

Stirling Road Access for All project

Themes raised during the public consultations over the proposed changes to Stirling Road and Beech Road in November and December 2014

Public consultations

Three events were held at the end of 2014 in Dunblane to showcase the design proposals for Stirling Road and Beech Road and invite comment:

- A public daytime event on Saturday the 29th November
- A closed event on Monday the 1st of December for business owners and residents
- A public evening event on Tuesday the 2nd of December

In total 182 people attended the three events. In addition, the questionnaires distributed at the events were also publicised and made available on-line to anyone unable to make the events. In total, we received around 200 written comments over the three days and 80 detailed surveys were completed, of which 43% had answers to all the 5 main questions. The themes raised through both the written comments and detailed surveys have been grouped together in this document as several posed questions. This method enables us to present back what we feel the common topics and concerns are that were raised by people over the three days. A complete record of all the comments raised is available in a separate document.

Design proposals

“The proposals, as presented, would be a significant improvement for pedestrians, particularly wheelchair and pushchair.” (Male Dunblane resident, 55-64)

The concept designs shown to the public, business owners and residents during the consultation do not represent a detailed plan of work rather a considered vision of what could change in the area.

There are many competing demands on the road and pavement space between the railway station and the High Street. The process of ‘firming up’ what will happen will need to look at how the different demands and visions for the space can be balanced out to the best all round benefit and within a fairly tight budget, timescale and a constrained space. It’s worth noting that whilst many people prioritised access to the area by car and parking a similar number of people also wanted to see the space altered to become a better quality people space for walking, cycling and socialising.

Summary

It's difficult to do justice in one document to all of the written comments, survey responses and ideas put forward by the people who attended the events or commented on the designs. All of the collected information, as written both good and bad, is freely available for those who wish to read it all.

The funding secured by Stirling Council from Sustrans to work on Stirling Road was granted on the basis of improving accessibility, making it easier for people of all ages and abilities to be able to walk and cycle along this road or travel to the station and business from a bit further away in town. Whilst we were keen to hold onto the objectives of the funding and vision behind the designs we recognise that there are competing demands on the street and that the demands for parking, vehicle and bus access need to balance against our desire to see better quality places and a more welcoming and accessible environment. It's refreshing that in many of the conversations we had and in the comments received there is also a desire to see things improve alongside a recognition of keeping the balance going to get an environment that works for us all.

Businesses – local impact/access/loading

“Increase short term parking. Encourage people to be spending money locally, rather than just visiting. Dunblane is lucky to have the independent businesses it does.” (Male, aged 64-75, non-resident)

What effect will the proposals have on local businesses and their ability to operate?

The businesses on Stirling Rd and Beech Rd are an important part of the local economy. Many people raised concerns as to the impact a reduction in short stay parking will have on the businesses and questioned where loading/unloading will take place.

The proposals as they currently stand would create high quality public spaces outside the station, on the bridge and at the corner of Beech Rd and Stirling Rd. These spaces will be more attractive and welcoming places to spend time or pass through for both locals and visitors alike, making Dunblane centre a more attractive place and hopefully increasing footfall

Equally access through this part of town for people that are less mobile and those walking, cycling or pushing buggies will be improved. By removing many of the trip hazards and obstacles caused by changes in kerb height, poor quality surfaces and poorly positioned street furniture access to town centre businesses will be improved for all.

As part of the proposals we will look to install two marked loading bays, one bay serving Beech Rd and the other bay serving the eastern end of Stirling Rd.

Bridge over the Allan Water

“Improves aesthetics of the bridge and Stirling Arms/Riverside. Makes a proper gateway to the town from the station and from Beech road.” (Female Dunblane resident, 55-64)

When is the bridge going to be repaired?

We had many comments about the bridge over the Allan Water and a desire to see the parapets repaired. The bridge is clearly an asset to the town which has the potential to be a better place to linger on and enjoy the views and form part of an attractive link to the town.

A feasibility study into the repair the bridge has been commissioned by Stirling Council. The results of the study and the costs for the repair of the bridge will be known in March 2015. Stirling Council will be seeking to identify funding to allow the work on the bridge repair to progress.

If funding is able to be found for the repair of the bridge the Stirling Road improvement proposals would be able to capitalise on the desire to see the bridge become a quality space potentially with seating and planting.

(NB Listed Building Consent to enable improvements to the bridge have been submitted at the end of January 2015 to enable bridge repair works to be co-ordinated with the Stirling Road improvements, if Listed Building Consent is granted and if funding can be found).

Station forecourt

“Replacement of existing kerbs which hinder movement an excellent idea - shared surfaces allow freer movement. Approve of access for cyclists directly down to station” (Female Dunblane resident, 55-64)

What will happen to the space outside the station?

The station forecourt is a difficult environment for people with reduced mobility. As well as addressing these access issues, the proposals also suggested that we could create more of a plaza area, making the space a more attractive and welcoming gateway into the town centre.

Whilst many agreed with the desire to improve this important entrance into the town, others were concerned about where station drop off, station pick up, disabled parking and taxis would go. The proposals will ensure that station drop off and station pick is provided as well as provision for taxis and disabled parking all within the immediate vicinity of the station and its entrances and exits.

Pedestrians and better quality places

“Use of local stone, ensuring materials used are sympathetic and blend in to existing area, places to sit and edible borders.” (Male Dunblane resident, 55-64)

What materials will you be using in the area and how will this help pedestrians?

Whilst the available budget is limited we think there is scope within the proposals to create high quality people friendly places that are fully accessible to pedestrians. Notionally these spaces will be outside the station, on the Allan Water bridge and at the corner of Beech Rd and Stirling Rd. Working with Stirling Council’s Conservation Officer we will identify a palette of materials that are sympathetic in colour to the built environment on Stirling Rd, look great and feel welcoming and are durable and will not create a slip hazard in the winter or hold water.

The pavements and road surfaces in between each space will also be improved to create a more uniform surface and make it easier for people with and without mobility issues to move around with less fear of falling or getting stuck because of the lack of dropped kerbs.

We understand the need to create places for people to enjoy and the installation of improved lighting, benches, planters and trees will enhance our proposals and make the centre of Dunblane a better space for locals and visitors.

A longer term aim would be to pick up on the many comments raised about the quality of the link path across the green footbridge by Bridgend and the connections onto Tesco.

Buses

“The bus stop would be better retained in the current less busy position, which would also allow waiting”. (Male Dunblane resident, 75 or over)

Will I still be able to catch a bus on Stirling Rd?

Maintaining access to public transport is an important element of the project. We are currently reviewing the design proposals to look at where we could create a designated space for the bus to wait.

The bus stop position currently besides Victoria Halls is likely to remain in a similar position.

Cycling

“The proposals improve access for cyclists significantly which is very welcome.” (Female Dunblane resident, 16-24)

What effect will the proposals have on improving access to the station and town for cyclists?

The one way system currently restricts:

- Secondary school pupils on the east of the town being able to cycle home from Dunblane High School (except via the Faery Bridge)
- Rail users and residents from the west of the town cycling to the town centre and to the east of the town

The proposals would see the creation of a shared use route running from the top of Stirling Rd by the junction with Perth Rd all the way down to the junction with Beech Rd. This route would be for the use of both pedestrians and cyclists and would allow cyclists and people using mobility scooters or pushing buggies and wheelchairs to travel against the flow of traffic on Stirling Rd.

Comments were received in support of the shared use path (especially as an access route to the town centre from the sheltered housing at Drumcastle Court), but equally some were concerned about a shared use surface and how this would work. Shared use surfaces are commonplace in other towns in Scotland, nonetheless the design of the route would be made to encourage slower cyclist speeds.

As the proposals develop we would envisage covered secure cycle being installed in close proximity to the station and the cycle racks at the corner of Beech Rd being replaced too.

Short stay parking

“Generally will improve the environment and reclaim the space for people not cars. But there is a need to consider displaced car parking, where does it go?” (Female Dunblane resident, 35-44)

“Careful thought must be given to parking provision as the short stay system encourages shoppers to pop in and use the town’s independent retailers.” (Male Dunblane resident, 55-64)

What impact will the proposals have on short stay parking and residents parking on Stirling Rd and Beech Rd?

We recognise that the short stay parking on both Stirling Rd and Beech Rd is both well used and important to both local shoppers and businesses and consequently we aim, where practical, to minimise the loss of short stay parking.

To enable the creation of the shared use access route, the proposals would lead to the removal of spaces between Papas takeaway and the bridge over the Allan Water. To minimise the loss of short stay parking in this area, the proposals suggest the re-orientation of the spaces on the side by the Post Office into a more efficient herringbone layout (known as echelon parking).

Some of the existing short stay parking spaces will be relocated in the area, possibly to the upper part of Stirling Rd opposite the entrance to the abattoir and on the upper part of Beech Rd. One option may also be to re-designate some of the existing long stay spaces on the dual carriageway to short stay spaces.

The residents parking directly opposite the station will be retained.

Whilst many are concerned about the loss of any short stay parking spaces, equally many are supportive of a small reduction to enable the creation of a more attractive and accessible town centre.

Long stay parking

“Re-balance debate between all parking and pedestrians in favour of latter.” (Female Dunblane resident, 45-54)

“Ensure there is parking for the people who commute from surrounding areas of Dunblane to Glasgow and Edinburgh.” (Male Dunblane resident, 45-54)

What effect will the proposals have on long stay parking?

We recognise that the Perth Rd, Stirling Rd and Millrow are all used for long stay parking by people visiting the town and commuters. We also recognise that Dunblane is a commuter town, with a hinterland that also uses the station to commute by rail (rather than drive into Stirling, Glasgow or Edinburgh).

Many comments suggest that the priority for parking spaces within the town should be given to short stay over long stay parking to support visitors to the town centre. .

The only long stay parking spaces in the study area are those closest to the station forecourt and daytime entrance to the station. These spaces will be removed. This is required to allow the station forecourt area to be made a more welcoming environment.

However, as noted above one option being explored is to re-designate some of the existing long stay parking spaces on the dual carriageway to short stay spaces to offset the loss of short stay spaces in the town.

Disabled parking and access

“The proposed plan in front of the station would improve the use of this area but does substantially reduce parking availability. Priority must obviously be given to disabled parking.” (Male Dunblane resident, 65-74)

What will happen to the existing disabled parking bays and access to Stirling Rd and Beech Rd for people who are less mobile?

The number and location of disabled parking spaces on Stirling Rd and Beech Rd will be reviewed to provide a better coverage at this end of the town centre, and hopefully additional spaces.

The two disabled parking bays closest to the daytime entrance to the station will be moved away from the station forecourt and placed closest to the new entrance to the station by the bridge lift. By placing the spaces next to the lift, for anyone returning to Dunblane after 1.30pm (when the Station building is shut), this is likely to reduce the total distance that users of the disabled spaces have to travel.

One way system

“Consider reversing the one way system. Would allow drop off at station and buses doing a loop on these roads. Also allow cars to exit Millrow and go up beech rd.” (Female Dunblane resident, 45-54)

Is there any benefit in reversing the one way system?

A few people put forward the idea that there should be consideration given to reversing the one way system. This idea has been discussed and we feel that it is not worth pursuing at this point. Changing the direction of the one way system would mean significant costs are incurred in changing the junction arrangements at the exit Stirling Road onto Perth Road and the entrance from Perth Road onto Beech Road for what are likely to be relatively minor benefits.