

CHAPTER 2 : DARLINGTON CONTEXT

Summary

Darlington is an attractive market town, well served by national and regional transport links and where quality of life and accessibility for all are seen as key drivers in promoting economic prosperity.

Building on the regional and sub-regional analysis in Chapter 1, this chapter continues to set the context for Darlington's second Local Transport Plan by setting out the transport implications of:

- Darlington's approach to planning and Darlington Partnership's Community Strategy, the long-term vision agreed by all partners and sectors in Darlington.
- Current transport and travel patterns, and the future changes which will affect them.
- The extensive consultation and travel behaviour research programmes undertaken through the six months from September 2004 to March 2005.
- Successes and areas for learning in the delivery of the first Local Transport Plan, and implications of the radical new approaches being taken to service procurement by the Council.

In doing so it draws out the policy implications from Darlington's long-term Transport Strategy which need to be delivered through this Local Transport Plan.

Key Messages

- Economic regeneration driven by quality of life and accessibility is Darlington's top priority.
- Managing road traffic congestion, improving actual and perceived road safety (particularly for pedestrians and cyclists), improving accessibility for specific groups and purposes, and managing and improving transport networks and car parking to support the economy are key challenges for the LTP.
- In national terms Darlington has lower than average levels of car ownership and relatively high levels of bus patronage. Without good alternatives to the private car, increasing economic prosperity will give rise to higher car usage as a result of increasing car ownership.
- Research suggests that Darlington residents would like to see emphasis placed upon improving infrastructure for the three sustainable travel modes (walking, cycling and bus), as well as improving the effectiveness of the existing network.

Darlington's Approach to Planning

- 1 The Community Strategy, "Where Quality Comes to Life", establishes the key local priorities for Darlington and provides structures for delivering against those priorities, led by **Darlington Partnership** (the Local Strategic Partnership). The strategy is directed towards realising the vision for Darlington as:
 - An area creating and sharing prosperity;
 - A location for learning, achievement and leisure;
 - A place for living safely and well; and
 - A high quality environment with excellent communication links.
- 2 The strategy has been agreed and is owned by all partners. The Council has established planning systems at corporate, departmental and service level linked to the delivery of the high level outcomes of the Community Strategy. Information Technology systems have been implemented to monitor and measure the Council's contribution to Community Strategy Outcomes, and transport outcome monitoring is an integral part of this.
- 3 The strategy pursues a sustainable future for Darlington through an integrated approach that balances economic, social and environmental well-being. **Figure 2.1** illustrates this approach. Whilst the Transport Strategy and Local Transport Plan are directly linked to the strategy theme of 'Developing an Effective Transport System', the integrated approach to planning and delivery recognises the Plan's contribution across all the themes. **Figure 2.2** illustrates the structure of the Darlington Partnership, created to facilitate delivery of the strategy and the integrated planning required across the eight strategy themes to deliver sustainable outcomes.

Figure 2.1 Darlington’s Approach to Planning

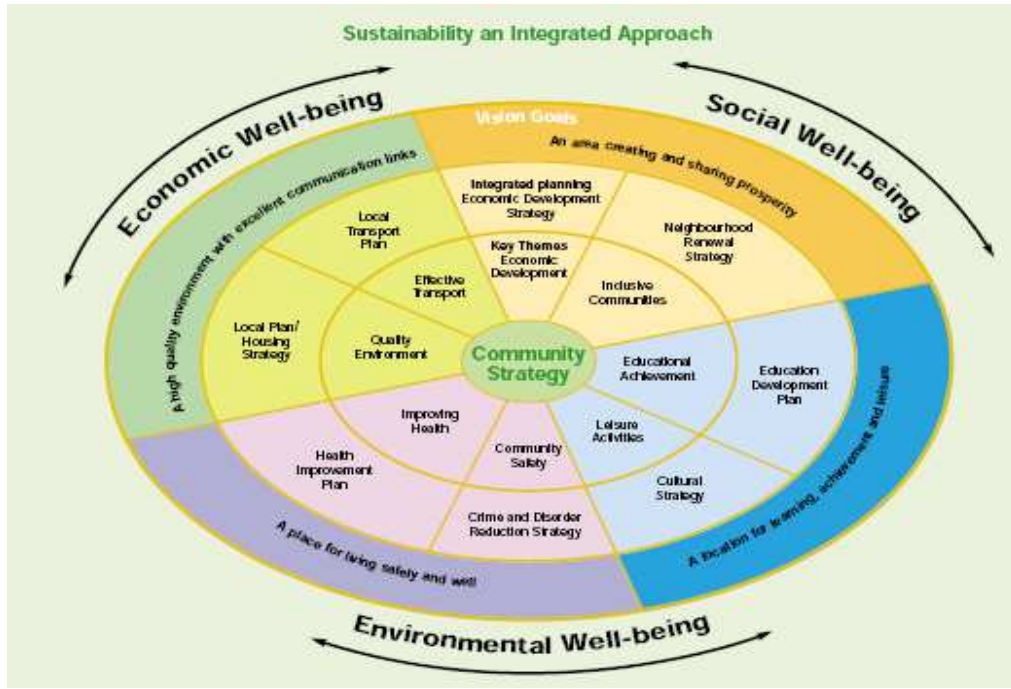
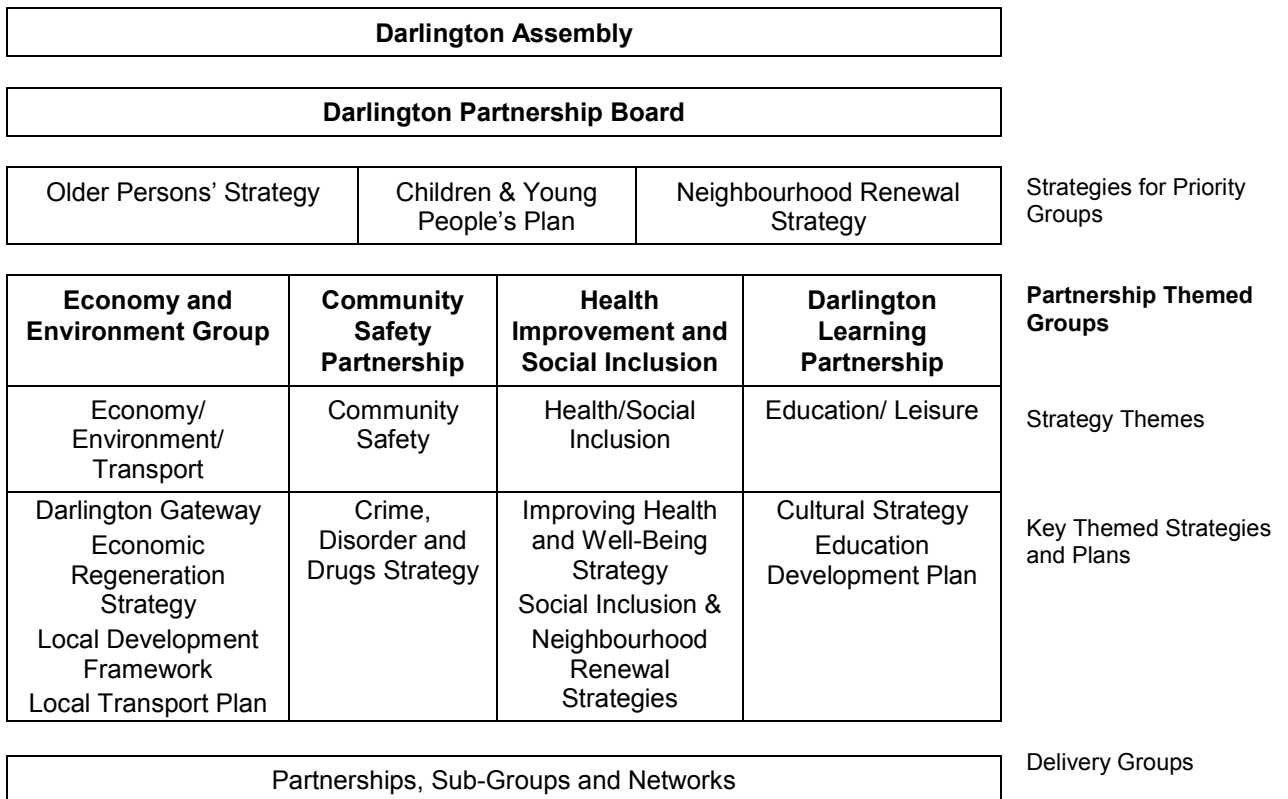


Figure 2.2 Darlington Partnership (LSP) Structure



Local Priorities within the Community Strategy

- 4 Through the Community Strategy, Darlington Partnership established priorities for improving quality of life in Darlington. These priorities, set out below in **Table 2.1**, are the result of detailed and extensive community consultation and analysis of the Borough's strengths and weaknesses. They are the basis of the shared ambition of the Council and all the partners working in Darlington.

Table 2.1 - Darlington Community Strategy Priorities

Priority Areas	Priority Groups
Improving the local economy	Children and young people
Raising educational achievement	Older people
Promoting inclusive communities	Those living in the most deprived wards

- 5 All strategies and programmes developed through the partnership are tested against these priorities. The Transport Strategy and the Local Transport Plan have been designed to address local transport needs in a way that balances and marries the national shared priorities for local government with these key local priorities.
- 6 The Darlington Partnership has taken a further step in setting priorities by identifying five cross-cutting issues that all Partnership theme groups are required to consider in their work. The five issues are:
- accessibility;
 - choosing health;
 - alcohol;
 - Darlington: A Town on the Move; and
 - anti-social behavior.
- 7 There are currently 39 plans and strategies in place or being developed within the framework of the Partnership. It is expected that the five cross-

cutting issues will be addressed in the development and implementation of these plans and strategies.

- 8 There is, therefore a reciprocal relationship between transport planning in Darlington and the wider community strategy. The Transport Strategy and Local Transport Plan are focused on delivering outcomes that contribute to community priorities, whilst the Partnership as a whole is seeking to enhance accessibility and transport choice through its various plans and strategies.
- 9 Darlington's approach to strategic planning has received national recognition and acknowledgement. The Corporate Assessment in October 2004, leading to 'Excellent' status in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment, recognized that partnership and effective planning and prioritization is happening for real in Darlington. The Audit Commission, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) and Local Government Association (LGA) have all sought to learn from the Darlington approach.

Vision for 2011

- 10 The overall direction for Darlington set by the Community Strategy centres on strengthening the local economy and securing sustainable gains in prosperity, whilst ensuring that all residents can share in and enjoy that prosperity, and that the barriers to social inclusion are removed. At the same time it aims to create a high quality environment that supports prosperity and inclusion and enables people to enjoy a high quality of life.
- 11 Some examples of how this vision is being addressed across all the Community Strategy themes include:
 - **Economic Regeneration** – investing in the infrastructure required to attract high quality, well-paid jobs to Darlington to counter the low-wage local economy; reducing the unemployment gap between the most prosperous and the most deprived wards; and enhancing the competitiveness and attraction of the town centre, with new shopping development and a major overhaul of the pedestrian environment;
 - **Improving Health** – providing health services that are accessible to all; giving people choice about healthy lifestyles and about where and when they are treated; working for a fitter and healthier population, promoting physical activity and reducing obesity, and reducing health inequalities by targeting those most at risk;

- **Social Inclusion** – inclusion is a key goal of much of Darlington Partnership’s work, but the focus is a shared Social Inclusion Strategy that aims to narrow the inequalities gap, build community confidence and improve access to services for 12 groups of people specifically at risk of deprivation, discrimination and disadvantage;
 - **Neighbourhood Renewal** – community partnerships have been created in each of the 11 most deprived wards; the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy provides a focus for the Council and others to work with the partnerships to tackle the combinations of factors – economic, social and environmental – that lead to deprivation; and
 - **Educational Attainment** – the many factors being addressed in order to raise educational attainment and narrow the attainment gap include major investment in new educational buildings, and the re-organisation of school clusters to strengthen the linkages between schools and the communities they serve.
- 12 Taking the Social Inclusion Strategy from the above set of Community Strategy workstreams as an example, transport contributes to achieving the strategy at several levels. Accessibility to transport/mobility is part of a bigger corporate picture of identifying and managing potential accessibility barriers across all services arising from racial, cultural, disability or other sources. Transport issues arising from the Social Inclusion Strategy and the related Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy include:
- **through the Council’s close relationship with Darlington Association on Disability and other partners, ensure that people with physical and sensory impairments can travel to select destinations safely and conveniently on foot or by wheelchair;**
 - **ensuring that information about access opportunities for people with various disabilities are well publicised, both for their benefit and for the benefit of businesses and service providers;**
 - **the need for public transport (or other forms of transport, such as community transport or taxis) for older people, young people, those in the targeted deprived wards and other groups with economic disadvantage, to be provided at times, on routes and at a cost to meet specific needs to access services, shopping, work and leisure; and**
 - **promoting and investing in all available transport modes including cycling, walking and public transport to ensure that choices are available to people who do not have access to a car.**

- 13 Success in delivering the overall vision for Darlington will bring increased prosperity shared by an increasing proportion of residents. The population is expected to remain stable over the next 10 years, with roughly the same number of trips made as at present (since trips per person changes little over time). The 2001 census showed that car ownership in Darlington was below the national average¹. Though not directly comparable with the Census, recent data collected through household surveys (see section 22) indicates that levels of car ownership have increased. There remains a relatively high level of aspiration towards car ownership and use. People's choice of transport mode, and the distances they travel for each trip, is therefore going to determine future traffic levels.
- 14 The physical outworking of the Community Strategy and its transport implications are described later in the chapter, after examining current travel and transport patterns. (See paragraph 43 for the key implications.)

Darlington Description

- 15 Darlington is an historic market town, situated adjacent to the River Tees and on the East Coast Main Line. Darlington is the 5th largest major retail centre in the North East and is a pleasant and attractive place to live, work and relax in – some 94% of people surveyed in recent research liked living in Darlington. 85% of the population of Darlington Borough live within a compact urban area, with the majority of the remaining residents concentrated in a few outlying villages.
- 16 The town has a wide variety of sports facilities, theatre, cinema and arts venues, restaurants and pubs and a good choice of schools and colleges. Residents have good access to open space and parks, both in the town and in the surrounding rural area.
- 17 Darlington is laid out on a traditional radial pattern, with the focus of the town's transport network being the town centre. This physical layout is partly reflected in the statistic that 49% of town centre users, either walk, cycle or take the bus to the town centre.
- 18 The A1(M) and A66(T) Trunk roads pass around the edge of the urban area, providing fast and efficient north-south and east-west connections respectively, whilst Darlington's position on the East Coast Mainline provides fast and frequent national rail services. In addition local train

¹ [31.2 Households without access to a car \(UK average 26.8%\)](#)

services provide rail travel to the Tees Valley, County Durham and North Yorkshire. The rapidly expanding Durham Tees Valley Airport is improving access to air travel for both business travellers and tourists, especially since the introduction of new BMI Baby flights to continental Europe. Darlington's accessibility has attracted major employers to establish their businesses in the Borough and further developments are underway to continue to attract inward investment.

- 19 Population in Darlington fell during the period 1991 to 2001, but since then has recovered to 1991 levels. During the period 1991 to 2001 there was a net increase in jobs in Darlington. Lost manufacturing jobs have been replaced by service sector jobs. Unemployment at 3% is below the regional average and the lowest in the Tees Valley, but is still above the national average. However this hides some of the problems in the Borough such as very high unemployment rates in specific wards such as Central, where they are eight times higher than in other wards². The average wage level in Darlington is very low, at 77% of the national average, and is lower than the North East and Tees Valley averages, which are themselves lower than most other regions. Substantial economic disparities within Darlington lead to equivalent disparities in health and other social indicators.

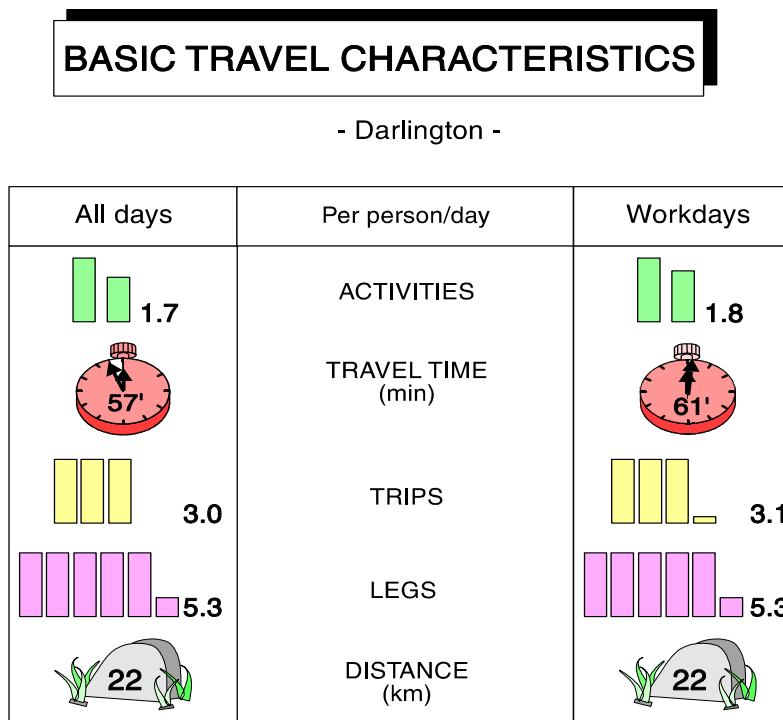
- 20 Economic regeneration is therefore the top priority in the Darlington Community Strategy, adopted by all partners. The Economic Regeneration Strategy is built on two special characteristics of the Borough: quality of life and accessibility. Major new developments are therefore being focused on sites that are well connected to sustainable transport facilities such as walking, cycle and bus routes. An example of this is the forthcoming development of Central Park, one of the region's regeneration priorities highlighted in the Regional Spatial Strategy. This is a mixed community of offices, housing, a hotel and the new site for Darlington College of Technology. The 75 hectare site is located adjacent to the East Coast Main Line, near to the Railway Station and accessibility by all travel modes is a key consideration. **Figure 2.3** shows the main transport networks and development patterns in Darlington.

Current Travel Patterns

² Central : Unemployment rate 7.2%; Heighington unemployment rate : 0.9%
Source : Office of National Statistics, November 2004.

- 21 In 2004/05 the Council carried out several pieces of research and consultation, giving one of the most comprehensive 'snapshots' of local travel behaviours and opinions available nationally, and probably one of the best bases for any Local Transport Plan.
- 22 The work included travel behaviour research for Darlington: A Town on the Move (the local name for our Sustainable Travel Town national demonstration project funded by the Department for Transport). The research was carried out by Socialdata, using an internationally respected methodology used worldwide over the last 30 years, with a statistically valid stratified sample with 4,269 people responding. It has provided a fascinating insight into travel patterns in Darlington, and shows that of the 1,993 households surveyed 24% did not have access to a car. The full report forms **Annex 2**.
- 23 In terms of travel activity, the survey shows the following travel behaviour for Darlington residents on average:

Figure 2.4



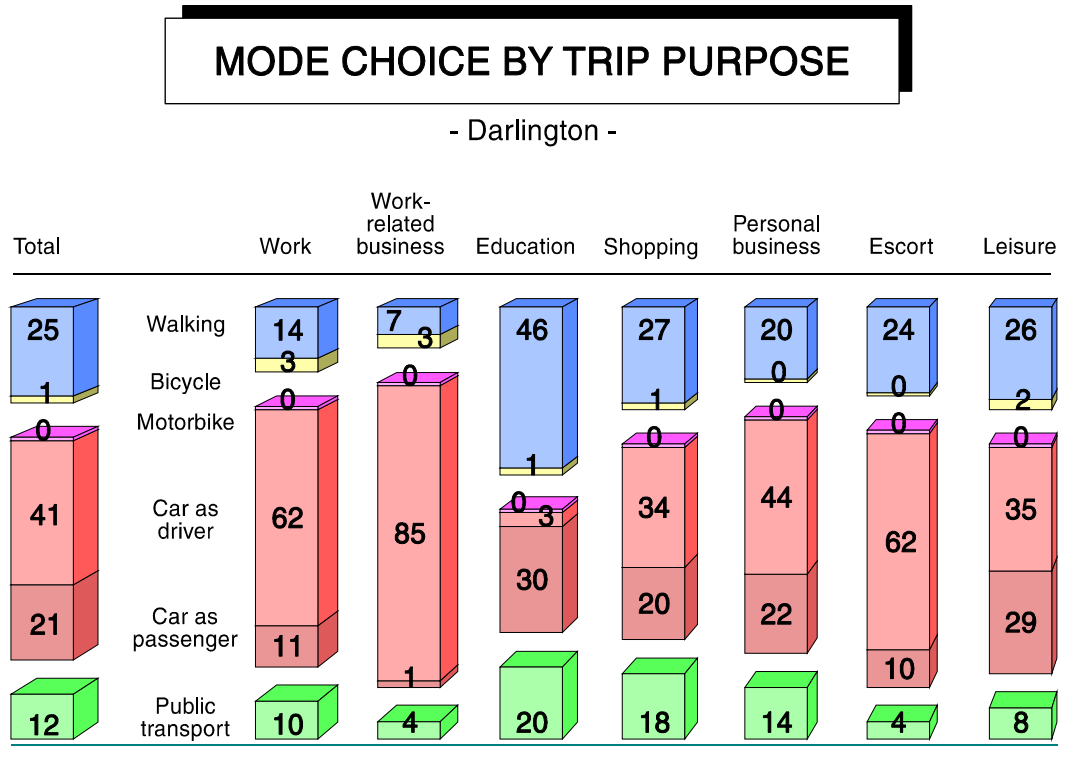


Figure 2.5 - Mode Choice by Trip Purpose Graph (Fig 3.8, p12 of Survey report)

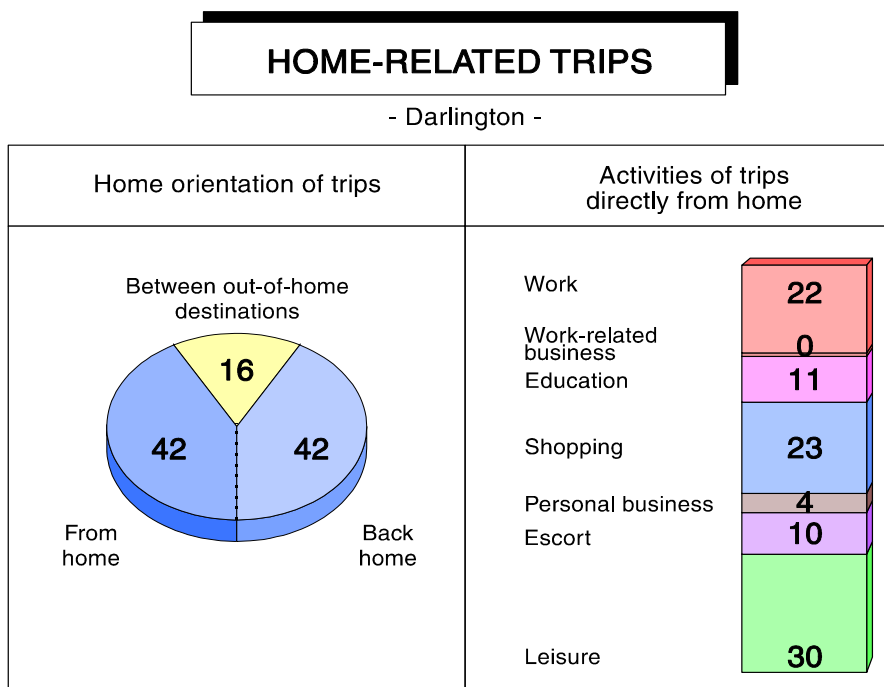


Figure 2.6

- 84% of all trips are to or from home, with 31% of all trips being for leisure reasons, 24% for shopping, 20% commuting to work and 10% for school or college;
- 77% of all trips are made within the urban area of Darlington, with 47% of all trips being journeys of less than 3 kilometres (about the same distance as the Town Centre to Harrowgate Hill or Lingfield Point). Only 26% of all trips were longer than 5km (or just over 3 miles).
- Possibly as a consequence of the short average distances, 25% of all

trips were made on foot with 12% by bus, and 62% by private car; and

- 32% of all trips did not use realistic alternative means of transport to the private car due to perceptions of their suitability by the resident involved. Only in 22% of all trips did the resident consider the relative merits of different types of transport.

24 The modal split of the trips made by residents were:

- 62% of all trips are made by car (41% as a driver, 21% as passenger) (180,000 trips per day);
- 25% of all trips are on foot (74,000 trips per day);
- 12% of all trips are made by public transport (35,000 trips per day); and
- 1% of all trips are made by bicycle (3,000 trips per day).

25 This pattern, where 38% of existing trips are made by sustainable means of transport varies by day, with most car use occurring on weekends (72% on Sundays).

Comparison with other similar towns and national travel patterns

- 26 Darlington has relatively high levels of sustainable transport use in comparison with Worcester and Peterborough, the two other sustainable travel demonstration towns, and higher than the national average of 35% of all trips by a sustainable mode.

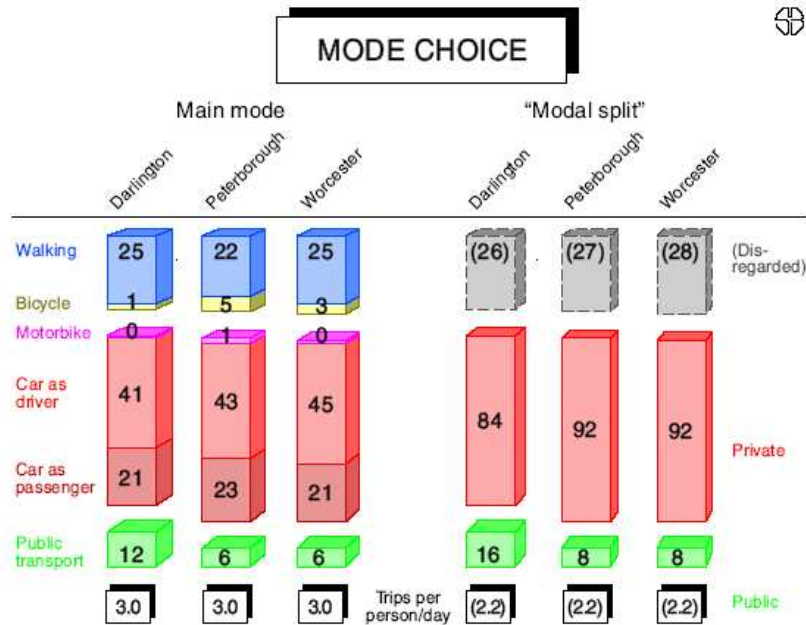


Figure 2.7

Social Inclusion

- 27 Analysis of the basic travel characteristics shows quite a range of travel behaviours between areas of the town. In particular, there is a significant variation in mode choice and relative importance of different modes to individuals' travel needs within different communities. Socio-demographic factors, geography and differences in the availability of the travel modes are likely to form part of the reason for this variance.

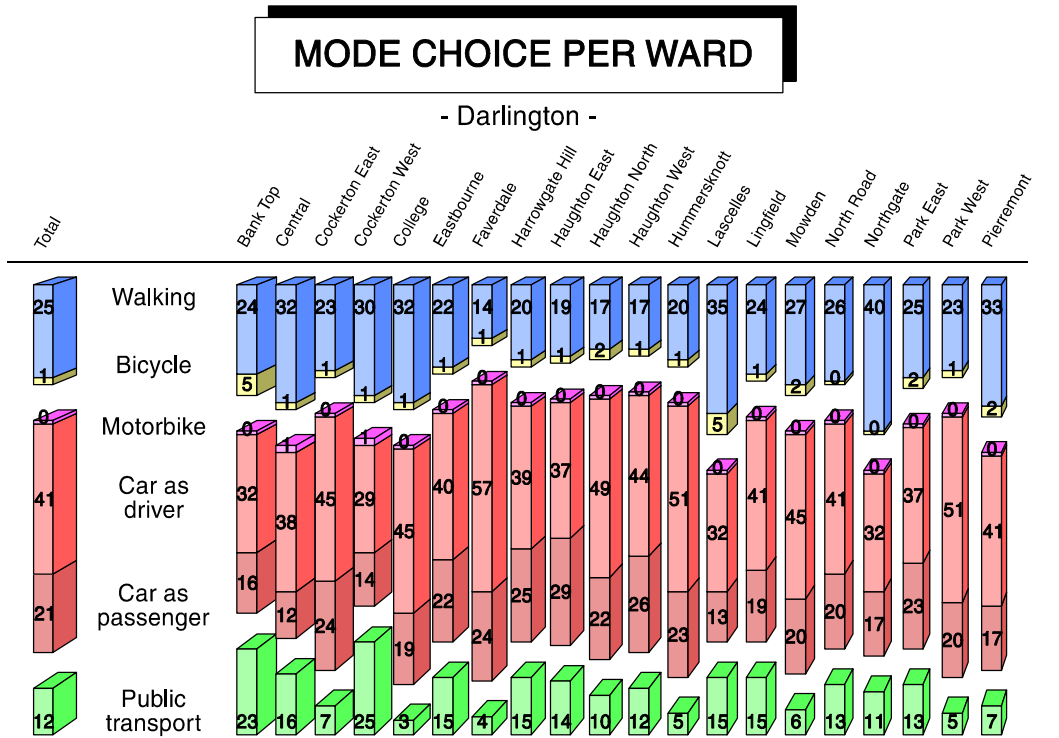


Figure 2.8

Accessibility

- 28 The accessibility plans in **Annex 12** show those parts of the Borough where the most significant accessibility issues arise for different activities.
- 29 The Framework Accessibility Strategy in **Annex 12** details the Partnership approach to accessibility planning that is being undertaken in Darlington through the Darlington Partnership’s themed groups. Identification of problems, based on specific target groups, locations or services, will be the basis for the development of solutions, both transport and non-transport. Meetings with Community Partnerships and other groups have identified some common issues such as cost of travel, personal safety, location of services and the needs of young people and those with a disability. The Accessibility Strategy to be developed for March 2006 will identify action plans for the next five years.

Traffic patterns

- 30 Historically, traffic levels in the Borough have been increasing over time. Using a network of 43 automatic traffic counters (linked by telephone to a

central computer), observed traffic volumes on some roads have increased by as much as 7%. **Figure 2.9** shows changes in traffic volumes within Darlington, with the highest increases being on Coniscliffe Road (+7%), Haughton Road and Woodlands Road (+6%).

- 31 These growth values hide the reality of traffic conditions elsewhere, such as on North Road where traffic congestion is perceived to be such that increasing numbers of drivers are using nearby alternative routes, such as Whessoe and Brinkburn Roads. This increased use of minor roads may result in greater environmental and safety impacts on local residents. This pattern of use is partly reflected in the key indicators chosen in 2000 to assess the impact of policies implemented during the first Local Transport Plan. As detailed in chapter 6, traffic flows on key corridors have returned to 2000/01 levels, whilst traffic flows approaching the inner ring road have declined.
- 32 Our performance against these indicators is also a reflection of the existing suite of demand management measures already in place, especially in and around the town centre (chapter 3).
- 33 This increase in general traffic levels has meant that, at certain times, individual junctions have become overloaded and traffic congestion has ensued. **Figure 2.10** shows the current position of the highway network in terms of average vehicle speeds for the worst weekday hour related to speed limits. As shown on the figure, most of the sections of road with low vehicle speeds (used as a surrogate for queuing traffic) are generated by specific junctions. Of particular note are the junctions at:
- West Auckland Road/Cockerton Green;
 - North Road/Whessoe Road;
 - North Road/Salters Lane junction; and
 - Haughton Road/McMullen Road junction.
- 34 Delays at these and other junctions throughout the town result in delays to all road users, including bus passengers and pedestrians as well as cars, as the roads become more congested and harder to cross on foot. Increasing traffic congestion on the inner ring road, is becoming an issue for businesses in the town centre, since it is perceived to be a potential barrier to people coming to the centre to shop or do business.

- 35 As also shown by **Figure 2.10**, traffic congestion is an issue on the A66(T) around the town. In particular, users of the sections of road near Blands Corner, Yarm Road and Stockton Road often experience traffic congestion, as a consequence of the capacities of the associated junctions.
- 36 Despite this increase in general traffic levels, Darlington Borough does not experience any serious air quality issues related to traffic sources and does not intend to declare an Air Quality Management Area at the moment. However, action may be required to tackle the levels of PM10 emissions (related to the use of diesel engines), if the proposed 2010 national target of an annual mean value of 20 micrograms per cubic metre is introduced. We intend to review air quality in 2006/07, working in partnership with our neighbouring Tees Valley local authorities. Further details, outlining why we do not feel that an air quality management area is required, both now and during the achievement of the vision for 2011 are contained in **Annex 6**

Road Safety

- 37 Darlington has a good road safety record and an extensive programme of engineering, education, encouragement and enforcement has delivered a continuing reduction in casualties.
- 38 Analysis of exposure to risk demonstrated that Darlington residents are exposed to less risk of a fatal or serious accident than the national average across all modes of transport, see **Figure 2.11**. Although there is slightly higher than the national average risk of a slight injury when travelling by bike or bus in Darlington, the actual number of accidents are low. This is at odds with residents' perception of road safety risk and will be addressed through education and information.

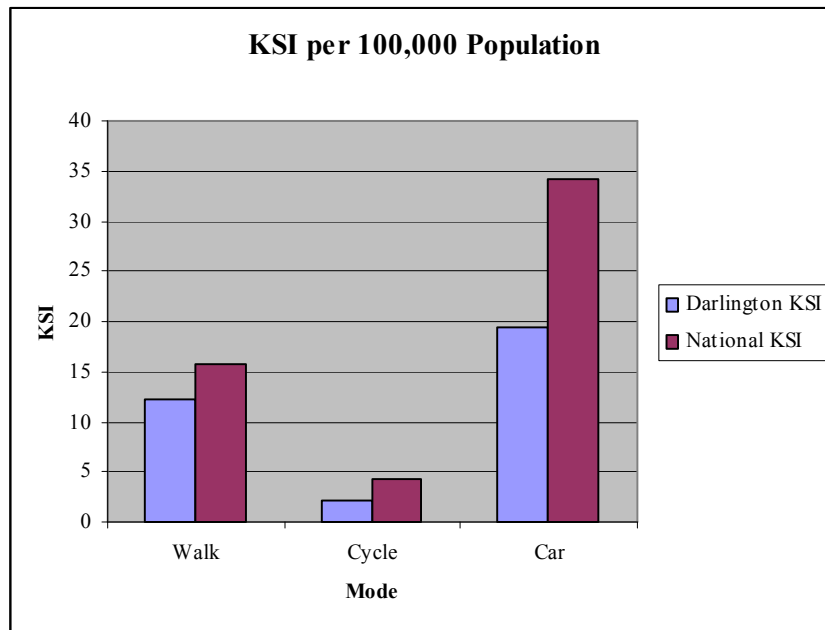


Figure 2.11

- 39 It has also been recognised that safety, in particular personal safety, is an issue for all journeys and influences the travel choices that people make, indeed whether people choose to travel at all. Initiatives already underway, including increasing use of CCTV on buses, at bus stops & in the town centre and security in car parks, will be expanded in the Travel Safety Strategy, as detailed in **Annex 13**.

Public Transport

- 40 Public transport use had a mixed pattern of use; bus use has declined by around 7% since 2001, whilst rail use has increased - in 2004/05 rail use from Darlington Station rose 7% (the second successive year of increases) or a 4.5% increase since 2001. This has brought with it more demand for car parking near the Station, which has had some impact on neighbouring residential areas.

Travel outside the Borough

- 41 In the 2001 census there were over 11,000 daily trips into Darlington from outside the Tees valley, 71% of which were from the North (Durham and Tyne & Wear). In addition over 8000 trips were made out of Darlington to jobs outside the Tees Valley, 63% of which were again to the north. This explains the traffic flows on key routes to the A1(M) and the increasing rail

patronage at Bank Top station. In addition there are a further 4000 trips to and from the rest of the Tees Valley.

- 42 Air travel from the Durham Tees Valley International Airport has increased significantly since the sale of the majority holding to, and investment by, Peel Holdings plc. A new set of flights to and from European destinations by BMI Baby, has seen annual passenger figures rise from 730,000 to 811,000 in 2005, an increase since 2001 of 11%. A new access road has been constructed and in 2008 the A66(T) Long Newton Interchange to the north of the site is to be improved by the Highways Agency. 73% of current passengers arrive at the Airport by car (22% by taxi and 1% by hire car) but a new direct bus service from Darlington rail station has recently been introduced.

Implications of travel patterns

- 43 It is therefore necessary for the Second Local Transport Plan to:
- **address the causes and thus the consequences of increasing traffic levels on local roads where these are creating traffic congestion, especially at selected junctions;**
 - **continue to focus on accident reduction and safety for all users, by physical design solutions, by education and road safety campaigns;**
 - **address the causes of declining bus use in partnership with local bus operators;**
 - **manage and improve the supply of parking available for residents, shoppers, visitors and rail travellers; and**
 - **address the low levels of cycling.**

Future Land-Use Changes

- 44 Arising from Regional Spatial Strategy, the Tees Valley Vision, Darlington's emerging Local Development Framework and changes in service provision, significant land-use changes that will impact on travel patterns are planned for the next 5 to 15 years. The emphasis is on developing sites that consolidate the existing urban area, although some edge of town development is inevitable in order to achieve wider objectives. The key developments are outlined below:

- Substantial new shopping development is planned for the town centre, together with the Pedestrian Heart improvements. These will retain trade in non-food goods from Darlington residents currently being lost to larger centres elsewhere. It should increase travel to the town centre by all modes, particularly at weekends, but could reduce longer distance car trips out of the Borough as more local people shop in town. In addition, since the town centre's catchment area includes parts of North Yorkshire and south-west Durham, with few bus services, car trips to other more distant centres should also come to Darlington town centre, thus reducing distances traveled.
- Major office development is taking place at two locations. The first, at Morton Palms on the edge of the urban area near the A66(T), is likely to attract additional car journeys at peak times through relatively congested junctions on the A66(T) and Yarm Road, despite a travel plan being implemented as part of the development and good bus services nearby. The second, at Central Park near the rail station and the town centre, has good prospects for promoting sustainable travel options if they are integrated into the development from the beginning, but could also otherwise increase peak time traffic on already busy radial roads. For both developments, the proposed Darlington Eastern Transport Corridor would increase travel options, provide an opportunity to promote local bus routes and help reduce traffic on some radial roads around their sites.
- Significant educational re-organisation is taking place. Darlington College is moving to Central Park, to the east of the town centre from its current location to the west. Several schools are being brought together on the new Education Village site in the north-west of the town at Haughton. Ensuring that any re-organisations are planned in a way that maximises the accessibility of education to students will improve the availability of services and could improve sustainable travel patterns.
- Darlington is experiencing high demand for residential development. However, with the exception of West Park (where a clear travel plan is building in bus, walking and cycling options from the start), almost all new development in the next five years will be on previously developed land within the urban area on sites with good accessibility by all modes to local facilities and employment. The agreed strategy for the new Local Development Framework will not allocate any greenfield nor edge of urban area sites, so that new housing will increase the density of the urban area and help promote options for travel by sustainable modes. Sites are distributed throughout the town and, given Darlington's radial road pattern and good bus network, are accessible by public transport.

- New industrial and warehousing development is taking place at Faverdale to take advantage of sites near the A1(M). New housing development is taking place nearby at West Park, but it will be important that the new jobs at Faverdale can be accessed by a choice of modes, including the frequent Urban Bus Challenge funded service 19. Freight traffic will be able to access the site easily.
- Major employment opportunities are being proposed in neighbouring areas, that will potentially attract more people from Darlington to travel outside of the Borough for work, and alter the pattern of such trips. Development proposals such as the Stockton-Middlesbrough Initiative will add to existing work flows, where currently about 33% of outbound trips are to the Teesside conurbation (2001 census). These changes will present real opportunities to improve inter-urban bus and rail services to help all Darlington residents access these employment opportunities.
- New health provision outside of the Borough. The on-going provision of some hospital health services for Darlington by Bishop Auckland General Hospital will alter future travel patterns; and
- A substantial increase in flights from Durham Tees Valley Airport, and potentially new business park development, will increase travel to the Airport.

45 These developments, and other workstreams within the Community Strategy, raise the following key issues for how our Transport Strategy needs to be delivered through this Local Transport Plan:

- **increasing affluence for Darlington particularly could result in substantial increases in car travel; planning for this and promoting alternative modes will help to reduce traffic congestion;**
- **conversely, promoting accessibility from deprived wards will help achieve social inclusion and economic targets;**
- **managing and improving short stay parking, as well as the quality of other means of travel, will be important to the economic health of the town centre;**
- **although new employment locations have been planned in sustainable locations well placed for access from the existing transport network by a range of modes, they could result in more dispersed travel patterns and more traffic unless accessibility is carefully planned in and promoted from the start, both within and**

external to the Borough area. It is also essential that the movement of freight to these locations is addressed;

- **accessibility planning for new and re-organised education and health facilities can help improve the service provision to local people; and**
- **the planned pattern of new housing development is in sustainable locations within the urban area and is consistent with transport planning needs, provided new developments are planned to facilitate walking to local facilities and other non-car modes of travel.**

Local People's Views

- 46 Unless local people want, and use, each part of Darlington's transport network, then it will not achieve its full effectiveness by providing solutions to local issues within the guidelines set down by national Government.
- 47 The comprehensive research and consultation on local travel behaviour and opinion carried out by the Council in 2004/5 included:
- Travel Behaviour Research, Baseline Survey 2004 for Darlington: A Town on the Move, referred to previously, using the methodology used internationally for many years;
 - the innovative Local Travel Summit for Darlington, which brought together, over two days, very high quality data about Darlington (and international comparative data) with a complete cross section of Darlington groups, sectors and stakeholders, advised by international transport experts such as Lynn Sloman and Werner Brög, to generate best value-for-money transport solutions relevant to Darlington. (It was linked, on the third day, to the first national Smarter Choices conference in Darlington);
 - consultation with the public and local stakeholders on the issues for the Second Local Transport Plan through workshops, one to one meetings, focus groups and a questionnaire to all residents;
 - consultation with the Darlington Partnership on the issues surrounding accessibility to local facilities; and
 - consultation with the public about issues surrounding the provision of concessionary fare travel schemes for bus services and taxis.

Synopsis of views

- 48 A full account of these wide-ranging activities forms **Annexes 1 and 2**. In summary, these pieces of work identified that the following were the key issues (where values are quoted, these are taken from a statistically valid stratified sub-sample of 406 people from the Travel Behaviour Research, 2004):
- car traffic has increased over the last few years (97% of replies thought that it had done so) and is expected to continue to increase (82%, with the majority viewing this as a negative development);
 - how to provide and promote realistic alternatives to the private car (85% wanted these);
 - the need to demonstrate the reality that walking and cycling is safer than people currently think (82% thought that cycling had a high accident risk and 53% thought walking had);
 - how to provide for people with mobility impairments, either physical or sensory; and
 - the need to make the existing road network more efficient.
- 49 In terms of opinions about the way in which these issues should be addressed, the key results were:
- 76% wanted more investment in public transport;
 - 73% wanted more investment in cycling; and
 - 64% wanted more investment in walking.
- 50 The consensus of opinion was that traffic congestion should be primarily tackled through the provision of effective alternatives, such as public transport facilities, rather than through restricting the use of the private car. Of the replies, 48% and 32% thought that the effective solution lay in limiting car traffic and making car parking more difficult respectively. This emphasis on travel choice, rather than increasing the current range of demand management measures, reflects the local concern over regeneration and accessibility. A strategic focus on improving accessibility through the provision of travel choice, is thus seen as a greater priority locally in order to achieve the outcomes of the Shared Priorities for Public Services.

- 51 Where conflicts occur between measures catering for differing types of user, the greatest number of responses were as follows:
- 85% favoured putting the needs of pedestrians before those of car users;
 - 79% favoured putting the needs of bus users before those of car users; and
 - 78% favoured putting the needs of cyclists before those of car users.
- 52 In summary, 85% of respondents wanted the future transport strategy to promote environmentally friendly means of travel, with 15% disagreeing. This response is not unusual; in 1991 similar surveys in the UK and continental Europe found the split to be 87% to 13% and 85% to 15% respectively.
- 53 However, 44% of all car trips were made because they had no other option than to use a car, either because of personal circumstances or the nature of the trip that they were making. Bringing forward measures to assist necessary car travel is important, as well as measures to assist sustainable travel modes (public transport, walking and cycling).

Consultation with stakeholders and the general public on transport issues

- 54 A wide ranging consultation process has been undertaken to inform the decision making process for the Transport Strategy and its delivery through the Second Local Transport Plan. This process was in two parts: a stakeholder consultation and a general debate with the public on the issues.
- 55 The following stakeholder consultations were carried out via a mixture of methods. These included face-to-face interviews and workshop sessions with a wide range of representatives from local organisations, as well as focus groups comprising local residents.
- 56 Analysis of the stakeholder consultation showed:
- congestion is seen as the most significant problem and one that will get considerably worse under expected future trends. It should be addressed through improving alternative modes, changing attitudes towards transport; and some traffic management measures;

- improving accessibility is seen as the most important aim of the plan, particularly focusing on the needs of more deprived people/areas; and
 - improving safety and air quality are not seen to be as high a priority (as less problems) and it is felt that addressing the other priorities will make a positive contribution to them. The broader concept of 'travel safety' is seen as providing a good link to the community safety element of the Community Strategy.
- 57 Whilst stakeholders broadly supported the strategy, they did of course raise issues that need to be addressed, where possible, as part of the delivery of the Plan. These issues are listed in **Annex 1** and will be considered when preparing the detail of individual schemes.
- 58 During March 2005, a questionnaire printed in the Town Crier was sent to every household and business in Darlington Borough. This part of the consultation process was targeted at all Darlington residents, to ensure everyone had the opportunity to give their views. 413 questionnaires were returned.
- 59 Many respondents to the questionnaire said that:
- there were problems of delays on journey times due to congestion;
 - there is speeding traffic in residential streets; and
 - that they would be encouraged to walk and cycle more if it was safe to do so.
- 60 The following messages from the questionnaire need to be considered:
- 287 people wanted more reliable bus services by giving priority to buses on main routes within the town;
 - 287 people stated that they would use the bus more if better waiting facilities and timetable information were provided at bus stops;
 - 172 people stated that there were insufficient car parking spaces in the town centre; and
 - 267 people agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that more money should be spent on measures designed to make travel easier for those with disabilities.

- 61 The questionnaire also asked people to state a choice between two options for the transport strategy. 271 supported the view that money should be spent on improving walking, cycling and public transport. 135 supported the view that money should be spent on improving roads and widening junctions.
- 62 Also over half of respondents have a problem in reaching places they need to go to access services such as the doctors, shopping or place of work.
- 63 Respondents were also asked to allocate £100 in multiples of £10 in order to make improvements for cars, public transport, walking and cycling. The £100 could be allocated to one travel mode or divided in any way between the 4 modes. In overall terms the total budget was allocated as shown below.

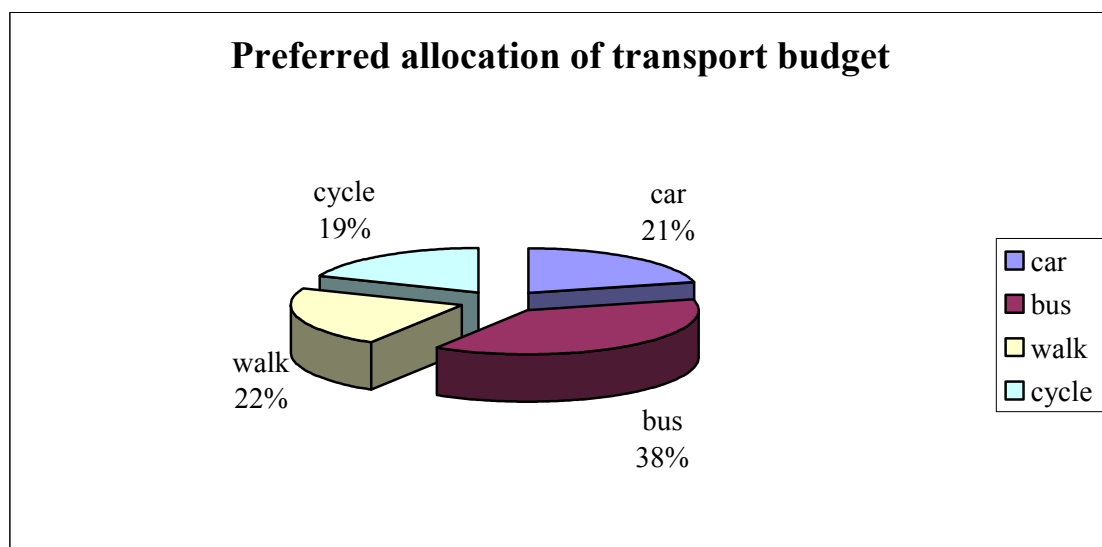


Figure 2.12

- 64 The preferred allocation shows a relatively even split between all the four main types of local transport used by most people, with a bias towards buses. This perhaps reflects a perception that some bus services are of low quality, with poor waiting facilities, poor reliability and little joint ticketing between operators.

Table 2.2 -Best Value User Satisfaction Surveys

Satisfaction with Transport Information	Bus Satisfaction
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Darlington	57%	62%
Average	50%	53%
Lower Quartile	45%	44%
Upper Quartile	55%	61%

- 65 Perhaps one of the biggest challenges to the success of the Second Local Transport Plan, identified both in the consultation process and elsewhere, is the improvement of local bus services. Currently, despite a good tradition of bus use (12% of all trips by residents are by bus) and high frequency services, quality and reliability are poor and bus patronage has been declining. If a strategy approach of promoting alternatives is to be maintained, it is essential that the bus fulfils a greater role in providing transport, and if it is to do this, a step-change in quality is needed within the lifetime of the Plan. Detail of our response may be found in the Darlington Bus Strategy appended to this Plan (**Annex 10**).

The First Local Transport Plan

- 66 The first Local Transport Plan published in 2001, was an extensive document that laid the framework for the next five years of transport improvements in Darlington. It contributed to our success in winning Sustainable Travel Demonstration Town status in 2004.
- 67 The expected outcomes set in the first Local Transport Plan were set to conform to, and help deliver, the five key transport objectives identified by the Government at that time. These key objectives were:
- supporting economic prosperity;
 - developing a socially inclusive system, accessible to all;
 - minimising impacts on the environment;
 - providing a safe and secure transport network; and
 - integrating different forms of transport.
- 68 In delivering transport solutions over the period 2001 to 2006, the first Local Transport Plan contained 17 detailed objectives that were designed to answer the following challenges, identified in 2000:

- to develop a transport system that imparts the minimum possible impact on global and local environments;
- to improve the safety of our transport network;
- to reduce dependence on the private car, and encourage more people to consider public transport, cycling and walking as a good alternative to the motor car for some journeys;
- to ensure that our transport system meets the needs of all sections of the community, thus addressing social inclusion in transport;
- to ensure that the transport system effectively and efficiently supports the local economy; and
- to balance the transport characteristics of urban and rural areas within the context of a sustainable transport strategy.

69 Darlington's First Local Transport Plan was assessed as "above average" in terms of its vision and associated objectives.

Performance

70 Although the First Local Transport Plan has a year still to run, evidence collected through the monitoring process shows that the Council has achieved its targets on several core indicators. For example, road condition values have moved from the bottom to the top quartile through concerted investment and focus. Equally, user satisfaction with local bus services continues to improve, as does road safety (which is already at a high level). The most significant target not achieved is the Best Value Performance Indicator on bus patronage, which has declined against a planned increase.

Table 2.3 - Core indicators

Core Target	Achievement	Comment
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Road condition	Yes	From bottom quartile to top quartile through concerted investment and focus of resources.
No. of bus passenger journeys	No	Patronage continues to decline, albeit from a high level, despite investment from Council. Need for focus on smart travel choice measures.
Bus satisfaction	Yes	Continues to improve, with low fares and frequent bus services on most routes.
Cycling trips	Yes	Numbers of cycling trips recorded at a town centre cordon have risen slightly.
KSIs all	Yes	Focus on road safety - engineering, education and enforcement
KSIs children	Yes	Focus on road safety - engineering, education and enforcement
Rural access to bus service	Yes	Requires further analysis as part of accessibility planning.

- 71 Whilst the actions undertaken to date have achieved much, three issues remain of important in addition to bus patronage; traffic congestion, road safety and management of parking supply. Although, traffic congestion is not as severe as in other places nationwide, 97% of local people thought that it had worsened in recent years; since 2001, traffic levels have risen by 5% on key radial corridors to the point where major junctions can no longer easily cope with the demand. This has resulted in delays to all road users, including bus passengers and pedestrians, as roads become more congested and harder to cross on foot.
- 72 Increasing traffic levels in Darlington are more a reflection of a perceived lack of realistic alternatives, than a reflection of the performance of existing demand management measures. Darlington Borough Council, in partnership with neighbouring Tees Valley Councils, is actively implementing the Demand Management Strategy agreed in 2001. Given the views of local people, it is clear that more needs to be done to promote travel choice and improve network capacity by all modes, whilst continuing

with the clear demand management measures already in place under the Strategy.

- 73 Road safety is still an issue, despite the good progress made (the number of all accidents being 7% ahead of target and child fatal/serious accidents being 37% ahead of target). This seems to be more of a perceived issue, with local people perceiving a different situation to that which actually applies – 53% thought that there was a relatively high risk for pedestrians for instance, and 82% thought that there was a high risk of a traffic accident when cycling.
- 74 Surveys of town centre businesses show how important they believe car parking supply is to the prosperity of the town centre, particularly with regard to the large number of shoppers coming into the town from the surrounding area.
- 75 The supply of parking spaces is therefore an important issue, particularly around key destinations in the town centre and at locations such as the main railway station. This is a reflection of conflict between the needs of local residents and other road users for example at Darlington Railway Station where a 7% increase in rail patronage in 2005 over the previous year (4.5% growth since 2001) has brought with it more demand for car parking near the Station, which has had some impact on neighbouring residential areas. Such an issue about overspill parking is also associated with the town centre and has contributed to the need for a study (now in progress) to assess the effects of Darlington's first Residents Parking Zones. Residents' Parking is now increasingly being coupled with the issues surrounding decriminalised parking control whereby the Council assumes responsibility for enforcing parking restrictions on road from the Police.
- 76 On balance, physical infrastructure schemes were implemented well. These included:
- road safety and traffic calming schemes;
 - junction improvements to reduce traffic congestion for all users; and
 - maintenance of roads and bridges, with a focus on improving road condition through use of both capital and revenue budgets.
- 77 So far, this delivery success has been more mixed in schemes that have one or more of the following characteristics:

- a need to implement 'soft issues' or 'smarter choices' travel measures such as accurate bus timetable information or travel planning;
- complex schemes that address more than one issue, affecting differing needs and opinions. In particular, the Corridors of Certainty strategy, intended to tackle in a concerted way all the transport issues on each of the radial roads in turn, has been slower and more costly to implement than anticipated in the first Local Transport Plan; and
- accessibility issues, where the needs of all transport users especially pedestrians (including those with disabilities) and cyclists are important.

Delivery lessons

78 The success of the first Local Transport Plan has come from:

- the use of programme control techniques to keep projects on time and within budget;
- consistent and rigorous attention to detail, from all involved; and
- good quality communication of the issues involved with partners and the public, so avoiding where possible, unrealistic expectations.

79 We plan to improve delivery of transport schemes further by:

- On major schemes, the consultation process is covering a wide constituency, since the schemes have a Borough wide impact, not just in the immediate area of the scheme itself. This consultation will not revisit the strategies and policies of the Local Transport Plan; rather it will address the detail;
- Clear policy briefs are being produced for each scheme, outlining the policy reasons and requirements for the scheme and detailing clear lines of responsibility both for delivery and evaluation.
- We are working to consolidate formal relationships with some partner organisations, especially local bus operators. This is helping create a situation where the efforts of both parties are coordinated and therefore generate greater benefits than would have otherwise been the case. The development of a Quality Bus Partnership at the time of writing is seen as a key step in ensuring that coherent use is made of joint resources in order to maximize the benefits.

- 80 A number of successful bids for additional funding from the Department of Transport have been made during the First Local Transport Plan such as Rural Bus Challenge; Urban Bus Challenge; Sustrans Links to Schools Programme; Homezone Challenge; and Sustainable Travel Demonstration Town. These mostly display the delivery characteristics that typify the successful implementation of infrastructure schemes.

Implications from LTP1

- 81 It is therefore important that the Second Local Transport Plan:
- **delivers schemes that tackle traffic congestion, by all methods;**
 - **continues to fund actions that further improve the area's good road safety record;**
 - **makes good progress on providing physical and smarter travel choice measures to help bus passengers;**
 - **continues to participate in the provision of solutions to issues surrounding parking supply for town centre users, residents' and users of facilities such as the Railway Station; and**
 - **is delivered via an effective programme control process that continually reviews and where necessary improves our delivery procedures, and continues to ensure that schemes contribute to achieving outcome objectives.**

Darlington – A 'Leading Edge' Authority

- 82 The Council is building on its 'Excellent' status in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment, so that it is better able to deliver enhanced outcomes within the Community Strategy.
- 83 A 'Leading Edge' programme is being developed, focused on achieving more efficient services, increased value for money, effective procurement and excellent service performance. This programme takes account of the requirements coming out of the Gershon Review and is built around 10 projects that will identify ways of re-engineering and delivering services and using assets to achieve excellence and efficiency. Transport services and programmes have a significant part to play in delivering some of these projects, notably a cross-cutting re-examination of the way 'Street Scene' services are delivered corporately.

- 84 The Term Contracts for highway construction and maintenance and winter maintenance are due for renewal during 2005/06, and all appropriate forms of procurement will be examined to identify the most cost-effective way of replacing the current arrangements. The Transport Service is also part of an innovative new procurement initiative, introduced in January 2005, embracing all the Council's development and environment services, to provide enhanced professional support through four medium-term framework partnerships with private sector consultants (Capita Symonds partners the department on transport services, with BDP/Kings Sturge, Ferguson McIlveen and Parsons Brinkerhoff partnering the department for other professional services).

Transport and Health

- 85 Darlington's transport network has a major impact on health – through accidents, levels of physical activity, effects on air pollution and access to a range of services. Transport issues are an integral element in meeting a range of National Health Service aims, including those set out in national service frameworks (coronary heart disease, diabetes, cancer) and other policy documents. There are significant inequalities in the impact of transport on the health of individuals and communities, both directly (e.g. through the social distribution of child pedestrian deaths and serious injuries) and indirectly (e.g. through the influence of planning decisions to accommodate car access – impacting on access for those without a car).
- 86 The main impacts of transport on individuals are through physical activity, injuries, air pollution and access. (Quoted figures are from national statistics.)
- Physical activity: The Chief Medical Officer's report (Department of Health, 2004) notes that 'the scientific evidence is compelling. Physical activity not only contributes to wellbeing, but is also essential for good health.' Adults who are physically active have 20–30% reduced risk of premature death and up to 50% reduced risk of developing major chronic diseases such as coronary heart disease, stroke, diabetes and cancers. The current advice is to achieve a minimum of 30 minutes moderate activity on at least five days of the week. 'Moderate activity' would include brisk walking and cycling.
 - Around 3,500 people are killed and 250,000 injured in Great Britain annually on the roads.
 - Air pollution from particulate matter is linked to 8,100 premature deaths annually, and sulphur dioxide to 3,500.

- Exposure to air pollution is greater for those living in areas of deprivation.
 - Access to work, employment, healthcare and food is more difficult for those without a car.
 - Children from social class V are five times more likely than those from social class I to be killed as pedestrians.
- 87 As Darlington has relatively good air quality it does not have an air quality management area, however transport and traffic congestion has a significant impact on local air quality.
- 88 Darlington has a significant opportunity to improve health through increasing physical activity associated with travel choices, as the Parliamentary Health Select Committee observed (see box below). Increased walking and cycling obviously promote physical activity, but increased public transport use will also increase walking.

Quote from Parliamentary Health Select Committee May 2004

The Department for Transport has recently announced that it will provide funding for "sustainable travel towns". It has set aside £10 million to help develop plans for sustainable transportation in three towns in England. These towns will "incorporate all aspects of best practice to encourage walking, cycling and other public transport use and act as showcases for other towns wishing to promote greater travel choice." Darlington, Peterborough and Worcester were selected from applications by 51 local authorities who submitted expressions of interest. They were selected on the basis of fully worked-up plans to deliver a sustainable transport scheme aiming to produce innovative school, work and personal travel plans; cycle lanes and improved cycle parking; better conditions for walking; and improved bus services.

It would not be appropriate for us to spell out the individual measures required to achieve the Government's ambitious cycling targets, although we were particularly impressed by the segregation of cyclists from road traffic we witnessed in Odense. If the Government were to achieve its target of trebling cycling in the period 2000-2010 (and there are very few signs that it will) that might achieve more in the fight against obesity than any individual measure we recommend within this report. So we would like the Department of Health to have a strategic input into transport policy and we believe it would be an important symbolic gesture of the move from a sickness to a health service if the Department of Health offered funding to support the Department for Transport's sustainable transport town pilots.

Summary

- 89 In summary, therefore, the key transport issues arising from this overview of the broad vision for Darlington, and the way in which it is being translated into physical and service development, include:
- **Darlington is a compact market town, well served by national and regional transport links. Quality of life and accessibility for all are seen as key drivers in promoting economic prosperity, which is the top priority for all partners.**
 - **In national terms Darlington has lower than average levels of car ownership and relatively high levels of bus patronage. Increasing affluence for Darlington particularly could result in substantial increases in car travel and traffic unless alternatives are planned for and promoted.**
 - **Promoting accessibility from deprived wards and for key population groups will help achieve social inclusion and economic targets.**
 - **Reducing road traffic congestion, improving actual and perceived road safety (particularly for pedestrians and cyclists), improving accessibility for specific groups and purposes, and managing transport networks and car parking to support the economy are key challenges for the Plan.**
 - **Darlington residents would like to see emphasis placed upon improving infrastructure for the three sustainable travel modes (walking, cycling and bus), as well as improving the effectiveness of the existing network.**
 - **The outcomes achieved through Darlington's first Local Transport Plan provide a strong base from which to build.**
 - **Darlington's Excellent record of partnership working and integrated planning, together with the Council's Leading Edge approaches to procurement will ensure that transport objectives are integrated into and achieved through other service planning – and that transport planning helps to achieve other, broader objectives.**
 - **A Town on The Move, the national Sustainable Travel Town demonstration project enables Darlington to implement a wide range of solutions to transport problems in an integrated way,**

with a better prospect of achieving outcomes through best value-for-money approaches.