

Brighton & Hove City Council

Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee

Agenda Item 81(c)

Subject: Deputations

Date of meeting: 15 March 2022

A period of not more than fifteen minutes shall be allowed at each ordinary meeting of the Council for the hearing of deputations from members of the public. Each deputation may be heard for a maximum of five minutes following which one Member of the Council, nominated by the Mayor, may speak in response. It shall then be moved by the Mayor and voted on without discussion that the spokesperson for the deputation be thanked for attending and its subject matter noted.

Notification of three Deputations has been received. The spokesperson is entitled to speak for 5 minutes.

(1) Deputation: Westdene School Streets

This deputation is on behalf of a collective of more than 30 residents living around Westdene Primary school who are very concerned about the BHCC Westdene School Streets proposal and the decision-making process behind it. We have repeatedly raised issues about engagement, consultation, understanding infrastructure and process. We have been met with a lack of transparent, objective or accountable response by the council, including the school streets team and our local councillors- the 'Withdean Greens' who sit on the ETS committee so are senior decision makers in this process. Issues we have raised include:

- A well engineered 'taster' day- marshals stopping cars parking or driving into the area, activities throughout the day; unjustified claims about impact, lobbying by cycling groups, and people from out of area influencing the 'taster' day; the Westdene 'school street' is not the main entrance to the school; biased, confusing, inaccessible and exclusive 'consultation' for the 'taster day'; lack of meaningful local resident representation or consultation. Following this, a nonsense Westdene school streets proposal where:
- The road with the main school entrance remains open to traffic and is also subject to a new permanent one way system; the information and maps provided were once again inaccurate and inaccessible; closure of an important 'link' road with no consideration of impact on surrounding roads; we have also subsequently discovered (from the school streets team) that this proposal has already been 'pre' approved at the ETS committee, last year, without any meaningful analysis, engagement, or consultation and it appears is fait accompli. If that is the case, we question the legality of this.

The current Westdene school streets proposal does not meet the objectives of school streets (reducing congestion and pollution, improving safety, and enabling children to get to school actively), objectives that we fully support, and it does not address issues that do need to be addressed. We believe it will make the situation worse outside the school and in surrounding streets, and is a waste of money. We are also aware London boroughs have seen increased accidents involving children

after introducing school streets. Will BHCC learn from this, engage, analyse, consult properly, and make better use of limited resources?

Last November, as a community we presented the school streets team and our councilors with a summary of our concerns and some of our ideas- statement and link to document shared below. We want a proposal that understands local infrastructure and issues, and is based on transparent, objective, data to understand impact, and accurate, accessible, consultation of all relevant stakeholders. This request has been systematically ignored.

We live with this problem every school day, and we have plenty of ideas of how to improve the situation. With proper engagement and insight the council can find a solution that meets school streets objectives for the benefit of (our) children and local residents. BHCC is an accountable public organisation, in receipt of tax payers money, and as such we are entitled to a full, transparent, response to the community concerns that have been repeatedly raised, and adhere to the public standards of openness, objectivity, accountability, and honesty.

Supported by:

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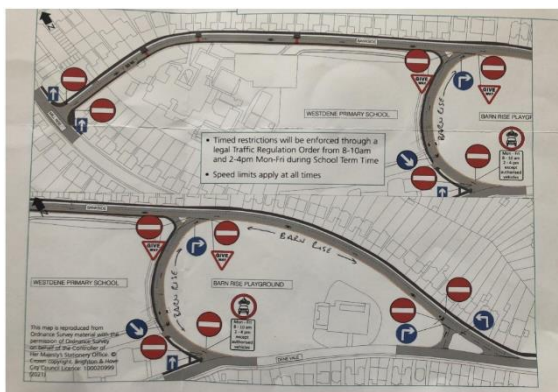
Greg Maddocks

Clive Gardiner

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LINK to the full document repeatedly shared with the council and councillors since November 2022:
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hz1LOQTkiLnxucfkKz9IHsDsafWcPo1V/view?usp=sharing>
 Some of the issues raised with council and councillors:

Westdene school streets proposal October 2021



Agreed statement to BH council regarding Westdene school streets

Westdene community supports initiatives that genuinely improve active travel to the school and improves congestion, pollution, and safety in the surrounding area, including local streets and immediately outside the school gates. This requires:

Objective and transparent planning and decision making which leads to a proposal that:

- Has been properly analysed- transparent, objective, data is key as per Hackney School Streets Toolkit.
- Has had proper stakeholder (community) involvement and responds, in full, to the community concerns raised in this document.
- Illustrates understanding of local infrastructure.
- Demonstrates anticipated impact (traffic on surrounding roads, parking) and mitigation against traffic/parking displacement and associated risk.
- Demonstrates a clear link between this school streets proposal and how it meets the school streets objectives.
- Shows a range of alternatives/options have been considered and the full rationale for final proposal and why it's the best option.
- Understand the timeline and cost, and how that cost will be met.

And, following this accurate, accessible, consultation of all relevant stakeholders.

Concerns relating to existing proposal incl. community feedback/suggestions

Traffic displacement

The section of Barn Rise that will be closed provides access to one of three/four pedestrian entrances to Westdene school. It is less accessible in wet weather and winter months. Currently used for school parking, school drop offs, and as a loop back down to Eldred avoiding Mill Rise and Bankside.

Closing this link/ road will shift traffic to the main school entrance(s).

Closing this link will inevitably force school traffic to park elsewhere, force more cars to either loop at the bottom of Barn Rise at a complex, small junction, and/or add traffic to Mill Rise and Bankside. It will increase congestion and reduce safety at junctions these children, and local residents will still have to navigate.

Consider closing/restricting access to a larger network of roads. This is more likely to meet objectives of school streets (e.g. restricted access from Eldred; Mill Rise junction with Highbank; Fairview Rise junction with Hillcrest and Redhill Drive).

Or, don't close the street at all but improve crossing points, traffic calming, pavement accessibility, monitor and address parking.

One way system

This proposal goes part of the way to formalising an informal one way system. However it does not take into account informal one way up Denevale, or across Mill Rise, or at the bottom end of Barn Rise. Nor does it take into account the impact of closing the link road on one way traffic displacement.

Some residents question the need to make Bankside/Barn Rise permanently one way.

For cyclists the one way system would work better up Barn Rise/Bankside due to the hills and also dropping off kids outside the main entrance on Bankside- this suggestion was acknowledged and supported by the group on that table.

• Consider one way network throughout the school road system- at least including Denevale, Mill Rise, all of Barn Rise, Bankside.

• Some residents don't like one way at all.

• Some residents on affected roads would prefer one way restrictions were timed.

• The two way junction around the island at the bottom of Barn Rise towards Eldred needs to be the same as the rest of Barn Rise (one way or not). This only suitable for one way traffic, and heavy traffic would get trapped.

• If wider restrictions were in place a one way system may not be needed at all.

Concerns relating to existing proposal incl. community feedback/suggestions

Parking

Data needed to understand why parents need to drive and impact of parking (the school has children registered who live outside of, and across the city, and parents need to drive to access the school).

School workforce parking is an issue on surrounding streets, particularly on Mill Rise

- Parents park illegally, blocking residents access, and obstructing limited pass points along Denevale, Mill Rise, Bankside and Barn Rise, as well as further afield.

- Parents park and wait for 30+ mins before school starts in local streets- engines idling in winter- creating unnecessary pollution.

- This proposal will lose access to c16 parking spaces. Where will this traffic go?

Traffic calming

The only traffic calming in this proposal is on a road that will be closed to traffic when the school entrance is open. How is this justified?

Crossing points

This adds two more crossing points to Bankside, which already has one crossing point on a 200m stretch of road, it is not clear what the purpose is, it will reduce resident parking, and parking issues, and doesn't address lack of crossing points elsewhere.

Pavements

This proposal misses an opportunity to improve accessibility of pavements (overgrowth/repairs/maintenance) which will also encourage children to walk and scoot. "The condition of the pavements influences whether I walk or drive" *comment via email from elderly resident on Denevale*

"If we want parents to change we need to understand why they drive and what may influence them to change. It is not evident / the Council makes no claim that its proposals are based on an analysis of the problem and represent the best of the options available. For this reason alone its proposals lack credibility and may lack legality." Denevale resident

"Disbelief that Brighton and Hove Council somehow believe that this will lead to the safety of the children in travelling to/from the school... surely crossings first" Mill Rise resident

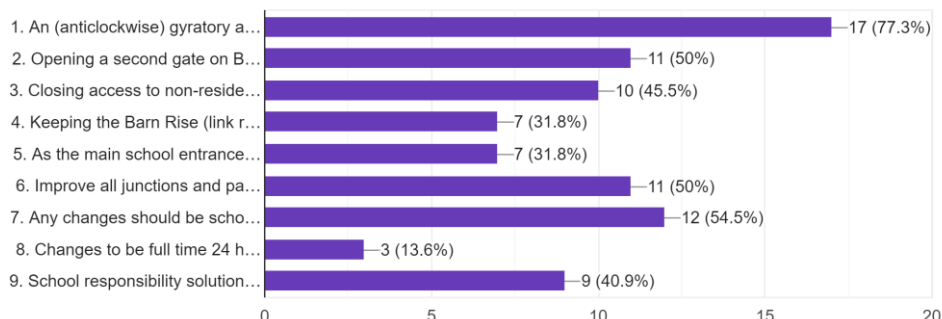
"How can the council consult on a proposal where the information is inaccurate?" Bankside resident

"All this proposal will do is make them (parents) park in adjacent areas, which incidentally is bad enough already" Eldred Avenue Resident

"Of the 6 school roads proposals by Brighton Council the Westdene Primary School one has the greatest effect on the local community. It neither considers the needs of the parents who [drive] or the residents of Dene Vale, Mill Rise, Bankside and Barn Rise..... To ban the use of the northern loop of Barn Rise... by parental vehicles will displace an even greater number of vehicles to the surrounding roads ... impinging on road safety." Barn Rise resident

Sample feedback (via email) from local residents unable to attend the meeting. General support of ambition to make the area safer, but concern this proposal will have the opposite effect and also make it more congested and polluted. Case needs to be proven, and infringement on residents rights not proportionate.

Please tick ALL THE IDEAS you think would improve the current situation and or current school streets proposal by reducing congestion and pollut..., and improving safety and active travel to school
22 responses



(2) Refund Valley Gardens Bus Gate fines

We believe that Brighton and Hove Council (from hereon in the “Council”) has, with its issuing of PCN’s to motorists who have contravened the regulations set for the Valley Gardens’ Bus Gate scheme (from hereon in the “Scheme”), acted in a way that is immoral, and which runs counter to the Council’s declared ethos of collaboration, respect, openness, creativity, and customer focus.

Human factors

A straw poll we have undertaken suggests that less than 10% of drivers know what a Bus Gate is.

Because it doesn’t appear in the Highway Code, drivers have not routinely been trained to understand Bus Gates and their ramifications. Also, drivers who have not driven along the Marlborough Place, Gloucester Place, St George’s Place and York Place for a couple of years, are now likely to be confused by the new, rather unintuitively configured road layout (with, amongst other things, its reliance on Bus Gates). Consequently, drivers who have not been schooled in the approach used by the Council are likely to find it disorientating – particularly when, as is the case, they can see other cars, vans and lorries apparently freely using the road.

Road signage perspective

Although we are not experts in the interpretation of the legal requirements for signage, we highlight that the Bus Gate signage does not conform to the “traffic island” requirements of 9.7.3 of Chapter 3 – Regulatory Signs – of the DfT’s Road Traffic Signs Manual (2019). We believe compliance with this DfT provision, in addition to being a regulatory requirement, would go a long way to providing a meaningful guidance to motorists about what Bus Gates involve. The present arrangement fails to provide such a meaningful guidance.

Inadequate public awareness campaign

Mark Prior, Head of Transport, in his presentation at the ETS Committee meeting on 15th January, stated that the Council had provided information on its website and had directly informed local businesses of the traffic implications of the Scheme. He also said that a video was being produced to inform motorists of their obligations when travelling through the Scheme.

It not being an obligation on their part, motorists using the Scheme are unlikely to have taken the trouble to find (and will not in future seek out) the material to which Mark Prior refers. Without adequate signage, therefore, they will not be adequately informed on the regulations now in place.

Conclusion

Mark Prior also stated in the above presentation that the Scheme signage went “above and beyond”. He also stated, however, that new, additional signs were now on order and that, until they were installed, the temporary signs that had previously warned drivers of their obligations were to be re-installed. Our contention is these remarks constitute an acknowledgement by the Council that the Scheme does not yet adequately address the three perspectives discussed above.

Accordingly, we would ask the Council, with immediate effect: to arrange for fines levied to date to be refunded, except perhaps, where there is evidence of second and subsequent re-offending incidents that have occurred after an original PCN has been issued; and, until more adequate signage has been installed, to suspend the issuing of any further PCNs.

Supported by:
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(3) Roundhill Liveable Neighbourhood

I'm a ward councillor for Round Hill and have been asked to be the spokesperson for this deputation on behalf of the residents who wish to request formal consideration of the neighbourhood in the roll-out of the Council's Low-Traffic Neighbourhood Scheme. This action is supported by the residents' association, the Round Hill Society.

Round Hill, a densely-populated residential area of about 900 households in the north of the St Peter's and North Laine ward of Brighton & Hove. Rolling-out the Council's Liveable Neighbourhood scheme across the Round Hill would address a number of objectives:

- (1) To reduce the ease of 'external traffic' using the residential streets of Round Hill as rat runs. In response to the petition brought to the ETS Committee in November 2021, councillors called for an officer's report on how to stop rat-running along Prince's Crescent and Wakefield Road, used by drivers to avoid the new traffic system at the junction of Ditchling and Upper Lewes Roads. This could form part of any LTN scheme.
- (2) To improve active travel infrastructure. Some walkways in Round Hill have become hotspots for pavement parking and are dangerous to pedestrians, particularly those with limited mobility. Other pavements are very narrow for users, and filled with street furniture. Rat-running vehicles continue to pose a danger to cyclist.
- (3) To add public green space to the neighbourhood would bring physical, social, and psychological benefits to the community. Round Hill lacks any green public space and, in comparison with averages for Brighton & Hove, has a higher proportion of one-person and single-pensioner households; and high proportion of people living in flats in converted houses, many without garden access. Pocket parks would make a positive contribution to the greening of our local environment and create habitats for wildlife
- (4) To improve air quality. Round Hill is bordered to the east by Lewes Road and to the north by Hollingdean Road. These roads have been identified as amongst the worst in the city for high levels of nitrogen dioxide associated with adverse impacts on health and wellbeing.

Some streets in Round Hill already have minimal traffic, and people in other streets want the same quality of life, improved social interactions, support of local retail, and ease of active travel enabled by an LTN. Round Hill Green Spaces, a community action group set up in 2018 and which operates under the auspices of the residents' association, is well placed to support council officers in the roll out of an LTN in the area. Our residents' association, the Round Hill Society, has been established for 22 years and has strong track record of successfully co-ordinating and delivering a diverse range of community projects.

Supported by:

Councillor Sue Shanks
Councillor Pete West
Rob Stephenson
Dominic Furlong
Jane Power
Kate Rice

