

# **SPOKES RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION ON THE CYCLE ROUTE PROPOSAL FOR MEADOWS TO INNOCENT PATH**

## **Introduction**

SPOKES welcomes the opportunity to comment on the proposals for this Path and also for sight of the detailed plans and the opportunity to discuss these with officials at the recent consultation event at the Southside Community Centre.

SPOKES supports the principle of developing a family friendly cycling network (FFN) and recognises the advantages of linking up existing off road cycle paths as part of this network whilst at the same time implementing significant on road improvements where feasible, as in Leith Walk.

The proposed cycle route from the North Meadows Cycle Path to the Innocent Path covers a short distance but the standards required for the FFN have made this a relatively complex route. We think that experienced, existing commuting cyclists are unlikely to use the route in its entirety. But it should be attractive for recreational trips, for new commuting cyclists and for experienced cyclists who find parts of the route particularly convenient, notably connecting North Meadow Walk to the Southside.

**There is a significant potential for pedestrian/cyclist conflict from these proposals. We appreciate that you recognise this and have taken steps to reduce this. But we consider that more can and should be done – see our proposals below. This is a critical issue in the acceptability of the entire project.**

## **Suggested Improvements and Other Comments on the Proposals**

1. The toucan crossing across Buccleuch Street (BS) should be moved to directly opposite the entrance/exit to the North Meadow Walk Path (NMWP) to avoid the use of the narrow path on the west side of BS which is likely to lead to significant cyclist/pedestrian conflict.
2. The double yellow line on the west side of Hope Park Crescent should be made continuous from the double line at the junction with Melville Drive to the existing double line at the entrance and exit to and from the NMWP. Vehicles parked on this stretch of road force cyclists to move out into the flow of traffic behind before turning into the NMWP and obscure sight lines for cyclists exiting from the cycle path. This is potentially dangerous.
3. We welcome the plans for widening the pavement on the east side of BS to Gifford Park (GP) by building out the pavement into the road. This build out should be extended as necessary to link into the new proposed toucan crossing and ensure that the total width is maintained for its full length of this stretch of the route. There should be a clear demarcation of a cycle lane separate from the pedestrian section (as we believe is intended) to avoid possible conflict.
4. The bins at the east end of GP are a major problem and this needs to be resolved before any plans are finalised. We recommend that the narrow pavements and railings at this far end of GP should be removed so that the bins can be moved up against the wall. There should be a clearly marked space for the bins to be located. There also need to be agreed plans with the Waste section of the council to manage the bins so that they do not become a barrier for use and effectively destroy the value of the scheme.

5. The cycle crossing of the pavement on the west side of Clerk St (CS) is major point of potential conflict with pedestrians given the limited scope for cyclists to see pedestrians approaching the proposed crossing point. We would recommend, at the minimum, retention of the existing bollards at the end of GP, suitable surfacing, the erection of warning signs for cyclists travelling from west to east and a quick response push button control for the toucan crossing so that cyclists are content to wait behind the bollards for the opportunity to cross. However, we also recommend that consideration should be given to the possibility of more ambitious design solutions. The final agreed design solution should allow for bikes with trailers to use this crossing.
6. Action should be taken to prevent the informal parking on the pavement outside the chemists shop and the letting agency on the corner of CS and Rankeillor St (RS) as this represents a potential threat to the safe use of the toucan crossing and the linked space created at the west end of RS. Action will also be required to ensure that this space does not become cluttered with bins.
7. We also understand that cars do ignore the existing prohibition on right turns from CS into RS so we have concerns about the likely effectiveness of the proposed no exit prohibition from RS into CS. There needs to be clear agreement with the police on an enforcement strategy.
8. The current plans envisage a small build out of the pavement into the road at the south east end of RS. We welcome this as means of minimising conflict between pedestrians and cyclists but it is too limited in extent at present and needs to be extended further up the south side of RS to allow cyclists travelling eastwards along RS to cross over the carriageway well before the junction.
9. The shared space for pedestrians and cyclists on the east side of St Leonards St (SL) should be clearly split into a cycling area and a pedestrian area.
10. This shared space which is approx 5 m wide for most of its length becomes progressively and unacceptably narrow as it approaches Hermits Croft (HC), particularly after the pedestrian

crossing. This potential source of significant conflict should be minimised by building out the cycle/pedestrian area into the road so as to maintain a consistent 5m width along the whole of this part of the route.

11. The exit and entrance from HC is problematic given the need for cyclists travelling from east to west to cross to the opposite side of the road close to the junction with SL and against the flow of cars etc. There is a significant amount of traffic here using the adjacent car park. This needs further consideration which might include a possible route through the paved, enclosed area at the corner of SL and HC.
12. We welcome the suggested improvements to the existing cycle path at the far eastern end of the route (part of the Innocent Path) on Hermits Croft. We also suggest that the narrow, existing entrance to the Innocent tunnel should be changed to allow 2 way cycle traffic.

## **Appendix – Possible alternatives**

We considered two possible alternatives, as follows...

- a. An entirely segregated on road route from North Meadow Walk via Hope Park Terr and Bernard Terr. Unfortunately such a route has many practical problems at junctions, may be politically unacceptable due to the number of car spaces displaced, and would be a lower priority for a high level of expenditure than a similar north-south main-road route.
- b. Rerouting the section from Rankeillor St to the Innocent via St Leonards Lane and then the existing path (upgraded in places). This would avoid widening the St Leonards footway, and the intricacies of the route via Hermit's Croft (11 above). However, for this to be effective the current, badly laid sets should be replaced with tarmac to create an acceptable surfacing for cyclists and safe cycle lanes created in both directions which may require the removal of the police parking spaces on the north side of the road. Given these evident problems, our preference is for the existing option providing the points mentioned in paragraphs 10 and 11 are dealt with.