

Major Safety Improvements to the A252

As people in Charing have already noticed, July 14th will see the start of road works which will close the A252 between Charing roundabout and the Faversham Road junction in the Eastwards (uphill) direction for a period of 4 days. This is the start of works to carry out major improvements to the A252 between Charing roundabout and Chilham aimed at reducing the number and severity of accidents. The A252 was considered to be one of the 50 most dangerous A roads in the country between 2012 and 2014 and this enabled KCC Highways to obtain £2.1 million in funding from the government for improvements.

Works will be carried out until September. Most of them will be carried out by closing one carriageway and then using traffic lights to enable two-way traffic but occasionally, as in July, it may be necessary to close part of the road for short periods. So there will be disruption for all users during the works but the end result should be a much safer and more pleasant road for everyone.

During closures it will be possible to access businesses although you may need to take a different route to get to them. Official diversions will use other major roads suitable for all traffic but cars will, of course, be able to use other roads as well. For example, to access Fixings, the Carpet shop and the Spice of Bengal from Charing during the four days starting on the 14th July you may wish, if you consider the route suitable, to use Hart Hill and Bowl Road returning via the A252.

The four days in July are to enable an improved surfacing to be spread over the road. The closure will be day time only. (The nature of the works mean they cannot be carried out during the night and also that it can only safely be done by closing the road in one direction entirely.) During the works KCC contractors will make every effort to enable residents to maintain access to their homes but this may be difficult for very short periods when the work is actually going on outside a house. The surface can be driven on shortly after it is laid. You will notice that it is initially rough but it will bed in with traffic use over a few weeks.

Some of the key changes from the overall scheme will be:

- The default speed limit on this stretch, except where lower limits are in force, will be reduced from the national speed limit of 60mph to 50 mph.
- Throughout there will be improved road markings, including the use of red and buff colouring, to encourage safer driving.

In Charing the following key changes will occur:

- There will be three pedestrian crossing islands around The Hill and Pilgrims Way junctions to help pedestrians cross and help protect turning traffic
- The middle lane from the Hill junction upwards will be hatched and coloured red with a continuous and an intermittent white line edging it on both sides, thus effectively suppressing it while allowing use in exceptional circumstances

- The 40 mph limit will start from just below the Hill junction
- The red hatching will continue, although narrower since the road is narrower, up to the Faversham Road junction. There will be a turning pocket by the Spice of Bengal to facilitate access for traffic travelling uphill.
- From Bowl Road to Faversham Road will be 30 mph. There will be another crossing island by Fixings.
- Faversham Road will be narrowed at its junction with the A252 by a built-out kerb by Threeways. This means that the centre white line on Faversham Road will be curved so traffic coming from it will not be faced with an apparent straight line through the junction and will be slowed; there will also be additional warning signs.
- Pavements will be cleared where grass verges have encroached.

Charing Parish Council has been consulted frequently throughout the planning process. Last year we set up a Highways Improvement Group of interested residents to review all improvements that could be made to traffic in the parish. Members of the group took a keen interest in the proposed plans for the A252 and suggested a number of changes to KCC's initial plans, several of which have been adopted. For example, the crossing islands by The Hill and Pilgrims Way, the hatching of the middle lane from The Hill upwards, moving the start of the 40 mph section downhill and the turning pocket for the Spice of Bengal were all originally suggested by us.

The Parish Council wants to thank Colin Burns, Nick Austen and Sue Lowen, in particular, who all spent significant time in drawing up our initial suggestions and then following through during subsequent discussions, and also others including Clive Triance and our own Tylden Reed for additional input. It is also a pleasure to record the collaborative way in which the various members of KCC staff involved have enabled us to work with them so that local knowledge could combine with technical expertise to produce what we all hope will be a very significant improvement to this road.

Jill Leyland
13th July 2020