

**Safer Routes to School
Public Consultation Report
October 2012**

Fiveways

Balfour Primary School
Dorothy Stringer School
Varndean School

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1.1 Public consultation results

126 people responded, giving a low response rate of 12.6%, a much better result compared to previous Safer Routes Consultations. The parents' survey of the school communities was combined with the public consultation on the proposed measures. Parents were invited by the schools participating to comment online via the consultation portal. Paper surveys were available for those who did not have internet access.

85% of the responses were from parents with children at one or more of the three schools. Without the parents' responses, the residents' response rate would be just under 2%, calling into question the value of postal drops as the primary feature of a communication strategy.

7 replies came from the exhibitions and events and 100 came from the on-line survey. 19 parents at Dorothy Stringer replied via survey forms provided by the school.

Open text boxes were given after each question for people to make comments and these are summarised in this report. Some respondents chose not to comment on every measure.

1.1.1 Measure One; Map 2A

92% of respondents supported the proposals, 7% opposed and 1% did not answer. 30 % chose to leave an additional comment.

1.1.2 Measure Two; Map 2B

80% of respondents supported these proposals, 19% opposed and 1% did not answer. 28% chose to leave a comment.

1.2 Public comments

The questionnaire also provided space for comments. The key points raised by local residents are summarised as follows:

1.2.1 Measure One: Map 2A

There were nine positive comments in favour of the new zebra crossing.

Six comments were made online about the need for a safe crossing further up Surrenden Road around Loder Road because of the speed of southbound vehicles concealed by the bend and the bus stop north of the junction. Two residents also wrote separate submissions also voicing these concerns. Harrington Road on the northbound section of Surrenden Road was also mentioned.

One comment suggested a separate entrance for pedestrians into the park would reduce the danger of pedestrians conflicting with vehicles exiting the Ride.

Another respondent suggested that moving the vehicle access to the Ride further south along Preston Park Avenue would make the whole Preston Drive/ Surrenden / The Ride junction much less complicated. Three others also echoed concerns about traffic exiting the Ride.

One comment suggested that arrows and separate lanes be marked for southbound traffic exiting Surrenden Road onto Preston Drive to prevent vehicles side by side both attempting to turn right onto Preston Drive. This respondent also felt these two lanes southbound at the junction of Surrenden Ave were too wide for elderly or pedestrians with buggies etc to cross quickly enough. Several other comments supported this concern.

They would also like to see the widening of the park entrance so that cars exiting the park do not block the entrance to the Ride at peak times. They would also like to see a dedicated right hand turn from the Westbound (downhill) lane of Preston Drive into Surrenden Road as these contribute to traffic calming. One comment expressed the view that the crossing outside the Park View tavern should be removed.

One correspondent would like to see the whole junction controlled by traffic lights.

One commented that a crossing on Preston Drive near Blakers Park would also be a good idea to make access to the park safer.

Two comments expressed concern that existing crossings further up Preston Drive should be retained or improved,

Officer Response

There have been no casualties on Surrenden Road in the three year period 13/08/2008 to 01/09/2011 at school journey times. While this means that the Safer Routes to school scheme cannot prioritise this area the perception of danger is a barrier to sustainable transport choices. The comments have been passed to the officer dealing with City wide crossing requests. This scheme has also received submissions about the lower Surrenden road and will be considering it against established criteria for crossing facility improvements and making recommendations to the 27 November 2012 transport committee.

Comments regarding separating pedestrians and traffic by moving traffic access to the Ride away from Preston Drive have been passed to Cityparks. The Safer Routes scheme does not have the budget to address this at present.

Traffic lights to control the Surrenden Road junction cannot be funded by this scheme, and would cost well in excess of the total budget.

The request for a safer crossing point near Blakers Park on Preston Drive has been passed to the officer leading on the Blakers Park scheme.

There are no plans to remove the crossings further up Preston Drive. Use of the existing crossing outside the Park View tavern has already been monitored. This will be compared with data collected once the new crossing has been installed to assess whether there is a continuing need for this crossing once the new facility is in place.

1.2.2 Measure Two: Map 2B

Many comments supported the new crossing facility but took issue with the parking and bus stop rearrangements north of Friar Road.

One respondent did not understand the need for a crossing point when there is a pelican crossing on Ditchling road near the junction of Balfour Road.

One questioned the timing of the restricted parking slots and suggested it should be limited to school peak times 8-9.30 and 3-4.30 only.

Another respondent felt making parents park further from the nursery created more risk for them by making them spend longer at the road side. Others made similar points including the added stress of having to walk in the rain to collect children.

Four respondents felt the bus stop created a child protection issue because it gave people an excuse to loiter outside the nursery premises, which are not shielded from the public highway by fencing. One pointed out the nursery already has an issue with a member of the public loitering, and the young women who work there would be at risk as well. This respondent felt that parents in custody battles could also be an issue.

A couple felt that the new stop would mean Varndean students using the bus would have to cross Friar Road to get to school once the stop was moved.

Noise and inconvenience for residents and people dropping their children off at the nursery was also raised by a few respondents. One parent felt it was unreasonable to expect parents to always control their children on the street.

One suggested the cycle lane was not used and should be moved across the road to Hollingbury Park where it could be two way off road. This person also claimed 70 parking spaces had been lost when the last changes to the area were implemented, pointed out the road was a major artery into Brighton and suggested education in schools was the solution.

Two people suggested Balfour Road should be the priority, suggesting the road is too narrow and that restrictions such as one way and double yellow lines and enforcement to stop parking on the kerb should be considered.

Another wondered why the bus stop opposite the light controlled crossing at the top of Balfour road was not adequate.

One expressed serious concerns about the crossing habits of teenagers, suggesting they need supervision. In particular, the point on Ditchling Road just below Balfour Road saw many running across the road to get to a path crossing the park by the tennis club.

Two others suggested that the 40mph limit needed to be moved further north as well as the speed camera. Another agreed suggesting parking near driveways in the 40mph area obscured views for residents trying to get out of their properties.

As well as expressing concerns about parents parking outside the nursery and worries this would bring unwelcome pedestrian traffic outside their premises, one correspondent felt it was unrealistic to assume parents accessing the nursery would want to use the bus. They also suggested this would displace parking onto Friar Road, which is already seriously congested, at times forcing the 56 bus to be rerouted because it is blocked. It was suggested that the bus stop being removed should simply not be replaced.

Another respondent felt the majority of students stayed south of this measure, but acknowledged those trying to cross to the bus stops should be able to do so safely.

Two said they believed the crossing facility should be a light controlled crossing, not a pedestrian refuge.

Another raised the need for a crossing facility near the entrance to Draxmont Way on Surrenden Road.

Another felt students would not use this crossing point which was further north than the bus stops closest to the school.

A local bus user felt locating the stop outside 391 might be better but praised the decision to move it north of Friar Road.

Another suggested an additional measure, extending the double yellow lines two car lengths beyond the bus stop on Friar Road would prevent congestion.

One requested clear sightlines for the driveways of 389 and 391 and asked for a bin at the bus stop.

Officer Response

Buses are often full after 3pm by the time they reach the stop nearest the pelican crossing, so students from Varndean are crossing the road further up to get to the bus stops further up the hill.

Proposals to alter parking arrangements outside the nursery have been dropped. The parking will remain unrestricted subject to future improvements to the cycle facility (See below).

The new bus stop will be located outside 391 Ditchling Road in order to avoid the current objections causing further delay. Bus stops cannot be removed altogether because of commercial contracts with service providers and a duty to make provision accessible for bus users with limited mobility who live in the vicinity. .

Varndean students using the bus in the mornings will be less likely to alight at this stop, as it is further away from the school gate. In the afternoons they will head north on the other side of the road for the reasons explained. The new pedestrian refuge will encourage them to cross before the Friar Road junction.

Comments on any future position of the cycle lane extension have been passed to the Walking and Cycling officer.

Balfour Road remains a concern at drop off and collection times. The schools will be asked to make regular reminders to parents and guardians about responsible parking and the limitations of Balfour Road. A request for enforcement officers to attend the road following the build of the new measures will be made.. Efforts will be renewed to recruit a new School crossing patrol for the crossing outside Balfour primary. This has proven difficult in the past. Varndean and Dorothy Stringer schools will continue to be offered support on Road safety education via the PSHE curriculum, tutor times and assemblies. Balfour primary will be offered priority provision of child pedestrian training for year 1 and 3.

The 40mph speed limit change has recently been reassessed and it has been concluded that it should remain in the current location, where there are residential properties on only one side of the road. The speed camera is needed to enforce the change to 30mph at its current location.

There is plenty of unrestricted parking on Ditchling Road north of Friar Road at all times of day. Friar Road is full during school hours only. The school will be asked to make the impact

of parking in Friar Road clear to staff and to recommend sustainable travel choices where these are an option.

A light controlled crossing has not been proposed because Engineers feel this would not be frequently used outside of school arrival and departure times, and could cause a greater hazard because drivers are not expecting to have to stop.

1.3 Response by Internal consultees

Relevant colleagues across the council were consulted.

The transport planner for Walking and Cycling has previously requested that all Safer Routes schemes check their proposed measures against the list of crossing points where light controlled crossings have been requested by residents. This points based system enabled us to assess crossing points suggested by residents and identify priority locations across the city.

The council has committed a further £200,000 to continue monitoring new pedestrian crossing requests, and to implement those identified as priority locations during 2012/2013.

The initial phase of this methodology process involves monitoring vehicle flows and the number of pedestrians crossing the road at each potential location

This process has identified the crossing facilities in at the southern end of Surrenden Road for potential improvement, and these and other measures in the scheme will go before the Transport committee on November 27.

Regarding the bus stop and parking bay proposals on Ditchling Road, the Walking and Cycling officer also commented the cycling facility which currently ends at the Friar Road junction is being looked at with the view to making improvements over the next few years. The parking bay proposals north of Friar Road would make it difficult to extend this cycle facility any further north and improve cycle access into the national park. The City is committed to improving sustainable transport into the national park and this is demonstrated in it's commitment as a partner in the Sustainable Travel to the Two Newest National Parks LSTF bid. Furthermore planned improvements to enable cyclists/ pedestrians to cross at the top of Ditchling road are being implemented in coming months strengthening the cycle link between Stanmer Park and the City Via Ditchling Rd.

The Environmental protection team had no objections on ground of air quality. They pointed out that Nitrogen Dioxide levels are easily compliant with limit values at roadside within this safer routes area. Traffic island refuges are a preferable road crossing method as these create less breaking and standing start accelerations that have associated higher emissions. They also observed that the nearest properties to the proposed zebra crossing on Preston Drove are suitably set back from the kerb.

Where there is an opportunity to introduce or re-locate a bus halt they recommend that this is kept away more than 5m distance from residential facades, especially outside ground and basement level flats or houses.

Officer response: For the technical reasons connected with the cycle lane extension, the parking bays have been removed from the final proposal and the Bus stop relocated to 391 Ditchling Road (See Sussex Police comment below).

1.4 Response by statutory and non-statutory consultees

A full list of external consultees, both statutory and non statutory, were invited to make submissions. Statutory bodies included the Emergency Services, the Road Haulage Association and Bus Companies. Non statutory organisations such as the taxi companies, bus passenger & disabled groups and the Brighton & Hove Chamber of commerce were also contacted. The replies received are detailed below.

1.4.1 Statutory

Mike Best, Operations director for Brighton and Hove buses has no objections to either measure, and has requested that the company be told in good time when the bus stop will be moved so that he can make sure drivers and passengers are properly advised.

Mark Dunn, Traffic management officer at the Operations dept of Sussex Police, advises the force have no objections. He has been made aware of the objections to locating the bus stop outside 387 Ditchling road, suggesting moving it further up the road to 391 would make stopping for buses slightly easier as it is further away from the build out, and make visibility easier for drivers trying to turn out of Friar Road while a bus is at the stop.

No responses were received from other Haulage or other transport operators, or the Ambulance or Fire and Rescue services.

1.4.2. Non-statutory

The Little Earthworms Nursery owners are very concerned about the proposal to put a bus stop outside their premises, which they say will put young children in 'grave danger'. This is because of increased pedestrian volume, child protection issues and noise and swearing from Varndean students outside the nursery. They believe the needs of under 5's should be prioritised over those of teenagers because young children cannot grasp road safety concepts. They believe the movements of buses will cause added traffic hazards in an area close to the 40mph limit, parents will find it difficult to park and neighbours will find it more difficult to get out of their driveways safely. They say the current parking facilities are already heavily used by their parents dropping off and collecting children, residents and their visitors and staff from Varndean School. They worry the bus stop will displace this parking to the opposite side of Ditchling road causing a hazard to all pedestrians trying to cross, and to Friar Road, disrupting the bus route there. They see parking restrictions as damaging to their business because the current lack of restriction is part of their 'unique selling point'. They want to see parking bays outside their premises and the bus stop further up the hill.

Bicycles commented that near collisions with cars near the Preston Drove measure are frequent and that cyclists should treat this junction with great caution. They welcome the proposal of the new zebra. They note that a lot of motor vehicles enter and exit The Ride making the whole junction rather confusing, and agree that there is a need for another pedestrian crossing here on Preston Drove, but feel that

squeezing it between Preston Park Avenue and The Ride is not ideal. Bricycles suggests a better option would be to close the northern end of The Ride to motor traffic and site the new zebra crossing directly opposite the current northern end of The Ride. They believe a new entrance/exit to The Ride from Preston Park Avenue approximately 50metres away from Preston Drove would be preferable.

Bricycles also note the cycle lanes on each side of the carriageway at the proposed site of the pedestrian refuge on Ditchling Road, and are concerned that wider vehicles will encroach into the cycle lanes when passing the pedestrian refuge. However, they acknowledge that few cyclists currently use this stretch of road.

Brighton & Hove Friends of the Earth (BHFOE) are generally supportive of the measures. They would like to see some minor modifications to the proposed zebra on Preston Drove to ensure it is wide enough to cater for pedestrians and cyclists together. They believe it should be wider than the proposed 3m width. There would appear to be enough space to cater for a 4 or 5m width crossing here. (The zebra crossings at the southern end are around 6m wide). The Park has the potential to form part of a cycle route to the schools and this capacity should be built in now. Even if legally, cyclists are not allowed to cycle across zebra crossings, they take up more space waiting to cross and so a wider crossing would make this more comfortable for pedestrians and cyclists.

They note that the junction of Preston Drove and Surrenden Road still has a large sweeping curve, encouraging vehicles to turn into Surrenden Road at higher speeds. Given the kerb line is being moved anyway, they think it could be built more square. They suggest a cycle slip could be added to the end of the build out to allow cyclists to exit into Surrenden Road.

They note that getting across The Ride can be awkward for pedestrians, so the extra width from having the buildout should be given to creating a wider pavement here. Any ramp for vehicles should be as short (therefore steep) as possible to slow vehicles down turning into the park and to allow the widest possible level pavement.

They would be concerned if the zebra crossing outside the Park View was considered redundant in the future and would want to see this kept alongside this proposal.

BFOE is generally supportive of moving the bus stop north outside no. 387 Ditchling Road and that it should be as close to the junction of Friar Road as possible. They believe the concerns of the parents and staff of the nursery, while legitimate, are unfounded and should not lead to the bus stop being moved further north. Having the bus stop here would also improve access to the nursery by bus and would mean that people didn't have to cross Friar Road any more.

BHFOE is, however, concerned at the proposals for parking bays being introduced here, whether they be north or south of the new stop. They are concerned that their introduction could prejudice improving links to the South Downs National Park. This is meant to be a Council priority and Ditchling Road is an important route out to Stanmer Park and Ditchling Beacon from this area of town. Cycle lanes are not necessarily needed both sides of the road, as coming into town, cyclists go reasonably fast downhill and are more stable. However, a cycle lane out of town, uphill, when cyclists are going slower and are more wobbly, would be of benefit.

This is the side that the parking bays are currently being proposed and therefore BHFOE objects to them.

Officer response:

The Little Earthworms Nursery currently makes no attempt to conceal its premises from the public highway. They have planning permission to do so with a fence set back from the boundary, and planning officers assure us any application for a fence on or near the boundary (which would not cause the same extent of light loss) would be considered.

However, these objections have the potential to significantly delay the measure further south on Ditchling Road which is urgently needed to improve student safety.. The current unrestricted parking will continue although future extensions to the cycle facility as detailed above may have some impact on this. (These would be the subject of a separate scheme).

Bricycles comments on The Ride entrance have been passed to the Cityparks team. This scheme does not have the budget to address such measures.

The Road Safety engineer is satisfied that the 3m width of the carriageway will ensure that large vehicles do not encroach onto the cycleway.

BFOE comments on the zebra crossing have also been discussed with the Road Safety engineer. He suggests that a wider crossing would not give drivers turning left out of Preston Park Drive enough distance to stop. Cycling across zebras is currently illegal as BFOE acknowledge. The 3m width works on the crossing outside the Park View tavern uphill from the site, suggesting it will be sufficient here.

The suggestion to extend the build out on the northern side of the crossing to square off the corner of Surrenden Road and Preston Drove would cost the scheme an estimated further £2000. This measure could improve safety as suggested, but is currently unaffordable with the constraints on this scheme's budget.

The Safer Routes Budget also cannot cover the cost of a new ramp across the entrance to The Ride, which will remain unchanged, though BFOE's comment has also been passed to Cityparks for their consideration.

2. Recommended Measures

The measures are outlined as follows:

- Introduce a zebra crossing and build outs to help pedestrians cross from the corner near St Mary's Church to The Ride in Preston Park.
- Extend the kerb on the corner of Preston Park Avenue to slow left turns out onto Preston Drove and improve visibility down Preston Drove
- Remove the bus stop north of the upper gate to Varndean School and replace it with a pedestrian refuge and build outs allowing pupils to cross more safely to the bus stop opposite.
- North of Friar Road, create a new bus stop outside 391 Ditchling Road
- Refresh existing double yellow lines on the junction of Loder Road and Surrenden Road

3. Timescale and Build

November 2012

- report to Cabinet Member's Meeting with final recommendation

January 2013

- Construction of scheme measures

Summer 2013

- Post scheme monitoring

4. Conclusions and final remarks

By asking parents of students at the schools to comment on the measures as well as take part in a survey of their travel habits, we have greatly increased the response rate for the public consultation.

Both measures received support. In the case of the Preston Drove zebra, 92% supported the measure. The Ditchling Road measure also received the majority support (79%) though changes north of Friar Road have concerned Nursery owners and users at number 387 and their immediate neighbours, their main objections being based on child protection issues and the parents' preference for parking immediately outside the premises.

The consultation has brought to light a number of other concerns in the Surrenden Road area which are not affordable under the current budget constraints, but which have been brought to the attention of officers leading other council schemes where appropriate.

Given the growing number of children who travel to school on foot or who require good access to their school, the schools and local community has the potential to gain much from the scheme.

