

**Living Streets Edinburgh Group**  
**POLWARTH STREET AUDIT (November 2020)**

## 1. Introduction

Living Streets Edinburgh Group (LSEG) is the local voluntary arm of Living Streets, the national charity which campaigns for better conditions for ‘everyday walking’.

In 2019 and 2020 we researched and wrote our ‘Cut the Clutter’ report, based on audit of a wide selection of streets across the city, with the aim of raising awareness of the need for ‘clearing Edinburgh’s pavements for pedestrians’. The full Cut the Clutter report can be found here (PDF, 5.5mb) – [Living-Streets-Edinburgh-Cut-The-Clutter](#), and the video can be found on our YouTube channel here – [https://youtu.be/\\_owjs7clKfk](https://youtu.be/_owjs7clKfk).

While our report was being printed, local Living Streets activists decided there was a need for a follow-up audit of all the barriers to walking in another neighbourhood where there is not only too much pavement clutter, but also where moving and parked vehicles seriously dominate the pedestrian environment: in Polwarth, (i) at the large roundabout where Polwarth Gardens and Polwarth Crescent converge, and (ii) the associated ‘rat run’ along Polwarth Crescent and Yeaman Place. *This has further importance, as the Council is investigating the closure of Viewforth, as a result of which additional traffic might well divert along this corridor.*

This illustrated report sets out our findings and we hope that these will stimulate discussion among local people and at Merchiston Community Council – ideally leading on to action by the City of Edinburgh Council to make this corridor much more pedestrian-friendly and a much more attractive place to live, shop, work, and linger.

## 2. Audit principles

In our approach to the audit we were guided by three key principles, namely that:

- (i) sufficient space should be provided to allow pedestrians to maintain appropriate **social distancing**, in line with Scottish Government guidelines;
- (ii) the state of the streets should reflect the place of walking (and ‘wheeling’, eg wheelchairs) at the top of the ‘**movement hierarchy**’ as set out in the ‘Sustainable Travel Hierarchy’ in the *National Transport Strategy* (2020);<sup>1</sup>
- (iii) provision of space for pedestrians should reflect the guidelines set out in The City of Edinburgh Council’s **Street Design Guidance** (2015),<sup>2</sup> in particular in relation to pavement widths and the ‘Clear Walking Zone’ provided. The Street Design Guidance (SDG) guidelines for the streets audited along the corridor are shown in the table overleaf.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/47052/national-transport-strategy.pdf> (Pages 42-43)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/downloads/file/24977/p3-footways-version-1-1>

Polwarth corridor streets	SDG pavement width guidelines		
	absolute minimum	general minimum	desirable minimum
Polwarth Gardens / roundabout / Granville Terrace	2m *	2.5m	3m
Polwarth Crescent / Yeaman Place	2m*	n/a	2.5m

\* 'only allowed in short sections'

For all the streets on the corridor the Clear Walking Zone guideline (ie for that part of the pavement not obstructed by poles, litter bins, tables and chairs etc) is an 'absolute minimum' of 1.5m width.

### 3. Summary of audit findings

Four Living Streets volunteers undertook the audit on a weekday mid-morning in late November 2020 – and details of what we found at each location are set out (with photos) in Section 4, followed by our conclusion in Section 5. We identified a wide range of problems faced by pedestrians at a large number of locations (38) along a relatively short length of street corridor. The types of problem which we found at more than one location were as follows:

- pavements too narrow (22 instances)
- unnecessary poles on pavements (9)
- unsafe road crossing / lack of formal road crossing (5)
- disused Royal Mail / utility boxes (4)
- missing dropped kerbs (4)
- lampposts narrow the Clear Walking Zone (3)
- parking ticket machines narrow the Clear Walking Zone (2)
- wide-splayed pedestrian-unfriendly road corners at junctions (2).

Of the other four (single-example) types of problem, three could easily be resolved: rubbish on the pavement, an overhanging hedge and café seats on a narrow pavement. The question of pedestrian access from Yeaman Place to the Canal towpath is more complex, but it links to wider regeneration / environmental objectives.

The two biggest overall problems which we encountered were:

- the general dominance (speed, volume, noise etc) of motor traffic, which makes this a largely unpleasant place for pedestrians
- the concentration of pedestrian-unfriendly features at and around the sprawling Polwarth Gardens / Polwarth Crescent roundabout (see summary at the end of Section 4).

#### 4. Detailed audit findings

Our notes below are listed in walking order from a start at the Polwarth roundabout (at the north-west corner junction with Polwarth Gardens), continuing down the west side of Polwarth Crescent and Yeaman Place to the latter's junction with Dundee Street. We then crossed to the east side of Yeaman Place and returned up to the roundabout, turning left into Polwarth Gardens, crossing the junction with Granville Terrace and Merchiston Avenue, turning west along the south side of the main road and returning to the south-west corner of the roundabout at Polwarth Gardens.

Pavement widths ('p.w.') were only noted where they are sub-standard in relation to the SDG width or Clear Walking Zone (CWZ) guidelines.

<i>Location</i>	<i>Observations</i>	<i>Suggestions / Proposals</i>
1. Polwarth Gardens.	Pavement (to SW) 1.75m wide Disused (?) Royal Mail holding box	Widen Remove



2. Zebra crossing at approach to busy junction

Traffic speeds excessive & a resident reported danger in using the crossing. Zebra is in poor condition

Widen pavements & raise crossing



3. Margiotta's at roundabout

1.95m p.w. at busy location

Widen



4. Polwarth Cres.

Unnecessary 'No Loading' sign on post

Remove.

Informal pedestrian crossing at very busy junction

Upgrade to zebra and raise



5. Polwarth Crescent

Large lamp post (first of a series)  
1.25m CWZ at post

Widen pavement



6. Polwarth Crescent

Parking signpost on 1.8m pw

Necessary post?



7. Polwarth Crescent

1.25m CWZ at parking machine, next to 2<sup>nd</sup> lamp post.

Relocate on build-out or next to bins on carriageway?



8. Polwarth Crescent  
(crossing at build-outs)

Good! But should be raised

Raise to establish pedestrian priority





9. Polwarth Crescent  
(junction with Temple Park Crescent)

Excessively wide splay junction

Narrow and tighten corners



10. Polwarth Crescent  
(below Temple Park Crescent)

1.6m p.w. at Controlled Zone sign

Widen pavement and/or  
remove sign



11. Bridge over canal

No pedestrian access to  
canal towpath

Provide (at long last)!

P.w. at poles only 1.7m.

Widen pavements and/or  
remove sign / put on bridge



12. Watson Crescent junction

Good narrowed entrance  
with build-outs and tree

n/a



13. Yeaman Place, at  
Watson Crescent junction

Crossing needed at north  
side of junction

Provide raised crossing with  
build-outs and tactile  
paving on both sides

East side build-out missing



14. Yeaman Place, north of  
Watson Crescent junction

1.6m p.w.

Widen pavement



15a. Yeaman Place, north of Watson Crescent junction

Disused (?) utility box (green)

Remove



15b. Yeaman Place, north of Watson Crescent junction

One of a series of four parking posts which reduce the CWZ to 1.2m

Place on the building wall





16. Yeaman Place, north of Watson Crescent

Inappropriate deterrence paving next to building

Replace with greenery?

Parking ticket machine narrows p.w.

Relocate to a build-out or the carriageway



17. Yeaman Place, near Dundee Street junction

Rubbish on pavement around bins

City-wide problem



18a. Dundee Street corner with  
Yeaman Place (west side)

1.8m p.w. and 1.35m CWZ  
at bollard in Yeaman Place

Narrow the junction with  
build- outs



18b. Dundee Street corner with  
Yeaman Place (east side)

Pavement in dis-repaired mess  
2.37m & 2.35m p.w. at bollard

Raise the pavement level

Narrow junction with build-out



19. Yeaman Place (east side)

Disused(?) Royal Mail holding box,  
where p.w. is only 2.45m

Remove?



20. Yeaman Place,  
opposite Watson Crescent

Disused (?) utility box (black)

Remove?



21. Entrance to scrap-yard  
Alongside scrap-yard

No dropped kerbs at entrance  
P.w. only 1.53m, CWZ 1.21m

Raise/continuous pavement  
Widen pavement



22. Bridge over canal.

1.65m p.w. at pillars.

Widen pavement



23. Merchiston Avenue junction

Wide splay junction,  
with no dropped kerbs

Narrow with build-outs, and  
raise entrance

P.w. only 1.45m and 1.83m



24. Polwarth Crescent  
(east side)

1.7m p.w. reduced to 1.4m CWZ  
by overgrown hedge

Cut back hedge along  
entire length



25. At 30 Polwarth Crescent

20mph / parking signpost  
reduces 1.7m p.w. to 1.4m CWZ

Widen pavement





26. At 25 Polwarth Crescent

Parking signpost reduces  
1.8m p.w. to 1.4 CWZ  
Encroaching hedge

Widen pavement  
Cut back hedge



27. At 16 Polwarth Crescent

Parking signpost reduces CWZ  
to 1.4m

Widen pavement and  
relocate / remove sign



28. Roundabout (NE side)

Guardrail and signpost reduce CWZ  
to only 1.6m at signpost

Widen pavement



29. Dangerous semi-formal crossing at roundabout (E side)

No dropped kerbs, no zebra at wide junction mouth

Install zebra crossing



30. Polwarth Gardens (north side) towards Granville Terrace

P.w. only 1.8m, CWZ 1.4m

Widen pavement

Seats on pavement at shop door

Remove



31. Merchiston Avenue junction (north side) with Granville Terrace

Carriageway too wide

Narrow carriageway and raise entrance

No dropped kerbs





32. Granville Terrace at junction with Merchiston Avenue

P.w. only 1.5m on north side, 1.7m on south side (1.3m at utility box)

Widen pavements



33. Merchiston Avenue junction (south side) with Granville Terrace

P.w. only 1.7m at bend.

No dropped kerbs

Provide build-out on east side (closest to camera), and install dropped kerbs



34. Polwarth Gardens shops (east of roundabout)

P.w. only 1.7m, CWZ 1.6m

Widen pavement



35. South side of roundabout.

1.4m CWZ to guardrail; p.w. 1.7m  
1.4m CWZ to post (traffic signs)  
1.4m CWZ at No.24 steps, 1.7m p.w.  
1.3m CWZ at lamppost, 1.6m to guardrail

Widen pavement and  
remove guardrail.

Central island is little use to pedestrians  
(see RH side of bottom right photo below)



36. At zebra crossing

CWZ only 1.4m at post / end of  
Guardrail, p.w. only 1.8m

Widen pavement



### ***Additional notes on the roundabout:***

The general dominance (speed, volume, noise etc) of motor traffic makes the entire corridor a largely unpleasant place for pedestrians, but the biggest concentration of pedestrian-unfriendly features was found at and around the sprawling Polwarth Gardens / Polwarth Crescent roundabout.

There is extensive wasted carriageway space on the south side of the roundabout, such that it is frequently used by parked or waiting vehicles. By contrast the pavement space for pedestrians is cramped and further confined by a long length of unnecessary guardrail. The guardrail is now commonly used for cycle parking.

Converting the excess carriageway into pavement would also allow space for the provision of cycle parking and/or seating, eg adjacent to the launderette. Seating generally was notable for its absence from the corridor: another reason for folk – especially the elderly and/or infirm – not to linger in the area.

A zebra crossing is not provided on the busiest arm of the junction (Polwarth Crescent) and there is none on the approach from Granville Terrace / Polwarth Gardens either. The existing zebra (Polwarth Gardens) is located away from the pedestrian ‘desire line’ – hence the extent of the guardrail deployed to force pedestrians to use the zebra. Traffic speeds approaching the roundabout are seen to be excessive – and the crossing facilities need to be upgraded on all three arms of the junction. It is suggested that raised crossings are needed, preferably with zebra stripes, on all three approaches.

Overall, there is also a real opportunity here for ‘place making’, by raising the quality of the whole of the roundabout area for pedestrians and establishing a prominent central feature such as a tree.

## **5. Conclusion**

While the City of Edinburgh Council formally confirmed in its new City Mobility Plan (published in February 2021) that pedestrians are at the top of the urban transport hierarchy, our Polwarth street audit illustrates how the practical situation on the ground is effectively the opposite of that admirable priority.

Many of the problems encountered by pedestrians can be solved quite simply, others will take more time and money. We hope that our report will stimulate discussion among local people and at Merchiston Community Council – ideally leading on to action by the City Council to make this corridor much more pedestrian-friendly and a much more attractive place to live, shop, work, and linger.

***Living Streets Edinburgh Group / March 2021***