

George Street and the First New Town

Consultation on Draft Concept Design - Response from Spokes

Introduction

1. We welcome the opportunity to respond to this consultation. Our primary concern is with the proposed cycleway. The Council is committed to build a protected cycleway (the CCWEL) between Roseburn and Leith Walk and the GNT project is tasked with delivering this along George St, a key part of the route, with links into Charlotte and St Andrew Sqs.
2. The cycleway should be designed to cater for a range of cyclists – commuters, shoppers on bikes and recreational cyclists including tourists and, as mentioned above, it will be part of a long-distance route. Cyclists using the cycleway should be separated and protected from both motor traffic and events held in the street. Cyclists on the cycleway should also be clearly separated from pedestrians on the footway (Please see paragraph 5 below for more detail on what is required).
3. We welcome the proposal to remove the central car parking from George St. This is essential to provide a safe and attractive environment for pedestrians, cyclists and all those wishing to use the facilities (pubs, restaurants, shops etc) of George St and the First New Town. We suggest that additional traffic measures are needed to reinforce and strengthen this proposal (see paragraphs 15 and 16 below).

The proposed cycleway – location and design

4. The Draft Concept Design envisages a 2-way cycleway on the south side of George St. We consider that 1-way cycleways on each side of the road would be preferable, in principle, as it is easier for cyclists to join and leave the cycle way at intermediary junctions. Although 2-way cycle lanes have been used elsewhere in the CCWEL this is largely because of lack of space, a consideration that does not apply here, and 1-way cycleways on each side would echo the arrangements for the Melville St section of the CCWEL, also part of the World Heritage site, and it would maintain the symmetry of the street design.
5. It is absolutely essential that any cycleway on George St (2 way or 1 way) is continuous with a consistent design along the whole route. The cycleway should be clearly identifiable throughout with modern setts (if these are chosen as suggested by the illustrations in the Draft Concept Design) with a distinct surface colour and, where it runs parallel to the footway, it should be at a different level to the footway with a kerb on each side. Edinburgh Council's Street Design Guidance gives clear advice on the form of hard segregation that should be applied – see (http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/downloads/file/10576/c4_-_segregated_cycle_tracks_-_hard_segregation)
The suggestion of using tactile paving to separate it from an “at grade” footway is quite unacceptable as this design has clearly failed both pedestrians and cyclists where it has been used on Leith Walk. We are also opposed to tactile strips being used on the cycleway itself as these can be dangerous for cyclists.

6. The Draft Conceptual Design refers to the use of plazas for small scale events. It is not entirely clear what is envisaged here but in no circumstances should any temporary, event buildings or other facilities be allowed to obstruct the cycleway. It also envisages “occasional, necessary vehicle access to the footways” Vehicle parking on the cycleway itself should not be permitted and it is important that the kerbs we suggest above should be continued throughout the plaza areas. Consideration should also be given to other physical measures in the plaza areas, for example, bollards, to prevent the possibility of taxis and other motor vehicles parking on the cycleway. And, in addition to the above, it will be necessary to have clear and identifiable crossing points for staff and visitors who wish to get access to these events, for example, to the cafes and bars erected in the area outside the Assembly Rooms.
7. We are content with the proposed width of the cycleway (4m plus a 0.5m barrier with the road).

The Junctions at Hanover, Frederick and Castle Streets

8. Our understanding is that cyclists and pedestrians will have priority at the junctions at Frederick and Castle St. We assume that this will be enforced by give way signs and markings and the use of raised tables for the cycleway and footpath across the junctions. We support this approach and would be grateful if all these points could be confirmed.
9. It is important that the design of the cycleway on George St allows cyclists to move into the cycleway from Frederick, Castle and Hanover Streets and vice versa.
10. We were told at the workshop that the intention is prohibit turns into George St from Hanover St by normal motor traffic with an exception for buses and emergency vehicles. However, we could see nothing in the material posted on line to confirm this. Again, we are very much in favour of this proposal and we would welcome confirmation that this is intended.
11. We understand that the proposal is for the Hanover St junction to be light controlled with separate phases for cyclists and pedestrians. We support this and we also support the idea of a single phase for all cyclists arriving in all directions to avoid unnecessary delay.
12. The junction at Hanover St and the cycleway along George St should be fully integrated with whatever is agreed in the Meadows to George St project for cyclists. We have noted that the Draft Conceptual Design includes protected cycleways on Hanover St which we presume are to be delivered by the Meadows to George St project and we look forward to being consulted on the details in due course. We also recommend that consideration should be given to extending this to the north side of Hanover St linking to Dundas St and the norther sector of the New Town.

The links with the CCWEL at St Andrew and Charlotte Squares

13. No details are given on these links. It is important that the design ensures integration with the CCWEL as a whole. At the St Andrew Sq junction, the Draft Conceptual Design suggests that a “controlled crossing is retained at this junction”. However, the existing crossing takes pedestrians to the centre of George St and this will clearly need to be modified to provide a suitable crossing for both cyclists and pedestrians. A similar adjustment will be required at the Charlotte Sq end where the existing pedestrian crossing also links to the centre of George St.

Cycle parking

14. Currently in George St there is very little cycle parking and this is a deterrent to cyclists wishing to use the amenities of the street. We are pleased to note that the conceptual design includes cycle parking. In our view, relatively small but frequent cycle parking installations, for each the main sections of the road, are preferable to a small number of large installations. Cycle parking should be provided on both sides of the road. We would be pleased to be consulted, in due course, on the amount, location and detailed design of the cycle parking.

Reducing traffic and Rat Running in the George St and First New Town area

15. Although the removal of central parking in George St and the proposed narrowing of the road are to be welcomed, George St will continue to be used by motor traffic and the lack of central parking may make it more attractive for “rat running” traffic. In our view, all general motor traffic not covered by specific, justifiable exceptions, should be excluded from George St.
16. We, therefore, suggest that careful consideration should be given to additional measures to deter unnecessary traffic. The proposal to ban motor traffic from Hanover St from turning into George St (para 10 above) should help. We also suggest that car parking in Castle and Frederick Streets should be limited to residents of George St and the First New Town and visitors to residents and that there should be no general pay parking..
17. In addition, there should be a specified and limited time restriction for vehicle access for deliveries to and waste collection from businesses in the street. Specific times for access to hotels by coaches should also be set with a view to minimising disruption for cyclists and pedestrians.

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For SPOKES Planning Group
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