
CYCLING IN THE TOWN CENTRE

**Responsible Cabinet Member - Councillor David Lyonette, Transport Portfolio
Responsible Director - Assistant Chief Executive (Regeneration), Richard Alty**

Purpose of the Report

1. To consider the monitoring results from the six month trial period to allow cycling in the town centre.

Information and Analysis

2. For the purposes of this report the 'town centre' refers to the vehicle restricted areas as detailed in the Traffic Regulation Orders for the Pedestrian Heart project. This covers the area between Northgate, Bondgate, Skinnergate, Blackwellgate, West Row, Tubwell Row, East Street and Crown Street. A plan is in **Appendix 2** (Option 1).

Background

3. On 16 November 2004 a report was submitted to Cabinet regarding Darlington Town Centre 'Pedestrian Heart'. In a section on 'Comments referred to Darlington Borough Council for consideration', Paragraph 34 (c) summarises the issue of cycling in the town centre and refers to a more detailed Annex (9), entitled 'Cycling in the Vehicle Restricted Areas'.
4. The reasons that cycling in the town centre at all times was proposed were as follows:
 - (a) **Conforming to national guidance**
 - (i) Current national guidance from the Department for Transport - 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'.

- (b) **Connecting radial routes to provide a continuous safe cycle route network**

- (i) 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.
- (ii) Evidence from towns that allowed cycling in pedestrianised areas concluded that:

'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'.
- (iii) The routes through the town centre provide continuity for cross-town cycle journeys utilising the cycle network.

(c) Providing access to facilities in the town centre, including employment, retail and leisure

- (i) Anyone using a cycle in an anti-social way is likely to cause problems in the town centre even if cycling were not allowed. This would penalise legitimate use, as a result of the actions of a few.
- (ii) It is not a proposal to allow cyclists on conventional pavements. Cyclists would be cycling within very wide shared use areas that have been created for use by vehicles for part of the day (i.e. from 5:00pm until 10:00am). Cycling on pavements adjacent to conventional carriageways would still be an offence enforceable by the Police.
- (iii) The design of the scheme was approved by the Department for Transport via the authorisation of non-standard signs.

5. It was minuted at the meeting that:

'the issue of cycling within the Town Centre would be reviewed after six months of the scheme being implemented.'

6. Throughout the trial period (July 2007 – December 2007), a range of monitoring has taken place. Both quantitative and qualitative data has been collected to gauge how many cyclists are using the town centre as well as opinion of both the public and stakeholders such as the Police, Darlington Association on Disability, Darlington Cycling Campaign and town centre businesses.

Policy Context

7. Since November 2004 there have been a number of developments in policy.
8. The Second Local Transport Plan (LTP) covers the period from 2006 to 2011 and was adopted by Council on 23 March 2006. Within the LTP a Cycling Strategy for Darlington is included which states:

'All cycle trips should be as convenient, or more so, than by car. This means routes must be

direct, continuous, high quality and safe.'

9. The Department for Transport's Manual for Streets was published in 2007 and is a guidance document relating to street and public space design. The document covers all transport users, and places pedestrians at the top of the hierarchy followed by cyclists, public transport users and then car users. Section 6.4.2 states that:

'Cycle access should always be considered on links between street networks which are not available to motor traffic. If an existing street is closed off, it should generally remain open to pedestrians and cyclists'.

10. In October 2005 Darlington became a Cycle Demonstration Town and committed to building direct routes to the town centre. Darlington is one of six demonstration towns that are each receiving £1.5 million over three years to encourage 'more people cycling, more safely, more often'. The aim of the project in Darlington is to increase cycling levels from 1% to 3% of all trips. The Cycling Demonstration Towns are guided by Cycling England which has produced guidance on providing facilities. An extract from their document A.07 Vehicle Restricted Areas states that:

'Where there are proposals to introduce vehicle restricted areas or pedestrianised areas the default position should be that cyclists are allowed to continue to use the streets concerned in all directions at all times. In terms of public opinion, lifting existing restrictions on cycling can be much more difficult to achieve than imposing them at a later date. Where there are concerns about continued cycle use, the preferred approach is to allow cycling from the outset'.

11. In September 2004 Socialdata undertook travel behaviour research in Darlington as part of the Sustainable Travel Demonstration Town project. This showed that 14% of all trips start or finish in the town centre and 7% of all trips are for shopping in the town centre. Only 1% of all trips, trips to the town centre and trips to the town centre for shopping were by bike.
12. However, the Socialdata research shows that in Darlington cycling is the mode, which has most potential to tackle congestion. 34% of car trips within the urban area of Darlington have a realistic potential to be made by bike, meaning that there is potential for up to 14% of trips to be made by bike. If Darlington could achieve cycling level achieved in other UK and European towns of say 10% of all trips, then this would noticeably reduce congestion. Providing safe, convenient and direct cycle routes throughout the town is a key factor in increasing cycling.
13. Follow up research in September/October 2006 has demonstrated that cycling levels have increased to 2% of all trips, a 79% increase on the 2004 levels. This is supported by other data collected from schools and automatic cycle counters.
14. In terms of setting a policy precedent, this decision may have implications for other users of the town centre, such as motorised mobility scooters.

Methodology for Research

15. A number of different approaches have been utilised to assess different aspects of the scheme.
16. An assessment of how many people are using the available space both on foot and by bike to illustrate whether cyclists have been encouraged to use the town centre more.
17. A review of safety in terms of reported incidents and accidents in the town centre to assess whether the town centre has remained a safe environment for all users. Accidents on the Inner Ring Road have also been reviewed, as this would be the alternative route for cyclists if they were unable to access the town centre.
18. The views of the public were also sought to assess whether people see cycling as a problem in the town centre or whether they support it and would like to see it encouraged. This included an existing survey methodology and a bespoke questionnaire.
19. Analysis of actual pedestrian and cyclists behaviour was also undertaken to assess how pedestrians and cyclists interact and whether they amend their behaviour in light of other users of the town centre.
20. Evidence was also sought from other towns that have either banned or allowed cycling to assess the potential impact of changing the scheme in Darlington, in particular in respect of anti social behaviour involving cyclists. (Anti social behaviour by pedestrians and other users were not analysed.)
21. Views were also sought from key stakeholders, in particular with regard to enforcement of the Traffic Regulation Orders

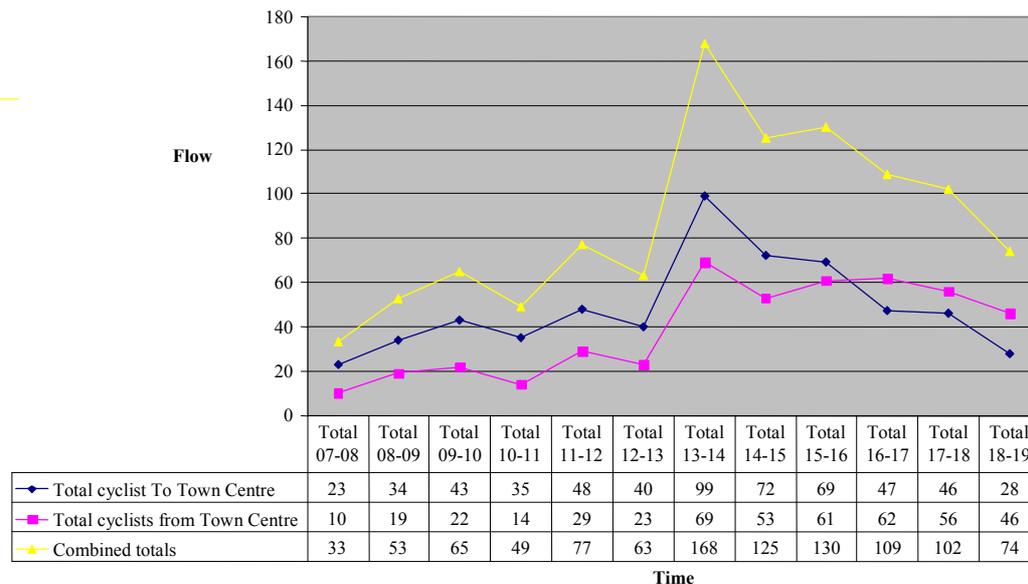
Analysis of Findings

22. Level of cycling and walking

Cordon Count

- (a) A count of pedestrians and cyclists entering and leaving the town centre on foot and on cycles has been carried out as part of the monitoring for the Local Transport Plan annually since 2001. As part of the Cycling Demonstration Town project, it is now carried out every quarter. The cordon count consists of counts taking place at twelve sites around the town centre over a twelve-hour period, during this time all pedestrians and cyclists who are entering or leaving the town centre are counted. In June 2004 612 cyclists entered the town centre area, compared to 1048 in July 2007 (an increase of 71%). Over the same time period the numbers of pedestrians entering the town centre have also increased, rising from 25,099 to 32,038 (an increase of 28%).

Cyclist Using Darlington Town



- (b) More refined counts of a much smaller area such as the pedestrianised area would be technically more difficult to achieve as well as expensive. There is also no historical data and no reliable technical solution.
- (c) Before the pedestrian heart scheme pedestrians had 5,115m² of pavement. Pedestrians and cyclists now share 10,933m², ie double the space. It is therefore easier for pedestrians and cyclists to move around the town centre.

23. Safety

Reported Incidents

- (a) Fourteen incidents were reported to the Transport Policy team between February and November 2007 regarding incidents involving pedestrians and cyclists.

Areas where cycling is permitted	Areas where cycling is NOT permitted
Young man riding 'dangerously, with no hands'	Lady knocked down on pavement by youth on a bike (suffered cuts and bruises) *
Cyclists 'fly through the centre'	Cyclist knocked lady down riding on the pavement (no injury)
Cyclist 'nearly knocked lady over'	
Child cyclists knocked over an adult and child (no injury) *	
Antisocial behaviour by youths, jumping on the ramps and steps	
Young man 'pulled a wheelie and scared her'	

2 cyclists 'pushed their way through'	
Adult cyclists 'cycling inappropriately'	
'Nearly run down by two inconsiderate young cyclists'	
Cyclist cycling one-handed and knocked a pedestrian with their handle bar (no injury)	

* Two of the incidents involving cyclists were checked with the CCTV centre, as there was sufficient detail about time and location of the incidents. The CCTV centre was not able to provide any evidence.

- (b) There were two further reports of cycles being secured to handrails within the town centre, this was before the formal cycle parking was installed and this problem has not been reported since.
- (c) Durham Constabulary has recorded 20 incidents during the period of the trial covering rowdy/nuisance behaviour of persons on cycles. However there are no reports of any actual accidents. They also state:

'It could be questioned that if the people committing the rowdy nuisance in the centre were not allowed to cycle in the area that they would choose to go elsewhere. I am aware that a number of commercial premises feel a very strong link between allowing cycling in the town and the rowdy/nuisance behaviour they suffer from local youths'. Durham Constabulary believes that there is significant under reporting of incidents.

- (d) During the trial period 7 tickets have been issued – 2 for cycling with no lights and 5 for cycling on the footway. The town centre Police team are keen to advise that issuing of tickets is secondary to the importance of education, which they do on a daily basis.

Accident Statistics

- (e) An analysis of accidents has reviewed both accidents in the town centre, within the Inner Ring Road and those on the Ring Road, as with a limitation on cycling, more cyclists would have to cycle on the Inner Ring Road if they wished to cycle legally.
- (f) Pedestrian and cyclist accidents on the Inner Ring Road and within the Inner Ring Road have been collated to cover the period 1 November 2002 to 31 October 2007. The data source is STATS 19, road accidents statistics where personal injuries occur. The Police provide these.
- (g) During this period there have been 40 reported accidents involving pedestrian casualties. Of those forty accidents 27 involved a pedestrian and a car, 9 involved a pedestrian and a bus, 3 involved a pedestrian and a taxi and 1 involved a pedestrian and a police vehicle. No incidents on the database involved a pedestrian and a cyclist.

Pedestrian accident with:	Number of accidents (total 40)
Car	27
Bus	9
Taxi	3
Police Vehicle	1
Cycle	0

- (h) Of the forty pedestrian accidents ten were on the Inner Ring Road and 30 were within the Inner Ring Road, including on Houndgate, Grange Road, Tubwell Row, Bondgate, Prebend Row, East Street and Skinnergate.
- (i) The number of accidents in the town centre has fallen to one (to date in 2007) from an average of 6 per year between 2003 and 2006. Early monitoring indicates that the town centre is a safer place for pedestrians. Allowing cycling has not created an increased risk of accidents for pedestrians.
- (j) There have been seventeen cyclist casualties arising from accidents on or within the Inner Ring Road during the same period. Of those seventeen 13 were between cyclists and cars, 2 between cyclists and taxis, 1 between a bus and cyclist and 1 between a HGV and a cyclist.

Cyclist accident with:	Number of accidents (total 17)
Car	13
Bus	1
Taxi	2
HGV	1
Pedestrian	0

- (k) Fourteen of the recorded cycle accidents took place on the Inner Ring Road. Of the three within the Ring Road one took place on Beaumont Street, one on Tubwell Row and one on Prebend Row.
- (l) Cyclists are more at risk of being involved in accidents whilst using the Inner Ring Road than using the town centre.
- (m) During the same five year period (1 November 2002 to 31 October 2007) there have been a total of 256 Pedestrian Casualties in the urban area (2 fatal, 47 serious, 207 slight) and 147 Cyclist Casualties (0 fatal, 15 serious, 132 slight).

Safety Audit

- (n) In August 2005 a Stage 2 Road Safety Audit was carried out by Capita Symonds on Darlington Pedestrian Heart. The terms of reference for the audit are described in HD19/03 in the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges. An independent party must carry out safety Audits with expertise in road safety. The audit involved a site visit as well as an assessment of plans and it raised 7 problems and one safety issue. No

concerns regarding cycling were raised.

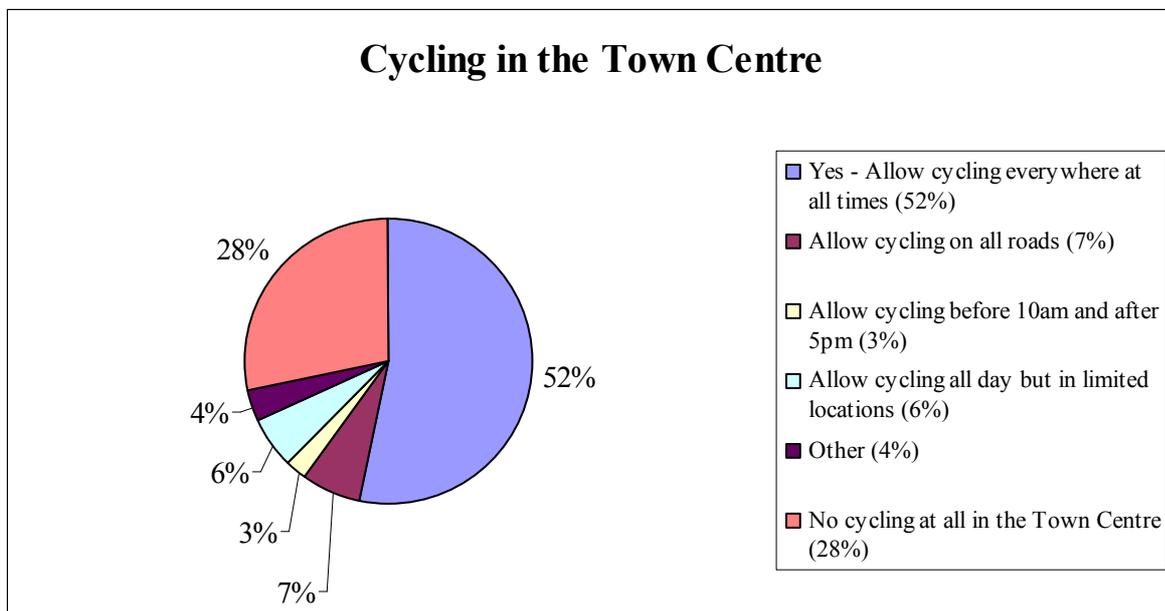
- (o) In October 2007 a Stage 3 Road Safety Audit was published by Capita Symonds covering safety issues within the town centre. The same methodology was applied. Sixteen problems were highlighted in the report. No mention was made of cycles posing a threat to any town centre user and no safety concerns were raised for cyclists using the town centre.

24. Attitudes to cycling in the town centre

Attitude Survey – on Street

- (a) A survey was carried out to understand and gather the views of the general public on cycling in the town centre. It was important to hear the views of a mix of pedestrians and cyclists and from visitors to the town centre on different days of the week, from different age groups and gender. Interviewing was carried out over two weeks, (10-26 November 2007) by NWA, a specialist market research company. Twelve interviewer sessions were undertaken with a total response of 393 completed questionnaires. This was a stratified random survey to ensure that we had results that were statistically significant for cyclists and non-cyclists. The sample size of 360 interviews was recommended by NWA with a 95% confidence level for the total sample and sample subgroups, and Darlington Borough Council's Policy Unit deemed this sample size reasonable.
- (b) The majority (60.6% or 238 people) of respondents claimed to be unaware that cyclists are allowed to cycle in the town centre at any time. However, 35.6% (139) were aware that cyclists were allowed to cycle in the town centre, with 0.8% thinking they were allowed to do so but that it was time restricted and 3.1% (12) that the places they could cycle were restricted. Just over three in five (61.8% or 243 people) of the total sample said that they had seen someone cycling in the town centre, whilst 38.2% (150) had not. The proportion of respondents who had seen people cycling in the town centre was highest amongst those with a limiting long-term illness disability (77.3% 'yes'), and those aged 60+ years ('60 to 69 years' 66.7% yes, '70+ years' 71.4% yes).
- (c) An overall majority (53.9% or 212 people) of the total sample indicated that they were in favour of cycling in the town centre continuing as it is now, rising to more than two thirds of respondents aged under 40 years (16 to 29 years, 70.7% 'in favour': 30 to 39 years, 68.8% 'in favour'), and respondents that do have a cycle available for their use (68.5% 'in favour'). The principle reasons given by those in favour of continuing cycling in the town centre were that they had 'no problems with the current arrangements'; that 'cycling was an easy and/or cheap means of travel'; and 'healthy/good exercise'.
- (d) The 176 respondents who said that they wanted a change to the current situation of cyclists being allowed to cycle in the town centre at any time were asked which of a list of alternative options they preferred. Nearly two thirds (64.2% or 113 people) of those who want a change (28.8% of the total sample), would prefer there to be no cycling allowed in the town centre at all, with only relatively small minorities preferring the other options listed: 14.8% (26) cycling on the road in the bus areas only, 13.6% (23) cycling all day in restricted locations only, and 5.7% (10) cycling allowed before 10am, and after 5pm only (like delivery vehicles). A further 8.5% (15) of those who 'want a

change' gave 'other responses' whilst 0.6% were 'not sure'. The principle reason given by those respondents who wanted a change was that it was 'dangerous/concerns about safety'.



(e) 20% (80) reported problems with other users of town centre. The other problems are detailed below.

		Count	Col %
Q15) (If experienced problems) please could you tell me about these?	Parking issues	35	43.8%
	Mobility Scooters	24	30.0%
	Traffic safety/ dangerous driving	15	18.8%
	Other	6	7.5%
Total		80	100.0%

Attitude Survey – Local Motion club members

- (f) An electronic version of the same questionnaire was sent to approximately 850 Local Motion members. 97 were returned and analysed. 53.6% (52 people) said they were in favour of cycling in the town centre. Among the 45 respondents who wanted changes to the current arrangements, 14 wanted cycling on the roads only; 14 wanted cycling to be limited to before 10am and after 5pm; 3 wanted cycling in limited locations; 10 wanted no cycling and 5 were not sure or 'other'.
- (g) 38 people had experienced 'problems' because of people driving or parking cars, vans, lorries or mobility scooters in the town centre.

Attitude Survey – Community Survey

- (h) Within the Community Survey 1016 respondents were asked the following question:

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement about Darlington town centre: 'The pedestrian heart is a safe and pleasant environment'.

66% of respondents agreed with the statement, with the main reasons relating to improved appearance, less traffic and feeling safer generally. 20.1% (rising to 31.8% amongst those 'with limiting long term illness or disabilities') disagreed with the statement, with the main reasons being road safety, principally buses (35.8%); access problems relating to steps and handrails (27.9%); and changes to the town's character (10.8%). Traffic safety relating to cyclists and skateboards was a reason given by 5.9% of respondents (12 people). Therefore when thinking about the town centre in general terms (with no prompt), cycling is not perceived as a major problem.

- (i) Within the Community Survey 1016 respondents were asked the following question:

'In 2004 the council took the decision to run a six month trial, starting from the completion of the pedestrian heart construction works, allowing people to cycle through the town centre pedestrian heart. Please say to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statement – 'People should be allowed to cycle through the town centre pedestrian heart'.

31.2% (317) respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that cycling should continue in the town centre. The main reasons given related to cycling not being a problem if people behave responsibly, and environmental or health benefits relating to less traffic and more people cycling. 59.5% (604) either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement and this rose to over three quarters amongst '60+ year olds'. The main issue was that it was considered too dangerous/accidents (45.5% or 275 respondents).

25. Analysis of CCTV footage

- (a) During the construction phase of the Pedestrian Heart and the subsequent trial period, the issue of actual and perceived danger and behaviour by cyclists and pedestrians has been raised by those supporting and against cycling in the town centre. Pedestrians complained of 'near misses' with cyclists and cyclists found 'indifference' from pedestrians.
- (b) Darlington Cycling Campaign undertook 60 hours of analysis of 19 hours of CCTV footage recorded by a CCTV camera on the side of the King's Head Hotel Building, providing a view of Bondgate, the northern end of High Row. The aim was to gather evidence on cyclists and pedestrian behaviour.
- (c) They observed cyclists and classified them as follows:
- (i) Category 0 – cyclists proceeds without significant deviation from a smooth course, and no pedestrian is caused any deviation from their intended course.

- (ii) Category 1 – cyclist required to change course or brake due to unexpected change of direction by pedestrian.
 - (iii) Category 2 – pedestrian caused to change course, was inconvenienced by, or potentially annoyed by, cyclist.
- (d) In total they made 302 observations involving cyclists and observed a total of 329 cyclists (Some observations involved two or more cyclists). 270 observations were category 0. Of the 27 category 1 observations, some were clear alterations of course or speed due to unexpected behaviour of pedestrians, but the majority were minor alterations of course. Of the 5 category 2 observations, only 1 actually caused a pedestrian to slow slightly, because she had suddenly observed a cyclist, though he appeared to be aware of her. At no time did they observe any pedestrian needing to 'dodge' a cyclist.
- (e) The 'weaving' that pedestrians perceive as 'dangerous cycling' is actually cyclists finding a safe route through pedestrians, reacting as pedestrians change direction or speed.

26. Experience in other towns

- (a) In 33 towns and cities in England, cycling has been permitted 24/7 in pedestrian zones. In the North East there are schemes, in Newcastle, Sunderland and Gateshead. A further 24 schemes allow cycling in pedestrian areas during 'commuter hours'. New schemes are being implemented each year. A major scheme for Cardiff city centre was agreed in April 2007, which will start with a trial for 12 months of cycling before 10:00am and after 4:00pm. This will be followed by a further 12-month period to extend the trial either by area or time.
- (b) Cycling in pedestrianised areas in towns and cities in the rest of Europe is commonplace. In places such as Paris and Barcelona where it has taken place for some time people appear to have come to accept it as normal.

Lessons learnt from places where cycling is allowed in pedestrianised areas

- (c) Cycling is allowed in pedestrian areas that are wide, with few obstructions (street furniture) and that still look and feel like roads (and potentially are used by service vehicles). (Middlesbrough's Corporation Road; Deangate – the road past the Minster – York.)
- (d) Cycling through pedestrianised areas when there are safety concerns for cyclists on the alternative route. (Deangate York)
- (e) In Brighton they have created a shared space that still allows traffic. The result has been an increase in cycling levels (22% or 100 more per day) and a decrease in vehicular traffic (a reduction of 93% or 12,000 per day).



Brighton – Before



Brighton - After

- (f) The Transport Research Laboratory has recently published detailed evidence of the experience of other towns in a report¹. The report examines the sharing of space by pedestrians and cyclists, from both a physical and 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.
- (g) 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.
- (h) Cyclists alter their behaviour according to the flow of pedestrians and regardless of whether cycling is allowed or not. During the period that cycling bans were in place in Cambridge and Hull, 39% and 46% respectively chose to push their cycles, while the majority continues to cycle illegally. In Salisbury, where there was no ban on cycling, 40% of cyclists still chose to dismount and 60% cycled legally.
- (i) The TRL report also states that during the period when cycling was prohibited ... 'a minority still cycled relatively fast in high pedestrian flows. These cyclists tended to be young males.'

Lessons from places that do not allow cyclists in pedestrianised town centres

- (j) In Middlesbrough Cycling is banned in the pedestrianised area of Linthorpe Road, following a number of requests from interested parties. Cycling still continues due to a lack of enforcement, but there have been no accidents. Cycling continues, as it is a direct route. (There is an alternative on road route but it is less direct and therefore less popular).
- (k) Difficulties in enforcing cycling restrictions create bad feeling towards cyclists, as well as a feeling that the Authorities are doing nothing. These sentiments are regularly expressed in the local press. (Bournemouth)

¹ TRL Report – Cycling in Pedestrian Areas, TRL 583; 2003

Outcome of Consultation

27. A letter was sent to three key partners with a view on cycling in the town centre asking to give feedback on their views. Letters were sent to Durham Constabulary, Darlington Association on Disability and the Darlington Cycling Campaign.
28. The town centre manager also consulted town centre businesses and a summary of the responses can be found in the background papers.
29. Cycling England were also consulted as they have provided £1.5m of matched funding over 3 years for the delivery of a programme of physical works to increase levels of cycling from 1% to 3%, including radial cycle routes into the town centre.
30. Full versions of the responses sent back can be found in **Appendix 1**.
31. Darlington Association on Disability are opposed to allowing cycling in the town centre as detailed below:

'Our Visually Impaired members tell us that as well as actual danger there is a natural perception of danger which is preventing or limiting their access to the Pedestrian Heart. With this in mind and the views of our other members with numerous impairments, Darlington Association on Disability is totally against allowing cyclists within the Pedestrian Heart. We recognise and agree with the view of the cycling campaign group that the roads should be made safer for cyclists but do not agree the danger should be transferred to vulnerable pedestrians.'

32. Darlington Cycling Campaign support allowing cyclists to use the town centre at all times arguing that the alternatives for cyclists i.e. the Inner Ring Road are more dangerous for cyclists:

'Darlington Cycling Campaign strongly urges the council to continue to allow cycling in the Pedestrian Heart for the following reasons:

...Prior to pedestrianisation, cyclists could travel through the town centre like any other vehicle. Banning cyclists now, even for part of the day, would make the situation **worse** for cyclists now than it was before pedestrianisation. ...The 'perception of danger', most vocally expressed by our colleagues from Darlington Association on Disability is, as DAD themselves admit, perception rather than reality. ...As other users of the Heart experience safe, responsible cycling more regularly, including police constables on bikes, we believe this perception is already starting to change and, given time (and more people cycling), will be replaced by a much more rational understanding'.

33. Having consulted a number of departments within Durham Constabulary including Traffic Management, the Neighbourhood Policing team believe that there is no evidence of a need to limit cycling in the town centre. They have considered many issues including the level of incident reporting, antisocial behaviour and public expectation of enforcement. In summary:

'Having considered all of the above points, I would take the stand that the issues raised do not evidence the need for the town centre to become a 'no cycling' area, however greater education, signage and publicity would greatly improve people's understanding of the

legislation. The option of limiting cycling by location or time could potentially cause great confusion.'

34. Cycling England, which incorporates a number of professionals from the sustainable transport industry, has also supported allowing cycling within the town centre. Philip Darnton, Chief Executive of Cycling England writes:

'On behalf of the Board of Cycling England I would formally like to register our total support for the continuation of this scheme. The Cabinet will be aware that Cycling England has been funding Darlington as a Cycling Demonstration Town for £500,000 p.a. matched by your own funding. This has allowed you to implement a significant programme of infrastructure building to allow for cycle usage across the town and into the centre. You have also taken significant initiatives – and put substantial investment – into crossings of the main roads in order to ensure that the road safety is permeable to cyclists wishing to go to the centre of the town. The quality of the work which you have also been undertaking in the town centre itself does mean that the heart of Darlington is now both much more attractive and readily accessible by cycle and on foot. The Cabinet will be aware that Cycling England is presently asking for proposals from the six demonstration towns for their plans for a further three years of cycling investment and we will wait with interest to learn of your decision on this particular matter.'

35. Businesses in the town centre were asked their views on cycling in the town centre. A wide variety of businesses responded from different sectors (nationals, independents and voluntary) as well as from a wide selection of locations within the town centre. A total of 9 responses were received.
36. Overall there was support for cycling in the town centre amongst businesses, (although some businesses were against it) with recognition that cyclists should respect other users of the town centre. Cyclists are seen as valuable shoppers and cycling is the preferred method of travel to work amongst some staff based in the town centre. Indeed some businesses stated that cycling should not only be permitted but also encouraged.
37. The main issues raised are cyclists using pavements or cycling too fast. The voluntary sector (Visually Impaired and Age Concern representatives) is against bikes in the town centre as they are a hazard.

Options Appraisal

There is a range of options available as detailed below:

38. Option 1 : Allow cycling in the town centre

(a) Proposed action and timescale

- (i) Permit cycling in the town centre, in accordance with the existing Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs).
- (ii) No variations would be required to the TROs and traffic signs.
- (iii) A map of Option 1 is in **Appendix 2**.

- (iv) Durham Constabulary have offered to work with the Council in campaigns/initiatives to increase cyclists' awareness of relevant legislation and pedestrian safety through considerate cycling, including a code of conduct. A programme of initiatives to be rolled out throughout 2008 as part of the Travel Safety Strategy.

(b) Evaluation

- (i) By allowing cyclists to access the town centre a safe, continuous, direct route would be provided into the town centre and enable cyclists to access the cycle parking that is provided throughout the town centre at locations convenient to shops, businesses and leisure facilities.
- (ii) Cycling in the town centre provides a number of key links in the cycle network in Darlington and provides a through route north to south and east to west. Radial routes are being constructed which link the suburbs to the town centre, including links to Haughton, Morton Park, Blackwell, Mowden, Hummersknott, West Park and Harrowgate Hill. Toucan crossings have already been provided on the Inner Ring Road at Russell Street, Priestgate, Leadyard Bridge and Feethams. Department for Transport guidance; Local Transport Note 2/04 section 8.2.1 states that:

'Pedestrianised areas are typically located in the core area of a town or city, and as such, can form a barrier to direct through-routes for cyclists. Cyclists often need access to pedestrianised areas to reach their workplace, shops or other destinations.'

- (iii) The traffic free area in the town centre provides a safer environment for cyclists. The alternative would be for cyclists to use the Inner Ring Road. Records show that there are more accidents involving cyclists on the Inner Ring Road than within the town centre. There have been no recorded accidents in the town centre involving cyclists and pedestrians during the last 5 years.

The Department for Transport guidance; Local Transport Note 2/04 section 8.2.1 states that:

'Studies (by Transport Research Laboratory) have shown that there are no real factors to justify excluding cyclists from pedestrianised areas - accidents between pedestrians and cyclists in these circumstances are very rare. At low flows they mingle readily. When pedestrian density increases cyclists behave accordingly by slowing down, dismounting, or taking avoiding action as required.'

- (iv) Durham Constabulary already enforce the Traffic Regulation Orders and have issued tickets using current legislation. The town beat team, who themselves use bikes to patrol the beat area, already educate and inform inconsiderate cyclists of appropriate behaviour. Inappropriate behaviour would still need to be enforced by the Police in order to deter people from riding their cycle in a dangerous manner in the vehicle-restricted areas. If cycling is allowed on a permanent basis Durham Constabulary would like to see some additional signage, greater education and publicity.

- (v) Cycling England strongly support Darlington's plans for radial routes into the town centre and are pleased with the progress made to date. Two completed routes should be signed by the end of the financial year and they want to see the signing taken to the heart of the town centre, rather than to the Inner Ring Road. Future funding will be based on the successful implementation of the initial programme.
- (vi) This option was supported by 53.9% or 212 of the people questioned in the on street survey. (This figure rises to over 68.8% amongst people aged less than 40 years). The principle reasons given were that they had 'no problems with the current arrangements'; 'cycling was an easy and/or cheap means of travel'; 'healthy/good exercise'; 'reduces congestion'; and 'environmentally friendly'. 53.6% or 52 people of the web-based respondents to the same questionnaire supported this option. In the 2007 Community Survey 31.2% or 317 people agreed that cycling should be allowed in the town centre. The reasons given were that it isn't a problem if cyclists behave responsibly and environmental and health benefits of less traffic and more cycling.
- (vii) Darlington Cycling Campaign, Durham Constabulary and Cycling England supported this option.
- (viii) Darlington Association on Disability, having listened to the views of its members, in particular those with a visual impairment, does not support this option. In the Community Survey 59.5% did not support this option. The main reason given was that it was too dangerous/accidents, although as the safety record shows that there have been no accidents involving cyclists and pedestrians, this is a perception of danger rather than actual danger. This is more prevalent amongst older people. In the same survey 20% didn't feel that the town centre was a safe and pleasant environment but the reasons were to do with road safety (principally buses), access issues (such as handrails) and the loss of character.

39. **Option 2 : Cycling on the roads only**

(a) **Proposed action and timescale**

- (i) Allow cycling on all the roads in the town centre, i.e. Northgate (inner Ring Road to Crown Street), Crown Street, Priestgate, Prebend Row and Tubwell Row.
- (ii) No cycling in the pedestrianised areas (Northgate {Crown Street to Bondgate}, Bondgate {Northgate to Abbots Yard}, High Row, Blackwellgate, Skinnergate {Duke Street to Blackwellgate} and West Row).
- (iii) A map of Option 2 is in **Appendix 2**.
- (iv) Variations would be required to the Traffic Regulation Orders and traffic signs. This would take approximately 6 months.

(b) **Evaluation**

- (i) Pedestrians who currently perceive that cyclists cause a danger in the town centre will be reassured.
- (ii) By allowing cyclists to use the bus route through the town centre cyclists will be able to access Northgate (2 way), Crown Street (Northgate to East Street - 1 way), Crown Street (East Street to Tubwell Row – 2 way), Priestgate (1 way), Prebend Row (1 way), Tubwell Row (Prebend Row to East Row -1 way), and Tubwell Row (East Row to Crown Street – 2 way) but access to most areas of the town centre would be prohibited. Cyclists will not be able to access the town centre from Bondgate and Blackwellgate, which are the most used entrances and exits to the town centre according to Cordon Count data.
- (iii) There would be no continuous, safe, direct cycle route from one side of the town centre to the other, travelling from east to west, west to east or south to north. There would be a continuous north south cycle route utilising Northgate, Crown Street, Tubwell Row, Church Row and Feethams.
- (iv) Cyclists would be forced to mix with buses (and other vehicles at certain times of the day) and this does not provide an ideal environment for children or inexperienced cyclists. It would not encourage more cycling and could potentially increase accidents involving cyclists and buses.
- (v) Evidence from other towns indicates that antisocial behaviour involving people on bikes would still continue, despite a legal restriction. Durham Constabulary support the view that education, publicity and signs plus enforcement are the best solution.
- (vi) This option would require variations to the Traffic Regulation Orders; alterations to signs; the physical removal of the cycle by pass lanes on Bondgate and Blackwellgate; and continued enforcement by the Police. This would have a cost implication. (Costs are difficult to estimate without significant design work but the erection or removal of each sign would cost approximately £100, plus new signs cost an average of £50 each and the TRO adverts would cost about £1200). It would potentially have a negative impact on the street scene with a proliferation of signs.
- (vii) The Police, Cycling England or Darlington Cycling Campaign does not support this option. Creating a no cycling or limited cycling area in the town centre causes the Police concern with regard to its enforcement. Public perception of such a regulation would be that it would be heavily enforced and no one would ever be seen in the town centre riding a cycle. Durham Constabulary go on to say:

'Unfortunately we do not have sufficient resources to deploy to this specific task on a daily basis.'
- (viii) This option was only supported by 6.6% or 26 of the people questioned in the on street survey.

- (ix) Unlike motor vehicle access, it is not possible to physically prevent cycles entering pedestrianised areas.

40. Option 3 : Cycling before 10am and after 5pm in the vehicle restricted areas and cycling on the roads at all times

(a) Proposed action and timescale

- (i) Motor vehicles are prohibited from the town centre for most of the day (with exceptions such as bullion vehicles etc). However before 10:00am and after 5:00pm there is access for delivery vehicles in Blackwellgate, Bondgate, High Row, Northgate, and Prospect Place. Therefore during this period pedestrians and other road users have to 'share' the pedestrianised area.
- (ii) This proposal seeks to limit access by cycle to the town centre in the same way, allowing cyclists to use the town centre until 10:00am and then again after 5:00pm every day.
- (iii) Cyclists could also use the roads as detailed in option 2 at all times.
- (iv) This is a combination of Option 1 and Option 2 and plans for both of these options are in **Appendix 2**.
- (v) Variations would be required to the Traffic Regulation Orders and traffic signs. This would take approximately 6 months.

(b) Evaluation

- (i) Cyclists would have access at peak commuting times to and through the town centre and limited access at other times. The Department for Transport guidance; Local Transport Note 2/04 section 8.2.5 states that:

If it is decided that cyclists cannot be given full access, it may be appropriate to limit it to particular times of the day. This may be feasible in shopping areas where most activity is likely to take place between 10.00am and 4.00pm. Permitting cyclist's access outside these hours would allow them to use the route for commuting.

- (ii) Pedestrians would expect to see vehicles, including cyclists during the periods 5:00pm until 10:00am, in the pedestrianised areas, and would alter their behaviour accordingly.
- (iii) Data collected in July 2007 highlights that between 07:00 and 10:00 151 people cycled into/out of the town centre; between 10:00 and 17:00 721 cyclists were counted; and between 17:00 and 19:00 176 cyclists used the town centre. The busiest hour was between 13:00 and 14:00. Limiting access by time would therefore disadvantage the majority (69%) of people cycling in the town centre, and would exclude children making the return journey home from school.

- (iv) Darlington Cycling Campaign, Cycling England or the Police do not support this option. Durham Constabulary have stated that:

'The option of limiting cycling by location or time could potentially cause great confusion'.

- (v) This option was only supported by 5.7% or 10 of the people questioned in the on street survey.
- (vi) This option would require variations to the Traffic Regulation Orders and alterations to signs. This would have a cost implication. Some motorists struggle to understand the signs limiting access but they are physically prevented from entering the area with rising bollards. Unlike vehicle access, it is not possible to physically prevent cycles entering the pedestrianised areas and signs may not be enough.
- (vii) The TRL report (see footnote 1) noted that part time bans were difficult to enforce and it was hard to prosecute erring cyclists.

41. **Option 4 : Cycling all day except on High Row, West Row and the pedestrianised part of Prebend Row**

(a) Proposed action and timescale

- (i) By removing cyclists from High Row, West Row and the pedestrianised area of Prebend Row but still allowing cyclists to use the rest of the town centre cyclists would still be able to access most areas of the town but they would be removed from the area that includes steps and ramps, where the most likely place of conflict would be.
- (ii) A map of Option 4 is in **Appendix 2**.
- (iii) Variations would be required to the TROs and traffic signs. This would take approximately 6 months. Further consultation may be required to assess the most appropriate area in which to limit cycling and assess, in consultation with local stakeholders and the Department for Transport, how this could be signed effectively.

(b) Evaluation

- (i) This option was supported by 13.6% or 24 of the people questioned in the on street survey.
- (ii) This option would require variations to the Traffic Regulation Orders and alterations to signs. This would have a cost implication.
- (iii) Unlike vehicle access, it is not possible to physically prevent cycles entering the proposed no cycling area. Defining the enforcement area would be difficult and have a negative impact on the street scene. This will cause great confusion for cyclists and pedestrians and will be difficult for the Police to enforce.

- (iv) This option is not supported by Darlington Cycling Campaign, Cycling England or the Police. Durham Constabulary have stated that:

'The option of limiting cycling by location or time could potentially cause great confusion.'

Legal Implications

42. This report has been considered by the Borough Solicitor for legal implications in accordance with the Council's approved procedures. There are no issues which the Borough Solicitor considers need to be brought to the specific attention of members, other than those highlighted in the report.

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998

43. The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. It is not considered that the contents of this report have any such effect.

Council Policy Framework

44. The issues contained within this report do not represent change to Council policy or the Council's policy framework.

Decision Deadline

45. For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this does not represent an urgent matter.

Key Decisions

46. This is a key decision because it is significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising one or more wards in the Borough.

Conclusions

47. The number of cycling trips in Darlington is increasing and this has positive benefits for the environment, public health, reducing road traffic and improving accessibility to employment, shopping and leisure facilities. The number of people cycling into and through the town centre is increasing, as is the number of pedestrians using the town centre, supporting the town centre economy.
48. Using available data, the town centre appears to have become a safer environment for both pedestrians and cyclists. In 2004 when the trial period was proposed cycling was being considered in the context of traditional roads and pavements that existed in the town centre and plans on paper for the Pedestrian Heart proposals. It was difficult to imagine how the town centre would look and feel, and how people would use the space. In 2007 when the project was finished the reality of the wide-open spaces in the town centre makes the idea of mixing pedestrians and cyclists easier to understand and accept as being a safe option.

49. However there is still a perception amongst some, in particular the elderly, that cyclists create danger and it is recognised that there is a minority of cyclists who behave in an anti social manner. The Police propose working with Darlington Borough Council and others on a programme of education and publicity, as well as enforcement, to ensure that cyclists (and all users of the town centre) behave in a considerate and safe manner.
50. Stakeholders and other interested parties will be invited to take part in intergenerational work to assess and address the disparity in perceptions and views between younger and older people.
51. Alternative routes for cyclists would involve using the Inner Ring Road and there is a significantly higher accident rate for cyclists on the Inner Ring Road. This would be a route used only by experienced cyclists and would exclude young people and inexperienced cyclists. It would create a significant gap in the recommended safe cycling routes for residential areas surrounding the town centre. Additional work would have to be carried out to improve safety for cyclists on the Ring Road.
52. In the surveys with residents to establish attitudes towards cycling and the level of support for maintaining cycling in the town centre the results were 53.9% (on street survey), 53.6% (on line survey) and 31.2% (Community Survey). The main reasons given related to cycling not being a problem if people behave responsibly, and environmental or health benefits relating to less traffic and more people cycling.

Anti Social Behaviour

53. One of the main concerns is the inconsiderate behaviour of a minority of cyclists, in particular cycling too fast or cycling in inappropriate places such as on the steps.
54. Evidence from other towns, and the belief of Durham Constabulary, is that this type of behaviour will continue whatever the rules and regulations are for cycling in the town centre. Limiting cycling will only disadvantage those considerate cyclists who behave in an appropriate way, slowing, changing direction or even dismounting when pedestrian flows are considerable. Instead education and information is required for both cyclists and pedestrians so there is a clearly understanding of what is acceptable behaviour, and enforcement is required for dangerous cycling. An educational programme will be developed with Durham Constabulary and other partners.

Views of Key Stakeholders

55. Darlington Association on Disability opposes cycling in the town centre and has requested that a Disability Impact Assessment be undertaken.
56. Cycling England totally supports the continuation of cycling in the town centre.
57. Durham Constabulary does not believe that there is any evidence of a need to limit cycling in the town centre.
58. Darlington Cycling Campaign strongly urges the Council to continue to allow cycling in the Pedestrian Heart.

Impact on Partnerships

59. Any form of limitation of cycling in the town centre would potentially have a negative impact on future funding for the ongoing development of the cycle and pedestrian network, not just in the town centre, but also schemes in other areas to improve access to open spaces, employment sites and schools. Cycling England are awaiting a funding decision from the Minister for Transport before announcing how much further funding will be able to receive. However this will be subject to the successful completion of the current project by the end of September 2008.
60. Durham Constabulary has already raised concerns about public expectations of the level of enforcement that they will be able to undertake in the town centre. Therefore changing the current arrangements will put undue pressure on their resources. They have however committed to work in partnership to promote considerate cycling as well as enforce as they currently do.
61. Darlington Association on Disability is against cycling in the town centre, in particular for those people who have a visual impairment. A group which includes disabled people will undertake a Disability Impact Assessment and any specific issues highlighted, will be addressed wherever possible. A careful balance needs to be achieved for all users of the town centre, as hazards such as parked vehicles, temporary obstructions such as advertising boards and motorised mobility scooters, also cause problems for some disabled people.

Option Analysis

	Ease of enforcement (Police view)	Cost	Cycling England Funding	Public opinion	DAD view	Safety for pedestrians	Safety for cyclists
Option 1	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	0	xx	✓	✓✓
Option 2	✓	x	x	x	✓✓	✓✓	xx
Option 3	x	xx	x	x	xx	✓✓	x
Option 4	xx	x	x	x	xx	✓	x

Key

✓✓ Very positive impact	✓ Positive impact	
x Negative impact	xx Very negative impact	0 Neither or 50:50

62. The balance of evidence and the assessment against objectives supports a continuation of the current town centre Traffic Regulation Orders for a further extended trial period whilst more experience is gained and more evidence gathered. Additional work on the cycle network including signs should encourage more cyclists to access the town centre and the impact of this needs to be assessed against criteria such as safety and accessibility. More work can be undertaken with Durham Constabulary, schools, the youth service, Road Safety, community wardens and local businesses to promote considerate cycling and tackle anti-social behaviour.

Recommendation

63. It is recommended that:-

- (a) The trial period for cycling within the town centre is extended to November 2008.
- (b) A Disability Impact Assessment on cycling in the town centre is carried out.
- (c) An educational programme on responsible cycling is carried out.
- (d) Inter-generational work with older people is carried out on concerns about cycling.

Reasons

64. The recommendations are supported for the following reasons:

- (a) To observe cycling for a full summer and gather more views from those using the town centre, and to communicate the issues covered in this report.
- (b) To work with Darlington Association on Disability and others to assess the impact of cycling in the town centre for disabled people.
- (c) To work in partnership with Durham Constabulary and others to promote considerate cycling and address issues of anti social behaviour, to reduce the requirement for large scale enforcement.
- (d) To address the disparity in views between younger and older people.

Richard Alty
Assistant Chief Executive (Regeneration)

Background Papers

- (i) Cabinet report 16 November 2004 Darlington Town Centre Pedestrian Heart Appendix Nine.
- (ii) Appendix 1 - Letter from Darlington Association on Disability.
- (iii) Appendix 1 - Letter from Darlington Cycling Campaign.
- (iv) Appendix 1 - Email response from Durham Constabulary.
- (v) Appendix 1 - Email response from Cycling England
- (vi) Appendix 1 - Summary of responses from town centre businesses.
- (vii) Appendix 2 – Plans of Options 1, 2 and 4.

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