



Response to East Lothian Council's proposal for a New Community Building at Bleachingfield, Dunbar

Sustaining Dunbar's Transport Group wants to make it easier to travel around Dunbar by sustainable modes of transport. In addition to the environmental imperatives, we all benefit directly from a more sociable and pleasant community, freed from the nuisance and danger of busy roads.

The proposed new community building will encompass a scout hall, library, after-school club, youth café, and council offices and will serve as an important focal point for the town. It is ideally situated near the primary school and not far from the high street and should be easily accessible on foot or by bike. In order to encourage as many visitors to the building to arrive by sustainable means of transport, the Transport Group would like make the following comments.

1. Building Orientation

With all its main entrances facing the school or the car-park, the new community centre (as currently proposed) appears to be turning its back on the town. A major bus route runs along Belhaven Road at the back of the building. We feel it would be more welcoming to the majority of Dunbar residents if the main entrance was on Countess Crescent to the west, taking advantage of the pedestrian crossing which is already there.

2. Walking and Cycling Routes

Given the limited access for cars, many community-centre users will arrive on foot or by bike. Not only that but many people pass through the Bleachingfield on their way to somewhere else. We have identified the following main routes that should be made as direct as possible:

a. High Street to Community Centre

As mentioned above, the centre should be easily accessible from the town centre as well as the new houses, and we propose that the main entrance should be on Countess Crescent opposite the pelican crossing, to give direct access to pedestrians approaching from the High Street or arriving from a bus-stop on Belhaven Road.

b. Kellie Road/Hallhill to Community Centre

This is a busy route for child pedestrians and cyclists. The existing path across the grass from the south of Countess Crescent should be upgraded to a 4m wide high-quality path. The entrance to the carpark at the school gate is difficult to cross and we feel a raised table at the entrance would give priority to pedestrians and slow cars down.

c. Train Station/Countess Avenue to Community Centre

Provision should be made for people to cross Countess Crescent at the north end of Countess Avenue, and a safe route created past or through the car-park. This route will become busier as more schoolchildren cross the railway at the middle tunnel in order to avoid the congestion of bikes, prams and people at the Hallhill tunnel.

d. School to Community Centre

The existing path should be upgraded to take account of the high volume of cyclists and pedestrians who use this path at busy times (school drop-off and collection).

e. Kellie Road/Hallhill to High Street/Supermarkets

We propose that Countess Crescent is designated a 'home-zone' where cars have access, but priority is given to pedestrians and cyclists. This could be achieved by suitable road surfacing, and other measures such as blurring the boundary of the Bleachingfield by removing fences and the pavement on the north side (which is sub-standard anyway). Consideration should also be given to street design which will discourage temporary parking on this road, particularly at school drop-off times.

f. Kellie Road/Hallhill to Parsonspool/Leisure Pool

We welcome proposals to upgrade the path alongside the school to a high-quality cyclist/pedestrian route with a crossing point on Belhaven Road.

g. School to High Street

For too many people in Dunbar, dropping off and collecting their children from school is the nearest they get to Dunbar High Street. In order to preserve the vitality of the High Street it is essential that it is easy to reach. A direct route from the school to the crossing on Countess Crescent should be incorporated into the new community centre plans.

3. Bike Parking

Cycling is a popular mode of transport in Dunbar, especially at the school where the 200 bike spaces are regularly full. We suggest that the community centre has at least 20 covered spaces with room for expansion as necessary.

The bike parking should be 'Sheffield' stands with an additional lower bar so that children's bikes can be accommodated. The stands should be under cover and visible from the windows of the building. Two separate bike parking areas are recommended – one at the main entrance and one near the entrances facing the school.

To encourage staff to cycle to work, lockers and showers should be provided.

4. Car Parking

The current car park is used for the school and community centre. While we do not suggest building more car parks we recognise there will be increased pressure for on street parking, and steps should be taken to ensure that Countess Crescent remains safe for cyclists and pedestrians. We recommend utilising parking space at the nearby supermarkets by creating a safe walking route to them, as at the moment there is only a pavement on one side of the road.

5. Current Council Buildings

No indication is given about fate of the existing council buildings and grounds. The library in particular is an iconic building and must not sit empty. We hope that the public route along the front of the library will remain open.

6. Outdoor Recreation

The Bleachingfield should be at the heart of the community and be a safe and relaxing place to be. A number of outdoor benches should be provided to allow people to stop and rest or socialise.

The proposed play area should be at least as large as the existing one as it is very heavily used, especially at 3pm when younger children are waiting for their older siblings to finish school.

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