

Davidson's Mains & Silverknowes Association

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To:
Dave Sinclair, Acting Manager, Spaces for People Team,
Paul Lawrence, Director of Place,
Lesley Macinnes, Transport and Environment Convener,
Spaces for People Consultation Team,
City of Edinburgh Council,
Waverley Court,
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Response to the Consultation on the Future of the Spaces for People Projects.

The Davidson's Mains and Silverknowes Association (DMSA) welcomes the opportunity to comment again on the Spaces for People and Safer Routes to School Projects which have been put in place across the city, and we will make specific reference to the five projects in our local area. Before doing so we would make a number of general observations about various aspects of the programme.

The Association is generally supportive of the principle of encouraging active travel in situations where there is a justification for investment and where there is likely to be sufficient demand. As with many local community groups we were asked in May last year to provide advice to the Council on local situations where congestion on footpaths and cycleways was a significant problem and where expenditure could be made to instigate improvements. In response we provided a number of options for improvements, of varying scale and cost, all of which would have had a positive effect, would have complied with the objectives to reduce congestion, and would have had the full support of the local community, and yet all were completely ignored. Instead the Council have used the Covid19 Emergency Legislation to roll out non urgent, non emergency projects to extend the cycle network in our local area on sections where there was and remains little demand and little use. The Council have used the allocated funds to circumvent normal planning protocols and procedures to rush these projects through.

It is against that background that we would comment as follows on the five local projects which have been put in place.

- **Closure of the north end of Silverknowes Road to motor vehicles**

The Association has been opposed to the closure of the north end of Silverknowes Road to traffic since it was first implemented at only 24 hours notice at the beginning of May 2020, and nothing that has happened since has given us any cause to change that opinion.

The wide carriageway and footpaths were capable of accommodating the numbers of vehicles, cyclists, and pedestrians which were normally using the road even in good weather at the week-ends. For about two weeks at the time of relaxation of the first lock down when there was a wholly extraordinary level of cooped up demand for people to get out and about in good weather, the route was busy but it soon reverted back to normal levels. Despite that, the Council used the unusually high temporary numbers as a justification for closing the road to vehicles. Buses were also prohibited initially and it is to be welcomed that the service has been reinstated.

However motor vehicles remain prohibited and this has adversely affected the elderly and least able who previously used their vehicles to drive down to the foreshore for fresh air and perhaps a short walk. They are now obliged to take a detour via the Muirhouse roundabout and the east end of Marine Drive and there are now complaints about congestion from residents at the Salvesen houses on Marine Drive due to the additional traffic. The closure of the road and the direct route to the parking at Silverknowes foreshore has also had an adverse impact on the traffic and parking situation at Cramond Grebe Road with some of the displaced drivers choosing instead to use the already congested locations at Cramond. Initially there may have been mixed opinions from local residents about the closure of Silverknowes Road to motor vehicles but it is clear now that the majority believe the continued closure is unjustified and the road should be re-opened.

- **So called quiet cycle route through the east side of Silverknowes**

The history and sequence of events around this project are highly unfortunate and regrettable, but what is now in place is less satisfactory and more problematic than the original proposals.

When this project was first suggested it was for a so called quiet route from Silverknowes Parkway via Silverknowes Place, Silverknowes Court, Silverknowes Bank and Silverknowes Brae to a road crossing of Silverknowes Road East to connect with the North Edinburgh Path. The stated objective was to divert cyclists from the main traffic route on Silverknowes Road. It is fair to say the proposal was subjected to widespread criticism and some ridicule because the route through the side streets of Silverknowes was so convoluted with added distance and many turns that most residents considered that human nature would dictate that the majority of cyclists would just use the direct route along Silverknowes Road. The Council do not have a good track record of listening to the public on Spaces for People Projects but for this one the level of criticism was such that they withdrew the proposals for reconsideration.

It was thought this might be the end of the matter but the Council then proposed and introduced an alternative design which retained the northern part of the route on Silverknowes Place and Court but replaced the proposals for the south end with 360 metres of a bi-directional cycle lane on Silverknowes Road. There is also 50 metres of bi-directional cycle lane to connect the crossing on Silverknowes Parkway with Silverknowes Place. The justification for the retention of the project with the revisions from the earlier proposals is stated by the Council to provide a safer route for young children and yet a principal concern now from parents is that these two way cycle lanes are too narrow for the purpose and present a danger to children. Parents say they would not permit their children to use them so their very purpose has to be called into question.

There are other problems with the current design. The carriageway narrowing on Silverknowes Road at the junction of Silverknowes East may well have the intended effect of slowing drivers down but the road markings and carriageway alignment has the unfortunate effect of tending to direct vehicles into the opposite carriageway. It has also been claimed that the width of the carriageway at the narrowest point is insufficient for two large vehicles (specifically buses) to pass each other within the space between the marked road limits.

Residents on Silverknowes Road who have had double yellow no parking restrictions painted outside their properties resent the fact this has been done for a project that is seen to be unnecessary and claim that when exiting from their driveway they are at risk from having to cross the cycle route with the uncertainty around cyclists moving in each direction adjacent to the south bound carriageway.

Learning from the experience of what has happened, if the Council are insistent on a quiet route for children and parents, where minimising interaction with moving vehicles is a higher priority than a significant detour and added distance then it would be much better to revert to the original proposal with crossings at either end of the route and only cycle symbols and signage for those who wish to use it. The contentious bi directional section on Silverknowes Road could then be removed.

The 50 metres of bi-directional cycleway on Silverknowes Parkway is too narrow for two way operation. It presents a risk situation and is not satisfactory.

- **Cycleway on Silverknowes Parkway**

The Association has been opposed to this project from the start. It had always been our understanding that if and when there was a case for a cycle route at this location it would be constructed as a bi directional route on the grass area to the north of the dual carriageway where cyclists would be separated from vehicles and pedestrians, as a best option solution. The first part of this cycleway had been constructed previously as part of the connections from the pedestrian crossing at the roundabout. It was assumed no action on the rest had been taken because there were so few cyclists and there was no need. It remains the case that it is difficult to see the justification for a cycle path, far less as now constructed on the carriageway on either side of the road with parking prohibitions for the residents whose lives have been disrupted for no good reason. They were insulted to get dismissive responses to their complaints to the effect that there were very few residents affected. As we have said there are situations where a few residents may have to suffer disadvantage for the greater good but this is not such an example and this project should be cancelled until a cycleway can be constructed to the north of the dual carriageway as had been originally intended. Residents have concerns about the difficulties in accessing their driveways through the gaps in the barriers from a busy single carriageway main road and are finding that tradesmen and service companies are refusing to make deliveries because of the absence of any parking availability.

- **Safer Routes to School - Davidson's Mains Primary School**

The Association is broadly supportive of the measures which have been put in place to discourage parking outside the school and the widening of the footpath to provide more space in the vicinity of the school entrance. These actions have been undertaken in full consultation and with the support of the School Parent Council, as has the closure of Silverknowes Road (South) to traffic, which we are obliged to accept even if we still have sympathy for the local residents who have been inconvenienced by the road closure and who had the closure imposed on them.

We have two particular points to make about the current situation which remain to be addressed

The project as implemented to date eliminates some of the risk for pupils travelling to and from the school and outside the entrance but it is a criticism that the major risk for pupils walking or cycling to the school from Silverknowes Road arises from the failings and unsatisfactory design of the pedestrian crossing on Main Street at Silverknowes Road. The crossing is off- set from the cross roads with the access on each side being from very narrow footpaths adjacent to the busy main road where there is the danger from speeding vehicles. There is a record of accidents and many reports of near misses. There is an unquestionable case for moving the pedestrian crossing directly to the crossroads, initially on a temporary basis, with a permanent construction later.

The other problem which has not been resolved is congestion at the bus stop opposite the school (on the city bound side of the road). The pavement is relatively narrow and at school times with people queuing for the bus at the stop it is difficult for pupils and others to get past them to get to the pedestrian crossing. This issue has been the subject of previous complaints and options to resolve the problem need to be considered.

- **Safer Routes to School - The Royal High School.**

The Association is broadly accepting of this project which has been undertaken in conjunction with the wishes of parents and pupils of the school and improves safety for pupils by widening the footpath space on Barnton Avenue. The resulting narrowing of the carriageway is reported by residents to have reduced the speed of vehicles using the road (previously a source of regular complaints which have reduced in frequency) but cyclists are now required to use a narrow carriageway and travel in the main vehicle stream, which is a concern from their perspective.

The long term solution for congestion on Barnton Avenue is to extend the cycleway from Silverknowes Road Bridge along the former railway path to Costa with a new crossing on Cramond Road South to East Barnton Avenue. It is a proposal which would eliminate congestion problems elsewhere on the cycle route on Silverknowes Drive and Terrace and on the link to Cramond Road South.

To sum up, we trust that proper consideration will be given to these comments which we are sure represent the views of the majority of local residents; if it is considered that we are not entitled to make that claim we can assure you that the comments represent the views of the vast majority of the many residents who have contacted us. Most would take a balanced view about justifiable projects but cannot see the requirement or the case for the cycleways in Silverknowes.

Yours Sincerely,

Charlotte L. Cowe (Mrs)
Honorary Secretary

cc. Rod Alexander, Chair DMSA,
Councillors Graham Hutchison, Kevin Lang, Norman Work, Louise Young