

TEC 6.10.22 - Paper 7.1 - Our Future Streets: Edinburgh's approach to a circulation plan

Comments from Spokes Planning Group, particularly on appendix 2

In general, Spokes welcomes the circulation plan proposals. However, we have a small number of particular concerns and comments where we believe it is too rigid. We trust that councillors will consider our suggested improvements carefully.

Clearly, it is vital that the Council develops an approach which takes strong cognisance of the transport hierarchy. However, it can never be 100%, or all road space would be converted into walking-only. This is presumably in part why the word 'Generally' appears quite often in appendix 2. Rather, it is a question of balancing alternatives, but with a strong emphasis towards modes that are higher in the hierarchy.

We believe that none of the principles in the draft framework should be 100% categorical, as there will always be exceptions. For example, where there are critical safety issues for a particular mode at a particular junction or other location, or for other unforeseeable reasons. We are pleased to see that virtually all the principles in the draft framework are already worded in this way, but note that the second bullet point in the Cycle Network section is not. It should be reworded slightly to allow for some discretion.

However we have a particular concern re High Streets/ shopping streets such as Dalry Road, Morningside Road, Portobello, etc, and the slightly different case of Princes Street.

Shopping streets are sometimes of restricted width, but are also important destinations and are likely to be significant links in any city cycle network. We hope there would normally be width for segregated cycling provision, e.g. as in the very popular tweet by Cllr Ross McKenzie a few weeks ago for Gorgie/Dalry.

We believe it is incredibly important that the city builds a continuous cycling network which is suitable for cyclists of all abilities to use, and which includes destinations such as high streets and town centres. Wherever possible, this should be dealt with by reallocating carriageway space to allow for footways and cycleways of acceptable widths. We accept that in a small number of particularly constrained streets, it will not be possible to provide the desirable widths of footways and cycleways. In these situations, we would urge that cycleways be included, even if the widths of the cycleways and footways are slightly substandard as a result.

Other measures to reduce through traffic, such as bus gates, would also be beneficial in terms of making streets be relatively safe and attractive for getting about by bike, for people of all types and levels of confidence.

Finally, there can also be cases where the framework could be problematic from a safety perspective. For example, the phase 3 tramline safety project which is shortly to begin construction at South St Andrew St (the scene of many cyclist injuries, including serious injuries resulting in compensation claims against the Council) would quite probably never have been allowed under the 'Place, Walking and Wheeling' section of appendix 2.

Specifically on Princes Street, Spokes remains strongly of the view that protected cycling provision is vital, in part to reduce the continuing non-blackspot crashes which occur when cyclists are travelling parallel to the tramlines but do encounter them. Some in the Council argue that George St is an alternative. George Street is indeed an important route, but for Item 3.1 many trips it is not an acceptable alternative to Princes Street, or would require several extra junction manoeuvres or tramline crossings to use it. Furthermore, we are extremely concerned that the current proposed concept of a 'cycle street' in the centre of George St (which Spokes originally reluctantly agreed in place of protected lanes) is being watered down more and more, with additional categories of motor traffic access now being actively considered.

More generally, we have concerns that some of the framework objectives are genuinely incompatible, and in danger of promising everything to everyone. For example, ensuring that all residents have "adequate access to useable car parking" seems highly optimistic, particularly in the inner city residential areas, unless this is referring to car club spaces rather than private ownership. Also, how extensive is the "clear and coherent network" of car routes? - the more extensive it is, the less space remains for public and active travel infrastructure.

In conclusion, the Council has made a valuable first step in developing the Circulation Plan, but modifications such as we suggest need careful thought.

We thank you for listening, and trust our points can be taken into account by the Committee.