

**DARLINGTON PEDESTRIAN HEART
16 NOVEMBER 2004**

CYCLING IN THE VEHICLE RESTRICTED AREAS

Purpose of this Appendix

1. To consider the Pedestrian Heart proposal to allow cycling within the pedestrian heart.

Information and Analysis

2. A number of comments have arisen from extensive consultation and discussion on proposals for the scheme including strong support for and against the proposals for allowing cyclists to cycle within the pedestrian areas.
3. In proposing a policy on this matter the Council must balance the potential risk to pedestrians from cyclists with its sustainable transport objectives to encourage cycling and with the risk posed to cyclists by forcing them to use other routes, for example the inner ring road. The Council has also taken into consideration the views of residents and key stakeholders, current national guidance, and evidence gathered from existing town centre 'pedestrian' zones.
4. Unless cyclists are allowed through the town centre, there would be a serious gap in the town's cycle network, forcing cyclists to use the inner ring road for cross-town journeys, which would raise serious safety concerns. Dedicated cycle lanes through the pedestrianised area were considered but experience elsewhere has shown that these are less safe for pedestrians. Experience of towns elsewhere that have allowed cycling in pedestrianised areas is that cyclists will use the areas responsibly and this is best practice recommended by Government. Anyone using a bike in an anti-social way is likely to cause problems in the town centre even if cycling were not allowed. It is therefore proposed that cycling is allowed initially, but that this is carefully monitored.
5. It is important to be clear that this is **not** a proposal to allow cyclists on pavements. Cyclists would be cycling within very wide areas (such as the width of West Row, but with only pedestrians and no other traffic). Cyclists and pedestrians avoiding each other is quite straightforward in such a wide area, and quite different from people cycling on pavements, which is undesirable. People currently cycle through the Market Square safely and, although the volume of pedestrians is less, this is the most comparable situation currently in Darlington to what is proposed in the Pedestrian Heart.

Current Evidence Relating to Cyclist use of the Town Centre

6. Evidence gathered from a manual classified count, repeated annually shows that there are over 600 cycle journeys in and out of the town centre every day.
7. Recorded accident statistics for the town centre (2001–2003) show that there were 14 accidents involving a private car and pedestrian, three accidents involving a taxi and pedestrian, five accidents involving a public service vehicle and a pedestrian, one accident

involving a police car and a pedestrian, and two accidents involving a car and a cycle. During this period there were no recorded accidents involving a cyclist and pedestrian. More recently, in July 2004 a cycle/pedestrian accident did take place on Northgate, this was on the highway.

8. Previous recorded accident statistics for the ring road in the past five years have shown that there have been 13 recorded pedal cycle accidents on the ring road, comprising:
 - (a) Four at Bondgate roundabout
 - (b) One at Northgate roundabout
 - (c) Three at Parkgate roundabout
 - (d) One at Grange Road roundabout
 - (e) Remainder at other locations on the ring road
9. Six recorded pedal cycle accidents in the Town Centre over the same period, include:
 - (a) Three in Tubwell Row
 - (b) Two on Prospect Place (both on the highway)
 - (c) One at another location within the Town Centre
10. Previous recorded accident statistics since 1988 have highlighted the following:
 - (a) 45 recorded accidents on the ring road involving pedal cycles - One of these accidents was a fatality
 - (b) 11 recorded accidents with pedal cycles within the town centre, none involving a pedestrian
 - (c) One recorded accident involving a pedal cycle and a pedestrian in the whole of the Borough
 - (d) No recorded information suggesting any accidents between disabled people and pedal cycles in the whole Borough

Evidence on Cyclist use of other Town Centres

11. Detailed evidence of the experience of other towns has recently been published in a report by the **Transport Research Laboratory 'Cycling in vehicle restricted areas', TRL 583.**
12. The report examines the sharing of space by pedestrians and cyclists, from both a physical and an attitudinal perspective. Detailed research was undertaken for Vehicle Restricted Areas in Cambridge, Hull and Salisbury, involving video monitoring, speed surveys and interviews with pedestrians and cyclists. In addition, the Transport Research Laboratory investigated schemes in nine other towns, holding discussions with local authorities and other interested parties.
13. Findings from the report show that the majority of cyclists tend to slow down or dismount and push their bikes when pedestrian flows are high. Interviews showed that the majority of pedestrians were 'not bothered' by cyclists, though the majority at two of the sites would like cyclists excluded for at least part of the day.
14. The report provides examples of Vehicle Restricted Areas with different physical designs. It concludes that those Vehicle Restricted Areas permitting cycling that seem to work most satisfactorily showed the following characteristics:

- (a) Wide spaces
- (b) Clear Signs
- (c) Street furniture channelling cyclists towards the centre of the street, away from doorways
- (d) Footway and carriageway areas still defined to some extent.

15. The authors conclude that, whilst sharing may not be an ideal solution for either pedestrians or cyclists, it may be an appropriate compromise in terms of trying to meet sustainable transport objectives. The possible risks to pedestrians need to be weighed against those faced by cyclists if they are forced onto unsuitable routes, as well as the importance of the route to cyclists. There may also be opportunities for satisfactory compromises through time restrictions, physical design, education or enforcement.
16. Towns that have successfully introduced pedestrianised zones where cycling is permitted include Sunderland, Watford, Birmingham, Salisbury, Cambridge and Hull and many places in the rest of Europe. Cycling is allowed throughout the day in Sunderland, Watford and Salisbury.

National Policy Guidance

17. The Council has taken advice from the English Regional Cycling Development Team (employed by Department for Transport) and recent national guidance published by the Department for Transport. This includes Local Transport Notes 1/04 and 2/04 'Policy Planning and Design for Walking and Cycling' and 'Adjacent and Shared use Facilities for Pedestrians and Cyclists'.
18. Local Transport Note 2/04 section 8.2.2 states that:

“For any new pedestrianisation scheme, there should be a presumption that cycling will be allowed unless an assessment of the overall risks dictates otherwise. In conducting this assessment, the risk to cyclists using alternative on-road routes should be taken into account. This is particularly important if the alternative routes are not safe or direct and cannot be made so (LTN 1/87, *Getting the Right Balance - Guidance on Vehicle Restriction in Pedestrian Zones*). It is worthwhile conducting similar assessments on existing pedestrianised areas from which cyclists are currently excluded”.

Council Policies (Local Transport Plan 2001-6)

19. Relevant Local Transport Plan objectives relating to accessibility and safety state that the Council will aim:
- (a) To develop a network of cycle routes across the borough that will encourage more cycle use, and to ensure that the safety of cyclists is considered across the highway network.
 - (b) To place the needs of pedestrians and cyclists uppermost in highway design decisions, and to improve pedestrian and cyclist safety on the highway.

Cycling within the Pedestrian Heart

20. Following careful assessment of the both the needs of pedestrians and cyclists and the available evidence on existing pedestrianised zones, it is considered that on balance cyclists should be given the right to cycle through the Town Centre Pedestrian Heart.
21. The Council is aware that a number of cyclists are cycling on public footways and will seek to discourage this behaviour through the programme of cycle training in schools, publication of literature promoting a 'Good Cycling Code' and through enforcement in partnership with the Police.
22. The Council wishes to promote the principal of considerate cycling throughout Darlington and believes that combined with enforcement this is the most effective approach to tackling the inappropriate behaviour of a few cyclists.

Summary

23. It is proposed that cycling within the town centre is allowed initially, for a six month trial period, but that this is carefully monitored, and the results of the trial formally considered by Environment Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet.