

**PE1595/HHH**

East Dunbartonshire Council Letter of 16 February 2016

Dear Ms Fergusson,

**Re: Consideration of Petition PE1595 (Moratorium on Shared Space Schemes)**

On the 27<sup>th</sup> of January 2016 East Dunbartonshire Council was contacted by Scottish Government Public Petitions Committee who had earlier heard petition PE1595 *“Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to place a moratorium on all shared space schemes until safety and equality concerns have been addressed.”*

Specifically the following has been asked of East Dunbartonshire Council:

*“The shared space scheme in Kirkintilloch was raised in the course of the meeting, along with shared spaces that have been introduced or are planned in other local authority areas. The Committee has agreed to seek information from relevant local authorities about the motivations behind the introduction of shared space schemes and for details of the process and consultation that was entered into prior to such schemes being introduced. In particular, the Committee asks for information about the consideration of the needs of disabled, blind and partially sighted people in consultations that may have taken place.”*

Local Plan 2, adopted in 2011, stated that Kirkintilloch Town Centre was in need of improvement in terms of appearance and retail offer. Policy TCR 6D stated that the Council aims to create a stronger identity for Kirkintilloch, increase visitor numbers, and attract higher levels of inward investment. The Local Plan stated that this will be achieved through improvements to the public realm, access and parking, and business support.

Following 2 years of engagement, on December 3 2013, the Development and Regeneration Committee agreed to formally approve the Kirkintilloch Town Centre Masterplan. It was adopted as a supplementary planning guidance note and consequently is a material consideration when considering development proposals within the town centre. The Masterplan outlines a number of proposals within the town centre which the Council is committed to delivering through its capital programme and external funding.

The vision of the Masterplan is to:

***“Create a reinvigorated heart for Kirkintilloch that is vibrant, welcoming and attractive, and encourages healthy and sustainable patterns of behaviour. Become a town centre that celebrates its key assets such as the Forth & Clyde Canal and Antonine Wall, and is also forward-looking and modern, providing a balance of leisure, civic, retail, business and tourism facilities. It must provide opportunities for young enterprise, new investment and act as a gateway to the natural attractions of the surrounding areas.”***

The Masterplan identifies a range of projects to address issues that emerged from consultation with the public and various stake holder groups. The projects were then grouped into themes: Public Realm, Gateways and Access, Historic and Built Fabric, Long-Term Physical Change and Economic Development. One such project is the Cowgate Street Design Project, which at that point sought to implement a 'Shared Space' approach to street design in Kirkintilloch town centre.

During initial consultation November 2011-January 2012 (in the form of questionnaires and community workshops) clear conclusions emerged from residents and businesses. They wished to see the town become more pedestrian friendly whilst also having improved sustainable transport links. It was also stated that any town centre interventions should alleviate congestion and give preferential treatment to public transport.

The Kirkintilloch Town Centre Masterplan and the Cowgate Street Design Project have been developed against Scottish Government's design policy and guidance, Scottish Planning Policy, Designing Places (now revoked), Designing Streets and Creating Places. The aim is to create a Kirkintilloch that is in line with the qualities of a successful place. These documents are used by all local authorities in Scotland to inform all urban design decision making.

Since this project was approved to be taken forward by Council substantial levels of engagement and consultation has taken place. This has resulted in significant alterations to the project which, initially, was more of a retrofit of the town centre with the current pavement and carriageway widths being maintained. Due to the positive engagement outlined below and support from partners such as Sustrans and Strathclyde Partnership for Transport the final project has been significantly enhanced:

- Community Workshops, Pop-Up Events and Residents/Businesses Questionnaires November 2011 – January 2012.
- Formation of the Kirkintilloch Town Centre Masterplan Champions Group in August 2012; The group acts as a sounding board and includes representation from the following bodies: Action for Churches Across Scotland, Ashoka Brassiere, Chamber of Commerce, East Dunbartonshire Access Panel, East Dunbartonshire Council, East Dunbartonshire Leisure & Culture Trust, East Dunbartonshire Ethnic Forum, Forth & Clyde Society, JACCA Ltd, Kirkintilloch Community Council, Kirkintilloch Town Hall Restoration Trust, Kenwil, Regent Centre, St Ninian's School, Seagull Trust, Scottish Canals, St Mary's Church, Sustrans and Vijram Properties Ltd.
- Information stand during Test Town in the Regents Gardens on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> of July 2014 to give information on upcoming projects for the town centre but with specific focus on the Cowgate Street Design Project
- Catherine St Junction Trial August-September 2014: Approximately 300 people took part in Council survey during trial.
- October Street Audit with the East Dunbartonshire Visually Impaired People's Forum (EDVIP) and Guide Dog UK.

- Consultation on Cowgate Street Design in December 2014 (5 drop-in Events in a Vacant Retail Unit):
  - 213 unique visitors attended the exhibitions.
  - 88 questionnaires filled out and returned to the Project Team (includes paper and online copies).
  - 161 visits to the unique webpage established for the lifespan of the awareness raising and consultation period.
  - 3,500 promotional brochures were distributed throughout the Cowgate to raise awareness of the project. These brochures were also distributed at the busy Christmas light switch on in the town centre.
- Committee approval and Equality Design Forums established. 42 participants over 2 three hour sessions took part in the Equality Design Forums (27<sup>th</sup> of May & 8<sup>th</sup> of June) and a final feedback session on the 9th of October 2015 including representation from EDVIP, Guide Dog UK, Deafblind Scotland and the National Federation of the Blind UK, the East Dunbartonshire Access Panel and other local groups such as schools, Police Scotland and the Council's Equality Officer and the Council's Sensory Impairment Rehabilitation Officer.
- Canal Festival in 2012 for the refinement of concepts (which included Cowgate) for the Masterplan document, in 2014 during the Catherine Street Trial and then subsequently in 2015 when approximately 200 people were engaged with and given flyers at each Festival.
- November 2015 Drop-In Sessions 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup> which had approximately 700 people through the door.
- Chair of Access Panel appointed Access Champion to Project.

As a result of the consultation, the design of the Cowgate Street Design has evolved greatly from what was proposed following adoption of the Kirkintilloch Town Centre Masterplan. As a result of consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, the final project will have the following features, many of which separate it from what would normally be termed as a shared space:

- **Pavement widths will be increased on average up to 3 metres;**
- **The carriageway will be physically narrowed resulting in greatly reduced crossing distances (on average 12m to 6m);**
- **There will be a 20mph speed limit and clear gateway signage to drivers;**
- **There will be a change of carriage way material and features, such as landscaping and gateway features to change driver perception of the area and to reinforce that it is a people orientated place.**
- **There will be 6 raised tables on the Cowgate which will emphasise the change in environment and influence driver behaviour;**
- **There will be kerbs throughout the project area – 60mm and 20mm where there is a raised table;**
- **There will be courtesy crossings with appropriate tactiles, which have been located in line with studies of where people tend to cross Cowgate at present (page 26 of the Kirkintilloch Town Centre Masterplan);**
- **There will be tactile edge between circulation space and clutter space, and appropriately located tactiles on all crossings;**

- **Visual and textural narrowing at the edge and middle of the carriageway to encourage lower speeds;**
- **Buses will stop on the carriageway rather than a lay-by in line with SPT guidance. This gives priority to public transport but will also slow traffic.**
- **There will be a strong tonal contrast between materials throughout;**
- **Bus stops will be improved and will be real time enabled to promote public transport (real time passenger information is not yet available in this bus corridor);**
- **There will be controlled crossings on Kerr Street, Catherine Street and at Barleybank on Cowgate;**
- **There will be appropriately located bollards to stop vehicle overrunning the pavement;**
- **Work with relevant bodies to ensure that any support, if required, will be available post construction.**
- **There will be monitoring where controlled crossings have been removed and the ducting will be put in place to ensure that, if as a result of monitoring a controlled crossing is required this can be easily achieved.**

Each of these techniques to street design underpin the approach being taken in the Kirkintilloch Town Centre Masterplan specifically the Cowgate Street Design Project and helped steer discussion in the Equality Design Forums. The approach is also reflective of the position of the Scottish Government that good design can change driver perception and psychology and create the kinds of urban places in which we all want to be in.

The proposals are also in accordance with the Scottish Government's Town Centre Toolkit. This document notes on page 75 that shared space/shared surface approaches to town centres "...are appropriate for central areas or town squares, where both through-flows of low traffic volumes at slower speeds and high quality people-friendly environment as desired" and that "consideration should be given to ensuring that shared spaces are well-designed for all, including people with visual impairments".

The final designs demonstrate that the project has been designed for people of all ability. It is clear that while the petitioner holds dissatisfaction with the outcome of engagement and consultation it does not negate the outcomes nor the process itself. Furthermore, as a result of the consultation that has taken place the project that will now be delivered on the Cowgate is not a true shared space.

It should also be noted that project has been subject to a number of Road Safety Audits which demonstrated there were no significant concerns. Furthermore the project was subject to an independent appraisal by the UK's leading pedestrian rights charity, Living Streets, who concluded:

***"Based on this assessment, the overall impact of the balanced street approach for the Cowgate is likely to be positive and it would hoped that it would feature as a case study in future versions of the Town Centre Toolkit and Designing Streets".***

For your consideration I have attached the following documentation which were approved by the full Council and the Council's Development & Regeneration Committee:

- Report: 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2013 – Kirkintilloch Town Centre Masterplan - Adoption
- Adopted Kirkintilloch Town Centre Masterplan
- Report: 24<sup>th</sup> March 2015 – Kirkintilloch Town Centre Masterplan – Cowgate Street Design Project, Catherine Street Junction Options.  
Including:
  - Appendix 1: Information on 'Shared Space'
  - Appendix 2: Report of Consultation from December 2014
  - Appendix 3: Ironside Farrar Catherine Street Junction Options Report
  - Appendix 4: Work programme and Phasing Plan
  - Appendix 5: Preferred Junction Options
  - Appendix 6: Cowgate Materials Zoning Plan
  - Appendix 7: Summary of Cowgate Street Design in Pictures
- Report: 6<sup>th</sup> of October 2015 – Kirkintilloch Town Centre Masterplan – Cowgate Street Design Project, Further Design Engagement Outcomes.  
Including:
  - Appendix 1: Equality Design Forum Report
  - Appendix 2: Living Streets Report
  - Appendix 3: Cowgate Street Design Project Equality Impact Assessment
- Urban Designer Visuals of the Final Design
- Final Plans for the Cowgate Street Design Project & Plan Pre Engagement with EDVIP and other bodies.

Should you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards

**Kevin Argue**  
**Kirkintilloch Town Centre**  
**Masterplan Officer**