

Introduction

This is a report of the Green Travel Public Meeting and Workshop held by Southampton Common Forum (SCF) and the University of Southampton (UoS) at the university's Avenue Campus on 24th April 2019. There were some 30 attendees. This report should be read in conjunction with the presentations made at the workshop and the Forum's Green Travel and Safety Working Group report.

It should be emphasised that the meeting was held for the dual purposes of information dissemination and gathering; it was not a decision making meeting and no conclusions were drawn nor votes taken.

Background

(1) The SCF's 2017 public survey (<http://www.southamptoncommonforum.org/survey.html>) identified a clear "Triangle of Conflict" between dog walkers, pedestrians and cyclists (especially fast commuting cyclists) using The Common, with each user type being reported as causing significant problems for the others. Addressing this issue is key to promoting shared use of The Common as both a recreational and green travel space and encouraging more use and more green travel.

(2) The SCF's Green Travel and Safety Working Group spent several months over 2018-2019 exploring options and investigating best practice in other parks across the UK and farther afield. In their report (http://www.southamptoncommonforum.org/scfdownloaddocs/greentravel/green_travel_and_safety_working_group_report_03_2019_for_www.pdf) the Working Group recognised that there are major constraints of space and resourcing, as well as a lack of appetite for significant physical remodelling of The Common. They conclude that the best way to improve green travel and safety (at least in the short term) is by trying to change users' behaviour towards each other. This could be done through a combination of a possible 'code of conduct', improved signage (possibly including arrows on the tarmac for approved cycle routes), campaigns, general awareness raising, and use of social media.

(3) In addition, during the first part of 2019, SCF conducted both an online and multiple physical user surveys across The Common, which aimed to inform on peak use patterns of Green Travel; numbers of cyclists and pedestrians, origins and destinations and routes to inform discussion and identify the major "problem points".

(4) This workshop was arranged in the context of exploring a 'strategic' and holistic approach to Green Travel and Safety across the Common. This needed to take into account:

- The longstanding (and controversial) plan to widen Lover's Walk.
- The adoption of a City-wide cycling strategy.

- The Council's approval of an ambitious and wide-ranging new plan for the Common, in which the key priorities include improving facilities for green travel, and reducing conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists and dog walkers, as well as improving safety.
- The Council's preliminary investigation of a possible dedicated cycle route along the Avenue, which crosses and bisects the Common.
- The renewed general emphasis on making Southampton a truly Green City.

Opening Remarks - Roger Brown

The Common is used by many different individuals and groups for many different purposes. Everyone was a stakeholder in the process of exploring and delivering solutions to identified problems.

SCF's role in this process was twofold:

(1) to attempt to engage with the different stakeholders to give them the opportunity of having their voices heard and their viewpoints understood. It was encouraging that there were many new faces in the room tonight who had come to engage in the process.

(2) to help provide an evidence base of facts that inform any future policies that Southampton City Council s

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Green Travel and Safety Working Group Report - Jenny Marshall.

This is a basic precis of Jenny's presentation. The full presentation can be found here:

<http://www.southamptoncommonforum.org/scfdownloaddocs/greentravel/green-travel-workshop-presentation-jm-www.pdf>

and the full report here:

http://www.southamptoncommonforum.org/scfdownloaddocs/greentravel/green_travel_and_safety_working_group_report_03_2019_for_www.pdf

The Green Travel and Safety Working Group had been convened to research and identify best practice from other parks, both nationally and internationally, to try to identify possible solutions to issues identified by SCF's 2017 user survey whilst actively promoting The Common as a key component of the City's Green Travel network.

Green Travel

Currently, each major entrance to The Common had a sign board which did contain a basic "code of conduct" which clearly wasn't as effective as research has shown it needs to be.

The working group had researched and evaluated 5 options:

(1) A code of conduct - there were lots of examples to draw from (e.g. The Royal Parks, see Appendix 1), but precious little data available to show that they actually worked. How could codes of conduct be enforced?

(2) Providing additional paths on/beside The Common for specific user groups (fast commuting cyclists).

(3) Physical barriers and other calming measures - these had a few positives but many negatives

(4) Widening selected, paths which provided the main commuting routes - there was little evidence that this reduced conflict and could increase it if wider paths encouraged greater speed.

(5) Providing segregated cycling and pedestrian paths - these could promote a sense of entitlement to cycle faster. They may produce fewer incidents but possibly those incidents were more serious - data was lacking.

The Working group concluded that option 1 (a well-designed, clear, comprehensive and well publicised Code of Conduct was the most resource effective option for the short term but if this proved to be ineffective then options (3) and (4) above would need further investigation. The Royal Parks had an agreed “pro forma” which guided the decision making process for any proposed changes to paths in their Parks, and a similar framework could be adapted for Southampton’s parks.

Safety

In general terms - safety (or the feeling of safety / danger) was clearly linked to visibility. Both day time and night time visibility needed to be considered.

For daytime, most concern seemed to be related to dense vegetation encroaching on paths and obscuring sight lines and darkening prematurely.

For night time the current SCC parks code says to “take a sensible approach” - which implies “at your own risk” and therefore discourages green travel and promotes parks as potentially dangerous places at night. On The Common, relatively few paths are lit. On many of these dense vegetation obscured sight lines and significantly reduced the efficiency of lighting so ongoing management and scrub and tree maintenance could significantly improve the situation. Providing additional lighting on currently unlit paths was controversial; there were those opposed to what they viewed as “urbanising” The Common and those who felt that it would be a good thing to encourage green travel and a feeling of safety. Some wanted to reduce existing lighting to discourage night time use of The Common. The perceived impact on wildlife (especially bats) needed actual scientific data to inform decisions and SCF and UoS were currently planning to generate this over the summer. Better information on actual (as opposed to perceived) risk of using The Common was also needed.

Commuter Surveys - Adam Wheeler

This is a basic precis of Adam presentation. The full presentation can be found here:

<http://www.southamptoncommonforum.org/scfdownloaddocs/greentravel/green-travel-workshop-presentation-aaw-www.pdf>

and the raw, anonymised survey data is available here:

<http://www.southamptoncommonforum.org/scfdownloaddocs/greentravel/southampton-common-commuter-survey-2019-responses.xlsx>

Decisions about path widening and development on and around The Common were often controversial. It was therefore important to have an evidence base about the actual usage patterns to inform and refine and, where appropriate, restrict the location of any proposals to where the identified need was greatest. With this in mind, both SCF and SCC had recently conducted physical surveys of pedestrian and cycle use on The Common. SCF had also conducted an online survey to provide additional information.

SCC had made some 15,000 user counts at various locations over 7 days, SCF had examined the major junctions at peak morning and evening periods, counting walkers and cyclists separately and also recording direction of travel into and out of the junction. The results of these data were presented.

Simple “user” counts (combining pedestrians and cyclists) showed areas of crowding. These data could be further analysed by considering path width; this showed that Lovers’ Walk around the University Steps was carrying the highest density. It should be noted that the Salisbury Road entrance to The Common was closed over the survey periods as a result of UoS building works and consequently usage of the section of Lovers’ Walk between Salisbury Road and the University steps was likely somewhat higher than might normally be so.

Whilst SCF had been surveying the University Steps junction, they had stopped and asked people their views and collated a short video from those willing to speak on and off camera. The video was shown. It was acknowledged that it was harder to stop and ask cyclists than pedestrians. The video is available on [facebook](#) and YouTube :

<https://www.facebook.com/SouthamptonCommonForum/videos/470595880379505/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k9xcpli-iCl&t=24s>

Questions and Answers

More information was requested about the Royal Parks path planning process.

Any proposed changes to any path within the Royal Parks (size, route, surface, designation etc.) was assessed on a 10 point template / framework which determined whose needs came first in the decision making process and modified the proposals accordingly.

Had Furzedown Road been considered?

Yes, it was part of the physical survey and significant numbers of cyclists appeared to use it to avoid congestion on the section of Lovers’ Walk from Highfield Lane to the University Steps.

It was observed that cyclists using Hawthorn and Chamberlain Roads to enter the Highfield Campus via the SW corner often travelled fast downhill along Hawthorn Road, past the schools and that junctions were often obscured by parked cars.

Were there any statistics on actual accidents on The Common’s paths.

No, these data was seemingly not available. Most incidents (unless severe enough to require the emergency services)were never formally reported and logged, but many near misses were known and several of the participants confirmed personal experience of them.

Both cyclists and pedestrians on The Common comprised 2 distinct user types; recreational users and commuters. These had different needs. How were they differentiated in the surveys.

It had not been possible to do this as it would have entailed stopping every individual. The online survey was specifically directed at commuters in terms of its promotion and the questions asked but was open so recreational users may have also responded. It had been observed that there were a large number of early evening recreational joggers and early morning recreational walkers and dog walkers, but it had not been possible to systematically record everything. It was acknowledged that no survey was perfect, but those undertaken had significantly added to the evidence base for use, timing and route.

Had Westbourne Crescent been surveyed?

No it had not, surveys were limited to The Common and its principal entrances.

If Lovers' Walk was the main pinch point, would a dedicated cycle path along The Avenue actually attract users away from it?

This was an unknown, but any such path would integrate into the wider City-wide cycle network. Some participants questioned the need to extent right up to Burgess Road, others asked why anyone would be against a designated, separate cycle path along The Avenue which contributed to overall City cycling infrastructure.

What would be involved in any physical widening of Lovers' Walk?

This depended on the surfacing to be used. If it were tarmac or concrete, rather than gravel / hogging (as would befit a key commuting path) then Commons Consent would need to be obtained from Central Government in order to increase the amount of Tarmac within a designated Common.

Was there an accepted "best width" for shared use, non-segregated paths?

A common guide was around 3.3m. In terms of lovers walk, over the years users had spread off the tarmac path at times of peak density and the worn earth at either side of the current path suggested what the width needed to be.

It was observed that all groups of users would "need help" to understand the other user groups and to learn to share paths considerately.

Workshop Session

The second half of the meeting comprised a workshop session. The attendees grouped themselves into small groups (of 2-4) to discuss the issues raised by the presentations and their own personal thoughts and comments. Critically, was there anything that had been missed from the discussion? Participants wrote their thoughts and comments onto sticky notes and placed them onto large printed maps of The Common supplied by UoS for all to see. These then formed the basis for an open discussion, facilitated by Adam Wheeler and Roger Brown, identifying themes and thoughts from the Evening. **Again, it should be emphasised that this meeting was held for the purposes of information dissemination and gathering; it was not a decision making meeting and no conclusions were drawn nor votes taken. No recommendations or prioritisation should be read into the report of the Workshop Session.**

Scans of all of the generated sticky notes comments can be found in Appendix 2 below.



Summary of Workshop comments and discussion

No recommendations or prioritisation should be inferred from the following summary.

(1) We should make it natural for people to do the “right thing”. Emphasis should be given to the Common as a common, shared space, the use of which involves obligations and responsibilities to others as well as an individual’s rights, benefits and privileges. A behaviour-based strategy might incorporate or reflect a ‘hierarchy’ of needs, vulnerability or respect, with the elderly, disabled and young children at the top; then other pedestrians; then cyclists and other ‘fast’ travellers (e.g., scooters) as has been introduced in the Royal Parks (see Appendix 1). It will be necessary to cater for non-English speaking users in any communication strategy and the education process would take time to produce results, some would always ignore it.

(2) There was general consent that shared paths (supported by appropriate, simple and effective signage, direction arrows on the tarmac, marked zones at major functions etc.) are preferable to segregated ones. They also could be physically narrower than segregated paths and so have less impact. The quality of the use experience would depend on the width, the surface and the visibility (with lighting being a key factor). Was there an optimum/minimum width for such paths where they constitute a major commuter route such as Lovers Walk? (Further research was needed). Were some kinds of physical speed limiters possible / practical?

(3) It was also recognised that improving green travel and safety might mean a less conservative approach to individual trees in strategic positions. Given the number of trees on the Common, specific trees should not be allowed to prevent better and safer travel where there are clear benefits in removing, trimming or risking minor effects on their root system, even if they have statutory protection (all council owned trees have the equivalent of TPO status). Where possible and appropriate, trees that are removed should be replaced.

(4) Because the ‘Dogs are brilliant’ campaign was recently launched, the behaviour of dogs and their owners had not been covered in the Forum Working Group report. The proposed code of conduct should include advice to dog walkers about the need to control their charges. It was suggested that if this was not effective, consideration should be given to requiring all dogs to be kept on a lead, at least on the main commuter routes.

(5) Some of the path surfaces were in poor and even dangerous condition and were badly in need of repair and remediation. Consideration should be given to removing the speed bumps. These can be dangerous for cyclists, especially in the dark and when concentrating on avoiding dogs, as well as an impediment for disabled users (the centre sections have already been removed from all of them).

Specifics

(6) There was some interest in exploring a segregated cycle route alongside the edge of the Avenue between Northlands Road and Burgess Road. A dedicated cycle route along the Avenue/Winchester Road could link up with a North Southampton Park and Ride. It was not clear how this would feed into the Burgess Road/Avenue junction. Some cyclists might still prefer to use the existing paths, and such a route would be of little interest to cyclists crossing directly between Highfield Road and Bellemoor Road.

(7) If confined to the Common between Northlands Road and the Highfield Road/Avenue or the underpass junction, rather than extending right up to Burgess Road, a separate route along the Avenue could relieve pressure on the lower part of Lovers’ Walk and other routes on the Common.

The lower part of Lovers' Walk could be cleared and widened, especially if land informally annexed over the years by residents of Westbourne Crescent was reclaimed by the Council. Associated traffic calming measures on The Avenue itself would be beneficial, not least in improving to access both bus stops.

(8) It was recognised that as an already lighted, broad and comparatively little used road, Westbourne Crescent could be promoted as an alternative route to Lovers Walk, although additional lighting might be needed at the junction with Blenheim Avenue. Following on the scrub clearance work by the Common Sense group, there was a need for widening and resurfacing the path opposite #1-5 Highfield Road and removing the bollards at the entry to Oakmount Avenue. The path between Winn and Westwood roads also needs resurfacing.

(9) Moving north, there was considerable support for widening Lovers Walk north of Highfield Avenue, either throughout or just between Highfield Avenue and the University Steps (the heaviest use). Whilst Furzedown Road was an alternative, the fact that cars are parked on both sides means that the available carriageway is quite narrow and so of limited suitability for cyclists. Concerns were also expressed about visibility at the Furzedown / Hawthorns Road junction. It was generally acknowledged that the access from Lovers Walk to Burgess Road was highly unsatisfactory, especially at busy times. The cycle route on the Avenue to Winchester Road is very poor. Finally, there might be benefit in exploring the full restoration creation/re-creation of the Carriage Drive East as a commuting and walking path to link up with the Carriage Drive West at the Burgess Road / Avenue junction..

(10) Other points raised included:

- Many chose to commute via Lovers' Walk in order to enjoy The Common.
- Improving the Bellemoor entrance which was overwhelmed at busy times (by shrub clearance as well as barrier reconfiguration).
- Would additional path lighting help alleviate pressure on the Bellemoor junction? It was noted that some cyclists use Hill Lane and Burgess Road (which is very busy, fast and narrow between Hill Lane and The Avenue) in preference to the west part of Carriage Drive simply because the latter is unlit.
- Drainage in the underpass is still a problem. Consideration could be given to putting down different shades of tarmac in the subway and also installing 10 mph signs at each end
- Introducing 'no parking' on both sides of Highfield Avenue.
- Introducing appropriate lighting on the northern stretch of Coronation Avenue.
- What shared paths were there in the City and is there evidence that they work?
- Whether a designated, separate cycle lane along The Avenue to the north of Burgess Road was more needed than one south of Burgess Road.

Appendix 1: The Royal Parks Codes of Conduct and Hierarchy of Needs

The Royal Parks are managed under a system of legislation, regulations and policies. The full listing is available here:

<https://www.royalparks.org.uk/managing-the-parks/park-regulations-legislation-and-policies>

The Royal Parks has instigated the following hierarchy of needs concerning priority and respect given to other park users on park paths.

- Safe access for all visitors
- Vulnerable users
- Pedestrians/walkers
- Horse riders
- Leisure cyclists, skaters, scooters
- Sports and commuter cyclists
- Operational vehicles
- Cars, motorbikes and taxis, Private Hire Vehicles – with the park as a destination
- Through traffic

Specifically for park pathways, there is a dedicated code of conduct:

<https://www.royalparks.org.uk/managing-the-parks/cycling-in-the-royal-parks/the-pathway-code-of-conduct-considerate-cycling>

Royal Parks Pathway Code of Conduct

Be considerate

Everyone has an equal part to play in making sure the park can be enjoyed safely! Our parks welcome a variety of users, including pedestrians, joggers, dog walkers, cyclists, horse riders, rollerbladers/skaters and motorists. Although pedestrians have priority over all other users, even in areas designated and marked for other purposes, everyone is asked to use the pathways considerately.

Be safe

Please adhere to all pathway and road signage. Take care at crossings and junctions by being alert and looking out for other users in the same space. Everyone needs to take care especially when passing other users, and also to give space so others feel comfortable. Cyclists, only cycle on designated paths so others know where to expect you and stick to the path so the park and wildlife remains protected (particularly important in Bushy Park and Richmond Park which are Sites of Special Scientific Interest). Dog walkers, keep your dog leashed in areas requested, and under control if off lead.

Be seen and heard

We recommend visitors are seen and heard in low visibility conditions. Using cyclists British Standard approved protective equipment and wearing high visibility clothing will help others be aware of your

presence in low visibility conditions. As some park visitors have visual and hearing impairments we also recommend using a bell to alert people of your approach if needed. Pedestrians should be aware that wearing dark clothing means you may not be very visible in low light conditions. Dog walkers, when choosing a lead consider a bright colour so others can see the lead across the path. Horse riders, let others know if they are too close to your horse.

Be polite

Giving way, saying 'thanks', 'excuse me' or 'sorry' are easy ways to help each other have an great experience in the park. All of our visitors, no matter the activity they undertake whilst in the park, come to the park for the same reason - to enjoy the special green spaces that they are. By every visitor being polite and considering the impact they have on others, we all contribute to a more harmonious space.

Think Park

Our visitors come to the park to relax, explore and exercise, which makes our pathways unsuitable for fast travel. Cyclists, if you are in a hurry or do not want to slow your pace to below 10mph, consider using another route outside the park.

In addition, there are specific codes of conduct for different user groups

for cyclists

<https://www.royalparks.org.uk/managing-the-parks/cycling-in-the-royal-parks/the-pathway-code-of-conduct-considerate-cycling>

This is further reinforced by a specific cycling policy:

https://www.royalparks.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/65395/160812_CPB_cycle-policy-TRP-2016-approved_es.pdf

for dog walkers in general

<https://www.royalparks.org.uk/managing-the-parks/park-regulations-legislation-and-policies/dogs-in-the-royal-parks>

This includes identifying restricted zones where dogs are not allowed.

for professional dog walkers

<https://www.royalparks.org.uk/managing-the-parks/licences-and-permits/professional-dog-walking-licences/code-of-conduct-for-professional-dog-walking-licence-holders>

Professional dog walkers must be licenced and must agree to abide by this code of conduct. Furthermore, they must ensure that right of way is given to all other members of the general public visiting the parks.

Appendix 2: Workshop "sticky note scans"

Lovers Walk
@ 1-5 Highfield Road
needs widening and
removal of bollards
to Oakmount Avenue.

TREES NOT
SACROSANCT.
WRT PATH WIDENING

Lovers Walk South
Too congested - but
there is relief via
Westbourne Crescent

LOVERS WALK (SOUTH)
Conflict with Westbourne Crescent
residents as visual impact from
their rear gardens. Increased
'Football' would be intrusive

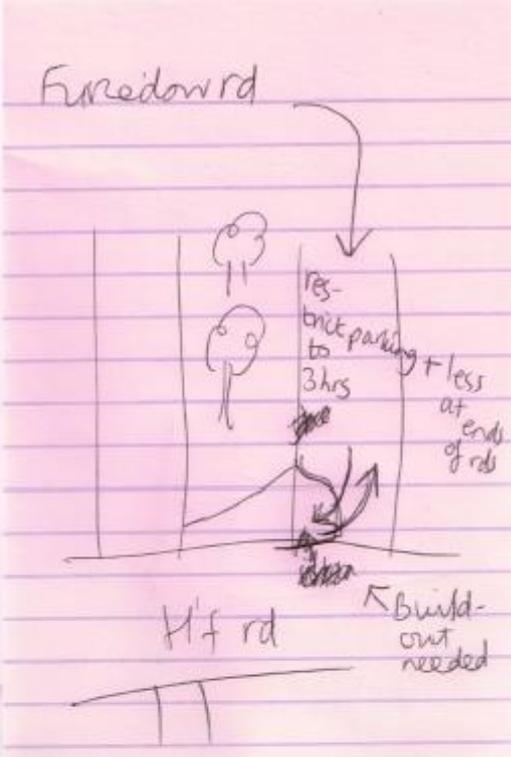
GENERAL - PATH WIDTHS

STRIKE CORRECT BALANCE BETWEEN
CAPACITY AND RESTRICTED
WIDTH TO LIMIT BIKER
SPEEDS.
WIDEN AT PINCH POINTS

Focus on bad/narrow
Sections of Lovers Lane
first

Forget new Avenue cycle
path - there are already
enough N-S options which most
pedestrians/cyclists would prefer

BELLS
 For
 SIKES



Westbourne crescent is a lit route anyway, so signpost that as cycle route & add one light where Blenheim Ave meet deadends.

+ make top corner of rd squarer + with no parking on corners - restricted viewing as full of car parking

WILL
 CYCLE LANE
 SLOW DOWN
 AVENUE ?
 Good !

N-S Cycle Path

- How much use for cost.
 - INTEGRATE WITH NORTHERN PARK + RIDE?
 - RIGHT TURNS - ISLANDS/SAMPLERS.
 - PRIORITY OVER SIDE ROADS
- OR
- Widen all of Lovers Walk!
- ← or IN SIDE?

Light at top of steps
doesn't light them
Trees need pruning!

Reclaim the land
taken by Westbourne
Cres. Houses $\frac{1}{2}$ in
order to widen ~~the~~ path
Lovers' Walk on that
stretch.

DOGS ON PATHS MUST BE ON SHORT LEADS.

Lovers Walk at 1-5 Highfield A

It seems well overdue to
sort out the bumpy narrow
bit here, so that we
all have the space to be
properly considerate when
passing on foot or cycle.

The common sense group
have created the foliage-free
width - let's now fix the
path!

Consider re-routing
southern lovers
walk along Esse
of Avenue

Code of conduct
campaigns
+
directional
arrows for travel.
eg. same side of
as traffic

LOVERS WALK (NORTH)

NEED MORE CAPACITY.

(Sometimes v. heavy use by
students coming from Ave Campus
to Highlight just after lectures).

Explore non-tarmac options
to widen path i.e. grit/gravel/
clay/more natural surface to
be used as an over-taking
lane.

Look left, look
right at inter-
sections.
eg. multi-cultural
1 year masters
international students.

Wider paths
(no need to remove
follage but to
tarmac + resurface
where mud is used)

GENERAL

SHARED PATHS BETTER THAN
(IMPROVED SIGNAGE). SEGREGATED.

THIS MEANS 'SHARED RESPONSIBILITY'

CYCLISTS DON'T GO TOO FAST.

PEDESTRIANS SHOULD BE AWARE OF CYCLISTS

DOG WALKERS SHOULD HAVE CONTROL OF
THEIR DOGS (and not amble along looking
at their phones unaware of their animals).

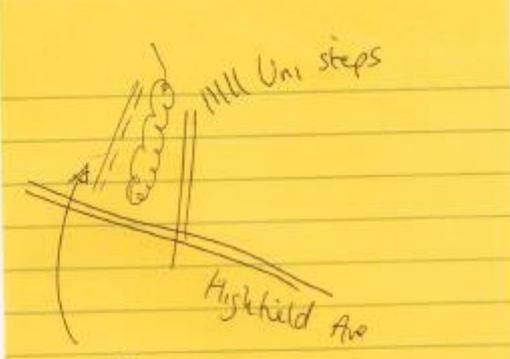
PEDESTRIAN RIGHT

KEEP LOVER'S
WALK AS
AS WALK?

NOT A CYCLE
HIGHWAY.

Better surface for
pleasant experience
at Avenue bus stop
and University steps
for all weather +
dignified access
(not covered in mud)

NO PARKING
ON
HIGHFIELD
AVENUE



Is there
a way we
can restore this
route north from
highfield avenue on the
other side of the trees to
create a pleasant walk
along the old carriage
drive away from
the commuter
heading to
uni steps

GARRAGE DRIVE
EPST →
USEABLE PATH

Avenue Cycleway
will not be straight,
due to conflict with
mature oak trees

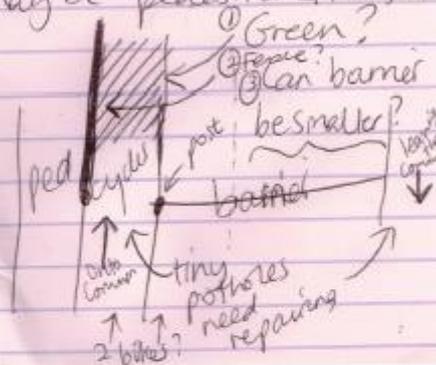
What happens at & after Burgess Rd / Avenue Junction?

Wider Shared Path on Loves Walk particularly from Highfield Avenue to Steps

Reduce height of lights

Loves Walk / Burgess Rd junction - not enough room to wait at lights with a bike:

Need wider entrance onto Common from Bellamoor Rd as need to get across on green traffic light but have to go single file through narrow entrance where there may be pedestrians walking



Loves Walk - Burgess Road junction needs better crossing wider paths better shared usage

Avenue Cycleway:

- ① Easing pressure on lower part of Lovess' Walk.
- ② East side of Ave North + South - seg. (cannot cross Avenue) especially up to Highfield Rd junction.
- ③ leaves Lovess Walk for pedestrians (hopefully!)
- ④ Improve Westwood - Swan Road path

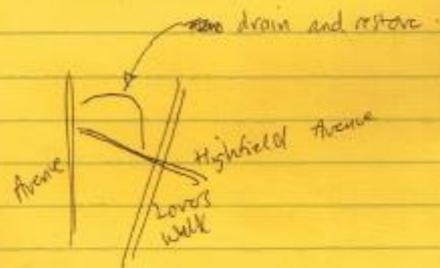
Green tunnel
on segregation in
subway & 10m further
each end.

Remove
Speed bumps
dangerous in
dark or if concentrating
on a dog.
Whiplash.

Improve
NSubway @ Bellman
Junction
+ Crossing facilities.

Why don't we restore the original carriage drive round this corner? It might be better value than an Avenue cycleway and would help reduce traffic from uni steps to Highfield Avenue.

Bring back carriage drives for Southampton's carriage drivers.



In the SCC cycling strategy, The Avenue is ~~planned~~ but not the routes across The Common. WHY?

Highfield ~~Road~~ Road section of cycle route is on road & managing interactions with traffic can be a problem.

Furzedown Road path should be widened

Improvements needed to Burgess Rd X roads & lanes needed on Burgess Rd.
+ Burgess Rd end ^{improve} of Ave ~~improve~~ entrance to common

Choosing to commute on/ across the common is is enjoying the Common.
↳ Commuters often choose longer commutes to spend time on the common.