

Heaton & Ouseburn Streets for People

Heaton Road Improvement Proposals

Introduction

Newcastle is one of 8 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 Finance 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>

Sustrans also produce a bi-annual report on cycling trends in the City - [Bike Life Newcastle](#) and other data sources can be viewed on the [Road Traffic Collision Dashboard](#) and at [Vehicle and Cycle Counter Data](#)

The Streets for People project aims to help neighbourhoods identify opportunities for making walking, cycling and other sustainable forms of travel easier, safer and more attractive. The project is led by Newcastle City Council and funded by a grant obtained from the Department for Transport's Cycle City Ambition Fund. 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 'reference group' of local residents and / or interested stakeholders who have supported the development of proposals.

Based on the experiences, insights and ideas collected as part of a survey about what it's like getting around in Heaton & Ouseburn (conducted in 2016), the Streets for People Reference Group have 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 cycle track along Heaton Road is one of the schemes in the Neighbourhood Plan.

The Neighbourhood Plan was the subject of a public consultation in October and November 2017 that drew 2,644 responses from people, the findings were published in March 2018 – www.streetsforpeople.org.uk

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 Heaton & Ouseburn.

- Tintern Crescent closure to vehicles.
- Stannington Grove / Stannington Avenue change of priority.
- Sefton Avenue closure to vehicles.
- Heaton Road cycle track extension to the Corner House.

The proposal to provide segregated cycle tracks on both sides of Heaton Road would connect the existing provision on the south end of Heaton Road with the Corner House. The proposal is a Streets for People initiative and relates strongly to the City Council's policies to promote sustainable and active travel, to improve Public Health and reduce inactivity and to improve air quality. Despite this, there are a number of comments and concerns that have been expressed by residents. We have summarised many of the points that have been made to us below, outlining our response.

Questions, concerns and comments about the Heaton Road Proposals

1. ***“Loss of all parking facilities on one side of the road (east side) forces all vehicles to park in inadequate spaces on the opposite side of the road (west side)”***

Our reply:

Following the public’s feedback on the proposed Heaton Road Cycle Track design showcased in 2017, the location of parking laybys was adjusted to provide on street parking facilities closer to the properties with the least access to garages and drives. Nearly all the properties on the east side of Heaton Road have off street parking, which is why the west side of Heaton Road was chosen for the parking facilities.

2. ***“Loss of parking – the proposals will reduce the number of unrestricted parking spaces on Heaton Road by approximately 74. What plans are being made to provide alternatives for the patrons of the People’s Theatre, Places of Worship, the Sports Ground etc?”***

Our reply:

While the City Council has no obligation to provide parking, we do recognise that changes will put some strain on the available space but also recognise that attractions such as the People’s Theatre, Places of Worship and the Sports Ground often attract people at different times so turnover of parking will occur.

The main purpose of the public highway is to provide for the movement of people, goods and services, not for parking cars. By providing safer, sustainable travel opportunities for patrons to access these venues we consider that over time, less parking will be required.

3. ***“Displaced parking will cause problems in other streets – competition over spaces will create community tensions.”***

Our reply:

We will review and monitor the situation going forward and if problems do arise, then there are mechanisms in place for permit parking schemes to be considered.

4. ***“How will deliveries, skips and tradesmen’s vehicles be possible?”***

Our reply:

Double yellow lines do not restrict loading and unloading for short periods of time. Skips require a permit from the Council, they could still be located on the highway, in the allocated parking bays. The preference for skip locations is usually off the highway, within the curtilage of the property and our permit system seeks to manage this.

5. ***“Will there be arrangements made for disabled residents to park outside their homes?”***

Our reply:

The City Council has set criteria for applications for disabled bay markings and these are considered on a case by case basis. More information is available on the Council’s web site www.newcastle.gov.uk .

6. “What is the justification for making these proposals? – what are the figures for the current and predicted use of cycles on Heaton Road? What are the accident figures? Traffic counts?”

Our reply:

The justification 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. It 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 builds on the existing facilities in the area, linking local services and destinations with safe, segregated cycle facilities. 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.

Our automated cycle counters on Heaton Road where the existing cycle route is in place, show use of up to 400 cycle trips on weekdays (total trips in both directions).

7. “Air pollution – the proposals will increase air pollution on Heaton Road by making the street more congested – traffic will be held up every time someone stops to get out of a taxi or a delivery vehicle double parks on Heaton Road. Reducing the number of lanes at the Corner House with no left turn past the Theatre will cause standing traffic and add to air pollution – has an AQ impact assessment been done?”

Our reply:

There is currently only one traffic lane in each direction. Under the proposed scheme, the layout of the road remains largely the same as it is now. Our proposals would change very wide lanes to be narrowed to provide safe cycling space in each direction. If vehicles do stop temporarily, delays will be for a short amount of time and shouldn’t cause undue inconvenience.

The existing left turn lane from Heaton Road into the A1058 Jesmond Road is often obstructed by parked vehicles so we don’t believe that this proposal will lead to a significant loss of capacity at this location. Furthermore, 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 safe space 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.

8. “The proposals will make it more dangerous – I will be reversing off my drive into the path of cyclists, blocking both lanes ...”

Our reply:

The highway code recommends (as does the Council) reversing onto and driving off your drive. In our experience of installing schemes like this in other parts of the City and the experience of other councils in the country, the arrangements in our proposal will work well and do not compromise safety.

9. “Children using the cycle track will not be seen above the walls and hedges”

Our reply:

Children riding bikes on the cycle track will be on a protected space beyond the footpath. This means that they will be further away from people’s drives than is currently the case. There is no reason why they would be less visible than they currently would be, riding on the footway. The council strongly recommends that drivers reverse onto their drives so that their visibility is improved when driving off.

10. “The position of the cycle track, between the footpath and the parked cars will mean that drivers must negotiate oncoming cyclists when entering or exiting their cars. The risk of car doors opening onto the cycle track and passengers getting hit by bikes.”

Our reply:

The position of the cycle track does not increase any of the risks described over the existing situation. These risks exist currently with car doors opening onto the highway where people could be cycling. All road users need to be vigilant and look out for each other.

11. “Double yellow lines outside my house is unacceptable, having to park on the other side of a busy road is not safe for me to unload older people and children and cross a busy road to get to my house.”

Our reply:

It is permissible to stop temporarily on double yellow lines to load and unload. Our choice of location of parking has been informed to ensure that the majority of properties affected by the scheme have drives or garages or both. That said, we are aware of a couple of exceptions and have endeavoured to include a few more spaces on the opposite side of the road to accommodate their needs.

12. “How have the risks of getting on and off driveways been assessed?”

Our reply:

We have successfully installed arrangements like this in other parts of the city and this type of arrangement has not been seen to increase risk.

Safety is an intrinsic consideration in all highway design schemes.

13. “Pedestrians have now become 3rd class citizens with no meaningful rights on the footpaths they are now forced to share with cyclists.”

Our reply:

The cycle facilities in this scheme are almost entirely segregated from all other users. Shared surfaces have been minimised in this scheme and only included where there were no alternatives. Unlike the retail area cycle track, this track is at carriageway level not at footpath level.

The City Council advocates tolerance and patience between all users of public spaces.

14. Heaton Road retail area – the arrangements are dangerous for all users and little used. The traffic lights have created congestion when there wasn't any when the roundabout was there. There is conflict between pedestrians and cyclists. Cyclists are still using the road and holding traffic up.

Our reply:

We believe that the road layout is safer for all users. One thing to consider about the new junction is that the provision for people on foot, particularly if they have mobility or visual impairments, has been considerably enhanced by providing signal-controlled crossing facilities where none previously existed.

Again, we must stress that the City Council promotes a tolerant mix of users in public spaces and believes that if people use the facilities as intended, there will be no conflict. People on bikes are perfectly entitled to ride on the road if they wish too.

15. "Particularly dangerous for children outside St Teresa's School, children wandering into the cycle track."

Our reply:

We worked closely with the school when the scheme was designed. We've had positive feedback from parents, children and the school about the facilities and a number of comments from children of school age who want to see the cycle track extended.

16. "Car parking and cycle track are too close as car doors open onto the cycle track ..."

Our reply:

We expect drivers and passengers in cars to look before opening their car doors. People riding bikes also need to be vigilant. Currently, the same danger from car doors exists on Heaton Road and on most roads in the City.

17. "Cyclists currently riding on Heaton Road show no regard for the safety of themselves or other users."

Our reply:

Most people riding bikes in the City ride in a responsible manner, and generally, we wouldn't envisage that people on bikes would wish to injure themselves or others whilst undertaking journeys.

18. "Existing, painted cycle lane on Heaton is good enough, repainting them would be a popular compromise and would not lead to a loss of parking."

Our reply:

We are trying to promote cycling for all confidence levels from ages 8 to 80 – protected space is the standard that we aspire to in order to encourage cycling. It's our experience that where ever we have introduced segregated space, cycling numbers have increased significantly and in particular, that reported concerns about people riding bikes on pavements has reduced.

19. “Enforcement of current infringements would negate the need for further investment – fly parking at Friday prayers, parking in the cycle lane, cyclists jumping red lights and riding on pavements, speeding etc”

Our reply:

In the current layout, parking in the advisory cycle lane is not enforceable.

Under the new layout, the opportunities for parking infringements will be minimised and enforceable.

We are aware of examples of both car drivers and those on bikes jumping red lights, it is wrong and illegal.

20. “It’s not clear where this idea has come from, what is the history of this Heaton Road proposal”

Our reply:

The idea for the proposed cycle track grew from community engagement work in early 2016 when residents from across Heaton and Ouseburn wards contributed to an exercise to discover the best and worst of getting around the area. Around 1,500 people took part in a survey that was promoted for 7 weeks. Those ideas were converted into proposals in a collaboration between a ‘Reference Group’ of interested volunteers and an independent Urban Designer. Their aim was to maximise the opportunities to encourage walking and cycling for shorter, local journeys, better connecting people to local services and destinations.

A neighbourhood plan was drawn up and first aired with the wider public at the end of 2017. The feedback gathered in that exercise was used to help prioritise the schemes in the Neighbourhood Plan and influence refinements which are now out for consultation.

Those refinements include reinstating the traffic signals at St Gabriel’s / Heaton Road to the plan, withdrawal of the idea to close Alexandra and Cartington to motor traffic and a rethink on the location of parking lay-bys. The drop in, held on 11th July 2019, is part of the ‘informal’ consultation process which also includes the next stage where residents, councillors, the emergency services and other stakeholders are invited to comment by letter. Consultation is expected to last several months before a decision to implement the scheme is taken by the Council.

21. “Residents should decide whether or not this goes ahead”

Our reply:

Whether a cycle track will be built on Heaton Road is a decision for the Council. Residents’ needs and views are important to the Council and are given full consideration in the decision-making process, but decisions must also account for the needs and views of all stakeholders and align with the Council’s overarching policy aims and objectives. These policies make it clear that improved infrastructure for sustainable and active ways of getting around is something that we will deliver.

22. “The proposals will benefit children cycling to school on Heaton Road and to the shops and the park”

Our reply:

Yes, we think they will, and we are also aiming to attract people of all ages and abilities to take up cycling or cycle more with the benefit of these facilities.

23. “The scheme is a starting point for connecting to schools and work places across the Coast Road”

Our reply:

We believe so and are trying to promote sustainable connectivity with local services. The Heaton Road facilities are an important contribution.

24. “Creating safe cycling space benefits cyclists and pedestrians”

Our reply:

We believe so, and that it will add benefits for all road users.

25. “Great news for the school run and children cycling to school independently”

Our reply:

It’s a long-standing council policy to create safer routes to schools to help tackle congestion at peak times.

26. “Good news for those cycling after dark with much better street lighting than the parks.”

Our reply:

It’s important that people feel safe riding bikes all year round, including dark mornings and nights – we aim to encourage cycling all year round.

27. “The proposals will encourage people to cycle rather than drive which means there is less traffic, less congestion and less pollution.”

Our reply:

We have designed this scheme in line with local and national policies that encourage people to walk, cycle and use public transport.

The principle of this scheme is to reallocate road space to better meet the needs of all users.

28. *“This scheme will encourage active travel which is important because physical inactivity is a public health crisis.”*

Our reply:

Active travel is an everyday way of building exercise into day to day life that reaps benefits for all ages.

29. *“Less traffic encourages more tolerant use of public space and improves community relations”*

Our reply:

One of the outcomes of installing cycling facilities is to convert some local car journeys to sustainable modes. There is good evidence from other cities in the UK and in Europe, that less traffic is better for all of us.

30. *“Reconsider the bends in the cycle track, can’t presume that motorists will give way, so some cyclists won’t use the track at all.”*

Our reply:

The bends in the cycle track are designed to make the route safer and maintain segregation.

31. *“Too many households have too many cars.”*

Our reply:

Part of the aim of these projects is to give people alternatives to driving particularly for shorter trips.

32. *“Can the existing parking permit scheme in Holderness Road be extended to evenings and weekends?”*

We will explore this proposal.

33. *“Cycle parking could be provided at the People’s Theatre & Corner House”*

Our reply:

We hope to create a local legacy fund from Streets for People funding to meet requests for more cycle parking and way finding. We can also engage with local businesses and services to connect them to existing schemes and offers.

34. *“Can the Council say / publish more about the benefits of cycling and the increase in numbers to counter all the social media about how it’s a waste of money?”*

Our reply:

We agree that cycling and walking need more exposure to support its growth and popularity. The Council aims to play its part through its partnerships with cycling and walking organisations and events and also by promoting positive stories on our web site and social media. Newcastle City Council have been part of the Bike Life project in conjunction with Sustrans that seeks to investigate public attitudes to cycling and investing in cycle schemes. More information is available at www.sustrans.org.uk/bikelife.

35. “Could more be done to encourage residents of Heaton Road to use their drives?”

Our reply:

This scheme encourages the use of drives as less on street parking is available.

36. “More needs to be done to ensure the safety of pedestrians, enforce pavement parking and speed restrictions”

Our reply:

These proposals do aim to address all these concerns – segregated space to protect pedestrians, double yellow lines to control irresponsible parking and narrower lanes to reduce speeds.

Please note. Enforcement of moving traffic violations is the responsibility of the Police.

37. “Ensure adequate signage for pedestrians and cyclists especially at spots like bus stops and junctions.”

Our reply:

Appropriate signage will be installed as part of the scheme.

38. “Could traffic lights be added to the Alexandra Road / Heaton Road junction?”

Our reply:

We will look into the feasibility of this idea with colleagues but would note it would have to be part of the wider strategy to ensure signals are connected to those around them.

39. “The connection up to Jesmond Academy (Heaton Manor) should be a priority”

Our reply:

This connection features in our Local Walking & Cycling Plan and is subject to future funding availability. This proposal would take the facilities much closer.

40. “Can a yellow box be considered for the exit from Burlington Gardens to Heaton Road?”

Our reply:

Unfortunately, a yellow box can't be installed within the area of a controlled crossing. However, we will monitor the operation of the junction and seek mitigations if problems arise.

41. “Can more be done to improve the comfort of pedestrians? Confined to existing footpaths, many with overgrown and overhanging bushes taking up much of the width, the clearance of this vegetation should be part of these plans.”

Our reply:

Overhanging vegetation is the responsibility of the householder. When the Council is aware of issues, residents can be contacted and asked to resolve the issue, and if this doesn't take place, the council can take the necessary action and charge the householder for the work.

42. “What can be done to maximise parking on Heaton Road and in the nearby area? Is it possible that Jesmond Academy (Heaton Manor) might be approached to find out if their car park could offer event parking for nearby venues?”

The scheme has sought to maximise the amount of on street parking that can be provided while also providing segregated cycle lanes, although it is worth reiterating that the public highway's function is to move people not provide car parking. In relation to the venues sharing car parks, we think this idea is worth exploring further and will contact local stakeholders.

43. “Why is the design for the junction of Alexandra & Heaton Road different to the other junctions? Would be better if there was room for a car across the cycle lane on the raised table to improve visibility and safer exit from Alexandra”

Our reply:

Lack of space meant that this junction had to be designed differently. Unfortunately, we can't replicate the design of other side roads.

44. “Accessibility of the drawings – clearer annotations to interpret the drawing and make the position of traffic lights and other facilities clearer.”

Our reply:

Thank you for the feedback, we will endeavour to take your comments on board.

45. Consider making Heaton Road 20mph.

Our reply:

This is being discussed in conjunction with colleagues in traffic management at the City Council and would be subject to a Traffic Regulation Order Legal Process if it is taken forward.