

# Transport & Environment Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 21 March 2017

## Request to close Viewforth at the south side of the Union Canal Bridge

Item number	7.13.1
Report number	
Executive/routine	
Wards	9 – Fountainbridge/Craiglockhart

### Summary

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In April 2014 the City of Edinburgh Council approved the provision of a new secondary school on the corner of Viewforth and Dundee Street. In 2016, during the construction, the Council was contacted by residents and the Parent Council raising concerns about the number of pupils walking to the school and the potential conflict with vehicles. This report is to provide background to this and makes recommendations.

### Links

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Coalition pledges	<a href="#">P33</a>
Council outcomes	<a href="#">CP4, CP11</a>
Single Outcome Agreement	<a href="#">SO4</a>

## Request to close Viewforth at the south side of the Union Canal Bridge

### 1. Recommendations

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- 1.1 It is recommended that the Transport and Environment Committee visit the site to observe the issues that have been raised.

### 2. Background

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- 2.1 In 2014 the Council approved plans to move Boroughmuir High School from the existing site to the corner of Viewforth and Dundee Street. This formed part of the former Scottish and Newcastle Brewery site within the Fountainbridge area of the city. The site covers approximately two hectares and is bounded by the Union Canal (a schedule ancient monument) to the south; Fountainbridge and Dundee Street to the north; Napier University student accommodation to the west on Gibson Terrace, a residential tenement street lies beyond this site; Viewforth and the remaining part of the larger former brewery site to the east. The site lies immediately south and west of the city's business district – Exchange area, Haymarket and Tollcross. The site is approximately 500 metres from the existing school.
- 2.2 The development is broadly consistent with the development plan and the Fountainbridge brief. The scale and the design was considered to be acceptable and the amenity would be safeguarded. There were no implications for road or pedestrian safety identified during the approval process.
- 2.3 The application was advertised on 10 January 2014. There were 11 letters of representation received, of which eight were in support of the application, one objection and two offered general comments. The following material points were raised:
- Principle of the development;
  - Road & Pedestrian safety; and
  - Amenity.

- 2.4 Merchiston Community Council, as a statutory consultee, raised the following points
- Roads & Pedestrian safety;
  - Park design; and
  - Maintenance and Cleansing.
- 2.5 The development included road improvements on Dundee Street, Viewforth Bridge and Gilmore Place. Due to the school catchment area being located largely to the south of the site it was acknowledged that there will be a significant increase in pedestrian flow from that direction. To accommodate the flow, the footways on the bridge will be widened to three metres and the traffic reduced to a single lane that will be signalised. This arrangement has been assessed from a road safety perspective and will be able to accommodate the pedestrian flow without unduly impacting upon traffic movement.
- 2.6 The linkages across the site have been designed for cyclists as well as pedestrians. A direct route from Dundee Street to the canal will be provided along the western boundary and a ramped access from Viewforth, just north of the school entrance. The area at the bottom of the steps which will link to Viewforth will be pedestrianised. There will be sufficient circulation space for people to be waiting in this location and access to the canal to be maintained. The footpaths in front of the school, both on Dundee Street and Viewforth are over four metres wide, which will safely accommodate pedestrian movement.

### 3. Main report

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- 3.1 Residents and the Parent Council raised a petition with over 220 signatures. This was discussed at the Petitions Committee on the [23 January 2017](#) and was agreed to refer this to the Transport and Environment Committee with a recommendation that the Committee members visit the site to observe the issues raised.
- 3.2 The issues raised as part of the petition are:
- 3.2.1 Safety of school pupils travelling to and from the new Boroughmuir High School due to moving vehicles.
  - 3.2.2 Pollution of stationary vehicles during rush hour.
  - 3.2.3 Noise pollution to the school from moving and stationary traffic.
  - 3.2.4 New housing developments on Horne Terrace increasing traffic movements.
  - 3.2.5 New mixed use development on the east side of Viewforth increasing traffic movements.
  - 3.2.6 The closure of Viewforth would improve access to the canal towpath.
  - 3.2.7 The closure of Viewforth would preserve the fabric of the bridge over the Union Canal.
- 3.3 The new Boroughmuir School will be accommodating nearly 1,300 pupils with the majority coming from a southerly direction.

- 3.4 The pupils traversing from a south direction will need to cross a number of junctions prior to the location of the requested road closure, namely Bruntsfield Place, Montpelier, Hartington Gardens, Hartington Place, Viewforth Terrace, Westhall Gardens, Viewforth Square, Gilmore Place and Horne Terrace.
- 3.5 Concern has been raised by residents and the Parent Council regarding the safety of the pupils between the junction of Gilmore Place and the main entrance to the school. They have requested that the road be closed to the south side of the bridge over the Union Canal to stop traffic travelling to Dundee Street/Fountainbridge area.
- 3.6 A monitoring exercise requires to be carried out on completion of the approved works to identify if there are any safety issues regarding the movement of pedestrians and any conflicts with vehicles prior to the school opening.
- 3.7 If any conflicts are monitored the Transport section will arrange for traffic modelling to be carried out to establish the effect of closing Viewforth on the surrounding network. This will be gathered by an external consultant carrying out a traffic modelling exercise on an agreed area as the Council does not have the expertise to carry out this work.
- 3.8 The Transport section will carry out further traffic counts once the school has opened so the data can be compared with previous data collected.
- 3.9 Councils School Travel co-ordinators will be working with the school on their school travel plan.
- 3.10 The Planning and Transport section will aim to improve the walking and cycling environment in the area through new projects and maintenance.
- 3.11 Any closure may increase congestion, pollution and safety concerns at other locations due to the displaced traffic.
- 3.12 There are two new developments in the process of being built on Horne Terrace which will increase the volume of vehicle and pedestrian movements in the area. The closure of Viewforth on the south side of the Union Canal bridge will increase the traffic movements in a south direction as there will not be an option to turn north.
- 3.13 As part of the proposed development on the east side of Viewforth access to the canal towpath will be improved. In addition, a raised table will be constructed to improve pedestrian movements across the carriageway.

#### **4. Measures of success**

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- 4.1 It is considered that it will take the contractor until April 2017 to complete all the works associated with the new school development. On completion, the Council will be able to carry out monitoring exercises to identify if there are any issues between pedestrian and vehicle movements.

- 4.2 If there are issues raised then a traffic modelling will be carried out which will provide the information on the impact the closure would have on the surrounding network.
- 4.3 This information can then be used to carry out improvements which may include the closure of the carriageway at a location on Viewforth.

## **5. Financial impact**

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- 5.1 The financial impact will be between £10,000 and £20,000 depending on the area to be incorporated in the traffic modelling.
- 5.2 Officers time commissioning the traffic modelling exercise and monitoring the area.
- 5.3 If required, the promotion of the Traffic Regulation Order to close the road and related signage.
- 5.4 The cost of any other improvements identified.

## **6. Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact**

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- 6.1 Failure to undertake the monitoring exercise as described in 3.6 of the main report above, could present a risk of potential pedestrian/vehicle conflict being unidentified.
- 6.2 Risk that the closure of Viewforth will have a significant safety impact on the surrounding area as a result of increased congestion due to the displacement of vehicles if the Traffic Regulation Order was promoted to close the carriageway to through traffic.
- 6.3 Risk of vehicles carrying out turning manoeuvres at the closure ends which may conflict with pedestrians if the Traffic Regulation Order was promoted to close the carriageway to through traffic.

## **7. Equalities impact**

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- 7.1 Consideration has been given to the three Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) general duties; there is no direct positive or negative impact on these duties arising from this report

## **8. Sustainability impact**

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- 8.1 The impacts of this report have been considered in relation to the three elements of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 Public Bodies Duties and the outcomes are summarised below.
  - 8.1.1 The proposals in this report are not expected to impact negatively on the reduction of carbon emissions;

- 8.1.2 The proposals in this report are not expected to impact negatively on the city's resilience to climate change impacts; and
- 8.1.3 The proposals in this report are not expected to impact negatively on social justice, economic wellbeing or the city's environmental good stewardship.

## 9. Consultation and engagement

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- 9.1 The local Councillors received correspondence from a resident regarding concerns with pedestrian safety and congestion due to the new Boroughmuir High School site. Subsequently two meetings were held and correspondence exchanged discussing the matter.
- 9.2 The Parent Council raised a petition and this was discussed at the Petitions Committee on the 23 January 2017 and referred to the Transport and Environment Committee.

## 10. Background reading/external references

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None

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## 11. Links

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<b>Coalition pledges</b>	P33 – Strengthen Neighbourhood Partnerships and further involve local people in decisions on how Council resources are used.
<b>Council priorities</b>	CP4 – Safe and empowered communities. CP11 – An accessible connected city.
<b>Single Outcome Agreement</b>	SO4 – Edinburgh's communities are safer and have improved physical and social fabric.
<b>Appendices</b>	Appendix 1 – Plan of Viewforth area.

# Appendix One – Plan of Viewforth area

