

The **Cockburn Association** response to: **Building a Vision for the City Centre**

The proposals aim to:

- * Create more pedestrian space on the north (sunny side) of both streets
- * Provide opportunities for more outdoor dining and entertainment
- * Create casual seating areas
- * Create pedestrian space to allow for performances, art and culture - similar to the way sections of the Royal Mile are currently used

The proposals would change the city centre in the following way:

- * Extra pedestrian space can only be created through reducing road space - this can be done by introducing a one-way system in the city centre

The Council will work with city centre businesses to test the use of additional space to see which kinds of activities work best for these streets and where they should be encouraged.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that additional pedestrian space on Princes Street will improve the overall experience of those who visit, work or live in the area?

More space is needed on the south side of Princes Street for pedestrians.... it is difficult to walk down past bus stops and queues of people waiting for buses and yet it has the better views of the Old Town, the gardens, the Castle... opening up the gardens at the east end would be preferable space for additional activity with perhaps a more permanent surface than the constantly replaced grass.

The pavements on the north side are already wide enough to accommodate pedestrians, bus shelters, waste bins etc. We cannot see an argument for widening them further. We would like to see unnecessary street furniture removed and more pedestrian oriented crossing facilities... currently the pedestrians are at the bottom of the pecking order with traffic having priority over pedestrian movement.

We suggested when the Primark building went through planning that one of the upper floors would make an ideal coffee bar where folk could enjoy the exceptional view across to the Castle but disappointingly this was not taken as a positive suggestion. The views from Princes Street to the Old Town are enjoyed at a higher level than the north side pavement where the view would be blocked by the constant stream of buses, taxis and trams and the unsightly tram wires and fixings (they would have been better laid underground for the Princes Street section).

If extra space were to be introduced on Princes Street how would you want to see this space used?

We agreed with the change in regulations along Princes Street and into the West End allowing wider than retail use of units. This would allow a greater offering which may spill out onto the pedestrian space in terms of cafes, bars, restaurants but it remains to be seen if they would be attractive spaces to sit out in. The existing pedestrian space should be devoid of street clutter leaving space for public art/sculpture, perhaps signage embedded in the paving stones drawing folk along the street or off to the Old Town or New Town and their attractions. Some interpretation of what there is to see and do along Princes Street. A skyline drawing that marks the significant architecture on the Royal Mile. This could all be achieved within the existing space.

Longer opening hours throughout the year would add vibrancy to the City Centre, the pavements are pretty dead after 7.00pm as the shops are shut and there is no other offering ... galleries, cultural venues, residents would add life not just cafes and bars.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that additional pedestrian space on George Street will improve the overall experience of those who visit, work or live in the area?

If extra space were to be introduced on George Street how would you want to see this space used?

George Street has a balanced symmetry and elegant Georgian architecture that has been largely preserved intact with the two squares at either end, unlike the mix of styles and eras along Princes Street. The mixed offering along the George Street adds to its attraction and success with retail, bars, restaurants, a significant venue in the Assembly Rooms, the church, hotels.... the experience of the street is already a good one. The short term parking allows those who need or wish to access the centre by car opportunity to do so.

The pedestrian experience has been disturbed by the railings and enforced crossing points that are contrary to natural movement and these faults should be reversed.

We are not convinced of the need to widen the pavements but would ask consideration be given to removing the kerbs and making pedestrians a priority over slow moving traffic that shares the entire street space.

Passengers waiting for buses in the central reservation and buses unloading passengers in the same limited space, surrounded by traffic on both sides, are cause for concern. How will this work? Will there be bus shelters? Will the area need to be railed off for safety? Neither of which would be welcome down the centre of the street.

Creating Space

The key elements of the proposal are as follows:

Princes Street:

- * Princes Street would be closed to general traffic in both directions
- * Buses, taxis and bicycles would move in a west-bound direction only, on the south carriageway (next to the gardens)
- * Trams would run in both directions
- * Changes would allow for more pedestrian space on the north side of Princes Street (in front of the shops)

George Street:

- * General traffic would travel in an east-bound direction only
- * Buses and taxis would travel in an east-bound direction only, using the south carriageway
- * A dedicated two-way cycle route would be created
- * Additional pedestrian space would be outlined, which could be used for a number of purposes

The Council aims to minimise any loss of parking as a result of these changes.

The proposals aim to:

- * Improve the quality of the pedestrian experience, creating more places to sit and enjoy the space and providing further opportunities for local businesses and entertainment
- * Improve access to the city centre
- * Provide dedicated cycle provision

The proposals would change travel in the city centre in these ways:

- * Bus travellers would have to use a bus stop in one street for arriving in the city centre, and a bus stop in another street for a return journey
- * Bus and taxi traffic on George Street would increase, with a reduction in traffic on Princes Street

Overall, to what extent would you support or oppose the introduction of the proposed traffic management arrangements in the city centre?

The New Town is considered to be a masterpiece of city planning, and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It was built in stages between 1765 and around 1850, and retains much of the original neo-classical and Georgian period architecture. Alterations should not be made at a whim. They should be carefully considered, planned and executed to the highest standard.

We do not support the proposed traffic movements. Traffic Management should be more concerned with: minimising the amount of traffic reaching the centre of the city; a complete cycle friendly network across the city rather than fragments here and there.... how will cyclists share the Princes Street space with Buses and Trams? giving pedestrians priority in the City Centre.

We are also concerned with the displacement of traffic into areas that are already suffering unprecedented levels of use by vehicles inappropriate to the roads and the buildings in these areas. This would include the Moray Feu, Queen Street and the northern reaches of the New Town.

These proposals seem to be an anticipation of problems that may occur when the trams are running along Princes Street. We believe it would be better to see what actually occurs and address any issues that may arise once we know what they are.

The proposals seem more to do with traffic than pedestrians.

This proposal aims to create a dedicated two way cycle route on George Street which would enhance the current National Cycle Route through the city centre. This cycle route would be integrated with other planned cycle route developments at the east and west ends of the city centre.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that a dedicated cycle route on George Street will make it safer to travel through the city centre by bike?

Whilst it may make George Street safer for cyclists what happens at the squares at either end? Are the cycle lanes wide enough for cyclists to travel in opposite directions? Are they divided by a line or something more physical? How will pedestrians negotiate the cycle lanes to cross over the street? Will there be a speed restriction for cyclists along this stretch for safety? How are cyclists and bus passengers segregated? This concept seems a long way off 'shared space' which we would support.

If you feel there are alternatives which should be considered for cycling provision in the city centre, please use the space below to provide information.

Dedicated cycle lanes away from heavy vehicles and parked cars would be preferred. In Princes Street, instead of increasing the north side pavements further, you might consider a dedicated cycling lane. Provision for safe cycle parking will be required as surely cyclists are there to use the City Centre as well as travel through it. Is there any consideration of free public cycle hire schemes? Cyclists need their own time and space at junctions and roundabouts rather than negotiating them with other vehicles within the City Centre and at other busy locations across the city.

Please use the space below to make any other comments about the proposed changes, to make any suggestions about the city centre and to provide feedback on this consultation.

A lively debate on the proposals on our facebook page:

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