

To:

Tom Brake MP, Carshalton and Wallington
Cllr. Manuel Abellan, Beddington South (Cycling Champion)

Copied to:

Cllr. Ruth Dombey, Sutton North, Leader of the Council
Cllr. Jill Whitehead, Carshalton Central, Chair, Environment and Neighbourhood Committee
Cllr. Neil Garratt, Beddington South
Cllr. Margaret Court, Wandle Valley
Cllr. Jason Reynolds, Wandle Valley
Cllr. Hanna Zuchowska, Wandle Valley
Caroline Pidgeon, Chair of the London Assembly's Transport Committee
Lynn Robinson, Senior Engineer, Kingston and Sutton Shared Environment Service, LB Sutton
Sally Blomfield, Area Renewal Programme Manager, LB Sutton
Simon Munk, Infrastructure Campaigner, London Cycling Campaign
Brian Deegan, Principle Technical Specialist, Transport for London
Peter McBride, Regional Borough Programme Manager (South), Transport for London
Hackbridge and BC Neighbourhood Development Group
Get Sutton Cycling supporters

Dear Tom, dear Manuel,

Last week, Get Sutton Cycling received the attached plan 'Proposed Cycle Routes' from Sutton Council. The plan, dated March 2016, relates to the new development at the site of the former Felnex Trading Estate, Hackbridge (contained within the Wandle Valley ward). This is a completely new development on a brownfield site, where there is currently no road infrastructure and there are no buildings. As such it offers easy opportunities for Sutton Council to start to put into effect the cycling strategy that was adopted seven months ago. However, to say that we are very dismayed with these proposals would be an understatement, so I am writing on behalf of the London Cycling Campaign's borough group to ask for your help.

The proposals, which include sections of shared footway, interspersed with numerous "Cyclists Dismount" signs, shared Toucan crossings, ninety-degree turns, and inadequate junctions, are not elements that will give this new, largely residential, development the cycling vibe. The plan appears to have been prepared by 'Odyssey Markides' for client 'BDW Trading Limited'. It is not clear how much direct input Sutton Council has had on these proposals, if any. It is assumed, however, that the proposals have an element of approval from the council given that the plan has been forwarded to us for comment in its current form.

The lack of aspiration in these proposals is extremely disappointing, especially given that Sutton Council has championed Hackbridge as an emerging sustainable suburb for many years. A report on the draft Hackbridge Masterplan (LB Sutton, May 2009) notes that over 90% of respondents to the consultation supported "the vision to make Hackbridge the greenest suburb using the principles of One Planet Living". Many of the respondents "agreed the need to enhance pedestrian and cycle access and connectivity in the area, and the need to create and enhance networks and destinations". Then, in 2013, the Outer London Fund bid, to develop the physical and economic regeneration Heart of Hackbridge project, attempted to address key issues of concern. These included the traffic domination of the area, and poor quality of public spaces.

There was great excitement late last year when the borough approved its new Cycling Strategy (November 2015), to complement Sutton's Sustainable Transport Strategy (June 2015). The Cycling Strategy declares that "All new schemes or improvement works should be designed and delivered in accordance with TfL's latest London Cycling Design Standards", and that "Good quality cycling infrastructure is recognised as an important factor in achieving wider participation in cycling".

Despite all of this, we now have proposals for the former Felnex Trading Estate that are outdated, perpetuate the marginalisation of cycling, and fall far short of current expectations. This brand new development needs to be seen as a major opportunity to build-in high-quality, international best practice, cycling infrastructure from the outset. The constraints here are not the same as those associated with the earlier phase of the Heart of Hackbridge project, where the prioritisation given to kerb-side parking on London Road resulted in the failure to start the process of bringing transformative cycling infrastructure to this neighbourhood. Felnex is a brownfield site, and Sutton needs to lead, and be seen to lead. Therefore, we would like to suggest that these proposals for cycle routes at Felnex are put on hold, and that Transport for London's advice be sought to help deliver plans that will make the difference.

Thank you both for your interest in cycling. It matters to us because making space for cycling is not just about cyclists. It is also about making the best use of scarce road space, and it's about pollution, health, noise, and the sort of places that we want to live, now and in the future. For these reasons, any further help you can give with this particular development in Hackbridge would be very much appreciated.

Regards,

Charles Martin
Sutton borough coordinator London Cycling Campaign, on behalf of Get Sutton Cycling
20 June 2016