

Legal and Democratic Services
City Hall
Norwich
NR2 1NH

Councillor David Bradford, Chair of
Mousehold Heath Conservators

26 November 2009

Your reference

Our reference jbr/nhac/2009-09-24

Dear Councillor Bradford

Norwich Highways Agency Committee – 24 September 2009
Traffic Calming – Gurney Road, Mousehold Heath

The Norwich Highways Agency Committee received your letter and your request for traffic calming in Gurney Road, Mousehold Heath, at its meeting on 24 September 2009.

The Committee considered the concerns of the Mousehold Heath Conservators and noted that Gurney Roads was a key link road to the north east of the City. There is a proposal in the Norwich Area Transport Strategy (NATS) that identifies Gurney Road as a bus rapid transport route. If this proposal were to be implemented it would remove general traffic, other than for access, from the road and would alleviate some of the concerns about speeding traffic and the problems for pedestrians crossing the road. The removal of some of the traffic from the road would be beneficial to the heath.

While understanding your request for Gurney Road to be considered as a special case in terms of allocation of funds for traffic calming work, this committee has to balance the needs of everyone across the City. We remain of the opinion that accidents must be of key concern when looking to allocate funds for traffic calming works and therefore we cannot agree that Gurney Road should be considered as an exception.

Officers have investigated the possibility of securing funds for the work through means other than the Local Transport Plan, but at this time there seem to be no special grants available for such work.

Prior to the meeting an assessment was made as to the possibility for a bid for a crossing on Gurney Road. . Based on this assessment, Gurney Road is well down the list of priorities for crossings compared to other sites across the City, so unfortunately we are unable to support this either.

The Committee considers that Gurney Road should be looked as part of the wider Norwich Area Transport Strategy.

An extract from the minutes of the meeting is reproduced below:-

'Traffic Calming – Gurney Road, Mousehold Heath

(Councillor Little declared a personal interest in this item as a representative of the City Council on Mousehold Heath conservators.)

Councillor Little read out the following letter on behalf of Councillor David Bradford, Chair, Mousehold Heath Conservators Committee:-

'This letter is to formally request that the Norwich Highways Agency Committee consider providing speed reducing measures on Gurney Road. Gurney Road dissects Mousehold Heath meaning that the users of the Heath, including ramblers, dog walkers, school parties etc, can feel threatened by the speed of vehicles on the road and that speeding makes it difficult to cross from one part of the Heath to another.

I would appreciate it if you could take into account that Mousehold Heath is an area of special scientific interest which this now major road cuts through. Gurney Road runs from Riverside Road and Barrack Street on the Ketts Hill roundabout and links directly to the Mousehold Lane traffic lights and has increasingly become part of the major highway network.

There are particular areas of concern that we would like to draw your attention to as follows:-

1. Gurney Road itself is an extremely hilly winding road.
2. The junction of Britannia Road and Gurney Road, which is also used by buses to turn, is hazardous due to the sharp blind bend on the corner with restricted pedestrian views.
3. The junction of Mousehold Avenue and Gurney Road where there is the public car park and Zaks Restaurant on one side and the popular recreation sports area and pavilion on the other, is extremely dangerous to cross.
4. Further along Gurney Road towards Mousehold Lane there is a well used car park for the pitch and putt course which is on the other side of another dangerous point of the road.
5. The traffic lights at the junction of Gurney Road and Mousehold Lane/Heartsease Lane lead onto the busy outer ring road and Salhouse Road. This junction will be increasingly used by pedestrians to cross especially when the new Heartsease Academy is finished.

I understand that your normal criteria for providing such measures are based largely on the accident history for an area. By its rural nature the accident rate for the Heath will obviously not compare with other more urban streets in the City, but nevertheless the Conservators feel that it is essential in order to preserve the safety and tranquillity of the Heath that vehicle speeds are reduced. I would also request that any solution should be sympathetic to the heath land setting and not create an urban environment.

The Mousehold Heath Conservators comprises members of Norwich City Council, Mousehold Heath Defenders and other interested parties. The Committee's function is to conserve the interest of Mousehold Heath.

It is important that you understand why we are asking for Gurney Road to be considered as an exception and why it needs to be considered outside of the normal highway assessment procedure in that context in terms of what remedial work can be done. I hope that you are able to allocate funding to Gurney Road in the next financial year.'

The Transportation Manager, Norwich City Council, said that she had attended a meeting of the Mousehold Heath Conservators and explained that funding was allocated first to high accident areas based on statistical information. She had researched the possibility of funding being available from sources other than the Local Transport Plan (LTP) but could not identify any and would like a steer from this Committee to see if an exception could be made in this case. As part of the NATS, Gurney Road had been identified as a bus rapid transit route and if this went ahead in the long term general traffic other than for access would be removed from this road.

During discussion members concurred that Gurney Road was a key link road to the north east of the City and that it could not be considered in isolation from the NATS as it was important to have a co-ordinated transport policy. The removal of traffic from this road would be beneficial to the Heath as it was currently divided by it.

Councillor Little called on the Committee to look at Gurney Road in terms of safety and pointed out that the Heath was a unique feature and the road was difficult for pedestrians and cyclists to cross from one part of the Heath to another. There should be a crossing near to Zac's in the interests of safety.

The Transportation Manager said that an assessment had been made of the possibility of a bid for a crossing on Gurney Road but it was well down the list of priorities for crossings.

RESOLVED to note that the Chair will provide a written response to the Chair and Members of the Mousehold Heath Conservators on behalf of the Committee.'

Yours sincerely

Councillor Tony Adams
Chair, Norwich Highways Agency Committee

c/o Jackie Rodger, Senior Committee Officer, Norwich City Council