

CEC PLANNING COMMITTEE, 12.11.25 - written deputation from Spokes

7.3 Non-Statutory Planning Guidance – Finalised Princes Street and Waverley Valley Strategy

The proposed draft guidance, whilst including many worthwhile proposals, has one over-riding failing, in that it completely neglects the huge area of land occupied by roadway, and assumes it must stay as now. It is as if we have separate Planning and Transport departments rather than a unified Place department. This cannot be the right approach for a holistic view of Princes Street and the Waverley Valley. Nor is it right that large amounts of money should be invested without the whole area being considered in a unified manner.

The earlier, consultation, proposals were widely criticised by the West End and New Town Community Councils, by internationally renowned Richard Murphy architects, and others for [lacking ambition and imagination](#). Nor did they go anywhere near the recommendations of the Council's commissioned report by urban designer [Jan Gehl](#), way back in 2010, who identified "*cycle and pedestrian priority*" and reduced vehicle presence as "*essential*" for Princes Street to achieve its "*huge potential*." Sadly, the draft Guidance document presented today shows little change in these respects. It fails to live up to what is expected in the heart of a modern European capital.

Richard Murphy Architects have put forward the sort of approach which takes these issues seriously ([website](#); [full report](#)) and looks at how the entire area, including the roadway, can be transformed into a place catering properly for walking, wheeling and cycling, together with effective tram and bus services, and with much greater scope for enjoying the incredible setting of Scotland's premier street. In particular, Murphy points out how much of the Princes Street roadspace is currently just empty tarmac for a lot of the day, whilst pedestrians have inadequate footways, and cycling conditions are very poor.

Spokes believes the Princes Street and Waverley Valley strategy should advise re-allocation of the carriageway space for widened footways and protected cycle lanes, whilst continuing to form a public transport corridor. The proposals by Murphy show that there are feasible opportunities to re-think the through-traffic of taxis, national bus services and loading access points to form a high-quality public realm.

There are several precedents of tram and bus sharing lanes through busy areas, with laybys for bus stops or other essential purposes, including:

- Leith Walk between Balfour St and the Foot of the Walk (500m, 2023)



- Manchester Second City Crossing (400m, 2016)



- Current Tram proposals South Bridge-Nicolson St (800m, in consultation)



The Richard Murphy Princes Street proposals are a very similar concept to the above examples, as in this drawing and video clip from [his report](#).

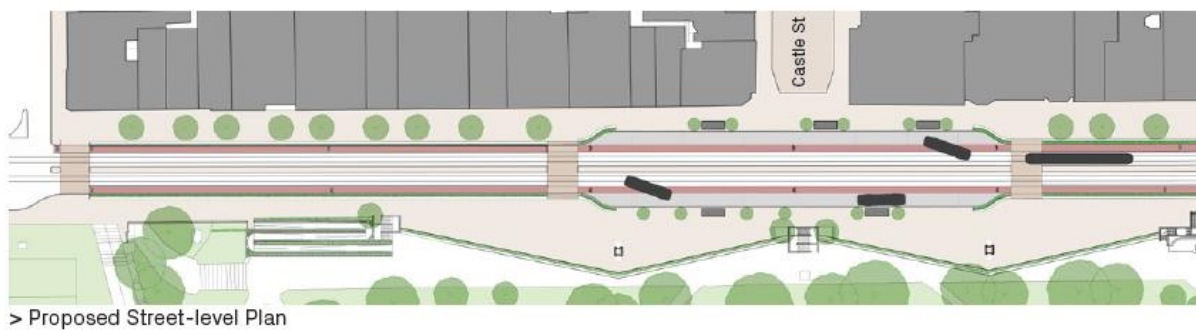


Figure 1. Still image from Richard Murphy Architects fly-through (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4LZLsfozjqc>)

Resurfacing of the footway and carriageway is very costly and presents a rare opportunity to modify kerblines that may not return for another decade or more.

In addition to footway extension, carriageway redetermination presents an opportunity for protected cycle infrastructure. Princes Street continues to be a popular cycle route for many journeys, including to destinations on the street itself. Indeed, anecdotal and crowdsourced evidence suggests it continues to be as or more popular than George Street.



Figure 2. Ride data, Weekly Heatmap 07.11.25, Strava

Princes Street is additionally a location of cyclist tram line crashes, injuries and compensation claims to the Council. Welcome safety improvements have been made at identified blackspots, but many crashes are at random locations – with [a variety of causes](#), but often involving experienced cyclists not intending to cross the tracks, but forced into them by traffic pressures. Such crashes can only be fully prevented through cycling space separated from the tram tracks. We note that since the Newhaven extension opened, we have not had a single [report](#) of a bike tramline crash on Leith Walk – which has separated bike lanes – although they continue in Princes Street, and elsewhere in the onroad sections of Edinburgh’s phase 1 tramline.

At TEC 10/09/24, a Spokes [deputation](#) requested further consideration is given to re-allocating **carriageway** space on Princes Street to provide protected cycleways. However, disappointingly, a proposal to reallocate **footway** space to form a bidirectional segregated cycleway was instead consulted on. The consultation report fails to clarify this – it refers just to ‘segregated’ space, which tends to imply that respondents to the survey opposed any form of cycle space, when in fact they were only asked about a cyclerooute using footway space.

RECOMMENDATION

In conclusion, we ask that the Committee postpones adopting the Guidance until such time as these issues have been properly addressed, to provide a holistic approach to the entire area including the sort of provision for sitting, walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport which is normal in the premier streets of other European capitals.