

Question 49

Policy 48 - New transport infrastructure

1. The Trust supports some aspects of this policy, but wishes to see additional safeguarding of current and potential public transport infrastructure, as detailed in paras 6-8 below.
2. In addition, the Trust strongly **opposes** the broad presumption in favour of the approval of new highway schemes as laid out in the grey box on pp 209-10 of the *Preferred Options* document. This policy statement amounts to a complete departure from the priorities and approach in the County Council's *Local Transport Plan 3 (LTP3:)* *Transport Strategy*, which was completed by the Council as recently as 2010 after extensive consultation and became effective in 2011. The public consultation clearly confirmed that the people of County Durham have no appetite for new road building, and wish to see a greater emphasis on sustainability and on promoting public transport use in place of encouraging the growth of car travel.
3. Policy 5 in LTP3 reflects this very clearly, with its explicit acknowledgement that new road construction should only be considered when all other options have been exhausted.¹ The rationale for this policy is set out in the LTP appendix volume, as follows

A.5 Policy 5 New Road Infrastructure

A.5.1 Road building can be disruptive and expensive and it is more preferable that all new development is located to minimise the need for new road construction. In terms of building roads to overcome problems relating to congestion and safety, then such projects shall only be pursued after all other potential options have been considered.²

4. As already discussed in the Trust's response to Question 48 on Sustainable Travel, paragraph A.5.1 acknowledges that locational decisions are key to effective and sustainable transport planning. Unfortunately, much of the strategy set out in the *Preferred Options* document ignores that inconvenient truth, and it is therefore unsurprising that a large proportion of its proposals would result in unsustainable outcomes. The Trust therefore calls upon the Council to revise its *Preferred Options* to make them consistent with the adopted policies of LTP3.
5. The Trust's specific objections to the Northern and Western relief roads mentioned in para 9.36 of this section have been set out separately.
6. On a point of detail and consistency, the Council's draft Aykley Heads planning document proposes the creation of a Development Area D on land which appears to include the main car park for Durham railway station.³ Any significant new low-rise building on this site would be incompatible with its current function of providing 239 parking spaces which support the

1 Durham County Council, *Local Transport Plan 3* p 76.

2 *LTP3, Appendix, p 11*

3 Durham County Council, *Aykley Heads draft supplementary planning document (2012)*, p 24

station's strategic role as the third-busiest passenger station within the entire north-east region⁴ and as the main railhead for the county and for adjoining parts of the Sunderland and South Tyneside local authority areas. Any undermining of this role through the reduction or loss of these parking facilities would be contrary to the Council's established policies as well as to the interests of current users. It would accordingly seem logical and appropriate to make provision within Policy 48 for the future safeguarding of interchange infrastructure at Durham railway station.

7. Apart from this comment, the Trust is generally supportive of the current rail and freight transfer proposals which the document set out in paras 9.29-31 and 9.33-35. However, the Trust considers that the safeguarding of those parts of the Leamside line within or along the County boundary should also be extended to the former Durham-Sunderland branch between Newton Hall and Leamside, for the same reasons that are set out in para. 9.30 of the *Preferred Options* document.
8. Consistent with Policy 2 of LTP3 and with the Government's recent confirmation of additional funding to improve local rail capacity into the Newcastle urban area,⁵ the County Council should therefore revise its County Plan proposals to include this safeguarding, and should give priority to discussions with the Tyne & Wear Integrated Transport Authority and its constituent councils about improving public transport links with that conurbation. Specifically, this should include consideration of options for extending the operations of the Tyne & Wear Metro into the county, both along the Leamside line and also from their existing terminus on the former Durham-Sunderland branch at South Hylton. This could provide opportunities for sustainable rapid transport links to be created from the Newton Hall and Belmont/Sherburn areas to Washington, Newcastle and Sunderland via Rainton, relieving the A167, A690 and A1(M). It would possibly also allow the Belmont Park & Ride site to be developed into a major multi-modal transport interchange, capable of feeding the Tyne & Wear conurbation in addition to Durham City, and thus reducing carbon emissions within the county which arise from cross-boundary car journeys.

⁴ Office of Rail Regulation, *2010-11 station usage report and data* (2012).

⁵ *LTP3, Appendix*, pp 8-9; Department for Transport, *Railways Act 2005 statement* (2012), para 25.