

“Winchester City Council strongly advocates cycling, free outdoor activities for local residents and the improvement of air quality. This is made clear in both the Winchester District Cycling Strategy and the City of Winchester Movement Strategy.

Yet in 2018, the Council plans to bulldoze around half of the longstanding BMX & mountain bike trails at Bar End Copse in order to create a new 14-bay coach parking area, to help pull more tourists into the city centre. This not only eliminates a key part of the free biking facility but also the mature woodland accommodating it.

Meanwhile, the Southern Park & Ride towards Compton, which enjoys the same transit time to/from the M3 and the town centre, failed to reach capacity once this year even during the Christmas Market. Please visit Area 6 of the site on any given day to see for yourself. Furthermore, on 5th July 2017 the site was overrun with travellers who went on to occupy the low-traffic site.

As local riders we are passionate about the trails at Bar End Copse. We have built and maintained them by hand for almost 21 years. The trails have been documented in national and international magazines & videos since 2004. Despite their notoriety, local children as young as five continue to make regular, free use of the site. The woodland is also very rich in wildlife from field mice to deer.

We believe access to local woodland for both cycling and witnessing nature first hand is more important than inflating Winchester’s visitor numbers beyond their current annual level of five million. As local residents ourselves, we confirm that this is plenty.

Whilst we support WCC’s aim to keep coaches out of the town centre, we strongly urge WCC to make better use of the neglected Southern P&R site, particularly Area 6, as opposed to pulling down mature woodland to expand St. Catherines P&R at Bar End. If Area 6 is somehow not sufficient for the additional coaches, there are around ten acres of flat grassland at the southern end of the South P&R which would be far less disruptive to local wildlife, residents and cyclists.”