

Jesmond Streets for People

Osborne Road / North Jesmond Avenue 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 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>

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 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 Jesmond (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 planned junction improvements at Osborne Road / North Jesmond Avenue are one of the schemes in the Neighbourhood Plan.

The Neighbourhood Plan was the subject of a public consultation in October and November 2017, 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 Jesmond:

- Moorfield
- Osborne Road (Haldane to Holly)
- Norham Place
- Osborne Road / North Jesmond Avenue junction improvements
- St Georges Terrace

We are in process of progressing our prioritised schemes and have recently held a drop-in session to give residents an opportunity to look at the proposals for improved facilities for people on foot and on bikes at the junction of Osborne Road and North Jesmond Avenue.

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 Osborne Road / North Jesmond Avenue Proposals

1. ***“What is the evidence / rationale to support the need for this scheme?”***

“The proposals are an over engineered solution to a non-existent problem – the current arrangements are appropriate and suitable for all users. The pedestrian refuges are adequate, the 90-degree corner on Osborne Road has a 20-mph speed which is adhered to, it is safe and comfortable to cycle on Osborne Road and make all turning manoeuvres.”

Our reply:

The reasons 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.

Improvements in this location were first conceived back in 2015 as a follow on to the successful Acorn Road scheme. The existing crossing facilities were identified as requiring upgrading as they were inconsistent with DfT guidelines.

Available data confirms that average speeds just after the 90 degree corner, are a little over 20 mph.

In 2017, in the Streets for People Neighbourhood Plan, this location was again identified as a weak point in the wider walking / cycling network from the Acorn Road / St George’s Terrace area into North Jesmond Avenue and onto Friday Fields Lane.

The proposal has been enhanced from the original scheme, as part of the Streets for People project, to improve the design and provide additional safer crossing movements. The proposal also improves the provision for people on bikes by allowing them to make turning movements within their own phase of the traffic signal operation.

The signalised junction gives vehicles leaving North Jesmond Avenue their own phase in the signals to enable them to turn safely into Osborne Road.

2. ***“The pedestrian crossings will lead to standing traffic and tail backs on Osborne Road and North Jesmond Avenue causing congestion and air pollution. Drivers will use adjacent side streets to create rat runs to avoid queueing at the traffic lights. Residents won’t be able to get on or off their drives.”***

Our reply:

The traffic signal junction is designed to operate on a demand priority basis. In general, it is envisaged that Osborne Road would have priority until either a person on foot, a person on a bike, or a vehicle exiting North Jesmond Avenue approached the junction and were detected (or pressed the call button) to register their demand.

No significant issues in the operation of the junction are expected including queues at the pedestrian crossings which might lead to drivers seeking short cuts. However, the operation of the junction will be monitored and reviewed if issues are identified.

We have commissioned some modelling of the junction proposals and will update this statement with the findings when they are available.

3. *“The additional pressures from traffic using the Tennis Club and the Nursery have not been considered.”*

Our reply:

The scheme has been designed in full knowledge of the location of the Tennis Club and Nursery but ultimately, it has been devised to prioritise the movement of people on foot and by bike to help encourage and facilitate a shift to more journeys being undertaken by sustainable and active modes of transport. Hopefully more journeys to the Tennis Club and Nursery will be made on foot and by bike when the improvements have been made.

4. *“The cost is excessive and there are more deserving projects in an around the area that could benefit.”*

Our reply:

The funding for the scheme has been provided by a DfT ringfenced grant for pedestrian and cycling improvements. It is capital funding for new infrastructure and can't be spent on maintenance projects.

The estimated cost of the scheme is typical for the installation of a light controlled junction of this size.

In our community generated Streets for People Needs Analysis of 2016, Osborne Road was the number one road that people highlighted for problems and issues with getting around.

This is one of 3 locations on Osborne Road that Streets for People and other programmes are seeking to address so we don't believe that there are any more deserving locations.

5. *“The consultation process is flawed; the proposals have been developed in secrecy. The scheme is unpopular with residents and their opinions carry the greatest weight.”*

Our reply:

The required permissions and legal orders for junction improvements in this location were gained in 2016 but not implemented through lack of funding. The principle of those improvements was rolled forward into the Streets for People Neighbourhood Plan because the location was consistent with the Streets for People Needs Analysis, a drawing and permissions were in place and Streets for People had the funding available.

There have been two large public consultations during the Streets for People process

However, since the original drawing was made, design standards and best practise have moved on and the Council's Highway Engineers have updated the original proposal from two linked pedestrian crossings to a signalised junction.

The new design offers significantly better opportunities for all modes to safely, and independently move through it.

Under current Department for Transport regulations, there is no additional requirement for further, formal consultation or more legal approvals on the revised scheme and all original permissions still stand.

We held the drop-in session and leafletted the area to raise awareness of the changes to the design at the request of your local councillors.

6. *“Spending public money on cycling is a waste – cyclists will continue to ride on the pavements endangering pedestrians, they routinely break the law. The cycling arrangements on Acorn Road are dangerous.”*

Our reply:

For all the reasons outlined in the introduction to this note, the City Council believes that investing in cycling is money well spent, leading to better public health and environmental outcomes.

Cycling on the pavement is illegal and not a practise that we condone however, cyclists tell us that the one of the reasons they do use footpaths is because they feel unsafe on the roads – therefore, investing in safe infrastructure for cycling, creates safer spaces for pedestrians too.

We disagree that cycling on Acorn Road is dangerous, cycling contra flow is common place in cities all over the country and works well in other locations in Newcastle such as Brandling Park. Since the scheme was introduced, we have no evidence of an increase in collisions.

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

7. *“The scheme will cause accidents. motorists will jump the lights out of frustration and run pedestrians down. Cyclists won’t obey the lights and will be run down on the cycle gate crossing Osborne Road towards North Jesmond Avenue.”*

Our reply:

As previously described, each mode – pedestrians, cyclists and drivers - will each have their own phase at the junction.

Cyclists crossing Osborne Road into North Jesmond Avenue on the cycle track will be directed by the traffic signals. Cyclists choosing to ignore the signals cross at their own risk, the design provides for the safe management of all turning movements and we hope that cyclists will see the benefits and comply.

Typically, a pedestrian crossing will close down traffic movements for 10 seconds to allow someone to cross. Our experience around the city is that drivers are comfortable with this time frame and respect the needs of pedestrians. There are pedestrian crossings in many locations down Osborne Road and across the city that are well respected by drivers, we don’t see this being any different.

In addition, it should be highlighted that jumping the lights is a traffic offence and any person committing this would be liable to prosecution, particularly if a collision did ensue.

8. *“The scheme will improve pedestrian safety, particularly for children walking to and from school.”*

Our reply:

One of the reasons that we value this scheme is because this is an important route towards the shops and services on St George’s Terrace and Acorn Road and on towards West Jesmond Primary School. The crossings will also help people walking or cycling to the Tennis Club or the Nursery on North Jesmond Avenue.

9. *“The raised tables contribute to improving accessibility around Jesmond.”*

Our reply:

Raised tables are designed to improve the pedestrian and wheelchair users’ experience by negating the need for dropped kerbs at road ends. Raised tables have the added benefit of providing some traffic calming properties by providing a visual and physical cue for drivers to slow down as they approach and drive onto the table.

10. *“The constant noise and light pollution from pedestrian crossings are an abomination in a conservation area.”*

Our reply:

There are no regulations that would prevent the installation of pedestrian crossings in conservation areas, road safety always takes precedence.

11. *“The scheme contributes to safety for people riding bikes on Osborne Road and makes junctions safer.”*

Our reply:

Streets for People aims to create safer and more welcoming cycling and walking environments to encourage less confident or more vulnerable people to choose active travel options for shorter journeys.

Segregated provision, separating different users, is the safest and most comfortable arrangement we can achieve and where space is available, it will be the standard we pursue. We also believe that where segregated provision is available, people on bikes will be less likely to ride on footpaths. They are however legally entitled to ride on the road should they choose to do so.

12. *“What impact will the proposals have on parking?”*

Our reply:

Most of the scheme falls within the existing double yellow lined area so has no impact on current parking capacity. While not necessary in order to introduce the scheme, the layout could be improved particularly for people on foot, if the existing on-street parking on Tavistock Road was shortened by approximately 1 No. car length on both sides. This would mean the loss of approximately 2 No. parking spaces. This would be the subject of a separate Traffic Regulation Order process.

13. “We are concerned that the short cut through the Clinic Grounds from Osborne Road to Towers Avenue will become a more popular rat run if this scheme goes ahead.”

Our reply:

We understand that this short cut is currently used by some residents of this area, as there are no through roads, the only people who might consider this short cut would be residents themselves. We will undertake to contact the Clinic to advise them that residents are using their car park as a short cut but ultimately, this is private land.

14. “How long would it take to build a scheme like this?”

We are currently developing the construction programme and we’ll update this page on our web site.

Additional concerns / challenges for the detailed design:

15. “Can the design address how to add safe exits from Newborough Crescent turning right onto Osborne Road?”

Our reply:

The new junction will introduce breaks in the traffic which should facilitate better exit opportunities turning right. However, we will monitor the operation of the junction and look for mitigations if issues arise.

16. “Can the design consider and improve access to driveways close to the pedestrian crossings?”

Our reply:

The proposals will not disadvantage the residents living close to the pedestrian crossings. The crossings will introduce natural breaks in the traffic flow which will create new opportunities for access and egress to driveways.

17. “Can thought be given to whether there is any need for cycle facilities to extend beyond the crossing on NJA?”

Our reply:

We don’t believe there is any need for specific, dedicated cycling facilities within the 20mph, residential North Jesmond area. Although there maybe opportunities to sign the route towards Friday Fields Lane and onto Jesmond Dene Road and Matthew Bank.