

## Comments from Spokes, 20.12.22

The [Spokes deputation](#) to the Dec 8 Transport Committee raised various concerns, whilst accepting the need for a Circulation Plan.

Having given further thought to the Committee Report, we are increasingly concerned over the potential implications of the current draft of the Plan for encouraging and catering for the large numbers of people who could, but currently do not, get about by bike. Many of these people are likely to be novices and/or less confident, or families reluctant to allow children on the roads. It is these current non-cyclers who the Council must attract if it is to achieve its desired substantial rise in cycle use for everyday trips.

### 1. Cycle Network “suitable for all”

The draft Circulation Plan refers to the need for a connected ‘*cycle network*’ but is not sufficiently clear in what it means by a cycle network. Crucially, is this a network which is suitable for ‘all’ or is it only for the more confident?

Even where a route within the network is largely suitable for all, one or more sections which are only for the confident effectively rules out that whole route for the less confident.

The current “cycle network” definition (4.8.4) includes “*some gaps in cycling segregation or lengths of shared bus/cycle.*” The draft combined map in the report suggests that such gaps are likely. Whilst such sections may be suitable for confident cyclists, they can not be part of a network which is suitable for all. Similar comments apply to most of the other street type definitions in section 4.8.

**Thus we urge that the Circulation Plan provides clarity, defined and mapped, on a connected cycle network which is ‘*suitable for all*’ rather than the current more ambiguous definition.**

In some sections, where space is tight, it is not possible to have both a bus lane and a cycle lane. Where such sections are essential to form part of a *connected cycle network suitable for all*, then the cycle lane should be provided – in line with the transport hierarchy.

Of course, there will be many locations where there are shared bus lanes which, for those willing to cycle on the roads, are certainly preferable to no bus lanes. Nonetheless they are scary to many - and furthermore they do not operate 24/7, and there is no automated (ANPR) enforcement to ensure they remain free of parked cars. Thus whilst they can usefully be indicated as beneficial to confident cyclists, they should not be marked as part of a ‘suitable for all’ network.

### 2. Traffic reduction

Although the draft Plan is intended to support the Council’s 30% car-km reduction target, it is difficult to see how this will be achieved without significant measures on the ground. The current draft plan is only at outline stage, and perhaps for that reason does not yet show any restrictions, such as bus gates and modal filters. However, such measures will be essential and must be shown in the next iteration of the Plan.

In particular, the Council should be aiming for a car-free city centre (other than blue badge), with streets such as The Bridges having bus gates. Local high streets should always be regulated primarily as destinations, with high pedestrian and cycle accessibility, rather than through routes for private motor traffic – and again, bus gates can be a useful tool to achieve this.

Finally, it would be helpful for the forthcoming more detailed Circulation Plan maps to include an overlay of defined car-reduced areas between the bypass and city centre. The [Birmingham](#) Circulation Plan provides a useful model - and has in turn learned from the Circulation Plans of European cities including [Ghent](#).