

14 October 2016

TRO 16/44 Causey Project, and RSO 16/12 E. Crosscauseway Objection from Spokes

Spokes supports the general intention to make the area more pedestrian and cycle friendly, including footway widening where possible and 2-way cycling in West Crosscauseway.

However, we have to object on two main grounds, which otherwise will worsen aspects of cycle and pedestrian activity and safety, and will significantly detract from the Council's Local Transport Strategy objective to encourage many more people to get about by bike on their daily journeys. Namely, we object to...

- 1 Removal of the cycle lanes in Chapel St;
- 2 The West Crosscauseway (WCC) 2-way-traffic cul-de-sac proposals.

1 Removal of cycle lanes in Chapel St.

The cycle lanes of Chapel St and Buccleuch St form part of the 'Quality Bike Corridor' which connects the centre of Edinburgh, and the University, to Kings Buildings. Traffic count data show that this route is heavily used by cyclists. It forms an important link between the two main campuses of the University, links to the North Meadow Walk/Innocent cycleways and forms part of many other local journeys by bike.

Whilst the Quality Corridor certainly has its weaknesses, the project was widely welcomed locally by the general public as a worthwhile step forward at that time. Of the 452 responses to an extensive Council consultation, 75% supported the scheme and only 15% opposed it. Surely the Council will not now agree to its downgrading?

If the lanes were removed, cyclists would be forced to re-join the traffic stream for the distance of the project. Whilst traffic-calming measures are proposed, there is still a significant difference between the speed limit (20mph) at which traffic will be moving, and the speed of the average cyclist (around 10mph), let alone the speed of those below average, or those venturing into the main traffic stream to go uphill

This change from cycle lane to main carriageway could be handled by confident cyclists, though even then it adds an element of danger, but would be very off-putting for new or less confident cyclists - the kind which the Council is aiming to attract and encourage.

The present proposals suggest widening of the footway and removal of the cycle lanes. While agreeing that the footways here would benefit from widening, if cycle use is to be encouraged then cycle lanes should be retained. Over part of Chapel Street, this could be done by diverting the centre line of the road to the east, bulging slightly into the proposed pedestrianised area, thus providing for widened footways without the need to remove the cycle lanes. This would also assist in traffic calming by reducing the traffic speed because of a greater bend in the road. Even at the the north end of Chapel Street, where road widths are tighter, width can be gained by removal of the central island and a slight further narrowing of the carriageways.

2 Closure of WCC and re-instatement of 2-way traffic

“Vehicular access to West Crosscauseway will be restricted to access only from Nicholson Street, removing access from Chapel Street, allowing access to Quarry Close at all times. Two-way movements will be reinstated into West Crosscauseway.”
(from the TRO Statement of Reasons)

We do fully accept that the road has become an unacceptable rat-run, but we believe there are better solutions than that proposed in the draft Orders. In particular, the turning of vehicles in this very narrow street (only 5m wide in parts), which would be necessary under the current proposals, would create very hazardous conditions for both pedestrians and cyclists and would generally be unpleasant.

Instead, we support keeping the existing one-way system, but restricting it by permitting left-only entry from Nicolson St, and left-only exit from WCC into Buccleuch Street. This would eliminate the present rat-running (mainly north to south) through this street, and remove the hazardous conditions created by the need for vehicles to turn. Cycling would be exempted from the one-way.

Note that we *only* support retention of the through vehicle route if the above turning restrictions are incorporated, so as to eliminate the rat-running.

Whilst short-term loading should be permitted, we do not support the retention of parking spaces.

We welcome the proposal for a build-out of the footway at the east end of WCC (north side), which could act as a launch point for a toucan crossing of Nicolson St;

Finally, although relaying the existing setts would be an improvement, it is still a very unsatisfactory solution if the objective is to encourage cycle use. If setts are to be used, they should be completely flat-topped, and skid-resistant in the wet, as for example at the junction of North Bridge and the High Street. If, despite the hazards to cycling, it is felt essential to re-use the existing setts, consideration should be given to cutting them in half and re-laying flat-side up.

Consultation procedures

We note that these Orders are the first detailed concrete proposals we have seen, and would have welcomed detailed consultation prior to the issuing of the Orders. It would also appear that even the Active Travel Team of CEC has had little involvement so far, although that should have been a basic essential prior to issuing of draft Orders. Even now, we would welcome the opportunity for discussions on the best solutions for this area, for both cycling and walking.