

## East Boldon Neighbourhood Forum (The Forum): Response to North East Local Transport Plan consultation

### 1.0 Summary and overview

1.1 The Forum supports in principle the general policies and proposals contained in the NELTP consultation documentation. The Forum welcomes the inclusion in the Delivery Plan of highway improvement schemes throughout the South Tyneside area & the upgrading of the NCN1 Cycle Route in the Whitburn area (ST13). We also welcome the proposal to extend the Metro to Washington and to re-open the Leamside line. This could lead to a reduction of traffic in South Tyneside and within the Forum area, particularly important if proposed new housing is built.

The points below highlight several issues that affect the Forum area and East Boldon village in particular. Many of these relate to the need to plan for future housing developments and the opportunity that the NELTP creates.

1.2 The East Boldon Neighbourhood Plan (EBNP) includes policies to promote sustainable transport in conjunction with new development (EB18); to address the issue of parking at East Boldon Metro station (EB19); and to improve walking and cycling networks (EB23). Its Community Actions include: Community Safety and Accessibility (CA5), Active Travel (CA9), Improving Access to Public Transport (CA10) and Highway Safety Improvements (CA12).

### 2.0 Background

2.1 South Tyneside Council completed its consultation on its Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) in March 2020. The exercise was well executed and involved a meeting and presentation to East Boldon Neighbourhood Forum members, and an on-line consultation. The Forum submitted a comprehensive response to this consultation. However, since then, potential housing sites within and adjoining the Forum area have been identified. These are now set out within the Local Authority's draft local plan. In addition, the housing target for South Tyneside now required by the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) will result in more housing sites coming forward.

2.2 Additional investment in the IAMP has also been confirmed since the Council's LCWIP consultation exercise. This will create additional jobs, and more traffic through the Forum area.

2.3 The provision of infrastructure, good public transport and safe active travel routes that will facilitate and encourage non-car transport choices is essential if the effects of more house building and the associated traffic is to be mitigated, and if residents are to be encouraged to make more healthy lifestyle choices.

### **3.0 Forward Planning and design**

- 3.1 The Forum is concerned that the current consultation and the proposals therein is not informed by the most up to date information in relation to housing delivery. We hope that flexibility and future proofing can be built into the plan so that account is taken of the proposed location and number of new houses likely to come forward.
- 3.2 For instance, opportunities now exist that might not have been apparent earlier. The Boker Lane housing site (Land at North Farm) proposed in the draft local plan sits close to the footpath which follows the river Don through an open landscape area behind Boldon Comprehensive School. This route links the North West corner of East Boldon, passing through West Boldon and Boldon Colliery, to the roundabout on the A184 adjacent to West Boldon Lodge. From here, cycle routes connect with the West Boldon Industrial Estate and IAMP. The Forum believes that this route can be improved and offers great potential as an active travel route to serve the Boldons.

### **4.0 Active Travel: Walking and Cycling Routes**

- 4.1 The Active Travel walking route at the East Boldon Metro Footway extension proposal (South Tyneside Council LCWIP, figure 9, item 12) provides connectivity to the proposed Cleadon Lane housing site, some 202 houses. It also links East Boldon village and the Metro station to the existing cycleway/footpath running from Tilesheds to Whiteleas. Currently, the route is in a very poor condition, making walking and cycling dangerous. The Forum requests that this route is prioritised. We also request that consideration is given to extending this route a short distance from Tilesheds to the bridlepath at the roundabout marking the junction with New Road and the B1298. This short section along Tileshed Lane (between the level crossing and the roundabout) is dangerous for cyclists to navigate, and the footpath which runs along one side only, is very narrow. The bridle path referred to above will play a significant future role in providing connectivity to the housing proposed in the draft local plan for the land on Boker Lane (North Farm) which lies immediately to the West, where some 263 houses are proposed.
- 4.2 The Forum requests that consideration be given to the inclusion into the NELTP proposals, in locations where it is safe & practicable to do so, the following Active Travel on-road cycle routes, which are identified in South Tyneside Council's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan documentation - figure 7 (routes map) & figure 8. These cycling routes had been previously identified in the Forum's response to South Tyneside Council's LCWIP consultation exercise in March 2020. The Forum appreciates that the viability, practicality & safety of these suggested routes would be fully assessed by specialist Highways Engineers from the North East Combined Authority/South Tyneside Council. Collectively, these measures would help to improve on-road cycle route linkages between West Boldon & Whitburn, through East Boldon, assisting with connectivity with adjoining villages, the remainder of the South Tyneside area, and the wider surrounding areas:

- 4.2.1 Moor Lane (East and West), from East Boldon Village (Station Approach, B1299) to Whitburn Village (A183). This is the most obvious and practical future Active Travel on-road cycle route in the East Boldon area (South Tyneside Council's LCWIP, figure 8, item 8). Moor Lane West has previously been identified by South Tyneside Council as a potential Quiet Lane.
  - 4.2.2 From Station Approach (B1299), past East Boldon Metro station, south west along Station Road, then along St. Johns Avenue, Natley Avenue, Sunderland Road, Blacks Corner & Front Street.
  - 4.2.3 South along Gordon Drive and then west along Alison Drive, South Lane, Bridle Path and Dipe Lane, to West Boldon (Hylton Lane).
- 4.3 The Forum requests that improvement to Moor Lane West be carried out with urgency so that it is made as safe as possible for all users and its potential as an active travel route is fully realised. This route links residents living in the Broadlands and Moorfield Drive estates with East Boldon, its shops and the Metro station. In turn Moor Lane links East Boldon with other off-road footpaths, the coast and Boldon Flats, a location rich in habitat and birdlife.

The Council is aware of how popular the route was when it was partially closed to traffic during the Covid pandemic (one side of the carriageway was used for walking and cycling). Even without such major intervention, it is possible to see how with further improvements, the lane could be made safer, which would result in greater use by both cyclist and walkers.

The proposal in the draft local plan to build 259 houses at the intersection of Moor Lane West (Land at West Farm) and the A1018 if implemented will put a great strain on this relatively quiet lane. It is essential steps are taken to improve the safety of the lane as soon as possible, but also to plan for the impact of the future housing development so the lane's use as an active travel route is safeguarded. The Forum believes that the provision of a dedicated walking route along Moor Lane West should be investigated, planned for and linked to the provision of the proposed new housing scheme.

## **5.0 Metro Station Car Parking**

- 5.1 Reference is made in the Nexus car park maintenance programme (NX07) to improvements at East Boldon Metro station car park, which are long overdue. Capacity at this car park is often exceeded, spilling onto adjacent residential streets and adding to existing long standing parking & traffic congestion problems in this area. The local community have long awaited a resolution to these problems. The proposed housing sites in East Boldon and Cleadon envisaged in the draft local plan will significantly worsen this situation. We ask that this matter is given due consideration by NEXUS and South Tyneside Council and is included in the long-term strategy of the NELTP as a priority. The Forum is committed to working to resolve the issue of problem parking in the Forum area and request that the community is fully consulted on any future proposals for East Boldon Metro station car park.

## **6.0 Public Transport**

6.1 The Forum acknowledges the recent trend in falling usage of public transport and declining levels of customer satisfaction, but is of the opinion that improvements and further investment in the local transport network, particularly bus services, can help to redress this situation & attract new customers.

One such example would be the provision of a bus service travelling through East and West Boldon villages (A184) to link with Heworth Metro, or preferably continuing through to Newcastle City Centre. This service could operate through to South Shields or more logically, to Sunderland. This route was successfully operated and well used prior to the opening of the Sunderland Metro link extension.

As a possible alternative, the current X34 service between Horsley Hill, South Shields and Pilgrim Street, Newcastle (every 30 minutes) could be utilised, ie. alternate buses could be re-routed through East and West Boldon, to create an hourly service.

6.2 In the future, additional bus services including those mentioned above, could be important & well used, due to the new housing sites identified in the East Boldon area in South Tyneside Council's draft Local Plan, or where planning permission has already been granted or recommended. As a result, in addition to the existing communities, the above-mentioned route could effectively service a further 474 new homes on sites in East Boldon, at North Farm/Boker Lane, Cleadon Lane Industrial Estate & Station Approach (Mayflower Glass site).

6.3 Additional and better public transport options should encourage more usage by the public (in place of private cars) and help to reduce traffic volumes and congestion in our villages, and will also help the environment.

**East Boldon Neighbourhood Forum January 2025**