

Questions for the County Highways Authority for the Joint Committee on 6th December 2017

Preamble

Given that the top priorities of the Council Highways Authority (CHA) are to 1. ensure road safety and, 2. to enable the free flow of traffic commensurate with priority 1, it is mystifying why the authority, as a statutory consultee to Local Planning Authorities, continues to recommend approval for planning applications with apparent disregard for these two priorities and the Parking Standards laid down by Spelthorne Council. The apparent alacrity with which the CHA recommends approval in respect of controversial schemes is a concern that has been observed by the Lower Sunbury Residents' Association for many years; and is known to be shared by a number of Planning Committee members.

Two recent applications for the development of Inglewood Hall in Green Street and at 126 Green Street, Sunbury – both on busy road junctions and bus routes - are cases in point. Neither application conforms with the Council's parking standards and both will entail on-street parking as a result.

The CHA's website "Surrey Highways – What do we do?" states: *"Our engineers assess each request, taking into account a number of factors, including road, safety, accessibility, congestion, the possibility of just displacing a problem...."* On pavement parking it states: *"Due to the demand for parking provision, this is a continual problem in many areas...."* Yet despite its lofty claims we see that the CHA's (unsigned) report for Inglewood Hall tacitly accepts that pavement parking *will* result, to wit: *"Even if vehicles did park partly on the footway, there would still be at least 2m of footway width left to allow pedestrians and wheelchair users to pass safely"*.

In respect of Inglewood Hall, the CHA report also states: *"The assessment was carried out on the 3 October around 11am as that was the time that the relevant officers were available."* In other words, at a time when one would least expect to see the likely effects of on-street parking which is at its worst after commuters have returned from work and school runs non-existent. A developer, had he been asked, could not have chosen a more helpful time for a highways assessment to be undertaken; and the author's suggestion that it was when *"the relevant officers were available"* is wholly inexcusable.

The CHA report continues: *"We recognise that there is a high demand for on-street parking in Green Street when schools are opening and closing; however, this is a temporary problem – it occurs at specific times of the day and only for short periods of time."* This comment is contemptibly dismissive of residents who live in the area for it takes no account of the high traffic volumes and congestion occasioned in Green Street and Nursery Road during the morning rush. No officer's assessment at 11am will reveal the true extent of the problem; and mere guesswork admits a betrayal of the professionalism we have a right to expect.

Questions

My questions for the CHA are as follows:

1. Spelthorne's parking standards are enshrined in planning law, so why is it that the CHA does not give its unqualified support to the law when enforcing the standards which are applicable outside Spelthorne's 4 town centres?
2. Can the CHA explain how an authoritative highways assessment can be effected at 11am on a weekday morning?

3. Is the CHA now admitting 'parking partly' on the pavement is acceptable if this is the price to be paid for getting applications through to eventual approval by the LPA?
4. What systems are in place to assess the cumulative impact of successive developments on highways within residential areas?
5. Under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 may I be supplied with data specifying the number of recommendations for refusal by the CHA in respect of all residential developments within the TW16 postal area to cover the last 5 years (expressed numerically or as a percentage of the whole)?

John Hirsh,
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