

Technical Note

Subject: Traffic Issues

Project: Longford Main Street

Our file: 5826

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1. Introduction

MRCagney have been commissioned by the Northern Midlands Council to address some ongoing traffic issues that have been highlighted throughout the recent project to examine the Main Street in Longford with a view to revitalising the town. We have been supplied with a list of traffic issues from Council which may be addressed during this revitalisation project.

MRCagney visited the site and had the opportunity to discuss some of the traffic issues on site with Council staff. MRCagney also participated in workshops with both Council and the broader community.

2. Traffic Issues

The traffic issues that were specifically highlighted by Council are:

- The deterioration of Wellington Street (Pultney Street to High Street);
- Redirection of trucks if appropriate road infrastructure is upgraded;
- Damage to old buildings in Longford by heavy vehicles;
- Possible implementation of a load limit on certain roads, and the possibility of reducing speed limits;
- Woolmers Bridge traffic.
- Noise and vibration from heavy vehicles;
- Traffic diversion and calming;
- Dedicated truck route;
- Design for re-routing of traffic who don't have business in town;
- Diversion of trucks from Powranna/Burlington Roads;
- Exits and entries onto Wellington Street;
- Historic precinct recognition, including the Memorial Avenues;
- Traffic mounting pavements/flowerbeds at the northern end of Longford;
- Roundabouts and issues for buses; especially around the school.
- Trucks close to rail line; all the truck traffic entering and exiting Swifts, pole yard, railway yard and box yard.
- Powranna Sale Yards diversion to Midland Highway; and
- Traffic entering and exiting Browns.

3. Analysis/Discussion

Longford is an idyllic town approximately 25km from Launceston. From a transport perspective, typical of country towns and villages, it is dominated by a main street, which doubles as the highway connecting Longford to the surrounding towns. This one street carries the majority of local traffic as well as all the through traffic. Naturally most of the commercial and retail premises utilise this street directly for either car or pedestrian access. It carries approximately 6,000 vehicles per day, including approximately 3% heavy vehicles.

Thankfully the Main Street does not have any roundabouts and as a result still allows good pedestrian access for all businesses on the Main Street. There is however a significant parking supply and there is no traffic congestion to speak of. This environment therefore tends to lend itself to driving for every trip, and even driving to multiple destinations within the town or along the Main Street. This particular traffic issue more than any other has a negative impact on the vitality of the Main Street. If people aren't walking on the Main Street, it looks empty and people shy away from empty Main Streets.

Figure 3.1: Empty Main Street



3.1. Heavy Vehicles

There is some concern as highlighted by the list of issues presented by Council regarding trucks in the town. However, the volume is in fact very low. The pavement in the Main Street is in excellent repair indicating the heavy vehicle volume is not affecting its integrity. There is some isolated pavement damage in Wellington Street which should be repaired, however it is not considered that this is a fault of that pavement design, or that the heavy vehicle volume is in excess of what this pavement can support. Similarly it is not considered that the

heavy vehicles could in any way impact on the sustainability of any buildings in Longford, old or new. If there are isolated incidents of building damage they should be inspected by a registered structural engineer to assess the real cause. Because the truck volume is so low, significant investment in addressing any heavy vehicle issues is unlikely to return any value to the town, relative to other types of investment in the Main Street.

3.2. Access and Intersections

There has been some concern expressed regarding how some properties directly access the Main Street and others about particular intersections on the Main Street. Our investigations have not been able to identify any genuine issues. There is adequate sight distance at all intersections and entries and there are no issues of queuing or delay. The access to Browns Market immediately adjacent the service station is unusual, but from an operational perspective works adequately. There is a conflict for right turners out of Browns and left turners out of the service station. This is a common conflict for adjacent driveways and would not normally lead to any crashes. In this case in particular there is no fence or barrier between the properties, which would interrupt sight distance, and the right turner from Browns will easily be able to see the left turner out of the service station.

Figure 3.2: Browns/United Fuel Access



The treatment at the Wellington Street intersection has been examined and considered appropriate, and in fact a genuine asset to the town. The discipline and expertise used to avoid a roundabout at that intersection will be a great long-term benefit to the future prosperity of Longford.

3.3. Parking

There has been some criticism of the layout of the car park in front of Browns. There are several problems with this car park, however the layout itself is not an issue. It seems to be generally compliant with AS2890. The real problem with the car park is that it is in front of the building. This is bad retail practice in general, but particularly bad in Main Street towns like Longford where the continuous building line is a key feature of the town. The planning rules are designed to protect the town from these poor outcomes while facilitating quality development and job opportunities. This arrangement does neither. It detracts significantly from the streetscape of the town and also completely ignores customers, unless they are driving.

Overall there is a significant parking oversupply in the Longford township. The only upside of this is that it gives Council some flexibility in building re-use. That is, there is no possible reason to insist on any new development meeting any minimum parking rate when there is such a massive oversupply in the town. This can be vital in the feasibility of re-use of heritage buildings. With a more moderate parking supply and some other land use modifications there is a future for Longford to have more lively active streets that match its wonderful heritage architecture.

3.4. Road Space and People Space

Concerns have been raised regarding speed limits and traffic calming. Overall there is a lot of road space in Longford. The Main Street environment is completely at odds with its 50km/h speed limit. This is historic, but Council (and State Growth) is now left with this large asset, which doesn't really give a lot back to the community, except to encourage speeding. The balance between movement space and exchange space in Longford is skewed too far in favour of movement space. Getting this balance right is important. Movement space costs money and exchange space is how you make it back. If there is not enough exchange space, the town will slowly lose its vitality.

There are plenty of opportunities to take back road space in Longford for:

- More generous and welcoming crossing places (with or without zebra treatments);
- Street trees;
- Outdoor dining;
- Wider footpaths;
- Cycling lanes;
- Parklets; or
- Public gathering.

Figure 3.3: An example of alternative road space use – generous and inviting pedestrian crossings



Figure 3.4: An example of alternative road space use – outdoor dining and gathering space

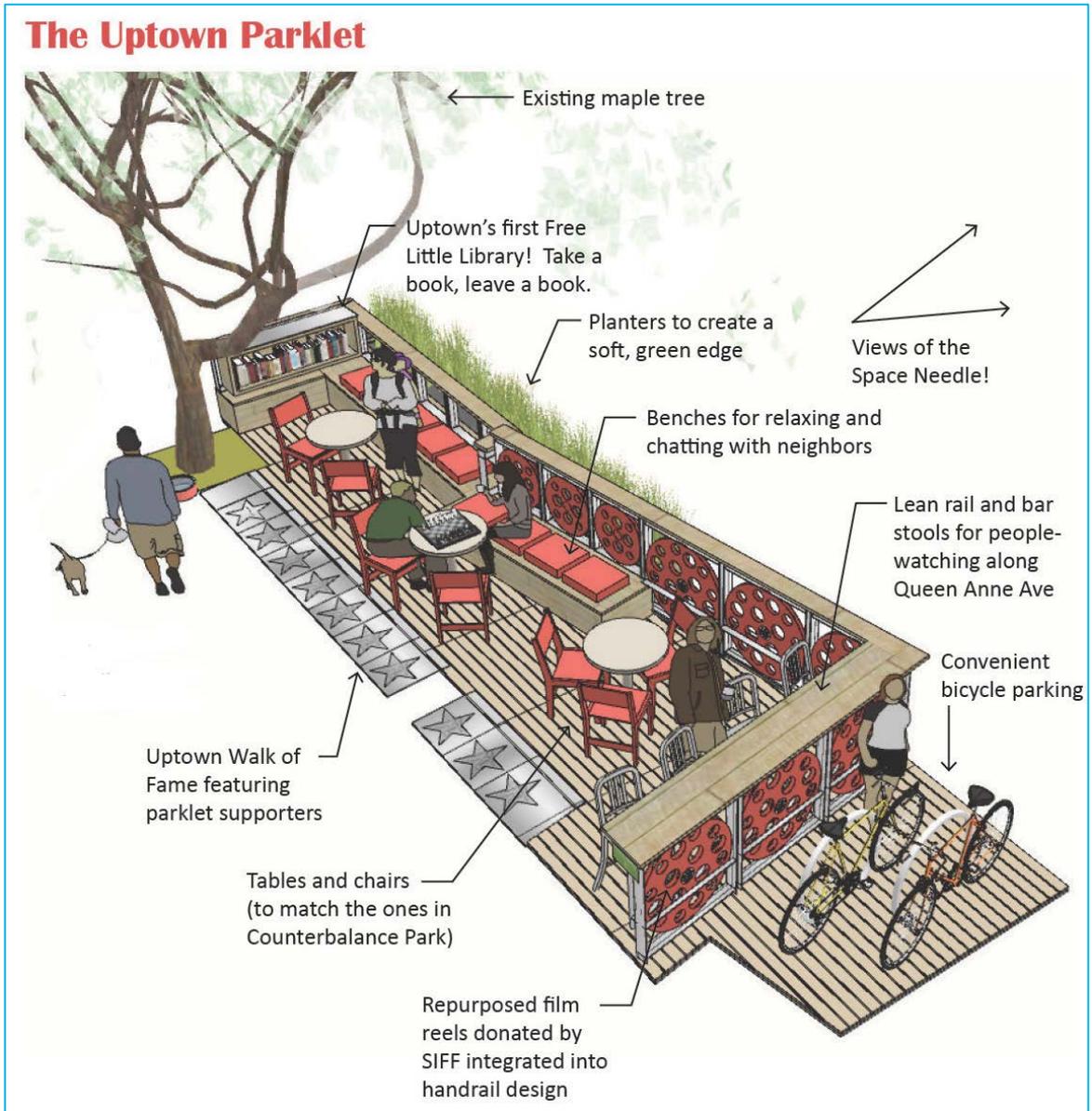


Figure 3.5: An example of alternative road space use – safe and inviting protected bike lanes



To make an exact recommendation on what treatments would be appropriate would have to be part of an overall streetscape design project, but a proper street tree project combined with some more significant crossing points and some incidental outdoor dining would be an excellent use of the excess road space in Longford.

4. Summary

MRCagney have examined the potential traffic issues in Longford in association with Council's efforts to improve the social and economic sustainability of its Main Street. Typically with smaller towns and villages there are some slightly inconvenient places where the traffic arrangements are not perfect, but nothing that would cause a safety issue, a long-term maintenance issue, or obviously a congestion or delay issue. Longford does need some attention, but MRCagney could not recommend that any significant traffic treatments are the most important works in improving the vitality or activity in the town.

There does however exist an opportunity to repurpose some of the excess road space for people space. This should be done within the context of a comprehensive street design with the aim of economically revitalising the town, but some of the most important works to consider would be:

- A street tree strategy, including long term plant management to ensure other infrastructure is not affected;
- Some generous and inviting crossing points to slow down traffic and allow pedestrians to more easily cross;
- Outdoor dining and gathering space to make people more visible on the street and display some street activity.

Other key actions would be to relax the adherence to minimum parking rates in the town centre to encourage repurposing of heritage buildings on the Main Street.