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THE A259 DIVIDE

Richard Jannaway

The busy A259, divides Emsworth in two and the section of road known as the 'short bypass', which made a big difference to the town centre when it had to carry all the A27 traffic, now makes that split worse by encouraging excessive speed in blatant disregard for the 30 mph speed limit.

During part of a 'Liveability Scheme workshop', (a government funded scheme which must be completed by March 2006), several members of the Emsworth Community Board were asked for ideas to improve the public open spaces in Emsworth. One of the main concerns expressed was the underpass/roundabout area for which a thorough study was requested. This problem was taken up in the Design Framework project carried out by Roger Evans Associates and exhibited in the Pastoral Centre in January.

A budget of £200,000, out of a total of £3 million for the whole Borough, was set by HBC for this underpass project. HBC then decided that a comprehensive scheme to solve the problem was not possible. Dawn Baxendale told The EMS that "the County Council would not support such a scheme at this stage and we would be unable to move forward in the timescales that we need to operate to meet government requirements under Liveability."

Instead, HBC are proposing to 'enhance' the underpass by replacing a short flight of steps with a ramp to improve disabled access to Palmers Road car park. Other suggestions are: improved surfaces, handrails, mirrors and artwork on walls, some of which could be paid for by Hampshire County Council. Joanne Penny, HBC's coordinator for the Liveability Project, said that if we didn't want the underpass 'enhancement' then Emsworth would get nothing out of the Liveability Scheme budget.

The reason for concern about such 'enhancements' is that by spending a substantial sum on the underpass now we would risk this being used as an excuse to avoid doing a proper road safety and traffic calming study leading to action to reunite the northern and southern parts of the town centre and control the A259 traffic to make Emsworth safer and more pleasant for pedestrians and cyclists. These are issues coming to the fore in Emsworth from a range of directions. Residents completing the Emsworth Design Statement survey a year ago mentioned it as a major concern and this was repeated in the feedback from the recent exhibition. In this issue of The EMS we have Brendan Gibb-Grey's initiative on road safety, letters from the Governors of Emsworth Primary School, the Road Safety Action Group based at St James Primary School and several other contributors.

Please write in with your views about what is needed to be done about this long-standing issue.

See also Letters to the Editor on page 2, Ode to a Crossing page 4.



Cycle/car conflict at the end of the cycle path on Havant Road

ROAD SAFETY - JOIN THE DEBATE

Brendan Gibb-Gray

As a recently elected councillor for Emsworth, I am acutely aware of the anxiety felt by residents in regard to road safety, traffic speed and negotiating our busy roads. Only the issues of crime and yobish behaviour are of comparable concern.

Whilst acknowledging the vital role the car plays in our daily life and that the majority of people drive carefully, we should remember the people of all ages who walk and cycle find the increasing volume and speed of traffic a real threat to life and limb. This is an everyday fear for parents and children walking to school. Small but significant improvements to central reservations in Havant Rd to assist safe crossing and design improvements in Horndean Rd., would help reduce traffic speed and make walking and cycling a viable and safe option for many more of our children.

We have more than 500 hundred children attending our primary schools, with a majority of them travelling by car. Teachers and concerned parents are doing all in their power to get Havant Borough Council and Hampshire County Council to implement School Travel Plans - our schools were among the first to lodge them with the County. The Authority have yet to begin work on safe cycle/walking links between schools and other urgent and necessary road improvements.

Our village is split by the A259 and this is particularly acute at the roundabout. Residents say they do not like the underpass, so risk their lives crossing near the doctor's surgery - sometimes having to run to avoid cars accelerating off the roundabout. Whilst the Emsworth Community Board has won funding for short-term improvements to the underpass, many people feel that safe surface crossings are the real answer. The only way this might be achieved is to replace the roundabout with automatic traffic signals. Readers may have other suggestions to improve the link between our shopping streets and enhance village cohesion.

Other suggestions to make our streets safer include a one-way system through the High St/Queen St which would reduce congestion and provide more badly needed on-street parking for residents and visitors. Additionally, there might be a case for 20mph speed limits in parts of the village.

Communities in other parts of the UK are beginning to question the tardiness of local authorities by challenging the dominance of the motorcar and coming forward with imaginative and inventive ideas to improve road safety, particularly in places where cars, pedestrians, and cyclists are forced to share the same space. It seems the approach to these concerns by the authorities is to act only after a serious personal injury accident has occurred.

These issues are vitally important to our well being and the future of our village community. Ideas and suggestions will be gratefully received. We really must try to improve the living environment of all residents and design safe routes to get our children to and from school, without increasing their dependence on the motorcar.



EDS exhibition a resounding success

Brian Edwards-Picknett



Overwhelming compliments continue to roll in following the Emsworth Design Statement exhibition staged in February.

Held in International House in the Square, the exhibition was the culmination of 13 months diligent work by a core group of some 15 local volunteer residents. The common aim of those involved is to see Emsworth evolve in a manner sympathetic to its traditions, preserving the features which make it unique, whilst recommending beneficial improvements where possible.



Almost 400 people visited the one and a half day exhibition - mainly residents but some visitors also attended and were welcomed to give their input.

On entering, each was given a form, pen and clip board and invited to comment on the identified design points highlighted in red in each of the 8 sections. The eight sections are: Landscape Setting, Settlement Pattern, Built Environment, Roads, Paths & Transport, Economic Activity, Sense of Community, Nature Conservation Areas and Harbour.

Interestingly, the majority spent between forty-five minutes and an hour absorbing the display information, ticking their agreement or disagreement and adding their thoughts and observations.

The fact that most responses were very positive is a credit to the EDS team's groundwork of questionnaires, consultations and analyses. Comments received as a result of the exercise will, where possible, be incorporated and/or used to amend the various design points making the final result a true reflection of our community's views.

More than 600 comments were made only 3% of which expressed disagreement. Comments

were made on all eight sections ranging from agreement, disagreement, points about accuracy, omissions, and suggestions for additions. To give an indication of the range of comments, here are excerpts from two of the comments.

"I am impressed with the Design Statement and its display. It acknowledges the necessity for changes and development whilst emphasizing the distinctive qualities which make Emsworth appealing."

"Young people are seriously underprovided for and most wouldn't go near a youth club. Somewhere for them to meet and 'hang out' ... they're not all sporty types and some just want to talk with their friends and listen to music."

Posters advertising the exhibition were displayed around Emsworth and, on their collection afterwards, one was found with an attached notice stating "Well Worth a Visit - Don't Miss It" ! Thanks go to an anonymous, enthusiastic, satisfied customer.

If you did not manage to get to see the exhibition and would like to see what it said, you can view the full text on the EDS website www.emsworthdesignstatement.org.uk

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