



# Meadows to George Street

Initial response from Spokes – The Lothian Cycle Campaign, August 2018

## Introduction

Spokes are very excited to see the launch of the Meadows to George Street project. As we will discuss in this submission, this is an arterial cycle route that is key to cycle connectivity not just in the city centre but across the city more broadly. It is therefore crucial that cycling is at the heart of this project, and that it delivers a route that is safe and attractive for cyclists of all abilities.

The Meadows to George Street corridor is additionally a key area of public realm within the city centre and World Heritage Site. Accordingly, we hope that the council will be bold in re-imagining the use of space throughout the route and transforming an area currently dominated by traffic to one that is a welcoming place for all and a showcase for the city that we want Edinburgh to be.

We understand that the project is at an early stage and so this submission focuses on high level challenges in the existing space and opportunities for improvement, with suggested priorities for the project. Spokes were pleased to support the the Council when it made its initial bid for Community Links Plus funding for this project<sup>1</sup> and we look forward to continuing to work in partnership with the project team.

## Key priorities

1. A high quality north-south cycle route that is safe and attractive for cyclists of all ages and abilities
2. Substantial reduction or elimination of general traffic
3. Significant reallocation of road space to promote walking, cycling, and placemaking
4. Well designed, straightforward connections to both current and future cycle routes

## Route context

It is important to consider the Meadows to George Street route in the context of the wider city. This helps illustrate why it is so important for cycling, and the opportunities available for reduction of general traffic.

## In the Edinburgh cycle network

The Meadows to George Street route is at the heart of Edinburgh's cycle network, and it is no coincidence that the Middle Meadow Walk cycleway was Spokes' very first campaign 40 years ago<sup>2</sup>. Today, Spokes' traffic counts<sup>3</sup> continue to show rising cycle use at Forrest Road and the continued demand for cycle provision along this route. They also show that 60-70% of cars are single occupancy and so there is real potential for traffic reduction if we can achieve further modal shift to walking and cycling.

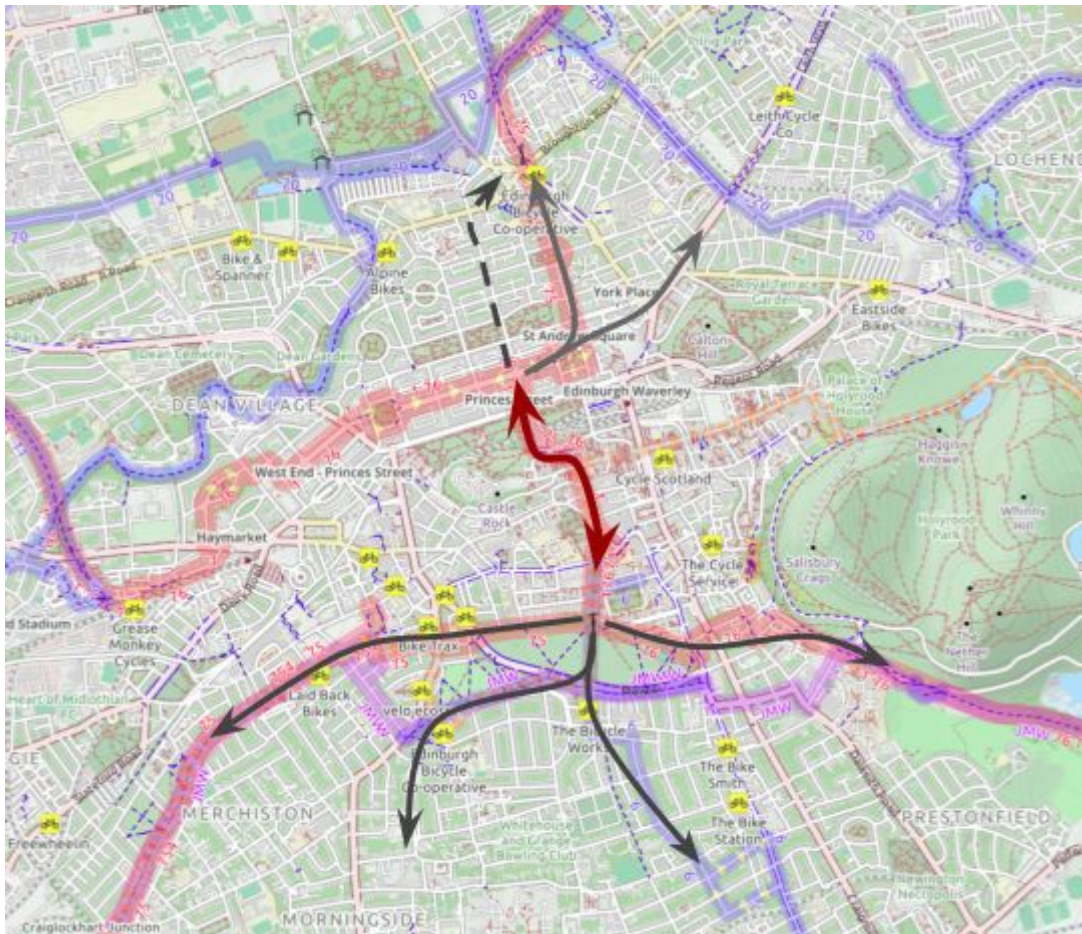
---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.spokes.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/1707-CL-MeadowsGS-slides.ppt>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.spokes.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/78-Meadows-Cycleway110.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.spokes.org.uk/documents/papers-documents/spokes-traffic-counts/>

The Meadows itself is a hub for cycle routes in south Edinburgh, with NCR1 coming in from the south east, the Quality Bike Corridor coming in from the Causewayside corridor, QR6 coming in from Kings Buildings, Leamington Walk coming in from Bruntsfield and further south, and NCR75 coming in from Tollcross and further south west. To the north, George Street is the route of the City Centre West to East Link (CCWEL) and also has a nearby connection to the North Edinburgh Path Network (NEPN), which provides traffic free cycling across much of the north of the city.

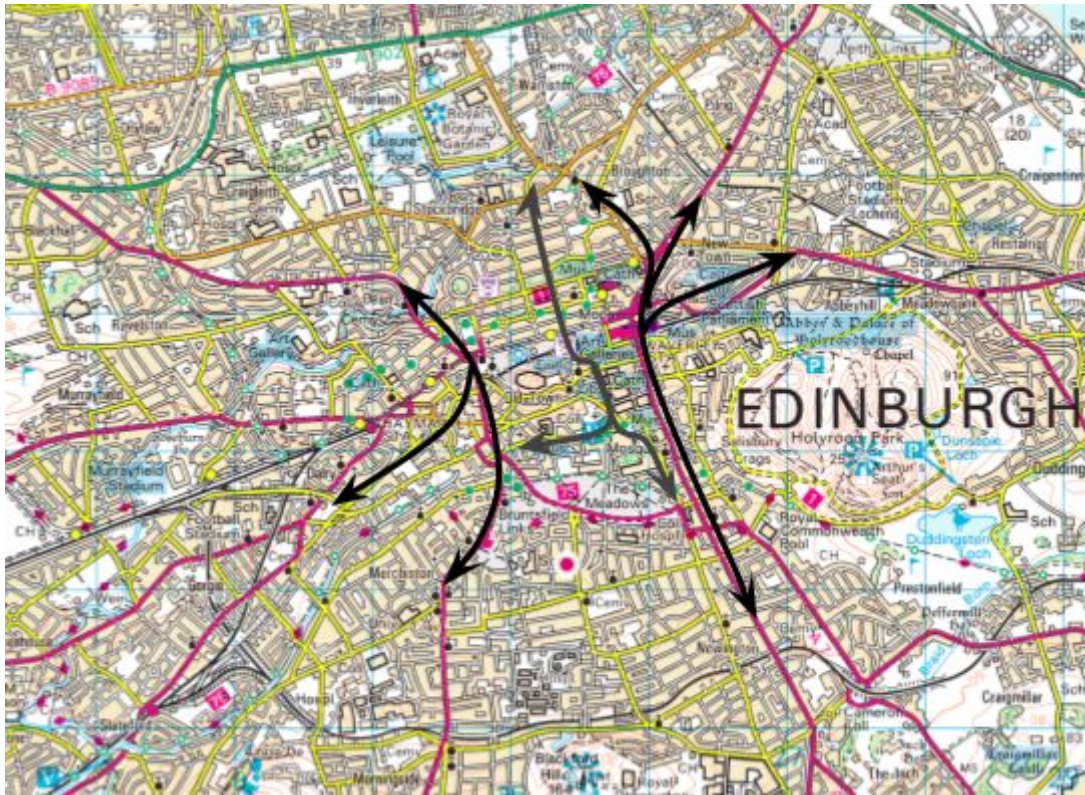


As stands, there is a huge north-south gap in the cycling network. While NCR1 and NCR75 are already routed along the Meadows to George Street corridor, this is really in name only as there are minimal cycling facilities in the form of painted cycle lanes and shared bus lanes only. This is clearly below the bar for a route that links together so many other cycle routes, and particularly those that are themselves traffic free or otherwise reasonably suitable for all ages and abilities. Other north-south routes via Lothian Road and The Bridges corridor are even worse from a cycling perspective.

**With this context, it is obvious that delivering a high quality north-south cycle route must be a primary objective of this project.**

## In the wider Edinburgh traffic network

It is also interesting to consider the role of Meadows to George Street for general traffic. The topography of the Waverley Valley and layout of the Old and New Towns limits the number of north-south routes through the city centre, and in practice there are only three main ones: Lothian Road in the west, George IV Bridge / Hanover Street in the middle, and The Bridges in the east.



- **Lothian Road** provides links to the west of the city via the West Approach Road, to the south west via Gilmore Place, and to the south via the A702 Bruntsfield/Morningside corridor. North of Princes Street, it provides links to the north west via the A90 (Queensferry Road), and to the north via East Fettes Avenue.
- **The Bridges** carry on south to Cameron Toll and provide links with many main roads to the south and east including the A7, A701, A772, and A6095. At their northern terminus at the East End, they provide links to the east via the A1 (Waterloo Place), to Leith via the A900 (Leith Walk), and to other parts of north Edinburgh via Broughton Street.
- **George IV Bridge and Hanover Street** are a contrast to the above as they provide no key connections by themselves. To the south, the George IV Bridge corridor is halted by the Meadows, and traffic either needs to head west to Tollcross and the Lothian Road route, or it needs to head south along the Causewayside corridor where it eventually merges with routes served by The Bridges corridor. To the north, Hanover Street becomes Dundas Street and leads to Canonmills, where it effectively merges with Broughton Street and the eastern route discussed above.

**Our key observation is that the Meadows to George Street route is therefore not essential for general traffic as other routes are demonstrably available and that, therefore, the project should consider substantial reduction of through traffic along the route, or indeed the elimination of general traffic altogether** (with suitable exceptions for service vehicles and access). This may seem radical, but at the time that Princes Street became buses/taxis/cyclists only, that seemed radical, and now it seems unthinkable to have it any other way. Moreover, the recent Leith Street closure serves to demonstrate that city centre traffic can continue to flow when one of its three north-south routes is closed.

## Detailed route assessment

We hope that the project will be ambitious and substantially re-work space along the route. As such, this assessment focuses on key opportunities for improvement rather than dwelling on all the problems of the route as it stands today. We look forward to commenting more on initial designs in due course.

## Forrest Road and Chambers Street area

We understand that detailed designs will take place later in the project, but we would draw attention to previous ideas put forward by Spokes particularly in this area. More details can be found in Spokes Bulletin 119 from 2014.<sup>4</sup>



1. **Forrest Road as the route both north and south:** It is clear from the map that the direct path from north to south is via Forrest Road. Today, northbound cyclists use Forrest Road but southbound cyclists go via Teviot Place. We believe that Forrest Road should allow cycling in both directions to provide a direct, easy-to-follow route, which would also improve access to the restaurants and shops on Forrest Road. Indeed, we hope that Forrest Road is one of the areas that sees pedestrianization to make the most of the cosy, tree-lined nature of the street.
2. **Better separation between pedestrians and cyclists on crossings:** The Middle Meadow Walk to Forrest Road crossing is the only cycle specific crossing on the route today. With the volume of both pedestrians and cyclists seen today it serves as an example of how they can interact poorly, with pedestrians often walking on the cycle section of the crossing. We hope that new crossings will be carefully designed to avoid conflict as much as possible.
3. **Teviot Place and Potterrow cycleway:** It is common to see cyclists using the southbound pavement of Teviot Place as a link between Middle Meadow Walk and the University buildings around Bristo Square. While Spokes certainly don't endorse illegal cycling on the footway, it is clear that this is a strong desire line for cyclists, particularly as it avoids the setts on George Square and provides a more direct link with Nicolson Square and South College Street. The University have a masterplan to redevelop the Potterrow area and we hope that the Meadows to George Street design will tie into that with a cycleway on Teviot Place and Potterrow.
4. **Safe crossing to Chambers Street:** This is already a well used cycle route despite the lack of cycle provision and the challenging right turn from Forrest Road into Chambers Street. It provides access to the Museum – a key family destination – as well as a route towards East End. It is therefore important that cyclists have a safe crossing to/from Chambers Street in all directions.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.spokes.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/pall-corrected-p8.pdf>

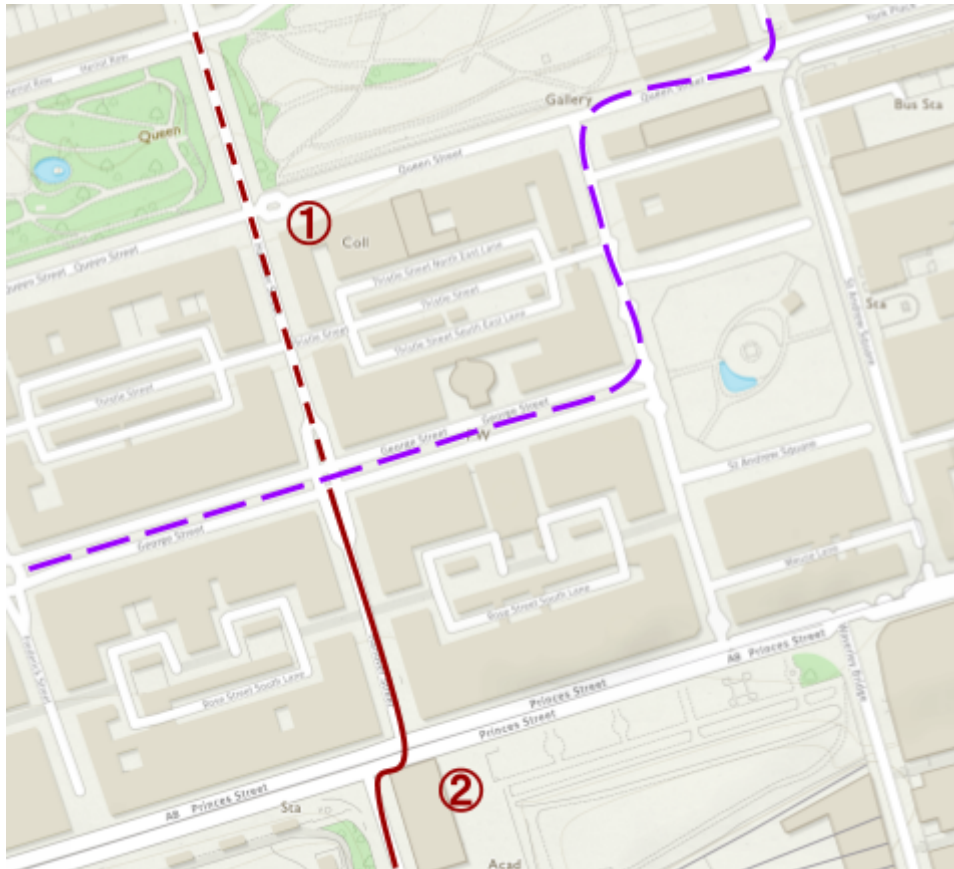
## Royal Mile and Mound area



1. **Allow cycling down Victoria Street:** Victoria Street is currently one-way uphill, which limits cycle access from George IV Bridge. Moreover, it forces southbound cyclists to detour via Candlemaker Row to reach the Grassmarket rather than follow the direct route via Victoria Street. We hope that this project will be used as an opportunity to improve cycle permeability by allowing bidirectional cycling on Victoria Street. We recognise that the street is narrow and so we believe that general traffic should be restricted or eliminated to do this, which would also improve the character of the street.
2. **Avoid risk of getting hooked at St Giles Street:** The current layout here presents a serious risk to cyclists travelling up North Bank Street coming round the corner towards George IV Bridge as vehicles can continue straight on into St Giles Street. A careless or speeding driver could hit the cyclist as they come around the corner. We hope the project will address this, ideally by making St. Giles Street one-way from the High Street for vehicles.
3. **Avoid risk of getting hooked at Market Street:** This is another location where cyclists are at risk of a left turning vehicle hitting them, in this case where a careless driver turns left from The Mound into Market Street and doesn't give space to an uphill and therefore slow moving cyclist. The design should afford cyclists more protection here.
4. **Link to Waverley along Market Street:** Waverley Station is obviously a key destination for many cyclists, both for commuting and leisure reasons. However, it is tricky to access by bike with no dedicated cycle provision other than an uphill cycle lane on Market Street (which vehicles often encroach on). We hope that the project will consider how Waverley can be effectively and safely linked to the Meadows to George Street route. This would also improve access to the New Waverley development, which is likely to be a significant trip generator with confirmation that almost 3,000 civil servants are moving in<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> <http://newwaverley.com/uk-government-to-move-2900-civil-servants-to-new-waverley/>

## Hanover Street area



1. **Future-proofed for Dundas Street extension:** Currently, cyclists wanting to get to/from the North Edinburgh Path Network (NEPN) have to take an indirect route via George Street, North St. Andrew Street, Dublin Street (very steep), and Scotland Street (setted). The NEPN is a hugely important network that extends as far as Trinity and Leith, and so it is vital that it is well connected to the city centre and the Meadows to George Street route. While we realise that the scope of this project stops at George Street, we hope that the design on Hanover Street looks ahead to a future extension along Dundas Street, which would provide a significantly more direct and comfortable route to/from the NEPN. This could be further facilitated by a link through the RBS site at Canonmills as part of any new development there.
2. **Safe tram track crossing:** Spokes welcome the recent work to put coloured surfacing on the cycle lanes across Princes Street to help encourage drivers to give cyclists space when crossing the tram tracks. It's important that any redesign of this junction builds on this and ensures cyclists are afforded as much protection as possible, as the tram lines remain a source of anxiety for many cyclists.