

## **A3 Hindhead Inquiry**

### **Waverley Cycling Forum First Day Statement**

Alec McCalden

#### **Abbreviations Used:**

HA - Highways Agency

NT - National Trust

#### **1. Introduction**

Thank you for giving us this opportunity to make an early statement. The Waverley Cycling Forum is one of eleven forums in Surrey set up by government as liaison bodies between local councillors, Surrey road engineers and cycle users. The Waverley Forum has put this statement together, although we have the close support of the other cycle groups and independent users represented at this inquiry. In preparing this case, we have taken care to work with other non-motorised user groups and feel we understand the needs of equestrians, carriage drivers and walkers also. We have also borne in mind the needs of the disabled. We and other non-motorised groups have spent considerable amounts of our own time with members of the HA and the NT, discussing their ideas and putting our own forward. Our proposals are inherently environmentally friendly.

#### **2. Motor Traffic**

We have to say that we support strongly the principle of the removal of motor traffic from Hindhead Common. It will totally transform the Common, Punch Bowl and village, and bring back a touch of open space and humanity to an area that's heavy with traffic and development. In transport terms, there's a real sense of injustice that the A3 has been allowed to develop to the point where it is too hazardous for most cyclists - and horseriders, carriage drivers and pedestrians - to use or cross it, whilst the motor vehicle is fully catered for. The construction of the tunnel together with the Thursley access link potentially redresses this balance somewhat, but only if a good quality route is available.

#### **3. Utility Cycling**

The downside of this scheme is that we feel that the issue of utility cycle use has been completely misunderstood and subsequently ignored by the HA. Any cycle provision has been aimed at recreational use, which is a rather different requirement. We are surprised and disappointed at the lack of knowledge shown by the HA of current government requirements in provision for cycle use.

## **4. Hindhead Common**

We put forward a strong case for keeping a limited width of the existing A3 open over Hindhead Common primarily for use of cycle traffic, with appropriate gating to keep out motorised vehicles. We show that the criteria for assessing the environmental case are still met, and arguably enhanced, if a limited width of the existing road is kept. We suggest the issue boils down to one of aesthetics, and that the argument has been rather one-sided. The problem of the existing A3 is one of the existing motor traffic and not that of the road itself. With the motor traffic gone, research from such bodies as the RSGB and Sustrans suggests that wildlife will soon be restored to that normal for such a beautiful environment. The alternative route proposed for utility cycles over Gibbet Hill fails simple tests for safety and conflict with other users, as well as being significantly less convenient.

## **5. To The South**

From the south of the A3 scheme to the Hindhead crossroads we also make detailed comments and suggestions. Not only do we think that existing crossings of the A3 for non-motorised users be kept, but agree with other groups that there is a strong case for an extra crossing at Bramshott Common, about 1km south of the nominal boundary to this A3 scheme. This would give a cycle route extending all the way from Thursley in the north to Liphook in the south.

We're very concerned that effective cycle and pedestrian provision has been ignored in the design of the Hazel Grove roundabouts, particularly as they are in a residential area and part of routes to schools. It is vital that the details of the crossings at Hammer lane and High Pitfold are appropriate for cycles, equestrians and pedestrians. Miss James' Walk and bridge will form an attractive off-road option to using Hazel Grove, but we have yet to see a commitment for cycle use. The plan for the length of existing A3 south of the crossroads omits any provision for on-carriageway cycle use, and the idea of a double mini roundabout to replace the Hindhead crossroads scares us rigid.

## **6. Conclusion**

In conclusion, there's a lot to recommend this scheme but we wish the HA had done the job thoroughly and included the concept of cycles as everyday utility transport. The current plans violate government requirements in places and ignore the recommendations of experienced local users in many others. Removal of the existing A3 over Hindhead Common will be a catastrophe for cycle use in the future. A bit of a concern is that the Cycle Forum liaison mechanism seems to have been largely bypassed; this Forum and the other groups look forward to working with the HA in the future and having a very much more constructive and positive dialogue.