

Old Hill Decisions

At the meeting held by Councillor George Taylor on the 2nd March, he considered the report on the latest consultation with residents on the Old Hill, Chislehurst traffic calming scheme. The main points in the report produced by council staff were:

1. The majority of residents felt that traffic calming was necessary on Old Hill but a large majority also felt that the “right type” had not been installed. In other words there was clear dissatisfaction with the two single cushions on the lower part of the hill and with some other aspects of the scheme with a number of people complaining of severe discomfort as a result. Note that the response rate to the survey was 24% which is a good one for this type of consultation exercise.
2. There was unfortunately no unified view as to what should be done about the scheme and a number of impractical suggestions were made. The main support seemed to be for changing the single speed cushions into full width tables or humps, or scrapping them altogether, but council staff would not support the latter suggestion.
3. Note that thirty questionnaires were received from outside the local consultation area which the council ignored when compiling the report. At the meeting, your editor asked a question on this point and the answer given by Gareth Davies was that they were ignored because he was not convinced they were genuine road users. But in a subsequent conversation he backtracked on that and simply said they were not from the local area. *(Editors Note: some of these 30 questionnaires were no doubt from BBRAG members so if you care to complain that your comments were ignored I suggest you send your comments to the Chief Executive at Bromley Council).*
4. The report also did not mention the severe accident involving Anja Szkodowski that was covered in our previous newsletters. When your editor asked why not, when council staff were clearly aware of the matter, it was stated that this was because it hadn't been reported via the police STATS19 system which seems a pretty lame excuse (as also pointed out previously, the police had specifically rebuffed Anja twice when she tried to report it).
5. The report shows that traffic volumes fell considerably after the traffic calming measures were installed. But it also shows for the first time that the 85th percentile speed on the road before installation was just over 30 mph – this is remarkably low in comparison with most roads in Bromley and not only shows that the vast majority of people kept within the speed limit but also that the traffic calming measures were probably unnecessary.
6. The accident record is also supportive of the above argument with only a few slight accidents before and after construction – that's apart from the severe accident to Anja Szkodowski of course, which was a direct result of the defective design of the scheme.
7. The report recommended:
 - a – Marking the humps.
 - b – Some changes to parking restrictions.
 - c – That Mr Taylor considers whether it was worthwhile to spend £5,000 replacing the two single speed cushions with flat top tables (note the lack of specific recommendation on the latter).

The full report is available from the council web site if you want to read it.

BBRAG's Position

Note that BBRAG supported the proposal to change the single cushions to speed tables with the following provisos:

- a – That the local residents affected by traffic noise (ie. “thumps”) from the humps be consulted about the new table design and placing.
- b – That the humps be designed to minimise noise by using a gentle leading slope, and be more clearly marked. These features would also avoid a recurrence of the severe accident mentioned above.

What Were The Decisions?

Mr Taylor decided that the speed tables should be installed, to replace the single cushions, and the other recommendations also followed. However no more than £5,000 will be spent on the tables.

Also it seems that local residents will again be consulted on this matter, so it is hoped that they will get what they want, although the limit of £5,000 may make it difficult to achieve a high quality result.

Let us pray though that the end result is an improvement because this saga has been going on for far too long. It has certainly consumed an awful lot of council staff time and money. But of course this has resulted primarily from the inability of council staff to listen to the comments of BBRAG and of residents at an early stage, and to take heed of subsequent complaints.