



Further comment on revised draft design for Leith Walk 12/6/2013

Following a recent Leith Walk stakeholders meeting, council officials have published a revised draft design for Leith Walk.¹

Greener Leith has already given public support to these new draft Leith Walk proposals, on the basis that the new design positively addresses many of the issues raised in the earlier joint consultation² response to the Leith Programme that Greener Leith volunteers helped to coordinate.

As such we believe that as it stands the design will deliver a safer, more attractive and more economically vibrant Leith Walk. In particular, the wider pavements, frequent zebra crossings and simplified junctions will be a particular boon to pedestrians, and as they will slow traffic down, we believe it will help to alter the "ambiance" of the street for the better.

Our management committee are delighted that the council has shown that it is willing to take on board community priorities and we welcome the offer of an ongoing dialogue throughout the remaining Leith Programme in order to help refine the design further.

In this spirit, we would offer the following further comments on the draft proposals now that we have had a chance to sound out our supporters and the board has had the opportunity to consider the details more fully - comparing it to our original joint consultation submission and the outcomes of the "Vision for Leith" consultation process.³

Advisory or mandatory cycle lanes?

North of Pilrig Street the revised designs include 1.75m wide advisory cycle lanes in both directions of the street.

Consultation after consultation process has repeatedly demonstrated that there is considerable local support for "protected cycle lanes" that would run on the inside of the parked cars, and this remains our first preference. It is likely that cycle lanes of this nature will be regarded as considerably safer by both current and potential cyclists.

Therefore, we urge the council to reconsider this aspect of the proposals.

If protected cycle lanes are still not considered feasible, we believe that - as an absolute minimum - that the proposed cycle lanes north of Pilrig Street are made mandatory rather than advisory.

The mandatory lanes should include a hatched buffer area between cyclists and the traffic in order to minimise the potential for "dooring" accidents.

¹ "Leith Walk, Enhanced Design" City of Edinburgh Council:

http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/downloads/download/2716/the_leith_programme_draft_enhanced_design

² "Joint Submission to the Leith Programme Consultation":

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/121692063/Joint-Submission-to-the-Leith-Programme-Consultation>

³ "Vision for Leith Walk: Final Report":

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/112731335/Vision-for-Leith-Walk-Final-Report#fullscreen>

The photo below, taken from Cycling England design guidance⁴ illustrates exactly what we mean with a UK example. The guidance notes that the TRO used to implement these lanes must specify that cars are permitted to cross the lane to park.



Bus interchanges.

There are a number of busy bus stops on the street, such as at the Foot of the Walk. In the current plans, even the advisory cycle lanes disappear at many of these interchanges.

As the current draft design stands, cyclists and buses must cross paths at these interchanges. This is not optimal design, as even confident cyclists find sharing bus lanes with high numbers of buses extremely intimidating.

If the cycle lanes north of Pilrig Street were placed on the inside of the parking lanes, it would be possible to put the bus stops in the "parking lane" - and run the bike lane behind them.

A design of this type supports the principles set out in Scottish Government Designing Streets⁵ - where the priority should run Pedestrians>Cyclists>Public Transport>Other motorised traffic. The current designs do not support this hierarchy.

Where buses stop it should be motorised traffic that is 'inconvenienced' - not cyclists. This type of design would also be far safer as cyclists would never have to cross the path of buses. It should be noted that Designing Streets is planning policy - it is not simply guidance - and therefore the transport hierarchy it proposes should be adhered to.

⁴ "Design Portfolio: A11:Cycle Lanes" Cycling England:

http://www.ciltuk.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/The%20Hub/Design%20Toolkit/A11_Design_portfolio_cycle_lanes.pdf

⁵ "Designing Streets: A Policy Statement for Scotland," Scottish Government:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/03/22120652/0>

Examples of two types of safer bus stop designs already in action elsewhere in the UK can be found here: <http://departmentfortransport.wordpress.com/2013/01/18/britain-can-do-it/>

Cyclist and pedestrian priority at crossings

Throughout the design, and especially on the southern section of the Walk where a segregated lane is proposed, more consideration should be given to ensuring that pedestrians and cyclists have clear priority over motorised traffic at minor junctions

Designing Streets policy states: "Cyclists are more likely to choose routes that enable them to keep moving. Routes that take cyclists away from their desire lines and require them to concede priority to side-street traffic are less likely to be used. Designs should contain direct, barrier-free routes for cyclists."

If cyclists are forced to give way at each junction, the convenience and appeal of the segregated cycle lane is severely undermined. As such, the lanes may fail to deliver the modal shift council policies seek.

Segregated lane design

The provision of a segregated lane from Picardy Place to Annandale Street is to be welcomed. However, we are concerned about the proposed transition at the Annandale Street from a two-way lane to a southbound only lane.

Our first preference is to revisit the design so that the two-way lane is extended further, ideally to Pilrig Street, but failing that, to the MacDonald Road junction. The road is wide at this point, and extending the lane would make it more appealing to all types of cyclist.

In our original Joint Submission, we noted that much of the street to the west is bounded by undeveloped brown field sites, which may give considerable scope to remodel the pavement and road widths. There is also scope (and public support) for reducing parking provision at these sections as the lengthy inactive frontages reduce parking demand on these blocks.

If the two-way lane must be reduced to one-way at Annandale place, the design will need to be very carefully thought through - otherwise there is a risk unscrupulous cyclists will simply continue to cycle northbound the "wrong way" down the narrower lane, and come into conflict with those travelling southbound.

Greenery

There is considerable public support for more trees and soft landscaping to be considered as part of the design. We would welcome further information on soft landscaping proposals as part of the design process.

Explicit 20mph limit

Whilst the council is currently determining a city wide policy on 20mph streets, as per our earlier Joint Submission, we believe that there is clear and broad based support for a 20mph limit on Leith Walk. We would urge that as part of the design process that the speed limit is explicitly altered, irrespective of any subsequent city-wide policy decision.

This will be particularly important to improving the perception of safety on the northern section of the street if the council chooses to retain a design with cycle lanes on the outsides of the parking lane.

About Greener Leith

Established in 2006, Greener Leith aims to promote better public spaces, community engagement and sustainable development in Leith, Edinburgh. You can find out more about us at <http://greenerleith.org.uk/about-us>