

SOUTH PETERSFIELD RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

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To: Policy and Regulations
Cambridgeshire County Council

13 September 2024

From: Edward Leigh, Chair, SoPRA

TRO: Mill Road Bus Gate Order 20

South Petersfield Residents Association (SoPRA) **objects** to the TRO in its currently proposed form. We want urgent action on improving the safety of Mill Road for people walking and cycling, and enhancing its attractiveness as a destination. However, we are unpersuaded that a bus gate on Mill Road bridge will achieve this, especially for the part of Mill Road in Petersfield (west of the bridge).

TRO Statement of Reasons

The TRO will not deliver the objectives set out in the Statement of Reasons:

For avoiding danger to persons or other traffic using the road or any road or for preventing the likelihood of any such danger arising.

The Council has presented no data to evidence this first aim. Having less traffic on the Mill Road is likely to mean more instances of speeding. Speeding traffic is a greater danger to people walking and cycling than the volume of traffic. There will still be a large number of taxis travelling along Mill Road and over the bridge. There will still be a significant volume of through-traffic on the Petersfield part of Mill Road and Tenison Road, since this is a main route between the station and East Road. It is probable that traffic, in particular taxis, already use South Petersfield roads as a 'rat run' between Hills Road and East Road, avoiding traffic lights on Hills Road, the Catholic Church junction and Gonville Place. It is therefore unclear how much safer roads in South Petersfield will become, if at all.

For facilitating the passage on the road or other road for any class of traffic (including pedestrians)

It is self-evident that a bus gate on the bridge will not achieve this second aim for motor vehicles that are not permitted to travel over the bridge. Even if we accept that the aim was incorrectly stated, there is also unclear how a bus gate on the bridge will facilitate the passage of pedestrians along Mill Road and adjoining roads.

For preserving or improving the amenities of the area through which the road runs.

Nothing about the bus gate improves the amenities of the area. On the contrary, some traders on Mill Road have stated that their costs of doing business will increase significantly, potentially threatening their viability. The Council has presented no counterevidence, nor has it engaged with Mill Road traders to assist them in adapting to the proposed changes.

The report to the Highways & Transport Committee on 7 March 2023 stated (emphasis added):

2.8 Funding is being sought for work to develop and implement public realm improvements on Mill Road. This work would initially consider what changes

might be made to improve the environment for those who live on and around Mill Road and for those that visit to access shops and services, and to support those shops and services on Mill Road. Possible measures to be investigated could include (but are not exclusive to):

- *Measures to declutter areas, for example by **widening pavements or relocating street furniture**, allowing for more space to be given to pedestrian and amenity use.*
- ***Renewal of street furniture and pavement surfacing.***
- ***Work with businesses on Mill Road to consider whether their servicing needs can be better addressed, and reduce conflict of servicing activities with other users of Mill Road.***
- *A more comprehensive consideration of how space on the bridge is used with the bus gate in place; by buses, permitted vehicle users, pedestrians and cyclists.*

2.9 This work would be undertaken in discussion with the local community and local stakeholders. Timescales depend on the availability of funding, but it is anticipated that scoping, design and engagement / consultation could be undertaken in 2023/24.

To our knowledge, there has been no engagement with local residents or businesses on any of these measures. No designs have been shared publicly. Yet, it is *these* measures which have the potential to achieve, for the most part, the aims stated for the TRO.

What engagement has the Council undertaken? What designs have been developed? When will these be published? What progress has there been on securing funding? When is the Council now expecting to come forward with specific proposals? How can the Council justify proceeding with the bus gate TRO without any of these complementary measures?

Argyle Street turnaround

The proposal for vehicles to turn around on the Romsey side of the bridge is to divert via Argyle Street and Stockwell Street. **Has the Council tracked the maximum dimensions of vehicles that can make the turn safely from Argyle St into Stockwell St? How will access by longer vehicles be managed (e.g. through a TRO or removing parking bays)?**

The scheme includes:

- Bus Gate markings on red tarmac at either end of the bridge*
- Bus Gate signage in the enforcement area and wider area*
- Install a build out on the south side of the bridge to slow vehicles coming from the bridge*
- Install “other traffic” markings to divert general traffic along Argyle Street***
- Adjust cycle parking on Argyle Street to increase carriageway width*
- Install ANPR cameras to enforce any restriction under the TRO.*

Monitoring

The live traffic monitoring using Vivacity sensors does not capture traffic routes, only counts at certain locations. It will therefore be difficult to discern how traffic re-routes once the bus gate is in place. Since re-routing of traffic, in particular to Coldham's Lane and Cherry Hinton Road, is a particular concern with residents and local councillors, the Council should recognise that it has a duty to measure these impacts in a way that can be reasonably accurately attributed to the introduction of the bus gate.

There are concerns in south Petersfield now about taxis and other traffic rat-running through the area to avoid congestion and traffic lights on Hills Road and Gonville Place. The reduction in through-traffic on Mill Road could make it even more attractive to rat-run through south Petersfield, a negative impact that was not mentioned in the March 2023 committee reports.

The Vivacity counter on Tenison Road misses traffic that cuts across to/from Mawson Road via Felton St and Wilkin St.

Data from the Vivacity sensors have not been published since 2022, so we are unable to see the current baseline of traffic movements, nor to monitor them in future.

For all these reasons, we ask the Council to commit to monitoring traffic and publishing the data before and after installing any intervention that will significantly alter traffic flows. This is so that the Council and residents can build an accurate picture of the impacts. Ideally this would be achieved by setting up ANPR cameras and analysing the data to see how trips re-route or disappear. We suggest eight locations for monitoring traffic flows in both directions, as illustrated in Figure 1.

We further ask that any intervention is installed at a time when traffic flows are expected to be most normal for a number of weeks (i.e. during term time for schools and universities), to ensure that the impacts of the intervention are clearly discernible from the background variations in traffic up to six weeks afterwards.

Alternative interventions

Several suggestions were made to the original GCP consultation for alternatives or refinements to the proposed bus gate on the bridge. Neither GCP nor Cambridgeshire County Council has set out reasons why those would not work or could not be trialled. **We ask the Council to assess and report to the Highways & Transport Committee on all constructive suggestions received to the GCP and TRO consultations before proceeding with any scheme for Mill Road,** including:

- 1) Optimised locations for one or more modal filters to achieve a more balanced reduction in traffic flows on Mill Road and reduce the east–west severance effect for vehicular journeys.
- 2) A bus gate at the western end of Mill Road and (as funding permits) reconfiguration of the public highway at the junction with Gonville Place/East Road would enable:
 - Shorter pedestrian crossing times in all directions at the junction.
 - A much-improved connection for pedestrians between Gonville Place and East Road.
 - A safer cycling route into the city centre via Mill Road and Parkside.
 - Faster journey times for buses running through the junction owing to no queueing on Mill Road.

- The creation of a safe cycling route between Mill Road and ARU via Palmers Walk that avoids East Road. (The route through Petersfield Garden and the connection point to Mill Road would need to be designed through consultation.)
 - Better connected green spaces at Donkey Common and Petersfield Garden.
 - The opportunity to create a gateway feature for Mill Road as a place for people.
 - Avoidance of severing Mill Road for commercial traffic – deliveries and services – with straightforward diversions for traffic needing to enter or leave Mill Road and adjoining streets (see Figure 2).
- 3) Modal filters in South Petersfield to close off through-routes between Hills Road and Mill Road.
 - 4) Limited hours of operation of the bus gate (e.g. 8am to 7pm, to facilitate access for deliveries and tradespeople in the morning and visitors in the evening, when there is reduced public transport).
 - 5) Limiting taxi access through the bus gate to hackney carriages (i.e. not including private hire vehicles). This would include taxis licensed to use the Cambridge station rank. It would further reduce the volume of traffic on Mill Road without limiting the mobility of those who are dependent on taxis as a form of public transport.

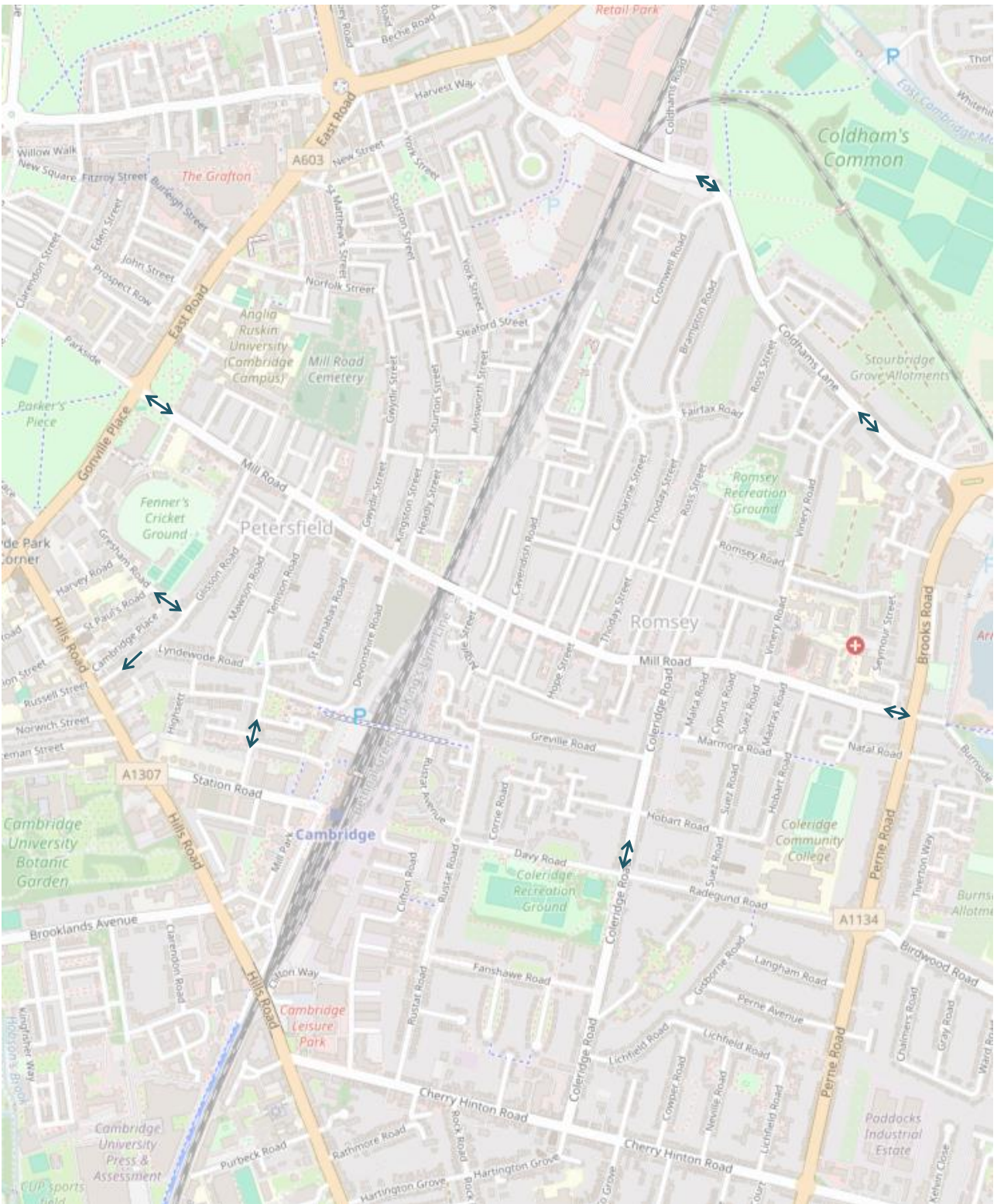


Figure 1: Eight camera traffic monitoring locations required to capture all trips into or through the Mill Road area

