

Active Travel Neighbourhood Feasibility

1.0 Introduction

Darlington Borough Council has a vision to have a safe and resilient low carbon transport system which offers choice, promotes health and wellbeing and supports inclusive economic growth.

Enhancing walking and cycling helps achieve this vision by meeting the objectives to reduce transport's impact on the environment and support health and wellbeing and improve safety for all road users. Darlington Borough Council is committed to climate action and transport is one of the biggest causes of greenhouse gas emissions. Providing infrastructure that is safe, usable and attractive will also encourage more active travel with health benefits being realised helping to make active travel the mode of choice for shorter journeys.

This document, Active Travel Neighbourhood Feasibility, outlines the measures that can be used to enhance walking and cycling in Neighbourhoods with community engagement needed at the centre of any proposal to ensure it works for people living within the communities in Darlington.

2.0 Guidance

- **Manual for Streets**

The aim of Manual for Streets is to bring transformational change to street quality and improved built environments, playing a key role in the creation of sustainable and inclusive communities. Manual for Streets defines place and movement status as a two-dimensional hierarchy, in residential areas, this means that the place function is a significant consideration in design and not solely based on motor traffic movement.



- **Inclusive Mobility**

Any proposals need to ensure they are inclusive and considers the accessibility needs of people with mental health conditions, dementia, age related and non-visible impairments, those with reduced mobility, including wheelchair and motorised scooter users and those with vision impairments. This includes suitable gradients and space for turning, particularly for wheelchair users at corners and appropriate tonal and colour contrast with surroundings and tactile paving in place for people with reduced vision. Dropped kerbs are essential at junctions and in locations that identify as suitable for crossing a road.

Enhancing the street scene will make the area more attractive for pedestrians and cyclists, however street furniture needs to be designed to ensure it does not create routes which are too narrow or a hazard for those with disabilities.

Access control measures such as barriers should not be used in scheme design, they reduce usability for everyone but particularly for people who use non-standard cycles or mobility devices such as scooters.

- **LTN1/20 Cycle Infrastructure Design**

Government guidance for cycle infrastructure (LTN1/20) focuses on high quality, direct and attractive routes in urban areas, utilising features that encourage active travel such as modal filters. In residential areas where speeds are slower there needs to be an approach to encourage cycling and walking using quieter streets acceptable for on carriageway cycling that are typically suitable for a 12-year-old child trained to Bikeability level 2 to be able to cycle independently. These locations usually have less than 2500 vehicles per day creating cycling friendly neighbourhoods that requires careful planning and assessment of impacts. Traffic management features would encourage a reduction in car trips or displace them onto other routes, and the needs of refuse collection and emergency services has to be accommodated.

Carriageway conditions should be provided to encourage motorists to travel behind cyclists and not intimidate or drive aggressively, a clearance of 1.5m should be available for cars to overtake cyclists, that can be reduced to an absolute minimum of 1.0m in areas where a 20mph speed limit is in place. If traffic calming features are used, they should be designed to provide cycle by-pass features which reduces conflict between cyclists and motorists at these pinch point locations.

3.0 Funding

Recommendations for schemes, at all stages, concept, feasibility and detailed design will be included in the Darlington Transport Plan Cabinet Update for a decision on the provision of suitable funding levels from capital funding allocations.

4.0 Identifying Neighbourhoods

Selection of locations is informed by research that demonstrates an ideal size for an Active Travel Neighbourhood is around 1 Km², around a 15-minute walk. Areas larger than this start to attract neighbourhood car trips and it may be difficult or expensive to provide consistent enhancements for people walking, wheeling and cycling across larger areas. Consideration should be given to splitting areas up in a phased approach if larger than 1 Km² and areas much less than this are unlikely to realise full benefits for walking and cycling. It is also necessary to think about how a scheme connects to adjacent neighbourhoods and wider cycling and walking networks.

A consideration as part of any Active Travel Neighbourhood is to remove through traffic movements as this has high potential to increase walking and cycling. If a residential area has a collision history, then implementing measures that will reduce benefits to vehicle traffic and enhance walking and cycling will likely show positive benefits as well as providing sustainable access to amenities such as schools, shops, bus stops and parks.

5.0 Features in an Active Travel Neighbourhood

Good sightlines are essential to alert pedestrians and cyclists for the need to take care when approaching junctions and where there is a need to give way, for example cyclists giving way to pedestrians. Modal filters are a way of providing through access movements for pedestrians and

cyclists but removing motor vehicle through movements to enhance the area for active travel. If modal filters are implemented it is important that digital map providers are informed so that satellite navigation systems can be updated. Modal filters can be introduced in a number of ways:

- **Bollards, gates, trees or planters**

Bollards, gates or planters immediately remove vehicle traffic from an area and enhance routes for pedestrians and cyclists. They should be designed to allow motor vehicles to turn if required and the connections through a neighbourhood should be in place so that driving becomes unattractive. If planters are to be used it should be done to enhance the surrounding area and the maintenance requirements should be taken on board to ensure that the desired street scene is maintained. It is important when introducing any of these features to understand what the impact on utility service providers is to ensure they can maintain their apparatus.

- **One-way streets**

One-way streets remove all motorised traffic from travelling in one direction and allows widening of footways for example to enhance walking routes. Care should be taken to ensure that speeds aren't increased and that the traffic routes have been assessed to ensure that displaced traffic does not impact on neighbouring streets. Contraflow cycle infrastructure should be provided so that two-way pedestrian and cycle movements are maintained and it may be necessary to ensure adjacent streets are treated as opposing one-way routes for motorised traffic so that local vehicle access can be maintained.

- **Bus gates**

Bus gates allow access for buses and sometimes delivery vehicles in areas where public transport routes are to be maintained ensuring bus penetration in neighbourhoods but general traffic is re-routed. They are particularly effective on the edges of town centres and are enforced using either rising bollards that do have a maintenance cost associated with them or by camera enforcement without any physical barriers. These routes do require signage to be in place to ensure that motorists are clearly informed that restrictions and enforcement are in place.

- **Width restrictions**

Width restrictions are designed to allow movement of cars but remove the access to an area by HGVs. The routes will need to be clearly signed to ensure no HGV mistakenly enters an area and is then unable to turn around. As these restrictions still allow through vehicle movements they do not always offer wider benefits of reduced traffic and may not achieve the aims of the scheme.

- **Signage and enforcement**

It is possible to introduce restrictions in neighbourhoods to prevent access by motorised vehicles. The signs needed to enforce such restrictions may be perceived as being over-engineered for residential areas and they would also need to be largely self-enforcing which can attract some abuse of the restrictions during the hours they are operating. Prohibition of motorised vehicles is unlikely to be suitable in residential areas as people still require access to their homes.

- **Treatment of Active Travel Neighbourhoods at junctions with local distributor roads**

Where a neighbourhood area joins a distributor road there needs to be suitable transition for pedestrians and cyclists to travel between the two. Active Travel England has useful tools to help identify the most appropriate feature at the junction, such as a stand alone crossing feature or

signalised junction. Any area wide features need to terminate at suitable locations to ensure pedestrians and cyclists do not conflict with vehicles when joining major routes.

- **Traffic calming and speed limit reduction**

Traffic calming is a traditional method of reducing speeds in residential areas that can discourage through traffic movements and enhance local roads for residents. Traffic calming can be undertaken on an area wide basis, including suitable phasing so that funding over more than one financial year can be allocated. Local Transport Note Guidance exists for traffic calming which should be followed to ensure that any scheme meets the requirements of local people with the intention of reducing driving speeds and collisions.

If a system of street lighting is in place in a residential area with no alternative plated speed limit then the speed limit is 30mph. Evidence demonstrates that reducing speed limits influences the speeds motorists are driving and that in turn reduces collisions or the severity of any collisions that do occur. If measured speeds are at or below 24mph then it is a relatively cost effective measure to introduce a 20mph speed limit where terminal and repeater plates are placed along the highway and are enforced through an associated traffic regulation Order. If measured speeds are over 24mph then a speed limit can only be reduced to 20mph by implementing a 20mph zone where speed reducing features are required at least every 50 metres to encourage lower speeds. A traffic regulation Order is also required for 20mph zones but they are more expensive due to the introduction of physical features in the carriageway.

- **Car Parking**

On street car parking in residential areas can be unrestricted, limited or permit parking. Allowing cars to be parked on street does provide an element of traffic calming as drivers tend to slow as they pass parked vehicles due to reduced road widths. Residents Parking Zones are in place across the Borough and are subject to a separate policy but any area wide scheme to enhance walking and cycling does need to take account of resident's parking requirements. Any scheme also needs to take account of whether pavement parking exists and whether changes to the street scene would increase this creating hazards for pedestrians.

- **Access by Heavy Goods Vehicles including refuse collection**

It is possible to introduce environmental weight restrictions in areas that will prevent through traffic movements by heavy goods vehicles, they are a useful tool in removing this type of traffic to more suitable classified roads. It should be noted that all properties do require access by refuse vehicles but there is an acceptance that this is for a relatively short period and that their movements will be accommodated by other vehicles giving way whilst they are in the area. A scheme should not prevent access for refuse collection and reversing movements by larger vehicles should be kept to a minimum. If streets are closed to motor vehicle traffic then it may be necessary to provide turning areas as part of the proposals.

6.0 Gaining evidence to support Active Travel in Neighbourhoods

- **Area wide management of traffic**

Each neighbourhood is site specific and has unique characteristics, however there are some processes that can be followed that help assess whether an area is suitable for interventions. Undertaking traffic surveys to understand vehicle movements, volume and speed are integral to understanding how an area currently operates. It will likely be a requirement to undertake traffic

modelling to understand how vehicle traffic will move around an area and how implementing features in certain locations can impact on vehicle traffic movement. It needs to be established that implementing features in one location does not have unacceptable negative consequences in another that cannot be mitigated.

Access for emergency services must be considered and they are all important stakeholders in the development of proposals.

- **Active Travel England (ATE) Area Check Tool**

As well as the use of traffic modelling as a tool to consider changing motor vehicle traffic movements, the ATE area check tool can be used as a desktop scheme review tool developed to assess the design quality of area based schemes. It can be used for evaluating local neighbourhood improvement schemes, town centre pedestrianisation and area wide traffic management programs. The tool appraises how safe, easy and pleasant it is to travel through an area when walking, wheeling and cycling. A well designed area scheme is usually lighter trafficked and contains multiple routes connecting through and around the perimeter of the identified network, usually bordered by busier trafficked roads. Changes to an area and particularly to motor traffic flow can affect streets elsewhere so impacts need to be identified and mitigated.

- **Road Safety Audits**

A Road Safety Audit is an independent qualitative check on a design to ensure that a scheme does not present road safety problems. Designers retain responsibility for a scheme and the role of an auditor is to take account of the needs of all highway users and make recommendations to a designer if there are perceived road safety issues.

- **Crime Prevention**

When considering changes to residential area layouts it is important to ensure that crime prevention is not overlooked. Introducing routes for pedestrians and cyclists that have no natural surveillance are not attractive for users but they also have the potential to attract anti-social behaviour or crime if routes are narrow and not well used.

- **Community Engagement**

One of the most important pieces of evidence that a scheme is acceptable is community support. A community engagement process should provide residents with enough information to understand the reasons for a proposal, what the benefits and any potential disbenefits of a scheme are and demonstrating what evidence has been provided to support an intervention. Engagement needs to be proportionate with an understanding of the impacts on residents who are most affected and what the impacts may be for the wider community who may also be affected.

Depending on the proposal, appropriate methods of consultation will need to be undertaken. Whether this is public meetings or drop in sessions, along with letters and questionnaires and opportunities to provide comments in writing or by email. As part of a communication plan for community engagement it will need to identify how the engagement will be undertaken to maximise participation and encourage valid responses and identify how they will receive feedback. It also needs to be clear how comments will be used to develop the scheme.

- **Stakeholder Engagement**

The Council will engage with stakeholders to obtain views on proposals meeting the duties of the Equality Act 2010 which legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and wider society with nine protected characteristics identified: age, disability, race including colour, nationality or ethnicity, being married or in a civil partnership, being pregnant or on maternity leave, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and gender reassignment.

The Council must also comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty to ensure discrimination, harassment and victimisation is eliminated, advance equality of opportunity between persons with protected characteristics and foster good relations between persons who share protected characteristics and persons who do not share it.

The Council is keen to engage with as many stakeholders as possible as part of the development of proposals including but not limited to bus operators, Darlington Action on Disability, Police and other emergency services, as well as local schools, hospital and places of worship if appropriate. An Equality Impact Assessment is an important consideration and will be undertaken to ensure that there is no disbenefit to communities.