

Suggestions for making walking and cycling safer in Durham City

The Immediate Priority

The twin imperatives to facilitate social distancing and to avoid increasing the pressure on public buses will have a clear impact on street use and controlling the flows of pedestrian, cycle and motor traffic. Measures need taking **now** to re-purpose space on the City's streets before motor traffic returns to previous volumes. We can regain the streets for pedestrians and cyclists, plus wheelchair users and pram pushers, if the County Council Highways Authority takes immediate action. This is already being done in cities across the country and is much needed in Durham where street space is at a premium.

Crossing points and junctions can be key to creating successful pedestrian routes and increased cycle use. Facilitating greater cycle use could start to clash with pedestrian use on busy routes and focal points and care is needed. Simple changes to traffic light controlled crossings through altering waiting frequency and duration can help pedestrians.

Use of Park & Ride Sites

Is there was a way, short-term, or longer term, to make the Park & Ride sites double as Park & Cycle sites, or would that create too many conflicts on the routes into the City?

The Sniperley and Howlands Park and Rides are both within easy cycling distance of several employment sites where parking is (or should be) quite constrained, including the hospital, Aykley Heads and the University; the Belmont Park and Ride less so. A Park and Cycle concept would obviously work if people bring their own folding bike, or a normal bike with an appropriate rack on their car, and would be a good way of allowing the P+R sites to be used at capacity without causing problems on the buses. A hire bike scheme would be much harder to organise, though there are some companies who run such schemes, including "virtual dock" schemes where bikes have to be left in designated areas but no physical docks are required. Such schemes usually require subsidy and the Council may feel it is not the best use of money at the moment. Indeed, more protected space for walking and cycling might be a higher priority.

From Howlands, the new University cycle route is half-complete -- as far as Hollingside Lane. When the rest is built that would get people as far as the former New Inn off road. Then the ideas floated for Church Street (see below) would calm that road sufficiently and, combined with suspension of some parking spaces on New Elvet, a safe route could be created all the way into town. It's possible to link to that route at Howlands from the Mount Oswald estate, and through to the path along the A167, bringing a wide area within reach of a fully protected route.

Another thought: could P&R sites be transport hubs where people catch buses to places other than Durham City?

Dealing with narrow pavements

Depending on when schools and the University reopen, Church Street might need tackling. Making the stretch from St Oswald's Court to the top of New Elvet one-way by coning off one

lane would assist with the very narrow pavements there, and would also keep the traffic levels in the street under control, which would encourage parents to walk and cycle with their children to school.

There are some key walking routes where there are narrow pavements on only one side of the road, which will make it hard to maintain social distancing once traffic and pedestrian levels increase. On Margery Lane and Quarryheads Lane one lane of the carriageway might have to be coned off from the corner of Briardene through to the Potters Bank roundabout to allow people to walk safely. The solution might be to make that road one-way northbound by making the one way stretch start opposite the gate leading down to Prebends Bridge, so people in the houses on that broad stretch of Quarryheads Lane could come and go. The one-way stretch would start there and continue to Briardene. Pimlico would become one-way northbound, but Grove Street would be two-way.

On the A167 there are sections with wide white hatching in the centre of the carriageway. Again, with cones this could be repurposed to move the traffic lane across and reserve some more space at the edge for cycling and walking. The "shared use" pavement is too narrow for social distancing to be maintained. The section from Whitesmocks to Durham Johnston is one possibility, and south of the Duke of Wellington is another.

Managing Queues

How can queues be managed to ensure 2m distance? We need to find ways to help shops and bus stops to cope with queuing. This is a particularly acute issue in North Road with all its temporary bus stops. We might need temporary wider pavements to give more space for queuing. An example of what can be done is where a council has laid tarmac on a sand base onto the road surface to create an area level with the pavement that is durable but can be taken up again quickly.

Guard rails

Another thing to consider is guard rails. These cause big problems for pedestrians wishing to keep 2m apart. The guard rails at the Margery Lane / Crossgate junction either need removing or temporary footways creating on the other side of them. There may be other locations where similar action is necessary.

Transport for London research showed that removing guard rails improved pedestrian safety. It makes motorists less confident, slowing them down, and it gives pedestrians crossing more options for escaping, meaning they spend less time on the carriageway.

Speed restrictions

The minister encourages councils to look at 20mph limits for urban areas. This could be introduced for the city centre. The advantage of lower speeds is that of reducing the risk of people being injured if they do step off the footway to avoid other walkers. This can also increase road capacity for motor traffic. The A690 down from the bottom of Crossgate Peth to the bus station roundabout would be improved by lower speeds.

The City of Durham Trust

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