

Spokes objection to RSO/17/13 and TRO/17/81

Leith Street, Calton Road, Greenside Row, Waterloo Place

Referencing: http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/downloads/download/2391/tro1781_leith_street

and http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/downloads/download/2392/rso1713_leith_street

1. Preface

Spokes is pleased to now have the opportunity to see the detailed plans for Leith Street, as part of the above TRO. We continue to object to RSO/17/13 and, having seen the detailed plans, provide updated reasons for our objection and we now also object to the proposals in TRO/17/81.

2. Reasons for objection

Spokes recognises that Leith Street currently has multiple roles to play as a corridor for walking, cycling, public transport, and private vehicles, and that space for accommodating all of these modes is limited. Nonetheless, we are unsatisfied that the orders as proposed provide an acceptable compromise and we object on the following grounds (which are in no particular order):

2.1 Bus Lane Removal

The removal of the bus lanes and associated "Greenway" red line restrictions on stopping, loading/unloading and waiting increase the risks to cyclists who cycle on the road, particularly those cycling uphill to Waterloo Place. The new loading bays will also force cyclists to move out into the main traffic flow, a particular exposure to danger on this steeply uphill and often busy section.

More generally, we strongly object to the Council's seemingly ongoing process of reducing bus priorities, in contradiction to its sustainable transport policies. Last year the Council scrapped all Saturday and off-peak bus lanes (despite some 150 objections); now Leith Street bus lanes are to go and there appear to be no bus priority measures in the proposals for Picardy Place despite this being termed by the Council a public transport interchange area.

2.2 Access to/from James Craig Walk

James Craig Walk is described in the approved planning application [Transport document, section 3.1] as "a key pedestrian and cycle route" and we understand it to be of a considerable (12m) width. We understand that no final decision has yet been taken on its detailed design, though we have strongly urged clear delineation between pedestrians and cyclists.

The route will have several important functions, including:

- Cyclists from the Bridges and Princes Street may use it to access Edinburgh St James itself and to connect to Elder Street.
- Cyclists from Edinburgh St James and, in the future, possibly from St Andrews Square, will use it to turn left into Leith Street.
- The most difficult desire line to cater for will be cyclists emerging from James Craig Walk and heading for the Bridges. Princes Street or Waterloo Place.

Given all the above, the junction between Leith Street and James Craig Walk needs careful thought and design, which is not apparent in the draft Orders.

2.3 Top (South) of Leith Street

We are disappointed that dedicated provision for cyclists has not been provided up to the East End junction as this is a key route connecting Broughton Street and Leith Walk to the Bridges leading south and used by many cyclists – as demonstrated during the current closure where many journeys are made using the temporary cycleway provided. At the very least a permanent uphill route is required to help cyclists where they are slowest and most vulnerable.

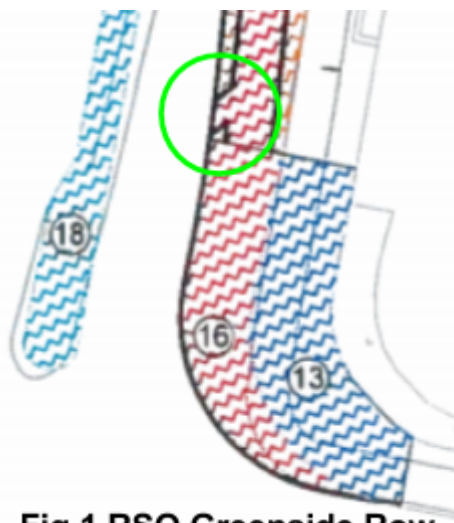
We have discussed this previously with CEC and been told that there is insufficient width to both provide cycle facilities and also to maintain throughput for vehicles. Spokes appreciates that there are limited widths at the top of Leith Street but nonetheless some of this space must be devoted to cycling – a clean, healthy mode of transport for which CEC has tough targets – even if it means reducing throughput for general traffic.

We urge CEC to start developing plans to tackle this section as soon as possible. The status quo where cyclists find themselves squeezed in with other vehicles and often large buses at the top of Leith Street is not tolerable.

Provision also needs to be made for southbound cyclists to access Waterloo Place, where the proposal is to ban the left turn.

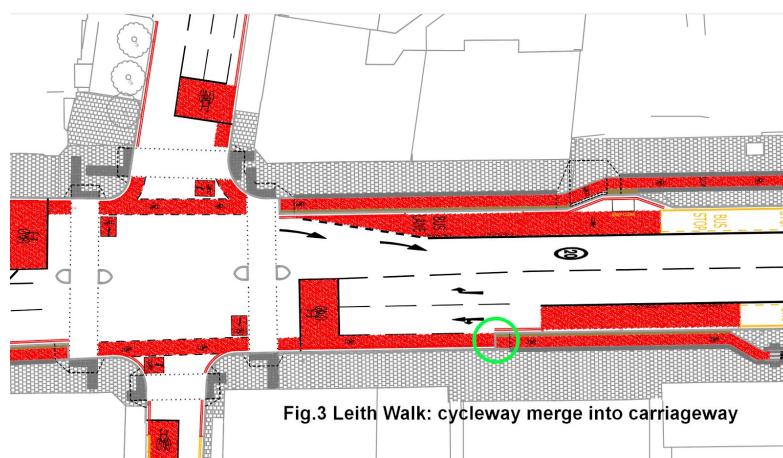
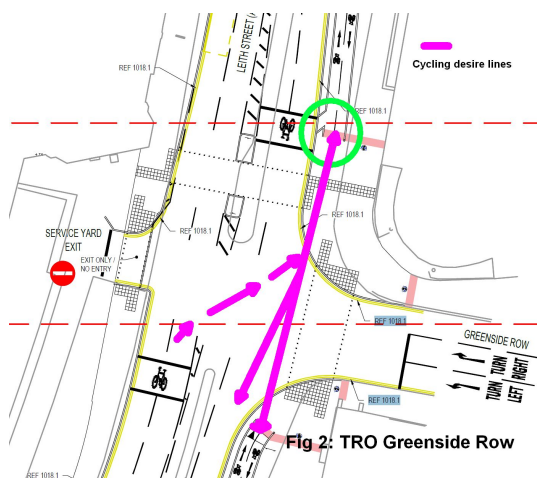
2.4. Rejoining the carriageway southbound at Leith Street

A safe method of leaving the cycleway to continue on the southbound carriageway of Leith Street has not been provided. This is a key route for cyclists coming from Leith Walk travelling to the East End, The Bridges etc and must be safely catered for in the design.



It seems clear from the layout of the southern terminus of the cycleway at Calton Road that cyclists can only join the carriageway onto Calton Road, and not Leith Street. We therefore assume that cyclists wishing to continue up Leith Street to the East End junction will need to use the small section of cycleway just north of the Greenside Row crossing that looks like it will permit rejoining the southbound carriageway (see diagram, left).

Fig 1 RSO Greenside Row



We are concerned that this forces cyclists to make a dangerous manoeuvre by merging into traffic without room to do so. We also doubt that there is sufficient space within this small section to accommodate sufficient numbers of cyclists. Inspection of the TRO plans (below left) suggests that there is some space taken up with hatching in the centre of the road that should instead be reallocated to provide a safe zone for merging, as described in *Cycling by Design* §6.2.6 and as used in the recently opened cycleways on Leith Walk, where the cycleway continues straight ahead into a cycle lane on the road (see diag Brunswick Rd). The 500mm buffer zone could also be included in a feed-in lane. We also have concerns about buses pulling out of the lay-by having sufficient forward visibility to see cyclists joining the traffic stream here.

Additionally, it seems likely that cyclists unfamiliar with the layout who are looking to get to the East End junction will assume they can continue on the cycleway across the Greenside Row crossing only to find they are forced onto Calton Road as per the above. Please confirm that appropriate markings/signage will be used to avoid this confusion, though quality cycle routes should be intuitive to follow without the need for signage. A better solution might well be a signalised parallel straight across crossing of Calton Road at the south terminus of the cycleway. A further option might be to mark a cyclist route to guide cyclists to use the Greenside Row Toucan to join the southbound carriageway, with Leith Street southbound road traffic held during the Toucan phase.

2.5. Greenside Row crossing

Separate cycle and pedestrian signals should be provided at a high volume crossing like this one. Additionally, corner radii should be reduced to maximise space for cyclists and pedestrians.

We assume that the crossing of Greenside Row is a toucan given that the order classifies the area on each side as cycleway (which will presumably be marked as shared space) rather than having separate areas on each side for cyclists and pedestrians. We are concerned that this mixing of cyclists and pedestrians will lead to conflict, particularly given that cyclists and pedestrians are otherwise expected to stick to the cycleway and footway respectively.

Instead there should be a split crossing, e.g. similar to the one used at Forrest Road, thereby keeping cyclists and pedestrians on their respective areas and minimizing conflict. If the signalling demands that the crossing is a toucan then we urge the final design to include markings to encourage cyclists and pedestrians to keep to their respective sides.

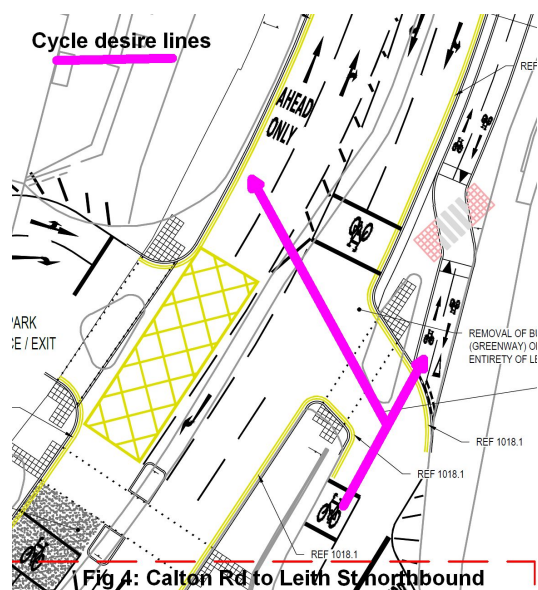
The cycleway at the south side of Greenside Row should be right up to the carriageway as there is no pedestrian crossing of Leith Street on this side, thereby avoiding the need for shared space on the south side

The cycleway on the north side stops a long way short of the Greenside Row crossing, but should be extended at least as far as the east/west pedestrian crossing (or is it a Toucan?) where conflict with pedestrians could be controlled by “give-way” markings as are proposed for the crossing to the small island further north on Leith Street or low-level signals (as at St.Leonard’s Street). Our preferred option would be for the cycleway to continue up to Greenside Row with a parallel crossing marked separately for pedestrians and cyclists. This could also be designed to provide access for southbound cyclists to join the cycleway (as in 2.4/Leith Walk) and for cyclists wishing to proceed to the top (South) of Leith St, to leave the cycleway, with appropriate signalling.

Furthermore, conflict will also be minimised by reducing the corner radii to provide additional space for cyclists and pedestrians, whilst making the junction safer by reducing the speed of turning general traffic. We recognise that there is need for larger vehicles to use Greenside Row for access to the Playhouse and the Omni Centre, but we question whether widths can be reduced further given how much space is available at the junction to allow oversized vehicles to swing out where required.

2.6. Northbound access to the cycleway from Calton Road

There needs to be a safe method for northbound cyclists to access the cycleway from Calton Road. This is a key route for cyclists coming from Waverley and the new Caltongate development travelling to Leith Walk and must be safely catered for in the design.



From the detailed TRO drawings we can now see that there is a straightforward route for cyclists to take from the ASZ (Advanced Stop Zone) to the northbound cycleway. However we are concerned that northbound cyclists turning right into the cycleway from Calton Road are at risk from vehicles turning left from Leith Street into Calton Road (see diagram, left), particularly as cyclists will be travelling slowly as this section is uphill. It’s crucial that the final design includes measures to keep cyclists safe while making this manoeuvre. Traffic from Leith Street needs to be held from turning left whilst traffic is exiting from Calton Road. An “early release” for cyclists waiting in the ASZ would also be helpful, as would road markings showing the access path to the cycleway and arrows or other markings on the ASZ to show that cyclists should position themselves to the right of the area in order to make their turn into the cycleway.

Also, it appears from the junction layout that the left turn from Calton Road will be very awkward for all traffic and will cause drivers to swing out potentially into cyclists turning right from Calton Rd onto the northbound Leith St cycleway. It is essential that right-turning cyclists are protected at this junction and can safely join the northbound Leith St cycleway safely. A 2-stage right-turn facility should be considered but there are clearly space problems.

We note that the right turn from Calton Road is banned and assume that this will also apply to cyclists and challenge whether this is necessary as it offers a more direct route to Broughton St/York Place for cyclists who might choose to use it.

2.7. Northbound cycleway access from Leith Street

There is no clear method for northbound cyclists on Leith St to access the main cycleway leading down to Leith Walk. This is a key route, in fact the main route, for cyclists coming from the East End travelling to Leith Walk and must be catered for. It must be made very clear how cyclists should join this cycleway in a safe and convenient way. This must be catered for extremely well.

It is not acceptable to force northbound cyclists through the busy Picardy Place junction (whatever form it ultimately takes). There does not appear from the detailed drawings to be any way for northbound cyclists to access the cycleway. It had previously been suggested that cyclists could use the crossing south of Calton Road and continue on the Leith Street cycleway. However the West pavement seems to be proposed as footway only. Cyclists should also be able to join the cycleway at Greenside Row, but again there appears to be no obvious access and with the proposed suspension of the cycleway short of Greenside Row, there is no easy access at this point (but see Greenside Row proposals.).

More confident cyclists may find it a better option to continue down Leith Street where a better way of joining the cycleway needs to be provided at the small island at the North end of Leith St.

Whichever options are implemented it must be intuitive for cyclists (with support from clear signage/markings) - to join the cycleways.

3. Additional comments

3.1. Segregated cycleway

We welcome the segregated cycleway and are pleased to see that the space for it has come from the carriageway and not the footway, as it is crucial to the success of this cycleway that pedestrians have enough footway to walk on so that they don't feel the need to encroach on the cycleway. The cycleway width for a 2-way route here is substandard, but we recognise that footway space is also at a premium. This reinforces the need for traffic reduction - removal of one further traffic lane would get closer to the sort of pedestrian and cycle conditions which a modern European City should be implementing as standard.

3.2. Floating bus stop

We know that there is some concern about using floating bus stops in Edinburgh, however they have been proven successful in other locations in Scotland, the rest of the UK and abroad and it is impossible to see a better solution here. That said, we urge CEC/TfE to use bus stops with transparent sides (rather than advertising boards) in this location so that passengers alighting a bus can clearly see cyclists coming (and vice versa). This is especially crucial given the two-way nature of this cycleway meaning that cyclists could approach from either direction, and so the usual bus stops used in Edinburgh, where one side is an advertising board, are not appropriate for this location.

3.3. Serious concerns over design details

The proposed cycle facilities do not seem to take account of the need for cyclists to maintain momentum, especially when travelling uphill. The proposals seem to treat cycling too similarly to walking for which momentum is not such a factor and where stopping and starting do not in themselves cause additional effort or delay. Stopping and starting on a bicycle takes time and effort and is estimated to add an extra

200m of effort for each stop. It has even more of an impact on people with cargo bikes, child-carriers, etc. due to the additional weight.

It also appears that the capacity of the cycle facilities is very limited and that with the targeted increase in cycling volumes over the next few years, cycle lane widths, crossing widths and shared spaces will not cope. Cycle routes should be made as direct as possible in order to avoid unnecessary delays. Crossings and cycleway junctions need to be made as large as possible to cope with the volume of users. Cyclists with special needs, eg hand-cycles, need to be accommodated as do cargo bikes and tag-along bikes etc, where frequent stops, dismounts and narrow areas often make an impenetrable barrier that denies people the opportunity to move around by bike.

Finally, as indicated at various points in section 2 above, shared pedestrian/cycle areas should be avoided, and segregated routes and crossings provided.

4. Closing comments

We recognise that there are conflicting objectives when designing a space like Leith Street. However, it is clear to us that pedestrians and cyclists must be prioritised and we hope that more will be done to achieve this both in this determination further and going forward. We are, as ever, happy to discuss further particularly when detailed drawings are provided.

We also query why the drawings are dated September 2017 but are only now being consulted on and why comments similar to those made above that Spokes made at a meeting with the developers in July have not been incorporated into these designs.

Spokes Planning Group

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December 2017