

SPOKES RESPONSE TO COUNCIL CONSULTATION ON THE CAMERON TOLL TO BIO-QUARTER CYCLING AND WALKING ROUTE

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General Points

1. We welcome the opportunity to comment on this consultation. As is normal with SPOKES responses, our preference is to send a detailed and customised response rather than complete the questionnaire.
2. We very much welcome the proposals to provide an improved and segregated route for cyclists as a safer alternative to the Old Dalkeith Road. Old Dalkeith Rd is very busy with motor traffic, particularly during the “rush hours” but, despite its disadvantages, many cyclists do use this route and would benefit from these proposals. Many more travelling along this route for work, study or routine visits to the RIE might be willing to take up cycling if this safer alternative was provided.
3. In addition, we strongly support the proposals for including a cycleway round the north side of Cameron Toll since the existing road is seen as very challenging for cyclists and a formidable deterrent for potential cyclists.
4. SPOKES was instrumental in campaigning, some years ago, for the advisory cycle lanes currently found on Old Dalkeith Rd. However, these advisory cycle lanes, although an improvement on the previous position of no provision for cyclists, have clear disadvantages especially where the lanes are dangerously narrow, where they are routinely used for parking cars such as outside the Toyota Garage or are located on the road side of a parking bay. We have registered our concern about limitations of the current position on a number of occasions.
5. We think that the cycleway should have priority over all the side roads it crosses. We suggest that the plans should be checked to make sure this applies in all cases.
6. Our preference would be for 1-way cycleways on each side of the road rather than a 2-way cycleway which requires cyclists to cross the road at various stages in the journey. We appreciate that there are arguments for a 2-way route in this case, for example, proximity of the route to side roads, there are also disadvantages such as potential conflicts between cyclists on the narrow stretch where the terrain encourages much faster speeds in one direction. From a strategic point of view, we are in great danger of building ad hoc and incompatible routes in different parts of Edinburgh that cannot be easily integrated into a comprehensive network. As this is the first proposed, segregated cycleway in Edinburgh to take cyclists into the suburbs we think that there is a case for reconsidering this decision.
7. Cameron Toll is not an obvious destination or starting off point for cyclists since it was developed very much with cars in mind and without any consideration for cyclists, essentially a few miserable cycle racks, being added on at a later stage. The roundabouts/gyratories that have been built to facilitate access by car are positively dangerous as is the 50m cycle path provided across the middle of the space between the car park and the railway bridge. In short, journeys by bike will almost always start and finish elsewhere than Cameron Toll. The most obvious larger, nearby starting points/destinations are Kings Buildings and Pollock Halls and it is important to consider how cyclists to and from these places to the RIE/ Bio-Quarter will navigate their way safely round Cameron Toll. The proposals do include some measures which help here but more is required, particularly providing for access to the cycleway from Dalkeith Rd and vice versa.
8. We would ideally like to see the project extended south from the BioQuarter to the boundary with Midlothian at The Wisp. We understand that Midlothian Council will soon be undertaking a feasibility study for a Wisp-Sheriffhall project, and it would make sense for this to connect to a cycleway along Old Dalkeith Road from The Wisp to the RIE. It would presumably be cost-effective to include that section in this project, rather than completing it at a later date.

Detailed Comments

9. We welcome the proposal for the protected cycleway to start in Craigmillar Park with access to Wilton Rd by way of a toucan crossing. Wilton Rd is relatively quiet compared with Esslemont Rd and use of this route to and from Kings Buildings would also avoid the difficult, multiple junction traffic lights where Esslemont Rd intersects with Lady Rd, Craigmillar Park and Liberton Rd. But it is indirect and, if adopted, would require careful and comprehensive signage.
10. We also strongly support the proposal to extend the segregated cycleway along Lady Rd as this is crucial to allow cyclists to navigate round the very hostile barrier presented by Cameron Toll itself.
11. Although the precise way in which the route then gets to the western side of Old Dalkeith Rd is not entirely clear. It seems to be the case that cyclists will need to cross 4 junctions – 2 on Lady Rd and 2 on access roads to and from the Cameron Toll car park. This seems complicated and an alternative might be for the route to cross over to the south side of Lady Rd by converting the existing pedestrian crossing into a toucan and using the space currently given over to shrubs and a taxi rank for the route itself. This might provide a simpler and quicker alternative.
12. Cyclists arriving from Dalkeith Road or Peffermill Road are ignored and have to find their own way to and from the cycleway using the existing gyratory. Alternatives are required and should be included in the final plans,
13. Leaving aside our comments on the merits of 1 way versus 2-way cycle ways, we support the proposal to use the grass strip by the side of Inch Park for a 3m cycleway followed by a similar sized segregated cycleway taken from space on the road.
14. We suggest that consideration should be given to a toucan crossing to allow cyclists and pedestrians to cross to the road leading up to the recycling site. This would allow direct access by local residents to the very popular play park in Craigmillar Castle Park and also provide access for Inch residents, by bike, to the new shops and facilities in Craigmillar and to the Innocent cycleway via Hay Avenue. However, the road up to the Recycling Centre itself is in very poor condition and unsuitable for cycling so to make this work would require the construction of a new (possibly shared) footpath and cycleway.
15. South of Ravenswood, the proposed cycleway is reduced to 2m in width. This is unacceptably narrow given that cyclists travelling north will be coming down hill and, therefore, potentially travelling at speed.
16. We understand, from discussion at the consultation event at Cameron Toll, that you are proposing that Kingston Ave is to be linked to the cycleway with a layout similar to that used at the east end of Rankeillor St where cyclists cross to the off side of the road. For this to work, space will need to be taken from the road to create a safe area for cyclists to wait and, as a result, a sharper turn for cars.
17. At Craigmillar Castle Rd, there is yet further crossing although it is not clear whether this is to be a toucan or a tiger crossing and after a very short stretch of 2.5 m width, the cycleway reverts to the unsatisfactory 2m width up towards Little France Crescent. "The junction with Craigmillar Castle Road is a serious cyclist injury hotspot, with 3 reported serious and 3 slight injuries during the last 12 years.
18. We are concerned to note that View 7 shows 3 potential crossings of Little France Crescent for cyclists coming from the Bio-Quarter and wishing to travel south. The traffic light settings need to be arranged to ensure that cyclists can cross all 3 together.
19. It would be helpful to see how the cycleway links into the existing and proposed cycleways on the RIE and Bio-Quarter site.

Conclusion

20. The proposals are a significant improvement on what currently exists but we think there is scope for further improvement. We would be happy to discuss our comments and suggestions with you.

Richard Grant
On behalf of SPOKES Planning Group

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