



BRAMLEY PARISH COUNCIL

Member of the Hampshire Association of Local Councils

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Safe Route to School Project/Bramley Lane Junction

Bramley Parish Council launched a 'Safe Route to School' project in late 2014. The purpose of the project was to improve safety for children and parents travelling to Bramley School, both pedestrian and vehicular. The project had three stages:

1. To separate pedestrians from the car park at Mekanix and the Baker, by moving the route of the Cinder Track at that point. This required the use of Network Rail land, and unfortunately fell through as an agreement with Network Rail could not be reached.
2. To better control traffic at the School and Moat Close. After consultation with the School and HCC Highways, a solution was not forthcoming.
3. To make safety improvements to the Bramley Lane Junction with Sherfield Road.

The third option was pursued, with HCC Highways leading on the feasibility study (funded from Bramley PC reserves built up prior to 2012) and then the plans for the junction improvements. Funding for the junction improvements came from s.106 monies from the St James Park development (allocated specifically for modifications 'in the vicinity of the level crossing'), and from the Local Infrastructure Fund; provided by the Government to be spent on projects in areas where there was development, and managed by Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council.

Bramley PC was concerned about the safety risks to pedestrians and drivers in the vicinity of Bramley Lane, and the HCC Highways feasibility study highlighted the unsafe driving of some drivers at the junction and the lack of a pedestrian refuge at a key crossing point. The key actions influencing their plans were:

- Overtaking queuing traffic on Sherfield Road in order to either turn right into Bramley Lane, or left into the Mekanix/Bakery car park
- Overtaking queuing traffic in Bramley Lane to turn left out of Bramley Lane.

These actions put drivers and others at risk, and it was this activity that was seen by HCC Highways as the most significant safety issue. HCC Highways concluded that the safety at the junction could and should be improved, and drew up plans accordingly. Given the poor starting point and limited funding, the plans made good use of the space and resources available.

The changes made to the Bramley lane junction were always about SAFETY, and never about traffic flow. This is confirmed in the comments from HCC Highways below. The location of the island was determined by the need to have a crossing as close as possible to where pedestrians historically crossed Sherfield Road, but still allow access to the houses and car park entrance. This island, with the keep left signs, not only offers a refuge for pedestrians but also compels drivers not to overtake traffic queuing because of the barriers being down.

There is a significant safety and traffic flow advantage of the new left turn from Bramley Lane on to Sherfield Road and the keep left signs on the island. There is not space on Bramley Lane to create a long filter lane; however it will improve flow, with room to pass on the left of four to five cars waiting

to turn right. It is hoped that the layout and position of the right turn lane will deter traffic waiting further back, wanting to turn left on to the C32, from overtaking waiting vehicles.

The Parish Council has noted that stationary vehicles adjacent to the island block the pedestrian route. HCC Highways will look into this as part of a review, along with monitoring of the junction to observe behaviour of all road users.

Bramley Parish Council has had many discussions over the years with Hampshire county Council over a number of issues and possible solutions for the main road through Bramley (the C32). These have included various traffic light crossing points, and width and weight restrictions. However, there has been no appetite for these, since such restrictions would result in increased traffic on the A33 and A340 and further exacerbate the limitations of these routes to deal with the growing traffic volumes around Basingstoke.

Another factor restricting traffic flow is the location of the village shop. It's location was dictated in quieter times. Parking at the shop not only restricts traffic flow but also endangers pedestrians. Again, there is no appetite demonstrated by the authorities to restrict parking on the pavements or put time limits on the Jibbs Meadow car park. The shop owners will not use smaller delivery vehicles nor reschedule delivery times. For now, there is little to be done.

In summary, the main concern appears to be traffic flow on the C32, which is a narrow winding poorly maintained road at best. With traffic calming, the shop, the level crossing, no significant car parks, many junctions and private drives accessing the road, and no vehicle weight or width restrictions, there is little that can be done to improve traffic flow. The new layout has not made the flow worse but rather it makes it safer by having a more recognisable crossing point and refuge, with dangerous overtaking practises now made an enforceable traffic offence. Over time many pedestrians and drivers will shift their thinking and actions. Regrettably, a few will not but as it is now an offence to overtake at the crossing point, this should act as a deterrent, especially when caught.

Bramley Parish Council

Below are statements from the Hampshire Highways Department:

- The scheme aims to improve pedestrian safety. It does not aim to improve the flow of east-west traffic on Sherfield Road, nor does it significantly alter it from its previous situation (except for left turners out of Bramley Lane).
- The Highways department will monitor the issue of drivers passing on the wrong side of the keep left sign [displayed at the ends of the island], those doing this now will be **committing an enforceable traffic offence**. During the scheme review period we can gather data to support a case for targeted police presence/enforcement.
- Clearly the railway crossing is the primary cause of delay, money spent on solutions to accelerate vehicles through the crossing when the barriers are lifted will achieve little overall benefit in journey time saving or reducing congestion, however it may be expected to increase risk to other road users and also detract from the village environment.
- Traffic lights to solely control pedestrian movements are not an option in the UK, therefore any controlled pedestrian crossing would need to also control the

flow of vehicle traffic. Traffic signals in close proximity to the railway crossing are not viable on railway safety grounds.

- Insufficient funding [and lack of space] exist for the alternative options [pedestrian subways] proposed and in any case, cost-benefit consideration would be required, along with consideration of the impact of some of these measures on the village environment.
- Right-turn movements into private driveways/accesses cannot be restricted by way of a turning ban.
- An independent road safety audit team who will visit shortly to review the completed works. They will issue a report highlighting any residual safety issues that require action and we can then look at options for making any adjustments to make the scheme function optimally, particularly with regard to stationary vehicles blocking the [pedestrian] crossing point.