

Cycle contraflow lane on West Street (Exeter city centre)

Exeter Cycling Campaign Response February 2021

We welcome the vision to better connect the Quay area with Fore Street and Exeter City Center, tackling the tricky integration through the western way area. Overall we have concerns about the proposed scheme but with suitable modifications we feel the plan may be feasible and compliant with regulations.

Road Width

The plan indicates a minimum road width of 2.00 meters. The DfT Manual for the Streets states:

“7.2.3 In lightly-trafficked streets, carriageways may be narrowed over short lengths to a single lane as a traffic-calming feature. In such single lane working sections of street, to prevent parking, the width between constraining vertical features such as bollards should be no more than 3.5 m. In particular circumstances this may be reduced to a minimum value of 2.75 m, which will still allow for occasional large vehicles (Fig. 7.1). However, widths between 2.75 m and 3.25 m should be avoided in most cases, since they could result in drivers trying to squeeze past cyclists. The local Fire Safety Officer should be consulted where a carriageway width of less than 3.7 m is proposed.”

The space that has been left for cars is 20% narrower than a parking space (2.4m) and is the width of an average family saloon (DfT Manual for the Streets Fig. 6.18). This means it is impossible for most motorists to follow the advisory lane. This would be a confusing situation for motorists as you are forced to drive over the advisory line of the oncoming lane, something that you would normally be able to avoid. A better solution might be to use the contraflow example in LTN1/20 Figure 7.4 / section 7.3.4, subject to low enough traffic levels and speed. This proven approach removes the need for any line (and sense of entitlement to road width granted by such a line) and can work better on quiet, narrow streets.

LTN1/20 notes that at low speeds (such as when going up a very steep section of road) the dynamic envelope of the cyclist can increase by up to 0.8m - requiring wider minimum widths to allow safe passing (5.2.2).

Traffic Levels

No Passenger Car Unit levels have been noted in relation to this consultation. LTN1/20 only permits an advisory contraflow lane where the speed limit is 20mph or less and motor traffic flow is 1000PCU or less. West Street can receive a lot of traffic cutting

through from Bartholomew Street (particularly when Fore Street is backed up from Exe bridges) and we would recommend a full survey be undertaken to ascertain traffic levels on West St are below the requisite level. If they are not the widths are insufficient to allow a protected contraflow and a non protected contra flow would be in violation of LTN1/20.

Speeds at the entry to West Street are also a point of concern. Traffic will frequently pull out rapidly from Bartholomew Street to cross Fore Street and with the gradients involved accelerate rapidly.

A possible solution to reduce the traffic levels might be to make West Street access only. Whilst hard to enforce it should hopefully deter a large portion of those seeking to use it as a cut through whilst continuing to allow access to the businesses and residents.

Parking

The single parking space being left would force cyclists out into the path of oncoming vehicles. Either the bay should be marked and the cycle path passed around it (with 50cm door room - which may render it impossible with widths) or it should be removed. Alternative parking and loading / unloading is still available on the other side of Fore Street.

Confusion of markings at Western Way

For those travelling down Western Way it should be made clear that the dual use cycle lane continues adjacent to the dropped kerb at the end of the parking - the proposed plan would seem to be indicating the cyclists should join the carriage way and the permission to continue along the pavement should be emphasised for all users' clarity.



Hopefully you can see from the above photo that the implication of the proposed markings would be pedestrians to the left of the planter, cyclists to the right. A reiteration of the shared use sign (illustrated in red) resolves this.

Likewise at the west side of the crossing over the exit of West Street onto Western Way the same confusion could arise, albeit reduced by the shared use sign the opposite side. Perhaps consideration could be given to improving this junction for the dual use -

moving the junction line back and giving a shared crossing would improve flow for active transport.



Sight lines involving the large planter should also be considered as downhill cyclists can emerge quite suddenly at the junction due to being screened until almost on top of the junction



More thought should also be given to the cyclists coming down West Street - if the intent is to increase the cycle traffic then more clarity should be given as to the route to the quay. The current route leaves the cyclist needing to know to double back around the parked cars and access the crossing.



Summary

With reworking of the contraflow in line with LTN1/20 7.3.4 and management of traffic volumes, such as via an access only area, the difficult section of the design can be achieved. Overall the signage and flow of cyclists through the area, including the route along the length of Western Way, needs to be refined. The single parking space at the top of West Street needs reviewing. Subject to these modifications we would support this proposal.