

Introduction:

Dublin City Council held an Information Evening about the East Coast Trail North Project at the Sean O'Casey Community Centre on Thursday the 13th of July 2023. Approximately 40 residents from East Wall attended along with a couple of Local Area Councillors.

The project essentially provides approximately 1 kilometre of two-way cycle lane linking Alfie Byrne Road with East Road. As part of the project some significant benefits to the local community will include:

- The provision of one kilometre of new two-way protected cycle lanes between East Road and Alfie Byrne Road that will provide residents of the East Wall area with a safe cycling link with Fairview/Clontarf and beyond.
- The scheme provides two new signalised pedestrian crossings, one at the junction of East Road/East Wall Road and the other on Alfie Byrne Road linking with Fairview Park.
- These new crossings will connect local residents with the new facilities being developed in Fairview Park as part of the Clontarf to City Centre Scheme. These will provide a new traffic free route for local residents through the park to Fairview and beyond.
- The scheme will remove footpath parking from both sides of East Wall Road making it much easier for pedestrians (especially those pushing buggies etc.) to move around.
- It will provide new parking for residents on the southside of East Wall Road either side of Forth Road and put an end to the footpath parking in this area.
- It includes a school zone at St Joseph's Primary School which will provide a much safer front of school environment for the local children that attend this school.
- It will provide a new indented bay at the bottle bank on Alfie Byrne Road so that local residents will be able to park in the vicinity of the bottle bank without mounting the footpath as they currently have to do.
- The scheme will include new efficient, sophisticated and upgraded traffic control systems at 'all' trafficked junctions. With new traffic CCTV which provides greater automatic and manual control of traffic movements

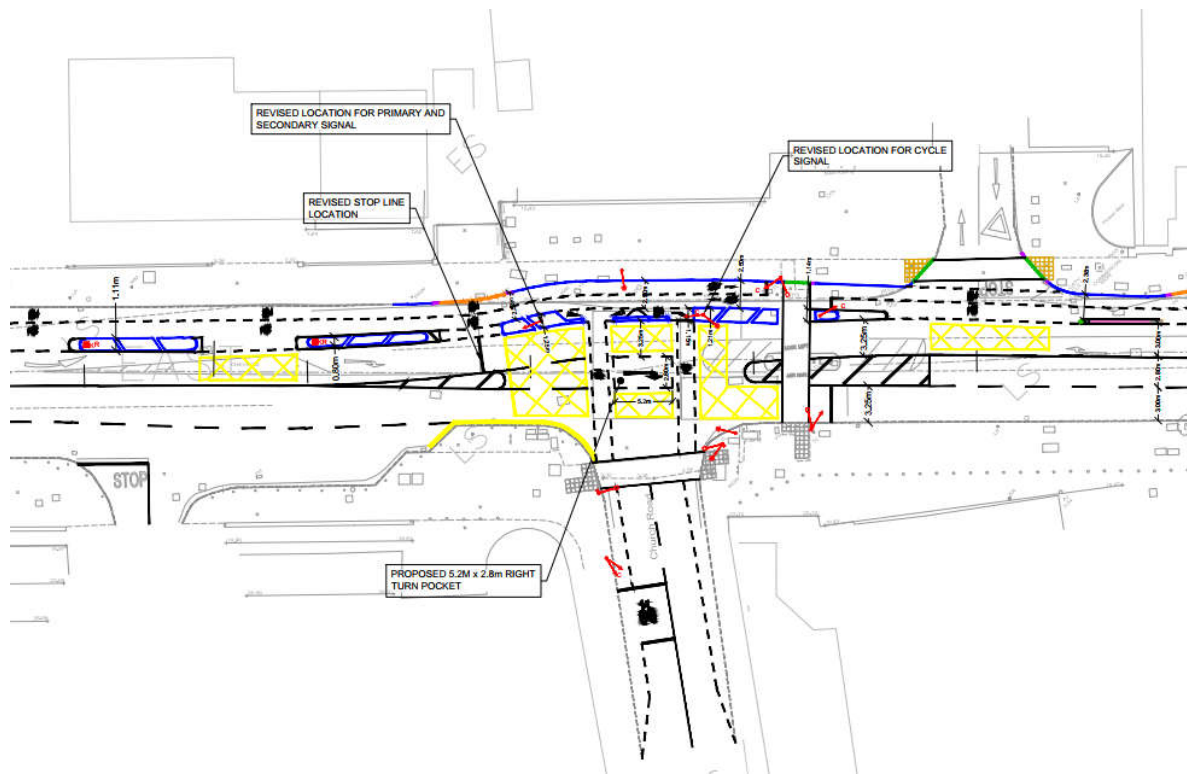
Residents voiced a number of concerns regarding the scheme proposals at the Information Evening.

Below is a summary of the issues that were raised and Dublin City Council's response.

Request to retain two inbound traffic lanes along Alfie Byrne Road and East Wall Road to accommodate residents of East Wall wishing to turn right onto Church Road and East Road.

Having considered the feedback received, the following is now proposed.

The design team had previously investigated the provision of a dedicated right turn lane onto Church Road but due to space constraints on public lands, this was not feasible. However, following consultation with the Designers and the Traffic Department the proposals for this junction have been reviewed and it has been determined that a right turn turning box can be provided in this junction (see drawing below).



In addition, changes are being made to the traffic signals to run the right turn filter lights at this junction more often. A traffic camera will be installed at this junction that will allow 24/7 observation of the junction from DCC's Traffic Control Centre. The area will be kept under observation for congestion and changes to the signals in real time will be made both automatically by DCC's sophisticated computer controlled and highly efficient traffic light system and if necessary manually controlled by DCC traffic control room staff to improve traffic flow and reduce delays.

Further changes are not considered viable for a number of reasons. These are outlined below.

For the majority of its length from Clontarf to East Wall Road, Alfie Byrne Road is currently only one lane in each direction, with two inbound lanes only being generated from just before the entrance to the Eastpoint Business Park as far as East Wall Road. The new scheme retains two inbound traffic lanes just before the entrance to the business park. Between the Eastpoint Business Park and East Wall Road, in order to retain two inbound lanes on Alfie Byrne Road, it would be necessary to shift the new two-way cycle lanes and adjacent footpath further east into lands that are in private ownership. Acquiring private lands would involve a lengthy process, be extremely costly and may prove to be infeasible.

It would also be necessary to either widen the existing John Mc Cormack Bridge or build a new parallel bridge over the Tolka. This design process alone, including feasibility studies, preliminary design, statutory processes including planning permission and detailed design could also potentially delay the project by years as well as adding substantial additional costs to the project.

Retaining two inbound lanes on East Wall Road between Alfie Byrne Road and the junction with Church Road would involve shifting the new two-way cycle lane further north. The lands to the north are in private ownership (East Wharf Hotel and Apartment Development, the East Wall Service Station and the Aldi Supermarket) and acquiring these lands would involve similar lengthy planning and planning processes to those mentioned above.

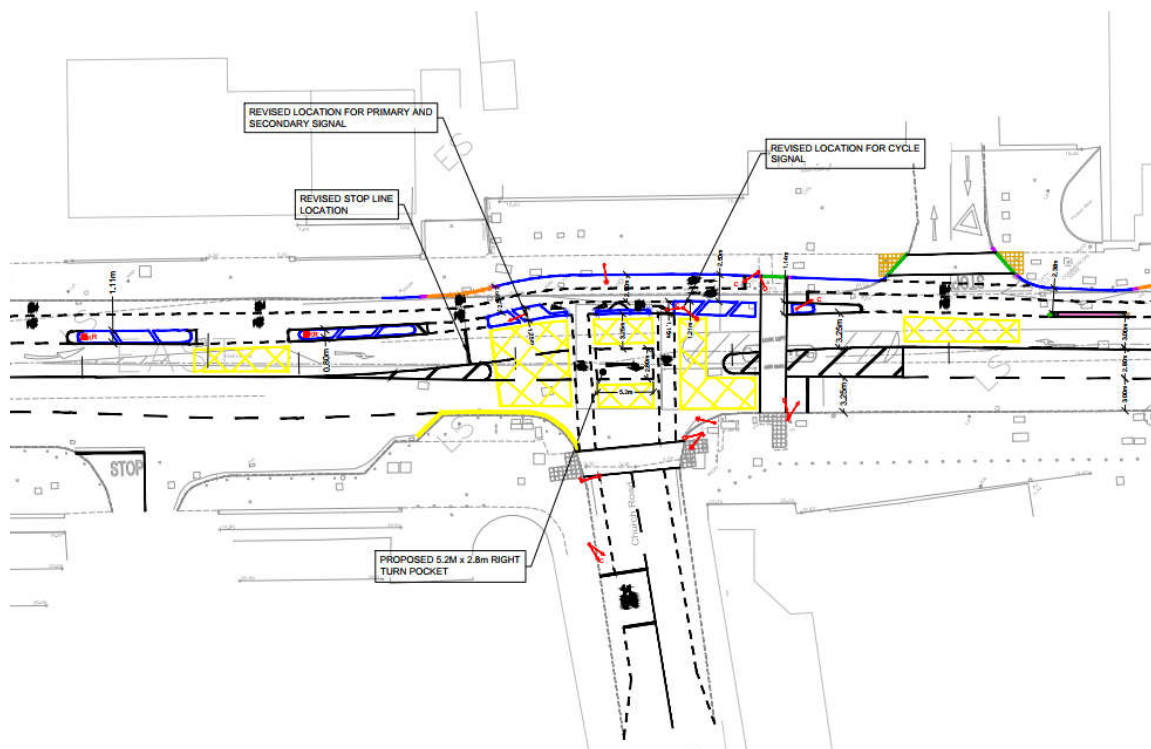
Further east the majority of East Wall Road between Church Road and East Road is currently only one traffic lane in each direction and this arrangement will be retained. For the final 30 metres in advance of the turn to East Road there is a right turning lane. It is necessary to remove this right turning lane to create space for the cycle lanes. The designs for this junction have also been reviewed and there is insufficient width to provide a right-turning pocket similar to what can be provided in the Church Street junction. However, similar to the Church Road junction, changes will be made to the traffic signals to run the right turn filter lights at this junction as often as possible. A new traffic camera will also be installed at this junction that will allow 24/7 observation of the junction from DCC's Traffic Control Centre. The area will be kept under observation for congestion and changes to the signals in real time will be made both automatically by DCCs sophisticated computer controlled and highly efficient traffic light system and manually by DCC traffic control room staff to improve traffic flow and reduce delays.

Concerns expressed regarding the loss of the right turn filter lanes at Church Road and East Road junction.

The design team has reviewed both junctions.

At Church Road:

In order to create space for the new cycle lanes, it is necessary to remove the right turn lane on the approach to the East Wall Road/ Church Road junction. However the designs have been reviewed in response to the concerns raised and the cycle lanes have been realigned to provide a small right-turning pocket in the junction as shown in the drawing below. This will allow for a right turning vehicle to wait in the junction without obstructing vehicles travelling straight along East Wall Road.



Changes will also be made to the traffic signals to run the right turn filter lights at this junction as often as possible. A traffic camera will be installed at this junction that will allow 24/7 observation of the junction from DCC's traffic control centre. The area will be kept under observation for congestion and changes to the signals in real time will be made both automatically by the DCCs

sophisticated computer controlled and highly efficient traffic light system and manually by DCC traffic control room staff to improve traffic flow and reduce delays.

Overall, this arrangement will facilitate right turn movements onto Church Road while minimising delays to vehicles heading straight along East Wall Road.

At East Road

At the East Wall Road/East Road junction it is also necessary to remove the right turn lane on the approach to the junction to create space for the cycle lane. At this junction there is insufficient width to provide a right-turning pocket in the junction while accommodating the 2 way cycle lanes. However, similar to the Church Road junction, changes will be made to the traffic signals to run the right turn filter lights at this junction as often as possible. A new traffic camera will also be installed at this junction that will allow 24/7 observation of the junction from DCC's traffic control centre. The area will be kept under observation for congestion and changes to the signals in real time will be made both automatically by the DCCs sophisticated computer controlled and highly efficient traffic light system and manually by DCC traffic control room staff to improve traffic flow and reduce delays.

Request to shift the cycle lanes further into the northern footpath along East Wall Road and retain two inbound lanes of traffic.

The current designs involve indenting the cycle lanes into the northern footpath in order to accommodate parking for residents on the southern side of East Wall Road. The remaining footpath on the northern side varies between 3.5 and 4.0 m wide. Allowing for the absolute minimum provision of a 1.8m footpath (required to comply with current minimum standards) the remaining space varies between 1.7m and 2.2m wide. This is insufficient width to provide for another inbound traffic lane which would need to be a minimum of 3.0m wide.

It is acknowledged that the footpath on northern side of East Wall Road is currently underutilised. However, with time, this is expected to change. The Aldi Supermarket attracts large numbers of pedestrians. The new bus stop near the Aldi is also generating increased pedestrian footfall. The new hotel and apartments at the corner of East Wall Road and Alfie Byrne Road will undoubtedly result in an increase in pedestrians using the northern footpath. As the vacant sites further east are developed the pedestrian usage on the northern footpath will only increase.

In light of these constraints, the designers consider the best use of the available space is to leave as much of the northern footpath as possible to accommodate future pedestrian growth in the area.

Request for parking to be accommodated outside St Joseph's National School.

The project includes the provision of a school zone outside St Joseph's National School. School Zones have been implemented at the front of schools across Ireland since 2021. Seventy school zones have been implemented in Dublin alone. The aim of School Zones is to give priority to students to walk and cycle to school safely. Traffic at the front of school during drop-off and pick-up times presents a safety hazard for school children and contributes to poor air quality. To achieve safer front of schools we need to keep cars away from footpaths, reduce vehicle drop-offs, pick-ups and idling.

Schools Zones benefit children as they provide a safe and healthy public space for them to access school. By providing space for walking and cycling, our communities can enjoy cleaner air quality, safer streets and roads, and more vibrant and inclusive public spaces.

A School Zone has been incorporated into this project at the request of local area representatives and has the full support of St Joseph's Principal and Parents Association. St Joseph's is a fairly inconspicuous building and the school zone will highlight its presence and the need for vehicles to slow down while passing it through the use of amber flashing school warning signs, pencil bollards and different coloured road surfacing in the immediate vicinity. The removal of the opportunity for parking or drop-offs in the immediate vicinity of the school is an essential component of a School Zone. The school and Parents Association will be encouraged to explore opportunities to set up Park and Stride arrangements in the locality for those parents that need to drive their children to school. DCC will facilitate such arrangements wherever possible.

Comments regarding lack of Public Consultation on Project

The designs for this project were developed during 2021 as part of Dublin City Council's response to the Covid 19 Pandemic.

The scheme proposals were first presented to the Central Area Councillors at the Central Area Committee Meeting in December 2021. Following that meeting the scheme was extended as far as St Joseph's Primary School at the request of the Local Area Councillors. A follow up report was presented to the Central Area Councillors at the Central Area Committee meeting in January 2022. The local area councillors were informed at the meeting of the intention to publish the scheme drawings on Dublin City Council's Public Consultation Hub and invite comments. This method of Public Consultation was commonly used by Dublin City Council during the Covid 19 Pandemic as social distancing rules at the time precluded face to face meeting with the public.

The proposals for the scheme were published on the Consultation Hub on the 24th of February 2022. The consultation period was extended from the usual 6 weeks to 3 months to allow as many people as possible to respond, with the consultation finally closing on May 31st 2022. In response to the submissions received during the public consultation process the scope of the project was further expanded to provide a number of additions, including parking for residents on the southside of East Wall Road, a new pedestrian and cyclist signalised crossing connecting with the new facilities being provided in Fairview Park as part of the Clontarf to City Centre Scheme and improved connectivity for cyclists and pedestrians with St Joseph's Primary School. A report was presented to the Central Area Committee in November of 2022 detailing the results of the Public Consultation and the finalised project, prior to tendering the works contract.

In light of the exceptional circumstances of the Covid 19 Pandemic, the design team consider that they took reasonable steps to keep the local area representatives and general public informed of the designs as they were developed for this project.

Primary School kids do not cycle to school and therefore the cycle lanes in front of the school will not be used.

One of the most popular requests received during the Public Consultation process was to provide cycle lanes directly connecting the scheme with St Joseph's National School. It is very common for primary school children to cycle/scoot to school when accompanied by an adult. It is also common for adults to use their bikes to carry their children to school. Provision of these cycle lanes connecting with the school will encourage such activities.

Drainage Issue at a particular location on East Wall Road.

One attendee highlighted a problem with the drainage at a particular location on East Wall Road. This was subsequently investigated by a member of the construction team and will be addressed as part of the project.

Most children approaching school come up East Road and not from the direction of the Alfie Byrne Road- the cycle lane along northern side of East Wall Road doesn't benefit these children.

It is accepted that most children approaching the school may come up East Road and not from the direction of the Alfie Byrne Road. However the primary purpose of the cycle lanes on East Wall Road is to provide greater connectivity for all cyclists travelling along Alfie Byrne Road and East Wall Road. Recent counts indicate that there are approximately 1300 cyclists passing through this area on a daily basis and this figure can be expected to rise with the provision of this facility.

The turning radius from Alfie Byrne Road to East Wall Road will be too tight for buses.

The designers have carried out turning circle analysis on all allowable turns on this project and can confirm that there will be no issues with buses making this turn.

The Effect of this scheme will be to (further) surround/box in East Wall residents.

Rather than boxing in residents the scheme seeks to create new links for East Wall residents to the surrounding area through the provision of new protected cycle lanes and safe and upgraded pedestrian crossings. East Wall Road is currently a hostile environment for cyclists and pedestrians. The project provides cycle lanes, footpaths and pedestrian crossings that connects East Road with Alfie Byrne Road and beyond towards Clontarf and Sutton. It includes a new pedestrian/cyclist signalised crossing that connects with Fairview Park and the new facilities being developed in the park as part of the Clontarf to City Centre Scheme. This will provide a new traffic free route for local residents through the park to Fairview and beyond.

No new turning bans or access restrictions will be placed on vehicles as part of this project.

General belief that scheme will increase traffic (or traffic delays) and is not for the benefit of local Residents

Since the end of the Covid 19 pandemic, traffic has begun to return to pre-Covid levels and will continue to increase unless alternatives to the private motor vehicle are provided. The provision of high quality cycle lanes and improved pedestrian facilities form part of both national and local policy with the objective of reducing traffic by encouraging a shift to more sustainable modes of transport including walking and cycling.

In the short term the scheme will certainly benefit local residents that choose to walk or cycle in the area. The level of traffic on East Wall Road makes it a hostile environment for cyclists in particular and the scheme will provide a safe cycling link for East Wall Residents with Fairview/Clontarf and beyond. The scheme provides two new signalised pedestrian crossings, one at East Road and the other linking with Fairview Park. It will remove footpath parking from both sides of East Wall Road making it much easier for pedestrians (especially those pushing buggies etc.) to move around. It includes a school zone at St Joseph's which will provide a much safer front of school zone for the local children that attend this school. The new indented bay at the bottle bank will mean that local residents will be able to park in the vicinity of the bottle bank without mounting the footpath.

East Coast Trail North Phase 1 Project Team

9th of August 2023

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