



Cycling Southampton: A plan for our city 2016-2026 - Climate Conversations response

Please note: Southampton City Council's draft Cycling Plan was open for comment as part of an engagement activity rather than a formal consultation.

The council's Research and Consultation Officer has stated:

"As an engagement it is not bound by the same rules as a consultation. The cycling plan forms part of the Local Transport Plan which will be subject to full consultation and will include details of planned delivery in regard to cycling."

Draft Cycling Plan: https://www.southampton.gov.uk/Images/Cycling-Southampton-2016-2026-DRAFT-Nov%202016_tcm63-389640.pdf

Dear Ms Rayment

30th December 2016

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to comment on the draft Cycling Plan for Southampton (2016-2026). Climate Conversations is a network of groups and individuals who are interested in progressing environmental and social change in the city and we support the council's work on developing a more sustainable Southampton. We welcome the Cycling Plan and hope that it will be the first of many proactive exercises to engage with the local community to produce truly sustainable transport policy for the city.

Please find below some comments on the draft, together with questions, which I hope you will consider when producing the final version of the plan:

1) Will the Cycling Plan become council policy?

It is stated in the draft (section 2.2) that the plan 'supports' various council policies and strategies, but there is no clear statement of its level of importance for the council. There is a concern that there is a gap between intent and outcomes, and between political rhetoric and the realities of the policy process. In fact, it is stated (section 5) that the solid foundation for a true Cycling City 'can be lost alongside other priorities if funding is restricted or through negative coverage'. In order for Cycling Southampton to remain a priority for the council we request that it becomes adopted policy.

2) How does the Cycling Plan fit within other future plans for the city?

Over the past month or so, some of us have been responding to a number of consultations relating to Southampton, sustainability and air quality. These include: The ABP Master Plan, Clean Air Zones (Defra) & The Redbridge Roundabout Improvement Scheme (Highways England). After reading the various consultation documents, the major drivers for change in the city appear to be economic rather than environmental or social; and are focused on growing the capacity of the port, rather than, say, seriously tackling the issue of air quality. Whilst these are not SCC consultations, it would be very useful to know the council's stance on all these plans and whether the cycling plan is just an 'add-on' whilst economic growth takes priority. For example, it is clear that 'the Council supports the growth and overall competitiveness of the Port of Southampton' (Policy AP4 (Port of Southampton)). This seems to be in conflict with both the Clean Air Strategy and Cycling

Southampton, as supporting the growth of the port will have negative environmental and social effects, particularly on air quality. Further reductions in air quality and increased HGV traffic on access roads will mean that people are less likely to cycle.

We would be happy to share our responses to these consultations, so that you may have further information on the complex issues relating to air quality in Southampton.

3) Will the final version of the Cycling Plan take into account comments on the Local Plan and Local Transport Plan (I believe consultations on these are due out early next year?)

As mentioned above it is difficult to know how the plan fits into the council's wider transport plans. It is hoped that the awaited drafts of the Local Plan and Local Transport Plan will provide this 'bigger picture' and also provide a greater focus on sustainability.

The first challenge listed in the Cycling Plan (p10) is that the streets have been designed for moving vehicles rather than people. This needs to be the central challenge in a comprehensive sustainable transport policy for the city, not just a cycling plan which is not currently adopted council policy.

For example, the Cycling Plan states that the City Centre Action Plan (CCAP 2015) 'puts cycling as one of the cornerstones for sustainably delivering ... growth'. Cycling is mentioned several times in the CCAP but there is little evidence that it is a key part of city centre development. For example, the target mentioned in the CCAP is a 3% p.a. increase in cycling (p198), rather than the 10% increase stated in the cycling plan. This is against the backdrop of Bargate ward having the highest numbers of accidents involving cyclists and walkers. In addition, the new Watermark development caused a key cycle path to be removed.

4) Is there a council policy to significantly reduce car use in the city?

Increasing modal share for cyclists means de-prioritising motor vehicle traffic. This requires serious investment in sustainable transport options and a redesigning of neighbourhoods so that they become less car-centric, for example, through lower speed limits in residential areas and around schools, designation of roads as Quiet Lanes or Home Zones, secure bike parking in car parking spaces, and so on. Due to the level of car ownership it is often not safe or desirable to cycle or walk to school.

Town planners in Leicester have been reclaiming space for people rather than for cars, by creating more cycleways and pedestrianised zones. The city has an elected mayor which has made it easier to make 'bold decisions' in relation to sustainable travel. (<https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/nov/26/lessons-from-leicester-the-uks-unlikely-new-poster-city-for-cycling>)

The aim should be to remove HGVs, LGVs and private vehicles from cities altogether, through measures such as distribution centres, park & ride, reduction in available parking, expensive parking fees, subsidised public transport, investment in zero emission buses/taxis, e-cargo bikes and proper cycling infrastructure on routes into and across cities, not just in city centres.

The Birmingham Connected white paper (https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/download/552/birmingham_connected) outlines a transport system which puts the user first. A detailed discussion on moving away from a car-centric society can also be found here: (<https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/apr/28/end-of-the-car-age-how-cities-outgrew-the-automobile>) This suggests measures to take public space away from private

vehicles such as mobility service providers, car clubs and well-integrated public transport systems.

Consideration should be given to reduction of parking spaces in the city centre, except for ultra-low emission vehicles. Southampton is oversupplied with parking spaces which are presently far cheaper to use than public transport. To balance this, bus companies should be helped to offer family tickets which cost less than parking a car. An “Oyster card” system should be introduced to make using public transport a cheaper and more integrated experience than it is now as there are a number of different bus companies in Southampton. In addition, car parks on the periphery of the city could be designated as “park and ride” and existing local bus routes badged as “park and ride” with stops at convenient locations. This could be introduced immediately without the considerable expense of a specially constructed park and ride scheme.

5) How will Southampton City Council ensure that developers will include proper cycling provision in new projects?

The removal of the cycle route through the Watermark development is a prime example of developers not embedding cycling provision in the design process. Developer contributions to funding, through s106 or s278 agreements, are mentioned in the cycling plan but there is no discussion of how to ensure that cycling provision is a priority in planning new developments. This should be one of the challenges mentioned on page 10 of the Cycling Plan. Requiring new developments to have ‘parking and storage facilities for bikes and develop on-street hubs for cycle parking’ is a start, but is insufficient.

It is stated on page 13 that the CCAP and emerging Local Plan require high quality cycle infrastructure to be designed into every new development scheme from the beginning. However, this did not happen with Watermark, which was a major development, so what safeguards and penalties will be put in place to ensure this does actually happen in the future? Will there be strict requirements for developers on the level of cycle infrastructure that is to be expected?

Guidance on integrating cycling provision into new developments can be found here:
[http://www.sustrans.org.uk/sites/default/files/images/files/Route-Design-Resources/
New_Developments_27_04_15.pdf](http://www.sustrans.org.uk/sites/default/files/images/files/Route-Design-Resources/New_Developments_27_04_15.pdf)
<http://www.makingspaceforcycling.org/>

6) What is the definition of a ‘true Cycling City’?

Transforming Southampton into a true Cycling City is a great aspiration but unfortunately this is not borne out by the figures given in the cycling plan. The aim is to have a 10% increase each year in the number of journeys made by bike. If we take the current modal share for cycling of 1.4%, then after 10 years this would mean a modal share of just 3.63%. Compare this with English cities where high numbers of journeys are made by bike - for example, Bristol which has a cycling modal share of around 15% and Cambridge where 29% of journeys to work are made by bicycle (2011).

The only defined outcome for the whole of the cycling plan is for metric no. 1 - the number of people cycling in Southampton - where the outcome is an ‘increase of 10% each year along the ten SCN cycle corridors into city centre and across’. What are the baseline numbers for each of these cycle corridors?

The other metrics in Table 2 only state ‘an increase’ without giving a specific figure. What are the baseline numbers for each of these aims and how much of an increase or

reduction will be expected for each? The 'Bicycle Accounts' are a good idea but will be meaningless without specific baselines and objectives.

7) What is being done about the high proportion of accidents involving cyclists?

The proportion of road traffic accidents which involve cyclists is 16% despite the modal share being 1.4%. This is simply unacceptable, especially as the number may be much higher (as noted in the plan). On page 10 of the plan it states that this is an opportunity to 'raise awareness of cycle safety and how vulnerable people can be while cycling'. This is the wrong approach as it places the onus on cyclists to take all manner of precautions (high visibility clothing, helmet, bright lights, cycling defensively, having children cycling on the pavement) in order to be safe on the roads. As noted, this is one of the reasons why people choose not to cycle and highlighting the vulnerability of cyclists will discourage people from choosing to cycle.

The safety of cyclists is paramount and can be achieved for example by:

- having properly segregated cycleways;
- educating *all* drivers (not just bus and HGV drivers) as to the minimum safe distance for passing cyclists and the 'Dutch reach' when opening car doors; and
- for Hampshire Police to take action on unsafe driving around cyclists (which is the current policy of the West Midlands Police Force - <https://www.west-midlands.police.uk/latest-news/news.aspx?id=4942>).

8) Where will the funding come from to turn Southampton into a true cycling city?

It appears that the £0.5million from the Local Transport Plan Integrated Block is the only confirmed funding for the Cycling Plan. Aside from the Access Fund for Sustainable Travel, how many other bids for funding have been submitted or are in development? Is there a reason why a larger proportion of the LTPIB funding cannot be used on cycling initiatives?

9) Which councillors regularly cycle to work in Southampton?

It would be very useful to know how invested councillors are in developing a proper sustainable transport policy for the city. Do councillors cycle or take public transport to get to work or around the city? If not, how can they be aware of the issues involved?

10) Why is there not investment in segregated cycle paths rather than shared-use paths?

Shared use paths (such as the one along The Avenue) cause conflict with pedestrians and are not an efficient way of cycling across the city. Table 1 mentions shared use cycle path projects - what is the rationale for investing in these rather than cycleways which would be safer for both cyclists and pedestrians?

11) Other suggestions:

- Public art & community-led street design for cycle ways and public transport routes (e.g. bus stops)

<http://www.sustrans.org.uk/community-led-street-design>

- Promotion of e-cargo bikes for short-distance shopping trips

We look forward to reading your report on the comments received.

Kind regards

Mandi Bissett

Climate Conversations

www.climateconversations.org.uk