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## **Draft TRO/13/51/ADY, Leith Walk, Pilrig St to Duke St Comment from Spokes Planning Group**

As we have said from the outset, Spokes would prefer a European-style solution with segregated facilities the whole length of the Walk, as proposed in the outline sketches prepared for Spokes by Dutch transport consultant Hans van der Stok when the tram was first being debated some years ago. Such an approach would be likely to attract larger numbers of new people to using a bike for their everyday journeys. The 'exemplary scheme' desired by the Transport Minister, Keith Brown MSP, in allocating additional funding for Leith Walk, would be better served if the segregated facilities continued along the whole Walk.

Nonetheless the council/Sustrans plans do improve significantly on the current situation. We welcome the fact that various suggestions by Greener Leith, Spokes, Pedal on Parliament and local organisations have been taken on board and that the council has been successful in its application to the Scottish Government for additional funding.

However, assuming the Council maintains its present approach, further improvements are possible even within that context, and we urge the following points in relation to the above TRO proposals...

### **a. Foot of the Walk**

The current plans do not show the proposals for this area. The June plans showed a simple junction at the Foot of the Walk, with single-phase pedestrian crossings and good cycle facilities. We had hoped for such a solution, or better, but at a later stage this apparently was being reconsidered due to traffic modelling results. We are not aware whether the concern was traffic throughput or air quality.

In either case the problems could be reduced by a design which encourages traffic reduction. The Council should consider more radical solutions such as, for example, limiting Constitution Street entry to buses and cyclists only.

Modelling is in any case an inexact science, dependent on assumptions. We recall, for example, that Spokes was initially told that modelling said dual traffic lanes were essential at the Mound Princes Street crossing - but after further consideration the council nonetheless tried reducing to a single lane (to allow space for cycle lanes) and this has worked well. Furthermore, impressionistically, traffic volumes have fallen as a result of the reduction in roadspace. In any case, to reduce the value of the Foot of the Walk junction for pedestrians and cyclists 24/7 for the sake of possible slight queuing during a 30-60 minute period on 5 days of the week also seems inequitable, especially given the Council and Government hierarchy of pedestrian – cycle – bus – car.

On one specific point, we were pleased in the June plans to see that the Leith Walk citybound cycle lane began before the junction rather than after it as had been the case in earlier plans. However, in the current plans it seems to begin even further away from the junction, after the bus stop. This would be very unsatisfactory – we hope it just reflects the fact that the junction design is still underway.

## **b. Coloured surfacing.**

Given that the road is being entirely resurfaced, we appreciate that red-chipping here (unlike in QBiC) is virtually cost-free, and also maintains its condition indefinitely without ongoing maintenance costs. Nonetheless experience elsewhere shows that chipping is significantly less visible than the traditional thermoplastic, or other more permanent solutions such as red tarmac. We therefore urge that, at the very least, points of greatest potential cycle/motor conflict receive a more effective colouring method. For example, if the chipping is installed throughout (given that it is cost-free as part of the resurfacing) then something more effective should be used at locations such as side-road crossings – ideally a non-deteriorating measure such as red tarmac, but failing that a thermoplastic overlay of the red-chipping.

We also take this opportunity to again point out that Spokes submitted a paper to the Council in April this year asking for a reassessment of colouring policy - there has so far been no formal feedback, after a considerable number of months. Our hope would be that an alternative colouring method would be found which is more visible than chipping but more cost-effective than thermoplastic in terms of maintenance, and that this could be used throughout in Leith Walk. Therefore our paper needs attending to urgently.

## **c. 20mph zone**

The draft Local Transport Strategy 2014-19, now approaching final form, is very clear indeed on 20mph limits, and this has been strongly welcomed by Spokes and others. Policy **Safe4** [section 6.5.3] states...

*“that on roads with a strategic movement function:  
those that are main shopping streets, are in the city centre, or otherwise have  
relatively high levels of pedestrian and/or cyclist activity, will generally have a  
speed limit of 20mph”*

Leith Walk indisputably fits this definition, being a main shopping street with high pedestrian and cycle activity and near, or arguably in, the city centre. Therefore only a truly exceptional reason would justify a limit over 20mph, and we see no such reason.

We also appreciate that the LTS as drafted commits the City to implement the 20mph policy in a phased programme by April 2017. However, given that Leith Walk is to be transformed well before that date, and that Leith Walk fits so well with the above definition, it would be (and would be seen by the public to be) most odd for 20mph not to be introduced at the same time as the improvement works. Whilst the wording of the LTS would certainly allow such a concurrent implementation, Spokes has suggested easing the way further by adding to section 6.5.1 of the LTS, *“Locations where traffic management schemes are in any case planned will be considered for early implementation – for example, Leith Walk.”*

In practical terms, the frequent pedestrian crossings and signalled junctions should help make 20mph self-enforcing to a significant extent. Our proposal below [f] regarding side road entries would further encourage slow speeds and careful driving.

## **d. Cycle parking**

We support the provision of frequent bike parking at all shopping and public-facility areas along the Walk – this is vital to promote local shopping and to avoid bikes leaning against shops, restricting access to doors and the visibility of shop window displays. However, the current plans appear to show a small number of fairly large but widely-spaced bike parking areas. A much larger number of small but frequent parking areas would be preferable, together with 'cyclehoops' on appropriate lamp standards etc.

### **e. Cycle lane design**

We welcome the fact that the cycle lanes north of Pilrig are now continuous and on both sides of the road, albeit we continue to argue that they should be physically segregated. However, if not segregated, then the following points should all be included...

- ◆ All such cycle lanes need a marked door zone at car parking areas, reducing the danger of passing cyclists being 'doored' by a driver or passenger. The plans do appear to show a door zone, but it is not entirely clear. Furthermore some sections of the apparent door zone are shown with a white line on one side only, whereas it should be on both sides.
- ◆ The coloured surfacing should take account of our comments in (b) above.
- ◆ The cycle lanes should be mandatory rather than advisory wherever possible.
- ◆ The cycle logos on the lanes should be repeated frequently, particularly in any stretches where chipping is the only form of colour. A logo in the lane at the beginning and end of each car parking area and each bus stop, for example, would help reinforce to drivers the possible presence of cyclists, and perhaps encourage drivers to park right up against the kerb rather than too near the cycle lane.

### **f. Side-road entries/junctions**

We are very puzzled that all the side-road junction entries are 'splayed' rather than angled junctions on the drawings. This runs seriously counter to the cycle and pedestrian-friendly area which the council is promising.

- ◆ Pedestrians do not have their desire-line for crossing at the corner or, if they do take it, they have a longer distance of carriageway to cross.
- ◆ Pedestrians become visible to motorists slightly later, as most will be slightly further from the junction when they cross.
- ◆ Motor traffic is less likely to slow down sufficiently, having a curve to swing around rather than a right-angle to negotiate - to the detriment of both pedestrians and cyclists.
- ◆ Splayed corners are particularly undesirable in what is likely (for the reasons above) to be a 20mph zone.
- ◆ *Designing Streets* recommends the use of small corner radii. Whilst we appreciate that DS refers to residential streets, Leith Walk needs to be the sort of place which similarly moderates speeds and prioritises walking and cycling through layout and design as far as possible.

Yours Sincerely

Dave du Feu  
for Spokes Planning Group