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Dear Spatial Policy Team

**(1) County Council Consultation Draft Masterplan for Sniperley Park
(2) Healthy Active Travel Connectivity Plan**

The City of Durham Trust warmly welcomes the opportunity to comment on the County Council's Consultation Draft Masterplan for Sniperley Park (CDP Site H5) and the associated Healthy Active Travel Connectivity Plan. (We note that the Cabinet resolved to put both documents out for consultation but only the Masterplan appears on the online consultation portal and therefore many people will be unaware of the consultation on the Healthy Active Travel Connectivity Plan.)

We offer the following comments in the spirit of commending the County Council for rightly taking the lead and we wish to provide constructive ideas for achieving a truly sustainable urban extension at Sniperley Park.

Indeed, we would urge the County Council to set aside the Banks 'masterplan' for the other sustainable urban extension (Site H6) and itself prepare a masterplan for Site H6 too, as it has done for Site H5. These are the two urban extensions to Durham City that were removed from the green belt and both merit masterplans that are fully compliant with the requirements of CDP Policy 5 and all the other relevant CDP and NPPF policies.

The Trust hopes that the responses it is making to the two current consultations by the County Council on Sniperley Park will receive the Council's careful consideration. We have undertaken very extensive analysis of these important documents and their context, and drawn upon a wide range of relevant guidance, research and parallel examples in preparing our comments and recommendations. We would be very happy to share this information with the Council in more detail as the two documents are developed further.

CONSULTATION DRAFT MASTERPLAN FOR SNIPERLEY PARK

Following on from our overall welcome for the County Council's draft Masterplan, our principal comment is that the draft Masterplan requires additional material to enable the aspiration of sustainable development at Sniperley Park to become a reality. The document has commendable statements of purpose, aims and policy content, but its spatial dimension has not in our view been carried through sufficiently to resolve the infrastructure matters upon which the satisfactory development of the whole site depends.

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The draft Masterplan presents the opportunity for Durham County Council to create a leading example in the UK of sustainable urban design. The work carried out already demonstrates that planning applications submitted before its finalisation and adoption would be premature and, indeed, potentially damaging to the delivery of sustainable development of the site.

The comments and recommendations we make are of two types. Firstly, the constraints identified have not all been fully resolved and it is important that they are. Secondly, the need for an enhanced spatial plan needs a number of key decisions relating principally to several aspects of infrastructure. These are set out as follows.

Section 1: Recommended resolution of site constraints

1.1 Road B6532

1.2 Park & Ride facility

1.3 Potterhouse Lane waste and recycling centre

Section 2: Recommended enhancements to the Draft Masterplan

2.1 A Spatial Plan

2.2 Landscape and green infrastructure

2.3 Movement and access infrastructure

2.4 District heating infrastructure

2.5 Building and design quality infrastructure

2.6 Community infrastructure

2.7 Phasing of development

Attached to this letter you will find a **paper on our analysis of, and suggestions for, Sustainable Travel Issues**. Finally there are two appendices: **Appendix 1 offers further suggestions about the draft Masterplan**, such as improvements to wording, which should be easy to implement; **Appendix 2 contains further comments on the draft Healthy Active Travel Connectivity Plan**.

Before embarking on these matters, we observe that in addition to the economic and environmental aspects of sustainability, the third and crucial social dimension requires further consideration in terms of equity and fairness if sustainability is not to be seen as a way of living that is unaffordable to the majority of people. The investments in sustainable infrastructure in Sniperley Park must have within them the capacity to spread benefits outwards and become the norm in the regeneration of surrounding areas. Attaching this enterprise to government programmes on sustainability and equity would be a major step in realising the aspirations of the Masterplan.

Section 1: Recommended resolution of site constraints

The draft Masterplan is incomplete in respect of the ten site constraints and considerations it identifies but does not fully resolve. These are so critical to the sustainability of the development that many sound aspects of the Masterplan may well be undeliverable without their resolution. Three of these unresolved key site constraints are within the power of the County Council to resolve.

These matters should be decided quickly and their implications built into the Masterplan. Without this, the development could rapidly default to a traditional but unsustainable housing scheme at the edge of the city.

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1.1 Retention of the B6532 through the centre of the site to facilitate north-south connection between Sacriston and Durham city centre.

The scale of through traffic on this road casts some doubt over the viability of the Draft Masterplan proposals for “place-making” and safe conditions for pedestrians and cyclists along its length. The Masterplan proposes that it be “downgraded to form a street”, but how that will be realised without diversion of the existing traffic is not explained. The section of the B6532 north from the Blackie Boy roundabout to the junction with the proposed link to the A167 Park and Ride roundabout has been indicated as a “Bus/Cycle only route” on the map on p. 11 of the Active Travel Connectivity Plan, though this is mentioned nowhere else in the text of either document. But if, as it appears, the Council has accepted the principle of breaking the B6532 as a continuous through route for general traffic, this needs to be strengthened further to support the place-making to which the Masterplan aspires.

Consideration should therefore be given to rerouting through traffic on the B6532 from the heart of the development by converting that section of the road to a bus priority route and residential distributor road. It may need to incorporate a bus-only section, probably in the vicinity of the local centre. The object would be to increase the attractiveness of sustainable travel options and thereby avoid increased congestion at the existing road junctions.

The freedom from through traffic would enable traffic calming to be applied throughout the whole development, thereby reducing demand for private transport and making innovation in car parking provision possible. This, in turn, would significantly meet objections to the development by reducing the impact of traffic generation on surrounding roads.

These possibilities are explored further in section 2.1 below and in the attached paper on Sustainable Travel Issues under the first heading, “Road layout and access”.

1.2 Retention of the existing Park and Ride site and requirement for expansion of this facility

The existing Park and Ride site is an important element of the public transport provision. The current proposal for additional car parking areas for park and ride, however, sits oddly with the welcome proposal for a mobility hub made in the Masterplan but not carried through into a full proposal. The role and location of the mobility hub needs to be given further consideration in relation to a potentially wider public transport role for the Park and Ride site and the benefit of locating such facilities in the new Local Centre. Some of the facilities could include an exemplar car share scheme, and a ‘Park and Pedal’ bicycle facility.

The site has the potential to play a wider role in serving the transport needs of the Sniperley Park area and beyond. We expand on this in sections 7 and 8 of the attached Sustainable Travel Issues paper.

1.3 Proximity to Household Waste and Recycling Centre (HWRC) on Potterhouse Lane, including the potential for a buffer to any residential development (c50m) and its required expansion. Also congestion on Potterhouse Lane related to operation of the HWRC.

The continued use and expansion of the HWRC is clearly at odds with the vision and feasibility of the new development. It has always been a non-conforming use in the countryside and will become a bad neighbour to the new development which is tacitly admitted by the need for a

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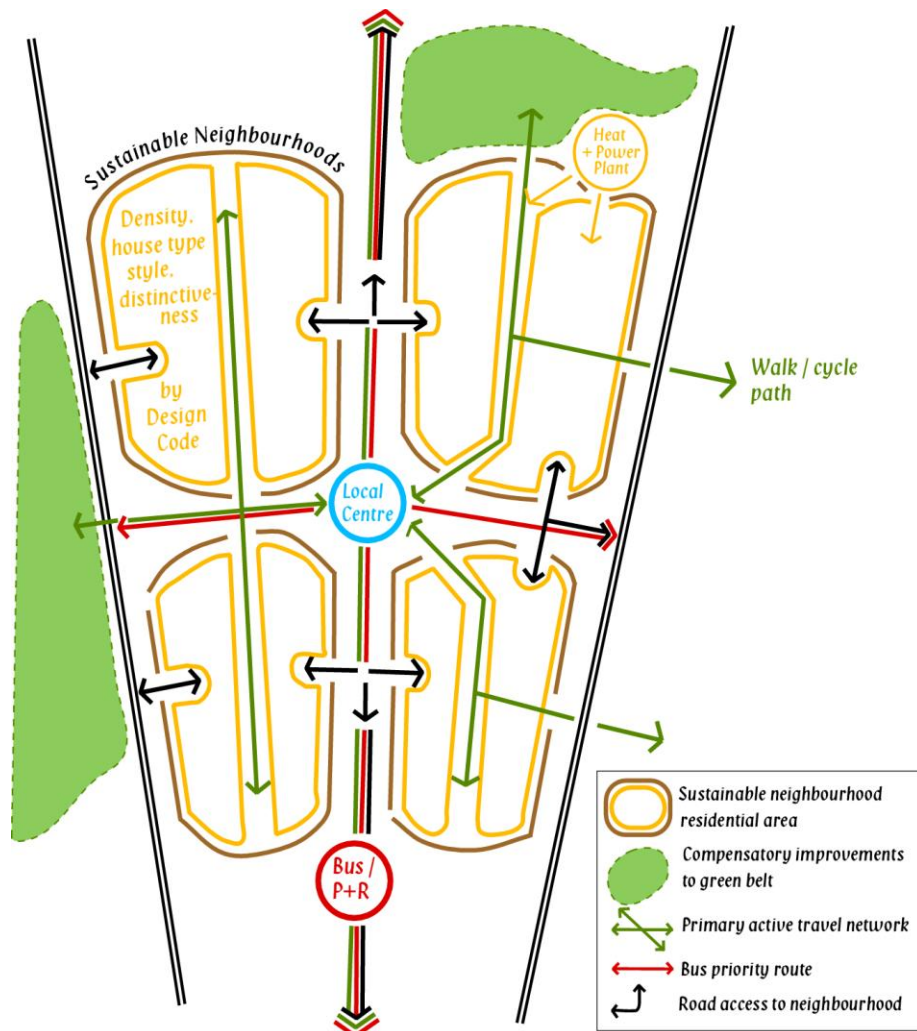
wasteful 50m metre buffer. Ideally, it should be relocated to an industrial site at an appropriate standard of provision and management. The site thus released could be one of a number of potential sites for a heat and power plant to bring sustainable energy to Sniperley Park and beyond.

Section 2: Recommended enhancements to the Draft Masterplan

2.1 A Spatial Plan.

The next stage in the development of the Masterplan should be to take the general principles and translate them into a Spatial Plan where key infrastructure requirements have been resolved and upon which detailed neighbourhood designs can be advanced. The excellent proposals so far relating to green infrastructure provide a vital framework to be respected. To this should be added a neighbourhood design concept based on the best appropriate practice. The Trust considers that this would be most appropriately achieved by a design code, as set out in more detail in Section 2.5.

The most important context as yet unresolved is the spatial relationship between the residential neighbourhoods and movement and access. It is not for the Trust to prescribe in any detail what that should be, but to demonstrate the general principles that could be pursued into a practical spatial reality. The schematic diagram below seeks to demonstrate those principles in terms of the sustainable transport hierarchy and other infrastructure elements.



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The sketch sets out elements of infrastructure that are required to guide subsequent planning stages in the delivery of coordinated sustainable development. It is indicative only and does not seek to represent the reality of the Sniperley site. It is based on the need for a design-led approach to neighbourhood units within the context set by the landscape and green infrastructure. It shows the application of the sustainable transport hierarchy which will be the best blend of separate and shared space for movement including segregated walking and cycling paths, a bus priority route and shared sections for local traffic distribution. A Spatial Plan based on such principles could also show more detail of community facilities and their relationship to the access and movement facilities.

If it is agreed that further work on this aspect of the document should proceed, then the workability of these principles can be resolved.

- Safe and direct active travel routes within neighbourhoods, between neighbourhoods and beyond the Sniperley Park development
- Bus priority routes serving the residential areas, the local centre and a new public transport hub which includes the Park and Ride site. The routes would also serve as a local residential distributor route.
- Access by car to or between each of the neighbourhood areas only available via the adjacent primary road network.

2.2 Landscape and green infrastructure

The important concept of providing a continuous network for wildlife and people will be a particular challenge in respect of road crossings. Also to provide sufficient natural drainage to ensure that flooding never occurs will probably require that surfaces such as pavements and hard standing for vehicles are permeable. The draft Masterplan shows several standing water ponds as part of the SUDS methodology. Such water bodies are a potentially great benefit in terms of wildlife and public amenity but require that the management resources are guaranteed within the ultimate development package.

The network of landscape and green infrastructure including the “compensation area” will become the crucial basis of the Spatial Plan. Its importance thus established requires that it be implemented from the outset and not made conditional on later phases of development.

2.3 Movement and access infrastructure

The Trust welcomes the Masterplan's statement of purpose on p. 7 which frames the Sniperley development as an opportunity to show “*good sustainable planning*” by, among other things, “*embedding excellent transport links throughout*”. This is set in the context of the Climate Emergency and the need to transition all our transport to ultra-low carbon.

An important part of the justification for removing the site from the green belt was “*maximising the number of journeys undertaken by sustainable means such as walking, cycling, and public transport and minimising overall journey distances and times*” (CDP para. 4.93). Without a more fully developed spatial plan, the biggest risk to this vision is that with excellent road transport links via the A167 northwards to Tyne & Wear or southwards to Teesside and Darlington, Sniperley residents will be enabled and therefore encouraged to make longer journeys, and will not take up sustainable local travel options in anything like the numbers needed for rapid de-carbonisation of the county's transport emissions. The green belt release

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justified to support the local economy, in tandem with the business park at Aykley Heads, might encourage more commuting to areas beyond the county boundary.

The UK Climate Change Committee's 6th Carbon Budget envisages a 50% reduction in surface transport emissions between 2020 and 2030. This will require not only progress on replacement of petrol and diesel vehicles by electric, but also reductions in motor vehicle use, achieved through a shift to sustainable modes combined with demand reduction. This would amount to 15% of current journey miles.¹

A completely new development such as Sniperley, on the edge of the county's largest settlement, offers the best chance of realising such reductions, but significant reductions will not transpire unless car use is more actively discouraged by design from the outset.

The Trust considers that these are major sustainable travel issues which the Masterplan needs to recognize and address. Our analysis and suggestions are fully set out in the attached dedicated paper on Sustainable Travel Issues. Those with implications for the Spatial Plan are summarised here under the sustainable transport hierarchy.

Active travel - walking and cycling

- Identify the main on-site and off-site destinations, determine the primary active travel network, and identify off-site routes which will need improvement.
- Determine the active travel links where walking and cycling need to be separated.
- Identify clearly all walking/cycling road crossings to be upgraded, including crossings at roundabouts.
- Define the acceptable mesh density of the cycle network.

Public transport

- Plan for the full integration of Park and Ride services, new or amended services to Sniperley Park and to Sacriston, Lanchester, the Arnison Centre and beyond based on the proposed bus priority route through the site.
- Decide on the type of facility and best location for the transport hub.
- Establish whether bus access is required within residential areas to meet the desirable maximum walking distance to bus stops consistent with CIHT guidance and expected bus frequencies.
- Review the alignment of link roads to maximise bus penetration of the site.
- Locate bus stops optimally and design the walking network for direct access to them.

Private car

- Design for reduced car- use, car sharing and electric vehicles.
- Use modal filters, sustainable transport priority measures, non-traditional housing layouts, and the location and tenure of car parking to ensure active travel modes and public transport become increasingly attractive in relation to private car use.

¹ This reduction is less than that aimed for in the Scottish Government's Climate Plan, which aims for a 20% reduction in traffic by 2030 relative to 2019: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/securing-green-recovery-path-net-zero-update-climate-change-plan-20182032/pages/9/>

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2.4 District heating infrastructure

To avoid the use of natural gas is an excellent proposal but it needs to be backed up by a detailed study of the potential for generating power within the site or beyond by either a shared facility i.e. district heating, or by individual heat pumps, solar panels etc. There is also an interesting potential for using mine-water as a source to a heat and power plant or for heat pumps. The assessment of potential could be wider than the Masterplan area and include:

- The current HWRC site
- The area for the buffer strip integrated into the new landscaping
- Sites beyond, e.g. Sacriston former colliery if access is possible to minewater heat via the mineshaft. Such an investment would meet the test of spreading benefits to surrounding areas in being available in local housing improvements

This study should be carried out as a matter of urgency to avoid rapid default to gas supply which would seriously compromise the sustainability promise of the whole development.

(The Trust notes that the County Durham Land LLP planning application is dismissive of the notion of district heating at Sniperley Park. It cannot be sufficient to provide a 'technical note' on less than an A4 side of paper to the extremely important requirement of CDP Policy 5(i) that *"opportunities for a district heating network will be explored given the site's proximity to Lanchester Road Hospital and Aykley Heads."*)

Page 7 of the document summarises the key components which the Masterplan must include. One is to *"grasp opportunities for a district heating system"*. The Trust considers that the draft Masterplan should be strengthened in its examination and commitment to the most sustainable forms of heating, including district heating, so that well-evidenced, comprehensive and integrated requirements are set out before any house-building begins.

A district heating system needs careful planning and co-ordination, and is not likely to materialise if planning is left to the separate developers. Clearly, the optimal design of a district heating system may have an impact on the phasing and timing of the neighbourhood developments.

2.5 Design quality and building infrastructure

The draft Masterplan has much on design quality that the Trust commends. We believe that it should go further and deal with the need to push design quality through into the detailed planning applications; it stops short of the desirable design coding to help nurture this.

New housing design examples prove that this can be achieved and can be found in the National Design Guide. (The National Model Design Code also informs transport-related design such as car parking. See the attached Sustainable Travel Issues paper sections 3 and 8 for transport design issues where the Masterplan could provide clear design code guidance.)

The Bent House Lane design code and that recently submitted for the Bellway plc ownership are more a minimal demonstration of retrospective justification for prior decisions rather than guidance to stimulate better design quality. The County Council Masterplan begins to move on from these constraints but ultimately the high quality design illustrations have no binding impact. In some instances the local centre illustrations apply to a much more intense

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development than Sniperley can generate. If, however, there were a higher density area around the local centre this could provide for a wider range of house types, including affordable housing.

The Trust sees the way forward as capitalising on the solutions to sustainable transport, access and general sustainability. This would be best achieved by a design code that observes the Government's own advice as represented by the National Design Guidance and the National Model Design Code.

Following sustainability needs through into design of housing clusters and individual units is essential and can be both inspired and governed by such a design code. This is an opportunity for the County Council to move on from typical volume house-building design to something more aspirational that would achieve 'Building Beautiful'. As an example the Trust does not see the Mount Oswald development as appropriate inspiration for this development. The Masterplan needs to lead the way into this more explicitly.

Following sustainability principles, combining these with contemporary design and looking for local distinctiveness by example and inspiration are necessary and best achieved with the help of a design code. Sniperley Farm and its surrounds offer a clear lead into looking at distinctiveness and the Masterplan identifies the potential for this. There are perhaps other influences that can be found in Durham's housing beyond those already identified without falling into the trap of pastiche. New housing design examples prove that this can be achieved and can be found in the National Design Guide:

- Great Western Park, Didcot – Street and space hierarchy with distinctive and effective mix of house types
- Officer's Field, Weymouth – Well designed courts and access
- Poundbury, Dorset – perhaps difficult to emulate here and overly traditional in approach, but an excellent example of transport, access and mixed use and house types
- Horsted Park, Kent – handling of frontage parking
- Derwenthorpe, York – Distinctive contemporary design with traditional roots
- Trowse Newton, Norfolk – Contemporary design with well researched reference to local historical housing forms
- Blackfriars Circus, Southwark, London – creation of place by arrangement of units, spaces and access
- Pottergate, Alnwick, Northumberland – Well judged corner development
- Upton, Northampton and Houlton, Rugby – effective provision of SUDS and ponds (if standing water feasible)
- The Avenue, Saffron Walden – Use of house types mix to create a mixed neighbourhood

2.6. Community infrastructure

The draft Masterplan recognises the importance of community facilities as an essential component of creating sustainable communities. The provision of a new junior school, local centre, community playing fields and community woodland are all identified, as are the facilities in the wider area beyond Sniperley Park. The Trust fully supports and emphasises the vital role of such community infrastructure, aware that much of the so-called 'failures' of the

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new towns programmes and consequent “new town blues” were attributed to their very rapid growth and the absence of an existing community network.

There is also the experience of large new estates such as Mount Oswald where the applicant’s approved masterplan showed local community facilities including shops and a health centre that have not materialised. The Trust considers that community infrastructure for the much larger development at Sniperley Park should also include local health services and space for cultural activities, and that these must be binding upon any approvals of major housing developments there. Phasing is key, as below.

2.7 Phasing of development

The phasing of development should not be decided before the five infrastructure elements above (2.2 to 2.6) are fully integrated in the spatial plan. From the spatial plan it will be possible to identify an order of development, possibly neighbourhood by neighbourhood, simultaneously with the infrastructure and not in advance of it.

Developing by neighbourhood will require that development proceeds according to community needs and not according to developer preferences. The fact that developers’ ownerships do not coincide with neighbourhood development areas should not present a problem when developers become aware of the requirements of phased sustainable development. This should lead to a reconsideration of land ownerships and current developer preferences.

In respect of the phasing applied in the draft Masterplan, the Trust considers that the early implementation of the walking and cycling network and bus services provision will need particular care, with planning conditions applied to ensure that the relevant routes are available to new residents from the point houses are occupied. It appears from the text and map on p.46 that the enhancement of the underpass would be delayed to Phase 2, even though it would be useful for those living in the Phase 1 area. Off-site enhancements, such as pedestrian and cycle crossings of the existing roundabouts, will also need to be delivered early enough to enable sustainable travel habits to begin forming as soon as people move in.

THE HEALTHY ACTIVE TRAVEL CONNECTIVITY PLAN

This, again, is a very welcome document in principle. We note that on page 3 the report includes “*identified interventions, including costing and funding opportunities*”; however, these are not stated in the report. It is a major issue that the report does not explicitly identify the active travel routes off the Sniperley site which must be improved to bring about the connectivity needed. We have already referred to this in our comments on the draft Masterplan.

While parts of the document illustrate potential interventions such as traffic calming and better footway connections, the document does not lay down clear guidance for designers such as dimensions, widths of paths, etc. This is explored further in the attached Sustainable Transport Issues paper. Here it will suffice to urge the inclusion of clear directions to comply with the latest national guidance referred to in the County Durham Strategic Cycling and Walking Delivery Plan (LTN 1/20, Active Travel Wales). Cross-references from the document to the appropriate numbered Design Elements in the Active Travel Wales guidance would be useful

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signposting to ensure good design. Alternatively this could form part of a wider design code as suggested above.

The other major omission is how the transport planning of the site will relate to the building types and density. With reasonably high frequency bus services, the site could be suitable for constraints on car parking and higher density development including flats clustered around the main bus stops and mobility hubs.

The Transport for the North *Decarbonisation Strategy* calls for local authorities to lead on the “unbundling of the cost of parking from new housing prices to incentivise take-up of car-free or car-lite development”. Could the housing near the Park and Ride have reduced car parking, for example, with residents being allowed to rent space in the Park and Ride car park? This could work well, as it would mean the P&R spaces would be used overnight, and would avoid having to provide residential parking spaces that would be empty most of the day. Similarly, a car club strategy, also recommended by TfN, could be implemented; with more people working from home, car clubs could become significantly more popular so that people do not have the fixed costs of maintaining a vehicle.

Other comments on the Healthy Active Travel Connectivity Plan are set out in Appendix 2.

The Trust warmly welcomes both consultations and offers the above comments with positive intentions and would gladly discuss our suggestions with appropriate officers.

Yours sincerely

John Lowe

John Lowe,
Chair, City of Durham Trust

SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL ISSUES IN THE SNIPERLEY PARK CONSULTATION DRAFT MASTERPLAN

1. Road layout and access

As stated in section 2.3 of the Trust's letter above, without a more fully developed spatial plan, the biggest risk to the vision of a sustainable urban extension is that, because of the site's existing excellent road transport links, new residents will be enabled to make longer journeys, and will not take up the sustainable travel options in anything like the numbers needed for rapid de-carbonisation of the county's transport emissions.

Durham County Council is a member of the Transport for the North consortium, and that organisation's *Decarbonisation Strategy* includes in its recommendations for local authorities that "new developments ensure active travel modes and public transport are always more convenient than private car use"². At present the Masterplan does not achieve this.

This section presents a broad spatial analysis of the challenges inherent in the current Masterplan proposals, and suggests a possible resolution. The Trust is fully aware that the proposals in this part of our response, while reflective of the most recent Government guidance and its strengthened emphasis on placing sustainable modes of travel and transport at the top of the transport policy hierarchy, could be seen to represent a departure from the Council's previous approach. They would of course also have knock-on effects elsewhere on the highway network. The subsequent sections of this paper do not however depend on the Council accepting the arguments advanced in this first section.

Looking at the proposed road layout for the Sniperley development, we find that the housing is linked to the two main roads at five junctions, being connected to the A691 and A167 not only by existing roads but also by three new link roads. Potterhouse Lane and Trouts Lane are already used as rat runs, and as noted on p. 20 "both lanes are rural in character and have limited carrying capacity". Residents of Trouts Lane have already objected to the County Durham Land application because of the impact there would be on Trouts Lane.



² <https://transportforthenorth.com/wp-content/uploads/Annex-A-Detailed-Policy-Recommendations-TfNDec21.pdf>
p. 10

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The Draft Masterplan notes the retention of the B6532 as one of the site constraints. Rather than retaining it as a through route for all traffic, with car traffic adding delay to bus services, a more ambitious approach would see the B6532 and some link roads blocked to through motor traffic, except buses. By dividing the B6532 into several sections, residents of different parts of the site would have only one choice for car access to the main road network, rather than a wide range of options. That would also limit the scope for external rat-running through the release site.

Inspired by Dutch cities like Groningen, the city of Birmingham has adopted a new transport plan, which will see through journeys by car in residential areas eliminated, with traffic forced to travel between neighbouring areas via the main roads on the outskirts of the city. All properties would still be accessible by car, but some journeys would be a few minutes longer, encouraging transition to sustainable modes. It appears from the map on p.11 of the Healthy Active Travel Connectivity Plan that the section of the B6532 from the A167 over-bridge to New College is being considered for a bus and cycle only facility to reduce the impact on the road network in Framwellgate Moor. The Trust's proposal applies the Birmingham concept in miniature to the whole Sniperley site, by adding more modal filters to reduce through traffic still further and achieve the liveable neighbourhood envisaged in the Masterplan.

A possible scheme is shown below, with colour-coding of the residential areas, and asterisks showing the road access options available to each portion of the development. All residents would be able to drive within easy reach of the local centre and the primary school if necessary.



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The locations for the modal filters could be adjusted to ensure appropriate levels of traffic at each junction, based on traffic modelling. The modal filter by New College (suggested on the map on p.11 of the Healthy Active Travel Connectivity Plan) is retained.

People travelling from Sacriston could reroute via Witton Gilbert or Kimblesworth, but some would instead be attracted to the B6532 bus services. For shorter journeys from Sniperley Park the extended route involved in the initial part of a car journey would encourage people making local trips to use sustainable modes, as walking and cycling routes would be more direct.

Some car journeys would be longer. For example, someone driving from the eastern portion of the site in the direction of Lanchester would not be able to drive through the development, across the B6532, and out via the link to the A691. Instead that journey would have to be made via the A167 and the Park and Ride roundabouts on the A167 and A691. Note, however that none of these longer journeys by residents would add to pressure on the Sniperley roundabout itself.

Suggested actions

- Consider modal filters, public transport priority measures, and site connectivity options to “ensure active travel modes and public transport are always more convenient than private car use” (TfN *Decarbonisation Strategy*).

2. Travel plan targets

A weakness of recent major planning applications is that the setting of modal share targets in the Travel Plan is based solely on TRICS predictions, uninformed by national and local policies on shifting to sustainable transport and the climate emergency. In line with the sustainability objectives of the Masterplan, the Trust suggests that the Masterplan itself should give a strong steer to developers on the acceptable range for the initial car travel figures from the site. This will encourage applicants to design neighbourhoods and infrastructure to achieve a sustainable outcome.

The best time to get people to change their travel habits is when they move house or change employment. An ambitious, relatively low target for car share is therefore desirable. Annual reductions should be in line with the TfN *Decarbonisation Strategy* and the Committee on Climate Change *6th carbon budget*.

A benchmark is provided by the 2011 travel to work census figures for the Framwellgate Moor and Pity Me areas. Although the last available census data is now 10 years old, the National Travel Survey has shown a slight decline in car use up until 2019, the year before the Covid-19 pandemic, and so it is considered that estimating on the basis of the 2011 census is still valid.

The census travel to work percentages include categories for those not at work and those working from home. It is important, in setting Travel Plan targets, to look not just at the percentage of journeys made by different modes, but also whether those journeys are being made at all, and how many times a week. For emissions reductions the lengths of the journeys are key. The change in work patterns brought about by the pandemic shows the need for a Travel Plan to be supported by a more sophisticated annual travel survey which incorporates these factors.

Suggested actions

- Indicate appropriate initial Travel Plan car targets in the Masterplan to support TfN Decarbonisation Strategy and national emissions reduction targets.
- Travel Plan surveys to incentivise reduction in number and length of journeys, not just modal shift.

3. Walking/cycling within the site

The Trust welcomes the statement on p. 41 that “pedestrians and cyclists will have priority across the site”. This should mean that raised zebra and tiger crossings should be the default on main roads, along with continuous footways across side roads. Informal raised crossings with a continuous pedestrian surface would be appropriate where the walking network crosses residential streets. Priority should also extend to the treatment of residential streets where cars have to cross footways to access parking areas. Steeper ramps for vehicles, allowing a standard 1:50 crossfall for the footway to be maintained across the vehicle crossing assists buggy and wheelchair users and helps to slow cars.³

Most of these interventions are illustrated in the Healthy Active Travel Connectivity Plan, but to achieve a consistency across the site and help guide the separate developers the Trust suggests that the preferred designs should be codified, with recommended design parameters including dimensions and a prescription of the surfaces to be used. There should be a clear distinction between shared pedestrian/cycle routes and routes where pedestrians and cyclists are provided for separately. The surface for separated off-road cycle routes should be consistent with any on-road cycle lanes. Minimum widths for the different types of provision should be specified.

The planning applications currently in from Bellway and Co. Durham Land are both using a 1.8m footway width alongside streets and access roads. This is consistent with the County Council's *Highways Design Guide for Residential Development* of November 2014. That design guide appears to have been developed without reference to pre-existing guidance such as *Inclusive Mobility*⁴ (DfT, 2005) and *Manual for Streets*. The County Durham Strategic Cycling and Walking Delivery Plan (which is referred to from CDP Policy 21) points to best practice design guidance in Object 3, Point 4. For walking, this is the Active Travel Wales guidance which follows *Inclusive Mobility* and *Manual for Streets* in prescribing a minimum footway width of 2.0m with wider footways at bus stops (3m), by shops (3.5m to 4.5m) and on busier routes, especially the approaches to schools. As the trail of references from the County Durham Plan is hard to navigate, the Trust urges that minimum footway widths be stipulated in the Masterplan, perhaps as part of a design code.

The Trust is generally supportive of the indicative pedestrian/cycle network within the site, as shown in maps on p. 41 of the Masterplan and on p. 11 of the Healthy Active Travel Connectivity Plan (HATCP).

³ For a discussion of this issue and appropriate design solutions, see the following article by a highway engineer with experience of inclusive design: <https://therantyhighwayman.blogspot.com/2015/05/on-level.html>

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-mobility>

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However, both maps suffer from a lack of clarity about the cycle network within the site, and the connections to neighbouring areas. The Masterplan shows existing public rights of way (PROWs) in green. The HATCP version distinguishes PROWs by whether they are bridleways or footpaths, showing the former as “existing pedestrian/cycle routes”, though the bridleways within the site are not suitable for mainstream cycling at present. The new indicative network is labelled as “pedestrian/cycle network”, but it is unclear if cycling will be allowed on all routes or whether the existing network is to be upgraded. The map on HATCP p. 11 therefore gives the impression that the main route crossing the A167 by Woodbine Road will be pedestrian only, and similarly the route from the east end of the underpass north to join the wagonway. These would be expected to be key cycle connections.

The DfT's *Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans: Technical Guidance for Local Authorities*⁵ (April 2017) advises in paragraph 5.19 that “in a joined-up urban cycle network, cyclists should typically not have to travel more than 400m to get between cycle routes of similar quality”. This measure is known as the “mesh density”. LTN 1/20 para. 3.5.1 suggests a lower mesh density may be appropriate in lower-density outer suburbs. The Council's LCWIP for Durham City does not provide clarity, as the only routes shown are along the A167 and B6532.

The Masterplan should state clearly, as it does for the distances from bus stops, the desired mesh density for the cycle network. Streets and roads where a good cycling environment is provided can count towards this: the network does not have to be entirely off-road. The Masterplan should make clear that all roads within the site will have to provide for safe cycling by being designed to comply with LTN 1/20. Figure 4.1 of LTN 1/20 indicates the types of provision which are appropriate according to the speed limits and traffic volumes of the roads, with different options given green-amber-red ratings. The Sniperley development should achieve a green rating for all roads, i.e., “provision suitable for most people”. It should also be made clear that pedestrian and cycle traffic will need to be separated on routes where high flows are likely, in accordance with LTN 1/20 Summary Principle 2 (para. 1.6.1(2), p. 9).

Suggested actions:

- Codify preferred design parameters for footways, carriageway widths, corner radii, etc. in the Masterplan, e.g. by referring to *Active Travel Wales* Design Elements.
- Specify surfaces to be used for different route types for consistency and legibility across site.
- Define acceptable mesh density for cycle network.
- Require LTN 1/20 “green” rating for all roads (see Figure 4.1).
- Identify main active travel routes where separate pedestrian and cycle provision is needed.

4. A167 severance

The poor crossing facilities are recognised, but the “key masterplan elements” on p. 32 only address improving pedestrian connections to Pity Me at Woodbine Road (item 24) and enhancing the underpass to “create a positive arrival for pedestrians”. The text on p. 41 repeats the pedestrian element for the Woodbine Road crossing. It is not apparent that any

⁵ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/908535/cycling-walking-infrastructure-technical-guidance-document.pdf

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improvements for cycling are included in the Masterplan, and the Healthy Active Travel Connectivity Plan is no clearer.

It is essential that the five main roundabouts that pedestrians and cyclists have to use for key journeys are enhanced. The uncontrolled crossings, often with dual-lane entry/exit, at Sniperley Roundabout, the A167 and A691 Park and Ride roundabouts, Pity Me roundabout and Blackie Boy roundabout do not meet the standard of provision expected for pedestrians and cyclists in the latest national design guidance.⁶

The “key masterplan elements” include alterations to the B6532/Trouts Lane junction (item 26) which is beyond the site boundary. It would not be inconsistent to list the requirement to improve these other junctions.

Note that traffic levels on the A167 would mean that any cycle crossing, whether at the roundabouts or between them, would need to be either signalised or grade-separated to comply with LTN 1/20 with any central refuge 3.0m deep to accommodate all cycles. Although there is no hard rule for pedestrian crossing facilities in DfT guidance, Table 3 of the CIHT publication *Planning for Walking* (March 2015) suggests that for 40mph roads uncontrolled crossings or central refuges are only appropriate in low flow environments.

Currently the A167 has the national speed limit applied. The carriageway, which was built to accommodate three lanes, is wide, and it is likely that observance of a reduced speed limit would be poor without any engineering intervention. One possibility would be to reassign the carriageway space with two standard motor vehicle lanes and a kerb-protected bi-directional cycle lane. If the cycle lane was on the east side, that would allow the shared-use path to revert to pedestrian-only. This would provide a standard of provision similar to the section from Mount Oswald to Cock o'the North.

The Masterplan is silent about two informal crossings of the A167 which are in regular use:

- the old wagonway
- the original alignment of Potterhouse Lane, past Potterhouse Terrace and continuing west to join the current alignment

As the approaches to these crossings on the Sniperley Park side will be part of the park land it seems unlikely that the desire to use these routes will diminish. The wagonway alignment could provide a better cycle route than the narrow underpass, and the crossing towards Potterhouse Terrace is ideally placed to lead from the northern part of the site through to Abbey Road and the Arnison Centre. It would be a much more attractive route for walking and cycling access than Rotary Way, for example.

It is appreciated that further crossings of the A167, which would probably need to be signalised, would be an additional expense and would affect traffic flow, but linking Sniperley Park with the existing communities to the east is rightly an important concern of Policy 5, as it is key to enabling sustainable travel.

⁶ See CD195 (part of DMRB) Table E/4.1 and LTN 1/20 Table 10-2 which show that uncontrolled crossings would be unacceptable, and signalised crossings or grade separation would be required. Refuges would need to be a minimum of 3.0m deep to accommodate the “cycle design vehicle” – see CD195 E/2 and LTN 1/20 Table 5-1.

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Suggested actions:

- Clarify that the main roundabout junctions in the area all require walking/cycling enhancements.
- Stipulate compliance with LTN 1/20 for all crossings.
- Consider engineering measures needed to ensure reduced speed limit is observed on A167.
- Review number and placing of intermediate crossings of A167.

5. Walking/cycling connectivity

The Healthy Active Travel Connectivity Plan contents summary at the foot of page 3 mentions *“identified interventions, including costing and funding opportunities”* but this material is not present in the version issued for consultation.

CDP Policy 5(i) states that *“the development must be connected to the existing development to the east of the A167 through suitable, convenient, safe and attractive cycleways and footpaths”*. Policy 5(l) requires *“a contribution to delivering sustainable transport”* in accordance with policies 21 and 22. The penultimate paragraph of Policy 5 states that the routes must connect to *“adjoining facilities”*. This must entail more than just creating cycleways and footpaths within the site and connections and road crossings at the site boundary. We feel that the Masterplan should be explicit about the connections and enhancements which are expected to be delivered.

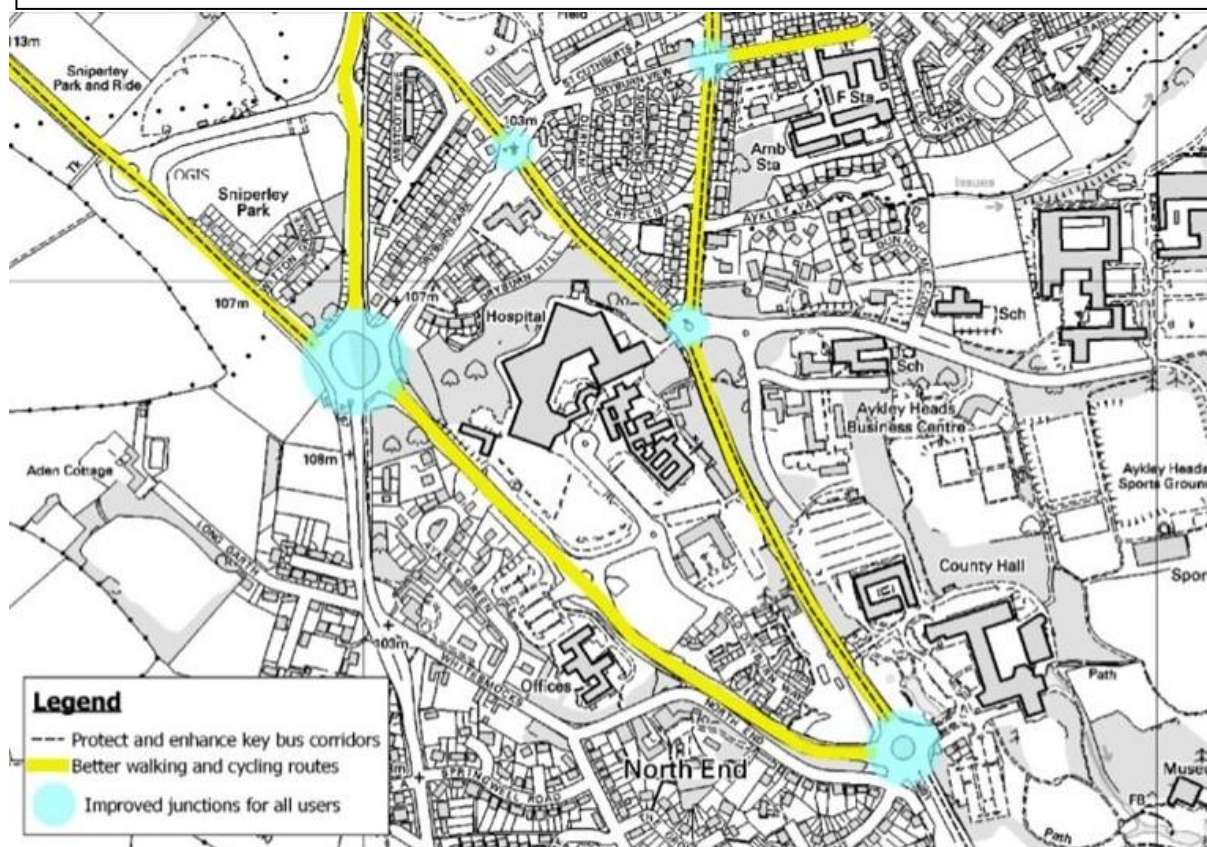
The Trust considers that the following are among the key facilities which Sniperley Park residents would need to access:

- Arnison Centre
- Abbey Road retail and employment
- Abbey Leisure Centre
- Framwellgate Moor local shops and leisure facilities
- Framwellgate School, Framwellgate Moor Primary School and St Godric's Catholic Primary School
- Chastleton Medical Centre
- Durham Johnston School
- St Leonard's School
- Aykley Heads employment
- Durham city centre

The parts of Policy 22 relevant to Sniperley Park are the *“walking, cycling and public transport improvements linking Aykley Heads, Sniperley, Framwellgate Moor, Newton Hall and the city centre”*.

The Durham City Sustainable Transport Delivery Plan (which supports Policy 22) identifies many of the routes and the measures which are required in the *“north-western corridor”* (see Figure 4.5 below). The provision for buses and cycling is highlighted as a priority, including *“the large roundabout junctions in the area, which present intimidating and potentially hazardous conditions for cycling as they are presently configured”*. Safer road crossings for pedestrians are also identified as necessary.

Figure 4.5 North-western corridor proposals



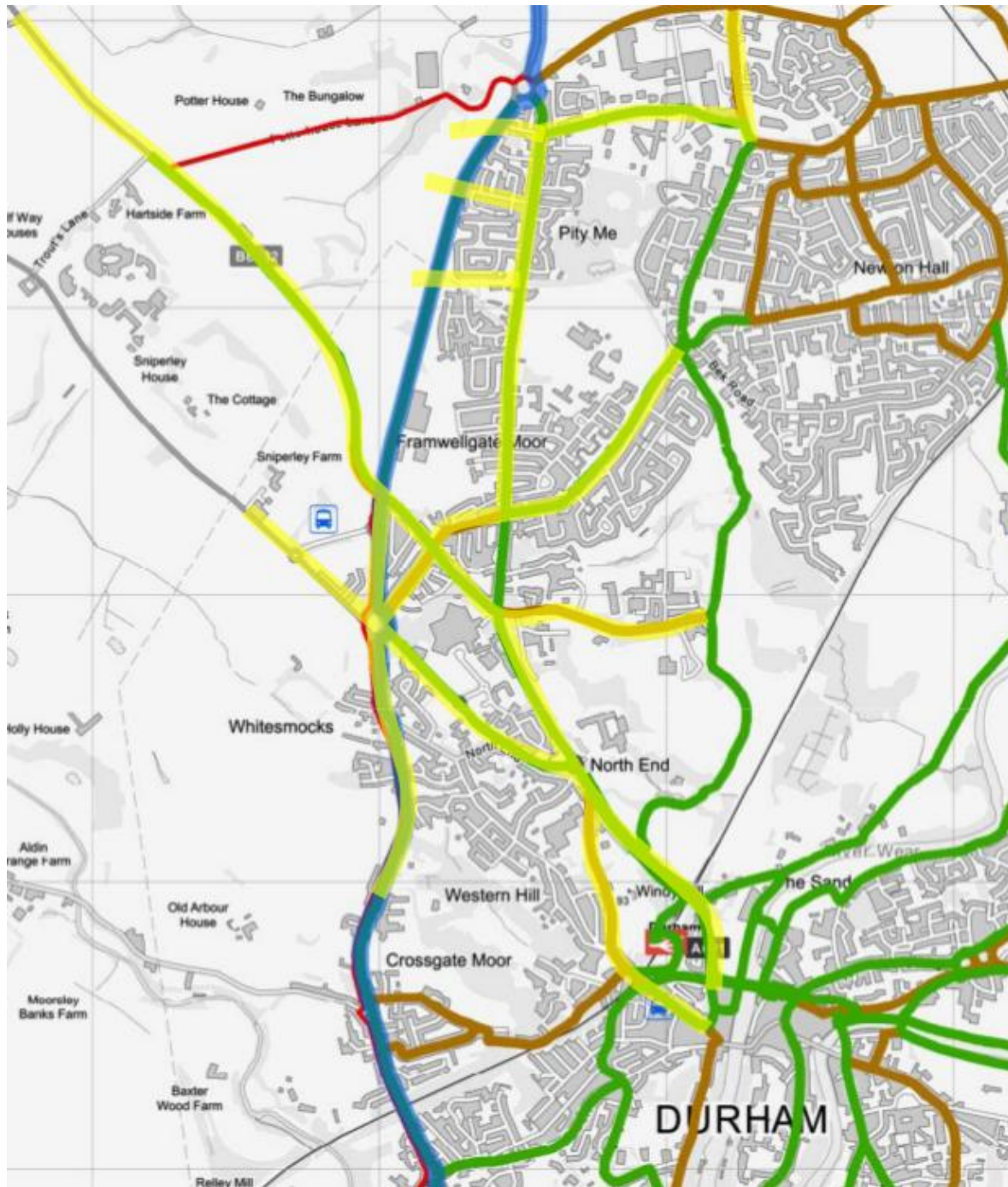
Policy 21 refers to the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan for Durham City, which identifies the main cycle network to be developed as well as pedestrian routes to be enhanced. We have highlighted in yellow on the diagram on the next page those routes which would help deliver the connections to the main facilities we have identified.

Some of these routes could attract contributions from other forthcoming development such as the Aykley Heads site. However it is paid for, it is essential that as much as possible of this network is delivered in readiness for the occupation of the new housing at Sniperley. Good quality networks will also help residents of neighbouring areas such as Framwellgate Moor switch to sustainable modes. This will reduce the number of cars on the roads, thereby also reducing the impact of the additional motor traffic resulting from Sniperley Park.

In a similar way, extending the B6532 cycle route to Sacriston will help reduce traffic through the new development and improve access to facilities for all.

Contributions towards the sustainable travel network should be prioritised over road capacity measures wherever possible. This is required by CDP Policy 21 which sets out the priorities for investment in sustainable transport, and only allows for changes to accommodate additional motor traffic following the implementation of sustainable transport measures.

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We note that in several of the Masterplan maps a link is shown giving access from Sniperley Park into the grounds of Lanchester Road Hospital, in the vicinity of the car parking area at the north-east. Again, it should be made clear whether a public walking and cycling route through the grounds to the A691 is to be developed. It would be useful to create a new link to Witton Gilbert Footpath 12 on the south-west side of the A691.

Suggested actions:

- Identify main off-site enhancements to walking/cycling network which need to be delivered.
- Resolve lack of clarity over potential link via Lanchester Road Hospital.

6. Bus provision

The Masterplan makes a good start in locating higher density development and non-residential use close to the B6532, which will be one of the main bus routes, and in providing two link roads to open up the site to further through bus routes, but the Trust believes there is a need to go further to ensure a high standard of provision.

The Masterplan states on p. 41 that “*all parts of the site should be within 400m walk of a bus stop*”. The 400m maximum distanced originated in a 1973 report when bus travel was less challenged by the private car. The 2018 CIHT publication *Buses in urban developments*⁷, which was informed by national policy including the NPPF, recommends that the maximum distance to bus stops reflect the frequency of services available.

Table 4: Recommended maximum walking distances to bus stops

Situation	Maximum walking distance
Core bus corridors with two or more high-frequency services	500 metres
Single high-frequency routes (every 12 minutes or better)	400 metres
Less frequent routes	300 metres
Town/city centres	250 metres

The Masterplan has not demonstrated clearly that the proposed road layout can achieve such distances for all parts of the development. To do this the likely bus service frequencies on each road must be identified. That will determine the appropriate walking distance from bus stops on those roads. The placing of the bus stops can then be determined: on a road with a lower frequency service they may need to be closer together, but a balance has to be struck to avoid the bus having to stop too often. This placement needs to be done in conjunction with the design of the residential street and path network to ensure that the walking routes are sufficiently direct. Actual distances, rather than radii, need to be considered.

As it says in *Manual for Streets*, para 6.5.9, it is “*essential to consider the siting of public transport stops and related pedestrian desire lines at an early stage of design. Close co-operation is required between public transport operators, the local authorities and the developer*”.

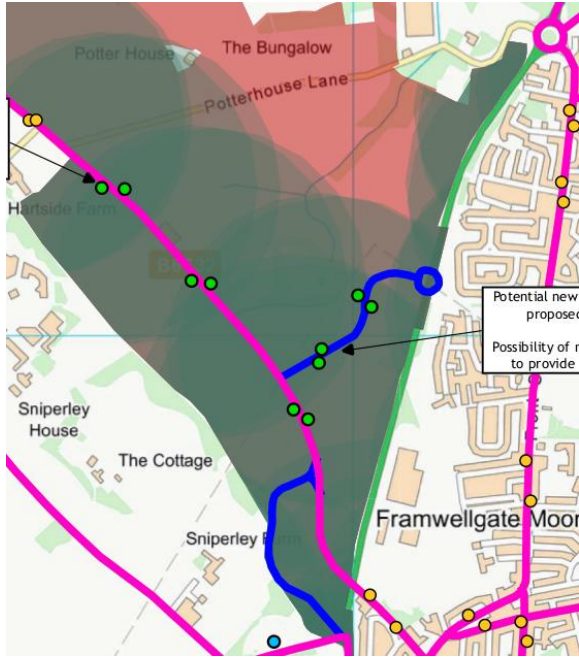
CIHT's *Buses in urban developments* quotes advice from Stagecoach on p. 15 that “*the locations of ... bus stops ... need to be broadly identified at the earliest feasible stage, and typically within the Master Plan consented at Outline Stage*”. Bus stops “*should act as foci for path networks and possible locations of local activity centres such as convenience shops*” (p. 11).

The planning applications submitted by Bellway and Co. Durham Land both had substantial areas of the housing beyond 400m, and the DCC Masterplan is a considerable improvement on those applications.

⁷ https://www.ciht.org.uk/media/4459/buses_ua_tp_full_version_v5.pdf

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The Masterplan proposes that the north-south link road from the B6532 meets the A167 opposite Woodbine Road, whereas the Co. Durham Land application had a junction further south, by the wagonway. As the Masterplan version heads west initially, it may bring more of the site, particularly the land adjacent to Potterhouse Lane, within a suitable distance of a bus stop. From the eastern-most development plots, however, the footpath access, along the existing rights of way, would not be very direct.



County Durham Land application: shading indicating 400m radii round bus stops



DCC Masterplan: Access & Movement map

Without indications of the locations of the actual bus stops, and measurements of distance that follow the roads and paths, it is not apparent whether the optimum access arrangement has been identified. The Trust would like to see a more fully developed bus access map which sets out clearly the expectations. It would be easier for the County Council to take the lead in any consultation with bus companies than two independent developers.

If the intention is to leave the detail to the two independent planning applications from the developers, how is any deficiency in the bus stop distances to be resolved? It will either need changes to the road and path layout, the location of building plots versus parkland, or the density of building to minimise the number of dwellings beyond easy reach of bus services.

The housing in the southern part of the site may be reliant on bus services along the A691. Grade-separation or signalised crossings would be necessary to access the west-bound stops. (See Section 4 on A167 severance above for the justification.)

Suggested actions:

- Set expected maximum distances to bus stops in accordance with CIHT guidance.
- Review alignment of link roads and placing of bus stops to minimise distances from all housing areas.
- Identify need to upgrade pedestrian crossings to access A691 bus stops.

7. Park and Ride

The current proposals to extend the Park and Ride site should be looked at again in the light of the public transport needs of the Sniperley Park area.

Where is the expected market? Some possibilities include:

1. From the west via the A691 or from the north on the A167.
2. From Sacriston, Edmondsley, Stanley etc. via the B6532.
3. From the Sniperley site itself.

Options 1 and 2 are valid markets, but is the plan accompanied by a commitment to reduce the amount of parking available in Durham City Centre, through a Workplace Parking Levy and removal of on-street provision in order to boost demand? Option 2 will be opened up by the proposed link road from the B6532, but there is a risk that customers using the existing bus services might be attracted instead to drive to the Park and Ride, especially as bus journey times from Sacriston would be extended because of the additional stops. Increasing capacity could also abstract bus passengers from services along the A691. A study at the University of the West of England has found that these effects can outweigh the benefit of Park and Ride services, so care is needed.⁸

Use by residents of the Sniperley site would be largely undesirable, unless they access the Park and Ride services by walking or cycling to the Park and Ride site.

It may be that a transport hub on the Park and Ride site (rather than a “mobility hub” at the Local Centre) would be preferable in that it would have a wider role supporting:

- Park and Ride users
- Residents of and visitors to Sniperley Park
- New College students, staff and visitors
- Sustainable transport options for reaching other major facilities such as the University Hospital of North Durham

Most buses should not terminate here but serve the Sniperley Park site and beyond, including perhaps rerouting of Sacriston services. This ‘harvesting’ of all public transport is essential to providing the frequency needed to make buses the transport of choice for Sniperley Park. Express services between the north and south of the county via the A167 might also be possible to widen the possibilities for users of the Park and Ride. Such ideas would require further development in partnership with the local public transport operators. A wider remit for the site would also help support concepts such as “Park and Pedal” or “Pedal and Ride”.

Perhaps the greatest opportunity is the double use of parking spaces to serve nearby residential properties overnight. This is dealt with more fully in Section 8 below.

Suggested actions:

- Develop plan for expansion of the Park and Ride only as part of a coherent city-wide car parking strategy.
- Consider scope for other bus services to call at Park and Ride.

⁸

<https://blueandgreentomorrow.com/travel/park-and-ride-schemes-not-as-eco-friendly-as-first-thought/>

8. Car access and parking

The new Parking and Accessibility SPD is in preparation, and the Trust has argued strongly for the new policies to support reduced provision of car parking in accessible locations and a greater reliance on communal parking areas or well-designed on-street parking to make more efficient use of land. The Trust's approach is consistent with the principles set out in CDP Policy 21 as modified by the Inspector.

The Transport for the North *Decarbonisation Strategy Annex A*⁹ contains detailed policy recommendations, some of which are expected to be delivered by local authority partners. Among those related to planning are the recommendations on p.10 to

- Encourage car-free or car-lite development.
- Implement planning policies that encourage the 'unbundling' of the cost of parking from new housing prices to incentivise the take up of car-free or car-lite development.

The Park and Ride site offers an opportunity to put this into practice. The Park and Ride car parking is largely empty overnight, and spaces could therefore be rented for use by neighbouring dwellings, which could be designed to have limited car parking available. This could be applied successfully to apartments and to houses. In the case of houses it would be necessary to ensure that front gardens could not be converted to provide additional parking spaces. One way to achieve this is to have small front gardens opening onto an area of communal green space, perhaps arranged in courts, with the minimum of road access for dropping off heavier loads.

An example of this approach is Vauban, in Freiburg, where car parking is entirely decoupled from ownership of dwellings. Car parking spaces are rented in multi-storey car barns on the periphery. The Park and Ride site offers a ready-made car parking facility which could be used in this way.

Closer to Durham, several developments being brought forward by the City of York Council as part of their Housing Delivery Programme¹⁰ would be worth emulating. The Duncombe Barracks and Burnholme sites have recently received planning permission for Passivhaus standard homes with a car-lite approach where parking permits are allocated separately from the housing.

The Transport for New Homes *Checklist for new housing developments*¹¹ (p.4) looks for:

- street scene not being dominated by ground-level parking
- most parking spaces communal and available to all residents and visitors
- parking only in defined spaces or purpose-built bays
- car parking avoiding negative impact on walking, cycling and bus operation (e.g. no frequent driveway crossovers)
- no car parking taking place on pavements

⁹ <https://transportforthenorth.com/wp-content/uploads/Annex-A-Detailed-Policy-Recommendations-TfNDec21.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://www.york.gov.uk/housing/housing-delivery-programme-1>

¹¹ <https://www.transportfornewhomes.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/checklist.pdf>

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The *Manual for Streets* Table 8.2 (p. 108) also supports communal parking arrangements to support more efficient use of land. There needs to be a careful balance to ensure that inappropriate car parking does not become a problem, but it should certainly be possible to avoid in-curtilage provision for multiple cars.



Burnholme development site, York



Duncombe Barracks development site, York

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The new National Model Design Code notes that “the arrangements for car parking can have a major impact on the quality of place. They should aim to minimise the impact of the car and solutions will vary depending on context”¹². The *Guidance Notes for Design Codes*¹³ section M.3.i favours unallocated parking as an efficient use of land, and also suggests options such as parking courts and car barns to concentrate allocated parking provision. While locating residential car parking in front of each house does simplify the provision of electric car charging points, this is by no means the only possible solution to encourage the use of electric vehicles.

To support a reduction in car ownership, a car share scheme should also be provided. The Masterplan refers to an “*exemplar car share scheme*” on p. 41 to be included in a mobility hub available at the local centre. Just as for access to sustainable transport, car share opportunities should be located reasonably close to homes. There may therefore need to be several locations where car share vehicles are available. The Burnholme site in York is planned to have a number of e-cargo bikes, suitable for carrying children and shopping loads, available for residents¹⁴.

Suggested actions:

- Explore the combination of low-car development and a rented model for overnight Park and Ride spaces.
- Ensure car parking provision is shaped by a strong design code.
- Consider non-traditional layouts to constrain car access.
- Review the balance of allocated (in-curtilage) and unallocated car parking.
- Give a strong steer on the need for car club spaces dispersed across the site.

9. Wider road network

CDP Policy 5(l) lists examples of highways works and improvements required. Note that in terms of NPPF paragraphs 110 and 111, sustainable transport interventions are to take priority.

The peak time traffic on the A167 is a major concern to local people, but it is clear that much of this is attributable to school traffic, not just to access Durham Johnston and St Leonard's secondary schools, but also some journeys to primary schools in Neville's Cross.

The Durham Johnston travel plan has not been maintained since it was first written in 2009, and the County Council has no recent travel survey data from Durham Johnston. This hampers the identification of appropriate solutions to the congestion issues.

In terms of the land use, and numbers of people travelling, the shared use footway/cycleway is the most space-effective part of the highway at present, but it is too narrow to act as an effective cycleway at peak times. By reallocating carriageway space an effective separated cycleway could be created along much of this length of the A167. With associated improvements to the foot and cycle crossings of the Sniperley Roundabout, and reinvigorated

¹²

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1009793/NMDC_Part_1_The_Coding_Process.pdf para. 59(iii), p. 30

¹³

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/957207/Guidance_notes_for_Design_Codes.pdf

¹⁴ City of York planning application 20/01916/OUTM, Transport Statement, p. 18, section 4.4. See <https://planningaccess.york.gov.uk/online-applications/>

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Travel Plans for the schools, modal shift to active travel might be induced to mitigate any increase in motor traffic demand resulting from the Sniperley Park development.

This approach would be consistent with the wording of Policy 5(l) which requires “capacity improvements along the A167 corridor from Neville's Cross to Sniperley, including improvements to Sniperley Roundabout”. It would be the right approach in the context of the climate emergency.

APPENDIX 1: DETAILED COMMENTS ON MASTERPLAN WORDING

This appendix contains suggestions which can easily be implemented by small changes to Masterplan wording. The more substantive suggestions were made in the main letter and attached paper on Sustainable Travel Issues.

p. 10

Connections to City Centre

The document states that from the centre of the site the city centre can be reached by “*a 15 minute cycle on well signed, good quality cycle paths*”. There is no continuous network of paths giving access to the city centre. Those sections that are available are mostly not of good quality, because of issues such as lack of safe routes at roundabouts, lack of priority over side roads, and space shared with pedestrians. These issues have been noted in the Durham City Sustainable Transport Delivery Plan, and if not resolved would seriously limit the uptake of cycling as a travel mode from the Sniperley site.

We suggest the text be amended to:

a 15 minute cycle ride involving sections of busy road and intimidating junctions

p. 20

Walking and Cycling

The document notes that “*pedestrian crossings on the A691 are very limited*”. The accompanying map shows a green double-headed arrow for the underpass. The public right of way crossing at Woodbine Road, where there is no refuge, is marked by orange arrows. It should be noted that despite the lack of formal crossing point or rights of way it is clear from evidence on the ground that two other crossing points are in regular use. One is on the alignment of the old wagonway, where despite the installation of a crash barrier in 2016 it is clear even on Google Street View that use continues to be made of the path on the west of the A167. The other crossing point is on the original alignment of Potterhouse Lane, which used to run straight from the end of Abbey Road, past Potterhouse Terrace and continued roughly west until it joined the current alignment. Both of these crossings are in regular use and should be added to the map on p. 21 to show the current access.

p. 28

Principle 7 (School and playing fields)

The text states that a “*suitable drop off area should be provided for the school with additional measures to prevent stopping on main vehicular routes*”.

Design of access to the school is crucial to encouraging sustainable transport. Access by car must not impinge on safe access to the school by walking and cycling, including unaccompanied access by older primary school children. Living Streets recommends operating car-free streets around schools and pick-up/drop-off times, with those who need to use a car parking away from the school gates and walking the last 10 minutes. Making the car option a little less convenient, and the environment around the school safer for active travel, can really encourage more families to adopt sustainable habits.

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Rather than retrofitting the access arrangements later, as will have to be done elsewhere, the Trust would like to see this wording strengthened so that the design of the school access delivers these outcomes from the start.

For example:

Suitable drop off areas should be provided at 5 to 10 minutes' distance from the school with additional measures to prevent stopping on main vehicular routes or access closer to the school by car, in order to create a safe low-car environment around the school which prioritises walking and cycling.

Principle 8 (Built form and housing densities)

It would be helpful if the masterplan could include indicative numerical housing densities rather than just asking for “higher density” at the local centre. CDP Policy 29(p) requires at least 30 dwellings per hectare (dph) net “*in and around town centres and locations where there is good access to facilities and frequent public transport services*”. The Masterplan envisages that the Sniperley development will have “*excellent transport links*”, which suggests that to comply with Policy 29 the majority of the site should be at a minimum of 30 dph, with even higher density close to the local centre. Supporting this view, the Transport for New Homes checklist¹⁵ looks for densities of at least 35-50 dwellings per hectare (gross) in order to assure the viability of high quality public transport and local facilities. Higher density development also supports the use of district heating.

Developers tend to allocate land to volume housebuilders in zones, and within each zone the variety of house types will be limited. The Masterplan should encourage greater mixing of house types so that within a moderate distance a mix of house types and tenures is provided.

While higher density is desirable around the local centre, this should not be the enabler of much lower density large dwellings grouped to form a socially exclusive neighbourhood bordering the green belt. This principle could be strengthened by referencing or incorporating parts of pages 35-38 (sections U1 to U3) of the National Design Guide¹⁶.

p. 29

Principle 9 (Overcoming the barrier of the A167)

After the words “unsignalised crossings” we suggest inserting “including those at the Sniperley, Park and Ride and Pity Me roundabouts” to ensure that it is clear that these access routes also require enhancement, and not just the public footpath crossings of the A167.

Principle 10 (Movement network)

This refers to the Sustrans Design Principle on facilitating “*independent walking, cycling and wheeling for everyone, including an unaccompanied 12-year old*”. The Trust urges that the age range start with 8-year olds, to match the Summary Principles of LTN 1/20 (p. 9, section

¹⁵ <https://www.transportfornewhomes.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/checklist.pdf>

¹⁶

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/962113/National_design_guide.pdf

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1.6.1(1)). The Trust would also like to see an explicit requirement in the Masterplan that all roads and cycle routes within the development comply with LTN 1/20, the current national cycle design guidance. Walking routes, including those along roads, should be designed in compliance with Active Travel Wales guidance, as suggested by the County Durham Strategic Cycling and Walking Delivery Plan (CDSCWDP). These national guidance documents are hooked into the County Durham Plan policies by way of Policy 21's reference to the CDSCWDP, but a direct reference from the Masterplan will help to ensure that the guidance is not overlooked.

Principle 12 (Zero carbon development)

As the site includes mine-shafts, we suggest that the text about Heat Pumps should be amended by inserting the words shown in bold:

*Heat should therefore be delivered through either individual or community Heat Pumps (air, ground **or minewater**) or be passivehouse.*

Note that there is some inconsistency in the document: passivhaus (p. 7), PassivHaus, passivehouse (both p. 29). The international standard is correctly called Passivhaus.

p. 32

Key masterplan elements

Consider amending to “pedestrian **and cycle** links” as residents from the north of the site may prefer to cycle to the Park and Ride.

p. 41

The text states that “*all parts of the site should be within 400m walk of a bus stop*”. Should it be nuanced to “*all buildings on the site*”, as it is not necessary for all areas of parkland to be on proximity to bus stops? See also the detailed Sustainable Transport Issues paper for suggestions on the appropriate distances.

The text refers to a “*pedestrian crossing at new junction on A167 (adjacent Woodbine Road)*”. We suggest this should be amended to a “pedestrian **and cycle** crossing” because a cycle link is needed to facilitate journeys to Pity Me, Abbey Road area and Arnison Centre.

State desirable mesh density for the cycle network (e.g. 400m in residential areas).

All roads and streets to provide for cycling according to speed limit and traffic volume (see LTN 1/20 Figure 4.1).

State minimum footway widths: 2.0m with wider footways on busy routes such as approaching the local centre and school.

Codify the surfaces to be used for different types of path to achieve consistency across the site:

- shared pedestrian/cycle off-road routes
- separated pedestrian/cycle off-road routes
- pedestrian-only paths
- on-road cycleways

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Stipulate design elements (e.g. by reference to Active Travel Wales p. 274 onwards) for key features such as:

- raised zebra and tiger crossings
- continuous footways at side roads
- access across footways for car parking
- bus stops

The key under the map refers to the Healthy Active Travel Connectivity Plan for the actual pedestrian/cycle routes to be implemented. That document, however, provides no additional detail, and concludes with a very similar map on p. 11 which is confusingly titled “Existing infrastructure plan”.

APPENDIX 2:

FURTHER COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT HEALTHY ACTIVE TRAVEL CONNECTIVITY PLAN

Pages 4 and 5: whilst stating the types of intervention needed to connect Sniperley to local amenities it is unclear whether these pages apply just on-site or also off-site.

Page 6: good to see traffic calming; we hope this is designed-in at the start. This should include tighter corner radii at junctions to reduce speeds and preserve pedestrian desire lines. The *Manual for Streets* and *Active Travel Wales* both advocate tighter radii, with the latter suggesting a desirable maximum radius of 3m.

Page 7: mentions "bus stop lay-bys". It is not clear what this means. If they are the sort of lay-bys where buses pull in to the side, so that other traffic can go past, then this is not a good idea because buses can be delayed getting out again. A useful design feature, which might be the intended meaning, is the "floating bus stop" or "bus stop bypass" where a segregated cycle route goes behind the bus stop to avoid pedestrians alighting from the bus coming into collision with cyclists.

Page 8: bike hangars are popular in London boroughs and we could do with some in Durham's terraced streets, but we would not advocate them as a design solution for newly-built accommodation which ought to have bike storage integrated into the design. We agree that there should be short-stay cycle parking at key public locations within the site, but cycle parking at destinations outside Sniperley Park, like the shops at Framwellgate Moor, are probably where it is needed more. Therefore the sentence which says "strategic locations throughout the development site" ought to be expanded to include off-site improvements to encourage cycling to the existing shops and schools. Within the site there should be cycle parking at the school, shops, and bus stops to widen the reach of existing and new bus services, and at the Park and Ride.

Page 9: Mobility Hub: plotting the existing and proposed bus routes and ensuring that there is good connectivity to the housing by walking and cycling is key, together with bike racks at the bus stops. The bus route to Sacriston is one candidate.

The primary school needs to be at the hub of a path network, and ideally should be less easy to access by car to discourage car drop-off. Another option is the "school street" where the approach road is closed at drop-off/pick-up times, but it would be better not to have to make that kind of intervention by designing the location more appropriately in the first place.

Page 10: while Park and Pedal sounds interesting, it is far more important to make the infrastructure investment in complete routes that take people to the city centre and the University. Secure cycle parking for people wanting to cycle to the Park and Ride site and then get the bus is definitely needed. An e-bike and e-cargo bike scheme would allow people to get some experience with them and hopefully then buy their own.

Page 11: the map of existing infrastructure is somewhat confusing because of the way the "indicative pedestrian / cycle network" is displayed. The dark blue line crossing the A167 is

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"bus/cycle only route" in the key, but it seems to be the bit of the B6532 that goes under the A167. Was the intention to colour the link from Front Street to High Carr Road instead, or is this, in fact, a proposal not mentioned elsewhere in the text?

A pedestrian/cycle network might be partly cycle and partly not, but one cannot tell which is which from this. It is important to distinguish each so that the adequacy of the cycle network can be checked.

The various new "primary roads" in dark grey within the site are worth scrutiny. Several of these create through connections which is undesirable if we are to avoid future rat-runs. The draft Masterplan has the same layout. The road network should ideally be a branching network with very few through journey opportunities, and the cycling/walking network should provide the within-site connectivity.

Potterhouse Lane, however, is mainly shown as light grey (existing road network) but a short stretch is green dots (indicative pedestrian/cycle network). It is unclear as to whether that stretch is to be closed to vehicles.
