

SPOKES

The Lothian Cycle Campaign

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Cllr Gordon Mackenzie
Transport Convener
City of Edinburgh Council

1 June 2010

Dear Cllr Mackenzie

FUTURE OF PICARDY PLACE

As you will be aware, Spokes is extremely concerned over conditions for cyclists in Picardy Place in the future. We are also concerned that the general pedestrian environment will be far from ideal. We do not know the detail of the latest thinking, which seems an ever-moving target, involving at the very least officers from transport, TIE, streetscape and planning. However, there have been plenty of hints from officers that space is very limited, ideal solutions are not possible, etc, etc.

As you know, the council's original Picardy Place Draft Development Principles totally ignored cycling, and after many representations the final version had to admit, "*provision of facilities for cyclists has yet to be finalised.*"

It would appear that the three main constraints are - the decision to allocate a great deal of this precious space to a hotel, the tramline, and the decision that the road layout must accommodate present or near-present levels of traffic.

The first two of these constraints would appear to be unavoidable, but we ask that the third be reconsidered.

If the area could be designed with a link road between Leith Street and Broughton Street, and Leith Walk joining them at a traffic-light junction, rather than using a gyratory, that would save a huge amount of space, would therefore allow far safer and more welcoming provision for cyclists of all types and the sense of place for pedestrians and cyclists which we are led to understand has high precedence these days.

There are other very substantial reasons in support of this approach...

a. The annual **Spokes traffic counts**, now conducted for 4 successive years, have *each year* shown a **decline in peak-hour private motor traffic**, from a total of 1995 private motor vehicles at our four counting points in May 2007 to 1773 in May 2010 – and the latest decline comes in spite of the re-opening of much of the centre following the Princes Street work.

The count results are at www.spokes.org.uk/wordpress/downloads/technical-and-research/spokes-traffic-counts on our website. Whilst our count points don't include Picardy Place, one might expect that trends across the city centre are fairly similar. If private traffic is in fact falling, the council should take advantage of that fact by designing traffic proposals which support and encourage that trend, rather than using large amounts of urban space to facilitate high levels of motor traffic.

b. The survey form completed by 84 people at the recent Spokes **Active Travel Action Plan public meeting** addressed by yourself identified Picardy Place as the *top blackspot in the entire city from the cyclist perspective*. Also, it lies virtually in the middle of the two top corridors identified by the survey as needing priority for the Action Plan - namely Princes Street and the Leith/Edinburgh corridor. The report of that survey can be found here...

www.spokes.org.uk/wordpress/2010/05/regular-cyclists-want-morebetter-onroad-facilities.

c. At last week's Active Travel conference in the Radisson Blu hotel a presentation on the new **Designing Streets** national policy document seemed highly relevant to Picardy Place - it was made clear that the policies in Designing Streets are intended to apply even in streets of significant traffic levels if those streets are also busy with people and activities. The document's introduction states, *“Designing Streets provides policy that should be followed in designing and approving all streets. Whilst its technical advice is aimed particularly at residential and lightly trafficked streets, many of the key principles are also applicable to other types of street, for example rural and high streets.”*

At the conference the speaker, Elaine Barrie of WSP, who led in the Designing Streets process, very firmly emphasised the priority order - **pedestrians, cyclists, public transport, cars**. It seems to us that this essential basis to Designing Streets is **not** being followed by the City Council in relation to Picardy Place.

d. Point (c) is reinforced by the government's **Scottish Planning Policy**, which states in para 169, *“Opportunities for personal travel should be prioritised by mode in the following order – walking, cycling, public transport, car and other motorised vehicles. Buildings and facilities should be accessible on foot and by cycle.”*

In conclusion, if the council is serious about meeting its bold 15% target for 2020 cycle use then Picardy Place cannot be left not just sub-optimal but seriously deficient and a deterrence-point for everyday existing and potential cycle travel.

We look forward to hearing from you on this. I will also copy this for information to various others.

Yours Sincerely
Dave du Feu