

Low Traffic Neighbourhood set to be approved by council

The City of Edinburgh Council is likely to approve what they say is their first Low Traffic Neighbourhood (LTN) later this week.

Those who oppose the council's plans to introduce the LTN in the west of Edinburgh at East Craigs are concerned there has not been any consultation on the proposals.

The council has said these measures are being brought in under Covid-19 emergency regulations, and because they are, they do not require any lengthy consultation. The residents say this is questionable and it may yet be the subject of legal action.

The administration has promised to review every scheme introduced as it develops (and they say that they have already

made changes to the East Craigs layout to 'better reflect local residents' concerns'). They say that LTNs could be a valuable component of a city-wide transport network, 'particularly for keeping through traffic away from primarily residential housing areas and facilities such as schools where improved safety conditions were desired'. The proposals have been amended by an extension to the opening hours of the bus gate which will, if approved, operate east bound from 3.00pm to 6.30pm and 7.30am to 9.30am. The administration have also confirmed there will be more explanation of traffic calming on Craigs Crescent and Craigs Avenue.

Local residents say there is no evidence of rat running through the neighbourhood, and many are vehemently opposed to the introduction of stopped up roads, modal filters and the like which the council say will make the area safer for those not using vehicles. 1600 residents signed a petition against the LTN earlier in the year, and hundreds turned up at a public meeting in late August.



LTNs

The introduction of LTNs is nothing new, but it is something which has been talked about more since the beginning of the pandemic, now that local authorities are being asked to create more space on roads and streets for walking and cycling. As it stands, the Scottish Government advice remains to avoid public transport if at all possible.

Laura Laker, a Journalist and writer who specialises in cycling and urban transport has written [here](#) about LTNs and what she believes to be the ten most historic in Britain. She says they are nothing new, and argues that although motor vehicles and emergency vehicles can still access every address, they operate to make short trips by vehicle less convenient.



Moray Place and Great Stuart Street which is claimed to be Edinburgh's first Low Traffic Neighbourhood segregated by bollards PHOTO ©2020 The Edinburgh Reporter

Laker also claims that the New Town in Edinburgh is the site of what was perhaps the first Low Traffic Neighbourhood – there are bollards there to stop vehicles using what was a favourite rat run through Moray Place. It is now an excellent through route for bikes and those on foot. But, moving bollards on George Street which cost the council millions were the subject of an Edinburgh Evening News campaign which forced a U-Turn.

The bollards on the Royal Mile which were heralded with such unbridled joy earlier this year are currently not operating as they are controlled from the City Chambers where few staff are working due to the pandemic.

This is possibly the most exciting piece of video we have ever shot... featuring [@CllrCMiller](#) on the Royal Mile at 10.31 am this morning... pic.twitter.com/S75z2n0QWf

– Edinburgh Reporter (@EdinReporter) [March 2, 2020](#)



Craigs Road. Photo: Martin P. McAdam www.martinmccadam.com

CONSULTATIONS

In ordinary times, consultations on traffic measures can take years. The Roseburn to Leith City Centre West to East Link (CCWEL) is an example of one piece of cycling infrastructure which has been many years in the process. The council first approved the preliminary design in December 2016. [SPOKES](#) Lothian, the cycling campaign group, reported only yesterday that they expect the first section of it to open shortly at Picardy Place – this will go from the bus station at Elder

Street to Picardy Place, but it is seen as an important start.

Some work is also being conducted on Melville Street which is also part of the same project. But a small number of objectors caused a two year delay and a hearing by the Reporter, following which the Roseburn link – which ought to have been the first stage – has been given the green light and may start in 2021.

The LTN at East Craigs could well have taken years to introduce with traffic modelling and paper plans. Instead the council will adopt the Try then Modify approach that the £5 million funding and encouragement from The Scottish Government allows. The only thing that can get in their way is local objection and possible legal intervention.

<https://twitter.com/SpokesLothian/status/1315641149667803136?s=20>

FULL COUNCIL APPROVAL REQUIRED

The proposals for the East Craigs LTN were approved by the Transport and Environment Committee at their [September](#) meeting, but after the 7 to 4 vote, dissenting councillor Susan Webber, who is the Conservative transport spokesperson, asked that the matter was referred to a full council meeting for their approval.

As the political make-up of the council is largely reflected in the Transport and Environment Committee, it is highly likely that the proposal might be approved when the council [meets online](#) on Thursday. What could possibly go wrong?

OBJECTIONS AND POLITICS

There are many East Craigs residents who cite their own reasons for objecting to the plans. One group opposing the road traffic measures have raised around £6,500 towards their

campaign to [Stop the East Craigs LTN](#). Some of this money may have been spent on obtaining a legal opinion from an unnamed counsel, a member of the Scottish Bar.

There were various deputations to the September Transport and Environment Committee, setting out their differing views, including parts of counsel's opinion, which you can read [here](#).

Ahead of the full council meeting where these matters could be approved, possibly without too much further discussion, these are some of the comments and politicians' standpoints. The LTNs at Featherhall and in Leith, where the plans are more welcome also seem to be making progress.



Cllr Mark Brown At the public meeting in Gyle Park 28 August 2020 ©2020 The Edinburgh Reporter

Local councillor Mark Brown (Conservative) says that he backs the 'halt and consult' approach and will continue to do so at the upcoming council meeting.

One resident of Fauldburn at the southern end of the area, refutes the idea that Craigs Road is a rat run, saying that she uses the east-west road as a way of getting to her son's house on Craigs Avenue to the south, and that a three minute journey will now take her 20 minutes.

Cllr Ricky Henderson (Labour) has replied to that resident saying that he is 'generally supportive of measures that help to improve local environments for pedestrians and communities', but that these schemes 'must be well designed and robust to deliver any intended benefits'.

Cllr Joanna Mowat (Conservative) has said that she will not be voting for these measures to introduce a Low Traffic Neighbourhood on Thursday.

Another local resident shared a photo of a narrow pavement – which is on Maybury Road – saying that walking along this road

is a hazard. 'As there is no space at all to move out the way safely if someone else walking towards you..council should use the money to fix these issues'.

The pavement certainly looks narrow, overgrown and uneven. What the council has done on this road is create a temporary road crossing over Maybury Road controlled by traffic lights on a road where traffic is quite heavy and quite fast.



Maybury Road. Photo: Martin P. McAdam www.martinmcadam.com

SPICE briefing

Another contributor pointed out that The Scottish Government has just published a briefing paper on Low Traffic Neighbourhoods, asking if it could be a briefing paper for the council meeting. They also said: 'It quotes photos copyrighted to Sustrans which makes me wonder if sustrans wrote it. Traffic evaporation numbers are modelled (ie predictions which supported the scheme going ahead) not actuals. No mention of LTNs which have been suspended'.

The briefing is by SPICE which is The Scottish Parliament Information Centre. The body 'provides impartial, factual, accurate information and analysis to Members in support of Scottish Parliament parliamentary business'.

Sustrans said they do not brief SPICE as they (SPICE) are 'perfectly capable of doing their own research'.

The SPICE briefing can be [read in full here](#). It explains what is meant by the term LTN, and also explains the concept of traffic evaporation which generally follows their introduction. It also explains: "LTNs do not require anyone to walk or cycle who cannot, or does not want, to do so.

"While one of the aims of an LTN is to make walking and cycling more attractive, there is no requirement for anyone to

walk or cycle. All properties remain accessible by motorised vehicles.”

MAYBURY ROAD and TRAFFIC MONITORING

Supporting the view of the narrow pavements on Maybury Road, another resident said that Maybury Road could easily be widened with some simple maintenance and clearing. (We think they mean the pavements not the road which is a four lane connector between Maybury Roundabout and Barnton Roundabout). It is also pointed out that the pathways around Fauldburn and Bughtlin are in a very poor state and not easily negotiated by buggies, prams or wheelchairs, and the resident says they ‘know they are not comfortable for cyclists’.

Residents say they have instructed traffic monitoring cables to be laid on Craigs Road, Craigs Gardens, and North Gyle Road, and a warning was issued to all residents to drive carefully and according to the speed limits. The residents group has applied to the council for permission to install the monitoring cables.



Craigs Road near Craigmount High School PHOTO ©2020 The Edinburgh Reporter

POLITICAL STANCE

Cllr Scott Arthur (Labour) who comments on a lot of transport measures in the city, and who uses his bike to commute to university where he is a professor in the school of Energy, Geoscience, Infrastructure and Society, said in a tweet about his own Ward that the council is consulting on reducing the speed limit on Oxfangs Avenue to 20mph.

He then continued: “This is NOT part of #SpacesforPeople so the community has a say.” Conservative Transport spokesperson Cllr Susan Webber immediately suggested this was an admission

from the SNP/Labour administration that 'when it comes to #spacesforpeople communities don't matter'.

Those residents who oppose the LTN say that they would welcome support from any politician, although it should be said that at any full council meeting it is unusual for a councillor to break the political whip.

Residents say: "Some might say you'd have to be a Monster Raving Loony to support the LTN."

As we have said, they believe that they can count on the support of Cllr Mark Brown and Susan Webber who are members of the Conservative Group. Given that the Conservative Group have roundly opposed any of the recent traffic measures taken by the council, they are probably correct, but they can, we think, count on the support of all Conservative councillors as a group.

There are no Green councillors in the area and despite requests they have not responded to any requests as to their current stance, except for Cllr Mary Campbell who said she will listen to the debate before making a decision. They will, as a group we believe, vote for the LTN.

Independent councillor Claire Bridgman may oppose the LTN. She told The Edinburgh Reporter previously: "My main concern is the effect on emergency vehicles. North Gyle and Craigmount is not a High Street area, but people here generally work out of town and need to use their cars to pick up children or get to work.

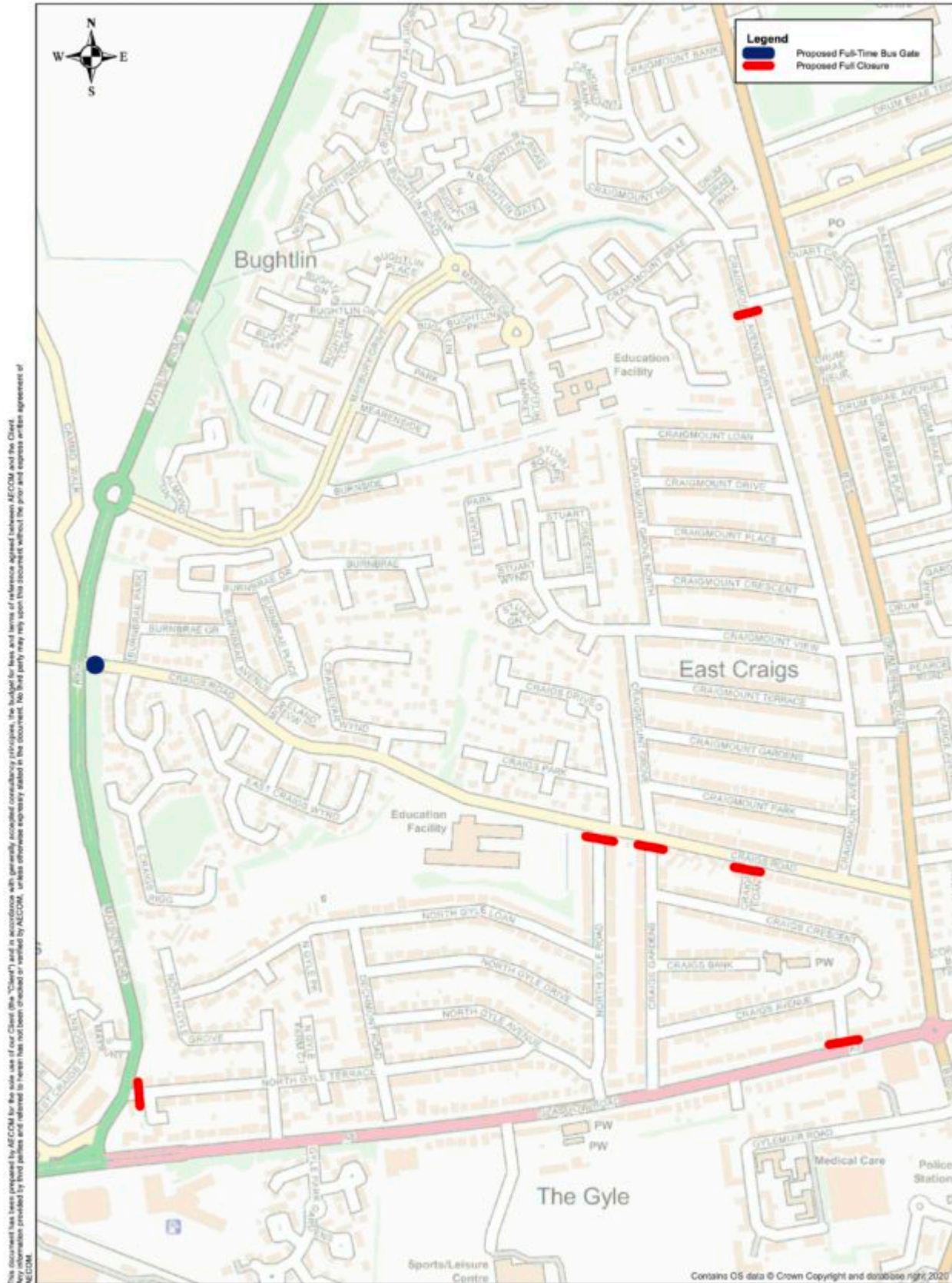
"It is great to ban cars, but sometimes that is the only way to pick up children. My feeling is that locals do not have the confidence that this will be temporary. There are a number of submissions against it but it looks as if it will go through. During rush hour it is a real challenge to turn right, and with all these engines running there will be an increase in emissions. The backlog will be worse, and as for using it as a

rat run – you have to know the area to use it as that! But there is some merit in possibly closing off North Gyle Terrace at Maybury Road. They should stop that road up.”



North Gyle Terrace. Photo: Martin P. McAdam
www.martinmcadam.com

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Proposals for the East Craigs LTN

There are no local Labour councillors. As part of the coalition they will vote with the SNP as the administration to

approve it.

The Liberal Democrats as a party oppose the move – and that includes the local MSP and MP as well as councillors. It is however, only the councillors who have a say in what happens in relation to transport matters.

The SNP Group along with the Labour group runs the council. There are no **local** SNP councillors, but it is clear that since this is an administration proposal the group will vote in support of it. SNP Cllr Lesley Macinnes is the Transport Convener. She spoke passionately at a public meeting of several hundred local residents in Gyle Park trying to explain why she believed it would be a good move for the area, but was speaking to an audience who had already made up their minds they did not want the LTN. They told Cllr Macinnes to go and put one in her own ward at Gilmerton, and reminded her that there was no such thing as rat-running and pointed out that there had been no consultation on the matter.

As a matter of record, while there may not have been any consultation on this plan, there has been considerable work carried out over the years on the proposed West Edinburgh Link, including traffic modelling which the council say influenced their decision to introduce the traffic measures in the adjoining East Craigs area.

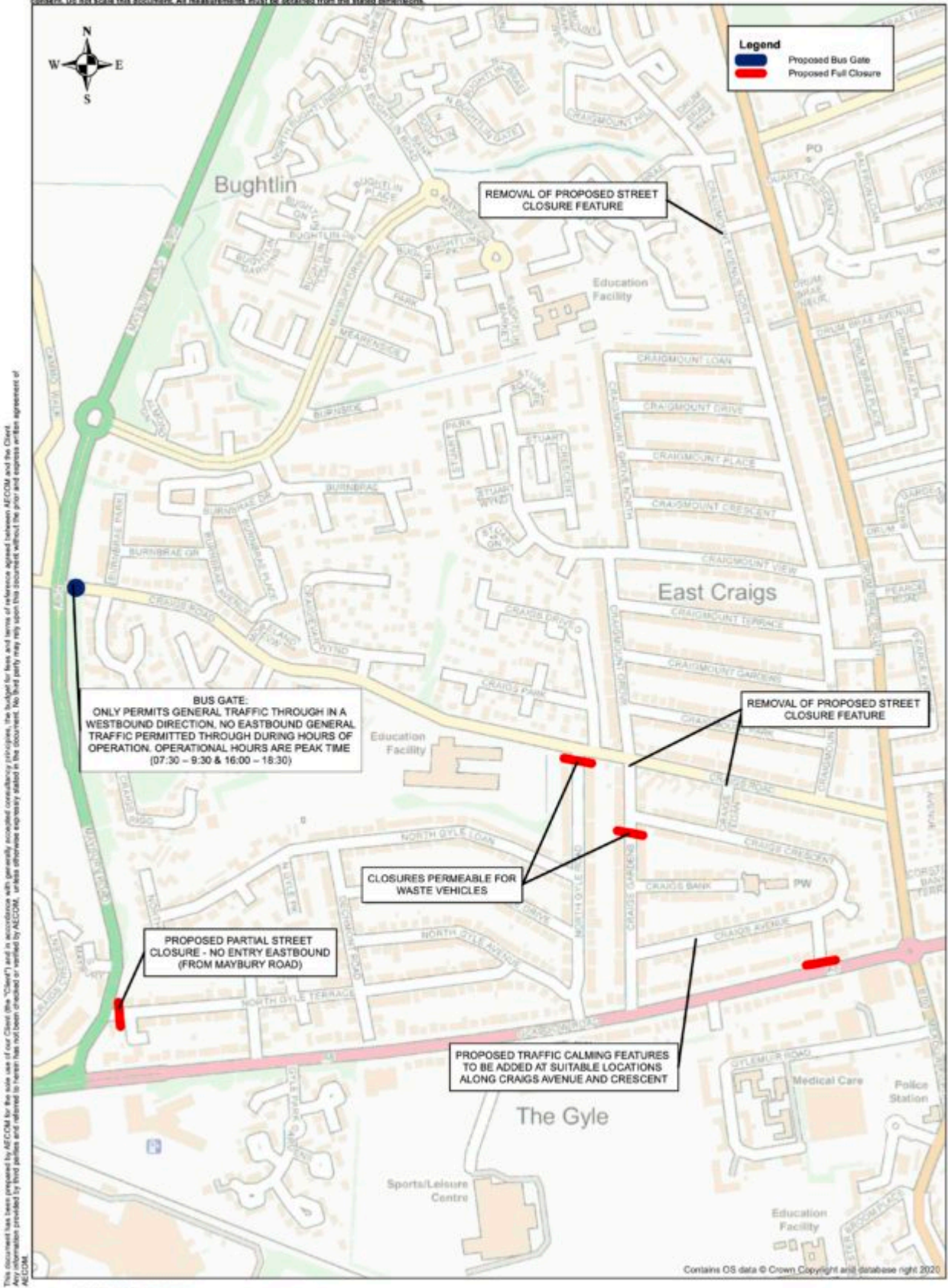
There is a petition to remove Council Leader Adam McVey and Cllr Macinnes from their roles [here](#) with over 1200 signatures. Morningside shopkeepers have complained about the emergency measures introduced in their area which they say affect their businesses. All current Covid-19 measures are here on the [council website](#).

[SPOKES](#) have a list of schemes which the council may act upon under Covid-19 emergency procedures. They have expressed their delight at the way the various cycle and active travel schemes they have advocated over the last four decades are now being

introduced.

At the recent meeting of the [Policy and Sustainability Committee](#) there was an update on West Edinburgh and progressing a vision for the area and the infrastructure which will be needed for planned and possible development there in the next decade.

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PROJECT PIE WEL
PROJECT NUMBER 60579456
SHEET TITLE APPENDIX 2 - REVISED EAST CRAIGS LTN DESIGN
CLIENT CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

Proposals for the East Craigs LTN

WHAT NEXT?

It was agreed at the Transport and Environment Committee that

If the LTN design for East Craigs is approved, officers will:

5.1.1 Notify all local residents of the final plan, setting out the rationale for the changes made and indicating the proposed date for installation;

5.1.2 Install the measures required for LTN implementation;

5.1.3 Undertake on-going engagement with residents, ward Councillors and Community Councils;

5.1.4 Monitor implementation (e.g. traffic surveys) of the LTN; and

5.1.5 Review implementation and make changes if appropriate.

5.2 Engagement on the proposal to introduce a permanent scheme under the WEL

project will continue in the Autumn and will be subject to all of the normal processes

associated with implementing a TR0.

5.3 Officers will continue to develop plans for the other schemes outlined above. In

recognition of the relatively complex nature of the projects compared with other

Spaces for People interventions, it is proposed to carry out an enhanced

Notification process with wider publicity and more time for responses. After this

process the projects will be presented to Committee for approval.

5.4 The next Spaces for People update will be presented to Committee on 12

November 2020.

It is expected that the measures will be put in place quite quickly if the council is allowed to approve them. Watch the

council meeting live on the webcast [here](#).