



c/o 15 Pointout Close,  
Bassett,  
Southampton  
SO16 7LS  
14/02/2020

Highways Legal Team,  
Southampton City Council,  
Civic Centre,  
Southampton.  
SO14 7LY.

Dear Sirs.

**Re: The City of Southampton (Hill Lane) Experimental Order 2020**

I am writing in my formal capacity as Secretary to the Southampton Common Forum, but also with the experience and local knowledge of being a local resident, cyclist, pedestrian and driver. The Forum's Management Committee has long championed green travel initiatives in and around Southampton Common as part of an holistic, City-wide approach to sustainable transport, health and wellbeing and, as such are generally supportive of proposals to enhance this. However, we have significant concerns about the practicalities, implications and consequences of the above order, as advertised, and urge a hold on implementation and an engaged re-think before a scheme is implemented here. We believe that a revised scheme could deliver benefit without causing the many problems that the advertised scheme would.

We outline our suggestion below and provide the background to it in the accompanying appendix.

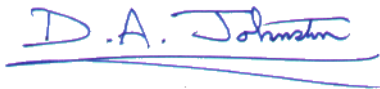
**A pragmatic suggestion for an alternative proposal**

- Rather than create single lanes on either side, create a dual direction lane on the east side and leave the west side exactly as it is. This would retain a significant amount of existing on-road parking on Hill Lane to minimise overspill into side roads and its adverse impacts on local amenity.
- The safety and priority of cycle tracks at junctions is critical – this is where 75% of on-road cycling injuries occur. Choosing the east side of the road for the dual lane avoids all vehicular junctions and the associated risks.
- This dual direction lane needs to be a minimum 2.5m, ideally 3m wide. In reality 3m wouldn't extend much beyond the existing parking lane (even excluding any car door opening buffer), though consideration should also be given to burning off and relocating the central division line between the N and S bound lanes.

- The dual lane should be marked with direction arrows and a solid white line (mandatory lane) and not just be a permanently coned off area). Hatched lines outside this would provide a warning buffer to discourage cars from approaching
- Ideally the dual lane would be coloured as a warning of “contraflow”. If retained long term it should be physically segregated with a raised kerb.
- Road surfaces need to be inspected and repaired before any lane is opened.
- There are 2 colleges and one primary school on Hill Lane. Perhaps 20 mph zoning would discourage speeding on this wide road.
- Perhaps the no parking zones facing Tauntons could be time limited to provide evening and weekend parking capacity (like at King Edwards).
- Ensure pavements are kept cut back to full tarmac width.
- As a final thought it is recommended that where parking problems cannot be resolved, cycle lanes are probably not appropriate. ([https://www.cycling-embassy.org.uk/sites/cycling-embassy.org.uk/files/documents/cyclingengland/2011/01/a11\\_cycle\\_lanes.pdf](https://www.cycling-embassy.org.uk/sites/cycling-embassy.org.uk/files/documents/cyclingengland/2011/01/a11_cycle_lanes.pdf)).

Our suggestion attempts to mitigate as much of the potential “damage” to local amenity as possible to accommodate the interests of motorists, cyclists, central government, local residents and Common visitors.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "D.A. Johnston". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

David A. Johnston, Secretary to Southampton Common Forum.

## **Appendix – supporting information.**

### **(1) Southampton Common Forum**

SCF has worked extensively with Council to research and address problems relating to green travel in and around The Common; undertaking online surveys and on the ground traffic counts, researching best practice, coordinating efforts to resolve issues relating to the stalled planning application to widen Lovers' Walk etc.. It is a great pity that this measure has been rushed through without any attempt at engagement. I understand that all 3 Shirley councillors are against the advertised plan, as are hundreds of local residents who will be adversely impacted by the scheme. It is also regrettable that Council did not notify the Forum, despite our extensive contacts with transport officers. We only found out about it from a local resident who sent us a photo of a Street notice. We posted the notice on our facebook page on 4<sup>th</sup> June and it has since been viewed 6,934 times, shared 37 times and attracted [159 comments](#) (as of 16:00 14/06/2020). We urge Council to read those comments as a "vox pop" indication of public opinion as part of an engaged and informed decision making process.

Direct URL to facebook post:

[https://www.facebook.com/SouthamptonCommonForum/photos/a.1775610489385116/2792815954331226/?type=3&\\_\\_xts\\_\\_%5B0%5D=68.ARB4HZhFFuehkUbAs77psqL7tEjgVC9Z4ZHiNot4c5DFDK\\_yqXusdpDM0IVuxgGEyfaLhfZXEbqID-ByIEQhzygsLTILGc1HVNPs4snsllZhNzDie\\_XeVinc8obYHWdqbsY6omhG9xtqjFKvTyru4OzuIMB2LS6zJJYGuljvyrUi0aqZFHJFg6cwfo83UF3jut0-xnOvDWxhbb9H5tkTArhveubTwzkdhXn7BrW3VpauKP4xJSJ1WC4NDM0WJGNyVzck05-FBN57LAWyUblGSwRP7kULr36NGdXcke\\_PUpBI\\_\\_Hunr34lozxOEJkWWVeX\\_SdBtNJ0avfokFECN9a3jwV2q5U&\\_\\_tn\\_\\_=-R](https://www.facebook.com/SouthamptonCommonForum/photos/a.1775610489385116/2792815954331226/?type=3&__xts__%5B0%5D=68.ARB4HZhFFuehkUbAs77psqL7tEjgVC9Z4ZHiNot4c5DFDK_yqXusdpDM0IVuxgGEyfaLhfZXEbqID-ByIEQhzygsLTILGc1HVNPs4snsllZhNzDie_XeVinc8obYHWdqbsY6omhG9xtqjFKvTyru4OzuIMB2LS6zJJYGuljvyrUi0aqZFHJFg6cwfo83UF3jut0-xnOvDWxhbb9H5tkTArhveubTwzkdhXn7BrW3VpauKP4xJSJ1WC4NDM0WJGNyVzck05-FBN57LAWyUblGSwRP7kULr36NGdXcke_PUpBI__Hunr34lozxOEJkWWVeX_SdBtNJ0avfokFECN9a3jwV2q5U&__tn__=-R)

Our concerns, comments and suggestions are based on the Forum's very extensive research base.

If the current pandemic has taught us anything, it is how vital the City's Green spaces are for the physical and mental wellbeing of City residents in a City beset with problems of air quality, public health and obesity and lack of private amenity space. In 2017 the Forum conducted the largest ever Common User Survey, generating some 2190 responses which were analysed against 2011 census data. Its key findings were all of direct relevance to the advertised proposals for Hill Lane:

*The Common is a valued amenity accessible to the great majority of Southampton residents*

*It is appreciated and used (at least once a month) by residents who live within 3.58 km (2.2 miles) of The Common who mostly use it on a weekly basis.*

*It is readily accessible to the 162,000 city residents (63% of the city's population) who live within 3.58km.*

*It is not the preserve of the residents in its immediate vicinity.*

*Users of The Common reflect the ethnic diversity of the City's population*

*The users of The Common match the overall ethnic diversity of the City, as measured in the 2011 census.*

*The Common is most popular with city residents from 30 to 69 years of age.*

*30 to 39 year olds are the largest user group often comprising young families with children.*

*The Common is highly valued as an open, natural green space primarily for walking and recreation*

*It is appreciated as a natural green space in the heart of the City, which is used for a wide variety of activities important to physical and mental well-being.*

*The Common significantly supports green travel in the City.*

*The second most popular activity (after walking) is commuting by foot or bike.*

See:

<http://www.southamptoncommonforum.org/surveyresults.html>

[http://www.southamptoncommonforum.org/scfdownloaddocs/2017survey/SCF\\_Survey\\_Executive\\_Summary.pdf](http://www.southamptoncommonforum.org/scfdownloaddocs/2017survey/SCF_Survey_Executive_Summary.pdf)

[http://www.southamptoncommonforum.org/scfdownloaddocs/2017survey/SCF\\_Survey\\_Report\\_Full.pdf](http://www.southamptoncommonforum.org/scfdownloaddocs/2017survey/SCF_Survey_Report_Full.pdf)

## **(2) Government guidance.**

We are fully aware of the mandatory guidance issued by HM Government on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2020 concerning LPA provision of extra cycling facilities during the COVID-19 pandemic to encourage cycling, facilitate social distancing on pavements and limit pressure on public transport. Those are all laudable aims which we fully support. However, for any experimental scheme to be judged a success it must meet an identified need, facilitate safety of all road users, be considered and not cause huge inconvenience. Quick “fixes” which simply tick government target boxes for mileage of cycle lane delivered, but do not address known problems and are introduced without apparent research and consultation are likely to be met with significant opposition, to provoke hostility towards council and thus are unlikely to succeed in the long run, to the detriment of all concerned.

## **(3) Loss of Parking and its impact on The Common.**

We calculate a loss of approximately 2.1 linear km (estimated) of parking next to Southampton Common (Hill Lane - Burgess Road junction to Raymond Road on east side, to Atherley Bowling club on west side excepting outside King Edwards and Tauntons on west side (also factoring in an estimated 50% reduction in parking capacity due to dropped kerbs in areas with housing). This loss will have a very significant impact on both Common users and local residents.

For Common users, we have solid evidence (SCF 2017 survey) that city residents can travel significant distances to use The Common. Many of these general users are elderly, they come to The Common to walk away from traffic, but a proportion of them are unable to walk significant distances to and from the Common in order to walk on it, they need to be able to drive to it and therefore need to park somewhere close by whilst exercising. Removal of all parking on Hill Lane will deny them easy access to The Common.

Parkrun every Saturday presents additional (albeit temporary) challenges - it regularly attracts >1000 runners. The next closest events are a significant distance away (Fleming Park in Eastleigh, Royal Victoria Country Park in Netley) so many participants come from a significant radius around The Common. Many local participants walk, jog or cycle to the event but those from the outlying areas need to drive. They already occupy all available parking on Hill Lane and surrounding side streets for an intense but focussed period every Saturday morning. The importance of parkrun on The Common to promoting health and exercise to City residents cannot be underestimated; it attracts all ages, all abilities, all fitness levels and we should be very wary of anything which adversely impacts on parkrun on The Common.

Others may need to drive to The Common for reasons of disability. There is no disabled parking on Hill Lane and only minimal provision at the east end of Cemetery Road.

Both The Common and The Old Cemetery benefit hugely from volunteer efforts to help maintain them. Those volunteers come from far and wide, some bring heavy and bulky tools. Their efforts need to be facilitated, not impeded.

The cars that currently park on Hill Lane won't simply disappear, they will be displaced - where to? No consideration appears to have been given to this and to its impacts on other local roads which are often already parked heavily by residents' cars as there is inadequate off road parking available for the number of cars per household that more affluent areas tend to have.

#### **(4) Evidence of Need**

What is the traffic survey (vehicle and bike) and road safety data that demonstrates that Hill Lane carries sufficient vehicle and cycle traffic and has a sufficiently bad safety record, to warrant cycle lane provision? Vehicle flows of <3000 per day / 300/hour are considered low. This is especially relevant considering that there are already 3 off road, North - South cycle routes in relatively close proximity:

1. Lovers Walk
2. The Avenue with its experimental scheme and pending, consulted-on SCN proposal
3. The Common's central N-S path from Sunrise on Burgess Road to Northlands Road).

Primary issue for cyclists on Hill Lane are the width at the northern end which encourages car to speed (especially south bound - it is a favourite haunt for police speed checks) and the danger to cyclists from parked cars opening doors. Narrowing the upper end of Hill Lane in way that calms traffic and physically separates cyclists from traffic would be a very good thing.

It strikes us that other routes into the city centre and in the area may be of much higher priority for cycling infrastructure provision, for example Shirley High Street and the carriage drive path between The Avenue and Hill Lane in the top of The Common. The adjacent section of Burgess Road is way too busy and narrow (road and pavement) to accommodate a cycle lane. The on Common path is currently unlit – SCF is shortly to release ecological research from bats and lighting experiments on The Common pertinent to this issue).

#### **(5) Reclaiming pavements**

Part of the current issues of cyclist – pedestrian conflict on City pavements (when cyclists are scared to ride on the road) and social distancing provision could be easily improved without infrastructure and changes to the road system simply by addressing the years of neglect that have seen roadside verges / public open spaces encroach onto pavements to a dramatic degree. The following pavements could be widened up to several feet if this encroachment was cut back to the edge of the laid, but buried tarmac (and there must be many other similar locations across the City):

- the sides of the Avenue along The Common
- Highfield Avenue
- Bassett Green Road, top end
- Winchester Road, top end adjacent to Sports Centre woodland
- Burgess Road by Butterfield Road entrance to The Common.



The Avenue, lost pavement – Photo Jan 2018



Highfield Avenue, lost pavement – Photos July 2018

Southampton Common Forum Volunteers started to clear both Highfield Avenue and The Avenue but their efforts have sadly not been maintained by Council.

## (6) Implementation Issues

Any cycle lane, temporary or other, must be properly implemented, must be of appropriate, legal width for its function, must be properly maintained and ideally should be made mandatory with solid white lining or physical barrier kerb.

(6.1) Much of the edge of road surface of Hill Lane (where any cycle lane would be placed) is in poor condition with potholes, cracked tarmac, sunken ironwork etc.. These all force cyclists further out into the road and sometimes necessitate “weaving” to avoid problematic road surfaces. Any cycle lane provision must include remedial works to road surfaces. This is especially problematic in the middle section of Hill Lane on the eastern side where there are wide flagstones at the edge of the road surface and significant erosion between these and the tarmac road surface. If narrow cycle tyres were to catch in this, a rider could easily be thrown. The dangers are exacerbated in the dark and wet and the aspiration should be to facilitate year round increases in cycling.

(6.2) The current cycle lane provision to the south end of Hill Lane is significantly less than the **absolutely minimum recommended width of 1.5m (ideally 2m)**. Research indicates that where cycle lanes exist, drivers tend to drive closer to cyclists than they do on open roads. This needs to be considered. *“Anything less than 1.5 metres (minimum) deprives cyclists of road space and encourages traffic to pass too close.”* (<https://www.cyclinguk.org/campaigning/views-and-briefings/cycle-lanes-tracks-and-shared-use-footways>) - **this width issue should be remedied as part of any proposal. Introducing 20mph zones would also help and facilitate general safety close to the 3 educational centres.**

(6.3) The current trial lane on the Avenue N of Winchester Road appears fundamentally flawed in implementation. It relies on traffic cones to create the lane. Whilst these provide a “cheap” physical barrier (good), they remove a valuable amount of available road width compared to solid white lining and coloured road surface. or a physical kerb (better). Moreover, at every junction the cones have been positioned on an angle towards the kerb, effectively blocking the lane! It is little wonder that many cyclists are still using the pavement shared path. Please don't repeat this in Hill Lane!

#### **Other Information Sources:**

[https://www.cycling-embassy.org.uk/sites/cycling-embassy.org.uk/files/documents/cyclingengland/2011/01/a11\\_cycle\\_lanes.pdf](https://www.cycling-embassy.org.uk/sites/cycling-embassy.org.uk/files/documents/cyclingengland/2011/01/a11_cycle_lanes.pdf)

[https://www.cyclinguk.org/sites/default/files/document/2017/10/space\\_for\\_cycling\\_guide\\_for\\_decision\\_makers.pdf](https://www.cyclinguk.org/sites/default/files/document/2017/10/space_for_cycling_guide_for_decision_makers.pdf)

<https://www.cyclinguk.org/campaigning/views-and-briefings/cycle-lanes-tracks-and-shared-use-footways>

#### **Footnote:**

We have not yet been able to access any maps for the proposal due to pressure of work and therefore being unable to contact Council within whatever working hours it is operating during lockdown to request to be sent copies. We find it staggering that in 2020, this material has to be individually requested, rather than being made automatically accessible through the Council's public web site with the URL given on the public notice.