

SEVENOAKS JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD – 26TH JUNE 2008

A25 ROUTE SAFETY SURVEY BETWEEN RIVERHEAD AND BESSELS GREEN

Report of the: Local Transport & Development Manager

Status: For Consideration

Chairman Mr Brazier (KCC)

Head of Service Head of Transportation & Planning (KHS) – David Hall

Recommendation: It be RESOLVED that

- (a) Members note the progress made on the investigation; and
- (b) The proposed strategy for taking the project forwards.

1. Background

- 1.1 Due to safety concerns from the local residents and the School Governor of the Riverhead Infant School, Kent Highway Services commissioned its consultant Jacobs to carry out a route safety study of the stretch of the A25 between Riverhead and Bessels Green in Sevenoaks.
- 1.2 A further route study was also proposed in response to representation from the three Parish Councils and local residents on the corridor of the A25 such as Sundridge, Brasted and Westerham. There are personal injury crashes along this road and there was a fatality in Sundridge in December 2007.
- 1.3 The route safety study was extended from Riverhead in Sevenoaks up to the Surrey county boundary of the A25.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 This paper reports the findings of route study carried out for the section of the A25 between Riverhead and Bessels Green. Although Jacobs have completed the full survey of the A25, at the time of writing KHS were not in receipt of the rest of the survey. These findings will be presented by the officers as a verbal update to the Members.
- 2.2 The A25 is subject to a 30mph speed limit through Worships Hill and Bessels Green and is street lit. The route runs generally west to east and is typically fronted by residential properties with driveways, and some cul-de-sac developments.

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2.3 The road itself is a two laned single carriageway providing an arterial route from the A21 to the north of Sevenoaks. The first section of Worships Hill from the roundabout to St Mary’s Drive is narrow, widening in the section from St Mary’s Drive to Cold Arbour Road where it narrows again to Bessels Green Road.

3. Discussion

3.1 Traffic Speed and Volume Surveys

Manual traffic speed and volume surveys were carried out over a period of 12hours between 0700 and 1900 hrs on Wednesday 21st November 2007 and was chosen to capture peak times as well as a typical midweek school day.

Current speed limit (mph)	85 th percentile speed to Westerham (mph)	85 th percentile speed to Riverhead (mph)	Mean speed to Westerham (mph)	Mean speed to Riverhead (mph)
30	35	32	29	27

The above table shows mean speeds and 85th percentile speeds (the speed at or below which 85% of the traffic is travelling).

The 85th percentile speed was used, until recently, to establish local speed limits (Circular Roads 1/93). Recorded speeds of 35 and 32 mph reinforce the position that the existing 30 mph speed limit is still appropriate.

The latest Government guidance, Circular 01/ 2006, uses the mean speed to establish the speed limit. The average mean speeds of 29 and 27 mph indicates that vehicles are not exceeding the stated threshold of the 30 mph speed limit

The maximum speeds recorded were 55 mph in the direction of Westerham and 42 mph to Riverhead. These speeds comply with the above table that shows that vehicles travelling out of Sevenoaks are travelling faster than vehicles travelling in the opposite direction.

An overall 12-hour flow of 17,352 vehicles was counted during this 12 hour period. There was a 50:50 split between vehicles travelling towards Westerham and those travelling towards Riverhead. The flows being generally higher throughout the day and the peaks themselves were not much heavier.

3.2 Pedestrian Surveys

A number of pedestrian counts were taken over the 12 hour period at a number of agreed locations. The results are as follows:

Between Riverhead roundabout and zebra crossing

A total of 65 pedestrians crossed at this location despite the zebra crossing being almost adjacent to them. The numbers of pedestrian movements was fairly evenly spread throughout the day but with a concentration between 11.30 and 1300 hrs. This has obvious safety implications as drivers will be concentrating on manoeuvring around the roundabout itself and will not expect to meet pedestrians on the highway at this point.

On the zebra crossing

A total of 708 pedestrians used the crossing. Much of its use was concentrated around school times and reflected its use by parents and children.

Other locations

A total of 20 pedestrians crossed at other locations between the zebra crossing and Bessels Green.

3.3 Crash summary

The crash record shows a falling trend, and the crashes for the latest 3 year up to 31st August 2007 are all classified as 'slight'. Compared to the crashes of the previous 3-year period up to August 2004, the crashes were halved from a total of 10 to 5 between 1st September 2001 to 31st August 2004. This reduction can be attributed to the installation of the traffic signals at the junction of Witches Lane.

The crash pattern is of predominately vehicle to vehicle. However there have been 2 crashes involving pedestrians within the last three years.

3.4 Traffic Signal Operation

The permanent automatic traffic signals situated at the junction of the A25 Worships Hill/ Witches Lane were installed in 2001 to coincide with the opening of the new Riverhead Infants School. These new premises joined the existing school on the opposite side of the road and therefore generate a high volume of both vehicular and pedestrian traffic at school.

The A25 is the primary route for Sevenoaks traffic when entering the westbound M25 and consequently can be very busy. The resultant traffic signal timings are heavily biased to facilitate this traffic.

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A potential hazard at the traffic signals is the right turning traffic from Witches Lane is likely to cut across any traffic leaving the school exist, with a resultant conflict. Although there is no crash data recorded for this location.

4. Conclusion

- The large number of light and heavy goods vehicles along this route combined with some poor provision for potentially vulnerable road users such as pedestrians and cyclist for crossings, cycle lanes and bus provision can make these road users feel more unsafe. The poor provision will not assist in encouraging more sustainable modes of movement to help ease issues of congestion and deal with problems of air quality along this route.
- The speeds along the route are generally within the speed limit of the road.
- Some junctions are poorly constructed and require improvements to reduce crashes.
- The traffic signals at Witches Lane require improvements both in layout and operation in order to provide safe passage or pedestrians and reduce conflict of vehicles, especially those exiting the school.
- The general maintenance of junction lining, gullies and manhole covers is poor.
- A programme of improvements to encourage more sustainable travel modes is required and KHS will be preparing a range of options for future discussion for the next Board meeting and to a strategy for this work for the future.
- The issues regarding general maintenance will be passed to the appropriate KHS team to be progressed.

5. Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 5.1 Any action or works arising from the proposed investigations would need to be evaluated and prioritised in the context of other schemes and funded from the Local Transport Plan.

Sources of Information: A25 Worships Hill, Riverhead – Route Study by Jacobs

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