

Improvement opportunities for Active Travel to the new Currie High school

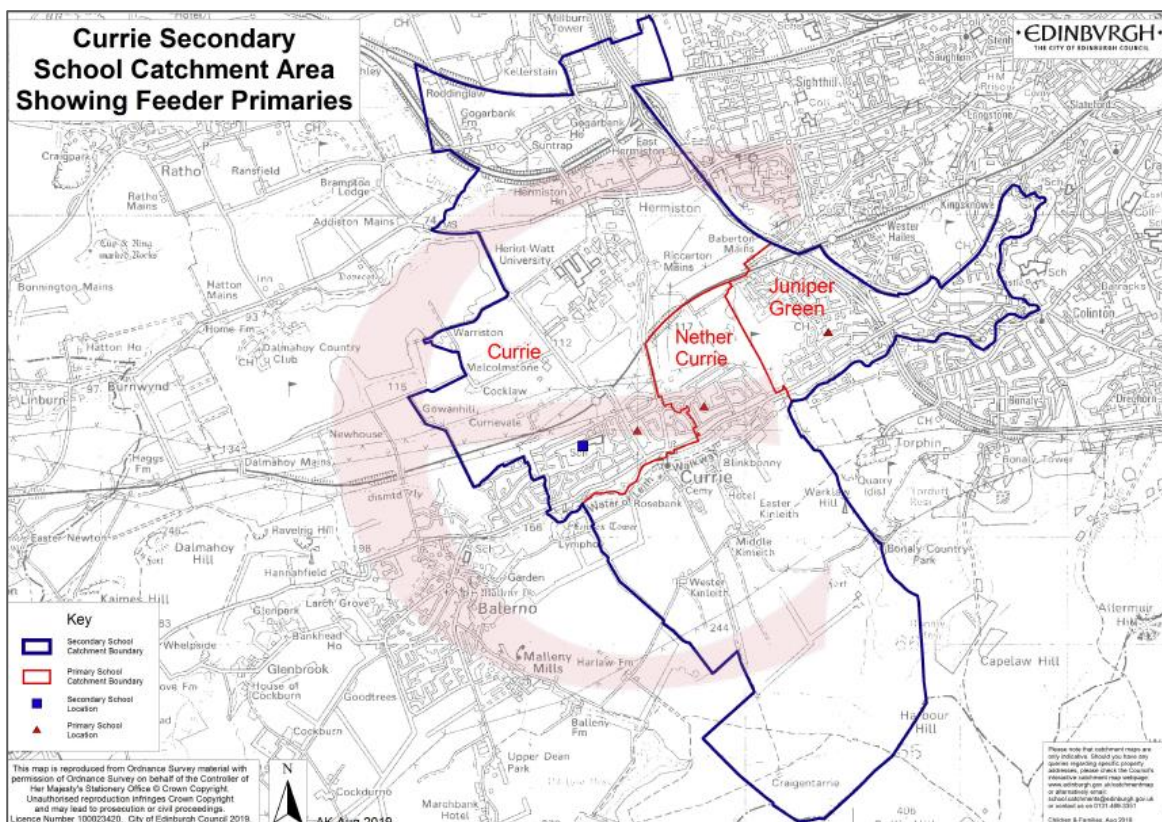
Background

Edinburgh Council is planning to replace the current Currie Community High School (CCHS) by a new school on the same site in August 2024.

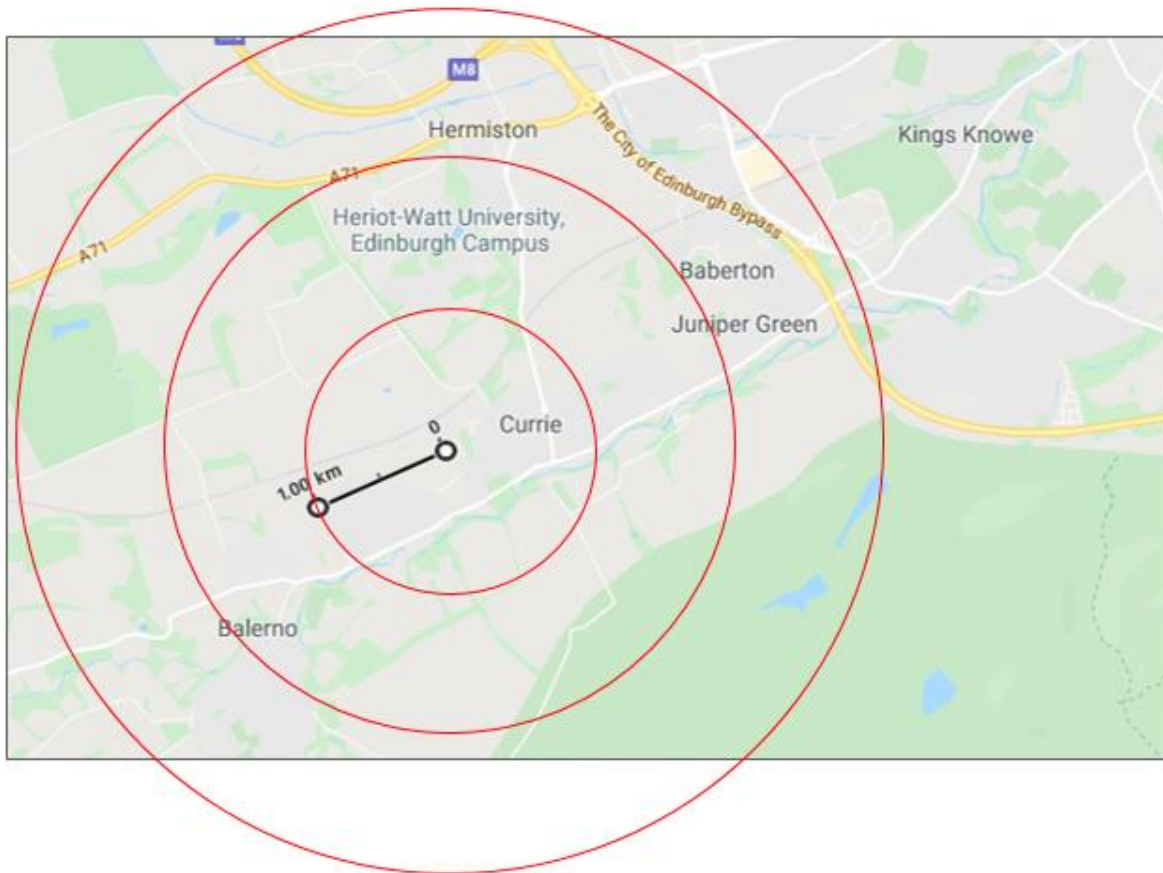
The Council's Strategic Planning team has asked the Active Travel team to investigate the opportunities to improve Active Travel to the school. There is also the desire to improve travel connections to the Primary School, Heriot Watt University and Curriehill train station.

The image below shows the catchment area of CCHS. The catchment area was changed in August 2019 and does not include the eastern areas of Balerno anymore (Newmills and Cherry Tree).

Most children come from Currie, Nether Currie, Juniper Green and Baberton.



The following image indicates the distances around the school:



Most students live within 3 kilometres of the school.

Assuming that 1.5km is an acceptable walking distance, students from Currie and Nether Currie can be expected to walk to school.

Considering the distance, students from Juniper Green and Baberton could cycle to school.

However:

- The Lanark Road (main road into Edinburgh: road that goes from South West to North East in the picture above) is very busy and not a nice road to cycle;
- Riccarton Mains Road (side road from the Lanark Road, going north) is very busy as well;
- Rarely any High school student cycles to school ('it is not cool', 'no one else does it, just some strange boys').

Teachers may live farther away and although the majority may currently use the car, improving the opportunities for Active Travel and optimising connections to the Public Transport network may convince them to travel more sustainably.

We have investigated potential Active Travel improvements in the following areas:

1. Movements within the school grounds
2. Access to school within the estate
3. Access to the estate

1. Movements within the school grounds



Current paths give access to the school from:

- 1.1 Currievale Park (red)
- 1.2 Dolphin Gardens West (blue)
- 1.3 Dolphin Gardens (Main entrance) (green)
- 1.4 Dolphin Gardens East (pink)
- 1.5 Forth View Crescent (yellow)
- 1.6 Currievale Drive (orange)

1.1 Path to Currievale Park (red)

This path is very well used by pedestrians and dog walkers, but has a couple of issues:

- It is too narrow for cyclists and pedestrians;
- It is not lit
- There are 2 sets of steps to get to the school entrance. Ramps have been installed recently, but the top/west one is not really suitable for cyclists. Any ramps for the new school should be of better quality and size (ideally they would not even be necessary)

If these issues were solved, the path would get better use by cyclists and in the dark.

Since it is in a park-like area, the path could be a shared-use path.

Images from school towards the west:



1.2 Path to Dolphin Gardens West (blue)

This path is a continuation from the previous path and would benefit from being widened to encourage cycling as well. The path is lit.

The path ends up in a courtyard area with garages with an exit/ access road between the houses that leads to Dolphin Gardens West.



Like the previous path, this one could be either shared or segregated.

Because of its type of use and width, the courtyard area and exit will have to be shared.

1.3 Path to Dolphin Gardens (Main entrance) (green)

This is probably the most frequently used path to enter and exit the school grounds on foot.

It is quite narrow and right beside the road. The access road is narrow as well and because of the sharp corner visibility is very bad. Currently, this access is not safe for cyclists.

It may be possible to widen the road (across the burn) to give space to cyclists.

Ideally, there would be one access and one exit road for the school.

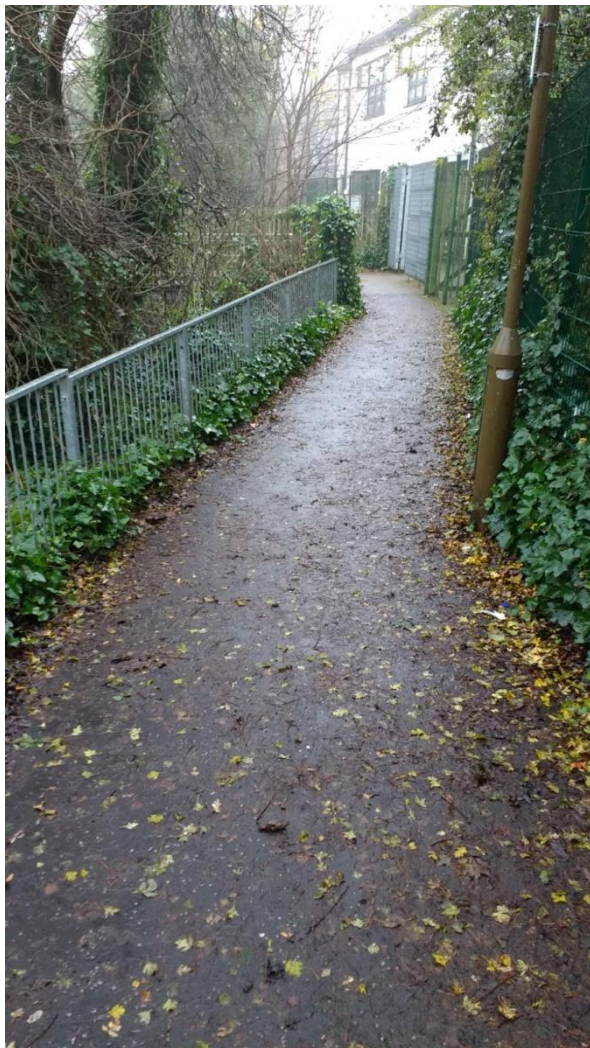
The exit road could be the existing one to Dolphin Gardens West (see B) or a new one to Currievale Drive (see 2). Both options will have their own issues, but the current solution is far from ideal as well.



Bottom image: view towards the school, opportunity to widen the road (in green)

1.4 Path to Dolphin Gardens East (pink)

This path is used a lot by students as well. The path gives access to Woodlands school, but has a branch that goes past the school. The gate to the road is closed when the school is closed, but there is a path to the north (see E.) that leads to the road and its gate is always open.



1.5 Path to Forth View Crescent (yellow)

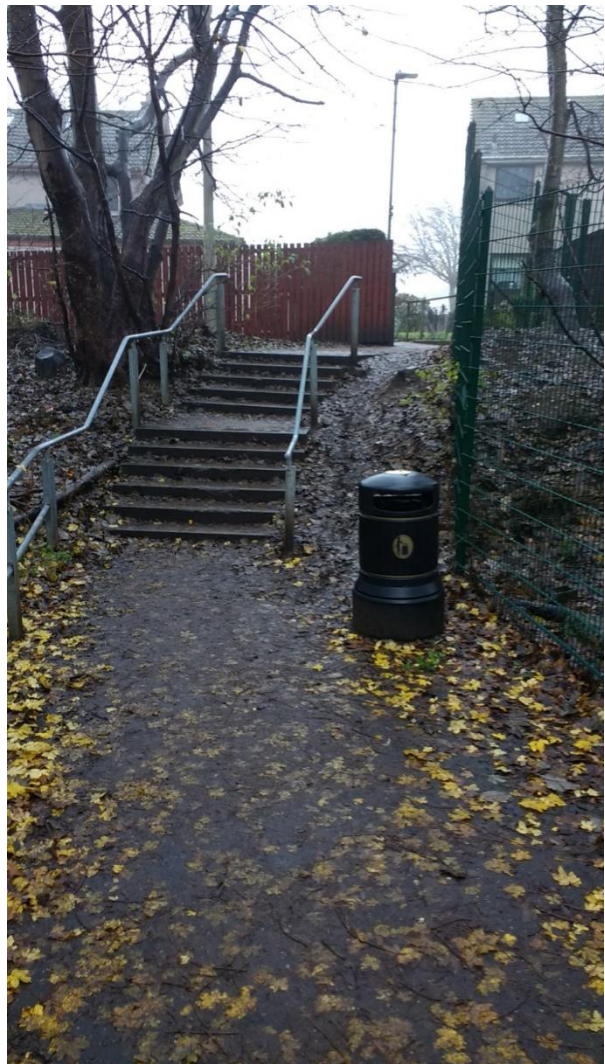
Another very well used path by students that walk to school.

This would be an ideal access to the school for cyclists from the west, but:

- it is quite narrow (between houses)
- it is not lit
- there are steps.

The situation would be greatly improved if there would be lighting and if there would be a ramp beside the steps to roll a bike down the bank (there is space for this).

The space could be shared between cyclists and pedestrians.

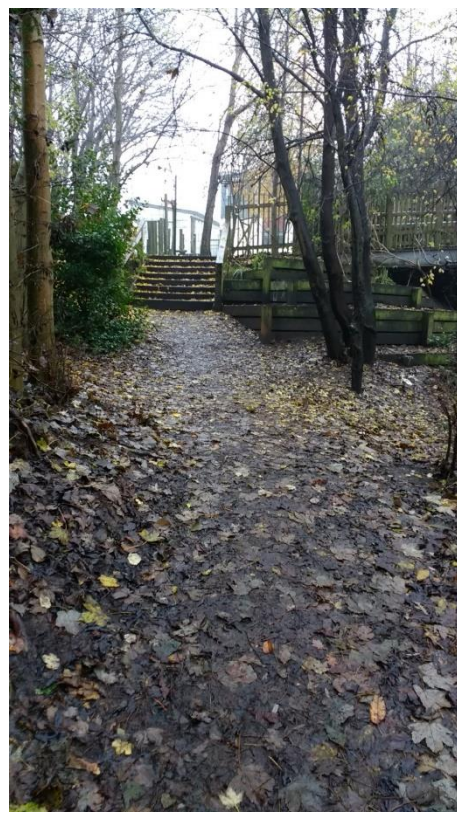
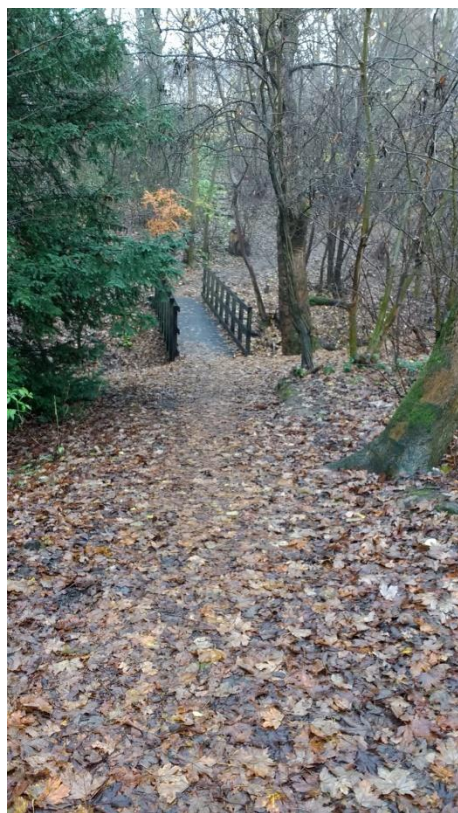


1.6 Path to Currievale Drive (orange)

The only path to the north of the school is through 'Roley's wood'.

A very nice path to walk, but steep, muddy, dark and with various sets of steps.

Nice for a walk during the daytime, but not ideal at night and not suitable for cyclists.



2. Access to school within the estate



Access to the school for students from:

- 2.1 West (red) via Currievale Park
- 2.2 Southwest (blue) via Dolphin Gardens West
- 2.3 Southeast (green) via Dolphin Gardens (Main entrance)
- 2.4 East (yellow) via Forth View Crescent
- 2.5 North (orange) via Currievale Drive

2.1 West (red)

Access from the west is relatively good.

The access to the school is via Currievale Park and the streets are not very busy.

Reasons that may keep children from cycling, walking and wheeling are:

- The gradient from north to south is quite high;
- On-street parking limits the space for cycling and reduces sight lines at junctions;
- Cars that leave the drive can pose a danger for children that walk, scoot and cycle.

Potential improvements

- The distance to the school is relative short, so most students walk to school.
- To improve Active Travel, turning the area into a home zone would be the ideal solution but this will be very expensive.
- Introducing raised tables or continuous footways on the most travelled route would be the next best option and will considerably improve safety for the many students that walk to school.

2.2 Southwest (blue)

Access from the Southwest is relatively good, especially since most people from this area will walk to school (it is not ideal for cycling).

The access to the school is via Dolphins Gardens West.

Reasons that may affect cycling, walking and wheeling are:

- The gradient from north to south is quite high;
- On-street parking limits the space for cycling and reduces sight lines at junctions;
- Pavements are relatively narrow and are easily blocked on bin-collection days;
- Stewart Avenue and Dolphin Gardens are used as a rat run from the Lanark Road to Curriehill Road (a.o. to the Primary school).

Potential improvements

Again:

- The distance to the school is relative short, so most students walk to school.
- Turning the area into a home zone would be the ideal solution, but this will be very expensive.
- Introducing raised tables or continuous footways on the most travelled route would be the next best option.
- Double yellow lines on street corners will improve sightlines.
- A filter on Dolphin Gardens will stop the rat run (see also area 3.)

2.3 Southeast (green)

This is the main entrance to the school and is used by most students and staff. This route is used by people that come walking from home or from the bus stop on the Lanark Road and this is the only access for cars and taxis (for Woodlands School).

The access road is narrow (give and go) and not ideal for the amount of traffic that needs to use it. Limited width and bad sightlines make it a dangerous route for cyclists.

Potential improvements

- As outlined in the previous paragraph, the entrance could be widened and it may be possible to create a segregated cycle path;
- Dolphin Gardens is used as a rat run to and from the Primary school and between the Lanark Road and Curriehill Road in general. This can be stopped by introducing a filter on 2 places:



These filters will greatly reduce the busyness around the entrance of the school. Residents are not disadvantaged very much, because there are various alternatives to reach the Lanark Road (main

corridor) and the other site of Currie (via Dolphin Road). The road to Woodlands School would still be accessible. If needed, there would be space to create a turning circle at each of the filters.

This filter will be a great help for pedestrians that come from the bus stop and walk down the grassy field east of Dolphin Avenue. To improve the situation even more, the area between the two filters (ideally the whole of Dolphin Gardens) could be made into a home zone. This would be a great combination with the grassy field and –in case it is done west of the western filter as well- with the grass patch west of Dolphin Avenue.

Alternatively, north-south continuous footways could be introduced at the junction of Dolphin Avenue and Dolphin Gardens.

2.4 East (yellow)

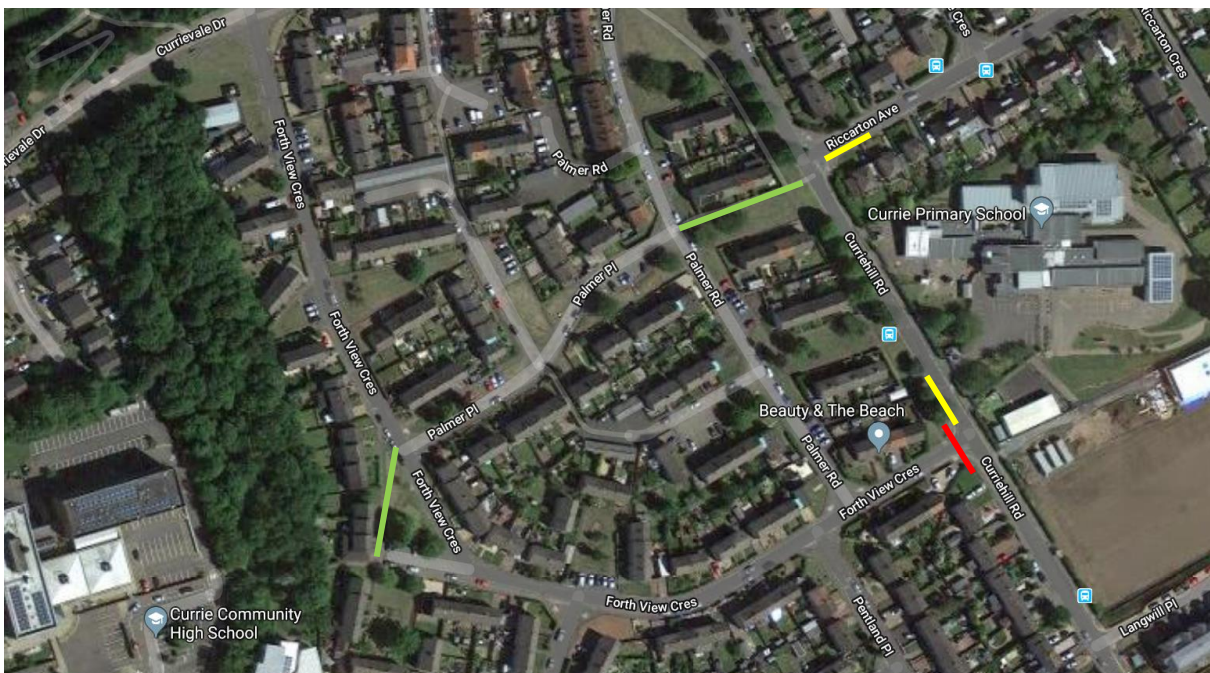
The access via Forthview Crescent is fine for pedestrians, but not very good for cyclists.

The steps do not have a wheeling ramp and the path between the houses is narrow.

From here, there are opportunities to improve cycling for people that come from further away (Nether Currie and Juniper Green).

Potential improvements

- Introducing raised tables and/ or continuous footways on the most travelled routes;
- The initial part of the path could be improved by adding a wheeling ramp beside the steps (there is enough space). Cyclists can walk the narrow part between the houses and cycle from there onward;
- Introducing raised tables or continuous footways on the most travelled route;
- Double yellow lines on street corners will improve sightlines;
- A shared use or segregated path can be created from the houses to Palmer Place;
- Palmer Place is a quiet street that can be used by cyclists. A shared use or ideally a segregated cycle path can be created on the grass area between Palmer Place and Riccarton Avenue. This can tie in to Riccarton Avenue (for Nether Currie and Juniper Green). See green lines below:



Note - Currie Primary School

Curriehill Road is a very busy road directly in front of the Primary School. Some parents try to drop off their children as close as possible to the school which poses hazards for walking and cycling.

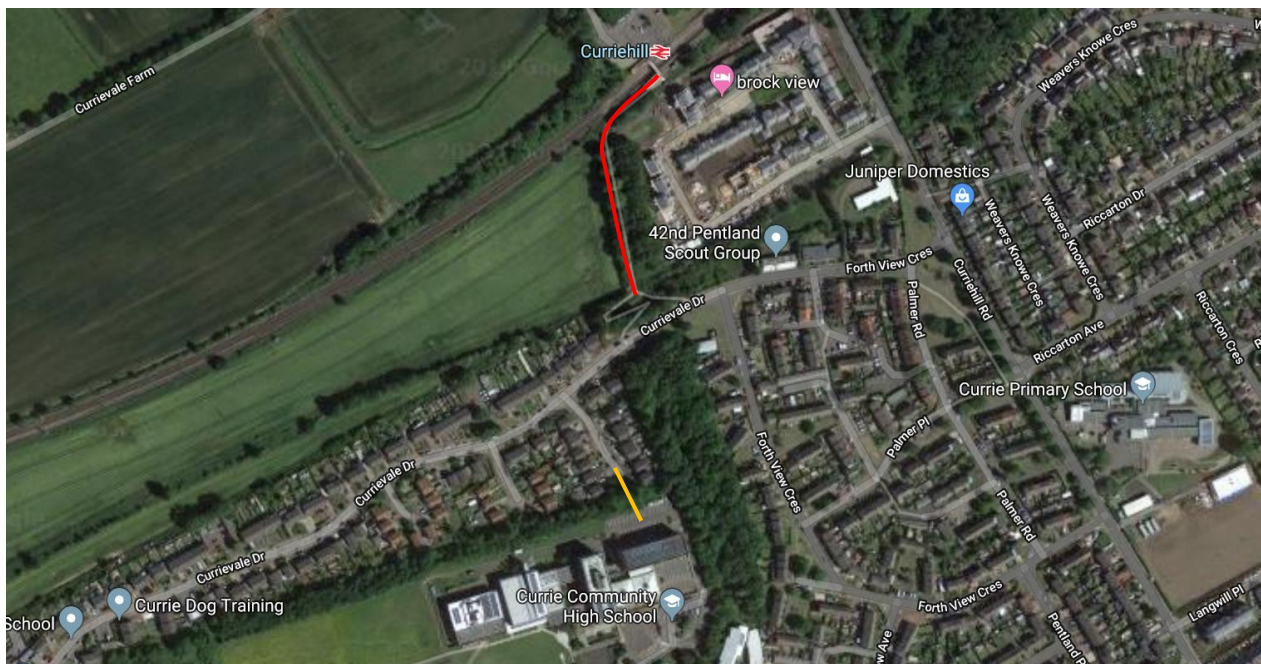
A few simple interventions would greatly help:

- Place a double yellow where the lollipop lady helps children across the street. Every day, the lollipop lady needs to place cones to keep cars away from her crossing point;
- The lollipop man at Riccarton Avenue is plagued by people that (want to) park on his crossing point that falls just outside the double yellow lines of the corner of the street (it is safer to be a bit further away from the corner);
- Place double yellow lines on corners of the street, so people (especially children) have good sight lines when they cross the street;
- Traffic right next to the lollipop lady would be greatly reduced if a filter is put in at the end of Forthview Crescent (junction Curriehill Road). There are enough alternative routes for cars to and from Curriehill Road further away from the school;

2.5 North (orange)

The access to Currie High School from the north is very limited. The path through Roley's Wood is the only option and –as we have seen- this path is only suitable for walking.

There is an opportunity to create a path to the High School from Currievale Drive that would benefit people when it is dark as well as cyclists (orange). This path would connect well to the path that leads to the train station (red).



Creating this path would mean that an existing green area with big trees will be turned into a foot/ cycle path.

The path would give access to the current car park of the school

Other interventions:

- Introducing raised tables or continuous footways on the most travelled routes;

3. Access to the estate

Zooming further out, we will look into opportunities to travel to the school from further away, using the bike or public transport. We will also look at destinations of interest like Currie Primary School and Heriot Watt.

3.1 From the West

The catchment area to the west of the school is very limited.

Staff that come from the west may use the quiet routes through Balerno, the path along the Water of Leith (see 'From the South') or the train (see 'From the North').

3.2 From the South

The Lanark Road (A70) is a very busy road and is only suitable for very experienced cyclists.

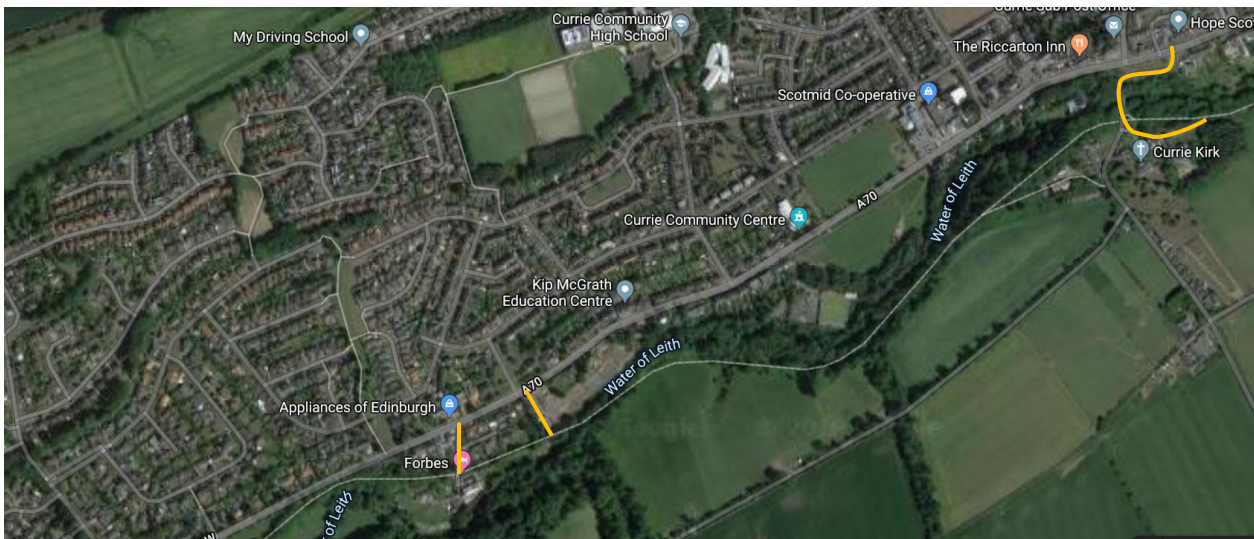
The path along the Water of Leith provides a great way to walk or cycle from Balerno and from the centre of Edinburgh. The disadvantage however is that the path is not lit and can be very muddy in the autumn, winter and spring.

To get to the High School from the Water of Leith, there are currently 2 places to leave the path:

- beside Currie Kirk (muddy path to the road and steep road to access the Lanark Road, below-right)
- at Waulkmill Loan (steep tarmac path to the Lanark Road, below-left)

The latter one is the better one, since it has better connections to the school once the Lanark Road is crossed.

A new housing development south of the Lanark Road may provide opportunities for a better solution: a path from the Water of Leith to the Lanark Road with a connection to Stewart Road, which is closer to the school (below-centre):



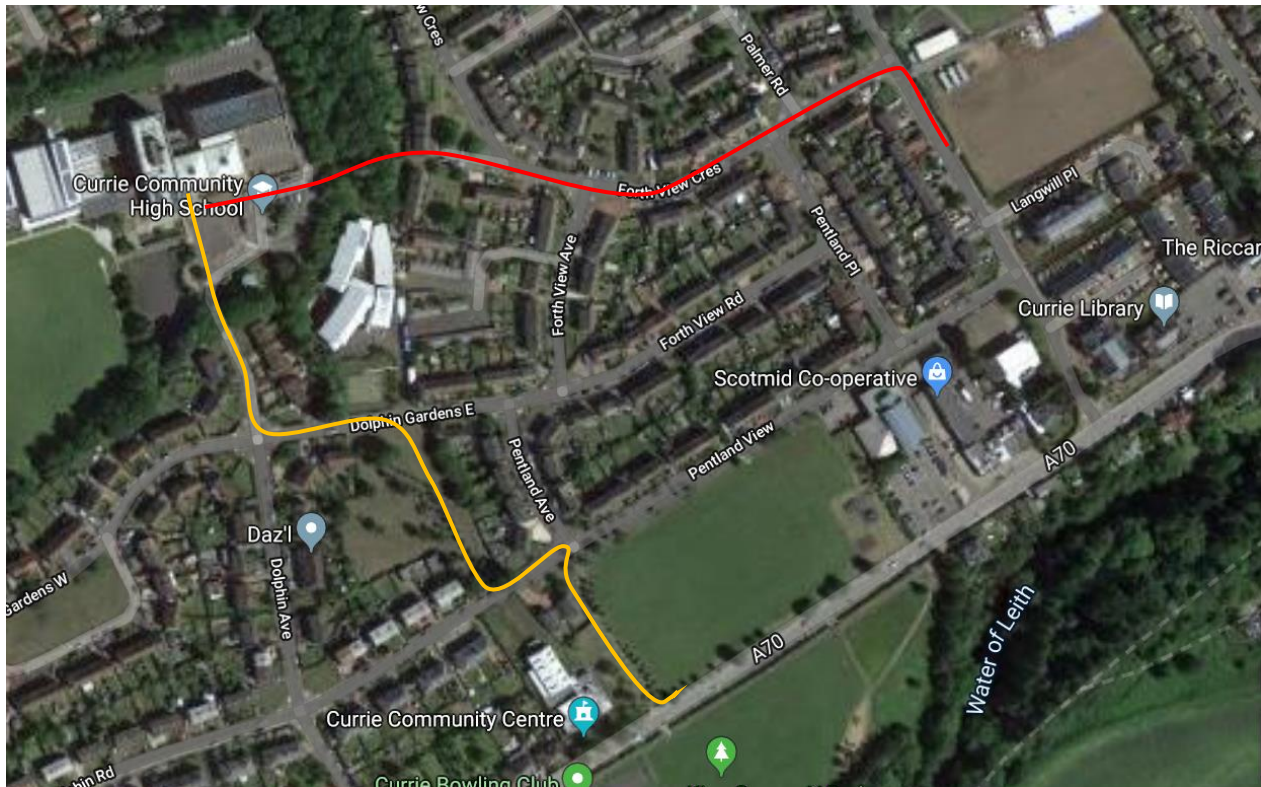
In other areas, the river is blocking the way to the Lanark Road.

Bus stops

The nearest bus stops are the ones for the 44 and the 45 bus. The 44 bus is used by students from Juniper Green.

The 44 Dolphin Avenue bus stop is located around 500m from the school. There is quite a gradient from the school to the Lanark Road (orange line). The filter mentioned in 2.3 would make the last part of this route quieter and safer.

The 45 Curriehill Road bus stop is located around 450m from the school, but has steps along the route (red line). The 45 bus is less frequent than the 44.



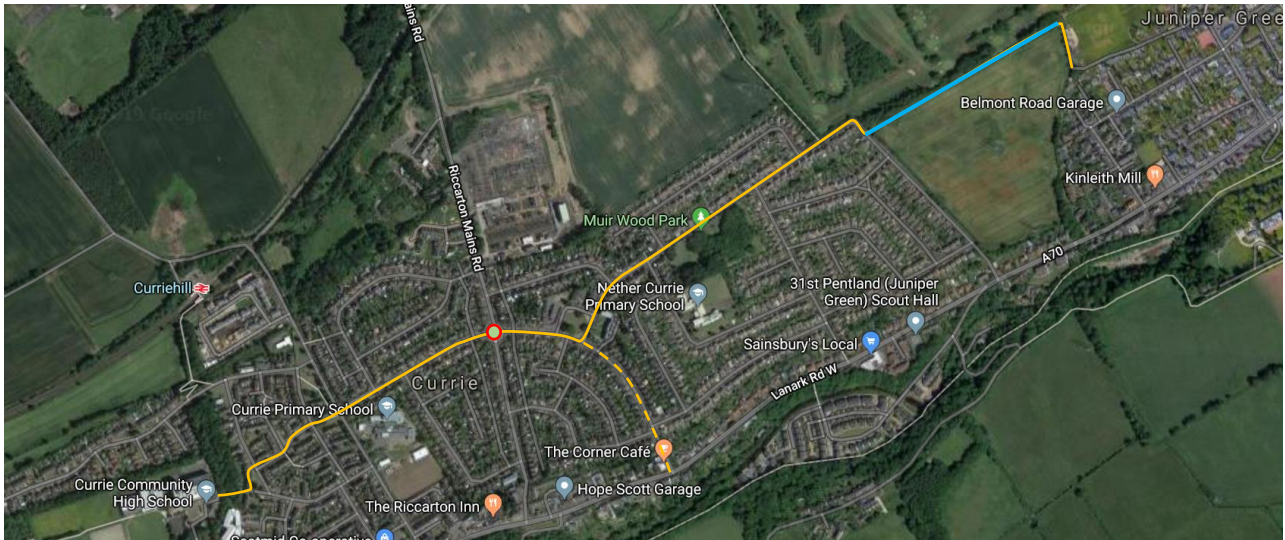
3.3 From the East

Currie High School's catchment area stretches relatively far to the east and many students that live in Baberton and Juniper Green take the bus to school.

Ideally, opportunities for cycling to school from these areas would be improved. This would save time, cost and improve health.

The Lanark Road is too busy for most cyclists (certainly for most students), and taking the path along the Water of Leith means that people must cross the Lanark Road twice.

There are however opportunities to create a better route:



From east to west:

- Chapter 2.4 shows opportunities to improve cycling from Currie High School to Riccarton Avenue.
- Riccarton Avenue is quite a wide road and not very busy. It is however also a bus route and may therefore not be suitable for a 12 year old cyclist.
- Riccarton Avenue crosses the very busy Riccarton Mains Road at a wide roundabout and continues as Bryce Road. Bryce Road is not very busy but has more parked cars than Riccarton Avenue (especially near the shops and towards the southern end of the street).
- Muirwood Road is a relatively quiet side road of Bryce Road. This road is used to access Nether Currie Primary School.
- At the eastern end of Muirwood Road, a muddy path crosses the field to Juniper Green's Bloomiehall Park. Bloomiehall Park has good quiet route connections to the rest of Juniper Green and to Baberton.

This route could be a great, relatively level active travel corridor between Juniper Green and Currie.

To make this possible, the following should be done:

- Change the roundabout into a 'Dutch style' roundabout or a junction so that cyclists and pedestrians can cross Riccarton Mains Road safely;



- Create a proper cycle and footpath from Muirwood Road to Bloomiehall Park;
- Ideally, there would also be better provision for cycling on Riccarton Avenue and Bryce Road (preferably all the way to Lanark Road). Creating advisory cycle lanes may be an option?

Currie Primary School

The red line in the image of 3.2 shows virtually the same route that would be taken from the Primary School to the High School. We have mentioned the use of a filter (Forthview Crescent) and wheeling ramp that would improve walking and cycling (see 2.4) between the Primary and the High School.

3.4 From the North

The 2 main destinations north of the school are Curriehill train station and Heriot Watt University. Improving links to these destinations will benefit the whole estate.

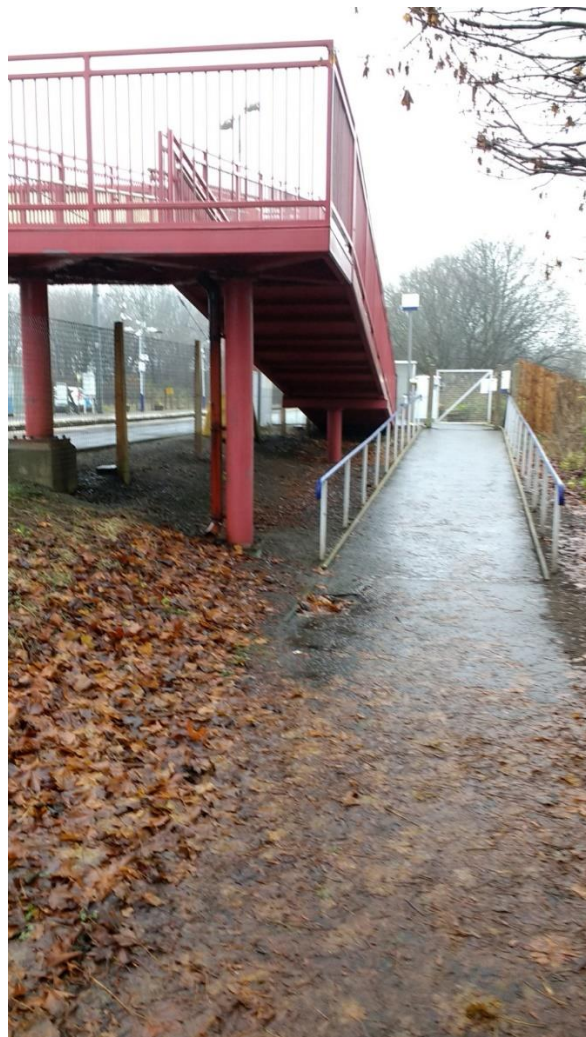
Curriehill Train station

Currently, the main access to the train station is on the north of the station.

Car and cycle parking provision is on this side of the station. The bridge between the platforms is not accessible for wheelchair users.

Since most people live south of the station, access for cyclists would be greatly improved by widening the path to the station and by installing cycle racks on the south side of the station.

There is ample space to widen the path and cycle parking could potentially be created under the bridge (keeping bikes dry). This would mean that cyclists don't need to negotiate the busy Curriehill Road.



3.5 Heriot Watt University

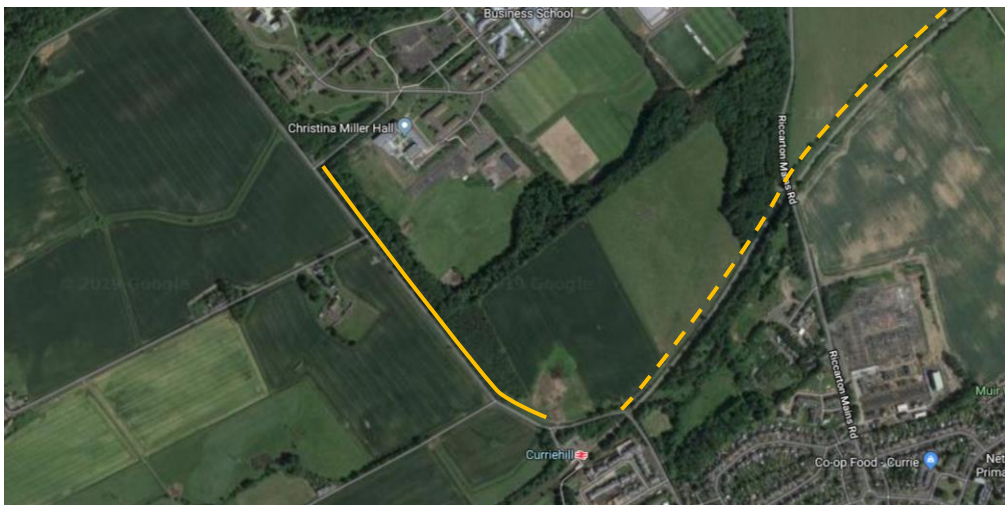
Heriot Watt University has approached Edinburgh Council's Active Travel team since it is keen to improve cycle links with the train station and with Currie and Balerno.

The road between Heriot Watt and Currie/ Curriehill station is a relatively narrow and busy road where cars drive fast. The footpath is narrow and in a very bad condition. The path is often overgrown.

It may be possible to move the carriageway to create space for cyclists (ideally on the east side of the road) but the potential increase may be limited.

Alternatively, a cycle path could be created on the University's site. This would however be behind a wall and in the trees, so this would not be ideal in the dark. It could be argued that the path would mainly be used during the day, so good path lighting may suffice.

Heriot Watt's grounds almost reach the train station, so this is an ideal situation to create an off-road path.



The path up to Currie and across the railway bridge is narrow and may be hard/ costly to improve. A great improvement to link Currie with the east (for instance to connect to Baberton or the canal), would be to create a cycle path along the railway into Edinburgh.

Summary

There is real potential to improve Active Travel to and from Currie High School and between the High School and the Primary School, Heriot Watt University and Public Transport locations.

The interventions vary from filtering traffic to create safer areas around the High and Primary School to creating a new cycle path that will allow students and staff to cycle to school rather than take the bus.

An overview of the changes that have the most impact:

1. Widen paths on school grounds (1.1 and 1.2);
2. Widen entrance to the school (1.3);
3. Fit wheeling ramp besides steps on path to Forthview Crescent (1.5);
4. Introduce raised tables or continuous footways on the most travelled route and double yellow lines on street corners (to improve sightlines) (2.1 to 2.5);
5. Filter traffic east and west of the entrance to the High School (Dolphin Gardens East and West) (2.3);
6. Filter traffic between Forthview Crescent and Curriehill Road (2.4);
7. Create segregated 2 short cycle paths between Forthview Crescent and Curriehill Road (2.4);
8. Investigate the opportunity to create a path to the school grounds from the north (2.5);
9. Investigate the opportunity to create a path from the Water of Leith to the Lanark Road at the new 'River Mill' Development (3.2);
10. Change the Riccarton Mains Road roundabout to a 'Dutch style' roundabout or a junction so that cyclists and pedestrians can cross Riccarton Mains Road safely (3.3);
11. Create advisory cycle lanes on Riccarton Avenue and Bryce Road and limit on-street parking;
12. Create a proper cycle and footpath from Muirwood Road to Bloomiehall Park (3.3);
13. Widen and segregate the path to Curriehill station (3.4);
14. Fit cycle racks on the south side of the station (3.4);
15. Investigate the opportunity to create a segregated cycle path between Heriot Watt University and Curriehill station (3.5);
16. Investigate the opportunity to create a cycle path from Currie to Westerhailes along the railway into Edinburgh (3.5).