
LONDON ROAD ACTION GROUP

Purpose, Objectives and Structure

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LRAG

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Purpose

The purpose of the London Road Action Group (LRAG) is to represent and give voice to the views of local residents, businesses, community groups and schools on Surrey County Council's plans for an active travel scheme on London Road, and to provide a conduit for SCC to communicate with these groups.

LRAG welcomes the development of improved carriageway facilities – and improved safety - for cyclists, and pedestrians (including bus users), and is committed to ensuring that the needs and safety of all road users are taken into account in the design and implementation of road improvements.

Scope

The focus at present is on Phase 1 of the planned scheme, which comprises the length of the A3100 between the Aldi roundabout at New Inn Lane and the Boxgrove roundabout.

However, Phase 2 – the construction of a Dutch roundabout to replace the existing Boxgrove roundabout – and Phase 3 – the replication of the Phase 1 scheme on the A3100 between Boxgrove roundabout and York/Waterden Road – are in scope, and cannot be ignored.

Objectives

Our objectives are as follows.

1. Ensure that the new round of consultation proposed by Surrey County Council is appropriate, given the impact of both the scheme and the construction, addresses both the scheme and its implementation, and provides meaningful engagement with all elements of the community who will be directly impacted.
2. Ensure that the feedback resulting from the consultation directly influences the design of the scheme, that the scheme is the best possible solution given the circumstances of London Road as an arterial route and that existing safety concerns are fully addressed.
3. Ensure that the construction and diversion arrangements for the scheme take account of the needs of local residents, businesses, schools and community groups, and prioritise minimising disruption for these groups, organisations and individuals.
4. Ensure that the consultation on Phase 1 is fully cognisant of the potential ramifications on the design and implementation of Phases 2 and 3.

Structure & Representation

The LRAG comprises representatives from the local residents' associations and interest groups, structured, initially, to achieve the objectives laid out at 1 to 3 above.

LRAG comprises a core group, and three working groups that will address:

- Communication with all interested parties, including schools, bus operators, businesses, community groups and individuals, emergency services.
- Safe scheme design
- Scheme construction/implementation

The core group will comprise the leaders of the working groups in order to co-ordinate, and the intent is to provide a two-way conduit to SCC, to and from the various organisations, groups and individuals, maximising public consultation. Details are attached as Appendices but this is a living document and will get amended as plans are revealed.

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Working Practice and Ethos

In all our dealings with officials and councillors of Surrey CC we must **remain courteous**. It is not our role to make the implementation plans for them, nor to attempt to design a better scheme. We know the PR disaster they have created for themselves in failing to think about the full ramifications of their original proposal, and their failure to take public opinion along with them.

We are reactors to whatever Surrey CC decide to do. Our role must be to **offer support for Surrey CC's communication** with as much of the public as possible, to **point out possible omissions and errors**, politely, based on our expertise and any feedback we obtain, but we should not attempt to present an opposition, *per se*. We must deal in **facts, not opinions**. The final conclusion will be theirs, not ours.

Collective Responsibility

We are aware of several instances where Surrey CC appear to offer mixed messages, seemingly because different spokespersons offer inconsistent briefings, presumably due to ineffective internal lines of communication. We must **be consistent** and to that end anyone forming part of LLAG should endeavour not to offer opinions other than through an **agreed consensus**, and make sure that all LLAG **participants remain aware of any and all communications with Surrey CC**. Informal notes should be recorded at any internal meetings, as they are not only a benefit in harmonising output, but important for maintaining a chronological account.

Communication Principles

Communication activity is anticipated to break down into central and local activity.

- Central (LLAG core group)
 - Creating/revising material, both from Surrey CC and other LLAG members, for the core group heads to share and to email out to stakeholders / post on social media / leaflet if necessary.
 - Collating feedback from the various interested parties (businesses, schools, transport providers, emergency services, residents' associations, etc) to feed back to both SCC and other LLAG members.
- Local (Working Group Leaders)
 - Sharing material with all stakeholders, discussing what's happening, and feeding back to LLAG core group for dissemination.

The foregoing applies to all working groups, though for the "technical" groups (Safe Design and Construction/Implementation) local communication will mostly involve other LLAG members and consultants.

The most important principle, however, is not to cause the same situation as we have seen at Surrey CC, where the Council leader has had to justify actions of his team that he may not have approved, had he had advance warning. All of our **outgoing external communications must be reviewed before transmission**.

General Guidelines

As a general set of guidelines, for both LLAG and Surrey CC, these principles may be helpful:

1. The end must justify the means. Greenwashing isn't good enough. A benefit for 2% is a disadvantage for 98%
2. Surrey CC should engage with LLAG on all aspects, safety, design, implementation, consultation and communication.
3. We (LLAG) may be the only voice that residents etc will trust. Surrey CC should listen to us if a repeat of 5th January is to be avoided.

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4. LRAG have local experience, knowledge and expertise; we are not just nimbys.
5. Surrey CC must not just throw LRAG potential red meat e.g., adding 50 cm to road width, cycling chicanes at transition points, removing floating bus stops etc. An improvement may still not be good enough.
6. Both parties must do their homework and anticipate public reaction. The advice is all there in “Traffic Management Act 2004: network management to support active travel” and “Gear Change”.
7. Always be able to back claims, and prove facts are facts not opinions.
8. Internal communication must be effective, so that left hand and right hand are in touch, in order to avoid mixed messages.
9. Consider possible knock-on effects for the entire scheme, not just Phase 1.
10. So far it has been a PR disaster. The only message people heard was: “we are going to make your life miserable for 7, no 5, months.” It was the equivalence of “Trying to persuade the Inuit to buy fridges, by suggesting they move to Florida.”
11. Time is no longer of the essence; we are prepared to discuss and in detail.
12. Review successful consultations e.g. Manchester.
13. Don’t just use passive communication i.e., posting on the website. Get into social media, local press, posters, TV, radio.

London Road Action Group – Core Team

