

Comments on plan drawings for changes to Nelson Street

General comments

Nelson Street is an important walking route between the Centre and Broadmead, designated a Primary Pedestrian Route in the Bristol Central Area Plan, and any re-design should recognise this.

With all the work in the Centre to make a better walking environment past the Cenotaph and on towards Broadmead, it is a shame that pedestrians are still going to be funnelled into a narrow, traffic-filled alleyway along Nelson Street. We strongly regret the decision that was made some time ago to route so many buses down Nelson Street, making the experience for pedestrians unpleasant. The requirement for two buses to pass each other and for a contraflow cycle lane, squeezes the space for pedestrians, who should be the priority users of this road.

We comment below on the plans as presented:

Detailed comments

1 Pavement widths

1.1 South side

We welcome the planned narrowing along parts of Nelson Street (although marginal), and the removal of pavement clutter to give as much space as possible to pedestrians and cyclists, given the constraint of the width needed for buses to go past other buses waiting at bus stops. However, the drawings show the width of pavement on the south side is 2m at its minimum. This is not sufficient for more than two people walking side by side or passing each other in opposite directions.

The section of shared space where the pavement width is narrowed by the concrete steps is a regrettable necessity, hopefully to be remedied soon by development of the site. There need to be 'give way' signs at the ends of the cycle track to give pedestrians priority.

1.2 North side

As the pavement is narrow on the south side, it is important to make the pavement on the north side attractive. The width of the pavement on the north side is unstated in the

drawings. The pavement in Quay Street is not wide and is obstructed by a bus shelter (one shelter is being removed but the other is shown as staying).

2 Junctions

2.1 Continuous pavements

We support continuous pavements in principle, and welcome the planned ones at the junctions of Nelson Street with All Saints Street/St Johns Steep, and Bridewell Street. There should be 'give way' signs on the road at each continuous pavement crossing.

Why are there not continuous pavements also at Small Street and Fairfax Street? (We note that the works at Small Street have already been implemented by the Metrobus project, so there is a lost opportunity here.)

2.2 Fairfax Street

With or without a raised crossing across the entrance to Fairfax Street, there should be clear pedestrian priority, eg a zebra crossing.

We question the need for a contraflow cycle lane in Fairfax Street. It adds risk to the many pedestrians crossing Fairfax Street, who will be looking out for motor vehicles entering Fairfax Street and not expecting cyclists in the opposite direction.

2.3 Christmas Street

A raised pedestrian crossing is not proposed for Christmas Street, perhaps because of the buses, but is proposed for Bridewell Street, which also takes buses (although far fewer) – which seems inconsistent. If there is no raised crossing at Christmas Street, there should at least be some markings to indicate a primary pedestrian route across the junction to encourage buses to slow down at that point. This may encourage pedestrians to use the (sunnier) north side, which links through to the newly paved area around the Cenotaph: otherwise they are likely to use the speed table to cross to the narrower south side.

The contraflow cycle lane into Christmas Street and the associated splitter island inhibit the pedestrian crossing at this point. There are likely to be more pedestrians crossing Christmas Street than cyclists turning into Christmas Street, so the design should give higher priority to pedestrians' needs. (The plan seems to show the contraflow lane stopping after the splitter island, so perhaps this recognises that there is not much need for a contraflow here?)

We welcome the speed table on Quay Street near the junction with Christmas Street, which slows traffic to/from Quay Street and recognises the pedestrian desire line from St Johns Arch across Quay Street to Christmas Street and then towards Christmas Steps. However the pedestrian crossing could be more aligned with the desire line if the treatment of the cycle contraflow on Christmas Street was changed.

3 Cycle lane

We strongly suggest that the road, southbound cycle route and pavement should be at 3 different levels. And the cycle route surface material should look more like road than pavement. (It is marked on the draft plan as not yet determined.)

4 Trees

The main obstacles that currently cause the cycleway to encroach into the footway on the south side of Nelson St are posts, for both lighting and signs, and three street trees. The new cycle track is shown as going through these trees. Any trees that have to be removed should be replaced by additional street trees in the close vicinity. This needs to be made clear on the plans. Street trees are one of the ways of reducing pollution and enhancing the street environment for pedestrians, and are currently the only greenery in this area.

5 Bridewell Street

We support the proposal to make Bridewell Street one-way towards Nelson Street. At the Rupert Street crossing at the end of Bridewell, we suggest that the pedestrian and cycle routes are reversed so that there is a continuous pedestrian route from the west pavement. The cycle route into the build-out should be at road level initially and the surface material should look more like road than pavement.