

COVID-19 Walking and Cycling Emergency Response Measures: Proposed segregated cycleways on Wester Hailes Road

Response from Spokes, the Lothian Cycle Campaign, July 2020

This response considers the proposals shared by the Spaces for People Team on 7th July 2020

We strongly support the proposal to install temporary protected cycle lanes on Wester Hailes Road, and to bring in a 20mph speed limit. Wester Hailes Road forms part of the “Cycling Ring Road”, but the existing layout and design makes it feel very hostile for cyclists. Protected cycleways on Wester Hailes Road will be particularly useful for people commuting from south and south west Edinburgh to Sighthill and South Gyle.

We also hope that the proposals for Wester Hailes Road will serve, wherever possible, as a template for the rest of the cycling Ring Road.

Detailed comments

Calder Road junction: In order to facilitate journeys to Sighthill and South Gyle, the proposed infrastructure must connect easily and clearly to the underpasses at the Bankhead roundabout. The “No cycling” signs in the underpasses should be removed.

For northbound cyclists, this will require a dropped kerb and short section of cycle path connecting to the existing footpath to be installed immediately before the crash barriers. The dropped kerb and connecting path should be wide enough that it can be used safely and easily by people using non-standard cycles, such as tricycles and handcycles. Additionally, the cycle lane here should be at least 1.5m wide, which is the “Absolute Minimum Width” given by *Cycling by Design*, and which would be achievable with 2.85m general traffic lanes. We note that elsewhere in the proposals there are places where similar lanes are only 2.75m wide.

Southbound cyclists coming from the underpass are likely to find it easiest to join the cycleway at the Sighthill Road junction, and signage facilitating this should be considered.

Murrayburn Road and Westburn Avenue junction: The proposed layouts approaching these junctions both have a 1.5m mandatory cycle lane and two 3.4m general traffic lanes. If the general traffic lanes were reduced to even 3.15m wide, 2m wide cycle lanes could be maintained through the junction. We note that elsewhere in the proposals there are places where similar lanes are as narrow as 2.75m, and that *Cycling by Design* says that “Lane widths of between 3.2m and 4.0m should be avoided” as they “encourage unsafe overtaking” (this is in the section on bus lanes, but the principle also applies to general traffic lanes). This is important even when there are segregated cycle lanes, as some cyclists will still want to use the general traffic lanes (in order to turn right, for example).

Slip road into cinema car park: The existing layout is maintained here, save for some red markings where the cycle lane crosses the slip road. This cycle lane is incredibly unsafe, and its continued existence should not be considered acceptable. Few cyclists on Wester Hailes Road currently use this cycle lane, with most following a safer and more direct route across the mouth of the junction. Since this manoeuvre will not be possible for cyclists using the segregated cycle lane, the proposals will actually make this junction *more dangerous* for cyclists.

The slip road access to the car park from Wester Hailes Road should therefore be closed, with all access instead being from Murrayburn Road. This would allow the cycle lane to follow a direct and continuous route instead.

Clovenstone roundabout: This is a notorious blackspot, with four cycling casualties in the last five years of available data (2015-2019). We believe that the plans are probably as good as can be expected for temporary infrastructure, and welcome the proposed changes. However, given the casualty record, a longer term permanent solution is vital.

General comments

Bus stops and cycle lanes: We are supportive of “floating” bus stops in principle, and welcome their inclusion in this temporary scheme. However, pedestrians crossing the cycleway at floating bus stops must have clear and explicit priority. Ideally, this would be achieved with controlled crossings, to aid vulnerable pedestrians. Zebra crossings, similar to those at the floating bus stops on Leith Walk, should be included at minimum, and we understand that this is possible using the proposed Rediweld and Vectorial materials.

The ramps at the floating bus stops should not be too steep or narrow, as this will cause problems for people using non-standard cycles such as recumbent bikes or handcycles.

Speed limit reduction: We are very pleased to see the proposed reduction in speed limit from 40mph to 20mph. We hope that enforcement of this happens.

Cycle lane widths: There are several places in the proposals where carriageway lanes are over 5m wide, next to a 2m cycleway. Widening the cycleways at these points to even 4m would not require the loss of a traffic lane yet have several advantages:

- It would become possible for cyclists to overtake other cyclists safely;
- Narrow carriageways are known to reduce speeding;
- Cyclists would be farther away from vehicles.

We note that *Cycling by Design* gives 2m as the “Desirable Minimum Width” for unidirectional kerb-segregated cycle lanes. Since there is plenty of space here, the proposals should definitely be going beyond the “desirable minimum”.