

**July 2020 submission from SCF to
Southampton City Council**



Dear Sirs,

further to the previous submission from Southampton Common Forum concerning the temporary cycle lane on Hill Lane, I wish to provide additional comment, research and survey information.

We make these comments from the background of a firm belief in, and commitment to, the encouragement and promotion of green travel. But equally, this should be holistic, proportionate and evidence based - the right things in the right place for the right reasons and properly executed.

Whilst we welcome the ethos behind the Government's recent statutory guidance on reallocating road space in response to COVID-19 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reallocating-road-space-in-response-to-covid-19-statutory-guidance-for-local-authorities/traffic-management-act-2004-network-management-in-response-to-covid-19>) and we fully recognise the urgent need to facilitate green travel and exercise in the city in order to reduce car use and congestion, to tackle very poor air quality levels and the resulting health impacts and costs to the NHS and to try to overcome chronic obesity levels in the city, we have concerns that the current scheme for Hill Lane has been poorly designed and executed.

The overall design of the Hill Lane scheme seems to be contrary to the mandatory advice, it seems to tackle a "problem that didn't necessarily exist", it has significant knock on effects for both visitors to The Common (as a vital green space for residents City-wide) and for local residents as a result of displacement of parking onto narrower and already busy side streets.

Further to our original submission the first weeks of the scheme on Hill Lane, we would now make detailed observations (1) specifically about Hill Lane and current usage (2) about how the scheme fits with the Government's mandatory guidance.

(1) The Hill Lane Scheme.

We remain to be convinced that this scheme addresses a genuine, identified need, especially in the more northerly sections.

To this end we have started to undertake regular, 4 weekly surveys of traffic flow on the top section of Hill Lane (Bellemoor Road to Burgess Road). Our survey point is the Hill Lane – Burgess Road junction as from here we can monitor bike and car use on the top section, together with bikes entering and exiting The Common at the junction (i.e. not using the cycle lanes). It also allows us to monitor bike use on Burgess Road. We have chosen 7:00 – 9:00 am as this is peak time on weekdays and we have chosen to count cars (all motorised transport) as well as bikes as this shows relative usage and also gives an indicator of the general "state of the easing of lockdown" and return to work.

Results from our first data collection are:

Day	Date	Cars going South on Hill Lane	Cars going North on Hill Lane	Bikes going South on Hill Lane	Bikes going North on Hill Lane	Bikes entering the Common	Bikes exiting the Common
Sat 07:00 - 09:00	04/07/20	287	288	7	10	3	1
Sun 07:00 - 09:00	05/07/20	137	174	8	7	1	5
Mon 07:00 - 09:00	06/07/20	612	608	17	18	8	5
Tues 07:00 - 09:00	07/07/20	658	617	15	18	16	15
Weds 07:00 - 09:00	08/07/20	595	652	12	12	11	4
Thurs 07:00 - 09:00	09/07/20	582	649	12	9	16	9
Fri 07:00 - 09:00	10/07/20	606	617	21	8	17	6

In doing these counts, we noticed the number of bikes using Burgess Road and so then did relative counts on a further 2 peak weekday 7:00-9:00 am time slots.

		Bikes going East on Burgess Road	Bikes going West on Burgess Road	Bikes going South on Hill Lane	Bikes going North on Hill Lane	Bikes entering Common	Bikes exiting Common
Tues 07:00 - 09:00	14/07/2020	5	13	10	10	14	4
Thurs 07:00 - 09:00	16/07/2020	8	13	10	11	13	9

We will be consolidating the 2 counts into a single week and repeating at 4 week intervals.

As can be seen, the results are pretty consistent across the weekdays and, at this point in time, at peak weekday time:

- (1) on average, 1 bike every 6 minutes uses Hill Lane in each direction
- (2) comparable numbers use Burgess Road (far narrower) or The Common.

There are, of course, some very strong caveats to these initial counts, which we fully acknowledge.

- Schools were not yet back, so neither car drop offs, nor cycle to school is included.

- The University was in lockdown at Highfield and the General Hospital, though we believe that University commuters would be more likely to use the E-W cross-Common path or Burgess Road (from our previous Commuter survey).
- Lockdown restrictions had only recently been eased, so by no means all of the general workforce was back in work (and the “new normal” may well mean that many may be working from home far more regularly in the future).

Which is why we will be aiming to repeat the counts every 4 week for the foreseeable future to monitor any changes. We will forward these to you as we do them.

Whilst doing the counts we also observed the following:

- Despite the cycle lanes, some adult cyclists on Hill Lane were still using the pavement (seemingly, similar has been observed for the other schemes)
- A substantial number of cyclists mounted the pavement at the Hill Lane – Burgess Road junction in order to cross the Hill Lane – Burgess Road – Winchester Road double roundabout on the pavement and using the pedestrian crossings – completely contrary to the intent to facilitate pedestrian – cyclist separation).
- In that 2 hour period: one bus (#U9) going south on Hill Lane, but only as far as Bellemoor Road and then turning onto Bellemoor Road for the Hospital, One bus (X11) going north on Hill Lane from City Centre via Shirley High Street and Bellemoor Road.

These observations reinforces the failure of SCC to adopt a holistic approach that could genuinely reduce car use and encourage adoption of cycle use by current non cyclists. Without park and ride and frequent, regular and reliable public transport, surely the best of intentions are doomed to failure? The Hospital’s park and ride at Adnac park has been in suspension for months, has any effort been made to repurpose it for the City (and routinely at weekends into the future)?

If those already using bikes are afraid of the roundabout complex at the top of Hill Lane, then that won’t encourage others to get bikes and use that route. I use that roundabout twice a day on a bike and, even as an experienced road cyclist in high viz, you have to have your wits about you as cars hurtle up to it, try to push out ahead of you and start accelerating onto the roundabout whilst you are still crossing in front of them. On dark winter mornings and evenings, the situation is far worse and it isn’t helped by the raised nature and planting scheme which hides cars (and their indicators) from bikes and visa versa. Council’s justification for the Hill Lane Scheme includes it being part of a City Centre to Rownhams / North Baddersley corridor. Without sorting out that junction in an holistic approach (for example, mandatory stop rather than give way, speed humps on all entries and exits, 20mph zone etc.) who will want to use it on a bike?

From conversations with local residents, removal of the parking on Hill Lane appears also to have encouraged faster (above the limit) car driving on the Bellemore Road to Burgess Road section, especially at night. Have temporary speed cameras been deployed? On Hill Lane as a whole, there are 4 educational establishments catering from early years to A level; Spring Hill, King Edwards, Richard Taunton and, above Burgess Road, Hollybrook. Imposing a 20mph zone from say Commercial Road up to Dale Valley Road and for 200m or so on all approaching side roads would calm traffic for all these establishments and the roundabouts.

We note the 3 designated disabled parking bays which have been introduced, one on each of 3 side roads – council’s online description of the scheme (https://transport.southampton.gov.uk/media/1394/hill-lane_summary_-faq.pdf) states “we will be

implementing three additional disabled bays in each of Bellemoor Road, Wilton Road and Raymond Road immediately off Hill Lane". You have not done this, you have done 3 bays in total, one in each!

Government recommendations for car parking provision in excess of 50 places is 4% designated as disabled – that means 14 spaces. Three additional disabled bays have been added on Cemetery Road (making 6 there of around 120 available) BUT to access Cemetery Road, whether disabled or not, means taking cars much further into the City Centre, most likely on The Avenue. Surely that is counter productive in so many different ways!

Further to this, David Livermore, a local resident and wheelchair user who advises SCF on disability access issues relating to The Common reports the following:

Two disabled parking spaces have been provided in Wilton Road and Raymond Road. Both are in dangerous positions.

Wilton Road is by a keep left sign and the road is very narrow. All the vehicles I saw drove through the parking space to avoid a very tight turn on the wrong side of the road as they approached Hill Lane. Anyone in a wheelchair accessible vehicle would be at significant risk.

The Raymond Road bay is close to the junction on the south side. A blind bend. Cars have always parked there but it is hazardous.

Traffic that used to park on Hill Lane now parks in Cemetery Road. which means it has become much more busy. When I last went two weeks ago there were no disabled parking spaces in Cemetery Road. That would be a much safer place to put them.

As I understand it, cycle lanes are bounded by a solid or broken white line. North of Wilton Road to the bend just before Bellemoor Road, there is no line, just cycle symbols. Some of these are outside of the bus parking spaces by King Edwards, which is quite narrow. I have queried the legality of the "non cycle lane" but the contact is on leave until tomorrow.

About 20 years ago, the bus spaces and high visibility signs were put up because of the high speeds and accidents in that section. There has been increased speeding in Hill Lane since the parking has been removed.

We keep hearing that pavements are being improved. I have seen little evidence of it. On a trip up Hill Lane on the west side I found broken dropped kerbs and severe cambers at crossing points which easily throw a wheelchair towards the road. I would quite happily go to the common in my wheelchair but St James Road makes it very uncomfortable. So I drive to Cemetery Road and park there. Ah! There's the problem.

Further comments on that document are:

(a) it states a "Cycle Street' approach between Wilton Road and Bellemoor Road". This is not defined but appears to be simply painting some bike symbols on the road! It certainly isn't the "Healthy Streets Approach" being adopted in other cities (<https://tfl.gov.uk/corporate/about-tfl/how-we-work/planning-for-the-future/healthy-streets#on-this-page-2>).

(b) it states that there have been 8 cycle injuries on Hill Lane in the last three years but does not provide a breakdown of cause or location (so they could all be pothole related!).

(c) it notes the significant increase in cyclists using the northern carriage drive path from Bellemoor up and around the top of The Common since lockdown (from 30 to 180 4pm to 6 pm). This may be true but it doesn't consider the context of a nation in complete lockdown and only allowed out for 1 piece of very local exercise a day – given the choice of taking that exercise on road or on The Common, I know which I would chose, so would consider those counts as fundamentally flawed.

(d) it cites SCF's own Common user survey (and SCC's own adopted strategic vision for The Common) which highlighted the need to " *Improve the safety of users of the Common especially after dark through increasing both the natural light and lighting on the main paths*". Yet Council's pending planning application for improving Lover's Walk (see below for further comment) did not include installation of lighting on the currently unlit southern section, despite 2 previous applications for the scheme being slammed by both the police and many local residents for not including lighting provision.

(e) it talks of working with schools to make green travel links to the area – so why haven't improvements to the roundabout complex been undertaken?

(2) Government Measures and General Implementation Comments.

The government's mandatory guidance contains specific measures that Councils can adopt. These are clearly listed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reallocating-road-space-in-response-to-covid-19-statutory-guidance-for-local-authorities/traffic-management-act-2004-network-management-in-response-to-covid-19>.

Significant questions can be asked about how Council has matched up to these measures.

- *Installing 'pop-up' cycle facilities with a minimum level of physical separation from volume traffic; for example, **mandatory** cycle lanes, using light segregation features such as flexible plastic wands; or quickly converting traffic lanes into temporary cycle lanes (suspending parking bays where necessary); widening existing cycle lanes to enable cyclists to maintain distancing. **Facilities should be segregated as far as possible, i.e. with physical measures separating cyclists and other traffic. Lanes indicated by road markings only are very unlikely to be sufficient to deliver the level of change needed, especially in the longer term.*** This has not been done – it is simply a paint job. The temporary barriers on The Avenue have also now been removed, it is now only paint. Moreover, on Hill Lane it is part Mandatory, part advisory and part not there at all!!!!
- *..... to **widen pedestrian refuges and crossings (both formal and informal) to enable people to cross roads safely and at a distance.*** This has not been done, all the parking for The Common is now on the far side of the road, there are relatively few refuges and they have not been widened.
- *Reducing speed limits: **20mph speed limits are being more widely adopted as an appropriate speed limit for residential roads, and many through streets in built-up areas....., reducing the speed limit can provide a more attractive and safer environment for walking and cycling.*** This has not been done, as noted above, with 4 educational establishments on Hill Lane (including Hollybrook), there is clear justification for this.

- ***Providing additional cycle parking facilities at key locations, such as outside stations and in high streets, to accommodate an increase in cycling, for example by repurposing parking bays to accommodate cycle racks.*** This has not been done. There are virtually no cycle parking facilities on The Common; about 4 spaces outside The Hawthorns, a handful at the Playpark, none at any other entrances.
- ***Changes to junction design to accommodate more cyclists – for example, extending Advanced Stop Lines at traffic lights to the maximum permitted depth of 7.5 metres where possible.*** This has not been done. The Hill Lane Roundabout complex remains unchanged and a major barrier.
- ***‘Whole-route’ approaches to create corridors for buses, cycles and access only on key routes into town and city centres.*** This has not been done. The Hill Lane Roundabout complex remains unchanged, so the facilitated route just stops.
- ***Identifying and bringing forward permanent schemes already planned, for example under Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans, and that can be constructed relatively quickly.*** This has not been done. In the first part of 2020, SCF was actively involved with Council in publicising and engagement in 2 long- planned schemes for green travel improvements around The Common:

(1) A formal planning application for widening Lovers Walk through Little Common – (<https://planningpublicaccess.southampton.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?keyVal=Q625UGOZGYZ00&activeTab=summary>). The legal due date for decision by Planning was 17th April, but it still has not been decided. If it passes planning, some phases of this scheme could be advanced sooner than previously anticipated (especially given the University of Southampton shutdown, an announced delay in the start of new academic year, no face to face lectures, and full staff return unlikely before the new year (I work for the University), and Common Consent sought from Central Government earlier.

(2) A public engagement for advanced proposals for permanent, engineered extension of existing cycle lanes on The Avenue from Northlands road up to Burgess Road as part of the SCN5 route (<https://transport.southampton.gov.uk/avenuelovers>). This has seemingly completely stalled, no report has been issued that we have seen.

We also note that no effort has still been made to clear back encroachment of The Common onto the footpaths of The Avenue and Highfield Avenue where up to 1m of pavement has been grown over. Council grounds teams have been working throughout the last few months.

Yours sincerely,

David Johnston,

Secretary to SCF.