

Ponsonby Road Pedestrian Improvements Project

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1 Introduction

1.1 Ponsonby Plan

Ponsonby is one of the earliest neighbourhoods in Auckland, located on the western fringe of the city centre. The Ponsonby area is a key entertainment and shopping area, serving both locals and the wider Auckland community. Ponsonby is home to many businesses, eateries, bars, apartments, fashion boutiques and amenities for local residents. It also has a number of parks, schools, churches and community facilities. The Ponsonby Plan was developed by the Waitematā Local Board (WLB) in partnership with Auckland Council, Auckland Transport, mana whenua, the Ponsonby business association and the Ponsonby community. The plan was adopted on 10 June 2014. Figure 1 shows the area overview for the Ponsonby Plan.



Figure 1: Ponsonby Plan area overview

The plan sets out a framework for the development of Ponsonby over the 2014-2044 period. It establishes five desired outcomes for Ponsonby Road.

The plan contains a number of actions to assist with achieving its key outcomes. The actions within the plan were documented as quick wins, or as short/medium/long term actions.

Link to the Ponsonby Plan; <https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/plans-projects-policies-reports-bylaws/our-plans-strategies/place-based-plans/Documents/ponsonby-road-plan.pdf>

1.2. Ponsonby Road pedestrian improvements project

At the time of developing the Ponsonby Road plan, Auckland Transport (AT) was investigating opportunities to improve pedestrian safety at the Anglesea Street/Ponsonby Road intersection. The wide intersection was proposed to have kerb build outs to shorten the exposed walking distance for pedestrians, provide improved visibility for pedestrians, and to encourage slow vehicle speeds.

During consultation with the WLB regarding the proposed improvements, the board agreed with the need to make the intersection safer. However, they recognised that the crossing points on Anglesea Street were offset, making it difficult for pedestrians to walk directly from the footpath to the other side of the street. The board insisted on a design which would provide a continuous pedestrian crossing experience, so the earlier design was reviewed. The WLB was satisfied with the revised design, and showed full support for AT to investigate and implement pedestrian safety improvements at seven other intersections in the Ponsonby town centre. The Ponsonby Road pedestrian improvements project is a result of this. The project contributes to the five desired outcomes of the Ponsonby Plan.

1. Recognise Ponsonby Road's diverse role as a vibrant centre, key entertainment and boutique - shopping locality that meets the needs of local residents, businesses and visitors
 - The designs, as well as careful consultation, allowed for the preservation and enhancement of the area, and allowed improved movement and utilisation of the space for businesses, visitors and residents.
2. Protect, recognise and interpret the historic and cultural background of Ponsonby Road
 - Existing historic elements were improved and the spaces near them were enhanced. This has revitalised some quite dilapidated spaces that caused hazards, but preserved the original character of the area.
3. Develop Ponsonby Road with various transport options that prioritise the safety of pedestrians and cyclists
 - Improvement's to bus facilities, cycle facilities and pedestrian facilities.
 - Calming the road environment and freeing up the existing footpath space by removing furniture items and relocating them to the new build-outs, resulted in a much improved pedestrian flow, and also allowed space for cycle parking facility.
4. Contribute to the achievement of region-wide improvements to the natural Environment
 - Improvements to the existing tree pits and improvement to the health of those trees.
 - New trees and compatible planting, making key corner spaces to support the existing heritage sightlines and view shafts
5. Ensure sufficient provision of open space and community facilities to meet the needs of the Ponsonby community both now and in the future
 - Removing clutter, increasing the amount of pedestrian space and improving the usable footpath for other uses like café dining. Calming the side roads and residential connections.

The key objective of the project was to provide a continuous, safe and consistent pedestrian experience in the urban hub of Ponsonby Road.

Further objectives were to:

- Create a slow speed environment in the Ponsonby town centre

- Expand public spaces to benefit pedestrians and local businesses

The improvements included constructing raised speed tables, upgrading footpaths, installing new street furniture, upgrading street lighting, enlarging tree pits, and planting at eight intersections of Ponsonby Road between Williamson Avenue and Franklin Road. The project area and the improved intersections are shown in Figure 2.

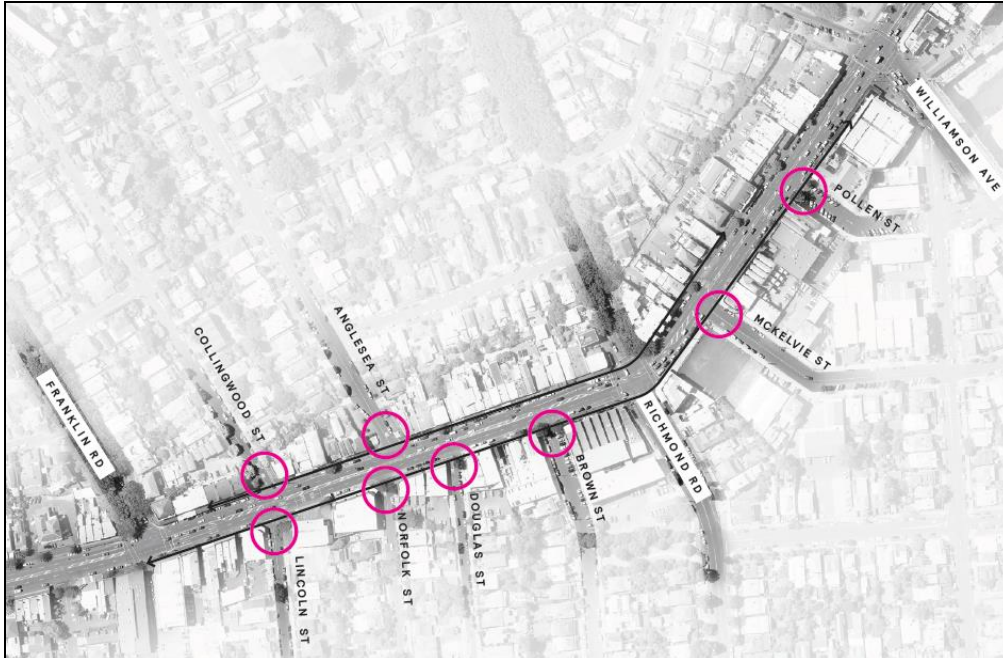


Figure 2: Ponsonby Road pedestrian improvements project area and the eight intersections

2. Project design

Vertical deflections such as kerb build outs and speed tables are not new concepts for speed control. However, the design of these devices need careful consideration in a busy town centre like Ponsonby. Ponsonby Road carries 25,000 vehicles per day (2016 data), and more than 4% of these are heavy vehicles. The speed limit on Ponsonby Road is 40km/hr. Ponsonby Road is part of a frequent bus service network. As per a survey done in 2014, an average of 500 crossing pedestrians were observed during peak hour at the Richmond Road/Ponsonby Road intersection alone.

2.2. Balancing efficiency, safety, mobility, amenity and on-street parking

The location of the speed tables on side streets needed to be carefully designed so that they were within the pedestrian desire lines. However, cars entering/exiting the side streets needed to be provided with enough space between the speed tables and the traffic lane to avoid queues/delays for buses and other vehicles. Whilst vulnerable users were given priority, the design ensured that the efficiency of Ponsonby Road would not be adversely affected.

Ponsonby is a popular destination, so it has a high on-street parking demand. The design aimed to retain as much as existing parking as possible. A few on-street parking spaces were removed to provide better visibility for pedestrians and vehicles. However, some additional parking was provided on some of the side streets, resulting in an overall parking gain. Figure 3 illustrates the intersection design concept.

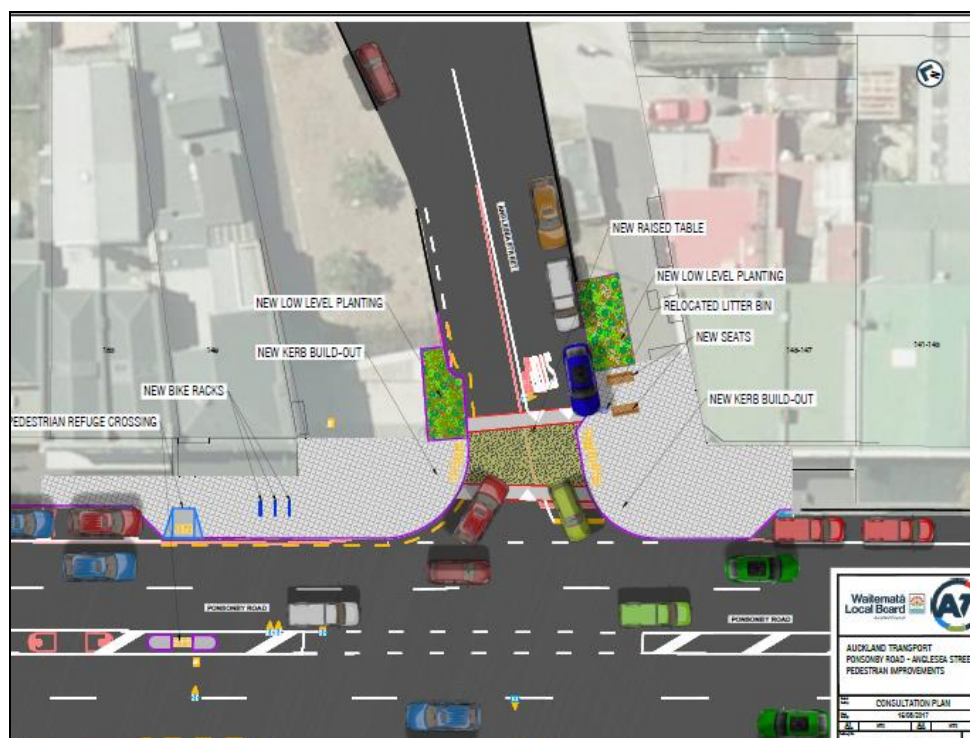


Figure 3: Intersection design concept

2.3 Stormwater designs, maintenance considerations and integration

Managing water drainage at raised tables can be complex and costly. The kerb build outs and speed tables obstruct the existing storm-water path flow, resulting in the need to redesign the storm-water system at intersections. Drainage paths must be considered to prevent ponding at the speed table.

There are various design options available. Some options, such as diverting water towards side streets through a slot drain, are cheaper and easier to construct. However, they cause safety and maintenance issues. The drainage at each intersection of this project was designed to connect storm-water to the existing storm-water system. This resulted in installing and/or relocating catch pits, manholes, and associated connections. Deep excavations had not been done at these intersections for many years. As expected, a number of unforeseen underground services were encountered in the process.

Early consultation with AT stakeholders on the project resulted in the identification of opportunities for integrating other programmed AT projects in the area. AT's Road Corridor Maintenance (RCM) team programmed footpath renewals, some road resealing work and street lighting renewals in the Ponsonby town centre area at the same time of implementing the Ponsonby Road pedestrian improvements project. RCM contributed to the renewal of footpaths, kerb and channels, and street lighting within the project area. The coordination of the Ponsonby Road pedestrian improvements project with other AT projects resulted in cost savings, less disruptions to businesses/residents/road users, whilst providing enhanced road infrastructure for the community.

2.4. Urban design & Ponsonby character

Safety and amenity can be improved via carefully executed urban design, by making an intersection a focal point whilst creating a perception of a slower speed environment. The build outs at each intersection not only encouraged slower speeds, but also provided space for street furniture. New seating, bike racks, rubbish bins, planting, and trees were provided on wider footpaths and berms.

Street furniture, and materials for footpaths and speed tables were chosen to suit the character and heritage of Ponsonby. Speed table ramps were paved with basalt pavers to match the existing

blue stone kerbs on Ponsonby Road. Tops of the speed tables were constructed with exposed concrete to create a colour contrast with the asphalt footpath. This is one of the few design parameters used to emphasise that pedestrians need to give way to vehicles turning in and out of side streets. The before and after implementation photos of the Pollen Street/Ponsonby Road intersection are shown in Figure 4.

Ponsonby Road currently has a number of London Plane trees and some native trees that provide amenity to the urban realm of Ponsonby Road. All existing tree pits within the project area were enlarged as a part of the project. A native Rewarewa tree was planted on the new bus build out area at Collingwood Street.



Figure 4: Before and after photos of Pollen Street/Ponsonby Road intersection

3. Consultation and engagement

A number of workshops and meetings were held with AT internal stakeholders and the WLB throughout investigation and design stages. These meetings helped create a balanced and acceptable design. The project was consulted with the Ponsonby community two times; at the end of the investigation stage and after the draft detailed designs were completed. The community strongly supported the project. Iwi were engaged through letters, e-mails and Hui. The Ponsonby Business Association was given the opportunity to provide feedback on the project, and they had been kept regularly updated during construction.

Consultation feedback reports and project details are available on this website:

<https://at.govt.nz/projects-roadworks/ponsonby-road-pedestrian-improvements/>

The AT stakeholder management team led the stakeholder management process during construction, whilst keeping the affected businesses well informed and ensuring the correct information was going to the right people at the right time.

4. Implementation and challenges

Managing the construction stage had been particularly challenging due to business, complexity of the location, and the fact that many stakeholders had been involved. The construction programme had to be revised a number of times to accommodate various programmed works by other utility services, private maintenance work, and having to coordinate with a number of Ponsonby events.

There were a number of situations where the contractor discovered unforeseen underground services during construction. These discoveries resulted in design changes. The drainage designs for Mackelvie, Douglas and Anglesea Street intersections had to be amended due to the discovery of unforeseen underground services. The Project team and the contractor worked collaboratively to work out solutions in these situations. Project implementation took approximately 1 ½ years.

5. Conclusion

Construction was completed in July 2018. Based on observations and feedback from the community, the project has proven to meet the project objectives. The project has also shown change in driver behaviour; most drivers are now more courteous to pedestrians and recognise pedestrian presence in the town centre.

Other than delivering the key objectives, the project contributed to the Ponsonby Plan by delivering a number of short term and medium term actions. The lessons learnt from this project, as well as feedback received during consultation, will aid in the development of the long term plan for Ponsonby Road.

Auckland Transport has used the designs and understanding of improvements in the Ponsonby improvement project to apply these standards to many other projects both large and small, providing similar designs and leveraging on the understandings gained from this project. Auckland Transport now has these designs as the standard for how to deliver pedestrian improvements and holds regular workshops with consultants to teach them about these understandings on projects they are delivering for Auckland Transport.

5. Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge Pippa Coom, the chairperson of the WLB, and other members of the board for their continuous guidance, feedback, and support.