

Quietways Highways Survey (June/July 2017)

Proposal to develop a Quietway cycle route along Grennell Road, Elgin Road and Benhill Wood Road

Some comments from Get Sutton Cycling (London Cycling Campaign in Sutton) relating to the Quietways Highways Survey

Background and overview

Get Sutton Cycling, representing the **London Cycling Campaign** in Sutton, note that Sutton Council launched the online Quietways Highways Survey¹ on 16 June 2017, and that this online survey remained open until 19 July 2017. The survey was primarily aimed at residents of Grennell Road, Elgin Road, Benhill Wood Road and surrounding streets to the north of Sutton town centre, the area through which the borough's first Quietway is proposed to be established. To publicise the survey, and to let residents know about the unique opportunity that the Quietway presented, the council sent a letter to residents emphasising that their views were essential in developing proposals to ensure that the plans represented local aspirations. Three public drop-in sessions were arranged, so that people could ask questions and fill in the survey in person with a member of staff.

We are excited about the prospect of the Quietway progressing, and are pleased that an engagement process with people residing in and around the neighbourhood of the proposed alignment has began prior to any formal consultation on specific plans. This approach essentially gives residents the opportunity, at the outset, to provide their views on their current travel choices, on road traffic and on the quality of their streets. Consequentially, this will help engender a feeling of involvement should plans to improve the area be subsequently developed as a result of the feedback received. It is also gratifying to note that the discussion is being set in the context of 'Healthy Streets', indicating that any improvements will potentially benefit everyone. With the prospect of funding from Transport for London, a unique opportunity is certainly being provided.

Our response

In July 2016, Get Sutton Cycling outlined some essential prerequisites for the successful delivery of the Quietway². These prerequisites, along with the associated recommendations that related to specific issues, form the basis of our response to the Quietways Highways Survey.

One of the essential prerequisites detailed in that review was that it was imperative for there to be **engagement with residents, schools and businesses over a wide neighbourhood area**. This condition has clearly been met (at least, to our knowledge, with residents). That's a great start, and we would like to thank everyone involved with the process.

Another condition was that **residents' support for traffic reduction measures would need to be realised prior to the project receiving any significant funding from Transport for London**. None of the questions in the survey specifically mentioned traffic reduction (so people were not led on this). Consequentially, it will be interesting to see, once the survey results have been collated, whether respondents have requested traffic reduction measures. Nevertheless, we stand by the condition that **a reduction in the volume of traffic on many of the roads along the proposed route is essential** for the success of this Quietway. Furthermore, if this is not achieved, consideration given to funding other projects (possibly Liveable Neighbourhoods) instead. A watered-down Quietway is unlikely to deliver a wide range of benefits.

¹ Quietways Highways Survey, Sutton Council, June 2017

https://www.sutton.gov.uk/info/200503/highways_and_street_lighting/1661/quietways_highways_survey

² Sutton's proposed first Quietway: what is required to make it a success?, Get Sutton Cycling, July 2016

<https://getsuttoncycling.org.uk/2016/07/10/suttons-proposed-first-quietway-what-is-required-to-make-it-a-success/>

Given the publication, on 21 June 2017, of the **Mayor of London's Transport Strategy** (draft for consultation)³, these essential conditions are arguably all the more important now than they were twelve months ago. The mayor's ambitious strategy (with its twenty-five year timeline) **puts people's health and quality of life at the very heart of planning the city's transport**. The Healthy Streets Approach means that the transport strategy will create streets that will appeal to people because the **streets will not be dominated by cars**. An outer London vision is to reduce car dependency by improving walking and cycling environments and providing better bus and rail services. In essence, this is all about **Healthy Streets and healthy people**. They may not know it, but the residents of Grennell Road, Elgin Road and Benhill Wood Road, could be the pioneers, in terms of this transport strategy. **This project really could be the start of something big.**

Survey questions and responses

In this section, we respond to questions in the survey, where appropriate (i.e. those questions that are suitable for a group response)

1. Please enter your postcode.

***Not appropriate** (none of the contributors to this survey live in Grennell Road, Elgin Road or Benhill Wood Road, but many cycle or walk here on occasion and are aware of the characteristics of these streets from that perspective).*

2. How do you usually travel around your local area? (Please select the single most common way you travel).

***Cycling** (the other options being walking, driving, motorcycling, public transport). Cycling, clearly the appropriate response from a cycling for transport advocacy group!*

3. Do you own a car, or have regular access to a private vehicle?

***Not appropriate** (some of the contributors to this survey do have regular access to a private vehicle, some do not).*

4. Do you own a cycle, or have regular access to a cycle?

***Yes** (goes without saying!)*

5. Thinking about the stretch of road spanning Grennell Road, Elgin Road and Benhill Wood Road, to what extent do you agree with the following indicators of a "Healthy Street"? Please select only one answer in each row.

In this section, the options are 'Strongly agree'; 'Agree'; 'Neither agree or disagree'; 'Disagree'; 'Strongly disagree'.

5.1 Streets are easy to cross:

***Disagree** (i.e. there is room for improvement)*

5.2 There is shade and shelter:

***Neither agree or disagree** (i.e. some room for improvement)*

5.3 There are places to stop and rest:

***Strongly disagree** (i.e. considerable room for improvement)*

³ Mayor's Transport Strategy: draft for public consultation, Greater London Authority, June 2017
<https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/transport/our-vision-transport/draft-mayors-transport-strategy-2017?intcmp=46686>

5.4 The area is not too noisy:

Strongly disagree (*time of day dependent, but at the busiest times 'quiet' would not be the adjective to describe many parts of the area*)

5.5 Walking and cycling are viable options:

Strongly disagree (*cycling, in particular, is not a viable option for most people aged 8 to 80*)

5.6 I feel safe walking around the area:

Neither agree or disagree (*feels safe walking most of the time, but can feel stressful*)

5.7 I feel safe cycling around the area:

Strongly disagree (*high volume, and speed, of motor traffic is not conducive to a feeling of safe and comfortable cycling, regardless of the riders ability. Making a right turn from Grennell Road (northbound) into Edinburgh Road can be unsettling even for experienced riders*)

5.8 There are things to see and do:

Disagree (*i.e. there is room for improvement*)

5.9 I feel relaxed getting around the area

Strongly disagree (*particularly during periods when traffic levels are high (disproportionally high, given the residential nature of the roads concerned), but also at other times too due to the occasional fast moving vehicles*)

5.10 The air is clean

Disagree (*almost accept the fact that the air quality is not as good as it could be, but frequently reminded that this is not the case by breathing the fumes generated by high volumes of traffic*)

5.11 The area can be used by people of all walks of life (i.e. children, the elderly and those with disabilities)

Strongly disagree (*the layout, and design, of the streets focuses more on movement (and, as noted in the consultation letter sent to residents, 70% of the traffic movement comes from outside the area) rather than a place to dwell, or the extension to a home, or the gateway of a school. Although probably accepted by many people as simply being how things are, the urban realm does not have to be like this. When the streetscape is designed for the young, the elderly and for those with disabilities, everyone benefits*)

6. The council should do more to address air quality in the borough.

Strongly agree

6.a. The council should do more to encourage walking and cycling to school.

Strongly agree

7. The following statements refer to specific locations which have previously been raised as requiring attention. To what extent do you agree with the statements?

Please don't select more than one answer

7.1 All Saints Road is too busy to cross safely on foot

Agree (*i.e. there is room for improvement*)

7.2 Oakhill Road is too busy to cross safely on foot

Agree (*i.e. there is room for improvement*)

7.3. The width of the Benhill Wood Road and Elgin Road junction make it difficult to cross

Neither Agree or Disagree

7.4. The mini roundabouts at the junctions of Grennell Road/All Saints Road, and Benhill Wood Road/Oakhill Road feel unsafe to cycle through

Agree (*i.e. there is room for improvement*)

7.5. Pinchpoints on Benhill Wood Road can make cycling feel unsafe

Agree (*i.e. there is room for improvement*)

7.6. Traffic around Greenshaw High School is heavy at drop off and pick up times

Strongly agree

8. Thinking about the stretch of road spanning Grennell Road, Elgin Road and Benhill Wood Road, to what extent do you agree with the following statements?

For each statement that you agree with, please provide ideas for solutions to address the issue.

8.1. There is too much traffic using the area

Strongly agree (*Idea for solution: use of modal filters to prevent through movement of motor traffic. Will require discussion with residents, schools and businesses over a wide area. Recognise the challenge imposed by many of the streets used by bus service (particularly Edinburgh Road). Technological solutions could be sought*)

8.2. Traffic is too fast in the area

Strongly agree (*Idea for solution: introduce a 20mph maximum speed limit throughout the area; redesign the streetscape to facilitate compliance*)

8.3. The speed and volumes of traffic make it difficult to walk around the area comfortably

Strongly agree (*see ideas for solution outlined in 8.2 and 8.3*)

8.4. The speed and volumes of traffic make it difficult to cycle around the area comfortably

Strongly agree (*see ideas for solution outlined in 8.2 and 8.3*)

8.5. It is difficult for vulnerable road users, including children the elderly and mobility aid users, to move around the area comfortably

Strongly agree (*see ideas for solution outlined in 8.2 and 8.3, and comments in 5.11*)

8.6. Parked cars can make cycling feel unsafe

Strongly agree (*consider limiting parking to one side of the road at any given location; explore options for off-street parking; use the borough's parking strategy*)

9. Please use this space to provide us with any additional comments you have that relate to local traffic, travel and the street environment, and ways you would like to see these addressed.

For greater detail on local traffic, travel and the street environment, and ways to address these issues see [Sutton's proposed first Quietway: what is required to make it a success?](https://getsuttoncycling.org.uk/2016/07/10/suttons-proposed-first-quietway-what-is-required-to-make-it-a-success/)⁴

Last, but not least, the other the essential prerequisite. The successful implementation of this section of Quietway will, from the outset, **depend on the support of councillors representing the three wards concerned.**

Charles Martin, with contributions from Get Sutton Cycling supporters, 19 July 2017

⁴ Sutton's proposed first Quietway: what is required to make it a success?, Get Sutton Cycling, July 2016
<https://getsuttoncycling.org.uk/2016/07/10/suttons-proposed-first-quietway-what-is-required-to-make-it-a-success/>