

Swansea Railway Station – cycle access

1. Introduction

Provision for cyclists requiring access to or from the station is inadequate. There is no information about nearby cycle routes nor signs directing cyclists to them. Cllr Nick Davies, being aware of these shortcomings, invited the writer to come up with possible solutions.

Three options are considered. The first involves minimal change consisting of little more than replacement of two pedestrian crossings by toucans. The second provides for a new cycle lane linking the station to Alexandra Road together with a change to the traffic lights. The third simply converts the junction by the station to a shared space by removing all the traffic lights.

All three options will require upgrading of the footway on the south side of Alexandra Road from High Street to the toucan crossing near the north end of Orchard Street to shared use. A new cycle direction board outside the station entrance where it would be more easily seen than the existing bus direction board would be required in all cases.

2. Option 1: Minimal change.

This is illustrated in Figure 1 which shows a continuous cycle route from the station to and along the south side of Alexandra Road. The only change from the existing situation is the upgrading to shared use, changing the crossings to toucans and the provision of a cycle direction board. The location suggested for this is shown on Figure 2. It is on the large lamp post opposite the station entrance.

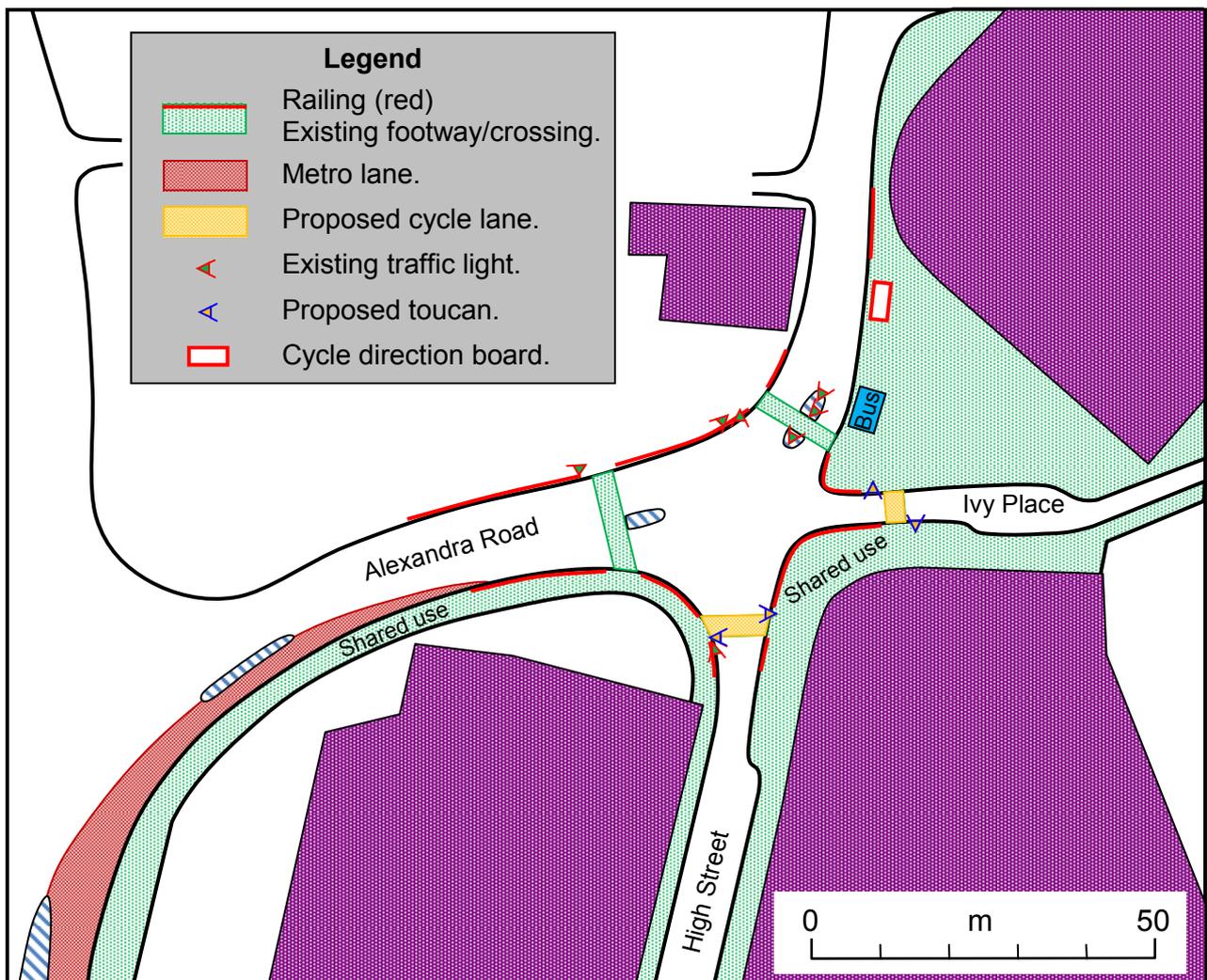


Figure 1. Option 1 Layout

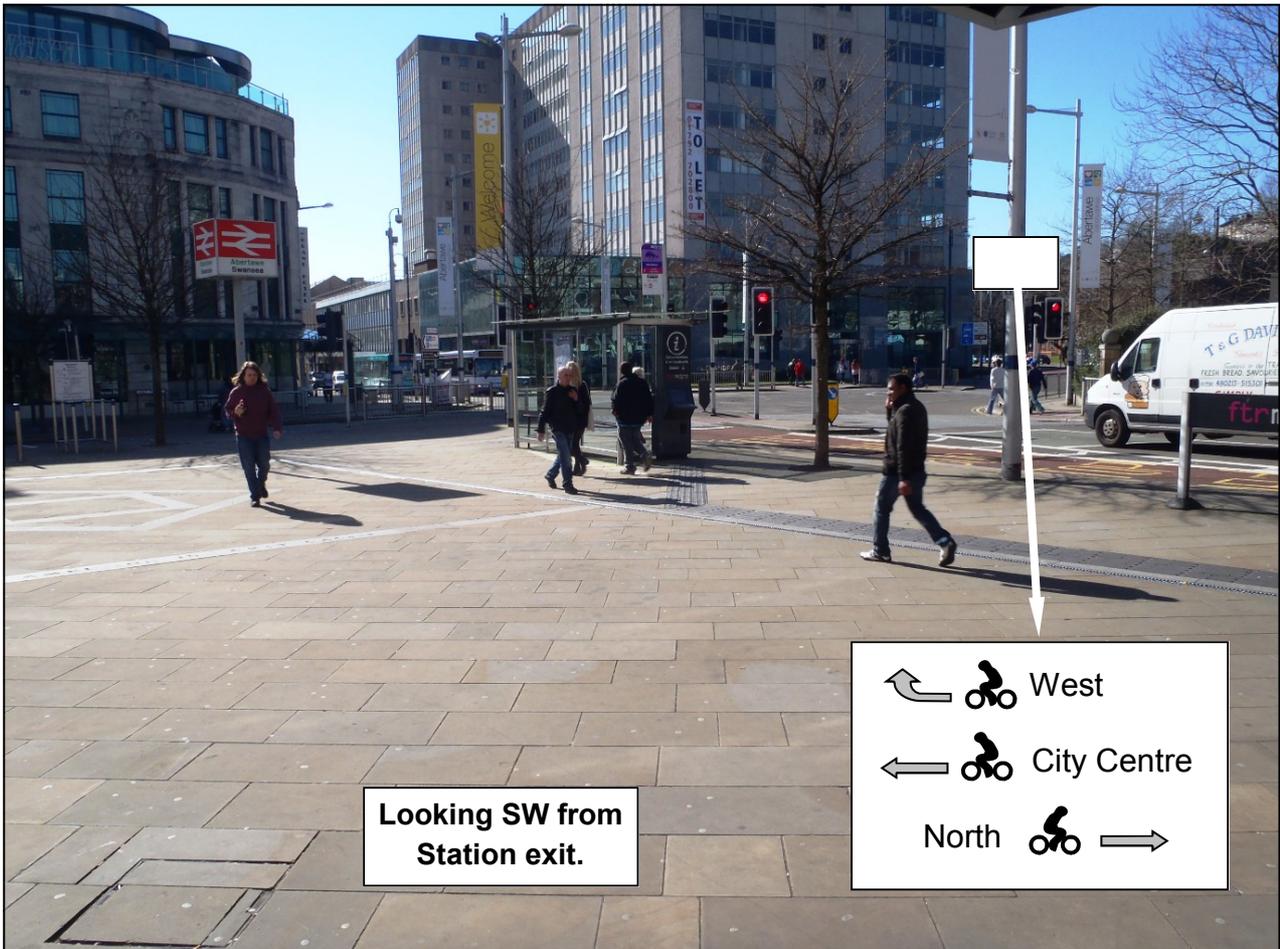


Figure 2. Cycle direction board

3. Option 2: New cycle lane.

This is shown on Figure 3. Its essential feature is a new cycle lane following the curve as High Street (North) bends west into Alexandra Road. It would be delineated on its south side by the gold broken line. The area between this lane and High Street (South) is shown gold to indicate that it should have the same surfacing as the cycle lane as it would be used by cyclists going to or from the station.

This lane would require the removal of sections of railing at its ends. It would be controlled by lights which would be phased to be the same as those for the bus lane adjacent to the station. The reason for this is that traffic – mainly buses – using this lane rarely (if at all) turns left. Cyclists would therefore be protected from other traffic coming south past the station which can only turn left on to High Street (South) when the bus lights are red. The phasing of these lights would need to be controlled by cyclists as well as buses. (The present lights appear to only change to green when a bus approaches.)

In addition to this new lane providing direct access from the station to Alexandra Street the area shaded gold can be used to allow cyclists to leave High Street (South) either to enter the station or to turn left onto Alexandra Road. This would be achieved by providing left-right arrows for cyclists on the traffic lights at the north end of High Street (South). These would be phased to allow cyclists to turn left or right when the lights are red for straight-through traffic. During this phase the bus and cycle lane lights would be green for east-west buses and bikes.

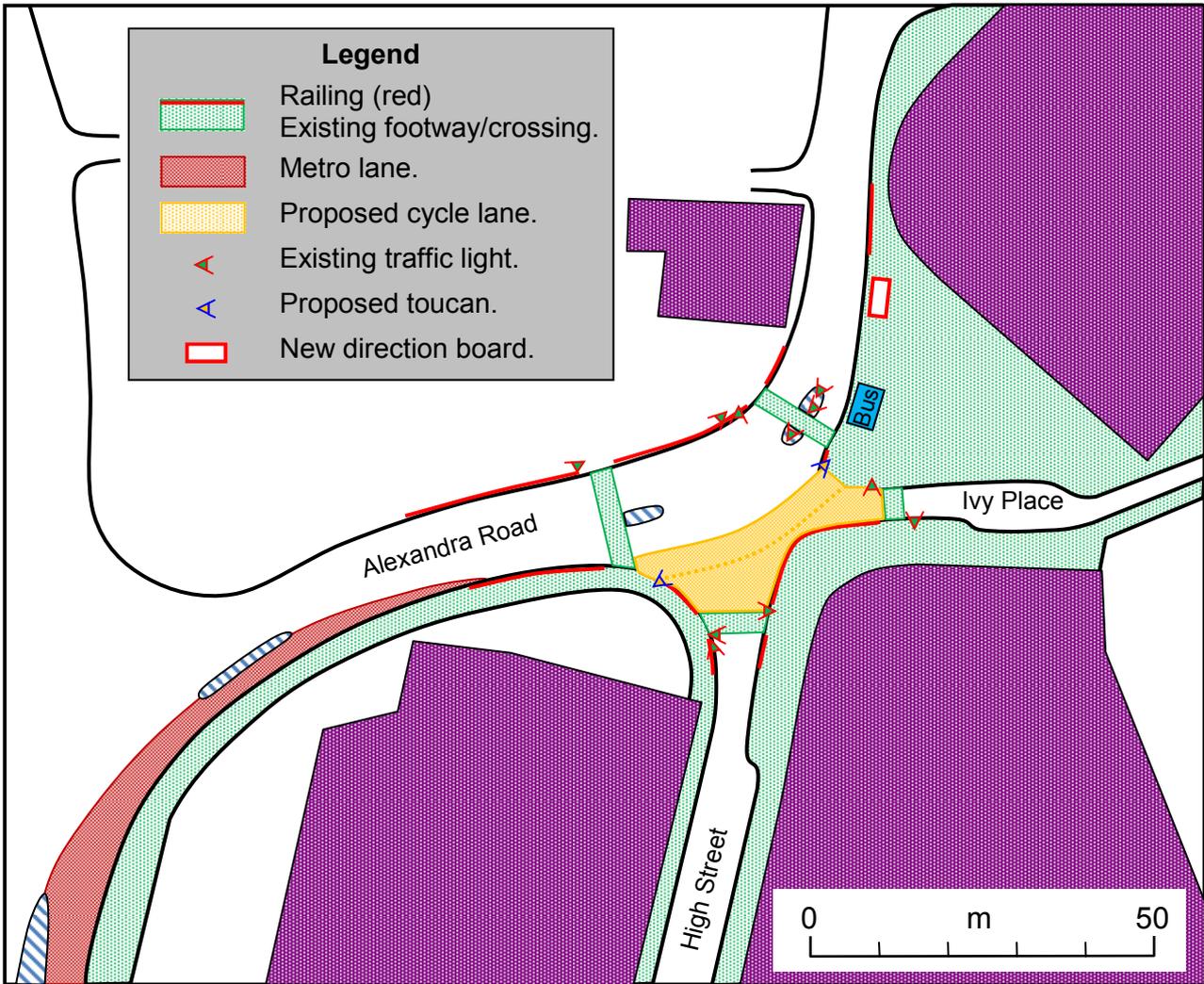


Figure 3. Option 2 Layout

4. Option 3: Shared space junction.

The Alexandra Road - High Street - Ivy Place junction contains a large number of traffic lights and for much of the time no traffic is moving at all. Conversion of this junction to shared space by removing all the lights can be expected to improve the flow of traffic as it would be more continuous, albeit moving at a slower speed.

In addition to the removal of the lights, the junction would be given a distinctive surfacing. (Figure 4.) Also signs, guard rails and other clutter would be removed, except that clear signs to indicate that a shared space zone is about to be entered would be needed, together with a 20mph speed limit.

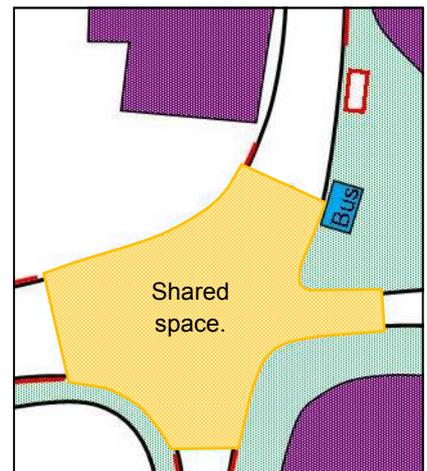


Figure 4. Option 3

The design of shared space has been pioneered by the Dutchman Hans Monderman and the Englishman Ben Hamilton-Bailley. Information on its implementation can be found in, eg, Section 7 of *Manual for Streets*. There are precedents in the UK: Euston Square, Exhibition Road and High Street Kensington in London. The reconstruction in 2011 of a busy junction in the village of Poynton in Cheshire provides an example of the benefits of removing traffic lights. The experience from precedents such as these indicates that, in addition to an improvement in the throughput of traffic, a reduction in incidents can be expected thereby improving safety.

5. Comments.

Irrespective of which, if any, of the three options is adopted a clear priority is to have a cycle direction board which is easily seen by cyclists leaving the station. The location indicated in Figure 2 is considered preferable to that of the bus information sign. This is up and to the right as one leaves the station and can easily be missed.

More information than that shown in Figure 2 could be included on the board, but at the risk of clutter. The bus information could be added, again at the risk of clutter. (Especially if wording has to be in English and Welsh. For this reason should the board only show signs?)

The first option is clearly the most straight forward although it only partly addresses the issue.

The second would be a major improvement, addressing the needs of cyclists travelling between the station, High Street (South) and Alexandra Road. It does not however address the needs of cyclists accessing the station from the north side of Alexandra Road. They would have to use the pedestrian crossing of High Street (North) as at present, although consideration could be given to altering this to a toucan.

The third option would appear to be a “win-win” solution, offering freer movement to all modes of traffic at minimal cost. The main difficulty will be to sell it. New ideas are not readily accepted. At Poynton the main objectors were the blind and partially disabled lobby. Feedback however indicates that their fears were largely unfounded.

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