



The scheme information pages say:

“The proposals look to achieve:

- bus infrastructure improvements to help buses move quickly through the traffic improving journey times and reliability.
- better pedestrian spaces providing safe crossing points and attractive streetscapes.
- reallocation of road space for cyclists to make it easier and safer to cycle

Our aim is to provide a better travelling experience for those who take the bus, cycle or walk, to encourage more people to choose to make the switch, which will help reduce congestion and improve air quality.”

Reallocation of road space is contentious because the road width may be insufficient to cater for all uses. The rationale is to prioritise space to the most space-efficient modes – buses, walking and cycling.

The approach was confirmed in an October 2021 Cabinet Strategic Corridors Update paper “These routes will be designed to provide a high degree of segregation, either on dedicated infrastructure or running freely with traffic. In principle this will seek to deliver high quality rapid transit.”

### 1.3 The 2020 consultation

Feedback from the first round of engagement on the scheme included:

- Nearly 80% agree and strongly agree with taking road space away from the car and providing more walking, cycling and bus infrastructure.
- Over 70% strongly agreed that safe crossing points and feeling safe were key for transport corridors closely followed by clean air and a place to walk and cycle.
- Over half of the respondents think the road is unsafe to cycle on and unpleasant to walk along as the streets are congested with too much traffic.
- 64% want safer cycle corridors and 52% want more cycle priority

### 1.4 The current consultation

The funding for the scheme comes from government via WECA. WECA has allocated funding to the scheme, but this is dependent on BCC presenting a business case to secure the money to implement the scheme. This consultation will help determine the design of the scheme to be presented in the business case.

## 2 Is it bold enough ?

### 2.1 Enough for First Bus ?

The Council and First Bus came to an agreement in 2019 that in return for freeing up passage of the buses, and thus making buses more reliable, First Bus would double the service frequency. This is a critical rationale.

The proposed bus gate on Park Street and the existing bus gates on Baldwin Street and Bristol Bridge, speed up the route 2 bus in the city centre. Some existing bus lanes will be changed to operate 24 hours a day, reflecting the post-Covid change in the daily pattern of congestion. But the proposed bus lane provision on both Whiteladies Road and Wells Road will remain far from continuous. Will that be enough ?

If proposals get watered down, buses may not be freed up, and the whole purpose of the scheme will fail. For instance:

- if the bus gate on Park Street is rejected
- if a satisfactory solution at North View is not secured

What does First Bus think ?

## 2.2 Walking – good but could be better

Improvements for walking tend to be smaller simple interventions. A number of continuous footways and pavement buildouts across side turnings are proposed. These are important: they give recognition that the pedestrian has priority in that location. There are a few new and improved pedestrian crossings, and a few widened footways. [Note: this is not completely apparent from the plans put to public consultation: some of the interventions are on parts of Wells Road and Whiteladies Road that are not included in the public consultation.]

There are three proposals that will radically change the balance of street use in favour of pedestrians:

- creation of new public realm at Queens Road between the Victoria Rooms and the Triangle
- bus gate and wider pavement on Park Street (but disappointingly Heavy Goods Vehicles are exempted)
- creation of public realm at places on Victoria Street

These changes are good, but could there be more of these small and large interventions to redress the balance in favour of the pedestrian ? Bristol Walking Alliance will make the case for more.

There are two major omissions:

- it is very disappointing that the traffic engineers have decided it is not feasible to design a scheme at the Triangle which would pedestrianize Queens Road. Doubly so because the proposed scheme does not even widen the high-footfall pavement, even though this was part of the temporary changes of the last year.
- there is nothing proposed for the narrow footway from Bath Bridges to the Three Lamps junction that is shared between high flows of pedestrians and cyclists. If this scheme does not address this, then it won't get done in the next 5 years.

## 2.3 Cycling – squeezed out ?

Bristol's cycling strategy is to "Build a comprehensive cycle network accessible for all and segregated wherever possible, meaning free from motorised vehicles and to reduce conflict with pedestrians." 'Accessible for all' is important: people will not switch to using bikes unless they feel safe, and segregation by bollards or kerbing is required for that.

Bristol Cycling Campaign judges that "The plans for the centre are brilliant. They show that Bristol can design first class proposals when it wants to". But this scheme's proposals do not include 'accessible for all' proposals on Whiteladies Road or Wells Road. The improvements for bikes are not continuous, and become patchier away from the city centre. The lack of provision seems a major flaw.

This is a key moment: if this scheme does not include segregated bike lanes, then no scheme will. An alternative parallel quiet route is proposed for Wells Road, and Bristol Cycling Campaign accepts that segregated cycling on the A37 Wells Rd is not likely to be feasible. But no alternative is proposed for Whiteladies Road (there is an existing Sustrans route, the Downs Way, but this is not mentioned in the consultation). A route through back streets which isn't direct is unlikely to achieve the same take-up as a route directly along the arterial road.

## 2.4 Extrapolating to other arterial routes

Using these proposals as a precedent, and making use of the information in the LCWIP, it looks likely that the strategic corridors will be as follows:

Arterial road	Continuous bus lane ?	Continuous cycle route ?	
		Segregated on arterial road	Alternative quiet route
Portway	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	-
Bath Road	<b>Yes</b>	<b>?Yes</b>	River Avon Trail
M32	<b>Yes</b>	No	Concorde Way, Frome Valley Greenway
Whiteladies Road	Partial	No	Downs Way
Wells Road	Partial	No	Bayham Road etc, Whitchurch Way
Gloucester Road	Partial	No	Southmead Quietway, Concorde Way
East Street/West Street	Partial	No	Whitehouse Lane, Filwood Quietway
A370	No, but Metrobus from P&R	No	Festival Way
Church Road	Partial	No	Wesley Way
Stapleton Road	No	No	Frome Valley Way
Fishponds Road	Partial	No	Railway Path

The policy statements and the transformational aspirations do not appear to translate into reality for buses and bikes on arterial routes. Few arterial roads will have continuous bus lanes or cycle lanes. The alternative quiet cycle routes are variable: most are indirect, good as leisure routes but less good for regular utility travel; some go through parks and are unlit at night. This seems a realistic conclusion to be extrapolated from the A37 A4018 proposals, but it is not something that has been publicly acknowledged by the Council.

#### 2.4 Car parking

Take Whiteladies Road. It has road width for 3 or 4 carriageways along most of its length. It has a long length of shops, and a good deal of roadside parking, which would have to be removed in a more radical plan. That will raise concerns from motorists and traders, and would take 'political capital' to implement. But the Council seems to have ruled this out without putting it to consultation. It could have presented two options: 1) removing car parking and showing the benefit for space-efficient transport modes, and 2) the status quo – delayed buses and less safety for bikes.

If it was in London or Manchester or Birmingham, would the car parking be removed and would there be either a continuous bus lane, or a segregated cycleway ? There are examples in other cities where parking has been removed outside shops: Oxford Road in Manchester, and Mile End Road in East London (CS2).

Wells Road is narrower. Whilst the same questions apply, it is more difficult to see how a segregated cycle way could be accommodated.

#### 2.5 Other cities

Other cities have demonstrated that bold schemes are possible. Here are some before and after pictures:

London – Lea Bridge Road



Manchester – Oxford Road



Glasgow – Sauciehall Street



### 3 Key locations for improvement

#### 3.1 Locations from 2020 feedback

The consultation feedback says that respondents to the 2020 consultation sought improvements for pedestrians, cyclists and buses at a number of specific locations. The table below lists these places and comments on whether the scheme delivers those improvements for buses and bikes.

Location	Improvements included in the draft designs	
	For buses	For bikes
A37 junction with Airport Road / Wootton Park	No substantive changes	No substantive changes
hill section of A37	<b>Inbound bus lane upgraded to 24 hour</b>	<b>Bayham Road cycle route. Uphill cycle lane between 3 Lamps and St Johns Ln</b>
Broadwalk and A37 junction	<b>Outbound bus lane upgraded to 24 hour</b>	None
Bath Bridges area	None	None
Park Street cycle lane	<b>Bus gate</b>	None, but the bus gate makes the road quieter
Triangle gyratory	None	<b>Segregated bike lane</b>
Top of Whiteladies Road	None	None through junction.

junction with Westbury Road and Stoke Road.		
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### 3.2 Other locations

Location	Improvements included in the draft designs	
	For buses	For bikes
North View	Bus gate rejected, proposals under review	Proposals under review
Whiteladies Road	<b>Outbound 24 hour bus lane on Blackboy Hill</b> Outbound hours to be reviewed on bus lane north from Clifton Down	None. Nothing in the designs on an alternative quiet route

### 3.3 Commentary

The analysis in the tables above supports the doubts that the scheme proposals do enough to help ease bus flows. They demonstrate also that the improvements for bikes are not continuous, and become patchier away from the city centre.

## 4 Is it presented well ?

### 4.1 Getting across the fundamental aim of the scheme

When I talk to individuals about this scheme, I have to explain the rationale (described in 1.2 above). The general public does not understand the rationale. Discussion tends to be one-dimensional, reflecting the preferred transport mode of the individual.

### 4.2 Engagement

The Council has improved its engagement processes by asking the public about their issues and suggestions for the route in the first round (in 2020 for this scheme), before presenting any proposals. But the second round of engagement doesn't seem to have changed much: it is still mostly a single proposal put forward for reaction, not more than one option. There is no explanation of the design compromises that have been made, and why. The processes don't seem to facilitate a rich, informed discussion. Plainly, a difficult thing to do.

### 4.3 Leadership

The Council's leaders have a role to play in getting across the rationale of the scheme, but we don't seem to be hearing from them during the consultation period. Political capital is not being invested in it. If they believe in the rationale of the scheme, surely they should be making the case for it ?

Local councillors also should be explaining the bigger picture. They should explain the scheme's objectives, not just point out the negative impacts and confirm people's prejudices.