

Traffic Management Sub-Committee

06 March 2024



Reading
Borough Council
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Title	Petition Response – Request to improve road safety of Hamilton Road junction with Crescent Road
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report status	Public report
Report author	James Penman, Network Services Manager
Lead councillor	John Ennis
Corporate priority	Healthy Environment
Recommendations	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. That the Sub-Committee notes the content of this report.2. That the Sub-Committee agrees to the officer recommendation in Section 3.9, namely that no further alterations to the junction are currently recommended and that potential options to address through-traffic can be investigated when funding and resourcing allow.3. That the lead petitioner be informed of the decisions of the Sub-Committee, following publication of the agreed minutes of the meeting.4. That no public inquiry be held into the proposals.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1. To provide an update and response to a petition requesting the Council to improve road safety at Hamilton Road junction with Crescent Road, which was received at June 2023 Traffic Management Sub-Committee (report available [here](#)).
- 1.2. This report follows officer investigation of the requested alterations in the petition and the presentation that accompanied it, and initial officer recommendations that have been made to the Lead Councillor and Ward Councillors.
- 1.3. This report does not recommend alterations to the junction at this time (see Section 3.9), acknowledges a desire to reduce through-traffic (rat-running), but highlights the implications of doing so. This area in particular will inevitably be the subject of further discussion and investigation, but this is not work that is funded nor resourced at this time.

2. Policy context

- 2.1. The Council's new Corporate Plan has established three themes for the years 2022/25. These themes are:
 - Healthy Environment
 - Thriving Communities
 - Inclusive Economy

- 2.2. These themes are underpinned by “Our Foundations” explaining the ways we work at the Council:
- People first
 - Digital transformation
 - Building self-reliance
 - Getting the best value
 - Collaborating with others
- 2.3. Full details of the Council’s Corporate Plan and the projects which will deliver these priorities are published on the [Council’s website](#). These priorities and the Corporate Plan demonstrate how the Council meets its legal obligation to be efficient, effective and economical.

3. The proposal

Current Position

- 3.1. On 2 March 2023, a petition was submitted to the Council, which was reported to the Sub-Committee in June 2023 (available [here](#)), containing 23 reports of near misses/collisions and 26 comments and ideas to improve safety at crossroad from residents. These were submitted in two tables, which form Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 of this report. During the Sub-Committee meeting, a presentation was shown to illustrate the concerns and to provide additional option proposals for overcoming the concerns raised.
- 3.2. The letter that accompanied the tables stated the following:

Because of ongoing expressions of concern, I recently asked residents of Hamilton Road to send me their examples of collisions and near-miss incidents at this crossroads, and their views on what might improve the situation. The responses are included in the attached document: Tables 1 and 2.

Near-miss incidents must be taken seriously as they are an indication of a danger that could result in death/injury/damage. Data from Crashmap.co.uk, shows only 3 incidents reported for this junction (2017 – 2020), but these data are based on reported incidents only, and exclude any unreported collisions, and the numerous, and highly significant, near-miss incidents.

The sample size of residents who responded is, not surprisingly, very small: only those on our local WhatsApp and Community email groups were consulted and this excluded the many residents not known to, or reached by, these internet-based groups. However, even this small number of residents has observed / experienced near-miss incidents on a weekly or daily basis, and some have been injured. Fortunately, so far, no one has suffered a serious or fatal injury, but we are all worried about such an occurrence, especially involving children and adults on bicycles.

Examples of Experiences/observations include:

- *The danger to life is primarily to cyclists going north or south on Hamilton Road*
- *Near misses affecting such cyclists are a frequent occurrence, but also affect car users*
- *There have been injuries/damage from collisions*
- *Road-users (both vehicles and cyclists) are not infrequently seen ignoring the Give-Way sign on Crescent Road, crossing Hamilton without pausing. Collisions have occurred for this reason*
- *Sight-lines for road-users on both Hamilton and Crescent Roads are poor, and without stopping at the junction, and easing forward, users cannot see approaching traffic, especially cyclists.*

Examples of Ideas for improving safety at this junction include:

- *Redesign junction with bollards and staggered entry to Crescent Road users*
- *Create a mini-roundabout with raised platform, and therefore no priority to any one direction*
- *Measures to force speed-reduction especially on Crescent Road*
- *A camera to warn users of scrutiny of their driving /cycling behaviour*
- *A continuous raised hump at the junction across Crescent Road, both West and East sides.*

Whilst these changes have cost implications, the costs of injury / loss of life and their treatment by health services, and the investigation costs etc by police / Council are also considerable, let alone the long-lasting and traumatic impact of such events on the people affected.

I and others are interested in helping the Council gather more data if that would help: for instance, by gathering more reports of near-miss incidents/collisions, helping to install a camera to record activity at this junction, or helping in any way that would help the Council come to an early decision.

- 3.3. For context, the crossroad of Crescent Road and Hamilton Road is situated within a 20mph zone, which benefits from existing vertical traffic calming measures, to encourage drivers to adhere to the speed limit.

The junction layout is presented with 'give way' on both approaches of Crescent Road to Hamilton road. Both Crescent Road approaches are signed and lined with the associated give way restriction in accordance with national standards.

Both the petition and the Sub-Committee report referenced that police-supplied casualty data does not suggest a road safety issue at the junction, with a single 'slight' incident occurring in the 5-year period of supplied data up to, and including, April 2023. However, a cross-junction of this nature is a higher-risk location and resident concerns are acknowledged, particularly in the context of some behaviours that have been described.

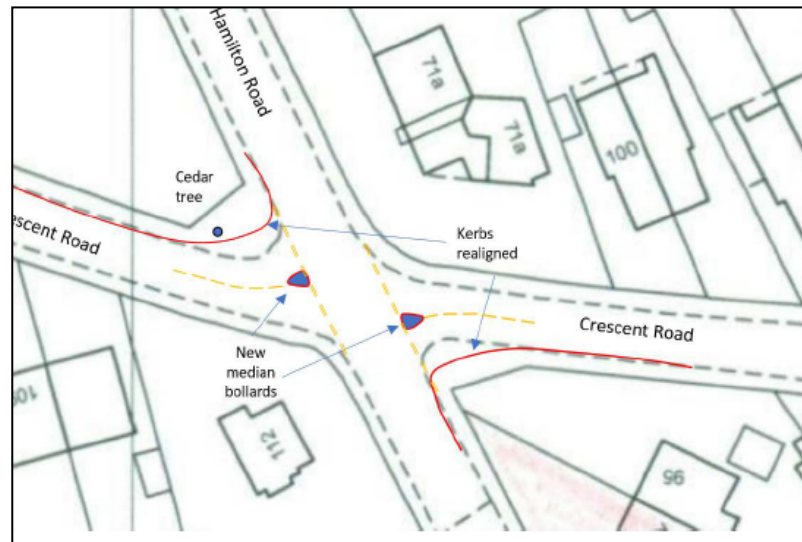
- 3.4. The 'Requests for Traffic Management Measures' report that comes to this committee twice-annually contains a long-standing request to reduce rat-running traffic along Crescent Road and beyond. Implementation of the School Street may have partially mitigated this issue, although it is acknowledged that this is currently in a trial (experimental) phase at the time of writing.

- 3.5. The Sub-Committee agreed to the officer recommendation that officers considered the contents of the petition, share their findings with the Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport, and Ward Councillors for discussion.

It was agreed that officers would report back their resultant recommendations to this Sub-Committee, while acknowledging that there is currently no allocated funding for the development and delivery of physical changes to this junction.

- 3.6. The following ideas have been put forward in both the petition and the slideshow presentation and officer comments have been added below, as follows:

a) Realign the junction with central islands both sides on Crescent Road



Extract from concept plan provided with the petition

The concept of islands that the graphic shows is a good idea in principle, and these have been used elsewhere in the Borough primarily to stop vehicles cutting across junctions and slow down the approaching speeds. Placed as proposed, they would be expected to have the greatest impact on traffic turning onto Crescent Road from Hamilton Road.

However, space around the junction will be an issue in this location. The street lighting and advance warning signs for the give-way are in place on the current footway alignment and are prominent/effective as a result. Tree roots and numerous utility service chambers would also create significant challenges (and substantial diversionary costs) in realigning the kerbs. Additionally, it is suspected that that these small islands would create conflict with vehicle movements, particularly the right-turns.

b) Create a mini-roundabout and therefore no priority to any one direction

The available space within the junction, alongside the alignment of the approaches, is expected to result in this proposal being unfeasible. Furthermore, it is unlikely to change the behaviour of those passing straight across the junction already and could exacerbate the problem by removing the current clear priority – we receive reports elsewhere that mini-roundabouts are being ignored by some motorists, which is not an issue that is unique to Reading, and with some motorists only looking at traffic approaching from their right and approaching at [relative] speed.

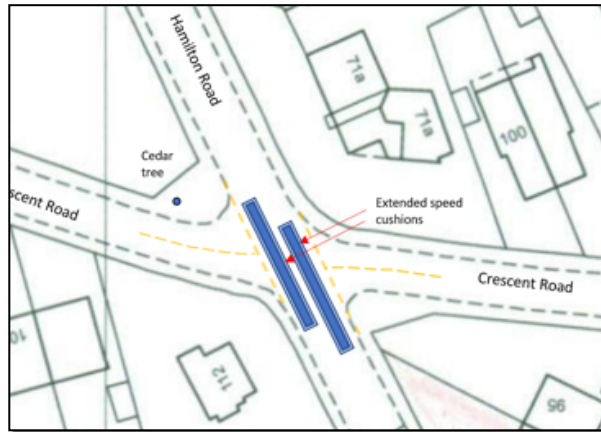
c) Measures to force speed-reduction especially on Crescent Road (includes speed camera installation, full-width humps, raised table across the junction, extended speed cushions across the junction)

Speed enforcement, including the placement of speed cameras, can only be undertaken by the Police at this time. Given that this location does not demonstrate a pattern of recorded casualties, it is unlikely to be a priority site for speed enforcement equipment. Additionally, speed cameras are typically unidirectional and breach of the 20mph speed limit is unlikely on the Crescent Road approaches to this junction, given the reduced visibility and give-way approaches.



Extract from concept speed table proposal provided with the petition

From an engineering perspective, drainage issues would be a concern and it would be a significant and costly engineering project (if feasible) to reprofile the footways on approach to get the levels right for the junction to be raised – the roads are slightly barrelled, and the centres are likely higher than the edge of the footway in places. From a safety perspective, it is a concern that this proposal would open up the already quite narrow footways to overrunning by vehicles, which would be a hazard to pedestrians and cyclists and this could also give the illusion of the junction being ‘wider’ than it is, leading to increased speeds.



Extract from concept ‘extended’ cushions proposal provided with the petition

There are national specifications for speed cushion design, which this proposal would not meet. They are designed to be travelled along, not across, and the gradient along the side is steep relative to the approaching gradient, as the feature is quite narrow.

The proposal would pose unacceptable risks of safety and damage to travel across and would also push Hamilton Road cyclists closer to the give-way lines on Crescent Road, or to the centre of the road, neither of which would be favourable from a risk perspective.

This proposal is considered unfeasible.

d) A camera to warn users of scrutiny of their driving /cycling behaviour.

Public space CCTV cannot be deployed for ‘spying’ on poor driver behaviour and would represent a significant initial and ongoing cost. It would also add another post in the area (street clutter) and given the proximity to private residences, would also likely raise privacy concerns by nearby residents. There would be no local authority follow-up for poor driving, as the Council cannot enforce against poor driving/cycling, use the DVLA database for looking up vehicle registered keeper details for this purpose would not be permissible, nor does the Council have resources to monitor and scrutinise this footage.

e) A continuous raised hump at the junction across Crescent Road, both West and East sides

There are speed cushions on both Crescent Road approaches to the junction and these areas will be deceleration areas as traffic approaches the give-way junction, with traffic very unlikely to be exceeding the 20mph speed limit. It is not considered that such features would be advantageous.

f) Change the 'give-way' to a 'stop' junction

Stop signs should only be provided where visibility is severely restricted for drivers entering the major road. Stop signs are not intended to be used as a traffic calming feature.

g) Place parking restrictions around the junction to stop parents parking at school drop-off / pick-up times

The Council has agreed to place a full-time loading ban around the junction, for which delivery is imminent, at the time of writing. See item 3.7 a.

h) Placement of rumble strips ahead of the junction

These features are typically used as a speed calming measure, but research has shown them to have little impact on speed reduction. These would not be advisable for use in a residential urban area as they will generate a significant amount of noise as vehicles pass over them.

i) Blocking approach/approaches to through traffic, allowing filters only for cyclists

This would be an effective way of stopping this from being a through junction in certain directions. It would, however, require a lengthy alternative access route for certain residents, impacting on their journey times and impacting on traffic volumes along nearby streets, particularly in addition to the Crescent Road 'school street' closures – this could have unforeseen detrimental impact elsewhere. It would likely be an objectionable proposal to many, given that on safety grounds, there is little justification for such a change.

j) Reversing the priorities through the junction

It is not considered that this proposal will change the reported issues that are occurring at the junction, just the approaching directions that would likely be greater affected. There will remain the same approach angles at the junction.

Options proposed

3.7. During the June 2023 Sub-Committee meeting, decisions were made for other reports that will impact on this junction, namely:

- a) There was agreement for a full-time loading ban to be introduced around the junction, to discourage and enable ease of enforcement against any parking near to the approaches. This is due to be delivered imminently as part of the 2022B Waiting Restriction Review programme.

- b) There was agreement for the experimental (trial) school street restriction on Crescent Road to become a permanent restriction. This initiative will be positively impacting on the volumes of through-traffic at the junction, particularly during the busiest periods of the day.
- 3.8. Officers have identified numerous illuminated speed hump warning signs in the area, with a number of these being located around this junction. Signing regulations no longer require these signs within a 20mph zone, so we are working to get these disconnected and removed.

With many of these signs being on standalone poles, the signing and poles can be removed entirely, which will remove signing and street furniture 'clutter' around the junction and has the potential to increase driver focus on the give way signs (in addition to the existing give-way road markings) and surrounding area. It may also remove some minor visibility obstructions at the junction.

These signs were referred in the slideshow presented at the June 2023 Sub-Committee meeting and their removal is being funded as part of a Highways maintenance budget saving initiative and carbon reduction initiative (due to the electrical usage from the illumination).

- 3.9. At this time, it is considered that the forthcoming changes noted in Sections 3.7 and 3.8 will bring benefits to the junction, both in terms of visibility and focusing drivers on the important messages. No further alterations are currently recommended.

The proposed alterations in Section 3.6 represent significant changes that will have varying local impacts and create new potential issues.

It is accepted that some options may help lower the resource burden on the Crescent Road School Street, have other sustainable transport and local enhancement benefits, but road closures, one-way plugs and similar features need to be considered in a wider context - the impact on accessibility for local and emergency service vehicle traffic, traffic displacement and local popularity.

While there is an entry in the 'Requests for Traffic Management Measures' report that reflects 2017 concepts for partially closing Crescent Road, investigation and development of this – or an amended – proposal will require funding and resourcing that are not currently available.

Other options considered

- 3.10. None at this time.

4. Contribution to strategic aims

- 4.1. The recommendation of this report does not directly deliver changes

5. Environmental and climate implications

- 5.1. The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).
- 5.2. The recommendation of this report does not directly deliver changes, so a Climate Impact Assessment has not been considered necessary.

6. Community engagement

- 6.1. The lead petitioner has been provided with a copy of this report ahead of this Sub-Committee meeting.
- 6.2. The lead petitioner will be informed of the decision of the Sub-Committee regarding the request that they have made, following publication of the meeting minutes.

- 6.3. Meeting reports and minutes are published on the Council's website and Traffic Management Sub-Committee is a public meeting that can be attended. Recordings of the meetings are also available via the Council's website (www.reading.gov.uk). Report authors must also consider engaging and consulting staff and Councillors to help them to draft the report.

7. Equality impact assessment

- 7.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 7.2. It is not considered that an Equality Impact Assessment is relevant at this time as the report recommendation does not directly lead to any physical change. Assessment will be considered once funding for development and delivery of a scheme is identified.

8. Other relevant considerations

- 8.1. None expected from the recommendations and decisions for this report.

9. Legal implications

- 9.1. There are no foreseen legal implications relating to the recommendation of this report.

10. Financial implications

- 10.1. None arising from the recommendation of this report.

11. Timetable for implementation

- 11.1. Not applicable.

12. Background papers

- 12.1. There are none.

Appendices –

1. Residents' report of near-misses and collisions
2. Residents' comments and ideas for crossroad improvement.