

Newcastle Cycling Campaign



Newcastle Cycling Campaign's comments on

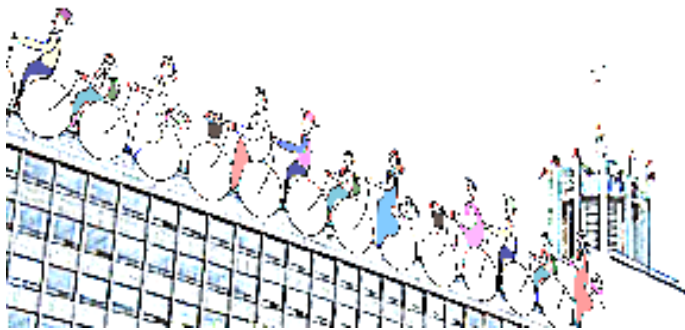
One Core Strategy 2030 Consultation Draft January 2011 Part of 1PLAN

13 March 2011

We submitted our comments to planning&housingstrategy@newcastle.gov.uk.

Responsible council officer: Harvey Emms
Strategic Housing, Planning and Transportation
Environment and Regeneration Directorate
Newcastle City Council

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OFFICIAL BACKGROUND

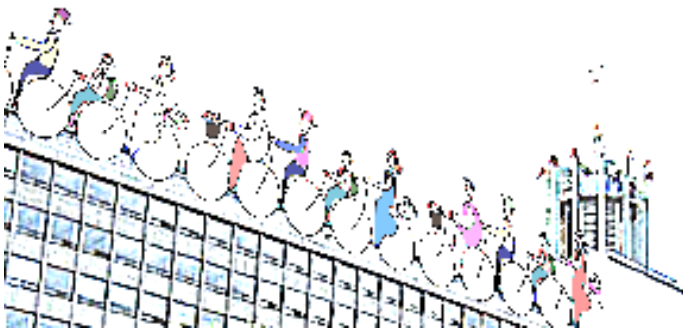
Council website The *Core Strategy* sets out the overall vision and strategy for the future development of both Gateshead and Newcastle and looks at areas such as housing, transport, health and well being and the environment. It is a plan that looks ahead to how we would like our areas to look like in the next 20 years. The plan aims to outline how both areas will plan for the creation of more housing, jobs, and an ambitious target for population growth.

The plan focuses on the following key areas;

- The Urban Core (Gateshead Centre and Newcastle City Centre)
- our neighbourhoods, including Benwell, Scotswood, Birtley, Great Park, MetroGreen, and Walker Riverside
- our rural areas and smaller village settlements
- existing employment areas
- sustainable locations.

<http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/core.nsf/a/haveyoursayonplanning>

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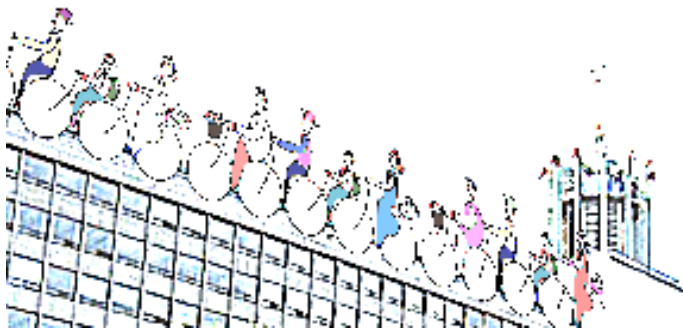




OUR RESPONSE

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1.1 Introductory statement

We welcome the many statements made in the *One Core Strategy* in support of sustainable transport in general, and cycling in particular:

1CORE says

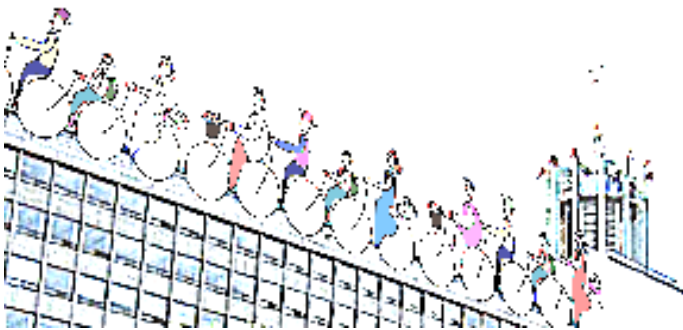
- “a key issue for the future development of Newcastle Gateshead is the high volume of traffic passing through the urban core” p.14
- “improved green spaces or cycling and walking routes” p.25
- “in line with the policy 5, we aim to reduce the amount of traffic through and within the urban core” p.77
- “promote walking and cycling” p. 84
- “greater emphasis on walking and cycling” p.88

We are somewhat in doubt however how these statements will be realised: a lot has been said in past policy and guiding documents about cycling, yet the Cycling Revival or Cycling Revolution has been largely absent.

The cycling community is rightly worried about the sincerity of policy statements, and we have recently asked that question to the council scrutiny committee.

Furthermore, the cycling community told the council to improve cycling in the ‘Safe cycling in Newcastle’ petition in June 2010 which attracted over 800 signatories.

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This is a number which cannot be ignored.

General point

On a more constructive note, we would urge the councils to translate the vision, strategic objectives and policy statements of the 1PLAN and now the One Core Strategy into an implementation framework which really does provide the much-needed interventions and infrastructure changes to create a prosperous, attractive and sustainable environment.

We ask the council to also read our submission to the Urban Core Area Action Plan which ran in parallel with this consultation.

The following comments and recommendations will ensure that, as well as the general vision set out in the document, the details and “small prints” are right.

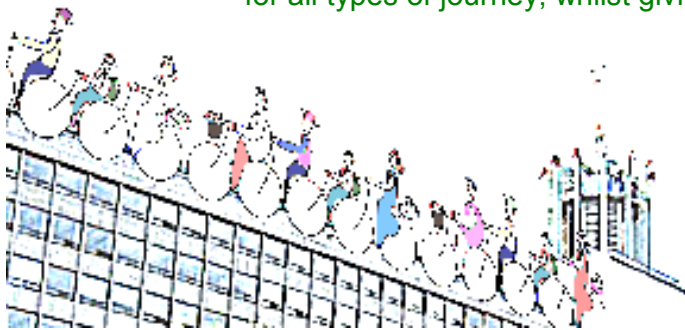
1.2 Comments and recommendations

1.2.1 Make cycling part of the solution

1CORE reads:

“A more sustainable transport system which promotes walking and cycling could reduce the level of traffic, benefit public health and improve quality and attractiveness of place. We acknowledge the need for access by car for certain journeys and seek to provide a balanced transport network that caters for all types of journey, whilst giving priority to sustainable modes.”

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Core action item

We would suggest this to more confidently state "will reduce the level of traffic".

We also wonder why it is necessary to make statements such as "acknowledge the need for access by car for certain journeys"? Which pressure is the council under to make such statement when only a minority of journeys "must" be carried out by car, might it be due to the nature of the trip or the driver's or passengers' capacity. Many journeys are either totally avoidable or transferable to more sustainable means.

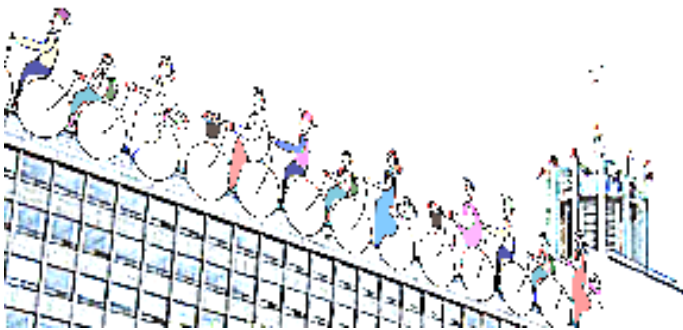
Rather disappointingly, it seems, the councils are perpetuating car dependency which they also seek to eradicate.

Core action item

Remove statements such as "acknowledge the need for access by car for certain journeys"

Policy 17 is concerning the Urban Core and mentions the councils' plan to reduce the amount of traffic within and through the urban core. This is welcome news.

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General point

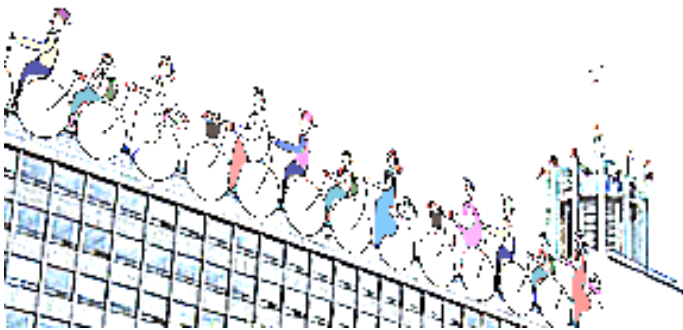
*We must ask the councils to **stand firm** on this as the revitalisation of our urban centres depends on this traffic reduction coupled with public realm improvement: giving streets back to people.*

The reliance on the car, especially for short urban journeys must be broken. Can the councils explain how they are going about this. The actions are few and far between and sometimes seem counter-productive.

The councils must not only get smarter harvesting external forces to their advantage (retailers, developers and developer contributions to sustainable transport), but must also get very smart with drawing in alternative funding sources for cycling and walking. Especially in a climate of diminishing leadership and support by central government, especially for sustainability development and transport. An officer, with the right skills, professional enthusiasm and excellent experience of sustainable travel, especially cycling, is required.

For better chance of success, the council should always consult the cycling community on funding and bid details and value their expert community input. This is most notable with the recent LSTF which will be viewed favourably by the DfT, the assessor and budget grantor, if community support can be demonstrated.

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1.2.2 Infrastructure

Adequate and well designed **infrastructure is absolutely key** to increasing cycling numbers.

General point

In relation to cycling, it is essential that cycling organisations can work closely with their councils to ensure that the appropriate measures are put in place from the very early stage of planning.

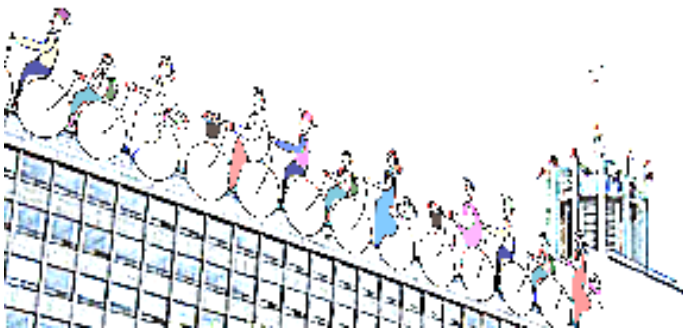
1.2.3 General comment

7.12 mentions how **excessive vehicle speeds be tackled by the police**. May we add also that it is the antiquated road design that encourages speeding.

General point

*We therefore must urge the councils to adopt a 21st century **road safety** perspective by **putting the vulnerable first** (cyclists on roads), encouraging walking and cycling, and being brave enough to **curb the strong** where necessary. It might mean discouraging driving or making driving conditions harder i.e. **reducing speeds**, and **car permeability**. This coupled with **public realm improvements** will benefit cyclists (and pedestrians alike) in an immeasurable way.*

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1.2.4 Cycling network

We congratulate the councils on Policy 5 stating to “develop a comprehensive cycle network”. However can we stress that a **continuous** and **strategic** network is currently much more important and effective than a comprehensive one.

As you know hundreds of city cyclists have recently asked for improvements to the pitiful cycle network in and around Newcastle. You can access the petition and survey report at this address <http://katlayout.co.uk>. Please read the report and recommendation it makes.

General point

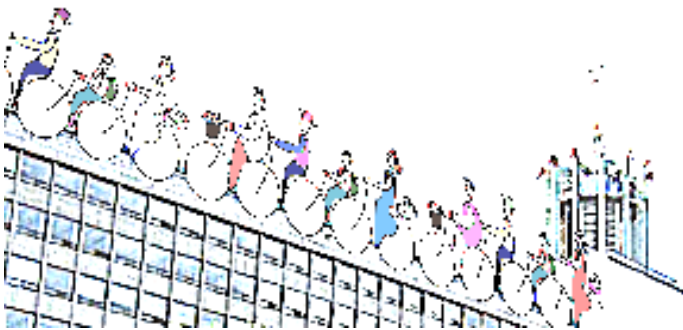
Please take the message that hundreds of petitioners have sent you seriously and incorporate the findings in your strategy and policy documents.

*We would suggest the council to focus on **strategic routes** first, before it seeks to improve all roads. A good effort in targeted routes goes further than a diluted effort.*

Core action item

Amend to read “develop a comprehensive cycle network consisting of continuous and safe strategic routes firmly rooted in the councils’ planning and engineering contexts”.

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1.2.5 Additional cycling infrastructure

We note an interesting project for a **walk & cycle bridge at Newburn**. We would advise the council to make sure that **money is spent wisely** and cyclists must be included in the consultation process right from the start. This will undoubtedly be a high capital expenditure project, which must come with a clear justification why it should be spent at this location benefiting pedestrians and cyclists, and not elsewhere.

1.2.6 Public realm

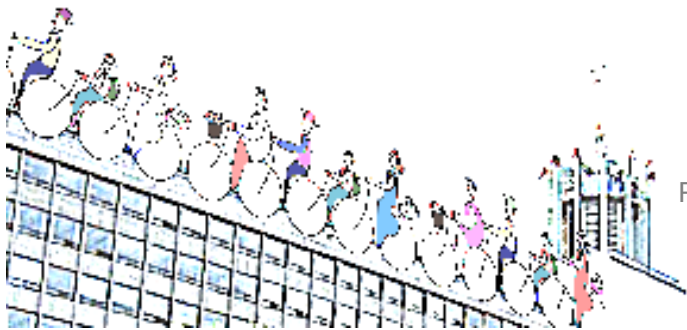
Can we ask the councils to integrate walking and cycling modes more: the development of an understanding of true shared spaces is essential to **modern, vibrant, European, inclusive** urban realm creation. It can be done, other cities have proven that mode integration works very effectively for civilising urban space. The *1PLAN* is also clear on this: it is the **over-engineered roads and fast-moving traffic the blight our urban core and fragment the urban fabric**.

Can we draw your attention to this short video of Copenhagen's impressive urban transformation which matches our vision of a people-friendly city centre. It is essential viewing to everyone who wants Newcastle to be a modern, vibrant, European, inclusive city.

Streetfilms <http://bit.ly/bpO1sR>

We recommend that any pedestrianisation also includes cycling provisions. The *One Core* statements below should include cycling.

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From 1CORE with **suggested change in bold:**

“the urban core is generally compact and walkable **and cyclable**, but there are barriers to pedestrian **and cycle** movement notably heavy traffic, poor public realm and fragmented walking **and cycling** route”, p. 74

“by prioritising sustainable modes and restricting traffic to the periphery we will create a quality of place that is easily accessible, pleasant to walk **and cycle** around and supports economic activity” p. 77

Experience gained by our fellow European countries clearly shows that walking and cycling can be combined. Sharing space is possible, even in Newcastle: in front of the Civic Centre and Robinson Library, the Town Moor.

Section 11, **quality of place**, should also be defined by their ability to make it easy for people to get around on foot but **also by bicycle** (see active travel).

General point

Can the councils please clarify their stance on traffic-calmed and pedestrianised areas? Councils must make sure new areas include cycle provision, and cross-reference this statement to East Pilgrim Street and other major development sites.

With foresight and vision, a lot more effort needs to go into accustomisation: open Northumberland Street for cyclists out-of-shopping hours on a 6-monthly trial basis and observe what happens.

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1.2.7 Partnership work

7.11 states that **the councils will work with partners.**

Core action item

We feel that partnership working must be mentioned more throughout the document.

General point

Could you please clarify how partnership working will be done? Of course with special regard to cycling but - as highlighted above - walking as well, as we believe these modes are highly compatible.

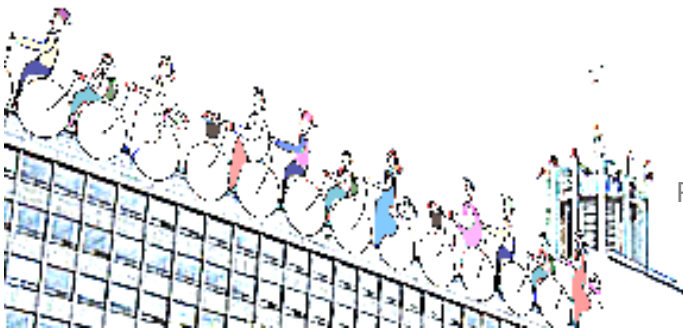
1.2.8 Targets

7.11 further states “**on-road lanes (sometimes mixed with other modes)**”. We again (as we have done in the LTP3 consultation) advise against this as we do not believe that this will bring about the **cycling revolution** as the LTP3 (draft) inspiringly promised. Alternative calmer routes will be needed.

In the absence of any hard targets, we take the cycling revolution to mean a ten-fold increase in the number of people cycling in 10 years. See Sustrans “More Haste less Speed” proposing a 20% cycle modal share by 2020.

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/katsdekker/5437787595/>

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Please note that we also believe that a further doubling should take place between 2020 and 2040 to near 40% of all journeys cycled. Councils will have their work cut out.

General point

Please set modal share targets and discuss these with interest groups.

1.2.9 Active travel

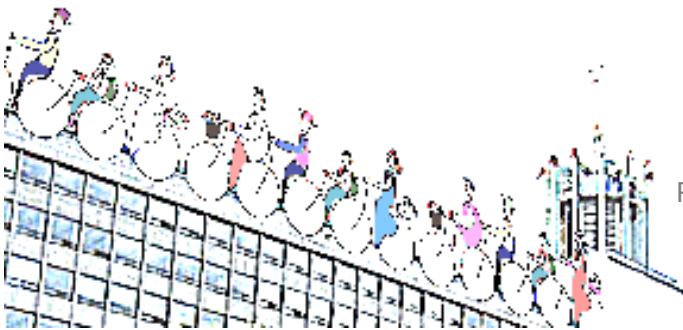
Section 7 (**Transport and Accessibility**) and Section 8 (**Health and well-being**) fail to mention active travel and its benefits. Walking and cycling are **sustainable and active travel modes** and need to be recognised for their health benefits. A cycling journey can cover a good 5 miles, a lot more even, and is very energetically efficient way of travelling at that.

There are **multiple benefits** in getting people cycling, and walking and we urge the councils to work in partnership with health sector. There might also be funding opportunities.

1.2.10 Integrated transport

Cycling must be integrated into public transport.

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General point

We urge our councils and their partners to develop plans with swiftness.

Cyclists want to be part of any plan and review.

Can the council please take note that a lot of time has been lost through Nexus' persistent stalling on the issue of bicycle integration. We request leadership from our councils.

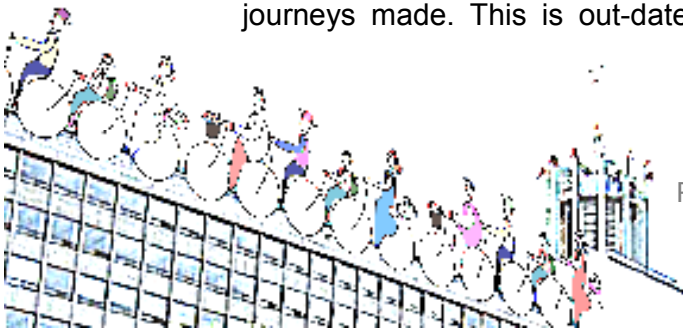
1.2.11 Other schemes

We are very worried about **East Pilgrim Street** development not taking cycling into account seriously (in fact worryingly relegating it below public transport in current plans) and would welcome involvement of cyclists in the further planning of the large urban development site to **avoid further grave planning mistakes** such as at the New Gate/Eldon Square development, where permeability and public realm have been compromised at the expense of retail space. Not to mention a rather disregarding design for cyclists.

The councils also must start to take Travel Plans to a higher level of quality, as part of the development process.

We further note the proposal to spend public money on **two further road bridges** to reduce congestion. We would advise that **reducing congestion is not always a panacea** and, more often than not, does not bring the desired results: as many past road schemes have shown, when new roads are built they simply attract more traffic increasing the overall amount of cars and journeys made. This is out-dated transport planning and must be avoided

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where-ever it can. We would rather like to see that money spent on sustainable travel projects where it yields returns.

You could however use this technique for cycling: Build the infrastructure and cyclists will come!

1.3 Conclusion

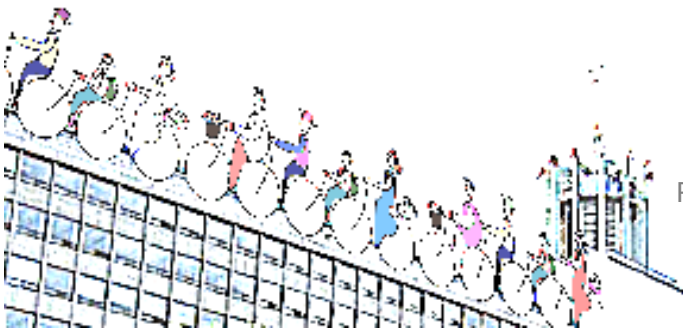
We believe the *One Core Strategy* should acknowledge **cycling as a vital part of the solution**, and fully reap all the cross-benefits cycling can provide to society if allowed to do so through your policy and leadership. Both of which you, our councils, can provide. With expertise from the cycling community this should be the start of a great partnership.

Some changes to the text of document are needed and have been outlined above in grey boxes like this one.

Furthermore, sometimes the document's focus must change, more detail is required or old rhetoric should be examined and eliminated, all as above in orange boxes like this one.

Cycling, as an active and sustainable mode of transport, plays an important role in:

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- ➔ creating the economically and environmentally sustainable urban core as described in *1PLAN*
- ➔ making our neighbourhoods better places to live and play
- ➔ connecting the urban core with neighbourhoods (at least within a 5 miles radius of each other, and longer journeys with multi modal integration) in a truly sustainable way

The most important thing is that this document will not just remain words but that our Councillors and council officers start to believe in their own vision. *1PLAN* is a great vision for *Newcastle-Gateshead*. Once the **political will, trust and belief in the vision** is there, implementation will be so much easier.

Please never hesitate to contact us to discuss our comment further. We always offer our help, and comment. However comments more often than not vanish and we are concerned about our councils' approach to **community involvement**. Could you please confirm this will not be the case and true, open and honest, fair and efficient engagement will take place. The petition showed that the local cycling community is very passionate. The *Newcastle Cycling Campaign* offers to the councils this **point of contact** with the cycling community. We want to help engagement and involvement to take place.

We look forward to having an input in the implementation framework as this document will set out the targets and indicators against which the strategy will be monitored and measured. This will ensure that the ambitious vision set out in the *1PLAN* can continue in the *One Core Strategy* and will actually be put in action leading to concrete improvements for the growing cycling community and more generally for the residents of *Newcastle-Gateshead*.

Katja Leyendecker and Claire Prospert

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