

## 4.5 THEME 5: A CITY WITH A MODERN AND SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE



### Vision

4.212 Durham City will have sustainable transport access to economic, educational, training, cultural and social opportunities for all, thereby enabling a swifter transition to a healthier environment and a low-carbon future.

### Objectives

4.213 The objectives of this theme are:

1. To ensure that Our Neighbourhood is well-served by sustainable transport;
2. To make travel healthier and safer for all;
3. To create pleasant and healthy streets, public places and areas of natural environment.

## Context

4.214 Decisions on transport policy, proposals and investments are crucial in achieving a more sustainable future. Thus it is timely that the 'Durham City Sustainable Transport Delivery Plan' for the period 2018 to 2030 has been produced by Durham County Council (2018b) and, indeed, the issues and opportunities identified (p.9 to 14; Durham County Council, 2015b) are the starting point for our the Neighbourhood Plan, which emphasises the role of new development in helping to deliver sustainable modes of transport appropriate to the special character of Durham City.

4.215 The context provided by the Sustainable Transport Delivery Plan is summarised below and influences, but does not necessarily determine, the policies.

- **Highways:** the need to maintain the highway network remains of crucial importance for all forms of movement, but the need to keep motor traffic flowing freely must not continue to take precedence over the needs of other users. The A690 through the City is a barrier to pedestrians and cyclists, and vehicle emissions have an impact on the health of local people.
- **Walking and cycling:** in Durham City, where 36% of people walked to work (in 2011), improvements to the pedestrian networks are a high priority. Addressing footway congestion on routes to the University, dealing with safety issues, including conflict with cyclists, wheelchair users and motor vehicles, and improving crossings at major junctions are among the interventions which could help walking reach its full potential. Cycling accounts for a low percentage of travel currently. City centre routes are complex and incoherent, there is little continuous cycling infrastructure, and no high quality routes to Durham University from the City centre. Round the outskirts there are many busy junctions with no provision for cyclists. There is a significant opportunity for improvement. The Government's commitment to a national Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy through the 'Infrastructure Act 2015' (UK Parliament, 2015, section 21) presents a new determination to secure greater investment in the future.
- **Public transport:** the Sustainable Transport Delivery Plan identifies issues which prevent the City from realising its full potential including too many services terminating in the City centre making many journeys inconvenient, the poor quality of bus stops and bus station, and poor connectivity to Durham railway station. Congestion affects bus reliability and journey times. The Park and Ride service and some other bus services do not run late enough into the evening for some users, and the Park and Ride requires a subsidy despite its popularity. While national rail connections are very good, train services to local settlements are limited.
- **Parking:** the Sustainable Transport Delivery Plan highlights the extensive provision of free car parking at major employment sites across the City, which might discourage the uptake of sustainable transport modes. The Delivery Plan

presents somewhat simplified conclusions on parking in comparison with the full Durham Sustainable Transport Plan Issues and Opportunities Report (Durham County Council, 2015b) which better reflected the diversity of opinion on this issue. In particular there are concerns about the continued economic viability of City centre retail which could be alleviated by better management of car parking.

4.216 A fuller treatment of the transport context and details of facilities is given in para. D2 to D12 of Appendix D. (See also relevant initiatives in the companion document 'Looking Forwards: Durham as a Creative and Sustainable City'.)

### **Justification**

4.217 This justification refers to the Transport theme as a whole. Additional, specific justification for each transport policy is given with the policy itself.

4.218 There is a limit to what the Neighbourhood Plan can achieve with respect to transport, especially when so many people travel to, or through, Our Neighbourhood from other areas. The maintenance and upgrading of the road network is adequately covered by policies that apply across County Durham for assessing the transport impacts of developments. Thus the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan focus on where value can be added, particularly dealing with shorter journeys by walking and cycling, access to bus services, and the design of streets. Car and cycle parking is also covered, to promote effective use of housing land.

4.219 The main justification for prioritising sustainable modes of transport in the Neighbourhood Plan is the County Council's recognition of the need to deal with competition for road space in its adoption in the Sustainable Transport Delivery Plan of the hierarchy set out in the Department for Transport (2007b) 'Manual for Streets'. This accords with the NPPF (para. 102 and 103) which has an objective that "opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use are identified" and supported by the planning system actively managing patterns of growth. The Council's earlier 'Transport Strategy' (Durham County Council, 2011b) is also supportive of sustainability. This Local Transport Plan is for the period 2011 onwards and covers the whole of Durham County, with Durham City as a section within this. It is organised under 6 themes, including: Reduce our carbon footprint; Safer and healthier travel; Better accessibility to services; Improve quality of life and a healthy natural environment; Maintain the transport asset.

4.220 The national 'Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy' (Department for Transport, 2017) aims to make cycling and walking the natural choices for shorter journeys, or as part of a longer journey. Its 2020 objectives are to: increase cycling activity, increase walking activity, reduce the rate of cyclists killed or seriously injured on England's roads, increase the percentage of children aged 5 to 10 that usually walk to school. It recognises that insufficient investment has been put into cycling and walking and notes that "walking and cycling should be seen as transport modes in their own right and an integral part of the transport network, rather than as niche interests or town-planning afterthoughts". (p.7)

4.221 Therefore, to meet expectations for a more sustainable City with a modern transport infrastructure, investment in future transport needs will be according to this user hierarchy:

- Walking;
- Cycling;
- Public transport;
- Specialist services, e.g. emergency vehicles, waste collection;
- Other motor traffic.

4.222 The second justification can be found in the Forum's priority survey of the views of local people and study of the views of young people in the City (Durham City Neighbourhood Planning Forum, 2015, 2016a) which reveal a variety of opinions on the transport issues facing us. People appreciate the pedestrianised areas, the compact size of the City and the public transport links, but many raised the poor pedestrian environment, traffic congestion, and parking as issues. The Park and Ride service is valued, but could also be much improved. People would like traffic management and the road system improved, including the pedestrian environment and safe routes for cycling. The Sustainable Communities Strategy for County Durham 2014-2030 (County Durham Partnership, 2014) has the theme 'Altogether safer' including the aim of reducing road casualties.

4.223 There were views also on the need to address climate change, air quality, congestion, and active travel (walking and cycling) to bring health benefits. Active travel suggestions included proposals for network improvements that were needed including specific paths to be improved by better surfaces or lighting. Ideas to improve walking were also gathered at the Eco-Festival held at St John's, Neville's Cross, in June 2016 and feedback on cycling needs was gathered via a meeting of local cyclists (Durham City Neighbourhood Planning Forum, 2016b) and these findings have been updated in the light of responses to the public consultation.

4.224 A further justification for a sustainable transport approach is to be found in the 'County Durham Climate Change Strategy' (County Durham Environment Partnership, 2015b, p.17)

*County Durham will aim to reduce CO2 emissions from transport, through the promotion of travel choices and alternatives to private car travel, ultra-low carbon vehicles, walking, cycling and more integrated travel planning.*

4.225 As pointed out in the strategy, 23% of CO2 emissions come from the transport sector. Nationally over a third of journeys under two miles, and 55% of journeys under five miles are made by car or van. If people are given more transport options, through improving public transport and the pedestrian and cycling environment, big reductions in emissions and congestion could be achieved. But it is also important to encourage the use of electric vehicles and cleaner, fuel-efficient cars among those who still need to use cars for their daily travel, particularly as an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) runs through the centre of Our Neighbourhood. Developments which would normally fall below the

threshold for requiring a Transport Statement or a Transport Assessment may be required to provide this analysis if the site falls within or is close to the AQMA. This may also lead to transport improvements being required as mitigation. Air quality is covered in detail in Figure 1 of the Plan.

4.226 The Durham City Regeneration Masterplan (Durham County Council, 2014) and its update (Durham County Council, 2016c) have a number of implementation projects and actions relevant to transport in Our Neighbourhood (a subset of the Durham City area covered by the Masterplan): i.e. Modern infrastructure - new relief roads (outside Our Neighbourhood) are proposed. In addition, there are projects to improve the bus station, cycle and pedestrian routes, and junctions on the A690. The Masterplan update notes what has been delivered and outlines key future activities. Completed projects include the refurbishment of most of the road and pavements in North Road, cycle path provision to the railway station, and preparations for installation of a SCOOT system at the traffic lights on the Gilesgate and Leazes Bowl roundabouts. However, the Plan can only address issues within Our Neighbourhood and consider ways to encourage cycling and walking and the use of public transport.

4.227 A number of saved policies of the City of Durham Local Plan (T4, T19, T21, Q1, Q2, Q4, Q8) are relevant to the following transport policies.

### **Planning Policies and Proposals for Land Use**

4.228 The policies related to this theme are:

- Policy T1: Sustainable transport accessibility and design
- Policy T2: Residential Car Parking
- Policy T3: Residential Storage for Cycles and Mobility Aids



### **Policy T1: Sustainable transport accessibility and design**

Development proposals will be required to demonstrate best practice in respect of sustainable transport accessibility and design.

#### **Accessibility**

Approach routes to the site, and access within the development should be accessible to all, giving the highest priority to walking, then cycling and public transport, and should meet the travel needs of people with mobility impairments.

#### **Impact**

Adverse transport impacts, including additional circulation and parking space for private motor vehicles, should be minimised.

To mitigate adverse impacts, proposals should be made to improve access by walking, cycling and public transport in the area around the development, and thereby contribute to modal shift towards sustainable transport.

#### **Design**

By following best practice, new access roads and residential streets, and alterations to existing ones, will include:

- a) safe, direct and continuous routes for walking, cycling and public transport users to, from and within the site; and
- b) measures to minimise car traffic, exclude through-routes for motor vehicles, and to discourage vehicle speeds exceeding 20mph; and
- c) a family-friendly environment in a high quality public realm, with opportunities for play in residential streets, and a safe environment at day and night.

4.229 The Planning Authority will give pre-application advice on the level of assessment required, which might be a full Transport Assessment, a Transport Statement, or a statement of accessibility within a Design and Access Statement. Durham County Council's thresholds based on the scale of a development proposal are published in the 'Planning Validation Requirements' (Durham County Council, 2017b) and are drawn from the national 'Guidance on Transport Assessment' (Department for Transport, 2007a). It should be noted that full Transport Assessments may be required for sites falling below the guideline thresholds if a development is proposed within or adjacent to the Air Quality Management Area or if local transport infrastructure is judged to be inadequate. The Guidance on Transport Assessment (Appendix B, p. 49) indicates that this should apply where there are substandard roads, poor pedestrian or cyclist facilities or inadequate public transport provisions. With respect to pedestrian and cyclist facilities, the context maps (see Maps 9 and 10 in Appendix D) and the detailed paper produced by the Neighbourhood Plan Working Party (Durham City Neighbourhood Plan Working Party, 2019b) should be used to help identify inadequate facilities. Over time this information base may be revised by the City of Durham Parish Council or in the course of production of the Durham City Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.



4.230 Paragraph 4.14 of the Guidance on Transport Assessment (Department for Transport, 2007a) stipulates that “an assessment should be made of the available capacity of the existing cycleway and footpath network in the area of the development” using “appropriate analytical tools and methodologies”. This assessment should inform the development of any Travel Plan, the assessment of modal split, and should indicate any enhancements to the local cycleway and footpath network that may be required. Objective 1 of the 'County Durham Strategic Cycling and Walking Delivery Plan 2019-2029, Action Plan 2019-2024' (Durham County Council, 2019c) sets out a range of audit tools which are considered suitable, including Appendices B and C of the 'Design Guidance: Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013' (Welsh Government, 2014).

4.231 It will not be acceptable for Transport Assessments and Transport Statements merely to illustrate the potential walking and cycling catchment areas for a development. The current conditions and deficiencies in the networks are material considerations which must be included in the analysis.

4.232 Potential will often exist for development proposals to encourage accessibility by foot, cycle or public transport through the provision of off-site improvements. Funding to remedy deficiencies in the transport network, or to provide capacity enhancement, may be sought via planning obligations. Improvements may include, but should not be limited to, the following measures:

- widening footways and improving road crossings;
- providing cycle infrastructure, and addressing conflict with pedestrians;
- improving accessibility for those using wheelchairs and mobility aids, for example by provision of at-grade crossings or dropped kerbs;
- improving the lighting, surface or drainage of footpaths;
- contributing towards construction of new public transport infrastructure;
- subsidising public transport services for a number of years until they are viable.

4.233 In all cases, solutions should respect the urban or rural context of the routes being adapted. Policy G1 covers footpaths.

4.234 Current best practice, in terms of design, can be found in 'Design Guidance: Active Travel' (Welsh Government, 2014), which is one of the design guides mandated by the County Durham Strategic Cycling and Walking Delivery Plan (Durham County Council, 2019c8g). It is currently the most comprehensive and up to date walking and cycling design guide to have received approval through a UK legislative process, and is in accord with UK highways practices. It gathers in one document best practice from earlier publications such as the 'Manual for Streets' (Department for Transport, 2007b), 'Inclusive Mobility' (Department for Transport, 2005), and 'Cycle Infrastructure Design' (Department for Transport, 2008). Designing walking and cycling infrastructure in accordance with this, or similar, guidance will enable the fullest uptake of walking and cycling in Our Neighbourhood. The guidance should be applied to all types of roads and off-road routes so that a network of consistently high quality can be developed.

4.235 The 'Design Guidance: Active Travel' (Welsh Government, 2014) covers topics such as surfaces, lighting, the need for seating, for managing street clutter, and for good maintenance, along with advice on determining how pedestrian and cyclist priority at side roads should be handled, and facilities at bus stops. A full range of design elements is provided, which embody best practice, including minimum dimensions. Highly congested pavements are a particular problem in Durham. Objective techniques for assessing footway capacity are provided (para. 4.7.5, page 38) which will determine what level of enhancement is required.

4.236 An important consideration in Our Neighbourhood, which came through strongly during the public consultation, is the need to separate pedestrian and cycle facilities. This is in part prompted by the poor design of existing routes, which are noted on the context maps (see Maps 9 and 10 in Appendix D), exacerbated by the potential for high speeds obtained by cyclists travelling downhill. Section 6.11 (pages 117-120) of the 'Design Guidance: Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013' gives detailed advice on segregation of pedestrian and cycle routes, and lists factors that should be used to determine the best design solution. The gradient of the route is an important factor to consider within Our Neighbourhood.

4.237 As transport is a key issue in Durham City, travel plans and transport assessments accompanying development proposals should incorporate local detail, rather than being desk-based exercises. Developers and their consultants are encouraged to engage from the outset with local groups such as the Durham City Cycle Forum (a focus group convened by the County Council), Durham City Access for All Group, and other relevant bodies. The NPPF (para. 128) states that “applications that can demonstrate early, proactive and effective engagement with the community should be looked on more favourably than those that cannot”. Applications should include walking and cycling provision in the design brief at the inception of the design process, as recommended by the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation (2018, para. 4 to 10) in their response to the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy Review.

4.238 In assessing the transport impacts of a development, a holistic view is required if the application forms part of a larger development zone, or part of a larger estate in the City. For example, car parking levels provided across the zone or estate should be compared to the prevailing car parking policy, and a commitment made to reduce any excess provision which is not justified.

### **Justification**

4.239 As acknowledged in the 'Durham City Sustainable Transport Delivery Plan' (Durham County Council, 2018b, p.7), the relatively small, compact nature of the City suits the promotion of sustainable modes of travel, and thus higher standards and a stronger emphasis on good design are required in Our Neighbourhood. Regarding land use planning, the Sustainable Transport Delivery Plan (p. 33) recommends the highest possible design standards should be applied to development sites and to access on foot,



by cycle and by public transport. Chapter 12 of the NPPF sets out how to achieve well-designed places, particularly emphasising that local and neighbourhood plans should set out a clear design vision, including recommending design guides. These provide clarity to developers at the earliest stage of the design process. To meet climate change commitments, and to build a healthier, more liveable environment, a sustained shift towards sustainable transport modes will be required, and new developments present an opportunity to increase the proportion of sustainable transport journeys over the average in the local area.

### **Policy T2: Residential Car Parking**

Development proposals incorporating or having an impact on car parking will be supported if they comply with the following:

#### **Design**

- a) Access to off-street car parking should be designed to minimise additional vehicle movements on residential streets. Where on-street parking is necessary, it should be provided in designated bays, and designed to ensure the safety and convenience of pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users. The in-curtilage element of car parking for dwellings without garages may be instead be provided within a nearby neighbourhood parking area to make more efficient use of land and improve the public realm.
- b) Where electric vehicle charging provision is required by the County Durham Parking and Accessibility Standards, the facilities must not hinder the movement of pedestrians or disabled people, and should respect the character of the area.

#### **Reducing car parking provision**

- c) Provision of car club spaces for residents and neighbouring users is encouraged.
- d) Within the Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) encouragement will be given to development proposals making provision at less than the minimum car parking levels prescribed in the County Durham Parking and Accessibility Standards.

#### **Extending the Controlled Parking Zone**

- e) Extensions to the Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) in order to mitigate the effects of a proposed development will have the costs recovered via planning obligation. Situations which might justify CPZ extension include:
  - 1) a development close to, or accessed from, an area which is currently in the CPZ; or
  - 2) a development close to the City centre or to a major employment site, such that parking controls would be necessary to maintain residential amenity and avoid use for long-stay commuter car parking; or
  - 3) development of student accommodation within or adjoining a residential area, which could increase competition for parking spaces in the residential

area; or

- 4) any residential development outside the CPZ where a developer proposes to provide fewer parking spaces than normally required by the County Durham Parking and Accessibility Standards.

4.240 The following questions will be considered when assessing the car parking associated with proposed development, including infill development:

- Does existing street character rule out on-site parking?
- Is the application sufficiently evidenced, for example, by parking surveys, highway safety audit, or public transport impact assessment?
- Is there likely to be an adverse impact on existing car parking users in the vicinity, and how can this be mitigated?
- Are key local services conveniently and safely accessible by walking, cycling and public transport?
- Have the needs of visitors and the needs of disabled people been considered?

4.241 The costs involved in extending the CPZ would include, but are not limited to, the costs of consulting affected residents and businesses, of carrying out parking usage surveys, and the costs of installing signage and equipment such as parking ticket vending machines. It is essential, at the application stage, to perform an adequate assessment: it will not be acceptable for impacts to become apparent only after a development has been completed. An extension to the CPZ might be limited to the new development, or might need to encompass neighbouring streets.



### Justification

4.242 In setting parking standards the NPPF (para. 105) recommends authorities consider:

- a) *the accessibility of the development; and*
- b) *the type, mix and use of development; and*
- c) *the availability of and opportunities for public transport; and*

- d) *local car ownership levels; and*
- e) *the need to ensure an adequate provision of spaces for charging plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles.*

4.243 Reducing off-street car parking provision generally has a direct bearing on the potential for achieving higher densities, and for good quality amenity space such as landscaping, green space, and areas for children to play. The Transport for New Homes Project Summary and Recommendations (Foundation for Integrated Transport, July 2018, p. 26) recommends that towns and cities plan for higher densities, and to “curtail car parking to allow our planners to design more attractive places with more space for greenery and better public realm”.

4.244 Owing to the historic nature of the streets within the Controlled Parking Zone, the supply of on-street parking space is limited in most areas, as is evidenced by the Council having ceased to provide resident or visitor permits for occupiers of new developments or conversions since 2000. Car parking space is increasingly coming under pressure with the increase in the size of cars, ownership rates among permanent residents and students, and the increase in student numbers. It would not be possible to meet all the future demand while preserving the special character of Our Neighbourhood, and so the policy emphasis must be on better control and management of car parking, and reducing car dependency.

4.245 The current county-wide policy, the 'County Durham Parking and Accessibility Standards' (Durham County Council, 2019a), sets different rates of provision for town centres and areas outside town centres. Its definition of the town centre for Durham City is based on a simple radius of 800m centred on the bus station, which does not take into account the geography of the City. Outside this area, car parking is required to meet or exceed a level determined by the size of the dwelling. Yet within the Controlled Parking Zone, parts of which lie beyond the 800m radius, student accommodation may be built with no car parking provision for residents. This has the effect of reducing the viability of ordinary residential development by comparison with the more profitable development of student accommodation.

4.246 Seeking to restore a better community balance within neighbourhoods is a key aim of the Neighbourhood Plan. This policy therefore allows for residential accommodation to be built with a lower level of car parking than the norm, but only where on-street parking controls exist. This will allow for high quality, higher density developments which do not generate extra traffic and support the viability of public transport services.

### **Policy T3: Residential Storage for Cycles and Mobility Aids**

Residential development proposals for new build or change of use should provide storage facilities for cycles and mobility aids as follows:

- a) Cycle parking should be provided at the rates required by the County Durham Parking and Accessibility Standards. The space and access must also be adaptable for storing other mobility aids, including powered wheelchairs, mobility scooters, children's buggies and prams. Electric power must be available to allow recharging of powered mobility aids and e-bikes.
- b) Where storage is provided communally for a number of dwelling units the travel plan should include a commitment to ongoing active management of communal storage spaces, including timely removal of abandoned equipment, and provision of additional capacity when needed.
- c) The design and location of storage must accord with current best practice guidance, with appropriate solutions selected depending on the style and context of the development.

4.247 Current best practice guidance for cycle storage can be found in the Cycle Parking Guide for New Residential Developments (Transport Initiatives LLP and Cambridge City Council, 2010). Developers are strongly encouraged to use this guidance, adapted as necessary for the storage of other travel equipment covered by the policy.

4.248 Cycle and mobility aid storage may be catered for simply by providing sufficient garage space. In properties without garages a variety of design solutions are shown in the Cycle Parking Guide for New Residential Developments, but particular attention will need to be paid to the storage of other mobility aids. Solutions such as porch extensions or additional hallway space would give greater flexibility than free-standing sheds or lockers, as the space could be used to store other belongings if the householder has no need to accommodate cycles or mobility aids.

4.249 Discretion may be exercised by the Planning Authority in cases of redevelopment and conversion of existing buildings and developments within the conservation areas. It is imperative that cycle and mobility aid storage forms an integral part of any full or reserved matters planning application, rather than treating it as a secondary issue to be resolved by condition. Full details of the location, type of fittings, spacing, numbers, method of installation and access to storage should be provided.

### **Justification**

4.250 It is essential that residents have sufficient space to store the various types of travel equipment they require. Convenience of use strongly influences transport choices, so if sustainable travel is to be encouraged it is essential that it is no harder to access a bicycle (for example) than a car. The 'Manual for Streets' (Department for Transport, 2007b, section 8.2.1) states that "providing enough convenient and secure cycle parking at

people's homes and other locations for both residents and visitors is critical to increasing the use of cycles". It is clear that having no storage for mobility aids could lead to greater social isolation as a resident's mobility becomes impaired.

4.251 On page 33 of the Durham City Sustainable Transport Delivery Plan (Durham County Council, 2018b) it is stated that higher provision of high quality cycle parking within developments is required, including in residential development within the City. The latest County Durham Parking and Accessibility Standards (Durham County Council, 2019a) has increased the level of provision required but does not provide sufficient clarity on design and does not cater for mobility aids.

4.252 The 'National Travel Survey' (Department for Transport, 2016, Table NTS0608) shows that for adult age bands around 40% of people own or have use of a bicycle, dropping to about 20% only for the 60+ age bracket. However, for the older age brackets use of other mobility aids would take the place of the need for cycle storage.

4.253 Facilities for recharging for electric equipment are important for mobility aids, but also for e-bikes. The 2019 revision of the County Durham Parking and Accessibility Standards covers requirements for provision of electric vehicle charging points, and Policy T3 extends this to other personal electric transport modes. The Department for Transport's recommended 'Propensity to Cycle Tool' predicts that, because of the hilly nature of the City, wider uptake of e-bikes would have the potential to almost double cycling trips in Our Neighbourhood.

4.254 This policy therefore seeks to ensure that lack of storage, or poor storage design, is no obstacle to uptake of sustainable travel modes in Our Neighbourhood, and that residential properties are adaptable to the changing mobility needs of individuals and families at different stages in their lives.

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