



► Acorn Road in Jesmond will see big changes next year under the plans

New £350k street plan is revealed

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A £350,000 scheme to make a popular Newcastle street “more people friendly” has been revealed.

It follows an at-times heated consultation process with local residents and businesses on the future of Acorn Road in Jesmond.

Three options were discussed, one being no change, before it settled on a plan.

The scheme would create a one way street for traffic, raise the road surface to the levels of footpaths to make it easier for pushchairs and widen pavements.

The council also wants to introduce a contra flow system for cyclists so they can pedal in both directions, reduce the speed limit to 20mph, provide new public seating and landscaping and introduce smart traffic lights at the junction with Osborne Road.

Another part of the scheme involves raising the junction with St George’s Terrace and pavements to improve wheelchair and pushchair access.

It will result in 10 car parking spaces being lost.

Steve Jones, owner of the Boilerhouse hair and beauty salon which has been on Acorn Road for 30 years, said: “I’m not impressed at all with it. To me it just seems to have been railroaded through by certain people.

“A lot of clients travel into the area by car. We employ 20 staff who have mortgages to pay and I’m worried about them.

“Local residents are worried at the loss of parking spaces forcing motorists to park on their street.

“I think they should leave it alone. It’s always been busy but since we’ve been here I’ve never seen an accident.”

However Tony Waterston, of the Jesmond Residents Association, said: “My personal view is it’s a very good scheme which will greatly improve the neigh-

bourhood and I’m really keen for it to go ahead.

“I think it will encourage more people to go on foot. Surveys reveal that pedestrians come back more frequently than car users and spend three times as much.”

Newcastle City Council said the changes will improve traffic flows, make the road more attractive and safer for cyclists and people who shop there.

The council received 624 responses with 48% backing the scheme they are putting forward.

This compared to 31% who backed the second scheme which would have kept the two way system, with raised pavements and would have cost about £189,000. Meanwhile 13% wanted no change and 8% did not state a preference.

Katja Leyendecker, chair of cycling campaign group newcycling.org, said: “We welcome the public’s and project board’s decision to reduce motor dominance on Acorn Road.

“It’s good for people, business, residents and customers, young and old. I am delighted to see that people rallied behind the far better option of the two that were on offer.”

However she added: “In the future, Acorn Road should be fully pedestrianised and that could have been an ‘option for change’ in the consultation.

“There is no room for parking and driving as well as people mingling safely, getting together and having a good time on Acorn Road. London boroughs and our European cousins know that and have started designing their local shopping areas that way.”

The council will now start statutory consultation with emergency services, taxi firms and bus companies, and advertise traffic regulation orders to begin the legal process to make the traffic changes.

The cost of the scheme is being met by the Cycle City Ambition Fund, and work is expected to start in January 2015.

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