

Comiston Road, and Braid Road SfP – Community Council Engagement

Notes from the meeting of Wednesday 25th August 2021

Present:

CEC: Dave Sinclair; Rurighd McMeddes

Morningside Community Council: Carol Duncan, Goff Cantley

Fairmilehead Community Council: Norman Tinlin, Barbara Dick

Presentation

RM presented the previously circulated document, outlining the options which had been developed on Comiston Road, to improve public transport connectivity and reduce impacts on local residents, and on Braid Road considering re-opening in both directions, with analysis of impacts on traffic levels, resident connectivity, and vulnerable road users.

Proposals on Comiston Road include: the extension of the northbound Bus Lane; removing Loading Restrictions and providing more loading spaces, and; signalisation of the junction of Brad Hills Road and Comiston Road, with bus priority, in order to mitigate the impact of the northbound closure.

Proposals on Braid Road include three distinct options, all of which have been overlayed onto the proposed permanent kerb layout at the junction of Braid Road and Hermitage Drive. These options include: two-way reopening; two-way reopening with a modal filter immediately north of Hermitage Drive; southbound only with modal filter immediately north of Hermitage Drive, and mitigations on the A702.

Comiston Road – Public Transport

There are documented impacts on northbound bus services on the A702 during the morning peak. As such it is proposed to extend the existing northbound bus lane further south to ease bus movements past queueing traffic.

NB: It is worth noting that this issue may be further mitigated if Braid Road were re-opened northbound, however Lothian Buses have stated that this proposal would be beneficial either way.

Comiston Road – Local Residents

The Council is aware of issues regarding loading and unloading access along stretches of Comiston Road – especially Buckstone Terrace – with limited parking availability.

As such it is proposed to remove the Loading restrictions along most of the length of the scheme, and provide gaps in the cycle lane defenders where possible, to provide additional loading opportunities.

In addition, the Council is aware of issues regarding accessing Comiston Road from Braid Hills Road heading northbound due to the closure of Braid Road.

As proposals have been developed for signalising this junction which would improve northbound access with Braid Road closed northbound.

Comments

NT expressed the view that social distancing is no longer required meaning that the TTROs in place were invalid, and suggested that the Council is acting *'ultra vires'* by not immediately removing measures.

DS responded:

- The Council has considered legal opinion and is content that the current activities as per Spaces for People transitioning to Travelling Safely utilising ETROs is legal and reasonable.

BD expressed a concern regarding the road layout at the junction with Buckstone Road where right turning traffic caused queueing.

BD expressed that when more than two vehicles are waiting to turn right passing vehicles are unable to continue northbound – which was the purpose of the previously installed DYs at this location.

BD further expressed concern at the installation of segregated cycleways in general on the A702, and suggested that these be removed and replaced with narrower cycleways, without bollard segregation to allow easier traffic movements.

BD suggested that the problems on Comiston are caused by the closure of Braid Road, and that the improvements outlined in the presentation would not be needed if Braid Road re-opened.

RM responded:

- Generally efforts have been made to provide right turn pockets where possible, however junction with Buckstone Road can be reviewed.
- Presence of segregation provides enhance safety, and perception of safety, enabling less confident users to choose to cycle. Any impacts on traffic movement must be assessed in balance with this gain with the aim of achieving a balance. To remove the bollards in full would be tantamount to removing the scheme – this is an option open to Cllrs, but not within the scope of the review.
- Options have been developed for re-opening Braid Road, and it is acknowledged that this would remove the need for some of the mitigations on the A702.

Post Meeting Addition

A right turn pocket is still in place at the junction of Buckstone Road and the A702, as shown below, though it is acknowledged that more than two right turning vehicles will result in passing vehicles being held up.



Braid Road

Several Options have been developed for Braid Road with consideration for impacts on traffic levels, resident connectivity and vulnerable road users walking, wheeling and cycling.

These options have been developed in line with the proposed permanent layout at the junction with Hermitage Drive and will deliver this layout in temporary materials. This will ensure that there is consistency with the temporary scheme, and the permanent improvements.

1. Open Two-Ways

Pros: Local Vehicular Access; Reduced Impact on Buses; Reduced re-routing on residential streets (including Hermitage Gardens and Midmar Gardens).

Cons: Risk of Induced Traffic; Loss of Segregated Cycleway on Braid Road; Minimal Benefits for walking/ cycling/ wheeling.

2. Open Two-Ways, Modal Filter on Braid Road North

Pros: Local Vehicular Access; Reduced Impact on Buses; Some Benefits for walking/ cycling/ wheeling; Reduced re-routing on residential streets (including Hermitage Gardens and Midmar Gardens)

Cons: Risk of Induced Traffic; Loss of segregated cycleway on Braid Road

3. Southbound Only, Modal Filter on Braid Road North – mitigations on A702

Pros: Significant Benefits for walking/ cycling/ wheeling; Segregated Cycleway Retained on Braid Road; Minimal risk of induced traffic; Reduced re-routing on residential streets (including Hermitage Gardens and Midmar Gardens).

Cons: Local vehicular access issues remain; Impact on buses remain.

Mitigations: Signalised junction at Braid Hills Road; Extend Bus Lane on A702.

Comments

CD stated that Braid Road has become a valuable route for less confident cyclists. CD stated that many who are interested in driving to Morningside are keen to see Braid Road re-opened both ways, however that some have suggested re-opening northbound instead, and queried whether this would be an option.

CD further stated that many people have become used to Braid Road being quiet and enjoy walking and cycling on it. CD further queried whether it was possible to make Braid Road open in both directions, which retaining the cycling improvements.

RM Responded:

- Northbound one-way on Braid Road would likely result in impacts on Southbound bus movements on A702 between Morningside Clock and Greenbank Church, as was seen in Autumn/Winter 2020 with significant bus delays. These delays were the reason for re-opening Braid Road southbound.
- Re-opening Braid Road in both directions will have an impact on the ability to provide cycling infrastructure as the junction with Hermitage Drive will be much busier, and there will not be enough room on Braid Road for two way traffic and protected cycleways.

GC asked whether it would be possible to mitigate the impact of northbound traffic on Midmar Drive/Avenue, and suggested including additional DYLS. GC also noted that re-introducing northbound traffic on Braid Road would introduce conflict between traffic and cyclists at the junction with Hermitage Drive.

RM Responded:

- Further mitigations can be considered on Midmar Avenue/ Drive, but the additional Northbound traffic will certainly have an impact on these streets.
- It is true that re-introducing Northbound traffic on Braid Road will introduce conflict between traffic and cyclists at the junction of Hermitage Drive which is challenging to fully mitigate, and this is a drawback of re-opening Braid Road to northbound traffic, and part of why Option 3 has been developed as a potential alternative.

BD stated that if Braid Avenue was re-opened there would be no issues on Midmar Avenue. BD noted that in the case of accidents on Comiston Road there are limited alternative routes due to the closure of Braid Road.

BD noted that were Braid Road to remain closed there would also be mitigation required at Morningside Clock to allow more vehicles to turn right from the A702 onto Cluny Gardens.

BD stated that she had spoken to many people who support the re-opening of Braid Road.

DS Responded:

- Braid Avenue is part of the Greenbank to Meadows Quiet Corridor, which has been approved for retention, as such is not part of the current review.
- Accidents can happen anywhere but they are occasional events and should not be the primary concern when planning a road network.

RM Responded:

- Were Braid Road to remain closed to Northbound traffic further mitigation could be considered at Morningside Clock, and this can be investigated as part of the current review.

NT highlighted that many people supported full re-opening of Braid Road, stating that if required cycling provision should be in the form of advisory cycle lanes. NT stated that in his view Braid Road should be 'fully' re-opened between Cluny Drive and Buckstone Terrace and thus Option 1 was the "only option on the table".

NT further suggested that "The DYL on the east side south from Hermitage Drive should be extended to the entrance to The Heritage. 2 disabled bays should be sited to just to the south of the entrance. If, and a big if, cycle lanes are required they should be advisory only".

GC and CD agreed that their preference would be Option 3, which retains the Northbound closure of Braid Road, noting that many residents support the current arrangement resulting in Braid Road providing a quiet a safe environment for walking and cycling. However, they accepted that Option 2 would provide a reasonable compromise, if Braid Road is to re-open to northbound traffic.

Post-Meeting Note:

GC and CD suggested that a further mitigation might be to allow northbound traffic on Braid Road to continue north of the junction with Hermitage Drive, while banning southbound traffic on Braid road at this location, reducing the impact of additional traffic on Hermitage Drive and Midmar Drive/ Avenue.

Post Meeting Officer Response: This could be included as an additional option, however this layout would compromise the Quiet Route by retaining a significant volume of traffic on Braid Road north of the junction with Hermitage Drive, and may encourage more traffic to utilise Braid Road over the A702, due to the ability to head straight northbound avoiding the lights at Greenbank Church – this might mean that any mitigation of impacts on Hermitage Drive is lost.

General Discussion – Further Points

GC and NT highlighted the need for disabled parking near the entrance to the Hermitage.

Post Meeting Officer Response – this can be included as part of an ETRO should the schemes be retained. We can consider appropriate sites.

NT highlighted that the original proposals for Braid Road should be completed and Braid Avenue should be fully opened.

Post Meeting Officer Response – The closures on Braid Avenue form part of the Greenbank to Meadows Quiet Connection which has been approved for retention under ETRO and do not form part of this engagement exercise. The permanent improvements to Braid Road and Braidburn Terrace will be implemented in full, though this exercise may result in further enhancements to these proposals depending on results.