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By email xxxxxxx@aberdeencity.gov.uk

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Dear xxxxx,

City Centre Masterplan - Schoolhill Public Realm

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on these proposals. **In summary, we are very disappointed that the proposals for one-way traffic and segregated two-way cycle-lanes, as set out in the Masterplan, have not been included.**

Our comments are phrased from the perspective of cyclists, who are our constituency: although we cannot claim to speak for all cyclists, ACF has around 600 members. Our objects, as set out in our Constitution, are noted below¹.

We began considering the proposals by returning to the City Centre Masterplan final report and examining what had been set out there in relation to Schoolhill, and cycling's place in the transport hierarchy.

Section 10 of The Masterplan report, titled 'The Connected City', on p56 states:

“.... remove on street parking and implement a series of one way streets, cyclists will be served by segregated two way cycleways through the heart of the city centre on streets such as Crown Street, Guild Street, Market Street and Schoolhill. This is necessary in

¹ A) To encourage cycling and to promote the benefits of cycling to the individual and the wider community B) To advocate for a safer cycling environment and improved cycle facilities in Aberdeen. C) To campaign for cycling to be an integral part of planning and transport strategies and practice, in order to provide the widest possible access to cycling as a healthy and efficient means of travel for work and leisure.

order to provide the safest possible environment that is attractive by the most vulnerable users, including families and young children.”

The Masterplan report (p57) also confirms the intention that this section of Schoolhill was to have a two-way segregated bike lane. It is also shown as the location of a possible ‘Bike Hub’, including covered, high quality bike parking (Project IN05). Neither of these things have been included in this suggested design.

Your covering email to us (24 January) stated “*The draft proposal continues two-way vehicular traffic along Schoolhill’s carriageway*” and “*The use of segregated cycle lanes is not proposed as the carriageway width currently serving two-way traffic precludes this, and that the current general vehicle usage throughout the day, out-with peak times, is not as intense as other city centre streets*”

You have not shared with us the reason for reneging on the proposal in the Masterplan to make vehicular traffic in Schoolhill one-way. However it seems clear that the necessary compromise has been that the provision of cycle infrastructure has not only been downgraded but dropped altogether from the proposals. In our view this would be totally unacceptable.

We recognise that by the very nature of a Masterplan, not every detail or idea will come to fruition. However, the transformation of the city centre is so dependent on changing current modes of transport, and making it an attractive place to walk and cycle is so integral, that we cannot accept that it can be so easily removed from these proposals.

We have the following further comments on points of detail in the design:

- 1) Although the plans we have seen do not include dimensions, it is clear that the carriageway is to be narrowed compared with the current layout. Narrowing of carriageway in Schoolhill with no segregated cycle provision is likely to represent a significant deterioration in attractiveness and safety for cyclists.
- 2) City Centre Masterplan report, p52 shows Schoolhill beyond the junctions with Back Wynd and Harriet St as pedestrianised / service vehicles only. As both these streets are one-way it would make sense for Schoolhill to this point to also be one-way. This would then provide space to allow provision of a two-way segregated bike lane.
- 3) Widening of the pavement in front of the War Memorial close to the junction is particularly problematic: it significantly reduces the radius of the turn, and cyclists travelling on Blackfriars St and turning left are likely to be in increased danger from vehicles also turning left, particularly any large vehicles such as buses or HGVs. We consider this is an unsafe design which should be reviewed urgently, particularly if Phase 1 of the design is to be implemented soon.
- 4) The red dots on the plan are not shown on the key but we presume these are bollards with the purpose of keeping vehicles off the pavement. Such bollards can present a hazard to vulnerable road users (pedestrians and cyclists) and we suggest that alternate means of protecting the pavement from vehicles should be considered. From a cyclist perspective, a row of bollards can be intimidating to cycle alongside, particularly where the carriageway is narrow and vehicles can be overtaking fairly close by – the bollards present a further hazard and they eliminate an ‘escape route’.
- 5) Positioning of cycle stands is satisfactory for access to Art Gallery but in our experience the existing stands to the SE of the statue are also used by cyclists accessing shops or other businesses in Belmont St, Schoolhill or the Bon Accord centre. The proposed

location at the back of the area and behind the statue is less convenient for that purpose and so likely to be used less. They are also more out of sight and so more prone to theft. A row of Sheffield stands does not in our view amount to a 'BikeHub' as described in the Masterplan. Furthermore, 9 stands as shown on the plan is fewer than the current provision of 11.

Overall, we cannot see how these plans can be construed as consistent with the Masterplan.

We would be happy to meet with you to discuss how alternate plans could be developed which would be consistent with the Masterplan.

Yours sincerely,

Gavin Clark

Chair, Aberdeen Cycle Forum