

Downe village - Road Safety improvement report

Introduction

This plan represents the wishes of Downe village (via the Residents' Association) in relation to proposed improvements in road safety. It has been drawn up in response to issues first raised at the Downe Residents' Association AGM in March 2017, and subsequently. Road safety is a big subject, and could include - traffic speeds, unsuitable vehicles, gridlock and passing difficulties, road signs, effects of Shire Lane closures, fly tipping, parking (lack of, or inappropriate), footways and footpaths, street lighting, danger to pedestrians, danger to or from cyclists, danger to horses etc

This report incorporates all the issues known as at April 2024, and includes full reports previously lodged with Bromley Council. In this way, this report has all the issues in one place. The report is an updated version that was first submitted to Bromley Council in 2019 – it makes recommendations on the following six areas:

1 Overall summary - road by road

This summary deals with each road requiring action and summarises what is required. Section 2 onwards onwards provides the detail:

Shire Lane - consider reducing speed limits, install roundabouts at dangerous junctions, attention to grass verges obscuring views

High Elms Road (village end) – lower speed limit to 20mph, restrict parking at narrow point (near Weller Place), implement residents wishes for primary school parking outside school

High Elms Road (remainder) - lower speed limit to 30mph

Downe High Street - lower speed limit to 20mph

Rookery Road - lower speed limit to 30mph

Luxted Road - lower speed limit to 30mph

North End Lane - lower speed limit to 30mph

Cudham Road/ Hangrove Hill - lower speed limit to 30mph (or 20mph), create passing places (there are none), install signage (“single track road”)

New Road Hill – install “unsuitable for HGVs” sign at Holwood Farm on entry to Downe

Cudham Lane North / Church Road junction - install “unsuitable for HGVs” sign at junction when heading towards Downe

Jail Lane/Berry's Hill/Single Street junction - install “unsuitable for HGVs” sign at junction when heading towards Downe

Downe village road safety improvement

The following sections deal with:

- 2 Shire Lane – road safety improvement
- 3 Traffic speeds in and around the village
- 4 Parking in High Elms Road – village end
- 5 Hangrove Hill – road safety improvement
- 6 “Unsuitable for HGVs” signage
- 7 Other – brief mention of a cancelled review of High Elms Road (Shire Lane end)

2 Shire Lane

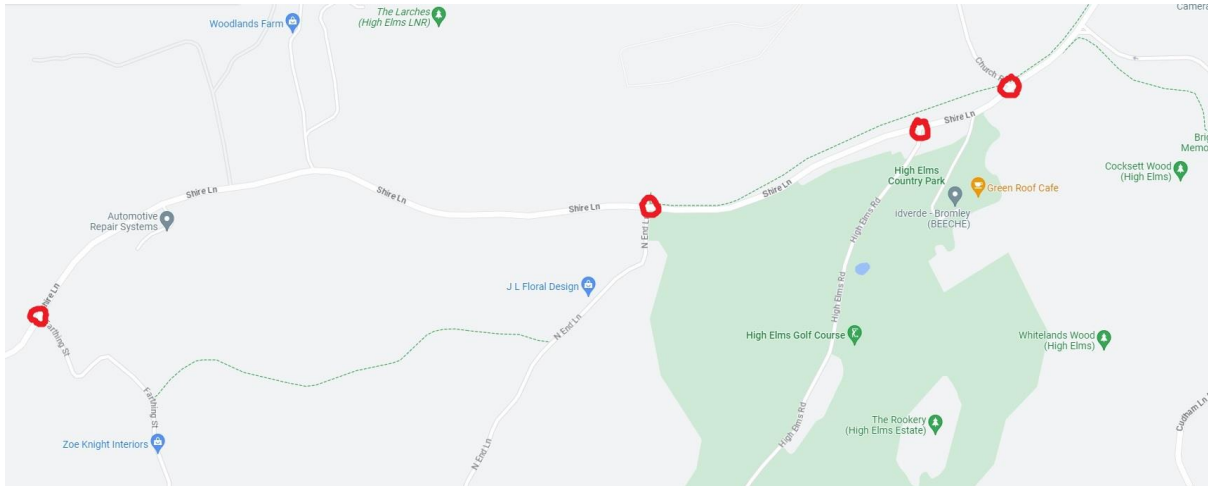
Shire Lane has become the most concerning road safety issue. Several recent accidents (September 2023) have highlighted this. The issues have been discussed a number of times at the DRA Committee meetings.

Why do we have this problem ? Shire Lane is narrow and poorly sighted at numerous points. It carries a huge volume of traffic at peak times, when speed seems of the essence to users. Users are avoiding Locks Bottom and Keston Mark along the A 233/Croydon Road. Many are focussed on their Satnav which unfortunately (a) gives them unrealistic arrival times and (b) sends messages like “save 2 minutes , turn left up North End Lane “. People trying to save 2 minutes then meet the R8 coming the other way !

The junctions with Church Road, High Elms Road, North End Lane and Farthing Street are felt to be the most vulnerable areas to be investigated. These junctions need to be made much more safe. The following diagram was submitted to Bromley Council in May 2023 (via Cllr Andrews) with a request for slightly raised "mini roundabouts" at these junctions with mirrors to enable visibility. Importantly, we need also to get Bromley Council to REGULARLY cut back vegetation at the junctions with Shire Lane – the sightlines can get very poor - rather than relying on residents raising Fix My Street reports. People MUST be able to see clearly at these junctions

We also feel the whole issue of Shire Lane safety needs to be seriously considered by the Council. The current 40mph speed limit needs to be reviewed as the road is generally quite narrow – it is likely that 40mph here is too fast. It may be that turning Church Road (Shire Lane to the Manse) and Farthing Street into one-way roads needs to be evaluated – exiting from both of these roads into Shire Lane is very dangerous. We may need to consider priority chicanes in Shire Lane to reduce speeds, and better signage regarding cyclists, horse riders and pedestrians. Maybe putting up signs with the number of accidents in a given period is worth considering ?

Downe village road safety improvement



3 Traffic speeds in and around the village

The essence is to reduce speed limits to 20mph in the central areas and 30mph elsewhere

The six proposals for reduced speed limits are:

- Proposal 1 - High Street and close by - set a 20mph speed limit in the centre of the village
- Proposal 2 - Rookery Road - reduce the speed limit to 30mph from the orchard northwards to Holwood Farm
- Proposal 3 - Luxted Road - reduce speed limit to 30mph from West Hill southwards to Berry's Green
- Proposal 4 - North End Lane - reduce the speed limit to 30mph from Mill Lane to Shire Lane
- Proposal 5 - High Elms Road - reduce the speed limit to 30mph from the school to Shire Lane
- Proposal 6 - Cudham Road - reduce the speed limit to 30mph from Christmas Tree Farm to Cudham ()but see Hangrove Hill section

The ROSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents) factsheet “Road Safety factsheet: 20mph Zones and Speed Limits” states:

There is a significant difference between the characteristics of a 20mph speed limit and a 20mph zone.

20mph limits are areas where the speed limit has been reduced to 20mph but there are no physical measures to reduce vehicle speeds within the area. Drivers are alerted to the speed limit with 20mph speed limit repeater signs. 20mph limits are most appropriate for roads where average speeds are already low, and the guidance suggests below 24mph. The layout and use of the road must also give the clear impression that a 20mph speed or below is the most appropriate.

20mph zones use traffic calming measures to reduce the adverse impact of motor vehicles on built up areas. The principle is that the traffic calming slows vehicles down to speeds below the limit, and in this way the zone becomes ‘self-enforcing’. Speed humps, chicanes, road

Downe village road safety improvement

narrowing, planting and other measures can be introduced to both physically and visually reinforce the nature of the road.

Given the descriptions above, it is proposed to seek “20mph limit” areas (not zones) as it is felt the additional features of humps, chicanes etc are probably unachievable and would not suit the village environment of Downe. The map below shows the potential area for 20mph limits – marked in red



Downe High Street

Current situation - the speed limit on this section of the road is unmarked, but assumed to be 30 mph due to peripheral signs on the way into the village. Opinions differ on speeds in this road. Some say the parked cars limit the speeds (by enforcing a one-way system). Others state that speeding traffic is still an issue. The road is used by the R8 and 146 buses.

Proposal 1 - set a 20mph speed limit in the centre of the village, to extend outwards to:

- The orchard (Rookery Road)
- Just beyond the primary school (High Elms Road)
- Just beyond Christmas Tree Farm (Cudham Road)
- West Hill junction with Luxted Road

Downe village road safety improvement

Rookery Road (from North End Lane to Holwood Farm)

Current situation - residents say this is a dangerous road to walk in. The road is used by the 146 bus. The speed limit is 30 mph from central Downe to the orchard, then 40 mph beyond. At the request of Downe Residents' Association and due to concerns raised by residents, Bromley Council installed a speed monitoring system in Rookery Road in September 2017 to monitor traffic speeds. This concluded that – “the 85th percentile speed for North and South bound traffic were 29.3 and 28.5mph and average speed were 24.9 and 25.1mph respectively”.

Proposal 2 - reduce the Rookery Road speed limit from the orchard northwards to Holwood Farm to 30mph (see High Street proposal for village centre to the orchard), and install appropriate signage.

Current road signage -

30 mph speed sign at orchard entrance (40 mph on reverse)

40 mph speed sign (at Holwood)

“Horses for 2 miles” warning (at Holwood)

Two “Slow down now” warning signs (Farthing St, Rookery)

“Slow” road markings and lane correction arrows (at Rookery Cottages)

Luxted Road incl Single St (from Berry's Green to the High Street)

Current situation - the road is used by the R8 bus. The speed limit on this section of the road is not marked except for one small 30 mph sign entering the village and one small 30 mph sign at Berry's Green

Proposal 3 - reduce speed limit to 30mph from West Hill southwards to Berry's Green, and install appropriate signage.

Current road signage -

One 30mph mandatory speed sign (approaching Berry's Green from Downe)

One 30mph mandatory speed sign (approaching Downe outside farm)

One “unsuitable for HGVs” sign outside Walnut Tree Cottage

Five “Horses” warning signs

Two “Bend” warning signs

Two “Reduce speed now” warning signs

Four chevron signs at bends

One “no footway for ¾ mile” warning sign

Six “SLOW” markings painted on the carriageway (on way out of Downe) and fifteen “SLOW” markings painted (on way into Downe)

Unclear HGV sign at Berry's Green (no wording)

North End Lane (from Luxted Road to Shire Lane)

Current situation - The R8 bus uses this route. The speed limit on this road is 30mph from Rookery Road to Mill Lane, then 40mph from Mill Lane to Shire Lane.

Downe village road safety improvement

Proposal 4 - reduce the speed limit from Mill Lane to Shire Lane to 30mph and install appropriate signage.

Current road signage -

Two 40 mph mandatory speed sign – southbound at Orange Court, northbound at Mill Lane

One 30 mph mandatory speed sign – southbound at Mill Lane

Two “bend” warning signs

One “Horses” warning sign

High Elms Road (from Shire Lane to the High Street)

Current situation - the speed limit is 30 mph from central Downe to just past the school, and 40mph from then onwards to Shire Lane.

Proposal 5 - reduce the speed limit from the school to Shire Lane to 30mph and install appropriate signage. See High Street proposal for the High Street to school section.

Current road signage -

Four 40mph mandatory speed signs

One 30 mph mandatory speed sign (southbound just before primary school)

Two “school” warning signs (one each way)

One “Bend” warning sign

Two chevron signs at bends

Five “SLOW” markings painted on the carriageway (two on way out of Downe, three on way in)

One “beware golfers” sign

Cudham Road (from Hangrove Hill to the High Street)

Current situation - the speed limit on this section of the road is 30 mph in the village side of Downe Hall, then 40 mph, from Downe Hall eastwards to Cudham.

Proposal 6 - reduce the speed limit from Christmas Tree Farm to Cudham to 30mph and install appropriate signage (see High Street proposal for Downe Hall to Christmas Tree Farm).

Current road signage -

Two 40 mph mandatory speed signs on exit from Downe (at Downe Hall and Christmas Tree Farm)

One 40 mph mandatory speed sign at Hangrove Hill on way into Downe

One 30mph mandatory speed sign at Downe Hall on way into Downe

One (blue) “Unsuitable for HGVs” sign on exit from village at Downe Hall

One (blue) “Single track road with passing places” sign on exit from village at Downe Hall

Two “pedestrians” warning signs

One “No footway for 200 yds” warning sign

One “Deer” warning sign

Two “SLOW” markings painted on the carriageway

Downe village road safety improvement

Roads not covered - The following areas are excluded from this report as it is felt they have less of a problem:

- West Hill, Farthing Street, Standard Road, Bellevue Road, Mill Lane, Snodland Close

4 Parking in High Elms Road (village end)

In 2019, residents of High Elms Road raised concerns over the amount of parking in the narrow section of the road at the village end. Driveways were being obstructed and large vehicles were finding it difficult to get through. In addition to this, some concern over parking outside the primary school – making passing through difficult – was voiced.

The DRA in conjunction with Bromley Council subsequently had a number of discussions and several proposals were produced by the Council. As at March 2024, the agreed solution put to the Council was:

- Yellow line parking restrictions in High Elms Road from “Greengates” to the end of “No 4 Weller Place”
- Yellow line restriction across the school car park entrance
- Yellow line restriction across the entrance to Downe Livery Stables

Residents in High Elms Road, the owners of Downe Livery Stables and the primary school (Board of Governors) were all consulted. Residents support the idea of restrictions to the west of the school – particularly to allow larger vehicles (eg emergency vehicles) to get through the narrow part of the road. As regards parking restrictions outside the school, after several iterations the school Board of Governors were in favour of minimal restrictions – the view was that overly restricted parking would damage the future viability of the school (ie attracting out of town pupils).

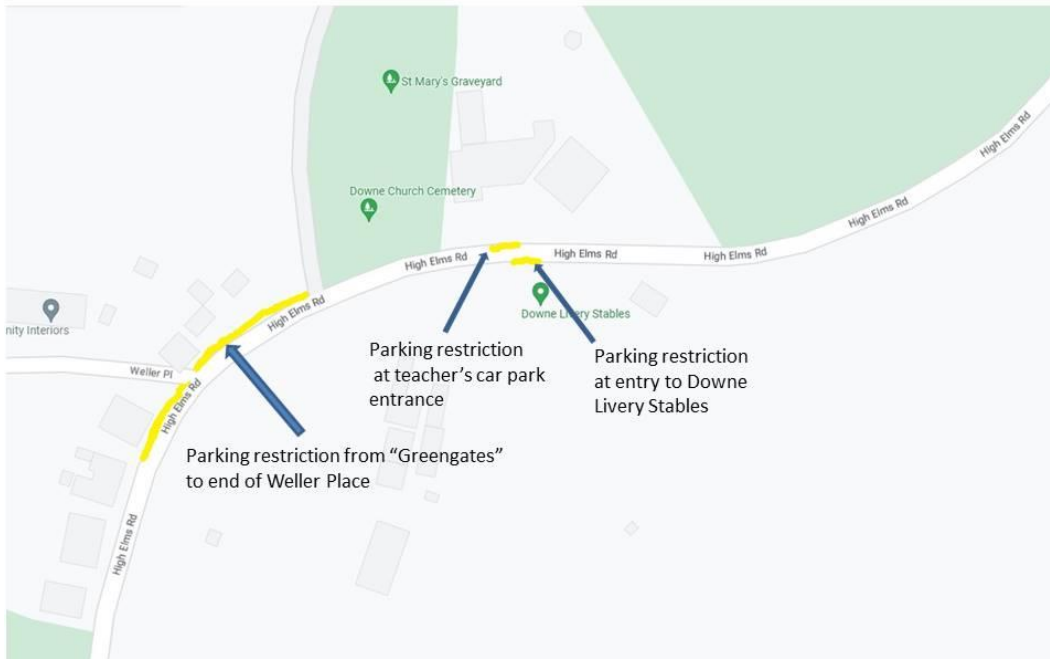
This recommendation is therefore supported by the Downe Residents’ Association committee (DRA), and the Council have been asked to implement this option.

2.4 DRA considerations

We have tried to design a solution to make the road safer, whilst not removing all the parking availability, and to meet all, or most of, resident’s concerns. We believe restricting all parking would cause chaos. As many parents with children at the primary school live out of area, driving to the school is their only option. It is believed, that if all parking was removed, the school would soon fail to attract sufficient pupils to survive.

Below is a diagram of the village end of High Elms Road. This shows where solid white lines/yellow lines should be painted on the north side of the carriageway at the western end, and two areas outside the school.

Downe village road safety improvement



5 Hangrove Hill

A request was submitted to Cllr Andrews by DRA Committee member Rev John Musson in September 2023. There are concerns about increased traffic on Hangrove Hill, especially following a recent incident where a van failed to slow down, and caused an accident – believing it was safe to travel at 40mph. As in the previous section, the speed limit needs to be reduced to 30mph (or even 20mph) for such a narrow lane.

Additionally, there is concern at increased traffic on Hangrove Hill which is unsuitable for this volume of traffic as there are no passing places. It is suspected that, following local campaigns against ULEZ, that some people are avoiding cameras (unnecessarily, as most vehicles are compliant) and wonder whether this might be a factor in the increase in traffic too.

Regarding passing places - a sign at the Cudham end is on the right hand side of the road when coming from Cudham - saying 'single track road with passing place' but in contrast to the one at the Downe end, does not say anything about its unsuitability for heavy goods. The second in Downe on the corner of High Elms Road is on the left - but the angle of the sign is a bit vague - is it referring to High Elms Road or Hangrove Hill? Passing places should be marked, and properly constituted.

6 Limiting Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) in Downe Village

The following is a copy of the report submitted to Bromley Council in May 2019

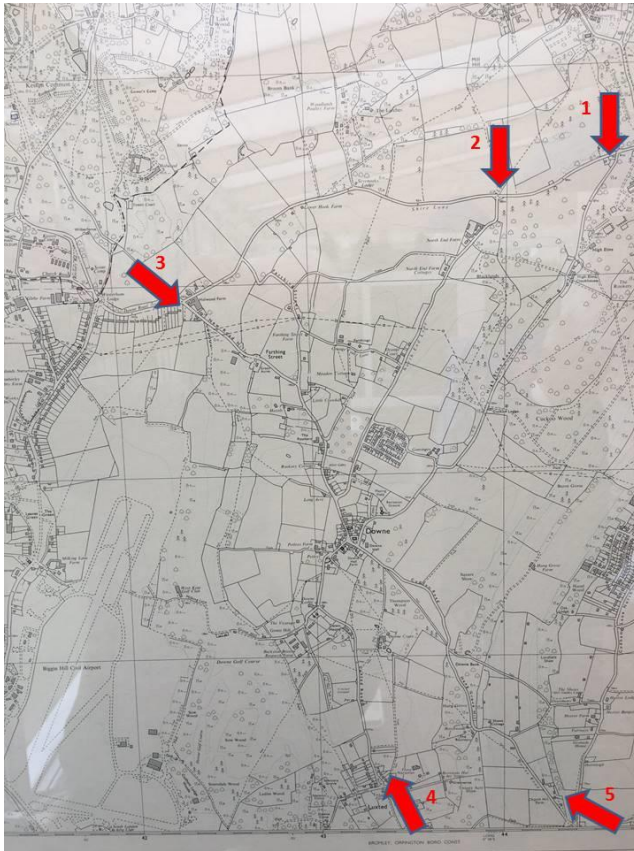
Introduction - residents in Downe have been concerned for some time about the number of HGVs passing through the village. The narrow lanes are simply not suited to the size of these vehicles, yet

Downe village road safety improvement

they still transit through the village - presumably led by their Sat Navs. Damage to trees, bushes and pavements has been witnessed.

It is fully recognised that some large vehicles have legitimate business in Downe and it is not the intention of this report to recommend stopping these. Legitimate large vehicles include buses (146 and R8), farm vehicles, coaches (eg visiting Down House) and delivery vehicles conducting business in the village. This report recommends signage to help ward off HGV drivers who pass through Downe when completely unnecessary.

The solution was seen to be the protection of the five entry points to Downe, by erecting blue/white "Unsuitable for HGVs" signs at certain locations. A number of such signs already exist (these are covered in this report, and this report recommends installing more to complete the protection for the village. The five entry points are identified (and numbered) in the map below.



Map – five points of entry to Downe village (1, 2, 3 are the actual points - 4 and 5 are the directions from the entry point)

Progress so far - after some analysis of the problem, and a review of the current situation, a request was made to Cllr Richard Scoates and the Bromley Council Traffic Department, to install five additional "Unsuitable for HGVs" signs in the area. Cllr Scoates wrote *"I know that we have unsuitable for HGV signs essentially marking the Darwin Ward boundary, and if HGVs end up in Downe village they have essentially ignored a road sign, and therefore the ability to acknowledge any further signs is reduced. However, there has been an increase in reports of HGVs getting stuck in the village"*

After some consideration, two of the five signs were erected in late 2018. These were at location 1 (at the junction of Shire Lane and High Elms Road) and location 2 (at the junction of Shire Lane and

Downe village road safety improvement

North End Lane). This is helpful and a good start. The Council Traffic Department however, declined to address locations 3, 4 and 5 – replying:

- (3 September 2018) - *“As you are aware this area has been studied previously and as a result the Council has installed “unsuitable heavy goods vehicles” in all roads leading to this villageHowever, the other locations are not suitable due to the insufficient spaces as a new post required to install this sign”*
- (22 October 2018) - *“There is currently no further plan to install further no HGV signs in this area however I will investigate to make sure existing “no HGN signs” (sic) are not covered by overgrown vegetation and if necessary will arrange cut them back”*

There are three problems with these replies. Firstly, and as this report makes out, “Unsuitable for HGVs” signs are not located in all roads leading to “this village” - as will be seen below, there is no, or insufficient/unclear warning to drivers in three locations. Secondly, this report contends that there is space for additional signage at key points. Thirdly, the point about overgrown vegetation is missing the point - this was not seen as a problem.

The following sections now deal with the three entry points (3, 4 and 5 on the map above), and make recommendations for additional “Unsuitable for HGVs” signs to be installed.

Map location 3 - at the junction of Downe Road, Shire Lane and New Road Hill (Holwood Farm)

A sign is needed to dissuade HGVs from inadvertently entering Downe village from the A233 (Westerham Road). As can be seen in **Picture A** below, HGVs are currently warned about turning left into Downe Road, Keston from the A233. In addition, there is a further sign (**Picture B** below) on the traffic island as Downe Road is entered. This shows that Bromley Council have accepted the principle of warning HGV drivers heading towards Downe from the A233.



Picture A – “Unsuitable for HGVs” sign on A233 – pointing towards Downe

Downe village road safety improvement



Picture B – “Unsuitable for HGVs” sign on A233/Downe Road – heading towards Downe

However, the next junction is the Downe Road, Shire Lane and New Road Hill (Holwood) junction. There is nothing here to dissuade drivers from bearing right at this junction (into New Road Hill) and thus entering Downe village. A further sign (in Downe Road) approaching the Downe Road, Shire Lane and New Road Hill (Holwood) junction should be installed to encourage HGV drivers to use Shire Lane (ie go straight ahead) rather than bearing right into New Road Hill (towards Downe village). See **Picture C** and **Picture D** for potential locations.



Picture C – existing signage in Downe Road (approaching junction) - the white/black direction sign lower edge is at least nine/ten feet above the pavement leaving plenty of space for a sign to be attached to the pole – or another pole installed. A sign here should state “Unsuitable for HGVs” with an arrow pointing to the **right** (encouraging drivers to travel along Shire Lane instead)

Downe village road safety improvement



Picture D – alternative location for “Unsuitable for HGVs” sign at Holwood farm junction. If this location is chosen, a sign here should state “Unsuitable for HGVs” with an arrow pointing to the **right** (encouraging drivers to travel along Shire Lane – to the left - instead)

Map location 4 - at the junction of Cudham Lane North and Church Road, Cudham

There is nothing to warn HGV drivers travelling westwards away from Cudham church junction (ie turning off Cudham Lane North along Downe Road/Hangrove Hill or Church Road/Berry's Hill) that these roads are completely unsuitable for HGVs. The Council have established this principle for Downe Road/Hangrove Hill already, as there is an "unsuitable for HGVs" sign at the entrance to Downe Road in the centre of Downe village when heading eastwards (ie the other way – see **Picture E** below). The warning needs to be completed by a sign at the other (Cudham) end of the road. **Picture F** below shows the potential location of a “Unsuitable for HGVs” sign – this would protect both Downe Road/Hangrove Hill and Church Road/Berry's Hill, and encourage drivers to continue along Cudham Lane North.

Downe village road safety improvement



Picture E - existing sign at entrance to Downe Road in Downe village centre



Picture F - potential location at Cudham Lane North for an “Unsuitable for HGVs” sign to protect Downe Road/Hangrove Hill and Church Road/Berry's Hill

Map location 6 - At the junction of Jail Lane/Berry's Hill/Single Street

At the Downe village end of Luxted Road, an existing HGV warning sign (see **Picture G** below) shows that Bromley Council have accepted the principle of warning HGV drivers heading towards Luxted Road and Down House. HGVs travelling along Luxted Road – itself not suited to HGVs - will eventually encounter Single Street, Cudham, which is a single track road and even more unsuited to HGVs.

Downe village road safety improvement



Picture G - existing sign in Downe village heading towards Luxted Road

At the other end - an HGV warning sign already exists at Berry's Green (see **Picture H** below). This shows an ambiguous HGV sign at the junction of Jail Lane/Berry's Hill/Single St (coming from the Jail Lane end). It indicates the Council have already accepted the unsuitability of HGV traffic heading eastwards at this point – however, part of the sign (maybe the wording ?) has worn away.



Picture H – existing sign at Berry's Green

It would seem feasible to upgrade this existing sign to say that HGV traffic is unsuited heading towards both Berry's Hill and Single St. If this location is chosen, a new sign here should state "Unsuitable for HGVs" with an arrow pointing **ahead** AND an arrow pointing to the **left** - telling drivers that both Berry's Hill and Single Street are unsuitable for HGVs.

There are several alternative places to locate a sign to protect Berry's Hill and Single Street – some of these are below

Downe village road safety improvement



Picture J - potential alternative location for an “Unsuitable for HGVs” sign to protect Berry’s Hill and Single Street (in Jail Lane outside the Old Jail car park)



Picture K - potential alternative location for an “Unsuitable for HGVs” sign to protect Berry’s Hill and Single Street (in Jail Lane close to Charles Darwin school). This would have the effect of dissuading HGVs from travelling from the urban part of Jail Lane (which can take HGV traffic) through to the narrow countryside part of Jail Lane which eventually ends at Berry’s Hill/Single Street.

7 Other

The DRA committee asked Bromley Council Highways to look at parking issues at the Shire Lane end of High Elms Road. Parking in High Elms Road (outside the High Elms car park) was narrowing the road such that larger vehicles had difficulty in passing – particularly emergency vehicles. In June 2021, the council responded with proposals for yellow lines and bollards in that area. In discussion with our then Councillor – Richard Scoates – we agreed that the Council proposals would have made things much worse. We agreed to drop the current proposals and monitor the situation for the

Downe village road safety improvement

future – it was felt that it problems may have been made worse by the pandemic. We asked that the High Elms Golf Course car park be re-opened to general parking, but the Council said this was the responsibility of MyTime (who restricted the car parking in the first place.

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