

# ALNWICK & DENWICK NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

## Topic Chapter Transport

### 1. Context

#### 1.1 Introduction

This paper represents an early step in the preparation of the transport section of the Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan (the Plan), which is to be drawn up, in principle, to reflect the needs and aspirations of the people in the community but set within the context of the National Planning Policy Framework. Aspects of transport relevant to the communities in the Plan area are first identified, from which potential strategic objectives for transport improvement within and affecting Alnwick and Denwick are proposed. Existing papers and documents influencing the provision of transport within the Plan area and more broadly are identified. The transport providers, authorities and organised users are set out and all will be offered opportunity to comment on the transport section of the Plan as it evolves.

The paper has made extensive use of the community engagement work carried out to date and the documents already produced are listed for reference. The results of that work have been combined with the published information, informal discussions and media publications to identify the issues of concern expressed by the residents of the Plan area individually and by their communities collectively. The same sources have then been used to compile lists of potential options for addressing those issues and hence improving the provision for travel and transport in Alnwick and Denwick.

General constraints that may prevent options for improvement being adopted are stated. As importantly, the interaction of transport and travel with other aspects of life in the Plan area have been identified, as compromise is certain to be needed if transport is to fulfil its proper role of facilitating the cohesion, health and well-being of the community, rather than being an objective in its own right.

The purpose of this paper is therefore to stimulate discussion with a view to condensing and refining the available evidence into a form that is appropriate for inclusion in the Plan.

#### 1.2 Aspects of transport of importance in the Plan area

In Alnwick and Denwick, as in many other areas, we use travel and transport in a wide variety of ways. Moreover, we don't always associate the services from which we benefit or the activities in which we engage with the transport provision that makes them possible. Our use of transport is often indirect, which serves to underline the fact that travel and transport more often facilitate other activities and services than form an activity justified in its own right. Some of the more obvious ways we use travel and transport are to:

- |                          |                  |                        |                           |
|--------------------------|------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|
| Access education         | Access work      | Do business            | Farm                      |
| Pursue trades & services | Make visits away | Reduce rural isolation | Provide visitor access    |
| Promote social cohesion  | Improve health   | Expand horizons        | Move goods & post         |
| Respond to emergencies   | Dispose of waste | Go Shopping            | Pursue leisure activities |

This short list is not intended to be exhaustive, rather it is intended to illustrate the wide range of activities that are dependent on the successful provision of transport for the movement of goods and to enable people to travel.

But there is no one mode of travel that can deliver all our objectives. Moreover, the disadvantages of a given mode may be greater than the advantages in some respects and so we have to make judgements about the overall provision that will achieve the greatest benefit for the community whilst at the same time protecting the interests and needs of minorities. And indeed, information technology has already begun to reduce the need to travel and good planning can reduce the need further whilst at the same time increasing the overall quality of life for the community and its members.

To remind us then, across the Alnwick and Denwick communities, we currently make direct or indirect use of:

Walking	Jogging	Cycling	Mobility scooters
Buses	Cars	Taxis	Coaches (private/tour)
Lorries	Vans	Farm vehicles	Maintenance vehicles
Rail services	Infant buggies	Wheel chairs	Specialist vehicles

However, these modes often present conflicts with each other, leading to accidents causing death and injury, to inefficiency, to ill health through polluting emissions, to accelerated climate change through exhaust emissions, to inappropriate use of green spaces and to damage to the townscape, all of which means that compromises have to be reached to deliver the appropriate transport and travel network for the Plan area.

In reaching the best possible compromise, extensive consideration of the current and potential infrastructure networks and constructive interaction between them is essential. The relevant infrastructure for this purpose consists essentially of:

Bus station	Bus stops	Car parks	Taxi rank
Footpaths	Broadband	Railway station	Roads
Cycleways	Cycle lanes	Bridleways	Pipes & cables

Pipes and cables are included, not only because they deliver many commodities to many places but also because they commonly are routed along existing roads and footpaths. Any need for maintenance, repair, replacement or enhancement consequently disrupts the normal use and user. Similarly, in their respective ways all the infrastructure networks require cleaning, maintenance, enhancement and often, special treatment to manage winter weather and increasingly, local flash flooding.

**1.3 Background studies, papers and plans**

Whilst the statutory Neighbourhood Plan represents a new departure in civic planning, it can draw usefully from the evidence supporting previous approaches and practices. Consequently, a list of the documents that have influenced the preparation of the present paper is provided in Appendix 1.

## 1.4 Community evidence of need for continued provision and improvement

The essence of the Neighbourhood Plan is that it should be derived directly from the views and aspirations of members of the community, rather than be a statement of intent imposed by planning, transport or other authorities. To this end, Alnwick Town Council on behalf of Alnwick & Denwick arranged various events in 2011 from which a range of issues relevant to travel and transport in the Plan area were identified.

The initial work not only served to launch the process, but also led to the production of a publicity brochure as an initial step towards ensuring that members of the community had good opportunity to know about and contribute to the Plan. A procedural report 'Developing a Plan for Alnwick' was produced and this report further identified some general concerns about transport and other topics. From this early work, a detailed questionnaire was developed and published widely in the Plan area, attracting 688 responses. A summary statement of the topics covered and the views expressed is available separately on the website.

As well as responses to the set questions, the survey provoked numerous comments and observations that identified issues of concern to members of the community and potential options for their resolution. Those comments that directly or indirectly had relevance to travel and transport have been extracted into topics of similar content that identify the issue concerned and any proposed options to improve the situation. To these contributions, evidence emerging from discussions, correspondence, documents and media reports and a subsequent open discussion forum have been added in developing a comprehensive picture of the travel and transport issues of concern to residents and visitors in Alnwick & Denwick

The evidence from all the foregoing work has been condensed into the following section of this initial statement of travel and transport 'Issues and Options'.

## 1.5 The Wider Planning Framework

Whilst the primary purpose of this paper is to identify the concerns and views of the communities involved, it is relevant also to see how these views fit within, or indeed may be in conflict with, the statutory National Planning Policy Framework. Short extracts from the Framework are therefore included in this paper. By their nature, extracts do not give a complete picture but the Framework can be read in full at:

[www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/nppf](http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/nppf)

The extracts below, set the general planning policy context for Transport; more specifically relevant clauses are identified under some of the topics listed. To assist in tracing the extracts used, the paragraph numbers from the Framework are included with the entries made.

### *National Planning Policy Framework Extracts*

Para 14 At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a **presumption in favour of sustainable development**, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking.

Para 17 Support the transition to a low carbon future, contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution, make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable.

Para 23 Recognise town centres as the heart of their communities and pursue policies to support their viability and vitality; allocate appropriate edge of centre sites for main town centre uses that are well connected to the town centre where suitable and viable town centre sites are not available.

Para 29 Transport policies have an important role to play in facilitating sustainable development but also in contributing to wider sustainability and health objectives. The transport system needs to be balanced in favour of sustainable transport modes, giving people a real choice about how they travel.

Para 30 Encouragement should be given to solutions which support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and reduce congestion.

Para 51 Local planning authorities should identify and bring back into residential use empty housing and buildings and, where appropriate, acquire properties under compulsory purchase powers.

Para 56 Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people.

Para 70 To deliver the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should plan positively for the provision and use of shared space, community facilities and other local services

Para 73 Access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities

The following clause is of particularly useful reference for the present paper:

Para 35 Plans should protect and exploit opportunities for the use of sustainable transport modes for the movement of goods or people. Therefore, developments should be located and designed where practical to:

- accommodate the efficient delivery of goods and supplies;
- give priority to pedestrian and cycle movements, and have access to high quality public transport facilities;
- create safe and secure layouts which minimise conflicts between traffic and cyclists or pedestrians, avoiding street clutter and where appropriate establishing home zones;
- incorporate facilities for charging plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles; and
- consider the needs of people with disabilities by all modes of transport.

## 1.6 Constraints

Clearly, a key constraint that will determine the practicality and implementation of the options eventually agreed for inclusion in the plan will be the availability of funding. At this stage it should be noted only that not all options require local, county or national government funding. Some options, at least, are likely to attract private funding or European support.

Some of the issues identified do not require new funding but do require a more determined application and enforcement of existing regulations relating to issues such as dog fouling, litter and anti-social behaviour. The evidence makes clear that closer attention to current duties by the enforcement agencies, such as the police, will be required if the Plan intent is to succeed.

The evidence available on traffic in Alnwick is now outdated and is based on national growth forecasts that have not materialised. The Department for Transport statistics show that national traffic levels have remained essentially the same over the last decade but the situation locally might usefully be explored. Similarly, the widely differing views on the adequacy of parking provision illustrate the dominance of anecdotal evidence over objective measures.

The lack of enforcement of existing parking regulations that has hitherto been endemic in the Plan area has contributed not only to traffic congestion but also to unnecessary safety hazards for pedestrians, access problems for the encumbered and to an insidious acceptance of lawlessness. The County Council has begun to address this issue but the needs of the community should be reinforced by the options for action agreed for inclusion in the Plan.

## **2. Strategic objectives for transport in the Plan area**

As already noted, the role of travel and transport is to facilitate the cohesion, health, well-being and quality of life of the community. The foregoing section has emphasised that compromises have to be reached to deliver the appropriate transport network and consequently, it is essential to define more closely, the strategic objectives of transport provision in the Plan area. Such objectives will then form a key component of the evaluation of the importance of the issues and potential measures for their resolution identified later in this document.

To this end, it is proposed that the following objectives be set to reflect the overall need for the sustainable development of transport provision across the Plan area:

- To improve access to homes, work and facilities for people and goods
- To enhance the viability and vitality of Alnwick town centre for residents and visitors
- To link residential, commercial, recreational and functional parts of the Plan area
- To improve conditions for walking, cycling, wheelchair and buggy users
- To improve the provision of public transport
- To increase pedestrian priority and reduce car dependence
- To contribute to the development of a sustainable future

Clearly, members of the community may wish to amend, reduce or expand this list and contributions in this respect would be welcome.

## **3. Transport issues and options for improvement**

### **3.1 Pedestrian links: Providing safe and attractive opportunities for all to walk within the limit of their ability**

#### **3.1.1 The issue in brief**

Whilst the health benefits to be gained from simple daily exercise are now well recognised, the provision for walking is often of inadequate quality in Alnwick and Denwick. Priority for pedestrians is insufficient, crossing places too often dangerous and traffic moves too fast in the residential areas for the streets to be considered safe shared space. Footpath surfaces are too often damaged and hazardous, pavements are too often blocked and dropped curb facilities obstructed by illegally parked vehicles. The shopping and recreational experience in the centre of Alnwick is made uncomfortable by the close proximity of moving vehicles.

Doing nothing would inevitably lead to a progressive decline in the quality of facilities available for most residents and visitors to Alnwick and Denwick and from that to a reduction in the attraction of the Plan area as a place to live, work and visit. Progressively improving the provision of safe and attractive opportunities to walk to and within the Plan area, by contrast,

would contribute to a progressive improvement in the vitality of the town and in the health and quality of life for all.

Various options for improvement have been suggested during the workshops, discussions and surveys so far and these have been concentrated into the list below.

*National Planning Policy Framework additional context*

38 Where practical, particularly within large-scale developments, key facilities such as primary schools and local shops should be located within walking distance of most properties.

75. Planning policies should protect and enhance public rights of way and access. Local authorities should seek opportunities to provide better facilities for users

**3.1.2 Options for improving pedestrian provision in Alnwick and Denwick**

(See separate items on the Market Place, Section 7 and Maintenance & Upkeep, Section 10)

- a) Reduce conflicting movements between pedestrians and vehicles in the town by reducing permitted speeds and providing more formal crossings and other safe places to cross, especially but not only at the War Memorial, Column and Oaks Hotel junctions.
- b) Use signal-controlled crossings of a consistent type at all locations where pedestrian priority crossings are provided in 30mph or higher speed roads.
- c) Increase pedestrian priority by adjusting the crossing light sequences, providing pinch downs as informal crossing points and increasing the provision of traffic calming measures.
- d) Complete the footpath link between the Leisure Centre/Sainsbury and the town by making up the stretch between the fire station and the cemetery. Link to the potential planning gain from the demolition and redevelopment of the adjacent former garage site.
- e) Improve the provision and maintenance of drop kerbs and drop kerb routes to ensure that all key facilities in the town are accessible by wheel chair, laden buggy, mobility scooter etc.
- f) Review the potential impact of the evidently increasing numbers of mobility scooters on footpath provision, identify footpaths that may have to be widened or alternative routes provided.
- g) Develop a sensitive 'traffic free' scheme for the use of Narrowgate from Fenkle Street to Bondgate Within and onwards to Market Street. For example, consider providing a differentially paved or coloured tarmac surface in the wider area of Bondgate Within to support pedestrian use, time limited parking and the taxi rank.
- h) Extend the Narrowgate/Bondgate Within scheme (above) to include a broader footpath in front of the town centre banking and commercial buildings.
- i) Take note of the National Planning Policy Framework Clause 51 (above) in redeveloping the Corn Exchange and its surrounding area. Press for completion of the work started to the west of Dispensary Street and progressive redevelopment of any other derelict sites in or near the town centre area. Specifically from a transport perspective, such developments increase town centre living and hence reduce the need to travel.

- j) Improve and make available the approach and steps to the Methodist Church area from Clayport Street to provide pedestrian access to and from the bus station and shops.
- k) Upgrade and progressively develop convenient walking routes and corridors to provide green/pleasant access from all residential areas to the town centre, each other and the trading estates. Use the school sites released now and in the future imaginatively, to enhance the green environment and footpath network. Sign the individual footpaths and the whole network tastefully, unobtrusively but comprehensively.

### **3.1.3 Consultation Questions**

**Should there be a comprehensive network of attractive, well-maintained footpaths to link the residential, educational, commercial and industrial areas of Alnwick town and its central area?**

## **3.2 Cycle links: Provision for and promotion of cycling for all**

### **3.2.1 The issue in brief**

Whilst the health benefits to be gained from daily exercise are now well recognised, the provision for cycling is often of inadequate quality in Alnwick and Denwick. Provision for cycle competence training and testing is of limited availability and priority for cyclists on existing roads is insufficient. Suitable routes linking the main facilities are inadequately developed and signed.

Doing nothing would continue the effective exclusion of cycling as a useful way of getting around in the Plan area, increasing unnecessarily the reliance on car travel for many journeys. Progressively developing safe and attractive opportunities to cycle to and within Alnwick and Denwick, by contrast, would contribute to an improvement in the vitality of the town for residents and to a useful increase in the access options for visitors.

Various options for improvement have been suggested during the workshops, discussions and surveys so far and these have been concentrated into the list below.

#### *National Planning Policy Framework Context*

See Section 2 above

### **3.2.2 Options for improving cycling provision in Alnwick and Denwick**

- a) Develop and expand safe, continuous cycle routes progressively for functional use to and between the residential areas of Alnwick and Denwick, the town centre and the industrial, business and commercial estates around the edge of the town.
- b) Identify and signpost effectively, safely and unobtrusively the cycling network and keep the signposting up-to-date as the network evolves.
- c) Use 20mph residential and town centre speed limits where compliance by drivers is or can be made a reasonable expectation, to improve cycle safety and reduce the need for cycle tracks and cycle lanes.
- d) Develop longer distance routes (cycle and walk) from Alnwick to Denwick, Alnmouth and the coastal villages for leisure use.

- e) Promote local cycle training, testing and safety compliance schemes and practices for cyclists, to reduce the road safety risk.

### **3.2.3 Consultation Questions**

**Should there be a well maintained, safe and signed cycle route network, mainly on existing streets, which would benefit Alnwick town and its links to the surrounding villages?**

## **3.3 Bus services: Provision and access for public buses, community transport, private hire coaches and other vehicles**

### **3.3.1 The issue in brief**

The provision of regular service buses has been in decline in recent years, and an improvement in the service has become essential in order to provide a meaningful alternative to car travel and to provide for the many who do not have access to a car for the school, business, service and leisure journeys they have to make. Moreover, the visitor economy is much dependent on private hire coaches, for which scant provision is made in the Plan area. The facilities currently offered for passengers to access the services are inadequate, providing little encouragement to use the bus or for coach tour operators to put Alnwick into their itineraries.

Doing nothing would contribute to the reduction of the bus services available and to a decline in the visitor economy. A review of passenger needs aligned to a matching bus service provision would help make the bus the mode of choice for many. Developing the bus station into a vibrant transport hub equipped for passengers in all weathers and for buses from rural communities, town services and longer distance links would present a modern gateway to the town, attractive to residents and visitors alike. Similarly, progressively enhancing the provision for tour buses and coaches would help ensure that Alnwick remains firmly located in the tour operators' plans.

Various options for improvement have been suggested during the workshops, discussions and surveys so far and these have been concentrated into the list below.

#### *National Planning Policy Framework additional context*

28 Support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit communities and visitors, and which respect the character of the countryside.

### **3.3.2 Options for improving bus travel in Alnwick and Denwick**

(See separate item on Transport Links & Accessibility, Section 8)

- a) Protect the Alnwick Bus Station site and develop the facilities as a key transport hub, with improved public transport, taxi and community bus links to the Alnmouth Railway Station.
- b) Radically improve and modernise Alnwick bus station to develop a high quality transport hub linking local public and community bus services to longer distance services. Provide toilet facilities for those arriving and changing buses, weather protection and heating, enclosed to ensure an effective smoking ban. Manage the whole facility inside and outside to ensure a clean environment free from litter, vandal damage and misuse especially outside school hours. Progressively develop the location as a tourist and visitor gateway, providing information on buses but also location of and access to key facilities such as the Tourist Information Centre and the railway station.

- c) Provide more, better and better-serviced bus shelters within the Plan area.
- d) Review with the County Council and service providers the existing commercial, supported, school, community and on-demand bus and taxi services within the town between the town and Denwick and from the surrounding villages (such as Shilbottle, Whittingham & Longhoughton) and North Northumberland, with a view to developing an optimised plan for access to work, leisure and visitor provision. Take into account weekday, evening, Saturday and Sunday provision, service frequency and seasonal variations together with early and late services for shift workers and leisure journeys.
- e) Consider the potential to improve service reliability to and from Newcastle by operating some peak time buses to and from Morpeth with connections to and from alternative bus services between Morpeth and Newcastle.
- f) Promote a park and ride collection stop for Newcastle buses in the Willowburn area.
- g) Continue to improve provision until all scheduled bus services are operated by vehicles that are fully compliant with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.
- h) Improve private hire bus and coach access, drop off/pick up with weather protection and layover/parking provision, potentially including the improved Bus Station transport hub. Ensure convenient, signed access to toilet and visitor information facilities.
- i) Improve school bus stops and lay-over provision to reduce traffic conflicts and improve safety for all.

### 3.3.3 Consultation Questions

**Should the Alnwick bus station be developed as a modern, high quality transport hub?**

## 3.4 Goods and Freight: Supporting access, delivery and distribution of goods and services

### 3.4.1 The issue in brief

Much of the movement of goods and freight takes place in the background of daily life and continued provision for these services is essential. Service vehicles need access at inconvenient places and times and large vehicles cause disruption when delivering during the day. Longer distance vehicles have to stay overnight somewhere. Modern farm vehicles, increasingly large in all dimensions, are a key part of the rural economy. Blending together all these demands on the transport facilities is set to become increasingly difficult as the vitality of the Plan area is restored and the envisaged growth is realised.

Doing nothing would lead to increased congestion and disruption and bring the goods and service traffic well to the fore. Recognising the needs of such traffic and making appropriate provision offers the opportunity of accommodating an increased prosperity in the Plan area without disrupting the normal daytime business of residents and visitors.

Various options for improvement have been suggested during the workshops, discussions and surveys so far and these have been concentrated into the list below.

*National Planning Policy Framework additional context*

31. Local authorities should work with neighbouring authorities and transport providers to develop strategies for the provision of viable infrastructure necessary to support sustainable development,

41 Local planning authorities should identify and protect sites and routes which could be critical in developing infrastructure to widen transport choice.

143 Safeguard existing, planned and potential rail heads, rail links to quarries and associated storage, handling and processing facilities for the bulk transport by rail, sea or inland waterways of minerals, including recycled, secondary and marine-dredged materials

### **3.4.2 Options for improving the movement of goods in Alnwick and Denwick**

- a) Provide for domestic and industrial delivery and distribution when making any changes to traffic provision.
- b) Work with Royal Mail to provide for Royal Mail collections from post boxes when designating parking restrictions.
- c) Recognise the need for maintenance, service and trade vehicles to have immediate access to pavements, streets and adjacent premises, commonly by parking equipment vans at the site.
- d) Review the benefits and disbenefits of promoting overnight, late and early delivery to major destinations and coordinate with adjustments to shop opening hours where appropriate.
- e) Make formal lorry parking provision in or near the town to reduce the abuse of road-side waiting areas provided at public expense but without hygiene facilities.
- f) Support and improve the current waste collection and disposal traffic arrangements.
- g) Provide for the movement of farm vehicles of increasingly large size.

## **3.5 Market Place: Improving the functionality, viability and vitality**

### **3.5.1 The issue in brief**

The recent decline in the quality and vitality of the Market Place has been plain for all to see, with illegally parked cars driving out the possibility of the facility being enjoyed by residents or visitors.

Doing nothing would almost certainly see the end of market provision in the town and would continue to increase the lawlessness that characterises the current approach of drivers to accessing and parking in the Market Place. Refreshing the traditional role, preserving the intended character and regaining the space for pedestrian, market and entertainment use would support the concept of a community hub, benefiting Alnwick, Denwick and surrounding village residents and visitors alike. The recent proposed scheme of limited parking by Northumberland County Council will have to be monitored as the Plan progresses to ensure that it does not adversely impact on the Market Place and its function as the town's principal outdoor assembly place.

Whilst the overall development of the Market Place is considered elsewhere, the associated transport options suggested during the workshops, discussions and surveys so far have been concentrated into the list below.

*National Planning Policy Framework additional context*

23 Retain and enhance existing markets and, where appropriate, re-introduce or create new ones, ensuring that markets remain attractive and competitive;

**3.5.2 Options for improving travel arrangements to support the Market Place in Alnwick**

(See separate item on the Pedestrian links (Section 3))

- a) Agree that the primary use, viability and vitality of the Market Place demands pedestrian priority.
- b) Recognise that market activity and community benefit require vehicles to be restricted in the Market Place other than at prescribed times and for prescribed purposes.
- c) Establish workable regulations and provide physical barriers as appropriate, then re-introduce and vigorously enforce the rule of law all day every day.

**3.6 Transport Links & Accessibility: Seek continually to improve sustainable links to the world around Alnwick and Denwick**

**3.6.1 The issue in brief**

The Plan area does not live in isolation but relies for its prosperity on its links to the world around it. Just as within the area, the need for such links outside the area to be made by sustainable modes of travel is paramount. To this end, it is necessary to recognise a hierarchy of preferred transport options and to develop the potential modes as appropriate to the distance to be travelled.

Doing nothing would result in an increasing isolation for Alnwick and Denwick, as the rest of the world moved on. Seeking continually to improve longer-range transport links by sustainable modes not only benefits residents in their need to travel but also helps to improve the inbound visitor gateway and economy.

Various options for improvement have been suggested during the workshops, discussions and surveys so far and these have been concentrated into the list below.

*National Planning Policy Framework additional context*

31 Local authorities should work with neighbouring authorities and transport providers to develop strategies for the provision of viable infrastructure necessary to support sustainable development,

**3.6.2 Options for improving transport links and accessibility in Alnwick and Denwick**

(See separate item on Bus services, Section 5)

- a) Establish a hierarchy of preferred transport options for the town in the sequence walking (most preferred), cycling, public transport, freight, car (least preferred) to reduce congestion and car dependence, to release car park facilities for necessary car journeys and to improve public health through a greater uptake of active travel options.
- b) Support measures to increase the self-sufficiency of the Plan area in order to reduce the need to travel.

- c) Work for the continuous improvement of main line rail links at Alnmouth Railway Station, to encourage more sustainable longer distance journeys by rail.
- d) Work with other towns and authorities along the route to enhance local train services between Cramlington, Morpeth, Alnmouth and Berwick.
- e) Support the completion of the Aln Valley Railway from its current Lionheart terminal station to the northbound platform at Alnmouth Station. Work with the Railway to reserve a route that would provide improved access to the town centre.

### 3.6.3 Consultation Questions

**Should better links with Alnmouth Station be developed to improve longer distance travel options for business and leisure journeys?**

## 3.7 Environmental concerns: Enhancing the environment to improve the quality of life for all

### 3.7.1 The issue in brief

Transport is one of the many factors that influence the quality of the environment in which we live. Whilst good, sustainable travel and transport links can help improve the environment, negative aspects of current transport provision and use include excessive emissions of greenhouse gases from road vehicles that accelerate climate change, emission of traffic pollutants that cause respiratory diseases and death, traffic incidents and crashes that cause injury and death and unsightly impacts on the urban streetscape.

Doing nothing would mean continuing to accept these health and safety risks that would not be tolerated in any other walk of life. Whilst the resolution of many of the problems is outwith the scope of the Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan, local changes particularly in facilitating informed choices of travel mode, can improve the travel environment for everyone. Various options for improvement have been suggested during the workshops, discussions and surveys so far and these have been concentrated into the list below.

#### *National Planning Policy Framework additional context*

28 support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit communities and visitors, and which respect the character of the countryside.

### 3.7.2 Options for improving environmental aspects of travel in Alnwick and Denwick

- a) Promote transport provision that generally enhances the health, wellbeing and quality of life for all.
- b) Design changes in transport provision so that they contribute to an improvement of the streetscape that reconciles the need for up-to-date facilities with a well conserved core town environment.
- c) Recognise the impact of low exercise (obesity) and air quality (respiratory disease) on general health, promoting active travel (walking, cycling, jogging etc) options accordingly.

- d) Reduce transport greenhouse gas emissions by promoting active travel, electric vehicles and good maintenance of internal combustion engine vehicles.
- e) Provide electric vehicle charging points in reserved bays in all main car parks in Alnwick in a programme designed both to encourage and reflect the uptake of such vehicles.
- f) Improve the policing of Alnwick, in the centre in particular, making better use of Community Support Officers to combat litter, vandalism, dog fouling and anti-social behaviour and hence encourage active travel.
- g) Improve street signage and reduce visual clutter throughout the Plan area

### **3.8 Maintenance & Upkeep: Keeping transport infrastructure in a safe and attractive condition**

#### **3.8.1 The issue in brief**

Like all facilities, transport infrastructure has to be serviced and maintained to keep it clean, safe and fit for purpose. Hitherto, much of the work undertaken to this effect has been concentrated on the roadways for vehicles at the expense of much lower standards of maintenance for footpaths and pedestrian facilities generally. The time has come to change this emphasis and put pedestrians first, thus encouraging a greater uptake of walking. Doing nothing differently would mean continuing to accept the dominance of vehicles over people and accepting the pressures that have led to hazardous footpaths and an unhealthy unwillingness to go out and about on foot. To ensure the vitality of the Plan area for the future, the pedestrian infrastructure will have to be serviced and maintained to a standard that makes walking safe and convenient and the town centre an attractive place to be for business, shopping and recreation.

Various options for improvement have been suggested during the workshops, discussions and surveys so far and these have been concentrated into the list below.

#### *National Planning Policy Framework Context*

See Section 2 above

#### **3.8.2 Options for improving the use of roads by maintenance and upkeep in Alnwick and Denwick**

(See separate items on the Pedestrian links, Section 3)

- a) Noting the excellent work done by the Council litter picking team, keep all routes clear of litter, dog fouling, vandal damage and overgrown vegetation. Enforce dog fouling and litter regulations.
- b) Prepare and implement a five-year strategic plan for the repair of footpaths and pedestrian areas, road crossings and markings, eliminating the many safety hazards that currently exist for pedestrians. Bring the standard of footpath surfaces up to or better than the standard of road surface provided for vehicle use, using funds diverted from the vehicle highway budget for the purpose.
- c) Keep areas of carriageway in good repair, where they are most used by pedestrians to cross and by cyclists.

- d) Repair soft verge damage caused throughout the Plan area by inconsiderate vehicle operation; install physical barriers at frequently abused locations.
- e) Continue to improve the winter treatment of pedestrian routes and roads throughout the Plan area.
- f) Give priority to the convenience and safety of pedestrians when carrying out maintenance on or near roadways.

### 3.8.3 Consultation Questions

**Should repairing the surfaces of footpaths be given priority over the improvement of road surfaces for vehicles, except where pedestrians cross the road or the quality of the surface represents a risk to cyclists?**

## 3.9 Traffic management: Managing traffic for the benefit of all, with priority for pedestrians

### 3.9.1 The issue in brief

Effective traffic management holds the key to several of the traffic and transport related concerns in Alnwick and Denwick. In many cases, junction management is dominant but there is a need to establish the rights of pedestrians to cross as well as to determine the optimum traffic flows. Much of the need for traffic management could be prevented by better control at the planning stage with development concentrated at locations that reduce the need to travel and travel planning offering clear benefits in this respect. Excessive speed continues to be a hazard with the safety benefit of a 20mph limit being inadequately understood. Drivers seem not to understand the inconvenience and danger of vehicles parked illegally and inconsiderately by other drivers, often to avoid walking a few yards.

Doing nothing would lead to a continuation of the current difficulties for pedestrians, drivers and car passengers, which for many would be intolerable. However, various cost effective options for improvement have been suggested during the workshops, discussions and surveys so far and these have been concentrated into the list below.

#### *National Planning Policy Framework additional context*

34 Plans and decisions should ensure developments that generate significant movement are located where the need to travel will be minimised and the use of sustainable transport modes can be maximised.

36 All developments which generate significant movement should be required to provide a Travel Plan.

### 3.9.2 Options for improving traffic management in Alnwick and Denwick

- a) Review radically the traffic systems and signing that bring people into the town; devise unobtrusive systems that give real meaning to the 'shared space' concept throughout the town and its approaches.
- b) Manage road junctions and crossings in favour of pedestrians.
- c) Enforce existing speed, parking and movement regulations.

- d) Ensure a travel plan is developed at an early stage for the new High School, as required by the National Planning Policy Framework. Encourage the development of a travel plan for guests at the new hotel at East Cawledge.
- e) Introduce a 20mph speed restriction throughout residential areas and town centre, providing 30mph through routes where essential. Provide traffic calming measures where necessary, preferably using such measures also to facilitate pedestrian crossing opportunities. Enforce the requirement by publicity and at critical points by speed indicators and cameras.
- f) Locate all 30mph signs outside the first/last building, or traffic hazard. For example, relocate the signs on the approach to Alnwick from Eglington, at the Lion Bridge, at the A1 South junction roundabout, on the Alnwick side of the Denwick A1 slip roads and from The Garden entrance on Denwick Lane to the Denwick side of The Garden car park entrance.
- g) Consider the impact of illegally and inconsiderately parked vehicles on traffic movement when establishing parking regulation enforcement policies.
- h) Explore the potential for one way streets and 'access only' restriction for the town centre.
- i) Consider roundabouts or signalling at the War Memorial and Column junctions

### 3.9.3 Consultation Questions

**Should vehicle speeds be restricted to a maximum of 20mph in the residential areas of Alnwick town with 30mph permitted along access routes where conditions make this a safe maximum speed.**

## 3.10 Parking: Provision, management and prevention of abuse

### 3.10.1 The issue in brief

The provision of parking spaces in Alnwick appears to be adequate, although alternative parking areas are not well signed from the most central sites. The County now has a parking strategy and its associated charging policy is being established. With the adoption of civic responsibility for parking, the County has begun to re-establish order into the system but much remains to be done to redress the scourge of pavement parking particularly and illegal parking generally.

Doing nothing is possible as always but the increasing lawlessness and obstruction in Alnwick indicate the direction to which such an approach would lead. In contrast, others have noted that if the town centre offers what people want, they will walk from the available car parks to the centre. Nevertheless, various options for parking improvement have been suggested during the workshops, discussions and surveys so far and these have been concentrated into the list below.

#### *National Planning Policy Framework additional context*

39 If setting local parking standards for residential and non-residential development, local planning authorities should take into account the availability of and opportunities for public transport and an overall need to reduce the use of high-emission vehicles.

40 Local authorities should seek to improve the quality of parking in town centres so that it is convenient, safe and secure. They should set appropriate parking charges that do not undermine the vitality of town centres. Parking enforcement should be proportionate.

### **3.10.2 Options for improving vehicle parking in Alnwick and Denwick**

- a) Apply the County Council Parking Strategy in respect of provision, location and permitted duration of parking to support leisure, shopping, work and visitor journeys appropriately.
- b) Improve the signs to car parks and parking areas, including those that are free and not reserved for residents. Include signs between the town centre car parks, to help visiting drivers in particular find alternative, possibly more suitable provision.
- c) Consider any further parking need and scope for provision or management of demand, taking note of the objective evidence that has led to the development of pedestrian only provision in shopping areas throughout Europe and in the extreme to the success of pedestrian only shopping centres.
- d) Note in reviewing the provision that the parking spaces on the cobbles (Bondgate Within, Market Street and Fenkle Street) may be unsuitable for mobility impaired drivers or passengers.
- e) Investigate the commercial provision of aesthetically acceptable decked or multi-storey car park(s) where the terrain is suitable, for example decking over the lower parking area in the Greenwell Road area. Use any increase in capacity to release at-grade provision elsewhere for community use.
- f) Review the application of parking charges and resident, shopper and visitor permits within the framework of the County Council requirements and interchangeability provision.
- g) Work with the County Council to manage the permitted use of car parks more selectively, using smart card technology to vary the availability and length of stay appropriately across the day and across the week.
- h) Extend sensitively the successful resident-only permit parking scheme now in place in Prudhoe Street, to the whole of the town core residential area.
- i) Stamp out illegal parking throughout the Plan area, especially on pavements, at drop kerbs, on yellow lines, at corners, at junctions and in the Market Place. Enforce on and off street parking restrictions firmly.
- j) Encourage considerate parking to protect green verges, keep access to premises clear and drop kerbs free. Enforce regulations and eradicate abuse throughout the Plan area.
- k) Work with Network Rail, Northern Rail, the County Council, and Lesbury Parish Council to extend the parking provision at Alnmouth Railway Station.

## 3.11 Planning potential: Using the planning process to help improve transport and travel now and in future

### 3.11.1 The issue in brief

Much of the future development of the Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood will be managed through the planning process using the National Planning Policy Framework to ensure that the result is sustainable. As it is a requirement of the process that the extent of Neighbourhood development overall must meet the imposed requirement, there is under this heading no possibility of doing nothing. Specific aspects of life in the Plan area have been covered in the previous sections of this paper; additionally, various crosscutting options for improvement have been suggested during the workshops, discussions and surveys so far and these have been concentrated into the list below.

#### *National Planning Policy Framework additional context*

17 Encourage the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land).

24 Local planning authorities should apply a sequential test to planning applications for town centre uses

32 All developments that generate significant amounts of movement should be supported by a Transport Statement or Transport Assessment.

37 Planning policies should aim for a balance of land uses within their area so that people can be encouraged to minimise journey lengths for employment, shopping, leisure, education and other activities.

41 Local planning authorities should identify and protect sites and routes which could be critical in developing infrastructure to widen transport choice.

49. Housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

### 3.11.2 Options for improving travel and transport through planning in Alnwick and Denwick

- a) Retain the compact urban form of Alnwick, applying the 'brown field first, sequential development from centre' test to all development proposals.
- b) Encourage growth that is balanced between homes, jobs, shopping and leisure facilities and sustainable in the long term. Recognise in the process that 'recreation' as a component of 'leisure' may more often be informal walking and cycling activities than more formal or organised provision.
- c) Provide access generally and walking opportunities in particular that are enhanced not worsened by developments. Examples of current concerns include East Cawledge Park and the severance represented by the A1 between East and West sides, especially for pedestrians.
- d) Use the Plan to maximise the contribution made by the major land and property owners to the development of the town, generally in respect of transport facilities but particularly for the provision and enhancement of safe and pleasant walking routes.
- e) Recognise the importance of tourism to the Plan area, when development applications are considered, noting that by definition, tourists use transport.

- f) Carry out a tourist facility check, especially related to access and travel to and from the town.
- g) Investigate with the County Council, the potential to fund any improvements found necessary in tourism facilities, from a local tourist tax as is applied in much of Europe.
- h) Safeguard the potential route of the Aln Valley Railway across the A1 and into the town.
- i) Reserve the former rail route towards Wooler for a potential cycle and walking route.

### 3.11.3 Consultation Questions

**Within the plan, should walking, cycling, public transport and the movement of goods and services be prioritised over private car travel to help deliver a more sustainable transport network?**

## 4. Links to other topics covered in the Plan

As already noted the primary role of transport is to facilitate the cohesion, health and wellbeing of the community, rather than travel and transport being objectives in their own right. Not surprisingly, therefore, many of the topics covered elsewhere in the Plan have to address transport issues. Such topics include:

- *Community engagement:* Bus station abuse, footpath litter & dog fouling
- *Community facilities:* community transport role and contribution, local access
- *Education:* transport to and from schools and other education facilities
- *Environment:* Sustainable transport, active travel, footpath maintenance & upkeep
- *Heritage & culture:* reinvigorated, pedestrian-friendly, attractive town centre, heritage travel
- *Housing:* provision of safe and pleasant active travel links from and between housing areas, employment sites, existing and new, and the Alnwick town centre
- *Retail:* cooperative, informed approach to access, parking and the role of the Denwick Detached trading areas East of the A1 road.
- *Sport & recreation:* active travel provision to link housing, facilities and green spaces
- *Tourism:* access to and movement within the Plan area and its attractions

Within that overall interaction, specific activities and places of concern include but are not limited to:

- Active travel facility provision
- Alnwick Bus station
- Central Narrowgate and Bondgate Within
- Denwick Detached, opportunities East of the A1 road
- Market Place
- Parking
- Speed restriction in residential areas
- Unobtrusive traffic management

Necessarily therefore, the issues and options for improvement taken forward into the next Alnwick & Denwick Neighbourhood Plan consultation process will have to reflect the best possible compromise across all such topics, activities and places of concern.

## Appendix 1

### Background papers and documents

#### *Primary background evidence*

- Regional Spatial Strategy for the NE and its Technical Paper 10 – Transport
- Integrated Regional Framework for the North East of England
- North East England Greenhouse Gas Emissions Baselines and Trajectories Study
- Better Health, Fairer Health, Strategy for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Health & Well-being in North East England

#### *Contextual evidence*

- Northumberland Local Transport Plan 2011 – 2026
- Northumberland Public Transport Strategy 2011 – 2016
- Northumberland Parking Strategy
- Northumberland Town Centres and Retail Study
- Northumberland Key Land Use Impact Study
- Northumberland Sustainable Communities Strategy
- Alnwick Transport and Parking Study 2004 Arup

#### *Planning evidence*

- National Planning Policy Framework
- Inherited and emerging planning policy framework and core strategy documents

## Appendix 2

### **Organisations engaged with transport provision and use**

The organisations listed are intended to illustrate the range of relevant organisations. Not all will necessarily be consulted at the pre public consultation stage.

- Aln Valley Railway
- Alnwick Chamber of Trade
- Alnwick Civic Society
- Alnmouth Rail User Group
- Bus Operators
- Community transport providers
- Confederation of Passenger Transport
- Cyclists Touring Club
- Freight Transport Association
- Highways Agency
- National Farmers Union
- North East Combined Transport Activists Roundtable (NECTAR)
- Network Rail
- NCC Highways and Sustainable Transport
- Northumbria Tourism
- Passenger Focus
- Ramblers Association
- Sustrans
- Taxi Operators
- Train Operating Companies