

Deputations

Transport and Environment Committee

10.00 am Thursday, 31st March, 2022

Virtual Meeting - via Microsoft Teams

Deputations

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CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL
TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Item No 3

31 MARCH 2022

DEPUTATION REQUESTS

Subject	Deputation
3.1 In relation to Item 6.1 on the agenda – Business Bulletin – Update on Elm Row	Community Councils Together on Trams (verbal and written)
3.2 In relation to Item 9.1 on the agenda – Motion by Councillor Lang – Petition on Station Road, Ratho Station	Newbridge & Ratho Station Community Association (verbal and written)
3.3 The Convener ruled that this written deputation be accepted in terms of Standing Order 12.3 as it did not relate to an item on the agenda for this meeting.	Keep Morningside Moving (written)

Deputation by Community Councils Together on Trams (CCTT) to Transport and Environment Committee Meeting on 31 March 2022 regarding the Elm Row update in the Business Bulletin (Agenda item 6.1)

1. We note that the Council has confirmed in the Business Bulletin that **no change to the design of the Elm Row public realm will be made now** as part of the Trams to Newhaven project, despite the serious concerns that were raised by CCTT along with all other active travel stakeholders in their submission to the Council in November 2021 (see Appendix).
2. We are very disappointed that the public realm now being built will not comply with current design standards, nor provide the required level of segregation between cyclists and pedestrians at such a busy area.
3. We regard this as a missed opportunity to deliver a quality of public realm commensurate with the overall goals of the Trams project. As our November submission made clear, it will also fail to meet the commitments made to the active travel stakeholders during the design charrette for this high-profile area of public realm.
4. Despite these issues having been identified by mid 2021, there was no recognition of the problems until late last year by which time construction work had already commenced, limiting the ability of the project to execute any design changes.
5. There are important lessons that need to be learned from this situation that should be applied to future projects being commissioned by the City of Edinburgh Council.
6. We also note the commitment in the Business Bulletin to address the above concerns and other issues including the potential further pedestrianisation of the service road once the current construction is complete.
7. It is important that the plan for officers 'to bring forward options for the pedestrianisation of Elm Row by Winter 2022/23' does fully address the concerns that have been raised by CCTT and the active travel stakeholders and provides a clear timetable and budget for any remedial work to be completed.

Community Councils Together for Trams

March 2022

APPENDIX

Critical Concerns about the Design of Elm Row Public Realm

Executive Summary

The Community Councils Together for Trams group has identified some critical concerns about the design of the Elm Row public realm construction being undertaken as part of the Trams to Newhaven project. We believe that the current design will adversely affect the safety of pedestrians and cyclists using this space. This document has been prepared with input from and is supported by the following groups:

- Leith Central Community Council
- New Town and Broughton Community Council
- Living Streets Edinburgh
- Spokes Edinburgh
- Edinburgh Access Panel
- Edinburgh Bus Users Group

We request that construction of the Elm Row public realm is paused to allow urgent changes to be made to the design to address the concerns outlined below.

Background

The current plans for the public realm on the east side of Leith Walk at its junction with London Road (adjacent to Elm Row) have raised a number of concerns for residents and in particular pedestrians and cyclists that will be using this space. This section of public realm is expected to be very busy with pedestrians heading north/south on Leith Walk, accessing the various retail businesses on Elm Row and boarding/alighting the buses at the two bus stops. It is also a key link in the cycle path from Picardy Place to Leith Walk.

The design that was issued for consultation in October 2019 showed a single two-way cycle path in the public realm space between Elm Row and Leith Walk. In the final drawings dated June 2020, this has been replaced with two one-way cycle paths through the same space. **We consider that this design change increases the potential for significant pedestrian-cyclist interaction with consequent increase in accident risk.** For example, pedestrians and wheelers wishing to traverse this area will need to cross **two** separate cycle paths in order to access/egress a bus stop or in the event of wanting to walk from the London Road pedestrian crossing down Leith Walk will need to cross **four** separate cycle paths.

It is not clear why this design was changed, as the reasons for doing so have not been made public. It has been suggested that this was required to improve cyclist access to the crossing at Annandale Street but it is not apparent what benefits the current design has over the previous one. It is though very clear that the latest design has very significant adverse impacts for pedestrians. This is particularly true for those with any visual impairment. The changes to the design have added unnecessary complexity to the use of this space and are likely to be more costly to construct.

These concerns are not new. The impact of the split cycle path was highlighted by Community Council representatives to the Trams Team as part of the prior engagement regarding the TRO (TRO/20/24A and TRO/20/24B) and in comments that were submitted in response to the public consultation for the TRO which were approved at the 19 August 2021 Transport and Environment Committee meeting. It became apparent just before that meeting that these comments were regarded as not being 'material to the TRO process' and

therefore we believe did not receive proper consideration by the Transport and Environment Committee. The summary provided by the Roads department to the Committee merely stated that 'Pedestrians have been considered throughout the design process which is in accordance with the Edinburgh Street Design Guidance'. Given their position at the top of the Active Travel hierarchy, it does not appear for the reasons provided below that they have been given sufficient consideration.

As noted in the recent Transport Scotland document "Cycling by Design" issued in September 2021: '**For new developments there should be a specific presumption in favour of separating pedestrian and cyclist in the built environment**'. It is further stated that shared pedestrian and cycle facilities in certain situations compromise safety and that within built up areas where a cycling facility is to be located adjacent to a road, there should be a strong presumption in favour of separating pedestrian and cycle movements. Although this document is new, the guidance it contains is not – much of the guidance was contained in the previous version issued in 2010. There is a clear expectation from Scottish Government that the design of public realm does provide suitable separation of cyclists and pedestrians.

Specific Concerns

1. There is no grade separation between the pedestrian areas and the cycle paths across the whole of the Elm Row public realm. This is contrary to design standards for such shared space and is of particular concern given the congested nature of this public realm. Living Streets Edinburgh has repeatedly highlighted the need for adequate pavement space for pedestrians and proper separation between cycleway and footway. Despite assurances that the design of the public realm along Leith Walk would at least meet the minimums contained within the ESDG, the latest design fails to do so.
2. The Edinburgh Access Panel had also provided comments on the design of the public realm along the Trams route as part of the TRO consultation. In particular, they stated that it was essential to provide effective segregation between cyclists and pedestrians and that they expected the design of the cycle paths to conform to that installed outside the Omni Centre with a level change and suitable kerb delineating the boundary of the cycle path and the pavement areas. Specifically, ESDG C4 page 7 states, "*Kerb <50mm difficult to detect for visually impaired users.*" In other words, a minimum level change of 50mm is required for perception by a blind pedestrian with a cane or guide dog. The lack of grade separation between the cycle paths and pavements across the whole of the public realm is in breach of this standard.
3. As noted previously there are two bus stops in this area, which are currently served by 12 different bus routes. These are busy stops with many passengers joining and leaving the buses, as it is an important interchange with the buses serving the east and west of the city that stop just around the corner on Leopold Place. The current design of the public realm results in these bus stops 'floating' – separated from the areas of pavement behind by the two cycle paths. Significant concerns have been raised about the safety of 'floating bus stops' especially for passengers with mobility limitations, visual impairment but also for those wheeling either themselves or others. **These issues are compounded by the decision to split the cycle path at this point.** We do not believe that the access needs of all passengers have been properly assessed. In their response to the TRO, Edinburgh Access Panel had stated that their concerns about floating bus stops could be allayed by designing them with due care – i.e. with a safety audit, careful sizing and truly effective measures to slow cyclists down and ensure they give priority to pedestrians. We do not see any evidence that these mitigations have been incorporated in the design.
4. The cycle path widths are 2 metres for the two-way sections at each end of the public realm and 1.5 metres for the one-way sections through the public realm. These widths are shown as the 'absolute

minimum' in the guidance but given the number of cyclists expected to use this space, the lack of separation between pedestrians and cyclists as well as the other hazards present, these widths would not be recommended in the current guidance.

5. We are also concerned about the proximity of the northbound cycle path with the parking on Elm Row. In the latest design, the amount of parking on Elm Row has been increased and instead of being parallel to the kerb is now angled in towards the cycle path. There is no effective separation between the cycle path and the parking area, so increasing the risk of parked vehicles overhanging the narrow cycle path and potentially striking cyclists travelling past this area. It would appear that the increase to parking provision contained in the latest designs has introduced new risks for cyclists. This design change does not reflect the priorities from the active travel hierarchy or indeed good practice with respect to road safety.

Conclusion

We recognise that there are times when design guidance cannot always be fully complied with but in this case which is effectively a new development, the design can and should meet the recommended requirements of the Guidance. As well as the pavement areas and cycle paths there are two pieces of public art (pigeon statues and clock tower) and a service road for the Elm Row businesses and residents that egresses on to Leith Walk. As a result, this is a very congested area of public realm and it is important that the design reflects that level of activity. The current design is overly complicated and introduces new hazards for pedestrians and cyclists. A risk assessment should be undertaken to justify the increased use of shared space and in particular the changes to the design that have led to an increase in pedestrian-cyclist interactions.

As noted earlier, we request that construction is paused to allow an urgent review of the design of the Elm Row public realm before construction proceeds further. This review should involve the key active travel stakeholders and the community councils. We recognise that this delay and potential redesign may add to project costs but it will ensure that the space is fit for purpose and reduce the almost inevitable need for remedial work in the future once the Tram extension and adjoining public realm is commissioned.

Community Councils Together for Trams
November 2021

Safety issues with LGV's in Ratho Station

There has been an issue with LGV's in Ratho Station for years. This has become an increasing problem due to the general increase in traffic, the availability of takeaway food in the village, and the introduction of restrictions on the A8 which has led to drivers using Ratho Station as a 'rat run' to access the Newbridge Roundabout.

The issue primarily concerns the lower end of Station Road (SR), and it's junction with Queen Anne Drive (QAD), although there is also a problem with LGV's parking around the Scotmid store as drivers get their lunch. A TRO would largely solve both issues. Due to the 90 degree turn at the QAD / SR junction, LGV's - even rear wheel steering ones - are more often than not forced to mount the verge to get round. This is the primary access route for children and their families getting to and from Hillwood Primary School. The only other route involves negotiating a longer path that is poorly lit, not paved, is in close proximity to woods and the railway line and involves steps, which makes it unsuitable for disabled or infirm residents and young children. It also involves crossing the entrance to an industrial estate.

Double yellow lines are ignored multiple times every day, so it is reasonable to assume that advisory warning signs stating that the road is unsuitable for LGV's would be similarly ignored.

A legal restriction would allow for a greater level of enforcement than there is currently, which would, we believe, lead to a greatly increased level of compliance, and ultimately reduce the level of traffic, thus by definition increasing safety.

Below are some photographs showing the various problems. These are by no means all that there are, I have been sent dozens more by concerned residents:



A TRO restricting vehicles over a certain weight would limit the amount of these vehicles traversing Ratho Station significantly. We acknowledge there are some issues, which we address below:

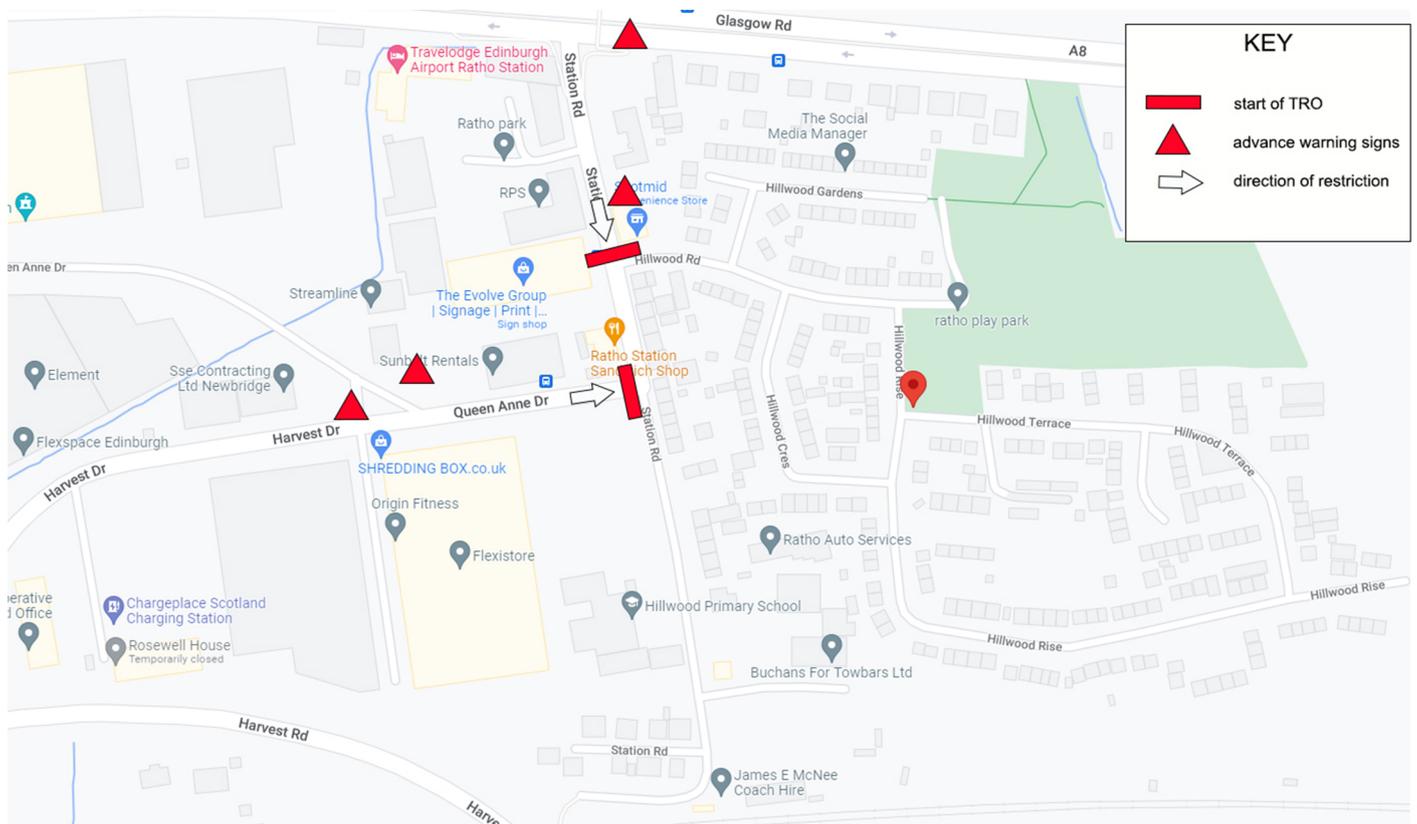
Emergency / Council access - a condition of any TRO permitting 'authorised vehicles' would allow both emergency services as well as statutory Council services (such as bin collections) to operate as normal.

Public transport - As above, an exception allowing buses and coaches would permit First bus to operate as normal. There is a private coach operator in the village, at the top of Station Road, however we believe this exemption could be applied to them, in addition to any future public transport operators.

Delivery vehicles - We accept fully that there needs to be deliveries within the village, however it is our contention that the vast majority of these are already made in vans rather than LGV's, and so the only deliveries that would be impacted would be the Scotmid and the hotel. Whilst it would be preferable to have any restriction preventing LGV's turning left into Ratho Station from the A8, if any restriction were to start after immediately before the left turn into Hillwood Road that would allow service and delivery vehicles to access the hotel and store.

Whilst a 24 hour restriction would be far preferable, a secondary option would be for a timed restriction on vehicles over a certain weight. This would allow any restriction to commence coming of the A8, which would have its advantages, and could cover daytime hours, in line with school times. The problems are significant on weekends as well however, so if a timed restriction turns out to be the preferred option we would say this would need to be in place 7 days a week.

Below is a map showing where any restriction could be placed, as well as where any warning signs would ideally be situated:



Keep Morningside Moving request that an item is included in the next TEC meeting at which councillors discuss the 24 hour modal filters on Whitehouse Loan which were installed as a temporary Covid measure, contrary to the wishes of local residents who support such a ban only at the start and end of the School day. It is lobby groups who support the ban.

Support for the closure.

Cllr Macinnes stated that local residents want the present closure on Feb 3rd 2021 in Edinburgh Live:-

*“We’ve heard from residents, parents and school pupils about pinch points and traffic volumes, and they’ve been **extremely supportive** of proposals to limit motor vehicles there.”*

Extremely supportive? Not at all - 98% of residents in Bruntsfield Crescent opposed the closure. Cllr Neil Ross’ made a significant contribution in a council meeting:-

“Notes the proposal has been made without notifying any residents living on or near the proposed route...”

Notes that the Council’s Commonplace online ideas tool collected twice as much support for protected cycle lanes on Whitehouse Loan than for closing that road to motor vehicles.”

Also all three groups consulted - Public Consultation, Business Consultation and Market Research - asked for this closure to be removed.

Cllr Macinnes verifies that the measures “were installed as part of the Travelling Safely measures within the Spaces for People Programme.” ie related to Covid.

The arguments in favour of closure.

It appears that the various arguments put forward to justify 24-hour closure have nothing to do with the original emergency.

On June 17th 2021 Christine Carr twice indicated the merits of school time closure instead of 24 hour closure; however Councillor Doran asked Christine whether she believed that the safety of schoolchildren should be a priority, implying that by rejecting 24 hour closure she was endangering schoolchildren. The question was unfair because Christine’s proposal was to protect schoolchildren with school time closure.

(Webcast 53 minutes 12 seconds - TEC June 17)

A Green councillor in an email to a KMM member defended the 24 hour closure by saying that it brought safety “to those further up to the route who can enjoy a safe route for their ongoing destinations after dropping children off at school or nursery.....” That is nonsense because the people she refers to with “ongoing destinations after dropping children off” would be doing so precisely at the school time closure which Christine approved of.

When Christine suggested that the barriers should be removed during the school holidays, allowing assessment of traffic numbers, Cllr Macinnes rejected the idea, her reason being that Bruntsfield Links was a “destination” for “a lot of people during the summer months”. She asked Christine whether she thought the present measures would benefit these people. The question was disingenuous because visitors to the Links do not need any additional road closures to enable them to walk there; as with many SfP schemes the council is trying to justify measures by trying to solve a problem which doesn’t exist; yet it causes problems for others.

In a reply to a KMM member Cllr Macinnes gave this as a reason. “Many people still need to cycle outside of peak times and, as outlined above, it is important that we reduce traffic significantly in order to enable them to feel comfortable and safe doing so.” Logically we would have to close any road on which cyclists feel uncomfortable.

In order to justify the closure, cycling figures on Whitehouse Loan were given to show that in certain months figures were up; but the data collection point is nowhere near the closure at James Gillespie’s Primary school; it is placed at the southern end of Whitehouse Loan at 172 Whitehouse Loan - 0.4 miles from the road closure. The council do not have figures for traffic outside JGPS at 92 Whitehouse Loan.

So which of these reasons hold merit? Parents continuing after dropping children at school times? Cyclists outside peak hours? Walkers with the Links as their “destination”? Protecting children outside school times?

None of them. The council has significantly obfuscated the issue by saying that the “Quiet Route” needs the road to be closed 24 hours a day. I quote:- “timed closures would not support journeys on this route outside of peak times.” But there are plenty of other roads on the Quiet Route open 24 hours a day, and you simply cannot close all these roads. It is just another excuse / pretext.

The one genuine reason for not having a timed closure has been the financial aspect; we were told that there was not enough money to finance it under SpacesforPeople schemes. We ask that school hours closures are considered as a measure using normal council money. Let councillors have a genuine discussion on the feasibility of this as part of a permanent solution at the next TEC meeting.

Please allow for discussion at your next TEC meeting on August 18th 2022.

We appreciate that groups making deputations may avail themselves of ten-minute slots live during the meeting; we will not be making use of this as our request is clear in the written deputation, and the extra time the meeting may benefit from could help councillors from having to curtail discussion of important motions at the 5pm cut-off point.

Ken Harvey
Chairman, Keep Morningside Moving

Fiona Gomes
Secretary, Keep Morningside Moving

Paul Bailey
Social Media Officer, Keep Morningside Moving

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