

Comments on Planning Application 16/06935/FB West Broad Quay by Bristol Walking Alliance

Bristol Walking Alliance has strong reservations about the proposal for a delineated cycle route through the shared space at West Broad Quay. We recognise the difficulties of designing something that satisfies all users, but we feel the current proposals do not recognise the safety that should be afforded pedestrians in this area of the public realm.

The establishment of a designated cycle route through Broad Quay, while an improvement on the current shared space, still has the potential to bring pedestrians and cyclists into conflict. This is an area that is used both as a through-route for pedestrians and as a gathering and meeting place, encouraged by the memorable location and by the frequent presence of vending stalls. From the cyclists' point of view, it will provide a 'missing link' between three segregated cycle routes - Park St, Prince St and St Augustine's Parade.

The desire for a delineated cycle route here could have the benefit for pedestrians of encouraging cyclists to keep to a well-defined route. It could lessen the insecurity of pedestrians who are currently faced with cycles taking 'random' routes through the space. It may also encourage more cyclists to use this route rather than the primarily pedestrian route across Pero's Bridge. The increase in space for gathering and meeting, obtained by remodelling the existing ramp and podium, is welcomed, but only partly compensates for the space taken by the cycle route.

There is currently no marked cycle route through the space. It is shown as 'shared space' in the associated document 'Bristol Shared Pedestrian/Cycle Space Review', in which pedestrians have priority. By introducing a delineated cycle route through this area, the hope is to that walkers and cyclists will better respect each others' movement. However, with increasing use and so contention, especially at crossing points, the safety and amenity of the walking environment is still likely to suffer. Our view is that when such proposals are made, the aim should be, at the very least, to do no harm to the walking environment and preferably to improve it. This aim is supported by the Guidance on Applications for Cycle City Ambition Grants which states: "while this fund is focused on cycling, as a minimum, proposals should use the principle of 'do no harm' to the pedestrian environment."

There are a number of specific issues we wish to raise concerning the current proposals.

- With the expected greater use of buses, cycling and walking as modes of transport, and the funnelling of cycles into the area due to the new Prince Street segregated cycle route, there may still be too much contention for a delineated cycle route to be safe.
- The increased density of people in the area on summer evenings and weekends, when there are rallies, or when there are special events such as the Harbour Festival does not appear to have been fully taken into account.
- The flat surface makes the legibility of the cycle route poor, especially for the visually impaired, but any level change in this space would be an unacceptable pedestrian hazard.
- There is too little indication of the desirable clearance between cyclists and pedestrians. We note that cars are advised to give cyclists 1.5m clearance when overtaking - pedestrians deserve the same when being passed by cyclists. The granite edges marking the delineated cycle route, proposed as 0.3m wide, could be wider.

- A change in surface material alone is not sufficient to indicate that cyclists should give way to pedestrians at the proposed crossing points.
- Some of the desire lines of pedestrians approaching or leaving the bus stops will be compromised, with no designated crossing points of the cycle route, especially for those approaching from the south.
- The long straight section of the cycle route along Broad Quay may lead to excessive cycle speeds - exhibited by some cyclists even in the current shared space.

The last two points could be addressed by shifting the cycle route to be alongside the road at its southern section and by requiring a zig-zag, with an additional pedestrian crossing point, adjacent to the southern point of the bus stopping area.

As a place often frequented by visitors, and in which sightseers are more likely to be looking around than down, the changes of surface designating the cycle route may be easily missed, even by those who have reasonable sight. For those who are visually-impaired, the cycle route may not be distinguishable at all. So it is highly likely that pedestrians will stray across the cycle route.

It is important, therefore, that pedestrians should still have priority throughout this area, and this should be indicated clearly by signage - more strongly than just the proposed 'Share with Care'.

We note that the Shared Space Review says that "Decisions about whether and how to share traffic-free streets must be evidence-based; while design should be the product of collaboration between different disciplines and real engagement with the needs of both user groups." The current proposals lack the evidence, particularly of predicted usage data and its implications for contention between pedestrians and cyclists. For example, the Dutch CROW Design manual for bicycle traffic specifies that cyclists and pedestrians should not share the same space (at the same level) if the number of pedestrians per hour per metre of profile width is greater than 160 (see Bristol Shared Pedestrian/Cycle Space Review - Reference Documents)[†].

The changes being proposed will be at significant expense and have to last many years. It is therefore important that they cater for the expected future increase in cycling and walking. We would much prefer a segregated route if possible, rather than either a shared space or a delineated route, for this key location.

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21 February 2017

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[†] We are disappointed to note that the planning documents referred to on page 14 of the design document do not refer to the Walking Strategy for Bristol (BCC October 2011). We would expect this strategy document, and any subsequent documents on the role of walking in the city, to be referenced as part of the design considerations.