



Northumberland County Council

We Asked You Said, We Did: Northumberland Line, Chase Meadows, Newsham and New Hartley Curve

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 Chase Meadows, Newsham and New Hartley Curve area, we sought feedback on proposals for Newsham station and Chase Meadows footbridge.

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 Newsham station and the level crossings and temporary sites in the Chase Meadows, Newsham and New Hartley Curve area.

Newsham station

We received 501 comments from 258 individuals directly relating to Newsham station. 41% were positive and 34% were neutral or suggestions.

Feedback on Newsham station:

- where positive was generally supportive of the proposals for the station, new overbridge and closure of Newsham level crossing;
- provided information on existing issues with congestion and suggestions for alternative road design options;
- made suggestions on the design of the track crossing in relation to safety, accessibility and active travel;
- questioned the impact of the new road layout on congestion on the local road network;
- suggested that the station was in the wrong location and should be closer to the town; and
- raised concerns over the provision of parking and potential impacts on residents and local shops.

Further details of the consultation feedback on Newsham 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.

Chase Meadows Footbridge

We received 152 comments from 124 individuals directly relating to Chase Meadows Footbridge. 53% were positive and 26% were neutral or suggestions.

Feedback on Chase Meadows Footbridge:

- gave suggestions and raised concerns on access for all users, including pedestrians, cyclists, equestrians and those with disabilities;
- raised concerns about safety and security, including from anti-social behaviour and children playing on the line; and
- asked questions about the visual, noise and privacy impacts on local residents.

Further details of the consultation feedback on the Chase Meadows Footbridge and how this was considered by the project can be found in the Planning Statement for the footbridge, which was submitted alongside the planning application.

Level crossings

87 comments from 87 individuals were received on the level crossings in this section in the Chase Meadows, Newsham and New Hartley Curve area. 39% were positive and 40% were neutral or provided suggestions.

Feedback on the level crossings:

- welcomed Chase Meadows, Lysdon Farm and South Newsham closures, suggesting that this would improve safety and reduce noise pollution;
- provided suggestions on improving safety at the crossings;
- made suggestions and raised concerns on access for all users, including pedestrians, cyclists, those with disabilities and more specifically the large number of equestrians who use the crossings;
- made suggestions for the improvements to the Public Right of Way (PRoW) network;
- asked questions about the impact of vehicle movements and barrier down time on the local road network; and
- asked questions on the cost and feasibility of the plans.

Temporary sites

At the time of our consultation we presented a number of potential options for temporary sites needed to build the scheme. 63 comments from 63 individuals were received about the proposed temporary sites in the Chase Meadows, Newsham and New Hartley Curve area. 64% of comments were positive and 25% were neutral or provided suggestions.

Feedback on the temporary sites:

- noted the impact on local PRoW during and post construction and made suggestions about how to ensure that safe alternative routes for equestrians are available; and
- asked questions about disruption to local residents from noise and traffic.

We Did

We met with the design team and considered your feedback. Where possible we have incorporated your feedback 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.

Newsham station

Safety

All new stations will feature CCTV, lighting and passenger help points to help ensure the safety and security of all passengers. The detailed design of the station is anticipated to be subject to a planning condition and will include specific locations for CCTV and other safety features.

Active travel

We understand the need for the stations to have good connections for people travelling by foot and bicycle, and have considered this as part of our design.

Sheltered storage for bicycles will be provided at each of the stations, close to the car park and station entrance, well-lit and covered by CCTV for security. The number of spaces at the station will be approximately 5% of the anticipated passenger count and its design will be confirmed as part of the detailed design process.

In addition, Northumberland County Council's local Walking and Cycling plans have been prepared with the location of the proposed train station in mind, and consultation on these plans will take place in the near future. The plans will focus on improving walking/cycling infrastructure to encourage active travel and a modal shift from private cars.

The station will be fully accessible.

Congestion and impact on road network

The station's Transport Assessment considers the development's impact on the local road network and indicates that the station and new road layout will have no adverse impact on the local road network.

In addition, the design of the highway is required to meet Northumberland County Council standards. The new road bridge will be single carriageway and will allow for the diversion of the A1061 from just west of the junction with the B1523 to just east of Blagdon Drive. This new section of the A1061 will include accesses into the east and west station car parks and drop-off zones. We are currently working closely with neighbouring residents to develop the design of the access to the western car park. Access to Blagdon Drive on the eastern side will also be maintained.

The new section of the A1061 will be approximately 500m long and will be a direct replacement of the existing road. The detailed design of the highway is anticipated to be subject to a planning condition.

The project is working in collaboration with other highways projects in the area (e.g. Blyth Relief Road) to minimise negative impacts and understand design interfaces.

Station location

One of the project's priorities is to enable people to travel quickly between Ashington and Newcastle, helping encourage them to switch from car to rail. The proposed location of the station has been found as the most suitable, with consideration of detailed surveys and analysis including demand modelling, the position of rail line, connectivity for onward travel and the station's Transport Assessment. In particular, the stations at Newsham and Blyth Beside are strategically positioned for access to Blyth.

The design of the station does not preclude future expansion.

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.

Chase Meadows footbridge

Access for all users

We will be maintaining pedestrian access over the tracks through the footbridge, and its stepped design has been informed by discussions with the council's PRow officers. At the current level crossing there is no provision for people with mobility issues, and the project's principle has been to maintain the level of access the current crossing provides; therefore, this remains unchanged in the proposed design. The inclusion of ramp access would have significant negative impacts on the immediate environment, requiring further vegetation clearance and impacting the privacy of local properties.

Access to the existing bridleway (300/016) will be maintained, although it is likely this will need a minor diversion. Discussions with the council's PRow officers regarding changes to the bridleway are ongoing.

Safety and anti-social behaviour

The crossing is an existing PRow, and to maintain safe pedestrian access a new footbridge is required. The footbridge will be designed to Network Rail standards and it is not anticipated that replacing the crossing with a footbridge will increase the risk of trespass on the line.

While there are currently no plans to provide lighting, CCTV or surface changes to the footpath of the existing public right of way (PRow), we are aware of local concerns about anti-social behaviour. We will engage with the British Transport Police as part of developing our proposals.

Impact on residents (privacy and noise)

As part of aiming to minimise negative impacts on residents, privacy screens will be included in the relevant areas of the bridge to prevent neighbouring properties from being overlooked. The design of the scheme will also include some replacement planting, which will function as additional shielding to neighbouring properties.

The project has undertaken noise and vibration assessments to understand the possible impact on nearby residential properties and other sensitive receptors. Based on the outcomes of these assessments, additional mitigation will be included in the detailed design for the bridge, which is anticipated to be subject to a planning condition.

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.