

Guildford Godalming Greenway
Surrey County Council proposals for Dagley Lane

Surrey County Council (SCC) have been consulting with residents in the vicinity of Dagley Lane to invite their response to the proposed changes. Several residents visited the Godalming Cycle Campaign (GCC) stand at the Godalming Green Gala on Saturday 14th August 2021 and indicated that they were unhappy with the proposals.

Martyn Sandford offered to meet Alison Hall, one of the residents, at Dagley Lane, and a visit took place on Friday 20th August. This was also attended by resident Ivor Thomas. The concerns raised are recorded in **bold** below. Responses from GCC are shown in *italics*.

Changes to Dagle Lane will fundamentally alter its character from a rural bridle path. It will take on a more urban feel.

A key attraction of Dagley Lane as a route for active travel is its rural aspect. GCC would not wish to see this change and believes the route must continue to be attractive for leisure as well as more utilitarian purposes. Our principal aim is for the route to be suitable for all types of active travel during all seasons of the year and we believe this can be achieved without destroying its rural nature.

Urbanisation has followed population increase and associated housing developments. A key purpose of the greenway proposal is to mitigate urbanisation by giving people an attractive alternative to traveling by private car. Much of the route already supports shared use. However, some sections are poorly drained, and others are steep and uneven. These deficiencies need to be addressed to make the route accessible to all ages and abilities. A consistent and well graded surface is an essential component of the solution, but we feel sure this does not necessitate the use of black tarmac.

The 3m path width along the entire length will be impossible to achieve without significant tree and vegetation loss.

The Department for Transport sets guidelines for active travel routes. GCC understands that a minimum width of 3m is specified for paths that provide for shared use so that the variety of users can navigate the route comfortably without conflict. This seems a reasonable specification for Dagley Lane which is already well used by both pedestrians and people on bikes.

Some of the route can accommodate a 3m width without any vegetation loss. Most of the remaining route requires the removal of annual vegetation or self-seeded saplings to bring the path width to 3m.

One location is significantly constrained by a mature oak tree. GCC would prefer to see the path width increased away from this tree with the loss of less mature trees on the other side of the path. This also takes the route further from the SSSI and makes room for new planting between the path and the SSSI. It is noted that the roots of the mature oak are already partially exposed due to erosion of the path. This should be addressed whether or not other changes are implemented.

The actual clearance will need to be greater than 3m to allow for construction.

Recent path construction in the Godalming area has not resulted in a clearance much beyond the confines of the path. The extent of disturbance may depend on the contractor employed and the methods they use. Assurance from SCC is needed on this matter.

The entire area of common land in the vicinity of the allotments is to be declassified as such and cleared of vegetation.

GCC provided a letter of support relating to the section of the route that passes over common land. Our support was based on the following information provided by SCC: "A relatively small section of the scheme requires surfacing on Common Land (see a very simple plan below) and consequently we are making an application to the Secretary of State for consent to do so." (The plan indicated the section of path from the cemetery to the mobile home park access road.)

As far as we know, the order relates only to the surfacing and would not result in the removal of the common land designation or the wholesale clearance of vegetation. SCC needs to confirm this.

Raising the level of the path where it is prone to flooding may make flooding worse.

Flooding arises from two causes:

- *Surface water puddling in depressions – The proposed improvements will include a fall to the side to ensure that water drains off the path.*
- *Rising water level from the River Wey – A significant rise in level occurs every 5 to 10 years. When it does, water covers the path near the Thames Water treatment works. The depth of the water can be several inches, occasionally as much as a foot. Raising the level of the path at this point will significantly reduce the frequency with which this occurs. A relatively small volume of water is involved so it seems unlikely that it will cause flooding to become worse elsewhere.*

A better surface will result in greater speed, especially on the downhill sections.

The primary aim is to make the route accessible to a wide range of potential users during all seasons of the year. The original GCC proposal specifically stated that "... it is not intended that this should be a route for cycling at speed. Fast routes for commuting by bike may be better provided separately."

While it is, of course, impossible to stop people using any form of transport in an irresponsible way, signage along the route should encourage considerate use and warn of junctions.

The changes may reinforce an incorrect perception (apparently held by a few) that the lane is exclusively for cycling.

This is a perception that GCC has not previously encountered. Members who use the route have always understood it to be for shared use. There is certainly no

intention that it should be otherwise. Indeed, it is fundamental to the greenway proposal that the route should be accessible to all seeking active travel.

Good signage will undoubtedly be part of the final design, and this must make the shared use clear.

The proposed lighting will adversely impact wildlife nearby.

Lighting addresses both safety and security issues and will greatly extend the availability of the route. It will enable users to see where they are going at night and increase their sense of security.

GCC never envisaged the route being lit by conventional lamps on poles. Rather we expected a lower-level lighting solution to be proposed. We note that SCC is taking advice from Surrey Wildlife Trust regarding any potential impact on wildlife. While many of our members have a keen interest in wildlife issues, we believe Surrey Wildlife Trust to be best placed to comment on this matter.