

COMMUNITIES & LOCAL SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
3 MARCH 2026

ACTIVE TRAVEL NEIGHBOURHOODS' FEASIBILITY REPORT

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. This report sets out the proposed requirements of Active Travel Neighbourhoods, that is an ambition of the Darlington Transport Plan and reported to Cabinet in the annual update. A draft Policy detailing the proposed requirements of Active Travel Neighbourhoods Feasibility is included at **Appendix 1**.

Summary

2. This report sets out the research and findings to date that has enabled development of the draft Active Travel Neighbourhood's Feasibility Policy that is included at Appendix 1. This includes considering best practice and current guidance on delivering active travel measures and suitable infrastructure that encourages short trips to be undertaken by walking, wheeling and cycling.

Recommendation

3. It is recommended that :
 - (a) That committee notes the contents of the report and proposed actions.

Anthony Hewitt
Assistant Director – Highways & Capital Projects

Background Papers

No background papers were used to prepare this report

Joanne Roberts: Extension 3187

Council Plan	This report contribute to the Council Plan through the involvement of Members in contributing to the development of operational policy.
Addressing inequalities	This report has no implications for addressing inequalities.
Tackling Climate Change	This report contributes to tackling climate change by supporting the implementation of sustainable transport infrastructure.
Efficient and effective use of resources	The outcome of this report does not impact on the efficient and effective use of resources.
Health and Wellbeing	This report has implications on the health and wellbeing of residents of Darlington as it encourages walking and cycling that increases levels of physical activity.
S17 Crime and Disorder	This report has no implications for crime and disorder.
Wards Affected	All
Groups Affected	The impact of the report on any individual group is considered minimal.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework.
Key Decision	No
Urgent Decision	No
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

4. Darlington has success at implementing initiatives to encourage walking and cycling, including between 2004 and 2009 being a Sustainable Travel Demonstration Town which was an exemplar at a national level. In addition, between 2005 and 2011 Darlington was a Cycle Demonstration Town, with both initiatives encouraging non-motorised trips with a result in lower overall traffic levels. Let's Go Tees Valley and Personalised Travel Planning have provided tailored information to residents about travel choices that have been effective in encouraging use of alternative modes of transport. The benefits of walking and cycling include improved health through more activity as well as tackling climate change as sustainable travel modes reduce reliance on motor vehicles. Active Travel Neighbourhoods Feasibility considers how improvements can be made within local communities that ensures that short trips are undertaken by walking and cycling as the mode of choice.
5. Government policy for a number of years has been to encourage short trips by walking, wheeling and cycling. This included providing previous guidance to implement 'Low Traffic Neighbourhoods' to reduce motor vehicle traffic, particularly through traffic movements in local areas. The previous government also issued the 'Plan for Drivers' that set out how the experience of motorists would be improved by making the driving experience

straightforward, accessible, environmentally responsible and as safe as possible. This new guidance led to a review of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods as they had attracted negative publicity, largely due to introducing restrictions for motor vehicle traffic. This review found that a significant number of Penalty Charge Notices likely from camera enforcement were issued as some schemes were signed as restricted but no physical restrictions to prevent motor vehicles were introduced. The review also found they were ineffective because of a lack of meaningful consultation with residents.

6. As part of the development of the Active Travel Neighbourhood Feasibility, a review of the current Department for Transport guidance, LTN1/20 (Cycling Infrastructure) has been undertaken, along with considering Active Travel England toolkits and best practice to develop measures that will encourage walking and cycling are set out in the document. It is considered that any measures implemented to prevent motor vehicle access that allows walking, wheeling and cycling will be physical, such as planters or bollards and not through schemes that rely on traffic signs to prevent access.
7. Any proposals would require detailed and meaningful community engagement and to ensure that if there are residents opposed to any changes that it can be demonstrated that they have been listened to and their concerns taken account of. A comprehensive Communications Plan would be developed as part of the scheme initialisation to ensure all stakeholder views are included and that there are a number of methods of communication undertaken to ensure widespread publicity.

Next Steps

8. The Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee considers and notes the research and policy development findings.
9. That the Policy be finalised and suitable Member engagement be undertaken.