



Response to the consultation “Cameron Toll to Bioquarter Walking and Cycling route”

Inch Community Education Centre Association
and
Inch Community Association SCIO
20 November 2019

Executive summary

The Inch Community Education Centre Association / Inch Community Association SCIO welcomes and supports, from the perspective of residents of the Inch and users of the Inch Community Centre, the plan for a protected walking and cycling route between Cameron Toll and BioQuarter.

We support the general aim of improving cycling conditions in Edinburgh and providing a route for commuters to RIE and Bioquarter, which hopefully also helps to reduce motor traffic in the Inch. We also note that, while much has been done in the city centre, the suburbs have seen fewer substantial improvements until now, and welcome the investment in the area.

From a local perspective, the plan is also an important and necessary improvement for residents of the Inch itself. It provides a safe route for Inch residents towards the centre where currently the Cameron Toll/Lady Rd area is a serious barrier that is only manageable for experienced and fairly fit cyclists who are willing to take risks.

Furthermore it addresses a number of other local needs that residents and local groups have long been lobbying for, in particular at signalised toucan crossing near the Bridgend Farmhouse and a footpath along the west side of Old Dalkeith Rd.

Based on our local knowledge and observations of peoples' movements, **we identified a few improvements**. In particular, the (unnamed) access road to the Recycling Centre is an important local walking/cycling route to Craigmillar Castle Park and beyond. Therefore we suggest installing

a **pedestrian crossing for Old Dalkeith Rd. between the Recycling Centre access road and Dinmont Drive**, ideally a signalised crossing, alternatively a tiger crossing, at the very least the existing pedestrian refuges should be kept. Also we ask to **add a foot and cycle path along the Recycling Centre access road** from Old Dalkeith Rd to the gate of Craigmillar Castle Park at the Recycling Centre to these plans.

The shortening of the bus lane in Old Dalkeith Rd. might have some impact on bus routes and we suggest moving the cycle lane back from the street so the bus lane can be retained.

We note that these plans do not involve any significant changes to the roads for motorised vehicles, so we do not think drivers will be much affected.

We are happy to get involved in discussions about further planning details and provide local insight if this is thought useful.

About the Inch Association(s) and this document

The Inch Community Education Centre Association, which is in the process of being reorganised and renamed into the Inch Community Association SCIO, is a member-led organisation to benefit principally the community of the Inch district. It manages the Inch House community centre and organises a range of activities within the local community. Among its purposes (that are relevant for this proposal) is the advancement of community development, including urban regeneration, in the Inch. The Association's values include encouraging a greater awareness and concern for the environment and drawing attention to issues of social need within the community.

This document was prepared by a member (Stephan Matthiesen) of the Association's Management Committee, based on experience and feedback gathered informally from other members and residents. **It was subsequently approved by the Management Committee at the committee meeting on 20 November 2019 as the official response of the Association.**

We focus particularly on the local views from residents' perspective, other organisations are better placed to comment on general aims of improving active travel or specific needs of commuters to BioQuarter.

General aspects: travel situation in the Inch

From the perspective of Inch residents, the significant improvement provided by this route is urgently needed, and we hope it can be constructed in the very near future without the enormous delays that have dogged nearly all cycling infrastructure projects in Edinburgh in the last few years.

The Inch has access to some good cycle routes (notably the new paths around Bioquarters; the new Gilmerton-Rosslyn route, the path through the Hermitage of Braid towards the Union Canal at Craiglockhart, and via Craigmillar Castle Park and Craigmillar the NCN1 towards Musselburgh),

but these existing routes are mostly attractive for leisure trips into the countryside, but do very little to help residents who want to commute into the centre.

For cycling towards the city centre and Kings Buildings, the Liberton Rd/Lady Rd./Cameron Toll traffic system creates an enormous barrier. All routes through this complex involves multi-lane busy roads and complicated manoeuvres on large junctions, often uphill. These are not suitable for most people, and even fit and experienced cyclists find some aspects daunting; every regular cyclist can tell many stories of close passes, left-hooks and other dangerous situations here.

The Association, having the aim of encouraging a greater awareness and concern for the environment, is trying to encourage, promote and support cycling and walking, both for leisure and utility trips (eg. work, shopping). While cycling locally in the Inch is getting more popular (also thanks to the leisure routes mentioned above), the lack of a suitable route into the centre seriously depresses utility cycling in the area and makes it much more difficult to get people out of their cars. We expect that the new route can be a game-changer in this respect.

Furthermore, the Inch suffers from much motorised commuter traffic, in particularly along Gilmerton Rd (with three schools) and Old Dalkeith Rd, making them difficult to cross at certain times. As a large number of new housing developments are built around Gilmerton, we expect traffic in the Inch increase considerably and make this problem worse. A good and convenient cycling route for commuters can help to address this and indirectly benefit the residents of the Inch through reduced through-traffic.

We note that these plans do not involve any significant changes to the roads for motorised vehicles, so we do not think drivers will be much affected (other than hopefully encouraged to leave the car and use the bicycle instead). Separating cyclists from motor traffic in difficult locations like Lady Road also can make driving less stressful there.

Detailed comments on individual sections

Craigmillar Park junction

The proposed route is an enormous improvement to the current situation and we fully support this. Some detailed comments and experiences follow (from North to South).

The toucan at Wilton Rd. is very important; when cycling northbound this avoids having to cross the large Craigmillar Park/Liberton Rd/Lady Rd junction. Also, Wilton Rd. is a good route towards Kings Buildings, as it is less steep and less busy than the more direct Esslemont Rd.

At the corner of Craigmillar Park and Lady Rd, it is good that the cycle path bypasses the junction. Southbound cyclists currently almost always have to wait fairly long at the traffic light at the end of Craigmillar Park, often between buses and vehicles turning left. From the drawings it is not clear if there will be pedestrian traffic lights on the cycle path itself, forcing cyclists to stop. If that is so,

waiting times for cyclists at the lights should be kept to a minimum and certainly much shorter than they are at present; and they could be switched off in the evenings when pedestrian and cycle traffic is low.

Some questions arose if the removal of the northbound bus lane in Craigmillar Park will affect bus users. While we are not in a good position to judge this, our experience shows that generally northbound buses are delayed in Liberton Rd. approaching the junction, but less so when leaving the junction towards Craigmillar Park, so we hope the removal of the bus lane will not affect buses much.

At the **Lady Rd. roundabout**, the cycle lane crosses the side road. As this is only an access to a few residential car parking spaces, we suggest **giving the bike and foot path priority over cars and install a “Dutch style” continuous foot and bike path.**

There is no obvious access route to the shopping centre here (other than the fairly unpleasant roundabout), however, from the perspective of Inch residents, this is not of concern as we more likely access it from the south.

Cameron Toll junction

Again, the route is an enormous improvement and we support it fully.

At the junction with **Cameron March**, we also suggest a **“Dutch style” continuous raised foot and bike path**; this is only an access road to a small number of properties.

The proposed routing of the bike path south of the gyratory seems a good solution with the minimum of traffic lights on the path. The **traffic light phases should be optimised** so that **waiting times for cyclists are as short as possible.**

In future, a connection to Dalkeith Road (to the North) and Peffermill Rd (to the East) is needed, as cyclists from/to these directions currently have to navigate the busy and dangerous gyratory. However we appreciate that this requires a complete redesign of the whole gyratory and is outside the scope of this project.

ODR – Inch Park

We support this fully and have no suggestions for improvement here.

The plan addresses the current problem that the southbound cycle lane is often blocked by parked cars, in particular in front of the Toyota car dealer, forcing cyclists to swerve into fast traffic. The proposed bike path will be a huge improvement.

At Inch Park, we understand the plan gives priority to the cycle path over vehicles coming out of and turning into the Park. We welcome this strongly and note that ratrunning through Inch Park is

an ongoing concern. Driving through the Park should generally be discouraged; giving priority to the cycle path might help in this respect.

We also support the general concept of a bidirectional bike path on the Western side of Old Dalkeith Rd. instead of two unidirectional bike paths on both sides. While there are general arguments for unidirectional bike paths and some cyclists prefer them strongly, from the perspective of Inch residents it makes much more sense to have a bidirectional path on the Western side as nearly all the housing and local amenities are on this side, as long as crossings are provided at the three access points to Craigmillar Castle Park (Bridgend, Recycling Centre, Lady Susan Walk; see below).

ODR - Bridgend/Craigmillar Park Estate Cemetery

A safe pedestrian crossing near Bridgend has been a long-term wish of the community, and we are very supportive that this plan includes a toucan crossing. Many people cross ODR here, especially since the Bridgend Farmhouse opened and organises many popular activities and events, often for families.

ODR is very difficult to cross here due to the s-bend that obscures sightlines and much traffic in both directions, sometimes at high speed (speeds have improved due to the average cameras, but some drivers are still well above the limit).

We are uncertain about the best location for the toucan crossing. Most difficult to cross is in the middle of the s-bend where people cross between Bridgend Farmhouse and Inch Park. However, as the toucan crossing serves several points (Inch Park, Bridgend, the cycle path at the allotments, the cemetery and the bus stop) and people coming from different directions currently tend to cross at different places, it is probably a good compromise to have the toucan crossing centrally between Bridgend and the Cemetery where it also connects easily and naturally to the existing path towards Peffermill.

The path between the cemetery and the allotments is a popular and important cycle connection into the park and further on to Peffermill and the Innocent path. With the new plan, this could also prove an important cycle connection from the new student housing in Peffermill to Kings Buildings and to Bioquarters. Therefore it is important to **have a convenient connection between this existing Peffermill path and the new proposal**. Currently the end of the existing path has a very steep slope at the ODR end and narrow chicanes which are not only an obstacle for wider buggies, mobility scooters and bike trailers, but also make it much harder to cycle up the slope as they take away momentum. We would like to have these **chicanes removed** and also wonder if it is possible to **reduce the slope of the end of the path** somewhat, e.g. by excavating it further.

We are also glad that the proposal will provide a footpath along the west side of ODR which has also been a long-term wish from the community, as is also evidenced by the dirt trail on the narrow strip of grass.

We suggest to **open a gap in the wall behind the bus stop** to access Inch Park. Many people from around Glenallan Drive walk through Inch Park to this bus stop, and often people climb over the wall near the bus stop – the wall had to be repaired numerous times in the past. We also suggest to **build a new foot/cycle path from the bus stop or the new toucan crossing into Inch Park** behind the Cottage (50 Old Dalkeith Rd) to the existing road inside the park, and possibly one to Glenallan Drive.

There are some concerns if the loss of the northbound bus lane will affect bus users. It is difficult for us to judge the impact; in our experience traffic can be busy in the morning, although it rarely comes to a complete stop, so buses should normally not be affected too much. However, it is also a key route for emergency vehicles from and to RIE.

We suggest **moving the new cycle path back from the road into Inch Park behind the wall**, so that the existing bus lane can be retained.

ODR - Recycling Centre Access Road (RCAR) / Dinmont Drive / Glenallan Drive

This is an additional section that was not listed in the consultation questionnaire. We added it due to its enormous local significance and would like to see considerable changes to the plans at the junction of the (unnamed) Access Road to the Recycling Centre with ODR, near Dinmont Drive and Glenallan Drive.

The current proposal removes the traffic islands at this location; we strongly object to that. Instead we would like to see **a pedestrian crossing** here, ideally as a signalised (toucan) crossing, alternatively as an uncontrolled tiger crossing. As a minimum, pedestrian refuges must be kept so people can cross ODR in two stages.

Furthermore, we propose to **add a foot and cycle path along the Recycling Centre Access Road, from Old Dalkeith Rd to the gate of Craigmillar Castle Park at the Recycling Centre**. We believe it should be easy and straightforward to add such a path on the north side of this road (between the road and the fence of the cemetery).

In our experience, the local relevance of this path is unknown and not obvious to people unfamiliar with the area, as it is not a named road, has (as far as we know) no special status as a cycle path or footpath, and it is not marked out in cycle maps (e.g. the Spokes map). Therefore we will explain the local relevance and motivate our suggestion in more detail.

Although originally built for the Recycling Centre (as the iron gates at ODR still show), it is one of only three entrances to Craigmillar Castle Park (the others being the path at Bridgend and Lady Susan's Walk at Ravenswood Avenue). For Inch residents, the RCAR is probably the most widely used and popular, as the other two entrances are a considerable detour, they involve more hills, and Lady Susan's walk is not suitable for bicycles, wheelchairs or buggies.

The adventure playground in the Park just north of the Recycling Centre is a very popular destination for families, and organisations like Edinburgh Greenspace now often organise events there. The RCAR is the most direct and most obvious route from the Inch to this playground and therefore used a lot by families as well as dog walkers and other people who want to enjoy the park.

Furthermore, the RCAR is also part of an important wider route network. Via the path at the playground it connects to Castlevie Avenue and Craigmillar Castle Avenue and leads directly to the new shops and facilities in Craigmillar (Lidl, Home Bargains, Craigmillar Library etc.); for many Inch residents this is one of the nearest and most easily accessible shopping areas.

It is also a route that continues (via Hay Drive) to the Innocent path and the Brunstane path for leisure cycle tours towards Musselburgh. While the Bridgend path also connects to the Innocent path, this is a long detour for tours towards Musselburgh, and the paths near the Royal Infirmary involve considerable hills; therefore the Recycling Centre Access Rd. is a key connection for leisure tours too.

In summary, the Recycling Centre Access Road is extremely important locally and as part of the wider cycle route network, but underdeveloped and undervalued. Improvements as part of this project can make it much more valuable for the whole cycle environment in South Edinburgh.

Currently, there are **several significant issues with the Recycling Centre Access Road (RCAR) that could easily addressed by amending the proposals.**

First, the RCAR has an enormously cratered surface that makes it difficult for bicycles, wheelchairs and buggies. In addition there can be considerable traffic accessing the recycling centre and parked cars. Therefore we feel that **a foot and cycle path alongside the RCAR** would be a huge improvement that could easily be added to this plan, and it appears that on the north side (along the cemetery fence) there is enough space and no structures that would cause problems. The path should be protected from parking. At ODR, the old iron gates should be removed and the footpath remodelled.

Second, many cars usually park along this road as people visit the park, creating obstacles for people walking and cycling, and sometimes the entrance to the park is blocked by parking. While generally we encourage local people to walk rather than drive, **some parking should be provided at the NE end of this road.** Also, there is an enormous car park inside the cemetery which is never used to capacity, but the cemetery has no gate on the NE side towards the park. We suggest installing a **gate on the East corner of the cemetery**, and also investigate if the car park inside the cemetery can be connected to the road at the Recycling Centre.

Third, it is often quite difficult to cross ODR from Dinmont Drive to the RCAR. Traffic is often very busy and fast and comes from both directions with few gaps, so even with the traffic island one has to wait considerable time. Note that local residents found this crossing so important that they recently lobbied for the installation of dropped kerbs and a short connecting path to Dinmont Drive here, which were installed about two years ago.

Therefore we would like to see a **pedestrian crossing of ODR at the Recycling Centre Access Rd.** We suggest to have the crossing just to the north of the Access Rd. and remodel the entrance so that it connects to the foot and cycle path that we proposed above.

Ideally we would like to see this as a **signalised toucan crossing**. While we expect that there might be some resistance to having another signalised crossing on ODR, it seems to us that the distance between crossings would not be unusual for a city road, and the different crossings tend to be used at different times, so it is not so likely drivers would have to stop at all of them. The second choice would be a **tiger crossing** which would help to stop traffic and reduce waiting times for pedestrians. A pedestrian refuge is the absolutely necessary minimum so one can cross in two stages.

On the west side of ODR there are existing shared paths to Dinmont Drive and Glenallan Drive which are good and important and unaffected by the plans. On the **path towards Glenallan Drive we suggest to remove the two sets of chicanes**; these are very restrictive for bigger buggies, mobility scooters and bicycle trailers. We assume these were installed over a decade ago to stop motorbikes on the path. However, while illegal motorbikes are still a problem in the Inch, the situation has improved considerably thanks to action from the police, and chicanes only displace motorbike riding to other residential streets and the parks without solving the issue.

ODR – Walter Scott Avenue (WSA)

We generally support the routing and design of the bike path here.

Having the bidirectional path on the west side of ODR solves a particular problem that cyclists in the Inch have been struggling with: Currently, it is very difficult to position oneself on ODR for turning right into WSA (one of the main routes into the Inch), as traffic is busy and often fast, while most cyclist are very slow uphill. Many local cyclists have experienced unpleasant situations here.

Where the bike path crosses WSA, it is a good decision to route the path away from ODR so that cars can turn fully into Walter Scott Avenue before crossing the bike path and not have to wait on ODR itself; this should make it easier for drivers to see and stop for pedestrians. The path should **cross WSA as a tiger crossing** (the details in the plan are not totally clear to us here). This can be a busy junction with many people walking to and from the bus stops, and cars turn into WSA unexpectedly without indicating, while there can be a queue of cars waiting to leave WSA. Therefore it is important that people on foot and on bike get a safe crossing point.

ODR – Ravenswood Avenue

We fully support this and have no suggestions for improvements here.

We are very supportive as this plan solves some issues that have nagged residents for long. Currently, there are steps at ODR unsuitable for wheels, and no dropped kerbs at the end of Ravenswood Av. (somebody emptied a bag of concrete onto the kerb to create an ad-hoc-ramp; an

indication that improvement is much needed). It is one of the three entrances to Craigmillar Castle Park and popular for walkers from the southern part of the Inch, and a crossing of ODR is very welcome here.

ODR - Kingston Avenue

The proposal delivers a significant improvement here. The existing advisory bike lanes get so narrow here that they are practically unusable and very dangerous due to high amount of traffic. A protected bike lane is urgently needed here. While some cyclists prefer unidirectional bike paths on both sides, a bidirectional path is probably a better choice due to the width limitations.

The new path is very narrow here, and options should be investigated to **make it wider**, even if just by half a metre. This can be a very busy route for cyclists and pedestrians. Many people who are employed at RIE or Bioquarters have moved into the Inch and walk to work this route, while there is cycle traffic in both directions (from the centre to BioQuarter, but also commuters from Gilmerton to the centre).

However we appreciate that the overall width is very restricted due to the walls, particularly the concrete retaining wall.

Craigmillar Castle Road junction

We fully support this section and have no particular suggestions for improvement.

It is good that the foot and bike paths cross Craigmillar Castle Road with a tiger crossing; currently this is quite dangerous to cross for pedestrians. Routing the path a few metres away from the junction will make crossing safer as drivers get to the tiger crossing “head-on” and will more easily see people.

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