

AN BORD PLEANÁLA
 Received: 6/12/17
 Fee: Cash €50
 Receipt No: B14114 7

Líonra
 Rannpháirtíochta
 Pobail
 Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath



Dublin City
 Public
 Participation
 Network

AN BORD PLEANÁLA
 TIME 15.15 BY Hord
 08 DEC 2017
 LTR DATED FROM Sn
 PL

College Green Consultation

JA0039

A submission from Dublin City PPN Disability Linkage Group

Dublin City Council plans to make the College Green area into a 'civic plaza', and the planning application is currently before an Bord Pleanála for approval.

The plan involves a pedestrianized zone in College Green, and a two-way cycle lane (at least 70 meters long) through this pedestrian area, meaning that the lane will be an uncontrolled crossing for pedestrians moving in the north-south direction etc. Given the lack of favourable research on the matter of cycle-lanes in pedestrian zones, one might have thought DCC's plan to be somewhat irresponsible with regard to the safety of cyclists and pedestrians in general.

However, when one factors in the significant minority of pedestrians who are vulnerable due to age or disability, an appalling vista emerges. Hitherto, such pedestrians have had their interactions with cyclists buffered by cyclists having to stop at controlled crossings (along with vehicular traffic); but in an uncontrolled environment, of bicycle lanes and pedestrians, vulnerable pedestrians (and those not quite paying attention because they're lulled into a false sense of security due to the pedestrian zone), are like moving skittles in a bowling alley.

There are 54,000 people with a severe visual impairment in Ireland, and a quarter of a million with a visual impairment of some sort. Even apart from their difficulties in locating the cycle lane at all, people with a visual impairment cannot see the actual bicycles coming. There is no way around this basic salient fact.

In all, 13% of the Irish population has a disability - that is 643,131 people. People with developmental disabilities, any cognitive or intellectual impairment and older people, have much slower reaction abilities, and so if they see a bicycle at the last minute, they do not have time to react and take evasive action or even to know what evasive action to take or which way to turn. One might add to the latter group, children under seven and those with mobility impairments including wheelchair users and people using any type of mobility aid such as crutches/walkers etc. The potential injury toll adds up.

The principle of the aesthetic desire for a cycle-lane for the 70 metres through this pedestrian space has no equivalence to the immediate needs of vulnerable and other pedestrians to safety of life and limb. If people with disabilities, older people, younger people, do not perceive the public plaza to be a safe place, then they will not use the space; instead they will remain isolated outside of their community which goes completely against the intent of a public plaza.

We firmly believe that this short section of cycle-lane in a pedestrianized zone is not only unnecessary, but dangerous. Cyclists should instead dismount and walk beside their bicycles while traversing the 'pedestrian' zone as is best practice in the USA. Cyclists are fit, but they themselves will be old someday or may be affected by disability later in life.

In future, too, we call on Dublin City Council's planners, architects, civil engineers etc. to engage in meaningful consultation with people with disabilities who tend not to be represented in those professions - for example there are few, if any, blind architects, or city planners or civil engineers with physical or cognitive disabilities. So, it would be unlikely that DCC staff in those professions can put themselves in the shoes of the people with different abilities who will be using the public spaces they design and construct.