



an independent force for a **better Bristol**

August 2014

Introduction and summary

Bristol Civic Society welcomes the draft Bristol Council cycling strategy document, but thinks that significantly more work is needed to make it a robust strategy.

In summary:

- BCS agrees with much of the high-level aims
- the proposals for 8 to 80 infrastructure need more thinking through and more explanation.
- whilst the strategy is valuable as a public visionary commitment, we think that the description of how it will be achieved could be more convincing.
- cycling strategy needs to be integrated with (a) public realm improvement (b) pedestrian provision.
- the strategy should include an aim of improving the facilities at the start and end of journeys.
- the strategy should aim to protect cycle routes where there is a threat from privatisation of public realm.

The presentation of the document needs thinking about. We welcome its unstuffy production design, but the writing needs editing and better structure to make the messages simpler and clearer. And it needs to address audiences other than enthusiastic cyclists, otherwise it runs the risk of being seen as evangelical, which will threaten wide acceptance of the strategy.

Detailed comments

BCS agrees with

- the aim of increasing cycling within Bristol. (pages 2 and 3)
- the targets (page 3),
- the strategy's statement of the benefits of cycling (page 5). One important environmental benefit of cycling that is not mentioned is that cyclists take up much less space than private motor vehicles. So increased cycling and reduced motor vehicle use has the potential to free up space to be developed as public realm.
- the 4 aims of making cycling simpler, safer, more attractive and helping to make Bristol a better place (Page 8).

- the aim to take a creative, innovative approach, pushing the boundaries (page 4 of the strategy) and testing innovative approaches using temporary measures (page 15)
- the approach to selling the benefits of cycling (page 15). Additionally, the marketing should challenge the image of cycling as unsafe, challenge the image of cycling being only for males clad in lycra, promote respect between all road and path users.

8 to 80 infrastructure: We welcome the approach of making cycling attractive and safe for less confident cyclists, including those aged 8 and 80. However, the proposals need more thinking through and more explanation in this strategy document:

- it is not clear whether the 8 to 80 aim includes the aim to provide segregated cycling lanes across *all* of the target network. If not, what is the extent of the target network of segregated cycle lanes, or how will it be determined whether a segregated cycling lane is needed ?
- in the 8-to-80 infrastructure proposals (page 11), there is an emphasis on routes to employment areas, but what about routes to schools, given that one of the strategy's targets is 20% of children cycling to secondary school ? Also retail centres, and community, health, cultural, and leisure destinations.
- in the 8-to-80 infrastructure proposals (page 11), south-east Bristol is not included at all
- the strategy does not face into the challenge of delivering 8-80 segregated cycle lanes on Bristol's narrow roads, eg on Whiteladies Road and Gloucester Road. There is a limit to how much space can be taken away from motorised vehicles.
- the strategy does not address the perception that Bristol is too hilly for a campaign to broaden the attractiveness of cycling to be successful.

Achieving the aims: Whilst the strategy is valuable as a public visionary commitment, we think that the description of how it will be achieved could be more convincing. For instance:

- the strategy consists of aspirational statements and a list of currently funded actions, but does not articulate the gap between the two.
- the list of actions is not linked to the stated aims or targets.
- BCycC's network map is useful as a target, but the strategy does not articulate the size of the task of achieving it, nor show a gap analysis versus what already exists. Nor does the strategy estimate the likely extent of 8-80 network that could be delivered in a particular timescale.
- there is no commitment to drawing up a prioritised list of cycling development schemes, ready for funding opportunities when they arise, nor the criteria on which schemes will be selected.
- whilst we welcome the commitment to spend £16 per head each year, there is no statement of how the required £7m pa will be sourced. The strategy should recognise that money to pay for important highway schemes is opportunistic, based on successful DfT grant applications. The strategy should make clear the amount of grant funding needed to achieve its targets, and comment on whether this is realistic.
- there is no statement that the council officer team will be sufficiently resourced to achieve the strategy. It is possible to use consultants to some extent, but they are no substitute for the continuity and local knowledge of a permanent council officer team.

If the strategy is *not* intended to include such information to give confidence that the aims can be achieved, it should be make this very clear, and instead refer to future processes or other documents that will fill the gap.

The one other document referred to by the strategy is “Bristol’s cycle design guide”. But it is not clear whether this is an existing or planned document, or what it covers. It does not seem to be on the council’s website.

Integrating public realm improvement: it is one of the strategy's aims to make Bristol a better place, which BCS supports. But the enhancement of public realm needs emphasising more, and a description is needed of how improving the public realm will be built into cycling development processes.

- in the same way that bus transport funding, such as Greater Bristol Bus Network and Metrobus, is used to fund improvements to the public realm along the route, funding for cycling facilities should be used in the same way.
- the cycle design guide should be part of a wider place and public realm design guide to ensure measures to enhance walking, cycling and movement are considered collectively with complementary benefits.
- in designing cycling infrastructure, there needs to be joint working with the Council's City Design team to ensure good design of the public realm, and to ensure sensitive treatment of heritage assets.

Integrating improvements for pedestrians: walking shares with cycling the same benefits. Too often, the pedestrian voice is not heard, and those promoting cycling should not take a parochial view and ignore pedestrians’ needs. The needs of pedestrians should be emphasised more in the strategy, and strongly integrated into it.

(There are two statements in the strategy relating to this but they are not enough - Page 16 of the strategy says "We will ensure that street space is used intelligently and effectively and protection from traffic will be implemented where possible in a way that ... is sensitive to the needs of pedestrians", and page 18 of the strategy includes the statement "Cycling will be integrated into the wider transport network by designing to minimise conflict between road users and encourage mutual respect.")

- new cycling infrastructure should consider pedestrian needs.
- the design of infrastructure at any place should reflect the relative volumes of cyclists and pedestrians. On some commuting routes, the volume of pedestrians exceeds the volume of cyclists. Where this is so, more space should be given to pedestrians, and the case for a segregated cycling route instead of shared space is greater, eg in the Centre.
- the walking strategy should sit alongside the cycling strategy, and the two should be looked at jointly.
- the cycle design guide should be integrated with a design guide to enhance the walking experience
- the target cycling network should be considered alongside the target pedestrian network.
- arguably, walking and cycling should be the responsibility of the same council officers to ensure that the two strategies are joined up.

Behaviour where cyclists and pedestrians mix: the strategy should face into widespread concern about the approach to shared space, where cyclists and pedestrians mix. It is to the mutual advantage of both groups to resolve this satisfactorily, and addressing it will help significantly to encourage acceptance by non-cyclists of more cycling provision.

- there should be strong marketing of the “respect other users” message, and reinforcement by simple signage at key conflict points.

- In confined spaces, cyclists must accept walking pace (which sometimes happens naturally due to the volume of pedestrians). This minor inconvenience will not "discourage" them.

End-of journey facilities: to achieve the aim of making cycling more attractive, the strategy should include an aim of improving the facilities at the start and end of journeys. There is some mention of this in the draft, but it could be emphasised more. For instance:

- provision of bike racks in public spaces should continue to expand
- space standards in new developments should include facilities for storing bicycles
- provision for electric bikes, eg security, charging points (possibly paid-for)
- provision of changing rooms in work places and places of entertainment.

Protecting cycle routes from public realm privatisation. The strategy should aim to protect cycle routes where there is a threat from privatisation of public realm. Possible examples are Arena Island, the old Grosvenor Hotel island site adjacent to Temple Circus, and other new developments around the Temple Quay Enterprise Zone area.