

TAYLOR-WIMPEY CYCLE ROUTE CONSULTATION

Comments from East & West Horsley Parish Councils

18th May 2021

This document provides consultation comments submitted by the parish councils of East and West Horsley on Taylor Wimpey's cycle route proposals for the proposed development at Wisely airfield. Our comments are based upon Taylor Wimpey's video conferences of 1st April 2021 and 11th May 2021 plus the accompanying Proposals Map included with the Engagement Brochure dated 28th April 2021.

Our comments focus solely on the three alternative cycle routes illustrated in the Engagement Brochure which link the proposed Wisley airfield development with the Horsley area, namely:

- A) The route from Alms Heath in Ockham to Horsley Station via Long Reach, Lollesworth Lane and Kingston Avenue;
- B) The route from Alms Heath in Ockham to Horsley Station via Ockham Road North;
- C) The route from Martyrs Green to Effingham Junction Station via Old Lane.

Detailed comments on each of these three cycle routes are given below, with some issues identified that we believe ought to be addressed by Taylor Wimpey to improve their proposals prior to the submission of a planning application.

A) Alms Heath to Horsley Station via Long Reach

Total Distance of 3.68 km with 5 junctions

Sections of this cycle route:

Alms Heath to Long Reach 0.26 km

The Taylor Wimpey Proposals Map indicates the initial part of the route along Ockham Road North from Alms Heath up to the junction with Long Reach is to be provided with a 2.0m wide cycle track on the western side of Ockham Road North 'to facilitate cyclists crossing of Ockham Road North'. We believe this is a helpful feature. However, we notice in the slide presented on 11th May 2021 that this cycle track does not appear to run for all of the 0.26km section up to the start of Long Reach. In our opinion an off-road cycle track is essential here given the very busy traffic flows along Ockham Road North in this area.

The Proposals Map also indicates that this section of Ockham Road North will become subject to a 20mph limit. Whilst we support such a proposal, since the current average speed is likely to be well above the present 30mph limit, we are unsure how this new 20mph limit will actually be enforced. We doubt that the insertion of 'Gateway' features such as a rumble strip and coloured tarmac will have very much impact on the high speeds of traffic using this busy road and something more robust may be required here, such as installing a police speed camera.

Long Reach 2.66 km

Long Reach represents 72% of the total distance of this proposed cycle route. We note that no highways work is being proposed at all for this narrow country road, which is to be designated as a Quiet Lane, with the carriageway space shared between cars, cyclists, pedestrians and horses. We believe that local residents will generally support this proposed Quiet Lane designation.

For its northern section, from Alms Heath up to the commencement of the West Horsley settlement area, Long Reach is flanked on both sides by a mixture of isolated houses, rural businesses, fields and woodlands. In this section the introduction of a 30mph speed limit is being proposed.

Since the fundamental concept of a Quiet Lane is that the carriageway is shared between all users, in our opinion speeds of 30 mph may pose a safety risk for 'inexperienced cyclists', who are intended to be the main users of this cycle route although without having the security of a segregated cycle lane. We therefore suggest that a 20mph limit should be considered for the whole of Long Reach.

This will also have the additional benefit of potentially reducing unnecessary signage in this very rural location. A single prominent Quiet Lane sign at each end of Long Reach would signal the commencement of the low-speed zone and allow intermittent signage to be kept to the minimum.

At the end of Long Reach at its junction with East Lane some connectivity improvements are being proposed by Taylor Wimpey. Since this is a busy road which is not always easy for cyclists to cross, we believe in principle that this is helpful, although would caution against excessive signage and unnecessary urbanisation in this rural area.

Lollesworth Lane 0.39 km

After crossing East Lane, the proposed cycle route runs the length of Lollesworth Lane. The Proposals Map shows this section as being "with traffic access only". It is currently classified as a bridleway with the SCC designation BW98.

Lollesworth Lane is a privately-owned road which provides access to a farm and several houses. There is no vehicular exit at its end, where the bridleway crosses over the railway via a footbridge and continues on into West Horsley Place.

Lollesworth Lane has an uneven surface of (probably) pre-WW2 tarmac covered with a light shingle topping. The first part of the lane is heavily dotted with pot-holes, filled in with loose chippings. We understand from the Taylor Wimpey presentation that there are no plans to offer any re-surfacing of this lane to provide a smoother ride for cyclists.

As a private road Lollesworth Lane is not subject to maintenance by Surrey Highways. There must therefore be some uncertainty as to whether or not the surface of this proposed section of the cycle route will be adequately maintained over the longer term.

Footpath 99 0.56 km

From Lollesworth Lane the proposed cycle route turns left and follows the railway line along Footpath 99 ('FP99') to join Kingston Avenue in East Horsley, which is a public road. The Proposals Map shows this section is to become designated as a PROW. Currently the designation is a public footpath, therefore a change of status would be necessary here through a Cycle Track Order.

At present FP99 has a tarmac surface which is relatively uneven, presumably a consequence of tree root growth. The effective width of this footpath is currently around 1.25 metres, with uneven verges on both sides. The estimated total width between the existing chain-link fencing beside the railway line and the boundary fence bordering the woodlands opposite (owned by West Horsley Place) varies from around 2.1 metres to 2.5 metres – although the railway fencing is straight, the fencing bordering the woodlands is more irregular, probably due to the varied woodland growth.

In their latest consultation presentation Taylor Wimpey have proposed this route shall become a “2.5 metre shared footway/cycleway”, although on questioning the WSP consultant admitted this was an aspiration and that some sections would be narrower due to the constraints of various ‘pinch points’.

Today FP99 is regularly used by pedestrians and a modest number of cyclists, since it serves as a direct off-road connection between parts of East and West Horsley, effectively the only direct east-west aligned public footpath between the two villages. However, the current narrow width of this footpath means pedestrians need to move aside and stand in the verges whenever cyclists approach. Passing can be problematic unless the cyclists slow down when coming upon walkers.

In order to construct a 2.5 metres wide cycle path along this route we presume that the present fencing alongside the West Horsley Place woodland will need to be removed and erected deeper into the woods. Obviously this will require the consent of the landowner. In order to provide sufficient space for the new 2.5 metres cycleway the total spacing between the two fences will need to be increased to perhaps 3.5 – 4 metres to allow for some verge borders. A cursory inspection suggests such a clearance will require the removal of a significant number of trees and shrubs from the woodlands. This, of course, would have an ecological impact.

The Taylor Wimpey proposal for a “shared footway/cycleway” implies there will be no central dividing line to segregate cyclists from pedestrians. At just 2.5 metres wide at its maximum, the proposal therefore raises the prospect that the kind of problems currently experienced on this footpath may persist in the future, with cyclists being delayed by walkers and walkers risking being hit by passing cyclists who fail to slow down or use their bells, if they have them. We note that in other off-site cycle routes around the Wisley airfield development Taylor Wimpey have proposed 3 metres wide shared footway/cycleways and wonder if this might not be a safer option for FP99.

Finally, we note the comments of the WSP consultant that although this cycle route is being proposed in connection with the Wisley development, Taylor Wimpey will assume no responsibility for its construction and will “*rely entirely upon SCC to deliver this cycle route.*”

Kingston Avenue 0.26km

At its eastern end the FP99 tarmac track meets the footway running along the northern side of Kingston Avenue in East Horsley. No highways work is indicated in the Proposals Map for Kingston Avenue, although a new 20mph speed limit is being proposed here.

In our opinion this speed limit is superfluous, since we believe the existing average traffic speed is already below this level. Kingston Avenue is a short road. In its western section the carriageway is effectively part of the curtilage of the Horsley Medical Centre and Village Hall, the middle 60m section already has speed bumps installed, whilst the final 100m section has almost permanent on-street parking, creating effectively a single lane carriageway. Therefore, introducing a 20mph limit here is totally unnecessary and the additional signage would only serve to clutter the street scene.

Station Approach 0.17 km

Other than converting the existing speed platform outside La Meridiana into a zebra crossing, no highways works are proposed for the junction between Kingston Avenue and Ockham Road North, nor for the short ascent up Station Parade to Horsley Station. During the Community Liaison Group presentation, the WSP consultant commented that this junction area is “*complicated*” and anticipated inexperienced cyclists would “*probably want to walk their bicycles up to the station from here*”.

Since there will also be increased movements of the Wisley shuttle bus in and around the Horsley Station area in connection with the new development, perhaps some further improvement at this ‘complicated’ junction location would be warranted.

ASSESSMENT

In principle, the proposed routing from Alms Heath to Horsley Station via Long Reach should represent a relatively safe route for inexperienced cyclists, providing they are in no hurry to get to their destination. However, there are some significant delivery risks in relation to FP99, including the following:

- a) For FP99 to become a viable cycle path, sufficient land will need to be acquired from West Horsley Place to allow for a widening of the existing footpath;
- b) There will be significant environmental damage to the woodlands which must be assessed and duly approved;
- c) SCC will need to find the funds to pay for the widening and construction of the new path;
- d) The Cycle Track Order will need to be approved. In the event that no segregated path separating cyclists and walkers is proposed, we anticipate significant opposition to the Cycle Track Order could potentially arise from local residents concerned about the ongoing safety of walkers along this well-used footpath. If such opposition arises, a public inquiry will be needed before the Cycle Track Order can be approved.

Assuming such obstacles can be overcome and that the shared/footpath cycleway is duly delivered, a fundamental question also arises as to just how many cyclists would actually make use of this route.

For daily commuters wishing to travel from the Wisley site to Horsley Station it is unlikely to be attractive. Compared to the more direct route along Ockham Road North it is some 27% longer in distance, as measured from Alms Heath, and perhaps around 50% longer in journey time as a consequence of FP99 constraints and numerous junctions.

In order to estimate potential travelling times, we asked four experienced members of the Horsley U3A cycle group to time this route going from the centre of the Wisley site around Bridge End Farm to Horsley Station using the Long Reach and FP99 route. Cycling at full energy, as a commuter would normally do, these regular cyclists variously clocked times of between 20 to 28 minutes for this route at different times of day, the average being 24 minutes. We believe that such lengthy cycling times are likely to discourage future site commuters from using this route on a daily basis.

Other potential users of this route are the cycling clubs, now numerous in this area at the weekends, who like to travel through the Horsley area when heading for the Surrey Hills and its Olympic cycle route. Few of such riders are likely to find a slow and narrow track beside a railway line an attractive option when compared to the much faster direct routing available along Ockham Road North.

The main user group for this proposed cycle route is therefore likely to be children or family groups wishing to travel for leisure purposes from the Wisley site to the Horsley area. Such users would find the safety of this route attractive by comparison to the dangerous option of using Ockham Road North, and lengthier journey times for such users may not represent a particular constraint. However, Taylor Wimpey and SCC may wish to consider just how numerous such users might be. Our suggestion is that they may actually be relatively few.

Overall, whilst the proposed Long Reach route can be considered as a safe cycle route for inexperienced riders, the numbers of people making use of it may be quite limited. Whether they are sufficient to justify the significant costs of establishing this route is something that Taylor Wimpey and SCC may wish to assess further.

B) Alms Heath to Horsley Station via Ockham Road North

Total Distance of 2.9 km with 1 junction

Sections of this cycle route:

Ockham Road North 2.65km

Ockham Road North (B2025) offers the most direct route from Alms Heath to Horsley Station. The road has high traffic volumes, including many HGV's, and is generally avoided by cyclists during weekdays. At weekends packs of cycling club groups can be seen here regularly, seeking safety in numbers.

The carriageway is relatively narrow with a series of bends limiting visibility. Historic traffic surveys indicate over 5,000 vehicles a day typically use this road. Crashmap data shows there were 17 accidents reported along here during the last 10 years, including 1 fatality.

No highways works are proposed by Taylor Wimpey for this part of Ockham Road North. The road is classed as "with traffic main route – for more confident cyclists". Currently this road has a 40mph speed limit over the section from Alms Heath until 100 metres before the junction with The Drift where the speed limit falls to 30mph. The Proposals Map indicates all of this route along Ockham Road North would have a 30mph limit in future. Given the current speed levels seen on this road the enforcement of this limit may be considered questionable.

Ockham Road South & Station Approach 0.25m

At the railway bridge beside Horsley Station the B2039 changes name to Ockham Road South. Other than the conversion of the existing speed platform outside La Meridiana to a zebra crossing, there are no other highways works offered by Taylor Wimpey here or during the short ascent up Station Approach to the entrance of Horsley railway station,

ASSESSMENT

The lack of any improvements along Ockham Road North for cyclists is disappointing, since this is the most direct and quickest route for cyclists to travel from the western and central sections of the Wisley site to Horsley railway station.

To describe this section of Ockham Road North as being suitable for 'more experienced cyclists', as shown in the Proposals Map, is highly questionable. During weekdays the traffic volumes and speeds along the B2039 are such that this route is generally avoided by cyclists and only the most courageous (or foolhardy?) of cyclists are seen here. In view of the hazardous nature of this highway, it is likely that very few cyclists will consider using it in future for daily commuting purposes to Horsley station. It is clearly unsuitable for children or family groups for leisure purposes. The only future users are likely to be weekend cycling clubs travelling in packs, as they do today.

Overall, we do not believe this route can be considered to represent a viable and safe option for any cyclists to use, whether experienced or otherwise. To describe it as a 'cycle route' is a misnomer.

C. Martyrs Green to Effingham Junction Station via Old Lane.

Total Distance of 2.05 km with 2 junctions

Sections of this cycle route:

Old Lane from Martyrs Green to Forest Road 1.85 km

Over 90% of this proposed cycle route is represented by Old Lane in the section from Martyrs Green by the Black Swan pub to Forest Road in Effingham Junction, East Horsley. Old Lane is a relatively narrow rural highway having only slightly lower traffic volumes than Ockham Road North.

Average traffic speeds are relatively high along Old Lane. The following is an extract submitted by our traffic consultant to the 2017 Wisley planning appeal, based upon the results of an Axiom traffic survey conducted for the two Horsley parish councils earlier that year:

The results of this survey are summarised as follows: the 5-day average northbound flow was 1,957 vpd, the 85%ile speed was 52.1 mph and the average mean speed was 43.9 mph. The 5-day average southbound flow was 2,301 vpd, the 85%ile speed was 51.9 mph and the average mean speed was 44.4 mph. It can therefore be seen that the present 40 mph speed limit is having minimal effect. Moreover, the existing 2-way flows are in excess of 4,000 vpd.

Old Lane contains several curved bends which motorists often take at speed. One consequence is a high rate of accidents. Crashmap data for this particular section of Old Lane shows there were 15 reported accidents during the past 10 years, including 4 severe and 1 fatality.

Despite this fast road and high accident statistics, no highways works are being proposed by Taylor Wimpey for this new 'cycle route' other than the introduction of a 30mph speed limit along Old Lane. Since the current average speeds are well above this level it is not obvious how this speed limit will actually be enforced.

Effingham Junction is the closest railway station to the Wisley site and for many residents would be their preferred station for journeying to London, offering lower fares, shorter journey times and a choice of two lines, making it a more attractive option than Horsley station.

In the Proposals Map, Old Lane is designated as "with traffic main road – for more confident cyclists". Yet surprisingly no highway works are being proposed to encourage 'less confident cyclists' to make use of this route.

Howard Road to Effingham Junction Station 0.2km

After the Old Lane T-junction with Forest Road the cycle route proceeds a short distance through the Forest Road junction into Howard Road and the entrance to Effingham Junction station. No works are proposed by Taylor Wimpey to facilitate the passage of cyclists through this busy and potentially hazardous staggered double T-junction.

The Proposals Map makes no reference to the proposed changes at this staggered T-junction already agreed with Berkeley Homes under a Section 106 agreement related to the development at the Howard of Effingham School. This agreement specifies works to create a new roundabout at this busy junction where long queues form up during the morning rush hour. In our opinion, since Taylor Wimpey are proposing that their cycle route will pass through this complex junction then it would seem appropriate to include some works to facilitate the easier passage of cyclists through it.

ASSESSMENT

Old Lane is the natural choice for commuters seeking the quickest cycle route from the Wisley airfield site to the most convenient London-bound railway station.

By not proposing a segregated cycle route from the Wisley site to Effingham junction Station, Taylor Wimpey are effectively forcing future residents to make a choice – either to use the short but dangerous Old Lane carriageway and take their life in their hands twice a day, or to adopt an alternative travel mode. We suspect many will choose the latter option and select to make the very short car trip, either with station parking or as a drop-off.

In their presentations, Taylor Wimpey have argued that a hierarchy analysis of attractiveness for local destinations gives a low ranking to Effingham Junction, where essentially the station is the only attractor. We believe this analysis is far too simplistic. It lists all of the various facilities available at different destinations around the site without any weighting of their importance and irrespective of travel mode or frequency of use. Effingham Junction will actually be very attractive to those Wisley residents who wish to commute every day (which was 20% in East Horsley at the last available ONS census) and also for leisure cyclists, since Effingham Junction provides connectivity with the wider Surrey Cycle Network, offering safe off-road connections to a range of destinations around the area.

Our strong recommendation to Taylor Wimpey is to re-consider constructing a segregated cycleway along the full length of Old Lane up to Effingham Junction. We understand that highways land may be unavailable for the entire route but this is surely capable of being supplemented by the purchase of some roadside verges from local landowners to allow an off-road cycle route here.

Without a segregated cycle track from the Wisley site to Effingham Junction station, we do not consider this route to represent a viable and safe option for cyclists, whether experienced or otherwise. As with Ockham Road North, to describe this as a cycle route is a misnomer.

CONCLUSION

We believe Taylor Wimpey's proposals for the three cycle routes linking the new Wisley site with the Horsleys to be underwhelming. Little new is being offered on any of these routes other than the erection of some road signs announcing probably unenforceable speed limits.

The two most direct routes to the Horsleys along Ockham Road North and Old Lane offer no highway improvements at all, with cyclists left to battle with busy traffic on dangerous roads. The Long Reach route is a safer cycle option, but it is materially longer and slower and likely to attract only a small segment of users. It also has a significant delivery risk.

We strongly recommend Taylor Wimpey should consider further the construction of a segregated cycle route alongside Old Lane. This would not only provide a safe route for commuters to Effingham Junction station, it would also offer attractive connections to wider parts of the off-road Surrey Cycle Network. As such this route would become highly attractive to all classes of cycle users - commuters, family leisure riders and cycle clubs.

East Horsley Parish Council

West Horsley Parish Council

18th May 2021