

SUTHERLAND GROVE CONSERVATION AREA RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

Email: admin@sgcara.org.uk

SGCARA

Web: www.sgcara.org.uk

Summary of SGCA 'rat-run' traffic issues (for meeting 30th Jan 2025, with MP Fleur Anderson, Wandsworth Cabinet Member for Transport Jenny Yates, Engineer Henry Cheung, reps from SGCARA & St Michaels PTA/Granville Rd)

The following 3-topic questions encompass SGCARA's developing concerns over excessive 'rat-run' traffic using SGCA streets. These questions have been asked variously of council-officials & elected councillors over the last year - with no answers so far.

- 1) *Has the draft report from the survey completed into West Hill ward traffic issues in the last year or so now been finalised? Is the finalised report to be available to the public? When can a much-needed 'comprehensive survey' take place?***

The background to this question is given in **3a) below** including SGCARA's disappointment that a promised 'comprehensive survey' of local traffic movement was apparently watered-down after the change in administration.

- 2) *Why exactly was the W'worth speed-camera trial abruptly abandoned? What might facilitate it being reinstated?***

We think that Cllr Ireland stated at the SGCARA AGM (22.04.24) that it was stopped because of disagreement between TFL, the DoT & Wandsworth Council about the funding for LAs being able to have their own speed cameras, including who would benefit financially from the fines? Did we understand that correctly? If not, please explain.

- 3) *Please check the details of the proposed Quiet Cycle Routes as they affect our area (namely routes 3 & 8), especially what 'priority junction' means as regards the Girdwood/Granville/Sutherland mini-roundabout. The term 'priority junction' is used elsewhere in the proposals, so important to establish exactly what it means.***

Although better provision for cyclists is very welcome, SGCARA is puzzled that this includes the dangerous Girdwood/Granville/Sutherland mini-roundabout, when the 'rat-run' vehicle problem is ongoing.

Background to the emergence of those key 3-topic questions follows:

1) Background to 'Rat-run' problem in SGCA

1a) Our proximity to the A3 has meant that over many years our area has suffered from 'rat-runners' leaving the A3 at Tibbetts Corner, driving down through the flats (Keevil Drive), most turning into Girdwood Rd, on to the Girdwood/Granville/Sutherland roundabout, crossing to Granville Rd. A while ago, an ANPR scheme was introduced forbidding all 'Left turns' at Withycombe Rd and Inner Pk Rd 7 – 10am, subsequently with exemptions for locally-registered cars.

1b) This 'No left Turns' ANPR scheme has had some effect in reducing the traffic coming down Girdwood Rd – but only between 7.00am & 10.00am. Some vehicles 'play the system' by turning round in the forecourts of flats beyond the 'No Left Turns', even do 'U' turns in Parkside itself driving back so they can make *right* turns into the 'forbidden' roads.

1c) Cllr Malcolm Grimston has suggested that restricting turning into the 'forbidden' roads **from either direction** during 7-10am would be a helpful strategy.

1d) Cllr Grimston has more recently suggested that turning into Skeena Hill from Beaumont Rd during the restricted hours should also be residents only, controlled by ANPR. This again could be a useful strategy, deterring vehicles from 'playing the system' as described in **1b)**

2) Informal SGCARA Traffic Questionnaire - summer 2023

2a) SGCARA offered residents opportunity to respond to an informal, but detailed, Traffic Questionnaire. ('Some residents' where indicated below refers to respondents to this Questionnaire.)

2b) Some residents feel that 'No Left Turns' on more roads off Parkside are needed. Others that the restricted time-period should be extended. Others that 'traffic-calming' measure are the answer.

2c) Most express concern that the **afternoon/evening 'rat-run' traffic is not currently addressed at all**. The comment has also been made that evening (actually from 3pm school pick-up time) westbound traffic (ie towards Beaumont Rd & onward) can be greater than eastbound traffic in the morning. This results in a considerable tail-back at the top end of Girdwood Rd, to access Beaumont Rd via the junction at Skeena Hill. Residents observe that through-traffic at w/es has increased considerably.

2d) Some (commuter) traffic deterred by the 'No Left Turns' - eg at Withycombe Rd - continues down West Hill, turning right into Sutherland Grove, & vice-versa in the afternoons/evenings. This can cause bad tail-backs especially between West Hill & the notorious Girdwood/Granville/Sutherland Grove roundabout. Vehicles typically then turn left into Granville Rd causing more tail-backs & danger to pupils at St Michaels. Vehicles are often speeding when there is opportunity. There have been a number of residents' parked cars hit by speeding cars - including at least two write-offs. Some residents note that the huge increase in home-delivery vans since Covid has made the whole problem worse.

2e) Some residents call for a morning 'No Right Turn' from West Hill into Sutherland Grove (for non-Exempt vehicles, again assuming exemption for West Hill Ward-registered cars). It is understood that this would need to involve TFL as West Hill is a trunk road.

2f) Some residents say that the only way to eliminate 'rat-run' traffic completely is a Clean Air Neighbourhood Scheme (as in Fulham), or other types of schemes, such as the South Chiswick Liveable Neighbourhood' solution.



See picture above

2g) Residents in general write about an inordinate amount of speeding – seemingly associated with road-rage at tail-backs etc. Many of us witness this speeding down Girdwood Rd for instance, starting at the steep descent at the top end of Girdwood. Anecdotally, the dustmen are often afraid to cross that road in the course of collecting rubbish, one dustman known to have called Girdwood Rd a 'racetrack'. Residents with young children are fearful for their safety. . One Girdwood Rd resident wrote:

'One day my car was parked outside my house and was ploughed into at 9.30 in the morning – it landed in the neighbour's front garden. It was written off, culprit never found.'



Speeding on Sutherland Grove is also widely reported & parked vehicles have similarly been written-off.

In the past year 2 speeding cars have completely overturned – 1 in Girdwood & 1 in Granville (as recently as Nov 2024 – see picture left)

A car parked legally in Skeena Hill was also written off (summer 2023) by a speeding car. The parked car was shunted 12' up the road, indicating the excessive speed of the car which hit it.

2h) There is pretty much 100% concern among residents at the problems associated with the Girdwood/Granville/Sutherland Grove roundabout, from nearby residents at the amount of road-rage, honking horns at all hours – all worse because of the substantial amount of commuter traffic.

Some residents suggest that junction was safer before becoming a roundabout – when Sutherland Grove was the main through-way & Girdwood/Granville Rd traffic had to wait. As so much commuter traffic travels from Girdwood Rd to Granville Rd (& reverse in the afternoons), this traffic often assumes a right of way, rather than following roundabout etiquette/rules.

Residents' suggestions included:

- A) substantial raised pavements on each of the 4 roads leading into the roundabout
- B) much larger & clearer 'Give way to Traffic from the Right' type-signs to indicate that it IS a roundabout & traffic on the right has priority.
- C) ...even Zebra crossings on each of the 4 approach-roads
- D) larger road humps (but SGCARA understands that legal sizes for road humps have reduced in recent years)
- E) large 'SLOW' and/or "20MPH" signs printed on approach roads.

We understand that any additional measures proposed would require public Consultation.

One resident made the following general & very valid point:

'It is not an inalienable right to drive into London for your commute (and it is additionally bad for the environment, too)'

So little determined effort seems to be evident – from national Govt downwards - to encourage or persuade drivers to come into London for work by public-transport rather than by car.

3) 'Big Traffic Count' June25-27th 2024

A year on from the Traffic Questionnaire, SGCARA initiated the Big Traffic Count, taking place on 3 days with all vehicles (except cycles & e-bikes) being accurately counted (clicker-counters) in 1-hour shifts at 3 key 'problem spots'. Counting was done in pairs where possible for the accuracy of results.

The BTC was well-supported by St Michaels parents/Granville Rd residents. The spreadsheet of results that followed demonstrates the heaviness of the traffic, especially at the roundabout, where numbers over 1000ph were not unusual at the recorded times. The BTC results spreadsheet has already been shared with officials & elected representatives, but is attached with this document for clarity.

4) Solutions?

4a) SGCARA had hoped that the 'rat-run' problems of our area would be conclusively addressed by a promised '*comprehensive survey*' (below - response Nov 2021 from the Borough Engineer to questions from a local resident)

'In the current consultation, there are questions in place to understand residents appetite for additional restrictions'.....'I would also advise we are due to carry out a comprehensive survey in the local area to help us understand traffic movements which will in turn help develop ideas / restrictions for future consultation.'

Nothing more was heard. When further questions were asked (Feb 2023) the response was that the council was '*not looking to make any changes at this time*'

4b) It appears that the comprehensive review was diluted to a review of the current ANPR scheme after the change in administration. The draft report of this diluted review was apparently shared for review in March 2024, but still no word on the availability of the final report. SGCARA was told that a meeting took place on Parkside between the Cabinet Member for Transport & our West Hill Ward councillors, (summer 2023), & that this concluded that the current ANPR scheme was working well with no need for update. SGCARA made contact with our 3 West Hill Ward Councillors to ask more about their involvement. The 2 who replied gave the impression that the meeting (on Parkside itself) with the Cabinet Member last summer was not a formal meeting in any sense, just a 'walkabout'. Cllr Grimston also said that he raised the idea of the 'No Left Turns' being extended to include 'No Right Turns' from those Parkside roads in the restricted hours.

The amendment suggested by Cllr Grimston certainly would have indicated that the current ANPR system from Parkside is only partially-successful, so it is very puzzling to think how a conclusion of no further changes could be reached. (Neither of our Councillors recall that such a conclusion was agreed at the walkabout.)

These 2 Councillors also made clear that this informal meeting was purely to discuss the 'No left Turns' ANPR scheme, not the full picture of 'rat-run' traffic in our area.

4c) SGCARA - & local residents of course- were also perplexed & deeply-frustrated that the plug was pulled on the experimental scheme allowing the council to install its own speed cameras & impose PCNs for speeding. The police do not have the man-power to do this. To allow councils to do it seemed the obvious solution. Speeding is a major problem in the area. The 20PMH limit is regularly exceeded – considerably & dangerously. The 'smiley/sad face' speed-indicators are largely ignored.

4d) With the 'rat-run' issues still unresolved, (and many local cycle paths, eg in King Georges Pk, needing repaint & repair) SGCARA was surprised by the consultation on proposed cycle Quiet Routes (early 2024) with the dangerous Girdwood/Granville/Sutherland roundabout included in at least 1 route.

SGCARA & local residents have high hopes that the 30th Jan 2024 meeting can be the catalyst towards clear solutions to the severe traffic problems of our area.