

## The Highland Council

Lochaber Area Committee – 24 November 2015

Agenda Item	8.
Report No	LA/39/15

### Road Safety at East Tomonie, Banavie

#### Report by Director of Community Services

##### Summary

Concerns have been highlighted regarding the safety of the access road into East Tomonie, Banavie. A road safety assessment has been prepared in order to address these concerns. Improvements to the existing infrastructure are recommended.

## 1. Background

- 1.1 Members had requested at the Lochaber Area Committee on 25 August 2015 that a report be brought to this Committee regarding safety concerns that had been raised in relation to the railway bridge and road access to the housing development at East Tomonie.
- 1.2 In particular the concerns relate to the capacity of the single track access road, the narrowness of the bridge over the railway, and pedestrian safety.

## 2. Road Safety Assessment

- 2.1 A report was prepared following an assessment of the road serving the development by the Council's Senior Road Safety Engineer. This report is contained in **Appendix 1**.
- 2.2 The key points raised in this report are that:
  - There are no recorded accidents within the development and at the A830 junction with in the past 20 years, however there may have been unreported minor damage only incidents;
  - The roads and footways within the development are generally very narrow which makes pedestrians feel vulnerable to passing vehicles, with a similar situation for cyclists;
  - Any proposals for improvements will be extremely limited due to the existing constraints of land ownership and boundary walls and fences.

## 3. Improvements to Road Safety

- 3.1 The road safety report proposes the following initiatives to improve road safety:
  - Change the advisory 20mph speed limit to a mandatory 20mph speed limit;

- Introduce traffic calming speed cushions – this would be subject to undertaking a speed survey to determine the need;
- Undertake footway repairs and localised widening where this is justified and land availability permits;
- Introduce road markings at passing places.

3.2 These proposed measures are low cost and can be accommodated within existing resources.

3.3 More significant improvements would require to be funded from future developments, should these be forthcoming.

#### **4. Implications**

4.1 Resource: The recommendations can be accommodated within existing resources.

4.2 Legal: There are no legal implications arising from this report.

4.3 Equalities: This report will ensure better provision for vulnerable road users.

4.4 Climate Change/Carbon Clever: There are no implications for climate change/carbon clever arising from this report.

4.5 Risk: There are no risk implications arising from this report.

4.6 Gaelic: There are no Gaelic implications arising from this report.

4.7 Rural: There are no rural implications arising from this report.

#### **Recommendation**

Members are invited to approve the implementation of:

1. The introduction of a mandatory 20mph speed limit;
2. A speed survey to determine the need for traffic calming measures;
3. Undertake footway repairs and localised widening where this is justified and land availability permits;
4. Introduce road markings at passing places.

Designation: Director of Community Services

Date: 12 November 2015

Author: Cameron Kemp; Area Community Services Manager

Background Papers:

## APPENDIX 1

# Report on Safety at Tomonie, Banavie

### GENERAL

There was a request at a Ward Business Meeting to carry out “***A professional evaluation of the roads infrastructure for the area with a specific request to look at the creation of a pedestrian footbridge linking to the A830.***”

This report looks at the safety of the roads infrastructure for vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians using the roads leading off the A830 through the residential estate comprising Wilson Way, Achdalieli Road and Campbell Road. It also looks at the constraints that would either preclude or limit further development within the estate.

### ROAD CONDITIONS

The main road into the estate (Wilson Way) leaves the A830 as a 2 lane road but narrows quickly to 3m as it approaches a railway bridge about 20m from the junction. The road continues straight for about a further 115m before turning sharply right onto another straight section of road extending for 140m and terminating at a hammerhead. This road comprises a 3m wide carriageway with a 1m footpath on the west side and a narrow grass strip on the other side. The road is kerbed only on the footpath side.

There is only one formal passing place available on Wilson Way, opposite Achdalieli Road, but there are also a further 2 informal passing places, one on the outside of the sharp bend and the other one situated at a field access along the final straight section between the bend and the turning head. None of these laybys appear to be regulation size, particularly the one on the bend where passing could be very constricted, especially if the both the vehicles are large. There are also a couple of opportunities to pass using house driveways, one on each straight, but these may not always be available and are not designated passing places.

The footpath on Wilson Way is generally 1m wide along its length, including the section over the railway bridge. It then widens from the railway bridge towards the footpath along the A830. The path is generally in good condition with a good surface. However the exception is again the section from the railway bridge towards the A830 which has major longitudinal cracks on it and is sloping significantly towards the back of the path. This makes it difficult to use safely, particularly in winter. The footpath is commonly bounded at the back by fences and hedges or a relatively steep cut slope. The fences and hedges are generally close to the back of the path making the path look narrow. These constraints however seem to lessen the further along Wilson Way you go. The verge on the other side is almost non-existent from the bridge to the formal layby with a hedge directly bounding the road edge. From the layby the verge widens out and ranges in width starting at about 0.5m and widening to about 1.0m along the second straight section but is always bounded at the back by hedges or fences. The verge is often sloping steeply up from the road edge on the first straight section.

There are 2 side roads leading from Wilson Way, one on each of the straight sections. The first side road (Achdalieli Road) extends for about 100m westwards from Wilson Way before turning south for a further 45m or thereby again terminating in a hammerhead. This road comprises a 3.5m wide carriageway with a footpath on the south and east side with a narrow grass strip on the north side and west side. This road is kerbed on both sides. There is only one informal passing place available on Achdalieli Road located close to the end of the first straight section leading from

Wilson Way. This layby has a designated parking area at the back of it. There are no laybys on the last section after the bend although there is a widened area of surfacing on the bend that could be used for vehicles to pass one another. Again, there are also a few opportunities to pass using house driveways on each straight section, but these may not always be available and are not designated passing places.

The footpath starts off at about 1m wide but seems to widen slightly, to about 1.2m, after the first 40m or so. Again the path is closely bounded by walls and fences along its entire length. The verge on the other side starts off at about 0.5m width with a fence to the back. This extends to the layby, then widens out towards the bend. Once on the next straight, the verge almost disappears for large sections with the property boundaries extending to the back of the roadside kerb.

Campbell Road, which joins Wilson Way in the middle of the second straight section, comprises a 5.5m wide carriageway forming a sweeping double bend and terminating at a hammerhead with a section of un-metalled extending southwards from the end of the road. The road is kerbed on both sides. There are no laybys provided on this road as it is wide enough to accommodate passing vehicles.

There is a 1.5m footpath on the east side of the road with a wide grass verge behind it to start with but changes to a fence set back about 0.3m past the first property on that side before reverting back to open verge towards the end of the road. On the other side there is a wide grass strip along the entire length of the road with no boundary fencing defining property boundaries.

There is an advisory 20mph speed limit starting at the A830 junction and extending along on all the roads within the estate.

### **ACCIDENT HISTORY**

A search of the council accident database was carried out to determine if there had been any recorded accidents on the various roads within the estate or at the junction with the A830. This search revealed that there had been no recorded incidents in the past 20 years. This is based on the data provided to the council by Police Scotland. It should however be noted that this may not reveal any minor bumps that could have gone unreported.

The lack of accidents would tend to show that drivers are behaving responsibly and driving within the constraints provided by the narrow confines of the estate.

### **DISCUSSION**

The roads and pavements within the estate are generally very narrow, particularly on Wilson Way which forms the main distributor road. From observation, the speed of vehicles seems to be quite low, but the narrow nature of the footpaths make pedestrians feel vulnerable to passing vehicles, particularly where there are boundary walls and fences close to the back of the path limiting any escape route if a vehicle comes too close. This is compounded when the boundary walls are high as this also gives the impression the path is more restricted than it actually is. There is a similar situation for cyclists on the road who find themselves under pressure when a vehicle approaches as there is very little room for cyclists and vehicles to pass safely. Drivers are also tempted to squeeze past cyclists if travelling in the same direction putting the cyclist under pressure to get off the road. The situation is exacerbated even further when large vehicles are involved.

However even if it is desirable to widen the footpath along Wilson Way, the constraints provided by adjacent fences and walls as well as the fact that the residential boundaries abut the back of the path mean that it will be very difficult to provide any improvement without purchasing land from the adjacent landowners to

facilitate any improvement. This in itself could make any improvement works quite protracted if landowners refuse to sell. There is a similar situation at the railway bridge as there is no scope to widen the footpath due to the proximity of the parapet walls. To widen the path at this location would require the installation of footbridge as proposed. This would however require its footings and linking paths to be placed on railway property. The footbridge would also have to meet any requirements that Network Rail may impose on the Council. They would also have to be closely involved during any construction works. This could significantly increase the overall costs of the footbridge.

Looking holistically at any proposed footpath development, it would seem that just providing a new footbridge on its own, while providing an improvement locally does not really improve the wellbeing of pedestrians within the estate unless the paths, at least along Wilson Way, can also be widened at the same time to provide continuity to any improvement. Even if this improvement initially comprised localised widenings of the footpath along the entire length of Wilson Way as and when land became available, it would at least give scope for pedestrians to wait on the widened sections until they felt safe to proceed once the traffic had passed.

It would also be desirable to extend any footpath improvements to Achdalieli Road as well as the paths here are of a similar width. However the volume of traffic using this road is much less than Wilson Way so the potential risks to vulnerable road users is also much less.

There is really no need for further improvement on Campbell Road as the road and path are already built to an acceptable standard and do not pose any real risk to pedestrians or cyclists.

To get a respectable footpath width, the council would have to buy at least a 1m strip of land from every landowner and this would not take account of the level differences that exist between the footpath and the adjacent gardens. Inevitably the costs for the scheme as outlined above will be high once all the land negotiations are concluded, especially if Network Rail imposes restrictions on the design of the bridge as well. These costs will have to be weighed against the overall gain in safety that will be achieved as vehicles will still have to squeeze past each other at the laybys. However cyclists will still have to co-exist with these vehicles on the road unless they revert to cycling on the footpath, or the footpath is re-determined as a shared use facility.

In the short to medium term at least, it would probably be more advantageous to consider alternative means of restricting vehicle speeds and thereby reducing the threat to pedestrians and cyclists.

There is also the question of whether or not any future development should be permitted and if it is, what level could be considered. At present, the estate seems to operate relatively safely albeit the roads and pavements are narrow. However, as more houses are constructed, the pressures on this fragile infrastructure will also increase to a point where safety will be compromised. From a road safety stand point, it is difficult to determine when that tipping point is reached. Possibly one or two more houses would have little effect but once the numbers increased to five or ten, or more, then the traffic volumes are likely to reach a point where safety will be compromised. Also, on top of the final generated traffic, there will be the inevitable short term increase in journeys on these roads by large vehicles servicing the new houses. If a number of houses were to be constructed at the same time these additional trips will be significant.

## OPTIONS

In the **short term**, there are low cost options, which, while not improving the infrastructure, will control vehicle speeds and permit the vulnerable road user to move about the estate without feeling so threatened by passing vehicles. However the proposals would not really cater for any future development within the estate until the proposed medium to long term options have been evaluated and a mechanism put in place to ensure that the chosen option is linked to the development.

These short term proposals could include the following:-

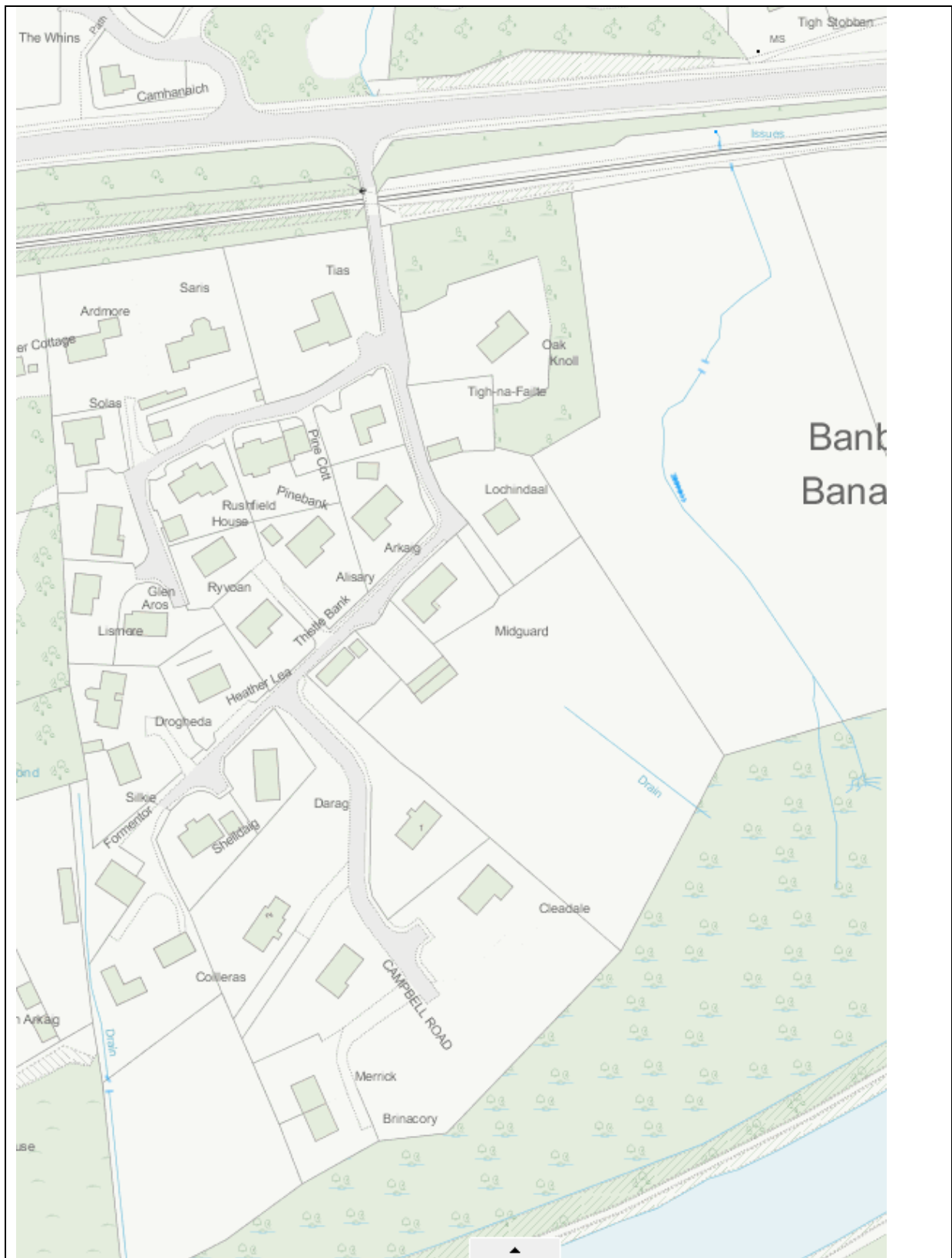
- *Change the advisory 20mph limit to a mandatory 20mph limit on all roads within the estate and provide a series of cushions along Wilson Way at regular intervals to physically control the speed of the traffic. The spacing of these cushions can be adjusted as required to achieve the desired maximum speed for vehicles within the estate. They could also be used on Achdalieli Road if desired.*
- *Repair the section of footpath between the railway bridge and the A830. Also look at the feasibility of widening the path at the same time to allow pedestrians to wait in a widened section until they feel safe to cross the bridge.*
- *Examine the possibility of providing a similarly widened footpath area on the south side of the railway bridge to provide a waiting area on the south side.*
- *Look to see if there are areas of footpath that could be strip widened without the need to buy land. This would be particularly beneficial where the footpath is on the inside of the bend.*
- *Mark both formal and informal laybys with broken white edge lining to raise their conspicuity to approaching drivers.*

In the **medium to long term** the possibility of widening the footpath and providing a footbridge over the railway can be explored to see the viability of such a scheme and whether any future developer contributions could be put aside to fund the project. However the path improvement and the increase in development would have to be linked and one could not proceed without the other.

Another possibility would be to make the road and pavement “shared use” so that pedestrians and cyclists have the priority on the roads within the scheme and vehicles would have to travel slowly and be ready to stop if required when pedestrians or cyclists are in the road. This idea is likely to be more attractive to residents when compared to giving up garden space. This would however be less desirable if further significant development is proposed.

Overall, as outlined previously, it is difficult to determine when development within the estate has reached saturation point as this will not only depend on the number of properties proposed but also the occupancy density within each development.

Hugh Logan  
Senior Engineer (Road Safety)



East Tomonie