

COVID-19 Walking and Cycling Emergency Response Measures: Proposed Measures at Echline and Queensferry Primary Schools to aid safe travel to school

Response from Spokes – the Lothian Cycle Campaign

August 2020

This response considers the proposals shared by the Spaces for People Team on 7 August 2020

1. General comments

1.1 We welcome the measures being taken around the school gates of the schools *to re-designate key parts of the road network to help pedestrians and cyclists travel safely while meeting physical distancing requirements*. However, we see this as only a first measure and that **further interventions are required to promote active travel and fulfil the full Spaces for People objectives**.

1.2 Nor do they yet cover all of the Queensferry Schools or reference the proposed diversion of High Street traffic along Station Road. The Spokes response to the High Street proposals can be viewed [here](#).

2. Low Traffic Neighbourhoods

2.1 There is an enormously valuable opportunity here to improve conditions, not just for school users but for all residents, by the creation of *Low Traffic Neighbourhoods*, akin to the current East Craigs proposals. Very little intervention would make it possible for walking or cycling to both school and generally to become the very attractive default. Helpfully, both these schools are well located within their respective catchment areas, with attractively short walking/cycling distances for pupils living in Queensferry:

- Queensferry Primary - 0.8 miles/15 minutes maximum walk¹
- Echline Primary (catchment after proposed enlargement) - 0.6 miles/12 minutes maximum walk²

2.2 Currently, the major obstacle is the lack of safe crossing points on The Loan and Station Road, for Queensferry Primary School (as well as St Margaret's and Queensferry High School) and on Bo'ness Road for Echline Primary School. We **strongly recommend** that consideration be given to addressing this by developing *Low Traffic Neighbourhoods* proposals in the next phase.

¹ From 48 Sommerville Gardens, using Google Maps walking route

² From 58 Society Road, using Google Maps walking route

3. Queensferry Primary School (roll 450 pupils)

The Council proposal here is to:

Introduce new waiting restrictions on Burgess Road along the school frontage to keep the area clear for physical distancing.

3.1 We support the proposals, but consider that further interventions are required.

3.2 In addition, the proposals here need to be considered in combination with the proposals to close the High Street and divert traffic along Station Road. In this respect, it seems very odd that the Council is promoting a TTRO for Queensferry Primary School and not for St Margaret's Primary School and Queensferry High School, which are actually on Station Road and will see higher traffic volumes outside.



Banner as Queensferry Primary School

3.3 Burgess Road is quite narrow and there is a long history of parking problems here, as parents drop-off and pick-up at both the Primary School and the busy Nursery next door. During our site visit, at 4pm on 12 August, two cars were illegally parked outside, one in the bus stop and the other on the zig-zags and blocking the dropped kerb!

3.4 Historically, this problem has resulted in TROs being introduced to extend parking restrictions to much of both sides of Burgess Road and an extension of restrictions on The Loan over the past 3 or 4 years. We welcome that the currently proposed TTROs sensibly cover those parts of Burgess Road near the school not already covered by the existing restrictions. However, it is likely that the new restrictions will displace parking onto the nearby section of The Loan where it is still permitted, between Station Road and Burgess Road. Parking there creates a particular hazard for cyclists coming up The Loan, as visibility is poor at the crown of the hill and cars can pull out with very little notice from the parking spaces on one side and Loch Road on the other. Accordingly, **we recommend** that, to both improve cyclist safety and allow physical distancing that the TTRO should also include the parking area opposite Loch Road.



Burgess Road at Queensferry Primary School

3.5 We note that following recent resurfacing works on The Loan that the road markings indicating current parking restrictions have not yet been repainted and **immediate attention is required** to rectify this.

3.6 As the school is the dominant user of the western end of Burgess Road, **we recommend** that consideration should be given to its closure (except for service/school buses/taxis, cycles, street residents and the Council depot traffic) between the Council depot and the junction with The Loan. Its only purpose for most cars is a (very marginal) short-cut by-passing a short stretch of Station Road/The Loan. With closure, it would become a largely pedestrianised/cycle friendly stretch of road, supporting safe active travel.

3.7 As the proposed TTRO will mean that there will now be no permitted space for dropping off/picking up by car, closure will stop those speculatively looking/hoping for a space just outside the school. Otherwise, speculative car-space lookers will continue, and there will inevitably be the illegal parking, with little chance of enforcement.

3.8 Whilst a closure could mean an increase in traffic use of the junctions at The Loan and Station Road, which may increase some risks with turning traffic, our view is this is more than offset by the reduction in risk by the reduced turning traffic at the two junctions at both ends of Burgess Road.

3.9 It is difficult and dangerous for school pupils wishing to walk or cycle to school to cross Station Road or The Loan, both of which bisect school catchment areas. **We strongly recommend** that temporary signalled crossings are installed at appropriate crossing points on these streets.

4. Echline Primary School (roll 290 pupils)

The Council Proposal here is to:

Introduce parking restrictions at the junction with the B924 Bo'ness Road to help pedestrians and cyclists travel safely while meeting physical distancing requirements.

4.1 We support the proposals, but consider that further interventions are required to meet these objectives.

4.2 This school is well linked to the excellent path network serving the Echline area, with two direct links on the south side of the school. However, a lot of pupils also access the school from the north side, where:

- the area around the gate is busy with cars at school drop-off and pick-up time, and
- there is heavy traffic on the B924 Bo'ness Road, a main entry route to the town

4.3 Addressing the busy school gate problem:

4.3.1 We note that the TTRO plan indicates that the parking restrictions will be introduced 'to improve visibility', but as this area can get very congested we consider that the TTRO is also necessary to provide more space for pupils and parents to access the school from Bo'ness Road, while physically distancing.

4.3.2 Given the need for physical distancing, **we recommend** that the school access road be closed just beyond the school gate; making the section between Bo'ness Road and the school access-only for school staff, deliveries, etc. thereby reducing the volume of traffic and making the carriageway available to safely physical distance.

4.3.3 There is a surprising amount of road space here to drive on, including the unnamed service parallel to Bo'ness Road which runs along to Echline Avenue. In order to open up a lot of valuable pedestrian circulation space, **we recommend** extending the closure, along the length of the service road, to the entrance to the residents car park and introducing parking restrictions on the remainder, along to Echline Avenue. This would also have the further benefit of pushing drop-offs further from the school gates, onto Echline Avenue, from which the excellent path network can be accessed in several places, thereby spacing out any drop-offs.



Service road, recommended for closure north from the school entrance

4.4 Addressing the busy B924 Bo'ness Road problem:

4.4.1 The main reason why drop-offs occur is the danger from this busy and fast road which blocks the school off from a large part of its catchment area, to the north. When Echline Primary School was designed and built, the B924 Bo'ness Road was a relatively secondary entrance route into the town. Unfortunately, since the Queensferry Crossing opened, it has become the main route into the town from the west and a major barrier to active travel to school. We understand that, in recognition of this, that there is a pedestrian crossing promised to be installed. **We strongly recommend** that a temporary signalled crossing be installed as an urgent requirement as part of this scheme, pending its permanent replacement.



The existing un-signalled crossing is 6 meters across, shows significant impact damage and is inadequate as a safe route to a primary school.

4.4.2 We also strongly recommend that the speed limit on the B924 be reduced to a consistent 20mph along its whole length.

5. Other Schools : St Margaret's Primary School & New High School

5.1 We are concerned that St Margaret's Primary School (roll 120) and the New High School (roll 450) are not yet subject to TTROs, although these may be in the pipeline?

5.2 While the roll at St Margaret's is lower than those at Echline and Queensferry, there is nevertheless significant congestion outside at school drop-off and pick-up times. Given that we can now expect to see a considerable increase in traffic along Station Road with the closure of the High Street, there is a need for TTROs to restrict parking outside both schools if serious congestion is to be avoided. This congestion has the potential to create a serious hazard for children cycling to school, to general cycle traffic along Station Road and also for pedestrians who will find it difficult to physically distance in the areas around these schools.

5.3 We fear that the conditions for cyclists travelling along Station Road could deteriorate considerably once the High Street closes and the schools open. **One of the most disappointing things is that this is likely to discourage children from cycling to school and works against the Council's stated objective of increasing active travel as a means of getting to school.** We **strongly recommend** that further TTROs are prepared for the schools on Station Road, with the implications of the High Street closure being fully taken into consideration.

Ewan Jeffrey, for Spokes Planning Group : 14 August 2020