

Residents say road closure 'is unjustified punishment'

MOTORISTS have been warned to expect long delays next week as one of the main roads in and out of Godalming is closed for traffic works.

Contractors for Surrey County Council had started work on implementing the planned traffic calming measures in Brighton Road last week, but delays have been blamed on heavy traffic and residents parking where they have been asked not to.

The county council has now decided the only way to finish the work on time is to close the road between Town End Street and The Drive for at least two weeks starting on Monday.

Residents groups have, however, condemned the closure as "an unjustified punishment".

A statement released this week by the county council said the completion of the "important" traffic calming measures, which include the introduction of formalised parking spaces, is being hampered by drivers parking too close to the works. The statement said: "The work is progressing slower

than the council would like because of drivers parking in areas they have been asked not to and therefore slowing down the work crews.

"In order to ensure the works are finished on time in mid-February the entire road will have to be closed from the week beginning February 4 until the completion of the works."

David Munro, Surrey's Executive member for transport, said: "We are working hard to make Surrey's roads better. This is a priority for the council.

"I would ask that residents help us as much as they can so that we can do these works quickly and efficiently."

But members of the Busbridge Community Forum, which has been working with the county council to improve traffic issues in the area, say the measures being taken will not help to solve the long-running problems.

The group has also suggested temporary traffic lights could be used instead of a full road closure.

The forum's chairman, Mike Harrison, said: "Virtually all users of

the road were already adopting a voluntary 'after you' strategy to speed the flow in the 150-metre section which is reduced to single track by parked vehicles. With the occasional exception of aggressive or out-of-area drivers, everyone respected this arrangement.

"We advised that the installation of parking refuges would in no way improve on the existing ad hoc system and that the expense to council taxpayers would be unjustified."

Mr Harrison added: "To make matters worse, no thought appears to have been given to the management of flow while the work is in progress.

"A temporary installation of traffic lights to bridge the entire work area, including the part disrupted by builders working on new housing, would prevent the agonising snarl-ups that are now all too common.

"To blame these on motorists is, at best, delusional and at worst arrogant. The punishment to be inflicted on the community by closing the road entirely is unjustified."