

AGENDA ITEM 5

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

**1. Eleonora Galli to ask the Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport
Kings Road Crossing**

In May 2021, my son was involved in a serious road accident at the crossing on Kings Road, directly in front of the Hope & Bear pub. He spent a week in intensive care and required a full year to recover. We are lucky he is alive, but other families have not been so fortunate; I cannot forget the tragic loss of a young life at this exact spot in 2012.

When, I raised deep safety concerns with Councillor Tony Page at the time, I was told that *"the road is one of the safest when crossing properly."* This deflects responsibility onto pedestrians and ignores the history of near-misses and accidents I have personally witnessed since.

Indeed, data from the **Department for Transport (via CrashMap)** and local reporting (<https://www.getreading.co.uk/news/reading-berkshire-news/most-dangerous-pedestrian-crossings-berkshire-20252047>) proves that the road is not safe.

In the last nine years, this specific crossing has seen **12 pedestrian casualties** (1 fatal, 5 serious). If including the Reading College crossing, that figure rises to **25 pedestrian casualties**.

Furthermore, the failure of CCTV cameras at the time of my son's accident created a total lack of accountability.

Kings Road remains a high-risk zone, particularly due to the high-speed bus lane contra-flow which often catches pedestrians off-guard because of a "directional blindness" effect, a tendency to expect traffic to flow in a single consistent direction, and the danger is currently exacerbated by an **inadequate** safety signage to alert the public to this non-standard traffic pattern.

In light of this, I would ask the Council:

1. **Safety Upgrades:** Will the Council commit to implementing a **20mph speed limit** on this stretch of Kings Road, aligning it with safety improvements made in other parts of the town ?
2. **Visual Alerts:** Will the Council install **clearer signage and road markings** specifically highlighting the contra-flow bus lane to warn pedestrians of traffic arriving from unexpected directions ?
3. **Infrastructure Maintenance:** What is the current status of the **CCTV and traffic monitoring cameras** at this junction, and what protocols are now in place to ensure they are operational 24/7?
4. **Timeline:** When will a formal safety audit of this crossing be conducted and the results made public ?

It is inconceivable to think of other families going through the ordeal we and many others experienced, before these simple, life-saving measures are taken. I look forward to your response.

REPLY by Councillor Ennis Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport

Thank you for your question, and for sharing what must have been an incredibly traumatic experience for your family. A week in intensive care and a year of recovery is something no parent should ever have to face, and we also remember the tragic fatality in 2012 and the recent incident earlier this month. These events understandably heighten concern about safety on Kings Road.

Reading Borough Council takes road safety very seriously. We work closely with Thames Valley Police on all casualty incidents, and we review the data they provide to understand whether any patterns or contributory factors suggest that engineering or layout changes could reasonably reduce future risk. Sadly, some incidents, however, arise from circumstances outside the Council's control.

We recognise the number of incidents along Kings Road and understand why this causes ongoing concern. Because these cases involve sensitive personal information, it would not be appropriate to discuss individual details or suspected causes in a public forum.

Turning to your questions

1. 20mph limit

I am sorry but there are currently no plans to introduce a 20mph limit on this section. Furthermore, speeding can only be enforced by the Police. Traffic speeds are generally low due to congestion, and speed has not been identified as a likely factor in the casualty data. Signed-only 20mph limits have limited effect without physical calming measures, which would introduce new risks particularly to vulnerable users on this busy corridor.

2. Signage and visual alerts

The two pedestrian crossings to which you refer are designed so pedestrians face oncoming traffic at each stage, with indicators and railings positioned accordingly. 'Look left' and 'look right' markings are being maintained. While there are upright signs available to indicate the direction of buses, unfortunately these signs cannot be varied to include the other vehicles that can use the Kings Road bus lane, other than including bicycles. For this reason, and the risk that they may add distraction and potentially reduce visibility, our officers have recommended against placing these at the controlled crossings.

3. CCTV and monitoring

The CCTV camera at Cemetery Junction is a low-resolution, pan-and-tilt traffic-monitoring camera. Officers currently do not have access to a live feed. The Council is transitioning to a new CCTV contract and back-office system, which is identifying compatibility issues and faults. Investment will be required to replace older equipment, and priorities will be set based on operational need. Unfortunately, we cannot guarantee continuous operation, as cameras rely on external power and telecoms services.

4. Safety audit

Formal road safety audits are undertaken when new schemes introduce significant layout changes. The Kings Road crossings are long-established and follow standard design principles. The Council is reviewing Police casualty data to determine whether any reasonable layout changes could reduce the likelihood of future incidents. If changes are proposed, a full safety audit would be carried out and reported to the Traffic Management Sub-Committee.

We appreciate how important this issue is to you and to others affected by incidents at this location, and your concerns form an important part of our ongoing work to improve safety wherever possible.