

**Email from Friends of Tooting Common to Councillor Paul White,
Cabinet Member for the Environment**

Dear Paul

Tooting Common: dangerous cycling

You will know from previous exchanges and discussions of Friends of Tooting Common's strong concern about the problem of dangerous cycling on Tooting Common, particularly on the shared pedestrian/ cycle path. We need to raise this again with you, in view of the continuing, and increasing, strong likelihood of a serious accident, and possibly a fatality.

As you know, the problem arises from the minority of cyclists, particularly some with electric bikes, travelling far too fast (clearly well beyond the speed limit of 12 mph) and so endangering pedestrians and other cyclists, particularly on what is a fairly narrow path, with some sections having limited sightlines. There is a particular problem with delivery riders on e-bikes or e-scooters. The problem has grown more acute in the last few years with the significant increase in people using the Common - itself of course a very good development - and in the increasing use of adapted e-bikes (which should not be on the Common in any case).

A further point is that these e-bikes are considerably heavier than other bikes, and so there is a considerably increased risk of injury, either to the rider or to other people, from a collision.

While there is a particular problem on the shared pedestrian/ cycle path, there is also a similar problem on a number of other paths on the Common where cycling also occurs, although not permitted.

We think there are two solutions - substantially improved enforcement, or physical barriers, or a combination of the two.

On enforcement, we welcome the plans for further targeted action by the Parks Police, and were pleased to attend the event on Wednesday morning. However we have to say that 'one-off' pieces of enforcement action such as this (and any accompanying publicity to them), while they may help to some extent, will not solve the problem as a whole; and we would note that previous similar exercises have not solved the problem. For enforcement to be effective, there would need to be police available on the Common, at key points, most or all of the time, to deal with speeding, and also with the point that adapted e-bikes, and e-scooters, should not be on the Common in any case. There is also the practical problem that the police may not be able to stop speeding cyclists, unless they also have some form of vehicle.

There would therefore need to be a substantial and permanent increase in the patrolling resources of the Parks Police. Currently their staffing numbers are clearly not adequate to deal with the problem overall.

Unless there can be this substantial increase in police enforcement resources we consider that some form of physical barriers or other effective constraints are needed to slow down excessively speeding bikes. We note that physical barriers are in place in two places on Wandsworth Common (as attached photos). Similar barriers have also, for example, been installed on the bridges in Beddington Park.

It would of course be important to ensure that such measures still allow for disabled access (and also access by maintenance vehicles where required) but we think it should be possible to find creative ways to achieve this. We assume that this problem also arises in most other greenspaces in London - and throughout the country - and we are sure that appropriate solutions will have been developed.

Improved signage could be of some help in reducing the problem (and we have made specific proposals to the Council and look forward to receiving a response), but will not deter the majority of those who cycle dangerously.

Similarly, the intended arrangements for geofencing of Forest and Lime bikes, though certainly welcome, will not help in deterring the majority of those who cycle dangerously, particularly on adapted bikes.

We stress that we are, of course, not anti-cycling. There are strong environmental and health reasons to encourage cycling, and many of our members are cyclists. Cyclists are an important and valued group of users of the Common; and among other things we are concerned that a cyclist could well be seriously injured in a collision with a speeding cyclist. Traffic calming measures do not deter considerate cyclists - on the contrary.

We recognize that physical barriers are certainly not ideal, but they are clearly strongly preferable to a serious accident.

We note that - rightly - the Council fells diseased trees on greenspaces close to pathways and buildings where there is a risk of the tree falling, though the risk of the falling tree actually causing an injury to someone when it falls is, perhaps, relatively low. The risk of a serious accident involving a dangerously speeding bike is, we think, much higher and so requires appropriate action.

We feel we have to warn the Council that, as above, the current position is a serious accident or fatality waiting to happen.

We would welcome your comments

I am copying this to colleagues on Tooting Common MAC and other greenspace Friends groups and MACs.

Best wishes

Peter (Ramell)
(Chair, Friends of Tooting Common)

28 November 2025