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By e-mail to: [john.foster@glasgow.gov.uk](mailto:john.foster@glasgow.gov.uk)

Dear Mr Foster,

**Glasgow City Council,  
Blythswood District Regeneration Framework**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Blythswood DRF. GoBike is a voluntary organisation campaigning in the Strathclyde area for better infrastructure, policy and political support for cycling. Cycling should be a safe, efficient, healthy and attractive form of transport for people of all abilities and ages and using every variety of cycle. The comments which follow are made in the context of GoBike's campaign aims, and were finalised as the number of confirmed coronavirus cases in the Glasgow area reached three figures. It's assumed that the need to reinvent and regenerate the central city area will remain (or be even greater) in whatever the new normality turns out to be.

**General response**

GoBike strongly supports the consultation document's ambition to reinvent Blythswood district and the central city area by reclaiming the streets from domination by motor traffic and parked cars. Obviously, achieving this ambition depends on big reductions in the number of private cars (and taxis and private hire vehicles) driving into and through the reinvented, vibrant central area, while still enabling large numbers of people to come into and move around it.

The inescapable inference is that transformative numbers of people need to choose to cycle into and through Blythswood district. Walking can contribute, but takes four times as long (according to the Council's own fingerposts). Bus travel will become more attractive with reduced congestion improving its speed and reliability, but it cannot provide the control and flexibility cherished by drivers. Cycling (with route choices which are safe, direct and comfortable) delivers the same individual control and flexibility as driving and, over short distances in city streets, better reliability with little if any time penalty door-to-door.

To be clear, it is not GoBike's position that no journeys should be by private car, but that if people cycle whenever practical the reduction in traffic will make the streets more inviting for everyone – for those walking, cycling, on buses, and for the remaining drivers.

To support the DRF's ambitions (for example, for achieving Objective 1, *Shift towards a more efficient, healthy and sustainability mobility*) GoBike therefore urges that stronger language is used to emphasise the key and vital role of creating a streetscape in which large numbers of people of all ages and abilities will routinely make cycling their first choice for short trips. These will be people of all ages and abilities, including from time to time those using a cycle for a mobility aid, transporting small children, transporting bulky loads with a cargo bike or as a cycle rickshaw for hire.

It's unhelpful to think in terms of 'cycle routes' (or 'designated' cycle routes, the term used in CDP11). People need to be able to cycle from anywhere to anywhere, just as those on foot need to be able to walk anywhere. Cycle infrastructure which is half-hearted (e.g. with side street design which puts people cycling in fear of being swiped by turning vehicles) or which delivers a small number of routes which are high quality but in a network too sparse for door-to-door trips won't attract the necessary numbers of people, won't deliver free road space for other uses, and will be a waste of money.

### Response to specific points in the narrative section

1. GoBike supports the DRF's Key Objectives (p30), especially Key Objective 1 (*Shift towards a more efficient, healthy and sustainable mobility*), Key Objective 2 (*Repurpose the urban grid to create an optimised 'tartan' of street types*) and Key Objective 4 (*Reduce car dependency, make space for people and nature*). Key Objective 1 is more powerfully stated as *Shift **TO** a more efficient...mobility*.
2. In the Updated Mobility projects list (p35), *Street safety and accessibility* must be a priority project. Safety and accessibility must be an integral part of all the projects that are shown as priorities; they are not things that can be created as an afterthought (ie they must be baked in, not bolted on).
3. Updated Mobility (p48) – GoBike supports a shift to more sustainable modes of transport to make the city more liveable – but the schematic diagram showing strategies for reducing car use in the city centre does not include cycling to or in the city centre. This may be a casual omission, but it suggests that the key role of cycling has not been fully acknowledged. There are multiple reports of studies showing that half or more of car journeys are of five miles or shorter, a trivial distance for cycling, particularly when cycling is seen as a normal activity.
4. Traffic-calmed Blythswood (p52) – GoBike strongly supports the elimination of city centre through traffic, and welcomes the acknowledgement that other cities have established useful examples to follow. The intent would be clearer if this project were labelled 'reduced traffic' or 'limited traffic' Blythswood, to avoid conjuring thoughts of streets full of speed cushions.
5. Specialisation in Streets (Tartan) (p55) – GoBike supports the exploration of the 'tartan' grid concept, with reservations. The language used is understandably compressed, but the possible interpretation of (for example) 'bike priority streets' is too broad. Nobody thinks of 'networks of walking routes' in inner cities in the way they do of 'networks of bus routes'. People cycling are like people walking rather than like buses. Using the expression 'networks of private car routes' would show a real change in unspoken assumptions and we urge you to do this.
6. Smarter Parking (p58) – GoBike completely supports the removal of parking from the streets. This must include an immediate halt to the installation of on-street charging points for e-vehicles.
7. Street Safety and Accessibility (p64) – GoBike welcomes the statement that 'streets should be designed in an intuitive and logical way' so that 'the design ... clearly indicates to car-users, cyclists and pedestrians intuitively how to behave', according to the principles set out in *Designing Streets*. It is the combination of these principles in minor streets with segregated cycling infrastructure on arterial routes which will enable people to cycle from anywhere to anywhere. Mechanisms need to be found to ensure that every change made to a street is in line with these principles (rather than solely when new streets are created).

8. Great Streets and Spaces (p98) – The aim of *improving pedestrian and cyclist links to make **fine-grained**, comfortable and logical network* is key to creating an area in which people choose cycling over driving, and needs to be given more prominence.
9. Great Streets and Spaces (p100) – GoBike welcomes the statement that *to make sustainable mobility ... serious alternative (over the car) routes/networks need to be safer, faster, more intuitive, reliable and comfortable*. The reference to ‘bike streets’, seemingly analogously with ‘bus streets’ is concerning – bikes need to go everywhere.
10. Blythswood Street Steep Park (p 114) – The street’s topography is indeed challenging for cycling (p42) – but will become less so with the increasing take-up of e-bikes. The installation of a bike escalator ([www.trondheim.com/trampe-bicycle-lift](http://www.trondheim.com/trampe-bicycle-lift)) would be a fun and useful part of a Blythswood Street steep park.
11. Finally, GoBike strongly supports the various proposals for improving permeability for people walking and cycling by restoring historic links that have been broken either by the M8 or megastructures squatting on the street grid, for example linking Charing Cross/Anderston stations (p62), through the Old High School site (p62), new bridges over the M8 to relink Elmbank Crescent/Kent Road and Bothwell Street/ William Street (p82)

Vital permeability for people cycling will be provided more quickly and at lower cost through a coherent policy providing contraflow cycling in one-way streets, following international evidence that this is safest when universal in an area.

## Action plan

It is disappointing that the Action Plan is dominated by administrative tasks with little change on the ground envisaged for several years. GoBike acknowledges the practical constraints of the decision-making system – and the need to expend political capital on the fears of people who see themselves as losing from the proposed changes. GoBike welcomes the proposal to use Experimental or Temporary TROs in Year 1 in Blythswood Street, West George Street and Blythswood Square, and encourages experimentation in more places. The search for ‘quick wins’ (eg p206) is welcome; the present dislocation to all our lives could present opportunities, which will be wasted if the natural urge to get back to normal as soon as possible includes returning to traffic-clogged streets which are unpleasant for everyone.

1. Updated Mobility – Bigger Context (p204-5) – GoBike strongly supports a rapid review of the City Centre Transport strategy to incorporate the findings of the Connectivity Commission. It must treat transport in a holistic way, with cycling an integral part of the plans and budget, not (as now) ring-fenced in special projects with their own funding and expertise. As suggested under Justification/Observations, high-performing cities can provide hard evidence of successful interventions, Glasgow does not have to learn from its own mistakes.

The dependence on traffic modelling (also proposed for Traffic-calmed Blythswood (p208), Smarter Parking (p208), Variation in Street Character (p 218)) is questionable. It’s acknowledged that this is an expert field, but it is clearly very sensitive to the chosen inputs and system bounds, and it has a poor record of predicting traffic induction or evaporation. Modelling should be used to find ways to deliver political objectives, not to question their feasibility.

2. Updated Mobility – Low Emission Zone (p204-5) – Important as the need to improve air quality is, prioritising the creation of a(n ultra) low emission zone is a distraction from creating an attractive central area. E-vehicles take up the same road and parking space as conventional ones. The vehicles with the lowest emissions are cycles. Glasgow needs a policy for e-vehicles which is consistent with the targeted reduction of traffic and

parking in the central area. It must include an immediate halt to the provision of on-street charging points.

3. Updated Mobility – Specialisation in Streets (Tartan) (p206-207) – Changing the first column to the following crystallises the DRF’s intention: “Ensure all streets are safe and attractive for people walking and cycling, with reliable bus corridors and a network of designated routes for private cars including taxis and private hire vehicles”.

Among the ‘quick wins’ should be the enabling of contraflow cycling to bring coherence to the EIIPR (Avenues) developments. This needs the ‘grand projects’ mindset to be integrated into the operational sections of the council.

It is GoBike’s experience that the excellent ideas and practice seen in some of the cycle infrastructure being added to Glasgow’s streets do not spread to the day-to-day activities of council departments. It’s also the case that while *Designing Streets* was published a decade ago, its principles are recognised only in new developments. Achievement of the admirable ambitions of the Blythswood DRF will be supported by the addition of the following additional (priority) actions.

1. Review all existing planning and professional guidance and take the steps needed to ensure that any which impede recognition of *Designing Streets*, the Transport Hierarchy or evidence of good design practice in other world cities will be overridden.
2. Put in place organisational mechanisms to disseminate the ‘reinvention’ mindset to the operational sections of the council so that new and inventive thinking is not confined to the ‘Grand Project’ (eg ‘Avenues’) teams. Create a fund for operational units to draw on when ‘extra cost’ is seen as a barrier to working to *Designing Streets* principles instead of the default method.

Above all, we urge you to have a fresh look at the city. Use your essential exercise break to cycle or walk round the Blythswood and Central area to see how much pleasanter the streets are with less motor traffic on them. Let’s ensure that we build on this to allow people, once this current disruption is over, to cycle and walk around and enjoy this great city.

Yours sincerely



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