

Ashington Sustainable Travel Audit

Developing a programme of works for active travel in Ashington Town Centre

May 2015



1 Network and Street Development

Introduction

Facilities for pedestrians and cyclists were recorded within the town centre boundary in order to inform future improvements to the area. This section begins with key observations regarding Ashington, followed by the issues that affect the primary retail and town centre streets.

The location and condition of key pedestrian and cycling infrastructure was recorded, including: drop kerbs, ramps, hand rails, stairs, foot/cycle bridges, underpasses, sub-standard lengths of footway, pedestrian refuges, zebra crossings, Puffin crossings, Toucan crossing, shared paths, cycle routes (off and on road), advisory cycle lanes, cycle parking, pedestrian/cycling signage, obstructive street furniture, pedestrian areas/zones. Full details of the audit and photo index are included at the end of this report.

An interactive map showing locations and features of the audit, as well as recommendations that follow in this report is available at: <http://tinyurl.com/AshingtonTravelAudit>

Error! Reference source not found. (page **Error! Bookmark not defined.**) details the results of the audit that informed recommendations for infrastructure across the town.

1.1 Rotary Parkway (A197)

Rotary Parkway forms part of a link road between the A189 and A1 which will eventually be completed with construction of the Morpeth Northern Bypass. Currently there is no provision for pedestrians and cyclists on the south side for 50 metres from the junction with Reiverdale Road. The pedestrian and cycle route operates effectively on the north side of Rotary Parkway but cedes Priority to motor traffic at the junctions with Lintonville Parkway and Lintonville Terrace.

Given the barrier that the road presents the development of high quality pedestrian and cyclist facilities on both sides should be prioritised.

1.2 Lintonville Parkway

Lintonville Parkway lacks footways on considerable sections and those footways that do exist are often blocked by pavement parking. The street would benefit from continuous footways on both sides with bollards installed to prevent parking abuse. Consideration should be given on whether on street car parking is appropriate for this road given that planning consents for the businesses located there will have carefully regulated provision for off-street car parking. The nature of the businesses in this area leads to a great deal of ad hoc parking despite ample car parking in the area. In the event that on street car parking is retained then clearly delineated bays should be provided broken up into groups of five or less by build outs.

1.3 Lintonville Terrace (A196)

The southern section of Lintonville Terrace is covered extensively by the town centre redevelopment proposals. It is important that cycle access is enhanced as and when the area is redeveloped. Shared Space has potential to work well here for both pedestrians and cyclists as long as traffic volume is kept below 10,000 vehicles per day (current traffic volume c.11,000 VPD).

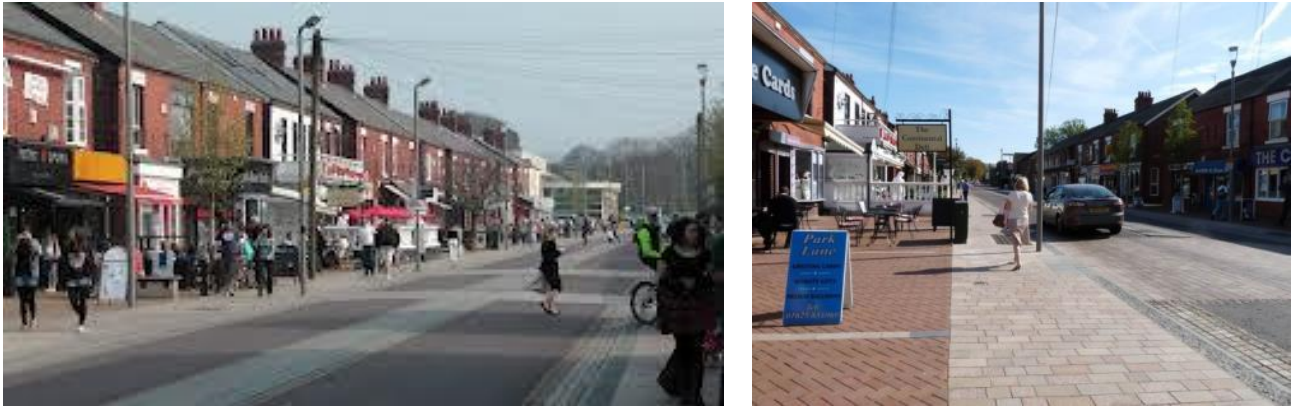


Figure 1: Shared space improvements in Poynton, Cheshire

The northern section of Lintonville Terrace is dominated by vehicle movements serving the new ASDA store and bus station. Facilities for pedestrians are poor with narrow footways and staggered crossings. Pedestrians are hemmed in by guard rail. The increased footfall generated by ASDA has meant that the narrow shared use paths connecting to Rotary Parkway have ceased to function effectively for local cyclists.

The traffic reduction required to enable pedestrian and cycle enhancements on the southern section may also free up sufficient carriageway width to enable national standard cycling infrastructure on the northern section. It is important that design reflects

- traffic volume, which given the ASDA access is likely to be high
- levels of pedestrian footfall, again high given the retail frontage

This points towards either on carriageway cycle lanes or separated cycle tracks. It would however be perfectly legitimate for alternative cycling routes to be provided accessing both the supermarket and the bus station which don't use this section of road provided they are sufficiently direct and convenient.



Figure 2: 'No entry except cycles' are a simple but effective method for improving cycle permeability.

1.4 North Seaton Road (A196)

As traffic proceeds south on North Seaton Road speeds increase such that the current traffic volume becomes highly uncomfortable for cycling. Providing adequate infrastructure to correct this would be difficult and costly, but could be phased accordingly. Given the high number of parallel potential north south routes it may be more cost effective to first adapt these to serve cycle movements rather than attempt to re-engineer North Seaton Road itself. Hence, the alternate north-south routes such as Laburnum Terrace are currently rendered unusable for cyclists due to no entry restrictions. Traffic orders should be modified to create "Except Cycles" exemptions on all of these streets as a matter of urgency.

The DfT authorised a number of trials of “except cycles” prior to issuing a note to local authorities allowing general use of this signage in January 2012. Depending on road width and volume of traffic an island or feeder lane may sometimes be required, but for narrower streets “except cycles” can function perfectly well without any markings on the carriageway.

Following these changes to parallel roads, a number of additions or adaptations could be made to North Seaton Rd making use of unused or redundant space, such as hatched areas and pairs of footways.



Figure 3: Light separation with reduced width central hatched area.

1. **Cycle lanes and separators:** there is a significant section of North Seaton Road between Roseneath Court and Titchfield Tce either side of Green Lane which cyclists are obliged to use in order to make viable east-west journeys through the southern section of Ashington. On this section there is ample space to remove a central hatched area and install good width separated cycling infrastructure. Given speed and volume, as a minimum light separation should be used e.g. 'armadillo' style cycle separators. As this type of infrastructure has not been installed in Northumberland before, it might be seen as a trial site.

2. **Cycle track:** Titchfield Tce to Bywell Rd boasts parallel footways that could be reallocated to accommodate a variety of users. The narrow footway on the nearside could be widened incorporating a section of grass verge and converted to a cycle track that is separated from the footpath by a tree lined grass verge. At Bywell Rd, there is the possibility to create a shared route by modifying a similar section of path, or redirecting cycle traffic onto a side road and converting into a 'cycle street' with some minor modifications. A cycle street is a quiet road in a residential area where traffic volume is currently very low, speeds are then restricted to 15mph and overtaking cycles is prohibited. Either of these would create a direct segregated route that links northern areas of the town with St Aiden's First School.

1.5 Station Road

Updating of the pedestrianized section of Station Road is covered extensively in the SPD, but whilst the SPD acknowledges the importance of the western section of Station Road for pedestrian and cycle movements there is no guidance on how this might be achieved in the context of vehicle movements accessing car parks around the station site.

“No Vehicles” signage indicates that cycling is prohibited in the pedestrian area but the service route is clearly being used by local cyclists. Currently the entrances into the pedestrianised area appear chaotic and there is little street width available to non-motorised users seeking to enter or exit the street.

There are two possible solutions for the road section to the west of the pedestrianised area, the first being the creation of a low speed shared space solution where characteristics of the pedestrianized section of Station Road are extended to the east. Provided that the speed of traffic is reduced sufficiently then there is no reason why a shared area could not work well for cyclists and provide more space for pedestrians in a similar way to Blakett Street in Newcastle.

At the point that Station Road crosses the rail line Wansbeck Square could be extended to create the feel of a single space across the width of the bridge. Sustrans are currently working on four schemes in Newcastle aiming to achieve “shared space” using a budget palette of materials, coloured asphalt and concrete blocks, the first of which will begin on site in the Summer 2015. Northumberland CC have approached leading consultants in urban design to explore the use of shared space designs at a number of locations around the County.



Figure 4: Shared space designs create a more pedestrian-friendly environment where appropriate, including Poynton, Cheshire (top right) and Turnpike Lane, London (bottom left).

East of Kenilworth Road the street functions as the access route for motor traffic heading for Wansbeck Square car park. Pedestrian provision on Station Road is very good but quality falls dramatically in the side roads. The western end of Station Road has wide footways with a 9 m wide carriageway but 2m of this width is lost to car parking.

If on-street car parking is to be retained then the only option will be creation of a single 3.5m wide central motor vehicle running lane with cycle lanes either side. Retained car parking should be grouped into sets of five bays to create a feeling of off carriageway parking. Depending on the location of services build-outs could be an opportunity to introduce street trees.



Figure 5: Sustrans shared space design, Jesmond

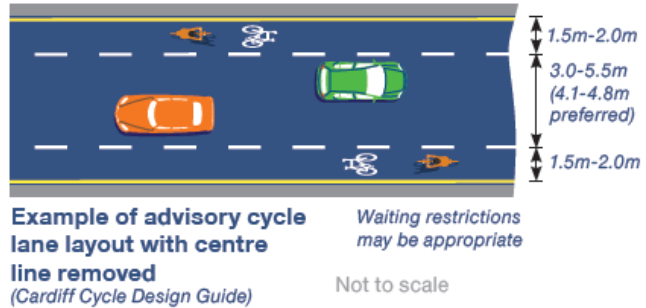


Figure 6: Dutch design for cycle friendly streets using contrasting colour and materials to allocate the road space. Sutrans Design guidance (right) shows a simpler approach.

Cycle permeability northbound from the library and cricket club is very poor, there doesn't appear to be a safe and legal way of re-joining station road other than via the car park access under Wansbeck Square. It is important that any redevelopment of Wansbeck Square addresses this issue and delivers bicycle permeability in both directions.

Connections from the north are also poor. It isn't clear how cyclists are expected to access Station Road from the cycle route which runs along Rotary Parkway and Ninth Row although a route could be signed.

1.6 Woodhorn Road

Woodhorn Road could form part of the backbone of Ashington's cycle network but currently lacks any facilities commensurate with the volume of bus and car traffic. The road has generous footways with a 7.5- 8.5m wide carriageway.

Removal of the centre line and marking 1.5m wide cycle lanes on each side of the carriageway with single 4.5- 5.5m wide central lane would be an option for this street. The town centre redevelopment proposals show the conversion of a large section of Woodhorn Road to shared space. We'd recommend ensuring that one of these two treatments extends along Woodhorn Road as far as Reiverdale Road.



Figure 7: Removal of centre lines- before and after- on a busy urban street (Islington)

Streets and lanes connecting into Woodhorn Road from the south should be treated to ensure full permeability for cycles with exemptions to One Way restrictions created and cycle gaps created in street closures. This is essential preparatory work which should be prioritised regardless of any eventual decision on how the town centre is redeveloped.



Figure 8: Large areas of residential streets can be improved with relatively small changes to traffic orders that were originally introduced to restrict vehicles and combat congestion.



1.7 Reiverdale Road

Reiverdale Rd is earmarked in the SPD for construction of a route for car traffic to bypass Lintonville Tce; however the more recent development proposals no longer rely on Reiverdale Rd. Reiverdale Rd makes a good walking and cycling link to the Lidl Supermarket site and should be developed and signed as such. Creation of a through route connecting to Rotary Way might be seen as a longer term project and would involve a small amount of land acquisition in order to cross Rotary Way.

1.8 North-South Links



Figure 9: West View is a particularly poor environment that does not welcome walkers or cyclists.

Park Road, Kenilworth Road and West View lie slightly outside the study area, but make very good north-south links either side of the rail line. The roads carry a proportion of school run traffic and evidently be well placed streets to develop that would encourage active travel. The three streets are spaced approximately 200m apart, in order to construct a town cycle network which does not use North Seaton Road all three would need to be upgraded. Park Road in particular serves two of the town's schools and connects to green space at

Ashington Park.

The northern section of Kenilworth Road is one way; it would be difficult but not impossible to deliver two way cycling through this road section. Current traffic calming on these streets varies with some use of speed cushions and build outs.

OPTION 1



In order to upgrade these routes to a modern 'quietway' standard, traffic calming should be positioned so that cyclists are placed in the correct road position and relative to narrowing strips at the edge of the carriageway 0.75m wide.

OPTION 2



Another alternative is the use of "sinusoidal" speed humps. These can be difficult to construct for contractors who may not have prior experience. They are, however, available as a prefabricated product such as Marshall's S humps.

OPTION 3



A third option would be to reconstruct build-outs to provide bicycle friendly bypasses; this requires careful design in order to prevent parked vehicles obstructing the bypasses.

1.9 Cycle Parking

One of the barriers to residents and visitors accessing local towns by bike are a lack of convenient and safe cycle parking. Small and frequent bike stands in visible locations can encourage people to cycle that would normally use other modes of transport.

Cyclists generally want to park as close to their destination as possible, not only for convenience but for security concerns of leaving a locked bike unattended. Fortunately, cycle parking is very space efficient and requires little or no maintenance costs when compared to typical vehicle parking. In order to reinforce the transport hierarchy, cycle parking should be sited as close as possible to the final destination or main access of buildings. Experience suggests that where this is not the case cyclists are likely to 'fly park' in locations that are convenient to them.

Ashington has very limited cycle parking, with just three locations ‘Sheffield’ type stands clustered around a small area in the town centre to the west of Station Rd. Figure 14 illustrates new locations for an extensive network of convenient cycle parking around the town. Locations have been assigned as ‘primary’ (red) for multiple bikes or ‘secondary’ (green) for single bikes (see Annex 5 for examples of cycle parking solutions). New locations have been chosen in order to make use of surplus space on the street, with multiple locations for single cycle parking.



Figure 10: Cycle parking locations.



Figure 11: Clear, consistent 'branded' signage that integrates routes on foot and bike with public transport.

1.10 Signage

Current pedestrian and cycle signage in Ashington is inadequate. Cycle and walking route signage is not only an important feature for way-finding, but serves to encourage and reassure users of safe and continuous routes. A new signage scheme with consistent and clear signage is an important aspect of signage design.

It is highly recommended that new signage is commissioned that integrates cycle and walking route signage, visitor attractions and key public transport services.

1.11 Network Development Summary

Table 1-1 Major Developments

	Ref		Description
Priority ⇐ ⇒	3.8	North South Links	'Quietway' treatments on north-south roads: update traffic calming construction of cycle gaps in road closures except cycles exemptions.
	3.5	Station Road (West)	Cycle lanes with centre line removed
	3.7	Reiverdale Road	Bicycle Road treatment
	3.4	North Seaton Road	Light separation scheme either side of Green Lane junction
	3.6	Woodhorn Road	Cycle lanes with centre line removed (to A197)
		Kenilworth Rd entry	Reconstruct carriageway and footway as a single surface Concrete block paving at road entry Removal of bollards

Table 1-2 Further Improvements

	Ref		Description
Priority ⇐ ⇒		Town Centre- Lintonville- Woodhorn- Station Rd Junction	Shared space junction redesign
		Town Centre- Lintonville Terrace Enhanced Crossing	Enhanced pedestrian crossing to link to ASDA site
		Town Centre- Lintonville Terrace	High quality shared space street

	Town Centre- Woodhorn Road	Shared space / cycle lanes
	Reiverdale Road to Rotary Way Cycleway link	Land acquisition; demolition of derelict garage cycle track to Rotary Way track
	Wayfinding and signage	Town centre way-finding Walking and cycling routes Public transport information
	Cycle Parking	Primary and secondary parking at various locations