



Skerries Active Travel Feasibility Study

**Submission By
Skerries Cycling Initiative**

**A Committee of Skerries Community Association
CLG**

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Welcoming public consultation on Active Travel Feasibility Study.

Many people of all ages in Skerries walk and cycle locally as part of their commute, as part of the school run or as part of their regular routine (shopping, socialising etc.). Increasingly scooters, cargo bikes, mobility scooters and other forms of transport are also part of everyday life in the town. The Skerries Cycling Initiative (SCI) welcomes the public consultation process for active travel and will engage constructively with the process.

This submission focusses on Skerries town. To achieve increased levels of active travel to and from neighbouring towns and villages infrastructure will have to be improved and we look forward to the Fingal Coastal Way greenway providing solutions in the case of many of these destinations. SCI believes that when safe infrastructure is available, cycling and walking will become options for many more people of all ages and abilities.

Note: Generally where we use “cyclist” we also include people using personal mobility scooters and wheelchairs.

The recently published report [Redesigning Ireland's Transport for Net Zero](#) commissioned from the OECD by the Climate Change Advisory Council, shows our transport system to be car dependent by design, GHG intensive and bad for our well being. The report concludes that solutions are possible in both urban and rural conditions and that local input is crucial to the success of decisions.

Improved Public Realm

The centre of Skerries benefits from some wide streets which means there is great scope for active travel and public realm improvements.

The busy triangle of Thomas Hand St, Church St and Strand St needs a comprehensive solution that meets the needs of all users with priority for those using active travel modes through traffic calming, good footpaths and cycle parking including parking for cargo bikes.

While Church St and Strand Street are wide thoroughfares Thomas Hand St is a narrower Street, with narrower footpaths and with parking currently provided on both sides of the street. It is also on the bus route and no alternative routing of buses seems feasible. There is no “one size fits all” for these streets.

The question of reworking the traffic flow of Church Street, Thomas Hand Street and Strand Street to accommodate better walking and cycling while not disturbing the sense of place that this area holds for locals would need sensitive handling by a skilled design team. The wide footpaths in Church St and Strand St lend themselves to the creation of parklets with benches and planters, instead of being used as parking spots. However, we are aware that in some cases the space immediately in front of the premises may be privately owned and any redesign of the public realm would have to take account of this. However it may be possible in the case of some premises to reach agreement on redesign issues.

How people cycling would safely access this triangular space, perhaps linking with “safe” shared routes through the Kybe, Skerries Mills, South Strand, the community centre etc. will also require careful consideration.

Underlying the redesign of the congested urban space in the town is the question of its use for parking of private cars for long periods. It is valid to ask how much of the parking in the town centre streets is long term on street parking and how much short term business/shopping parking. Are there streets where long term on street parking should be more restricted. Can a more rational use of the finite road space in the town centre be part of the redesign?

Traffic calming using ramps/cushions should be avoided especially on bus routes as the up and down movement is known to discourage some people from using public transport. A series of imaginative measures to calm traffic should be explored. Compliance with speed limits can be achieved by street layout e.g using planters to create chicanes, different coloured tarmac and where appropriate, speed cameras. Similarly the narrowing of lanes has a naturally traffic calming effect, while also providing more road space for other uses.

30 Kmh zone in Skerries

Speed limits in Skerries are inconsistent with how the town has changed over the years. A limit of 30km/h should be introduced on the Miller's Lane, Dublin Road, Holmpatrick, South Strand, Harbour Road zone in addition to the housing estates where 30kmh has recently been applied.

Prominent signage at entry points to the town along the four approach roads to make it clear that Skerries is an "Active Travel and Age Friendly" town.

"Park and Stride" and town edge parking

To ease the pressure on the limited parking within the town centre, including Red Island car park at busy weekends, the town needs to develop "edge of town" car parking on all approach roads from which people could conveniently walk, cycle or use public transport to finish their journey. Electronic signage could be erected in key places to inform motorists when the Red Island car park is full and where alternative parking can be found. The use of car parking charges on Red Island should be considered with barriers to prevent access when all spaces are full.

Education and communications initiatives

Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, there are several years of school children who have not had the usual cycling safety training at their schools. Funding for safe cycling training for school age children should be provided especially for those that missed this training during the period our schools were closed.

Training such as this could be expanded to include other sectors of the population, for example refugees newly arrived in Ireland, and for adults who would like to return to cycling but need to regain confidence.

Encouraging community groups to develop community bike maintenance workshops with repair service and training would be beneficial especially now that the town lacks a local bike shop.

The practice of **parking cars across footpaths** can frequently be seen in housing estates and poses a real hazard especially for people with visual impairment, mobility issues, people pushing buggies and pedestrians generally.

Parking on the roadway in housing estates can pose a danger for children playing nearby by obscuring their visibility to motorists. Education and communication, followed by and enforcement if necessary, can help to eliminate this practice.

Safe school zones

Too many children in Skerries are driven to school, and you can see the effect of this on traffic management between 8am and 9am any weekday morning, at lunchtimes and at pickup times in the afternoon. During these periods the roads are jammed with cars heading to and from the schools. There must be a better way! The constant issue that comes up in discussions with parents regarding using active travel to school is one of safety and understandably not wishing to place children in harm's way.

An approach for this is the "School Street" concept, which envisages a ban on cars entering the street that the school is on at specified times of the day when children arrive or leave the school. This prevents cars from blocking footpaths at the school and creates a safe space at the school. It also encourages parents who are living within 1 or 2 km of the school to walk or cycle to the school with their children. This concept was piloted in Malahide and was welcomed by the vast majority of families, most of whom actually did live within 1km of the school.

Skerries Community College and most of the national schools are located in places that are amenable to the creation of a "safe street approach". It is recognised that a considerable community effort is needed to develop a "Safe Street" involving lots of volunteer effort, school collaboration and local authority support.

Better access to services for the elderly, people with disabilities, and people with buggies

For people with a disability good footpaths are crucial with "dishing" at safe crossing points - see following section. An avoidable problem for people with mobility issues is the ongoing problem of illegal parking on footpaths. Increased and ongoing enforcement needs to take place to send the message that the misuse of footpaths and cycle lanes will not be tolerated.

With regard to the parking of motorised vehicles, the idea of reallocating more spaces specifically for the use of the elderly or people with mobility issues or with a disability should be explored and where such spaces are provided there must be enforcement to prevent misuse.

Safer road crossing points

Safe crossings are required to indicate to motorists that this is a crossing point and to provide a safe method of crossing the road. Minor roads entering major roads at a T

Junction should have a stop sign (rather than yield) set back from the intersection with an active travel crossing prioritised.

[We note that the Department of Transport is starting a pilot scheme in conjunction with a number of local authorities to permit some crossings to be constructed without the requirement for powered beacons which could, if successful, provide a more cost effective solution than erecting and maintaining Belisha Beacons.]

Locations where safe crossing points are needed.

Miller's Lane:

needed to link Hillside and Ballygossan estates with the rest of the town, Skerries Mills and the railway station. There are several existing access points to the Town Park from Miller's Lane and each of these currently lacks a safe crossing point.

Dublin Road:

Needed to link Mill Hill, Greenlawns, Town Park/Skerries Mills and estates to the east of Dublin Road with the railway station. Currently there is no safe means of crossing the Dublin Road from its southern end.

Shenick Road:

Needed to link Downside and Shenick estates and enabling access to local shops.

Golf Links Road/Millers Lane crossroads:

Needed to enable east/west crossing linking estates, shops and the railway station. We trust that the upgrade being planned for this junction will meet the needs of all users and encourage active travel modes.

Barnageeragh Road:

Multiple crossings of side roads needed to allow safe travel across junctions with Kelly's Bay main entrance (opposite Skerries Point exit) , Kelly's Bay Drive, Harrison Bay Road, Skerries Rock/The Green, Selskar Court, Selskar Road, Newtown Parks and Townparks. Priority should be given to people travelling by active travel along Barnageeragh Road over cars entering from the side roads.

Rush Road:

Crossings needed to access the bus stop at the intersection with Shenick Road, and to access the pedestrian beach path close to the rugby club on the coastal side.

Coast road (R127):

All major estate access points (Kelly's Bay, Barnegeera, Mourne View) and road intersections, along with the junction of Kelly's Lane with the coast road.

Harbour Rd, Quay St, Strand St, and South Strand St junction:

This junction has lots of foot, bike and motor traffic. The intersection of these four streets needs substantial redesign to make it safer and more active travel friendly. This redesign should aim to rectify:

1. Poor/non-existent footpaths and crossings around triangle intersection between Harbour Road and South Strand as well as poor crossing at right angle from Strand St onto Harbour Road, especially for wheelchairs, buggies, etc
2. Confusing and poorly marked traffic layout around triangle, dished curbs and crossings. Consideration should be given to moving the triangle against the sea wall to make a usable coastal parklet with benches and put a small roundabout with zebras crossings at the intersection. [We note that routing of FCW will have design implications for this junction].

Harbour area

There are no safe crossing points on Harbour Road, making access to the green spaces of Red Island or the beach area next to the lifeboat station difficult without walking into traffic. The public toilets here are in the middle of what is effectively treated as a roundabout! This area around the toilets should be pedestrianised except for official harbour and RNLI traffic.

South Strand

We note that the emerging preferred route for the Fingal Coastal Way (FCW) is to follow the green verge along South Strand from "The Dorn" down to The Brook. We are not here commenting on the merits or otherwise of this as a route for the Greenway through the town but we do have reservations about it as a suitable route to encourage people towards active travel as a means of getting about the town. For confident cyclists the roadway is likely to remain the route they will choose in this part of the town.

On-road cycling safety on South Strand Road could be improved through traffic calming and signage to make cycling there safer. However if it is to be suitable for cyclists of all ages and abilities, segregation from motorised traffic may be needed to remove hazards such as vehicles reversing out of nose-in parking spots.

A protected two way cycle lane on the built up side of the street located directly beside the footpath inside any car parking/unloading facilities provided on that side of the street should be considered to meet everyday functional cycling needs. Although more costly initially it may be what is needed to achieve modal shift.

Better access to services and amenities by foot or bike

Some amenities in, or near, the town are difficult to access on foot - as discussed elsewhere in this submission, access to the excellent amenity of Ardgillan Castle requires walking beside fast moving traffic where there is no footpath. Getting to the train station from the south of the town requires crossing a road with fast moving traffic and no safe crossing point, with the footpath simply ending at one point on the Dublin Road.

St Michael's House Special National School is difficult to access on foot, again due to lack of footpaths.

Better connections between different parts of the town

A number of estates and areas are "walled off" from an active travel point of view and require people on foot or cycling to enter and leave along the same route as cars instead of using a filtered permeability approach to encourage active travel. In some locations people climb the walls and fences to get from A to B, demonstrating a clear desire line.

This is not just the case with older estates (such as Downside which has a big wall at one end where there should be a pedestrian link through to the Golf Links Road) but also new estates such as Ballygossan Park where there is the bizarre situation of the Hillside and Ballygossan greenspaces being next to each other but fenced off from one another. If families from Hillside wish to use the Ballygossan playground they must make a large detour from their greenspace to the other one. A gate sized opening in the fence is all that is required to remedy this. This minor change would also open up a pedestrian route from Ballygossan, through Hillside and into the Mills near the Mill Pond etc.



In the Kelly's Bay housing estate, access to Kelly's Lane is restricted by solid walls from Kelly's Bay Rocks and Kelly's Bay Pier. Openings in these for pedestrians and cyclists would allow easier access to Skerries Point and the nearby Educate Together National School making active travel the more attractive mode. Completing the tarmac surfacing of Kelly's Lane to connect to the coastal road. With the increased usage due to permeability on to the lane, anti-social behaviour on the lane and around the Educate Together School will decrease.

At Kelly's Bay Tide - see photo - locals access the lane via a mud track which could easily be turned into a proper connection to suit all active travel users.

Newer estates in Skerries tend to have better permeability for pedestrians and cyclists (e.g Ballygossan Park and Barnageeragh Cove) and where it exists it is used. In older estates transport emissions could be reduced by “retrofitting” filtered permeability, making it more convenient to walk or cycle between places.

Better use of green spaces and improving permeability

There are large green spaces in some housing estates which could be developed as active travel routes at relatively low cost.

This could be done in many cases without interfering with the use of the greens for sports and other recreational activities. They are part of the public realm and could be made more attractive spaces with the addition of seating at locations agreed with local residents.

In the “**Malahide-Skerries Cycle Study**” (Sustrans & Colin Buchanan, 2009 section 4) there were a number of proposals for better permeability. Section 4 proposes detailed **North-South** and **East-West Connections**. Photos illustrate the possibilities well and include a photo of the laneway from Hillside to Millers Lane and numerous shots of the Town Park and its possibilities. The Ballygossan estate was built after the Study was published and there is no direct connection between it and Millers Lane *through* the Hillside estate. Ballygossan *is* connected to the roundabout at the railway bridge by a tarmacadamed path emerging close to the railway bridge at the Dublin Road roundabout. Considerable work is required to make it safe for pedestrians and cyclists to proceed onto the Dublin Road and across Millers Lane and into the Town Park area.

It must be stressed that the strongly advocated new N-S path across the Town Park was proposed in this study on the assumption that a re-alignment of football pitches would be required and that this would be done with full consultation with the sports clubs etc. This path is central to providing an active travel route all the way from Hillside (& Ballygossan) across the town to the Dublin Road and the Train Station.

Better connections to Ardgillan Castle

Ardgillan Castle is a fantastic resource for the people of Balbriggan and Skerries and is badly in need of a safe active travel route from Skerries to it. As it is, you have to walk along the coast road and face some dangerous pinch points. This is impossible in a wheelchair or with a buggy, and of course there is no way for wheeled road users to get across the bridge at the Lady’s Stairs.

There are possible solutions - Kelly’s Lane leads up from the coast road to Skerries Point. To the north of Skerries Point there is an overgrown lane which leads to lanes on the Western side of the rail tracks. This was fenced off some years ago, apparently by the landowner due to problems with “scrambler bikes” and a right of way became closed off to the public. If this RoW was restored here, along the agricultural land on the western side of the rail line, a safe active travel route could be provided from Skerries Point most of the way to the main

entrance of Ardgillan.

Better linkages to public transport including train station

Skerries is fortunate in having a train station, but its position in relation to the rest of the town means a lot of people drive to it rather than walk. Commuters approaching from the north side of the town tend to park along the Barnageeragh Road as it avoids navigating the busy roundabout and Dublin Road approach to the station (as well as being free). However, it is questionable whether this is the best use of a public roadway that is a main artery for the town.

Bike parking at the station could be improved with secure enclosures and user access via Smartcard to make it more attractive. Also, the layout of the parking lot should be re-designed to better facilitate and protect active travellers from the train station exits, across and past the “set down” areas and parking spots, to the paths leading across the Ballast Pit and to St Patricks Close.

TFI should be working with Fingal County Council and with the transport providers to synchronise the timetables of the train with the 33 and 33A buses. Proper signposting should be in place at the station to let passengers know where the bus stop actually is (there is no such signage at the station, one would think there was no bus stop). Buses arrive and leave the station itself but it is not clear when to expect this (and there is no official stop there).

The routing of bus routes at the northern end of the town should be looked at with a view to moving them to include the Barnageeragh and Hamilton Hill areas. Existing bus stops around the town would benefit from more shelters from the elements and seating.

Shuttle Bus

The question of introducing a local shuttle bus service comes up from time to time and a study of the feasibility of a local bus service, linking the station to the town centre and surrounding estates, and potential edge of town parking areas, would be timely. At different times of day such a service could meet the needs of different user groups e.g. those accessing the train station, schoolchildren, transporting residents to shops, services and amenities. Such a service, using e-buses and taking a circular or looped route around Skerries, could reduce emissions and help alleviate traffic and parking problems.

Making Barnageeragh Road active travel friendly

Skerries has few segregated cycle paths. The 3km long Barnageeragh Road now forms part of the main route to Balbriggan, and also connects the train station, Skerries Point, Skerries Educate Together National School (ETNS) and many local housing estates.

The Ballast Pit Path is a cycle/walking track across the Ballast Pit from the station car park to the pedestrian crossing on the main Barnageeragh Rd. From this point northwest there is no cycle path or cycle lane until Selskar Court, as well as nothing east to the roundabout with Dublin Road. This stretch of road also comprises a linear car park for train commuters with up to a hundred cars parked here in pre-Covid times. This means that to cycle along this stretch of road and to avoid being hit by a parked car door opening you must cycle in the middle of the road. Currently children cycling to school here face the choice of cycling in this fashion on a busy road or crossing the road and cycling on the footpath. However, the footpath requires crossing at busy junctions with no safe crossing points (see safe crossings section of submission). Also cars often travel even faster than the 50 km/h speed limit due to a wide straight road and lack of any traffic calming measures.

From Selskar Court, the next third of the road, ending at the entrance to Skerries Educate there is a substandard cycle path which is frequently interrupted by side roads. The crossing of these side roads poses a risk for those using the cycle path, many of whom are school children. Upgrading this section of the cyclepath means providing safer ways of crossing the side roads.

Starting just past the Educate Together School there is a continuous two way off road cycle path running to the junction with the coast road.

Along the entire stretch of the Barnageeragh Road from the Ballast Pit to Skerries Point there is ample space on the southwestern side of the road to install a high quality two way cycle track. This could join up with the existing cycle infrastructure at Skerries Point. If the stretch of road adjacent to the Ballast Pit is to continue as a linear car park there is room to create a cyclepath along the grass verge to link the train station with Skerries Point and new housing estates of Barnageeragh Cove and Hamilton Hill and beyond it.

Rerouting traffic from Harrison Bay Road to Barnageeragh Road

The Barnageeragh Road is now fully open along its entire stretch. However road signage for the M1 and Balbriggan, is still in place, which routes through traffic from Barnageeragh Road, down Harrison Bay Road and on to the R127.

It would be better if through traffic was signed to continue along Barnageeragh Road to join the R127 at the new junction past Barnageeragh Cove. This would allow Harrison Bay Road to revert to local use only except for buses.

Coast Road

Now that the Barnageeragh Road is open fully, making the coast road one-way for vehicles and making the sea-side of this road a dedicated cycle and walking route (the Fingal Coastal Way) would solve the problem of a missing pathway on the coast road. Motorised traffic on

this road could be permitted to run north-west towards Balbriggan, allowing local traffic to turn left onto the two-way Barnageeragh road when local access is needed.

Bicycle Parking and Rental

More cycle parking infrastructure is needed in the town centre itself for those shopping and accessing other services.

Rental bikes are regularly seen locked in inappropriate places at entrances to estates because there is nowhere else to lock them, which could be alleviated by providing bike racks at strategic spots within the estates so that they can be used to get to the shops / beach / station.

In the town centre itself there is very little cycle parking. For example Thomas Hand Street, if you go to the hardware shop in Skerries on your cargo bike there is nowhere to lock-up. Replacing one or more on-street car parking spaces on each main street with bike racks and cargo bike parking spaces should be introduced immediately as a clear sign that the town centre is open for active travel. One car parking space can provide 8 parking spaces for bicycles. The provision of additional bike racks in some parts of the town in recent months was welcomed although many of the racks are occupied by Bleeper and Tier E-bike. There is an absence of bike parking close to the hardware shop, doctor and dentist surgeries, gyms, restaurants and pubs and at Red Island Wines. There should also be more bike parking at the supermarkets and train station.

Submitted on behalf of Skerries Cycling Initiative, a committee of Skerries Community Association CLG