

Merchiston Ave/Merchiston Place/ Rochester Terrace Junction Safety: Key insights from Community Survey

January 2026. Analysis prepared with support from AI, checked and validated by MDCC members. Anonymised data is available and can be shared with CEC upon request.

Summary

We received **102** responses to the survey from people residing in the immediate area as well as neighbouring areas. The majority of respondents use the junction daily as pedestrians but many are also cyclists and car drivers. Respondents feel overwhelmingly that this junction represents a serious accident waiting to happen, with particular risk to children. The combination of high traffic volumes, poor infrastructure, driver non-compliance, and heavy pedestrian use (especially school children) creates an urgent need for intervention. The fact that one person has been knocked down and multiple reported collisions or serious near-misses (including near-misses involving children) have occurred suggests formal accident reporting may be underestimating the true danger level at this location. Many people report choosing to cross away from the junction due to safety concerns, which means that the CEC's pedestrian counts at the junction do not represent the full extent of junction users.

Critical Safety Concerns

Overwhelming consensus on high level of risk: 85%+ of respondents rated their concern level as 4-5 (maximum), indicating this is perceived as a serious safety hazard requiring intervention.

Pedestrian vulnerability is paramount: The junction serves as a major crossing point for primary school children (Bruntsfield Primary mainly, as well as St. Peter's Primary, James Gillespie's Primary and George Watson's), yet lacks any formal pedestrian crossings. Multiple respondents report near-misses involving children and express fear about allowing children to cross independently. University students are also heavy users of this junction, walking to Napier Campus and other local universities and colleges. This adds to the overall vulnerability of the junction, with young adults (who may be less familiar with the area) navigating alongside children, elderly residents, and other vulnerable users.

Main Concerns/Problems Identified (ranked by frequency)

1. **Lack of pedestrian crossings** - mentioned by 50+ respondents
2. **Traffic volume/rat-running** - mentioned by 45+ respondents
3. **Driver behaviour (not stopping, not yielding to pedestrians)** - mentioned by 43+ respondents

4. **Poor sightlines/visibility** - mentioned by 38+ respondents
5. **Speeding/excessive vehicle speed** - mentioned by 32+ respondents
6. **Poor road surface/potholes** - mentioned by 22+ respondents
7. **Parked cars obstructing views** - mentioned by 17+ respondents
8. **Non-compliance with stop signs** - mentioned by 16+ respondents
9. **Presence of large vehicles (HGVs, vans)** - mentioned by 15+ respondents
10. **Poor street lighting** - mentioned by 4 respondents
11. **Flooding/blocked drains** - mentioned by 4 respondents

Main Proposals for Improvement (ranked by frequency)

1. **Zebra crossing(s)** - mentioned by 45+ respondents
2. **Raised table/raised junction** - mentioned by 27+ respondents
3. **Pavement widening/junction pinching** - mentioned by 26+ respondents
4. **Speed bumps/traffic calming measures** - mentioned by 15+ respondents
5. **Limit/ban HGVs** - mentioned by 14+ respondents
6. **Better signage** - mentioned by 12+ respondents
7. **Remove/restrict parking near junction** - mentioned by 8 respondents
8. **Traffic lights/pelican crossing** - mentioned by 6 respondents
9. **Modal filters/reduce rat-running** - mentioned by 5 respondents
10. **Roundabout/mini-roundabout** - mentioned by 4 respondents
11. **Road resurfacing** - specifically mentioned by 4 respondents but implied by many more

Incidents Reported

Total incident references: 57+ separate mentions of collisions, near-misses, and safety incidents, including:

- **Numerous confirmed collisions**
 - One respondent states: "I was hit by a car" at this junction (cyclist)
 - One car driver going along Merchiston Place hit by driver that failed to observe stop sign (car seriously damaged, occupants shaken)
 - 1 pedestrian "knocked down" - elderly family member hit by a car (potentially serious - unclear if reported)
 - One car hit parked car while swerving to avoid reversing vehicle
 - Two additional people report witnessing car accidents at the same location
- **1 cyclist coming off bike** due to damaged road surface
- **1 witness to serious cycling accident** - cyclist hit pothole in puddle, flew over handlebars, broke helmet, landed on head
- **Multiple weekly near-misses** - at least 10 respondents report near-misses occurring "at least once a week"
- **Children-specific near-misses** - at least 6 respondents describe incidents where children were nearly hit
- **Driver confrontations** - 3 respondents report being shouted at, honked at, or receiving abuse from drivers
- **Regular minor car collisions** - multiple respondents living nearby report hearing crashes and witnessing car-to-car collisions at the junction

- One respondent notes: "I have looked at the Crashmap statistics and they under-report the number of bumps and minor 'dings' that happen at this junction"

Notable specific incidents:

- Van driver breached give-way lines, nearly hit pedestrian with buggy who had to step back level with driver's window
- Car travelling north on Merchiston Avenue nearly hit another car and pedestrian had to pull buggy back
- 8-year-old child nearly hit by car that blew through stop sign
- Mother with children nearly driven at by impatient driver this morning (survey date)

Note: while we cannot rule out a measure of possible double-counting of the same incidents, the reports detailed in the survey responses still amount to a concerning level of hazard.

References to Children's Safety

Children's safety mentioned by 38+ respondents

Key themes:

- Parents unable/unwilling to let primary school-age children cross independently (mentioned by 8+ respondents). Several respondents note this junction is "the only obstacle" preventing children from walking to school independently.
- Specific references to Bruntsfield Primary School pupils using this junction daily
- One former chair of Bruntsfield Primary School Parent Council reported receiving "a lot of feedback over the years from parents expressing concern about this specific junction"
- Children from other local schools and nurseries also use the junction including St. Peter's, George Watson's, Steiner School, and JGPS (James Gillespie's Primary School), Forbes Nursery, and nurseries on Spylaw Road.
- Multiple references to morning school run (8-9:15am) being particularly dangerous

Specific problems with sightlines

Sightlines are poor for pedestrians, cyclists and drivers at all arms of the junction creating dangers for all users but particularly for children, elderly residents, and cyclists.

Key issues:

- **Parked cars near the junction** (17+ mentions) force pedestrians to step into the carriageway to see oncoming traffic and obstruct drivers' views when pulling out of Merchiston Avenue. One respondent notes: *"you need to step past parked cars into the roadway to see oncoming vehicles"*
- **The curve/bend in Merchiston Crescent** (8+ mentions) means traffic approaching from the west cannot be seen until very close, with drivers coming eastbound round this "blind corner" at speed, creating particular danger for the eastern side of the junction. One resident commented: *"As a wheelchair user, my main worry personally is line of sight"*

because it is difficult to gauge the speed of traffic which is sometimes unexpectedly fast coming round the corner from Merchiston Crescent”.

- **Four-way junction geometry** requires looking in multiple directions simultaneously while wide junction mouths allow fast cornering. As one respondent describes: *"Sightlines are terrible; in order to cross, one has to do the pedestrian equivalent of 'creep and peep' - stepping onto the carriageway to get a better view"*
- **High walls and vegetation** obstruct sightlines for both pedestrians and drivers

Specific problem locations:

- **South side of Blantyre Terrace/Merchiston Crescent:** *"The worst problem with visibility occurs if one is heading north from Colinton Road, trying to see traffic coming along Blantyre Terrace, and being prevented from doing so because of a vehicle (especially if it is a large white van!) parked on the south side of Blantyre Terrace close to the junction"*
- **Eastern corner of the junction:** *"Sightlines are terrible... this is especially true of the eastern corner: traffic travelling west on Merchiston Place cannot be viewed due to the parked cars"* - pedestrians cannot see traffic approaching from Bruntsfield direction
- **Western corner:** Traffic coming east off Merchiston Crescent *"sometimes rounds the corner of crescent blindly at speed as it straightens up"*, with the curve creating a blind spot that has resulted in multiple near-misses with cyclists and pedestrians crossing from Rochester Terrace.

Avoidance Behaviour: Residents Actively Avoiding the Junction

Several respondents report that they deliberately avoid using the junction due to safety concerns, choosing longer or less convenient routes instead. Children featured in the replies:

- "I live on the west side of Merchiston Avenue, and every day, with 2 children on foot plus a baby in a buggy, we travel South then East toward Bruntsfield Primary and Forbes Nursery. **I 100% avoid this junction entirely and cross somewhere along the length of Merchiston Avenue.** That way I only have to look out for traffic in two directions and can find a pair of opposing driveways with dropped curbs I can use to make an informal crossing point."
- "When I was using a pram with my daughter, **I found it too risky so I had to walk a longer route to avoid it...** I'm nervous crossing with my child and the junction is my main concern about her walking to school independently when she is older."

Crossing away from the junction:

- "When possible, I **cross further up Colinton Road due to the anxiety of the crossing.** I would not let children cross at this junction without an adult."
- "As a pavement user I **usually avoid crossing on my way to Bruntsfield by crossing away from the junction.** I often have to run to get safely across."

Cyclists avoiding the route:

"I tend to **avoid cycling as traffic so close to home, particularly this junction, is a barrier to feeling safe.** I used to cycle to work regularly but **gave up in part due to frequently ending up just walking across this junction.**"

Quotes from survey respondents

On the severity of the problem:

"Every week at least once impatient drivers or distracted drivers turn without indicators or zoom across the junction without appreciation of pedestrians... At least once a week there is a problem for me with a near miss."

"It's a rat run in the morning and so the timing is also not helped during the morning hours. A signal-controlled pedestrian crossing would be the preferred safest method to help the kids cross safely."

"It feels only a matter of time before there is a serious accident or fatality, particularly among primary school children with limited awareness."

"This junction represents a serious accident waiting to happen... I've been concerned about this junction since moving to the area 9 years ago"

"Because I live [very near] the corner, I have borne witness to many a dangerous incident outside. Possibly the most dangerous was two cars colliding, one of which ended up within a few feet of my front window..."

"It was a terrible cycle accident in the rain when a cyclist rode through a puddle that masks a deep pothole when it rains. He flew over the handlebars and broke his helmet by landing on his head. Bike broken. Almost ridden over by a car crossing the junction too. I presume he went to hospital."

"I have paid tax and council tax in this city for more 40 years... I have had to stand & wait for 10 mins to get across. When I have indicated well in advance... I have been shouted at, hooted at, and called names."

On driver behaviour:

"MOST Car drivers appear to be unaware of the new Highway Code rules about giving way to pedestrians at junctions. You have to be very assertive and brave to step out"

"Drivers waving children across to cross while another vehicle coming in a different direction doesn't stop. Some near misses caused by uncertainty among drivers I think."

"No one stops for pedestrians, even kids. They're too busy concentrating on their shortcut."

Novel proposals for improvement:

"I honestly think we should turn the crossing into a plaza. Make all four intersecting streets a dead end. No driver should need to continue through here. This is a residential street where through traffic only benefits others zipping through."

"Close the arm linking to Rochester Terrace. Simplifying the junction would make it much easier to navigate and Blantyre Terrace could handle traffic - staggered crossroads are safer than single points and this may also discourage rat-running by making it more complicated. This would also create potential space for play for kids on their way to/from school?"

"...making Merchiston Ave one way with bidirectional cycling, filtering out HGVs, making it a 4 way give way to stop speeding through from Merchiston Place"

"Crossing patrol/lollipop person at school times"

"At Blackford Safe Routes, we believe that road danger should be reduced at source, i.e., by reducing the volume of traffic, particularly rat-running... We believe the junction could be made safe by means of a low-cost, simple, and effective, modal filter. A modal filter similar to the ones on the Greenbank to Meadows Quiet Route would prevent most of the rat-running and reduce the amount of traffic to a manageable amount."