



1 This is a written response from newcycling.org to the urban congestion
2 inquiry [http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-
z/commons-select/transport-committee/inquiries/parliament-2015/urban-
congestion-16-17/commons-written-submission-form/](http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-
3 z/commons-select/transport-committee/inquiries/parliament-2015/urban-
4 congestion-16-17/commons-written-submission-form/)

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6 We are a constituted organisation entirely run by volunteers. We formed in
7 2010 to address economic, social and spatial inequalities in the transport
8 system and to lobby Newcastle council for decent cycling infrastructure. Our
9 organisation has 1,600 local members. We submit this response on behalf of
10 our membership.

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13 Our response

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- 15 • We agree that traffic congestion is a serious problem that must be solved
- 16 • However the current way congestion is addressed, institutionally and
17 technically, is not right
- 18 • A lot of things are done in the name of congestion relief. One is road
19 building. Seeking congestion relief through increasing road capacity for
20 motor vehicles however defeats the original objective. It will almost
21 certainly increase motor traffic and causes new congestion, as numerous
22 studies have shown - more notably perhaps Cairns et al (1998), Duranton &
23 Turner (2011), SACTRA (1994).
- 24 • Alternatives to driving are often not available
- 25 • We need new practices including national standards for cycle infrastructure
26 design

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28 Unfortunately we see “road building” under the banner of congestion relief applied in
29 Newcastle time and time again. The most recent plans we have seen to that effect
30 are for the so called Northern Access Corridor. It might be worthy of note that the
31 council’s rhetoric also is routinely coupled with the headings of “air quality” and “road
32 safety” improvements too. Just like “road building” these can be equally conflated



33 issues only addressed in short-term ways and ultimately counterproductive. Another
34 conflation is between road building and jobs and economic growth. Projections rarely
35 live up to their expectations. Often monitoring and evaluation does not even happen.

36

37 We are missing the bullseye for a sustainable future and a fairer transport mix by a
38 very long shot.

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40 The right approach would be if the transport authority would design for motor traffic
41 reduction, particularly private cars. That way the city, citizens and the transport
42 system stay viable in the long term, competitive in the market, tackling cleaner air
43 and noise issues and the mounting public health epidemic. The list of positive returns
44 for that transition are endless. Yet discussing with the council these paybacks or
45 discussing the steps that are needed for a transport transition has proved near
46 impossible. Old practices are strong, often automatically executed and hard to
47 challenge. Consultations are held for box-ticking reasons not for public engagement
48 or to foster public debate.

49

50 A new approach would necessitate having a fresh look at urban space, so that in
51 future it can be used truly efficiently. One of the sorely missing parts in Newcastle's
52 transport mix is cycling. Cycling is an eminently conceivable mode for short journeys,
53 but only if the right infrastructure exists. Building cycleways to enable short journeys
54 done by bike has vast potential, but requires a paradigm shift away from the practice
55 of providing exclusively for the private car. The practices and tools that need
56 modernising are transport planning, traffic modelling, and highway engineering, and
57 perhaps to a lesser extent the subsidiary practice of road safety.

58

59 To reduce congestion we must reduce car use. We can reduce car use by making
60 alternatives available. Part of this is done through prudent network planning
61 (including a coherent cycle network consistent of good quality infrastructure), putting
62 together a car parking strategy (both spatial and fiscal) and bus route consolidation.
63 This is fully in council's responsibilities, only that the practices being used are
64 outdated. This means council plans are often heading in the wrong direction, into
65 perpetual gridlock rather than planning for car reduction.

66



67 Census 2011 tells us that Newcastle’s households are 42% car free (see newcycling,
68 2013). Cycling potential is colossal: 41% of car commutes are under five kilometres,
69 totalling 20,000 residents (see Leyendecker, 2015). Many of those commutes could
70 be cycled with the right infrastructure in place. Cycling improves space efficiency.

71

72 **What we need for Newcastle**

73

74 Without clear national steer progression into a new direction will be nearly
75 impossible. National direction is needed for national cross-cutting policy based on
76 urban wellbeing, health and liveability (air, noise, and environment) as well as **new**
77 **practices** to facilitate the transition. Given the potential that the expansion of cycling
78 offers in Newcastle (and other cities too, no doubt) we would immensely benefit from
79 national **cycle infrastructure design standards** and a national effort to skill up and
80 train council officers, and politicians, on sustainable transport planning and motor
81 traffic reduction measures.

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83 Committee of newcycling

84 On 24 November 2016

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86 **References**

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