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**Campbell, Jacqui**

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**From:** Borghmans, Borghert [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 04 March 2015 14:43  
**To:** Roads Eastern Srit  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Comment on York Street Interchange  
**Attachments:** YSI response BJB 150227.pdf

Dear Sir, Madam,

Please find attached my response to the York Street Interchange.

Thank you.

Regards,

**Borghert Jan Borghmans**

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
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██████████ 27 February 2015

Dear Sir, Madam,

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to comment on your Department's proposals for the York Street Interchange. The scheme is greatly needed and I do not oppose its implementation.

However, there are aspects of this project that have serious problems, and these should be addressed before implementation.

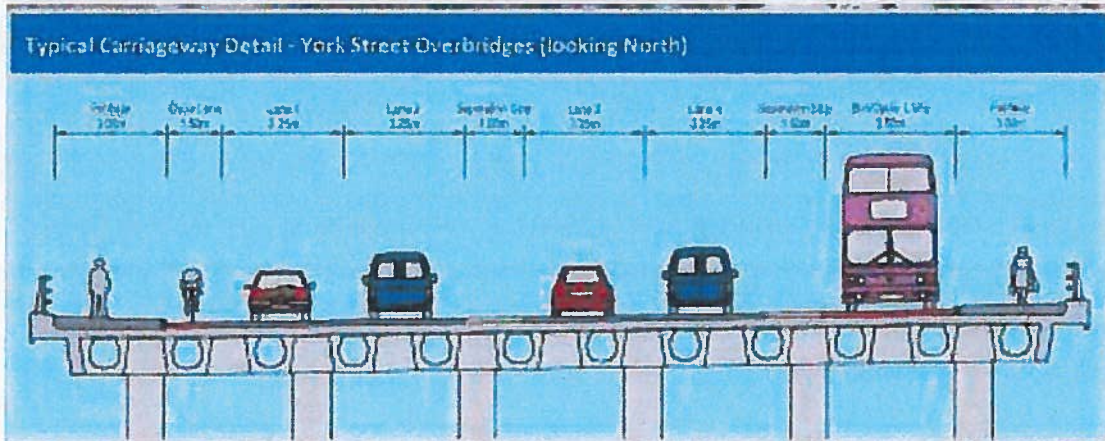
### **The Main Aims**

The main aims of the project include:

- to remove a bottleneck on the strategic road network;
- to deliver an affordable solution to reduce congestion on the strategic road network;
- to improve reliability of strategic journey times for the travelling public;
- to improve access to the regional gateways from the Eastern Seaboard Key Transport Corridor;
- to maintain access to existing properties, community facilities and commercial interests;
- to maintain access for pedestrians and cyclists;
- to improve separation between strategic and local traffic.

The first 4 are addressed well by the project, but the final 3 are problematic. The project delivers improvements for strategic traffic, but at best it maintains the present provision for local access and traffic. And here lies the rub. Present local access is very poor. It is a scandal that in a £125million budget to improve 1 junction no money can be found to sharpen the aims to "to improve access to existing properties" and "to improve access for pedestrians and cyclists".

### The York Street Flyover



I am trying to be brief and I limit myself to the York Street flyover and the roads either side from Dock Street junction to Dunbar Link.

On the positive side, cyclists were considered as a traffic flow from Shore Road to Dunbar Link, as evidenced by the provision of a bus/cycle lane. This is an improvement, but it is again lacking in ambition. Minister Danny Kennedy wants to create a cycling capital for these islands, but these ambitions are thwarted if at best the cyclist is expected to share with buses. This cannot be a permanent solution and evidence from across Belfast suggests that bus lanes do not give a sense of safety. This perception is a major block to cycling uptake. Unfortunately DRD only concentrate on absolute safety, the KSI statistics, not how people perceive their safety to be endangered by a bus driving close behind them.

On the other side of the road, country-bound, the plans foresee a 1.5m painted cycle. This lane won't be protected by a kerb. Firstly, the width of the lane is not sufficient to allow for 2 cyclists to go side-by-side without straying into the car space. As a minimum the width should be 2m to allow a faster cyclist to overtake a slower cyclist without straying in to the car lane beside.

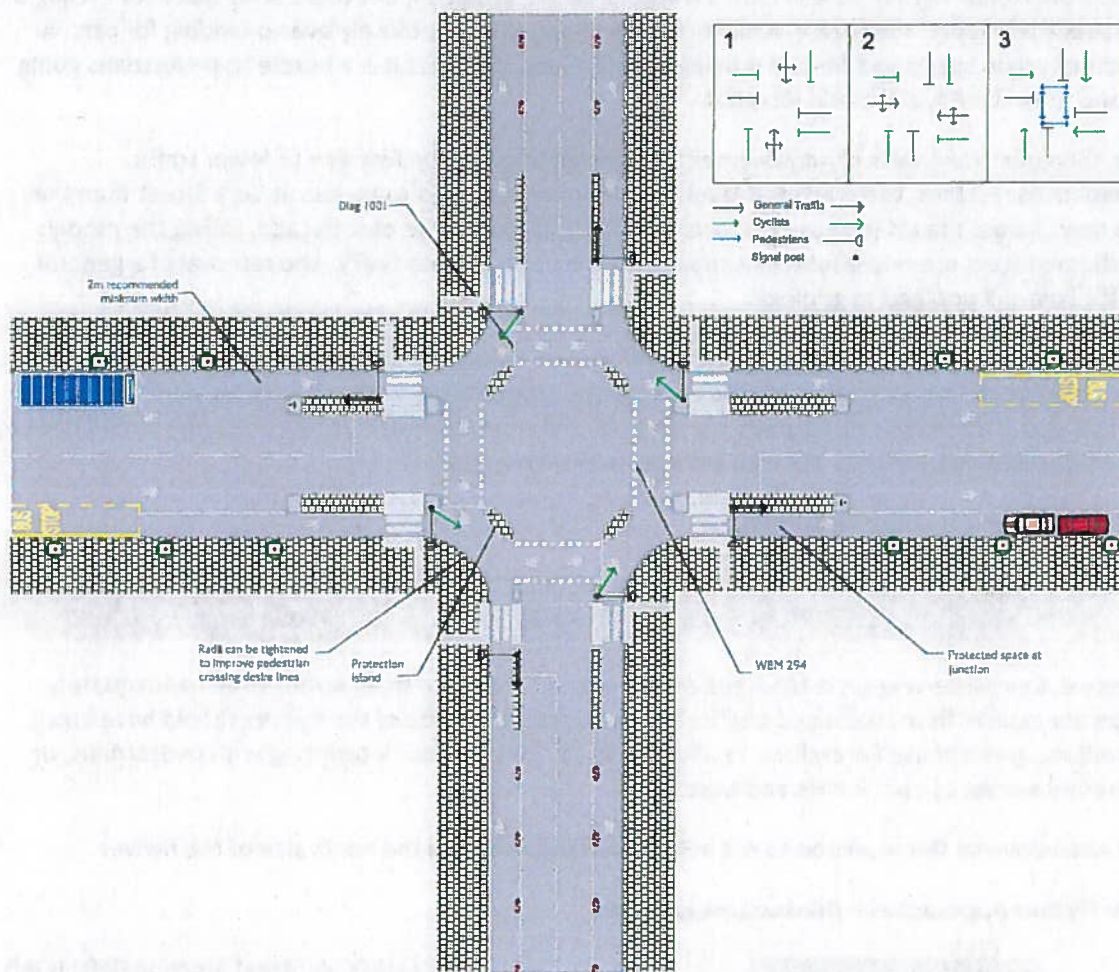
The separation by paint is not at all sufficient. Car drivers will see the white line as the safe buffer between them and the cyclist, leading, ironically, to closer overtaking than if no lane was present.



Above is the proposed lay out. The separation of 1.6m between the car lanes is to accommodate double headed traffic lights. It is rather disappointing that more space and safety concern is given to traffic lights than cyclists.

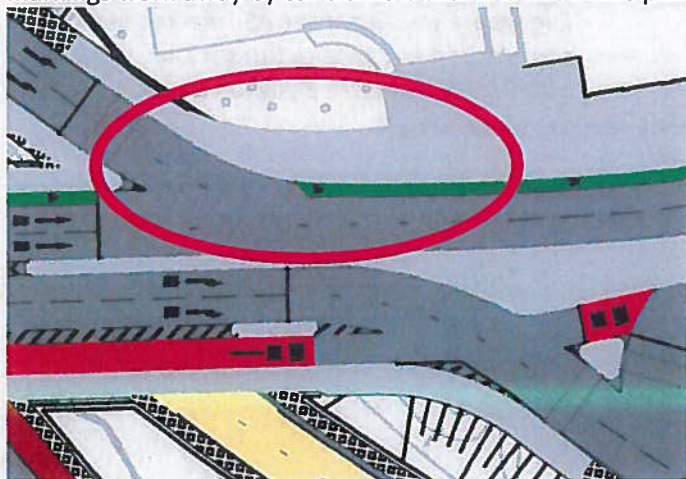
I note that there are 2 running lanes are devoted to traffic from Dunbar Link to Shore Road. When pressed the URS engineer stated this was needed to deal with the traffic flow at that location. This rings untrue because at the city centre side approach there are only 3 lanes of outbound traffic and the left most lane separates out into two at the flyover. Why not continue with the 3 lane layout from Dunbar Link across the flyover?

Across the City DRD are happy to allow parking 24 hours a day on one lane of the city's A-roads. For instance, for 20 hours a day the Lisburn Road is reduced to one lane each way to accommodate parking, and traffic levels are comparable if not higher.



### The northern approach

One of the problems of having a painted cycle lane with a sliproad across it is that the paint quickly wears off. Motorists do not slow down to enter the side street, putting pedestrians and cyclists in a very vulnerable position. The A12 offslip cuts across the painted lane and whilst traffic light phasing means cars and cyclists should not meet at the mouth of the lane, the message of cycle lane markings worn away by car traffic is that it is not a safe place for cycling.



At the Grosvenor flyover no less than 6 traffic lanes are provided, but there is no space for cycling or for public transport. The road is virtually empty all day, it is grandiosely over-providing for cars. A waste of urban space and despite it being hailed a design success it is a hurdle to pedestrians going to and from the Royal Victoria Hospital.

The YSI report itself talks of improvement for pedestrians and cyclists due to fewer traffic interactions. Further, the predicted levels of traffic are expected to be less at York Street than they are now. Across the UK increase in motor traffic has stalled in the past decade, calling the models traffic engineers use into doubt. In a situation where there is less traffic, the removal of a general traffic lane will not lead to gridlock.

Bearing in mind the above real life experience we can reduce the Shore Road bound lanes to one and redistribute the space to allow for cycle tracks, separated by kerbs. Ideally we want the gold standard, but the following diagram is a sensible compromise; Dutch design principles would have a 3 to 4m wide two-way cycle track on both sides of such a road.

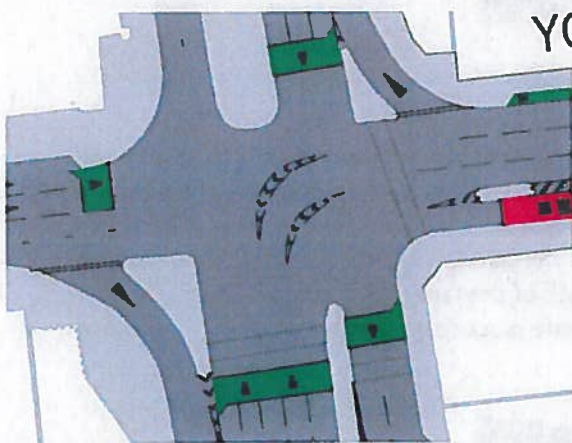
Here is my version of the flyover layout:



There is now a one-way cycle track either side with a kerb and a small buffer zone to adequately separate cyclists from motorised traffic. The junctions either side of the flyover should have an all directions green phase for cyclists, to allow them to cross without interfering with pedestrians, or run the gauntlet of cars, lorries and buses.

An alternative to this would be to put a 3-4m *two-way* track up the north side of the flyover.

#### The Flyover Approaches – Dunbar Link junction



The Dunbar Link/York Street junction (left) is left as it is, but redesigned to accommodate the end of the citybound bus lane. My proposed layout for the flyover can be extended to the junction with the buffer zones (marked in black hatches in the diagram left) removed to accommodate the cycle tracks either side of the road.

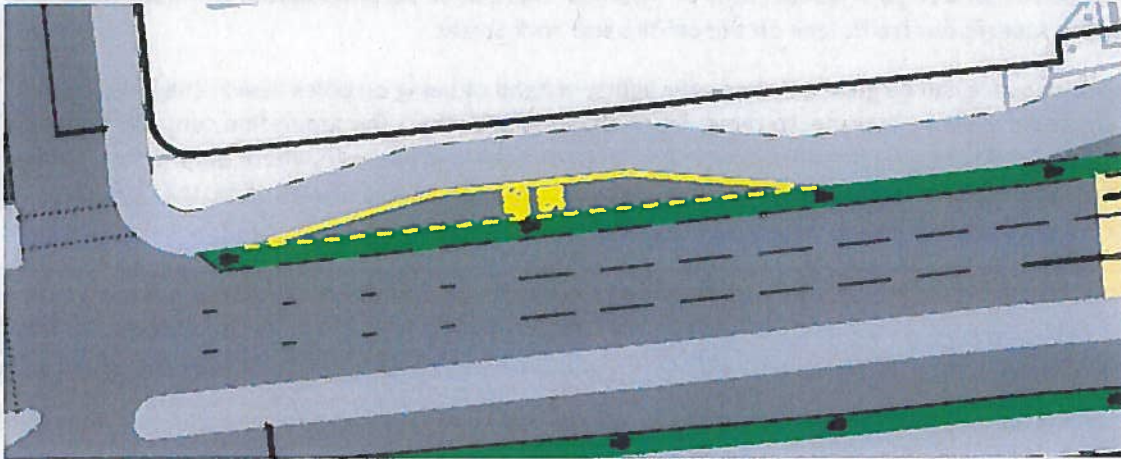
The junction has a 5-lane ASL. This is beyond credible, but it actually is the present layout. Even more puzzling is the ASL marked out at the southbound entrance to Dunbar Link. Why, oh why? It is green paint designed to tick boxes but

not designed for cycling: an abomination that needs to be be erased!

The area immediately to the southwest of this junction is going to be dominated by the University of Ulster campus, introducing many thousands of pedestrians and hundreds of cyclists. Rather than waste money on green paint, DRD could really push the boat out and with adaptation introduce a proposed Transport for London junction design that is safe for cycling (below) taken from:

[http://www.hackney.gov.uk/Assets/Documents/08\\_Brian\\_Deegan\\_and\\_Paul\\_Lavelle\\_-\\_LCDS.pdf](http://www.hackney.gov.uk/Assets/Documents/08_Brian_Deegan_and_Paul_Lavelle_-_LCDS.pdf)

### York Street – floating bus stop



Across the entry to the car park is a bus stop. Here is another example of where cyclists are put in danger by the present proposals. The cyclist might be tempted to overtake the bus at the stop and then find that the bus pulls out. What does the cyclist do? Swerve into the traffic lane, or get run over by the bus pulling out?

A much better arrangement would see the cycle path run to the left of the bus stop, with the waiting area for bus passengers either on the "island" or on footpath.

Here is an example from Brighton:



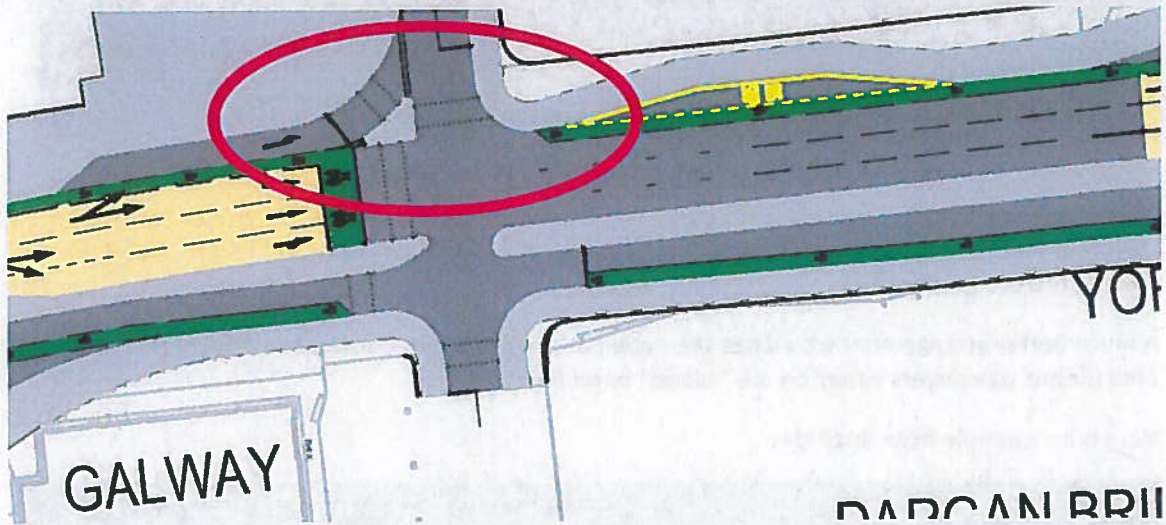
This design helped win Brighton and Hove the 2014 CIVITAS Award for its policies to promote sustainable transport.

The cyclist can pass the bus stop without worrying about traffic behind or buses pulling out. There are visual clues to the cyclist (the tactile paving) alerting them to pedestrians crossing.

With so much space available, the lighter grey in the diagram is pedestrian space – at least 6m, a completely separated path would easily be installed. This can be accommodated without taking away the *superfluous* traffic lane on the off-slip and York Street.

More road space can be gained if the traffic lights, instead of being on poles beside the lanes, were put on a gantry above the lane, so removing the rationale for the 1.6m separation centrally between the two sets of northbound traffic lanes. Gantries are commonplace everywhere but on the island of Ireland. When asked why the response was that poles were what was always done; that gantries weren't even considered.

Further down York Street the cycle path and footpath cross the CitySide complex off-slip.



In my version the segregated cycle lane runs on the left of the off-slip to the CitySide complex. Then it crosses the side road at a right angle. Visually the path forms a continuum with the paving of the cyclepath and the footpath forming a visual clue to drivers, pedestrians and cyclists. Raising the road to kerb height would also tell drivers to be alert and slow down.

The present arrangement sees motorists sweeping into the car park, with no real incentive to slow down and pedestrians and cyclists needing the aid of traffic lights to get across; pedestrians needing 2 crossings and potentially waiting twice. It is a very car-friendly design, which does little to get people going on foot, or by bike or bus.

Here is an example of a continuous footpath which compels drivers to slow down.



## **York Street citybound**

There is ample space to include a segregated cycle path from Dock Street to the flyover in the plans. South of the flyover space is more limited, but even here a Copenhagen style cycle path (such as the one on Victoria Street) can be introduced *beside* the citybound bus lane. I despair at the limited ambition the designers have shown towards cyclists and pedestrians when space has been so abundantly available!

## **Future thinking**

The design for York Street, specifically the flyover, is behind the times. It doesn't think of near future where the University of Ulster will bring a large influx of bicycle users to the area; it doesn't mention or cater for the flow of pedestrians from Yorkgate station to the campus. Belfast City Council have ambitious plans for Dunbar Link, Buoys Park and the Library Square, with events spaces, reduction and banning of motor traffic. The plans are blind to the roll out of the bicycle hire scheme.

In the text of the proposals there is talk of community greenways, but it will be difficult to see where they are designed into the plans. Once the concrete has been poured and the road layout has literally been set in stone it will be difficult to put Community Greenways in place without serious compromise to their effectiveness.

One of the great phrases of building cycling infrastructure is "Build it, and they'll come". The numbers of cyclists are so lamentably low, precisely because of the perceived danger of the junctions and heavy traffic. Design the infrastructure right and cyclists will come. Around the cyclepaths of South and East Belfast numbers of cyclists have increased dramatically, with cycling modal share for inner suburbs approaching 10%.

North Belfast has been bypassed by this revolution, and the proposals as they are will not encourage more to cycle to work, or to go into the City Centre to shop or find entertainment.

## **Meeting the aims of the Project – but no more, and probably falling short**

A recap of the aims of the project:

- to maintain access to existing properties, community facilities and commercial interests;
- to maintain access for pedestrians and cyclists;
- to improve separation between strategic and local traffic.

These aims lack ambition and it arguably those aims are not being met. The project documents talk of lessening the impact for local residents, yet a person traversing the junction across the flyover is still crossing two roads with traffic lights as they currently do. At the CitySide Complex entrance pedestrians will face a new staggered crossing that prioritises motorists over pedestrians. Cyclists will need to duel with buses on a shared bus/cycle lane and dice with death when buses are pulling away from the stop at the CitySide Complex.

No thought whatsoever is given to increased numbers of pedestrians using Yorkgate rail halt to access the University of Ulster campus. If the pedestrians are made to wait excessively long at Dock Street and the Westlink sliproads experience shows that pedestrians will not wait, but use any hiatus in the traffic flow to get across. This could have fatal consequences.

Strategic traffic will be banished into the chasm below ground level, but pedestrians and cyclists will still have to contend with considerable traffic joining and leaving the Westlink.

**DRD Cycling Unit**

The engineers present at the public viewing of the plans mentioned that the DRD Cycling Unit had seen the plans. Seen maybe, but there are many issues that run counter to the draft Bicycle Strategy, so it would be hard to believe these plans received any kind of approval from them.

At the Changing Gear conference Minister Danny Kennedy has set out his stall to make Belfast a Cycling Capital. When the Giro rolled into town renowned Dutch cycling commentator Gio Lippens spoke of Belfast as a great cycling city. Let's change the design to give substance to those words.

Yours sincerely,

**Borghert Jan Borghmans**

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

**Campbell, Jacqui**

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**From:** Roads Eastern Srit  
**Sent:** 05 March 2015 09:17  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** York Street Interchange

Borghert

Thank you for your response to the consultation on the proposals for the York Street Interchange. Your views have been recorded as part of this process and will contribute to the decision on whether The Department should hold a Public Inquiry into the scheme.

Regards

*Colin Pentland*

Strategic Road Improvements

DRD - Eastern Division, Hydebank, 4 Hospital Road, Belfast BT8 8JL.