

Cramlington Sustainable Travel Audit

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

February 2016



1 Network and Street Development

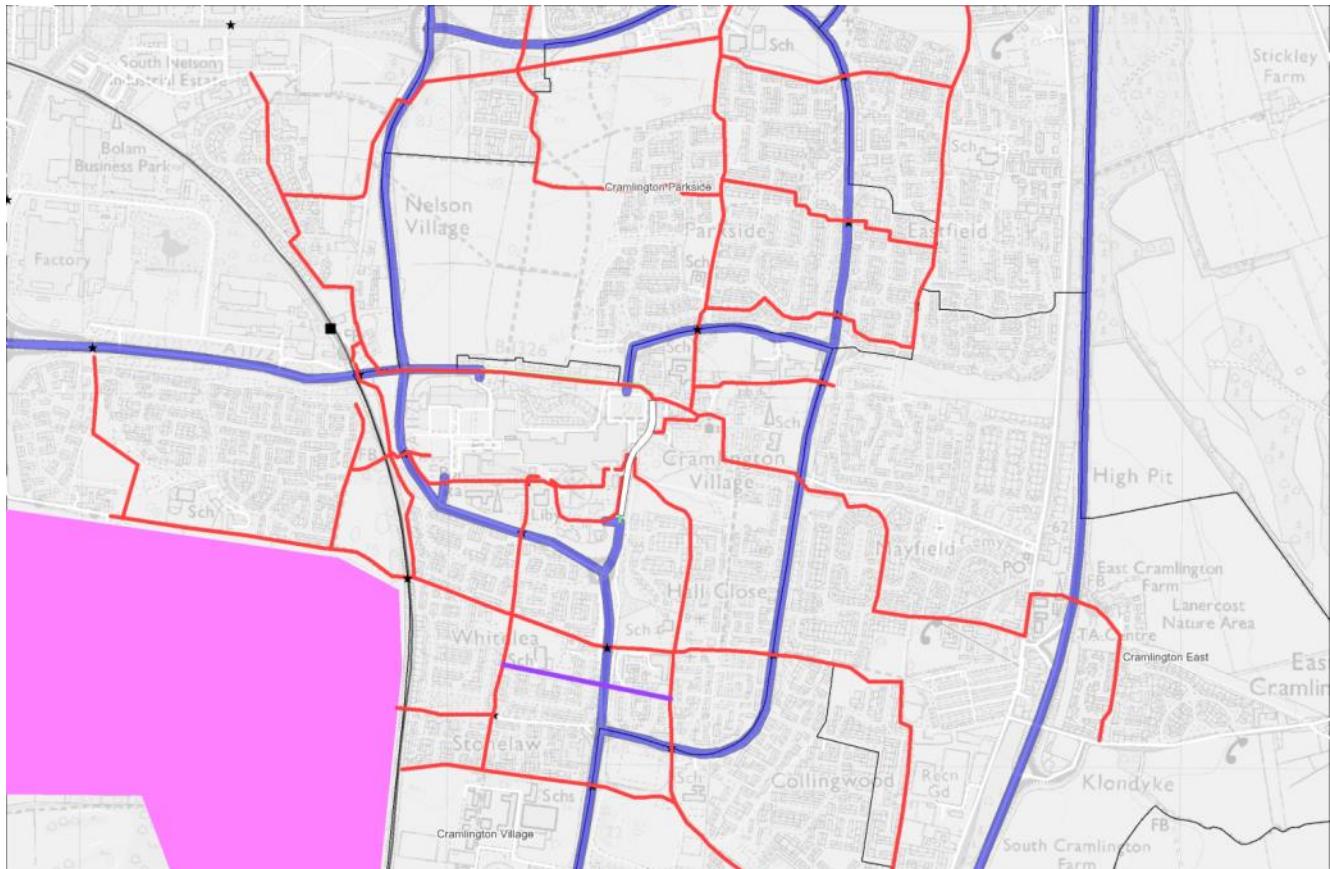


Figure 1: Cramlington town network, cycle routes existing and proposed in red, car routes in blue.

1.1 Cramlington Village

Old Cramlington Village offers a quiet street environment with no through traffic. Public space in the village centre is of good quality. A walking and cycling route runs North-South through the village centre using a zebra crossing over Blagdon Terrace.

Streets in the Village remain 30mph and in many cases retain centre lines and priority junctions where given the speed and volume of traffic this should not be necessary.

There is scope to deliver considerable improvements to the walking and cycling route as it runs through Middle Farm Court and Smithy Square by using a Bicycle Road type treatment. Clear signing of a cycling route through the village would improve legibility and remove any ambiguity over where residents can and cannot ride a bicycle.

1.2 Dudley Lane (Low Main Place)

Dudley Lane lies between the new town centre and the old Cramlington Village Centre. There are no cycling facilities on the northern section and crossing can be difficult for pedestrians faced with relatively high traffic speeds which would not normally be seen in a town centre.

Access from the town's walking and cycling network from the south is via a narrow shared use footway and an underpass that connects into Manor Walks shopping centre. The underpass uses a substantial area of land on both sides of the carriageway. Its design does not lend itself to efficient mixing of pedestrians and cyclists with sight lines and natural light being poor.

The section of road adjacent to Manor Walks functions as the town's principle bus interchange. Facilities are poor with connections via the underpass and no real time passenger information provided. There is cycle parking adjacent to the retail centre but this is not aimed at bus passengers.

Dudley Lane would benefit from a reduction in use by private motor traffic which would allow filling in of the underpass and creation of a public space and enhanced bus interchange. A design based on shared space principles similar to that on Newcastle's Blackett Street (original, as built construction) would allow direct connection between the town's cycle network and the shopping centre without the use of traffic signals.



Figure 2: Blackett Street as originally constructed, pedestrian movements towards the shopping centre are prioritised and bus passengers arrive at a destination with good public realm where crossing the road is easy.



Figure 3: Removal of underpass and traffic reduction creates around 3000 m² of usable public space.



Figure 4: Dudley Lane proposed shared space public transport corridor, what is currently a barrier to walking and cycling could become a focal point for the town network.



Figure 5: A shared space Dudley Lane would create opportunities not only for better public space but also for changes in land use creating more active frontages along the East side of Dudley lane.

1.3 Station Road (B1326)

Other than for a short section Station Road is characterised by residential properties on one side and the retail park on the other. It is a 30mph urban B Road with an 8.75m carriageway and 17.5 metres between property lines.

Pedestrians benefit from good width footways on both sides of the carriageway. However these are subject to a considerable amount of pavement parking. It appears that verges which may once have been grassed have been surfaced with bitmac due to car parking.

Vehicle entry splays on the south side of the road are very wide which leads to pedestrians diverting from their natural line in order to reduce crossing distance.

There is no provision for cycles.

The 1930's properties on the eastern section of the road have for the most part ample off street car parking provision. It is not clear whether the vehicles parked on the pavement are linked to these properties or are commuter parking linked to the retail centre.

The central section of the street is characterised by slightly older properties on the north side, without driveways. There is public open space on the south side and the footway is protected by bollards.

There appear to be two solutions to improving this section of road for walking and cycling:

- a) Reduce the volume of motor traffic on the central section of the road with residential frontages on both sides, which might be best done using a bus gate or "no entry except access".
- b) Moving all car parking off carriageway, reducing the running carriageway width to 6.5 metres and installing unidirectional cycle tracks on each side. Some measures will be needed to discourage large LGV's from using the road.

Both of these solutions imply to some degree reducing Station Road's role serving the movement of motor traffic. This would mean diverting the B1326 to follow Northumbrian Road which is in any case better suited to function as an inner distributor road.

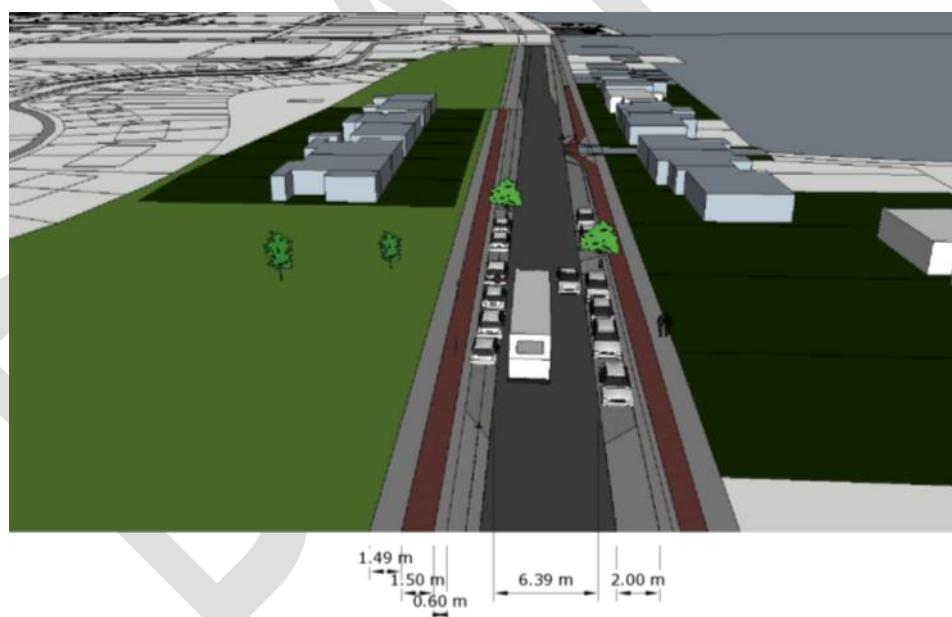


Figure 6: Reduced width carriageway allows for structured parking layout, cycleways and footway to be accommodated.

1.4 Westmorland Way (A1171)

Westmorland Way functions chiefly as a barrier in the local walking and cycling network rather than as a route which pedestrians and cyclists want or need to move along. To the south there is a good quality underpass and although additional crossing points would be useful, pedestrians and cyclists are relatively well served.

To the north – west a good quality walking and cycling path parallels Westmorland Way, this is dealt with in the sections below.

1.5 Links Within Manor Walks Shopping Centre

Cramlington is unusual in that the Primary Shopping Area is in private ownership. An attempt has been made to extend a traffic free cycle route into the shopping centre from the eastern end but this has been compromised by the new cinema development and in any case ends at Forum Way.

There is a good quality walking route running east west through the site via the indoor shopping centre. However by bicycle negotiating the retail park is difficult, it can appear a maze of car parks and warehouse type buildings.

Whilst some improvements in cycle permeability through the retail park could be achieved by adding strategically placed drop kerbs, creating a navigable route would be exceptionally difficult.

Forum Way offers a much easier opportunity to create a viable East West link through the retail core. Traffic volumes are light enough to allow removal of the centre line and creation of two on carriageway cycle lanes provided on street car parking is removed in the vicinity of Cramlington Police Station. The route should then connect to the “McDonalds Underpass”.

The “McDonald’s Underpass” has recently been severely degraded by the construction of new retail units across its access ramp. This development appears to be out of line with development control policies and should prompt a review of how enforceable these policies are and how they are being implemented.

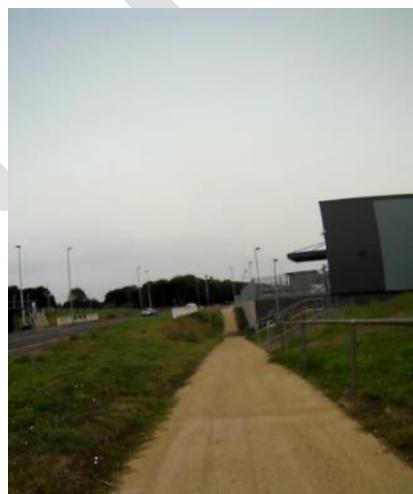


Figure 7: Underpass approach before (above) featured a gentle grade ramp with good visibility; underpass approach after development (right) has a more difficult gradient particularly for less able cyclists, poor visibility and only perpendicular access to the underpass.

Recreating a primary East-West cycle route through Manor Walks will require considerable expenditure, but given its dual role in connecting through to the rail station it is vital that this project is undertaken. The best solution for cycling appears to be routing cyclists onto a new path around the southern boundary of the McDonald’s site with well-designed transitions onto Forum Way.



Figure 8: Proposed Forum Way Cycleway.



Figure 9: Views along the McDonald's site boundary.

1.6 Station Link

Cramlington Station is linked by an existing path that connects to the shopping centre via the “McDonalds Underpass”. The path would benefit from some upgrading and clear signing, not only from shopping centre to station but northwards towards the South Nelson Industrial Estate to create a coherent North-South link. The path south from the railway station should be extended adjacent to the rail line to connect to the existing pedestrian and cycle bridge at Mirlaw Road to complete a high quality walking and cycling route.



Figure 10: New path section extends Station Link Southwards, approach to station improved and redefined.

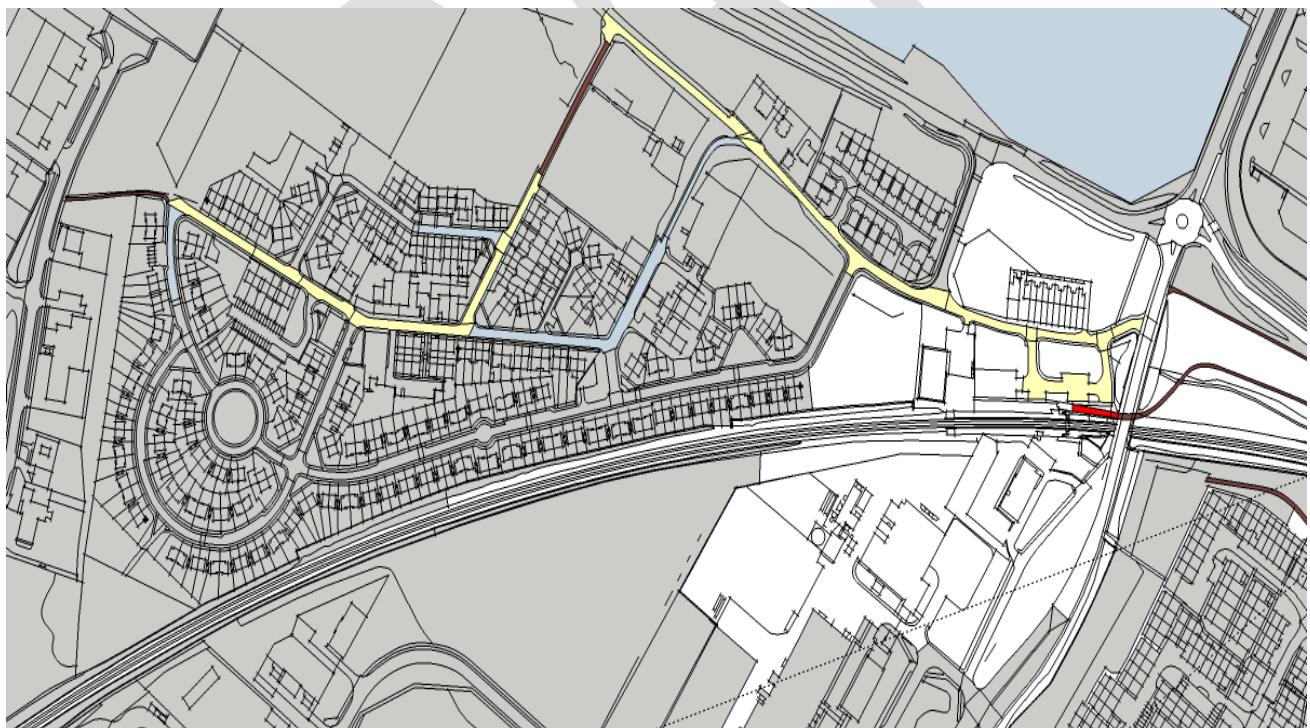


Figure 11: A signed on road route should be created to connect north into South Nelson Industrial Estate.

1.7 Northumbrian Road

Although not part of the study area crossings over or under Northumbrian Road are significant in determining the ability of families to access Cramlington Village and the shopping area from East Cramlington.

Northumbrian Road is served by a number of high quality underpasses but these are spaced up to 750 metres apart. For walking and cycling routes to work effectively they need to work on a 250m dense grid, this points towards the construction of several additional crossing island points along Northumbrian Road at strategic points.

As a minimum the crossing islands should be upgraded over Northumbrian Road at its intersection with Church Street to offer improved access into the village centre from the east.

1.8 SW Sector Housing Development

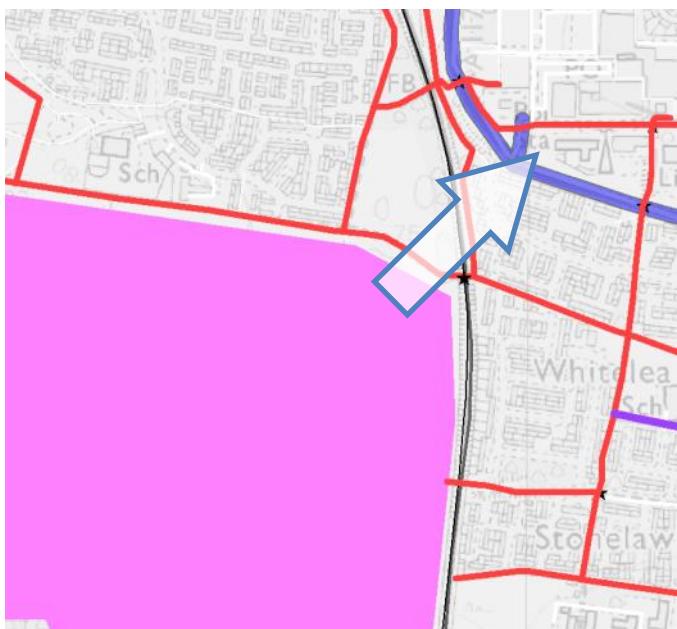


Figure 12: There is a clear advantage of walking and cycling over car use in accessing Manor Walks from the south-west of Cramlington using a number of dedicated routes.

previous infrastructure in Cramlington but could be a positive one if built to a good standard.

The proposed use of a shared use path along the Boulevard should be rejected, this type of infrastructure is not appropriate for use alongside a road in a new development. High quality separated cycle tracks would be required on both sides of the carriageway with priority treatments at side roads. Reference should be made to the recent Sustrans North East paper circulated to North East Highway Authorities on side road treatments.

Although outside the scope of the study, the proposals for development of Land at Arcot Lane incorporates the last section of land originally identified as part of the new town.

The masterplan makes good use of existing public rights of way both within the development and to connect to Cramlington's existing walking and cycling network. Provided connecting paths are of sufficient quality the existing pedestrian and cycle bridges over East Coast Mainline will provide good permeability through to the rest of the town, this if anything will be quicker and convenient than accessing Manor Walks by car.

Further development reinforces the need for improvements to the north-south link to Cramlington rail station. The development proposes that one of the key cycle routes within the site will be constructed along a boulevard style road. This is a departure from



Figure 13: Unidirectional boulevard cycle track at a side road.

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.

Cramlington Town Centre at Manor Walks is well served by cycle parking, but would benefit from a handful of improvements to rearrange some existing parking to make better use of the resources. In order to create a comprehensive network of convenient cycle parking locations, an extensive study is recommended to locate suitable sites for new parking at key locations, such as local shops, transport and employment areas.



Figure 14: Clear, consistent 'branded' signage that integrates routes on foot and bike with public transport.

1.10 Wayfinding and Signage

Current pedestrian and cycle signage in Cramlington 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.

2 Network Development Summary

Table 2-1 Major Developments

Priority ↑	Ref		Description
	3.6	Station Link	New path section southwards, signed cycle route north, improvements at station entrance
	3.5	Forum Way Cycleway	Cycle lanes with centre line removed, new pass section to connect with underpass
	3.10	Wayfinding and signage	Town centre way-finding Walking and cycling routes Public transport information
	3.1	Old Village Centre Improvements	Bicycle Road treatment Middle Farm Ct and Smithy Square
	3.2	Dudley Lane Shared Space	Shared space bus and cycle gateway
	3.3	Station Road	Cycle tracks next to the carriageway

Table 2-2 Further Improvements

Priority ↑	Ref		Description
	3.7	Northumbrian Road Crossing Islands	Informal Crossings
	3.9	Cycle Parking	Primary and secondary parking at various locations