

PICARDY PLACE CONSULTATION

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Response from Spokes

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1. Consultation process

For the record, we express our concern at the consultation process over the years leading to the present situation. At no stage has there been a proper public consultation on main options, and the whole process has ended in a rushed consultation on the fine detail of one single concept.

2. Gyratory concept

Spokes is unhappy with the basic gyratory concept and we associate ourselves with the positions put forward by [Living Streets](#) and by [Sustrans Scotland](#). Our comments below relate to the detail of the plans as they stand and should not be taken as endorsement of the gyratory concept.

3. West-East cycleroute CCWEL

Key issue: This route must be direct and of high quality

This is the Council's flagship cycleroute project, vital for the city in transport terms as the basic core route to which others will link, giving extensive opportunities for safe and enjoyable cycle journeys between different parts of the city for shopping, work, leisure and other purposes. Its standard will give a big message as to how serious is the Council on meeting its tough [Local Transport Strategy](#) targets on cycle use.

The [Council website](#) is explicit that CCWEL links the City Centre, and the west, “to Leith Walk.”

Given the above it is essential that the CCWEL link through Picardy is high quality, direct and convenient. In particular it should pass through the triangle on a direct physically segregated route (as in the previous set of plans) and its road crossings should be separate from, and adjacent to, the pedestrian crossings, though both with the same traffic light phasing. Similarly the approaches to junctions should be segregated, not shared. See also 'Cycleroute design' in the Annex below.

We note that the two road crossings by this route (entering and leaving the main island) would be single-stage, which adds significantly to its quality.

The current Council proposal of an indirect link via the John Lewis corner not only fails on the above criteria, but will add very significantly to potential pedestrian/cyclist conflict at this very constrained corner, probably forming the main cyclist flow here. Such difficulties are likely to greatly outweigh any conflicts due to a direct segregated route through the main island.

4. Future of the main Island site

Key issue: Maximum flexibility must be retained in the Picardy design, to allow for future adaptability in conjunction with the forthcoming city centre traffic-reduction strategy. In particular, this means landscaping the island, not building on it.

We hugely welcome the Council's *City Centre Transformation* initiative, albeit this is at a very early stage. To take any major long-term decisions on the island site without awaiting the completion of this process would be foolhardy in the extreme.

It is hoped and intended that the *City Centre Transformation* process will lead to substantial reductions in city centre motor traffic of all types (though particularly of private vehicles). Furthermore, only through such measures can the Council hope to meet its very ambitious *Local Transport Strategy* targets. The aim of the Transformation, as in the originating [Council motion](#) [motion 9.1, clause 5], is...

“... to improve the public realm in the city centre with the aim of making it more pleasant, reducing motor traffic substantially, and improving conditions for, and prioritising access for, pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users ...”

If this process is to succeed, Picardy must both contribute to and benefit from it, with substantially reduced motor traffic. A bus turnaround facility will be important, to enable fewer Princes Street buses; and there needs to be a genuine tram/bus interchange – see 8 below.

In both the short and long term, a major bike-share location should be sited either on the island near the tram stop, or (off-island) near Omni, or both.

5. Broughton Street to/from Leith Street

Key issue: These are important cycleroute connections and must be direct and convenient.

First, we welcome the current proposal for a segregated route in preference to shared space in front of St Mary's Cathedral – but this should be a segregated facility right up to and through the junctions, not as currently shown ending in shared space.

However, the Broughton Street – Leith Street connections, in both directions, remain problematic.

5.1 Broughton Street to Leith Street

We suggest reducing uphill (southbound) traffic on Broughton St to one lane, so as to enable the creation of a segregated cyclist route which would lead to a traffic-controlled crossing to the island, and a re-instated segregated route within the island [We note that southbound traffic on Broughton Street is already single-file].

We recommend an early release here, allowing cyclists to go directly across to the island. Alternatively, or additionally, the stop line could be moved further south to make the junction easier for cyclists (possibly also give extra queuing space for vehicles?) - in the current plans the stop line is a considerable distance from the junction.

At the south end of the main island, the John Lewis corner, cyclists will need to cross to the Leith Street cycle lane. The small island here looks to be a bottleneck – significant numbers of pedestrians and cyclists will be wanting to cross here in very limited space. Wide parallel crossings and separate space on the island will be essential. As discussed in (4) above the position here will be considerably worsened if the main CCWEL cycle flow is also diverted via this junction.

5.2 Leith Street to Broughton Street

Cyclists travelling north down Leith Street may need to get to Broughton St from either the cycle lane on the east side of Leith St (which currently only starts at Calton Road) or from the northbound carriageway. Accordingly, we propose that :

- Northbound cyclists on the roadway should be able to smoothly access the new Cathedral segregated cycle lane – for example by a new cycle link, starting well before the John Lewis Leith Street crossing and passing well clear of pedestrians waiting to use that crossing.
- Northbound cyclists on the Leith Street lane need to be able to cross to the above lane or, possibly, alternatively, to cross at the John Lewis corner to a re-instated segregated two-way lane on the west side of the island, to get to the crossings at the western end of the tram stop.

6. Connecting to Union Place and onwards

The pedestrian crossings to the north footway at the eastern end of the tram stop should be aligned and designed for cyclists as well as pedestrians. In particular, the intermediate island is too small to accommodate both cyclists and pedestrians.

This connection is important, firstly, so that cyclists can access the popular Union Place restaurants and shops [which under the current design will be difficult for both cyclist and pedestrian access from the Playhouse side] and secondly as some cyclists will need to use the eastbound roadway at this point, for example to turn into Union Street or Gayfield Square.

7. Little King Street

Shared pedestrian/cycle space in Little King Street is completely inappropriate. Although a cul de sac, this is a major entrance to St James, which will be used by very large numbers of pedestrians and is also a possible taxi rank.

As regards cyclists, not only will many park at the entrance to the centre, but the developers have taken an impressively forward-looking decision to allow cyclists to walk their bikes through the centre's arcade, to use the shops and then continue on to St Andrews Square. The internal lifts which take people up from Picardy level to St Andrews Square level are designed to allow cycles. This route through the centre is effectively part of the city centre cyclist route network.

It is therefore very important for segregated cycle provision to be provided in Little King Street – otherwise we are likely to see significant shared-space cycle/pedestrian problems.

8. The tramline and tram stop

In a **future** traffic-reduced Picardy re-design (see 4 above) there should be a proper bus/tram interchange, with bus turnaround and a major bike-share facility. Under the current plans people changing from bus to tram have to cross major traffic flows - this is far from a quality interchange.

For the **present**, however, the design can and should be further improved as follows...

Firstly, the tram tracks should be adjacent in the whole Picardy/Greenside area, not separated by a central reservation. This is a crazy waste of precious road-width which could be used for improved pedestrian and/or cycle space. Also, the further apart are the tram tracks, the less space there is outside them, leading to **increased chances of cyclist tramline crashes** – *as we have seen with the disastrous decision to have a wide central reservation in Princes Street, and the resulting injuries and claims against the Council*. Tramline crashes often occur when a 'going ahead' cyclist is forced into tramlines by traffic pressures, and available road width is critical to reducing such cases.

Second, having the tram tracks adjacent at the tram stop would allow platforms on each side instead of one central platform, thus allowing for far better bus/tram interchange opportunities, without altering the tram tracks, in a future traffic-reduced Picardy Place redesign. This is a common arrangement in many other tram systems abroad and in the UK.

9. Leith Street

Although not part of the Picardy consultation, Leith Street is intimately related and work there is proceeding on a similar timescale.

The current 10-month closure of Leith Street appears to be working reasonably well now that it has settled in, although with some problems including increased traffic in some New Town streets. The recent [Spokes traffic count](#) near Greyfriar's Bobby found a smaller rise in diverted motor traffic than might have been expected and it seems likely that some former motorists are now using alternate modes or alternate opportunities rather than driving on circuitous routes.

As in the case of the Picardy island (4 above) Leith Street will be intimately involved in the *City Centre Transformation* decisions. We therefore urge that the present car ban is maintained until the Transformation outcomes become clearer – buses should return to Leith Street as soon as possible, but it makes no sense to allow motorists to re-habituate themselves to using Leith Street if that may not be a long-term prospect and if meantime Leith Street could be a really people-friendly street.

It should also be noted that once buses are allowed back into Leith Street any car congestion on the diversion routes will therefore be reduced due to fewer buses and fewer hold-ups at bus stops.

We are aware that the Council is also developing the *North-South CL+* route from Meadows to George Street, and an option is to make that route free of private motor traffic in whole or in part. If that were to happen it is conceivable that Leith Street might at that stage have to re-open to limited north-south traffic – but if so that should only happen at the same time as the CL+ road closure.

In summary, decisions about the long-term future of Leith Street and of the CL+ route should form an integral part of the Transformation decision-making process, and in the interim Leith Street should remain closed to motor traffic other than buses. Measures to prevent any New Town rat-running (such as one or two road closures) should be adopted in parallel if necessary.

Finally – we hope our comments are helpful and would be happy to discuss them if useful - and indeed the whole area within the remit of the Edinburgh St James project, up to and including James Craig Walk.

Yours sincerely

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for Spokes Planning Group

ANNEX - Cyclerooute design

General - Bike friendly cities such as Amsterdam have busy road junctions but, on a bike, you are hardly aware that they exist, as one passes through via signalled segregated crossings. Similarly, cyclists should be able to pass easily and directly through Picardy on segregated lanes rather than having to wiggle through cramped intermediate islands.

Width – we are concerned that some cyclerooutes on the plans look too narrow. A minimum normal width for a 2-way route should be 3m, with 2.5m as an absolute minimum where space is very constrained.

Edging – the experience of the new Leith Walk lanes suggests that low kerbing is preferable to solely the use of tactiles. The Leith Walk segregated lanes have experienced some car parking on the lane, and pedestrian/cyclist interaction would be further reduced by use of kerbing - though rising to footway level at important crossing points such as bus stops. Kerbs should be angled, so as not to catch pedals, and to allow the bike to mount the kerb in an emergency.

Road crossings – Parallel Crossings should be used, i.e. separate but adjacent cycle and pedestrian crossings, both under the same light control phasings.

Shared space – this should be avoided. We are concerned at the shared space areas shown near road crossings – these are the very points where pedestrian/cyclist interaction is likely to be most difficult and conflict most likely.

Advance stop areas – early release cycle traffic lights should be used.