

## **DEPUTATION ON BEHALF OF BRIGHTONS AND ROSEFIELD RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION ON ITEM 7.7 TO THE MEETING OF THE TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE 11 NOVEMBER 2021**

My name is Diana Cairns and I am Chair of Brightons and Rosefield Residents' Association, which comprises around 200 households in Brighton Place and the surrounding streets. We have a group position on Portobello community council.

If the closure of Brunstane Road goes ahead, this area will be severely impacted. A survey of residents indicated that 92% of respondents opposed the closure of Brunstane Road and only 8% supported it.

The Council's ETRO consultation shows that an overwhelming majority of 77% of respondents oppose the closure of Brunstane Road and the community council's survey showed that 80% of respondents oppose it so public opinion on this matter is very clear.

Many people believe the council did not listen to their concerns at the first stage, that it is a done deal and so it appears to be. Despite the huge opposition to this plan the council seems hellbent on pushing ahead with this road closure.

The report recommends that objections be set aside, with no explanation as to why. This says it all - concerns of people living in this area have been - and continue to be - ignored. There has been a refusal to even try out alternatives to the total closure of Brunstane Road, such as a one-way system, traffic lights at the bridge or passing places.

Issues such as the fact that Brighton Place and Southfield Place are part of a safe route to school are not even mentioned. However, paragraph 4.11.1 in the report mentions damage to cars in Brunstane Road. This is clearly a case of putting property before people.

The report fails to address our concerns, which can be summarised as follows:

### **Displacement of traffic from Brunstane Road to Brighton Place**

Brunstane Road is one of only two north/south axes in and out of Portobello, the other being Brighton Place. Despite this, no mention is made in the report of the impact this closure would have on Brighton Place.

The report states that 2,200 vehicles per day currently travel up and down Brunstane Road. That traffic needs to go somewhere - you cannot just make it disappear.

If only half of that number of vehicles is diverted onto Brighton Place it will lead to an increase in traffic of 20%, i.e. 1,100 extra vehicles per day.

We know exactly what will happen as a result of the closure of Brunstane Road because when it was temporarily closed in August 2020 for utilities works Brighton Place experienced a huge increase in traffic volumes and there was rat-running on East Brighton Crescent and Lee Crescent.

### **Existing traffic problems in and around Brighton Place**

Brighton Place is a residential street and busy bus route with three services operating on it. Traffic tails back from the lights at the north end of the street as far as the railway bridge at the south end of Brighton Place. The rail bridge is a single-lane pinch-point that causes a bottle neck.

Traffic flow is curtailed by traffic lights at the south end of Southfield Place and the north end of Brighton Place where traffic on Portobello High Street is often at a standstill.

Southfield Place, a narrow street south of the rail bridge, has parking down both sides, which causes traffic chaos with two lanes of traffic plus buses trying to pass and queueing to get under the bridge.

A TRO to remove parking on one side of the street was supposed to be implemented this autumn but we have been informed that it will not happen until next autumn at the earliest. So, adding a potential minimum of 1,100 extra vehicles per day to this narrow street on a safe route to school is a recipe for disaster.

The Council's traffic survey recorded that 50% of vehicles exceed the 20 mph speed limit in the street. The situation is already unsafe and a child was knocked off his bike this summer in Southfield Place. Do we have to wait until there is a serious injury or a death before the Council takes action?

Lee Crescent and East Brighton Crescent residents are concerned that extra traffic in Brighton Place will result in these narrow streets being used as a possible rat-run if Brunstane Road is closed. This would cause congestion on these streets, one of which is home to a nursery, and increase the chance of accidents.

### **Lack of reliable data on which to base this decision**

Traffic counts were done on the two roads for only a few days at a time when traffic volumes have not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels. There is no reliable data on which a decision can be made.

Residents have stressed the need for a strategic survey of the whole local road network to determine which roads might be closed with the maximum benefit and the minimum disruption for the majority of residents rather than closing one road by demand and for the benefit of only the residents of that road.

No permanent closure of any local road should be undertaken without a thorough assessment at a time of normality of the impact on the whole of the Portobello road network.

### **Increased traffic on a safe route to school**

The report completely ignores the fact that Brighton Place is supposedly a safe route to and from a number of schools and nurseries used by a large number of children and parents twice a day, five days a week.

Additional traffic displaced from Brunstane Road to Brighton Place will lead to increased traffic volumes, queues and congestion, increasing the risk of accidents for children, cyclists and pedestrians using this route.

## **Air pollution**

Increased traffic volumes with queues of cars with their engines idling will increase harmful emissions in Brighton Place for all those walking and cycling as well as for people living in the street.

The report states that air quality is within legal limits at the nearest monitoring station in Portobello High Street but this is some distance away.

The rail bridge between Brighton Place and Southfield Place is a tunnel where harmful emissions are likely to linger and concentrate. Our requests to have the air quality measured here have been refused, despite a transport officer admitting that any increase in traffic resulting from the closure of Brunstane Road could impact upon the current air quality in Brighton Place.

What we would like to know is at what point air quality monitoring might be considered and what action will be taken if toxic emissions are found to exceed safe levels?

## **Detrimental impact on quality of life, health and wellbeing for residents in the Brightons area**

This ETRO has been dressed up as aiming to create a “quiet neighbourhood” but as this will be at the expense of the people living in the area around Brighton Place - a residential area - presumably we do not merit having a “quiet neighbourhood”?

Paragraph 4.11.3 in the report claims that for Brunstane Road residents: “The proposal will make it safer for residents and active travel users, improving quality of life and community interaction.”

The exact opposite is true for the Brightons area, as already described. Overall, what will benefit a relatively small number of people in Brunstane Road will disadvantage a much larger number of residents elsewhere.

## **Environmental impact**

To get around the closure of Brunstane Road cars will have to drive further for longer, adding to traffic congestion on other routes, generating more toxic emissions and worsening air pollution. Overall there would be a negative environmental impact from this proposal.

## **Lack of contingency planning/mitigation measures**

In raising our concerns we have been trying to encourage preventative measures to limit any negative impacts if this closure goes ahead but there has been no contingency or mitigation planning done by the council, despite repeated requests.

All concerns are brushed aside by the statement that the closure is a trial but it is not clear what is meant by that. Does it mean that if we experience the problems that are anticipated Brunstane Road will be re-opened?

As you know, HGVs are to be banned from turning left onto Harry Lauder Road from Portobello High Street, meaning an increase in the number of HGVs travelling up the Brighton Place route to access Milton Road, posing an increased risk of accidents in Brighton Place and Southfield Place.

The cumulative impacts of this change added to the estimated increase in traffic, plus the parking problems in Southfield Place, mean that a perfect storm of road safety risks is brewing for people using this route. As previously stated, the situation here is already unsafe.

We suggest that either the closure of Brunstane Road be postponed until the TRO for Southfield Place is implemented or the TRO for Southfield Place needs to be fast-tracked and implemented before the closure of Brunstane Road.

### **In summary**

We remain strongly opposed to this closure. It is ill-thought out, divisive and not based on any reliable data. We ask that for all the reasons stated above you please vote against the closure and agree to seek out a fairer solution for all, based on reliable data collected at a normal time.

However, if you decide to go ahead:

- The TRO for Southfield Place should be implemented first.
- The option to re-open Brunstane Road should be kept on the table throughout the trial period.
- Meaningful data must be collected for the whole of the trial period on the impacts of this closure and this should be analysed and shared in an open and transparent manner with residents.
- We would like an assurance that any problems that arise will be fixed immediately.
- We would like the council to engage with residents in a collaborative and open-minded approach to problem-solving.

# Brightons and Rosefield area traffic problems



To Duddingston and St. John's Primary Schools

- Traffic lights
- Queuing traffic
- Rat running along East Brighton/Lee Crescents
- Safe route to school
- Parking both sides of Southfield Place
- Narrow, single lane underpass to Sir Harry Lauder Road and railway

**Brightons' and Rosefield Residents Association – Traffic Problems**

Southfield Place - congestion



Brighton Place - rail bridge congestion



Brighton Place - traffic queue





Brighton Place - traffic queue

