

# Stockton-on-Tees

## Local Transport Plan, 2006 to 2011

### Accessibility Strategy

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

### Background

Accessibility is about the delivery of key services and the ability of users to reach and use these services. It is about ease of access, but also about information, choice, affordability, timing and location. Accessibility can have a significant impact on the job opportunities, quality of education and health and general wellbeing that are available to some or all sections of the community. Good accessibility is important for everyone but is crucial for the most disadvantaged groups, including the elderly and mobility impaired, those on low incomes or without access to a car and those with specific transport needs.

Accessibility planning is an important issue across all Council services and is relevant to delivering best value, partnership working and linking transport and non-transport policies.

The Accessibility Strategy underpins both the Second Stockton-on-Tees Local Transport Plan (LTP) and all of its supporting documents. Its primary purpose is the proactive promotion of social inclusion by ensuring that transport is taken fully into account during the development of wider policies covering education, health, housing, regeneration and employment, thereby shaping the future delivery of Council services within the Borough. It is also intended to help improve access to jobs and key services by public transport through a planned, evidence-based approach, delivered through partnership.

The Strategy focuses on improving access to jobs, learning, healthcare, shopping and leisure and stems from a baseline assessment of accessibility needs across the sub-region and at an authority-wide level. Consultation with key stakeholders including Stockton Renaissance, the Local Strategic Partnership for the Borough, has ensured that this Strategy is set in the widest possible context and reflects the community's priorities. Accessibility in Stockton-on-Tees is not just driven by the transport agenda but is a now a common element of policy development across all services.

The Final Accessibility Strategy is based on the 'Provisional' Strategy published in July 2005, and focuses on issues raised through ongoing consultation and analysis. It reflects, and is integrated with, the development of the aims and

objectives of the Council's Long-Term Transport Strategy, as set out in the Second LTP.

The Final Strategy is a 'living' document that will evolve to reflect the changes that will take place over the next five years. The main differences compared to the Provisional Strategy lie in the stronger evidence base for particular issues and actions. This has allowed the development of specific targets and interventions associated with each of the proposed actions.

In line with guidance published by the Department for Transport (DfT) in December 2004, the Accessibility Strategy:

- Is set in the context of the wider vision and objectives for the Borough, as set out in the Community Strategy;
- Aims to improve accessibility for all, but particularly those in disadvantaged groups and/or areas such as rural and isolated communities, the elderly, disabled people and socially excluded groups;
- Recognises the different requirements of each group or area and aims to provide accessibility improvements in a targeted but consistent way across the Borough and in the wider context of the Tees Valley;
- Focuses on accessibility to employment, learning, healthcare and food shops, together with other services and opportunities of local importance as identified through the evidence base;
- Is based on an assessment of the accessibility needs and problems of the area developed through accessibility mapping, consultation, an Accessibility Audit and local partnership working;
- Sets out accessibility priorities within the five-year period of the Second LTP, and demonstrates how they result from the assessment;
- Provides targets for improving accessibility, with clear linkages to the wider Strategy, and on the ground delivery;
- Includes more detailed local accessibility action plans, developed with partners, to tackle initial priorities identified from the assessment; and
- Shows how accessibility considerations will be incorporated into wider policy and scheme development and delivery in transport, land use planning and non-transport sectors.

## Approach

Our approach to developing the Strategy has been to focus strongly on the evidence base, and to use this to define the key issues that need to be addressed. We accept that this is an emerging Strategy, which will need to be developed over time. We will also continue to develop our monitoring processes so that accessibility planning is fully integrated with the targets set within other strategies. Our initial Action Plan focuses on the most important issues arising from the accessibility audit, mapping, consultation and partnership work undertaken to date.

Accessibility planning will become a fundamental part of the Council's approach to service planning and delivery over the coming years. Fundamental to the success of this approach is the need to ensure that access to jobs and key services is neither discretionary nor discriminatory and is provided for all users in an equitable way.

Accessibility planning aims to ensure that:

- There is a clear process and responsibility for identifying groups or areas with accessibility problems;
- Whilst developing their Second LTPs, local authorities have improved information on barriers to accessibility and the areas where accessibility is poorest; and
- Local authorities work with other agencies to consider a wider range of solutions to accessibility problems, including changes to the location and delivery of services and the introduction of measures designed to improve the personal safety of those using public transport, as well as improved mainstream and specialist training.

Accessibility problems and opportunities arise across a range of agendas including education, healthcare provision and employment services. These issues have been considered during the development of the Second LTP, and have informed the development of the Action Plan set out in [Chapter 4](#).

## Aim and Objectives

The Council's aim and objectives for accessibility in the Borough has taken into account the issues that have arisen during consultation on the Second LTP, delivery of the Central/Local Government Shared Priority for Transport and local needs and aspirations. The overall aim is consistent with the Accessibility theme of the Transport Shared Priority and the Public Service Agreement target for the accessibility, punctuality and reliability of local public transport.

Accessibility spans both the transport and non-transport sectors, and underpins the delivery of Council services, its relationship with neighbouring Tees Valley authorities and other partners including health service providers, transport operators and community groups. Whilst current levels of accessibility for principal services is considered to be good, the approach outlined in this Strategy is to tackle the long-term decline in public transport patronage and encourage walking and cycling, thereby ensuring that access is available to key services and facilities throughout the Borough.

In addition, the Council will contribute to the successful delivery of improved accessibility, connectivity and equity in transport provision across the Tees Valley, consistent with the objectives and targets of the Regional Spatial Strategy and the Regional Economic Strategy.

The overall **Aim** of this Accessibility Strategy is:

***“To improve opportunities for all to access health, education, jobs, leisure and food outlets”***

To meet this aim, the **Objectives** of this Strategy are:

- Improved public transport network coverage;
- More integrated transport links;
- Better information;
- Increased reliability of transport systems;
- Reduced cost of travel; and
- Encourage more walking and cycling trips.

## Chapter 2: Context

### National Context

As well as being a central theme of the Government's transport strategy, accessibility planning is crucial to the delivery of many other national agendas including economic productivity, mobility, social inclusion, learning and health.

The transport implications of the following national policy documents were considered during the development of our approach to accessibility planning:

- 'Making the Connections' (Social Exclusion Unit, 2003);
- Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2001);
- Health White Paper: 'Our Health, Our Care, Our Say: A New Direction for Community Services' (Department of Health, 2006);
- Green Paper for Adults: 'Independence, Wellbeing and Choice' (Department of Health, 2005);
- 'Quality and Choice for Older People's Housing: A Strategic Framework' (Department of Health, 2001);
- 'Making it Happen: The Northern Way – Creating Sustainable Communities in the North East' (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2004);
- Home Ownership and Affordable Housing Initiatives;
- The Children Act 2004;
- Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners (Department for Education and Skills, 2004);
- Youth Green Paper (Department for Education and Skills, 2005); and
- Education White Paper 'Higher Standards, Better Schools for All' (Department for Education and Skills, 2005).

Integration and synergy across all of the policy disciplines will be necessary if accessibility is to be 'mainstreamed' and the priorities for accessibility within the Borough are to be delivered. This Strategy outlines how this will be achieved through partnership and consultation against a sound evidence base, identifying key indicators, targets and trajectories over the lifetime of the Second LTP.

Helping to ensure that people can access the services that they need and want is not just a matter of improving local transport, but also of improving the provision of other services and planning developments in more accessible places and ways. It is recognised that local authorities can make a positive contribution not only through their own transport policies, but also through the integration of accessibility objectives across wider policy areas and through joint working with bodies in non-transport sectors.

The Council and its neighbouring authorities within the Tees Valley are working with partners across the sub-region to deliver improved accessibility to health and education as well as to deliver improved public transport. We have established a number of joint strategy and working groups, and we will continue to develop ways of sharing information, co-ordinating planning and procurement in order to focus on better, more efficient and more accessible service delivery in line with national initiatives and guidance.

The ability of people to access places of work, learning, health care, shopping, leisure, exercise and other opportunities can significantly impact on their quality of life and on their life chances. It also has a wider impact on the sustainability and growth of the economy, delivering choice, connectivity and mobility. Improving accessibility makes a valuable contribution to national objectives and targets in non-transport sectors, including:

- Improving health and social care outcomes, including for 2010 to reduce the gap in infant mortality across social groups and raise life expectancy in the most disadvantaged areas faster than elsewhere;
- Improving attendance and attainment in education;
- Promoting work as the best form of welfare for people of working age;
- Raising levels of social inclusion, neighbourhood renewal and regional prosperity;
- Enhancing opportunity and tackling social exclusion in rural areas, and to improve access to countryside leisure and exercise opportunities; and
- Increasing participation in culture and sport.

All of these outcomes contribute to the delivery of the Council's vision for improved accessibility. They are also relevant to other strategies

accompanying the LTP process, in particular the Public Transport Strategy and the Community Strategy. Issues relating to accessibility and improved service provision are documented in each of these strategies, illustrating the policy integration required.

## **Regional/Sub-Regional Context**

There is already a high degree of partnership and co-operation across the Tees Valley, helping to deliver services, co-ordinate access to education and healthcare and develop policy. However, the dispersed pattern of development across the sub-region, and the accessibility needs in the context of the wider North East region, including access to North Yorkshire, County Durham and Tyne & Wear, places particular demands on transport services and infrastructure.

Future changes anticipated within the Tees Valley will give rise to a number of potential problems. The additional pressures of increased choice in health and education facilities, coupled with the polycentric nature of the Tees Valley means that there will be a need to take account of a wider range, and possibly greater level, of trip making.

The 'Darzi' review of acute hospital healthcare is likely to have an impact in terms of the need for access to a number of hospital sites, not just the nearest one. The introduction of free concessionary travel from 1 April 2006 will address some of the affordability issues associated with accessibility, particularly in respect of access to health, social and community facilities. We have worked closely with our partner authorities in the Tees Valley and the major bus operators to ensure that the National Concessionary Fare Scheme will both operate without time restrictions and extend to cover the Boroughs of Hartlepool, Middlesbrough and Redcar & Cleveland, thereby avoiding any potential cross-boundary problems.

The more dispersed pattern of development that will result from the regeneration proposals within the Borough and the sub-region will also impose complex travel demands on the transport network. New development opportunities bring challenges for the delivery of sustainable public transport as well as cycling and walking access.

The Second LTP outlines the importance of Accessibility at the regional and sub-regional level in terms of supporting employment growth at the key sites and in the existing town centres within the Tees Valley. Whilst this Strategy is focused on access to local services such as health, education and retail facilities, it also acknowledges the need for good access to major employment sites, key facilities and attractions across the sub-region.

The Second LTP also identifies a series of sub-regional objectives for accessibility that will be delivered jointly by the local authorities and their external partners.

The sub-regional objectives for accessibility are relevant to the context within which the local accessibility action plan will be developed and targets set. They include:

- Maximising accessibility opportunities to the revitalising Tees Valley economy and associated services;
- Addressing the decline in bus use and providing a stable and sustainable network; and
- Attracting the necessary investment to deliver the required improvements in the local rail network, including looking towards more innovative solutions.

Accessibility has to be provided for all users in an equitable way. However, given the priorities afforded in recent times to the private car as a means of transport, there is a need within the short to medium term to invest in more sustainable forms of transport in order to make the network as a whole more equitable.

It may also be necessary to target investment in specific areas of the Tees Valley, where deprivation and disadvantage are at their greatest, in order to deliver equality in accessibility to health, education, employment, housing and leisure opportunities. This takes account of existing levels of accessibility delivered by our transport infrastructure and through cross-sector services.

The trunk road network, principally the A1, A19 and A66, provides the main source of inter-region connectivity identified in the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). The strategic function of these routes will need to be maintained and enhanced, working in partnership with the Highways Agency through its recently published Route Management Strategies. Selective investment in the

road network will be necessary to enhance accessibility to a number of the key regeneration sites across the Tees Valley, including those close to the River Tees and the A19/A66 Interchange. Development of core freight routes across the sub-region will also be necessary, as freight transport will be key to the ongoing development of sites such as Teesport.

The bus network across the Tees Valley is not as well co-ordinated as we would like, as evidenced by a 3% year-on-year decline in patronage during the lifetime of the First LTP. The problem for the Tees Valley Authorities is one of stemming the existing decline in bus use whilst developing a network to better suit the changing travel patterns envisaged due to development proposals and other policy and demographic changes. The aim is to maximise bus patronage whilst maintaining accessibility and social inclusion, with a cost-neutral base option and costed, prioritised incremental improvements.

A number of initiatives are being developed by the Tees Valley Authorities to promote bus use, and these will be developed over the course of the Second LTP. A major scheme bid is also being developed for a package of improvements arising from the Tees Valley Bus Network Review, which has as a core objective to maximise bus patronage whilst maintaining accessibility and social inclusion, thereby delivering a co-ordinated bus network across the Tees Valley. A strong partnership approach is envisaged between key stakeholders with a new set of relationships and structures.

Compared to bus, rail has a much smaller share of the passenger market in the Tees Valley with approximately 2.2 million journeys a year commencing at stations within the sub-region. Although rail patronage has risen consistently year-on-year, its modal share is still low compared to most other parts of the country. Due to its location on the East Coast Main Line, Darlington remains the dominant station in the Tees Valley in terms of passenger footfall, followed by Middlesbrough, Redcar Central, Hartlepool and Thornaby.

Better sub-regional and inter-regional accessibility will be important to maintain an economic rail network and deliver better connectivity to the Tyne & Wear and Leeds City Regions, and also to other parts of the country. Providing additional rail freight capacity is also key to supporting the growth of the sub-regional economy and reducing the level of heavy goods vehicles on the road network. This will be guided by the Regional Rail Strategy.

To improve the competitiveness of the sub-region, the provision of a modern, integrated public transport system remains central to the long-term transport and economic strategy for the Tees Valley. The future system could create a high quality, fast and reliable solution to assist regeneration and contribute to accessibility as changes to travel demand and distribution arising from economic activity gathers pace. It could also play a key role in raising the area's regional and national profile and encouraging greater inward investment and sustainable economic growth.

Access to Durham Tees Valley Airport is another key economic driver for the sub-region with plans to expand both passenger air services and wider employment opportunities at the site. This will lead to an increase in travel demand from all five Tees Valley authorities as well as the wider area. Future opportunities will focus on increasing access by sustainable modes.

Investment in walking and cycling measures across the Tees Valley has been made throughout the First LTP period, and encouragement of these modes has much wider benefits in terms of health, education and safer communities. As regeneration takes place, and trips become longer and more dispersed, there may be a decline in the proportion of journeys made on foot or by cycle as the main mode of travel. For this reason, the Council and its Tees Valley neighbours are committed to investment in measures encouraging the use of such modes for short journeys within local communities and as part of multi-modal journeys that do not necessarily involve the private car at any stage. Key objectives for cycling over the next few years are the completion of the National Cycle Network within the sub-region along with other improvements linked to schools, town centres and residential areas and provision of improved signing, cycle parking and information.

Each of the Tees Valley Authorities will be pursuing individual quality walking networks as part of the Second LTP, recognising that walking as a mode of transport is suitable for short distance trips and can make a significant contribution to health initiatives.

Opportunities to impact on the wider policy agenda through the delivery of interventions promoted in the Second LTP include:

- Participation in the Tees Valley Health and Transport partnership to delivery improvements in access to health facilities and services;

- Reviewing the Tees Valley bus network to develop a public transport hierarchy serving both core commuter routes and rural communities;
- Development of an effective sub-regional public transport system linking the main centres of population and sub-regional 'gateways';
- Continued investment in better interchange facilities across the Borough;
- Implementation of the Tees Valley Real Time Bus Passenger Information System;
- Continued development of a network of cycling routes that feed into the National Cycle Network; and
- Continued investment in providing CCTV on buses, in bus stops, in taxis and at public transport interchanges.

Given the existing characteristics and the likely future changes within the Borough, we feel that these interventions will have the greatest impact in terms of improving accessibility over the lifetime of the Second LTP.

## Local Context

The population of Stockton-on-Tees is 186,700 (mid 2005 estimate), living in almost 73,000 households (2001 Census). The population is both increasing and ageing, which means that there is a particular need to focus on access to key services by older people.

Table 2.1 compares the Borough's performance against a number of 'headline' indicators to that of England as a whole. These statistics provide the local context for the challenges that will be faced throughout period of the Second LTP plan, and for delivering improved levels of accessibility compared with the existing baseline.

Unemployment within the Borough is higher than the national average at 3.2% (January 2006), although the long-term trend is downward. Within the Borough's 'Priority Neighbourhoods' – the areas with the highest levels of deprivation, where car ownership is lowest – our focus will be on providing access to education and training opportunities. Within those areas of the Borough that exhibit relative affluence, this Strategy will promote more travel choices, thereby improving accessibility and reducing the potential for increased levels of congestion.

Indicator	Stockton-on-Tees	England
<b>Population</b>		
• Over 60	17.3%	18.5%
• Under 60	82.7%	81.5%
<b>Unemployment</b>		
• Working Age Not in Employment	3.2%	2.6%
<b>Car Ownership</b>		
• Households with Two or More Cars	27.1%	29.4%
<b>Health</b>		
• Standardised Mortality Ratio (index)	114	100
• General Health Not Good	10.41%	9.22%
<b>Education</b>		
• Pupils Leaving School with Five or More 'A*' to 'C' GCSE Grades	46%	44%

(Sources: 2001 Census, Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit & Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council)

**Table 2.1: Headline Indicators**

Additional evidence supporting this approach is the continued increase in car ownership levels. The number of households with two or more cars rose by 7.6% between 1991 and 2001. It is anticipated that this trend will continue as economic growth and regeneration continue within the Borough.

Accessibility is essential to improving the health of the Borough's residents, both by reducing health inequalities and increasing life expectancy: the standardised mortality ratio for Stockton in 2004 was 114. Consultation carried out during development of the Local Action Plans within each of the Borough's Priority Neighbourhoods has revealed that the affordability and availability of public transport links to healthcare provision is a contributory factor to the number of missed hospital and GP appointments reported by the Health Authority. In addition, consideration needs to be given to the location of, and access to, community-based health facilities. To this end, the Strategy has been developed in partnership with local health professionals across the Tees Valley.

Educational achievement within the Borough is increasing, with 46% of pupils leaving school with five or more 'A\*' to 'C' grade GCSEs in 2004. With a local

policy to rationalise education facilities, it is paramount that access to schools and other educational establishments is considered when planning future provision.

Consideration of these factors demonstrates that the development of this Strategy has been driven not just by transport-related issues, but also by the need to ensure that key services are delivered as accessibly as possible.

It is important to demonstrate the link between the headline indicators for the Borough and the transport issues that arise as a result. The headline indicators can be summarised as follows:

- An Ageing Population, including an increased need to access key services, particularly to facilitate elderly people living at home;
- Unemployment above the national average;
- An above average mortality rate, linked to below average general health;
- Increasing car ownership levels across the Borough; and
- An increasing percentage of pupils with five or more 'A\*' to 'C' GCSE grades.

The direct transport implications of these issues are:

- An increasing need to access key services and facilities, particularly healthcare, training and employment;
- The need to provide a range of travel choices;
- Potential for traffic growth and the creation of opportunities for modal shift;
- The need for more effective travel planning; and
- The need for better travel information.

An initial, high-level assessment of current accessibility levels was prepared for the Provisional Accessibility Strategy in July 2005. The key accessibility issues identified included:

- A shrinking commercial bus network;
- Poor accessibility within the Borough's rural communities;
- Poor accessibility to the Tees Valley 'gateways' of Durham Tees Valley Airport and Darlington rail station;
- Poor interchange opportunities;
- The need for enhanced walking and cycling networks;

- Personal safety concerns amongst current and potential public transport users, particularly within the Priority Neighbourhoods where antisocial behaviour is an issue; and
- Accessibility to key sites and activities outside the Borough and, conversely for journeys starting elsewhere in the Tees Valley to key destinations within Stockton-on-Tees.

These issues have been investigated in more detail as part of the process of preparing the Final Accessibility Strategy.

## **Problems – The Evidence Base**

Development of the evidence base for the Strategy has focused on four key areas:

1. An Accessibility Audit;
2. Accessibility mapping and modelling;
3. Consultation; and
4. The assembly of existing knowledge through partnership working, reviews and theme-specific workshops.

This process has embraced policies and issues for non-transport sectors, especially education and healthcare where proposed policy changes will have a significant impact on transport provision and accessibility.

### **1) The Accessibility Audit**

The Accessibility Audit has focused on developing a set of key indicators, based on levels of accessibility, within each of the main policy areas. This has involved compiling specific information from the health and education sectors as well as demographic and transport-related data.

In preparing the Strategy, audits were undertaken of existing accessibility to further education establishments, district centres (as a proxy for employment opportunities) and the University Hospital of North Tees, all of which have been adopted as key performance targets within the Community Strategy. The audit also identified that the Strategy should consider key destinations and purposes elsewhere in the Tees Valley, for example, major employment sites and

hospitals of sub-regional importance, due to the current and likely future demand for cross-boundary travel to key destinations and the need to access facilities that have a wider catchment area. It should be noted that these issues have been discussed and developed in partnership with the other local authorities in the Tees Valley authorities to ensure that a consistent strategy can be identified.

Some of the issues were drawn from consultation and existing partnership working, through regular meetings with transport and other sector officers across the Tees Valley. In addition, the development of Local Action Plans (LAPs) within each of the Priority Neighbourhoods offered the opportunity to develop the Accessibility Strategy in parallel with wider corporate agendas.

As part of the audit process, a Transport and Accessibility Survey was carried out in the following Priority Neighbourhoods during 2004:

- Hardwick & Salters Lane;
- Primrose Hill & Newtown;
- Portrack, Tilery, Queens Park & Victoria; and
- Parkfield.

Face-to-face questionnaires were completed and analysed, following which a series of workshop sessions were held with representatives from the four neighbourhoods. The representatives were given the key survey findings for their neighbourhood, and were asked to expand on the issues raised and discuss any concerns that they had about access and transportation issues.

Specific issues around the need for improved accessibility to employment, education, healthcare and food retail facilities were identified, thereby demonstrating consistency with the issues raised at the Borough-wide and sub-regional level that have helped to define the wider Strategy.

Key issues raised included the following:

- Interchange can be a barrier to accessing jobs;
- Large employment sites are not well served by public transport;
- Congestion and parking has a significant impact on accessibility;
- Fares and concessionary passes for elderly and disabled people are not co-ordinated with the availability of services;

- Safety issues for students where reliable public transport is not available;
- Timing of journeys for education and youth activities can be a problem for parents wanting reliable and safe public transport for their children;
- Limited parking at health centres and doctors surgeries;
- Availability and reliability of buses for hospital appointments;
- Interchange required for access to hospital appointments;
- Cost of travel and availability of tickets for hospital appointments;
- Reliability and timing of bus services;
- The lack of integrated bus ticketing, and the cost of changing buses operated by different bus companies;
- Problems understanding or reading bus timetables; and
- Use of electronic real time information at bus stops.

Although, due to cost constraints, this detailed process has not been repeated in the other Priority Neighbourhoods, similar issues have been raised during the development of the LAPs in these areas.

As a result of the audit, a number of key accessibility issues were identified: these are shown in [Table 2.2](#). The current levels of accessibility highlight improved access to food retail and healthcare facilities as the most pressing needs within the Borough. However, the proposed changes to the regulations covering the statutory provision of school transport, as detailed in the Education White Paper, are likely to make access to education an important issue for the future. Furthermore, the Darzi review of acute healthcare provision within the Tees Valley will influence priorities in terms of access to hospitals.

It should be noted that the current accessibility levels are dependent largely on the coverage of the existing bus network. It is important to reflect, therefore, that the continued shrinkage of this network will have major implications for future levels of accessibility, particularly in those areas of the Borough remote from the 'core' corridors around which the two main bus operators are basing their operating patterns. It is clear that action will need to be taken to reverse the long-term decline in bus patronage across the Tees Valley as a whole if accessibility to jobs and key services within the Borough and across the wider sub-region is to be maintained and improved over the lifetime of this Strategy and beyond.

Key Accessibility Issue	Current Level of Accessibility	What does This Mean for Accessibility in Stockton?	What does This Mean for the Wider Policy Agenda?
<b>Food Retail</b> % of population within: 15 minutes 30 minutes of major food retailer.	5.88% 62.13%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poor access by public transport to major food retail within the Borough.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Land use planning, economic development and regeneration initiatives need to deliver better links to food retail through policy development.</li> <li>Health and food education agendas need to consider promoting the benefits of using food retail as opposed to local fast food retail.</li> </ul>
<b>District Centres</b> % of population within: 20 minutes 40 minutes of district centres.	82.62% 97.46%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adequate transport links to key service hubs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased economic prosperity.</li> <li>Enhanced community health.</li> <li>Increased opportunities to access local facilities.</li> </ul>
<b>Healthcare Services</b> % of population within: 30 minutes 60 minutes of the University Hospital of North Tees  % of population within: 20 minutes 40 minutes of a GP.	67% 98%  64% 72%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ageing population – need to provide personalised travel access plans.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Possible expansion of community transport services to improve access to health services and facilities.</li> <li>Enhanced ticketing scheme allowing concessionary travel for those receiving benefit to attend hospital appointments at reduced cost or free.</li> <li>Green Paper for Adults: Independence, Wellbeing and Choice – Improve access to universal public services, helping people to play a full part in society, access to health services.</li> <li>Location of health facilities / NHS Improvement Plan needs to consider accessibility needs of the Borough.</li> </ul>
<b>Employment</b> % of population within: 20 minutes 40 minutes of major employment sites.	31.85% 92.89%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bus network changes to promote better access to employment sites.</li> <li>Cater for demand for travel by sustainable modes.</li> <li>Roadspace re-allocation to facilitate a sustainable transport network.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure access to all key regeneration sites for those both living in the Borough and those travelling into the Borough.</li> </ul>

Key Accessibility Issue	Current Level of Accessibility	What does This Mean for Accessibility in Stockton?	What does This Mean for the Wider Policy Agenda?
<b>Education</b> % of population within: 15 minutes 30 minutes of a primary school.  % of population within: 20 minutes 40 minutes of a secondary school.  % of population within: 30 minutes 60 minutes of a further education facility.	71% 73%  93.37% 97.39%  94% 98%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Better access to education facilities by a range of accessible modes.</li> <li>Increased opportunities to use local facilities.</li> <li>Greater choice in education facilities and transport modes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need to maintain current levels of access to all education facilities throughout the development of the agenda for rationalising education establishments.</li> <li>Access to integrated services in geographical areas including the development of extended schools with additional facilities for community involvement.</li> <li>Access to learning opportunities throughout the Borough – flexible curriculum for 14-19 year olds.</li> <li>Access to specialist schools and delivery of personalised learning.</li> </ul>

**Table 2.2: Summary of Accessibility Audit for Key Sites and Facilities**

## 2) Accessibility Mapping

A mapping exercise to examine access to key services was carried out to define journey times by public transport to the following key destinations:

### *Sub-Regional Destinations*

- Stockton Town Centre;
- Darlington town centre;
- Hartlepool town centre;
- Middlesbrough town centre;
- Redcar & Guisborough town centres;
- University Hospital of North Tees;
- University Hospital of Hartlepool;
- James Cook University Hospital;
- Durham Tees Valley Airport; and
- Wynyard.

### *Destinations within the Borough*

- Major Employment Sites;
- Primary Schools;
- Secondary Schools;
- Further Education;
- University Hospital of North Tees;
- James Cook University Hospital;
- University Hospital of Hartlepool;
- Prescription Sites; and
- Food Retail: Morrisons, Teesside Park and Asda, Portrack.

The mapping was carried out on behalf of the Council by the Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit, using the 'Accession' software provided by the DfT. All of the above maps are included in [Appendix 1](#).

Though not exhaustive, the mapping carried out to date is representative of the key areas considered in this Strategy, and both demonstrates and forms part of the evidence base for existing accessibility problems and opportunities within the Borough.

In addition to the Accession mapping we have looked at the origin and destination of work trips to major employment destinations by bus and car using data from the 2001 Census Journey to Work survey. This gives a useful indication of whether actual travel behaviour reflects the level of accessibility suggested by the mapping. The theoretical journey time for trips to key destinations and services, as used in the Accession software, is not always reliable, and the mapping does not take into account variations in the cost and quality of public transport.

The mapping, which is also included in [Appendix 1](#), reflects indicative levels of accessibility in relation to employment, education, healthcare and food retail. These are discussed in turn below.

#### *Major Employment Sites*

The major employment sites in the Borough are located around Stockton, Thornaby and Billingham. These sites are generally accessible within 40 minutes' journey time by public transport, except for communities to the very south of the borough, such as Kirklevington, and to the north west around Carlton, Whitton and Stillington. These are relatively isolated rural communities with particular accessibility needs for a number of journey purposes.

The majority of the urban areas of the Borough, including the centres of Billingham, Stockton and Thornaby, are well connected by public transport and are accessible within 30 minutes' journey time. The distribution north to south reflects the exiting pattern of bus service provision and the importance of Stockton town centre as an interchange as well as a key destination in its own right. However, increasing congestion around the district centres and along the A66, and the lack of frequent bus services away from these centres, means that a 10-minute access time is restricted to a relatively small catchment around each major employment site.

This is supported by analysis of the 2001 Census Journey to Work data, which illustrates a much wider distribution of journeys to work by car than by public

transport. These maps also suggest that public transport accessibility is poorer for east-west movements across the Borough than for those made between the north and south. This reflects the distribution of the main residential areas and, hence, the corridors on which demand for public transport is highest.

#### *Educational Establishments*

A similar pattern of accessibility is exhibited for educational establishments. Accessibility to primary schools is generally good, with journey times of no more than 15 to 20 minutes for most sites. The exceptions are the more isolated rural communities in the south and north west of the Borough.

The pattern is similar for secondary education, with no area of the Borough more than 40 minutes from a secondary school by public transport. To support this information, distance-based plots are presented for secondary education in order to identify those areas where competition for school places may impact on statutory school transport provision and parental choice under the legislative changes proposed in the Education Bill. The plots indicate that pressure on certain schools, particularly those in the south of the Borough, may increase due to the extension of choice, and this will require further analysis to determine the detailed impact on school transport provision.

Unsurprisingly, the picture in terms of public transport access to further education is similar to that for primary and secondary schools, with journey times in the south and north west of the borough rising to between 40 and 60 minutes. The proximity of further education sites in Middlesbrough is important in terms of widening the choice of courses available to students, and the levels of accessibility within the Borough should be viewed in this context. One of the key issues for sub-regional accessibility will be delivering attractive travel choices for the 'best' or 'right' training and education opportunities, rather than just the nearest. This highlights the need for good east-west public transport links and the removal of barriers such as poor service quality, frequency and interchange.

#### *Healthcare Facilities*

One of the most important issues in terms of accessibility within the Borough is access to healthcare, in particular the three hospitals – the University Hospital of North Tees, the University Hospital of Hartlepool and the James Cook

University Hospital – administered by the North Tees & Hartlepool and South Tees Acute Hospitals NHS Trusts. This is because, under the Darzi Review of acute healthcare provision, residents of the Borough and hospital employees may have to travel to any one of the three hospital sites dependent on their medical condition or specialism.

Unsurprisingly, given its location within the Borough, access to the University Hospital of North Tees is generally good. Only those areas in the south and north east of the Borough lie outside the 40-minute travel time 'zone', although interchange in the centre of Stockton is required for a significant proportion of residents.

It is a very different story for the University Hospital of Hartlepool, as only a very small percentage of the Borough's population can expect to reach a hospital appointment by public transport within 40 minutes, whilst over half the population will take more than 50 minutes to reach the hospital site. This is, accordingly, a key issue for the Accessibility Strategy to address.

The situation regarding the James Cook University Hospital is better, but there is a distinct east versus west 'split', with residents of the communities to the west of Stockton town centre having to travel for more than 40 minutes in order to reach the hospital site. Nowhere in the Borough is less than 30 minutes from the hospital, despite the fact that it is located less than three miles from the Borough boundary and less than five miles from Stockton town centre.

#### *Food Retail*

Accessibility to food retail highlights a similar problem in terms of ease of access across the Borough. Mapping of public transport accessibility to the Morrisons and Asda stores at Teesside Park and Portrack respectively shows only a small catchment area within 30 minutes' travel time by public transport, and a significant proportion of the Borough's population living outside the theoretical 50 minutes' travel time 'zone'. Again, this is due to the need for many residents to change buses in Stockton town centre, together with the relative infrequency of services from some areas of the Borough.

The poor levels of accessibility to such sites is unsurprising given the rapid growth of out-of-centre supermarket shopping that occurred as a result of previous planning policy: for example, Teesside Park has several hundred free

car parking spaces. Although bus services were introduced to serve the site when it first opened, these have been progressively withdrawn due to the fact that it is served by a single vehicular access and the extra journey time that this imposes.

As part of a wider town centre regeneration initiative, the Council is working to attract a leading food retailer to the centre of Stockton. This will significantly improve access to food retail for residents across the Borough.

### **3) Consultation**

In addition to the mapping exercise, the Accessibility Strategy has been informed by the same two-level consultation process carried out during the development of the Second LTP itself.

The key message that has emerged from the Borough-wide consultation process is that, because the majority of the Borough's population lives in urban areas that are relatively well served by public transport, accessibility to services – with the exception of existing food retail and future healthcare provision – is generally good.

A comprehensive consultation process was carried out during development of the Second LTP. Analysis of that consultation shows that, in broad terms, accessibility to key services – primarily health, education, employment and town centres – is the most important theme, irrespective of area, cultural background or demographic. The priority over the lifetime of the Strategy is, therefore, to develop and promote better access to these services.

We have worked closely with our partner authorities in the Tees Valley to develop areas of consistency in policy and delivery. This approach acknowledges the fact that, whilst there are specific accessibility issues within each authority area, all of the partners face common challenges in the delivery of wider economic and regeneration strategies.

We have consulted widely with community groups as part of the LTP and Local Action Planning processes, and we have raised transport as a core issue in these discussions.

Consultation with Council Members, Area Focus Groups and the Council's 'Viewpoint' Panel has also been carried out as part of the development of the Second LTP. The results of these consultations demonstrate the relative importance that both residents and key stakeholders place on those elements of the Council's Long-Term Transport Strategy designed to improve accessibility and address quality of life issues.

To ensure that specific interventions and implementation plans are deliverable and represent value for money, we have consulted with key delivery partners, such as:

- Bus operators;
- Train operating companies;
- Our neighbouring authorities in the Tees Valley sub-region; and
- Durham and North Yorkshire County Councils.

To ensure that relevant officers across all service groupings are aware of how accessibility planning contributes to delivery across all of the Council's agendas, Policy Officer Group meetings have considered each of the key stages of the development of the Strategy. Other internal consultation channels have included:

- The Internal Stakeholders Policy Forum; and
- The Highways Service Improvement Group (SIG);

Accessibility has also been considered within the wider LTP agenda by Stockton Renaissance, the Local Strategic Partnership for the Borough. This has ensured that the partners are aware of the emerging proposals and how they will contribute to the delivery of the Community Strategy. Presentations have also been given to each of the four Stockton Renaissance Area Boards.

We are also pursuing, through the Tees Health and Transport Partnership, the implementation of the recommendations arising from an independent study of the transport implications of the Darzi Review of acute healthcare services carried out by consultants JMP.

The Council already consults widely on cycling and walking issues, though a number of user groups and forums, including:

- The Stockton Cycle Users' Group – a web-based e-group for cyclists within the Borough;
- The Tees Valley Cycle Forum – a forum bringing together Council cycling officers, Sustrans, representatives of local cycling groups and members of the public;
- The 'Comments and Feedback' facility hosted within [www.doitbycycle.com](http://www.doitbycycle.com);
- Reporting of cycleway cleansing, faults and maintenance defects via the Council's 'Care for Your Area' Telephone Hotline; and
- The Walking Strategy Development Group – a mix of officers, community representatives and health walk volunteers meeting regularly to discuss issues arising from the Strategy;
- Transport-related focus groups, as part of the Second LTP preparation and review process; and
- The two Stockton Road Safety Fora.

#### **4) Partnership Working**

In addition to the comprehensive consultation exercise carried out as part of the preparation of the Second LTP, parallel engagement within the Priority Neighbourhoods has contributed to the development of the evidence base presented in this Strategy. The Council now actively 'mainstreams' accessibility as a key objective across all of its service areas, thereby ensuring that it is considered as an integral part of the service planning process.

A number of partnerships have been established in order to deliver the actions and targets identified within this Strategy. Together with our local authority partners, other service providers and stakeholders, we are committed to maintaining our focus on the delivery of improved accessibility to jobs and key services throughout the lifetime of the Strategy. This is illustrated in one of our key accessibility action plan areas, healthcare.

Our involvement in the Tees Valley Transport and Health Partnership over the last three years has been key to the delivery of improved access to local hospitals, most notably through the upgrade of the 1 and 37 bus services introduced in 2004 as a result of our successful bid for Urban Bus Challenge funding. However, there is still much work to be done.

We will continue to work in partnership with the other Tees Valley authorities to pursue the implementation of the recommendations arising from the

independent study of the transport implications of the Darzi Review of acute healthcare services. These recommendations cover five key areas:

- Partnership and accessibility planning;
- Public transport network development;
- Specialist transport development;
- Influencing travel behaviour; and
- Information and advocacy.

An initial Action Plan has been developed in each of these areas, and this will be developed further over the coming months. A particular priority is to ensure that accessibility planning stays at the heart of partnership delivery across all sectors. Of equal importance is the need to develop a funding structure that maximises both the contributions from each partner and the potential for additional funding from external sources.

The Council is also looking at ways in which it can provide transport services through partnership, making greater use of the Community Transport service to provide travel to healthcare, education and community facilities. The Community Transport Unit is in the process of applying for a full PSV Operator's Licence in order to give it greater flexibility in terms of the range of services it can offer, thereby delivering real and targeted improvements in accessibility for specific user groups.

The Council's policy of promoting care in the community will need to be delivered carefully – and in partnership with healthcare providers – to ensure that accessibility is taken fully into account, particularly for those who have a medical need for non-emergency patient transport. These issues will be addressed as details of future changes in healthcare service provision emerge over time.

## Chapter 3: Strategic Issues

### Overview

The Council's Long-Term Transport Strategy, as set out in the Second LTP, is based on the set of Core Aims and Objectives set out in [Table 3.1](#).

Accessibility Planning will play a key role in meeting many of these Aims and Objectives, particularly those highlighted in green within the Table. Moreover,

as an overarching theme within the Second LTP, Accessibility Planning is intrinsic to the development of transport policy and delivery in the Borough.

Whilst Accessibility is central to the delivery of the Long-Term Transport Strategy, it is important to note that even maintaining existing levels of accessibility will be a major challenge unless decisive action is taken to address the long-term decline in bus patronage and the associated shrinkage of the commercial bus network.

Shared Priority Theme	Core Aims	Objectives
Accessibility	To improve opportunities for all to access health, education, jobs, leisure and retail outlets.	Improved public transport network coverage. More integrated transport links. Better travel information. Increased reliability of transport systems. Reduced cost of travel. Encouragement of more walking and cycling trips.
Congestion	To reduce the rate of traffic growth in the Borough.	Increased use of more sustainable alternatives to the private car. Promotion and awareness of more sustainable alternatives to the private car. More efficient management and use of existing infrastructure.
Road Safety	To reduce the incidence and severity of casualties on the Borough's roads.	Ensure that all new and improved highways infrastructure adopts best practice in 'safe by design' principles. Take into account the greater incidence of casualties in priority neighbourhoods. Promote road safety education within the community.
Air Quality	To reduce the risk posed to health by traffic related pollution.	Maintain statutory air quality objectives across the Borough. Implement measures designed to reduce PM10 levels across the Borough.
Other Quality of Life	To improve transport's contribution to our community's quality of life.	Implement measures designed to enhance safety and reduce the fear of crime. Address noise and climate change issues. Enhance the landscape and biodiversity. Enhance the quality of the public realm. Improve community transport. Promote healthier communities. To provide recreational opportunities for a wider range of people, especially those without cars

**Table 3.1: Accessibility - Contribution to Meeting the Core Aims and Objectives of the Long-Term Transport Strategy**

## Policy Areas

### Access to Employment and Training

Although transport is rarely the only factor in terms of barriers to employment, it can have a significant impact on the choice of jobs or the ability to take up and retain employment suited to particular skills: the same applies to employment training, vocational work and apprenticeships. This is a key area for accessibility planning and, given the number and distribution of existing and proposed key employment sites across the Tees Valley, is a cross-boundary issue.

In order, as part of the baseline assessment, to examine issues concerning access to employment, training and further education, the Tees Valley authorities arranged a half-day workshop in January 2006. This workshop was attended by a number of partner organisations, including further education colleges, the Learning and Skills Council, Jobcentre Plus, Connexions Tees Valley and local authority representatives responsible for adult learning, training and access to employment.

The workshop identified a number of areas where improvements could be made, and a consensus was reached regarding the barriers and constraints imposed by transport for those seeking training and employment opportunities or trying to access further education. In particular, the following points were agreed:

- A relatively comprehensive bus network provides reasonable access to urban centres, but the limited coverage of the bus network away from key corridors means that access to non-central facilities is restricted;
- The bus generally has a poor image, associated with poor reliability, affordability and journey time;
- Although access to local opportunities may be reasonable, the ability to reach the 'right' or 'best' education and training facilities across the Tees Valley can be difficult;
- Students, and those seeking employment and training, often need additional information and assistance to give them the confidence to use public transport;

- Employment advisors need to have a better understanding of what forms of transport information are available so that they can offer this information and assistance when needed.

A number of these issues will be addressed directly as part of this Strategy.

### Access to Education

Difficulties with transport to schools and colleges can prevent people from participating in learning, or restrict their choices in terms of the 'right' or 'best' type of education provider.

The detailed transport implications of the Education Bill, in terms of access to primary and secondary education, are still emerging. Both the extension of the statutory distance over which school transport should be provided and the introduction of greater choice for parents choosing a school for their children will have accessibility implications.

The Council already provides a wide range of services for school travel, and experiences high demand on some tendered services. Issues relating to access to education already exist, particularly in the west and south of the Borough where competition for places in high-performing schools, and the distribution of these schools relative to the main residential areas, means that many children already travel further than to their nearest school.

The Council will, of course, comply with any changes in the current statutory requirements and work to ensure that, wherever possible, these requirements are exceeded, thereby maintaining the current high level of accessibility to the Borough's schools.

### Access to Healthcare

Access to healthcare – including local access to prescriptions, doctors' surgeries and health centres as well as wider access to hospitals – is a key priority within this Strategy. The location and provision of health services, and how they are accessed, can disproportionately affect whether disadvantaged groups can reach the healthcare that they need, with a corresponding impact in

terms of social inclusion. This is evidenced by the accessibility mapping and audit work undertaken during the preparation of this Strategy.

Significant improvements in terms of access to healthcare have already been implemented as a result of the Council's successful Urban Bus challenge bid in 2003. This bid included the extension of services 1 and 37 to serve the University Hospital of Hartlepool and the James Cook University Hospital, and the upgrade of both services to 'low floor' specification. However, there remains a 'gap' in public transport provision between the University Hospital of North Tees and the University Hospital of Hartlepool, and this will have particular implications for accessibility when the recommendations of the Darzi Review of acute healthcare provision are implemented.

There is already a great deal of understanding between the health and transport sectors within the sub-region. Over the last three years, the multi-agency Tees Health and Transport Partnership has considered the various linkages between the two sectors, including access to health care, improved health and wellbeing through social inclusion and the importance of alternative travel modes in supporting healthy and active lifestyles. This Partnership has been an important catalyst both for joint working and the sharing of information.

The accessibility mapping exercise has shown that there is generally good local accessibility to the nearest hospital. For example, 67% of the Borough's residents are within 30 minutes, and 98% within 60 minutes, of the University Hospital of North Tees when travelling by public transport. However, accessibility to the University Hospital of Hartlepool is poor, whilst the recent withdrawal of the 68 Service has reduced accessibility to the University Hospital of North Tees for those living in Billingham.

A number of public meetings were held across the area as part of the consultation carried out on the recommendations of the Darzi Review. In summary, the main issues raised at these meetings were:

- General concerns about travel and access to hospital (e.g. parking, transport availability, distance and time);
- Access to hospital generally (rather than the implications of the Darzi proposals) and the retention of local hospital services;
- The need for a direct bus between the University Hospital of North Tees and Hartlepool; and

- Car park management (when paying for parking, people expected to be able to park without difficulty).

There is, clearly, potential to encourage both the use of alternative travel modes and car sharing for patient, visitor and staff travel. However, public transport services will only be attractive to potential users if they are relatively direct and quick. Likewise, car sharing will only be an attractive option if real incentives are provided, such as priority parking spaces, reduced cost parking or higher mileage rates.

Travel for hospital staff is dominated by car use. Analysis of staff surveys carried out in the University Hospitals of North Tees and Hartlepool has revealed that approximately half of all the respondents used their cars for business purposes and, of this group, around three quarters of those based at the University Hospital of North Tees and two thirds of those based at the University Hospital of Hartlepool cited the need to travel between the two hospital sites. This both highlights the importance of inter-site travel and lack of an attractive alternative to the car for journeys made between the two sites.

Various issues have emerged from outpatient travel surveys carried out at the two hospitals, including:

- Difficulties associated with travelling between the two hospital sites, and from Billingham to the University Hospital of North Tees, including journey time and interchange issues;
- The Hospital Travel Costs Scheme is poorly publicised and can be difficult to claim;
- Difficulties in promoting public transport and encouraging new services at a time when there are regular cutbacks in the commercial bus network (particularly 'non-core' routes);
- Evidence that improvements to bus services can increase their attractiveness and, hence, patronage levels (e.g. a 14% increase in patronage on Service 37 between the University Hospital of North Tees, Stockton and Middlesbrough town centres and the James Cook University Hospital); and
- An ageing population, the introduction of choice and greater flexibility and cutbacks in the commercial bus network will all contribute to the need for more specialist transport provision.

The Council also supports wider activities and partnerships aimed at improving public transport accessibility for healthcare and maintaining standards overall. As stated previously we are, through the Tees Health and Transport Partnership, pursuing the recommendations of the independent study of the transport implications of the Darzi Review, in particular the provision of a direct public transport link between the University Hospitals of North Tees and Hartlepool.

### **Walking and Cycling**

An important part of delivering accessibility for all is to encourage and support journeys by foot and on cycle where these offer safe and reasonable alternatives to journeys currently made by car.

Our approach to cycling is to create a seamless hierarchy of cycle routes, regularly audited to identify any gaps and the need for cleansing and maintenance. We are developing standards based on cyclists' needs and providing integration with other modes, particularly public transport, wherever possible.

We are promoting awareness of the benefits of cycling, the facilities that are available and encouraging cycle safety training as part of a wider campaign to support cycling for a range of journeys. This includes workplace cycling for Council staff through the provision of parking and changing facilities at workplaces, the incentivisation of cycle use for business purposes and a review of working practices and financial support to improve choices.

Over the lifetime of the Second LTP an expanded monitoring regime will be established to measure the success of the initiatives taken forward in meeting our objectives and to review future implementation and spending programmes.

A similar approach is being taken for walking, through the development of a strategic hierarchy of routes including links to key education, healthcare, transport and community facilities. We are developing an assessment process covering the condition, location and accessibility requirements of pedestrian facilities, focusing on user needs and safe and secure integration with public transport. We are also progressing travel awareness campaigns for leisure and recreation, and through workplace travel planning.

### **Access to District Centres**

A wide variety of services are provided in the main district centres within the Borough, and these will continue to provide a focus for transport provision and interchange. Whilst these centres are relatively well served by public transport, the ongoing shrinkage in the coverage of the bus network means that access from outlying and rural communities is becoming increasingly difficult. For this reason, the focus over the life of the Strategy will be to work in partnership with neighbouring local authorities and the bus operators to address this issue.

### **Access for Rural and Isolated Communities**

The consultation exercise carried out during the preparation of this Strategy has revealed that accessibility to jobs and key services is a major issue for those living in the Borough's rural communities. Access to healthcare is a particular problem.

The contraction of the commercial bus network is a major challenge to the delivery of accessible public transport for rural and isolated communities. One potential solution is the increased use of community transport, coordinated by the Community Transport Unit. The 'Community Lynx' demand-responsive service, designed to improve access to healthcare for those living in rural areas and funded through a successful bid for Rural Bus Challenge funding in 2003, is one example of this approach. The changes to healthcare and education provision, proposed under the Darzi Review and the Education White Paper respectively, will create additional pressures that will need to be addressed during the life of this Strategy.

### **Access for All**

The success of accessibility planning is dependent on consideration of all aspects of the journey, not just the provision of improved public transport services or specific infrastructure. The affordability, quality and choice of travel options for each journey are key, and the degree to which it is possible to access services by different transport modes is of paramount importance.

The Council already invests heavily in measures designed to improve access to the transport network, for example the ongoing upgrade of bus stops across the Borough to low floor specification and financial support for the 'Dial-a-Ride'

service for people unable to use 'conventional' public transport. The Council also contributes to 'Traveline', the regional public transport journey planner, and is preparing a comprehensive local travel guide for distribution during 2006.

The Council has also worked closely with the local bus operators to agree an extension of the National Concessionary Fare Scheme to cover Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar & Cleveland and Stockton-on-Tees Boroughs, with no restriction on time of travel. This agreement, which comes into force on 1 April 2006, will be reviewed after the first year of operation to ensure that it is sustainable in the longer term.

### **Partnership Working**

Key to the delivery of a successful Accessibility Strategy will be an inclusive approach to information gathering and sharing and joint working with partner authorities, transport stakeholders and local communities. To support the sub-regional imperative of regeneration, the Council is working in partnership with its neighbouring local authorities and the major bus operators with the long-term objective of providing seamless travel throughout the Tees Valley.

Specific partnership arrangements are in place to consider access to healthcare across the Tees Valley. The Tees Transport and Health Partnership considers the transport needs of patients, visitors and staff, and helps to deliver funding support for appropriate accessibility improvements.

Through partnership with external service providers, the Council is currently developing a number of customer-focused initiatives bringing services closer to their end users. The aim of the 'Access to Services' Strategy is to give residents and customers easy access to Council services through multi-service contact centres, providing a single point of telephone contact and 24-hour internet access. This will involve creating:

- Multi-service centres in Stockton, Billingham and Thornaby – 'one-stop-shops', providing face-to-face access to Council services and, in time, those of partner organisations;
- A single telephone contact centre serving the whole Borough;
- 24-hour internet access providing a range of interactive, self-service and information services; and

- A network of local access for the wider community that addresses the diverse needs of the Borough's residents.

By bringing together existing customer-facing staff, a single 'Customer Service Unit' will be established to manage and resolve the vast majority of queries at first contact, ensuring that access to the services provided by the Council is as straightforward and 'hassle free' as possible.

To allow residents to access a broad range of services easily, the multi-service centres will also, in the longer term, include first contact points for partner organisations. The Council will work towards a goal of 'joined-up services', providing public services in an integrated and unified environment. The Council will invite organisations such as Tristar Homes, the North Tees Primary Care Trust, Cleveland Police and the Citizens' Advice Bureau to provide a first contact service from its multi-service centres, and will investigate the extension of this arrangement to include Government agencies such as the Department for Works and Pensions and the Inland Revenue.

Our accessibility analysis and supporting evidence base has been used to inform other strategies, notably the [Public Transport Strategy](#), the [Walking Strategy](#) and the [Cycling Strategy](#). These links will be strengthened over the lifetime of the Second LTP to ensure that that accessibility planning becomes a central component of the delivery, monitoring and achievement of targets across a wide range of policy areas.

At present, there is a two-way relationship between accessibility planning and the development of individual strategies. On the one hand, the development of these strategies provides the context for accessibility planning, and we are seeking ways to better understand and present accessibility issues within them: for example, we are keen to investigate the links between theoretical accessibility (as quantified by Accession) and actual travel behaviour. At the same time, accessibility planning is being used to shape other strategies and provide the justification for the action plans and targets set within them.

Examples of this approach include the criteria adopted by the Council in 2002 to prioritise supported bus services and the development of the 'Community Lynx' demand-responsive bus service described earlier in this Chapter. A similar approach has been adopted for the proposal to submit a Major Scheme

Business Case for enhancements to the Tees Valley bus network based on an evidenced hierarchy of ‘super core’, ‘core’ and ‘secondary’ route networks.

This process will continue to develop over the lifetime of the Strategy. We will report the progress that we make towards the ‘mainstreaming’ of accessibility planning as part of the wider delivery across the Council’s service delivery through the LTP reporting process.

**The Community Strategy – Accessibility: the Wider Vision for Stockton-on-Tees**

The Council is committed to the **Stockton Middlesbrough Initiative** (SMI), an ambitious regeneration project that will transform the heart of the Tees Valley. Accessibility will be a pre-requisite to the successful realisation of this project and the delivery of the overall vision for the Borough:

***‘Stockton-on-Tees at the heart of a vibrant Tees Valley City Region, which is experiencing economic renaissance’;***

***‘An enhanced quality of place, including renewed town centres and improved local neighbourhoods’;*** and

***‘Enhanced well-being and achievement for local people’.***

Stockton Renaissance will work to deliver this vision by focusing on the five key improvement themes of the Community Strategy. **Figure 3.1** highlights the accessibility issues associated with each of these themes:

Improvement Theme	Accessibility Issues
<b>Economic Regeneration &amp; Transport</b>	Improve connectivity within and external to the city ‘core’ by all forms of transport.
<b>Liveability</b> (Including Environment, Housing & Civic Renewal)	Improve quality of life through equal opportunities for all to access key services and facilities.
<b>Community Safety</b>	Provide a safe environment for the community to access services irrespective of preferred transport mode.
<b>Health</b>	Develop and maintain good transport links to hospitals and community healthcare services.
<b>Children and Young People</b>	Ensure accessibility issues are considered during the development of the agenda for rationalising education establishments.

**Figure 3.1: Accessibility Issues Associated with the Five Key Improvement Themes of the Stockton-on-Tees Community Strategy, 2005-08**

## Chapter 4: Action Plan

The Council's **Five-Year Accessibility Action Plan** is illustrated in [Table 4.1](#). The Action Plan sets out the key objectives of the Second LTP, the specific local issues identified through consultation, the policy areas they relate to and the actions proposed over the lifetime of the Strategy.

Although we have developed an indicative programme for this Action Plan, it is important to note that the delivery of this Strategy is closely linked to the delivery of the other LTP strategies. Therefore, whilst the actions proposed for the early years of the Action Plan can be programmed with reasonable accuracy at this stage, it is more difficult to finalise the timescale for longer-term

interventions. For this reason, the Action Plan will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis to take into account progress towards targets and future changes in other policy areas.

The Action Plan has been developed in partnership with key stakeholders including Stockton Renaissance, the Local Strategic Partnership for the Borough, and is based on the evidence detailed in [Chapter 2](#) and the need to deliver the wider Vision for the Borough as set out in the Second LTP.

Objective	Issue	Policy Area	Action	Timescale				
				2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Improved network coverage	A number of areas – for example High Grange, The Clarences and Thorpe Thewles – are poorly served by bus, and access to the University Hospital of North Tees is poor.	Access to healthcare	The Council will, in partnership with neighbouring local authorities, prepare a bid to central government for a major public transport scheme covering the whole of the Tees Valley area.					
	A number of areas – for example the Tilery and Wrensfield Estates – are poorly served by bus, and access to the University Hospital of North Tees is poor from Fairfield and Hartburn.	Access to healthcare						
	A number of areas – for example Teesdale and Ingleby Barwick – are poorly served by bus, and access to Teesside Park from Thornaby is poor.	Access to food retail and employment						
	A number of areas – for example Kirkclevington and parts of Yarm – are poorly served by bus, access by bus to local hospitals is poor, and there is a lack of high quality public transport interchange facilities across the Borough.	Access to employment and healthcare						

Objective	Issue	Policy Area	Action	Timescale				
				2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Improved network coverage (cont'd.)	The recommendations of the Tees Health Services Review may result in poorer access to healthcare for local residents.	Access to healthcare	The Council will work in partnership with the Health Service to address any negative transport impacts arising from the Review.					
	Poor access to further education facilities – in particular Stockton Riverside College – can discourage potential students from enrolling.	Access to education	The Council will continue to fund and promote the 'Pathfinder' bus pass for 16-19 year olds in full or part-time education.					
	The lack of school places within Ingleby Barwick means that many children have to travel to schools in neighbouring towns and villages. The impact of greater parental choice and a change in the statutory distance thresholds for school transport may increase or extend school journeys.	Access to education	The Council will address this issue through the Accessibility Strategy, as part of the second Local Transport Plan. We will develop a delivery plan to ensure that future statutory school transport provision meets or exceeds the new requirements, building on the current, successful management of school services.					
	More subsidies are needed to improve bus services in outlying areas.	Access from rural areas	The Council will consider the possibility of extending its 'Community Lynx' demand-responsive bus service into such areas.					
Integrated transport links	Disabled people have difficulty accessing Stockton High Street, where important interchange facilities and local services are located.	Access to district centres	The Council will seek to improve disabled access to the High Street through the ongoing Stockton Town Centre Regeneration Study.					
	Concerns regarding the way in which the implementation of dropped kerbs and low floor bus stops is prioritised.	Access for all	The Council will consult local disability groups prior to determining priorities in each case.					
	There is a lack of high quality public transport interchange facilities across the Borough.	Access to district centres	The Council will continue to work with bus and rail operators to implement new and improved interchange facilities throughout the Borough.					

Objective	Issue	Policy Area	Action	Timescale				
				2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Better information	Access to Stockton town centre from Thornaby Station should be better publicised.	Access to district centres	The Council will work with the local train operating companies – TransPennine Express and Northern Rail – to address this issue.					
	The availability of clear and comprehensive information about public transport services and connections is limited.	Access for all	The Council will continue to work with the bus and rail operators to deliver improved travel information and seek ways to make it more easily accessible to existing and potential users.					
Increased reliability of transport systems	Delays on Yarm High Street make it difficult to run bus services to time and may affect the future viability of a number of routes. 'Park and Ride' should be introduced, with shuttle buses providing links to nearby rail stations.	Access for all, access to district centres	The Council will consider the introduction of 'Park and Ride' during the forthcoming consultation on the recommendations of the Yarm Parking Study, which addresses the impact of parking on congestion in the High Street.					
Reduce the cost of travel	Some hospital patients are unable to attend appointments because they cannot afford the bus fare.	Access to healthcare	The Council will work with the Health Service to address this issue.					
Encourage walking and cycling	There are a number of gaps in the local cycle network.	Access for all, walking and cycling	The Council will revise its Cycling Strategy to ensure that new routes are introduced where required.					
	The 2004 MORI Poll indicates falling levels of satisfaction with footway condition.	Access for all, walking and cycling	The Council will draw up a programme of footway improvements based on the results of a specially commissioned citizens' survey.					
	There are a number of gaps in the local cycle route network. A cycle route should be provided between Ingleby Barwick, Eaglescliffe and Yarm.	Access for all, walking and cycling	The Council will consider introducing additional cycle routes in line with its Cycling Strategy, including upgrading the existing footpath between Queen Elizabeth Way and Preston Lane to allow use by cyclists. The viability of a new bridge across the River Tees will also be considered.					
	There is no direct footway or cycleway link between Ingleby Barwick and Yarm to cater for pupils attending Conyers School.	Access for all, walking and cycling	The Council will investigate the provision of a footpath/cycleway link between Ingleby Barwick and Yarm.					

Table 4.1: Accessibility Action Plan, 2006/07 to 2010/11

## Outcomes

The key outcomes that we will seek to influence through our interventions relating to accessibility are:

- Greater choice and availability of transport modes;
- A more sustainable transport network, with improved interchange between modes;
- Increased opportunities to use local facilities;
- Enhanced social inclusion;
- Increased economic prosperity;
- Increased public transport patronage;
- Reduced mode share of the private car;
- Enhanced community health;
- Better access to education, employment, health, community and leisure facilities by a range of sustainable transport modes;
- Improved access to better public transport information;
- Opportunities for more walking and cycling trips;
- Enhanced personal safety; and
- Community better informed about transport choices.

## Priorities for Action and Interventions

The identification of issues and actions against the objectives of the Second LTP has allowed interventions within each of the key policy areas of the Accessibility Strategy to be prioritised. In this way, we have developed specific Action Plans covering the following policy areas:

- Access to Healthcare;
- Access to Education;
- Access to Employment; and
- Access for Rural Areas.

These Action Plans are fully consistent with the action plans adopted within the other strategies supporting the Second LTP, including the [Public Transport, Walking and Cycling Strategies](#).

The **Action Plan for Access to Healthcare** focuses on addressing existing 'gaps' in provision identified by the accessibility audit and consultation exercise, in particular the lack of a direct public transport link between the University Hospital of North Tees and the University Hospital of Hartlepool. We are also looking to provide better interchange in Stockton town centre, improved quality and availability of public transport information and greater use of community transport to support access from rural areas.

We are also auditing public transport access to local healthcare facilities. The Action Plan covers access to all of the hospitals covered by the Darzi Review as part of a co-ordinated approach to improve access to healthcare.

The **Action Plan for Access to Education** focuses on auditing the impacts of the proposed change in statutory requirements for school transport and mapping the effects of greater parental choice on the distribution of trips to and from educational facilities by public transport, walking and cycling. The Action Plan also covers the better integration of bus services providing access to further education establishments across the Tees Valley, and the improved quality and availability of public transport information.

The **Action Plan for Access to Employment** includes the delivery of information and support for those advising job seekers, to help ensure travel is not a barrier to taking up employment opportunities and training. We will work with our Tees Valley partners to stem the decline in the coverage and use of the bus network by supporting the preparation of a major scheme bid based on the development of 'core' and 'secondary' networks. We will also improve the delivery of interchange in the main district centres, including access to stops and facilities and the provision of public transport information.

The **Action Plan for Access for Rural Areas** is based on the development of existing services and facilities. We will continue to provide community and demand-responsive transport for our rural and isolated communities, and we will improve the local delivery of Council services through our 'Access to Services' Strategy.

[Table 4.2](#) details the Outcomes and Interventions identified under the Accessibility theme of the Transport Shared Priority, together with their contribution to the indicators adopted within the Second LTP.

Outcome	Intervention	Contribution to LTP Indicators
<p><b>Sub-Regional Accessibility</b></p> <p>There is a need to improve accessibility to the Tees Valley 'gateways' of Durham Tees Valley Airport and Darlington rail station.</p>	<p>We will support the development of an effective Tees Valley public transport system linking the main centres of population and sub-regional 'gateways'. Although such a scheme will be taken forward at a sub-regional level, there will need to be integration across all of the elements of the public transport hierarchy, and we will refine the local bus network accordingly to feed into key sub-regional nodes.</p> <p>Examples of such sub-regional nodes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The five main town centres (including Stockton);</li> <li>• Darlington, Middlesbrough and Thornaby railway stations;</li> <li>• Durham Tees Valley Airport; and</li> <li>• The University Hospital of North Tees.</li> </ul>	<p><b>BVPI 102, BVPI 104, LTP1, LTP2, LTP5, LTP6, LTP7, SUP2, SUP7, SUP10, SUP11 and SUP12.</b></p>
<p><b>Bus Network</b></p> <p>To enhance accessibility across the Borough, there is a need to address the impact of the ongoing shrinkage of the bus network due to commercial pressures associated with rising costs and declining patronage. In particular, accessibility to the Borough's rural communities needs to be improved, whilst current interchange facilities have been identified as a barrier to using the public transport network.</p> <p>There is also a need to improve the physical accessibility of the bus network.</p>	<p>We will, in partnership with the bus operators and neighbouring Authorities in the Tees Valley, and subject to the availability of funding, implement the recommendations of the Tees Valley Bus Network Review across the Borough to develop a public transport hierarchy serving both 'core' commuter routes and our rural communities. This strategy will allow higher return commercial services to support less profitable secondary services, thus addressing the issues of rising cost and declining patronage and tackling social exclusion.</p> <p>The revision of services to provide better, more sustainable coverage will be accompanied by the continued roll-out of low floor buses and associated infrastructure, bus priority at traffic signal controlled junctions and the reallocation of roadspace in favour of more sustainable transport modes, targeted in the first instance on the core corridors to improve reliability and stimulate passenger growth in order to support other services across the network. This will also include an improvement of the bus stop environment on core routes and at key interchanges to improve physical accessibility.</p> <p>Locations where bus priority measures will be introduced include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A1130 Bridge Road/Victoria Bridge/Mandale Road, following the full opening of the A66/South Stockton Link Interchange; and</li> <li>• All signal-controlled junctions on identified 'core' and 'super core' routes.</li> </ul> <p>Continued investment will be provided in better interchange facilities across the Borough, focusing on key nodes and the development of a new sub-regional public transport network. In particular, the current regeneration of Billingham, Stockton and Thornaby town centres provides an ideal opportunity for the existing interchange facilities in all three to be upgraded to meet existing and future needs.</p>	<p><b>BVPI 102, BVPI 104, LTP1, LTP2, LTP5, LTP6, LTP7, SUP2, SUP7, SUP10, SUP11 and SUP12.</b></p>
<p><b>Personal Safety</b></p> <p>Personal safety concerns have been highlighted as a major barrier to the increased use of public transport, particularly by those living in the Borough's Priority Neighbourhoods.</p>	<p>We will continue to invest in providing CCTV on buses, in bus stops and at interchanges under the aegis of the Stockton-on-Tees Bus Quality Partnership.</p>	<p><b>BVPI 102 and BVPI 104.</b></p>

Outcome	Intervention	Contribution to LTP Indicators
<p><b>Travel Information</b></p> <p>The evidence collated suggests that public transport travel information is not readily available. There is also an identified need to improve the marketing of sustainable alternatives to the private car.</p>	<p>The Tees Valley Real Time Bus Passenger Information Scheme will be implemented over the period covered by the Second LTP. The first 'on-street' displays within the Borough are due to come online early in 2006/07.</p> <p>The Council is also preparing a comprehensive local travel guide for distribution during 2006 and will continue to fund and promote both Traveline North East and the national travel information portal, Transport Direct.</p> <p>Further ticketing, information and marketing initiatives will be developed in partnership with other Tees Valley Authorities and the local bus operators. Some of the initiatives will be targeted with the roll-out of infrastructure improvements and network enhancements in order to maximise return from investment and passenger growth.</p> <p>The Council will work closely with its partner Authorities to encourage and promote the use of more sustainable alternatives to the private car, through initiatives such as the Tees Valley Travel Awareness Campaign and the development of the <a href="http://www.doyoureallyneedit.com">www.doyoureallyneedit.com</a>, <a href="http://www.doitbycycle.com">www.doitbycycle.com</a> and <a href="http://www.2plustravel.com">www.2plustravel.com</a> sustainable transport, cycling and car sharing websites.</p>	<p><b>BVPI 102, BVPI 104, LTP1, LTP2, LTP6, LTP7, SUP2, SUP11 and SUP12.</b></p>
<p><b>Travel Costs</b></p> <p>Consultees expressed concern that there is no provision within the National Free Concessionary Fare Scheme for cross-boundary journeys.</p>	<p>The Council has worked closely with the local bus operators to agree an extension of the National Concessionary Fare Scheme to cover Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar &amp; Cleveland and Stockton-on-Tees Boroughs, with no restriction on time of travel. This agreement, which comes into force on 1 April 2006, will be reviewed after the first year of operation to ensure that it is sustainable in the longer term.</p>	<p><b>BVPI 102 and BVPI 104.</b></p>
<p><b>Walking and Cycling</b></p> <p>We need to continue to encourage walking and cycling as attractive alternatives to the car for shorter distance journeys within the Borough. This will involve action at a number of different levels.</p>	<p>The Council's Highways Service Improvement Group (SIG) has commissioned a citizen survey, with a view to drawing up a programme of targeted improvements designed to improve customer satisfaction of footway condition. The results of this survey are currently being analysed, and will be incorporated into future work programmes. Given the desire to improve accessibility to the transport network, these improvements will concentrate on common desire lines to and from bus stops.</p> <p>Additional walking routes and pedestrian crossing facilities will be developed, based on locally identified needs. Similarly, we will continue to develop a comprehensive network of on and off-road cycle routes that feed into the National Cycle Network.</p> <p>Locations where we will develop such links include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stockton, joining the existing cycle routes serving the town centre;</li> <li>• Between Hartburn, Elton, Long Newton and the Borough Boundary, as part of National Route 14 between Stockton and Darlington town centres; and</li> </ul> <p>In the vicinity of schools and other educational establishments across the Borough.</p>	<p><b>BVPI 187, LTP2, LTP3, LTP4, LTP6, LTP7, SUP5, SUP6, SUP8 and SUP9.</b></p>

Outcome	Intervention	Contribution to LTP Indicators
<p><b>Taxis</b></p> <p>Taxis will need to be fully integrated into the local network in order to meet the aims and objectives of our Long-Term Transport Strategy as an important part of the transport hierarchy.</p>	<p>The Council is working with local taxi operators under the aegis of the Stockton-on-Tees Taxi Quality Partnership to address the particular issue of disabled access, possibly through some form of incentive scheme.</p>	<p><b>LTP1, LTP2, LTP6, LTP7 and SUP3.</b></p>
<p><b>Access to Other Services</b></p> <p>Alongside our Access to Services Strategy, high quality access to a range of facilities is needed. The Council's Adult Strategy will not be effective unless convenient access to a range of services can be provided.</p> <p>We need to ensure that the emerging Health Authority management proposals do not have a negative impact upon access to health care facilities across the Borough.</p> <p>Parental choice for primary education may result in longer journeys to and from school, and we need to take steps to ensure that longer distance journeys by private car are minimised.</p> <p>Poor access to further education can be a disincentive to uptake. We must ensure that longer term planning is aligned with proposals for changes to higher education provision.</p>	<p>In terms of healthcare provision, the Council will continue to support the Tees Health and Transport Partnership, which includes the Acute and Primary Healthcare Trusts and the Strategic Health Authority, in order to address any negative impacts on accessibility arising from the Tees Acute Health Services Review. The Partnership has played an active role in the development of the Accessibility Strategy, and so awareness has already been heightened as to the key role that accessibility planning needs to play in the testing of any future options.</p> <p>In relation to other services, the Council will provide an appropriate training mechanism to allow care navigators to develop 'Personal Accessibility Plans' as part of adult care packages. Similarly, the Council's Extended Management Team will ensure that accessibility, safety and school travel planning form part of emerging proposals for changes to primary and secondary school provision within the Borough.</p> <p>The Council will continue to fund and promote the 'Pathfinder' scheme, which offers half fare bus travel across the Tees Valley for all 16-19 year olds resident within the Borough.</p>	<p><b>BVPI 102, BVPI 104, LTP1, LTP2, LTP6, LTP7, and SUP3.</b></p>

**Table 4.2: Priority Outcomes, Interventions and Indicators relating to the Accessibility Strategy, 2006/07 to 2010/11**

### Other Interventions

Accessibility will also be addressed as a key issue within the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF) to ensure access to new developments by public transport, walking and cycling is integral to the planning process. The

LDF process will also provide an opportunity to address the current poor accessibility to food retail outlets in the Borough.

Workplace Travel Plans will continue to be a standard requirement to support any major planning application.

These interventions will contribute towards meeting the targets set for LTP indicators **BVPI 102**, **BVPI 104**, **LTP1**, **LTP2**, **LTP3**, **LTP6**, **LTP7**, **SUP10**, **SUP11** and **SUP12**.

[Figure 4.1](#) illustrates the relationship between the **Aims**, **Objectives**, **Indicators and Interventions** set within the Strategy.

### **Links to Other Shared Priorities**

Improving accessibility to key services will make a valuable contribution to national objectives and targets in other Shared Priority areas, including:

- Improving health and social care outcomes including, by 2010, reducing the gap in infant mortality across social groups and raising life expectancy in the most disadvantaged areas faster than elsewhere;
- Improving attendance and attainment in education;
- Promoting work as the best form of welfare for people of working age;
- Raising the levels of social inclusion, neighbourhood renewal and regional prosperity;
- Enhancing opportunity and tackling social exclusion in rural areas, and improving access to countryside leisure and exercise opportunities; and
- Increasing participation in culture and sport.

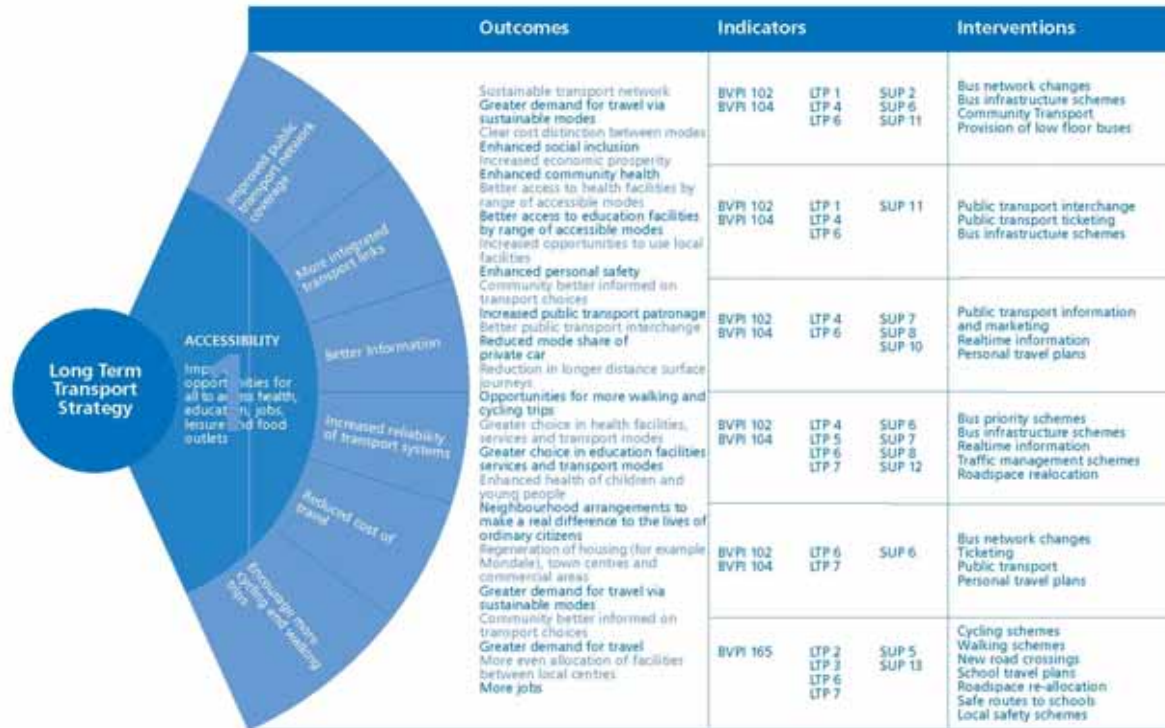


Figure 5.1: Accessibility Strategy – Relationship between Aims, Objectives, Indicators and Interventions

## Chapter 5: Indicators, Targets and Trajectories

Accessibility Planning is a new requirement for the Second LTP, and the detail of the Accessibility Strategy is still emerging. It will be both a proactive and a reactive Strategy, requiring adjustment and development in light of the progress made towards targets and as policies impact on transport supply and demand.

The Council recognises the need to establish a robust but flexible monitoring regime to ensure that progress towards the aims and objectives set out in the Strategy can be accurately assessed. Our target for the mandatory LTP indicator set by the DfT is described in more detail below, together with the monitoring regime that we have put in place.

### LTP Accessibility Target

#### **Mandatory Indicator LTP 1: Accessibility to Healthcare and Education Facilities**

Access to healthcare and educational facilities has been highlighted as a major issue throughout this Strategy. We have, accordingly, based our target setting on this key indicator.

Work to define the baseline and targets for this indicator has been undertaken as an integral part of the development of this Strategy. Whilst the mapping exercise and accessibility audit work carried out to date indicates that, in general, there is good baseline accessibility to hospital and education facilities throughout the Borough, changes to both sectors are likely over the lifetime of this Strategy due to the Darzi Review of acute healthcare provision, the proposed requirements for statutory education transport provision set out in the Government's Education White Paper *'Higher Standards, Better Schools for All'* and as a result of the changing demographic profile discussed in the Second LTP.

For this reason, our targets are to maintain the percentage of the Borough's population within the defined time parameters of healthcare and education facilities at their respective baseline levels throughout the lifetime of the Second LTP.

Due to the long-term decline in the coverage of the bus network and the corresponding fall in bus patronage over recent years, these targets are challenging. We will work in partnership with our partners in the health and transport sectors to reverse the current trends by delivering improvements to the integration of bus services, interchange opportunities and the provision of travel information, both within the Borough and across the sub-region as a whole.

The Council's wider 'Access to Services Strategy' was discussed in [Chapter 3](#). As the Council's vision for customer service is to provide easy access to services through multi-service contact centres, we have adopted a secondary target – to set up such multi-service centres in Stockton, Billingham and Thornaby by 2011 – in recognition of this wider corporate agenda.

### **Monitoring Progress and Reviewing Targets**

In addition to meeting the requirements of the LTP reporting process, we propose to monitor and report progress towards the targets set in this Strategy on an annual basis, and review the priorities within the Strategy at least every two years in partnership with our key stakeholders. This will ensure that available resources are used as effectively as possible and allow any future changes – for example those affecting the provision of healthcare and education transport – to be taken into account.