

*Peter Hawkins was asked to outline the objections of cyclists to the design of the proposed new station at Gogarburn to the CEC Planning Cttee. This is his report*

I attended the meeting of this cttee yesterday (Thurs 1<sup>st</sup> April) and was given 10 mins to address them on our concerns, followed by questions.

There were 28 objections from cyclists, in all, nearly all making the same 3 main points.

Using the Spokes map I pointed out the dangers of the south side of the Gogar rbt and noted that the north side path has no main road crossings and is much preferred. Hence, routes westwards, to RBS, the airport, future Business Gateway etc are on the north side of the A8, whereas destinations eastwards, to Gyle Centre, Edinburgh Park, and the city, are all to the south of the A8. The underpass is thus a vital link in a major route.

I then outlined our three requirements - 1 that there be direct links from the northern mouth of the underpass to the east-west path above; 2 that the underpass be for cyclists, not just for pedestrians with cyclists having to dismount; and no barriers; and 3 that the underpass be open 24/7 because of shift workers, late planes etc. I pointed out that all 28 of the objections mentioned one or more of these points. I noted that the u/pass will, at 5.5m width, be wide enough for peds and cyclists to either share, or be divided by a white line.

I then stated the need for transport infrastructure to be integrated, ie to include cyclists, and quoted various bits of Gov't policy to this effect, esp from, eg the Obesity Strategy, "Applying robustly, in development decisions, the priority order for personal travel opportunities - walking, cycling, then public transport, followed by private car - as set out in Scottish Planning Policy (SPP)"; "to create environments that make walking and cycling part of everyday life for everyone"; "ensuring that in all our actions... we are promoting active travel..."; "safe and DIRECT access for pedestrians and cyclists"; expanding safe cycling routes to link key community destinations... INCLUDING PUBLIC TRANSPORT HUBS..."

CEC's own Standards for Sustainable Buildings includes: "development proposals should offer genuine and practical alternatives to car use by prioritising desire lines for peds and cyclists", noting that this proposal with its long diversion was not 'practical' (nor genuine in that the applicants Network Rail (NR) were claiming the u/pass was for peds AND cyclists when it really is not). I praised the Cllrs for what Edinburgh has already done for cyclists; "we love you!" (?!)

NR's arguments, I pointed out, that the u/pass is part of the station, and thus part of the "station experience", are fundamentally weak and take no cognisance of the need for integrated transport. I asked Cllrs when they last went to a station in order to get a "station experience".

There was a model of the proposals on display and I have to admit that when I saw it I realised the situation is much worse than I'd feared. The northern mouth of the u/pass leads straight into a plastic tunnel, no gaps or escapes, for about 150m into the station. Cyclists will have to walk all this distance, then double back another 150m to get to the main east-west path (admittedly they can ride this bit) - a long diversion. When challenged on this latter I noted that the Gov't spends billions on motorways to save drivers as little as 5 mins. And explained about desire lines.

Under questioning, I agreed that a ramp from the northern mouth westwards was more important than one to the east, since the former would be the main direction of flow.

Kevin Murphy, the Planning Officer, then told us the reason no ramps had been designed in, was - wait for it ! - because of the requirements of the surrounding landscape design. Even some Cllrs drew breath in at this.

I also argued that the station could begin at a point close to, but separate from, the northern mouth, where the covered tunnel could start, leaving the u/pass free for all users.

I suggested that our requirements should be made planning conditions. At the end of the session there was further discussion among the Cllrs. Then Cllr Burgess proposed an amendment which included all 3 of our requests. Cllr Rose put another amendment which would grant 2 of them - not the 24/7, over "security" fears - but the precise location of the ramp(s) was left unspecified, - allowing potential for a fudge. The Burgess amendment was defeated, but the Rose one was carried.

There was clearly a lot of sympathy from most Cllrs - except a couple of complete curmudgeons - and the questioning went on much longer than for other objectors, indicating a high level of interest.

I will need to see the Minutes for the precise wording of Rose's amendment, but we clearly still have a battle on our hands, and because the promoter is a Gov't Agency, this will have to involve lobbying MSPs as well as Cllrs.