



## ***BROUGHTON STREET – OUR COMMUNITY HIGH STREET***

### **Summary**

Following extensive consultation with local residents, businesses and other interest groups, the New Town and Broughton Community Council (NTBCC) has developed a number of proposals with regard to the planned Spaces for People improvements to Broughton Street. These proposals are based on the feedback from the Commonplace mapping exercise undertaken last year and reflect the accepted travel hierarchy, which places a priority on pedestrians and wheelers. We have though taken account of the realities of current higher levels of traffic on Broughton and surrounding streets caused by the road closures for the Trams project. It is also important to note that our proposals are mainly intended as temporary measures to be implemented in the short term, pending the completion of the Trams project and a wider examination of the impact of traffic on this part of the City Centre. Our key proposals for immediate measures prioritised on the basis of the travel hierarchy are as follows:

#### Pedestrians and Wheelers

1. Increase the width of both pavements, in particular on the east side of the road, to meet the recommended 3.0m width requirement for this type of street
2. Remove all street clutter from pavements to maximise the use of the available space and in particular ensure there is adequate width for wheelers
3. Undertake urgent programme of repair and maintenance of pavements to improve quality of pavement surface and provide drop-down kerbs on side streets
4. Review timing of all pedestrian crossings to ensure these reflect the priority to be given to pedestrians
5. Reduce the width of junctions for side streets to create more space for pedestrians, slow traffic turning from Broughton Street and create “linger spots”
6. Install new zebra crossings at the existing Broughton Street crossing points to enhance the safety of pedestrians crossing road and reduce speed of traffic heading downhill

#### Cyclists

1. Install a new segregated cycle lane from north of roundabout at London Street, along London Street to connect with National Cycle Route 75 along Dublin Street
2. Proceed urgently with previously approved plans to improve London Street/ Drummond Place junction which would enhance pedestrian and cyclist safety
3. Undertake an urgent programme of repair and maintenance of the road surface especially where damaged by potholes or heavy vehicles to improve cyclist safety
4. Install cycle racking on Broughton Street at expanded junctions with side streets for use by cyclists wishing to access shopping, hospitality or other local businesses

## Public Transport

1. Retain number 8 bus service along Broughton Street but relocate the bus stops to locations where pavement is wider to minimise impact on pedestrians and wheelers

## Private and Commercial Vehicles

1. Establish effective atmospheric pollution, traffic volume and speed monitoring along Broughton Street to assess impact of changes and provide baseline for future improvements
2. Maintain two way traffic on Broughton Street but with only one running lane in each direction to provide additional space for pedestrians and bus stop pull-ins
3. Introduce further traffic calming measures to reduce the speed of downhill traffic
4. Reduce number of loading bays in consultation with adjacent shops and businesses, restricting operating hours to reduce impact on traffic flow
5. Remove all long-term pay & display parking spaces on Broughton Street, leaving only time-limited and designated disabled driver spaces

For ease of reference, these proposals have been used to develop the attached plan to illustrate the potential impact on Broughton and surrounding streets.

The full document below provides further background and justification for these immediate proposals as well as some additional suggestions for longer-term improvements. Together, these will not only respond to the current needs for social distancing but also encourage active travel and provide a foundation for Broughton Street becoming a more vibrant community hub and high street for the future.

## **Introduction**

Originally the centre of a village on the old road to Leith, modern Broughton Street has evolved into multiple roles – as a residential street, as a pedestrian place for shopping and leisure, as a highway, as a public transport corridor, all combining to form a high-quality community High Street for local residents and those beyond. As such, it offers a pleasing contrast to the chain store retail offering of the nearby city centre; in the same manner as Stockbridge or William Street cater for their localities. As with most inner-city residential areas, it had experienced a period of decline but has now come back strongly.

But it is under threat from a number of fronts. Erosion of residential amenity; the changing patterns of retailing; excessive traffic and inadequate pedestrian space; all of which detract from the potential role of Broughton Street as a vibrant community hub and High Street.

## **Transport and Place-making Principles**

The New Town and Broughton Community Council recognises the importance for Broughton Street of looking at the total picture in 'placemaking' in order to create a thriving, sustainable and high quality environment as a community hub for local residents and businesses. Suggested improvements must be set in context of the street's function as a whole, and minimise adverse impact on other functions such as business access and amenity. So initiatives must be addressed as part of an overall 'placemaking' initiative and not just a quick-fix reaction to specific issues.

Transport-related concerns were clearly highlighted in in the public response to CEC's *Spaces for People* questionnaire, where the two main issues identified were **increasing pavement space** – particularly relevant to allow adequate distancing for Covid – and **reducing excessive traffic** speed and congestion. A summary of the

responses is attached to support our analysis. Any temporary measures should therefore concentrate on resolving these issues and not divert resources to solve other 'problems'. We support the move to a more 'people-centred' approach to infrastructure issues.

Broughton Street is narrow and space for innovation is limited. Priorities must be based on the Scottish Government travel hierarchy (pedestrians and wheelers, followed by public transport, cycling and lastly private cars). The primary focus on pedestrians is supported by the Council's Active Travel action plan and its own statistics contained in the latest *Edinburgh by Numbers 2019* document, which show that the main modes of travel around the city are bus (72%); car (59%); on foot (53%); taxi (15%); bicycle (9%) and tram (9%). We have also taken note of the Edinburgh Street Design Guidance document and in particular the section on the design of pavements and junctions.

The issues with Broughton Street are not new and certainly not confined to this street. In Jan Gehl's 1998 report 'Edinburgh Revisited – Public Space Public Life' commissioned by the City of Edinburgh Council, it was identified that there was not enough space for walking; footpaths were frequently interrupted; materials and design for details and furniture were poor; constant intrusion of noise and pollution from traffic; heavy overcrowding; few benches and pavement cafés; and a perception of the whole pedestrian environment as dangerous.

Likewise in the UK government guidance published in 2000 '*By Design: Urban Design in the Planning System: Towards Better Practice*' the key objectives of urban design in creating attractive and sustainable places were listed as follows:

- Character – a place with its own identity.
- Continuity and Enclosure – a place where public and private spaces are clearly distinguished.
- Quality of the Public Realm – a place with attractive and successful outdoor areas.
- Ease of Movement – a place that is easy to get to and move through.
- Legibility – a place that has a clear image and is easy to understand.
- Adaptability – a place that can change easily.
- Diversity – a place with variety and choice.

We believe that these objectives should guide decisions on future infrastructure planning for Broughton Street and elsewhere in the City Centre.

### **Broughton Street as a Pedestrian Street**

A quarter of all responses to the Commonplace mapping focused on inadequate pedestrian space, not just for current social distancing requirements, but as a clear future priority to enhance pedestrian movement and to create recreational space for informal meetings, shopping, cafés, pavement displays, or just casual seating for people-watching. Currently, the diversion of traffic during tram works has exacerbated the congestion, noise and pollution from traffic squeezed into too narrow a street space, and the consequent erosion of pavements in an attempt to accommodate it. The environment for both road users and pedestrians is unpleasant, overcrowded, makes social distancing impossible, and is dangerous.

Much of the pedestrian space is further compromised by the lack of enforcement of obstacles such as A-boards, 'temporary' road construction signs and barriers, waste and recycling bins as well as fixed signs and railings. These issues are of particular concern to 'wheelers' including those who may have limited mobility or impaired vision.

Although it is impractical, at this time, to seek a Rose-Street style traffic-free precinct given the need to still accommodate essential transport, we seek a minimum 3-metre pavement clear width in accordance current guidance, particularly on the eastern, sunnier side to encourage 'dwelling' to attract trade for local business and improve the ambience for pedestrians. Currently pavements in Broughton Street narrow to pinch-points of 1.1m (including at a bus stop) in its northern part because of the attempt to squeeze in 4 traffic lanes. At least one will have to be removed to achieve the necessary pavement widening

The speed of traffic, particularly downhill, is a concern; although there are two intermediate crossing islands, these rely on the goodwill of drivers. A single lane in each direction, the addition of zebra crossings at the existing crossing points and further traffic calming measures would slow traffic, reduce the risks to pedestrians crossing the road and discourage unnecessary traffic.

Suggested Actions:

- Increase the width of both pavements, in particular on the east side of the road, to meet the recommended 3.0m width requirement for a busy street with high pedestrian volumes
- Remove all street clutter from pavement to maximise the use of the available space and in particular ensure there is adequate width for wheelers
- Undertake an urgent programme of repair and maintenance of the pavements to improve the quality of pavement surface and provide drop down kerbs on side streets
- Review timing of all pedestrian crossings to ensure these reflect the priority to be given to pedestrians
- Reduce the width of junctions for side streets to create more space for pedestrians, slow traffic turning from Broughton Street and create “linger spots”
- Install new zebra crossings at the existing Broughton Street crossing points to enhance the safety of pedestrians crossing road and reduce speed of traffic heading downhill
- Modify the roundabout at London Street to enhance pedestrian space and ability to use desire lines
- Ensure that footway extensions even if temporary are of a standard consistent with the quality of the city and in particular the World Heritage Site (i.e. avoid unsightly and easily dislodged wands)

### **Broughton Street as a Cycling Route**

The increase in cycling in Edinburgh during the pandemic is encouraging. However, Picardy Place into which Broughton Street disgorges is a challenge even for experienced cyclists, with stubs of lanes starting and stopping at random and no safe continuity throughout. Cyclists often resort to illegal pavement cycling, which endangers pedestrians, particularly the elderly and mobility impaired. Even if there were space for a segregated cycle way in Broughton Street (which there is not in the top section after other needs are met) it would be irresponsible to encourage cycling which discharges into a dangerous gyratory traffic system.

Many of the ‘new’ cyclists are inexperienced, and their needs in particular could be better met by setting out an alternative safer route, enhancing Dublin Street as the main north-south link. This route via the ramp into Dublin Street would provide improved connectivity between the planned cycle paths on George Street and St Andrew Square with the North Edinburgh railway path network through George V Park and beyond. However, the changes proposed to Broughton Street, in particular those that would reduce traffic speed, will have a positive benefit for any cyclists that wish to use the street.

Suggested Actions:

- Install a new segregated cycle lane from north of roundabout at London Street, along London Street to connect with National Cycle Route 75 along Dublin Street and then National Cycle Route 1 and other designated cycle routes through the City Centre
- Proceed urgently with previously approved plans to improve London Street/Drummond Place junction which would enhance pedestrian and cyclist safety
- Undertake an urgent programme of repair and maintenance of the road surface especially where damaged by potholes or heavy vehicles to improve cyclist safety

- Install cycle racking on Broughton Street at expanded junctions with side streets for cyclists wishing to access shopping, hospitality or other businesses in Broughton Street area

### **Broughton Street as Residential Area**

Edinburgh's high concentration of city centre dwellers is almost unique in Britain. It is recognised as essential in keeping the city centre alive and prosperous and also, by the informal policing it provides, making Edinburgh one of the safest cities in which to live. Residential amenity is though being undermined by lack of adequate consideration of the needs of residents in matters such as planning, licensing and not least transport as well as by a lack of effective enforcement. The recent move towards working from home, which is likely to become a lasting trend, increases the importance of providing a high quality civilised residential environment for the people that choose to live in the city.

The measures outlined in this document will help to improve amenity. In addition, because of congestion at the poorly designed Picardy Place gyratory which cannot handle the traffic levels it was supposedly designed for, Broughton Street traffic backs up producing fumes which undermine the goals to meet improved air quality targets. Current CEC policies to switch from petrol and diesel to non-polluting power sources will improve air quality, but not do anything to reduce congestion, accidents, ease parking problems, make roads safer for pedestrians or cyclists, speed up public transport, or free up additional pavement space. As stressed in our 2020 response to the City Mobility Plan, there should be a focus on discouraging unnecessary traffic from entering the inner city in the first place for example by revisiting a congestion-charging regime, as is already the case in other European cities.

### **Broughton Street as a Retail and Leisure Hub**

The rapid increase in on-line shopping, accelerated by the present pandemic, has hastened the already changing retail structure of the city with the collapse of many once-invincible major operators. This change affects smaller businesses also – a parliamentary working group concluded that 'the demise of the small shop would mean that people will not just be disadvantaged in their role as consumers but also as members of communities – the erosion of small shops is viewed as the erosion of the 'social glue' that binds communities together, entrenching social exclusion in the UK.'

Broughton Street's strength is in its smaller businesses, with great diversity of offering and often of a high quality, which draws custom from outside the immediate vicinity. There is a need to safeguard these at a time when the pandemic is putting many operators in jeopardy. There are essential issues of ensuring provision for deliveries and servicing, pick-up and drop-off, and maintaining adequate access by intending shoppers and browsers while not obstructing other footway users. We support recent proposals to introduce a 'Totally Local' initiative to benefit local businesses in Broughton Street and adjacent areas.

There is growing demand in all northern European cities for greater pavement space to accommodate the flourishing 'cappuccino culture' of outdoor cafés. Studies suggest that on streets with high pedestrian usage such as this, there must remain at least 2.75 metres (9 feet) of unobstructed pavement to allow pedestrians to pass by safely – Edinburgh Council licensing has suggested 3 metres. This is not achievable without the recommended pavement widening.

### **Broughton Street as Transport Route**

Edinburgh has a high-quality bus and tram system used by a wider sector of the community than most networks elsewhere. Ease of bus movement is therefore essential, with adequate stop provision to allow shelter without obstructing pavements. There must be adequate provision for wheelers, disabled users and others with impaired mobility.

As noted previously because of the volume of traffic using this route at present, it is important that the flow of traffic is maintained to limit the level of congestion and thus atmospheric pollution. Likewise there is a need to limit the speed of traffic especially that travelling downhill for safety reasons.

## Suggested Actions:

- Retain number 8 bus service along Broughton Street but relocate the bus stops to locations where the pavement is wider to minimise impact on pedestrians and wheelers
- Maintain two way traffic on Broughton Street but with only one running lane in each direction to provide additional space for pedestrians and bus stop pull-ins
- Introduce traffic calming measures to reduce the speed of downhill traffic
- Establish effective atmospheric pollution (nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide and particulates), traffic volume and speed monitoring along Broughton Street to assess impact of changes and provide baseline for future improvements
- Reduce number of loading bays in consultation with adjacent shops and businesses, restricting operating hours to reduce impact on traffic flow.
- Remove all long-term pay & display parking spaces on Broughton Street, leaving only time-limited and designated disabled driver spaces
- Revisit design of Picardy Place gyratory to improve pedestrian and cycling connections, and resolve traffic flow issues so that agreed changes can be implemented as part of the scheduled relocation of the tram stop from York Place to Picardy Place later this year and next
- Reduce the parking capacity associated with the new St James' Quarter and pay & display spaces throughout City Centre streets

## Conclusion

We strongly believe that Broughton Street can play an important role in meeting the needs of residents and others visiting this part of Edinburgh but that significant change is required for it to be able to achieve its potential. Although the focus of this submission has been on travel, it is important that other aspects of place making are not ignored for Broughton Street to become the vibrant community hub to which we all aspire. **The Spaces for People initiative offers an opportunity to expedite some of the improvements - this is an opportunity that we cannot afford to miss.**