

COMMITTEE	Communities, Housing and Infrastructure
DATE	8 <sup>th</sup> November 2017
REPORT TITLE	Cycle Path for Ferryhill School Children
REPORT NUMBER	CHI/17/252
INTERIM DIRECTOR	Bernadette Marjoram
REPORT AUTHOR	Alan Simpson

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## **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 At the August meeting of this committee, following a referral from the Petitions Committee, Members instructed officers to undertake a feasibility study to look at options on improving cycling within the area around Ferryhill Primary School. This report outlines the proposed methodology that will be followed and seeks committee approval for it.

## **2. RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 2.1. It is recommended that Committee:
- a. Delegate authority to the Interim Head of Planning and Sustainable Development in conjunction with staff from Education and Children's Services to engage with pupils, parents and teachers from Ferryhill School on developing a school travel plan;
  - b. When the travel plan is complete, instruct the Director of Communities, Housing and Infrastructure to report back to the appropriate committee with the anticipated levels of active travel associated with the school, how any future actions should be progressed, what resources will be needed and how these can be sourced.

## **3. BACKGROUND/ MAIN ISSUES**

- 3.1. The Petitions Committee on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2017 considered a competent petition put forward by children attending Ferryhill School. This consisted of the following:

*Cycle Path for Ferryhill School Children*

*We the undersigned petition the Committee to build cycle paths for children who go to Ferryhill School to allow them to cycle to and from school safely.*

### Justification

*Children who go to Ferryhill School in Aberdeen would like to cycle to and from school safely. Currently they have to cycle on roads with cars and trucks. Please build dedicated cycle paths that are not shared with motor vehicles or pedestrians. We would like Aberdeen City Council to build a dedicated cycle path on Bon Accord St, a very busy road with lots of fast-moving traffic, including trucks. We would also like Caledonian Place, Whinhill Rd, Fonthill Rd, Springbank Terrace, Willowbank Rd, and Great Southern Rd to have separated cycle paths. Children who cycle to school receive health and well-being benefits as a result of the physical activity. Aberdeen city also benefits through reduced pollution and traffic congestion around schools. Spending on cycling infrastructure returns more to the community than it costs to build.*

- 3.2. The Petitions Committee determined that the matter be referred for consideration to Communities, Housing and Infrastructure Committee in August for officers to investigate whether a feasibility study to look at options on improving cycling within the area should be undertaken. At that meeting on the 29<sup>th</sup> of August, the committee agreed to instruct officers to undertake a feasibility study to look at options on improving cycling within the area.
- 3.3. In taking forward this instruction, the following elements have been considered:
  - Current situation and benchmarking
  - Road safety and traffic
  - Policy fit
  - Going forward/ Other implications

### *Existing situation at Ferryhill School and Benchmarking*

- 3.4. There are currently no core paths or off-road routes within the immediate school area. The National Cycle Network Route 1 goes through part of Ferryhill using Wellington Brae, Polmuir Terrace, Devanha Gardens and Crown Street, However, not only is there no cycling infrastructure (outwith directional signage) none of these streets are covered within the Petition request.
- 3.5. Over the past four years Ferryhill School has had falling numbers of pupils cycling to school whereas numbers cycling have increased at other local City Centre schools. For comparison Ashley Road, Broomhill and St Josephs have been included as likely to have similar traffic conditions and socio-demographic within the city centre area – although St Josephs has a wider catchment area than any of the other primaries.
- 3.6. Ashley Road has seen an increase in 2016 to 7.2% of pupils cycling to school (see table 1) in comparison to Ferryhill's 1.6% in 2016. Officers believe the Ashley Road success may be due to in part to the development of a School Travel Plan in 2015 and the promotion of active travel at the school as a result. The other schools in the area show lower levels of cycling although both are still higher than Ferryhill, despite St Joseph's wider catchment. As Ferryhill Primary doesn't have a Travel Plan it is difficult to establish whether

there is any demand for a segregated cycle route in the area, and indeed which roads should be covered.

Table 1: Percentage cycle to school rates in Aberdeen schools.

	% Cycle to school			
	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>Ferryhill School</b>	2.8	4.1	3.1	1.6
<b>Ashley Road School</b>	2.2	4.2	2.0	7.2
<b>St Joseph's R.C. School</b>	1.5	1.6	3.6	-
<b>Broomhill School</b>	-	1.3	-	2.5

### *Road Safety and Traffic*

- 3.7. The roads around Ferryhill School are reasonably busy. A maximum speed limit of 20mph applies on Caledonian Place, outside the school. Ashley Road is covered by a similar 20mph zone, Broomhill is surrounded by a larger zone and there is no 20mph zone around St Joseph's. Therefore it is difficult to ascertain whether this is influencing travel mode and perceptions of safety. There have been no recorded accidents at any of the schools in the last few years. City Wardens have been approached and feel that speeding vehicles driving past the school on Bon-Accord Street are of concern.
- 3.8. Traffic count data seems to suggest that the main road next to the school is less busy than at the other 3 schools listed – as can be seen from Table 2.

Table 2: Traffic count data during school rush hour (year).

<b>Aberdeen Traffic Count Data</b>		
<b>Street</b>	<b>8AM-9AM</b>	<b>3PM-4PM</b>
Bon Accord Street – Willowbank Road	1052	817
Fonthill Avenue – Holburn Street	2512	2010
Carden Place, Albyn Place, Queens Gardens	2686	2263
Ashley Road – Great Western Road	1291	1064

### *Policy Fit*

- 3.9. The Local Transport Strategy (2016-2021), adopted in January 2016, has an objective to:

*Foster a cycling culture in Aberdeen by improving conditions for cycling in Aberdeen so that cycling becomes an everyday, safe mode of transport for all.*

Both the Local and Regional Transport Strategies acknowledge that like walking, cycling is a cheap, healthy and non-polluting form of transport.

- 3.10. The City Council's Active Travel Action Plan (ATAP) was approved by Communities, Housing and Infrastructure Committee in January 2017. The consultation for the preparation of the Active Travel Action Plan found that the main barrier to cycling in Aberdeen was the perception that cycling is an unsafe activity. Although the presence of conveniently located secure cycle parking at key destinations is necessary, training for both children and adults instrumental, safety messages to both cyclists and car drivers important, gritting of cycle routes in the winter required and information on cycle routes helpful, it remains the case that the infrastructure in Aberdeen is perceived as disconnected and, where lacking, unsafe.
- 3.11. As a result, the Active Travel Action Plan prioritised a number of routes around the City, taking into account new developments, the Roads Hierarchy (how the road network works after the AWPR opens), the City Centre Masterplan, access to education and work. The streets listed as part of the petition are not included as priority routes in the Active Travel Action Plan, as they are not considered strategic in any of the other Council's Plans or Strategies.
- 3.12. Therefore, while noting that this proposal is in line with national, regional and local transport strategies for the Council there is a question over whether the roads adjacent to this school would be the priority if the Council were considering taking forward a proposal for cycle routes in the area.

#### *Going Forward/ Other Implications*

- 3.13. The Council's policy supports cycle infrastructure and, by extension, the proposal for cycle routes. The area in question falls outside that of the City Centre Masterplan however there are a number of strategic routes covered by the petition that could potentially link to City Centre Masterplan cycle priority routes, as well as the wider network – including the Deeside Way and Riverside routes – which none of the other schools have quite the same potential for.
- 3.14. The comparison between schools on road safety, traffic volumes and speeding does not show anything of note. However, it is clear that Ferryhill School is suffering from declining numbers of pupils cycling to school. This is likely to be from a number of factors but without a school travel plan it is difficult to assess why this might be the case and what the solution is. Segregated cycle routes would very likely increase the numbers cycling but would also have to be carefully considered alongside potential impact – including competing use of space between pedestrians and cyclists depending on likely demands, the removal of parking along the length of a number of streets and possible impact on trees many of which are covered under Tree Preservation Orders. Segregated routes also tend to be expensive compared to dual use paths, for instance, and the Council has to consider whether any measures should then be a priority compared to other routes.
- 3.15. Without a more detailed study of the area it is impossible to establish wider demand, potential costs and likely impact. Due to falling numbers of pupils cycling to school, implementation of a travel plan would likely be beneficial and, in a similar fashion to Ashley Road, would increase cycle to school rates.

Going forward, it is suggested than consideration should be given to this before embarking on any infrastructural improvements.

- 3.16. The typical timeframe for developing a School Travel Plan is 6-12 months. Thereafter the development of a range of measures to fit with the Travel Plan is difficult to quantify at this time and will be dependent on available resources, both financial and competing demands for staff time. A detailed business case would be developed to support any further work beyond the Travel Plan.

#### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1. The development of a School Travel Plan would have no direct cost to the Council other than for the staff time in supporting the pupils, parents and teachers. Any project identified thereafter would have a detailed business case and cost estimate.

#### **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1. There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

#### **6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK**

##### **6.1. Financial**

There is a risk that undertaking this project may impact upon the ability of officers to undertake existing committed projects with committed, and time-restricted budgets. However, the outcomes of the travel plan engagement process will better inform this, so it is worth taking this step first.

##### **6.2. Employee**

As this project has not been identified in Service Plans, undertaking it could put extra pressure on staff time, as it will have to be added to their existing workload. Again, the outcomes of the travel plan engagement process will better inform this, so it is worth taking this step first

##### **6.3. Customer/Citizen**

As this report has resulted from a Petitions Committee there will need to be a formal response to the Petitioner on their Petition and how the Council may or may not be taking this forward. As the implications for the local residents are unclear at this point contact with the local community should be limited to explaining the process of the development of the Travel Plan. Any future local consultation would be incorporated into any business case

##### **6.4. Environmental**

There are no environmental risks at this stage involved with undertaking the engagement..

##### **6.5. Technological**

N/A

6.6. **Legal**

At this stage there are no legal risks involved with undertaking the engagement

6.7. **Reputational**

This has been largely covered in the Customer/ Citizen Section above.

**7. IMPACT SECTION**

7.1. **People**

The development of a school travel plan will encourage teachers and pupils to consider a range of different transport options for their journeys to and from school while the whole process will allow different services within the Council to work more closely together.

The projects described in this report flow from the development of the Aberdeen Local Transport Strategy 2016-2021 and the Nestrans Regional Transport Strategy, both of which have undergone their own EHRIAs (active travel and low carbon initiatives are specifically covered within the LTS EHRIA).

1.1. **Place**

Through the process officers and pupils will gain a greater understanding of Ferryhill School and its surroundings.

1.2. **Technology**

N/A

1.3. **Economy**

A completed travel plan can often help to strengthen the case for grant funding for the school should it wish to apply for this in order to implement sustainable transport measures,

**8. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

*Communities, Housing and Infrastructure Committee - 24<sup>th</sup> January 2017*

Aberdeen Active Travel Action Plan

<http://councilcommittees.acc.gov.uk/documents/s65437/Aberdeen%20Active%20Travel%20Action%20Plan%20CHI.16.279.pdf>

**9. APPENDICES (if applicable)**

N/A

**10. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS**

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