



Ms D Jones
Countryside Access
Surrey County Council
Whitebeam Lodge
Merrow Depot
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Guildford
Surrey GU4 7BQ

Paul Goddard,
Honorary Secretary WVA,
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Submitted also by email to rightsofway@surreycc.gov.uk

2nd May 2022

Dear Ms Jones

Objection to Proposed Prohibition of Traffic Order 202

Reference: DW/3/1/41/526

**Public Byway Open to All Traffic (BOAT) No. 526 Capel & Wotton (D287)
(Wolvens Lane)**

On behalf of Westcott Village Association, I am submitting an objection to the proposed Prohibition of Traffic Order 202. This follows the representation made to you by Tim Way in a letter dated 14th April 2021 on behalf of the WVA. This representation is still relevant to our objections and is summarised below as follows:

WVA's stated preference is for Option 1, accommodating horse drawn carriages if possible, based on the following principles:-

1. To protect the Council's significant financial investment in the resurfacing work
2. To preserve the safety and quiet enjoyment of Wolvens Lane for compatible users
3. To preserve the AONB and the sensitive environment the lane passes through
4. To contain the financial and management burden for the local taxpayer (police and councils), landowners and other stakeholders

The WVA Committee was very disappointed with the decision to propose only to ban four wheeled vehicles from using Wolvens Lane and not to ban motor bikes. We understand local Westcott Residents who gave direct responses to the 2021 consultation were also overwhelmingly in favour of Option 1, and their views were further reinforced at a recent WVA Open Meeting.

We note the 'Statement of Reasons for making the Order' published with the Proposed Prohibition of Traffic Order 202 and will comment on these in this letter.

However, core to our objection to Traffic Order 202 are two specific matters:

- 1) the result of a survey petition carried out amongst Westcott WVA Members and Residents during April 2022, and
- 2) evidence that the expensive repairs to Wolvens Lane are already beginning to show signs of failure which we would argue is caused almost exclusively by motor bikes

The survey petition:

To gauge the current reaction of Westcott Residents to the pending decision to allow motor bikes to continue to use Wolvens Lane, a survey petition was circulated to WVA Members by email with a supporting commentary. The survey petition asked those WVA Members to consider the pending decision and then to participate in the survey by selecting one of the following two options:

- To ban all motorised vehicles including motorbikes or
- To leave the traffic plan as it is and only ban four wheel vehicles

The result of the survey is as follows:

- 179 people responded
- 174 responses, that is 97.2%, are in favour of extending the ban on four wheel vehicles to include motorbikes
- 5 responses, that is 2.8% are in favour of leaving the plan as it is with only four wheel motor vehicles banned

The email was sent to the 414 people on the WVA mailing list, 289 (70%) opened the email, of whom 128 (44% of those who opened it) went on to click on the survey. The remainder of the responders – that is 51 - came from our social media activity.

The complete wording of the survey petition is set out in Appendix 1 to this letter.

Given that these responses will largely be from residents who live locally to Wolvens Lane and potentially use it for leisure purposes, the result is one that the WVA urges Surrey County Council to take note of. Excessive motor bike speeds and noise is already a daily annoying and dangerous nuisance on the A25 through and beyond the village, a nuisance that local and national public bodies all acknowledge, but are failing to address. Whilst we accept there are motorcyclists who act responsibly, there are many who do not.

Our collective experience on Wolvens Lane is the same – some motorcyclists are considerate to other users but many are not. Their excessive speeds will inevitably lead to accidents and even considerate motorcyclists are noisy given how the trees and bushes contain the sound. This is particularly concerning where a single-track D class road has a speed limit of 60 miles per hour.

We strongly urge you to reconsider your proposal, and take note of the views of those people who live close by, know the area, and want to keep Wolvens Lane and the surrounding AONB a safe, peaceful and attractive amenity for walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

Failure of the expensive repairs:

The second specific matter in support of the WVA Objection is the evidence that the newly repaired surface of Wolvens Lane is already deteriorating. Ruts are developing particularly on sloping parts caused, we would argue, almost exclusively by motor bikes.

WVA Committee Member and local Resident James Leaver, a frequent user of Wolvens Lane, has recently taken some photographs that show the ruts. Examples are shown in Appendix 2 and more are in the hard copy of this letter posted to Merrow Depot.

A recent pedestrian inspection of the entire length of Wolvens Lane last week clearly showed visible ruts particularly on sloping sections – for instance just below the Kingston Ramblers memorial. Visual evidence would suggest that this is a result of motorcyclists using more power through their rear wheels to go uphill and braking to slow down going downhill. These ruts will only get deeper and wider with motorbike use especially in or after periods of rain. The Lane and slopes will become increasingly hazardous for cyclists encouraged to use Wolvens Lane as part of the Leith Hill Greenway – a major and costly Surrey Hills AONB initiative.

There is also substantial evidence of damage to banks and paths and areas in the vicinity of Wolvens Lane that can only have been caused by motorcycle tyres. To reinforce this point, Residents have reported being confronted by scrambler bikes travelling at speed on the narrow raised footpaths above the Lane

Given that Wolvens Lane is generally narrow, groups of motorcyclists ride in single file along the middle of the Lane. Detritus is moved to the edges of the Lane and the central line is wearing down. Ruts are already forming on the newly repaired surfaces due to concentrated motorbike use.

SCC 'Statement of reasons for making the Order':

As noted earlier, there are some comments used in the above Statement which Surrey County Council has made to justify closing Wolvens Lane to four wheeled motor vehicles and horsed drawn carriages which, we believe, would equally justify prohibiting motorbikes too.

These include – referring to the numbered points in the Statement

Point 1: Acknowledges that the route is narrow with very few safe passing places with restricted visibility risking conflict between users.

Point 3: Says that motorbikes and horses can pass each other with relative ease along much of the route. This acknowledges that on some parts of the route it is not easy and accidents are therefore more likely to happen.

Point 3: We fail to see why not being able to build structures to prevent motorbikes using Wolvens Lane means that motorbikes can't be banned and are to be allowed to use it. There isn't a structure to prevent motorbikes accessing the Cradhurst in Westcott but it doesn't mean they should therefore be allowed to ride there!

Point 3: Our view is that signage asking motor bikers to be courteous is merely a sop to other users to demonstrate that Surrey County Council have done something to remind motor bikers to ride safely and quietly and within the speed limit. It will have little or no impact on the thrill seekers.

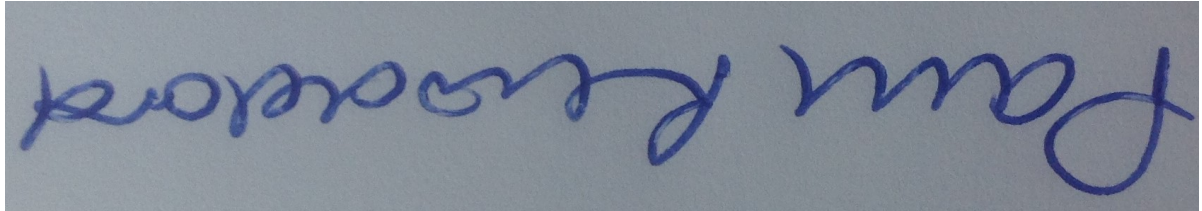
Point 4: Allowing motor bikers to use Wolvens Lane will not prevent damage to the surface. It is very clear that motorbikes damage the surface.

Point 6: Notwithstanding the outcome of the final review of the proposal, Surrey County Council should publish the 'monitor and review' methods and processes they intend to put in place to check the effectiveness of the TRO. Local Residents will then be in a better position to provide evidence to be considered in the proposed annual review.

We also fundamentally disagree with the conclusion drawn in the last paragraph of the paper. We could agree with it wholeheartedly, if the TRO banned all motor vehicles including motorbikes.

In conclusion, on behalf of its Members and Residents of Westcott, and for the reasons expressed herein, the WVA very strongly urges Surrey County Council to change their Proposed Prohibition of Traffic Order 202 and extend the prohibition to all motor vehicles not just those with four or more wheels.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Paul Goddard", is displayed on a light blue background. The signature is written in a cursive style.

Paul Goddard,

Honorary Secretary, Westcott Village Association

cc
Tim Way
WVA Committee
Hazel Watson

APPENDIX 1

Wolvens Lane ByWay: Act now to ban all motorised vehicles

Calling all WVA members - please respond to the petition below before the end of April asking Surrey County Council to reverse their decision and STOP ALL motor vehicles including motorbikes from using the Wolvens Lane byway which runs from Wotton to Coldharbour

In 2020, Surrey Highways spent over £100k repairing the heavily rutted surface of Wolvens Lane to make it safe for all users and to incorporate the newly launched “Leith Hill Greenway” cycle path from Denbies to Coldharbour. Following repairs the byway was closed to all four wheeled vehicles (but not motorbikes) while a public consultation was conducted to consider the long term use and allow the new surface to bind.

Many Westcott residents and the WVA responded to the consultation choosing the option presented which banned all motor vehicles including motorbikes from using the byway. The WVA set out its reasons for choosing this option in a letter to Surrey Highways (14th April 2021). Despite these representations in Sept 2021 Surrey Highways Local Committee concluded the consultation by deciding to keep the byway open to motorbikes whilst continuing to ban four wheel vehicles. They are now planning to formalise this in a Traffic Order.

The WVA and many of those residents present at the recent WVA Open Meeting believe this to be the wrong decision. There has been significant deterioration to the surface over the winter period due to continued motorbike use and there are many safety concerns about allowing motorbikes to drive on a track used extensively by walkers, families, dog walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

Time is now running out to make our voices heard and urge our County Councillor, Hazel Watson, to make representations to reverse the decision and stop all motor vehicles including motorbikes from using Wolvens Lane. This is not just about protecting the investment already made in the surface it is about ensuring all “non-motorised” users can safely enjoy the peace and beauty of the area. Please respond before the end of April so we can submit a strong view to the Council by their 2nd May deadline

Please indicate your agreement or not by selecting the relevant box below so we can present a petition to Hazel Watson urging her to act now and if the majority agree, to reverse the decision made by Surrey Highways Local Committee about the use of Wolvens Lane

☐ BAN ALL MOTORISED VEHICLES including motorbikes

☐ Or leave the plan as it is and only ban four wheel vehicles

END

