



DARLINGTON
Borough Council

Darlington Town Centre Transport Plan

Summary Document

2022-2030

Foreword

Darlington has ambitious plans for the town centre as set out in the Town Centre Strategy 2019-2030 and the Towns Fund Investment Plan. Transport underpins these developments, enabling people to travel to, from and through the town centre by all modes of transport.

The Vision of the Darlington Town Centre Strategy 2019-2030 is as follows:

By 2030, Darlington Borough Council working together with partners and local communities, will deliver real positive change to our town centre, placing it at the heart of our community for years to come.

In addition, the Darlington Transport Plan sets out the following vision.

We want Darlington to have a safe and resilient low carbon transport system which offers choice; promotes health and wellbeing; and supports inclusive economic growth.



The Darlington Town Centre Transport Plan forms the link between these two important policy documents and is also influenced by a number of other local policies and plans as illustrated in Figure 1.




Figure 1



Issues and Opportunities

The following table summarises the main issues and opportunities for transport in Darlington town centre.

Mode	Opportunities	Issues
<p>Walking and Cycling</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking and cycling as far as the Inner Ring Road have been well developed and there are several signalised crossing points over the Inner Ring Road to help people cycle in the town centre • The pedestrianised areas of High Row, Blackwellgate, Northgate and Bondgate provide space for people to walk and cycle • High Row and Riverside Park are good examples of high quality public realm areas enhancing walking and cycling routes • Ability to plan improvements so that walking or cycling to the town centre is an option of preference for more people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulnerable road users (pedestrians/ cyclists) are not always prioritised due to conflicting demands on space • Need gateways into the town centre for pedestrians and cyclists and to link different areas together • Need to create gateways into the town centre so that cyclists and pedestrians know that they are in a different space, more shared, less traffic and cyclists need to slow their speed • Need easy-to-find, secure cycle parking • Some pedestrians crossing points are difficult to use due to buses and taxis
<p>Bus</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bus services are a mixture of town services (that run between the town's residential areas and employment sites, and the town centre) and out of town services that link to North Yorkshire, South Durham and other areas within the Tees Valley to the east. • Buses are at the heart of the retail/leisure area • There has been investment in the bus fleet and technology to support people using buses e.g. next stop announcements, real time information displays. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of space for buses to stop and also space for people to stand/ sit and wait for a bus • Stop accessibility issues (walking routes to bus stops) • Conflicts with other modes, in particular HGVs and LGVs. • Insufficient kerb space (capacity) for the number of buses that operate per hour. This creates congestion and delay to bus services, and will get worse if more services operate more often • The coach stop on Feethams has capacity for 3 coaches at any one time, However this is insufficient at peak times with coaches parking further along Feethams causing confusion for drivers and passengers

Mode	Opportunities	Issues
<p>Taxi</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 81 taxi rank spaces around the town centre • Taxi marshals already deployed to manage queuing and traffic • Investment in improved lighting at taxi ranks to enhance safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriateness of existing taxi rank locations as the town centre evolves • Further requirement for tougher emissions standards to help improve air quality and reduce carbon emissions
<p>Highways and Parking</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can prioritise which traffic should have access, when or for what purpose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited space within the Inner Ring Road to accommodate all existing and future transport demands
<p>Other</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2019, Darlington became the first in the region to be awarded Purple Flag status. Purple Flag is an accreditation process similar to the Green Flag award for parks and the Blue Flag for beaches. It leads to Purple Flag status for town and city centres that meet or surpass the standards of excellence in managing the evening and night time economy. Purple Flag assessors look for how safe and welcoming the town feels, how easy it is to move around the town and to get home safely, how good the range of leisure and entertainment venues are in terms of choice and how the town generally looks and feels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town centre is cluttered and confusing. • Pavements for People Guide is currently being updated to manage the design and use of space within the town centre and Darlington Borough

Objectives

The objectives of the plan are set out below alongside the objectives of the Town Centre Strategy and Transport Strategy. They reflect the need for a long term, transport plan to accommodate the movement of people and goods into and within the town centre.

Darlington Town Centre Transport Plan Objectives	Darlington Town Centre Strategy Objectives	Darlington Transport Plan Objectives
Enable good access for retail, leisure and work by all modes of transport	Making Darlington a great place to live, work and visit Enhancing the attractiveness and vitality of our town centre	Connect people with job and training opportunities and link communities
Create attractive points of entry and a legible town centre transport network	Celebrating our heritage	Maintain and effectively manage a resilient transport system. Improve safety for all road users
Reduce vehicular traffic in the town centre and prioritise access for sustainable and public transport and deliveries/ servicing		
Provide suitable supporting infrastructure for town centre residents to allow the town centre to develop as a place to live with a strong community	Enhancing the attractiveness and vitality of our town centre Improving the health and wellbeing of people	Support a revitalised and transformed Darlington town centre
Address the impact of transport on the environment and climate change	Improving the health and wellbeing of people	Reduce transport's impact on the environment and support health and wellbeing
Facilitate residential, commercial, retail and leisure property development	Supporting local economic growth	Maintain and effectively manage a resilient transport system

Measures

	<p>Walking and Cycling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Walking and Cycling Network Improvements - Inner Ring Road cycle gateways, new outer/ inner cycle routes, improved pedestrian crossing points along bus routes• Implement a programme of landscaping that will link together key sites and green spaces. The transport plan will ensure that the spaces are linked for those who are walking and cycling• Well-designed, high-quality, convenient and well maintained cycle parking• Improved pedestrian and cycle signage and a town centre cycle plan
	<p>Bus and Coach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review bus routing and priority. Bus services should be continually reviewed to ensure the most effective routing, quality and level of bus services that are in place• Bus Services - Tees Valley Bus Service Improvement Plan and Tees Flex• Real Time Passenger Information and Selective Bus Detection• Upgrade customer waiting facilities. Develop a set of standards for bus stops, bus shelters and information provision• Consider options to create more coach facilities
	<p>Rail</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure stations are easy to reach by bus, on foot or by bike• Support delivery of enhanced passenger facilities that meet the needs of users and the station remains a gateway to the town centre• Local rail service improvements - enhanced frequencies/ extended operating hours
	<p>Servicing and Deliveries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Last Mile Delivery - operating a local delivery service can support town centre businesses and reduce carbon emissions and congestion. We will promote the use of last mile delivery through providers such a Green Link• Timed restrictions on HGVs• Service and delivery management plans
	<p>Cars and Taxis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduce the need for cars to travel throughout the town centre• Education and Enforcement Activities• Improve Taxi Rank Provision• Taxi Licencing Review• Provide Car Club
	<p>Parking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Implement Darlington Parking Strategy• Enhance car park accessibility• Increase public Electric Vehicle Charging• Adequate parking provision for new residential developments

Town Centre Transport Policies

To support the interventions set out above eight town centre transport policies have been developed to guide how transport in the town centre is planned in the future. These policies are listed below:

- 1.** A hierarchy of road users will inform any changes to public realm, highway and transport services in the town centre
- 2.** Cycle routes and cycle parking will be planned and constructed so cyclists can cycle to and from the town centre, with alternative routes for cyclists that wish to avoid the town centre
- 3.** Clear bus priority routes within the town centre will be identified and measures put in place so buses are punctual
- 4.** Sufficient space will be allocated to bus passenger waiting environments and facilities will be improved to include bus shelters with green roofs, additional seating, clear signs and up to date easy to understand information
- 5.** Safety must be considered in all developments including road safety, personal safety, vehicle security and reducing road user conflict wherever possible
- 6.** Town centre traffic management plans will ensure efficient use of the highway in line with the Traffic Management Act
- 7.** We will support the transition to zero/low emission transport by prioritising walking and cycling, creating infrastructure and programmes for electric/hydrogen vehicles, encouraging cargo bike deliveries and by providing a Car Club
- 8.** Town centre developments, including housing, must have clear strategies for parking, servicing and deliveries



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