion Retail Park. Counsellors ask for information from us. They had no idea the retail park's car park had been leased by British Land. WBC had not spotted changes or acted on information given to them. We do our best, but do have lives. Neighbours are taxpayers rather than council employees. The enforcement team is under resourced. It can take many months for contact to be made about planning breaches. A year to deal with light nuisance – Pets at Home! Then retrospective applications are made and often approved.

- i) As long ago as November 2001, it was reported in a local newspaper that Cllr Evans had said there was a need to improve areas of neglect between Monument Bridge and Oriental Road. She said that the major road through the heart of Maybury was not pedestrian friendly and gave no sense of pride in the place. Areas were unattractive and in poor condition. There was an urgent need to improve safety and upgrade the place to a village. Some actions will have been taken, but much of what was said then remains true now. We seem to be going backwards with permission for banners opposite the Rooster Shack, for which usual lighting seems to have failed. The banners often break away and are left billowing in the wind. Railings trap pedestrians forcing them to cross at particular points. On 24th May 2019 SCC closed, without warning, the pedestrian crossing from LRP to Princess Road. After major surgery, the walk from a friend's home towards the shops became a real battle. A large Enterprise van was taking up most of one side of the pavement at one point. Pedestrians can feel invisible to local councils. The pavement had been blocked off and it was necessary to walk back towards East Hill and cross at a safe point. The crossing remained closed for several days. This was a mistake by SCC who apologised. It demonstrates how little thought is given to those living in Monument Road/Maybury Hill and thereabouts! There are elderly and permanently disabled people, as well as parents with young children and all should be considered from a health and safety point of view

Question 2 Do the anticipated densities of urban allocations take into account the importance of securing well designed, attractive and healthy places?

- a) I do not believe that WBC air quality readings are correct or appropriate. The forecourt at the church is usually overfull with blue, Guildford taxis and other vehicles on Friday. More recently there have been wonderful occasions when there have been no blue, Guildford taxis there at all. I can provide photographs illustrating use as a taxi car park. It is not a healthy situation when parking is at the bottom of gardens and adjacent to the entrance roundabout. It would be appreciated if I could be proved wrong by the provision of an independent air quality report, not funded by any Asda or British Land associate company, which report to include particulate matter. Evidence that one is needed is the black beneath the boards under house guttering in Little Riding. The church tower has a black coating. Little Riding loft insulation is coated with black. This has started in the last few years. The air is sometimes thick and it is hard to breath. A neighbour has asthma and avoids opening the windows. Neighbours whose homes face Oriental Road do not open the windows.
- b) The removal of hedging, height restrictor and barrier around the retail park, increased vehicle size, traffic and light noise and air pollution for neighbours. Mosque attendees and parents whose children attend St Dunstan's use it. Travel plans have worsened air quality here. The Air Quality Report of 2011

showed a high reading in Monument Road, thereafter reports have not. This is surprising.

- c) Air pollution is detrimental to health and can affect lung development in children. It is said to be the cause of many illnesses and conditions such as heart disease, asthma and cancers.

Question 3 Do the SAPDs policies taken together seek to create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users

- a) The evidence is that they do not:

Question 2 – point (b). Since 2011 taxi and car hire firms have been allowed to set up adjacent to the roundabout at College Road/Maybury Hill and there have been many other developments. Logically reports should show a worsening picture.

Road changes occur without prior warning or consideration of those with disabilities, responsibility for children or mobility issue that create challenges. This is not safe and does not promote health or wellbeing. A community hall was funded but it can take weeks to get a reply in respect of classes and often communications are not answered. Other development will be in Sheerwater or Horsell. To stay healthy there is Hoebridge gym, classes at The United Reform Church and the Woking Leisure Centre. Sports tracks are no use at all to many people of a certain age.

Night work (water, building, cleaning) is undertaken by at night. This is to the detriment of family and a peaceful life. At night noise travels further and sounds louder. Operatives prefer night shifts paying premium rates. Shops do not want to lose income. Residents are unimportant.

Question 4 Is it clear from policies whether developments are expected to either (a) enhance, or b) respect, or c) merely avoid compromising the character of their surroundings? Could the design aspects of policies be more streamlined and consistent in these regards?

In many ways one sees situations in which it is clear that policies enable developers to do what they can get away with. As an example, the Bower House, a bungalow with a garden in Maybury Hill, was demolished and a block of six one bed roomed flats with car parking was approved. The flats are minute. The former owner of the Bower was elderly and the property and garden had deteriorated. But the flats form a very different picture. It is a congested spot and will add many cars to the area. Add the visitors and parking issues in Princess Road will worsen.

We have to find out about developments rather than being advised of them when it must be very evident to the Planning Officer who will be affected. The Rooster Shack was to be a Pizza place!

Is the SAPDs approach to transport matters consistent with national policy?

1. Parking Is the SAPDs approach to parking standards consistent with the Framework at paragraph 6

There is insufficient parking in Woking and the policy of encouraging commuters to park in private gardens has led to some families parking their own cars on council land thereby enhancing income. I have been trying to move home for some time but so few small properties have parking with guest space.

Q2 Travel Plans

Currently these allow the use of old, rattly and polluting vehicles because schools have tight budgets. People drive to a drop off/pick up spot such as the LRP in their 4 x 4s. They move traffic and pollution to areas such as LRP. So the system fails. In the winter heaters are left running. In the summer it is the air conditioning. It does seem that travel plans may be a bit of a ruse to enable planning applications to get through. One for Britannia Wharf actually suggested that a HR department would check how people were travelling to work in a care home. Staff turnover is high and I imagine most of their time would be spent recruiting and dealing with contractual matters.

Q3 Should policies require the achievement of safe and suitable access for all people to ensure consistency with the Framework

Public transport is infrequent and taxis are not always clean or easy to get into. Some years ago drivers were instructed to use van style taxis. Arthritis and similar conditions means that it is tricky for some people to open and close sliding doors. Many drivers have no understanding of dealing with those who are injured or who have disabilities. (I travelled to hospital in a taxi having broken my wrist. The driver was disconcerted that I left the door for him to close, as my hand was not working.) Clearly no training had been given in caring for the broken or disabled. It is not easy for older, and some disabled, people to step up into high vehicles.

Access to buildings is a difficult thing in Woking. I have broken bones and had experience of the route to get round the shopping centre whilst it was being changed. There is clearly no understanding of such conditions. The length of the ramp was ridiculous. Pushing a wheelchair would have been no fun. I had difficulty balancing. It is important to care for those who have health challenges, whether permanent or temporary.

M Meinke

