

EAST HORSLEY PARISH COUNCIL

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Highways England,
FREEPOST M25 junction 10/A3 Wisley interchange

CONSULTATION: M25 junction 10/A3 Wisley interchange improvement scheme

I am writing on behalf of East Horsley parish council under the public consultation being held by Highways England into the proposed interchange improvement scheme at the M25 junction 10/A3 interchange.

The village of East Horsley lies several miles from this interchange. Two rural roads connect East Horsley with the A3 - the B2039 Ockham Road connects the centre of the village with the Ockham Park roundabout and Old Lane which runs from the Effingham Junction area of East Horsley ending in a T-junction with the A3 close to the M25/A3 junction. Consequently the changes proposed under the interchange improvement scheme may impact significantly on residents of our village and traffic flows across the local area.

Having studied the published information about this scheme and attended several presentations by Highways England we should like to make the following comments:

1. The benefits arising from the improvement scheme appear to be relatively modest

Nobody can dispute that severe traffic congestion arises during peak hours on most days at the M25/A3 junction. However, this congestion is not a function of junction capacity as such, but rather comes from the general congestion arising along the M25 which leads to traffic tailing back along sections of the A3 around this junction. Outside peak hours, the junction functions perfectly satisfactorily.

In our conversations with Highways England staff during the consultation presentations it is clearly accepted that the interchange improvement scheme will not actually ameliorate the traffic congestion at the junction. Rather the improvement is intended to improve the flows of through traffic travelling along the A3 by providing additional spaces for traffic to queue up as they wait to join the congested M25.

At present the outer lanes of the A3 generally continue to flow over the M25 junction during peak hours but at reduced speeds, since the traffic is slowed due to the build up of queuing vehicles on the inside and middle lanes. Therefore, a modest improvement in journey times of through traffic is forecast from the provision of additional queuing lanes, as cited in the Highways England presentations.

A further benefit of the improvement scheme being highlighted is an improvement in road safety. Traffic accidents are reportedly very high at this junction, primarily as a result of traffic weaving between lanes in response to congestion at the interchange.

An examination of Crashmap data for the past two years shows that on the A3 between the Painshill junction and Ockham Park roundabout there was 1 fatal incident, 7 serious incidents and 44 slight incidents. We might surmise that the preponderance of 'slight' incidents arises because impact speeds are moderate due to the heavy traffic congestion. Since almost 100,000 vehicles are reported to use this interchange every day, we might also query whether the reported level of accidents shown in the Crashmap data, regrettable though it is, does actually represent sufficient justification for the large project expenditure now being proposed and which is partially justified on grounds of improved road safety.

OUR CONCLUSION: We question whether the relatively modest benefits arising from this scheme are worth the considerable construction costs required for the interchange project and whether such funds might not be better applied towards addressing the more fundamental problem of congestion on the M25.

2. The scheme is likely to create significant traffic congestion at the Ockham Park roundabout

The scheme proposes to direct traffic accessing RHS Wisley from the A3 through the Ockham Park roundabout and on to a new access road to be built south of the A3, connecting to Wisley Lane via a flyover. Wisley Lane will no longer have any direct connection with the A3 except via this new road.

RHS Wisley is a major tourist attraction whose visitor numbers are projected to reach 1.5 million per annum within the next few years. This represents a substantial flow of traffic. Under the submitted Guildford Local Plan a new settlement of over 2,000 homes is also being proposed at the site of the former Wisley airfield. The principle access road to this settlement would either use the new Wisley Lane access road or have a separate access nearby directly with the Ockham Park roundabout. There is also significant additional housing development proposed in the Horsleys, Ripley and Send under the Guildford Local Plan which will add further to the traffic using this roundabout.

In our opinion the combination of all these new traffic flows is likely to create significant congestion at the Ockham Park roundabout in future. Traffic modelling presented during the public inquiry into the Wisley airfield site in autumn 2017 illustrated the potentially very high volumes that may arise here. Even with the introduction of traffic lights at the roundabout the volumes of traffic entering from Ripley, from the Wisley airfield site, from the new Wisley Lane access road and from the Horsleys mean that this roundabout is likely to be functioning at or around maximum capacity during peak hours in the future.

A consequence of this congestion will be that significant traffic queuing would arise along many of the roads leading into the Ockham Park roundabout in future, including potentially the A3 exit slip.

If Highways England has undertaken detailed traffic modelling of the Ockham Park roundabout based upon all the additional traffic flows mentioned above, we should be very grateful to receive your modelling results. Ockham Park roundabout is used frequently by people living in East Horsley travelling either northwards towards London or southwards to Guildford and the south coast and therefore significant congestion arising at this roundabout will be a particular concern for many of our residents.

OUR CONCLUSION: We believe the improvement scheme may generate significant congestion in future at the Ockham Park roundabout. Such additional queuing times must be weighed against any improvements in A3 through-travel times when considering the overall benefits of this scheme.

3. The scheme is likely to create additional traffic congestion within the centre of Ripley

Ripley High Street presently suffers from significant traffic congestion, particularly at the T-junction with Newark Lane. At its entry Newark Lane comprises just a single carriageway due to the limited space between historic buildings but is still heavily used as it offers a direct route to Woking. Removing the existing direct access into Wisley Lane for northbound A3 traffic means that in future all visitors to RHS Wisley coming from the south will need to leave the A3 at Burnt Common and travel through Ripley before reaching the Ockham Park roundabout. This will substantially raise traffic volumes through Ripley High Street, adding further to existing traffic congestion.

Some RHS Wisley visitors might alternatively choose to continue north to the M25/A3 junction and take the southbound exit back along the A3 to approach Ockham Park

roundabout from the north. However, this would be a circuitous and lengthy route which would only add further unnecessary congestion to traffic at the M25/A3 junction.

One of the most convenient routes for people living in East Horsley wishing to take the A3 southwards is to travel through Ripley. Therefore, such congestion will have a particular impact on many residents of our village.

In our opinion two possible solutions might be considered to prevent this increase in traffic flow through Ripley:

- a) To retain the existing entry and exit from the A3 into Wisley Lane, perhaps with the creation of improved slip roads to enhance road safety; or
- b) To create two new south-facing slip roads from the Ockham Park roundabout to the A3, thereby allowing northbound traffic to enter the A3 directly from the roundabout without the need to travel through Ripley. Returning traffic would take the south-bound slip road directly to the A3.

Moreover, if both of these options were adopted then the rationale for a separate access road and flyover into Wisley Lane would disappear, potentially reducing the overall construction costs and limiting the impact of the improvement scheme on environmentally-sensitive land.

OUR CONCLUSION: We believe the improvement scheme is likely to generate severe traffic congestion along Ripley High Street unless alternative road configurations are considered, such as the options we have suggested.

4. The scheme may potentially create an accident black spot at the Old Lane T-junction with the A3

Presently Old Lane connects with the A3 in a T junction. Leaving the A3 southbound into Old Lane is relatively straightforward. However, traffic leaving Old Lane to join the A3 southbound is a more difficult turning for drivers, given the relatively high speeds of approaching traffic already on the A3. Traffic lights at present on the M25/A3 roundabout create breaks in the traffic flow which help vehicles from Old Lane to join the A3 southbound.

Under the proposed improvement scheme traffic lights will be removed for all traffic on the M25 westbound A3 exit, which will allow uninterrupted access on to the A3 southbound prior to the Old Lane junction. Traffic leaving Old Lane will potentially be faced with a much more unbroken flow of southbound vehicles, which following the removal of the traffic lights will

be travelling at even greater speeds. Joining the A3 will therefore become a good deal more problematic and potentially hazardous.

The consultation brochure makes the comment: “*Old Lane remains open, with safety improvements.*” However, it is not clear just what those safety improvements will entail, although at least there does seem to be recognition of the hazard which may arise.

In order to address this issue we suggest consideration should be given to creating a slip road beside the A3 southbound from Old Lane to help vehicles to join the main carriageway.

OUR CONCLUSION: *The improvement scheme may potentially lead to an accident black spot at the A3/Old Lane T-junction unless suitable safety improvements are introduced.*

Concluding comments

The proposed improvement scheme will undoubtedly bring some benefits, although these appear to be relatively modest. Fundamentally, the scheme fails to ameliorate the major issue of peak hour traffic congestion occurring at the M25/A3 junction for traffic joining the M25 and as such it may be questioned whether the substantial costs of the project are sufficiently justified by the limited benefits obtained.

The scheme also has some negative consequences. In this submission we have highlighted several which are relevant for residents of East Horsley, in particular the development of traffic congestion at the Ockham Park roundabout and through the centre of Ripley. We also have significant concerns about the future safety of the Old Lane T-junction unless appropriate mitigation measures are taken.

Yours faithfully,

NSClemens

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