

Tees Valley Travel Consultation Feedback from Difference North East, July 2025

About Difference North East

Difference fights for equality for Disabled People and an end to discrimination on the grounds of disability. We aim to change perceptions of disability with our work and campaign for a more equal region. We are a Disabled People's organisation (DPO) run by and for disabled people. Our work is directed by the experiences of local people, and we act to make sure that disabled voices are included and centred in the decisions that impact their lives.

As part of our work, we also deliver training, research, and consultancy.

As part of this consultation, we reached out to members of Difference North East to seek out their feedback. We will be submitting our response using any feedback provided and our local knowledge.

We have considered these plans using the current [government active travel principles](#); Safety, Accessibility, Comfort, Attractiveness, Directness, and Cohesion. However, we have prioritised reviewing these plans from a disability access perspective, utilising the [Wheels for Wellbeing principles](#) as detailed below:

1. **Equality of access to public spaces** for Disabled people and others with protected characteristics – Equality Act (2010) including the Public Sector Equality Duty and the UNCRPD (United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities).
2. **Legal, regulatory, and social recognition of mobility aids**, including how present regulations restrict Disabled people's access to society.
3. **Accompanied groups** people need to move in groups of two or more to make essential journeys. Accompanied groups walking/wheeling and cycling can no more split up than the same people could when travelling in a car, van, or bus.
4. **Social safety** how safe will a space or route be at all hours of day and night, for all people with all protected characteristics? What can make spaces safer?

5. **Physical safety** we often consider safety of people walking/wheeling and cycling from drivers. What about other hazards? What about when people aren't using a space in the way designers intended? – and why might people be using spaces in unintended ways?
6. **Coherence and wayfinding** how safe and easy are spaces for Disabled people to navigate, including negotiating priority of movement with other users of a space?

Member quotes from May 2025 when discussing travel in Tees Valley

Finally, before we detail our response, we want to include some direct quotes that local people shared with us at our recent Tees Valley member events. We hope this will provide some context as to why centring disabled voices in active travel is important.

"Access just generally across the North East is terrible. But I think I don't realize sometimes how poor transport infrastructure is in Teesside until I go somewhere else, and then I'm like, wow, these have it really good".

"It's simple things such as drop curbs for wheelchair users"

"Back when there was the Cleveland Disability Association, people would go along with their aids and their white sticks, and they assessed if it would work [before the work started]."

"Does it ever regularly get checked, ideally, by disabled people or the people who use those spaces, by deaf and disabled people? Because I think access audit should be undertaken by people who live in the community and use the space"



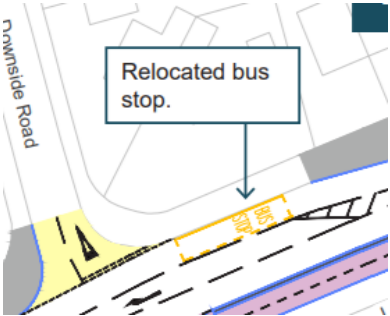
"But in terms of pavements – when they built all the car parking spaces on the old estates – cars were a lot smaller so now we don't have enough space to get around. Oh, you know you talk about making life easier and stuff. Everything you do – you have to plan a bit more"


"[talking about adjustments] reasonable means the bare minimum. For me, it sets the bar there, it should be achievable. It should be inclusive"

"Regardless of what differences we have, or disability or needs or anything, we all have a right to exist. We are all human beings, regardless of what our brain does, regardless of what our body does. We have rights to live in the world"

Middlesbrough. Green Lane Active Travel – Better Connections towards James Cook Hospital.

We will comment on each individual section of the plan (as outlaid on page 1 of the [green lane plan document](#))

Green Lane – Plan 1	
	<p>There is an opportunity identified to link with the Thornaby cycle lane. If these cycle systems are implemented, I would suggest TVCA look at the existing cycle path entrance (as seen here in Google Maps dated 04/25).</p> <p>This entry barrier presents an access issue to active travel, particularly for cyclists who are using adapted trikes or tandem bikes, which are wider than traditional bikes and may not be able to navigate this space. We would recommend removing barriers like this entirely. If barriers are needed to prevent vehicles accessing this space, then the wheels for wellbeing guidance are bollards spaced with 1.5m minimum air gaps.</p>
	<p>Opportunity to introduce formalised parking areas. This planned area is directly in front of 5 residential houses, with off-street parking, driveways and dropped kerbs that exit directly into the path of this suggested parking area. This is not accessible, especially for blind, visually impaired or deaf pedestrians.</p>
	<p>The relocated bus stop is a good idea. This pavement area is wide enough to lower ramps and disembark safely. There are currently no trees and or street furniture that would impact access.</p> <p>However, if a bus stop is to be installed, we must ensure this does not impact access. There is a residential property directly opposite this proposed bus stop with a brick wall – meaning installation of a seated bus shelter may limit the available space on the path to move around freely and safely.</p> <p>Before making these changes, it might be a good idea to undertake a ‘sweep’ test to see what the turning circle would be when embarking/disembarking a bus/ramp using a</p>

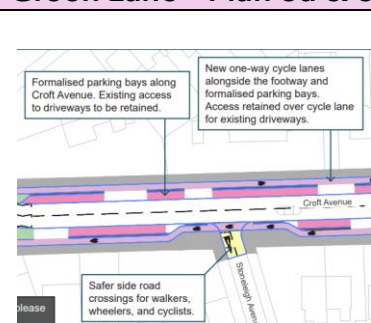
	mobility aid or wheelchair to ensure there is enough space to navigate safely.
	At the proposed location for the new bus stop, west of Haythrop drive, there is an electrical cabinet that mean impact a person being able to exist a bus using a ramp and have the required turning space to move away safely. If a bus stop is to be installed, please refer to concerns identified above. (Image taken from Google Maps, last updated 04/2025)

Green Lane - Plan 2

In relation to the development of a two-way cycle lane along Leverick crescent. There are a number of crossing points along this route that currently have no dropped kerbs, no tactile crossing points, and an uneven pavement surface, so this installation would greatly improve surface accessibility and access for active travel.

However, the impact to pedestrians and residents must be considered. The design of the cycle path is important to ensure there is no impact to accessibility so this space can be used by everyone safely.

Green Lane - Plan 3a & 3b

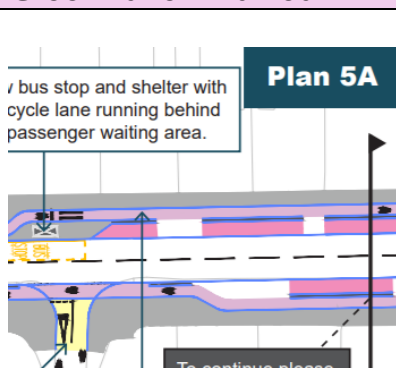


I am concerned about the one-way cycle lane that is directly over residential driveways and the safety implications of this if vehicles are crossing whilst pedestrians are using this space. For some deaf or blind pedestrians, this may propose a significant safety issue.

I foresee an issue also if parking bays are put in place - it will block the view of drivers to see pedestrians on the cycle path.

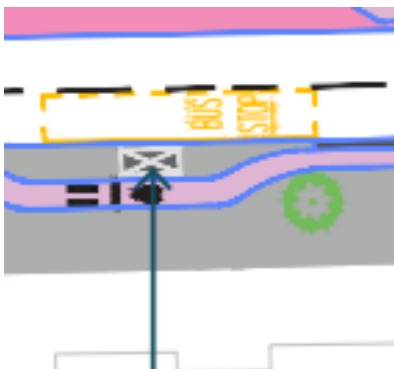

(This is also in 6a, 6b, 9a, 9b, 10a, 10b, 10c, 11a, 11b)

Green Lane - Plan 5a



We are concerned about the one-way cycle lane that is directly over residential driveways and the safety implications of this if vehicles are crossing whilst pedestrians are using this space. For some deaf or blind pedestrians using the footpath this may propose a significant safety issue.

We foresee an issue also if parking bays are put in place - it will block the view of drivers to see pedestrians already on the cycle path or footpath.

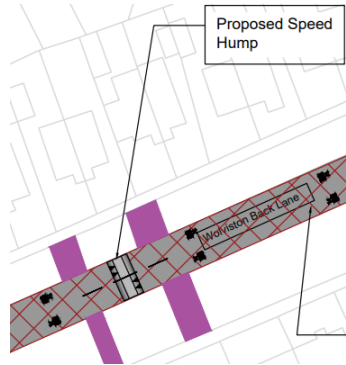
Green Lane 5a, 6a, 9b, 11a, 11b	
	<p>We would ask the TVCA to avoid creating 'bus islands' or 'floating bus stops' in this design. Rollout of these bus stops were paused in July 2025 due to safety concerns.</p> <p>We want cyclists to be safe, but not at the expense of disabled pedestrians, particularly those who are blind or have a visual impairment. Please see evidence from Guide Dogs at the recent bus services committee in June 2025.</p> <p>We agree with the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) that <i>"bus-stop bypass design is flawed, as the very people who have installed them will be assessing their future design."</i> It's increasingly important that disabled people are engaged with directly in these designs.</p> <p>Suggestion: Difference North East would recommend creating a disabled transport user group for future TVCA planning and consultation</p>
	<p>6a If the new cycle lane is implemented, can we ensure the removal of the barriers on the path at the entrance to Trueman Road (for the same reasons detailed in plan 1 comment.</p> <p>Image taken from Google Maps, updated May 25.</p>

Wolviston to Cowpen Bewley Woodland Park consultation plans

We will comment on each individual section of the plan (as outlaid on page 1 of the [Wolviston plan document](#))

Wolviston to Cowpen Bewley - Plan 1b to 6
<p>Creating a cycle path at this location is positive. The current path is a thin dirt track and is not accessible to all bike/trike/sports chair users as it has no accessible entry and exit points.</p> <p>We note there are currently no plans to install bollards or entry barriers on this path (to restrict vehicle access). We would encourage no barriers along the length of this route to ensure it remains accessible to all users. If there is a worry about cars or other motor vehicles using this space, we would suggest prioritising use of CCTV and other community safety measures before installing barriers to access.</p>

Wolviston to Cowpen Bewley - Plan 6, 7b, 8



We have noted the plan for a number of proposed speed humps on the mixed-use road at Wolviston back lane. It is not clear from the plans if there are any accessible paths alongside this. Please ensure there is a safe level and flat access crossing that ensures everyone can navigate this barrier, as not all wheelers can navigate speed humps.

Wolviston to Cowpen Bewley - 13a



Please ensure that any barriers to entrances and exits are removed with the improved cycle ways. This is the current entrance to West Hartlepool Road.

This entry barrier presents an access issue to active travel, particularly for cyclists who are using adapted trikes or tandem bikes, which are wider than traditional bikes and may not be able to navigate this space. We would recommend removing barriers like this entirely. If barriers are needed to prevent vehicles accessing this space, then the [wheels for wellbeing guidance](#) are bollards spaced with 1.5m minimum air gaps.

Stainton Way consultation plans

We will comment on each individual section of the plan (as outlaid on page 1 of the [Stainton Way Proposed Plans](#))

Stainton Way - 1a and 1b

Proposed widening of the existing footpath and cycle lane, to provide two-way cycle lane alongside the footpath - Merging into a shared use footpath in plan 1b
We would query the width of the new cycle lane design; will this width be sufficient to allow for safe access/passing of adapted trikes and handcycles, which are typically much wider than a standard bike (example a Tomcat trike can be between 74cm-76cm width, and a side tandem can be up to 1.2m). Cycle lane widths, gradients, turns and kerbs must be accessible for Disabled cyclists, including those using non-standard cycles

Recommendations

We would recommend the Tees Valley Combined Authority commission, and coproduce, directly with disabled people's organisations and local transport groups when seeking out feedback on active travel consultations and any future work.

There are a wide range of organisations, charities, grassroots groups and individuals who would be keen to be involved; but are often prevented from doing so due to access. Creating a bi-monthly or quarterly Tees wide disabled transport forum would address these barriers. Difference North East are happy to have discussions with the TVCA team about how this could be developed.

Contact Details

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