

Spokes' Response to the [Edinburgh City Plan 2040 Consultation](#) 20 October 2026

Delivering a connected, accessible and high-quality cycling network for Edinburgh

Spokes, the Lothian Cycle Campaign, welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Edinburgh City Plan 2040. We support the ambition to create a more sustainable, healthier and more accessible city, in which walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport are attractive alternatives to private car use.

Achieving these ambitions will require more than identifying routes on a map. Edinburgh needs a coherent, high-quality cycling network that enables people of all ages and abilities to travel safely and conveniently between their homes, workplaces, schools, local centres, green spaces and public transport connections. The City Plan should establish clear expectations for the delivery of this network, ensure that it connects effectively with wider placemaking initiatives, and identify strategic infrastructure projects that will deliver substantial improvements in connectivity.

Spokes recommends that the City Plan 2040 addresses four key priorities.

1. Establish clear quality standards for the primary cycle network

The City Plan should provide clear guidance on the required quality and characteristics of Edinburgh's Primary Cycle Network.

The Primary Network is defined in [Delivering Actions for Active Travel](#), which forms part of the [Implementation Plan](#) of the [Mobility Plan](#). It is to comprise “*a joined-up network of routes that feel safe to everyone at all times of day. This network will need to make much greater use of segregated cycle tracks on main roads, as well as unsegregated onstreet routes that have low volumes of motor traffic.*”

However, designating routes as part of a primary network is insufficient unless there is a clear commitment to delivering infrastructure that is safe, coherent, attractive and suitable for everyday journeys. Furthermore, other than the mention of segregation on main roads, the document does not specify the requirements for the network and, crucially, how the Council will ensure they are met. For example, without consulting cycling interests, the Council has installed a buildout which forces cyclists away from the kerbside into the main traffic lane on Gilmerton Road, which is part of the Primary Network.

Spokes therefore believes that the following principles should underpin the network, and that procedures should be changed such that changes to the road system affecting cycle lanes are always consulted with cycling representatives.:

a) Continuity

The network must provide continuous routes between destinations, without gaps, abrupt endings or sections that require cyclists to negotiate hostile road conditions. A high-quality segregated route loses much of its value if it terminates at a busy junction or requires users to mix with fast-moving traffic further along their journey. Particular attention should be given to junctions, crossings and transitions between different sections of infrastructure, where safety and accessibility are often compromised.

b) Segregation from motor traffic

Where routes run alongside roads carrying motor traffic, the default expectation should be physical segregation from motor vehicles. Painted cycle lanes and shared carriageways are unlikely to provide sufficient protection or reassurance for many potential users, particularly children, older people and those who are less confident cycling. Segregation should be designed to minimise conflict with motor traffic and pedestrians, while ensuring safe and convenient access at junctions and crossings.

c) Design for all cycle users

Infrastructure should be suitable for the widest possible range of users, including children travelling independently, families, older people, disabled cyclists and people using adapted cycles, cargo bikes and other non-standard cycles. Routes should be sufficiently wide, accessible and comfortable, with appropriate gradients, even and smooth surfaces, visibility and junction design.

The network should be planned around the needs of people who may not currently cycle because they perceive existing roads and routes to be unsafe or inaccessible. This is essential if Edinburgh is to increase everyday cycling rather than simply improve conditions for those who already cycle regularly.

d) Incorporation of Cycling by Design

The council should explicitly commit to applying Transport Scotland's *Cycling by Design* guidance to the planning, design and delivery of the primary cycle network. This should inform decisions on route selection, infrastructure provision, junctions, crossings, widths, accessibility and integration with other transport modes.

These principles should be reflected in a clear set of network standards, against which proposed and existing routes can be assessed. Where existing infrastructure does not meet the required standard, the council should identify the improvements needed and establish a programme for delivery.

2. Expand and better connect the primary cycle network to support placemaking

The City Plan should consider where the existing proposals for the primary cycle network need to be expanded, strengthened or better connected to reflect the council's evolving approach to community-based placemaking.

Initiatives such as 20-minute neighbourhoods and the blue-green network offer an opportunity to plan cycling infrastructure as part of a wider network of accessible local destinations, public spaces and green corridors. These ambitions should not be developed separately from strategic transport planning. Instead, they should reinforce one another.

For 20-minute neighbourhoods to succeed, residents must be able to reach shops, schools, healthcare, employment, leisure facilities and public transport safely and conveniently by bicycle, as well as on foot and by public transport. This requires more than isolated local improvements: neighbourhood routes must connect to one another and to the primary cycle network, enabling longer journeys across the city.

Similarly, the blue-green network can provide valuable opportunities to integrate cycling with green spaces, waterways and active travel corridors.

Whilst [Delivering Actions for Active Travel](#) does to some extent recognise these issues through the connectivity provided by its Secondary Network and its Local Network, this needs to be fleshed out in much more detail for specific areas

Spokes therefore recommends that the council reviews the cycle network proposals alongside its plans for 20-minute neighbourhoods, the blue-green network and other placemaking initiatives. This review should identify missing links, opportunities to extend existing routes and improvements that would make the network more useful for everyday journeys.

The City Plan should also recognise that cycling infrastructure is an essential component of successful placemaking, rather than an additional feature to be considered once other development decisions have been made. New developments and public realm projects should contribute to a connected, high-quality network from the outset.

3. Integrate cycling into Edinburgh's tram extension to the south of the city

Spokes welcomes the development of Edinburgh's tram network as part of a more sustainable transport system. However, future tram extensions must be planned and designed to support cycling, rather than creating new barriers or leaving active travel as an afterthought.

a) Context for cycling in south Edinburgh

The provision of safe cycle infrastructure in the south of Edinburgh is severely underdeveloped compared to the north. This is due to the comparative lack of disused railways that can be

converted to active travel corridors, as well as the large volume of car traffic entering the city from Midlothian. The main arterial roads of Dalkeith Road and Craigmillar Park-Minto Street in the south-east, as well as Buckstone Terrace in the south-west, are characterised by poor surface quality and wide carriageways that encourage fast-moving traffic, making them unpleasant for cycling despite some temporary cycle segregation measures. The Primary Cycle Network proposals for Dalkeith Road, Mayfield Road-Causewayside and Buckstone Terrace-Braid Road would bring welcome improvements. These corridors would particularly benefit from permanent segregation and traffic-calming measures.

The Our Future Streets Circulation Plan suggests that the Primary Cycle Network will, in part, be diverted off the Primary Traffic Network. This approach is sensible as journeys move further from the city centre and away from key destinations, but it does not solve the problem for cyclists wishing to access amenities on streets such as Morningside Road and Newington Road, which are not part of the Primary Cycle Network. The strategy appears to assume that cyclists will divert from heavily trafficked destination streets onto parallel corridors. Whilst this is appropriate for some journey types, it is less effective where major retail and community destinations remain located on the principal road network. Therefore, it must be stressed that although the Primary Cycle Network concentrates on certain roads for main north-south movements into and out of the city centre, provision of safe cycling conditions remains vital on these other routes also. This is especially true in relation to the tram proposals along Newington Road and South Bridge, as discussed in more depth below.

b) Tram considerations along the Southern route

As agreed through recent Transport and Environment Committee discussions, cycling should be designed into future tram extensions from the outset. This commitment should be explicitly reflected in the City Plan.

Tram corridors can create significant severance if tracks, stops, road layouts and junctions are designed without adequate consideration of active travel. We have particular concerns regarding the original plans for the bridges corridor in this regard - for example, see Section 4 of our [written deputation to 10.9.26 TEC](#).

Cycling provision should therefore form an integral part of route planning, design development and project appraisal. This includes continuous and appropriately segregated cycle routes along or near tram corridors where feasible, safe crossings of tracks and roads, convenient connections to tram stops, and secure cycle parking at suitable locations.

The design process should also consider how people using adapted cycles and cargo bikes can access tram stops and interchange between cycling and public transport. Potential conflicts between cyclists, pedestrians and tram passengers must be addressed through good design rather than left to be resolved after construction.

Embedding these requirements at the outset will help avoid expensive retrofitting, improve the value of public investment and ensure that tram extensions contribute to the wider objectives of the City Plan.

4. Enhance north Edinburgh's path network through strategic connections

Spokes welcomes the recent investment in cycle paths in Granton and initiatives such as North Edinburgh Connections.

Spokes urges the council to further enhance north Edinburgh's network, including two projects with the potential to deliver significant benefits for active travel connectivity.

a) A bridge connecting the Roseburn Path and the Roseburn–Union Canal link

The council should develop proposals for a bridge over the mainline railway to create a more direct and effective connection from the southern end of the Roseburn Path to the Roseburn–Union Canal link.

The railway currently presents a significant barrier to convenient movement between these active travel corridors. A well-designed bridge would help address this severance, improve route continuity and create a more attractive connection between existing paths.

This would strengthen the wider north Edinburgh path network, improving access to green space and supporting everyday journeys by bicycle and on foot. It would also help ensure that the benefits of existing active travel infrastructure are not undermined by missing links.

We note that this vital bridge is already included in the Council's Mobility Plan (page 43 of [Delivering Actions for Active Travel](#)). Furthermore, the [Council response](#) to the 2025 tram consultation said that such a bridge would “*provide a vital link, encourage increased use of sustainable transport modes, supporting wider regeneration and ... deliver substantial long-term benefits for connectivity.*”

The City Plan should therefore also recognise this connection as a strategic opportunity and support the necessary feasibility work, design development and delivery planning.

b) Progress the Powderhall Link project

The council should also commit to progressing the Powderhall Link project, which would connect the North Edinburgh Path Network (NEPN) with one of Scotland's most densely populated areas.

This connection has the potential to make the existing path network accessible to many more residents, creating new opportunities for safe and convenient journeys to work, education, shops, public transport and recreational destinations. By connecting a major active travel corridor more effectively with a densely populated urban area, the project could deliver

substantial benefits in terms of accessibility, health, sustainability and reduced reliance on private cars.

The Powderhall Link should therefore be treated as an important strategic component of Edinburgh's active travel network, rather than an isolated local improvement. The council should establish a clear pathway for progressing the project, including the necessary design work, consultation, funding and implementation.

Both projects illustrate the importance of addressing missing links. A network is only as useful as its connections, and relatively short sections of new infrastructure can unlock the benefits of much longer existing routes.

c) Deliver a more continuous coastal cycling path, including improvements to West Harbour Road

The council should prioritise the development of a more continuous, high-quality coastal cycling route, addressing key gaps in provision that currently undermine the safety and usefulness of the network from South Queensferry to Mussleburgh.

In particular, the lack of segregation on West Harbour Road has become a significant missing link, compromising connections to cycling infrastructure to the west, south and east. This limits the potential of the wider coastal route as both a safe everyday travel corridor and a leisure route for residents and visitors. The City Plan should recognise the importance of providing continuous, segregated cycling infrastructure along this section, designed in accordance with *Cycling by Design* and suitable for people of all ages and abilities. Improving West Harbour Road would strengthen links between existing and planned routes, support access to local destinations and public transport, and help realise the full potential of Edinburgh's coastline as a connected active travel corridor.

Furthermore, Spokes is extremely disappointed that progress on the Joppa to Musselburgh onroad segregated route, joint with East Lothian Council, has now been stalled for several years. This main road connection is a vital section of the Primary Cycle Network.

Conclusion and recommendations

Spokes believes that the Edinburgh City Plan 2040 should establish a clear, deliverable commitment to a comprehensive and high-quality cycling network that supports the city's wider ambitions for sustainable transport, public health, placemaking and climate action.

We ask the council to:

1. **Set clear quality standards** for the primary cycle network, requiring continuity, segregation from motor traffic, inclusive design, adherence to *Cycling by Design*
2. **Review and expand the network** to ensure that it connects effectively with 20-minute neighbourhoods, the blue-green network and other community-based placemaking initiatives.

3. **Design cycling into future tram extensions from the outset**, in line with the approach agreed through recent Transport and Environment Committee discussions.
4. **Prioritise strategic connections in north Edinburgh**, including a bridge linking the Roseburn Path with the Roseburn–Union Canal link, progression of the Powderhall Link project and resolving missing links on the coastal route.
5. **Consult with cycling interests** on any projects which permanently affect the network. This specifically must include all minor works affecting onroad sections of the network - consultation used to take place through RSO traffic orders but this ceased through the council's otherwise welcome [decision](#) to reduce their use to speed delivery.

These measures would help turn the City Plan's sustainable transport ambitions into practical improvements that residents can experience in their everyday lives. A connected, accessible and high-quality cycling network will be essential if Edinburgh is to become a city where cycling is a safe and realistic choice for people of all ages and abilities.

Spokes encourages the council to make these commitments explicit in the City Plan 2040 and to support them with clear delivery priorities, funding and implementation programmes.