

Title: Wokingham Borough Council: School Crossing Patrol Service – Consultation Report- April 2017

Report to Malcolm Richards, Executive Member for Highways and Transport

Prepared by Alex Deans, Matthew Gould & Dave Allen, Environment

Purpose

The report provides a summary of comments received from the 102 individual responses received to the public consultation and the two petitions (605 signatures) also received on the subject. All comments have been considered and a summary of the key issues raised along with WBC's response is contained at Appendix A. The majority of the comments related to perceived safety issues at specific locations.

Background

School Crossing Patrollers are currently employed by the Council, primarily to help children cross the road safely on their way to and from school. The service is discretionary and currently employs 15 patrollers. Of the 15 patrollers currently employed, five operate on a pelican crossing and three on a zebra crossing. The remaining seven patrollers operate at locations where there are no formal controlled crossing facilities.

Wokingham Borough Council continually reviews the value of its non-statutory services, and in this context has been considering the effectiveness of pedestrian crossings as a proven, efficient and safe way of crossing a road. Eight of the school crossing patrollers are currently operating where there is already a safer crossing facility in place.

It was therefore proposed that the school crossing patrol service at these eight locations should cease at the end of this academic year (July 2017).

The eight locations that were part of this proposal were:

- Emmbrook Infant & Junior School, Emmbrook Road, Wokingham
- Highwood Primary School, Fairwater Drive, Woodley
- The Coombes Primary School, School Road, Arborfield
- Earley St Peters Primary Church of England School, Church Road, Earley
- Whiteknights Primary School, Elm Road, Earley
- Beechwood Primary, Headley Road, Woodley
- Hawthorns Primary School, Northway, Woosehill
- Sonning Church of England School Primary School, Pound Lane, Sonning

The remaining seven sites (not listed above) with school crossing patrollers but no formal crossings are exempt from these proposed changes.

Consultation

A public consultation was held to seek comments on this proposal from March 1 to April 19 2017. The table below provides details of the number of responses received by the Council in response to this consultation.

Location	Number of responses received
Sonning CofE Primary School	34 comments
Emmbrook Schools	27 comments
Earley St Peters School	16 comments
The Coombes School	8 comments
Whiteknights Primary School	2 comments
Beechwood Primary School	2 comments
General comments (including those that refer to more than one school)	13 comments
Highwood School	No individual comments (was referred to by one general comment)
Hawthorn Primary School	No comments
EPetition: We the undersigned petition Wokingham Borough Council to abandon its proposal to cease school crossing patrol service at eight locations at the end of this academic year (July 2017)	161 electronic signatures 248 paper signatures
Paper Petition: Earley St Peters C of E Primary School: Keep our Road Crossing Patrollers and Keep our Children Safe	196 signatures

Appendix A below provides a summary of the key issues raised by consultees along with responses from WBC.

The consultation has generated a number of responses from concerned individuals and it is clear that the School Crossing Patrol Service is a well-respected and valued service amongst those responding.

A significant proportion of the comments received relate to general road safety issues i.e. poor driving, speeding vehicles, inconsiderate parking. Issues such as these are not unique to locations near school crossing patrol sites and ultimately it is drivers' responsibility to drive safely and legally. As the only agency currently with the power to enforce these issues, any concerns should be reported to the police on the non-emergency number 101. When Wokingham Borough Council takes on Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) from the police later in 2017, it will be able to target problem areas more effectively.

Another common theme is the general safety for children on their journey to school. It is the responsibility of the parent or carer to ensure their child is safe on the highway. Parents and carers play a vital part in teaching children general road safety and also how to cross the road safely. The council through its Road Safety Education team also provide road safety training and activities to schools and this service will continue.

Both zebra crossings and pelican (light-controlled) crossings are safer places for pedestrians to cross the road, where they are given priority and, as such, pedestrians do not require additional assistance when using them. In many cases, the provision of an SCP pre-dated the crossing and was kept in place when the formal crossing was installed.

All but one of the Pelican crossings is a Puffin crossing (Pedestrian User Friendly Intelligent Crossing). Puffin crossings look very similar to Pelicans and are an updated version of a Pelican crossing. One of the main differences is that the red and green man signals are just above the WAIT box and not on the other side of the road. Puffin crossings have special sensors built in which can detect a pedestrian waiting and makes sure that traffic remains stopped until all the pedestrians have crossed.

When SCPs work on light-controlled crossings, they must step off the kerb and take their position in the road while the red light is showing for traffic, so they do not confuse drivers. SCPs must use the lights to stop traffic, essentially replicating the function of the traffic lights thus duplicating the purpose of the pedestrian crossing.

Conclusion

Consideration of all the responses to the consultation show that they have not raised any issues that should prevent WBC continuing with its proposed removal of the SCP at eight locations that are already served by formal pedestrian crossings facilities from the end of the academic year, in July 2017.

The consultation has however highlighted some site specific issues (not related to SCP) that should be investigated before the start of the new school year in September 2017. These are:

- that all pedestrian crossings at the affected sites be inspected to ensure all lining, signage and other site aspects are all in good condition
- that consideration be given to the conversion of one Pelican crossing to a Puffin
- that all light controlled crossings are inspected to ensure Remote Monitoring System (RMS) is operational and that the signal equipment is in good order

In addition it is recommended that all schools affected are reminded that they have access to the Council's Road Safety and MyJourney teams who can facilitate further road safety training for pupils if requested.

Further details of our Road Safety activities can be found on the council's website at <http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/parking-road-works-and-transport/road-safety/> or by contacting the team via email road.safety@wokingham.gov.uk.

Details relating to MyJourney Wokingham can be found at the following link <http://www.myjourneywokingham.com/discover-wokingham/schools/> The web page also provides a link to a contact page should you require any additional information on or wish to access any the initiatives.

Appendix A: Summary of consultation responses and WBC response

Responses relating to Sonning C of E Primary School	
Comments were received from 34 respondents and letters were received from the SCP at the school and Sonning Parish Council	
Key Themes	WBC response
Poor driving – speeding on Pound Lane	<p>Speed limit enforcement is a matter for Thames Valley Police and any concerns should be reported to them on the non-emergency number 101.</p> <p>The Council will ensure all lining, signage and other site aspects are present and in good condition before the start of the new school year (Sept 2017)</p>
Poor parking – dangerous parking around school and there is a lack of safe parking opportunities	<p>Poor parking is a problem at many schools however it is the responsibility of drivers to ensure they do not park inconsiderately.</p> <p>When WBC takes over Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) from the police later this year it will be able to target problem areas more effectively, and the council has already agreed with the Parish Council to a future review of parking here in the light of CPE.</p>
Poor driving – drivers failing to stop at pedestrian crossing	It is drivers' responsibility to drive safely and legally and any concerns should be reported to the police on the non-emergency number 101.
Pound Land is a very busy road with volume of traffic that means SCP is required	Pedestrian Crossings provide safe crossing points and are appropriate for busy roads. The crossing point is also co-located with a road hump to help reduce vehicle speeds.
Higher proportion of parents have to drive as they live in surrounding villages	The volume of traffic does not prevent a Pedestrian Crossing from being a safer crossing facility.
Pedestrian crossing is near a dangerous bend which blocks motorists' view	All SCP locations are reviewed on a regular basis. The last assessment carried out on the site (July 2016) did not raise any issues or concerns with the site or specifically the bend. It should be noted that the approach from the bend falls within a 20mph zone and visibility sightlines are adequate. Additionally, there is warning signage and school flashers on both approaches.
The SCP is a popular figure who teaches children road safety	It is acknowledged that SCP's are popular however, the discretionary service they have been employed to provide is to ensure people can cross safely and this duplicates the function of the Pedestrian Crossing. WBC can facilitate additional road safety training if schools request it.
There have been attempted abductions in neighbouring	School Crossing Patrollers are employed by the Council to help children cross the road safely on their way to

counties and SCP increases security	and from school. SCP's role is to ensure people can cross roads safely not to ensure safety in other areas.
The savings are not large and could be made in other ways	The level of savings is not relevant to the decision being made. The issue is that SCP and Pedestrian Crossings perform the same function and, therefore, not both necessary.
The pedestrian crossing is a zebra crossing not a traffic-light controlled crossing, which would be safer	Zebra Crossings are considered safe crossing facility. However where appropriate zebra crossing could be converted at a later date to a pelican crossing should funding be available and the site location permit the provision of such a facility
Sonning Parish Council has offered a financial contribution to keep the SCP but would not want to employ one directly	Options for alternative funding are not part of this consultation. The borough council's position remains that the SCP are not necessary due to the presence of the Pedestrian Crossing

Responses relating to Earley St Peters CofE Primary School	
Comments were received from 16 respondents; plus 196 petition signatures	
Key Themes	WBC response
Church Road is particularly busy / dangerous road with heavy congestion in the rush hours	Pedestrian Crossings provide safe crossing points and are appropriate for busy roads
Frequent incidence of poor driving and cycling – failure to stop at red light and dangerous parking	It is drivers' and cyclists' responsibility to drive safely. The Council will ensure all lining, signage and other site aspects are present and in good condition before the start of the new school year (Sept 2017) Poor parking is a problem at many schools however it is the responsibility of driver to ensure they do not park inconsiderately. When WBC takes over Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) from the police later this year it will be able to target problem areas more effectively
Pavements too narrow for the volume of pupils	It is parents' and carers' responsibility to ensure the safety of their children on journeys to and from school. SCP's role is to ensure people can cross roads safely not to ensure safety in other areas.
Earley St Peter's is a large school and therefore there are more pupils attempting to cross road than other schools and SCP help 'crowd control'	It is parents' and carers responsibility to ensure the safety of their children on journeys to and from school. SCP's role is to ensure people can cross roads safely not to ensure safety in other areas.
There is no audible signal that it is safe to cross at the pedestrian crossing	The audible signal is to assist users that are visually impaired and is not used as a primary indication that is it safe to cross as not all crossing will have this enabled. This is often disabled when crossings are located near houses. As an additional aid to users that are visually

	impaired there is a rotating cone located at the base of the button box which users are taught to use
The phasing of the lights at the pedestrian crossing does not allow enough people to cross during busy period and without a SCP this could encourage people to cross dangerously	The length of time people have to cross the road should not be affected by the presence of the SCP because SCP have to operate with the traffic light phasing. The crossing at this location is a Puffin crossing. Puffin crossings have sensors to detect if there are pedestrians waiting at the side of the road to cross. This allows the Puffin crossing to cancel the crossing demand, as it won't be needed if the pedestrians are no longer there. Another sensor is used to extend the crossing time if necessary, by checking/monitoring for pedestrians still in the crossing area.

Responses relating to The Coombes Primary School	
Comments were received from eight respondents and a letter from Arborfield and Newland Parish Council	
Key Themes	WBC Response
Frequent incidence of poor driving – failure to stop at red light and dangerous parking at school drop-off	It is drivers' and cyclists' responsibility to use the highway in a safe manner and follow the laws of the road. The Council will ensure all lining, signage and other site aspects are present and in good condition before the start of the new school year (Sept 2017) Poor parking is a problem at many schools however it is the responsibility of parents to ensure they do not park inconsiderately. When WBC takes over Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) from the police later this year it will be able to target problem areas more effectively
Frequent incidence of children running from parents and need for SCP to help 'crowd control'	It is parents' and carers responsibility to ensure the safety of their children on journeys to and from school. SCP's role is to ensure people can cross roads safely not to ensure safety in other areas.
School has only one entrance that is close to the main road and is over-crowded at drop-off and pick-up times	SCP's role is to ensure people can cross roads safely not to ensure safety in other areas. Schools are responsible for their own access and can seek to make changes if necessary.
The volume of traffic outside school is increasing and will increase due to the Arborfield Garrison Strategic Development Location	Pedestrian Crossings provide safer crossing points and are appropriate for busy roads
Parents have been encouraged to park at the Royal British Legion and walk to school and a	Parents walking their children from the British Legion and the walking bus can use the Pedestrian Crossing. There is no reason for parents to stop walking their

walking bus has been established. This route takes them across the pedestrian crossing. Fear has been expressed that removal of SCP would lead to more parents driving to school	children to school as a result of these changes. It is parents' and carers responsibility to ensure the safety of their children on journeys to and from school.
Lorries and other traffic use School Lane rather than Langley Common Road (due to its designation as a B road) and this leads them passed the school despite Langley Common Road being more suitable for large volumes of traffic	Pedestrian Crossings provide safer crossing points and are appropriate for busy roads.

Responses relating to Emmbrook Schools	
Comments were received from 27 respondents and two letters were received from the SCP at the school	
Key themes	WBC response
The SCP is a reassuring and popular figure for parents and children	It is acknowledged that SCP are popular however, the service they have been employed to provide is to ensure children can cross safely and this duplicates the function of the Pedestrian Crossing
North Wokingham Strategic Development Location will lead to increase in traffic on local roads	Pedestrian Crossing provide safer crossing points and are appropriate for busy roads
Poor driving. Speeding is a problem outside school – appeal for increased traffic calming and measure to prevent parents parking illegally outside school	<p>It is drivers' responsibility to drive safety and legally and any concerns should be reported to the police on the non-emergency number 101.</p> <p>Poor parking is a problem at many schools however it is the responsibility of the driver of the vehicle to ensure they do not park inconsiderately.</p> <p>When WBC takes over Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) from the police later this year it will be able to target problem areas more effectively.</p> <p>There is a series of traffic calming in place around Emmbrook School and an enforceable 20mph speed limit. Issues regarding noncompliance should be reported to the police on the non-emergency number 101.</p>
The site has three schools and two pre-schools in close proximity and therefore	There is a series of traffic calming in place around Emmbrook School and an enforceable 20mph speed

additional safety issues than other areas	limit. These measures are considered appropriate for the area.
Audible alert on crossing has been turned off and should be reactivated. In addition, the phasing of crossing would need to be changed if there is not SCP	The audible signal is to assist users that are visually impaired and is not used as a primary indication that it is safe to cross as not all crossings will have this enabled. This is often disabled when crossings are located near houses. As an additional aid to users that are visually impaired there is a rotating cone located at the base of the button box which users are taught to use
Pavements around school are narrow and SCP helps reduce the danger this causes. In addition children climb on the yellow safety barriers – adding to danger	It is parents' or carer's responsibility to ensure the safety of their children. School Crossing Patrollers are employed by the Council to help children cross the road safely on their way to and from school.
Safe walking routes to school need to be developed	Safe walking routes are in place for the school and WBC can facilitate further road safety training in school if the school requests it.
School has SEN children, including a hearing impaired unit, the children from which will not hear cars or sirens well.	Pedestrian Crossings provide safer crossing points for users with additional needs, including those that are sight and hearing impaired. It is the responsibility of parents and carers to ensure their children are helped to walk to school when necessary.

Responses relating to Beechwood School	
Comments were received from two respondents (including the school headteacher)	
Poor driving – cars failing to stop at pedestrian crossing	It is drivers' responsibility to drive safely and legally and any concerns should be reported to the police on the non-emergency number 101.
Poor driving – cars speeding outside school (request for traffic calming)	It is drivers' responsibility to drive safety. Additional speed reducing measures could be considered at individual sites, however enforcement is the responsibility of Thames Valley Police and any measure could only be introduced in collaboration with them. Any concerns should be reported to them on the non-emergency number 101.
Request for traffic light operated crossing to replace zebra crossing	Zebra Crossings are considered safe crossing facilities. However where appropriate zebra crossing could be converted at a later date to a pelican crossing should funding be available and the site location permits the provision of such a facility
Request for more road safety education	WBC does offer road safety training and will provide further training at the school should the school request it.

Responses relating to Whiteknights School	
Comments were received from two respondents	
Volume of traffic makes road dangerous	Pedestrian Crossing provide safe crossing points and are appropriate for busy roads
SCP ensures children do not stand too close to edge of road	It is parents' and carers responsibility to ensure the safety of their children on journeys to and from school. SCP's role is to assist people in crossing the road and not to ensure their safety in other areas.
SCP is a popular and valued figure	It is acknowledged that SCP are popular however, the service they have been employed to provide is to ensure children can cross safely and this duplicates the function of the Pedestrian Crossing

General responses (and those relating to more than one school)	
Comments were received from 13 respondents	
Poor driving – in particular drivers failing to stop, speeding and being distracted by phones etc	It is drivers' responsibility to drive safety. Additional speed reducing measures could be considered at individual sites if problems persist however enforcement is the responsibility of Thames Valley Police and any measure could only be introduced in collaboration with them. Any concerns should be reported to them on the non-emergency number 101.
Drivers and pedestrians do not understand Pedestrian Crossings and as a result act dangerously	Pedestrian Crossings are covered in the Highway Code and it is the responsibility of all drivers to understand them. WBC's My Journey and Road Safety teams can support schools to increase parents and children's understanding of them.
Without SCP, who will report issues such as Pedestrian Crossing lights that fail, drivers who do not stop and road surface problems	All these issues can be reported by parents or school staff directly to the police (in the case of dangerous driving) or to WBC. Most traffic light facilities within the borough have a remote monitoring system (RMS) which will report any faults automatically. All locations will be checked to ensure that the RMS are working.