



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Mr Jim O'Sullivan  
Chief Executive  
Highways England  
Bridge House,  
1 Walnut Tree Close,  
Guildford  
GU1 4LZ

Our Ref: HM/FM/362

10 December 2018

Dear Jim,

**A21 dangers at Hurst Green**

As you may be aware, there was an accident in Hurst Green on Wednesday 28 November involving a car and a truck. The driver of the car was a parent taking three children to school. The driver was turning right into the school car park when the truck ploughed into it. The road was consequently blocked and the family taken to hospital.

As you can imagine, the community at Hurst Green are understandably shocked and angered by this latest accident. Only the previous week, a 17-year old pedestrian was knocked down on the pedestrian crossing on her way to work. My constituents are demanding action to improve the safety on this road.

I have read the Highways England A21 Forward Programme for 2018-2020 which was published in August 2018. Whilst this study has reinstated the proposals for roundabouts at Coopers Corner and the A265, there is nothing in this document which proposes additional safety measures to protect children attending Hurst Green CE Primary School which is located directly on the A21.

Whilst any moves to increase the EuroRAP rating of the highly dangerous A21 are welcome, the Programme has completely neglected to address the serious issues of protecting school children both at Hurst Green and Whatlington which are villages located on the A21.



The proposals in this Programme are already well over-due. Indeed, many of these proposals were the subject of previous scoping studies for improving A21 safety which were previously rejected as not meeting VfM criteria.

The attached document has been collated by my office. It makes for interesting reading as it catalogues some of the proposals that have been put forward by Highways Agency/Highways England since 2010 when major improvement projects for the A21 were cancelled (after years of no delivery).

Since 2010, the communities along the A21 have been campaigning and lobbying their local MPs for safety improvements along this road. As far as they are concerned, the small improvements that were carried out to lower speed limits and change driver perceptions in August 2015 have not been effective. Analysis of speeds taken from data on Highways England's website for October 2018, copy enclosed, show worrying levels of speeding through Hurst Green village at all times of day and night. Yet, we are repeatedly told that "data does not support the widely held belief that there is a demonstrable issue with speed" – letter from Roads Minister to Amber Rudd MP and myself dated 3 May 2018. Copy enclosed for ease of reference.

At my meeting with you in May this year, you told me that Highways England did not agree with all of the data and conclusions from the Road Safety Foundation Report of November 2017 which highlighted the A21 as one of the highest risk roads on the Strategic Road Network. You agreed to send me your own data to support this but I have yet to receive it.

I would appreciate a response to all of the questions below:

1. Is the attached local analysis of vehicle speeds taken from data on Highways England's own website correct? If so, can you once again explain why it was decided that the proposal to install average speed cameras from Flimwell to Hastings was not appropriate for the A21?
2. Why has a speed camera never been installed in Hurst Green village?
3. Why are there no proposals to improve safety outside Hurst Green School in the A21 Forward Programme 2018-2020?
4. Why are there no flashing school signs as well as variable speed signs outside Hurst Green School?
5. Why has it taken from March 2018 to get the variable speed limit sign outside Hurst Green School repaired?
6. When were variable speed signs first installed outside Hurst Green School? Since then, for how many months have they been working effectively and for how many months have they been defective or out of action? The enclosed Timeline of Issues suggests that they have been ineffective for long periods.
7. How many Highways England-managed roads have schools located directly on them? What safety measures are in place at these locations? Is there a national standard for road safety outside schools?
8. Why was no remedial action taken to introduce a TTRO to fix the speed limit to 20mph outside Hurst Green School whilst the school sign was reported out of action in March 2018? At my meeting in Hurst





Green with the parish council and a Highways England officer in October 2018, I asked for this to be implemented. Following the meeting, I sought advice on obtaining TTROs from officials in the Department for Transport and was advised that a TTRO could be achieved within a week. In November 2018 my office was advised that HE and its contractors were still looking into the possibility of a TTRO.

9. Why are there no proposals in the 2018-2020 strategy to protect pedestrians/school children in the village of Whatlington where there are no pavements?
10. How much money has been spent on consultations and scoping studies to improve road safety for Hurst Green village since 2010 by Highways Agency/England and its contractors?
11. How much money has been spent on the implementation of actual road safety measures for Hurst Green village since 2010.
12. A proposal from the parish council and local landowner to offer land to create a lay-by outside the school for a safe drop-off and pick-up point appears to have never been followed up by Highways England. Was this proposal ever fully considered? Will HE be prepared to look at this proposal again?
13. New roundabouts proposed for Coopers Corner and A265 junction – will further scoping studies be carried out for these or will the previous studies suffice? What is the likely implementation timetable?
14. Repairs to road surface in Hurst Green – these have been assessed as needing repair – when will the repairs be carried out?
15. Pedestrian crossing – it was highlighted to HE in October 2018 that the sensors on the crossing are not working correctly as they are not picking up children or those in wheelchairs. There also appears to be an extraordinarily long wait before the lights change in favour of pedestrians – up to 10 minutes have been recorded by local residents. Have these lights been examined yet and is any action being taken?

I appreciate that this is a long list and will require some research to complete. However, I would appreciate a swift response to the over-riding concern of my constituents which is the road safety at the primary school in Hurst Green.

I spoke to Jesse Norman MP, Roads Minister today who asked me to copy him into my letter to you. I am also sending a copy to my colleagues, Amber Rudd MP and Greg Clark MP whose neighbouring constituencies are impacted by these issues which affect the resilience and safety of the A21.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Huw Merriman  
Member of Parliament for Bexhill and Battle