

Deputation on Greenbank to Meadows Quiet Route.

Blackford Safe Routes

On behalf of:

James Gillespie's Primary School Parent Council

Bruntsfield Primary School Parent Council

Sciennes Primary School Parent Council

St Peter's Primary School Parent Council

Background to the route

The community group known as Blackford Safe Routes initially designed plans for a "Liveable Neighbourhood" or "Low Traffic Neighbourhood" (LTN) based around quiet routes to James Gillespie's Primary School, recognising the danger to the school children from traffic on routes to school, as well as increased pollution levels. This plan won the support of Sustrans before the Covid pandemic and has been modified and re-used to constitute the Spaces for People Greenbank to Meadows Quiet Route.

The benefits of the creation of the LTN are

- Reduced use of residential routes as "rat-runs" - particularly outside schools.
- Reduced noise, pollution and traffic danger, particularly outside school but also on residential streets.
- Opportunities for place-making - planters, benches, street trees and greenery.
- Modal filters which open roads to walking, wheeling and cycling but prevent use of certain roads as through-routes by motorised vehicles, are cheap, modifiable and approved for use elsewhere by emergency services.
- Continuous footways allow priority in residential areas for pedestrians and slow down traffic increasing safety.
- Less isolation, more sociable streets - allows more opportunities for neighbours and children to socialise and take part in unstructured play.
- As the Spaces for People Quiet Route is a temporary trial, the trial itself will act as a form of consultation, and a more accessible form of consultation at that, as everyone can see how it works
- Low Traffic Neighbourhood benefits everyone who lives in the area - those who wish to walk more safely, and those who wish to have more shareable community spaces.

Evidence in Favour of LTNs

Evidence shows that when safe alternatives to driving are provided, many people who are able to, stop driving, and instead take up more sustainable forms of transport - this is known as “Traffic evaporation”. There is a huge latent demand of those who wish to walk, wheel or cycle for some journeys, but currently won’t because of traffic danger.

<https://londonlivingstreets.com/2019/07/11/evaporating-traffic-impact-of-low-traffic-neighbourhoods-on-main-roads/>

<https://spice-spotlight.scot/2020/10/07/low-traffic-neighbourhoods/>

Reduced traffic volumes in residential areas are shown to support local businesses in many cases:

<https://theconversation.com/do-the-sums-bicycle-friendly-changes-are-good-business-58213>

In established LTN areas such as Waltham Forest, the opposition to the LTN pre-installation was 44% - yet after the bedding-in period, those wishing to revert the changes is now only 1.7% - installing LTNs is ultimately a “vote winner”

<https://www.sustrans.org.uk/our-blog/opinion/2020/october/backlash-over-new-street-changes-is-inevitable-but-it-can-be-managed/>

Covid-specific reasons to support

The government guidance on managing the Covid-19 pandemic has been around maintaining distance where possible through “social distancing” to prevent transmission of the virus. As a result, fewer people are using public transport and more are using cars which is causing congestion and pollution. It is important that people are given safe alternatives to using cars in the city. The Quiet Route would allow parents with children to walk or cycle to school more safely, and return home more safely. From the anecdotal evidence gathered from running the James Gillespie’s Primary School Bike Bus and also during the initial lockdown period, many parents would cycle or walk with their children if they felt safe to do so on the roads. Understandably, due to the level of traffic on roads such as Whitehouse Loan, many do not because of the perceived, or real danger from motor traffic. Giving people the opportunity to travel more sustainably on residential streets would reduce traffic volume and allow people a safer means of transport. Many parents are now working from home meaning there is a reduced need to take a car for onward journeys.



(Pic outside Gillespie's Primary School at 3 pm Nov 3rd)

Criticisms of LTNs

- *Traffic increases on main routes such as Comiston Road*

The response to this is that the increase in traffic on Comiston road is mainly due to the lack of use of Public Transport. It cannot only be reasonably attributed to the Braid Road closure - there is no evidence to support that this is the main contributing factor.

Comiston Road has always been congested - the only way to solve congestion is to reduce the volume of traffic coming into the city. Giving people safe travelling alternatives such as walking and cycling gives the opportunity for "traffic evaporation".

- *Emergency services response times will be affected*

All evidence from the LTNs in London shows that Emergency Services approve installation of modal filters. The main impediment to fast response times is increased traffic volume.

- *Consideration for the disabled and those that need to drive*

Everywhere can still be accessed by car - some routes are potentially longer due to residential streets having modal filters installed. Please also see here for the statistics on the reality of modal share for people with mobility issues:

<http://blackfordsaferoutes.co.uk/documents/>

Signatories to this document.

The school Parent Councils counter-signing this deputation all support the Quiet Route proposals (*as distinct from the other emergency measures in place through Spaces for People on the main roads*). They represent the parent bodies of those schools, who are primarily concerned with the safety and well-being of the children attending these schools.

This Quiet Route would also provide a safe route for children who attend many other schools such as South Morningside Primary School, Boroughmuir High School, James Gillespie's High School, George Watson's and George Heriot's. Due to time pressures we have been unable to get official approval from the parent bodies of these schools for this document.