

# A720 Sheriffhall Roundabout

## Response to Draft Orders and Environmental Statement by Spokes, the Lothian Cycle Campaign, January 2020

<https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/draft-orders-and-environmental-statement-a720-sheriffhall-roundabout-scheme/>

### About Spokes

Spokes is a non-party-political voluntary organisation with 1200 members, mainly in Edinburgh and Lothian, founded in 1977. We aim to promote cycling for everyday transport, as part of a sustainable transport strategy, and to persuade councils and government to do the same, including through high quality infrastructure. We welcome this opportunity to comment on the draft orders and environmental statement for the A720 Sheriffhall Roundabout scheme.

### Background

Sheriffhall roundabout is a notorious junction for cyclists and pedestrians and acts as a very real barrier between Midlothian from Edinburgh to many cyclists, and indeed potential cyclists. Spokes therefore strongly supports the intention to include safe routes for pedestrians and cyclists at Sheriffhall roundabout.

However, we also believe that increasing road capacity at Sheriffhall by creating a grade-separated junction will have adverse effects on traffic congestion, air quality and carbon emissions in Edinburgh and Midlothian. On balance, we feel the advantages of the current scheme do not outweigh the disadvantages, and we are therefore objecting to the scheme on the grounds that it is likely to have significant adverse effects on the environment in Edinburgh and Midlothian.

Safe routes for pedestrians and cyclists could and should be provided here, whether or not grade-separation of the road junction goes ahead.

## Comments on the scheme

### Grade separation of the road junction

- Grade separation of Sheriffhall junction will almost certainly lead to an increase in the number of vehicles driven on it, due to the [well known](#) phenomenon of [induced demand](#). Indeed, the [DMRB Stage 2 Scheme Assessment Report](#) for the scheme predicts more than 30 000 additional trips will be made each day in 2030 if the junction is grade-separated. This will lead to increased congestion at other points on the bypass, such as Straiton junction, and on the surrounding road network.
- Edinburgh Council's [Local Transport Strategy](#) includes a target of reducing the modal share of commutes made by car from 42% in 2010 to 29% in 2020. However, the most recent reported actual figure was 39% in 2018 (from Scottish Household Survey, reported in [Transport and Travel in Scotland](#)), so clearly more action will be required to achieve the Council's target. Measures such as improved park and ride provision, segregated cycleways and a workplace parking levy are likely to help, but grade-separation of Sheriffhall roundabout will not.
- Edinburgh Council's (draft) [City Mobility Plan](#) also includes a goal of "managing the amount of general traffic in the city centre and town centres". This goal will only be made more difficult if traffic capacity at Sheriffhall is increased.
- The Scottish Government's Infrastructure Commission [recently advised](#) Ministers that there should be "*a presumption in favour of investment to future proof existing road infrastructure and to make it safer, resilient and more reliable rather than increase road capacity*" due to the climate emergency. That advice should be heeded, and the money allocated for Sheriffhall roundabout should instead be spent on public transport and safe active travel routes.
- In May 2019 the Scottish Government declared a [Climate Emergency](#) and stated, "*This Scottish Government will be placing climate change at the heart of everything we do. I can confirm that it will be at the core of our next Programme for Government and Spending Review.*" In a Climate Emergency, the Government should not be waiting for the next Programme for Government and Spending Review - it should be acting now, by re-allocating the Sheriffhall money towards public transport and safe active travel routes.
- The 2006 National Transport Strategy has three Key Strategic Outcomes, which are also restated in the [2016 Refresh](#): "*improved journey times and connections, to tackle congestion and lack of integration and connections in transport*"; "*reduced emissions, to tackle climate change, air quality, health improvement*"; and "*improved quality, accessibility and affordability, to give choice of public transport, better quality services and value for money, or alternative to car.*" Grade-separation of Sheriffhall junction is likely to contradict all three of these Key Strategic Outcomes.

- The (draft) [National Transport Strategy 2](#) contains the following Priorities: “*Takes climate action*” and “*Improves our health and wellbeing*”, as well as the following Outcomes: “*Will help deliver our net-zero [emissions] target*”, “*Will promote greener, cleaner choices*”, “*Will help make our communities great places to live*” and “*Will enable us to make healthy travel choices*”. Since grade-separation of Sheriffhall junction will lead to more journeys being made by car, and hence increase emissions, lower air quality in both Edinburgh and Midlothian, it is clearly at odds with all of these objectives. Therefore, if the Scottish Government is serious about these policies, we believe it should cancel the scheme and invest the money in sustainable transport schemes instead.

### Provision for active travel within the scheme

- Spokes very much appreciates the efforts that have been made to significantly improve the initial proposals as regards active travel provision for crossing the bypass safely. Nonetheless, good connecting routes between the junction and surrounding destinations have not as yet been incorporated into the project. The following connections are vital, and must be built at high quality as part of the project, to ensure that the bypass crossing is effective and attracts the maximum number of active travellers...
- A cycleway should be added on the east side of the A6106(N), and an associated underpass. Without these, cyclists coming south on the A6106 (from Millerhill direction) will have to cross the road in order to use the underpass on the west side of the A6106. It is particularly important that the underpass is built as part of the roundabout project, as it will be difficult and expensive to retrofit. It is worth noting that extensive housing and employment developments are planned for land on the east side of the A6106(N) at Shawfair, Millerhill Marshalling Yards and Newton Farm, that Shawfair train station is also located here and that [Midlothian Council's Active Travel Plan](#) contains a proposal for a multi user path between Sheriffhall roundabout and Millerhill junction (running parallel to, but north of, the A720). Without an underpass on the east side of the A6106(N), accessing all of these becomes significantly more difficult for pedestrians and cyclists.
- The cycleways should be extended so that they connect at least as far as Dalkeith (A6106(S)), Eskbank (A7(S)) and The BioQuarter (A7(N)) and Fort Kinnaird (A6106(N)).
- Crucially, **funding for all connecting routes** should be included as part of an overall integrated project. This must not be left to local authorities as, when and if they can raise the necessary sums. The fact that the connecting routes lie largely outside the trunk road boundaries is a matter of bureaucracy not of transport planning, and Transport Scotland must take a transport planning approach rather than merely being satisfied with an oasis of cycling excellence within a desert of underprovision. Transport Scotland's Bathgate/Airdrie rail project was a distressing example of the bureaucratic approach, with active travel routes between stations and several towns only appearing years later when councils managed to scrape together the requisite funding.