

Appendix 1 – Response to Draft Belfast Bicycle Network 2017 Consultation Document

Question 1:

Do you agree that producing a Bicycle Network for Belfast is an important element of developing a more bicycle-friendly city? What time frame do you think it should cover?

Yes - producing such a plan will be important when addressing the barriers which deter people from cycling across the city. The BikeLife Belfast (2015) reported that almost 1 in 3 people in Belfast do not ride a bicycle but would like to. Addressing the bicycle infrastructure will be a key priority to realising the potential that travelling by bicycle can make to people's lives and the city in general. This is recognised within the Bicycle Strategy for Northern Ireland and the Belfast Active Travel Action Plan.

We would encourage that while an initial timeframe to create the Bicycle Network for Belfast should be in the region of ten years, the Network should be seen as 'ever improving' with development, maintenance and adaptation to meet demand and advances in technology considered on a continuous basis.

The timeframe for the delivery of the network will be dependent on the resources available and it is critical that adequate resources are allocated to the implementation of the plan. The Council would welcome a more collaborative working approach on the prioritisation and implementation of the Bicycle Network Plan.

We would highlight the success of the Belfast Bikes scheme and the high demand to expand the scheme outside the city centre which is underway in parts of the City. In order to support this scheme there is an urgent need to improve the overall cycling infrastructure across the City for current and future users.

Question 2:

Do you agree that these five criteria from the BMTP are still valid for the development of a network for Belfast? If not, what do you consider the criteria should be? Please explain.

Yes - the 5 criteria listed are still valid for the development of the Bicycle Network for Belfast. We would encourage that consideration is given to re-ordering the criteria to reflect the priority and potential of each criteria i.e. safety is listed as the fourth criteria, however, perceptions of safety would be the key barrier preventing more people from cycling. Without safe, practical, and continuous routes in urban areas it is unlikely that the increasing levels of cycling can be sustained. We would encourage the list to be re-ordered as follows: safety, coherence, directness, comfort and attractiveness.

Question 3:

Do you agree that the development of a Belfast Bicycle Network is a key element in giving those who would like to cycle (but currently don't) the freedom and confidence to do so?

Yes - the development of a Bicycle Network for Belfast will be key to giving those who would like to cycle freedom and confidence to do so.

However the capital build element is only one element of encouraging an increase in cycling and a series of behavioural change programmes (including cycle training) and positively framed public awareness campaigns will be required to provide feelings of freedom and confidence. It is also key that there is an enforcement campaign to ensure that cycle lanes are not misused by other road users.

Safety is a concern for people in Belfast, when it comes to cycling. Belfast BikeLife (2015) reported only 29% of people surveyed rated cycling safety in Belfast as good or very good. The development of high quality infrastructure will be required to increase this figure.

Question 4:

Do you agree that the objectives in 3.9 should be applied to the network? If not, what objectives do you think should be set?

3.9 Objectives

- *To develop a comprehensive bicycle network for commuter, amenity and recreational cycling through the expansion of cycling infrastructure and cycling facilities;*
- *To bring good quality cycle routes within the reach of most people within the city;*
- *To ensure a consistent level of service in the design of safe infrastructure – providing dedicated infrastructure where there are large volumes of higher speed vehicles and shared facilities where the volume and speed of traffic is low;*
- *To encourage use of the bicycle and promote safe cycling through increasing the amount of bicycle parking, providing more cycling education programmes for both young people and adults, supporting events to promote cycling.*

Yes – the objectives outlined cover the main points for consideration. We would encourage that consideration be given to phrasing the objectives in the language of outcomes, to match the direction being set by the draft Programme for Government and the draft Belfast Agenda.

Question 5:

Do you agree that the primary network should be based on the concept of arterial and orbital routes?

Yes – the development of the Bicycle Network for Belfast should be pragmatic and make the most of the existing traffic infrastructure across the city. The use of arterial and orbital routes fits with the current infrastructure for motorised traffic and provides flexibility when planning bicycle journeys.

Question 6:

Do you agree that the network should be developed in Primary and Secondary stages as outlined in 3.13? If not, how should it be developed?

Yes – the use of primary and secondary stages for development is again a pragmatic approach. Development of the Network should maximise existing infrastructure improvement schemes and future city developments. We would encourage focus to be given to routes which offer the greatest potential to increase the number of people using the bicycle, including consideration of areas which are to see an increase in population numbers.

Question 7:

Do you agree that we should consider requirements of likely users on a scheme by scheme basis, for example routes which will primarily be used by children on the school journey may be best served as shared track?

Yes – while the planning of all routes should follow the same guiding principles, each route will be different in terms of potential users and mix of travel modes. The use of a mixed network of routes would provide options for cyclists of various abilities and for commuting as well as leisure.

We would encourage that consideration be given to ensuring the highest levels of safety (traffic-free cycle routes, shared pavements and protected bike lanes) are appropriately employed along routes i.e. highest level of safety near schools and along routes where motorised traffic may be faster flowing).

Question 8:

Are there any other kinds of bicycle infrastructure that should be considered? What are they? Do you have any views on which types of infrastructure, if any, should be favoured in developing a network for Belfast?

The Council would support innovative forms of cycling infrastructure provision and the development of segregated cycle routes /junctions similar to match the quality of best practice in Europe. In other areas, Authorities are currently trialling innovative cycling infrastructure such as:

- segregation within carriageway, side road crossings and separations methods;
- Dutch style roundabouts (kerb-segregated cycle track at carriageway level, orbiting the roundabout, with priority for cyclists across the entry and exit lanes);
- Traffic signals for cyclist – high and low level; and
- bus stop by passes.

We would encourage that where possible the infrastructure providing the highest level of safety be used and where this is not possible consideration is given to the use multiple options i.e. the best suited physical infrastructure coupled with appropriate traffic calming measures.

Question 9:

Do you support the use of the network requirements as detailed at paragraph 5.1?

Para 5.1 Building on the themes agreed in the Bicycle Strategy we have drawn up a number of network requirements to assist in defining the general character of the proposed bicycle network in

Belfast. In order to develop and maintain a coherent and consistent network it is important that the requirements are referred to:

- *at the time of route selection;*
- *during the design and implementation of individual routes within the network;*
- *when changes to the network are being contemplated;*
- *in other relevant planning documents; and*
- *when the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan is reviewed and updated.*

Yes – the network requirements are appropriate.

Question 10:

Do you agree with the addition of ‘Adaptability’ as a network requirement? What other requirements would you like to see included?

Yes – routes along the network need to be adaptable to ensure bicycle users of all abilities have the opportunity to experience the freedom and confidence to cycle, as set out within the ‘vision and objectives for cycling’.

Question 11:

Do you agree that the routes should be planned and facilities designed with the achievement of increasing numbers of people cycling in mind?

Yes – the development of the network should primarily be focused on increasing the number of people cycling. Changes to the physical infrastructure which slows or removes motorised traffic from a space may promote the use of that space for a variety of other uses. The network could allow for increases in other sustainable travel modes including walking and scooting.

Question 12:

What are your views on segregation between people who walk, people who cycle and people who drive? What are your views about physical segregation between motorised traffic and non-motorised traffic? Do you agree that there are levels of traffic (footway or carriageway) below which physical segregation is not always necessary – such as quiet routes and residential areas?

Segregation of people who walk, cycle or drive should be considered on the basis of potential speed of travel and volume of usage. The higher the potential speed or volume of traffic, the greater risk of serious incident. We would encourage that consideration is given to how infrastructure interventions are designed to prioritise the most vulnerable users i.e. where motorised traffic exceeds 20mph segregation is introduced, where people cycling have the potential to cycle above 5mph segregation is introduced. For quiet / residential areas which have effective traffic calming measures, physical segregation is not always required.

The Council would like to highlight the potential for shared use paths to create conflict between the pedestrian and cyclists. Busy pedestrian routes such as the shared path from Alfred Street to Cromac Street could benefit from some type of segregation such as demarcation or contrasting surfaces which could lead to a greater sense of safety, user confidence and comfort.

Question 13:

How important is the requirement that ‘routes need to flow’? What kind of signage should be provided? What facilities should be provided?

If the network is to encourage more people to cycle, then routes should provide an end-to-end journey for users and potential users. We would encourage that consideration be given to the type of journey most likely to take place across each route and appropriate signage and facilities be installed to match i.e. secure bicycle parking available at the end of each short route and within longer routes at points of interest is essential.

We would encourage the use of mixed signage throughout the network including directional signage, distance / time of travel signage, strong road markings, tourism signs / points of interest signs, etc.

Where required, the Council would suggest providing opportunities to rest / stop off (i.e. seating or shelter) on longer routes. The Council would also suggest including monitoring and traffic counters.

Question 14:

What is the relative importance between construction of a route and its maintenance? What other guiding principles would you suggest? Please explain.

Maintenance of the network will be important to ensure its continual usage. We would encourage that the network is regarded as a significant part of the local traffic infrastructure and is given the due priority with relation to maintenance, removal of debris, treatment in winter, etc. The network should be seen as an extension of the road network, a supplementary alternative that supports the better flow of people across the city. We would ask that the Council’s cleansing section is consulted during the design phase to ensure that consideration is given to allowing access for the mechanical sweepers which will be used to sweep the routes.

Question 15:

With reference to the appendices please set out your views on the proposed routes. We are interested in the positives or negatives associated with the various sections of the proposed routes.

General points for consideration would be to:

- Whilst we welcome the plan and would agree in principle, it does impact on Council land therefore we would require clarification on the impact on our land in terms of access, pathways, lighting and gates.
- We would require clarification around potential financial issues relating to both the capital build and ongoing maintenance.
- Maximize the existing network
- Incorporate the network within planned infrastructure improvements
- Prioritise the most vulnerable users of the network
- Align the highest level of safety infrastructure to parts of the network that carry the greatest risk of incident.

Question 16:

What are the specific issues that may arise if bicycle infrastructure was constructed along the proposed route?

As there is currently limited detailed on the proposed routes it is difficult at this point to identify what specific issues might arise. We would suggest that discussions take place with the relevant Council officers in relation to the specific proposed routes in relation to design, build and ongoing maintenance.

Question 17:

What other alternative routes are available?

The Council would request consideration is given to including a number of the main arterial routes in city which service high density residential areas as part of the primary network.

In particular, the Lisburn and Ormeau Roads suffer from heavy traffic congestion and the opportunity to develop high quality cycle infrastructure along these routes to encourage modal shift is paramount. In addition, the south and north of the city will not benefit from the Phase 1 of Belfast Rapid Transit therefore, it is considered that priority should be given to promoting other sustainable modes such as walking and cycling routes.

The Council would also propose the creation of a community greenway to the south west of the City from the City Centre along the M1 Motorway to connect with the Lagan Towpath and Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park. The proposed southern arm of the West Route extends from the Bog Meadows along the M1 motorway to Kennedy Way where it then travels west towards Andersonstown Leisure Centre. It is suggested that a new community greenway is developed so the route continues south alongside the motorway to connect with the Lagan Towpath. The additional extension would provide an opportunity for a sustainable travel option to the south west of the city, provide a safer environment in which to encourage greater uptake of cycling, improve health and well being and support greater bio-diversity. Council officers would request to meet with the Cycling Unit to discuss in more detail.