

ANNEX 3:

Darlington's Transport Strategy

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1. Introduction

Darlington's Transport Strategy for the period 2006 to 2030, sets out the communities' vision for Darlington and how transport can make the lives of all those who live, work, invest and relax in Darlington better.

This Transport Strategy will be delivered through the Local Transport Plan (LTP); the Second Plan 'Darlington, A Town on the Move' covering the period 2006 to 2011. It will also be delivered through the Council's Sustainable Travel Demonstration Town national pilot project of smart travel initiatives. Both of these delivery programmes will be presented in the LTP, which describes the detail of how the challenges identified in this Strategy are to be achieved in reality.

2. Vision

Darlington is a compact town with an existing pattern of sustainable travel behaviour, a good safety record, a suite of existing demand management measures, yet with increasing traffic congestion.

The Transport Strategy seeks to:

- improve accessibility to services and opportunities by providing travel options, so that all may participate in the life of their community;
- tackle traffic congestion and its associated effects on local communities through a focus on sustainable travel choices, thus contributing to residents' quality of life;
- make the transport network safe and secure for all; and
- deliver solutions to travel needs in partnership with local people, businesses and other providers.

This vision reinforces the Community Strategy for Darlington and related strategies delivering economic regeneration, quality of life and social inclusion.

Darlington Tomorrow

Darlington in 2030 will be a place where people can:

- Create and share prosperity;
- learn, achieve and relax;
- live safely and well;
- enjoy a high quality of life.

These visionary goals of Darlington's Community Strategy develop Darlington's strengths, namely:

- Strong economic performance in the service sector;
- good communication links by rail, air and road to other regions;

- accessible employment development sites;
- good quality of life, attractive town centre, including a regionally significant Theatre and Arts Centre;
- attractive environment in which to live, work, invest and relax; and
- a culture of partnership between the community, the Council, local businesses and other organisations.

3. Context

National

The Council is committed to helping Government deliver the Shared Priorities for Public Services for both transport and other policy areas. In doing this, it recognises the need for Government to lead the debate on the transport as illustrated in the White Paper 'The Future of Transport' published in July 2004.

In the White Paper, the Government sets out a national strategy that is based on three elements, sustained investment, improvements in transport management and planning ahead. Along with the underlying objective of improving the quality of life, the Government seek to contribute to the sustainable development strategy and the commitments made in the Kyoto Protocol for Climate Change.

In July 2002, seven Shared Priorities were agreed by Government and the Local Government Association; to provide a common focus for the efforts of all involved in delivering services to the public.

The shared priority for transport is as follows:

- improving access to jobs and services particularly for those most in need in ways that are sustainable;
- improving safety;
- improving air quality;
- reducing problems of traffic congestion; and
- improving local quality of life.

These elements of the transport shared priority underpin the Darlington Transport Strategy and are the basis for the specific schemes proposed for delivery between 2006 and 2011.

Regional

The Draft Regional Spatial Strategy 'View: Shaping the North East' defines the regional agenda that Darlington's Transport Strategy contributes to. In setting out the long term strategy for the spatial development of the North East, the Regional Spatial Strategy seeks to steer land use and transport planning well into the 21st century.

The regional agenda is described in further detail in the Second Local Transport Plan, but essentially sets out the basis for the economic regeneration of the North East.

The Regional Spatial Strategy also influences the plans of various other transport providers in the region, including the Strategic Rail Authority and the Highways Agency. As a result, Darlington's Transport Strategy should have a natural fit with the aspirations of these organisations, thus minimising wasteful duplication or conflict with the benefits accruing to local residents.

This Transport Strategy also recognises the policy framework that exists in the sub-region. As explained in more detail in the Second Local Transport Plan, we seek to support outcomes within the Tees Valley Vision (the Tees Valley Vision is the sub-regional development strategy), tackle traffic congestion, improve local peoples' accessibility to health, employment, education and seek a step change in the quality, and relevance of, public transport links. Through this Strategy, we also seek to help deliver the outcomes of work undertaken in neighbouring County Durham and North Yorkshire, in recognition of the linkages that exist between our areas.

Local

Darlington's Transport Strategy is also part of a 'jigsaw' of plans, which contribute to the local picture, including those pertaining to health care provision, economic development, social inclusion and crime & disorder. In particular, we feel that the following strategies are important to the successful delivery of transport in Darlington.

Local Development Framework

Darlington's Local Development Framework is currently being developed and will be subject to a period of public consultation before inspection and adoption. The Framework will provide the land use component of the Council's environment work and will, with this strategy, contribute to the outcomes of the Regional Spatial Strategy. Possible key outcomes for land use in this Framework include:

- development of sites which bring better quality jobs to accessible locations;
- a vibrant and diverse town centre;
- an effective transport network providing travel choice to residents;
- high quality landscapes and streetscapes;

- a network of schools located to best serve current needs; and
- sustainable villages, with local or easily accessible services for residents.

The accessibility strategy (**Annex 12**) delivering this Transport Strategy will be incorporated into the thinking of the Local Development Framework, to better ensure that land use choices do not impose unreasonable costs on the transport network or generate travel demands that can only be met by the private car.

Sustainable Travel Demonstration Town

Darlington has been selected by the Department for Transport as one of three sustainable travel demonstration towns over a five year period from 2004. As such a town, the Council and its partners are required to implement a comprehensive package of measures to help tackle traffic congestion and its wider effects focusing in on helping people make the best use of the existing transport network.

The project outcomes for this work conform to those of this Strategy, and the delivery of the project will be integrated with that of the Local Transport Plan to ensure maximum benefit. The outcomes are to:

- reduce the proportion of trips of less than 2 miles made by private car;
- increase the proportion of trips of less than 4 miles made by bicycle;
- increase the proportion of trips of 1 mile or less made on foot; and
- increase the number of bus passenger trips in the Borough.

Some of the proposed measures to be introduced through the project include stop specific bus timetable information, improved bus services, better maintenance of bus stops, local area bus, walking and cycle maps, cycle & pedestrian training, individualised travel marketing, a website, a lift sharing scheme and a car club.

Cycling Demonstration Town

In 2005, we were also selected as a Cycling Demonstration Town by Cycling England. This DfT sponsored initiative allows us to match fund Local Transport Plan and other monies, up to a limit of £1.5m over three years (2005 to 2008). As a Cycling Demonstration Town, we are tasked with a focus primarily on physical infrastructure, so promoting cycling to tackle traffic congestion, improve accessibility and promote healthier communities. Some of this work will also benefit pedestrians, thus bringing more benefits to local people. Our work is being integrated with our other transport programmes to ensure that we make good progress towards our policy outcomes.

Local Transport Opportunities & Problems

Our vision for Darlington is described above. It is fundamental to the achievement of this vision, that Darlington's economic regeneration is supported through ensuring the achievement of good accessibility and a high quality of life. This ambition gives rise to both problems and opportunities when compared to the current position of the local transport network.

Opportunities -

- Good access by all modes (road, rail, air)
- Basis for partnership working between all involved in place, but could be developed further in areas such as health, education and economic regeneration.
- Status as a Sustainable Travel Demonstration Town means that more resources can be focused on providing timely and relevant information to people on their individual travel choices.
- Developing more travel choices to make best use of existing physical infrastructure, including actions to increase road capacity where appropriate.
- Willingness to explore and introduce new ticketing and marketing initiatives for bus travel.
- More investment in alternatives to the private car to increase the already significant levels of trips in urban Darlington being made by these methods. In particular, new networks of walk, cycle and bus routes will be needed to link many trip origins to destinations and thus improve the choices available and so access to facilities.
- Designing transport needs into new development sites, such as Central Park, from the beginning to ensure good accessibility for all, by all modes.
- Developing travel plans to help business make the best use of existing resources, thus releasing capacity for further economic regeneration of the Borough.
- Ability to focus in on maintenance, using resources from several funding sources.

Problems -

- Increasing traffic volumes on main routes causing congestion at peak times, both within the town and from outside the Borough.
- Potentially limits to economic regeneration in future, due to capacity of existing local road network, including the adjacent trunk road network.
- Poor environment for residents in some locations due to intrusive traffic levels, especially where 'rat running' occurs.
- No coherent ticketing and marketing approach to bus travel.
- Poor information about travel choices, in particular walking and cycling.
- Some transport facilities dated and no longer meet modern

expectations or requirements.

- Compact urban and town centre area resulting in few opportunities for new physical infrastructure.
- Consolidation of services such as health care and food shops meaning that people live, on average, farther away from local facilities.

Recent surveys have shown that 94% of local people like living in Darlington and that many want to work in the town too. Darlington's Economic Regeneration Strategy has five key themes:

1. Support the economy;
2. Support new and existing businesses;
3. Support people into employment;
4. Create a quality environment for economic growth; and
5. Promote Darlington as a quality location for businesses and tourism.

This has implications for accessibility to work, the need to tackle traffic congestion and contribute to the quality of life that local people enjoy.

The Improving Health & Wellbeing 2005-2010 Strategy (Darlington Primary Care Trust [PCT]) aims to address health inequalities in Darlington, thus improving the health of all local people. This aim means that all involved in health care and transport need to plan for good access to health care, both within the Borough and to neighbouring facilities in surrounding areas.

Darlington's Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy seeks to tackle disadvantage in the eleven most deprived wards in the Borough. This Strategy tackles deprivation geographically whilst 'All Together Now' - Darlington's Social Inclusion Strategy, seeks to address deprivation by action for specific groups of people and their needs.

Transport has a vital role in addressing these local issues, through accessibility planning and other strategies such as the Travel Safety Strategy.

The Council has recently reorganised the way in which it delivers education and social services to local people. The Children's Services Department will be developing a strategy for further improving education attainment in line with the aspirations of the Community Strategy.

Transport will play a significant role in this work, not least through accessibility to schools, colleges and leisure facilities.

4. Objectives

We have set ourselves the following strategic objectives, as shown in **Table 1**. Each has links to elements of the Shared Priority for Transport, Tees Valley transport objectives and the Community Strategy for Darlington.

Table 1

| Strategy Objective | Transport Shared Priority | Tees Valley objective | Community Strategy |
|--|----------------------------------|---|--|
| A To provide the framework for sustainable development of new and existing businesses, housing and services in Darlington. | Accessibility Quality of Life | Objective 1 Tees Valley Vision Objective 5 Congestion | Improving the local economy Enhancing the environment |
| B To improve access to employment and education, particularly for those without access to a private car, those with a disability and those that have greatest need. | Accessibility | Objective 2 Accessibility Objective 3 Bus use Objective 4 Rail use | Promoting inclusive communities Raising educational achievement Stimulating leisure activities Improving the local economy Improving health and well-being |
| C To tackle traffic congestion on key corridors and its potential impact on the economy and environment by making the most effective use of the transport network. | Congestion Air quality | Objective 3 Bus use Objective 4 Rail use Objective 5 Congestion | Develop an effective transport system |
| D To improve travel safety and security for all by addressing the real and perceived risks. | Road Safety | | Promoting community safety |
| E To provide and promote travel choices to all, in particular to reduce the proportion of car driver trips. | Congestion Accessibility | Objective 3 Bus use Objective 4 Rail use | Promoting inclusive communities Developing an effective transport system |
| F To improve the health of the community through increasing levels of sustainable travel and improving access to health, leisure and fresh food. | Quality of life Accessibility | Objective 2 Accessibility | Improving health and well-being |

We recognise that journeys are usually made for a purpose unconnected with transport mode itself and, as a consequence, will be concentrating on accessibility to facilities in the way we deliver the Transport Strategy between 2006 and 2011. We have also set ourselves more specific policies in our Second Local Transport Plan 'Darlington: A Town on the Move' to ensure that the desired strategic objectives are met.

5. Resources

The Council has been allocated the indicative sum of **£13.087m** until 2011 through the Local Transport Plan process for the delivery of capital works. This sum may change in light of the assessment process of the Second Local Transport Plan. As detailed in this Plan, we will concentrate on providing the basis for better travel choices to reduce the transport problems outlined above through a focus on six reasons for travel as follows:

- travelling to work;
- doing business in Darlington;
- going to school or college;
- shopping for food and goods;
- leisure and recreation; and
- access to health services and caring for others.

It has also been awarded **£3.24m** until 31 March 2009 to deliver a national pilot project to illustrate the benefit of smart travel measures to local people. Due to the compelling evidence already collected, both nationally and locally about the realised and potential benefits, it is proposed to support the delivery of appropriate physical measures by smart travel choices beyond this date, subject to an ongoing assessment of which smart travel choice interventions benefit local people. We have also been awarded **£1.5m** match funding by Cycling England, in our role as a Cycling Demonstration Town and will use this to increase both the scope and speed of our investment benefiting cyclists – with associated benefits for pedestrians.

Such added value will enable the Council to fully realise the potential of the capital works delivered through the Second Local Transport Plan.

The Council will also use its own resources to improve transport within the Borough. The Council's forecast revenue expenditure is set within the Medium Term Financial Plan. Money from this Plan is allocated over a three year rolling programme to support transport investment in areas such as supported bus services, concessionary fares support, highway maintenance and road safety education. The sum to be spent in supporting the delivery of transport investment in 2006/07 will be **£8.210m** and future spend will be identified in the detailed costings for the delivery of this strategy throughout the period of the Second Local Transport Plan.

In addition to these resources, the Council and its partners in the Darlington Partnership will identify and commit resources from other public sector organisations, private business and community groups, through the Local Area Agreement.

6. Approach to Delivery

In achieving the vision of the Transport Strategy, we will adopt an approach that:

- demonstrates ambition and optimism;
- has quality at its heart;
- has opportunity for all;
- is accountable and involves everyone; and
- is sustainable.

We will also ensure that all activities delivering the Transport Strategy deliver the outcomes listed in the objective section, through a rigorous programme of monitoring. We need to be sure that all investment in resources is playing a part in contributing to the wider picture, that they represent value for money and that the results of that investment are as expected.

Having become a '4 Star' authority, we are aware that simply continuing to deliver services in the way we do now will not enable us to remain excellent for long. We need to change to address our areas for development, to free up resources to bridge our budget gap and for investment in frontline services.

We have built a delivery programme that we expect, in the medium term, to more than address Gershon efficiencies. We have identified the savings that we require as set out in our Medium Term Financial Plan 2005-2009. Our approach to the efficiency review is to:

1. Effect cultural change in the organisation to seek out good practice, enhance our ability to challenge the status quo and achieve greater innovation in service design.
2. In so doing we shall continue to work very closely with partners. Our well regarded Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) is an excellent vehicle for considering partnership efficiencies.
3. Identify all the major, corporate initiatives that we are implementing over the next 3-5 years and assign a Gershon target to each - this is how we expect to generate the majority of efficiencies beyond 2005/06.
4. Build in an enhanced approach to project and programme management to ensure that efficiencies and other benefits are managed effectively and delivered to time.
5. Seek opportunities to collaborate with other organisations through the Regional Centre of Excellence.
6. Build in challenge from the beginning by securing early external opinion and challenge at the onset of the overall programme.

Therefore we will consider:

- how to provide travel choices through construction and promotion of transport facilities;
- why people need to travel;
- the different types of user (and their needs);
- the geographical coverage that is best for each scheme;
- how best to consult with people; and
- what are the consequences for the environment.

Providing Travel Choices : Construction and Promotion

We are determined to ensure that the resources invested in improving transport in Darlington are used to best effect. To this end, we will make sure that:

- people understand the travel choices available to them and that we understand their travel needs including where they have a disability that prevents them from using current travel choices;
- the use of the local transport network helps wider ambitions in our communities, such as improving access to local facilities, improving the general level of health, reducing anti-social behaviour or reducing the impact of car use;
- resources are pooled wherever possible, through partnership with other transport providers, community groups and other providers of services to the community. This will help achieve value for money; and
- there is the ongoing money to maintain physical improvements to the transport network to the relevant standards. This will help ensure that the expected life of a physical improvement is achieved, rather than letting the benefits of an improvement be wasted through poor maintenance.

This will mean that we will seek to make the best of existing resources through promotion, better maintenance and better delivery of what people actually need, rather than providing new, large scale, physical works as a first solution. This does not mean that no such works will happen, but that they must be part of a coherent package of measures, rather than a stand alone solution. As a consequence, we will assess the benefit of continuing implementing smart travel choices until 2011, using Local Transport Plan funding (the project is funded by the Department of Transport until 2009).

Focus on Why People Need to Travel

We recognise that the vast majority of journeys are made for a purpose unconnected with transport. For instance, the majority of us, will at certain times in our lives, be mainly concerned

with getting to work, going shopping and getting to leisure facilities. We therefore are proposing to focus in on the following sets of travel needs to make sure that Darlington remains an accessible location:

- travelling to work;
- doing business in Darlington;
- going to school or college;
- shopping for food and goods;
- leisure and recreation; and
- access to health services and caring for others.

The Second Local Transport Plan details the plans of our partners and ourselves for transport between 2006 and 2011, in addressing these needs for travel.

Different Types of Users and their Needs

In delivering the transport strategy, through the Local Transport Plan and other investment programmes, we are keen to ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable are considered. This safety led concept means that we will consider the needs of the following groups of users in priority order, as follows:

- pedestrians, including those with disabilities;
- cyclists, and where appropriate horse riders;
- bus, train and taxi users; and
- private car and motorcycle users.

What this presumption of need does not mean, is that we will give priority on the ground to pedestrians and cyclists in all cases. There may be good reasons why such priority is not suitable, for instance shared use between cyclists and vehicles on a road designed for high vehicle speeds. Having said that, we do not think that this result will occur very often within the urban area of Darlington and in its surrounding villages. Each scheme we deliver, will be underpinned by a method statement demonstrating that we have considered the needs of the hierarchy of users in formulating our plans.

Geographical Coverage of Schemes

In achieving our objectives, we are aware of the need to deliver projects that do not have narrow boundaries that leave out important generators of travel, which ignore natural boundaries to neighbourhoods or ignore other schemes. So often in the past, such scheme specific thinking has resulted in the loss of opportunities caused by a lack of awareness of other projects or ambitions.

Therefore, we will tend to deliver schemes in multiples of one of the following two geographical definitions:

- widened corridors; or
- local neighbourhoods.

As an exemplar, the travel needs that the North Road Corridor of Certainty scheme addresses are wider than the immediate environs of North Road itself. The scheme addresses the travel needs of local communities wishing to cross the road, from Harrowgate Hill to Rise Carr as well as the north-south movements to and from the Town Centre.

Whilst delivery areas will be varied according to the individual scheme, we will strive to ensure that they match with those of complementary projects to ensure consistency and maximum benefit.

Consultation with People

In delivering the Transport Strategy, we are committed to the principle of public and stakeholder involvement, whilst recognising that difficult decisions, balancing differing travel needs and interests, may be required from time to time. The Transport Strategy is closely aligned with that of Darlington's Community Strategy, which is the agreed expression of the communities' priorities for Darlington. The responsible body for the Community Strategy, the Darlington Partnership, will be closely involved in the transport agenda; for instance it contributed to a transport summit in 2005, which debated the future of transport locally and recommended ideas to the Council.

Consultation about the content of and delivery of this Transport Strategy will include discussions with relevant stakeholders as well as the general public. The processes used will be set out in the delivery documentation, but will be in accordance with the principles set out in the Council's Consultation Strategy. The principle of Best Value places a duty on the Council to consult with its partners, local people, businesses, and service users about the exercise of their functions, the setting of new targets for service delivery and the establishment of corporate priorities and objectives.

We do this by using a range of techniques to ensure all interested parties are able to inform the development of service delivery and policy. The Council's Consultation Strategy provides overall co-ordination, encouraging innovation within a framework of standards and promotion of good practice. (see **Table 2**)

Table 2

| Groups | Consultation Methods |
|-------------------|--|
| External Partners | Presentations, briefings and special meetings with partners boards, co-ordination groups and forums, e.g. Darlington Partnership, Parish Councils, Transport Forum |
| Residents | Questionnaires, focus groups and meetings e.g. Citizens' Panel, Annual Community Survey, Residents' Panel, Community Cohesion Events |
| Employees | Open presentations, briefings and workshops with staff generally and representative groups, e.g. Joint Consultative Council, Employee Panel |
| Service users | Questionnaires, focus groups and events with users of specific services, e.g. tenants, licensees and developers |

Since 1998 Darlington Borough Council has carried out an annual Community Survey seeking the views of residents on overall satisfaction with the Council, satisfaction with its individual services, and priorities for improving services. Increasingly, quality of life issues have been picked up to address wider thematic considerations and the Council's contribution to partnership working. This survey has proved helpful in developing transport solutions to such issues as road and pavement maintenance, and will continue to be used in future.

These results are used to inform a range of processes and are timed to be available in order to influence the annual review of budgets, business and service plans. Results are increasingly being used not only by the Council, but by partner agencies as well. The Council can demonstrate an ever closer correlation between budget spend and citizens' priorities.

Consequences for the Environment

We acknowledge our responsibility to deliver this transport strategy in an environmentally sustainable manner, so as to enhance the lives of current residents whilst not having a detrimental impact on future generations.

We assessed our proposals for delivery through the Second Local Transport Plan to the requirements of the European Community Directive on Strategic Environmental Assessments. In producing such an assessment, we recognised that, in some cases, a balance will need to be struck between the environment and the needs of local communities.

The Strategic Environmental Assessment is contained in **Annex 7**.

7. Supporting Policy Documents

More detailed discussion of the principles concerning the delivery of some elements of transport are set out in the annexes to the Second Local Transport Plan. This is because the level of detail required is substantial, meriting a separate document.

These daughter policy documents are the:

- Accessibility Strategy
- Bus Information Strategy
- Bus Strategy
- Car Parking Strategy
- Rights of Way Improvement Plan
- School Travel Plan Strategy
- Transport Asset Management Plan
- Travel Safety Strategy.

In addition, supporting documentation exists at a sub-regional level, as identified in the Second Local Transport Plan, for example the Draft Tees Valley Demand Management Framework. A synopsis of the current draft revision is presented in at the end of our Parking Strategy.

