

## What was delivered for cycling in Sutton between 2010 and 2022?

*This article, the second in a trilogy and following on from ‘Sutton’s councillors: welcome to the class of 2022’, is being published largely as it was drafted in the summer of 2021 (with the working title ‘What has been delivered for cycling in Sutton in the last ten years?’). Additional sections have, however, been added. These reflect some more significant progress in 2021 and 2022, and provide greater context by referencing the borough’s recent (and not so recent) sustainable transport and cycling strategies.*

### Summary of the headline conclusions from this 2023 review:

- **In terms of cycling infrastructure, delivery in Sutton between 2010 and 2020 was pitiful**
- **Just five schemes introduced during the decade are worthy of some note (and all five have shortcomings):**
  - Manor Lane (Sutton) cycle contraflow (2016)
  - Worcester Park footway upgrade (2017)
  - Newstead Walk (St Helier) footway/cycle way link (2020)
  - Wrythe Lane (St Helier) parallel crossing (2020)
  - Wrythe Lane (St Helier) cycle path (2020)
- **One ‘big idea’ and two ‘major projects’ have been identified as either “borderline useless” or, at best, a great disappointment for cycling. In all three cases, delivery was long and protracted (and, in one case, has still not been fully delivered):**
  - Green Wrythe Lane (Carshalton) pavement conversion to shared-use (2013-2017)
  - Heart of Hackbridge outer London fund project (around 2012 to around 2016)
  - Beddington North TfL Major Scheme (2017- 2023?) - note ‘TfL’ appears in the title because the scheme was funded by TfL, but it is important to recognise that the borough “delivered”.
- **The opportunity to bid for significant funding, or receive funding to develop worthwhile cycling infrastructure, has either not been taken or has been seemingly ignored**
  - Liveable Neighbourhood programme submissions were not made in either 2017 or in 2018
  - Despite the news in 2015 that almost £400million was being pumped into Sutton town centre, little is known of any developer contributions towards cycling infrastructure as a result of this investment
  - A residential and commercial redevelopment in Hackbridge, a district that at one time aspired to be London’s most sustainable suburb, is no different from any other when it comes to cycle provision
- **The Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 saw a number of short-lived interventions under the ‘Streetspace for London’ initiative and delivered through Sutton’s Safer Active Greener Streets programme**
- **Ten School Streets were introduced in Sutton during 2022, the only significant legacy to date of the Safer Active Greener Streets programme**
- **Some targets, actions and objectives from the borough’s now retired Cycling Strategy 2015, and the now retired Sustainable Transport Strategy 2015-2021, have yet to be met**

## Introduction

1. This article, the second in a trilogy which follows on from ‘[Sutton’s councillors: welcome to the class of 2022](#)’ and precedes ‘Holding to account’, is being published in the spring of 2023 largely as it was drafted in the summer of 2021. However, in recognising that during the subsequent two years there have been some small signs for optimism (especially if taken with the view that “there is no rush”), the original three sections of the review, as envisaged, have been expanded to six.

2. The first section of this review discusses those schemes that have been delivered between 2010 and 2020, and which demonstrate some merit. (Note that, in terms of the delivery of ‘schemes’, the provision of cycle parking is excluded from the review). The second section considers the major projects and big ideas over the same decade, and the third section looks at the missed opportunities. The fourth section, ‘Safer Active Greener Streets’, notes the briefly lived ‘Streetspace for London’ experimental, trial, initiatives, introduced in the borough during spring and summer of 2020, as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic<sup>1</sup>. The School Streets and the Neighbourhood Placemaking initiatives (introduced during, and since, the Covid-19 pandemic, with engagement and consultation currently ongoing) are discussed in section five. All of this is to be seen in the context of the borough’s published strategies on transport and cycling (the recent and not so recent), so these are referenced in the sixth section.

3. Essentially, this review attempts to answer the question ‘What has been delivered for cycling in Sutton in the last ten years?’ (i.e. generally since 2010). Or perhaps more accurately, what has been delivered “on the ground” across the borough during the decade prior to Covid-19 that has boosted the profile of cycling for Sutton’s residents and visitors alike? It’s the sort of question that people may ask if they are either new to cycling, new to Sutton, or are wondering why cycling remains at such a stubbornly low level in the borough (accounting for about 0.8% of the trips made by Sutton residents) and largely unchanged from twenty years ago (when cycling accounted for around 2.2% of trips). It is certainly an important question to ask, as this review can be used as a benchmark against which comparisons can be made in 2030 on the delivery over the next ten years.

4. Why ask the question now? In the summer of 2020 there had been considerable optimism in the air. Most legal restrictions to control Covid-19 have been lifted, and there was evidence of a new approach politically for walking, cycling and active travel at a national level with the publication of Gear Change (DfT, July 2020)<sup>2,3</sup>. While also reflecting on the climate emergency (Climate Safe Streets, LCC, March 2021)<sup>4</sup>, the summer of 2020, therefore, had seemed to be a good time to consider what has actually been delivered for cycling during the previous ten years in Sutton.

5. The answer to the question is, perhaps unsurprisingly, not a lot. Despite the evidence of growing aspiration (and necessity), the focus during the period of this review has been more on words rather than action. Furthermore, and rather unfortunately, in looking at the new ‘Class of 2022’ administration, the immediate future is not looking particularly great either.

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Riding out a national emergency together’ (Get Sutton Cycling, 26 March 2020): <https://getsuttoncycling.org.uk/2020/03/26/riding-out-a-national-emergency-together/>

<sup>2</sup> Cycling and walking plan for England (policy paper) (DfT, 27 July 2020): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cycling-and-walking-plan-for-england>

<sup>3</sup> Gear Change: a bold vision for cycling and walking (DfT, 27 July 2020): [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/904146/gear-change-a-bold-vision-for-cycling-and-walking.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/904146/gear-change-a-bold-vision-for-cycling-and-walking.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Climate Safe Streets - One year on (LCC, March 2021): <https://www.lcc.org.uk/climate-safe-streets/> | [https://getsuttoncycling.files.wordpress.com/2021/05/climatesafestreetsoneyearon\\_lcc\\_march2021.pdf](https://getsuttoncycling.files.wordpress.com/2021/05/climatesafestreetsoneyearon_lcc_march2021.pdf)

## 1: Cycling schemes of some merit delivered since 2010

6. In terms of infrastructure, delivery in Sutton in recent years has been pitiful. **Only five meaningful schemes come to mind over the last ten years.** One of these schemes was delivered during 2016, another in 2017, with three in 2020. Perhaps the fact that the second half of the decade delivered more than the first half, is one indication that things might be slowly improving. It should be noted that all of the schemes mentioned in this section were funded through the annual Local Implementation Plan (LIP) programme. In other words, not a lot of money; money that has to be spent before the end of the financial year or lost; and money to which (until relatively recently) there was little accountability in terms of how effectively the money was spent. What could possibly go wrong?

7. As reported during February 2016 and March 2016<sup>5</sup>, the year 2016 saw the delivery of the **Manor Lane cycling contraflow. Verdict: A long time coming, the contraflow is a welcome addition (with reservations).** The reservations being that, by retaining parking bays, the scheme brings cyclists into the direct line of vehicles coming in the other direction. So you could argue there is added danger. A case of **whatever you do, don't touch parking.**

8. The **'Worcester Park footpath: improvements and designation as cycle route'** scheme was finally delivered in 2017, having originally been reported on in October 2014<sup>6</sup>. **Verdict: useful link for local residents** of Trafalgar Avenue wishing to travel towards Morden Cemetery and the park at Motspur Park (during daylight hours only - path remains unlit), **but not of great use for residents elsewhere** or for any other journeys **because the sum is only as good as the parts** (and the other parts do not exist to any satisfactory level). Consequently, this path totally fails to deliver on the proposed Sutton to Worcester Park route it was intended to be part of. This upgrade can be categorise as "do what is easy (a hidden away path), don't do what is difficult (anything useful out on the street)". Also note that the scheme overran in time and in cost (partly due to funding provision of a new fence along a section of the path at the rear of the adjacent properties, that was requested by residents who feared the upgraded path would increase crime).

9. Three schemes of note were introduced during 2020. These were the **Wrythe Lane crossing**<sup>7,8</sup>; **Wrythe Lane cycle path**<sup>9,10,11</sup>; and the **Newstead Walk | Bishopsford Road crossing**<sup>12,13,14</sup>. These three schemes, combined with the subsequent upgrade to the footpath/cycle path in Rosehill Park East during the autumn of 2022<sup>15</sup>, are the only outcomes (to date) of work relating to

<sup>5</sup> 'Manor Lane cycling contraflow' (Get Sutton Cycling, 10 February 2016): <https://getsuttoncycling.org.uk/2016/02/10/manor-lane-cycling-contraflow/>

<sup>6</sup> 'Worcester Park footpath: improvements and designation as cycle route' (Get Sutton Cycling, 30 October 2014): <https://getsuttoncycling.org.uk/2014/10/30/worcester-park-footpath-improvements-and-designation-as-cycle-route/>

<sup>7</sup> Wrythe Lane - Google Streetview: <https://goo.gl/maps/9dMeifjx1HTA5tNk6>

<sup>8</sup> Wrythe Lane - Streetmap: <http://streetmap.co.uk/map?X=526299&Y=166367&A=Y&Z=11>

<sup>9</sup> 'New TfL cycleway to St Helier Hospital' (Get Sutton Cycling, 26 November 2020): <https://getsuttoncycling.org.uk/2020/11/26/new-tfl-cycleway-to-st-helier-hospital/>

<sup>10</sup> Wrythe Lane - Google Streetview: <https://goo.gl/maps/tqraFLJrrksEg3jM9>

<sup>11</sup> Wrythe Lane - Streetmap: <http://streetmap.co.uk/map?X=526443&Y=166259&A=Y&Z=110>

<sup>12</sup> 'Newstead Walk and the new Bishopsford Road crossing: update' (Get Sutton Cycling, 25 April 2021): <https://getsuttoncycling.org.uk/2021/04/25/newstead-walk-and-the-new-bishopsford-road-crossing-update/>

<sup>13</sup> Bishopsford Road towards Newstead Walk - Google Streetview: <https://goo.gl/maps/B742XP6WWhgzxYEVV6>

<sup>14</sup> Newstead Walk - Streetmap: <http://streetmap.co.uk/map?X=526261&Y=166741&A=Y&Z=110>

<sup>15</sup> Twitter @cyclinginsutton, 1 November 2022: <https://twitter.com/cyclinginsutton/status/1587544176169832449>

Sutton's proposed first **Quietway** (July 2016)<sup>16</sup>. Not a particularly ringing endorsement, especially when taken in the context that **'Quietways' had been launched seven years previously, in March 2013**, by Boris Johnson, Mayor of London (2008-2016); Prime Minister and Leader of the Conservative Party (2019-2022), in his Vision for Cycling<sup>17</sup>. It was clear from the outset that Quietways would require more than 'lines and signs' (September 2015)<sup>18</sup>. Progress in Sutton has been subsequently reported in 'Sutton's proposed first Quietway: the conversation begins' (August 2017)<sup>19</sup>; 'Link between Sutton's first proposed Cycleway and St Helier hospital approved' (February 2020)<sup>20</sup>; "Cycleway between Sutton High Street and Colliers Wood – proposals in the Sutton area' informal consultation launched' (March 2020)<sup>21</sup>. **Verdict: Good, but not good enough.** "Our response to the 'Cycleway between Sutton High Street and Colliers Wood – proposals in the St Helier area' informal consultation' (November 2019)<sup>22</sup> outlines constructive aspects of the three schemes, along with the shortcomings. Council officers subsequently responded to our comments, and those made by residents, to a consultation on the St Helier section, as reported in 'St Helier section of Sutton's first proposed Cycleway: feedback to consultation responses' (February 2020)<sup>23</sup>.

10. Meanwhile, **Quietways** are out, **Cycleways** are in, and Sutton has neither. And it looks like it could stay that way. An informal public consultation held in February/March 2020 for the Sutton area of the proposed Cycleway<sup>24</sup> (of which the Wrythe Lane crossing and Newstead Walk schemes were essentially part of) majored more on 20mph and somewhat less on the use of traffic filters to reduce through-traffic (despite a consultation held during the summer of 2017 having shown that there were high levels of through traffic in the area, and that there was support by respondents to the consultation for traffic reduction<sup>25</sup>).

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<sup>16</sup> 'Sutton's proposed first Quietway: what is required to make it a success?' (Get Sutton Cycling, 10 July 2016: <https://getsuttoncycling.org.uk/2016/07/10/suttons-proposed-first-quietway-what-is-required-to-make-it-a-success/>)

<sup>17</sup> The Mayor's vision for cycling in London - an Olympic Legacy for all Londoners (Greater London Authority, March 2013): [https://getsuttoncycling.files.wordpress.com/2015/09/cyclingvision\\_gla\\_final-2\\_march2013.pdf](https://getsuttoncycling.files.wordpress.com/2015/09/cyclingvision_gla_final-2_march2013.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> 'Quietways require more than 'lines and signs'' (Get Sutton Cycling, 6 September 2015): <https://getsuttoncycling.org.uk/2015/09/06/quietways-require-more-than-lines-and-signs/>

<sup>19</sup> 'Sutton's proposed first Quietway: the conversation begins' (Get Sutton Cycling, 27 August 2017): <https://getsuttoncycling.org.uk/2017/08/27/suttons-proposed-first-quietway-the-conversation-begins/>

<sup>20</sup> 'Link between Sutton's first proposed Cycleway and St Helier hospital approved' (Get Sutton Cycling, 26 February 2020): <https://getsuttoncycling.org.uk/2020/02/26/link-between-suttons-first-proposed-cycleway-and-st-helier-hospital-approved/>

<sup>21</sup> "Cycleway between Sutton High Street and Colliers Wood – proposals in the Sutton area' informal consultation launched' (Get Sutton Cycling, 1 March 2020): <https://getsuttoncycling.org.uk/2020/03/01/cycleway-between-sutton-high-street-and-colliers-wood-proposals-in-the-sutton-area-informal-consultation-launched/>

<sup>22</sup> 'Our response to the 'Cycleway between Sutton High Street and Colliers Wood – proposals in the St Helier area' informal consultation (Get Sutton Cycling, 3 November 2019): <https://getsuttoncycling.org.uk/2019/11/03/our-response-to-the-cycleway-between-sutton-high-street-and-colliers-wood-proposals-in-the-st-helier-area-informal-consultation/>

<sup>23</sup> 'St Helier section of Sutton's first proposed Cycleway: feedback to consultation responses' (Get Sutton Cycling, 2 February 2020): <https://getsuttoncycling.org.uk/2020/02/02/st-helier-section-of-suttons-first-proposed-cycleway-feedback-to-consultation-responses/>

<sup>24</sup> Cycleway between Sutton High Street and Colliers Wood - Proposals in Sutton (LBS, 25 February 2020): <https://sutton.citizenspace.com/environment/sutton-cycleway/>

<sup>25</sup> 'Sutton's proposed first Quietway: the conversation begins' (Get Sutton Cycling, 27 August 2017): <https://getsuttoncycling.org.uk/2017/08/27/suttons-proposed-first-quietway-the-conversation-begins/>

11. The delivery of several less-meaningful schemes during the decade include the construction of around eight shared-use paths in eight of the borough's parks. **Overton Park**<sup>26,27</sup>, **Oaks Park**<sup>28</sup>, **Carshalton Park**<sup>29</sup> (subsequently accompanied by the borough's first **parallel crossing** (combined pedestrian and cycle zebra crossing at **Ruskin Road**<sup>30,31,32</sup>), **Grove Park**<sup>33</sup>, **Cheam Park**<sup>34,35</sup>, **Reigate Avenue Recreation Ground**<sup>36</sup>, **Cuddington Recreation Ground**<sup>37</sup> and **Sutton Common Park**<sup>38,39</sup> all saw some new asphalt or gravel appear. These additional, largely, recreational facilities, are a nice to have. But they have added very little to the cycling vibe (beyond providing some safe space place for children to pedal around on). Although often promoted by Sutton Council as being an integral part of a cycle network, many of these paths have to be accessed through (closed) gates, and none of them link with any worthwhile infrastructure in the wider world. Their introduction is, of course, largely non-controversial, as they are not seen as impeding, in any shape or form, the movement of motor traffic. And, perhaps, there-by lies the reason for their popularity with councillors and officers. Paths in parks means they feel able to say that something has been done for cycling - so that box gets ticked - without having to face any criticism.

12. Incidentally, over in **Overton Park, at the Moore Way entrance**<sup>40</sup>, two tie-wraps have been used to ensure that the park gate at the southern end of the shared-use path remains open. These tie-wraps are the only remaining legacy of the more immediate interventions introduced during the Streetspace for London initiative. They are very much appreciated, because, if nothing else, it is now possible to jog (or even cycle) into, and out of, the park without having to manhandle a heavy gate in the process. However, whoever is passing through the gate, whether

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<sup>26</sup> Overton Park - Streetmap: <http://streetmap.co.uk/map?X=525369&Y=162838&A=Y&Z=110>

<sup>27</sup> 'Ideas for boosting Sutton's cycling aspirations' (Get Sutton Cycling, 31 August 2016): <https://getsuttoncycling.org.uk/2016/08/31/ideas-for-boosting-suttons-cycling-aspirations/>

Back to basics: some ideas for boosting Sutton's cycling aspirations: [1] Start to replace cycling infrastructure that fails to impress; [2] **Recognise that a cycle path through a park does not necessarily make a cycle route**; [3] Review schemes and address what does not work; [4] Make the most of opportunities when they are presented.

<sup>28</sup> Oaks Park - Streetmap: <http://streetmap.co.uk/map?X=527559&Y=161503&A=Y&Z=110>

<sup>29</sup> Carshalton Park - Streetmap: <http://streetmap.co.uk/map?X=528107&Y=164153&A=Y&Z=110>

<sup>30</sup> Ruskin Road - Streetmap: <http://streetmap.co.uk/map?X=528099&Y=164285&A=Y&Z=110>

<sup>31</sup> Ruskin Road - Google Streetview: <https://goo.gl/maps/35xH7k89LURU6eKA6>

<sup>32</sup> For further commentary on the Ruskin Road parallel crossing see 'Notes from our July 2017 meeting' (Get Sutton Cycling, 19 August 2017): <https://getsuttoncycling.org.uk/2017/08/19/notes-from-our-july-2017-meeting/>

<sup>33</sup> Grove Park - Streetmap: <http://streetmap.co.uk/map?X=528111&Y=164730&A=Y&Z=110>

<sup>34</sup> Cheam Park - Streetmap: <http://streetmap.co.uk/map?X=523765&Y=164220&A=Y&Z=110>

<sup>35</sup> 'Another path in another park' (Get Sutton Cycling, 17 January 2016): <https://getsuttoncycling.org.uk/2016/01/17/another-path-in-another-park/>

<sup>36</sup> Reigate Avenue Recreation Ground - Streetmap: <http://streetmap.co.uk/map?X=525407&Y=166336&A=Y&Z=110>

<sup>37</sup> Cuddington Recreation Ground - Streetmap: <http://streetmap.co.uk/map?X=522591&Y=164854&A=Y&Z=110>

<sup>38</sup> Sutton Common Park / Recreation Ground - Streetmap: <http://streetmap.co.uk/map?X=524931&Y=166687&A=Y&Z=110>

<sup>39</sup> 'Sutton Cycle Forum July 2017' (Get Sutton Cycling, 3 September 2017): <https://getsuttoncycling.org.uk/2017/09/03/sutton-cycle-forum-july-2017/> Image 1 (new cycle path behind gates): "Sutton Cycle Forum July 2017 reported that a new path in Sutton Common Park, to link with the Greenway route in the area, was complete". Image 2 (new cycle path behind gates, and the adjacent Greenway complete with chicane barriers) "How well does the new path in the park (on the left) connect with the 'Greenway' (Sustrans route 208) on the right?".

<sup>40</sup> Moore Way - Streetmap: <http://streetmap.co.uk/map?X=525413&Y=162679&A=Y&Z=110>

on foot, on a scooter or on a cycle, needs to be happy to share a narrow section of footway immediately outside the park. So this is no meaningful cycling infrastructure. Interestingly, though, despite Overton being a dog-free park, no one appears to mind the gate being left open. Long may it last!

13. Just one final point on paths in parks. At the Sutton Cycle Summit 2014<sup>41</sup>, one of the presenters declared that Sutton Council had created a cycle network in the 1980s by utilising spaces in parks<sup>42</sup>. Who would have thought that over three decades on from those pioneering days, that the borough would still be majoring on paths in parks?

14. The parallel crossing introduced on Ruskin Road, Carshalton, was followed by another similar **parallel crossing on Chiltern Road**<sup>43</sup>, Belmont, in 2019. There is commentary on this in the notes to the 'Sutton Cycle Forum November 2018'<sup>44</sup>; 'Sutton Cycle Forum September 2019'<sup>45</sup>; and 'Will the new cycle crossing in Belmont encourage people to cycle?' (September 2019)<sup>46</sup>.

15. Although this review is about *what was delivered* for cycling between 2010 and 2022, it would not be complete without mentioning at least one example of *what was not delivered*. In January 2017, **Tharp Road**<sup>47</sup>, Wallington, was highlighted as a small scheme that could have made a big difference. As it transpired, the Tharp Road scheme excluded proposals that could have helped everyone, and subsequently delivered a safer cycling facility. In doing so, Tharp Road essentially highlighted three issues:

- Firstly, in proposing a one-way operation without providing a cycle contraflow (or something better) the scheme highlighted that council officers, councillors and members of the Beddington and Wallington Local Committee appeared to have no idea (or no interest) in the fact that the road formed part of a (theoretically) signed cycle route (and not just any old cycle route, but the London Cycle Network (LCN)).
- Secondly, the process of engagement with members of the public, and the Sutton Cycle Forum, demonstrated a lack of communication between council staff. This was evidenced through officers telling the Sutton Cycle Forum they had advised Highway Engineers that Tharp Road was a key cycle route, but Highway Engineers subsequently failing to bring this critical information to the notice of the Local Committee.
- Thirdly, the opportunity to communicate the aims of the borough's Cycling Strategy (which, at the time, had been in existence for a year) was simply not taken in the discussions around the proposals for Tharp Road. This failure provided an early, and clear, indication that either the Cycling Strategy was seen by some council staff and councillors as an irrelevance, or that council officers and councillors had forgotten (or did not know) about its existence.

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<sup>41</sup> 'Sutton Cycle Summit 2014' (Get Sutton Cycling, 19 July 2015): <https://getsuttoncycling.org.uk/2015/07/19/sutton-cycle-summit-2014/>

<sup>42</sup> 'Another path in another park' (Get Sutton Cycling, 17 January 2016): <https://getsuttoncycling.org.uk/2016/01/17/another-path-in-another-park/> "...Sutton Council had created a cycle network in the 1980s by utilising spaces in parks."

<sup>43</sup> Chiltern Road - Streetmap: <http://streetmap.co.uk/map?X=525831&Y=162511&A=Y&Z=110>

<sup>44</sup> 'Sutton Cycle Forum November 2018' (Get Sutton Cycling, 17 November 2018): <https://getsuttoncycling.org.uk/2018/11/17/sutton-cycle-forum-november-2018/>

<sup>45</sup> 'Sutton Cycle Forum September 2019' (Get Sutton Cycling, 23 November 2019): <https://getsuttoncycling.org.uk/2019/11/23/sutton-cycle-forum-september-2019/>

<sup>46</sup> 'Will the new cycle crossing in Belmont encourage people to cycle?' (Get Sutton Cycling, 8 September 2019): <https://getsuttoncycling.org.uk/2019/09/08/will-the-new-cycle-crossing-in-belmont-encourage-people-to-cycle/>

<sup>47</sup> Tharp Road - Streetmap: <http://streetmap.co.uk/map?X=529763&Y=164225&A=Y&Z=110>

- Finally, proposals that could have helped everyone, and subsequently delivered a safer cycling facility, were not considered. **All in all, it is about as bad as it gets**<sup>48</sup>. **'No room for bikes: how Tharp Road could show borough-wide failure over cycling'**<sup>49</sup> has more on the story.

## 2: 'Big money' projects that have not made the grade during the last decade

16. The **Green Wrythe Lane**<sup>50</sup> **pavement conversion to shared-use**, agreed by councillors in 2012 and then delivered in several stages between 2013 and 2017, was also funded through the LIP. In a sense, therefore, this scheme is far from 'big money'. Nevertheless, it features in the 'big money' section because the conversion of around 900 metres of pavement to shared-use was funded incrementally over a number of years. You can read about this scheme in 'The last word on Green Wrythe Lane?' (April 2017, and associated posts dating back to 2014)<sup>51</sup>. The project included a very short section of segregated cycle lane, that provides excellent parking for people buying lunch in the local shops<sup>52</sup>. Meanwhile, elsewhere along the road, it is quite difficult to tell the difference between the look of the footway after conversion to shared-use in comparison to how it looked prior to conversion<sup>53</sup>.

17. The **Heart of Hackbridge**<sup>54</sup> **outer London fund project**, in the pipeline prior to 2013 and completed around 2016 (see 'Heart of Hackbridge and space for cycling' (May 2015)<sup>55</sup>), fails to make the grade too. One example of how this overall project disappoints was highlighted in March 2017, when Councillor Neil Garratt asked former Councillor Jill Whitehead, who was Chair of the Environment and Neighbourhood Committee at the time, what new sustainable transport infrastructure or options had been introduced in Hackbridge since the designation of the

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<sup>48</sup> 'Cycle Forum highlights issues to be addressed' (Get Sutton Cycling, 6 March 2017): <https://getsuttoncycling.org.uk/2017/03/06/cycle-forum-highlights-issues-to-be-addressed/> - see 'Discussion' section 'It's a communication thing, with opportunities not always being taken':

"From the minutes of the Beddington and Wallington Local Committee meetings held in June 2016 and October 2016, it would appear that members of the committee, along with Senior Professional Engineers tasked with resolving the traffic issues on this residential street, were not to aware about Tharp Road's status as a signed cycle route. However, when we highlighting this at the Forum meeting today (10 January 2017) we were told that a council officer had advised engineers and committee members on several occasions that Tharp Road was a cycle route. So what went wrong?"

"Residents would like something done about traffic. But is Sutton Council taking the opportunity to communicate the aims of the borough's Cycling Strategy?"

"The missed opportunity highlighted by traffic issues at Tharp Road, to put sustainable transport (healthy streets) on the agenda, is not an isolated case...."

<sup>49</sup> 'No room for bikes: how Tharp Road could show borough-wide failure over cycling' (Get Sutton Cycling, 26 January 2017): <https://getsuttoncycling.org.uk/2017/01/26/no-room-for-bikes-how-tharp-road-could-show-borough-wide-failure-over-cycling/>

<sup>50</sup> Green Wrythe Lane - Streetmap: <http://streetmap.co.uk/map?X=527445&Y=165719&A=Y&Z=110>

<sup>51</sup> 'The last word on Green Wrythe Lane?' (Get Sutton Cycling, 7 April 2017): <https://getsuttoncycling.org.uk/2017/04/07/the-last-word-on-green-wrythe-lane/>

<sup>52</sup> Green Wrythe Lane - Google Streetview (accessed 10 April 2023, with view from July 2022): <https://goo.gl/maps/ucvUeAgUv1ihaPDKA> A moment is captured which shows vehicles parked on an inadequate cycling facility.

<sup>53</sup> 'Green Wrythe Lane - one year on' (Get Sutton Cycling, 21 December 2015): <https://getsuttoncycling.org.uk/2015/12/21/gwl-one-year-on/> Spot the difference: Image 1 'A section of the pavement on the west side of Green Wrythe Lane, prior to its conversion to shared use'; Image 2 'A section of the pavement on the west side of Green Wrythe Lane, after its conversion to shared use'

<sup>54</sup> London Road, Hackbridge - Streetmap: <http://streetmap.co.uk/map?X=528461&Y=166153&A=Y&Z=110>

<sup>55</sup> 'Heart of Hackbridge and space for cycling' (Get Sutton Cycling, 31 May 2015): <https://getsuttoncycling.org.uk/2015/05/31/hoh-and-space-for-cycling/>

neighbourhood as a “sustainable suburb” (see ‘Timely questions to the Council in March 2017’<sup>56</sup> (question 2)). As part of her reply, Councillor Whitehead said that the Council had “carried [out] the replacement of the London Road bridge over the railway incorporating new on-road cycle lanes”. Sounds great, but anyone who has actually cycled along the south-bound cycle lane, on the east side of the widened railway bridge at Hackbridge, may well say that the design is about as bad as it gets. Users can find themselves forced out onto the main carriageway of general traffic when they reach the end of the painted lane at the southern end of the bridge.

18. Elsewhere, the welcome upgrades (including resurfacing) of sections of the **Wandle Trail**<sup>57</sup> in the borough have been excluded, as these improvements have been tarnished by the installation of additional barriers (and there is more on this in the notes to the ‘Sutton Cycle Forum December 2019’ meeting<sup>58</sup>, and elsewhere on the blog).

19. The **Beddington North**<sup>59</sup> **TfL Major Scheme** went to consultation in the summer of 2017, and is being funded by TfL (hence the inclusion of TfL in the title, although Sutton Council is/was largely responsible for the design and delivery working with consultants). The Beddington North scheme, seeing cycling facilities introduced on a section of the busy Beddington Lane, could (and should) have been included as a meaningful scheme. But who knows what has happened to it, and when it will be completed? Furthermore, the final design did not meet with our expectations - see, ‘Beddington North TfL Major Scheme: going ahead as planned’ (January 2018)<sup>60</sup> - so this is yet another ‘cycling’ facility that, whilst welcome, falls short.

20. It is particularly unfortunate that the Green Wrythe Lane, Hackbridge and the Beddington North schemes are considered as falling short, as these were/are all relatively high budgeted projects (and were topics that dominated the council’s Cycle Forum meetings for years). All of which makes you wonder, what hope is there?

### 3: Opportunities taken and opportunities missed 2010 to 2020

21. Sutton submitted a bid for ‘**mini-Holland**’ funding in 2013<sup>61</sup>, the exciting initiative launched by the then Mayor of London Boris Johnson. In doing so, Sutton demonstrated a level of aspiration (although, of course, it may have been more about the money - up to £30 million was up for grabs for each of three successful boroughs). Sutton’s bid, which declared that “the London Borough of Sutton is ideal for cycling”, was not all that aspirational, and Enfield, Kingston and Waltham Forest went on to be the three successful boroughs.

22. Unfortunately, four years later, when the **Liveable Neighbourhoods** programme was launched in 2017 by Mayor of London Sadiq Khan (a programme which offered a more modest £5 million (or thereabouts) as a maximum package but for a larger number of boroughs), Sutton failed to submit a bid in either of the first two rounds. It was only at the third round of bidding, in November 2019, that Sutton made a submission. Only two other London boroughs (of the 32 in total) left it as late as Sutton to bid in this competitive process. What does that tell you about aspiration? The Covid pandemic followed, and all was lost. (Read more in ‘Why didn’t Sutton submit a bid for

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<sup>56</sup> ‘Timely questions to the Council in March 2017’ (Get Sutton Cycling, 19 June 2017): <https://getsuttoncycling.org.uk/2017/06/19/timely-questions-to-the-council-in-march-2017/>

<sup>57</sup> Wandle Trail at Watermead Lane - Streetview: <http://streetmap.co.uk/map?X=527777&Y=167031&A=Y&Z=110>

<sup>58</sup> ‘Sutton Cycle Forum December 2019’ (Get Sutton Cycling, 16 February 2020): <https://getsuttoncycling.org.uk/2020/02/16/sutton-cycle-forum-december-2019/>

<sup>59</sup> Beddington Lane (environs) - Streetview: <http://streetmap.co.uk/map?X=530039&Y=166217&A=Y&Z=110>

<sup>60</sup> ‘Beddington North TfL Major Scheme: going ahead as planned’ (Get Sutton Cycling, 11 January 2018): <https://getsuttoncycling.org.uk/2018/01/11/beddington-north-tfl-major-scheme-going-ahead-as-planned/>

<sup>61</sup> ‘Sutton’s mini-Holland Bid: Expression of interest and outline of proposal’ (LBS, July 2013): [https://getsuttoncycling.files.wordpress.com/2014/09/sutton\\_mini-hollandbid\\_expressionofinterestandoutlineofproposal\\_july-2013.pdf](https://getsuttoncycling.files.wordpress.com/2014/09/sutton_mini-hollandbid_expressionofinterestandoutlineofproposal_july-2013.pdf)



Liveable Neighbourhoods funding at the first opportunity?' (January 2018)<sup>62</sup> (which also references the 2015 news from Opportunity Sutton that almost £400million investment was being pumped into the town centre, and so raising the question as to whether there were any developer contributions specifically towards schemes that would enable cycling); 'Anticipating Sutton's first Liveable Neighbourhoods funding bid' (September 2019)<sup>63</sup>; Our response to the 'Sutton Liveable Neighbourhoods funding bid' consultation 2019 (October 2019)<sup>64</sup>.

23. There had been great hopes for the **Felnex redevelopment in Hackbridge** (now the New Mill Quarter)<sup>65</sup>. Those hopes were completely dashed when plans were made available in the spring of 2016, showing sections of shared footway, interspersed with numerous "Cyclists Dismount" signs. 'Felnex redevelopment – an acid test for cycling' (June 2016)<sup>66</sup>, and the lead story in our 'September 2016 Newsletter'<sup>67</sup> ("dire and totally inadequate proposals for cycling"), tell it like it was. Perhaps things would have been different if the Sustainable Transport Strategy 2015 had had, like its replacement, the status of a Supplementary Planning Document. There again, perhaps not. Either way the residential and commercial (ongoing) redevelopment at Hackbridge was yet another major lost opportunity for enabling active travel. (And, remember, it was the councillors in the class of 2014<sup>68</sup> who did not make it happen).

24. That concludes the review of the first decade of the twenty-first century. Who could have foreseen what would happen next?

## 4: Safer Active Greener Streets

25. In **May 2020**, weeks after the Covid-19 pandemic had resulted in the first 'lockdown', the Government announced that it "expects local authorities to make significant changes to their road layouts to give more space to cyclists and pedestrians"<sup>69</sup>. In support of this, the Department for Transport announced "a £2 billion package to support active travel to help the country emerge from coronavirus crisis"<sup>70</sup>. "Fast-tracked statutory guidance" was published telling councils "to reallocate roadspace for significantly-increased numbers of cyclists and pedestrians"<sup>71</sup>. An Emergency Active Travel Funding allocation of £250 million fund was provided directly to local

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<sup>62</sup> 'Why didn't Sutton submit a bid for Liveable Neighbourhoods funding at the first opportunity?' (Get Sutton Cycling, 7 January 2018): <https://getsuttoncycling.org.uk/2018/01/07/why-didnt-sutton-submit-a-bid-for-liveable-neighbourhoods-funding-at-the-first-opportunity/>

<sup>63</sup> 'Anticipating Sutton's first Liveable Neighbourhoods funding bid' (Get Sutton Cycling, 25 September 2019): <https://getsuttoncycling.org.uk/2019/09/25/anticipating-suttons-first-liveable-neighbourhoods-funding-bid/>

<sup>64</sup> 'Our response to the 'Sutton Liveable Neighbourhoods funding bid' consultation 2019' (Gets Sutton Cycling, 31 October 2019): <https://getsuttoncycling.org.uk/2019/10/31/our-response-to-the-sutton-liveable-neighbourhoods-funding-bid-consultation-2019/>

<sup>65</sup> New Mill Quarter, Hackbridge - Streetmap: <http://streetmap.co.uk/map?X=528435&Y=165965&A=Y&Z=110>

<sup>66</sup> 'Felnex redevelopment – an acid test for cycling' (Get Sutton Cycling, 24 June 2016): <https://getsuttoncycling.org.uk/2016/06/24/felnex/>

<sup>67</sup> September 2016 Newsletter (Get Sutton Cycling, September 2016): [https://getsuttoncycling.files.wordpress.com/2016/09/suttonboroughnewsandupdate\\_september2016\\_final\\_pages\\_300dpi.pdf](https://getsuttoncycling.files.wordpress.com/2016/09/suttonboroughnewsandupdate_september2016_final_pages_300dpi.pdf)

<sup>68</sup> 'Sutton's councillors: from the class of 2014 to the class of 2018' (Get Sutton Cycling, 14 June 2018): <https://getsuttoncycling.org.uk/2018/06/14/suttons-councillors-from-the-class-of-2014-to-the-class-of-2018/>

<sup>69</sup> Traffic Management Act 2004: network management to support active travel (DfT, May 2020 - most recent update April 2022): <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>

<sup>70</sup> Transport Secretary's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 9 May 2020 (gov.uk, 9 May 2020): <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/transport-secretarys-statement-on-coronavirus-covid-19-9-may-2020>

<sup>71</sup> £2 billion package to create new era for cycling and walking (gov.uk, 9 May 2020): <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/2-billion-package-to-create-new-era-for-cycling-and-walking>

transport authorities and London boroughs. The first tranche of funding indicatively allocated a sum of £100,000 to each individual London borough and £1.7m to Transport for London<sup>72</sup>.

26. On **6 May 2020**, the Mayor of London, announced a “bold new Streetspace plan” to overhaul London’s streets<sup>73</sup> - the London Streetspace Plan.

27. On **22 May 2020**, Sutton Council launched ambitious plans for safer, active streets<sup>74,75</sup>, - **Safer Active Greener Streets** - identifying nine locations within the borough for the first phase of safer, active streets programme:

- Sutton Town Centre (Throwley Way - Benhill Road to toucan crossing opposite Lodge Place)
- Sutton Town Centre (Throwley Way - pedestrian crossing south of Greyhound Road up to Manor Park)
- Sutton Town Centre (St Nicholas Way - south of Hill Road (end of red route) to St Nicholas Road)
- Worcester Park (Central Road/Malden Road railway bridge)
- Belmont (Moore Way/Homeland Drive to Overton Park)
- Beddington (Mollison Drive - section by Roundshaw Park/Leisure centre)
- Beddington (Sandy Lane South - from No 2 up to left-turn lane on Stafford Road)
- Hackbridge (London Road/Hackbridge Road outside Sainsbury’s)
- Wallington (Woodcote Road (High Street area) - loading bay outside KFC)

28. A report, entitled ‘Safer, Active, Greener Streets’<sup>76</sup>, was presented to members of the **Strategy and Resources Committee on 6 July 2020**<sup>77</sup>. The summary to the report includes the text: “This report outlines how the Council can further improve our public realm and further develop our commitment to environmental sustainability as our ‘Streetspace’ is enhanced following the impact of COVID-19”. The summary of bids (Appendix A -updated)<sup>78</sup> included reference to three specific LTNs, although this was actually five when including the DfT Active Travel submission, four Cycleway elements, and sixteen School Streets outside eighteen schools.

29. The minutes to the **14 September 2020 meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee**,<sup>79</sup> agenda item ‘Safer, Active, Greener Streets Progress Update’, include the text: “The Chief Executive apologised to all Councillors for mistakes in the process of implementing the schemes and how they were communicated. Members discussed: the implementation of

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<sup>72</sup> ‘Streetspace for Sutton: Setting the scene’ (Get Sutton Cycling, 26 May 2020): <https://getsuttoncycling.org.uk/2020/05/26/streetspace-for-sutton-setting-the-scene/>

<sup>73</sup> ‘Mayor’s bold new Streetspace plan will overhaul London’s streets’ (Mayor of London, 6 May 2020): <https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/mayors-bold-plan-will-overhaul-capitals-streets>

<sup>74</sup> Council launches ambitious plans for safer, active streets (LBS, 22 May 2022): <https://www.sutton.gov.uk/-/council-launches-ambitious-plans-for-safer-active-streets>

<sup>75</sup> ‘Streetspace for Sutton: The timeline of implementation’ (Get Sutton Cycling, 26 May 2020): <https://getsuttoncycling.org.uk/2020/05/26/streetspace-for-sutton-the-timeline-of-implementation/>

<sup>76</sup> Safer, Active, Greener Streets (LBS, 6 July 2020): <https://moderngov.sutton.gov.uk/documents/s71587/6R%20Safer%20Active%20Greener%20Streets.pdf>

<sup>77</sup> Agenda for Strategy and Resources Committee on Monday, 6th July, 2020, 7.30 pm: <https://moderngov.sutton.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=453&MId=5423&Ver=4>

<sup>78</sup> Safer, Active, Greener Streets - Appendix A, Summary of Bids (LBS, 6 July 2020 or later): <https://moderngov.sutton.gov.uk/documents/s71711/6A%20-%20UPDATED%20Summary%20of%20Bids.pdf> **“Department for Transport Active Travel submission:** Bid based on the Liveable Neighbourhood work that includes low traffic zones in south Sutton, comprising 2 main areas, Langley Park Road / South Sutton and Belmont / Overton”. **“Low traffic neighbourhoods:** Bid includes 3 schemes at Butter Hill, North Cheam and Worcester Park and the last two locations are sites within the East-West cycle route from Worcester Park to Sutton Town Centre”

<sup>79</sup> Agenda for Strategy and Resources Committee on Monday, 14th September, 2020, 7.30 pm: <https://moderngov.sutton.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=453&MId=5524&Ver=4>

schemes, how the success of schemes were monitored and reviewed, the communication around the implementation of schemes and how far schemes could be amended or removed. The item would be considered in more detail at the Environment and Neighbourhood committee scheduled for 1 October”<sup>80</sup>. The tide was turning.....

30. .... although at the **1 October 2020 meeting of the Environment and Neighbourhood Committee**<sup>81</sup> (a meeting that extended to almost four hours in length - quite right too given this was the last ever meeting of the Committee before its name change!), the minutes to agenda item ‘Petitions regarding The Safer, Active, Greener Streets Scheme’<sup>82</sup> note: “An additional recommendation was moved and seconded to revoke low traffic schemes. The recommendation was put to the vote and lost.” Interestingly, at the same meeting, members agreed that the Draft Sustainable Transport Strategy Supplementary Planning Document went to public consultation; and that both the updated Environment Strategy, and the Climate Emergency Response Plan, be agreed.

31. On **20 January 2021**, the High Court ruled that the Mayor’s Streetspace Plan, Interim Guidance to Boroughs and A10 Bishopsgate Traffic Order, that effectively excluded licensed taxis, were unlawful<sup>83</sup>. Within days (22 days to be precise), Sutton Council, used this judgment (which, incidentally, a Court of Appeal subsequently appealed in **June 2021**<sup>84</sup>) as an excuse to throw in the towel, when members of the Environment and Sustainable Transport Committee took the decision to conclude the borough’s Safer, Active, Greener Streets programme at an additional meeting of the Committee held on **11 February 2021**<sup>85,86</sup>. The summary to the ‘Addendum Report: Safer, Active, Greener Streets Scheme’ includes the text: “**A High Court judgement issued against the Mayor and Transport for London (TfL) regarding a scheme within its “Streetspace” programme has brought the guidance that was commended to local authorities into sharp focus.** This report sets out proposals to end the schemes initiated in response to the Mayor’s guidance and sets out how future schemes will be introduced in accordance with the consultation processes and standards of which we are proud in Sutton”. The phrase “**brought the guidance that was commended to local authorities into sharp focus**” is particularly interesting. Certainly, the challenge (‘Bishopsgate Traffic Order and Streetspace’) brought against TfL included interim Streetspace guidance to boroughs, but TfL had issued new consultation guidance in December 2020. Furthermore, it is believed that none of the other thirty-two local authorities across London withdrew their own equivalent Streetspace schemes as a result of the ‘Bishopsgate’ judgement (which, as noted, was subsequently challenged by TfL and overturned). So, here in Sutton, was the decision taken simply as a result of weak borough leadership? Had panic set in? Or was it just a great excuse to jump ship?

<sup>80</sup> Printed minutes Strategy and Resources Committee on Monday, 14th September, 2020: <https://moderngov.sutton.gov.uk/documents/g5524/Printed%20minutes%2014th-Sep-2020%2019.30%20Strategy%20and%20Resources%20Committee.pdf?T=1>

<sup>81</sup> Agenda for Environment and Neighbourhood Committee on Thursday, 1st October, 2020, 7.00 pm: <https://moderngov.sutton.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=452&Mid=5487&Ver=4>

<sup>82</sup> ‘Petitions Regarding the Safer, Active, Greener Streets Scheme’ (LBS, 1 October 2020): [https://moderngov.sutton.gov.uk/documents/s72400/20201001%20\\_%20R\\_%20Petitions%20Regarding%20the%20Safer%20Active%20Greener%20Streets%20Scheme%20\\_%20Environment%20and%20Neighb.pdf](https://moderngov.sutton.gov.uk/documents/s72400/20201001%20_%20R_%20Petitions%20Regarding%20the%20Safer%20Active%20Greener%20Streets%20Scheme%20_%20Environment%20and%20Neighb.pdf)

<sup>83</sup> ‘Bishopsgate Traffic Order and Streetspace’ (London Assembly. Mayor’s Question Time, 25 February 2021): <https://www.london.gov.uk/who-we-are/what-london-assembly-does/questions-mayor/find-an-answer/bishopsgate-traffic-order-and-streetspace>

<sup>84</sup> ‘TfL wins Bishopsgate Streetspace scheme court appeal’ (City Matters, 18 June 2021): <https://www.citymatters.london/tfl-wins-bishopsgate-streetspace-scheme-court-appeal/>

<sup>85</sup> Agenda for Environment and Sustainable Transport Committee on Thursday, 11th February, 2021, 7.00 pm: <https://moderngov.sutton.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=651&Mid=5580&Ver=4>

<sup>86</sup> Addendum Report: Safer, Active, Greener Streets Scheme (LBS, 11 February 2021): <https://moderngov.sutton.gov.uk/documents/b13061/Addendum%20Safer%20Active%20Greener%20Streets%20Scheme%2011th-Feb-2021%2019.00%20Environment%20and%20Sustainable%20Tr.pdf?T=9>

32. A further reference to the decision to “conclude” the Safer, Active, Greener Streets programme in **February 2021**, was given in response to a question regarding the adoption of the Sustainable Transport Strategy at the **E&STC meeting held on 7 October 2021**<sup>87</sup> (see ‘Appendix B’: ‘Consultation responses summary’<sup>88</sup>, page 11, respondent 132): “Following the High Court judgement earlier this year on the schemes in Bishopsgate, the Council took urgent legal advice about its Safer Active Greener Streets programme (which had been developed and implemented following the TfL policy documents). Given the uncertainty this left us with, the Environment and Sustainable Transport Committee decided, on 11th February, to conclude the programme. However, in doing so, they agreed to take account of, and reflect, ongoing concerns from residents about various environmental issues across the borough, by progressing a new School Streets programme as well as traffic management interventions in Butter Hill and Worcester Park.”

33. Which leads on nicely to the post Covid-19 world...

## 5: Post Covid-19

34. Since the summer of 2021 there has been evidence of some small signs for optimism in the years ahead (especially if taken with the view that “there is no rush”). As a result, this review would not really be complete without briefly considering the **School Streets** revolution, and the introduction of a collaborative approach to **Neighbourhood Placemaking**. It is just all rather unfortunate that it took a global pandemic (Covid-19) to kick start initiatives that, had they been delivered (or even just discussed) years before, would have brought so many benefits so much sooner (or, at least, made the conversations in difficult times potentially so much easier). But we have been there before<sup>89</sup>, so not a lot to add to that line of reasoning.

### School Streets

35. The approval of eleven School Streets<sup>90</sup> by the **Environment and Neighbourhood Committee in June 2021**<sup>91</sup> (subsequently reduced to ten School Streets<sup>92</sup> as a result of Carshalton Boys Sports College not proceeding with their proposed School Street) is clearly a significant development since the original draft of this article was prepared in the summer of 2021.

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<sup>87</sup> Agenda for Environment and Sustainable Transport Committee on Thursday, 7th October, 2021, 7.00 pm: <https://moderngov.sutton.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=651&MId=5649&Ver=4>

<sup>88</sup> Adoption of the Sustainable Transport Strategy - Appendix B ‘Consultation responses summary’ (LBS, 7 October 2022): [https://moderngov.sutton.gov.uk/documents/s77382/Appendix%20B%20-%20Consultation%20Responses%20Summary%20\\_%20EST%20Committee%20\\_%2020211007.pdf](https://moderngov.sutton.gov.uk/documents/s77382/Appendix%20B%20-%20Consultation%20Responses%20Summary%20_%20EST%20Committee%20_%2020211007.pdf)

<sup>89</sup> ‘Time to make the case and rise to the challenges’ (Get Sutton Cycling, 15 September 2015): <https://getsuttoncycling.org.uk/2015/09/15/time-to-make-the-case-and-rise-to-the-challenges/>

<sup>90</sup> ‘School Streets get the go-ahead’ (Get Sutton Cycling, 4 August 2021): <https://getsuttoncycling.org.uk/2021/08/04/school-streets-get-the-go-ahead/>

<sup>91</sup> ‘Agenda for Environment and Sustainable Transport Committee on Thursday, 24th June, 2021, 7.00 pm’ (LBS, accessed 23 March 2023): <https://moderngov.sutton.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=651&MId=5648&Ver=4>

<sup>92</sup> ‘Sutton School Streets’ (LBS, accessed 23 March 2023): <https://www.sutton.gov.uk/-/sutton-school-streets-sutton-school-streets-schemes-streets-and-times>. Note that sixteen **School Streets** (eighteen schools) had been proposed as part of the Streetspace programme. ‘Streetspace for Sutton: Safer, Active, Greener Streets’ (Get Sutton Cycling, 3 July 2020 “...sixteen schemes (outside eighteen schools), with five of those schemes introduced using emergency powers to support return to schools from 4th June [2020] in Sutton Town Centre and Cheam. Includes a further programme to introduce ANPR enforced school streets at these five locations (Robin Hood Juniors, Cheam Park Farm, Cheam Common, Cheam Fields and Manor Park) plus the remaining eleven locations (Overton Grange, St Mary’s/St Philomena’s, Muschamp Primary, Rushy Meadow, Harris Academy Carshalton, All Saints Carshalton, Carshalton Sports College, Green Lane Primary, Westbourne Primary, Bandon Hill Primary/Sherwood Hill and St Elphege’s Catholic Infants and Juniors) from September 2020” <https://getsuttoncycling.org.uk/2020/07/03/streetspace-for-sutton-safer-active-greener-streets/>

36. A report entitled '**School Streets - Review of Phase 1 and proposals for Phase 2**'<sup>93</sup> was presented to members of the **Environment and Sustainable Transport Committee on 13 October 2022**<sup>94</sup>. Amongst other findings, the report noted that six months of operation of the School Streets (phase 1) had resulted in:

- a reduction in traffic volumes of over 50% outside the schools
- an increase in pedestrian numbers by 24% outside the schools
- an increase in cycle numbers, on average, of 36%
- an improvement in air quality (PM2.5) of around 33%
- and that generally the implementation of the School Streets had not appeared to have had a significant impact on the surrounding roads for the majority of the schools

37. The School Streets report also noted that **informal consultations on three further borough schools was proposed between November 2022 and January 2023** for implementation by September 2023.

38. There is no doubt that the introduction of ten permanent School Streets in Sutton in 2022 (and the facilitation of a further three in 2023) will go some way to boost the borough's rating in the annually produced **Healthy Streets Scorecard**<sup>95</sup>, the rating of which to date has not been particularly complimentary. In 2022, the scorecard for Sutton noted that **"Sutton is 28th of 33 London local authorities in this year's [2022] Scorecard and so remains in the same position as last year, lingering at the bottom of the table"**<sup>96</sup>.

## Neighbourhood Placemaking

39. In the autumn of 2021, the council launched two Neighbourhood Placemaking consultations (one for a small area of Worcester Park<sup>97</sup> and the other for Butter Hill, Wallington<sup>98</sup>). The results of the consultations were outlined in the report 'Neighbourhood Placemaking area-wide schemes - results of consultation and proposed next steps'<sup>99</sup> presented to members of the **Environment and Sustainable Transport Committee on 15 December 2022**<sup>100</sup>.

<sup>93</sup> 'School Streets - Review of Phase 1 and proposals for phase 2': <https://moderngov.sutton.gov.uk/documents/s81669/School%20Streets%206%20month%20review%20EST%2020221013.pdf>

<sup>94</sup> Agenda for Environment and Sustainable Transport Committee on Thursday, 13th October, 2022, 7.00 pm: <https://moderngov.sutton.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=651&MId=5805&Ver=4>

<sup>95</sup> Healthy Streets Scorecard: <https://www.healthystreetsscorecard.london>

<sup>96</sup> Healthy Streets Scorecard for Sutton (accessed 23 March 2023): [https://www.healthystreetsscorecard.london/your\\_borough/sutton/](https://www.healthystreetsscorecard.london/your_borough/sutton/)

<sup>97</sup> Neighbourhood Placemaking - Worcester Park (London Borough of Sutton, 18 October 2021, accessed 27 March 2023): <https://sutton.citizenspace.com/highways-environment-and-planning/neighbourhood-placemaking-worcester-park-1/> "Sutton Council is looking to explore ways that we can reduce pollution, promote healthier modes of transport and generally make our streets safer and cleaner for the Worcester Park neighbourhood" ... "We are taking a collaborative approach to this consultation. Residents in Sutton are involved in deciding on and delivering improvements to their local area and together we are working to find new ways to improve our local neighbourhoods". ... "We will use your consultation responses to develop options for your neighbourhood. Any proposals that we take forward would be subject to funding approvals and we will notify you of a further consultation which will take place in 2022".

<sup>98</sup> Neighbourhood Placemaking - Butter Hill (London Borough of Sutton, 18 October 2021, accessed 27 March 2023): <https://sutton.citizenspace.com/highways-environment-and-planning/neighbourhood-placemaking-butter-hill/>

<sup>99</sup> Neighbourhood Placemaking area-wide schemes - results of consultations and proposed next steps: [https://moderngov.sutton.gov.uk/documents/s82460/6%20Neighbourhood%20Placemaking%20area-wide%20schemes%20R%20\\_%20Environment%20and%20Sustainable%20Transport%20Committee.pdf](https://moderngov.sutton.gov.uk/documents/s82460/6%20Neighbourhood%20Placemaking%20area-wide%20schemes%20R%20_%20Environment%20and%20Sustainable%20Transport%20Committee.pdf)

<sup>100</sup> Agenda for Environment and Sustainable Transport Committee on Thursday, 15th December, 2022, 7.00 pm: <https://moderngov.sutton.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=651&MId=5806&Ver=4>

40. It may be of interest, particularly to those who are only too aware of the angst and outpouring on social media emanating from a number of commentators who were vehemently in opposition to the trial bus gate installed on Browning Avenue in late 2020, that only 7 per cent of those in receipt of a consultation letter for the Worcester Park area actually bothered to respond. In Butter Hill the response rate was slightly higher at 12 per cent<sup>101</sup>.

41. In the Butter Hill area, 50 per cent of respondents thought that reducing through traffic (defined in the consultation as “rat-running”) would improve the local area. Whereas, in Worcester Park the equivalent metric received support from just 22 per cent of respondents (although, confusingly, there was also a category called “reduce volume of traffic” which received support from 29 per cent of respondents).

42. No specific proposals for either area are outlined in the ‘proposed next steps’ document<sup>102</sup>. A proposed programme timeline is provided (paragraph 3.32), which includes a “Stage 2 consultation period on proposals and options to address issues identified in Stage 1” between February and March 2023, leading on to implementation from April 2024 (adding that “if measures are agreed sooner construction dates will be earlier”).

43. It seems that ‘healthy streets’ consultations are to remain focussed on 20mph and zebra crossings. These ideas would have been great ten or fifteen years ago, but now the emphasis needs to be somewhat less aligned with managing expectant traffic growth and rather more on traffic reduction and an increase in active travel for short journeys. The Government recognises this (aspiring to see cycling and walking as the natural first choice for many journeys, with half of all journeys in towns and cities being cycled or walked by 2030<sup>103</sup>), so why doesn’t our local authority? Encouraging behaviour change is part of it, and it was something the Sutton Council majored on with Smarter Travel Sutton 2007-2009 programme<sup>104</sup>. But now there is a growing need to go further, and (excusing the pun in relation to 20mph) to go faster. Whether the proposals for School Streets and Neighbourhood Placemaking go far enough to make a tangible difference, an improvement to the lives of residents, remains to be seen. It is a start though.

44. The aforementioned annual Healthy Streets Scorecard publications<sup>105</sup> will be a very welcome indicator of progress going forward.

45. Meanwhile, strategies come and strategies go. The question is, does anyone care?

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<sup>101</sup> At the meeting Environment and Sustainable Transport Committee on 15th December, 2022, this seemingly low response rate was questioned by Councillor Andrew Jenner. An officer replied to say that the response rate was actually quite good, given the multi-questioned nature of the consultation. (It makes you wonder what level of response rate would be considered as disappointing). Meanwhile, Councillor Tony Shields had concerns that half of the respondents lived outside the area and that it was therefore likely that the “cycling lobby” had skewed the results (or words to that effect). It was pointed out to Tony that although many respondents lived outside the area, that did not mean they lived miles away. From the postcodes provided, most lived in the immediate vicinity of the area. Councillor Patrick Magnus expressed a view that Get Sutton Cycling could have had undue influence (or words to that effect). Audio of the meeting is available here: <https://aisapps.sonicfoundry.com/AuditelScheduler/Player/Index/?id=fc31447a-2093-465a-9297-b19685efe873&presID=ab2e0860376946c7a67180c1e1a349301d>

<sup>102</sup> Neighbourhood Placemaking area-wide schemes - results of consultations and proposed next steps: [https://moderngov.sutton.gov.uk/documents/s82460/6%20Neighbourhood%20Placemaking%20area-wide%20schemes%20R%20\\_%20Environment%20and%20Sustainable%20Transport%20Committee.pdf](https://moderngov.sutton.gov.uk/documents/s82460/6%20Neighbourhood%20Placemaking%20area-wide%20schemes%20R%20_%20Environment%20and%20Sustainable%20Transport%20Committee.pdf)

<sup>103</sup> Gear Change: a bold vision for cycling and walking (DfT, 27 July 2020): [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/904146/gear-change-a-bold-vision-for-cycling-and-walking.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/904146/gear-change-a-bold-vision-for-cycling-and-walking.pdf)

<sup>104</sup> Smarter Travel Sutton Legacy (LBS, 2009): <https://moderngov.sutton.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?AllId=11541>

<sup>105</sup> Healthy Streets Scorecard (accessed 1 April 2023): <https://www.healthystreetsscorecard.london>

## 6: Strategies come and strategies go

46. In March 2015, members of the Environment and Neighbourhood Committee<sup>106</sup> approved the borough's draft **Sustainable Transport Strategy** (STS)<sup>107</sup>, and the final version of the strategy was published three months later in June 2015. The document was not made available on the council's website until September 2015.

47. The Action Plan within the June 2015 STS set out specific actions arising from six borough transport objectives to be implemented over the next five years. The document noted that the Action Plan would "be **reviewed annually and a progress report produced**". Progress reports were published, through the E&N Committee, in each of the subsequent three years (June 2016, June 2017, and June 2018). The fourth progress report, due 2019, was produced but was not presented to members of the E&N Committee<sup>108</sup>. There was no review in 2020 or in 2021 (as of 21 July 2021). Consequentially, four monitoring reports have been published in six years. Despite the launch of a consultation on a new updated Sustainable Transport Strategy in March 2021, **the 2019 documents remain the most recently publicly available STS annual monitoring reports.**

48. The original 2015 STS declared a 'short-term target' for cycling modal share of **2.2% by 2017** (from a baseline of 1% (2009/10-2011/12)). However, in the 'Summary of Sustainable Transport Strategy Targets' report (May 2018) - essentially the third annual review - the date for achieving the 'short-term target' for cycling modal share of 2.2% (where cycling modal share is the proportion of trips made by the residents that are cycled), had changed from **2017 to 2020**<sup>109</sup>. The monitoring report noted "The initial short-term targets (2017) have been moved forward (to 2020) and reviewed in order to reflect the existing situation". No explanation of what was meant by the "existing situation" was given. Furthermore, according to the minutes of the Environment and Neighbourhood meeting on 28 June 2018, **no members of the E&N committee questioned why the target date had been changed.** Elsewhere in the report, we learn that "Considerable progress was made in implementing or upgrading sections of the cycle network". Well, it sounds good anyway.

49. The fourth annual update (2019) of the 'Summary of Sustainable Transport Strategy Targets' (Appendix C to the main report), indicated that the 'short-term target' for cycling modal share changed again. This time from **2.2% by 2020 to 2.2% by 2021**. This time, however, there was no mention of the date change to 2021 in the main monitoring report<sup>110</sup>. The only direct mention for cycling modal share was "...the data suggests that the proportion of people cycling has dropped from 1.8% to 1.5%". That was it, that was the sum total. Furthermore, as the report

<sup>106</sup> Agenda for Environment and Neighbourhood Committee on Thursday, 19th March, 2015, 7.30 pm (LBS, accessed 1 April 2023): <https://moderngov.sutton.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=452&MId=3637&Ver=4>

<sup>107</sup> Sutton's Sustainable Transport Strategy (LBS, June 2015): [https://getsuttoncycling.files.wordpress.com/2015/08/suttonsustainabletransportstrategy\\_june2015.pdf](https://getsuttoncycling.files.wordpress.com/2015/08/suttonsustainabletransportstrategy_june2015.pdf)

<sup>108</sup> In 2019, a summary of the latest STS targets was made available to members of the Sutton Cycle Forum on 4 October, and the same document was made available on the council's website by 23 December, along with all other documents pertaining to the annual monitoring review due that year (see [Evidence Base By Topic: Transport](#)). As of July 2021, and despite the launch of a consultation on a new updated Sustainable Transport Strategy in March 2021, these 2019 documents remain the most recently publicly available STS annual monitoring reports. (Note that on 1 April 2023, the 'Evidence Base By Topic: Transport' page only provides links to the [Monitoring report](#) and to Appendix A 'Progress against STS Action Plan Indicators', but not Appendix B 'Progress against Cycling Strategy targets or Appendix C 'Progress against STS Targets').

<sup>109</sup> Environment and Neighbourhood Committee, 28 June 2018. Appendix C to the main 'Update on Sustainable Transport Strategy' report (LBS, June 2018): <https://moderngov.sutton.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=452&MId=5022&Ver=4>

<sup>110</sup> [Evidence Base By Topic: Transport](#) (Sutton Council, accessed 21 July 2021)

had not been presented to the Environment & Neighbourhood Committee<sup>111</sup>, there is no record of what members thought about the change or even if they were aware of the change.

50. It is worth noting that, although the ‘short-term target’ for cycling modal share was set to *one decimal place* (2.2%), the first three annual updates reported the previous year’s figure, and the updated figure, to a *whole number*. Only the fourth update reported these to *one decimal place*. So, in 2018, the official figure of 1.8 % was rounded up to 2%; whereas in 2019 the official figure of 1.3% was not rounded down to 1%. All suggesting that this method of reporting was employed in order to make things look better than they actually were, when it suited to do so.

Target T1 Modal Share for cycling (2015 STS, annual reports 2016 to 2019)			
Year	Last Year Figures	Updated Figure	Short-term Target
2016	Baseline 1% (2009/10-2011/12)	2% (2012/13-2014/15)	2.2% (2017)
2017	2% (2012/13-2014/15)	2% (2013/14-2015/16)	2.2% (2017)
2018	2% (2013/14-2015/16)	<b>2%</b> (2014/15-2016/17)	2.2% <b>(2020)</b>
2019	<b>1.8%</b> (2014/15-2016/17)	1.3% (2015/16-2017/18)	2.2% <b>(2021)</b>

51. The fifth (2020) and the sixth (2021) annual updates of the (old) 2015 STS have not formally been published by Sutton Council. However, the Draft Sustainable Transport Strategy 2020-2025 published in January 2021, notes that “Cycle mode share is low, 1.1% of all journeys and among the lowest share in London”. The STS also references the Mayor’s Transport Strategy (MTS) ‘outcomes borough data pack - April 2020’, available (at the time) from the Transport for London open data portal <http://planning.data.tfl.gov.uk/>. This pack notes that the cycle mode share for Sutton over the period 2017/18-2019/20 was 0.8% (which was below the average for outer London as a whole at 1.4%). From this, it can be concluded that it is highly unlikely that the target of 2.2% by 2021 has (or had) any chance of being met.

52. So, all in all, not quite a ringing endorsement for the borough’s Sustainable Transport Strategy 2015, or its sister document the Cycling Strategy 2015. Questions have been asked of the Chair of the Environment and Sustainable Transport Committee, Councillor Barry Lewis, and for more on this see forthcoming post ‘Holding to account’.

53. Although outside the scope of this ten-year review, it would seem appropriate, when considering strategies that come and strategies that go, to briefly reference two of the borough’s policy documents from former times. A ‘Cycling Action Plan’ for Sutton was produced in June 2007, and eight years prior to that, in March 1999, a Sustainable Transport Strategy for the borough had been published. Some (albeit rather selective) quotes from those documents are shown below. The reader can come to their own judgement on how successful, or otherwise, the council has been on fulfilling its aspirations and objectives.

54. Some quotes from the Sutton **Cycling Action Plan 2007**:

“Cycling has been identified in the Mayor’s Transport Strategy as a vital mode of sustainable transport in London. **London Borough of Sutton’s vision is the same as the Mayor’s to make the Borough a place “where people of all ages, abilities and cultures have the incentive, confidence and facilities to cycle whenever it suits them.”**” [11.1.1]

“**Sutton has a high potential for being a cycling borough.**” [11.1.3]

“The Borough will develop and facilitate partnership working at all levels with TfL...” [11.9.8]

<sup>111</sup> Note that the last meeting of the Environment and Neighbourhood Committee was held on 1 October 2020, and the first meeting of the Environment and Sustainable Transport Committee was held on 28 January 2021: <https://moderngov.sutton.gov.uk/ieDocHome.aspx?bcr=1>



"The borough will ensure all officers are adequately trained and up-to-date with all the current cycling information." [11.9.8]

55. Some quotes from the **Sustainable Transport Strategy 1999**:

"Perhaps the most serious problem is that of air pollution. Vehicle exhausts are now responsible for a large proportion of the pollutants emitted into the atmosphere, and in certain atmospheric conditions ... they form a potentially lethal cocktail, especially for those people with respiratory problems." [Page 2]

"Prepare a Borough Cycling Strategy aimed at increasing cycle use." [Page 18]  
*In 1991, 2% of the journeys made by residents of Sutton were by cycle; nearly thirty years later, and the figure is around 1%*

"The Council will seek to reduce the proportion of journeys made by car in relation to other more sustainable forms of transport". [Page 21]  
*In 1991, 56% of the journeys made by residents of Sutton were by car; nearly thirty years later, and the figure is around 55%*

"Ensure all highway / traffic management / road safety schemes take into account, and where possible improve, bus, cycle, and pedestrian movement, safety and convenience" [Page 36]

56. There is more on strategies, and reporting on outcomes, in the forthcoming post 'Holding to account'.

## In conclusion

57. This review has endeavoured to go some way towards highlighting the delivery of cycling related projects and schemes in the London Borough of Sutton since around 2010.

58. Only five minor schemes have been identified as having any merit, and three major projects have proved to be disappointing.

59. It is clear that the annual, piecemeal, 'spend it or lose it', Local Implementation Plan funding, coupled with low aspirations, has proved not to have produced any tangible worthwhile results. When more significant levels of funding are offered, the borough appears to be either unprepared or manifests its low aspiration (and 'all too difficult') thinking.

60. Borough strategies relating to sustainable transport and cycling have talked big, but delivered little. No one appears to have questioned why that is (until now - see forthcoming post 'Holding to account').

61. There is some evidence that things are changing and improving. However, unless the borough can show greater ambition, and is prepared to up its game on active travel, it is likely that Sutton will get left further behind. If the borough does get left behind, then at some point in the future people may well ask why 'healthy streets' (and 'climate safe streets') were so far down the agenda in Sutton in 2022, in 2023....