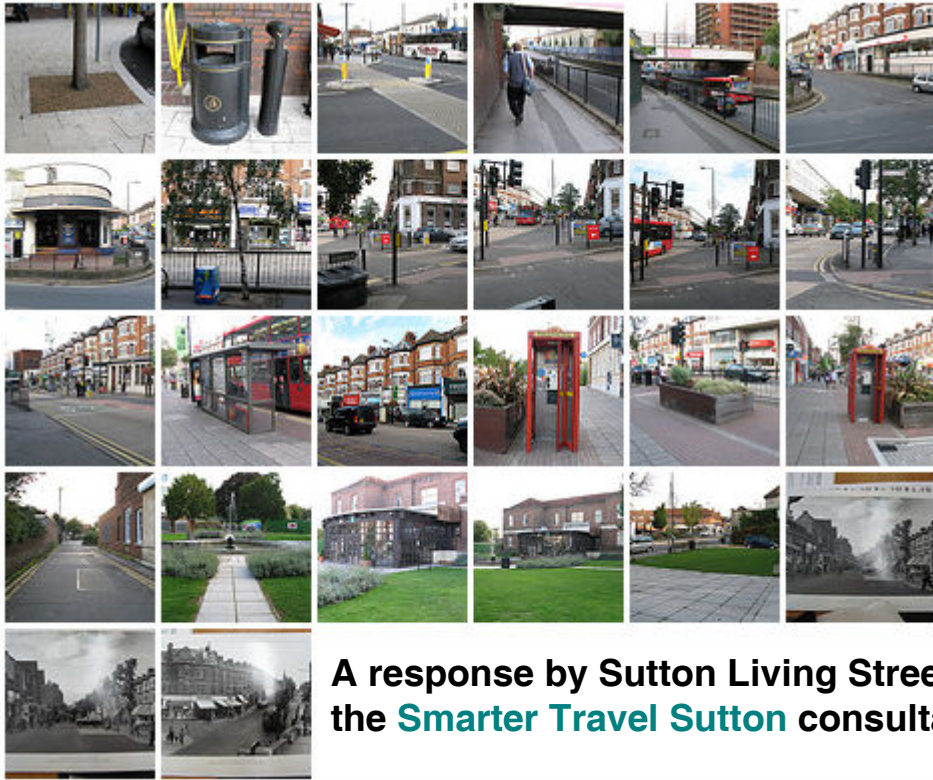


Improving Travel in Wallington



A response by Sutton Living Streets to the [Smarter Travel Sutton](#) consultation

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Introduction

Sutton Living Streets is a small group of Sutton residents who support the aims of the national charity Living Streets, which works to create safe, attractive and enjoyable streets, where people want to walk.

This paper is our response to the proposals for the development of Wallington Town Centre as presented at the Improving Travel in Wallington exhibition and outlined in the accompanying document *Improving Travel in Wallington: copy of exhibition panels*¹. Our comments are presented in the style of the Feedback Questionnaire.

Sutton Living Streets fully support the scheme objectives to improve the look and feel of Wallington Town Centre in order to boost its attractiveness to residents, visitors and shoppers, and to enhance pedestrian, cycle and bus access in and around the centre. Whilst recognising the need to preserve Woodcote Road (the 'High Street') as an important corridor for vehicular movement, the challenge here of course is to mitigate the negative effects that such a road can have, and has had, on the local community and town centre. It is perhaps a disappointment, therefore, that speed reduction is not included in the proposals, as it could be argued that free flowing traffic at low speed would be a better outcome than stop-start traffic permitted to travel at up to 30 mph.

Nevertheless, it is evident that the proposals hope to address the concerns expressed by respondents to the initial consultation. The consultation found that people did not like the traffic levels, experienced difficulty walking around the centre because of traffic, limited crossings and clutter, and noted that the town centre is short of decent public spaces to enjoy. At the same time, it was noted that there is a strong sense of community in Wallington and that the convenience and availability of local services is highly valued. The scheme proposals are clearly trying to respond to these issues, and if implemented will unquestionably result in a better Wallington Town Centre.

In this response we have attempted to suggest a few ideas for consideration that may give added value to the scheme. We certainly hope that the views and comments here are of interest.

¹ Accessed at <http://www.smartertravelsutton.org.uk/uploads/documents/OX4602ConsultationPanelsA3CO.PY.pdf>,
September 2010.

Improving Travel in Wallington: Feedback Questionnaire

1. What elements of the scheme do you like?

Particularly like the proposal to remove parking from Woodcote Road during the day. The case for this is well made in the consultation document. Without general on-street parking, cars will immediately head for the nearby car parks. In doing so, the levels of traffic on Woodcote Road (one of the main areas of concern for people) will be reduced, and it will be possible to provide more public space on the footway, especially on the east-side of the street. Along with the proposals to improve the design of street crossing points throughout the broader area, this should definitely encourage more people to consider walking to Wallington Town Centre.

2. What elements of the scheme do you oppose?

There are some very strong elements to this scheme and, with the possible exception of the proposals to effectively restrict certain access for cyclists into and out of Beddington Gardens, and at the same time indicate cycle routes along paths not suitable for cycling (see section 3), there is little to oppose.

However, further improvements should be considered too. In particular, would like to see more emphasis placed on the link adjacent to the library between Woodcote Road and Shotfield. This idea, along with more examples from other key areas, is discussed further in the sections below.

3. If you have specific comments about particular scheme elements, note them down here:

- Woodcote Road, 'High Street' public realm proposals

It is hoped that the proposals to resurface Woodcote Road, between the Old Town Hall and Beddington Gardens, along with the provision of new pavement treatment and the removal out of date street furniture, will all help to tip the balance away from traffic dominance towards a more pedestrian friendly environment. Ideally, people should be free to cross from one side of the street to the other with a lot more ease than is currently the case.

If the resultant effect of the resurfacing is not to provide a "naked street" (as suggested in one of the visualisations), or if the total carriageway width is not to be reduced throughout the length of the road, then, in order to reduce further the 'barrier effect' that the busy A237 can cause for pedestrians and cyclists and make it easier to cross the road at any point, it may be appropriate to provide a safe central flat-surface area along part of the street, similar to that implemented along the High Street in New Malden a few years ago. Being able to cross the street on an almost ad-hoc basis, but at the same time ensuring smooth traffic flow,

would help achieve the objective of making Woodcote Road a pedestrian focussed street that supports retail activities.

Anything to improve the appearance of the railway bridge, could transform, aesthetically, the north end of the street. The *Emerging Landscape Concept* document, published in March 2010 as a precursor to the initial consultation, suggested that featured lighting would be considered in this area. However, the exhibition document does not appear to refer to this idea. The area under the bridge can appear quite dark and uninviting. Improved lighting would increase the perception of safety and, if used creatively through the use of LEDs dotted around the walls, or ground lighting, could greatly enhance the location.

Recent work to the paving on the east side of Manor Road (between Woodcote Road and Melbourne Road) just to the north of the railway bridge is a great improvement, and a step in the right direction to help create a more compelling experience for pedestrians.

There is some concern over the proposed general street lighting, in particular the height of the lighting columns. The use of down-lighting and new technology to reduce light pollution is good, and the importance of effective lighting is recognised, but such towering columns would appear to be more appropriate on a motorway to support fast moving traffic rather than in a retail and residential area.

The inclusion of additional street trees, that provide shade and colour, is welcomed. But planting must be supported through continued regular care and maintenance of the trees and shrubs. Some evidence of partial neglect to existing trees is apparent, for example the silver birch on the west side just to the north of Beddington Gardens.

- **Town Hall / Library Gardens area proposals**

The objective to further enhance this area as the main community and civic space, connecting Woodcote Road to the Library and car park through pedestrian focused links, is an exciting prospect. The public space improvements immediately in front of the Town Hall, including the use of banding and furniture as a symbol of togetherness, appear innovative.

However, the scheme should go further, with more emphasis placed on the link adjacent to the library between Woodcote Road and Shotfield. Current proposals appear to draw people from Woodcote Road towards the car park, but with less emphasis on public realm improvements alongside the car park and through to Shotfield. The overall experience for those arriving and leaving the town centre on foot through Shotfield could be further enhanced through the provision of a widened footway alongside, but separate from the car park. Trees and lighting could be used to delineate the alignment of the route along this section.

Moreover, if the southern vehicular entrance to the car park on Shotfield was to be moved to a point perhaps ten metres to the north of its current location, and a pedestrian only entrance provided in its place, the footway alignment would be further enhanced. As it is, people are left to walk through the car park and head for the height-restriction barrier, which is perhaps not the most inviting way to access the library or town centre (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 Pedestrian access as currently provided to Woodcote Road from Shotfield.



Source Charles Martin, 14 September 2010

A proposal to include a zebra crossing across Shotfield, linking the library with the medical centre as a junction enhancement is noted, and this could work well with an improved pedestrian link adjacent to the car park.

Consideration could also be given to a clearly delineated and traffic-free diagonal footway across Shotfield car park too. Any enhancements here would readily contribute to the broader area scheme for transport links.

The inclusion of additional seating near to the entrance of the buildings would be welcomed, as would creative lighting features (preferably solar powered). The use of short lighting columns may be more appropriate to strengthen the concept that these areas are predominantly where people (and vehicles) move slowly.

An innovative way of increasing use of public space would be through the provision of a free wireless hotspot outside the Town Hall or Library².

² Such a scheme has been introduced at Queensland State Library in Brisbane, and was featured in the key-note speech given by designer Dan Hill at Interaction10, the third annual conference hosted by the Interaction Design Association (IXDA). (Savannah, Georgia, February 2010). A video is available at <http://www.ixda.org/resources/dan-hill-new-soft-city>.

- Ross Parade proposals

The proposed raised table and footway build-out on Ross Parade at its intersection with Woodcote Road is very welcome. This should help achieve the objectives of providing a more coherent, and easier to navigate, route for pedestrians.

Currently, due to the road level difference and associated guardrailing, anyone wishing to walk along the east-side of Woodcote Road is required to make a detour of about 15 metres into, and then 15 metres out of, Ross Parade. Those on foot also then have to face the possibility of navigating their way between parked vehicles in order to cross the road as kerbside parking and a loading bay are situated at the crossing point, i.e. immediately where the guardrailing finishes (see Figure 2). Enhancements should ensure that a clear area, allowing pedestrians to cross safely and comfortably, is provided.

The proposed removal of parking on the north side, along with the provision of wider pavement, better quality paving, and road resurfacing, will all help to transform this street.

Figure 2 Ross Parade close to the intersection with Woodcote Road. The point at which pedestrians using Woodcote Road cross Ross Parade. Pedestrian movements are constrained not just by the unlevel surfaces but also by the marked kerbside loading bay being allocated so close to the guard-railing,



Source Charles Martin, 14 September 2010

Currently, access to Wallington railway station from Ross Parade and the streets beyond is relatively circuitous and indirect for people on foot despite the close proximity of the station. For example, although the direct distance between eastern end of the eastbound platform at Wallington station and a point at the junction of Ross Parade and Clarendon Road is only around 70 metres, the walking distance is

approaching four times this length. Anything that can be done to improve this situation would be welcome³.

- **Beddington Gardens junction reformatting**

The consultation document notes that the option for on-way entry into Beddington Gardens from the north only is a difficult decision, but that it would offer a number of advantages. These include the removal of traffic signals to smooth traffic flow on Woodcote Road (but hopefully not speed it up), easier crossing for pedestrians, wider footways, and the reduction in through traffic on Ross Parade.

However, in recognising the resultant reduction in options for traffic movement, the consultation document only refers to 'cars' not able to turn left into Beddington Gardens, or 'cars' wanting to access the car park from the south needing to use Stanley Park Road. The possibility of people cycling from the south to access Wallington railway station, and the new cycle parking provision there, appears not to be directly considered. Although the proposed cycling contraflow, and welcome cycle lanes on Woodcote Road, will provide a link from Beddington Gardens to Melbourne Road (the latter forming part of the London Cycling Network, route 75), any reduction of traffic movement for cyclists in this area would be unfortunate.

It is hoped that the road design at this junction can be reassessed to accommodate cyclists to and from the south, without compromising footway space for pedestrians.

- **Parking proposals for Woodcote Road / Library car park**

The consultation rightly points out that the proposals to remove general parking from Woodcote Road during the day, and only allowing some limited disabled parking adjacent to Wallington Square, is a difficult decision. However, Sutton Living Streets supports this decision due to the many noted advantages which include the development of a new proposed community space; a reduction in traffic levels on Woodcote Road (as motorists will head for nearby car parks rather than drive along Woodcote Road first hoping to find a space to park); and an improvement to the location of loading bays to ease deliveries. The initial disadvantage to motorists is to be sweetened through the provision of up to 30 minutes of free parking (currently costing 30p), and it is likely that any inconvenience will soon be forgotten when the resultant advantages

³ Although beyond the scope of this scheme, an additional entrance to Wallington station from the north side of Ross Parade, or from Clarendon Road, or from a point on the east side of Woodcote Road just to the south of the railway bridge (i.e. opposite the existing access steps to the south entrance of the station), would greatly enhance accessibility. Any of these options would of course require an eastern extension to the westbound platform, but this is perhaps something that could be considered in conjunction with Network Rail and other stakeholders in the longer term.

are recognised⁴. The proposals may also provide a useful case study for other areas.

Improvements to the car park itself, through resurfacing, and tidying are welcome. But, as noted under Town Hall / Library Gardens area above, ideally consideration should be given to fully delineated, pedestrian-friendly, routes to and from Shotfield on desire lines (i.e. alongside, and diagonally across the car park) that avoid the necessity for people on foot or in wheelchairs to have to twist and turn between parked vehicles.

- **Walking links from surrounding residential area**

Upgrades to walking links are welcome. It is noted that the walking route map included in the consultation document (reproduced in Figure 3a), does not include the footpath that runs parallel to the railway (i.e. east-west) on the south side. This is a useful path that links with the Grosvenor Road-Beddington Gardens path (north-south) to the west of the station. Interestingly, this path, along with the footpath from the south side of Grosvenor Road, both of which are not suitable as cycling links due their narrowness, is shown on the cycling route map (Figure 3b).

Figure 3a Routes defined as key walking links to Wallington Town Centre

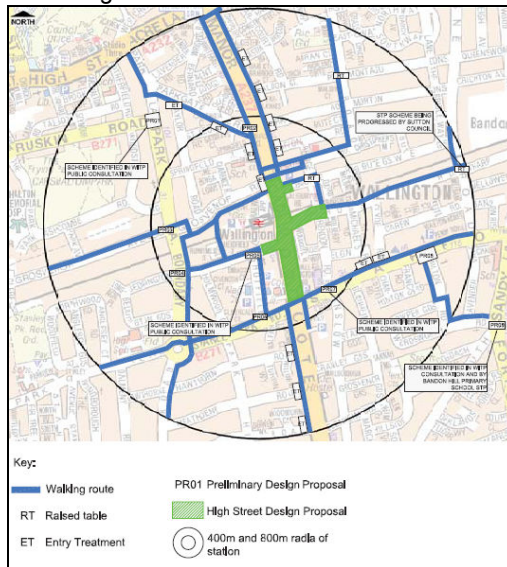
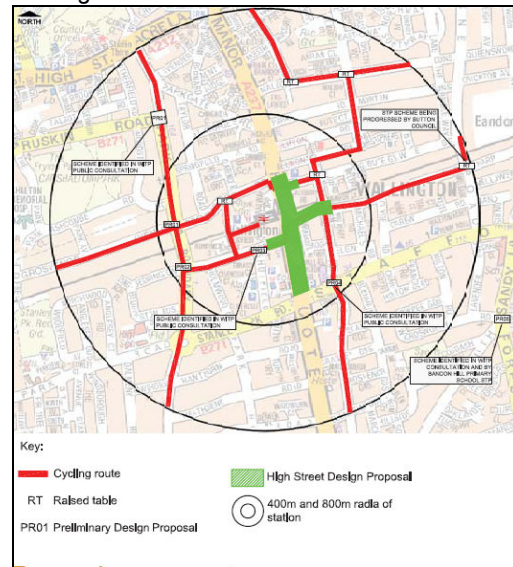


Figure 3b Routes defined as key cycling links to Wallington Town Centre



Source *Improving Travel in Wallington: Copy of Exhibition panels*

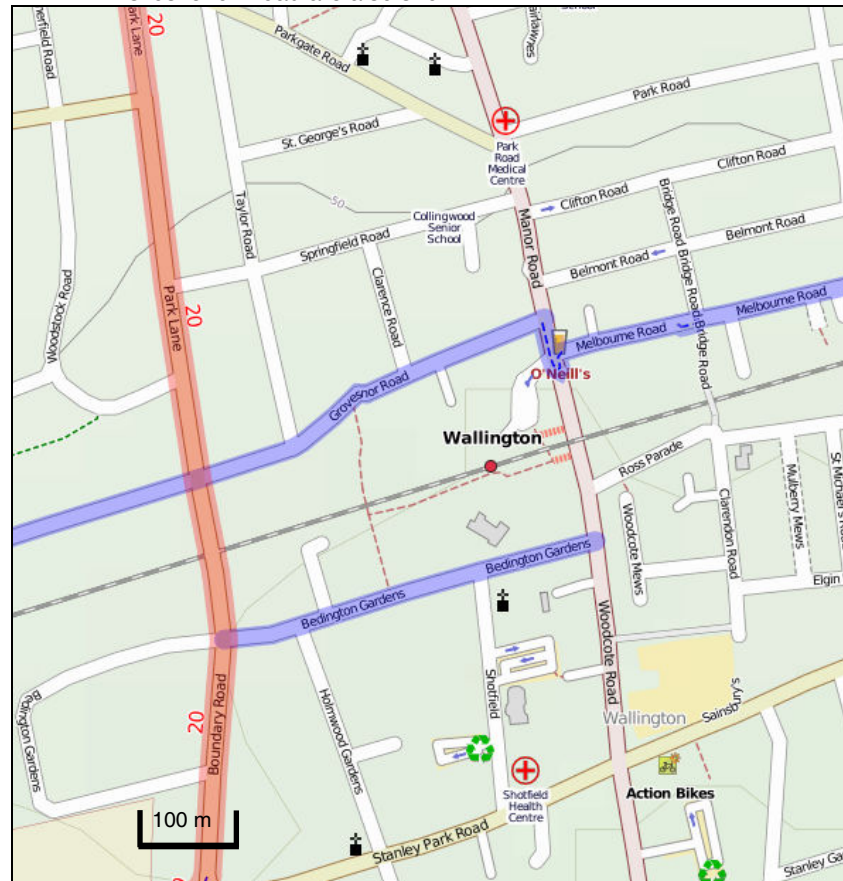
⁴ Hopefully, in the medium term, charging for car-parking will be enabled through smart-ticketing. If, for example, car park fees could be made through Oyster pay as you go (which, as for public transport use, could offer a more cost effective option to cash), not only would this make payment easier for motorists (and therefore a small charge would be less of an issue, especially when compared to travel by bus currently £1.20 each way), but this could also encourage subsequent public transport use as well.

- **Cycling links from surrounding residential area**

Any enhancements to cycling links from surrounding areas will be welcome. An increase in cycle parking provision is also noted. To supplement the proposed cycle parking provision (Sheffield stands), some full cycle locker parking (for those wishing to leave helmets, panniers etc.), would be useful in the Shotfield car park.

London Cycle Network (route 75), and National Cycle Network (route 20), both pass close to Wallington Town Centre (see Figure 4), and improved links to these routes, and the routes themselves, would be welcome.

Figure 4 Strategic cycle routes close to Wallington Town Centre. Footpaths linking Woodcote Road and Manor Road with Beddington lane and Grosvenor Road are also shown.



Source Open Street Map, 14 September 2010

- **Proposed junction improvements in the surrounding residential area**

All nine of the junction enhancements, proposed for the surrounding residential area, are approved of.

4. Is there anything missing from the scheme that you would like to see included?

A number of suggestions for enhancements have been highlighted and discussed in the preceding section. In particular, Sutton Living Streets would welcome more emphasis to be placed on the link adjacent to the library between Woodcote Road and Shotfield.

5. Which, if any, of the scheme elements do you think are priorities to implement?

Priorities for implementation include the removal of general parking from Woodcote Road during the day, along with the de-cluttering of out of date street furniture, and the installation of new planting, seating and lighting. All of this together should help create a more compelling experience for pedestrians in the core shopping area.

6. Please record any additional comments here

Sutton Living Streets has appreciated being given the opportunity to respond to the consultation on proposals to improve transport to Wallington. All of the elements of the scheme are generally welcomed, although, for all the objectives to be met, Wallington Town Centre could benefit from some further improvements.

It is hoped that this first phase of improvements will be inspiring enough to begin the transformation of Wallington into a place that people from across the borough and beyond will want to visit simply because the town centre offers something different. If the completed scheme results in a further increase in the number of trips that Sutton residents make by bus, bicycle and on foot, and boosts the attractiveness of the town, the objectives would have been achieved. It would be a great commendation if Smarter Travel Sutton could win an accolade such as the annual Urban Transport Design Award for all are part of this scheme. Whatever the outcome, the findings will be useful in informing future schemes.

It is recognised that the Improving Travel in Wallington scheme is a challenging project. The proposals have been well presented by Smarter Travel Sutton, and Sutton Living Streets wishes all involved with the project every success.