

SPOKES *The Lothian Cycle Campaign*

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Cllr Lesley Macinnes, Cllr Karen Doran
Transport and Environment Convener and Deputy Convener
City of Edinburgh

cc Paul Lawrence, Director of Place

22.7.20

Dear Cllrs Macinnes and Doran

We are writing with some thoughts on the Spaces for People programme, possible lessons for future permanent schemes, and particularly some concerns about the town centre shopping street schemes.

We would be pleased to discuss the points in this letter, if a meeting is possible, particularly as regards safe and welcoming conditions for people cycling in the town centres.

Spaces for People

There are three main categories of SfP projects...

- ◆ **Traffic restrictions – road closures and bus gates** We very much support these measures and hope to see further examples
- ◆ **Segregated cycling routes from A to B** We are delighted to see the growing number of these projects, to encourage more people to cycle, and more safely, on important corridors. Obviously we have comments on points of detail but the overall approach is very welcome
- ◆ **Town centre / shopping street projects** We fully support the footway widening which is a major element of these projects, but have serious concerns over the treatment of both cycling and motor traffic – the main reason for this letter.

Consultation and implementation processes

Overall we are delighted with the ongoing series of SfP measures coming forward. Compared to the rate of progress with pre-covid active travel projects there is in fact no comparison!

We see lessons here for the future, where project development processes could adopt the best features of the pre-covid 'multiple-consultation' approach and of the SfP 'try then modify' approach, so that people could both feel fully consulted and yet also reap the benefits of projects at an early stage. Our thoughts are laid out in this article, which we trust you will consider for the future

<http://www.spokes.org.uk/2020/06/spaces-for-people>

Town Centre / shopping street projects

We are fully aware that these are the most difficult and contentious projects, with fixed levels of road width, clear need for wider footways, often intense pressure from shopkeepers to retain roadside parking, and of course the need for speed of implementation.

Nonetheless the town centre schemes in general appear if anything to worsen cycling conditions; certainly not encouraging more people to cycle or people to cycle more. In most cases, far from segregated provision, the proposals bring one lane for all traffic, including bicycles. Cyclists will experience the fear resulting from traffic building up behind and the danger of close passes. Nor are traffic levels or speeds reduced.

This does not comply with the National Transport Strategy's sustainable transport hierarchy¹. Traffic levels and flow are taking priority over safe and welcoming conditions for people cycling. High streets should feel and be safe for people to walk, wheel and cycle - through wider footways, safe cycle facilities, traffic reduction and lower speeds.

The town centre proposals are in two phases, albeit with no indication of timescale for Phase 2, with most cycle provision, apparently, in Phase 2. However, not only does this leave an interim period of unknown duration when cycling conditions will often be worsened, but the Phase 1 designs give little confidence that it will be feasible to make adequate cycling provision in Phase 2.

A common approach in Phase 1 is to remove selected roadside car parking and divide the freed-up space between wider footway and wider carriageway, stating in responses that this provides room on the carriageway for cycling. Another common approach is to extend the footway over an existing advisory cycle lane, without providing a new cycle lane in Phase 1 (and no clarity on Phase 2).

Whilst existing confident cyclists can probably cope, there is little hope of encouraging more people to cycle or supporting those who have started recently and are nervous of traffic - as is the intention of the government's SFP funding. For those who do nonetheless decide to cycle, many will unfortunately be tempted to use the extended footway area rather than carriageway.

Town Centres - Next Steps

1. Town Centre Phase 1 schemes are now being implemented, with welcome footway widening. The Council must, as a priority, identify consequential risks to people cycling, given the points above.
2. We would be grateful to know when and how Phase 2 will be brought forward and Implemented.
3. Given that these schemes come under emergency pandemic funding and rules, 'try then modify' should be applied urgently to Phase 1 projects rather than only waiting for Phase 2 to make cycling safer. Modifications should be based firmly on the sustainable transport hierarchy: walking and wheeling, then cycling, then public transport, then private vehicles – so making high streets more pleasant to spend time in and supporting local businesses. See appendix for possible measures.

Yours sincerely

Dave du Feu

Spokes, in conjunction with Spokes Portobello and Spokes South Edinburgh

¹ The Sustainable Travel Hierarchy is on pages 42-43 of the National Transport Strategy, <https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/47052/national-transport-strategy.pdf>

Appendix

Below we list measures put forward by Spokes in various town centre consultation responses, in line with the transport hierarchy, to provide safer and more welcoming cycling conditions, to make high streets more pleasant to spend time in, and to support local businesses.

The Council should consider using these and other appropriate measures, the mix of which will depend on each specific location.

- ◆ The norm should be that where roadside parking is removed, the space is divided between extended footway and a segregated cycle lane, rather than extended footway and wider carriageway.
- ◆ Given that the fears of traders about loss of parking custom have been found to be groundless in many cases elsewhere², there should be greater confidence in removing all car spaces on shopping streets – except where there are no adequate blue-badge or loading alternatives. Retention of car parking often prevents segregated cycle provision³ - despite the hierarchy.
- ◆ Where space allows, parklets and pavement cafes should be encouraged.
- ◆ Through traffic should be diverted from shopping streets wherever possible: the current proposals do not. For example, Portobello High Street is retained as an arterial traffic route (and without the segregated cycle provision which the draft City Mobility Plan promises⁴).
- ◆ Bus gates (enforced through number-plate recognition cameras if possible) are another option to prevent through private traffic. Bus gates could initially be time-dependent, for main shopping periods. Morningside Road could be a suitable trial location.
- ◆ In shopping streets a 15mph limit should be considered, as in the City of London Square Mile⁵

2 We welcome Cllr Macinnes's motion to the 23.7.20 Policy Committee asking for a report on this. Item 8.2 at <https://democracy.edinburgh.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=5516&Ver=4>

3 For example, in the council's Corstorphine response, *"To minimise the impact on the available on-street parking it is not possible to create a segregated cycle lane on both sides end to end. Where possible cycle segregation will be introduced under Phase 2."*

<http://www.spokes.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/2007-SFP-Corstorphine-Assessment-Feedback.pdf>

4 "A detailed plan will be in place to reallocate road space on all arterial routes to deliver improved public transport and dedicated active travel infrastructure (by 2025)" Draft City Mobility Plan, page 17.

https://consultationhub.edinburgh.gov.uk/sfc/city-mobility-plan/user_uploads/city-mobility-plan-february-2020.pdf

5 The City of London transport strategy is planning a 15mph limit across the entire Square Mile, and as part of their Covid-19 measures will introduce 15mph as an advisory measure. <https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/assets/Services-Environment/covid-19-city-streets-explaining-the-changes.pdf>