



Northumberland

County Council

RECORD OF DECISION TAKEN BY SERVICE DIRECTOR – LOCAL SERVICES

Paul Jones

Northumberland Line Level Crossings – Proposed Traffic & Parking Restrictions

Cabinet Member: Councillor John Riddle

04 May 2023

Purpose of Report

This report sets out the background to the traffic and parking restrictions which have been proposed as mitigations to potential congestion issues associated with the Northumberland Line level crossings.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the:

- One-Way system, 'Prohibition of Entry' and 'No Waiting at Any Time' restrictions at the Plessey Road level crossing;
- 'Prohibition of Entry' restriction at the Marchey's House level crossing;
- One-Way system, 'Prohibition of Entry' and 'No Waiting at Any Time' restrictions at the North Seaton level crossing;
- 'No Waiting at Any Time' restriction at the Bebside level crossing;

are all introduced as proposed following the risk assessments which were carried out to identify any potential level crossing safety and traffic issues and their necessary mitigation measures as a result of the level crossings when in operation.

Link to Corporate Plan

This report is relevant to the following key themes in the Corporate Plan for 2021-2024:

Delegated Decision

- Enjoying, Connecting - We will maintain, protect and enhance the environment, prioritising our commitments on Climate Change. We will deliver high-quality services in all our communities and secure investment in housing and transport across the County.

Key Issues

1. The new Northumberland Line is due to open to passenger trains in summer 2024 and several areas with existing level crossings in operation across the Ashington and Blyth vicinity will be affected.
2. Risk assessments have been carried out which identified a number of level crossing safety / road safety issues that could be present if the existing road layout is left untreated.
3. Proposals have been developed identifying remedial measures to reduce the possibility of safety issues at the level crossings when the barriers are in operation.
4. The scheme will be funded by the Northumberland Line project.

Background

The new Northumberland Line railway linking Newcastle to Ashington is set to re-open to passenger trains in 2024 and has several level crossings which cross the highway along the existing route. The change from the existing freight only use to more frequent and higher speed passenger trains has led to a need to re-assess and upgrade the level crossings. Risk assessments have been conducted as part of the design process to determine where level crossing safety / road safety issues may be present once the new rail system is in operation.

Four level crossings were identified where new regulatory traffic restrictions are necessary in order to alleviate the concerns of queuing, congestion and blocking back onto the level crossing instances which were identified during the risk assessments due to either parked vehicles, adjacent junctions, right turning traffic and driver behaviour when attempting to navigate through the areas. Results of the data gathered from the level crossing census which identified blocking back instances can be found in Appendix A.

The Northumberland Line Project Team carried out the consultation process to inform statutory consultees and directly affected residents of the proposals, who in turn were given the opportunity to comment on any of the measures via the Citizen Space website. The responses received are listed in Appendix B.

Proposals

It is proposed to introduce One-Way only systems and 'Prohibition of Entry' (No Entry points) restrictions in streets where right turn manoeuvres could lead to queues blocking back onto level crossings or junction manoeuvres can be simplified. 'No Waiting at Any Time' restrictions in the form of double yellow lines are proposed to prohibit parking in areas near the level crossings where the route must remain clear in order to maintain the free flow of traffic.

Plessey Road Level Crossing, South Newsham

The potential issues at the level crossing on the B1523 Plessey Road are vehicles queuing back from the roundabout of Plessey Road / Carr Street onto the level crossing when barriers are down to allow the passage of trains. Westbound vehicles turning right into Delaval Street also presents the risk of blocking back incidents over the level crossing itself and vehicles parking at the Plessey Road/Delaval Street junction could contribute to that issue.

The issues posed by the proximity of the level crossing to the roundabout will be addressed by refreshing the road markings and providing a give-way marking on the circulatory carriageway to ensure the eastbound traffic does not block the level crossing. In addition, keep clear markings over the exit from Plessey Road will be provided to ensure traffic can exit during barrier down time, which will cause less obstruction to traffic entering the roundabout from the west.

Delegated Decision

A One-Way system is proposed on Phoenix Street which will operate in a loop that permits vehicles to travel in a clockwise direction only and is illustrated in Figure 1, which will simplify the operation of the adjacent roundabout. To reinforce the system, a No Entry point is proposed at the eastern junction with Plessey Road.

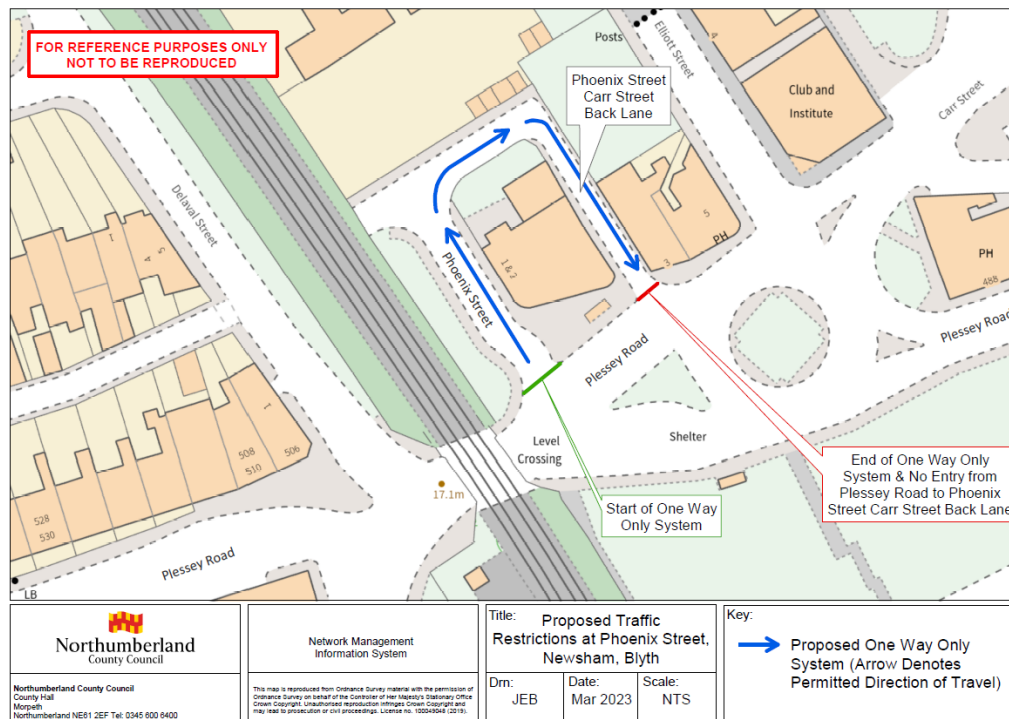


Fig. 1: Proposed One-Way only route and 'Prohibition of Entry' on Phoenix Street

In order to discourage obstructive and indiscriminate parking at the junction of Delaval Street and Plessey Road to assist with the free flow of traffic, an extension of the existing double yellow lines is proposed, with the extents shown in Figure 2.

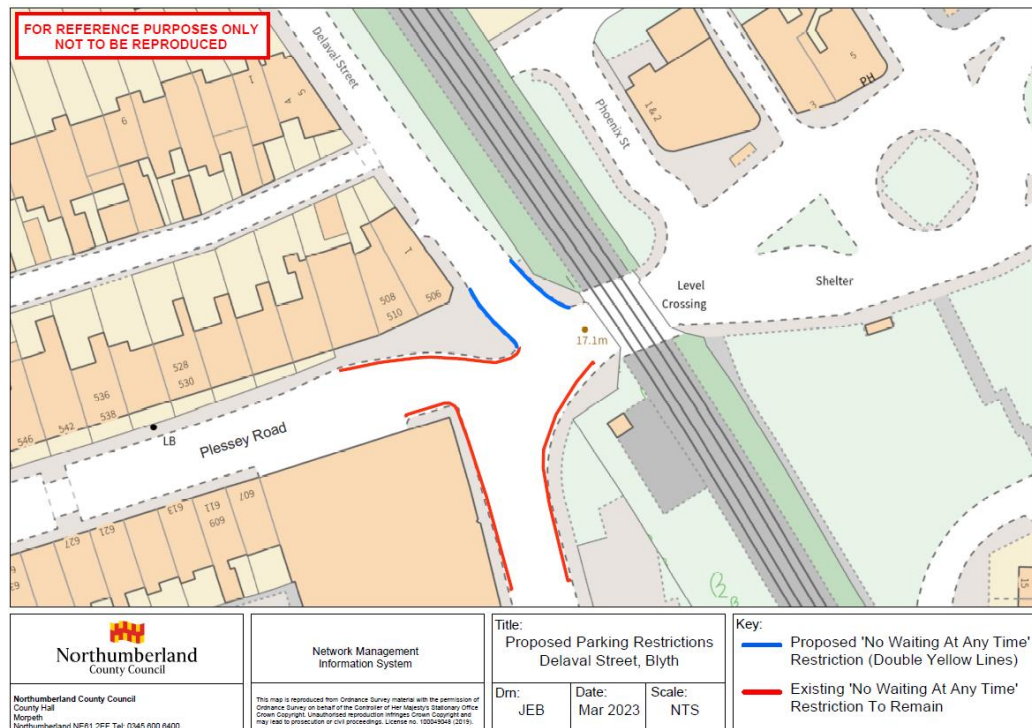


Fig. 2: Proposed 'No Waiting at Any Time' restrictions on Delaval Street

Bebside Level Crossing

Situated on the A193 at Bebside, concerns that this route already experiences traffic queues backing up to the roundabout linking the A189 'Spine Road' with the A193 has resulted in double yellow lines being proposed directly outside the Bebside Inn in order to maintain forward visibility at the level crossing and the free flow of traffic, alongside advisory 'Keep Clear' markings to be installed at nearby junctions to prevent obstructions. The extents of the proposed double yellow lines are demonstrated below in Figure 3 and are estimated to be 15 metres in length.

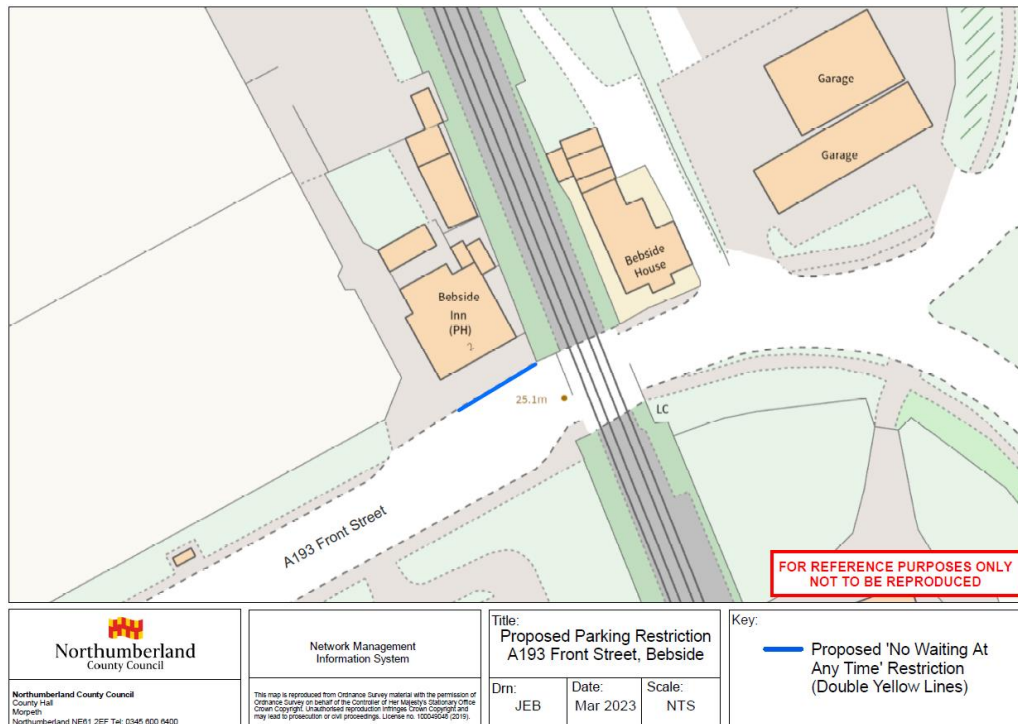


Fig. 3: Proposed 'No Waiting At Any Time' restrictions on the A193, Bebside

Loading and/or unloading is still permitted on double yellow lines, therefore it is not anticipated to cause issues with the Bebside Inn's day-to-day operations where deliveries are required.

Marchey's House Level Crossing, West Sleekburn

Marchey's House level crossing is located on Wansbeck Terrace to the south of Ashington and east of Guide Post. It is anticipated that if vehicles are attempting to turn right into Church Avenue from an eastbound direction, blocking back instances over the crossing itself may occur.

In order to alleviate these concerns, a No Entry point is proposed in the form of signage and road markings to denote the 'Prohibition of Entry' restriction into Church Avenue, shown for clarity in Figure 4.

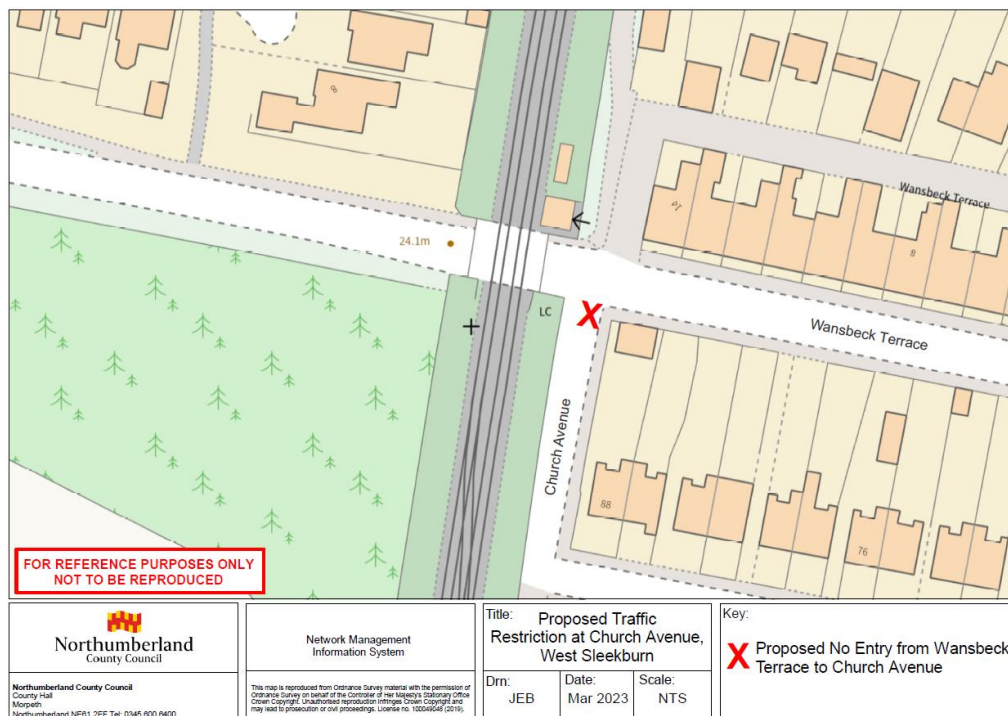


Fig. 4: Proposed 'Prohibition of Entry' point into Church Avenue

Vehicles will be required to enter Church Avenue via its eastern junction with Wansbeck Terrace, ensuring a minimal diversion route is available.

North Seaton Level Crossing

The level crossing at North Seaton is located on the A196 south of Ashington and the current road layout presents a number of road safety issues which need to be addressed:

- Right turning movements into the eastern access of Jubilee Estate by vehicles travelling westbound on the A196 increases the risk of blocking back over the level crossing;
- Blocking back instances occurring at the level crossing originating from congestion of traffic at the Black Close Bank / Newbiggin Road roundabout;
- Vehicles travelling eastbound on the A196 turning right into the Coronation Terrace back lane causing blocking back instances over the level crossing.

In order to mitigate the risk of blocking back caused by turning movements into Jubilee Estate, a No Entry point is proposed at the eastern junction with the A196 in conjunction with a short section of a One-Way system on Jubilee Estate where vehicles will be permitted to travel southbound only and this will be denoted through traffic signs and road markings. The extents of this proposal can be found in Figure 5 below.

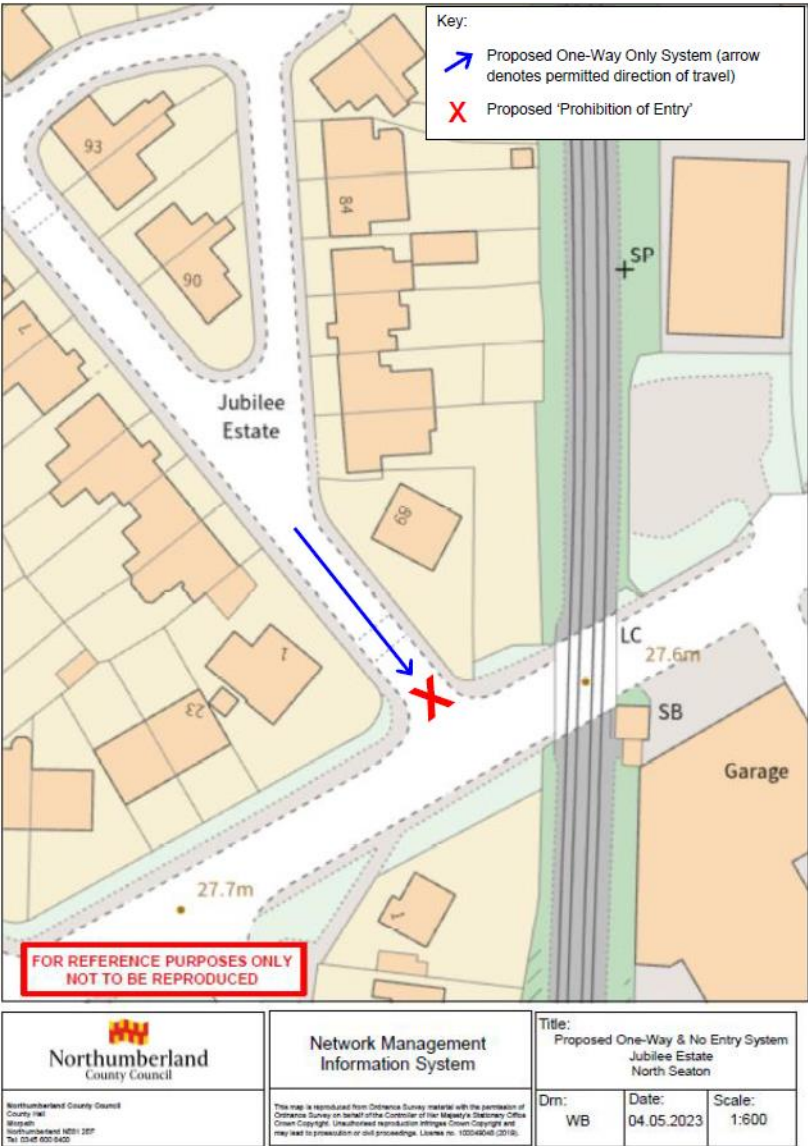


Fig. 5: Proposed One-Way only route and 'Prohibition of Entry' on Jubilee Estate

Provision of a formalised right turning area within the carriageway was considered so as to avoid the need for the above restrictions, however insufficient distance between the level crossing barrier stop line and the entrance to Jubilee Estate is available to provide such a facility in order to meet the visibility and design requirements.

Other road markings include advisory 'Keep Clear' wording at the roundabout to discourage obstructions in sections which could cause blocking back instances if vehicles were stationary there, whilst double yellow lines are proposed to be introduced on the A196 at its junctions with Jubilee Estate and Coronation Terrace in order to assist with the free flow of traffic by prohibiting obstructive and indiscriminate parking at the approaches to the level crossing, the extents of which are outlined in Figure 6.

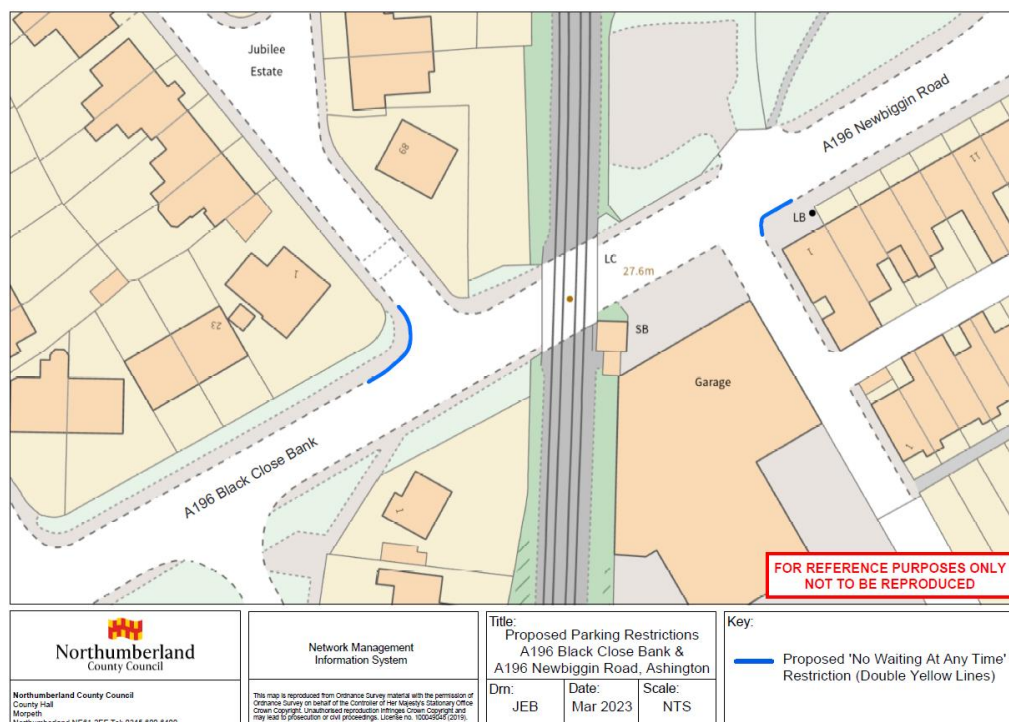


Fig. 6: Proposed 'No Waiting At Any Time' restrictions on the A196, North Seaton

Conclusion

It is expected that the new measures will improve level crossing safety and road safety at these level crossings, in particular as the Northumberland Line comes into operation for passenger services. The consultation undertaken about the level crossing proposals by the Northumberland Line team generally resulted in favourable responses. Some concerns have been raised about the Jubilee Estate No Entry proposal at North Seaton level crossing by both the local Member and residents regarding both traffic flows in the Estate and the condition of the existing roads. These have been considered but the requirements for improved level crossing safety are felt to outweigh these concerns.

Directly affected residents, Northumbria Police, other emergency services and relevant statutory consultees will be notified of these amendments as part of the process for making the permanent Orders.

Delegated Decision

Implications Arising out of the Report

Policy	Consistent with existing policies
Finance and value for money	Scheme will be financed through the Northumberland Line project
Legal	Motorists will be required to comply with the Traffic Regulation Orders
Procurement	None
Human Resources	None
Property	None
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A
Risk Assessment	Carried out through the Level Crossing Risk Assessments
Crime & Disorder	Regulations in place to carry out enforcement
Customer Consideration	The proposals will lead to a safer environment for all road users at level crossings with passenger trains operating
Carbon reduction	None
Wards	Newsham, Kitty Brewster, Sleekburn, Haydon

Delegated Decision

Background Papers:

File reference: CA201001

Appendix A – Level Crossing Census Data

Appendix B – Consultation Responses

Author

Report Author **William Binks, Programme Officer**

Delegated Decision

DECISION TAKEN

Title of Officer: Service Director, Local Services

Subject: Proposed Traffic & Parking Restrictions at Northumberland Line Level Crossings.

Consultation: Undertaken via Citizen Space dated 17.03.2023 - 07.04.2023

Decision Taken: To introduce new traffic and parking restrictions at the Plessey Road, Bebside, Marchey's House and North Seaton level crossings

Signature of Director



Date

6th June 2023

Delegated Decision

Appendix A

Level Crossing Blocking Back Instances

Level Crossing		Amber 1	Amber 2	Red 1	Red 2	Red 3	Total
Plessey Road	Weekday Average	115	144	25.2	5.2	2.2	291.6
	Weekend Average	62.25	79.5	17	3.25	1.5	163.5
	Weekend Average	190	0	0	0	0	190
Marchey's House	Weekday Average	1.4	0.2	2	0.2	0	3.8
	Weekend Average	0.5	1	3.25	0.5	0	5.25
North Seaton	Weekend Average	29.6	48	8.8	3.4	0	89.8
	Weekend Average	10	28.25	5.25	2	0.25	45.75
Bebside	Weekday Average	859	9.6	1.8	0.2	0	870.6
	Weekend Average	696.5	6	0	0	0	702.5

- Amber 1: Rear of queue extends to between 11m and 50m downstream of the crossing;
- Amber 2: Rear of queue extends to between the crossing barrier and 11m downstream;
- Red 1: Vehicle fouls the barrier but not within 1.25m of the running line;
- Red 2: Vehicle fouls the crossing line, or within 1.25m either side of the running line and is stationary for three or more seconds;
- Red 3: Similar to Red 2, but where no escape route is available either forwards or backwards.

Delegated Decision

Appendix B

Consultation Responses

F = For, A = Against, N = Neither

F	A	N	Comments
1			All of the changes seem well thought out and logical.
	1		To the east of North Seaton LX is an almost identical layout causing an identical problem...but the opposite solution is proposed! A formal right turn pocket is being provided even though a minimal diversion route is available 100m away. This right turn pocket will be quite short and narrow and may not be suitable for use by the commercial vehicles (vans/recovery lorries) that access the businesses on the side street. The risk of blocking back still exists and is not adequately controlled by the narrowed right turn pocket.
	1		We live at Jubilee Estate on the road that is to be the in route, concerns over the amount of traffic already parked on either side of the road, also cars struggle at the minute to sometimes get up the road if there are deliveries and cars trying to get through the cars parked if not right on the pavement, the congestion would still take place turning in whether it was the first entrance or the second will not make any difference still be congestion possibly meaning cars on the line which could happen even if the both entrances are used to enter. The road outside our house has been damaged over the years as they tried to put speed humps in and made a mess of them as the road was unable to take them, so we have a totally uneven road which has been constantly filled over and over, the pavements need changed to tarmac as the cars parking on the pavement which they have had to do has caused uneven path, it would be unacceptable for the increase in traffic to happen without the road being resurfaced and the pavements tarmaced fully to compensate the change that has been suggested. In drawing comparisons County Hall car park has been completely resurfaced when that surface was 100% better than our current road surface at Jubilee Estate, having been totally neglected over the years. I am also concerned that all residents got the letter dated the 15th March with only two weeks to send concerns, and originally this link was not working, some older residents are not computer owners and so unable to make comments. So it would be unlikely that you have had any objections or concerns. We would like to see that the road surface and pavements are given priority before any such decision on traffic flow is decided. We trust this will be discussed at cabinet level and fast tracked to a positive resolution.
1			Enforcing KEEP CLEAR may prove problematic as some drivers ignore them. On the whole, though, changes seem fairly sensible.
1			I am happy with the proposed changes to my local crossings in Ashington.
1			I welcome the changes.
		1	Newsham to have uninterrupted traffic flow i.e fly over or under pass for cars as Laverock hall road is already gridlock at peak times.
1			Looks good, shame you have to think of solutions to people blocking a level crossing when all signs, highway code, and common sense would tell you not to.
1			Commuting a lot easier.
1			Plessey Road changes are welcome for safety and convenience. The Northumberland Line will transform south-east Northumberland and is a key step in regeneration of the area.
1			All improvements welcome, Bedlington South could perhaps benefit from revising through route to be Station Road onto Palace Road.
		1	On the map you have double white line markings to the east of the crossing. What is needed here is a 'KEEP CLEAR' road marking in front of the entrance to Railway Cottages and the Garage. Traffic is constantly stopped on the road waiting to go into the Garage blocking our entrance way and also backing up

Delegated Decision

		traffic sometimes on to the crossing or making traffic cross over the already existing double white lines.
1		Looks OK to me.
	1	I'm not in favour of Newsham one its going to cause traffic build up and cars are going to start parking in our estate Blagdon Drive rather than pay to park their cars at station.
	1	North Seaton crossing, I would have liked more conversations around a right turn into the Jubilee Housing Estate and the issues it may cause with road conditions/safety and parking. Also would like to add more parking restrictions to help the flow of traffic. Leaflets were sent out without me knowing! Local County Councillor?
9	4	2