

Views on Potential Traffic
Improvements in
Gosforth High Street
& the Surrounding Area



© March 2013

Contents



Introducing the Research

Newcastle City Council are proposing major traffic improvements on Gosforth High Street and the surrounding area. Proposals are for a strategic cycle route which will be submitted as a bid for DfT funding at the end of November.

The aims of this research were to:

- Assess perceptions, expectations and preferences of respondents in relation to proposed traffic improvements in Gosforth High Street and its environs.

The Objective of the Research

Objectively, the research facilitates a report which statistically and accurately gauges respondents' perceptions of a possible need for traffic improvements in Gosforth High Street and the surrounding area.

The Research Methodology

A structured questionnaire was developed to ensure all necessary information was gained during the interview. A copy of this questionnaire is available on request.

The questionnaire was administered by professional Researchers employed by Newcastle City Council who interviewed respondents on a face-to-face basis. Interviews were undertaken in November 2012 on-site at Gosforth High Street.

Additional comments were collected from more than 150 members of the general public attending Gosforth ward committees, speaking directly to City Council Officers or submitting comments via the Let's talk website.

Notes

- All percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole figure and may therefore not total 100.
- Percentages have also been calculated excluding missing responses.
- Acknowledgements are extended to all participants in the research.

The Research Findings

Who Was Interviewed

460 interviews were completed with users of Gosforth High Street. 400 of these were completed on-site and 60 were submitted online via the Let's Talk website.

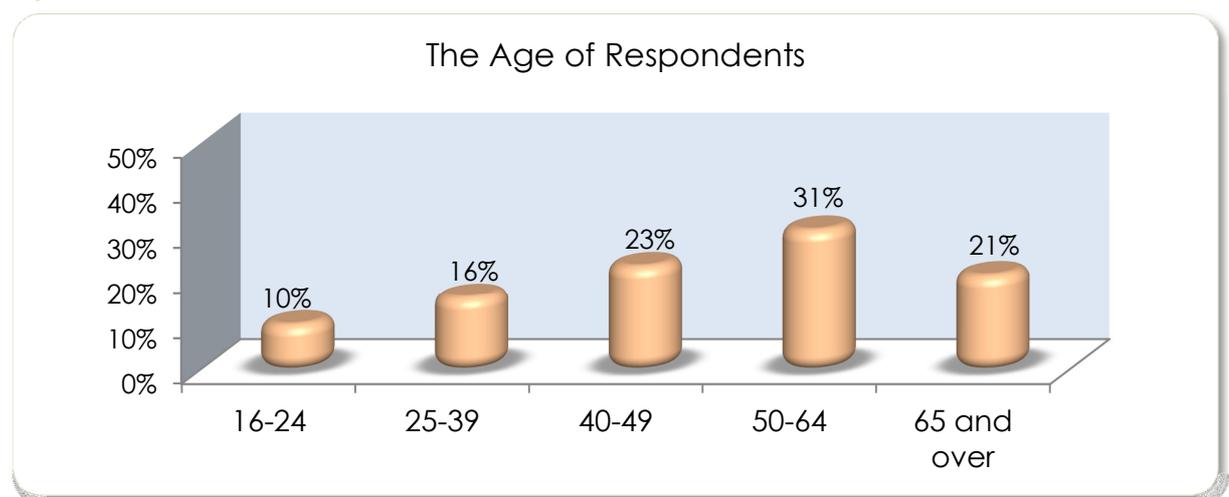
The Gender of Respondents

53% of respondents interviewed were female and 47% were male.

The Age of Respondents Interviewed

Respondents were most commonly aged 50-64. Figure 1 shows the age profile of respondents who gave their views.

Figure 1



The Ethnicity of Respondents

93% of respondents described their ethnicity as White British, with 6% of a minority ethnicity.

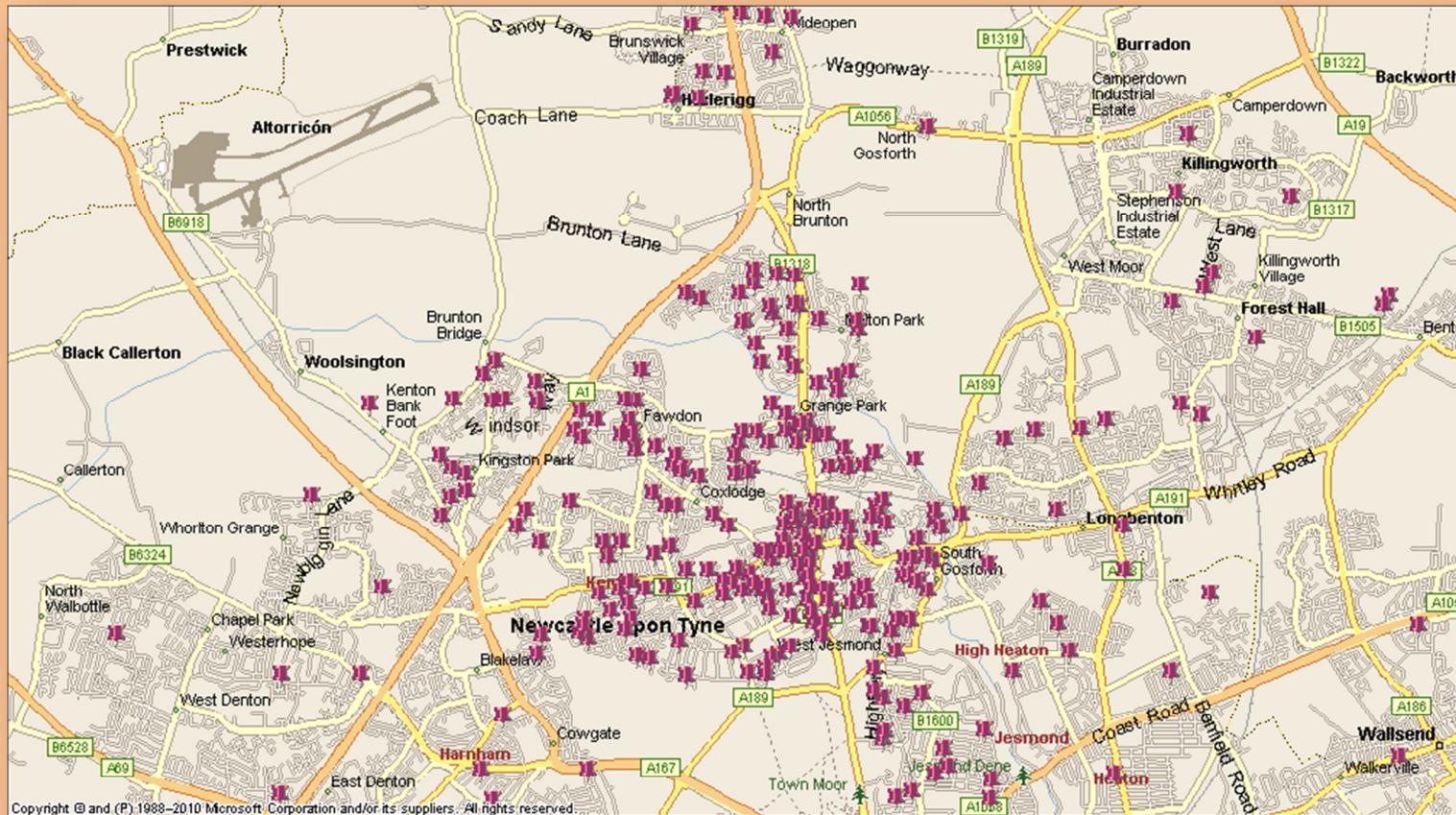
10% of Respondents with a Long-Term, Limiting Illness, Disability or Health Problem

10% of respondents had a long-term limiting illness, disability or health problem.

Streets of Residence

The residence of the 460 respondents, resident across Newcastle and beyond is shown in Figure 2.

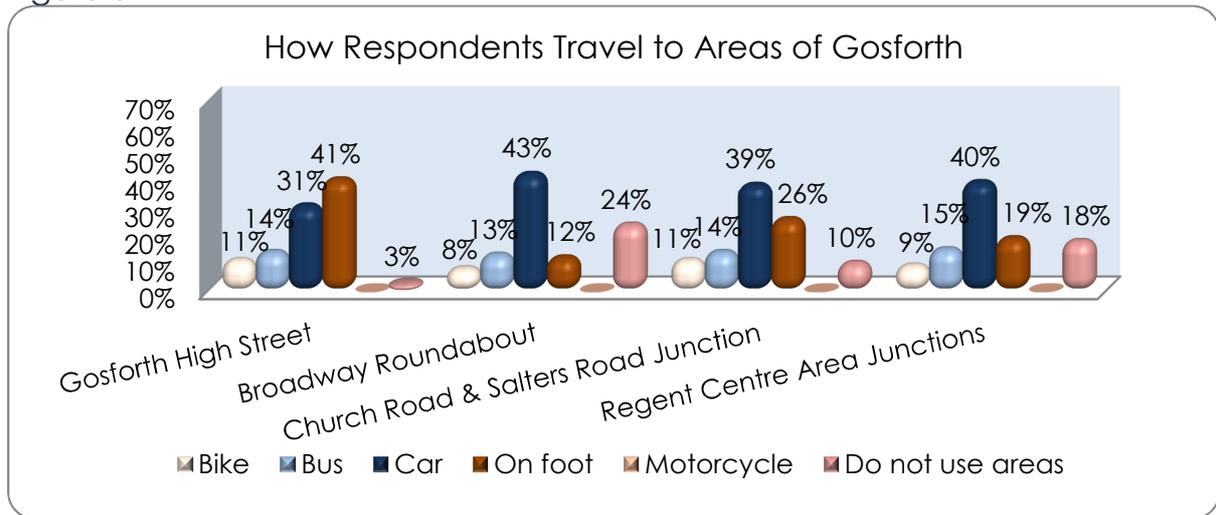
Figure 2



How Respondents Travel to Areas of Gosforth

Figure 3 shows the forms of transport respondents used to travel to areas in and around Gosforth High Street. These were most commonly on foot to Gosforth High Street (41%) and by car (around 40%) to Broadway Roundabout, Church Road & Salters Road and Regent Centre Area junctions.

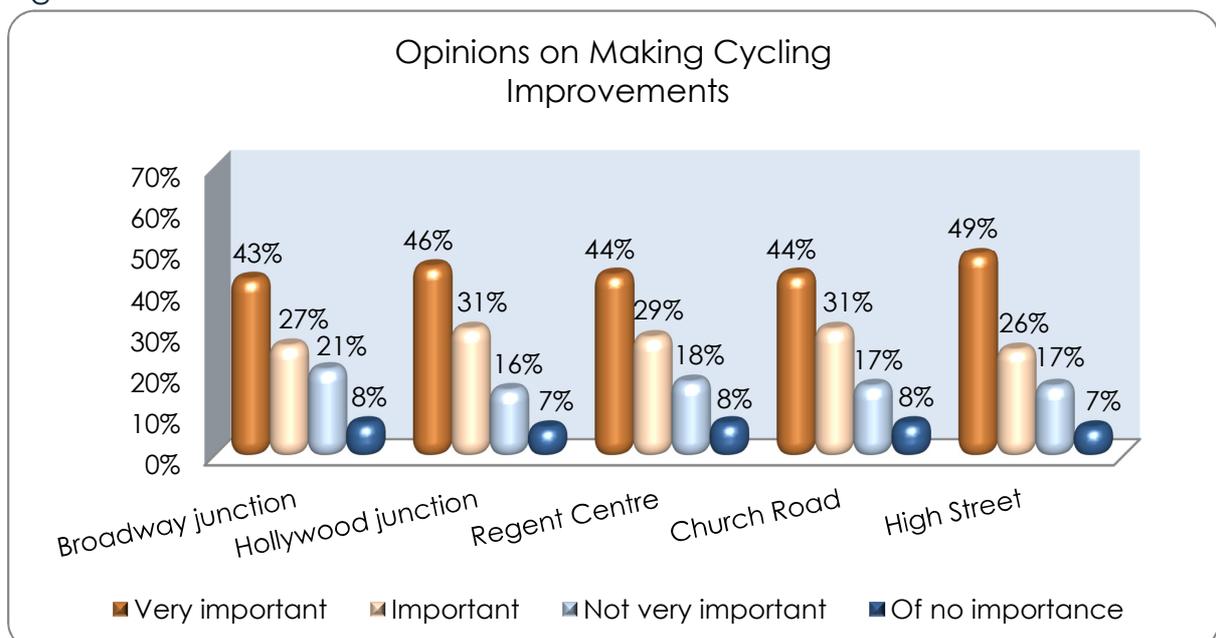
Figure 3



Opinions on Making Cycling Improvements in and Around Gosforth High Street

Over 70% of respondents felt that it was important to make cycling improvements in each of the locations shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4



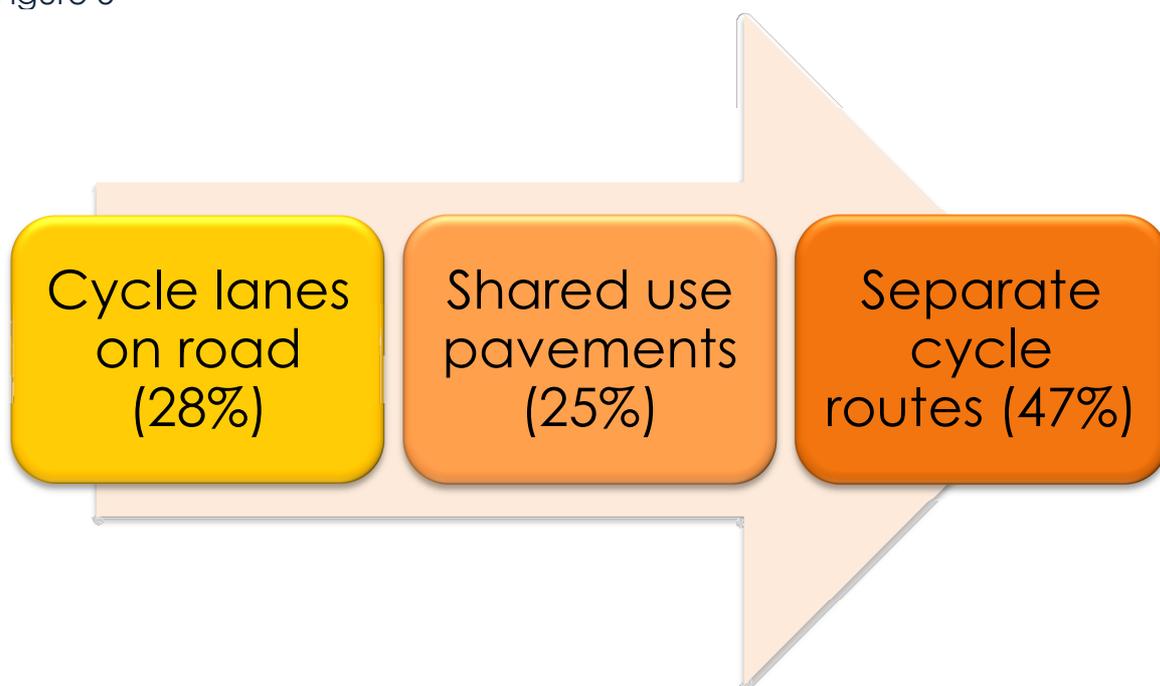
Opinions on Providing Routes for Less Experienced Cyclists

67% of respondents felt that it was important to provide routes for less experienced cyclists in Gosforth. 21% of respondents felt it was unimportant and 12% were undecided.

Preference of Cycling Routes

Given a choice, respondents would most commonly prefer separate cycle routes (47%). (See Figure 5).

Figure 5



Preference of Crossings

When crossing roads on a cycle, respondents would prefer signalised crossings (57%) or islands (25%). 18% of respondents were confident enough to not need any crossing.

Opinions on Pedestrian Crossing Facilities between Broadway Roundabout and The Grove

Just over three-quarters (77%) of respondents felt that the pedestrian crossing facilities on Gosforth High Street between Broadway roundabout and The Grove were adequate. 14% of respondents felt that they were inadequate, and 9% were undecided. Respondents who felt that crossings were inadequate most commonly identified The Grove (12%), Broadway (10%), Regent Centre (7%) and High Street (5%) as crossings that could be improved.

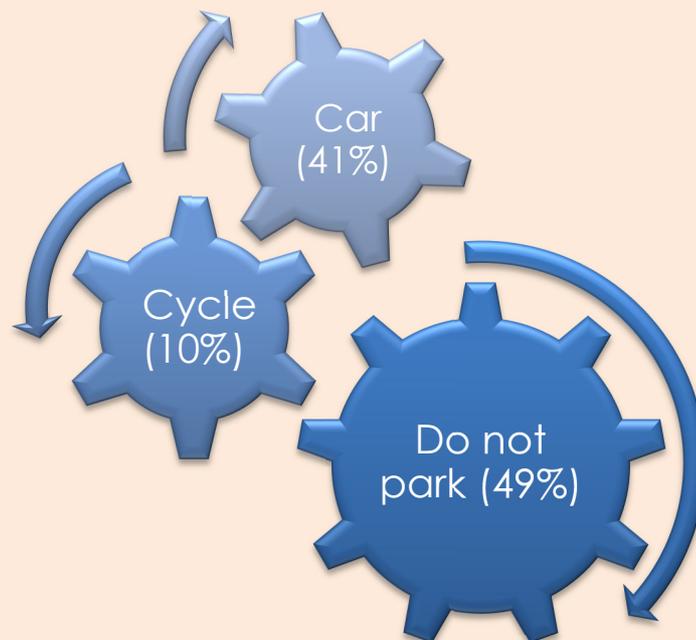
44% of Respondents Felt That Junctions Should Be Not Improved For Buses in Gosforth

44% of respondents felt that junctions should not be improved for buses in Gosforth. 32% advocated junction improvement, whilst 25% were undecided.

Parking In Gosforth to Use the Shops

Over half of all respondents parked in Gosforth to use the shops. Respondents most commonly parked in car parks at Sainsbury's (30%) and on Salter's Road (18%). Others parked at The Grove, West Avenue, Woodbine Street, St. Nicholas Avenue, Regent Centre, Moor Crescent, Lloyd's Bank, Linden Road, Ivy Road, Asda and the Co-op. (See Figure 6).

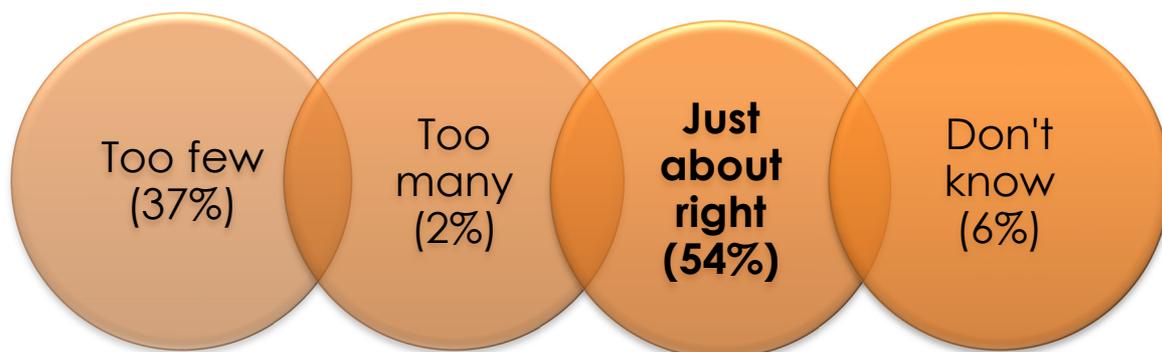
Figure 6



Parking Spaces for Cars and Cyclists in Gosforth

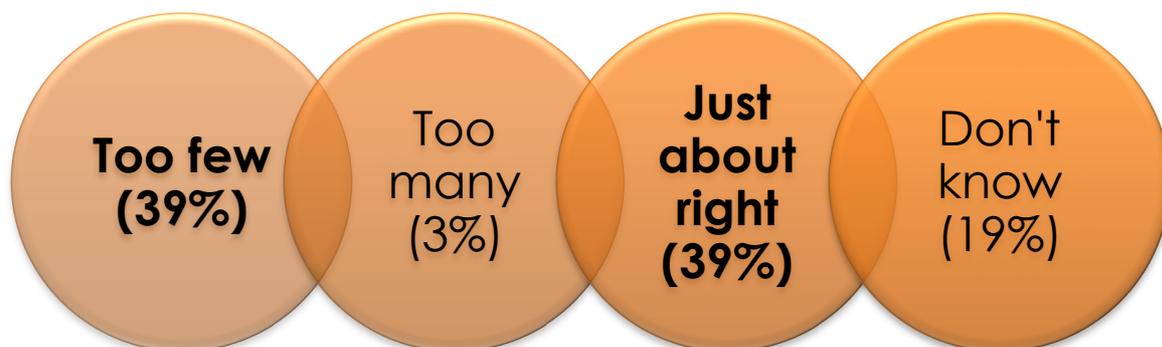
54% of respondents felt that parking spaces for cars in Gosforth were just about right. However, 37% of respondents felt that there were too few parking spaces for cars in Gosforth and 6% of respondents were undecided. (See Figure 7).

Figure 7



Identical percentages of respondents felt that parking spaces for cyclists in Gosforth were just about right or too few (both 39%). 19% were undecided. (See Figure 8).

Figure 8



Rating the Idea of the City Council Putting Money into Supporting People to Use Healthier, Cheaper and Less Harmful Transport

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of the City Council putting money into supporting and encouraging people to use transport that can be healthier, cheaper and less harmful to the environment. This transport included walking, cycling and public transport. 84% of respondents rated this as important. The remaining percentage of respondents felt that this was either not very important (10%) or of no importance (7%).

Respondent Views on Proposals

A number of respondents spoke of the potential benefits of easing congestion:

"anything to do with easing congestion is good and also the promotion of activities, such as walking, which are good for your health"

"I don't think the environment is the issue. It's the congestion that is often bad, especially during school term time"

"if there was less traffic on the High Street then it would make the area more pleasant and safe".

Others spoke of encouraging the use of cycles:

"bikes should be allowed on Metro's and trains. This would encourage more people to leave their car at home"

"children should be encouraged to cycle or walk, and not be given lifts everywhere by their parents. We are too protective now".

Whilst others focused on obstructions to cyclists due to parked cars:

"cycle lanes at the entrance to Gosforth are permanently parked on by local respondents, they need to be made mandatory so that cars parking on them are penalised"

"fines should be given out to motorists when they park on the cycle routes".

"Gosforth High Street is essential to everyone. Allowing everyone to cycle and walk is good exercise and these activities don't cause pollution".

Other respondents highlighted problems with sequencing of traffic lights on Gosforth High Street:

"it does get very busy on the High Street at night times. The traffic lights have too many difference sequences"

"I think a review of traffic light sequencing would be of benefit. A lot of the traffic appears to be caused by poor synchronisation of lights"

together with concerns of cyclists having consideration for other road users and pedestrians:

"some of them ride on the pavement and give little or no consideration to pedestrians or small children. This should not be allowed"

"cyclists are probably safer on the pavements as long as they respect pedestrians"

"cyclists should obey road rules and not go over lights on red. They shouldn't ride side by side on any road".

"cyclists don't pay tax so they shouldn't be on the road"

and a perceived need for additional routes and cycle paths:

"bring in a red route along Gosforth High Street from Broadway into town - i.e. bus/cycle route and one lane only for cars. The biggest problem is the school traffic as it's fine when the school holidays are on. Parents should be encouraged NOT to do the school run"

"I would really welcome better routes for cyclists. I do cycle but I am quite nervous and get put off by thoughtless drivers. I feel I would cycle more if the cycle routes were better and safer"

"I think shared pavements would be a solution for cycle paths. They are wide enough until you get to Gosforth High Street. I use my car for safety reasons during peak times. I would cycle most mornings at peak times if there were designated cycle paths from Brunton Park to the end of Gosforth High Street".

In contrast, some respondents expressed concerns about the potential effects of any changes on Gosforth High Street and the surrounding area:

“it will be very detrimental if car parking spaces on the High Street are reduced as this will affect the economy of the High Street. The main reason I use the High Street is I can park easily”

“proposed bus lane extensions will cause major traffic delays. This will substantially worsen the present problem on Back Rothwell Road. The proposal should be put on hold until a solution can be found”.

A number of further comments came from a selection of residents and members of the general public attending drop in sessions and ward committees in Gosforth, submitted via "Let's talk", and voiced directly to City Council officers.

Many voiced their support for the proposals, clearly envisaging the potential benefits of implementation and regarding the creation of a safer cycling environment as long overdue:

“as a cyclist any changes in favour of safer cycling have my support”

“this is an excellent scheme. Cycling in the area is currently dangerous so I welcome any improvements”

“we strongly support a cycle lane running north from the Blue House Roundabout. Don't let anything put you off”!

However, residents were additionally keen to voice a number of concerns and potential issues which they would like to see addressed. These concerns were extremely varied, but can be largely summarised as shown in Figures 9 and 10 on the following pages. Note a focus on a perceived need to preserve the quantity of existing parking spaces in the area, together with considerations relating to the implementation of cycle lanes, and the potential impact of proposals on residents, pedestrians, area users and businesses. Respondents were also keen to be kept up to date, requesting further Information. Note also that some respondents specifically expressed dissatisfaction with the consultation process, describing its presentation as technically complex and consequently difficult to understand.

Proposal Considerations

Figure 8

Cycle lanes



- Ensure roads are wide enough to accommodate cycle lanes.
- Prevent cars fly parking in cycle lanes via enforcement and prosecution.
- Ensure direct, commuter and home to school routes are available.
- Increase education regarding the safe and courteous use of cycle lanes.
- Appropriately accommodate bus stops.
- Increase cyclist advantage measures - raised paths, kerbs, early release for cyclists at traffic lights, advanced stop lines etc.

Car parking



- Maintain current number of parking spaces as Salters Road car park is observed as frequently full.
- Prevent cars parking or stopping on the High Street.
- Consider viability of extending Gosforth Centre roof parking.
- Ensure Gosforth Hotel can accommodate additional spaces.

Consultation



- Make it less technical and easier to understand.
- Ensure multiple plan copies and sufficient response sheets are available at events.
- Consider a progress update email/newsletter.
- Newcastle is twinned with Grenuger, the most cycle friendly Dutch city - consider exploiting this link to take advantage of their expertise.

Proposal Considerations

Figure 9

Residents



- Prevent Hollywood Avenue and other 20mph streets from becoming 'rat runs'.
- Minimise potential increases in noise/air pollution.
- Address concerns about a potential lack of resident parking spaces.
- Address environmental concerns re tree removal.

Pedestrians



- Ensure pedestrian considerations are not demoted.
- Promote pedestrian safety in the context of increased cyclists.
- Consider reducing the vehicular traffic speed limit on the High Street.
- Encourage cyclists to respect pedestrian safety and not jump red lights.
- Consider separating cyclist and pedestrian paths/lanes.

Businesses



- Ensure adequate, accompanying business consultation.
- Ensure adequate and demarcated delivery times for supplier loading needs.
- Ensure adequate car parking to preserve and promote trade.

Key Messages

This survey highlights a number of key messages from users of Gosforth High Street. The first is about the demographic profile of actual users, which would appear to be fairly well balanced in terms of gender.

It would also appear to be fairly well balanced in terms of age – with approximately equal percentages of those under and over the age of 50.

However, both minority ethnic use, and use by those with a long-term, limiting health problem, illness or disability is lower than city figures.

A majority of users of the High Street reside within a 2 mile radius of its main spine, with many travelling there either on foot or by car. In relation to car use, many park in Gosforth itself (typically at Sainsbury's to use the shops) and feel that there are sufficient car parking spaces in Gosforth. However, note that more than 1 in every 3 users of Gosforth High Street disagrees, with the view that car parking spaces are insufficient in number. A similar view is evident in relation to parking spaces for cycles – with around 40% feeling that there are insufficient – a feeling countered by an identical percentage who are content.

Over 70% of those who gave their views feel that making cycling improvements in and around Gosforth High Street was an important proposition, and this peaked in relation to the High Street itself. In contrast, improvements at Broadway junction attracted the highest level of perceived unimportance.

There is also solid support for the notion of providing routes for less experienced cyclists – with two-thirds of High Street users feeling that this is an idea worth progressing.

And whilst cycle lanes on roads, and shared use pavements attract some support, it is separate cycle routes which attract higher comparative applause, together with signalised crossing to aid cyclists crossing roads.

Note that a majority of those who gave their views feel that the pedestrian crossing facilities between Broadway roundabout and The Grove are adequate, and this should consequently not be regarded as a priority.

What should undoubtedly be regarded as a priority is investment into the encouragement of healthier, cheaper and less harmful means of transport – something supported by the vast majority (84%) of those surveyed.

However, note concerns which include a perceived need to ensure:

- Availability of car parking spaces to accommodate both residents and users of Gosforth High Street.
- Adequate space for cycle lanes and subsequent enforcement of any illegal parking within them.
- Increased education in relation to courteous use of the High Street environment.
- Simpler, and less technical future consultation.
- Inclusion of business considerations within proposals.