

Hundreds sign petition against A7 cycle path

Hundreds of people have signed a petition opposing proposals for a cycle path on a busy main route within hours of it going online.

The petition calling for Midlothian Council to drop plans to add dedicated cycle/walking paths to the A7 corridor between Sheriffhall Park and Ride and Main Street, Newtongrange, which are currently out for consultation, had more than 350 signatures by lunchtime today – 20 hours after it was launched on Change.org.

Objectors say the proposals would “serve a minority interest at the expense of the majority” arguing few cyclists will use it and that the route should, instead, be upgraded to a dual carriageway to serve the thousands of motorists who use it regularly.

The council launched a consultation on the proposals last month which closes for comment next week.

It says the new paths would “improve active travel connections making it easier for people to walk, wheel and cycle for their everyday journeys and to connect to public transport services more easily.”

And it points out there is no or limited provision for walking or cycling along the majority of the road.

However the petition says the A7 is one of the “only routes through the area with minimal restrictions to traffic flow”

It says: "Instead of reducing capacity by introducing cycle lanes, the road should be expanded to a dual carriageway to meet the growing demand for vehicle travel.

"The current proposal risks worsening traffic congestion and delays, negatively impacting commuters, local businesses, and the wider community."

A Midlothian Council spokesman said: "We are currently consulting with local people and communities about how to improve walking, wheeling, cycling and connecting with public transport for local journeys along the A7. Any decisions around active travel improvements along parts of the A7 will be informed by the outcome of the consultation, which closes on Sunday 30 March.

"We encourage people to complete the survey at www.midlothian.gov.uk/A7Active as, while we are aware of the petition, it has not been formally submitted and must meet specific requirements to be considered by the petitions committee."

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter