

SUTHERLAND GROVE CONSERVATION AREA RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

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Autumn 2026

'Rat-Run' Traffic Problems. Where are we now & How (on earth) did we get here?

It felt useful to give a detailed summary of how the **'West Hill Traffic Management Scheme'** developed from 2018 to understand where we are now.

An *aide-memoire* for long-standing residents & useful info for those new to the area.

A 4-page read. If you just want to read recent developments, skip to Pg 3. (*However this connects to all the earlier stuff!*)

Also worth saying at the start that neither council administration has served us as well as they might in terms of facilitating 'RatRun' traffic-reduction.

Back in 2017, 'RatRun' traffic levels were much worse than now (*if you can imagine that*)

A petition was launched, mainly by Granville Rd residents & St Michael's School parents, to request ACTION. All sorts of 'solutions' were suggested, including making Skeena Hill one-way only (uphill), or making Keevil & Castlecombe Drives variously one-way in the morning rush-hour.

March 2018 Cllr Malcolm Grimston summarised a council Report into traffic levels, which explored resident-suggestions. He included these shocking stats from the Report:

'Every weekday over 8,500 vehicles come down Keevil Drive. About 4,800 of these continue down Skeena Hill; most (4,000) then go down Girdwood though the others stay on Skeena. Sutherland Grove north of Granville Road gets about 5,000 vehicles a day. The volume of traffic coming through the area went up by between 10 & 20% just in the year from October 2016 to October 2017'

Morning 'rush-hour' 'No Left Turns' from Parkside into Withycombe Rd & Inner Park Rd (north) emerged as the best option to push for. The council were resistant to taking action. We recall they voted against these measures first-off, but a 6-month trial period for those options was finally Approved by the Transport Committee in **Autumn 2018**.

<https://democracy.wandsworth.gov.uk/documents/s60091/18-314%20West%20Hill%20Study.pdf>.

The cross-road at Girdwood/Granville/Sutherland was also to become a roundabout.

March 2019 the 6-month trial started. At this stage no camera-enforcement (just intermittent council vans with ANPR). Crucially NO resident-exemption from the restrictions.

September 2019 the trial-period was extended for another 6 months. Cllr Grimston reported:

'The evidence so far ... suggests that there has been a 22% reduction in traffic coming off the A3 into Park Side. This has resulted in a reduction of morning rat-running down Keevil Drive, Skeena Hill, Girdwood Road & Granville Road. However, there has been an increase in traffic coming off the A3 into Sutherland Grove & eastbound on the southern section of Inner Park Road, of 150 and 675 vehicles respectively during the three-hour daily restriction period. In the case of Inner Park Road that represents almost a doubling of numbers (up 82%).'

March 2020 the restrictions were Supported by a majority of residents & were made permanent,

June 2020 Along with other local groups, supported by Cllr Grimston, SGCARA submitted a strong request for resident-exemption from the restricted 'No Left Turns'. The council committee voted

against it. (See uploaded document: [WBC TransportScrutinyCommittee09.06.20 Paper No. 20- 171a West Hill Deputation Requests](#))

August 2020 traffic-calming measures installed in Granville Rd.

September 2020 a 6-month Trial Period started for a 'No Left Turn' into Inner Pk Rd (south). This became permanent in **Spring 2021**.

The morning rush-hour restrictions do not address the problems of 'Rat-Run' traffic in the late afternoons & evening 'rush-hours', not the problems of speeding cars in Girdwood Rd etc.

When **Covid restrictions** were lifted, commuters were reluctant to return to public transport & there was increased car-commuting, with some of the good work reducing 'Rat-Run' traffic in our area undone.

March 2022 Exemption from PCNs (Penalty Charge Notices) was FINALLY given to cars registered to West Hill Ward residents. Quite a while before all the glitches were sorted.

October 2022 Cllr Grimston reported:

'Wandsworth Council has won permission to run a pilot scheme to enforce 20mph speed limits in the Borough. Until now this has been in the sole power of the police. Two locations have been chosen for the 8-month pilot scheme which starts next week – Priory Lane in Roehampton & Wimbledon Park Road'.

The chosen locations were a frustration to those who felt Girdwood Rd would have been a more-appropriate choice.

February 2023 Cllr Grimston shared the following update:

'...Apparently the Department for Transport (DfT) has said the way Wandsworth was using its powers to enforce these cameras was unlawful & has asked the DVLA to stop sharing details of drivers caught speeding under the scheme with the Council. Data suggest that the number of vehicles travelling over 25mph on the two roads in the pilot (the other being Priory Lane) has halved from 13% to 6.6% since the introduction of the scheme. Discussions are ongoing with the Government.'

It seems inexplicable that the DfT would pull the plug on a scheme that appeared to be reducing speeds & would likely have been very effective if rolled out to Girdwood Rd & Sutherland Grove etc. The camera in Wimbledon Pk Rd was finally removed in 2026.

June 2023 'Reaching out to Residents' included a Traffic Questionnaire for residents to complete & return. SGCARA was pleased to receive the (well-considered) responses, although there were a disappointingly low number. One challenge is that a wide range of 'solutions' were suggested. Nothing clear to coalesce around. Suggestions like the creation of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) have since been emphatically by the council ruled out. The suggestion to restrict Right Turns into Sutherland Grove from West Hill is STILL under consideration by TfL. This is apparently now under the umbrella of further possible changes in West Hill, following the tragic death of a cyclist at the West Hill/Lytton Grove junction in **November 2024**.

June 2024 In conjunction with committed, creative SGCA residents, SGCARA held the Big Traffic Count over 4 days, counting traffic at morning & evening 'rush-hours', where rota-slots could be filled. Each survey was done by 2 people where possible, each with separate clicker-counters, to eliminate error.

January 2025 A meeting to discuss further improvement of our 'Rat-Run' problems was convened by Fleur Anderson. It included representatives of SGCARA, Granville Rd residents, parents of St Michael's School, Cllr Jenny Yates (Cabinet member for Transport) & Henry Cheung (Borough Engineer for our area.)

SGCARA shared in advance a document summarising suggestions from the 2023 Traffic Questionnaire, information from The Big Traffic Count (June 2024), & other related matters. See the uploaded document:

'SGCARA – summary of through-traffic problems for Meeting 30.01.25'

In her post-meeting informal report, Fleur shared the following.

The meeting was told:

- 1) *'The first criteria for Council & TfL intervention is personal injuries, meaning it would be difficult for Granville Road, Girdwood Road & Sutherland Grove to meet the criteria for intervention.'*

This suggests that nothing would be done unless serious injury – or death – occurs! There appears to be the opposite criteria for consideration of School Streets locations!

- 2) (it has been decided that) *'the installation of speed cameras is the remit of the police & TfL so the Council are unable to install cameras'.*
- 3) *'.. there are concerns that traffic calming measures in the Granville area would displace traffic to neighbouring roads & cause parking issues & the Council lacks the remit and resources to implement several measures'.*

What the Council will look into in light of this meeting:

- 1) Raising with TfL the possibility of further turning restrictions from West Hill so that less traffic is diverted down Girdwood through to Sutherland & Granville.
- 2) Suggestions from SGCARA (in the shared document mentioned on Pg2)
- 3) New zebra crossings at the top of Sutherland Grove and the junction of Granville and Merton Road.
- 4) New Speed Indication Devices (SIDs) on Girdwood Road & fixing the existing SID on Sutherland Grove.
- 5) Assessing the volume & speed of traffic across the area using Automatic Traffic Counters (ATCs – black pneumatic road tubes) around the area as the Council would like their own data on this issue in order to review it comprehensively

March 2026 Following requests by SGCARA, Cllr Jenny Yates gave permission for the 'raw data' from the March 2025 Traffic Survey to be shared with us. This 'raw data' was frankly vast & impenetrable to the uninitiated. Even Malcolm Grimston - a scientist used to complex data - implied it would be difficult to assess & draw conclusions. He hinted that swamping us with 'everything' might be a way of telling us 'nothing'. SGCARA has never received an explanation why finalised data & an accompanying Report does not seem to have been shared. We understand that what is shared is very much at the discretion of the council politicians, not the council officials (including the engineers).

April 2026 Cllr Grimston's monthly email included:

I am told that the data gathering exercise was not intended to create options for managing the rat-run but rather to 'sense check' the latest information now that the West Hill traffic management scheme has settled in & to provide certain data to TfL, as they are responsible for West Hill. The issue is not a priority for the current Council & it would take another petition to prompt further investigations.

This was quite a revelation. So the March 2025 Traffic Survey wasn't intended to result in any changes of provision.

February 2026 local residents & SGCARA were taken aback by the announcement of a proposed (Saint Cecilia's) 'School Street' in Sutherland Grove, with a restricted zone between Combemartin Rd & Skeena Hill. The justification for the proposal included:

'traffic surveys completed in recent months indicate that surrounding roads are able to accommodate the temporary increase in traffic'

There seemed to be some belief in the council that the 'School Street' might resolve some of our 'Rat-Run' traffic problem, whereas we all know that it would most likely funnel even more traffic down Girdwood Rd (& Skeena Hill).

With excellent input from residents, SGCARA hosted a petition against the proposal, summarising the argument in '5 Key Concerns'.

March 2026 At the 'School Street' drop-in session (Saint Cecilia's), the results of a local Traffic Survey (undertaken **December 2025**) were displayed.

This showed the following numbers of vehicles for Girdwood Rd (both directions)

7.00-8.00am	319
8.00-9.00am	475
3.00-4.00pm	516
4.00-5.00pm	586
5.00-6.00pm	587

These figures appear rather higher than those that can be extrapolated from the March 2025 data. Certainly over the level requiring council-intervention?

May 2026 The Conservatives narrowly won the council election – 29 seats to Labour's 28, with Cllr Grimston taking on a 'Confidence & Supply' role. This meant a new Cabinet member for Transport – Cllr Dan (Daniel) Hamilton. He created a positive impression that SGCARA would be able to do business with him, **then events took an unexpected turn... see below!**

June 2026 Cllr Grimston shared the welcome news that the proposed (Sutherland Grove) School Street trial would not be going ahead. Approx 83% of respondents were opposed (with well-argued submissions).

Summer 2026 The Sad/Smiley face SID (Speed Indicator Device), promised in **January 2026** finally appeared in Girdwood Rd!

July 2026 After just 2 months in the job, Conservative Council leader Aled Richard-Jones resigned the post (although remaining as a Councillor). A contest then took place between Cllr Dan Hamilton (the then-Cabinet Member for Transport - *see above*) & a rather controversial figure, Cllr Robert Morritt. Cllr Morritt won the contest by a single vote & became leader. Cllr Dan Hamilton (fellow Cllr Tom Pridham) immediately resigned their Cabinet positions in protest.

So we have a new Cabinet member for Transport – Cllr Nick Austin.

Cllr Austin has been copied into some emails involving the 'Rat-Run' problems – mainly requests to the Borough Engineer for clarification of data etc.

After a committee meeting (November?) SGCARA hopes to initiate more direct contact & see if his attitude towards our concerns is more positive than that of his predecessor in the previous administration.

If things do look more positive, it would be good to draw together all interested residents, including those who responded with such clarity to the 2023 Traffic Questionnaire, others who supported the Big Traffic Count etc & also the Granville Rd group. An in-person meeting for residents including Cllr Nick Austin, our Borough Engineer Henry Cheung & our Councillors would be the ideal?

Either stand-alone or perhaps to precede the AGM at a Saint Cecilia's meeting?

We suspect that we will need to formulate a Petition amongst residents following such a meeting.

Our understanding is that this will need to be specific & entail narrowing down the various 'solutions' suggested by residents at various times.

Saga to be Continued...

ALSO UPLOADED ON THIS SGCARA website PAGE:

WBC TransportScrutinyCommittee09.06.20 Paper No. 20- 171a West Hill Deputation Requests

SGCARA - summary of through-traffic problems for the Meeting 30.01.26

School Street Traffic Data -surrounding StC School Dec 2025

School Streets St Cecilia Report - 19.05.26