Giles Gooding

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Dear Sir,

Winchester Green Party are encouraged Martin Tod is showing an interest in improving our streets as described in his latest blog “COVID-19 and our local streets”. We are extremely supportive of initiatives to improve walking and cycling in Winchester in the recovery phase and beyond, and very hopeful that both Winchester City Council and Hampshire County Council will embrace the current opportunity to get on with implementing some of the long-awaited projects included in the movement strategy. Councils around the country are making enormous strides forward and we very much hope that here in Winchester this momentum will be seized. Many of the measures we are suggesting are very quick to implement, do not require huge budgets or infrastructure, and really must be undertaken quickly to ease the transition to being less locked down.

It has been heartening to see the large numbers of people walking and cycling in and around Winchester and illustrates how important it is to create the conditions to enable people to cycle and walk more – if the infrastructure is there it will be used.

Other notable changes have been the significant reduction in noise and vast improvements in air quality. The Council must avoid taking us back to the pre-crisis pollution levels.

We have a unique opportunity – a once in a generation chance - to embed this change and to make Winchester a healthier, safer, more pleasant, more economically vibrant place. If not now, it is difficult to see when such transformation might take place.

In addition to the suggestions already made and included in Cllr Tod’s article, we would like to add the following for consideration:

* Create cycle lanes on hills
* Remove restrictions on bicycles on minor one-way roads in the city centre
* Install traffic lights (initially temporary) at narrow train bridges to reduce traffic to one way and leave space for pedestrians
* Change traffic light priority for users throughout the city to pedestrians, cyclists, buses, taxis, blue badge, cars (delivery vehicles are a separate consideration that need to be thought about in the longer term).
* Close roads around schools at (extended) drop off and pick-up times before they re-open fully
* Use temporary barriers and temporary traffic lights to implement changes quickly
* Create cycle lanes from Park & Ride car parks and make bicycles available to borrow/hire at P&R
* Close Middle Brook Street car park and relocate the market stalls there. The market in its usual locations prevents physical distancing. However, the independent food businesses are much missed and needed in Winchester.
* Close part of Friarsgate car park to increase capacity of cycle storage – with an increase in cycling more bike racks will be required. They will have to be off the high street to not impede queuing and physical distancing. This could easily provided in Friarsgate car park, which would have the added advantage of being undercover and secure
* Enable and encourage pubs/restaurants/cafes/shops to transform their on-site car parks or use on-street parking spaces to create more space for people/tables & chairs
* Introduce an incentive for businesses using bikes or cargo bikes for delivery

We know these are ideas for Winchester City and we would be keen to learn from people in other parts of the district about how their roads could be improved.

Clearly time is of the essence and changes need to be made quickly to help Winchester recover successfully from this exceptional chapter in our lives – a better future is possible and both Winchester City Council and Hampshire County Council can and should be taking action now.

Giles Gooding

On behalf of Winchester Green Party