

Submission from [redacted]

Theme 5: “... Sustainable Transport Infrastructure”

1. Objectives 4.213 page 117

Can the policies within the Draft Plan hope to meet the objectives?

Whilst each of the stated objectives are very desirable, just a superficial, forensic examination of the contemporary issues confronting Transport Planning for Durham City 2019-2035, shows that these objectives can not be met by means of a Neighbourhood Plan. Whilst the Parish Council is absolutely right to pursue these objectives in collaboration with the local planning authority, a neighbourhood plan can not provide the necessary legislative policies nor the required resources to achieve the degree of change required.

The Neighbourhood Plan can only provide a mechanism for bringing about sustainable development, in so far as it can influence the use of land. In the case of the Draft Durham City Neighbourhood Plan, this relates to only a “handful” of small housing sites producing a few dozen new dwellings. It simply cannot, as a neighbourhood plan, feasibly deliver on the scope of its “Transport Objectives”.

2. Evidence base to support the policies?

No objective surveys have been commissioned or sought by the Neighbourhood Plan working group or its predecessor.

Speculation as to what increase in “cycling take-up” might be achieved, is purely an individual’s aspirational conjecture.

There has been no attempt to measure the potential for motor transport to be substituted by bicycle.

Encouraging behavioural change from walking to cycling to the University, by several thousands of students (for half of the year), must be counter productive, as it would increase road congestion. Any significant increase of cycling in and around Durham’s narrow roads must inevitably result in increased traffic congestion, and consequently increased air pollution. This has been ignored.

The overriding aim of the transport theme is to increase cycling (as a sustainable means of transport), and to oppose the private vehicle user. Numerous arguments that can be made against air polluting motor vehicles (and congestion). However, at the same time a balance between competing transport users needs to be struck. Motorised transport does have a vital and legitimate role to play for much of Durham City's transport needs. Highways exist and are maintained for vehicle transport.

3. Other Options ?

Perhaps this could be explored by the Parish Council's Environment Committee in consultation with Durham County Council as the Local Highways Authority. The draft neighbourhood plan is prejudiced and unbalanced towards cycling.

4. Prejudiced

Pedestrians should not be put at a disadvantage, nor should the "quality of life" for walkers when using footpaths through green spaces, be compromised in order to serve that small minority of cyclists who are not prepared to dismount when occasionally travelling on footpaths. The draft neighbourhood plan is prejudiced and unbalanced towards cycling at the expense of pedestrians:

see page 3, 1.3 -reference to companion document "Looking Forwards:
also page 177, Map 10: Cycling Issues

Within the context of a neighbourhood plan, I have persistently suggested that:

- i) arguments should be reasoned and balanced,
- ii) evidence should be robust and credible, proportionate and objective,
- iii) any consequent proposals should be realistic, meaningfully relevant and enjoy a wide measure of community support.

However, as I have consistently failed to persuade other members of the Neighbourhood Planning Working Group on these points, there is little to be served by me repeating my reasoning to the Working Group. I therefore merely make the point here that I consider that the "draft Transport Theme " is likely to be judged Unsound and puts the final adoption of the plan at unreasonable risk.

The modus operandi adopted first by the Forum and subsequently continued by the current working group, relies far too heavily upon a single individual, acting unilaterally as a "theme champion/coordinator".

There has been inadequate group collaboration and virtually zero meaningful community participation.

I consider it unrepresentative of the “neighbourhood”, that the same small group of acquaintances should exercise dominance and control over the plan making process for the last six years.

I consider the draft Transport Theme to fail on each of the above points i), ii) and iii). A number of significant comments previously submitted in response to the 2017 Draft Durham City Neighbourhood Plan have not been addressed.

I hope that the Parish Council will examine this with fresh eyes and review the working group’s terms of reference (or lack of), before examination by the independent examiner, via the Local Planning Authority.

Objective examination and evaluation of the “evidence basis” as provided in the Draft Plan in support of the Transport Theme policies, clearly reveals a scarcity of community engagement, a lack of properly considered public consultation and an absence of locally relevant empirical data. All of these shortfalls are compounded by the “Transport Theme’s” almost obsessive focus upon promoting an already “pre-planned and mapped out Durham City cycle network” that is currently being campaigned for by various cycling groups:

1. “TRUSTPATHWAYS” (www.trustpathways.com): organisers Matthew Phillips, M Wright see below Trust Pathways map titled “Mind the gap!”, intended to: “Plan a full network of cycle-friendly routes....” across Durham City.

1. Durham University’s DBUG (Durham Bicycle Users Group):

See “Pre-Submission Draft of the (former) County Durham Plan - Consultation response by DBUG” submitted “ c/o Mathew Phillips

1. Durham City Cycling Forum

See notes of meeting 29.01.2013 Item 6. Strategic Cycling Routes

Durham University reps. Mathew Phillips, Mathew Wright

Mind the gap! (updated) [11 April 2017](#) [Trust Pathways](#) [Uncategorized 2](#)
(www.trustpathways.com);



This picture is from a [new diagram of cycling routes](#) in and around Durham city. It is not meant to be a map to help you find your way. Instead it highlights the gaps in the network, by colour-coding all the links according to their safety. Blue links are the safest, red the most dangerous, and some useful missing links are shown as grey dashed lines. The most dangerous junctions are colour-coded too, with a red circle inside the black.