

Dear Ms Killian

(cc Cllr Tim Oliver, Michael Gove MP, Cllr Edward Hawkins, Cllr John Skipper, Cllr Graham Tapper, Cllr Kristian Wrenn)

We are writing to express our disappointment and disgust at the state of the Heather Ridge Arcade in Heatherside, Camberley and the apparent complete lack of interest being shown by Surrey County Council regarding the dangerous and damaged paving in an area dedicated as Highway land.

We have three main areas of complaint; firstly the dangerous paving, secondly the current project being carried out on the trees in this area and finally the complete lack of engagement and communication from Surrey County Council with residents about this area and any plans to make improvements.

The paving in the Arcade is in an appalling uneven state throughout the area. There are many trip hazards and dangerous slabs. When these are reported to Surrey County Council they receive only the most minimal response. Residents are either told that they are not dangerous or if they are deemed to be a hazard, token patching repairs are made in tarmac, which only add to the unkempt and run down appearance of the area.

Over the past few years many people have tripped and fallen due to the uneven paving at the Heather Ridge Arcade and despite this being reported to Surrey County Council, residents have been repeatedly told that there isn't an issue! How many residents have to be injured and seriously hurt before Surrey County Council will accept that this area is dangerous and needs to be dealt with? The situation has become so bad that one of the local business owners is now keeping an (increasingly long) register of those who have been injured.

We would also like to express our frustration about the way the removal of the trees in the arcade has been carried out. The existing trees had become extremely overgrown and were totally inappropriate for the location. The roots had pushed up the paving slabs adding to the trip dangers mentioned above. Wooden planters installed to contain these roots had become rotten and broken.

Over three years ago Heatherside Ward Residents Association applied for grant money to carry out work on the planters. As part of this project some rotten sleepers were removed, the areas were weeded and flowers were planted. However at the time we warned that this was only a temporary solution and that a more permanent solution needed to be found. In the past two weeks the trees have been cut down and the contractors employed have informed local residents that new trees are to be planted, once again contained within wooden sleepers placed around the holes. These wooden sleepers will only last a few years before the same rotting and disintegration that has affected the previous ones will occur. No attempt appears to have been made to excavate the remaining roots of the previous trees so no doubt these will rot causing

the paving to drop and become further distorted. This is not a permanent solution to the problems here.

Furthermore, the communication with local residents regarding the work here has been entirely non-existent. It would not be difficult to issue a statement about what is planned for our local councillors to share. There is a community noticeboard within the arcade that could be used. Surrey County Council could utilise social media as many other local councils do to inform their residents or we as a local residents association could send emails out and share information on our website and Facebook pages but none of this seems to happen!

We are aware that both our local Borough Councillors and our County Councillor have tried repeatedly to engage with Surrey County Council Highways and have had little success in getting a proper strategy in place to deal with a permanent solution for Heather Ridge Arcade. As a local residents association we registered the arcade as a potential project for the Surrey County Council 'Your Fund' scheme to get improvements made here but we were told that as it was Highway land it didn't qualify. What is the point of such a scheme if the very areas most in need aren't able to be included? We also note that money has been spent elsewhere in areas which have been in less urgent need of attention such as the precinct at the Old Dean estate.

Is there a plan for this area? Do Surrey County Council have any intention of accepting their responsibility to local residents and ensuring they can walk safely through their local shopping area without risk of injury, or do local businesses need to stock up on their first aid supplies to assist the residents you are failing? The current situation cannot be allowed to continue so we implore you to either tell us how you plan to make the area safe or work with us as a community to find a way to resolve this situation.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Regards

Mrs Kirsty North

Chair - HWRA

On behalf of Heatherside Ward Residents Association