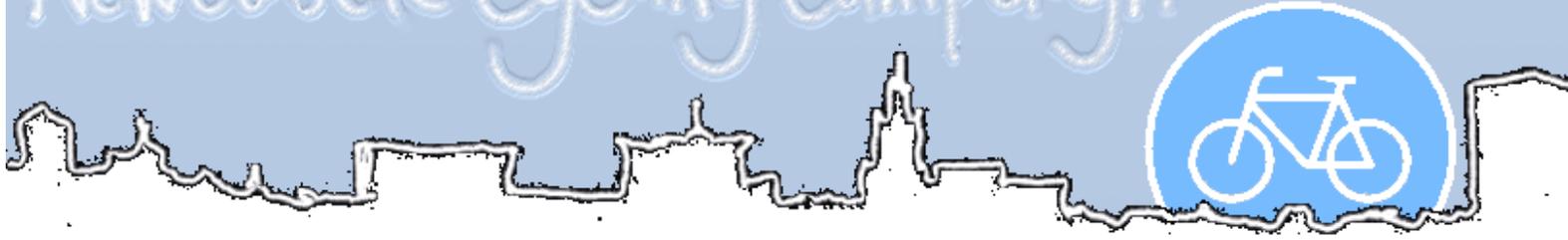


Newcastle Cycling Campaign



Newcastle Cycling Campaign's comments on

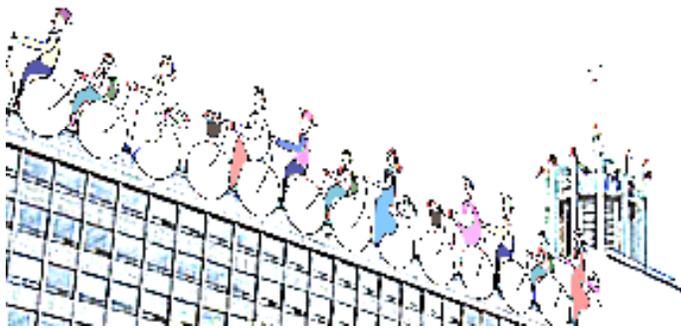
Urban Core Area Action Plan Consultation Draft January 2011 Part of 1PLAN

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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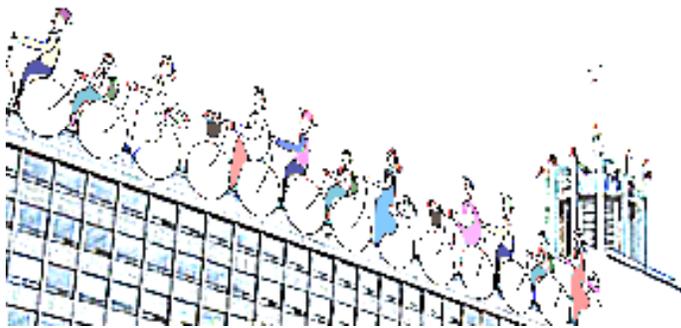


OFFICIAL BACKGROUND

Council website The Urban Core of the Tyne and Wear City Region includes Newcastle City Centre and Gateshead Centre. Within the Urban Core, we aim to improve the economy, urban living, transport and accessibility and the quality of place.

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

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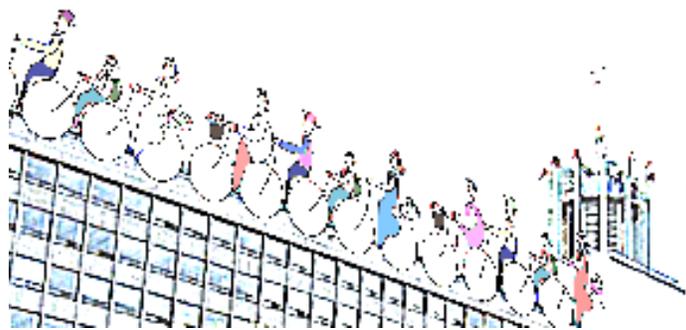




OUR RESPONSE

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1.1 Introductory statement

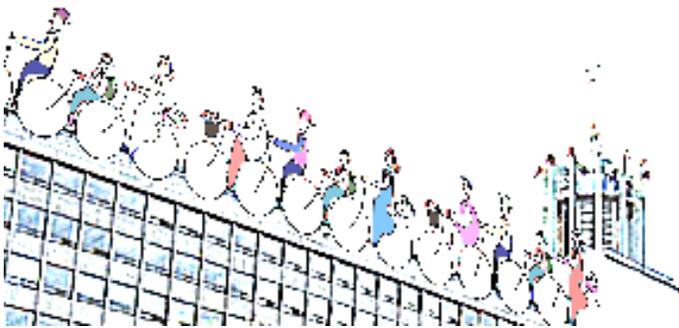
The Newcastle Cycling Campaign is a not-for-profit community group of volunteers. We give our time to press for much needed change. Change that has been promised to cyclists for decades. Change that has not yet materialised to cyclists' satisfaction. We read the document with great anxiety and trepidation.

We would like to point out that you, our councils, are not alone on this journey. Excellent help and advice is available from groups such as the Newcastle Cycling Campaign.

There are four main themes in the BNG vision and luckily for cycling it delivers on all of those.

- **Economic Prosperity** – creating a flourishing economy driven by science, creativity and innovation and a place recognised for and characterised by a highly skilled working population.
- **Health and Wellbeing** – creating a place with high rates of emotional and physical wellbeing, delivered through encouraging and promoting healthy lifestyle and reducing inequalities.
- **Home and Thriving Communities** – creating a place where people choose to live that offers a range of quality of housing set in safe, attractive communities with good access to employment, education and health care.

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- **Sustainable Quality of Place** – creating a place that maximises the potential of its landmarks, environment, riverscape, townscape, heritage and culture.

Please note that we have commented on the **1CORE** strategy separately. This document should be read in conjunction with the **1CORE** comments.

1.2 Comments and recommendations

1.2.1 Target setting

We welcome the statement 3.11.

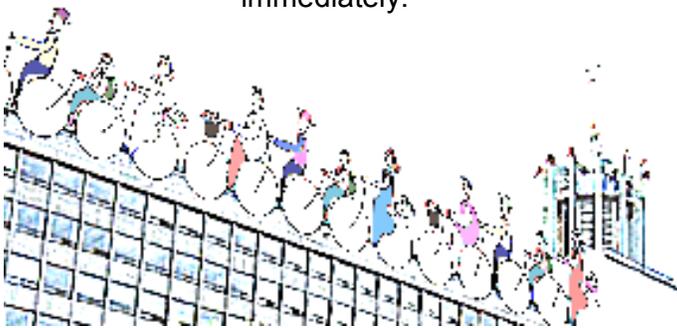
3.11 By reducing the amount of traffic within and through the Urban Core there is an opportunity to re-balance the existing space giving priority to sustainable transport modes including increasing pedestrian priority, improving cycle links, increasing public transport priority, and locating new car parks on sites easily accessible from the strategic road network.

But we must urge the council to draw up plans immediately as to how this **traffic reduction**, which is vital for the urban core revitalisation, will be achieved.

▶▶ **Draw up a traffic reduction plan now.**

Setting clear targets for modal share is also key. The councils should discuss targets with interest groups. Councils must start the **target-setting** exercise immediately.

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▶▶ **Set clear modal share targets now.**

For a civilised city centre walking and cycling needs to be made pleasant and enjoyable, as well as safe. Otherwise the **cycling revolution** so keenly stated in the LTP3 (draft) will not happen.

In the absence of any targets, we take the cycling revolution as a ten-fold increase in the number of people cycling in 10 years. See Sustrans “More Haste less Speed” proposing a 20% modal share by 2020. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/katsdekker/5437787595/>

One way forward would be to decide on the modal share model and what shares are to be achieved in 5, 10, 15 and 20 years.

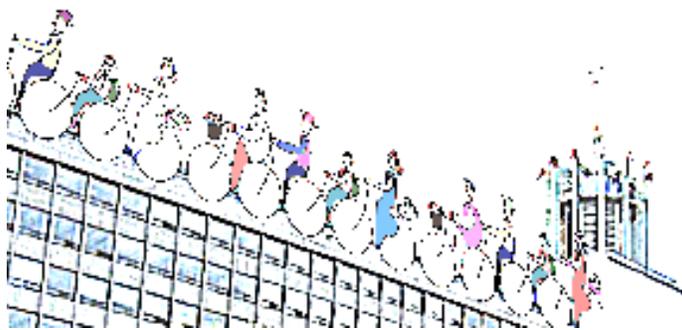
For short journeys into the city centre we suggest this transport mix matrix.

Table 1 Modal mix

%age of trips	2010 (est)	2015	2020	2025	2030
Walk	28	35	40	40	40
Cycle	2	10	20	30	38
Bus / metro	20	20	20	20	20
Private car	50	35	10	10	2
Total	100	100	100	100	100

This would be entirely achievable if the political will and some comparatively **modest resources** could be mobilised.

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1.2.2 Parking strategy

1PLAN dictates car parking strategically located outside the urban core, an approach we welcome. However the method is unclear. Where are these car parks, and which ones get relocated? Where is the **Parking Strategy** connected to the traffic reduction plans.

▶▶ **Draw up a car parking strategy now.**

Worryingly the plan seems to suggest more car parking is introduced.

1.2.3 A civilised city centre

We agree with statement 3.35 in principle.

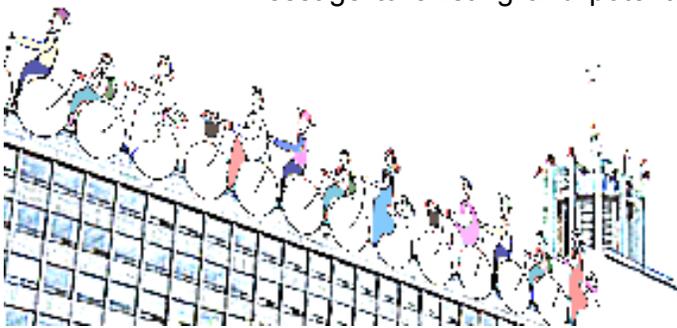
3.35 How we manage movement is fundamental to how our urban core operates. Increasing activity in the Urban Core has created, and will continue to create, an increase in demand for travel by all modes into and within the area. It can also result in poorer accessibility to, within and around the Urban Core, and gives rise to greater potential for conflict between pedestrians, vehicles, cyclists and buses. An important role of the AAP is to balance the growth-related pressures and the potential impacts.

As you know hundreds of city cyclists have asked for safe and sensible routes in and through the urban core, <http://katlayout.co.uk>.

▶▶ **Confirm you have read the petition report and recommendations.**

We currently do not believe that the proposal sends a sufficiently strong message to existing and potential future cyclists that cycling really is at the

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heart of the city council. For cycling to happen infrastructure improvements must take place. This may mean discouraging car use such as traffic reduction, speed restriction and pedestrianisation. Something which appears to lack political will.

▶ **Please confirm to us how you are planning to achieve this.**

The acknowledgement of conflict between road user is fine, but what is not acceptable is the apparent believe (reading between the lines) that fewer cars create growth-related pressures. The *1PLAN* is clear on this: it is the private vehicle blighting the Urban Core. 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.

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

Radial routes into the urban centre would have to be improved too, alongside any proposed city centre improvements.

1.2.4 Tools for political leadership

This time our councils must be strong and stand firm with their *1PLAN*, and not pander to the so-called 'motoring lobby'.

Politicians must be given the right engagement tools: clear plans, number & figures, messages and understandable aims and targets. This will help them to explain to the public the *1PLAN* (something painfully lacking so far), set public expectations thereby giving residents the necessary time to adjust to the 'new thinking'.

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▶▶ **Please give Councillors the instruments and tools.**

Politicians must take the lead in this dialogue. Politicians should demand from the council these detailed plans, targets and background data to backup their debate with the public.

▶▶ **Councillors, please take up the *1PLAN* baton and demand the tools.**

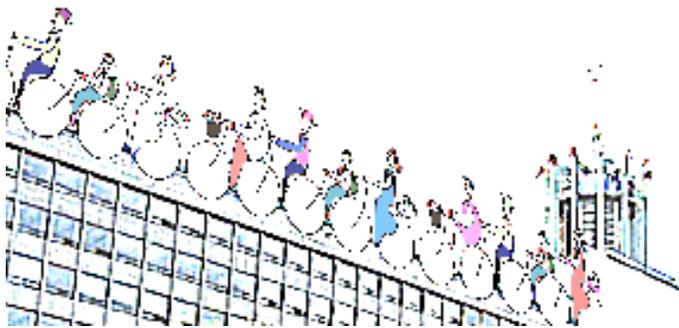
After all the council repeatedly states that it wants more people to cycle. With a city centre being a major trip attractor, where best to start than at the heart of it all. By **creating a destination** with rich public realm and civilised space where people feel compelled to go, spend time and enjoy themselves.

1.2.5 Cycle routes

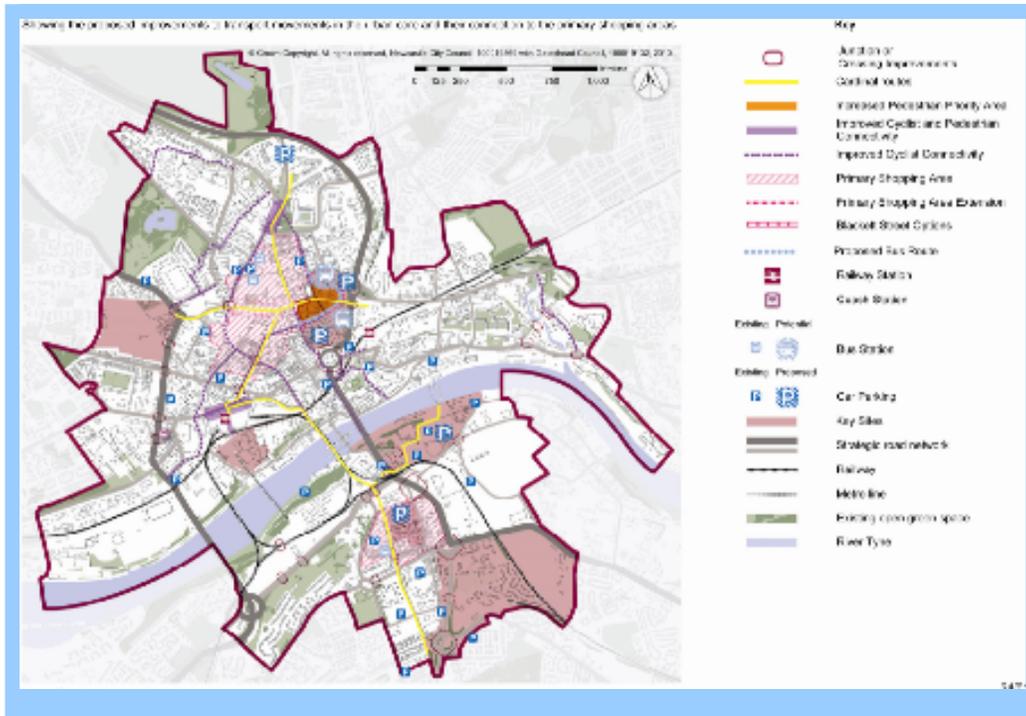
With interest we note the map in appendix 5 “**Transport Interventions**”. We welcome maps for providing visual clarity. However on this occasion, we have more questions than actual comments.

See Appendix 5 for map of Existing Transport Network.

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Overall it is difficult to understand where the traffic of the various modes will flow. **There is a lack of strategic clarity.** Be believe that if a system or a concept is difficult to understand, it will be more difficult to implement.

Please clarify the “increased Cyclist and Pedestrian interventions” (light purple).

What significance do the **cardinal routes** (yellow) hold? Are they for the use of a specific mode of transport. Confusingly Northumberland Street is shown as cardinal, which is pedestrian only.

We welcome any cycling routes and are happy to discuss a cycle network further. We would strongly advise the council to concentrate on **strategic** routes into and around the city centre first before diluting their effort too much.

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The plans do not appear to have sufficient detail to effectively comment on the cycle routes. We also note, that the cycle routes shown are not joined up. We would welcome more detail on routes, and how these routes have been chosen. Can you please clarify which routes will be vehicle-trafficked? Has the hierarchy been used? Reduce traffic first, including cycle-friendly pedestrianisation, then look at lowering speed.

► **The message of the map must be made clearer.**

The AAP reads

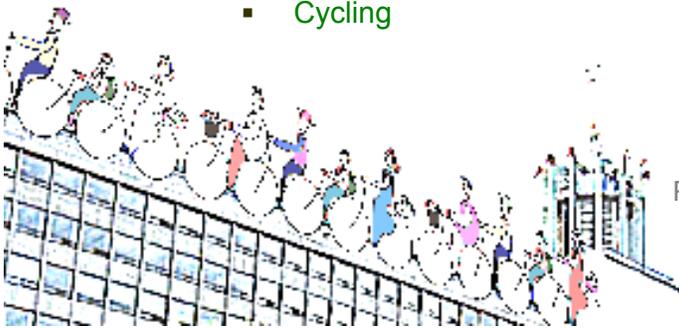
Objective 6 Improving walkability and streets for pedestrians and cyclists whilst improving access and links for people and goods.

3.36 NewcastleGateshead is an accessible urban area with good public transport. It has a compact and walkable centre. Employment created in the Urban Core is likely to generate 30% fewer commuting journeys by car compared to jobs in locations outside. We can make it easier for people to walk and cycle across the Urban Core by balancing streetspace in favour of pedestrians on the most important walking routes, and by providing strategic cycle routes through it. We need to ensure, too, that public transport is prioritised, so that people can travel into the heart of the Urban Core sustainably, and then walk to their destinations. And we need to provide sufficient parking to support the economy, and to locate and manage it in locations which help prevent or reduce traffic moving through the Urban Core.

3.37 It is therefore appropriate to consider movement by mode of travel, in the following hierarchy:

- Walking
- Cycling

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- Public transport (including hackney carriage and private hire taxis)
- Servicing vehicles
- General Traffic (visitors, shoppers, commuters, through traffic).

Can we reiterate the importance of these **strategic** routes and consulting on the strategic network with all interest groups.

Sadly the councils felt again the need to make the ill link between car use (in this car parking) and the retail economy. Can we stress that this statement is in opposition to *1PLAN* which states that the traffic blights the city's streetscape and hinders economy to unfold.

▶▶ **The council to draw up a strategic routes, and consult.**

1.2.6 New developments

We are also very worried about East Pilgrim Street development, not taking cycling into account seriously and would be glad if effective consultation could take into account the view of community groups.

This is the main section concerning cyclists, replicated below.

Walking and Cycling

3.38 At the 'top' of the hierarchy is walking - the most sustainable form of transport, with the least impact on the environment. Safe, pleasant pedestrian routes and a high-quality pedestrian environment encourage walking and influence where people want to spend time. However, even though we have a compact Urban Core, it is not always easy for pedestrians to get around.

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Traffic movements, highway infrastructure, indirect crossings and excessive street furniture all make conditions more difficult. We cannot resolve every conflict, but particular attention will be given to the creation of major 'Cardinal Routes' which will aim to make walking easier and more pleasant. A pilot wayfinding project is planned to start this year to improve signage between the University, the retail area and Central Station.

3.39 Cycling, which is also a very sustainable mode, can be attractive for many purposes including work and leisure, yet there is a lack of clear routes in some locations across the Urban Core. Fragmented cycle routes can make access difficult to places of employment. Other issues concerning cycling include the potential for tensions with other travel modes, and the need for adequate cycle parking throughout the Urban Core.

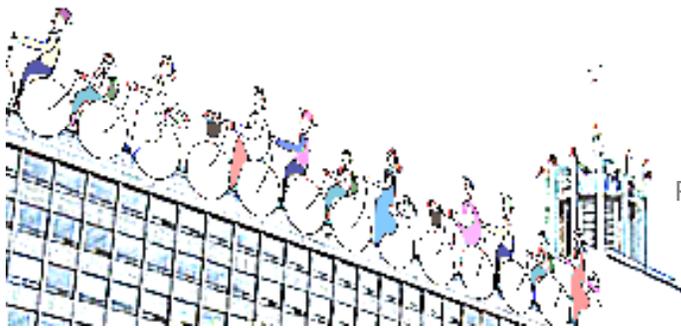
We would like to comment that cycling is three times more energy-efficient than walking i.e. you can travel three times as far with the same energy expenditure. Cycling gets you around!

Preferred Option Policy 7 - Pedestrians and Cyclists

Development of high quality pedestrian links and facilities throughout the Urban Core: we will continue to upgrade pedestrian facilities and improve legibility where the opportunity arises, and in particular where redevelopment could create new routes for pedestrians;

Designation of two Cardinal Routes (north/south, east/west) where pedestrian movement through the Urban Core will be prioritised. They will be the focus for improvements, forming the core of the pedestrian network and connecting pedestrian activity to transport interchanges;

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Can we re-iterate that signage is only ever as good as the quality of the strategic network. Judging from the way-finding project that is planned there appears to be much more work needed to identify strategic routes. We urge the council to check its archives and re-engage with local community groups as this work has already been carried out.

The cycling route system is very disjointed, as you know. Hundreds of cyclists told you that and are crying out for better, safer routes. Please do not disappoint these hundreds of local people.

Reduction of car traffic and greater priority to pedestrians in areas where there are high numbers of pedestrian movements and where conflict arises;

We note the council felt the need to acknowledge the tensions but has not suggested how this conflict could be overcome.

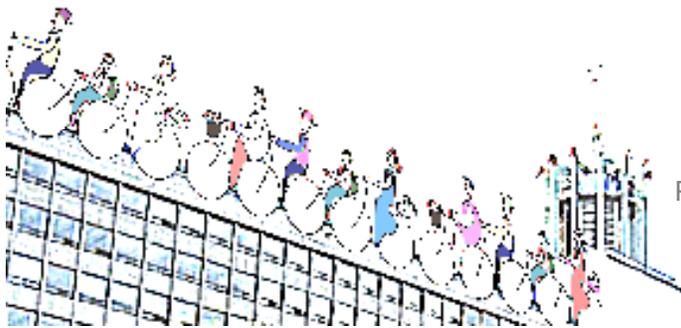
►► Can you clarify how the council plans to resolve this?

We have suggested a road user debate to take place. This is important to cyclists as cycling is often misunderstood due to its under-use in the general population, leading to conflict and abuse. We have also previously suggested that a phased approach be adopted such as opening up Northumberland Street to cyclists out-of-shopping hours.

Cycling and walking can integrate well. It might well need some training and gentle coaching of pedestrians but shared spaces such as the route in front of the Civic Centre show it can be done.

The AAP continues

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- Rationalisation of the amount of street furniture, to reduce clutter;
- Introduction of cycle routes to facilitate easy access to and within the Urban Core;
- Provision of infrastructure such as cycle parking and cycle 'hubs'.

Please consider innovative design such as the flexible cycle parking system: **Cyclehoops** and excellent mapping and routing facility **Cyclestreets**. Both are low cost ways of promoting and encouraging cycling.

We would welcome more information on the definition of a cycle 'hub'.

▶▶ **Councils to embrace innovative solutions.**

1.2.7 Modal integration

With regard to section **Public Transport** we cannot stress strongly enough the importance of cycling integration.

Cycling also must be favoured more at transport hubs such as central station.

▶▶ **Can you please outline a plan how you will go about this?**

1.2.8 Rationalisation of bus services

We would also propose a rationalisation of the entire city centre bus service to be carried out.

▶▶ **Please confirm this is underway.**

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1.2.9 Taxis

With interest we read that taxi is seen as a public transport service. We note this is a highly individualised form of public transport, almost going against the definition of public transport.

1.2.10 Private car use

The chapter **General Traffic** must send a much stronger message about the use of the private car if Newcastle City Council really want to achieve a truly civilised pro-people city centre.

We believe that a truly sustainable transport system means that the private car has become entirely irrelevant (bar a few exceptions, of course) for urban travel, see Table 1 above. Many of our journeys are under 5 miles (3 out of 4 journeys) and can be substituted by more sustainable modes of transport.

1.2.11 Delivery vehicles

Urban freight and delivery traffic must be managed carefully. Delivery vehicles on Northumberland Street during shopping hours are not acceptable when equally disallowing bicycles.

▶▶ **Can the council please outline the future of Northumberland Street.**

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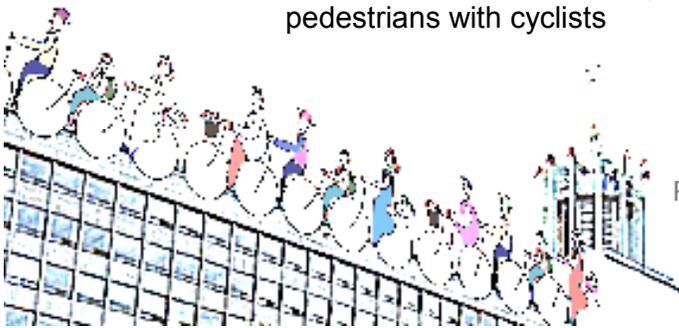


1.3 Summary and suggestions

Overall we do not feel we have said anything, the council wouldn't have known already. But in summary, the below action would help making cycling more welcome, safer, more included.

- ➔ Set clear targets for modal share
- ➔ Develop a traffic reduction strategy including car parking
 - Strengthen East Pilgrim Street transport plans such as disconnection of Pilgrim St from Swan House, combined cycling and walking areas
 - Consider IDR one-way system to free up more space for walking and cycling
- ➔ Politicians are key to the success: give them the right tools and information
- ➔ Clear city-wide strategy for road network and strategic routes for different modes of transport embedded in that a cycling network: **but** focus on strategic routes first to avoid diluted wasted effort.
 - Cycle corridor routes into the urban core
- ➔ Bus services, get rid of duplication - "too many buses roaming the urban core"
- ➔ Offer a delivery service (including by bicycle) to address the perception of "need a car to transport by bags"
- ➔ Tackle vertical safety measures (railings, bollards), street furniture
- ➔ Address road safety dichotomy
- ➔ Northumberland Street to opened up to cyclists out of hours to acquaint pedestrians with cyclists

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- ➔ Consult more and more effectively with community groups

1.4 Conclusion

We do not currently think this proposal is going far enough for cyclists, or indeed public realm improvement. Old-fashioned car-centric thinking is still prevailing in the document. We are not convinced the councils have internalised the transport messages from the *1PLAN* yet.

More detail is required particular around the strategic route identification **for all modes**. Without that the *1PLAN* implementation would be in doubt.

We would also welcome clearer messages on targets, traffic reduction and parking strategies, integration of sustainable transport modes and specifically cycle integration into the public psyche. We remain to be convinced our councils take cycling seriously other than in words.

The *Newcastle Cycling Campaign* and other community & charity groups have got their work cut out **educating their council**. The cycling community still feels it's pushed aside too easily, even after hundreds of local people asked for better cycling facilities... we start to see some change happen.

However, we keep hearing that change happens slowly at the council. Cyclists' patience after **decades of council promises** is thinning.

The *Newcastle Cycling Campaign* is here to help. As always.

Katja Leyendecker (chair)

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