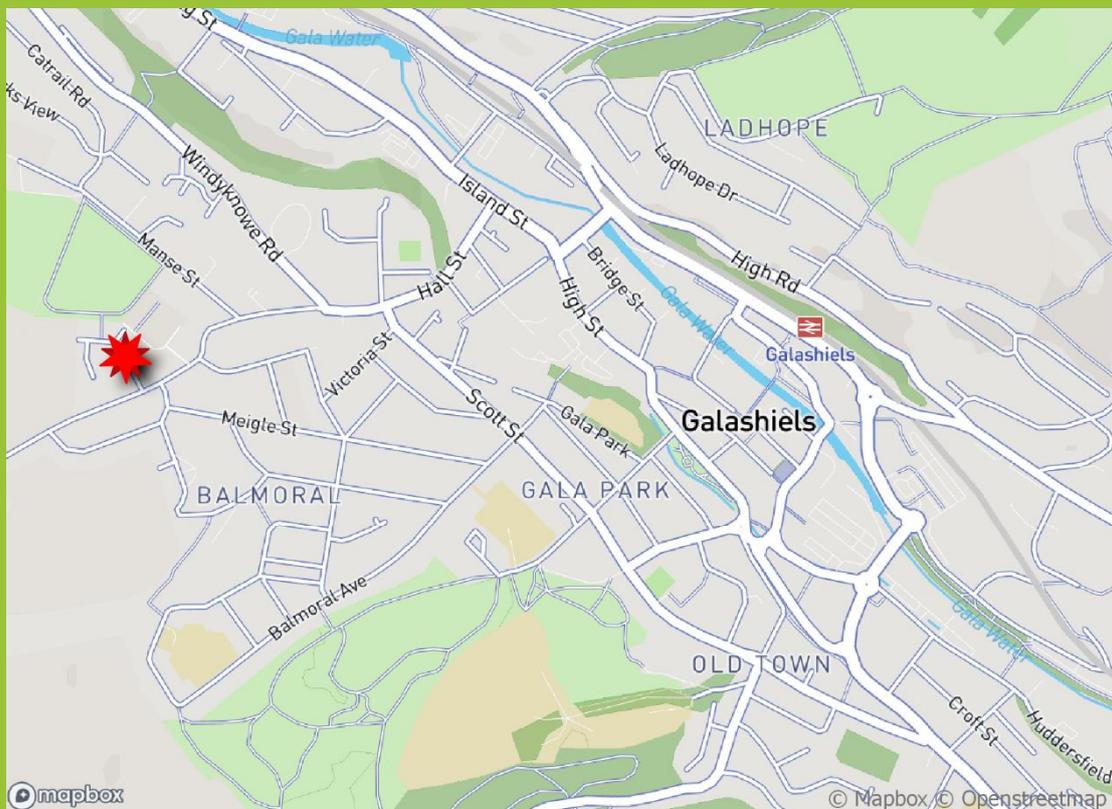


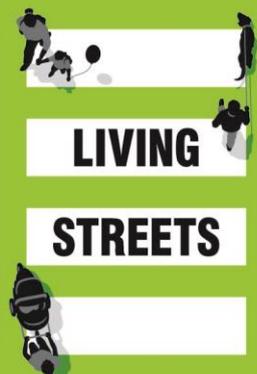
Pedestrian conditions assessment

Meigle View, Galashiels (Eildon Housing)

Social Housing Partnership Fund for Improved Cycling & Walking Facilities 2020-21



We are Living Streets Scotland, part of the UK charity for everyday walking. We want to create a nation where walking is the natural choice for everyday, local journeys.



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Summary

Key points for Registered Social Landlord

Our assessment of the area around Meigle View (and Riddle Dumble Park) Galashiels, which should be checked with residents and other stakeholders, leads us to conclude that pedestrians are disadvantaged by these key issues:

- The streets in the wider residential area tend to have relatively narrow footways (i.e. pavements) and in some cases these are insufficient for anyone other than an able bodied adult walking alone.
- The lack of dropped kerbs on many junctions in the wider residential area will prevent use of many wheeled mobility aids.
- Many of the junctions in the wider residential area are designed so that extremely large areas of carriageway are available, with minimal footway. While low traffic levels may mean that crossing at these locations is possible (for able bodied adults), it is probably unpleasant to do so. These junctions probably allow higher vehicle speeds than are desirable.

As the Registered Social Landlord it may only be possible for Eildon Housing Association to lead action in connection with a small number of the issues and ideas described in this report. The most significant of these might be around:

- Working with the local authority to agree to the installation of temporary infrastructure (e.g. planters or bolt-down features) seeking to change driving behaviour within the local area (primarily on Meigle View).

We report on wider issues because we consider that the better these are understood the higher the likelihood of change – whether locally or more generally.

Background note:

Our urban environments are defined by interrelated features under the influence of many different bodies, and this report is about current conditions whatever their cause. Registered Social Landlords do not generally have control over the main factors which affect pedestrians in the wider areas around the properties they manage. Likewise local authorities - with limited resources and budgets, and facing numerous other constraints - do not have immediate control over many of the factors which affect pedestrians.

However, in the longer term it is helpful if problems are understood, and potential solutions are explored. Registered Social Landlords may be able to have a positive influence, making more immediate changes where they have the power to do so, supporting others to understand the issues their residents face, and playing their part in working toward change.

This report is based on an assessment which used mapping and information available from sources such as Google Streetview. Prior to finalising this report we presented the content to Eildon Housing Association as an initial check of its accuracy. The intention is that the information in the report is used to support a longer informed discussion with local residents, as they are the real experts on the quality of the experience for pedestrians in the areas where they live.

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Introduction

Living Streets has received funding from the Social Housing Partnership Fund for Improved Cycling & Walking Facilities, administered by Cycling Scotland. We are assessing conditions for pedestrians around properties managed by Registered Social Landlords.

This report presents observations and suggestions for improving conditions following an assessment of the area around the Eildon Housing Association property at Meigle View and Riddle Dumble Park in Galashiels.

Key factors we assess

Our assessment looked at issues such as the following:

- **Footway (i.e. pavement)¹ and path provision:** the presence, surface quality, continuity, width, obstruction, and design of footways and paths.
- **Accessibility:** how far footways and paths, and their interaction with the carriageways of streets, have been designed to accommodate disabled people and others less able to deal with complicated or dangerous conditions.
- **General area design and character:** whether this is an area full of human activity and street life or one dominated by the movement of or parking of vehicles and the provision of roads designed primarily to facilitate these things.
- **Local area traffic-related safety:** looking at possibility of risk of injury from vehicles, and evaluating the likely effects of this risk on behaviour, not least in terms of how easily pedestrians cross streets or junctions, but also on how pleasant or otherwise a journey might be.
- **Whether streets and paths are welcoming to pedestrians:** both in and around an area, including focusing on how they will feel after dark or later at night – considering in particular what ‘passive surveillance’² exists, and to what level streets and paths are overlooked from buildings nearby.
- **Area permeability:** looking at whether paths and footways connect to provide convenient shorter routes for pedestrians, and longer routes for those driving – or whether routes for pedestrians are defined by following streets which have been designed around vehicle use, or by the necessity to negotiate these safely.
- **Entry and exit points and routes from an area:** looking at what boundaries around the area define these points/routes, and conditions for pedestrians here.
- **Likely destinations outside the local area and routes to/from these:** considering pedestrian journeys primarily for utility journeys – including for shopping, education, and work – and conditions for pedestrians along these, distances, and potential use of public transport.

¹ For clarity this report uses the word term ‘footway’ rather than the phrase ‘the pavement’ to describe the space for walking on beside a road. We do this because the word ‘pavement’ is also used in technical discussion to describe the actual material a road or path is constructed from.

² We use the term ‘passive surveillance’ to describe the way in which it feels safer to be on a street where there are other people nearby who may be able to see activity, including those who might look out from the windows of a building – even if nobody is currently actively doing so.

Location

Meigle View and Riddle Dumble Park together form a small area of (distinctively) newer housing in the west of Galashiels.



Area of Meigle View and Riddle Dumble Park (with associated housing on Mossilee Road)

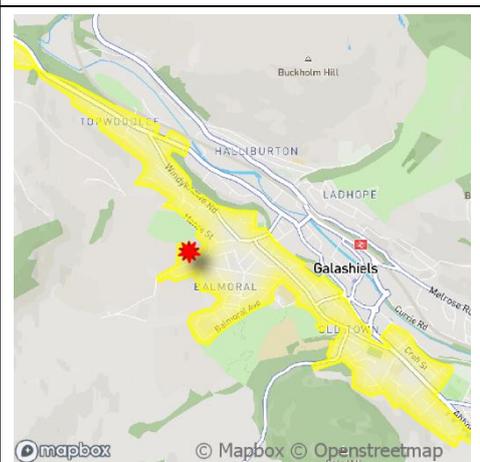
The area is around 1km to the west of the centre of Galashiels, to the southwest of Gala Water, around 50-55m above this and the town centre.



Location (marked with a red star)

There are few more obvious local boundaries to the area of residential housing here. Meigle View and Riddle Dumble Park are part of a very much larger area of primarily residential property arranged on higher ground to the southwest of Gala Water. This area stretches uninterrupted from Torwoodlee, around 1km northwest to Kingsknowes around 2.5km southeast – as shown in yellow on the map (right). The key boundaries to this wider area are created by

- commercial/industrial land use nearer the river,
- the edge of the built up area of Galashiels,
- more significant/wider parts of the A7 road (further southeast).



Wider residential area (yellow)

Observations

Key observations

We think that these issues (and any positive points) most strongly influence the experience of pedestrians in the area. These issues may arise from many different factors. The Registered Social Landlord, and even the local authority, may have little or no direct control over some of them.

Within the larger residential area there are features which create division into smaller areas. These might be ignored by those driving but will feel significant to residents and pedestrians. Such features include:

- distinctive changes in housing style (and age),
- specific areas of street which are not lined with residential property,
- larger streets designed so they feel to be focused on vehicle flow and speed,
- areas at road junctions dominated by the large proportion of space given over to carriageway.

The sections of street which lack residential property have a poorer sense that there is 'passive surveillance' of the street. This situation is sometimes created by the presence of individual non-residential buildings.

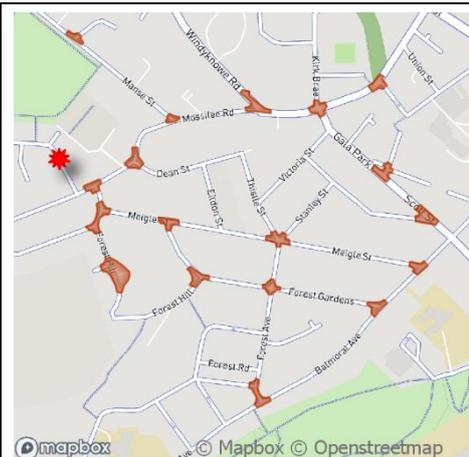
Where carriageways are designed for vehicle speed and flow, or where large areas of carriageway are present around junctions, these provide physical barriers to pedestrians.

Most street junctions in the local residential area (surrounding Meigle View and Riddle Dumble Park) are designed so that carriageway space is extensive.

These wide junctions have minimal footway (pavement) and large open areas of carriageway.

The carriageway shape probably allows vehicles to travel through these junctions at a higher speed than would be desirable. Where traffic is light the lack of conflicting movement may make this worse.

Elderly or disabled pedestrians, those less able to walk (or wheel) quickly, or children less able to anticipate risky situations, may all be at increased risk here.



Approximate areas given over to carriageway at the widest local residential junctions (Meigle View is marked with a red star).

We note that the shape of many of the local junctions would be consistent with an industrial estate designed specifically to accommodate easy movement by HGVs.

The Google Streetview images on the right compare one of the closest large junctions (to Meigle View), with a tighter junction on the purpose built Righead Industrial Estate, which is beside the M8 motorway, accommodating high levels of articulated HGV traffic.

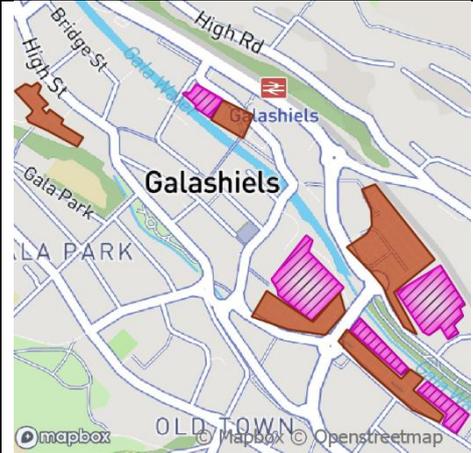
Links to representative images on Google Streetview:

Mossilee Road / Dean Street junction, Galashiels

James Street / Melford Road junction Righead Industrial Estate (North Lanarkshire)

The topography of the area provides one of the biggest disincentives in regard to pedestrian journeys. Most routes between significant destinations and Meigle View are on streets which people might typically describe 'steep' – although perhaps the biggest issue is the overall climb rather than any individual section of street.

People might at one time have expected to walk up these hills as part of living in Galashiels. In modern times however the town centre has been developed in such a way as to enable as much access by private car as possible. Much of the town centre is now focused on two large supermarkets (Tesco Extra / Asda), and a B&M Bargains 'box' store, each of which has its own very large car park. Near these is a small retail park with further chain stores, also with its own car park. Each of these facilities is sited for easy access from the larger town centre roads (which are designed for vehicle flow and speed). While access to these for pedestrians from the old town centre is quite possible these destinations feel to be focused on customers who arrive by car.



Key 'box' stores, retail parks, and larger car parks

Given the barriers noted above it seems likely that those who have access to a car here will use it.

Secondary observations

<p>There will be no 'through' traffic on Meigle View or Riddle Dumble Park. This means that traffic movement should be very light, and that speed could (in theory) be physically restricted.</p>	
<p>Riddle Dumble Park is designed as a level surface street (sometimes described as 'shared space'), without footways (pavements). In theory, in certain circumstances, such an arrangement can create a situation where people driving feel like they are on pedestrian space. Often the result is the opposite and level surface streets like this can feel to be dominated by vehicle movement. Such movement, even if slow, carries risk to pedestrians - much as is the case in a supermarket car park. It is difficult to assess which is the case here without visiting to observe behaviours.</p> <p>There is little to restrict vehicle movement on entry to this area. Gently swept kerbs provide smooth access from Meigle View without a need to significantly slow a vehicle. The carriageway space provided allows easy simultaneous two way traffic movement. While the surface material changes there is no ramp of any kind. The footways stop suddenly - with the design suggesting that pedestrians are required to step into carriageway space.</p>	<p>Links to representative images on Google Streetview</p> <p><u>Riddle Dumble Park level surface</u></p> <p><u>Transition to level surface</u></p> <p><u>Swept corner on approach</u></p>
<p>Junctions on Meigle View are designed as if between major and minor roads, with priority clearly marked. Oddly the join between Meigle View and Riddle Dumble Park (which is essentially a corner in the road) is also marked as a priority junction. While this might be in anticipation of an extension of Meigle View this is unhelpful.</p> <p>The junction with Meigle View and Mossilee Road implies that Mossilee Road is a much larger thoroughfare – despite the fact that around 250m west this becomes a farm track.</p> <p>Markings like these can increase speeds on the road marked as having priority. Alternative designs could have been used on all of these junctions in order to discourage or physically restrict speed.</p>	<p><u>Junction 1 (with Riddle Dumble Park)</u></p> <p><u>Junction 2</u></p> <p><u>Junction 3</u></p> <p><u>Junction 4 (with Mossilee Road)</u></p>

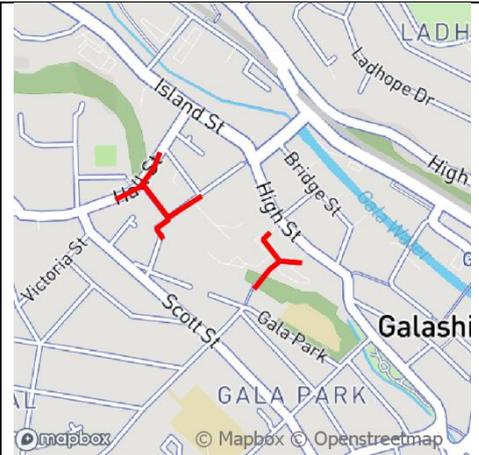
<p>Most local footways (pavements) are probably wide enough for their current use. However there are significant stretches of some footways which are likely to be too narrow for two people to walk comfortably beside one another. Some local sections are barely wide enough for one (able bodied) person to use.</p> <p>Positively, most streets do have footway on both sides, and in many places the surface quality of this may be better than average (although this is difficult to assess).</p> <p>A high proportion of local street junctions lack dropped kerbs. This will severely restrict movement by some people, although even with dropped kerbs many would be difficult to navigate.</p>	<p>Links to representative images on Google Streetview</p> <p><u>Mossilee Road (width of footway)</u></p> <p><u>Meigle Street (width of footway)</u></p> <p><u>Thistle St/Victoria St (lack of dropped kerbs)</u></p> <p><u>Meigle St/Stanley St (lack of dropped kerbs)</u></p>
<p>On many of the local streets access by vehicle to driveways of individual residences across the footway (pavement) has been facilitated by the addition of dropped sections of kerb, and with additional 'crossfall' (slope toward the carriageway) on the footway.</p> <p>Such sloping sections of footway can be challenging to walk across in frosty weather, and can make passage for those using mobility aids much more difficult at all times. These problems tend to multiply when streets are also on a hill (as is the case here).</p> <p>There are individual locations where very minor access is provided by a full break in the footway.</p> <p>These arrangements are common in the UK, but much better solutions keep the footway more level (without significant crossfall) and provide a shorter steep ramp to footway height for vehicles.</p>	<p>Links to representative images on Google Streetview</p> <p><u>Mossilee Road, very narrow footway also broken for very minor access</u></p> <p><u>Mossilee Road, footway with additional crossfall, also on hill</u></p>
<p>Easy vehicle access across the footway of Meigle View has been provided with very long stretches without full kerb separation from the carriageway – and with accompanying additional crossfall. The same is true outside the associated housing on Mossilee Road.</p> <p>Footways without kerbs are a barrier to blind people.</p> <p>Footway with increased crossfall is difficult to navigate using mobility aids, and to walk on in frosty weather.</p>	<p>Links to representative images on Google Streetview</p> <p><u>Mossilee Road, lack of full kerb</u></p> <p><u>Meigle View, lack of full kerb</u></p>

Positively the area is of relatively high density housing, designed so that most streets are overlooked and so they feel to be subject to 'passive surveillance'.

Few key routes suffer from a lack of passive surveillance – however those that do include stretches of all of the nearest links between the residential area and the town centre (marked in red on this map).

These routes are likely to feel unwelcoming to many (or most) people after dark or later at night.

Many of the key destinations in the town centre are southeast of these routes.



Key links to town centre lacking good sense of passive surveillance

Links to representative images on Google Streetview:

[Hall St/Kirk Brae at above Union Street](#)

[Roxburgh Street \(link to Bridge Place\)](#)

[Roxburgh St/Roxburgh Place linking stairs](#)

[Stairs from Gala Park to town centre](#)

Routes to the catchment primary and secondary schools are all around 1km or shorter. It is possible to use only residential streets to reach these destinations. There are also some significant shortcuts using paths through green space (including woodland).

These shortcuts appear to be unlit, and sections appear to have a very poor surface. Consequently some people will find them to be difficult or impossible to navigate, or to be unwelcoming.

Potential improvements

This section lists some ideas for change. These are intended to prompt discussion, and are not necessarily recommendations. We've separated the ideas into three rough categories. The first ideas are about changes which might more easily be led by the Registered Social Landlord. The Registered Social Landlord may be able to have a strong influence in connection with the second group of ideas. The third group of ideas are generally for the longer term, or of a nature which means that a much wider group of agencies would need to be involved.

Led by the Registered Social Landlord:

The Registered Social Landlord might consider trying to take a lead on the following issues, although the cooperation of other bodies might be required:

Temporary reconfiguration of carriageway space

The wide junctions common in this area probably allow much higher vehicle speeds than are desirable in a residential area. Eildon Housing has a stake in ensuring that Meigle View and Riddle Dumble Park provide positive environments for its residents. Minor alterations at junctions on Meigle View, and between Meigle View and Mossilee Road, might make a major difference to this.

Permanent changes to streets would require a more major project, probably led by the local authority. Less permanent changes might be implemented with less work and expense.

Two key 'temporary' options are provided by 'bolt down' infrastructure, and by the use of 'planters' of one kind or another. Bolt down infrastructure can be attached to the road surface without digging it up – and in any layout desired. In some circumstances such an intervention can be ugly or can create a trip hazard, but the decrease in speed (and risk of serious injury by vehicle) might be seen to offset these issues. Planters can be more attractive if they are looked after. These can restrict sight lines if larger – slowing speeds in some circumstances, but perhaps also blocking important views of pedestrians. In some locations the cooperation of a community in caring for planters has wider positive effects.

Key concepts in such an intervention are:

- that simultaneous two way movement can be blocked, forcing those driving to negotiate passage with any oncoming vehicle,
- that the expectation is that large vehicles turn using the whole carriageway space,
- that at small residential junctions it can be desirable to remove both actual and apparent priority of one carriageway over another.

The images at the end of this report illustrate some potential arrangements.

Influenced by the Registered Social Landlord

These more complex changes might require a much deeper involvement from other bodies, but we guess that the Registered Social Landlord ought to be able to provide strong encouragement or strong influence:

Permanent changes to carriageway configuration and footway width

It seems likely that Eildon Housing can provide some influence, and that it may be able to magnify the voices of residents in regard to the issues faced by pedestrians living in its homes. More permanent changes to carriageway configuration within Meigle View and Riddle Dumble Park might come about based on this influence. In particular the junction layout here might be permanently changed – perhaps with very little physical infrastructure.

Longer term or more complex change

The potential improvements listed here are of a nature meaning that change is likely to take much longer, and that the Registered Social Landlord is likely to have much less influence:

Reconfiguration of junctions and footways in residential area

The issues we report here almost certainly combine to make pedestrian journeys significantly less attractive for most people, and unpleasant or even impossible for people using mobility aids (including powered mobility scooters).

Changes to carriageway space can be controversial. Often people who are directly disadvantaged feel worried or angry about proposals. Those who stand to benefit are often less vocal. If well informed Eildon Housing may be in a position to promote constructive discussion of options in a way which would lead to a more balanced debate, supporting wider change across the area.

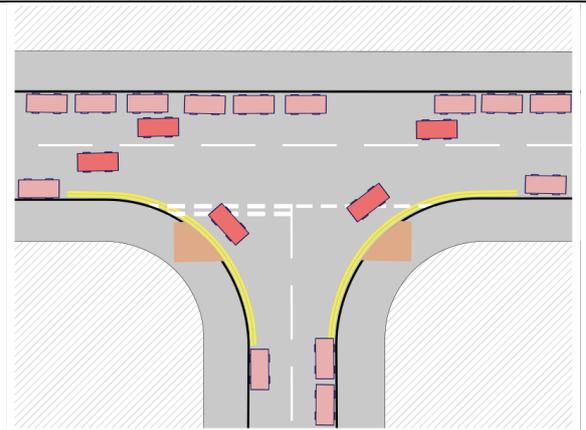
Further information

Illustrative sketches of junctions

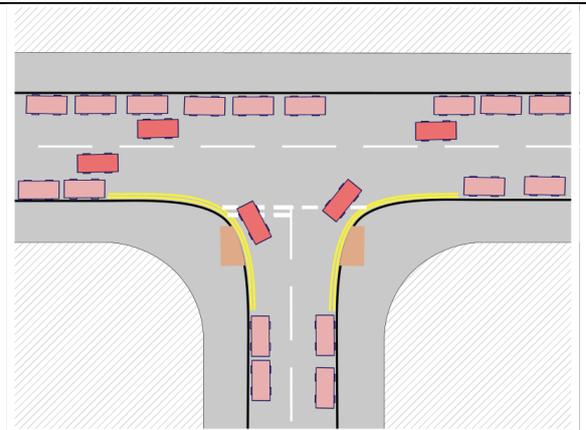
Below are greatly simplified sketches illustrating that different junction designs make a difference to pedestrian journeys. These sketches illustrate permanent changes, but temporary infrastructure (e.g. planters or bolt down items) can be used to similar effect.

Many junctions around this part of Galashiels have wide gently swept corners, as shown in this diagram (some examples in Galashiels are much more extreme than this illustration). These designs usually result from a belief that smooth traffic flow should be promoted (over other considerations), and that movement of large vehicles should be easy.

There is a clearly marked 'main' carriageway and an obvious side road. The gentle corners allow vehicles to join or leave the main carriageway at greater speed. Pedestrians cross a very wide area of 'live' carriageway.

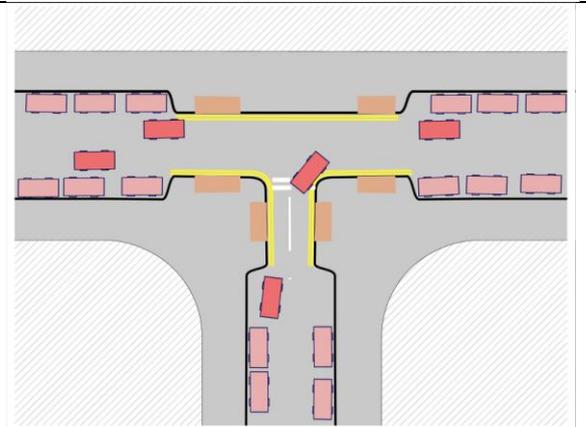


Simple narrowing of the junction mouth can make a big difference – both slowing vehicle speeds and narrowing the area of carriageway to be crossed.



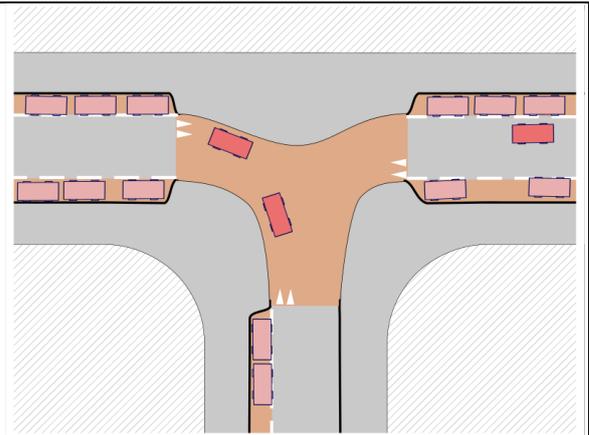
Further narrowing can be useful. Here, those driving are expected to negotiate passage with one another because the carriageway does not allow for two way movement at the side road entrance. Tight corners and narrow carriageways work together, meaning that it feels natural to drive at a slow speed. Larger vehicles use the whole carriageway space to manoeuvre.

The narrowed 'main' street keeps parked vehicles clear of the junction and pedestrians can now cross easily in all directions.



A junction can also be changed so that there is no longer any distinction between 'main' and 'side' roads. The aim is to create a situation where nobody driving feels they have priority over another vehicle, meaning that people must drive carefully through the junction in all directions. Features of such a junction can include the carefully chosen shape, a raised table on the carriageway, and significant narrowing of the carriageway.

An arrangement like this means that junctions become a key traffic calming element within a residential area – and also that pedestrians now cross a minimal carriageway space. The raised table means full access for those using mobility aids.



Potential funding

Funding for improvements to the urban environment might be available from a number of sources, including:

- Places for Everyone:
<https://www.sustrans.org.uk/our-blog/projects/2019/scotland/places-for-everyone/>
- Awards for All:
<https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/under10k>
- The Social Housing Partnership Fund for Improved Cycling & Walking Facilities:
<https://www.cycling.scot/what-we-do/cycling-friendly/social-housing-fund>