

Calls for council to fix “deathtrap junction”

Charities Sight Scotland and Sight Scotland Veterans have called for improvements at a busy junction in North Edinburgh, but the Transport Convener has told The Edinburgh Reporter “limited funds should be targeted where they are most needed”.

The charities say that the pedestrian crossing facilities at the junction between Telford Road, Hillhouse Road and Strachan Road are not fit for purpose. Representatives met with the council to discuss proposals for upgrading and say they were surprised it has been removed from the council’s list.

Caroline Hedley, a Rehabilitation and Mobility Worker with Sight Scotland, explains: “This junction poses a major risk to anybody with visual impairment, and we are extremely worried that it will take a serious accident before any action is taken. Due to the complicated layout of the crossings, the poor pedestrian crossing facilities and the heavy fast-moving traffic, it is dangerous and inaccessible to most blind and partially sighted people.

“The pedestrian crossings do not have audible signals or revolving cones, and some are in need of basic repair. Also, there are few protective barriers at this junction which makes me as a sighted person feel very vulnerable, so I can’t

imagine how someone with vision impairment would feel. Strachan Road simply has no pedestrian crossing facility at all.

“As part of my job, I help blind and partially sighted people with their mobility, both indoor and out. We help them plan routes when going out, looking at hazards, and trying to ensure they know how to navigate the safest way to go if they have a medical appointment, for example, or just want to go to the shops. The biggest priority with a mobility assessment is safety. I have clients living close to this junction and I need to explain to them that the safest way to cross these roads is with sighted assistance, and this is absolutely essential for people who cannot see the red and green man. What makes matters worse is that Blackhall Medical Centre is located on the Hillhouse Road side of the junction.”

Craig Spalding, Chief Executive of Sight Scotland, and Sight Scotland Veterans, adds: “We are calling on the city of Edinburgh Council to upgrade this junction now before a serious accident occurs. How this junction has been taken off the upgrades list is beyond me; it is highly dangerous if not impossible for blind and partially sighted people to cross these roads independently. Poor crossing facilities like these could mean a person is more likely to stay at home, reducing their opportunity to move around in their home area. When a person’s mobility is impacted in this way, there is a knock-on effect both physically and mentally.”

Cllr Hal Osler, for Inverleith, comments: “When designing public spaces we need to think about the safety and accessibility for those most at risk, if we do this, it benefits us all. Unfortunately in Edinburgh we have too many junctions and crossings where the safety and accessibility of pedestrians was not considered as a design priority. It’s utterly shameful that this junction was removed from the list of upgrades and as a councillor I am appalled at the lack of thought for our most vulnerable pedestrians. If we truly

believe in the importance of safe active travel, and that pedestrians are top of the transport hierarchy, this needs to change.”

Cllr Scott Arthur, Transport and Environment Convener, said: “The Major Junctions Review aims to improve safety for people around the city. Helping vulnerable road users to travel safely is of particular importance, which is why Edinburgh Access Panel and Living Streets were key to engagement as part of the review.

“In order to best allocate limited funds we used a robust methodology to prioritise junctions most in need of improvement. This methodology included undertaking traffic, pedestrian and cycling surveys and reviewing the number of personal injury collisions, hazards and traffic speeds at junctions. The review recommendations were supported by all five of Edinburgh’s political parties, and I am expecting an update on the 40 junctions prioritised to be discussed at the January 2024 Transport and Environment Committee meeting.

“Whilst, following the prioritisation process, the Telford Junction was not included in the list of prioritised junctions, I have discussed it more recently with both the local Community Council and Council Officers. I agree that the missing crossing is a real concern, and the operation of the junction itself needs to be simplified for pedestrians. It remains the case, however, that all five of Edinburgh’s political parties agreed that the limited funds available should be targeted where they are most needed.”

