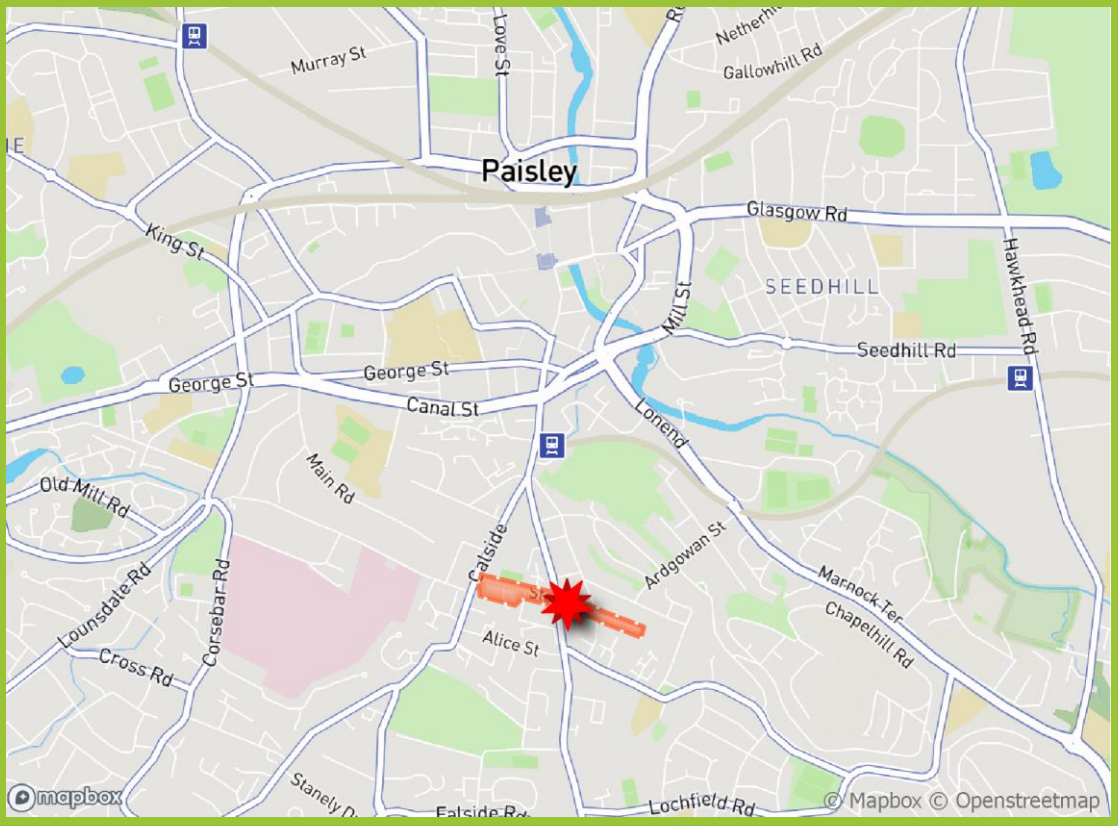
Pedestrian conditions assessment
Stock Street, Paisley (Paisley H.A.)
Social Housing Partnership Fund for Improved Cycling & Walking Facilities 2020-21



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Summary

Key points for Registered Social Landlord

Our assessment of the area around Stock Street, Paisley, which should be checked with residents and other stakeholders, leads us to conclude that pedestrians are disadvantaged by these key issues:

- The design of streets is generally focused on maximising space for vehicle movement, and on capacity and flexibility for vehicle use, with space for footway (i.e. pavement) at a minimum.
- Because of the mixed use nature of this area, many journeys will take pedestrians through parts of streets which feel unwelcoming after dark or later at night.

As the Registered Social Landlord, it may only be possible for Paisley Housing Assocation 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:

- minor changes intended to make small improvements to less welcoming sections of those streets which more generally provide acceptable conditions;
- improvements for pedestrians to local junctions.

We report on wider issues because we consider that the better these are understood the greater the likelihood of change – whether locally and 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 information to Paisley Housing Association as an initial check of its accuracy. The intention is that the information in the report is used to support an 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.

Introduction

Living Streets has received funding from the Social Housing Partnership Fund for Improved Cycling & Walking Facilities, administered by Cycling Scotland. As part of this work 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 Paisley Housing Association property at Stock Street, Paisley.

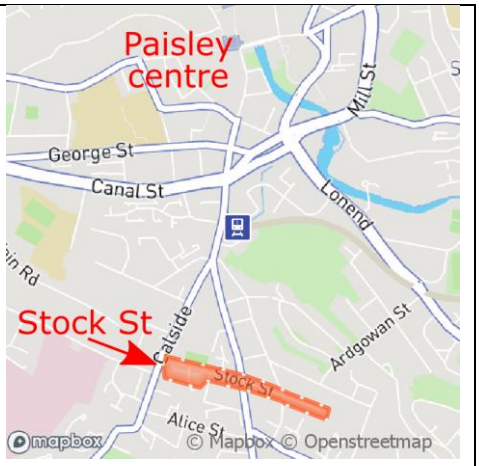
Key factors we assess

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

Stock Street is around 1km south of the Paisley's central 'High Street'.	 **Location**
Stock Street is not in a clearly defined residential area, nor is the street as a whole of a clear residential character. Buildings here have very mixed uses – residential, retail, office, and light-industrial. The neighbourhood's edges are difficult to define. The street itself changes character markedly along its 600m length, with only some sections feeling to be more clearly of a residential nature. Neilston Road (B774) cuts Stock Street in two. The eastern half of Stock Street is then itself bisected by a wide junction at Espedair Street. In contrast to the rest of the street the cul-de-sac section of Stock Street east of Espedair Street is of a clearly residential nature.	 **Neilston Rd and Espedair St subdivide Stock St**

Observations

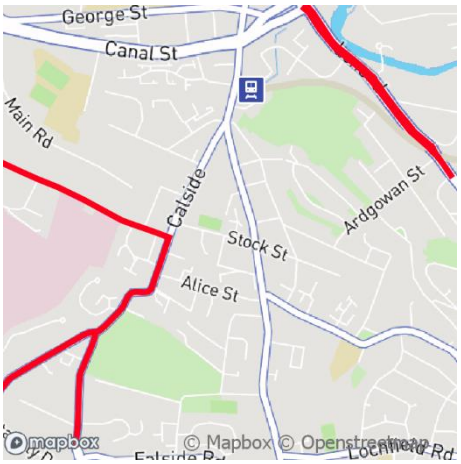
Key observations

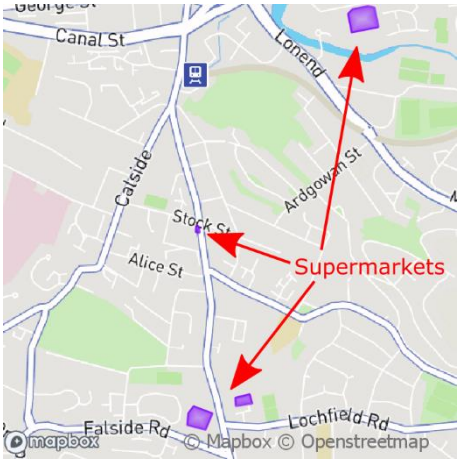
We think that these issues (and any positive points) most strongly influence the experience of pedestrians in the area. These issues may arise from many different factors. The Registered Social Landlord, and even the local authority, may have little or no direct control over some of them.

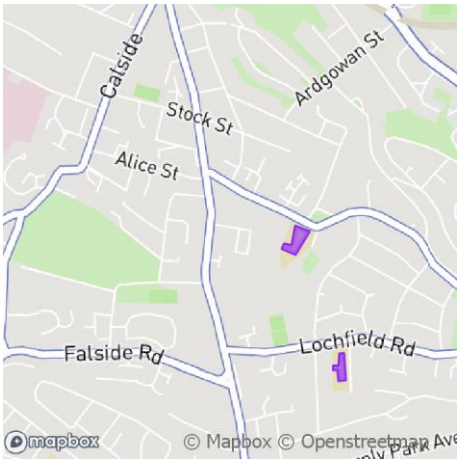
The streets in this area have a highly interconnected nature. This has both advantages and disadvantages for pedestrians. Positively, most potential routes for pedestrians, whether locally or over a longer distance, are on streets which have neighbouring buildings, at least some of which are residential. This makes it likely that many parts of these routes remain relatively welcoming after dark and later at night. However, the streets here are also designed to provide maximum permeability to motor vehicles, so it is likely that they all carry through traffic.	Links to representative images on Google Streetview: **Typical section of street overlooked from residential and retail property (Neilston Rd)** **Typical section of street overlooked from residential property (Espedair St)** **Section of Stock St overlooked from residential property on one side**
Many junctions in this area have unnecessarily large areas dedicated to use as carriageway space. There is significant space between the buildings, but footway is limited to a minimum, closely following the building line. These are places where much of what is currently live carriageway could be converted to other uses without any major effect on their vehicle-carrying capacity. Such a change can be used to slow and control vehicle speed, control parking, and make pedestrian journeys very significantly simpler and safer.	Links to representative images on Google Streetview: **Espedair Street / Stock Street** **Espedair Street / Barterholm Road** **Barterholm Road / Ardgowan Street**
There are many individual locations where issues with footway (pavement) quality, the treatment of minor accesses, a lack of level access, or limited crossing time will disadvantage some people with disabilities.	Links to representative images on Google Streetview: **Unnecessarily wide entrance** **Footway interrupted by old access** **Lack of dropped kerbs** **Broken narrow footway beside fast moving vehicles**

Secondary observations

Neilston Road would appear to define a spine not only for vehicle movement but also for pedestrian movement. Both to the north and south there are sections of the street which have local shops or other facilities. The street offers the most obvious route to the town centre, and in the opposite direction to the nearest larger supermarkets. While there is little to define the outside boundaries of any neighbourhood here, Neilston Road may help to define an internal focus. However, the quality of pedestrian journeys along Neilston Road is very badly compromised by the need to cross the entrances to side streets – many of which have been designed to support vehicle speed and flow rather than pedestrian safety. In many places these entrances could be significantly narrowed, with at most a minor effect on flow on Neilston Road. Even if there are mild effects on speed and flow on Neilston Road this may support pedestrian movements across the carriageway, which is desirable.	Links to representative images on Google Streetview: **Crossing of Stock Street (east)** **Crossing of Stock Street (west)** **Junction of Neilston Rd/Calside, lacking any support for crossing**
There are sections of many of the streets in this area which may feel less welcoming. This is partly a result of the mixed building uses here. In places where non-residential property dominates, the streets might feel to be threatening for pedestrians after dark or later at night. This may mean that small changes to individual building uses and building designs have a big effect on how pedestrian-friendly a street is. It also means that small improvements may in places make the streets much more welcoming. The most problematic locations may be unobvious to outside observers.	Links to representative images on Google Streetview: **Stock Street, just west of Espedair Street** **Espedair St just south of Stock Street** **Espedair St just north of Stock Street**
Some of the more important, more direct, roads in the area have a design focused more on vehicle flow and speed, with buildings set further back from the carriageway, and sections which are not overlooked at all. Some longer journeys by pedestrians are likely to rely on these roads because they offer the only sensible route choice toward some destinations. Pedestrians on these routes may feel isolated and at risk, particularly after dark or later at night.	Links to representative images on Google Streetview: **Calside, looking toward Stock Street** **Stanely Road** **Craw Road**

The issue of isolation (with a lack of alternative route options) would seem to be prominent on Calside, south of Stock Street (and the two roads further south branching from this, Park Road, and Stanely Road). While Craw Road to the east isn't designed for vehicle speed in quite the same way much of the footway here is not visible from nearby buildings. This may make many pedestrian journeys to the west, south and southwest much less welcoming. Some of the other larger roads in the area have a more open character, and in places are more closely overlooked from residential property (e.g. Canal Street near Camphill). Journeys here may feel tedious and even unpleasant, but pedestrians may not feel so isolated.	 **Larger sections of Calside and Craw Road south and west of Stock Street were pedestrians may feel isloated after dark or later at night (also showing Lonend).**
There are fewer problems of isolation on journeys north or northwest. However journeys to the northeast are made difficult because of the need to cross Black Cart Water, a railway line, and a major dual carriageway. Crossing points are available for all of these, but the dual carriageway connects to what is effectively an inner ring road near Mill Street / Bridge Street, making journeys less welcoming. It seems likely that most predictable journeys use the river bridges at Mill Street or Bridge Street. The conditions for pedestrians at these points are therefore important. The pedestrian bridge beside Thread Street is in a location which is relatively difficult to access. Journeys in this direction are defined by the limited crossing points for the railway, and a need to walk beside fast-moving traffic on Lochend.	 **Barriers to northeast:** **Railway (black), river (blue), Lochend dual carriageway (orange)**
The eastern end of Stock Street is a cul-de-sac. The carriageway has been substantially re-designed in a way which probably creates slow driving speeds. Pedestrians are much better prioritised here than on any other streets in this area of Paisley. Parked vehicles blocking sections of footway may be an issue (this can be seen to have been a big issue in a Google Streetiview image of 2011). There may be an argument for the use of bollards to deter this. Alternatively resident involvement might make it possible to discourage such behaviour, or to use more attractive features such as larger planters or even smaller plant pots to achieve the same effect.	Links to representative images on Google Streetview: **Stock Street** **2011 image of vehicles blocking pavement**

There is a path which passes close to the eastern end of Stock Street. If a link was built between Stock Street and this path it is possible that a small percentage of east-bound journeys might locally be slightly easier. However it seems unlikely that this route would be attractive after dark. To the south it joins an unattractive lane with a hidden/industrial character – and there are few obvious destinations to the immediate northeast which would be much easier to access with such a change.	 **A path passes close to the end of Stock Street, separated from it by little other than a wall.**
The junction of Stock Street with Union Street stands out as having been designed to reduce the carriageway width crossed by pedestrians, and to tighten corners to slow vehicles.	Links to representative images on Google Streetview: **Stock St/Union St**
A large section of Stock Street west of Neilston Road has been designed to facilitate and control parking, with opportunities taken to provide a very much narrowed carriageway space. It seems likely that speeds will be somewhat slower here. While the street can still carry through traffic it does not feel to be designed to facilitate flow/speed. However the opportunity has not been taken to narrow the crossing point at the west end of Stock Street. The kerb lines and carriageway width here seem likely to facilitate relatively high speed access – from a section of Calside designed to facilitate very much higher speeds.	Links to representative images on Google Streetview: **Stock St at Stock Avenue** **Stock St at Calside**
The nearest smaller supermarket is nearby at the junction of Stock Street with Neilston Road. Access to this is probably convenient for most people (with the exception of those facing bigger accessibility issues). The nearest larger supermarkets are around 700m south on Neilston Road. There is a much larger supermarket around 800m north, but access routes to this are very much more convoluted (around 1.5km) and are likely to be much less pleasant. The location and design of this, including the accesses to it, are intended to provide for vehicle access from the A726 Lochend.	 **Supermarket locations**

The catchment primary schools are within around 500m-1km. Pedestrian journeys to these are along streets which exhibit both the good points and the issues listed elsewhere in this report. Positive points include areas of street which are overlooked by residential properties. Negative points include issues with carriageways designed for traffic speed and flow, wide entrances, and sections of street which are not overlooked.	 **Primary school locations**
Available routes to the catchment secondary school are of around 3.5 km. Few people would choose to walk this distance on a daily basis. There are no obvious routes for cycling which most people would consider to be safe. Routes for pedestrians involve substantial sections of streets which are less welcoming for pedestrians.	

Potential improvements

This section lists some ideas for change. These are intended to prompt discussion, and are not necessarily recommendations. We have 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:

Minor improvements to less welcoming sections of street

Because of the mixed nature of buildings in this area it appears that short sections of many streets are likely to feel very much less welcoming to pedestrians, particularly after dark or later at night. Where this is the case it may be that small improvements in these sections of street have a more profound effect on how it feels to be a pedestrian in the area more generally.

Improvements need not only be about improving the actual aesthetic appearance of the street. It might also help if it can be seen that:

- someone made something look better (painted, mended, moved)
- someone left something personal here (car, bicycle, hanging washing)
- someone is looking after something (plants, cleaning, mending)
- there are signs of people's lives (views in windows, hanging washing).

improvements for pedestrians to local junctions.

While it is unlikely to be within the power of Paisley Housing Association to make more major changes to local streets, it seems likely that they are seen as a more important stakeholder in the area – particularly on Stock Street itself.

Shorter term changes to local junctions might not require major investment. For example the junction of Stock Street and Espedair Street might be significantly improved using only more temporary tools, like painted surfaces and planters. A key advantage to the use of tools like this is that different road layouts can be trialled. The cooperation of Paisley Housing Association, and it's potential recruitment of residents to participate in discussion, could be helpful.

Similar improvements could be made at other nearby junctions.

Suggested objectives for improvements at junctions like this include:

- Reduce carriageway space so that only the minimum required to support existing traffic movement is provided, and to slow vehicles moving in all directions at these locations.
- Remove areas of carriageway (using them for other purposes) which might be used for parking at junctions rather than trying to prevent it with parking restrictions.
- Arrange pedestrian space so that as short a width of carriageway as possible is to be crossed by those walking along any street, without them needing to divert significantly.
- Where not on a major road, remove the sense that one carriageway has an inherent obvious priority over the other, thus encouraging all users to slow down.

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:

Improving Neilston Road for pedestrians

Conditions for pedestrians on journeys along Neilston Road are poor in many places where they need to cross the entrances to side roads.

There are many locations at which pedestrians should be better supported to continue along the footway (pavement) here. The simplified drawings provided later in this document illustrate how significantly such junctions can be changed.

Initial improvements might be made with more temporary tools. While in the longer term it would be preferable for kerb lines to be altered, the current crisis around Covid-19 has provided local authorities with experience in installing items bolted to the carriageway surface – which can also be relatively robust. However, in some circumstances even the use of painted markings and surfaces can help to emphasise that it is no longer intended that corners into and out from side roads are driven with gentle lines and at higher speed.

Such treatments seem likely to be more effective than the current provision of ‘side road entry treatments’ which simply try to mark a path across an unaltered wide carriageway space. Steeper speed tables and ramps will be more effective in combination with narrowed entrances, remembering that even slowly moving vehicles can cause major injury to pedestrians.

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:

Ensuring passive surveillance

In the longer term it seems important that developments in this area seek to increase passive surveillance – ensuring that a much higher proportion of the streetscape is overlooked directly from residential property. This does not necessarily mean that all sections of street should be residential.

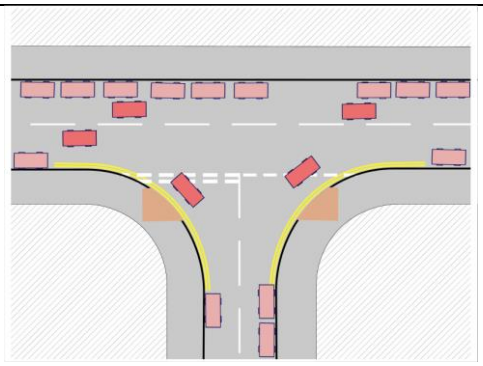
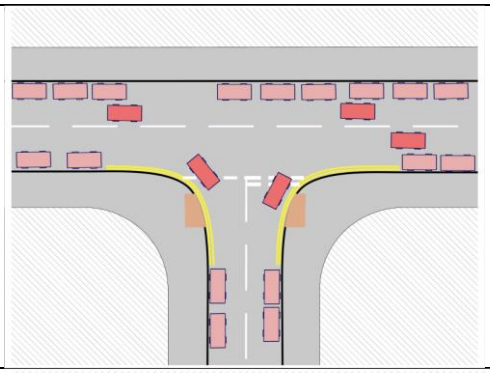
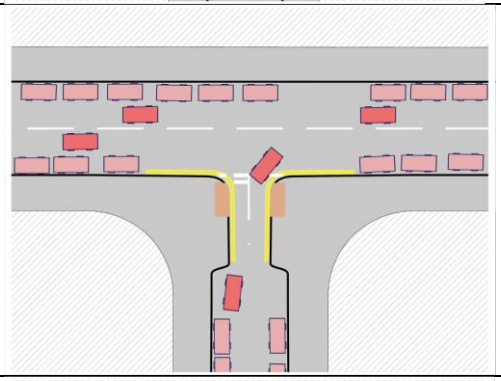
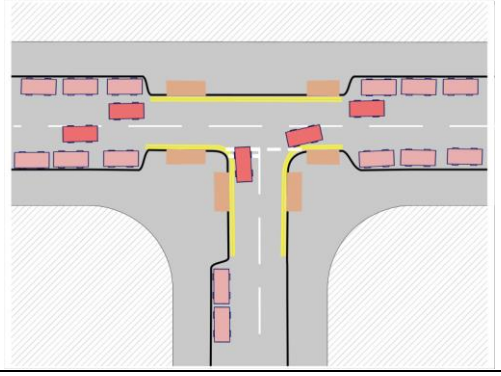
Limiting through traffic

Many towns and cities now try to control through traffic – limiting it to particular roads, seeking to create slower and calmer driving elsewhere. Currently in this area of Paisley almost all roads are open to through traffic.

Further information

Illustrative sketches

These images are approximations of typical current junction designs in this area, showing they could be altered to make crossing the side road much easier. Such improvements are costly but these images may help to explain some of our observations above.

Some junctions in this area have additional speed tables to slow traffic, or textured strips intended to imply some priority for pedestrians. We see little evidence of their significance. Often carriageways are designed on the basis that they will carry free flowing traffic, yet such flow is rarely observed. Sometimes additional space is provided at peak times by limiting parking, yet the extra width may increase speed more than it increases actual network capacity.	
The crossing distances for pedestrians can be significantly shortened, if it is accepted that vehicles should be slowed while on the main carriageway. When considering design from the perspective of a crossing pedestrian it is difficult to justify the idea that speed should be maintained here (on the basis that vehicle flow is more important than their wellbeing).	
At some locations crossing distances can be shortened further once it is recognised that traffic is rarely flowing smoothly or at consistent speed on the larger carriageway. In this arrangement it is anticipated that a vehicle turning into the side road might even need to stop before turning in. Such an arrangement also discourages turning into the side road (and other measures can support this) meaning that fewer turning movements need to be supported in any case.	
Even if a slightly wider entrance remains, building the footway (pavement) out so that it comes to the outside edge of the line of parked vehicles increases visibility for people wanting to cross the main carriageway here, and this further tightens the corner for turning vehicles. Building out the opposite footway adds to the improvement. Helpfully such an arrangement can improve visibility for those driving, making it easier for people to exit the side road.	

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