

Notes on a **Community Street Audit**
in preparation for a
Local Safety Scheme
Sutton High Street
23 June 2009



Source: Charles Martin 23/06/2009

Local Safety Scheme - Community Street Audit

Location: High Street (Crown Road to Angel Hill), Sutton

Date: 23 June 2009

Facilitators: David Waugh and Lynn Robinson, London Borough of Sutton

In June 2009 Sutton Living Streets were invited by the London Borough of Sutton to take part in a Community Street Audit. Charlotte Gilhooly, Tony Pattison and Charles Martin attended the event on behalf of the organisation. Other participants included ward councillors and a number of representatives from residents associations, churches, and cycle groups.

This aim of this report is to present the main findings from the Sutton Living Streets team. At the same time, it is hoped that many of the views expressed by the other attendees have also been represented. Our thanks go to David Waugh and Lynn Robinson at the London Borough of Sutton for facilitating the event, and for listening to our views in such an enthusiastic manner! We hope you find this document of use as you prepare to progress the Local Safety Scheme.

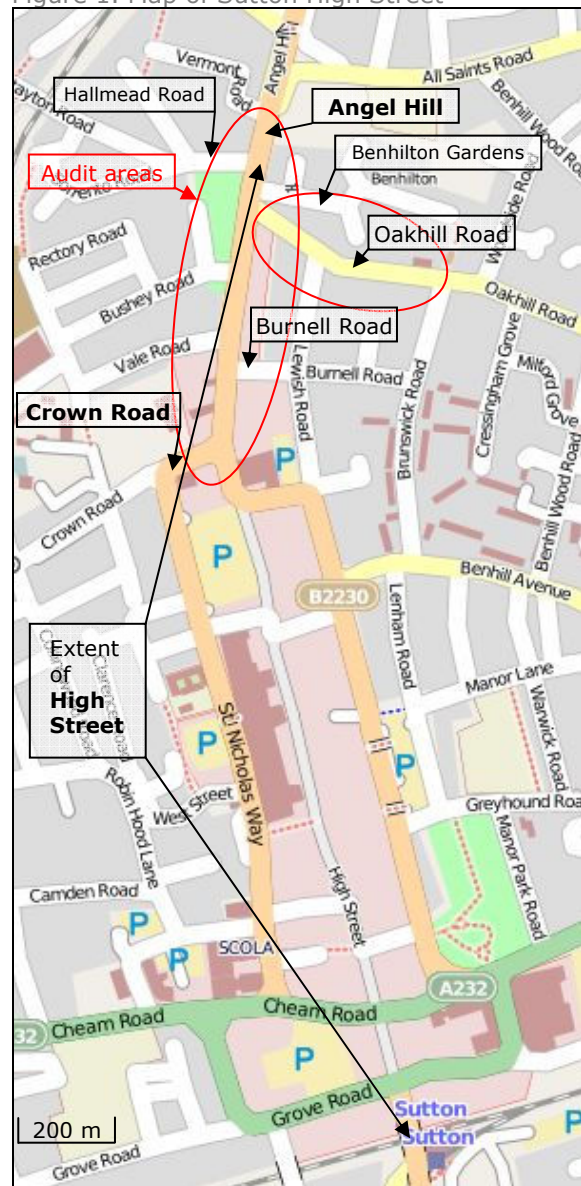
Background

The audit was being undertaken primarily as a result of a number of accidents involving pedestrians crossing the High Street, Sutton near the junctions with Oakhill Road and Burnell Road¹ (see Figure 1). The intention of the audit was to assist with the development of a Local Safety Scheme to improve pedestrian and cycling facilities, with a main focus on improving things for residents and people on foot.

Funding had been provided by TfL to enable the London Borough of Sutton to carry out a feasibility study, consultation, and detailed design for the implementation of a Local Safety Scheme along the High Street, extending from Angel Hill to Crown Road. The street audit would assist with the production of the informal public consultation document. In line with Living Streets guidance, stakeholders, including residents associations, traders and businesses, schools, churches, youth and community groups, ward councillors, police, public transport operators, and cycle groups had been invited to contribute at the audit stage.

To help identify problems during the audit, participants were advised of a number of items to look out for in a pre-audit briefing session. These included footway surfaces and obstructions, facilities and signage, maintenance and enforcement, personal security, crossing points and desire lines, and road layout.

Figure 1. Map of Sutton High Street



Source: OpenStreetMap (20/07/2009)

¹ In total Sutton High Street is around 1.5 km in length, and approximately half of this is generally closed to vehicular traffic. However, the part of Sutton High Street under review consisted of just the northern section, a distance of around 500 metres, which is open to two-way traffic and forms part of the B2230.

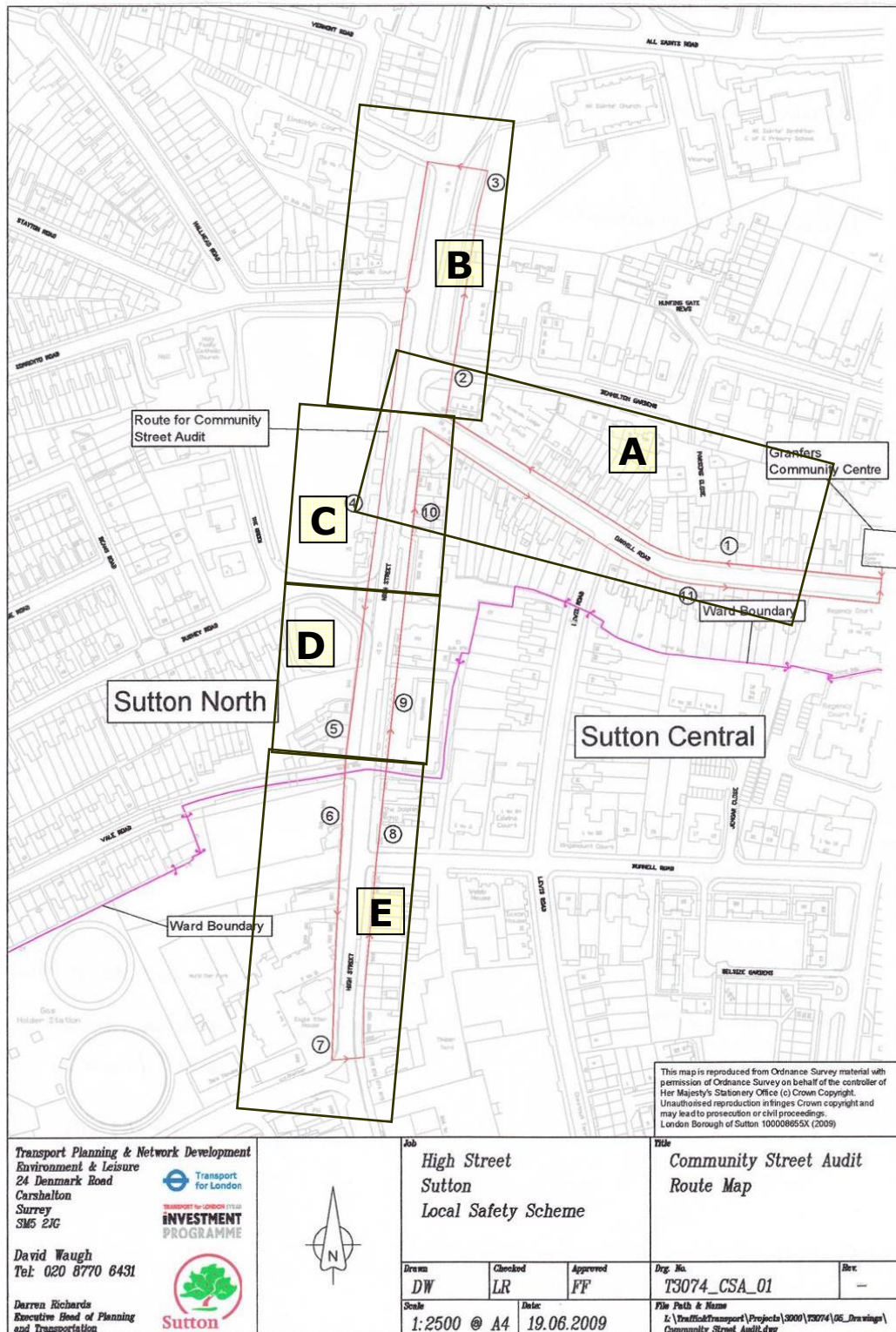
Summary of audit findings

- Participants thought that some form of additional pedestrian crossing would be welcomed in Oakhill Road.
- It was noted that there is a steep camber to the pavement on the north side of the existing 'refuge' crossing situated in Oakhill Road by the junction with High Street.
- To improve safety, and to help make the neighbourhood more attractive and enjoyable, Sutton Living Streets would like to see the current 30 mph maximum speed limit reduced to 20 mph throughout the corridor under review.
- There appears to be the potential to reduce the width of Oakhill Road at its junction with the High Street. Currently Oakhill Road is wide here with a narrow pavement.
- The introduction of a signalised pedestrian crossing facility at the existing High Street/Angel Hill/Vermont Road/All Saints Road junction would be welcomed.
- Benches on Angel Hill are appreciated, and some consideration should be given to their refurbishment.
- Some of the existing traffic signs on the approach to Angel Hill were thought to be 'over-engineered' and unsightly.
- In principle, sharing the pavement on the west side of the Angel Hill approach with cyclists would be acceptable. Some demarcation would be welcome.
- Entry treatment could be advantageous to pedestrians at Hallmead Road.
- A way of making the High Street easier to cross between Benhilton Gardens and Oakhill Road, and between of Vale Road and Burnell Road, would be welcomed.
- The reopening of the toilet facilities on Sutton Green in some form would be welcomed.
- Bushey Road, at its intersection with the High Street, may benefit from a reduction in width.
- The streetscape would benefit if road signs were repaired or unnecessary signs removed.
- The walking experience could be enhanced if pedestrian flow was prioritised at locations where vehicles, at low volumes, are currently given priority to cross the pavement to access car-parks.
- Participants thought that improvements should be made to the crossing facilities at the intersection of the High Street with Crown Road.

Details of key audit findings

A route for the audit had been identified, along with some suggested stopping points, and these were detailed on a map that was provided to all participants (see Figure 2). The audit was carried out on the evening of Tuesday, 23 June 2009 on a fine bright, warm evening. The following commentary reflects some key findings of the audit along the route starting from Granfers Hall in Oakhill Road and proceeding through the stopping points 1 to 11 and returning to Granfers Hall. These have been consolidated into five areas A to E.

Figure 2. Supplied route map



Source: London Borough of Sutton under licence to Ordnance Survey

A Oakhill Road

- New crossing:** Participants made it clear that they would value a pedestrian crossing (zebra preferred) on this section of Oakhill Road (see Figure 3). The road was busy for a lot of the day, and elderly residents in particular felt that an additional crossing point would be a great improvement to counter the increases in road traffic that they had noted over the years. A lady also pointed out that an additional crossing would enable easier access to the centre of Sutton via the quieter residential Lewis Road without the need to detour to the existing crossing near the junction with the High Street. The precise location of any proposed crossing was an issue, but all participants seemed to be happy that it should be located somewhere between Granfers Hall and a point midway between the junction with the High Street and the junction with Lewis Road (although clearly avoiding the bend in the road).

Issue to resolve: Location of crossing will be constrained by the presence of existing driveways, and the fact that residents will not be happy to relinquish on-road parking spaces! How is this solved in other areas, or by other authorities?

Fig 3. Participants discuss and identify issues along Oakhill Road



Source: Charles Martin 23/06/2009

- It was mentioned by a resident that the existing **road humps** cause the road to be "noisy at night", as traffic brakes and then accelerates away. Because of this they would like to see the humps removed.
- A lady mentioned that the pavement on the north side of the road by the existing 'refuge' crossing on Oakhill Road (close to the junction with the High Street) had a very **steep camber on the dropped kerb**. Although this **existing crossing point** is appreciated, its location is such that it is set back from the High Street and as a consequence is not on a desire line for pedestrians using the High Street. The crossing had also been positioned close to a tree on the north side which is less than ideal.
- Oakhill Road is a 'hail and ride' section of bus route S1, and some concern was expressed about the location of a bus timetable on the lamppost on the north side close to the junction with the High Street thereby encouraging people to wait at this 'virtual' bus-stop with consequences for safety resulting from **buses stopping so close to a junction**. The timetable could be moved further along Oakhill Road to potentially alleviate this. However, passengers may still wish to continue to board and alight here as this location acts as a proxy for the 'Sutton Green' stop on the High Street which cannot be served by this route (on journeys towards Mitcham) due to its location relative to the junction with Oakhill Road. Consideration could be given to changing the bus-stop layout on the High Street at The Green to facilitate provision of this route to serve 'Sutton Green' (see section C below for more on this).

- Given that Oakhill Road is predominantly residential, **Sutton Living Streets would like to see the 30 mph maximum speed limit reduced to 20 mph².**
- The position of certain street furniture (particularly traffic signs) was seen to narrow the usable width of the pavement (see Figure 4 and Figure 5). It is appreciated that there is a requirement to place traffic signs at a certain distance from the carriageway to avoid overhang, but there are methods to facilitate this and keep the pavement clear. Some consideration could be given to using existing infrastructure or, if a new post is required, the sign could be offset enabling the pole to be appropriately located. It would help further if the pavements on Oakhill Road were widened so that two people could walk side-by-side along the footway.

Fig 4. Oakhill Road near junction with High Street. A dilemma! Road-humps need signs, but road-hump signs can block the pavement!



Source: Charles Martin 23/06/2009

² For more background on Living Streets policy for 20mph to be adopted as the default speed limit in all built-up areas see *Living Streets Response to A Safer Way: Consultation on Making Britain's Roads the Safest in the World* (July 2009) available from http://www.livingstreets.org.uk/news_and_info/consultation_responses.php?id=961.

Fig 5. Oakhill Road by the junction with the High Street. 'Road-hump' signage clutter reduces the usable width of the already narrow pavement, and a crossing situated away from the desire line is ignored.



Source: Charles Martin 23/06/2009

- A better crossing experience could be realised for pedestrians walking along the High Street at the junction with Oakhill Road by providing a crossing on the desire line (as mentioned above) and by **narrowing the width of Oakhill Road** at this point (i.e. reducing the 'splay' of the junction). This would encourage drivers to further reduce their speed when from turning from the High Street into Oakhill Road, and at the same time make pedestrians more visible to them. Perhaps this junction would qualify for a raised entry treatment (see Figure 6).

Fig 6. The entrance to Oakhill Road from High Street. Narrow pavement, wide 'splay', and fast traffic.



Source: Charles Martin 23/06/2009

B High Street (between Oakhill Road and Angel Hill)

- It was indicated that there was clearly the potential for some form of pedestrian crossing across the High Street at a position midway the junctions with Oakhill Road and Benhilton Gardens (primarily to facilitate access to and from Sutton Green and the Sutton Green bus-stop on the west side of the High Street).
- It was noted that the dropped kerb on the north side of Benhilton Gardens is situated further from the High Street than the kerb on the south side. As a result, there appears to be a misalignment from the perspective of pedestrians travelling along the High Street. However, the location of the north-side dropped kerb was probably chosen as the best compromise to link the two feeder pavements that continue north of here towards Angel Hill. An improvement may be realised if the existing north-side dropped kerb was widened **to provide an improved overall desire line**. Benhilton Gardens is a cul-de-sac and therefore the road is probably lightly trafficked, consequently an entry treatment may not be such a high priority here. Nevertheless, an entry treatment may well enhance the overall area and provide a consistent feel to the High Street. It may also visually indicate to the motorist that they are on the approach to the town centre. Again, a rather large opening 'splay' was evident (see Figure 7), and so there may be scope to narrow Benhilton Gardens a little at this junction as well.

Fig 7. The entrance to Benhilton Gardens from High Street looking south.



Source: Charles Martin 23/06/2009

- The lack of a suitable place for pedestrians to cross the High Street between the pelican crossing at The Green and the footbridge at Angel Hill was acknowledged by the participants of the audit. In addition to the possibility of a new crossing near Oakhill Road and Benhilton Gardens (as discussed above), contributors were strongly of the view that, in the interests of safety, the **upgrade of the existing signalised road junction** (Vermont Road/Angel Hill/All Saints Road) **to include a signal phase for pedestrians** would be particularly welcome (see Figure 8). A toucan crossing would be preferred here as this crossing will connect with the proposed Greenway (see below). Ideally the road surface should be coloured to clearly delineate the crossing, with improvements to the dropped kerbs and bollards. The inclusion of an advanced stop line on the northbound carriageway would be appropriate, as the B2230 at Angel Hill forms part of the London Cycle Network (LCN+)³.

³ For more information on LCN+ see <http://www.londoncyclenetwork.org.uk/>.

Fig 8. High street approach to Angel Hill looking north. The existing crossing (High Street/Vermont Road/Angel Hill/All Saints Road) could be upgraded for pedestrians.



Source: Charles Martin 23/06/2009

- The road surface at the existing crossing is uneven in places.
- The existing dropped kerbs at Vermont Road are set back from the junction with Angel Hill) and the evident desire line (see Figure 9). Furthermore, this is a signalised junction (for traffic leaving Vermont Road) and the dropped kerb on the north side of the road is situated at a point where vehicles are likely to be stationary and therefore blocking access to it. The provision of dropped kerbs on the desire line (and wide enough to share with cyclists – see below) would be a welcomed improvement here.

Fig 9. Angel Hill looking north at the junction with Vermont Road to the left. The dropped kerbs are set behind the traffic stop line



Source: Charles Martin 09/07/2009

- **Benches** are a welcome part of the street scene (see Figure 10), and should be retained and repaired. Opportunities for new additional benches at suitable locations should be considered.

Fig 10. Existing bench at Angel Hill.



Source: Charles Martin 23/06/2009

- **Sharing the pavement with cyclists** (reference to the proposed Greenway⁴) was acceptable by most participants in principle, but it was felt that some sort of segregation should be included to reduce potential conflict and to delineate the cycle-way. The existing pavement width (as shown in Figure 11) would need to be widened. A recent report by London TravelWatch *Cycling in London* makes some valid, evidence based, points relating to the interaction on cyclists and pedestrians⁵.

Fig 11. High Street north towards Angel Hill along the proposed shared cycle path.



Source: Charles Martin 23/06/2009

- Participants recognised the necessity of **road signs**, but questioned the physical size of one particular sign at the approach to Angel Hill. It was suggested that it would seem more appropriate on a motorway than a B-road (see Figure 12).

⁴ For information on Sustran's Greenways (GOAL) project see <http://www.sustrans.org.uk/sustrans-near-you/london/453>.

⁵ London TravelWatch (2009) *Cycling in London* (accessed 13 July 2009 at <http://www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/document/3765>) notes that "Introducing cycling onto pavements raises as many questions as it answers in terms of quality and safe cycling provision". And continues "The stakeholders we consulted generally agreed with us that the conversion of pavements to cycle tracks really should be the last resort and where this does happen designers should also consider the needs of cyclists that remain on the carriageway".

Fig 12. Existing signage at Angel Hill.



Source: Charles Martin 23/06/2009

- The suggestion of an **entry treatment** across the entrance to Hallmead Road was generally thought to be a good idea (see Figure 13), although one participant wondered whether such a facility could give pedestrians a false sense of security. While at this location the participants of the audit witnessed two vehicles travelling south from Angel Hill and turn quickly into Hallmead Road whilst a pedestrian (on crutches) was forced to stop half-way across the road in order to let them pass.

Fig 13. Hallmead Road junction with the High Street, looking north towards Angel Hill.



Source: Charles Martin 09/07/2009

C High Street (The Green – between Oakhill Road and Bushey Road)

- The potential for re-positioning the bus-stop and lay-by at Sutton Green was discussed briefly, with a view to improving traffic flow and pedestrian access. Currently bus route S1, when travelling north towards Mitcham, cannot use the Sutton Green stop as it is located too close to the junction with Oakhill Road to enable buses to make the necessary manoeuvre to turn right from the bus-stop in the High Street into Oakhill Road. For this to be facilitated, either both the existing bus-stop and lay-by would have to be moved 10 or 15 metres to the south (this would require the repositioning of the pelican crossing), or the existing lay-by could be extended slightly to the south (and possibly to the north) and so allow an additional second bus-stop to be installed in the extended lay-by for use by service S1.
- The space around the bus-stop at Sutton Green was accessed, and its quirky features, including the disused bus inspector box, were admired (see Figure 14). It was felt that if the box is to remain it should at least be occupied by an inspector. It was acknowledged that the bus lay-by was necessary as driver transfers are carried out at this stop and consequently bus dwell times can be longer than is normally the case. Overall this area was highly valued by the participants.

Fig 14. In the vicinity of Sutton Green (west side of High Street looking north).



Source: Charles Martin 23/06/2009

- Sutton Living Streets believe that the High Street signalised pelican crossing situated just to the north of the junction with Bushey Road (see Figure 15) could benefit from having a coloured surface (perhaps red) to emphasise the crossing to drivers and improve pedestrian safety and priority. Possibly the junction could be upgraded to a puffin, with button control installed on all four approaches.

Fig 15. High Street pelican crossing situated just north of the junction with Bushey Road.



Source: Charles Martin 09/07/2009

- Many participants thought the **toilet facilities at Sutton Green should be reopened**. The proposed alternative use of the building as a café with toilets would be better than the building remaining derelict (see Figure 16). However, there was some concern that this would only provide toilet facilities at times when the café was open. (A councillor subsequently suggested that it may come down to a choice between a café and toilets at Sutton Green or a café and toilets at Manor Park, but not both, due to constraints on funding).

Fig 16. The disused toilet block at Sutton Green.



Source: Charles Martin 23/06/2009

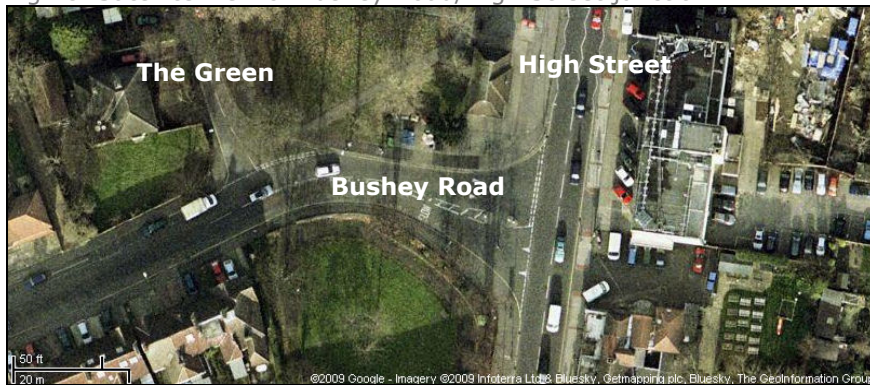
- Bushey Road is very wide at its intersection with the High Street** (see Figure 17). It was mentioned by one participant that there was little potential to reduce the width (or splay) here as any reduction in kerb radius would result in buses having to cross into the southbound carriageway of the High Street when turning left out of Bushey Road to travel north. Nevertheless, even if build-outs were not possible here for this reason, it was hoped that there would be some scope for reducing the overall splay with consideration for possibly a larger refuge island and/or entry treatment at the junction. Possibly a zebra crossing may be useful here. Figure 18 shows a birds-eye view of the intersection. It is also interesting to note from this view the rather large splay at the junction of The Green (a cul-de-sac) and Bushey Road.

Fig 17. Looking north across Bushey Road at its junction with the High Street towards Sutton green.



Source: Charles Martin 09/07/2009

Fig 18. Satellite view of Bushey Road/High Street junction.



Source: Google Maps 07/07/2009

- At the Bushey Road junction there is a smooth transition from pavement to the road although there was an issue over the **absence of tactile paving**⁶. *Manual for Streets*⁷ notes that tactile paving should not be placed on curved sections of kerbing because this would make it difficult for blind or partially-sighted people to orientate themselves before crossing. As mentioned previously, a crossing located away from the pedestrian desire line is, however, likely to be ignored.

⁶ DETR (1999) *Guidance on the use of tactile paving surfaces*, para. 1.1: "The purpose of the blister surface is to provide warning to visually impaired people who would otherwise, in the absence of a kerb upstand <25mm high, find it difficult to differentiate between where the footway ends and the carriageway begins."

⁷ DfT (2007) *Manual for Streets*, para. 6.3.12.

D High Street (between Bushey Road and Vale Road)

- It was noted that the gateway from the High Street into a small public garden situated on the southside of Bushey Road was fenced over (see Figure 19). Currently there is only one entrance to this garden, and this is from Bushey Road. It was thought that some **consideration should be given to reopening the High Street entrance to the public garden** as a public realm enhancement. A representative from the Metropolitan Police suggested that the park gate may have been closed due to anti-social behaviour, and that trouble-makers are discouraged from entering the park if only one entrance is open (as this can act as a form of containment with nowhere to escape)⁸.

Fig 19. Fenced off entrance to small public garden in High Street.



Source: Charles Martin 23/06/2009

- The existing crossing facility for the High street just south of the junction with Bushey Road was appreciated. The proximity of the crossing to a lamppost partially reduces the available access and egress on the western side and there was evidence of poorly maintained road markings (see Figure 20).

Fig 20. The existing High Street crossing near Bushey Road.



Source: Charles Martin 09/07/2009

⁸ Reports of anti-social behaviour appear to be on the increase in various locations throughout the London Borough of Sutton and, as a result, many 'open spaces' are being gated and closed. In February 2007 an *Open Space Strategy* was published (available from <http://www.sutton.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=1364>), the purpose of which was to provide clear objectives and a framework by which the Council could effectively manage, maintain and enhance the Open Space network of the borough. The strategy admitted that there were challenges. Para. 1.31: "Anti-social behaviour is increasing and the cost of maintaining an aging infrastructure is considerable. To help deal with anti-social behaviour the Parks Police are now linked with London's Metropolitan Police, forming the Safer Sutton Partnership, the first organisation of its kind in the UK". It would appear that one method the Safer Sutton Partnership use to deal with the anti-social behaviour is to gate the parks. The *Sutton Strategy* (2008) notes more positively that: "Getting more young offenders into education, employment or training is a key target and should contribute to less crime, anti-social behaviour and a reduction in people's fear of crime" (page 9). (Available at <http://www.sutton.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=5359>). Ultimately, well-maintained green spaces can attract residents, be valued, and provide recreational and environmental benefits.

- **A plethora of misaligned traffic signs⁹** were noted along this section of the High Street. Many of them were twisted through ninety degrees (see Figures 21 and 22), and, as a result, did not provide the information to the intended audience but just gave the impression of unnecessary clutter. It was felt that signs should either be repaired (and continually reviewed) or removed.

Fig 21. Signage – and its lack of use. High Street opposite 'Burger King'.



Source: Charles Martin 23/06/2009

Fig 22. Signs serving a purpose, or just post-mounted clutter?



Source: Charlotte Gilhooley 23/06/2009

- It is hoped that the 'Burger King' site is to be redeveloped and with it the possibility of introducing a bus lay-by. Bus lay-bys are not generally favoured, but this stop, like its north-bound counterpart at Sutton Green can experience longer dwell times due to driver change-over. At the time of the audit, some traffic congestion was noted here (see Figure 23).

Fig 23. The High Street adjacent to the 'Burger King' site.



Source: Charles Martin 23/06/2009

- An easy crossing facility is provided at Vale Road, although the lack of tactile paving was noted.

⁹ Skewed and vandalised traffic signs are relatively commonplace throughout the borough. This raises the question as to whether many of the signs are actually necessary in the first place. If they are, then a budget for maintaining the signs would seem appropriate.

E High Street (between Vale Road and Crown Road)

- It was generally considered that a **surface-level crossing should be provided across the High Street in the vicinity of 'The Dolphin' public house** (i.e. between Vale Road and Burnell Road) as options to cross the High Street are limited here.
- Some participants thought that it was a pity that the "high class fruiterer" Perry, as advertised on the wall adjacent to 'The Dolphin' (High Street almost opposite junction with Vale Road), was no longer trading (see Figure 24)!

Fig 24. The publican and the fruiterer. High Street opposite Vale Road.



Source: Charles Martin 23/06/2009

- It was suggested that **pedestrian flow should be prioritised** at the points on the pavement that currently appear to give priority to car-park and service road access. Three such crossings occur over a short distance on the west side of the High Street opposite the junction with Burnell Road (see Figures 25 and 26). If the footway were to be extended across these entrances, giving pedestrians priority over vehicular traffic, the walking experience would be greatly enhanced.

Fig 25. West side of High Street opposite junction with Burnell Road.
Access points to low usage car-parks dominate the pavement.



Source: Google Maps Street View 07/07/2009

Fig 26. West side of the High street looking south towards Crown Road opposite junction with Burnell Road. Three access points to car-parks dominate the pavement.



Source: Charles Martin 09/07/2009

- Some areas that add diversity to the High Street could benefit from some **care and attention** (Figure 27). It was noted that this strip of paving was private property, however, and therefore not directly within the remit of the council.
- **A lack of cycle parking provision** was noted, especially in and around 'Zurich Square'.

Fig 27. West side of the High street looking north near 'Zurich Square'.



Source: Charlotte Gilhooley
23/06/2009

- Participants thought that 'Zurich Square' had the **potential to be a great public space and provide a calming oasis** away from the traffic of the High street (Figures 28, 29 and 30). Currently the area is detached from the northern end of the main commercial part of the High Street, and it was recognised that there are longer-term plans for regenerating this area of Sutton.

Fig 28. View south from the 'private' confines of Zurich House towards Crown Road and High Street across 'Zurich Square'.



Source: Charles Martin 09/07/2009

Fig 29. 'Zurich Square', looking north from Crown Road, has the potential to be a vastly improved public space and oasis from traffic.



Source: Charles Martin 09/07/2009

Fig 30. 'Zurich Square', looking south-west from the High Street.



Source: Charles Martin 09/07/2009

- Some participants asked whether some of the guard-railing away from the immediate intersection of the High Street with Crown Road could be removed (see Figure 31)¹⁰.

Fig 31. Guard-railing adjacent to 'Zurich Square' along the west side of the High Street just to the north of its intersection with Crown Road.



Source: Charlotte Gilhooly 23/06/2009

- Possible **improvements to the crossing facilities at the intersection of the High Street with Crown Road** (the northern apex of the Sutton town centre one-way gyratory system) were considered (see Figure 32). The existing crossing consists of a central pedestrian island and therefore involves two stages when crossing. Participants asked whether **the island and existing crossing signals could be removed and replaced by a single crossing (possibly 'scramble-style'**¹¹).

Fig 32. Signalised crossing at junction with Crown Road and the High Street on the west side of the High Street looking north.



Source: Charles Martin 09/07/2009

¹⁰ DfT *Local Transport Note 2/09 Pedestrian Guardrailing* (April 2009) reports the results of surveys into pedestrian behaviour at 78 sites (37 with guardrailing and 41 without) throughout the UK, and notes that for traffic signal controlled junction sites "the collision total and pedestrian collisions were fewer at sites without guardrailing, but the differences were not statistically significant" (para. 3.3.4).

¹¹ Such a facility, based on the crossing at Shibuya in Tokyo, is currently under construction at Oxford Circus in central London and due for completion in November 2009. Another example can be found in Balham, south London. Plans for such a crossing are believed to be in place for the intersection of the southern end of Sutton High Street with Chalk Pit Way and Grove Road.