

8th November 2022

To whom it concerns,

I wanted to voice my objection in the strongest possible terms to the proposal to create a cycle lane by the removal of residential parking for a ½ mile stretch between on the South Circular Road (SCR) between Fennessy's and Alphonsis Street.

I am keen cyclist myself. I commute to work daily by bike and cycle recreationally with my family at the weekends. I am an active member of Limerick Triathlon Club and regularly use the Limerick Shared Bike scheme (previously Coke Bikes) to access the city centre. I am also a resident on the South Circular Road for the last 15 years. I share a house with my wife and 3 school age children. All of the family cycle.

I live on the narrowest stretch of the road between Mary I and the Redemptorists. The limited street parking is a lifeline and essential for the street to be habitable. Without the limited on street parking that exists such regular services such as deliveries (postal and other), visits by relatives or medical professionals, bin collection, visits by trades men etc. could not occur. The removal of the limited existing parking would effectively make my own house and those of my neighbours inaccessible, an island boxed in my bikes and moving cars that cannot stop.

I would also flag that should the parking be removed then the existing parking used by residents and visitors to the local churches and schools will spill over to the surrounding areas.

I am an avid cyclist and strongly support the provision of cycling infrastructure but only where it enhances the city not where it ruins it for the residents. I am also a father of 3 small children who needs access to where he lives and needs a place to park while, ironically, cycling to work. The provision of poor cycling infrastructure decreases the quality of life for everyone.

I have provided a more detailed responses below. Please forgive the length of the submission. I wanted to respect the process and provide a comprehensive response. I would hope that particular consideration would be given by those directly affected by the proposal rather than those that may or may not ever avail of the proposed cycle lane.

My concerns are provided in the following pages and grouped under

- Parking
- Access
- Degradation of Architectural Heritage
- Church Access
- Safety

1. Parking

I live on the stretch of road between Fennessy's Roundabout and the junction of the SCR and Alphonsis St. All 75 on street parking spaces are proposed to be removed from this stretch of road to make way for the cycle lane with scant consideration for the what is by any measure an already narrow residential street.



Figure 1 Parking photo take on Bank Holiday Monday, when only residents on road.

The plan removes all on street parking along the 750m (½ mile) stretch between Fennessy's and Alphonsis St. with only 10 new spaces created all clustered at one end.

Parking allows me to leave my car at home so I can cycle to work. The irony of the proposed works is that this will inhibit this. The use of parking spaces on the road tends to be temporary; school collections, church visits, tradesmen, home help etc. On one weekday afternoon I noticed 6 different cars parked outside my door none of which were my car. The SCR is not a destination for long term parking. The car parking capacity incentivises access to the city rather than being simple car storage like many city centre parking spaces.

I would also like to flag that only a small number of houses on the right side of the road (facing the city) along this stretch of road have rear access. Most of the houses are terraced meaning that they have restricted if any side-access. My own house is mid terraced without rear and very limited side access making access from the street vital.

2. Access

The greater issue will be access. The plan generates a 750 meter stretch of the road where cars cannot legally stop even for deliveries. Any car pulling in has to stop on the carriageway or pull onto the cycle path. This makes the houses on this stretch of road inaccessible for routine deliveries (e.g. parcel delivery, groceries, oil / fuel), there is no provision for how tradesmen could access to maintain the buildings in the area, many of which are listed and requiring constant upkeep. Families with smaller children have to be dropped and collected. This is activity that makes an area habitable, this provision would be removed. The street has a large proportion of elderly residents, they require access and care from medical professionals / home help who will need to be able to park close by.



Figure 2 Oil Delivery (houses have no rear access)

Younger families have started to move into the area including ourselves. Older relatives including my own live in rural areas and so visit by car. They need to be able to park close to the door for their own mobility reasons.

My own kids are very active in local sports clubs, scouts etc. We carpool regularly. These routine drops and collections need a car to be

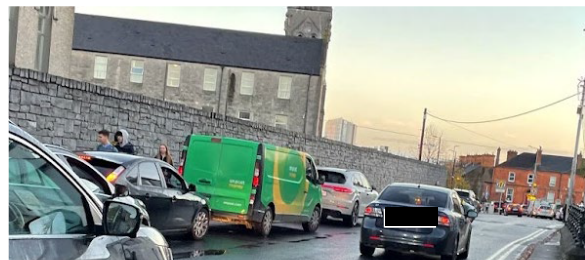


Figure 3 An Post Parcel Delivery. No provision in plan for this.

able to stop briefly close to our door. The current proposal means a car cannot stop on the SCR for a ¼ mile of my front door in either direction. This is a ridiculous situation.

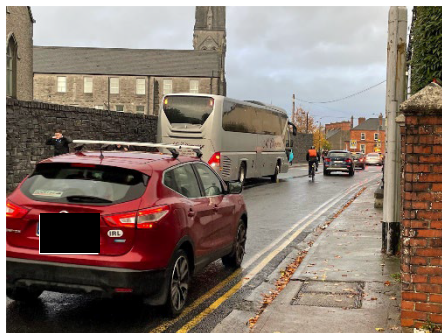


Figure 4 School Bus Parking on SCR for Laurel Hill (2 schools) & St. Clements

The reports prepared on the route make poor reference to access issues to the Schools, Scoil Mhathair De, Laurel Hill (both schools), St. Clements as well as the nearby Project and Model Schools. Scoil Carmel has been used on a temporary basis as a school and may return to use as a School. Mary I is also on the route. The road is particularly busy at school drop off and collection. No reference is made to where this traffic will go and how kids will be collected or be dropped off.

Busses pick up and drop off school groups from the SCR at the Redemptorist church directly for school outings. This avoids them having to take a the sharp left into the Laurel Hill or St. Clements schools. I fail to see how this is dealt with within the new road layout.

3. Degradation of Architectural Heritage

The section of road was never designed as a major artery into the city. The proposed plan incentivises the residents to add or widen driveways to their dwellings to counteract the removal of access (parking) to their dwellings. The Architectural Heritage Impact Statement (pg 3, para 3) notes this. The plan will further destroy the road and city's architectural heritage. The lack of attention to this is depressing.

My own house is over 150 years old and sits within a fast disappearing streetscape. I struggle to see the merit in incentivising the destruction of old city streetscapes to facilitate possible through traffic from suburbs on the off-chance that they might, at some indeterminable point in the future, decide to leave their cars at home.

It is difficult if not impossible to reconcile the proposal with Limerick Council's own Georgian Quarter revitalisation strategy. The Georgian Quarter adjoins the lower part of the SCR. Much of the current route is a mixture of Victorian and Georgian houses. The proposal seems to go against the city's own preservation strategy for the sake of expediency.

The proposed cycle route promotes the destruction of Limerick's architectural heritage while at the same time a competing strategy promotes the opposite.

4. Church Access

There is no reference to the usual busy Sunday and other holy day traffic that the Redemptorist church draws. Nor is there reference to the ever still popular Novena each June when traffic is brought to a standstill for 2 weeks.

The traffic impact assessment fails to consider the new Elevate church (previously St. Philomena's) which is used at weekend for church services. It is used during the week for additional tuition / grinds and other uses.

I struggle to think how the cycle lane is even relevant in these contexts given that cycling would not be a viable option for these congregations (older people and larger families travelling distances).

5. Safety

a. Children crossing Cycle Path

The plan makes no provision for how passing traffic will be able to safely drop off or collect schoolchildren / Students. The proposal would see cars stop in the carriage way and schoolchildren egress from the car across the cycle lanes and onto the footpath. As a cyclist I know from personal experience that this presents a serious danger to both the cyclist and school child. The opening of a car door across the cycle path will be a major hazard. The second danger is to the school child / Student who has to cross in front of the cyclist. Cars would not expect to have to discharge their children into moving traffic cars or bicycles.

It is reasonable to anticipate that cars will pull onto the cycle lane to allow the safely drop off of their kids thus rendering the cycle lane in-effective and creating a chaotic and unsafe environment for cyclist and other traffic. The route is very close to 3 primary schools. Parents are understandably protective of their young children. It is highly unlikely that children would simply be deposited on the road as this proposal seems to assume.

Traffic at school collection times do not currently park in designated parking spaces (Figure 5) as there is insufficient capacity. The cycle lane will significantly reduce parking / stopping in the vicinity of the schools. It is probable that cars will continue to park as they have previously i.e. in the cycle lanes. This makes the cycle lanes unusable at the very times they would be intended to be used.

It should be noted that the 6 schools in the area have staggered starting and finishing times meaning that the chaotic parking situation extends for a peak period in the morning and much of the afternoon i.e. the very time the cycle path is expected to be in use it would be unusable / a safety hazard.



Figure 5 Existing Congestion at Primary School Pick Up time for the Model / Project & Scoil Mhathair De schools

The argument that Laurel Hill or any other pupil attending a Limerick female secondary school will start to cycle based on this new route is not plausible. A key component of their uniform is an ankle length skirt. This prevents cycling.

b. Cycle Lane not connected to the Model and Project Schools

The proposal would bring cycle lanes close to the Model and Project Schools but not to them. All Model schoolchildren would still face crossing the SCR, going the wrong way down a newly created one way street and then again crossing a larger and busier road before they reach their school. The Project schoolchildren would still have to cross the SCR across 2 lanes of traffic, ten cycle in a roadway with cars before reaching their school gates. The proposed route does not safely serve these schools.

c. Pedestrian Safety

The stretch of roadway is already well used and way over capacity. The footpaths are used by Mary I students walking to college and schoolchildren & parents accessing the schools in the area. The current line of parked cars compensates for the inadequate footpath width. It allows people to safely step off the path to allow buggies or large groups to pass. The new route removes this safety valve with any pedestrians now having to step into a cycleway when this occurs.

The drawings presented are ambiguous on the retention of the existing footpaths which is a major concern.

d. Speedramp removal

The proposal curiously does away with the speed ramps on the stretch of road between Mary I and the Redemptorist's. These currently have the effect of keeping speeds on the

road low. The removal of these speed ramps will only serve to allow increased speed when traffic volumes are low.

6. Only one Option presented.

There is no evidence presented of other options for the cycle route. No consideration seems to have been given to the Dock Road, Ballinacurra Road / O'Connell Avenue, Ballinacurra Avenue / Edwards Street or any of the much wider routes into the city. There is no mention of the pedestrian and cycle access from O'Connell Avenue to the gates of Mary I on the South Circular Road. O'Connell Avenue alone provides direct access to all Primary Schools (Project. Model and Scoil Mhathair De) as well as Mary I.

The selected single option presented is the less obvious route for a cycle lane into the city.

The proposal creates a throughway to city from the near and far suburbs at expense of and no benefit to residents along the route. It is reminiscent of the drive to force motorways into the heart of European and US cities in the 1950's / 60' / 70's. The proposal makes the SCR far less habitable, reaccelerating the hollowing out of the city centre as a residential area.

In summary the route degrades the quality of life for those on the route by rendering their properties inaccessible, incentivising the destruction of the Limerick heritage and creating a less safe environment for the city's youngest citizens. Poor proposals like this feed into a negative perception of cycling and cyclists. The proposal particularly as it pertains to the stretch of road between Fennessy's and Alphonsis Street should be rejected out of hand with consideration given to more obvious alternatives.

Regards,

John, Valerie, Paul, Neil & Kate Gleeson

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