

Council to discuss road safety plans for East Craigs

The council's Transport and Environment Committee on Thursday will discuss traffic measures in East Craigs which are now to be presented in two separate parts.

The council's plans to have a Low Traffic Neighbourhood (LTN) in the area fell foul of opposition by some residents earlier in the year. In particular the Get Edinburgh Moving campaign (GEM) obtained a legal opinion indicating that it would be unlawful for the council to introduce the measures under the Covid-19 emergency umbrella. A selection from that opinion has been aired in deputations since.

The question turns on whether the LTN is an answer to a public danger (Covid-19) to make ways of getting about safer for residents envisaged by the government funding. It is regarded by those who oppose it as a project that the council had on its clipboard before the pandemic began, and it is the view of the lawyer engaged by GEM that it oversteps the mark. The Edinburgh Reporter understands that the legal advice obtained by the council accords largely with that view.

The proposals are to have a compromise of sorts. There are two parts to proposed action in this area of West Edinburgh – one is to introduce some temporary measures near the High School, and the other is to use what is known as an Experimental Traffic Order (ETRO) process to bring in at least some of the LTN measures with a consultation element.



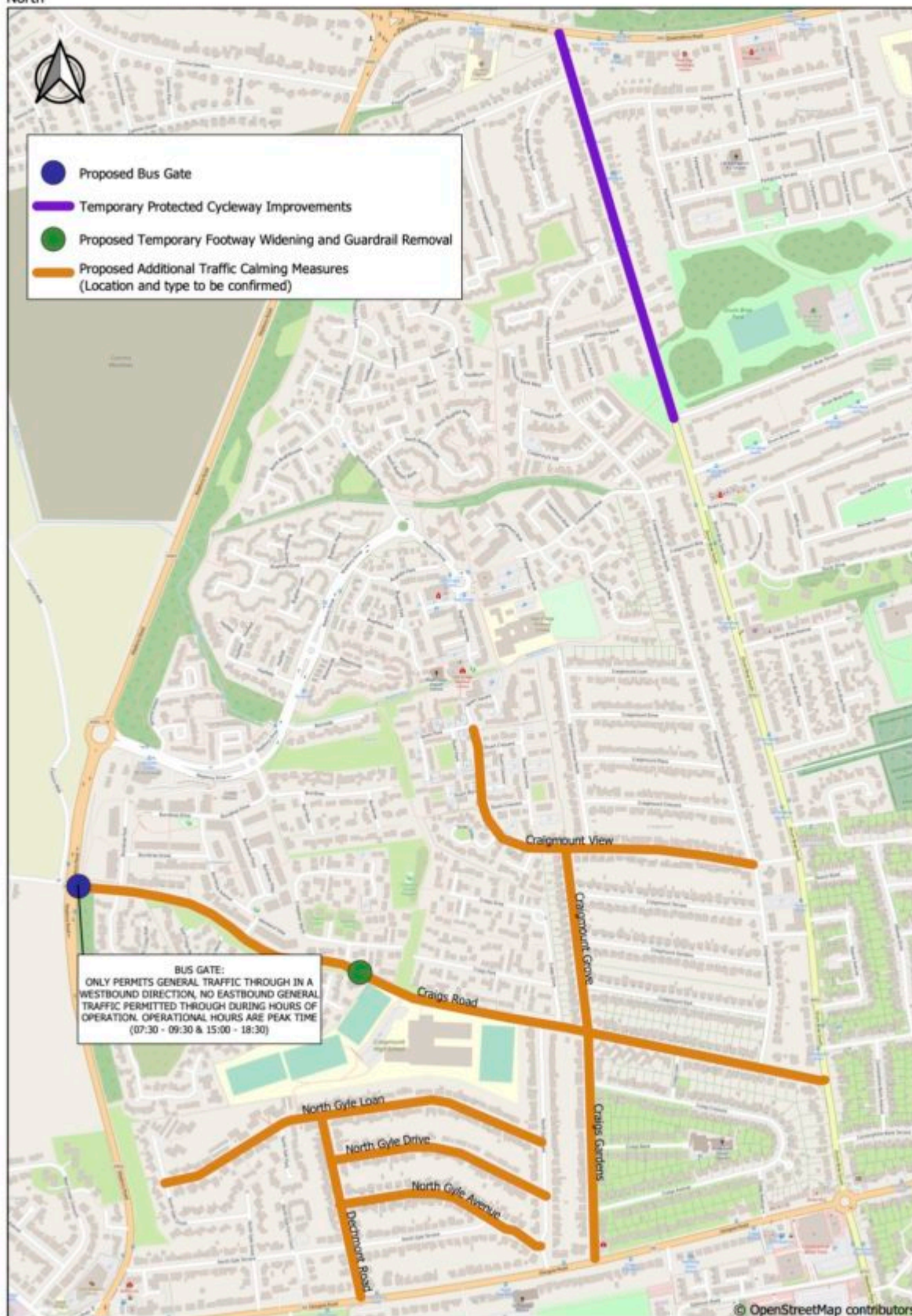
Craigmount High School. Photo: Martin P. McAdam
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The Transport Convener Lesley Macinnes said: "There has been a lot of concern among locals about the way we were doing this. GEM have said how pleased they were with the meeting we had and that it was good to have an opportunity to exchange views. I think we demonstrated our willingness to recalibrate even after amending the original proposals, and to listen to local concerns. But it is worth saying that there is a lot of support for the original concept of an LTN.

"Most housing estates from the 1980s onwards live in an LTN almost by default, using one entry and one exit point. A lot of the worries around emergency vehicle access are already dealt with in other parts of the city and don't seem to cause any major problems. I hope we can deliver this project which will honestly have real benefits for the residents. These mean enormous benefits for those walking, cycling and wheeling have free access and it means just a little inconvenience to car and other drivers. Once the concept is in and proven people tend to be very happy with it."

Appendix 2

Option 2a: Improved safety around Craigmount High School, including bus gate, wider traffic calming and cycleway on Drum Brae North



High School Safety measures

The option which is recommended to councillors is intended to increase safety at Craigmount High School on Craigs Road as there are 'large numbers of people' coming together at the start and end of the school day. In Edinburgh the council has already put such Spaces for People measures in place at more than half of schools. The idea is to create more space for those on foot near the school, and there would be a bus gate in operation at the beginning and end of the day. A guardrail near the school and a nearby path would be removed.

Council officers say that the reduction in traffic as a result of the bus gate on Maybury Road will make Craigs Road safer. And on surrounding roads and streets there will be traffic calming measures to slow traffic down – but crucially none of the streets would be closed off to vehicular traffic. One of the matters of concern is that the council's survey data shows traffic speeds in excess of 20mph. The final part of the plan is to create a segregated cycleway along Drum Brae North to help those using bikes instead of public transport.

The vegetation on Maybury Road which is an obstruction on the pavements on either side of the road will be cut back (some of that work has already been carried out). Some parts of the land at the side of the road are not owned by the council but they will advise landowners to cut the vegetation back or take action themselves in due course.

East Craigs Experimental Traffic Regulation Order

The council say that the East Craigs Experimental Traffic Regulation Order will allow for the consultation that local residents desire. This is the council officers say 'the right transport and mobility concept for that part of the city given

its strategic linkages to Cammo, Maybury and Corstorphine and the Gyle’.

The council had already identified the need for this when researching the West Edinburgh Link project.

This will allow the LTN measures to be created but changed during the lifetime of the order, and council hopes that the public consultation will be enriched by witnessing the traffic plans in place, with the opportunity to make any objections afterwards. And the council confirms that it would carefully consider any objections. The cost of the ETR0 will be met from the West Edinburgh Link project funding and not the Covid-19 funding. This would have to be followed in due course with a permanent traffic order when the final plan is agreed.

A council officer said: “We are more than aware of significant local concern and that people have felt that we were introducing a scheme that we had planned before the pandemic. We are also mindful of the direct legal challenge, so we are taking a two pronged approach and are not undertaking the whole LTN under the Covid-19 emergency powers.”



East Craigs Edinburgh PHOTO ©2020 The Edinburgh Reporter

Community Councils

Steve Kerr the Chair of Corstorphine Community Council (CCC) pointed out that at no point to date has the council approached either CCC or the Drum Brae Community Council to approve the plans at any stage, even though there would appear to be a statutory responsibility on the council to do so.

He said: “We are pleased that consultation with residents is now hot-wired into the process. The council has obviously downgraded from their original intentions and I have already said that to introduce modal shift you have to bring people

with you. I commend the council for revising all these plans but it is still regrettable that it has got to this stage.

“At least the residents will now have the opportunity of having input. This is a better way and we hope as community representatives that we are involved in any future discussions. This is what we have asked for along Not to do so until now is a serious omission on the part of the council.”

The council obtained £5 million of funding from The Scottish Government earlier in the year at the point when the total fund was only £10 million. It was later increased to £30 million to introduce measures in towns and villages in Scotland to make it safer for people to walk, wheel and cycle. The package of funding is 100 per cent backing for local authorities to put pop up cycle lanes and wider footpaths in place and the money is administered by Sustrans.

The Transport Secretary Michael Matheson asked for ‘bold ambitious plans’ and said when introducing the measures on 28 April: “My officials are working with Sustrans and local authorities to help to ensure that people are able to walk, cycle and wheel safely during lockdown, including key workers who travel to work and people visiting shops for essential items or taking daily exercise. Doing that is important to support people’s health and wellbeing, and we need to provide more space for people to keep physically distancing in a safe way.”

The area around the west of the city at East Craigs has been a hotbed of citizen activism since the summer when they realised the council might be about to impose the LTN without any consultation. Many deputations to council and words written and spoken have ensued.

The council approved amended LTN plans at the last Transport and Environment committee meeting, but when the matter was referred to the full council, the administration called for a

delay while they mulled over their own legal opinion.

There is a short notification process for the temporary measures being introduced under Covid-19 measures to stakeholders before these are then put in place so these could come within a few weeks. The ETR0 process regarding the LTN will take just a little longer than that, but at least it appears that the council has found the route forward.

Opposition councillors

The opposition councillors from the Conservative Group on the Transport & Environment Committee have lodged amendments calling for 'full comprehensive consultation with the local community'. In the Conservative amendment it is noted that the council's own legal opinion indicates that using emergency measures to progress an LTN is neither 'proportionate or appropriate'. But they do concede that it is a good idea to address footway pinch points outside the High School and welcome the maintenance of vegetation on Maybury Road. The group also introduce mention of the path network in East Craigs and ask for it to be made safe underfoot.

The Liberal Democrat Group comments that this process has damaged relationships between the council and people living in East Craigs, North Gyle and Craigmount. They recommend that the council does not progress with the ETR0 but agree that the measures around the school should be introduced as well as the segregated cycle way on Drum Brae North. This last recommendation is interesting given that Liberal Democrat councillor Robert Aldridge said earlier in the year that he did not see how anyone could cycle up Drum Brae...

