



# Northumberland County Council

## **We Asked, You Said, We Did: Northumberland Line, Ashington to North Seaton Viaduct**

### **We Asked**

We asked for your feedback on our proposals for the Northumberland Line scheme, which will see the reintroduction of passenger services between Ashington and Newcastle. In particular, we asked for comments on proposals for new stations and bridges, changes to level crossings and the land we will need to use to build the scheme. In the Ashington to North Seaton Viaduct area, we sought feedback on proposals for Ashington station and options for Hospital level crossing.

### **You Said**

We received 1023 responses to the consultation, made up of 949 response forms and 74 emails and letters. 91% of respondents were fully, mostly or slightly supportive of the project.

We have analysed all the feedback received and have provided a summary of the main themes raised in relation to Ashington station, Hospital level crossing, and the level crossings and temporary sites between Ashington and North Seaton Viaduct.

### **Ashington station**

We received 474 comments from 273 individuals directly relating to Ashington station. 53% of these comments were positive and 29% were neutral or suggestions.

Comments on Ashington station:

- were generally supportive of the proposals, suggesting that the station would encourage more people to live in and visit the area, improve the look of the area and open up more opportunities for local residents;
- noted that it would improve access to other areas within the north east;
- suggested that good signage and wayfinding are needed to promote use of the station and connect it with the local area, especially as the station is not in the town centre;
- commented on the size of the car park and potential impacts on availability of parking for local shops;
- suggested that the design of the station inhibits future expansion; and
- noted that the site currently has poor bus connectivity.

Further details of the consultation feedback on Ashington Station and how this was considered by the project can be found in the Statement of Community Engagement which was submitted alongside the planning application.

### **Hospital level crossing**

At the time of our consultation, surveys and assessments were ongoing to determine the most appropriate solution for Hospital level crossing. We presented two options that could be put in place if it needed to be closed: an underpass provided near to the site of the current crossing, or an accessible footbridge at the new Ashington station.

347 comments from 298 individuals were received on Hospital level crossing. 18% were positive and 71% were neutral or provided suggestions. Overall, 61% expressed a preference for a footbridge and 39% expressed a preference for an underpass.

Other comments on Hospital level crossing:

- made suggestions and raised concerns about the safety of level crossings;
- raised concerns about anti-social behaviour;
- made suggestions and raised concerns about access for those with disabilities; and
- asked questions about the visual impacts of the bridge on local residents.

### **Other level crossings**

135 comments from 135 individuals were received on the level crossings between Ashington and North Seaton Viaduct, of which 53% were positive and 35% were neutral or provided suggestions.

Feedback on the level crossings in this section:

- were generally supportive of the proposals for the crossings;
- noted that level crossings were needed at Green Lane and North Seaton to ensure safety;
- asked questions about the detailed design of the crossings;
- made suggestions on access for all users, including pedestrians, cyclists, equestrians and those with disabilities;
- highlighted the dangers of level crossings; and
- asked about the impact of level crossings on the wider road network, and more specifically congestion at Green Lane level crossing.

### **Temporary sites**

At the time of our consultation we presented a number of potential options for temporary sites needed to build the scheme. 114 comments from 114 individuals were received about the proposed temporary sites between Ashington to North Seaton Viaduct. 51% were positive and 36% was neutral or provided suggestions.

Feedback on the Ashington to North Seaton temporary sites:

- suggested some alternative location options;
- suggested that local Public Right of Way (PRoW) should remain accessible and measures should be put in place for equestrian access;
- asked questions about the impact on the road network, in particular for Ashington station options A and B;
- noted that use of some sites would result in the loss of woodland and asked questions about the environmental impacts of the options;
- asked questions about the impacts on local residents; and
- raised concerns about the loss of parking.

## **We Did**

We met with the design team and considered your feedback, where possible we have incorporated this into the proposals and have outlined our response to key areas of concern below. Your feedback will continue to be considered as the detailed design progresses.

### **Wayfinding and signage, including connections to the town centre**

We are aware of the need to provide consistent and understandable wayfinding and signage both within and outside of the station site, including to guide people to the station on key local approaches. Within the stations, this will be a detailed design consideration and we will take feedback received to date on board as we develop our designs.

In addition, the project has reviewed options for pedestrian and cycle access to the station, and a lift is now proposed to provide an accessible route between the station and Wansbeck Square. The lift will be designed to be large enough to accommodate 16 people and to allow a turnaround for all bicycles, as well as accommodating other users, such as mobility scooters.

### **Car parking**

The station's Transport Assessment considers anticipated demand and existing supply of local car parking spaces, and the size of the car park has been determined by demand forecasting, with an allowance for future anticipated demand. This means that it should be large enough to avoid negative impacts on local car parks, but Northumberland County Council will monitor any parking issues and implement measures as necessary should issues arise.

### **Station design and future expansion**

The demand modelling undertaken to support our proposals indicates that the current design (including proposed single track) provides sufficient capacity for future anticipated use. However, the design of the station does not preclude future expansion, should this be required in future.

### **Need for bus connectivity**

We understand the need for the stations to have good connections for people travelling by public transport (as well as by foot, bicycle and car). We are currently in discussions with bus operators about how best to enhance and promote existing options, including the potential to bring the bus stops on Station Road back into use. However, changes to bus services are outside the scope of the Northumberland Line scheme and the project is unable to directly influence service provision.

### **Hospital level crossing**

As noted above, the project has reviewed options for pedestrian and cycle access to the station, and a lift is now proposed to provide an accessible route between the station and Wansbeck Square.

This means that a bridge at the station is no longer required, and also resolves concerns about accessibility and visual impact.

Following a detailed engineering assessment an underpass is being proposed at Ashington. An underpass performs better from an engineering perspective as its depth is

much more modest than the bridge's height and requires less maintenance and land take than a bridge. It also has less impact on neighbouring properties by removing privacy concerns.

The underpass will be sensitively designed to discourage anti-social behaviour and create an appealing walking route by including through lighting, CCTV and appropriate materials.

The underpass does not form part of the current planning application for Ashington station and will be the subject of a separate planning application later in 2021.

### **Other level crossings**

The detailed design of the level crossings is currently ongoing. Feedback in relation to these is being reviewed and will be considered as the design progresses.

### **Temporary sites**

Preferred temporary works sites have yet to be agreed, and consideration of the feedback received in relation to them is currently ongoing and will inform a construction strategy. Once the location of temporary works sites have been confirmed, all necessary conditions and permissions would need to be obtained from the relevant authority.