

Northfield and Willowbrae Community Council



The City of Edinburgh
Road Safety
Waverley Court C2
Edinburgh
EH1 1BR

2 Hamilton Terrace
Edinburgh
EH15 1NB

20 February 2015

Dear Sirs

SCHOOL STREETS CONSULTATION: ST JOHN'S AND DUDDINGSTON PRIMARY SCHOOLS

The Community Council offers the attached comments on the two proposed School Street pilots in our area. These have been agreed in correspondence and will be homologated at our next public meeting on 19 March.

The Community Council supports the introduction of these pilots.

We were pleased to work with Council officers on the consultations in our area. We will publish these comments on our website and make a link to that via Facebook.

We understand the relevant Council Committee will in June make final decisions on which, if any, pilots should proceed and there will then be a formal consultation on the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order. We would be happy to offer comment on the draft Order, both during drafting and once published for consultation.

Please acknowledge receipt.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink on a white background. The signature reads "Brett Pearson" in a cursive script.

Secretary

CONSULTATION ON SCHOOL STREETS

RESPONSE TO THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

1. This is the response by the Northfield and Willowbrae Community Council to the consultation undertaken by the City Council about the introduction of School Street pilots for St John's Roman Catholic Primary School (affecting Hamilton Terrace, Hamilton Drive and Hamilton Park) and Duddingston Primary School (affecting Hamilton Gardens, Hamilton Grove and Hamilton Drive West).

2. It draws on comments made by local people and the experience of Community Councillors. We commend the City Council for conducting drop-in sessions at both schools.

Overall Conclusion

3. The Community Council supports the introduction of these two pilots.

4. The Community Council believes that the acceptability of the pilots will be strongly influenced by the practical arrangements which do not seem to be fully worked out at this point. Once detailed practical proposals are available the Community Council believes that a further short consultation should be conducted, which should not be the formal consultation on the required Experimental Traffic Regulation Order.

The Need for the Pilots

5. The circumstances affecting traffic at the two locations are entirely different and there is no connection or similarity between the two.

Duddingston Primary School

6. The situation has been created by the City Council forming, in 1964, an emergency exit to the back of the school site by taking a strip of land from two houses (by compulsory purchase). There is a gate which is thought to be locked outside school hours; the gate is surrounded by high fencing and anti-climb measures. It is hardly an emergency exit – it presumes that emergencies occur in school hours and there is a risk that when finally needed the gate will be locked.

7. The exit has, over the years, become used as a pedestrian access for pupils coming from Northfield and Mountcastle. It means the last few yards of their walk to school are on quiet streets but in reality the walk to the front entrance to the school is not significantly longer.

8. The need for the pilot arises because parents are bringing children by car to this entrance rather than using the main entrance on Duddingston Road where proper controls could be applied. In consequence, residents of these streets find the entrances to their homes blocked by wild parking, often on the pavements, and often putting pedestrians and other cars at risk.

9. The whole pilot would be rendered entirely unnecessary if the emergency exit were closed and replaced by something which met modern standards. The lack of self regulation by parents dropping pupils by car – frequently causing friction between cars arriving in opposite directions - has created a suspicion by local residents that without strict enforcement the pilot will be unsuccessful. No doubt there would be some parental disquiet if the pedestrian entrance were closed but it would not increase risks to children. There is otherwise no traffic in these streets other than that serving the residents homes.

St John's RC Primary School

10. The catchment area for this school is large, extending over the whole of Portobello, Joppa, Brunstane, Willowbrae with the longest journey to school being about 1.9 miles (from the City Boundary at Joppa). This journey is probably beyond the capacity of today's primary school children and would require a bus to Portobello Town Hall and then a half mile walk or another bus. It is not surprising that such journeys are undertaken by car. However, the area around the school is not suitable for the levels of traffic which now arrive, all of which must have travelled less than 2 miles.

11. The submission by St John's School was not made available until a request was made under Freedom of Information. This showed a limited assessment of the traffic, omitting:

- the traffic to the nursery (which has different hours),
- the traffic arising from out of hours school activity
- the traffic diverted into Hamilton Terrace and Hamilton Drive when the flow on Duddingston Road is closed by the school crossing attendant,
- the rat-run traffic through Hamilton Terrace and Hamilton Drive caused by people avoiding the minor delays at the traffic lights at Duddingston Road/Mountcastle Drive,
- the traffic of parents dropping children improperly at the rear entrance to Portobello High School.
- the parking by teachers and other staff which frequently prevents residents accessing their homes.
- The effect of diverting traffic to areas outside the controlled zone.

12. The school clearly thought this was a matter for parents alone. If St John's had consulted any residents or even the Community Council before making its submission, the case for action would have been much stronger. Luckily, even with the limited data provided, the Council agreed to take it into the consultation on the pilot scheme.

13. As a consequence, the Community Council asked the City Council to distribute its leaflets in a wider area. As these leaflets gave no information on how the scheme might be implemented the Community Council printed and distributed over 180 leaflets in the two pilot areas, identifying some of the issues. Despite this, items on Facebook, drop-in sessions run by the City Council and media coverage very few formal responses have been received. Anecdotally, local people are waiting for detailed arrangements to be announced.

The Detailed Arrangements

14. Given the issues noted above, the Community Council endorses the principle of the pilots. The following comments are intended to give our views on the practicalities.

Enforcement

15. We understand that the street closures will create temporary No Entry signs; passing such signs will be a moving traffic offence over which parking wardens have no power. Enforcement will require attendance by the Police. It will be a fixed penalty of £80 fine and 3 points on the driving licence. This is not widely understood and significant publicity will be required to emphasise the difference from a parking offence. Many parents seem willing to risk a parking fine but licence endorsement will deter very many. If regular but random enforcement is not carried out the schemes will fail quickly.

Residents' Permits

16. Council officials have suggested that the permits will be similar to residents parking permits used elsewhere in the city. These are designed for examination at close quarters by parking wardens. They carry a Zone number, visible at some distance but are not easily seen on a moving vehicle. We believe they are not suitable for this application: the need is for a sign which is readily identifiable in passing traffic. East Lothian Council (the only other place with such schemes) uses a red card with a large R in white. These carry the risk of photocopying but so do the parking style permits proposed as offending vehicles will not be stationary.

17. Council officials say there will be one permit for each vehicle registered at an address in the area. Users of company cars often do not have the car registered to them and some companies provide hire cars which change regularly. A conspicuous transferrable residents permit seems necessary.

18. Many home have at least two cars, especially if adult children are still at home. Limiting the numbers available to each house will be unfair.

19. Carers and others who look after elderly or disabled people will need access, regardless of the hour.

20. Permits to enable visitors will be needed – perhaps one (RV) per address which can be moved from vehicle to vehicle.

Hours of Closure

21. Council officials say:

- The proposed times of operation at St. John's are 8:10 to 9:05, 14:25 to 15:45 Monday to Thursday and 11:20 to 12:30 on Fridays.
- For Duddingston, the times are 8:10 to 09:00, 14:35 to 15:45 Monday to Thursday and 11:50 to 12:40 on Fridays.

22. We consider these to be about right. However, the number of parents routinely arriving at St John's well after 9am, and in something of a hurry, suggests that the morning closure should be at least 5 minutes later than that proposed. In addition, the proportion of parents picking up nursery attendees by car is much higher than for the main school. The Community Council believes this should be monitored carefully.

23. We presume the closures will not operate during school holidays, whether the extended or single day ones.

Areas Outside the Zones

24. In both the Duddingston and St John's areas parents who currently come into the zones are unlikely to stop travelling by car and will still attempt to get as close to the schools as possible. This will take them to Mountcastle Drive and Duddingston Road as well as the smaller streets, like Durham Road, Durham Terrace and Duddingston Avenue.

25. It may be that further Double Yellow Lines will be needed to protect the interests or safety and access by residents in areas which are currently unaffected by such traffic. This should be assessed now and provision made in the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order.

Other Issues

26. One obvious cause of school congestion is parents staying with their child until entry to the school building. If parents were not allowed in the play ground – as used to be the case - most would leave the child to play with its friends and go back to the journey to work – a desirable outcome. It would also reduce the risk of a stranger being with children in the playground.

Northfield and Willowbrae Community Council

20 February 2015