**TRANSPORT & TRAFFIC**

The Neighbourhood Plan allows us to consider the transport issues affecting our village and to formulate ideas on how to improve and manage all forms of transport for the benefit of the community. However, any proposals in the Neighbourhood Plan must have regard to national planning guidance and to the core strategy of the Durham County Plan.

The national guidelines involve:

* Delivering a sustainable transport system
* Delivering sustainable communities through improved access for all.
* Promote sustainable transport choices.

The main aim of the County Durham Plan is to make sure there is an accessible, integrated and sustainable transport system. Good transport is vital in building sustainable communities.

LTP3 is the local transport plan for County Durham. It sets out the aims for strategic transport development from 2011 onwards. It is a *Transport Strategy* looking 10 years ahead at the main issues and a *Delivery Plan* setting out options to achieve objectives and how to manage, maintain and improve transport assets and services.

The opportunity to develop a transport plan enables us to maximise our place potential in relation to the rest of County Durham.

It is not the intention to address how the emerging plan will deal with key transport issue that is the role of LTP3. However, transport issues need to be considered in a positive way and should consider all modes of transport. Any objectives that are formulated should try to meet the anticipated needs of the community and facilitate accessibility and sustainable transport.

Witton Gilbert lies within the Central Durham area comprising the city and adjoining settlements with strong links to the city. Durham City itself is the main settlement outside the Tyne and Wear conurbation and is a strategic public transport hub. The position of the village affords direct links with the main transport corridors:

* A691 connecting to Durham City, the A1(M) north and south and the main East Coast railway
* A167 dual carriageway to Chester-le-Street connecting to the A1(M)

These corridor are vital connections in the strategic transport network.

There are good levels of public transport accessibility to education, employment, health facilities and shopping. The nearby park and ride is well used alleviating traffic congestion within the city. Bus services to Durham City and the Arnison retail park are regular.

The health, wellbeing and safety of other road users and pedestrians are also of vital importance when considering the transport & traffic issues. We kill and injure an unacceptable number of people on our roads each year\*1. Rural roads are particularly dangerous, with 62% of all fatalities occurring on rural roads. The NHS published a recent paper highlighting the impact on our health not only due to road collisions but as a result of traffic restricting the opportunities for physical activity, social interaction and reducing our quality of life. The consequences of these issues are felt across all age groups. It is therefore essential that a better balance is struck between the needs of road users and that of the community they pass through. It is important that we integrate road transport with the footpath network, provide safe access for pedestrians, cyclists, walkers and horse riders. We should remember that our rural road network is also a recreational resource for both residents and visitors.

**Key Issues**

* Minimise the negative effect road traffic has on the health and wellbeing of parish residents and ensure the residents are given a higher priority when transport and traffic issues are reviewed.
* How to manage and improve local transport networks to support the growth implicit in the Durham County Plan and to minimise the potential adverse impacts of that growth.
* Manage growth to maximise the use of public transport.
* Identify congestion hot spots.
* Undertake a review of the parish’s road network to set appropriate speed limits and to eliminate hazards and make the network safer for other road users and recreational purposes where appropriate.
* Address speeding problems on the B6312 Sacriston Lane
* Address traffic issues on Front Street between junction the with B6312 Sacriston Lane & with & including eastern junction of A691 Bypass.
* Promote traffic calming measures & 20 mph speed limits on all estate roads.
* Village Centre: The projects aims are to slow traffic down as it approaches the village Centre reducing the risks for residents crossing Sacriston Lane to access the village store and provide a safe crossing point to access the school and recreational facilities.

**Aims**

* Public transport accessibility and a high quality walkable environment are equally important and we aim to achieve a balance between the two.
* Encourage active travel such as walking and cycling.
* Ensure the needs of disabled people are taken into account, whether as pedestrians, public transport users or motorists.
* Promote the use of **Traveline** to improve public transport information and route planning.
* Promote safer travel for motorists, cyclists and pedestrians through passive safety features on the B6312 through the village & on Front Street between junction the with B6312 Sacriston Lane & with & including eastern junction of A691 Bypass.
* (speed humps, lighting columns); improve crossing facilities.
* Promote increased use of **Bikeability** to provide ‘on road’ training to keep cyclists safer and more aware of traffic danger, and be aware of the Highway Code.
* Promote safer public transport: CCTV and a well lit environment for public transport users travelling in the dark.
* Encourage a community taxi initiative. Taxis are an important component of the transport range and can serve as an alternative to car or bus where walking or cycling is not possible or feasible.(NB Policy 25 of LTP3 states community transport organisations will be supported)
* Strive to improve the efficiency of the public transport network, particularly with regard to early morning/late evening and Sunday demand.

The link with land use planning is paramount to the future of transport, even in a small area like Witton Gilbert. Future changes within and outside the village have the potential to generate more traffic and possibly change existing transport patterns.

**Policy T1**

**All changes to roadways** within the parish should require the involvement of the local community and require a ….community consultation process. A full evaluation of the parish road network is to be carried out in order to assess the impact on the connecting roads as a result of the proposed changes and mitigating measures are to be carried out should the affect be significant.

**Policy T5**

**20mph Zones** are to be introduced in all residential estates in the parish. The aim of this measure is to protect the children and residents of the parish, to create a safe environment for all residents, to reduce the risk to health and remove the disincentive to walk and cycle………..

**Policy T4**

**Front Street** is the victim ofhigh traffic volumes on the bypass (A691) at rush hour periods. Drivers traveling east-west and west East along the A691 encounter congestion and take shortcuts through the village along Front Street, increasing traffic flows and adding to congestion at the junction with the B6312. As the emerging County Plan is projecting significant population increases together with the Counties aim of making Durham city the business hub of the county we can reasonably expect to see significant increases in traffic on our entire road network. Mitigating measures are to be investigated which will discourage rat-runs and protect our community from ……..

**Policy T3**

**All new Developments** and significant extensions to existing buildings are to be designed to “Building for life 12” recommendations. Proving sufficient car parking spaces for the new or extended dwelling at the rate of ? spaces per person. Layouts are to ensure there are good pedestrian and cycling routes through the development and connecting directly with the parish wide network. Due regard is to be taken of the location of public transport stops and direct and secure links are to be provided.

**Policy T2**

**Village Centre developments** aim is to improve the appearance of the village, create a visual and social focus for the village. The centre is to provide a pedestrian focused space which allows easy and safe crossing of Sacriston lane (B6312) by the use of traffic calming measures and changes to the road geometry. Improvements are also required to the access to ???? Estate by ensuring traffic speed is reduced around the blind bend on the B6312 adjacent to Louisa Terrace. The conflict between Brookside access road and the village store carpark entrance is to be address in the development works by changing the carpark access position.

**Policy T6**

**Other road users** are to be protected where possible with the introduction dedicated cycleway and paths, the reduction of speed limits or junction geometry changes. The Aim is to make the parish’s road network a safe and enjoyable place to walk, cycle, run, ride and use a wheelchair. As the evidence from the NHS report shows the fear of injury is an active disincentive to our residents and visitors to engage in outdoor physical activity and this is having an impact on our physical and mental health. A full assessment of the road network is to be carried out to review all speed limits, road designations, and its integration with the existing cycle-ways, bridle paths and footpaths to ensure our aims of encouraging alternative forms of transport, creating a active population and creating a welcoming and safe experience for our visitors can be achieved.

\*1: In 2000, there were 320,283 casualties and 3,409 people killed in motor vehicle traffic accidents in Great Britain (Department of Transport 2001). This includes 42,033 pedestrian and 20,612 cyclist casualties and 857 and 127 pedestrian and cyclist deaths respectively.