

Bristol Walking Alliance (BWA) supports the desire to create a better river environment and public space for those visiting Riverside Park. However, the proposed design creates unacceptable conflict between pedestrians and cyclists.

Context

BWA supported most of the proposals set out in the Frome Gateway Regeneration Framework. However, one of our concerns was the shared use between pedestrians and cyclists of the route alongside the river [1]. As well as its role as part of Concorde Way, providing an active travel link to the north of the city, this route was also being proposed as a main link for cargo bike traffic into the city centre from a local distribution hub near Junction 3.

In the final Frome Gateway Regeneration Framework [2], the north-south route along the west bank of the river is designated as both a primary pedestrian route and a primary cycling route. We have not seen any subsequent details about how this route will be implemented.

It is likely that pedestrians will be using the park for leisure, whilst cyclists will be using it as a through route between north Bristol and the City Centre. Given the different speeds at which cyclists and pedestrians move, this can create a conflict. Cyclists do not like having to weave around pedestrians and pedestrians do not like having to be continually alert to cyclists coming from either direction. The potential presence of fast-moving cycles can be a deterrent to using the path at all for the elderly, for the visually impaired or for those looking after small children.

In a park, we would hope the path could be wide enough to allow segregation (or at least delineation) between cyclists and pedestrians. An example of this is the cycle route through Castle Park, allowing pedestrians to proceed slowly, or to stop and look across the harbour, while remaining separate from passing cyclists.

Enhancement proposals

The current proposals for improvements to Riverside Park and the River Frome channel include providing accessible seating terraces around a new lowered section of the riverside wall. The desire to improve people's connection with the river is laudable, and the general approach is innovative.

However, in order to achieve this, the riverside route has to be diverted in a curved loop around the back of the seating area. Access to the terraced seating is from each end of the loop, either via a ramp from one side or via steps on the other side of the loop. As well as the terraced seating, it is also proposed to include further seating, consisting of benches with arms and backrests, along the side of the route furthest from the river.

The indicative illustrations in the proposals show the riverside path being 3.5m wide, with a further 1m widening for the seating around the rear of the loop. None of the illustrations show any cyclists!

Unless cyclists are provided with an alternative route, **this design will introduce more conflict between pedestrians and cyclists.** Pedestrians may wish to approach the seating on either side of the route, so making it less feasible for just one side of the route to be used for cycling. Pedestrians would have to cross the path to reach the seating just at the points where cyclists have to negotiate

the bends around the loop. This conflict of movement will introduce an additional element of insecurity and potential collision.

Alternatives

To avoid the conflict between pedestrians and cyclists, an alternative route for cyclists could be provided, avoiding the route beside the river through Riverside Park.

We can see two possibilities:

- There is a separate, more central, north-south path through the park. This could be dedicated for cyclists. It does, however, include somewhat steeper gradients, though these should not be a problem for regular commuting cyclists.
- In our response to the Frome Gateway Regeneration Framework consultation [1], we suggested that Pennywell Road should have a properly segregated cycle route that would be designated as the main cycle commuter route into the city centre from Junction 3. However, it would require the provision of a better road connection at the southern end.

It may be that the Framework can be revised to accommodate such new routing. BWA would recommend this is considered before greater conflict is introduced through the current proposals. We would like to be involved in any consultation on such a revision.

If the riverside route is to remain as a primary cycle route as well as a primary pedestrian route, it must be widened to allow segregation between the two modes.

Bristol Walking Alliance

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References

[1] <https://bristolwalkingalliance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Frome-Gateway-BWA-comments.pdf>

[2] <https://democracy.bristol.gov.uk/documents/s93348/Appendix%20A%20%20-%20Frome%20Gateway%20Spatial%20Regeneration%20Framework%20FINAL%20JAN%2024%20reduced.pdf>