

Arthurs Hill Fenham Streets for People

East / West Cycle Route – Proposals for Cedar Road - Bolbec Road - Gowland Avenue Junction and Nuns Moor Road Closure to Motor Vehicles

Introduction

Newcastle is one of 8 English cities chosen to be a 'Cycle Ambition City' – a status that brings funding from the Department for Transport to invest in infrastructure that enables and encourages active travel (walking and cycling) as an alternative to driving.

Active travel is linked to improved health & wellbeing, better air quality, increased road safety and social cohesion benefits – a recent report to the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee describes the background and policy context to cycling in Newcastle and provides some monitoring and performance data:

<https://democracy.newcastle.gov.uk/documents/s138843/Cycling%20scrutiny.pdf>

The Streets for People project is one of the themes contained within our Cycle City Ambition Funding application. The project aims to help neighbourhoods identify opportunities for making walking, cycling and other sustainable forms of travel easier, safer and more attractive. The focus of Streets for People is the inner-city suburbs to the north, east and west of the city centre – Jesmond, Heaton into Ouseburn and Arthurs Hill into Fenham. The project is split into these three neighbourhoods and each is supported with its own identity, plans and a stakeholder group (Reference Group).

Based on the experiences, insights and ideas collected as part of a survey about what it's like getting around in Arthurs Hill Fenham (conducted in 2016), along with survey data on travel patterns in the area (details available here - <https://streetsforpeople.org.uk/arthurshill-fenham/previous-engagement/>), the Streets for People Reference Group worked with an Urban Designer to come up with a set of proposals to address the issues that were raised. This is known as the Neighbourhood Plan. The proposed Junction improvements on Cedar Road, Bolbec Avenue, Gowland Avenue and the closure to motor vehicles on Nuns Moor Road is one of the schemes in the Neighbourhood Plan. The neighbourhood plan is available online - https://streetsforpeopleorguk.files.wordpress.com/2017/11/s4p-ahf-neighbourhood-plan-updated-17_11_17.pdf

The Neighbourhood Plan was the subject of a public consultation in October and November 2017, the findings were published in March 2018 – <https://streetsforpeopleorguk.files.wordpress.com/2018/03/arthurshill-fenham-findings-march-2018.pdf>

Based on the feedback from the public engagement exercises, and recognising that changes were required on many schemes, we prioritised schemes for delivery. This followed meetings with the Reference Group and discussions with Ward Members in December 2018. Within the budget available, the following schemes were prioritised for delivery for the Streets for People project in Arthur's Hill Fenham:

- Westgate Road east of Beaconsfield Street – a links to school scheme to provide a signalised crossing over Westgate Road improving the route to Westgate Hill Primary School.
- East / West Cycle Route - The objective of this scheme is to create a new cycle route linking up residential areas with schools and businesses and to the City Centre.
The western section of this route – from Two Ball Lonnen to Nuns Moor Road would include taking the approach of creating a 'Quietway' with traffic calming, side road treatments and closing the road to vehicles at Nuns Moor Road to provide a low traffic route that would prioritise people on foot and on bike. There is a lack of space within the highway to provide a segregated cycle route in between these points.
The eastern section of the route – from Nuns Moor Road towards Barrack Road has been included in a recently successful European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) bid that will enable a greater part of the route to be

implemented. Designs are now being worked up, combing the transport and flood resilience treatments. More details will be available in the coming months.

The Streets for People initiative relates strongly to the City Council's policies to promote sustainable and active travel, to improve public health, reduce inactivity and to improve air quality. Work to develop the prioritised schemes is underway and have recently held a drop-in session to give residents an opportunity to look at the proposals for Bolbec Road and Gowland Avenue junctions and an experimental road closure to motor vehicles at Nuns Moor Road. People on foot and bike would still be able to pass through.

During the drop-in event and in subsequent correspondence several comments and concerns have been expressed by stakeholders. We have summarised these comments and outlined our response below:

1. *"What is 'Streets for People'? Where did it come from? I don't think anyone supports the closure on Nuns Moor Road"*

Our reply:

The aim of the project is for neighbourhoods to identify opportunities for making walking, cycling and other sustainable forms of travel easier, safer and more attractive and bring this together within the context of a Neighbourhood Plan. Further details of the Streets for People project can be found in the introduction above and on the website www.streetsforpeople.org.uk

The Streets for People Arthur's Hill and Fenham Neighbourhood Plan contained the idea of the East / West Cycle route through the area of which the closure of Nuns Moor Road to motor vehicles was one of the specific interventions that would enable this route to be developed as a 'Quietway'.

The Neighbourhood Plan was subject to a public consultation in October and November 2017 where we received over 300 responses, in relation to the closure to motorised vehicles on Nuns Moor Road we received broadly the same number both supporting or expressing concerns. In addition, we received letters of support that were signed by residents on Nuns Moor Road supporting the idea of a trial of the closure. Similarly, both support and opposition was expressed at the recent drop-in event.

2. *"What is a Modal Filter?"*

Our reply:

A modal filter is another name for closing a road to motorised traffic, where people on foot and on bike are able to pass through. The information leaflet that was delivered to households prior to the drop-in event contained a picture showing an example of a modal filter elsewhere in the city.

A modal filter is a means of reducing traffic along this route which in turn will help to improve safety, and importantly provide a more attractive environment for people to walk and cycle.

It is proposed that the closure of Nuns Moor Road would be implemented on an experimental basis (detailed in Point 3 below).

3. *What is an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order and how will the impact of the proposed changes be monitored?*

Our reply:

An Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) is a legal process that is used to 'trial' interventions in order that their effectiveness can be monitored and reviewed ahead of a final decision as to whether to make the intervention permanent or not. They have been used elsewhere in the city and nationally.

In this case, as set out above, the aim of the scheme is to reduce the level of vehicular traffic on Nuns Moor Road. This will help prioritise people on foot and bike in what is currently a busy location near a number of schools, as well as helping to facilitate the development of an East / West cycle route through the area.

As part of the development of the neighbourhood plan, traffic surveys were undertaken in a number of locations around the area to provide an understanding of how people currently move around the area and inform the development of the proposals to date. Alongside the ETRO, a monitoring plan is also being developed in order that the a more detailed impact of the proposals can be observed. This will include further traffic surveys ahead of the implementation of the closure on immediately nearby streets, and periodically afterward to help understand any re-routing of traffic. Both pre and post surveys of use of Nuns Moor Road by people on foot and bike will also be undertaken in addition parking surveys to determine any displacement / additional concerns are arising.

If concerns or issues are noted through the monitoring, then changes to the scheme can be made via the ETRO process. The process also enables objections to the scheme to be made and for these to be considered, ahead of a final decision on the scheme being made by the City Council.

4. *“Dame Allan’s School are responsible for a lot of the traffic volume and parking in this area. This will be increased if the closure goes ahead”*

Our Reply:

We are aware that parking and traffic associated with travel to and from Dame Allan’s School is a key concern in the area. We are also aware that they encourage people travelling to the school to use alternatives to cars where possible, provide a range of bus services themselves and also request that anyone travelling to the school parks legally and responsibly. The City Council are in discussion with the school and hope to work together on a School Travel Plan in the near future which will help to encourage more staff and students to travel some or all of their journey by walking, riding bikes or by using public transport.

The closure will not prevent vehicles accessing the area around the school from the wider road network, although it is anticipated that there may be a period of adjustment whilst people find alternative routes around the area. It is expected that traffic that is merely ‘passing through’ is unlikely to continue using Cedar Road and other local roads to do so.

The intention of the scheme is to close the road to vehicles and thereby reduce traffic volume on Nuns Moor Road. That in turn will help improve safety and provide a more attractive environment for people to walk and cycle. In addition, the proposals do include some additional parking restrictions to help deal with illegal and antisocial parking issues that already occur.

5. *“The proposed road closure at Nuns Moor Road will displace traffic that will cause problems on the surrounding streets”*

Our reply:

The idea behind the scheme is to prioritise more vulnerable road users at this location, as well as helping to reduce the overall level of vehicular traffic on what was identified in the Arthur’s Hill and Fenham Streets for People Neighbourhood Plan as the east / west cycle route.

Whilst vehicle access around the area is still possible, the intention is that over time motorised through traffic is discouraged from using Nuns Moor Road and the surrounding local streets, and that vehicles will use roads which are more appropriate for them.

Undoubtedly, given the number of destinations in the immediate vicinity, there may well be other changes in travel, routing and parking patterns associated with this scheme over time.

Following the drop-in event and correspondence received, we are considering some further proposals that may help to mitigate some of the concerns that have been raised. We will be writing to residents about these in more detail in the coming weeks.

A key point to note is that the closure to motor vehicles at Nuns Moor Road is proposed to be introduced using an ETRO and that a monitoring plan will be put in place by which to gauge the effectiveness of the scheme as discussed in point 3.

6. *“There will be a negative impact on business and local shops”*

Our reply:

In our experience these concerns are not borne out once schemes are implemented. Vehicle access through the area is available via roads more suited for vehicular traffic.

The scheme aims to encourage people to walk or cycle in the local area and the evidence shows that businesses benefit from this.

7. *“This will cause disruption to people’s journeys to school, places of worship (Church and Mosque) and for emergency service vehicles”*

Our reply:

If people in motor vehicles have a reason to be in the area, then they still can reach their destinations using alternatives routes to Nuns Moor Road. By closing the road to vehicles at this location, priority will be given to people on foot or bike and it is expected that this would help to encourage people to undertake more trips on foot and bike particularly for local journeys. As outlined earlier, it is expected that over time people in cars simply passing through the area will no longer do so.

Drivers of emergency service vehicles will be well aware of the closure and will plan their routes accordingly.

8. *“I am worried that parking will increase on the surrounding streets”*

Our reply:

The scheme aims to improve safety and provide a more attractive environment for people to walk and cycle. The proposals do include some additional parking restrictions to help deal with illegal and antisocial parking issues that already occur, although overall, this would not result in a significant amount of parking displacement.

This is something that will be monitored and reviewed as part of the ETRO going forward and if problems do arise, then there are mechanisms in place for additional restrictions or measures such as permit parking schemes to be considered.

9. *“The proposals will make it difficult for myself and my neighbours to park outside our houses if the kerb on the junction is built out and yellow lines put in”*

Our reply:

The proposed build out and parking restrictions are to help improve road safety for all road users by reducing crossing widths over roads and to help maintain visibility for everyone. Acknowledging this may impact on a small number of properties, we do note that the main purpose of the public highway is to provide for the movement of people, goods and services and not for parking cars. It is known that most properties in the area have private drives and garages for the parking of vehicles and alternative parking can be found beyond these restrictions. We can confirm that it is permissible to stop temporarily on double yellow lines to load and unload vehicles.

10. *“Nuns Moor Crescent will become a turning circle”*

Our reply:

The closure will be signed in advance on all approaches. We would expect that motorists would either not take the route, or not take it again after realising it is a no through road. Nuns Moor Crescent is one of the areas where we will be monitoring the impact on traffic flows and parking and seeking feedback from residents on the impact of the changes. It is also likely that some additional traffic calming in this area will feature in the eastern section of the east / west cycle route scheme that will be coming forward soon.

11. *“Where the footways are to be built out at the junction on Gowland and Bolbec, will there be effective deterrents, to stop people from parking on them”*

Our reply:

The proposed no waiting at any time restrictions (double yellow lines) mean it will be illegal to park on the side of the road with lines marked, including on build-outs and footpaths. The installation of some street furniture (bollards and traffic sign posts), will further deter parking on these areas.

12. *“Will there be increased parking enforcement in this area as yellow lines are ignored”*

Our reply:

We will request that parking enforcement colleagues increase their presence in the area to tackle illegal parking.

13. *“We think the proposal for Nuns moor road will increase safety, reduce congestion, air pollution, traffic speeds and volume, and address the conflict between drivers and the damage to residents’ cars by passing vehicles”*

Our reply:

Yes, in addition to the benefits of removing through traffic, we also believe that the scheme will encourage more people to walk and ride bikes, which will be of benefit to people’s health and the environment.

14. *“This is a long time coming as the road is far too narrow, people park on both sides of the road, buses, coaches and lorries attempt to go along this route”*

Our reply:

We would expect that the proposals will help to improve road safety in the area.

15. *“The justification for the scheme is not clear and the known costs outweigh the benefits”*

Our reply:

We do not agree with this. The justifications for making these proposals are to provide safer spaces for people to walk and cycle so they consider it as a reasonable and viable alternative to how they choose to get around.

This is not a ‘traffic management’ scheme and has not been designed to address a specific road safety issue. The scheme is designed in accordance with the principles of the Streets for People project outlined earlier and aims to link local services and destinations with residential areas with a safe and convenient walking and cycling route. One key point to make is that we are trying to design for people on bikes who may be less confident. This scheme has not been designed for “middle aged men in lycra”; it has been designed to enable people, whether they are young or old, to safely travel about or through their local area on foot or by bike. Reducing vehicular traffic on this route is a key way to do this based on experience both here in Newcastle and elsewhere.

16. *“Congestion that will be caused has the potential to increase noise and air pollution”*

Our Reply:

The Streets for People initiative relates strongly to the City Council’s policies to promote sustainable and active travel, to improve public health, reduce inactivity and to improve air quality. The data we have shows that poor air quality is caused by vehicular traffic and many of those trips, given their length, could have been undertaken without using a vehicle. Providing facilities for walking and cycling is proven over time to increase the number of

trips made by those modes of transport. Improved walking and cycling facilities are critically important in improving air quality.

17. *“This can be mitigated by better public transport access to a wider range of destinations”*

Our reply:

The area is already relatively well served by regular bus services with routes taking in some or all of Cedar Road, Fenham Hall Drive, Linden Avenue, Hadrian Road, Wingrove Road and Studley Terrace. Dame Allen School also provide a range of services for their pupils at school times.

Under current legislation the City Council has limited ability to influence public transport provision as generally bus services are provided by commercial operators at their own risk. The Council cannot require operators to amend routes to serve additional locations.