

From a South Edinburgh Spokes member

Dear City of Edinburgh Council,
(CC to Cllr Steve Burgess and Spokes)

Traffic Order number: RSO/17/13

Traffic Order title: Leith Street, Calton Road, Greenside Row, Waterloo Place

Your full name:

Your address:

I hereby lodge an Objection to the above Redetermination Order.

I have live in Edinburgh's Southside for 13 years, and I travel a lot around the city by a mixture of walking, cycling, bus, tram, train and car for both work and leisure. Leith Street is the most direct route between the Southside and Leith, so I use it when going to Leith for work or leisure reasons, but it also connects very many people with University campuses, the Royal Infirmary, long-distance transport interchanges, shopping and leisure destinations, and therefore a very large number of people wish to travel along Leith Street. Leith Street also hosts a variety of retailers, offices and entertainment venues as well as large car parks.

The RSO as it stands is a lost opportunity to transform Leith Street from an unpleasant, noisy, polluted, congested, canyon-like urban motorway into a pleasant link for sustainable transport and an appropriate setting for the Omni Centre and St James Quarter. The current closure of Leith Street has not resulted in a dramatic increase in congestion and I believe that general traffic can be permanently excluded from Leith Street except for buses and for general vehicle access between Picardy Place and Calton Road, with no ill effect. It is disappointing that this work has not been part of a comprehensive review of travel in and around the city centre. In the face of increasing population, obesity, the widening gap between the rich and the poor, and the ongoing process of global warming to which private motor transport is a major contributor, it is essential for all public bodies to take steps to encourage active travel, invest in public transport systems and make cities into places where people can enjoy their lives.

I will structure the remainder of my objection using the Edinburgh Street Design Principles, v.1.0.1, which the Council adopted in 2015. According to this document, Leith Street is categorised as a Strategic Retail/High Street and this scheme is a complete rebuild of the road hence all aspects of the guidance apply including the "Innovative" section.

- "Design Emphasis: Place > Pedestrians > Cycling / Public Transport > Loading > General traffic > Parking" (ESDP, p.30). The proposed RSO will maintain the current hierarchy of traffic flow along Leith Street, i.e.:
 1. General Traffic (carriageway varying between 10.5m and 15m in width, wide enough for filter lanes and overtaking buses, will encourage more general traffic to use this route thus increasing congestion on nearby streets and for all other transport types).
 2. Parking (wide, fast access to and from car parks in Greenside Row and St James Quarter)
 3. Bus Passengers (buses will be slowed down by being overtaken by other vehicles while waiting / loading at bus stops)
 4. Pedestrians (narrow footways with frequent waiting at road crossings, conflict with cyclists in shared cycleway/footway areas).
 5. Cycling (dangerous as forced to share space with motor traffic). The proposed cycle track does not serve the dominant route i.e. journeys the length of Leith Street.
 6. Place (wide carriageway with no landscaping, seating, etc, this will simply be a conduit for traffic).

- "Minimum width of footway... absolute min. 2.5m (only allowed in short sections), general min 3m, desirable min 4m or wider" (ESDP, p.30). The RSO does not increase the footway width from the existing 1.5m wide pinch point on the east side near the top of Leith Street, and it will also be less than 2.5m wide adjacent to the northernmost bus stop on the east side of Leith Street. Very few areas meet the preferred 4m footway width. A very large volume of pedestrians use Leith Street and more will do so following the redevelopment of the St James Quarter, so wide footways will be needed to accommodate the different categories of pedestrians: commuters, bus passengers, shoppers, crowds leaving cinema and Playhouse etc.
- "Minimise corner radii (maximum 3m for all street types)" (ESDP, p.30). The RSO proposes corner radii of considerably greater than 3m at both sides of the entrance to Greenside Row. These wide, sweeping curves will encourage turning vehicles to do so at speed, and also prevent any crossing point being located at the entrance to Greenside Row.
- "Provide pedestrian crossing points... Locate them at or near junctions to respect pedestrian desire lines" (ESDP, p.30). The RSO does not indicate the positions of any crossings, maybe this is a later piece of work, but crossings must be provided close to all bus stops and at the top and bottom of Leith Street. In particular, the sweeping bends at the entrance of Greenside Row will make it impossible to provide a crossing immediately beside the junction where the dominant pedestrian flow is.
- "Install continuous footways at all uncontrolled side junctions" (ESDP, p.30). There is no indication of what sort of crossings are proposed, but continuous footways would be appropriate for the Service Yard Exit and Calton Road junction both of which are low-traffic roads.
- "Consider provision of mandatory or segregated cycle lanes on strategic and secondary streets especially where traffic volumes/speeds are high. Connect them to ATAP Quiet Routes Network". (ESDP, p.30) The proposed cycleway will only assist cyclists travelling south from Leith Walk to Calton Road, which is a minor flow. The majority of cyclists in this direction will be heading for North Bridge and they will be forced to share a wide road with buses, cars and delivery vehicles on a steep uphill gradient, all the way from north of Greenside Row to the top of Leith Street.

Cyclists really need protection from vehicle traffic, especially in the uphill direction the full length of Leith Street, this should be provided for in the form of a 2m wide uphill-only segregated cycleway on the east side of Leith Street, leading into a large advance stop area with an advance green phase allowing cyclists to clear the junction ahead of vehicle traffic. This would leave space for two 4m wide general traffic lanes, one in each direction. The right turn from Leith Street to Princes Street could be banned for motor vehicles, and bus routes from Leith Walk to Princes Street re-routed via St Andrew Square, ensuring that all traffic southbound from Leith Street is for North Bridge only and so not delayed by congestion in Princes Street. (this need only apply south/west-bound: north/east-bound buses could continue to turn left from Princes Street into Leith Street), and northbound cyclists can share the carriageway here safely as they can go downhill at a similar speed to vehicles, as far as Picardy Place.

Additionally, the RSO appears to create a shared cycleway/footway either side of the Greenside Row junction, this will presumably facilitate installation of a shared toucan crossing, set several metres inside Greenside Row. To properly accommodate the flows of pedestrians and cyclists along Leith Street and avoid conflict, segregation of pedestrians and cyclists should continue both sides and on the crossing itself and the crossing should be immediately adjacent to Leith Street and not set back.

- "Minimise road markings", "Consider bus lanes with parking/loading restrictions on strategic and secondary streets", "Clear width of carriageway: – Strategic streets: min 6m" (EDSP, p.30). The RSO provides a carriageway width of Leith Street far in excess of this 6m minimum, varying from 15m (5 vehicle lanes) north of the Greenside Row junction to 10.5m (3 wide lanes) at the narrowest part of the top of Leith Street. The RSO does not give any indication of how this carriageway space is to be allocated but it would appear that it will require to be painted extensively to provide bus lanes, on-road cycle lanes, loading bays, turning lanes etc. Painted road markings are liable to abuse and make the street appear cluttered.
- "Consider soft landscaping and street trees to conserve and enhance townscape character" (EDSP, p.30). It is disappointing that no space has been found for any trees or hedging which could enhance the environment and help to absorb particulate pollution.

I urge the Council to undertake a proper review of travel needs around the city centre and take bold decisions to implement the Council's and the Government's visions of increasing active travel and decreasing urban pollution. At the very least, please follow your own policies for this redesign and modify this scheme so that it properly follows your own Street Design Principles.

Kind regards,