

SEVENOAKS JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD – 16 JUNE 2009**CHILDSBRIDGE LANE, KEMSING – PROPOSED ZEBRA CROSSING**

Report of the: Head of Countywide Improvements

Status: For Consideration

Executive Summary: This report describes the course of action taken in response to five written objections to the proposed installation of a zebra crossing in Childsbridge Lane, Kemsing.

This report supports the Key Aim of improving pedestrian safety, including measures to improve access for people with disabilities as indicated in the Sevenoaks Community Plan.

Chair To be decided

Head of Service KHS – Head of Countywide Improvements – Behdad Haratbar

Recommendation: Members are asked to note that in consultation with local Members, Kent Highway Services resolved to set aside five objections raised by residents against the installation of a zebra crossing in Childsbridge Lane, Kemsing

Background

- 1 At the September 2007 meeting of this Board, Members considered a petition with 115 signatures collected from the local community in Kemsing during July 2007. The petitioners called for pedestrian crossing facilities in Childsbridge Lane close to its junction with Dynes Road and West End.
- 2 In response to this petition, funding was been secured from Kent County Council's Integrated Transport Programme to install a zebra crossing at this location during this financial year.
- 3 Since Childsbridge Lane bisects the village, pedestrians must cross it to use local facilities including the primary school in West End, the shops in Dynes Road and the secondary school bus pick-up point in Childsbridge Lane. At a site meeting in 2008, officers, local Members, the Parish Council and lead petitioners considered that the most beneficial location for a zebra crossing would be to the south of the crossroads. This is the point at which the primary school's walking bus crosses Childsbridge Lane.
- 4 It is usual for Kent Highway Services to seek the views of nearby residents prior to deciding whether to commit to its installation. This was done by the Parish Council in April 2009 by way of a letter to all properties in Childsbridge Lane between the junctions of Dynes Road and Castle Drive. As a result of

this, five households in the vicinity of the proposed crossing have submitted written objections.

Discussion

- 5 The householders' objections were twofold; firstly, that they maintain there to be insufficient justification for any formal crossing and, secondly, that if a crossing must be provided then it should be north of the junction. The details of the objections are considered as follows:
 - 5.1 *"Since so few pedestrians have been injured crossing Childsbridge Lane, any formal crossing facility risks making the situation worse"*
 - 5.1.1 The police report that two crashes in the past decade resulted in pedestrians being injured close to these crossroads. Both these occurred in 2007 and involved secondary school pupils trying to cross Childsbridge Lane having alighted from the school bus. This endorses a local concern that parents collecting their children from the school bus tend to park close to the junction, forcing those walking home to cross between parked cars. The proposed zebra crossing's white zig-zag markings would make this illegal (but would displace this parking to other locations).
 - 5.1.2 Risk compensation, the effect whereby individual people adjust their behaviour in response to perceived changes in risk, means that individuals tend to behave less cautiously in situations where they feel "safer" or more protected. Thus wherever there is a very low incidence of reported pedestrian injuries, there is a risk that injuries will occur after a formal pedestrian crossing is installed. However, this does not mean that the road was "safe" before the crossing was installed or "unsafe" afterwards. The closest corollary is that it may indicate that pedestrians previously adapted their behaviour to reflect the traffic hazards they perceived there to be. This can include escorting children who would otherwise cross the road on their own, changing a route (or mode of travel) to avoid crossing at that point or simply taking more care. In the case of Childsbridge Lane, the 115-signature petition strongly suggests that many pedestrians consider these existing hazards to be significant at the location of the proposed zebra crossing.
 - 5.1.3 Once a zebra crossing is installed, the law requires any driver or rider to stop for any pedestrian who is on to the crossing. Some pedestrians incorrectly take this to mean that if they step on the crossing then the traffic will stop; this can lead to accidents. The Highway Code advises pedestrians to not start crossing until traffic has stopped from both directions or the road is clear, and road-safety training at schools emphasises this
 - 5.1.4 The proposed location complies with the governmental advice on the satisfactory siting of zebra crossings and the scheme's final design would be subjected to independent safety audit prior to construction.

5.2 *“Most pedestrians cross Childsbridge Lane north of the junction”*

5.2.1 With negligible development to the south-east of the crossroads, pedestrians have historically chosen to cross north of the junction (where, until a few years ago, a school crossing patrol operated). However, when surveyed between 7am and 7pm on 1 November 2007, only 35% of the 334 pedestrians crossing Childsbridge Lane did so north of the crossroads. This is likely to be due in part to the school bus pick-up point and the route of the primary school's walking bus being south of the junction. For these reasons, in officer/Member/Parish/petitioner discussions, the southern side was considered to benefit more users. A pedestrian count carried out in late February 2009 during the morning peak hour (when traffic flows are relatively high) revealed equal numbers crossing north and south of the junction.

5.3 *“The zig-zag markings outside the houses will remove the ability for vehicles to load and unload close to these properties”*

5.3.1 White zig-zag lines would prohibit vehicles stopping along a 48metre length of road. Whilst all houses fronting this stretch of road have off-street parking for cars and light vans, delivery vehicles would have to park up to 15mtres away to load and unload.

5.3.2 Nonetheless, in response to this concern, officers reduced the length of white zig-zags to 44metres, the minimum recommended by the Department for Transport.

5.4 *“Street lighting and belisha beacons will be intrusive”*

5.4.1 The proposed type of street lighting lantern is the most efficient available and minimises light pollution to such a degree that little light would spill onto the facades of nearby houses. Nonetheless, because street-lighting intrusion is subjective, the glow of the lamp itself can irritate some people.

5.4.2 Whilst houses to the south of the junction are closer to the road than those to the north, they are still set-back some ten metres from the road and more than 15metres from the nearest belisha beacon. Belisha beacons use 50watt bulbs so would not be expected to disturb residents of these properties. Nonetheless, as with streetlights, the glow of the lamp itself can irritate some people. Although a black cowl can be placed around belisha beacons to shield them from adjacent properties, the angle of view from these properties to the belisha beacons at this location means that they would not be suitable.

5.5 *“The location of the relocated bus stop for the secondary school bus pick-up/set-down will be more hazardous”*

5.5.1 Irrespective of the zebra crossing proposal, the bus stops are not in an ideal location and Kent Highway Services are in discussion with both Arriva and the school-bus operators to have the southbound stop moved. However, the route of the school bus means that this is not straightforward. For the time being, therefore, the bus stops have been moved away from the junction.

5.6 *“The primary school’s growing popularity means that only children who live close by now meet the admissions criteria”*

5.6.1 The school’s admission criteria are those published by KCC and are therefore consistent with all other community schools. Priority is given first to siblings with the remaining places allocated on the basis of straight line distance from home to school. This year there were an exceptionally high number of applications for the thirty places and if the applicants did not already have siblings at the school they were only admitted if they lived within 1150 metres (0.71 mile) of the school. This meant that approximately half the housing west of Childsbridge Lane was outside the school’s catchments.

5.6.2 The large number of siblings from the area outside the catchment means that there continue to be a significant number of pupils who live in the westernmost part of the village. Being a village school, the number of new applications fluctuates greatly and thus it cannot be assumed that the number of pupils from this area will, in time, reduce.

5.7 *“The petition was organised by the primary school and many of those who signed it would not use the crossing”*

5.7.1 Signatories were recruited at the primary school and at the shops in Dynes Road. All but a handful lived in the village, split roughly equally east and west of Childsbridge Lane. Whilst those primary school pupils who live west of Childsbridge Lane would be clear beneficiaries of the crossing, people living to the east also need to cross that road when, for instance, using the shops on the south side of Dynes Road.

Views of Local Members and Kemsing Parish Council

6.1 Cllr Miss Stack (District Member for Kemsing) asked that the objections to the proposed zebra crossing be set aside.

6.2 Kemsing Parish Council asked that the objections to the proposed zebra crossing be set aside but that cowls be placed around the belisha beacons to limit light spill.

Financial and Value for Money Considerations

7 The zebra crossing would have cost an estimated £25,000 to install either north or south of the junction. Preparing and informally consulting on an alternative design for a zebra crossing north of the junction would have cost £1,700 whilst a village-wide public consultation would have cost an estimated £5,000 to carry out and analyse.

Legal Implications

8 None as a result of this report. Unlike a traffic regulation order, there is no statutory requirement to carry out public consultation on a proposal to install a

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zebra crossing. Nonetheless, a highway authority must demonstrate that it has properly considered the reasonableness of its provision.

Recommendation

In respect of the proposed zebra crossing in Childsbridge Lane, Kemsing, Members are asked to note that the five objections that were received were set aside and the objectors informed accordingly.

Appendices

None

Sources of Information:

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