

## CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

14 DECEMBER 2023

## DEPUTATION REQUESTS

Subject	Deputation
<b>3.1 In respect of Item 8.7 on the agenda</b> – Motion by Councillor Parker – Transient Visitor Levy and the Housing Emergency	Living Rent
<b>3.2 In respect of Item 8.13 on the agenda</b> – Motion by Councillor Mitchell – Telford and Hillhouse Junction	Sight Scotland and Sight Scotland Veterans (Written submission attached)

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# **Hillhouse Road/Telford Road Junction – Deputation Sight Scotland and Sight Scotland Veterans 14 December 2023**

## **About**

At Sight Scotland and Sight Scotland Veterans, Scotland's largest sight loss charity, we believe that roads need to be safe and accessible for all. Putting people with visual impairment at the centre of decision-making is essential for ensuring streets meet the needs of blind and partially sighted people.

## **Our concerns**

The Hillhouse Road/Telford Road Junction was highlighted to us by one of the people we support who resides in the local area. This individual is visually impaired and raised serious concerns regarding the accessibility and safety of the junction. The current state of the junction means the person is unable to cross without assistance.

Public support for the upgrade is strong, with nearly 270 emails been sent to local councillors calling for the junction to be upgraded urgently.

## **Key issues:**

- no useful tactile paving – this is essential to ensure someone can determine where the pavement ends, and the road begins
- no revolving cones under wait boxes – these are used when a person can't see the red/green man or hear audible signals

- no audible signals – these are used to signify traffic has stopped
- no bulbs in the wait box – for someone who has light perception difficult to see the signal
- staggered crossings are hazardous and confusing for people with visual impairment, especially when there is tactile paving and metal barriers

Poor crossing facilities like these could mean a person is more likely to stay at home, reducing their opportunity to move around in their home area. When a person's mobility is impacted in this way, there is a knock-on effect both physically and mentally.

A site visit with our Rehabilitation and Mobility Officer confirmed from a professional's perspective how dangerous the crossing is. Without these vital accessibility features, the crossing is a death-trap for visually impaired people.

**Caroline Hedley, Rehabilitation and Mobility Officer at Sight Scotland**

"This junction poses a major risk to anybody with visual impairment, and we are extremely worried that it will take a serious accident before any action is taken. Due to the complicated layout of the crossings, the poor pedestrian crossing facilities and the heavy fast-moving traffic, it is dangerous and inaccessible to most blind and partially sighted people.

"The pedestrian crossings do not have audible signals or revolving cones, and some are in need of basic repair. Also, there are few protective barriers at this junction which makes me as a sighted person

feel very vulnerable, so I can't imagine how someone with vision impairment would feel. Strachan Road simply has no pedestrian crossing facility at all.

"As part of my job, I help blind and partially sighted people with their mobility, both indoor and out. We help them plan routes when going out, looking at hazards, and trying to ensure they know how to navigate the safest way to go if they have a medical appointment, for example, or just want to go to the shops.

"The biggest priority with a mobility assessment is safety. I have clients living close to this junction and I need to explain to them that the safest way to cross these roads is with sighted assistance, and this is absolutely essential for people who cannot see the red and green man. What makes matters worse is that Blackhall Medical Centre is located on the Hillhouse Road side of the junction."

### **Previous Decisions**

The current position of the Council is that the junction was not included on the Committee approved Majority Junction Review priority list. This decision was backed by all five of Edinburgh's political parties but "agreed that the limited funds available should be targeted where they are most needed." We are disappointed at this decision.

### **Our ask**

While we understand it was not included in the list of priorities, we deem the junction has reached a point of deterioration that a special case must be considered to upgrade it urgently before a serious accident occurs. It is highly dangerous, if not impossible, for blind and partially sighted people to cross this junction independently.

We believe a separate fund should be made available to so that specific projects deemed by the public to be in urgent need of upgrade, can be progressed. The proposed Local Traffic Improvement Programme (Spring 2024) should consider the junction as part of as part of this framework.