

BWA comments on the draft Shared Use Routes policy

BWA welcomes the council's initiative to create this draft policy.

BWA supports good routes for both cycling and walking in order to encourage active travel, but there is a need to balance the needs of both modes. In the context of a city that has taken a liberal attitude to cyclists' use of public space, a Shared Use policy document could fulfil a need to make clear the Council's policy for how that balance will be achieved. The consultation on the draft document provides an opportunity to debate this, and help move towards a more balanced, manageable use of space.

BWA's detailed comments are given below as annotations to the draft document.

We would highlight the following:

1) **Design guidance - detailed:** For clarity both within the Council and for the public, the Council must decide which detailed design guidance it is going to use and say so in this document. This policy is not complete without that. The Council may not adopt all of the guidance, but that should not be used as a reason for not adopting the guidance. It doesn't help that the CROW guidance is not available for free. Is TfL's "London Cycling Design Standards and Pedestrian Comfort Guidance" the best choice?

2) **Design guidance – key elements:** Most lay people will not read the detailed design guidance, so the shared use policy should include some key elements of design guidance to give confidence that the adopted design guidance is appropriate for managing shared use well. Examples of design elements that determine the balance of experience between those walking and those cycling are:

- the positioning of a segregated or delineated cycle route in relation to the pavement
- treatment of pedestrian crossing points on segregated cycle routes
- treatment of segregated cycle routes at bus stops
- minimum widths to allow a comfortable distance between passing cyclists and pedestrians.

If the London Cycling Design Standards are used, the shared use policy can quote key elements of the approach, eg : "Based on metrics that are simple to obtain (e.g. pedestrian flows and physical dimensions), the guidance enables the categorisation of conditions in any street on the following scale: Comfortable - Acceptable - At Risk - Unacceptable/ Uncomfortable."

It is noticeable that the London Cycling Design Standards say: "4.2.4 Two-way cycle tracks. .. Segregated lanes/tracks and stepped tracks should generally be designed to be one-way, on either side of the road, with cycle traffic running in the same direction as adjacent general traffic lanes." ... and ... "The model of using segregated two-way tracks on one side of a street should be applied very selectively." Yet, the schemes recently implemented at Baldwin Street and Clarence Road, and the proposed route at Prince Street, do not follow this approach. The shared use policy is an opportunity to explain how these schemes fit with Bristol's adopted policy.

If it is thought that “Bristol is different from London” because its roads are narrower, then that is worth explaining, along with the implications for network provision and design choices.

3) **Delivering the vision:** Whilst this document is intentionally high-level, it must give more clarity on the commitment to delivering segregated cycle routes, in order not to raise false expectations. Delivering the ‘vision’ of good parallel networks depends on providing segregated routes, particularly segregated cycle routes alongside the carriageway. The Bristol Transport Plan, currently in development, hopefully will have a policy favouring some re-allocation of road space to enable segregated routes, reflecting the adopted user hierarchy, and if so this policy can refer to that. Otherwise, cycle routes will take away from pedestrian space.

4) **The importance of legibility:** On all shared routes, the signage and layout should clarify for different users the terms of engagement, ie be ‘legible’. This improves safety and prevents conflict. The shared use policy needs to put more emphasis on the importance of legibility. The aim should be that the route expected to be used for those walking and those cycling should be intuitive - obvious without thinking about it. Put simply, the walking route should look like a pavement, the cycling route should look like a road. Tarmac paths are more likely to be perceived by pedestrians as ‘roads’, including roads for cyclists, than paved surfaced ones. Even better if cycle routes are the same distinctive colour. A one-way segregated cycle route at either side of the road is simplest, and therefore the most legible, especially if it is applied widely. A consistent approach across the city will aid legibility.

Where the route is delineated, not segregated, it is always going to be a problem stopping pedestrians from wandering on to the cycle route, but legibility is still important. Cycle routes should have more frequent and stronger cycling logos on them than on many existing paths, with centre line and direction arrows where they have to be two way.

5) **The needs of all users:** The policy needs to refer to the needs of all users, including people using wheelchairs or mobility scooters.

6) **The impact of cycle routes on the walking environment:** Where unsegregated and delineated routes are proposed, the aim should be, at the very least, to do no harm to the walking environment¹ and preferably to improve it. Shared use should only be implemented after considering the impact on levels of use by walkers and by users with health conditions or impairments, and perceptions of walking safety, and exploring other alternatives, including reallocating space from motor traffic or changing the route for cyclists.

1. Department for Transport. *City Deals - Guidance on Applications for Cycle City Ambition Grants*. February 2013, page 6

7) **The good behaviour message:** We suggest that the council should implement “Respect other users” (or similar) signage at key places. Such signage should be used selectively. Pinch points are places where at times there is a high volume of pedestrian traffic that fills the space, and such signage could be used at all pinch points. It is important that this message is put across. Even if it isn’t adhered to, it reassures those who “share with care” that those who don’t “share with care” are being told that they should do so too. Such signs need not add to visual clutter: they can be put on the path surface.

Draft Policy: Shared Use Routes for People Walking and on Bicycles

Objectives of policy

This policy on shared use routes should be read in conjunction with Bristol's walking and cycling strategies. Both these strategies set clear objectives to encourage active travel as healthier, accessible and environmentally friendly ways of getting about. They aim to do this by making walking and cycling around the city easy and convenient by providing routes that meet the needs of people on both foot and on bikes.

It is acknowledged that shared use paths can sometimes be problematic for people on foot, - including people using wheelchairs or mobility scooters, and on bikes, due, for example, to the lack of clarity over priority and boundaries. This policy aims to clarify the council's position about how it will or will not use shared paths to support the aims of both the walking and cycling strategies.

Types of treatment

There are three different types of treatment:

- Unsegregated – people walking and cycling mix freely
- Delineated – a feature such as a white line or different coloured paving creates visual guidance for people walking and cycling with no change in level
- Segregated – kerbing provides a level change to create a separate facility for people walking and cycling

In busy areas or where people are moving in many different directions, unsegregated shared use paths should be avoided wherever possible.

The ambition over time is to create good parallel networks for people on foot, people on on bikes and motorists. The network of cycle routes for 'A to B' cyclists aims to avoid places where conflict with high volumes of people on foot are likely to arise, but this is not possible in in some places.

On major, busy linear routes, provision should generally be segregated, separated by grade and/ or a physical demarcation to clearly define the space and in particular assist those with sensory disabilities.

There is no easy formula that can be applied to prescribe design solutions and whilst subjective views of users are important, decisions on shared use paths should be made objectively and with reference to evidence and research. The design will depend on the level of usage and the character and quality of the place it passes through, but using as far as possible a consistent design approach to aid legibility for all users

In busy areas and at pinch points people on bikes should be expected to moderate their speed and give way to people on foot, or push their bikes, if high numbers of pedestrians fill the space; no type of movement is fully unconstrained within the central area and cycling cannot be any exception. In the vast majority of cases the empirical evidence shows that people on bikes do slow down. Surface treatments, layout, planting and furniture can be used to reduce the speed differential between different users without creating conflict.

Where major shared routes cross urban public spaces, delineated routes are preferred. These will generally be at the same level as the walking environment so that they do not restrict events and walking movements, but be clearly lined and with cycle marker logos to minimise conflict. In practice, neither walkers nor cyclists will consistently adhere to any delineation of space, but even so it is helpful to indicate the path to be taken by delineating the route.

On quiet routes in outer suburbs, or routes in places of leisure such as some central city spaces and parks, the route may be unsegregated. The treatment will take account of the character of the environment and the function as a place. Subtle but conspicuous cycle markers and/or standard signage can be used to show that cycling is allowed but people on foot have priority.

High-level principles

Where unsegregated and delineated routes are proposed, the aim should be, at the very least, to **do no harm to the pedestrian walking environment** and preferably to improve it. Shared use should only be implemented after considering the impact on levels of use by walkers and by users with health conditions or impairments, and perceptions of walking safety, and exploring other alternatives, including reallocating space from motor traffic or changing the route for cyclists.

Where 'shared use' routes for pedestrians and cyclists are proposed, or where a new cycling route is planned, the aim should be, at the very least, to do no harm to the pedestrian walking environment and, hopefully, to improve it.² Shared use should only be implemented after considering the impact on levels of use by walkers and by users with health conditions or impairments, and perceptions of walking safety, and exploring other alternatives, including reallocating space from motor traffic.

Unsegregated and delineated routes should be wide enough to allow **a comfortable distance** between passing cyclists and pedestrians.

On all shared routes, the signage and layout should **clarify for different users the terms of engagement, ie be 'legible'**. This improves safety and prevents conflict. The aim should be that the route expected to be used for those walking and those cycling should be obvious without thinking about it. Put simply, the walking route should look like a pavement, the cycling route should look like a road. Alternatively, if the chosen treatment is delineation and the space has a significant flow of walkers, there should be a difference in surface that makes the route obvious, for instance by use of a different surface colour. A segregated cycle route should not create extra **pedestrian crossing points**, for instance 'floating' bus stops, without demonstrating that the benefits of the design outweigh the disbenefits. A one-way cycle lane at the edge of each side of the road is the simplest way of implementing segregated routes on busy streets, and is the default design choice.

Reference Documents and Guidance

A wide variety of reference documents and guides are available such as the Dutch CROW Design manual for Bicycle Traffic. Although the reference documents vary in terms of type and focus, when viewed as a whole, they are surprisingly consistent:

- There is no simple formula or calculation which can be applied to make a decisions on whether people on foot or bike should reasonably be expected to share the same space; and decisions must take into account local conditions
- That said, decisions should be based on a rational assessment of the density of flow of both people on foot or bike in the context of the physical space in question.

Putting it into practice

For internal schemes, the Place Directorate’s Quality Assurance Board is best placed to sign off schemes following a balanced multi-disciplinary discussion. This is for complex schemes where site constraints prohibit the optimal solution.

The following principles should be applied when deciding on the type of intervention appropriate:

Flow	Treatment Type	Example street/place	QA Board involvement
Low	Unsegregated	Portway A4	Option to 'call in' schemes
Medium	Delineated	Straight St. (Gardner Haskins), Castle Park	Option to 'call in' schemes
High	Segregated	Baldwin Street, Clarence Road	Consider
Pinch points	Pedestrian priority	Junction of Welsh Back and Queens Sq	Full consideration

TABLE 1: METHOD FOR GAUGING APPROPRIATENESS OF SOLUTION (AFTER C.R.O.W MANUAL).

It is difficult to apply exact figures to the flow levels as it will depend on the location specifics e.g. width of shared use paths, the nature of movement (eg linear or multi-directional), speed of cyclists (may depend on whether the route is used by leisure cyclists or ‘A to B’ cyclists), or the potential for increases or decreases to existing flow levels (planned, adjacent developments).

External schemes by developers or agencies will be considered through the planning process and at the pre-application stage. Teams within the Place directorate already work with planning officers to ensure that this policy is applied consistently.

Background Information

Bristol City Council Cycle Strategy - <http://www.betterbybike.info/news/bristol-cycle-strategy>

Bristol City Council Walking Strategy -

<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/documents/20182/33688/WALKING+STRATEGY+-+FINAL+VERSION+-+JAN11.pdf>

Bristol City Council Shared Pedestrian/Cycle Space Review – (not currently online)

Dutch CROW Design Manual (not available online)