

# Northumberland Line Hospital Level Crossing consultation response analysis

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# Introduction

The following document provides a summary of the responses to the public consultation on the proposed closure of Hospital Level Crossing. The crossing needs to close on safety grounds due to the introduction of faster and more frequent passenger trains.

The consultation was undertaken jointly by Northumberland County Council and Network Rail. It began on Tuesday 19 April 2022 and concluded at 11:59pm on Tuesday 31 May 2022. Members of the public and stakeholders were asked to submit their comments online at **[nland.cc/HXL](https://nland.cc/HXL)**, or via email or post.

During this period a total of 231 responses were received. This consisted of 194 online forms, 36 hard copy forms and 1 email.

This document contains a breakdown of stakeholder and community responses to the consultation, including common themes identified in responses. It also provides a summary of types of respondent, including their stated use of the crossing and demographic data.

Please see **Appendix A** for a copy of the consultation response form.

# Stakeholder feedback

Of the respondents to the consultation, two were identified as being key stakeholders for the project, in terms of their local land interests or positions in the local community. The responses from these stakeholders are summarised in the table below.

**Table 1: Summary of feedback received from local stakeholders**

Stakeholder	Key theme/s	Feedback
<b>Ashington Town Council</b>	Supports extinguishment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health and safety</li> <li>• Anti-social behaviour</li> <li>• Accessibility</li> </ul>	Supports extinguishment as the existing crossing would be unsafe once the new Northumberland Line is open. A bridge would have access issues and an underpass is negatively associated with anti-social behaviour.
<b>Bernicia Homes</b>	Supports extinguishment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anti-social behaviour</li> <li>• Health and safety</li> <li>• Impact on local residents</li> <li>• Privacy</li> <li>• Existing alternatives are sufficient</li> </ul>	<p>Supports extinguishment due to anti-social behaviour and the health and safety risk associated with the intensification of the use of the railway.</p> <p>Believe that the distances that would need to be travelled to cross the railway elsewhere using existing infrastructure are acceptable. Note that using existing infrastructure will increase trade for businesses on Station Road.</p> <p>An underpass would cause significant disturbance to local residents due to anti-social behaviour and a bridge would be visually intrusive for the neighbourhood due to the size of the structure.</p>

# Demographics

The 'About you' section of the response form was used to understand the audience reached by the consultation. All statistics and figures in this section are based on the responses that answered the relevant questions on the consultation response form.

## Responses on behalf of a business or organisation

222 consultation responses were submitted on behalf of individuals and 3 were submitted on behalf of an organisation or business. 6 respondents did not answer this question. See **Appendix B** for a list of the organisations and businesses responses were submitted on behalf of.

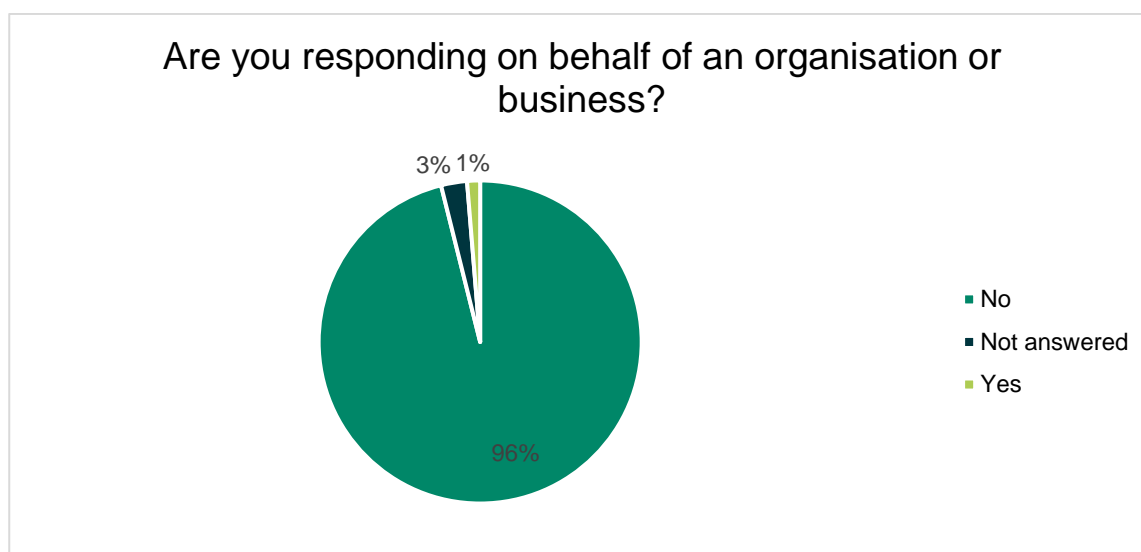


Figure 1: Graph showing the proportion of people responding on behalf of an organisation or business

## Respondent location

**Figures 2 and 3** show the area covered by those who responded to the consultation, based on the postcode data supplied through the response form<sup>1</sup>. The colour of the points on the map indicate the level of support those respondents showed for extinguishment of the crossing with no replacement.

The majority of postcodes supplied were within Ashington; however, some were further away, in areas including Newcastle upon Tyne, East Hartford, Loansdean and Hadston.

It can be seen that the majority of respondents felt 'strongly' about the proposals, both in support and opposition, with fewer either 'slightly' supporting or opposing, or being neutral. There is a slight correlation between location and support for extinguishment, with a cluster of 'strong support' responses in the immediate vicinity of the crossing. However, outside of this, there is no clear correlation between location and support for or opposition to extinguishment, with both from those who live in the immediate area around the crossing. Likewise, in the wider Ashington area there is a mix of support and opposition throughout, with no clear spatial pattern.

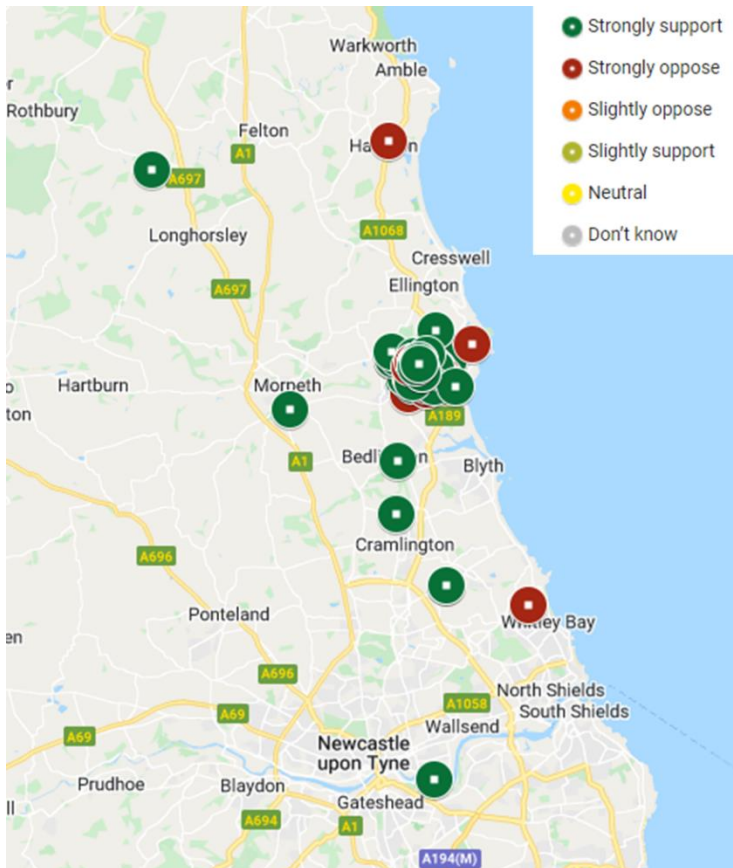


Figure 2: Map showing all respondent locations and level of support/opposition for extinguishment

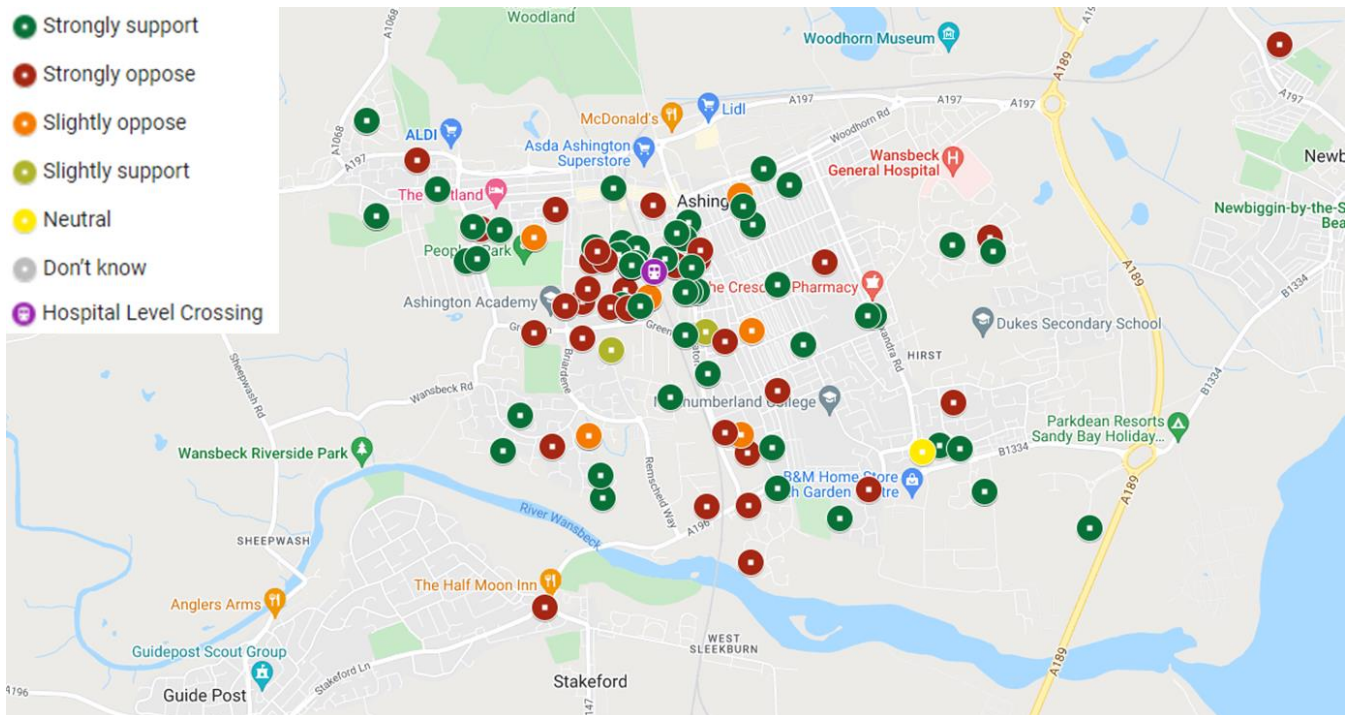


Figure 3: Map showing respondent locations and their level of support/opposition for extinguishment, within a 4km radius of the Hospital Level Crossing

**Figure 4** shows the area covered by those who attended the consultation event at YMCA Northumberland on Tuesday 17 May 2022, based on the postcodes provided whilst signing into the event<sup>1</sup>. The yellow icon represents the location of the level crossing.



**Figure 4: Map showing the postcodes provided by respondents who attended the consultation event on Tuesday 17 May 2022**

## Respondent age

**Figure 5** shows the age breakdown of respondents to the consultation. It can be seen that the majority of respondents are aged 35-44 years, with 46 people (20%) being part of this age group. This is closely followed by 55-64 years old, with 44 responses (19%), and 45-54 years old, with 42 responses (18%). 25-34 years old and 65-74 years old also had relatively high amounts of responses, with 27 (12%) and 34 (15%) respectively. All other age groups had low numbers of responses. Nine (4%) respondents did not answer this question and four (2%) stated that they did not want to disclose this information.

<sup>1</sup> Please note that not all attendees or respondents supplied a postcode

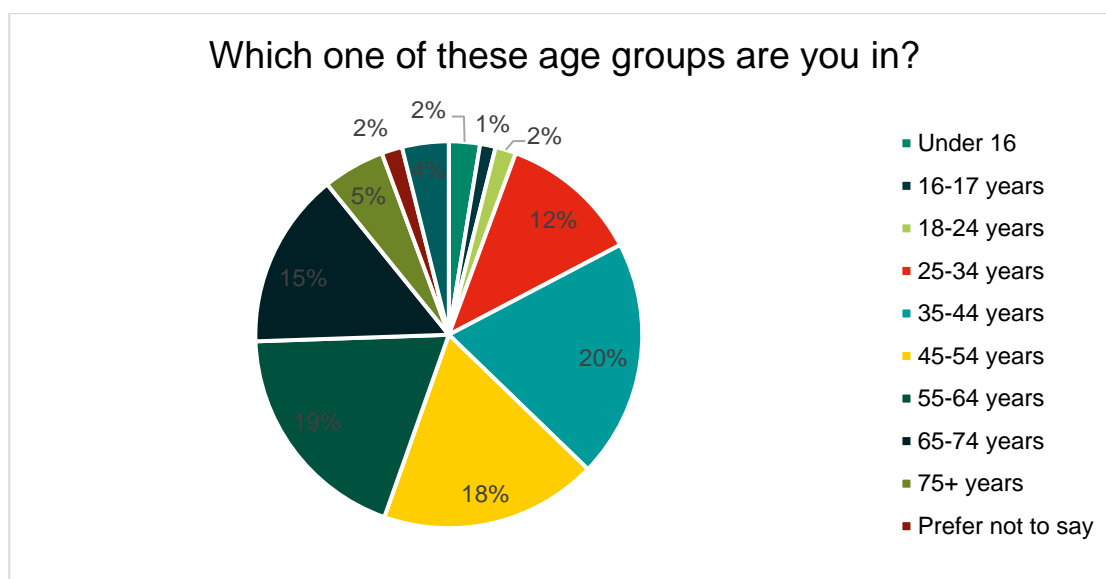


Figure 5: Graph showing the age groups of respondents

## Respondent gender

**Figure 6** shows the gender breakdown of respondents to the consultation. It can be seen that a slight majority of respondents identified as a woman 121 (52%), with 96 (42%) identifying as a man. 8 (3%) respondents either did not answer the question whilst 6 (3%) preferred to not disclose this information. No respondents stated that they prefer to identify using a different term.

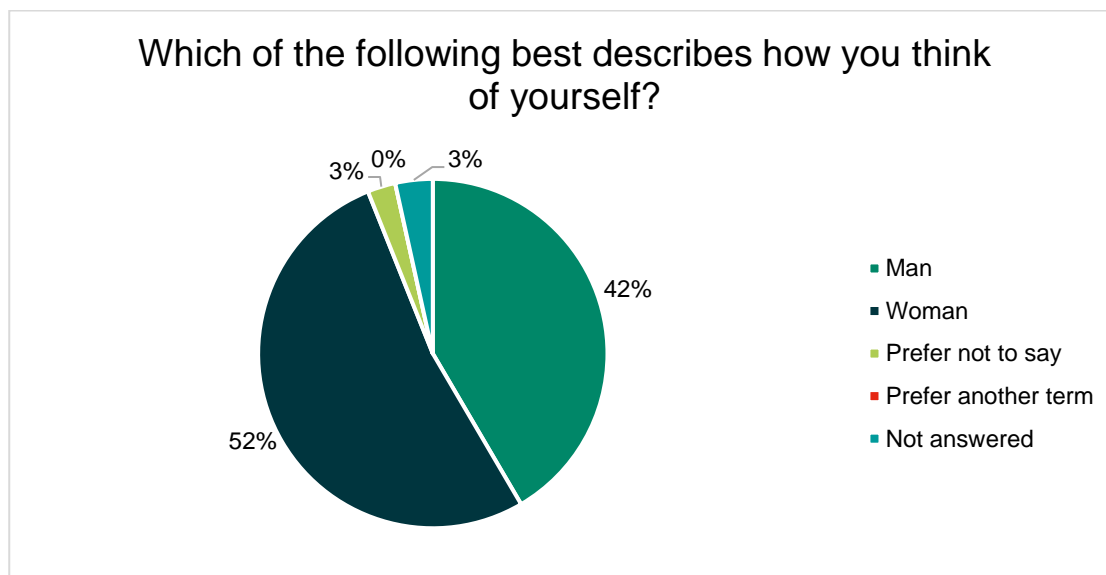
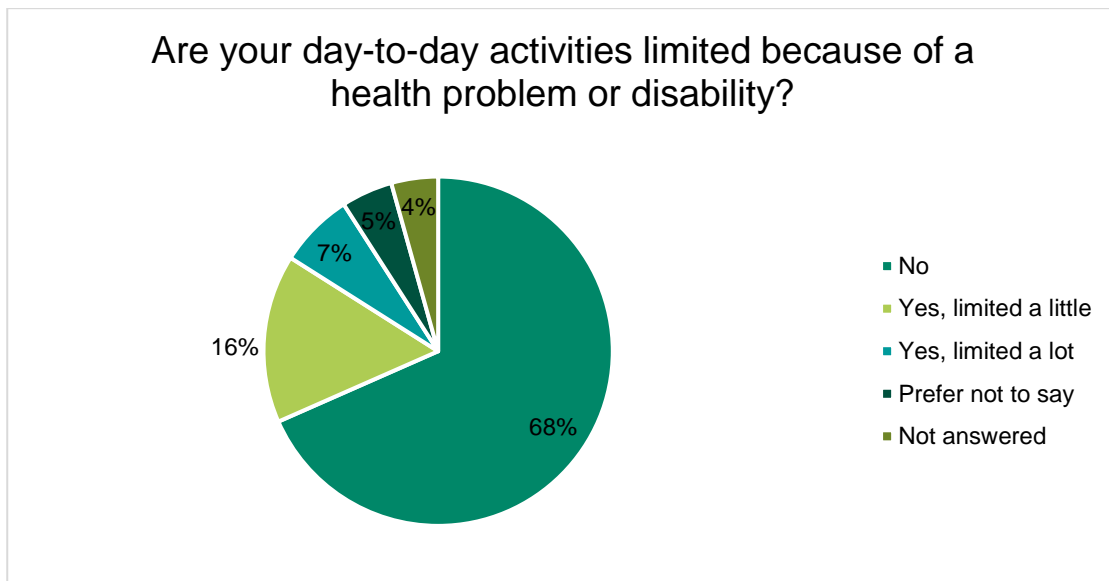


Figure 6: Graph showing the gender identity of respondents

## Respondent disability

**Figure 7** shows that 16 (7%) respondents stated that their day-to-day activities are limited a lot because of a health problem or disability. 36 (16%) respondents stated they are limited a little, whilst 158 (68%) stated they are not limited and 11 (5%) preferred not to say. 10 (4%) respondents did not answer this question.

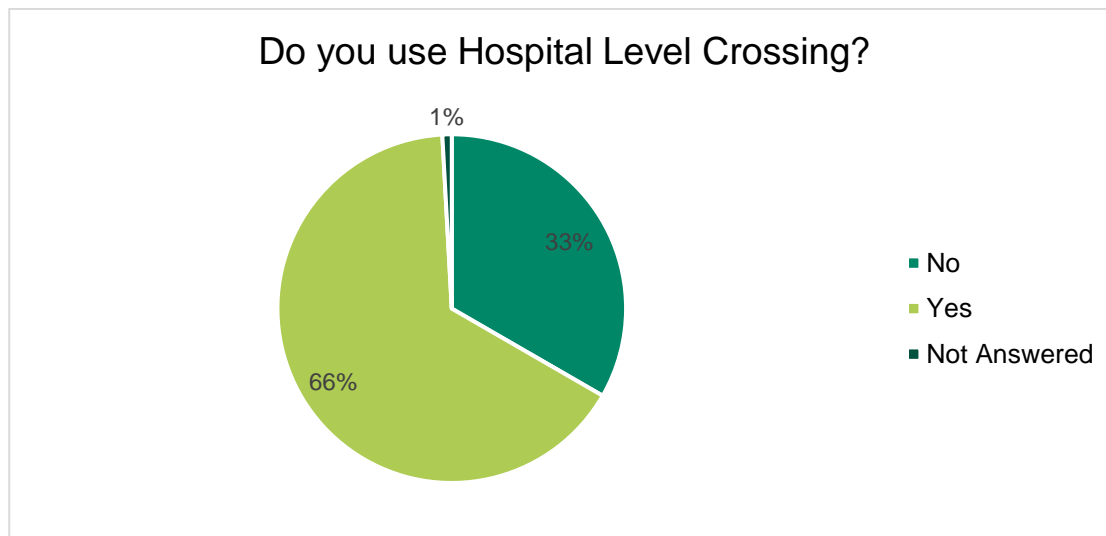


**Figure 7: Graph showing whether respondents believe their day-to-day activities are limited because of a health problem or disability**

## Use of the crossing

The 'Use of the crossing' section of the response form was used to understand the respondents' relationship to the proposals, in particular whether they used Hospital Level Crossing and, if so, how. All statistics and figures in this section are based on the responses that answered the relevant questions on the consultation response form.

As shown in **Figure 8**, of the 231 submissions received 152 (66%) stated that they do use Hospital Level Crossing, whilst 77 (33%) stated that they do not. Two (1%) respondents did not answer the question. Whilst some respondents who stated that they don't use the crossing live within the residential areas directly by the crossing, the majority were located further out in the wider area of Ashington.



**Figure 8:** Graph showing the proportion of respondents who use the Hospital Level Crossing

### Frequency of use

**Figure 9** shows how frequently respondents use Hospital Level Crossing. It can be seen that the largest proportion of respondents 75 (32%) did not answer this question, potentially showing that they do not use Hospital Level Crossing (as these respondents were instructed to skip this question).

The largest proportion of those who did answer stated that they 'occasionally' or 'very rarely' use Hospital Level Crossing, with 36 (16%) and 37 (16%) choosing these options, respectively. This is followed by 33 (14%) choosing 'once or twice a week' and 32 (14%) choosing 'four or five times a week'. 18 respondents (8%) stated that they use the crossing 'more than once a day'.

If you use Hospital Level Crossing, how frequently do you use it on average?

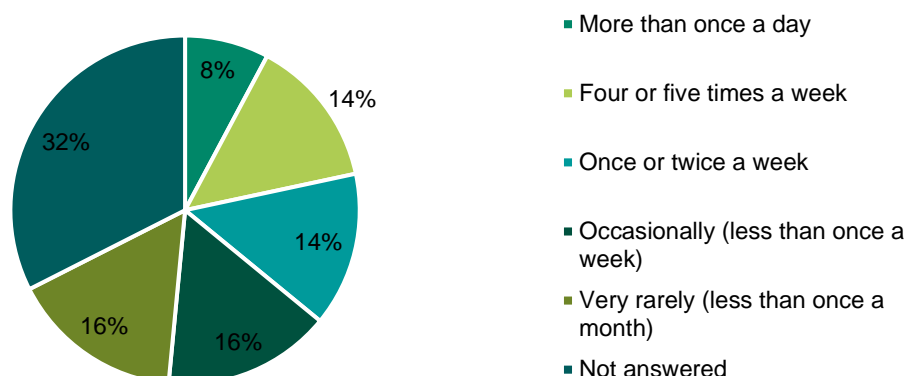


Figure 9: Graph showing how frequently respondents use Hospital Level Crossing

### Types of journey

Figure 10 shows the types of journeys that respondents are making whilst using Hospital Level Crossing. It can be seen that the most common type of journey is leisure (e.g. going for walks), followed by visiting friends and family.

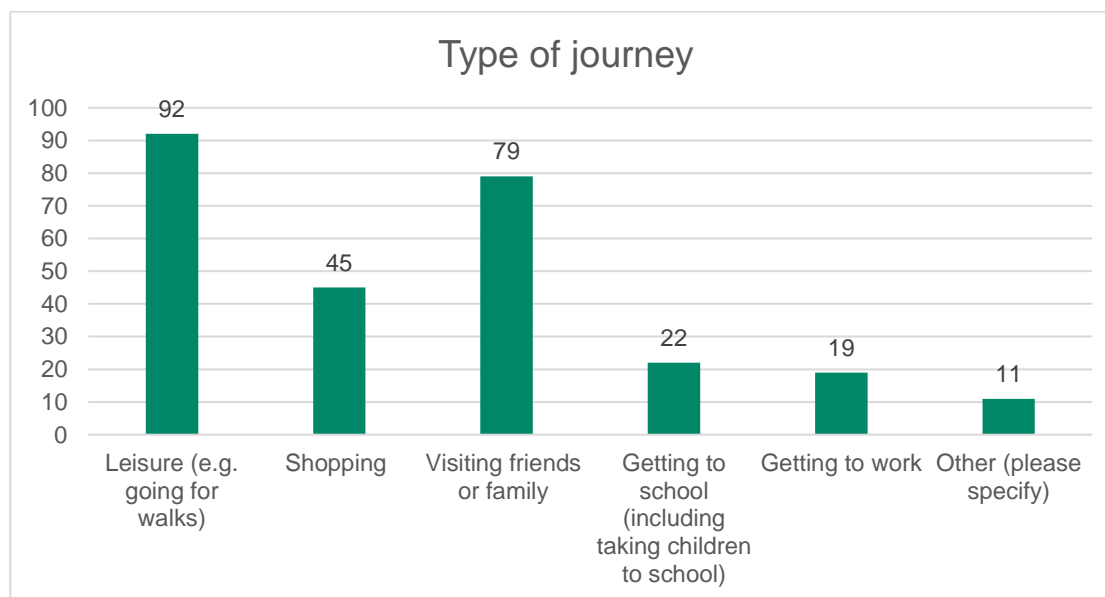


Figure 10: Graph showing the types of journeys made by respondents across Hospital Level Crossing

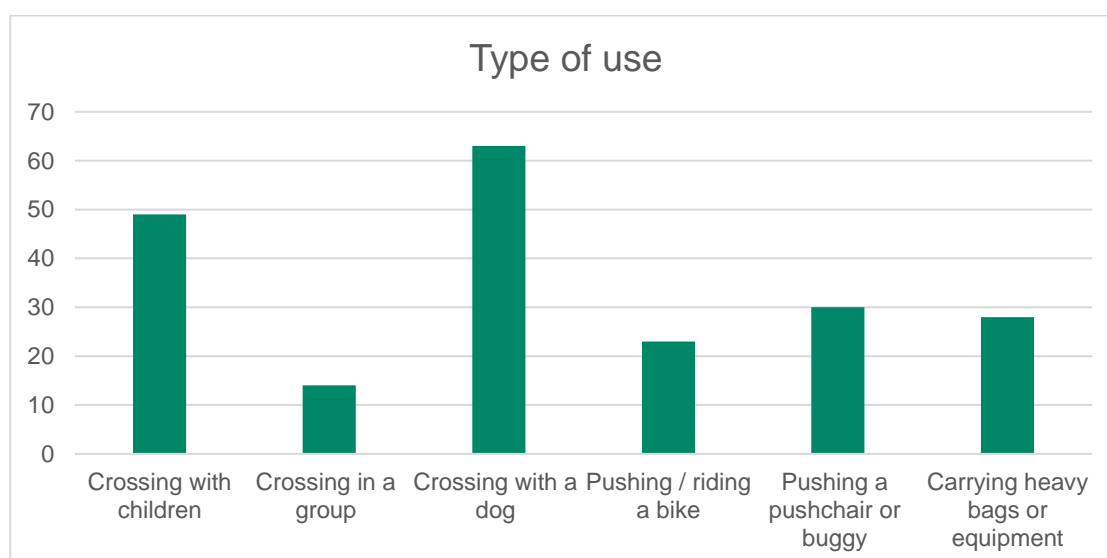
Of those that selected 'Other', the following activities were specified.

- Appointments
- Getting to public transport
- Returning from work by bike
- Taking the dogs to the park for a walk
- Dentist appointments
- I do not use it because I think it's not up to health and safety standards no barriers to stop people when trains are on route the only warning is sight of train coming or train horn I rather go out my way and take the long way round to get to the shops and amenities

- Access to People's Park
- My elderly dad uses it to cross from Nople St- he is a non-driver
- Dog walking
- We are responding as a Town Council therefore various responses are applicable
- Only if I need to
- Visiting a friend occasionally, use it twice only in 6 years
- I'm a community support worker and I use this cut multiple times a day to ensure I can get to my calls on time so that vulnerable adults in the community get the support and care they need to live
- To avoid walking down the high street to get to my destination
- Car service at local garage
- I have never used this crossing
- Car garage on West View

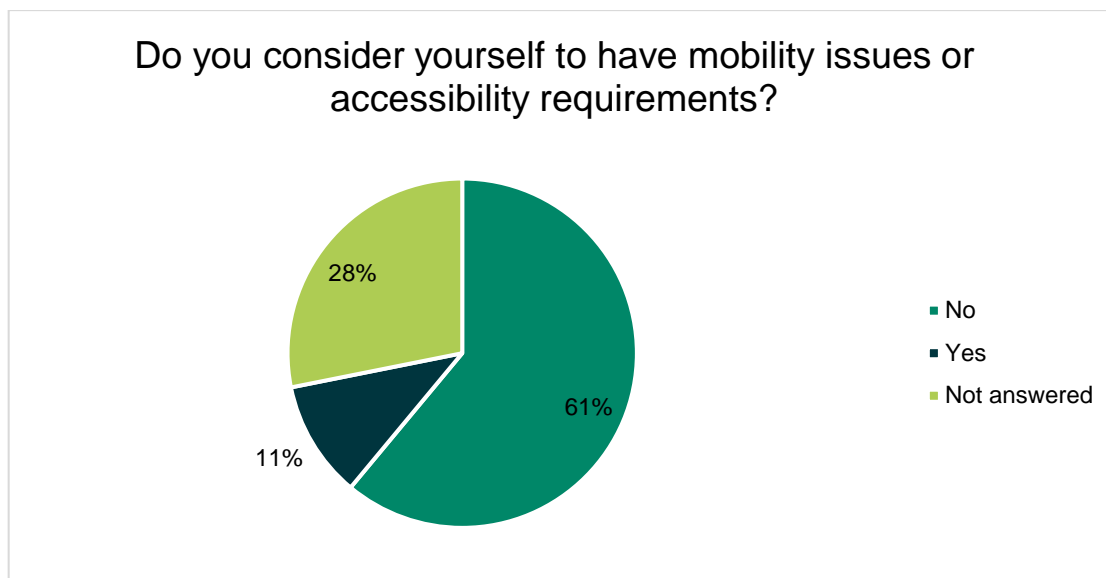
Please note that whilst 11 people selected the 'other' option, 17 people left a comment in this section.

Respondents were also asked for more detail about the type of journey they made over the crossing. **Figure 11** shows the breakdown of responses to this question. It can be seen that many journeys are made with a dog or with children.



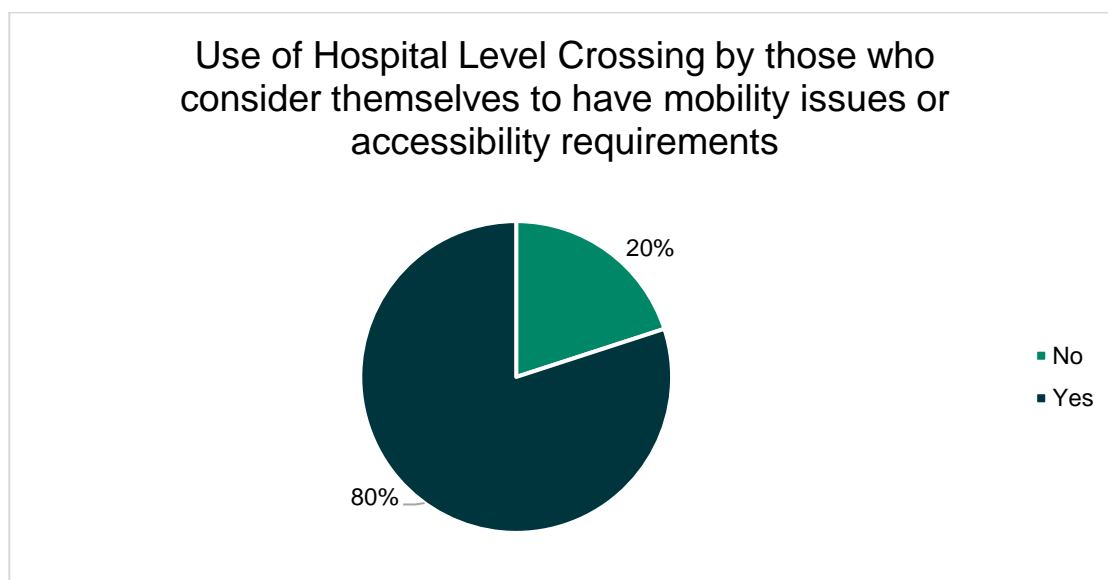
**Figure 11: Graph showing types of journeys made over Hospital Level Crossing**

In addition, 25 people (11% of all respondents) stated that they consider themselves to have mobility issues or accessibility requirements. This breakdown is down in **Figure 12**.



**Figure 12: Graph showing whether respondents consider themselves to have mobility issues or accessibility requirements**

As shown in **Figure 13**, of the 25 respondents who considered themselves to have mobility issues, 20 (80%) respondents stated that they do use the crossing, and 5 (20%) stated that they do not.



**Figure 13: Graph showing whether the proportion of respondents who consider themselves to have mobility issues or accessibility requirements use Hospital Level Crossing**

As shown in **Figure 14**, of the 20 respondents who stated that they do use the crossing, one (5%) respondent stated that they use the crossing more than once a day, seven (35%) stated that they use the crossing four or five times a week, five (25%) stated that they use the crossing once or twice a week, two (10%) stated that they use the crossing less than once a week, and five (25%) stated that they use the crossing less than once a month.

Frequency of use by those who consider themselves to have mobility issues or accessibility requirements

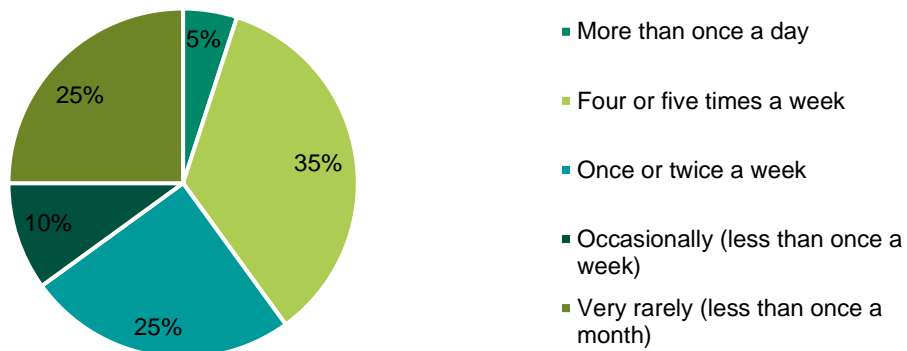


Figure 14: Frequency of use by those who consider themselves to have mobility issues or accessibility requirements

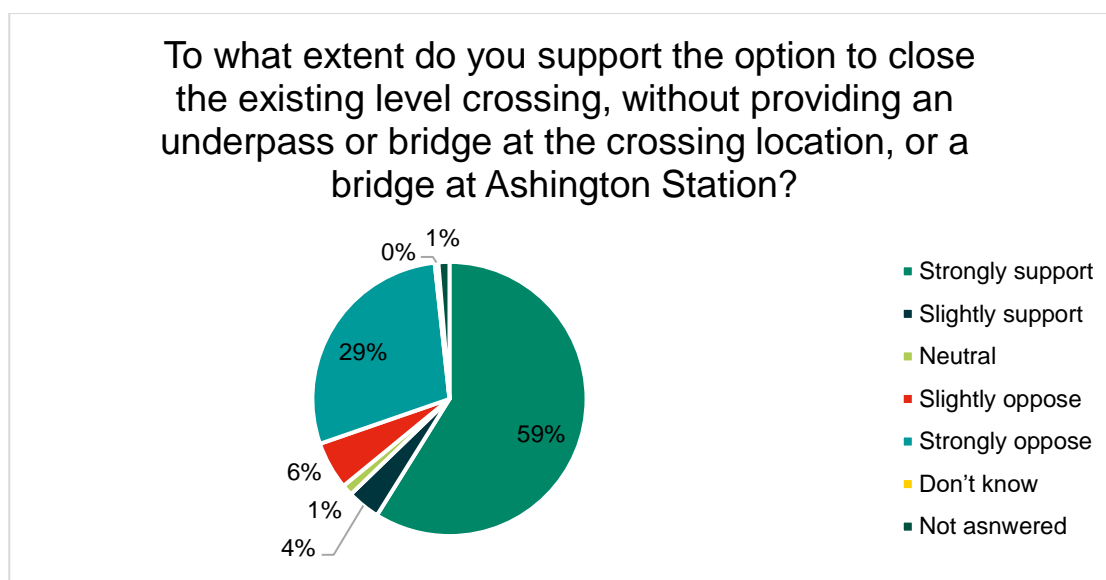
# Feedback

The 'Proposed closure of Hospital Level Crossing' section of the response form was used to understand respondents' opinions on Northumberland County Council's preference to close Hospital Level Crossing with no replacement, as well as the other options presented as part of the consultation.

## Support for extinguishment

**Figure 15** shows the levels of support for the option to close the existing level crossing, without providing an underpass or bridge at the crossing location, or a bridge at Ashington Station.

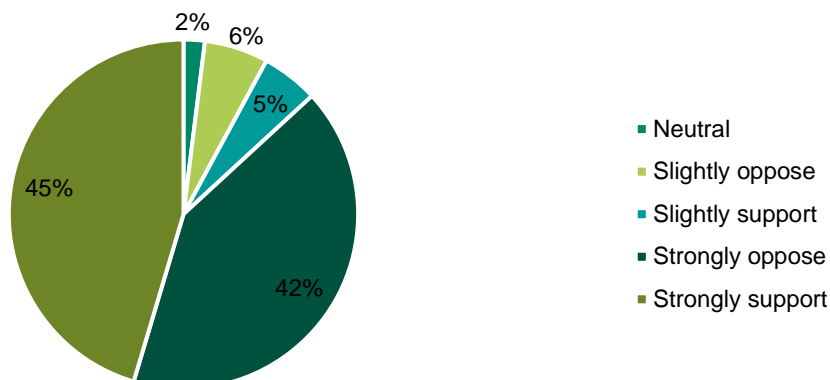
136 respondents (59%) stated that they strongly support the extinguishment of the crossing, nine respondents (4%) slightly support extinguishment, three respondents (1%) were neutral, 13 (6%) slightly oppose extinguishment, 66 (29%) strongly oppose extinguishment, one respondent (0.4%) stated they didn't know, whilst three (1%) did not answer the question. These levels of support can be seen correlated with location in **Figures 3 and 4**.



**Figure 15: Graph showing the extent of support for extinguishment of Hospital Level Crossing, without providing an alternative**

**Figure 16** shows the level of support for extinguishment from those declared themselves as users of the crossing. Of the respondents that stated that they do use the crossing, 69 (45%) strongly supported extinguishment, 8 (5%) slightly supported extinguishment, 63 (42%) strongly opposed extinguishment, 9 (6%) slightly opposed extinguishment and 3 (2%) were neutral.

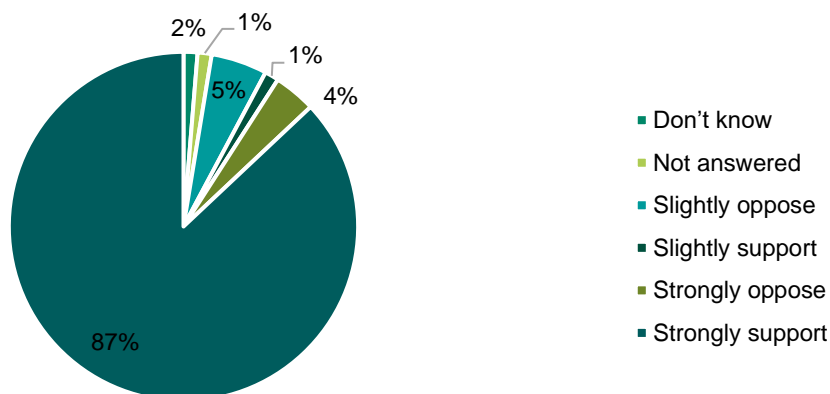
### Level of support for extinguishment from those who use the crossing



**Figure 16:** Graph showing the level of support for extinguishment from those who state they do use Hospital Level Crossing

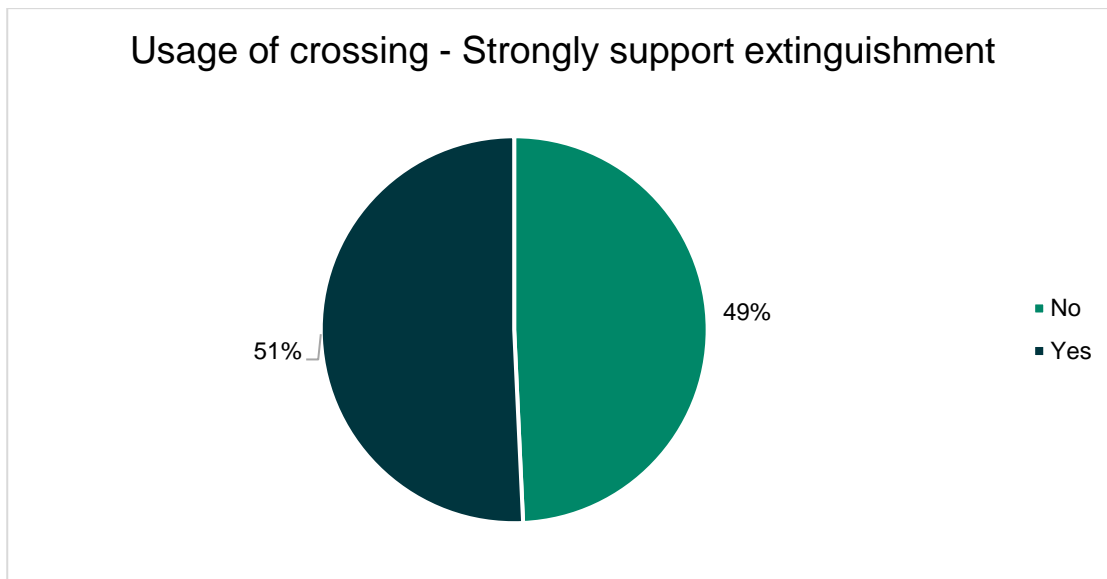
**Figure 17** shows the level of support for extinguishment from those who declared they did not use the crossing. The majority of these respondents support extinguishment, with 67 (87%) stating that they strongly support extinguishment, one (1%) slightly supporting extinguishment, four (5%) slightly opposing extinguishment and three (4%) strongly opposing extinguishment. One respondent stated that they didn't know, and one respondent did not answer the question.

### Level of support for extinguishment from those who do not use the crossing



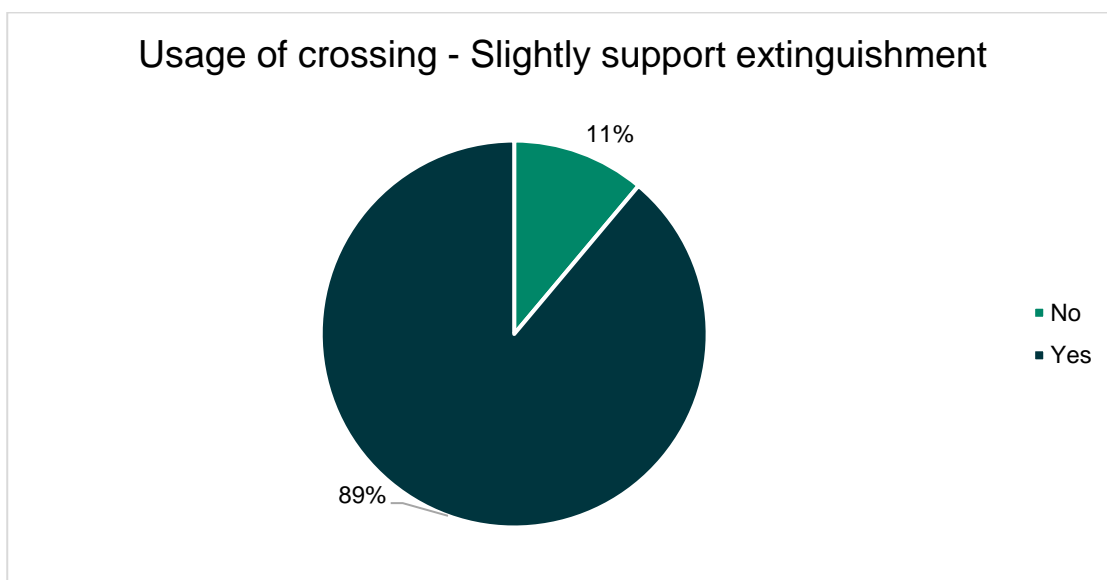
**Figure 17:** Graph showing the level of support for extinguishment amongst respondents who do not use the crossing

As shown in **Figure 18**, of those who stated they strongly support extinguishment, 69 (51%) stated that they use the crossing, with 67 (49%) stating that they do not use the crossing.



**Figure 28: Graph showing whether those who support extinguishment use Hospital Level Crossing**

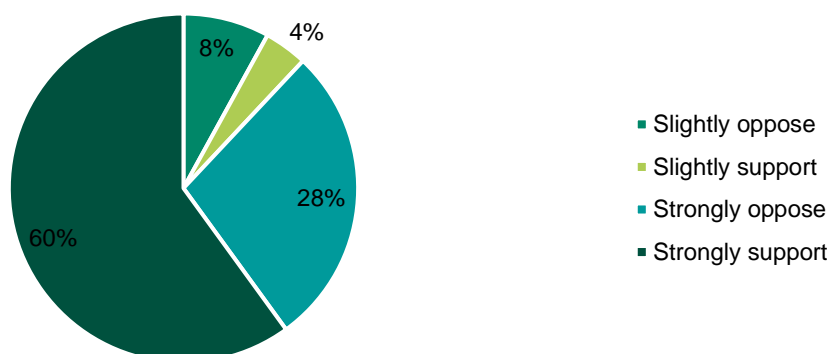
As shown in **Figure 19**, of those who stated they slightly support extinguishment, eight (89%) stated that they use the crossing, with one (11%) stating that they do not use the crossing.



**Figure 19: Graph showing whether those who support extinguishment use Hospital Level Crossing**

As shown in **Figure 20**, of the 25 respondents who stated they have mobility issues or accessibility requirements, 15 (60%) strongly supported extinguishment, one (4%) slightly supported extinguishment, seven (28%) strongly opposed extinguishment and two (8%) slightly opposed extinguishment.

### Level of support for extinguishment from those with mobility issues or accessibility requirements



**Figure 30: Graph showing the level of support for extinguishment from those with mobility issues or accessibility requirements**

### Free text comments

The remainder of the questions on the response form asked open questions about reasons for the level of support expressed for closure, as well as for comments on the other options presented. These comments have been analysed collectively and categorised into six high-level themes, namely:

- Close with no replacement (extinguishment);
- Underpass;
- Bridge (ramped or stepped);
- Bridge – stepped;
- Bridge – ramped; and
- Other.

The remainder of this section is set out in line with these themes, with information about detailed sub-themes identified within them.

## Closure with no replacement (extinguishment)

Across the 231 responses to the consultation, there were 16 themes identified in comments made about the closure of Hospital Level Crossing with no replacement (extinguishment). A summary of these is set out in Table 2.

**Table 2: Summary of the comments relating to closure with no replacement (extinguishment)**

Theme	Number of responses making comments in this theme	Detail of comments in responses
<b>Length of diversion</b>	91	<p>Views were mixed in this category, with some respondents stating that routes via the potential alternative existing crossing points are too long and they would not be willing to walk such a distance, and others saying diversions were of an acceptable length.</p> <p>Those who thought it was too long highlighted that the diversion would mean children would have to walk along busy roads and have a longer journey to and from school. They also stated that the diversion would greatly increase the length of journeys and would likely lead to more people travelling by car rather than walking. One respondent pointed out that the diversion would mean having to carry heavy shopping for a longer walk. Some comments also suggested that a replacement bridge would be a better option, as people with pushchairs or mobility issues could still cross without having to make longer journeys to the alternative crossings.</p> <p>Those who thought the diversion to be an acceptable length believed that key destinations can still be easily reached without the crossing. It was also stated that the diversions to the alternative crossings would be safer than a replacement crossing, as they are well lit at night and don't have issues with anti-social behaviour. It was also highlighted that the footfall at the alternative crossings is already much higher in comparison, suggesting people are already walking to these and will continue to do so. It was also stated that the increase in anti-social behaviour and crime associated with a replacement crossing would not be worth it to save people walking slightly further to the alternative crossings.</p> <p>One comment suggested people would continue to cross at the current location even if the level crossing was closed, as it would be a 'shirt cut'.</p>
<b>General positive</b>	56	Comments in this theme made general comments in support of closure, including noting that its closure would have minimal

Theme	Number of responses making comments in this theme	Detail of comments in responses
		impacts on those that use it, that the crossing was not needed and that they just wanted to see it closed.
<b>Anti-social behaviour and crime</b>	48	<p>Comments in this theme stated that closure of the crossing would minimise anti-social behaviour and crime, including vandalism to passing trains, fires, litter, graffiti and broken glass.</p> <p>It was also stated that all the options presented except extinguishment would encourage anti-social behaviour. Some also stated that they don't use the current crossing anyway due to it being poorly lit and there often being youths hanging around the area.</p> <p>Comments also noted that closing the crossing would reduce levels of crime, including current issues with children, motorbikes, property damage, fires, graffiti, litter and broken glass.</p> <p>It was also stated that the police are under-resourced and should not be expected to attend calls for misbehaviour on the line on a regular basis.</p>
<b>Safety (positive)</b>	39	<p>Comments in this theme touched on a number of topics, including that extinguishment of the crossing would improve safety due to avoiding the risk of injury associated with the increased use of the railway by faster and more frequent trains.</p> <p>Some comments also noted that extinguishing the crossing would stop young people loitering in the area and congregating next to the railway, reducing anti-social behaviour (and its negative safety impacts) in the area.</p> <p>Additionally, some comments stated that the current crossing is uneven, leading to trips and falls, and that the elderly and those with mobility issues struggle to use the crossing as a result of this. Others highlighted the lack of safety protocols in place and the health and safety risks associated with the crossing, including its poor state of repair and the lack of maintenance on access ramps.</p> <p>It was suggested that walking slightly further to the alternative existing crossing points was not an issue, as these crossings feel safer due to being well lit and not attracting anti-social behaviour. Some respondents</p>

Theme	Number of responses making comments in this theme	Detail of comments in responses
		<p>particularly stated that they don't use the crossing as it does not feel safe, especially at night as it is poorly lit.</p> <p>The lack of lighting and barriers at the crossing, or a horn to stop people crossing when a train is approaching, was another safety concern related to the current crossing that extinguishment would eliminate.</p> <p>Concerns about the safety of the current route to the crossing were also raised, stating that people had been attacked here previously.</p> <p>Some respondents also stated that they supported extinguishment as they would not feel safe using a bridge or underpass, or in their homes (which are close to the railway line).</p> <p>The risks to children using the current crossing were also highlighted.</p>
<b>General negative</b>	33	<p>Comments in this theme made general comments against closure, including noting that it is many people's preferred route to work, school, shopping and to visit family, and that it would significantly impact people's daily commute.</p> <p>It was stated that there should be some form of crossing left in place as not everyone can use alternative routes, with many using the crossing either being children, elderly or people with limited mobility.</p> <p>Other comments stated that there have been no injuries or fatalities on the crossing, which shows that it is used safely and that high-speed trains won't pose a hazard.</p> <p>It was also stated that there are other railways with similar crossings that have remained open.</p>
<b>Impacts on local residents</b>	28	<p>Some comments in this theme noted that all other options would potentially result in negative impacts to existing residents, especially those closest to the crossing (who do not necessarily use it).</p> <p>Others noted that closure with no replacement would lead to longer journeys and disruption for those visiting families on the other side of the railway, for children</p>

Theme	Number of responses making comments in this theme	Detail of comments in responses
		<p>getting to school and people commuting to work.</p> <p>It was stated that total closure would be very inconvenient for people that live locally, especially those who are elderly or have mobility issues.</p> <p>One respondent stated that closing the crossing would mean having to carry heavy shopping for longer.</p> <p>It was also stated that the impacts, particularly regarding safety, on local residents should be taken into consideration.</p>
<b>Cost</b>	16	<p>Most comments in this theme supported extinguishment as respondents felt it would reduce the overall cost of the project as well as maintenance costs for the local authority.</p> <p>It was also stated that the options would be costly, and money would be better spent elsewhere in the community, on other parts of the line or on station facilities.</p> <p>Some comments asked general questions about the cost of the project.</p>
<b>Local resident views</b>	13	<p>Comments in this theme stated that the views of local residents, in particular those closest to the crossing, should be the key deciding factor for the proposals. These comments highlighted the negative impacts that all options except extinguishment would have on these residents.</p> <p>One comment stated that objections from local residents are likely and could delay the line reopening.</p>
<b>Alternative crossings</b>	12	<p>A number of suggestions were made for alternative crossings, generally noting that there are other options available.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- An option providing access on both sides of the track close to the new station at Station Road.</li> <li>- A replacement bridge further to the north, to be adjacent to the site where several blocks of garages were demolished between Darnley Road and Chillingham Crescent, to avoid houses being overlooked.</li> </ul>

Theme	Number of responses making comments in this theme	Detail of comments in responses
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- An alternative crossing at Wansbeck Square.</li> </ul> <p>A bridge near the station, rather than an underpass on a residential street.</p>
<b>Positive impacts on Ashington town centre</b>	6	It was stated that losing the crossing with no alternative would increase the footfall to the town centre, which could deliver benefits to retailers.
<b>Accessibility</b>	6	<p>One respondent stated that they do not feel that the current crossing is accessible, and they often avoid the crossing with a pushchair due to the steep hills and uneven paving either side, and suggested that there would be no major improvement if the crossing was replaced with a stepped bridge.</p> <p>It was also noted that extinguishment would cause crossing the line to be harder for those who are less mobile.</p>
<b>Environment</b>	3	Comments in this theme highlighted positive impacts closure would have on the environment, including reducing the amount of litter next to the railway (as the current crossing is used to dump rubbish). Some stated generally that they support closure due to environmental reasons.
<b>Safety (general)</b>	3	Comments in this theme questioned how dangerous the current crossing would be when the Northumberland Line starts operation, and how many accidents there were in the past when coal trains and passenger trains were passing over the line. Some respondents believed that the new rail services will not be as busy, in terms of frequency of trains passing over the crossing, as they were in the past.
<b>Impact on Green Lane</b>	2	<p>Comments in this theme stated that barriers at the crossing on Green Lane will be down more, which will lead to an increase in traffic and would also reduce the safety of this crossing.</p> <p>It was also stated that if Green Lane is the best alternative route, then residents will have to make do, as the Green Lane crossing is just a busier route.</p>
<b>Public transport</b>	2	Respondents believe that closing the crossing would make access to public transport more difficult as no buses travel past the new station.

Theme	Number of responses making comments in this theme	Detail of comments in responses
Noise	2	Comments in this theme noted support for closure as it is believed it will lower noise pollution.

### Underpass

Across the 231 responses to the consultation, there were 9 themes identified in comments made about the construction of an underpass close to the existing crossing. A summary of these is set out in **Table 3**.

**Table 3: Summary of the comments relating to the construction of an underpass close to the existing crossing**

Theme	Number of responses making comments in this theme	Detail of comments in responses
Anti-social behaviour and crime	95	<p>Comments in this theme stated that an underpass would lead to an increase in anti-social behaviour, such as vandalism, drug and alcohol use and an increase in crime, noting assaults that have occurred in other underpasses.</p> <p>It was stated that people would be too afraid to use an underpass, and the risk of anti-social behaviour would stop certain groups from using it, such as the elderly and those with mobility issues.</p> <p>It was also stated that the police would be called regularly to deal with offences and that policing would be sparse. One respondent stated that if anti-social behaviour occurs, the police need to respond and address the issues, as residents pay 'too much' council tax.</p> <p>However, some respondents also stated that this could be addressed through good lighting, CCTV and clear and open approaches to the underpass.</p>
Safety	73	<p>Comments in this theme stated that an underpass would be unsafe and they would not use it or allow their children to use it, nor would they feel safe living nearby. This is due to the fear of increased anti-social behaviour and crime associated with underpasses, including drug use, muggings, fires, stone throwing and assaults. One respondent highlighted a murder that occurred in the underpass at Cramlington.</p> <p>It was also stated that policing will be sparse. Respondents suggested that extensive and working CCTV around the area, good lighting and clear approaches with good visibility are required to address these issues. It was also</p>

Theme	Number of responses making comments in this theme	Detail of comments in responses
		stated that an underpass would quickly become run down.
<b>General negative</b>	41	Comments in this theme made general comments against an underpass, including noting opposition from local residents, the police, Ashington Town Council and Bernicia Homes. Comments said it was not needed or wanted, and wouldn't be used.
<b>Cost</b>	17	<p>Comments in this theme stated that an underpass would be very expensive to construct and that the cost is disproportionate to the benefit.</p> <p>It was stated that it would not be value for money as the existing crossing is not well used.</p> <p>It was also highlighted that the distance between the two existing alternative crossings points is half a mile, and the added expense and disruption associated with an underpass is pointless.</p> <p>Respondents suggested that they would rather the money was spent elsewhere in the area, rather than on an unsafe underpass. It was also stated that having no underpass or bridge would save the police and fire brigade significant amounts of money, as they would not need to be called out to deal with issues such as fires and vandalism. However, it was also stated that local residents pay 'too much' council tax and that if anti-social behaviour occurs in an underpass then police will need to respond and address these issues.</p>
<b>Impacts on residents</b>	11	An underpass is opposed by residents close to the crossing as it is believed it will be disruptive, creating stress and noise for residents nearby, particularly those that are elderly. It was stated that the underpass is not wanted as residents want to live in a safe community.
<b>General positive</b>	11	Comments in this theme made generally positive comments about the underpass, noting it was close to the existing crossing route, and both a reasonable and the best option.
<b>Diversion length</b>	6	Comments in this theme highlighted that viable existing alternatives are available and that they would rather walk for a few more

Theme	Number of responses making comments in this theme	Detail of comments in responses
		minutes to another crossing than use an underpass.
<b>Aesthetics</b>	5	It is believed that an underpass would be an 'eye sore' and become 'run down'. Respondents stated that it would become a place for graffiti and that maintenance would be minimal.
<b>Palmersville Dairy</b>	2	It was queried why, if the Northumberland Line Palmersville Dairy level crossing can be successfully made into an underpass, the same could not be done at Hospital Level Crossing. Respondents stated that closing the crossing without a replacement seems like Ashington isn't deemed good enough to have the time and investment spent on it like other areas.

### Bridge (ramped or stepped)

Across the 231 responses to the consultation, there were nine themes identified in comments made that were applicable to both a ramped or a stepped footbridge close to the existing crossing. A summary of these is set out in **Table 4**.

**Table 4: Summary of the comments relating to the construction of both a ramped or a stepped footbridge close to the existing crossing**

Theme	Number of responses making comments in this theme	Detail of comments in responses
<b>Anti-social behaviour</b>	48	Comments in this theme stated that, whilst better than an underpass for anti-social behaviour, this will still take place on a bridge. In particular, some respondents believed a bridge could be used for people to throw things at passing trains and there may be an increase in theft from local properties due to better views into properties.  It was also stated that, if a bridge was constructed, these occurrences could be mitigated by an open and visible bridge.
<b>General negative</b>	33	Comments in this theme expressed general opposition to a bridge of any kind, noting it was not needed, will be detrimental to the local area and will exacerbate current issues.
<b>General positive</b>	29	Comments in this theme expressed general support for a bridge of any kind, noting it was the 'fairest' and safest option, as long as there is lighting and CCTV installed.
<b>Safety</b>	27	Comments in this theme were mixed. Whilst some stated that people would not feel safe

Theme	Number of responses making comments in this theme	Detail of comments in responses
		using a bridge, that a bridge would encourage anti-social behaviour and theft and that a bridge may be used for people to jump from, some comments stated that a bridge would be the better option if there was security enhancements (CCTV and lighting).
<b>Cost</b>	27	Comments in this theme stated that this option would be expensive and that the cost is disproportionate to the benefits.
<b>Privacy</b>	25	Comments in this theme noted that a bridge, ramped or stepped, will cause privacy issues for neighbouring residents as well as providing an opportunity for thieves to scope out local gardens and houses.
<b>Aesthetics</b>	14	Comments in this theme stated that a bridge would be big and not aesthetically pleasing. Some stated that a bridge would be an eyesore.
<b>Impacts on residents</b>	14	<p>Comments in this theme noted that a bridge would be disruptive to existing residents due to overlooking. However, some stated that careful design could lessen this impact.</p> <p>Respondents also stated that, whilst they believe a bridge is the best option to replace the current crossing, they understand the disadvantages it may have on local residents.</p>
<b>Accessibility</b>	10	<p>Comments in this theme noted concerns about accessibility whether a bridge was stepped or ramped. In particular, they noted that a stepped bridge would not be accessible to all and a ramped bridge could have a long incline with turns to reach the bridge.</p> <p>However, some comments in this theme stated that, despite some accessibility issues, a bridge would be the best option as it follows a similar route to the current crossing.</p>

## Bridge – stepped

Across the 231 responses to the consultation, there were six themes identified in comments made specifically about the construction of a stepped footbridge close to the existing crossing. A summary of these is set out in **Table 5**.

**Table 5: Summary of comments relating to the construction of a stepped footbridge close to the existing crossing**

Theme	Number of responses making comments in this theme	Detail of comments in responses
<b>Accessibility</b>	9	<p>Some comments in this theme noted that a stepped bridge would mean that people in wheelchairs, those with accessibility issues and those with a pushchair would still need to find an alternative route.</p> <p>However, others stated that the current crossing is not accessible for all and is often avoided by those with low mobility, those in a wheelchair and those with pushchairs. Therefore, the installation of a stepped bridge would not lessen the accessibility of the crossing.</p>
<b>General positive</b>	6	Comments in this theme expressed general support for a bridge, noting it was either the best of one of the best options available.
<b>General negative</b>	3	Comments in this theme expressed general opposition to a stepped bridge, noting it is not needed and expressing a preference for closing the crossing with no alternative.
<b>Anti-social behaviour</b>	1	<p>The comment in this theme noted that a stepped bridge would less likely to be used as a gathering place for anti-social behaviour compared to an underpass.</p> <p>However, the comment also noted that anti-social behaviour may still take place on a stepped bridge (such as things being thrown from it).</p>
<b>Diversion length</b>	1	The comment in this theme noted that a stepped bridge is preferred as it will provide a route most similar (including in length) to the existing crossing.
<b>Impact on residents</b>	1	The comment in this theme noted that, while a stepped bridge would have impacts on neighbouring properties, careful design could lessen this and help to reduce anti-social behaviour and crime.

## Bridge – ramped

Across the 231 responses to the consultation, there were six themes identified in comments made specifically about the construction of a ramped footbridge close to the existing crossing. A summary of these is set out in **Table 6**.

**Table 6: Summary of comments relating to the construction of a ramped footbridge close to the existing crossing**

Theme	Number of responses making comments in this theme	Detail of comments in responses
<b>Accessibility</b>	19	Comments in this theme stated that this option would best accommodate the needs of all abilities. A small number of comments also speculated that people using the current crossing didn't have accessibility requirements.
<b>General positive</b>	17	Comments in this theme expressed general support for a ramped bridge, noting that it was respondents' preferred option, and the fairest.
<b>Anti-social behaviour</b>	4	Respondents stated that this option, as well as the stepped bridge, would see less anti-social behaviour compared to an underpass. It was also stated that an open and visible bridge would lower the levels of anti-social behaviour and allow for local residents to see and report any incidents which may happen.
<b>Impact on residents</b>	3	Comments in this theme noted that careful design of the bridge could lessen the privacy issues on surrounding residents. For example, high sides of the bridge on the sides facing the residential areas.
<b>General negative</b>	2	Comments in this theme expressed general opposition to a ramped bridge.
<b>Diversion length</b>	1	Comments in this theme noted that people with pushchairs and wheelchairs could get across the railway without needing to make longer journeys to other crossing points, should a ramped bridge be installed.

## Other

Across the 231 responses to the consultation, there were seven additional themes identified in comments, that did not fit into any of the previous sections. A summary of these is set out in **Table 7**.

**Table 7: Summary of the comments falling outside of the core categories**

Theme	Number of responses making comments in this theme	Detail of comments in responses
<b>Suggestions</b>	26	Comments in this theme made suggestions about different locations for an underpass or bridge, which included the end of Darnley

Theme	Number of responses making comments in this theme	Detail of comments in responses
		<p>Road, Roseneath Court, or closer to the new station.</p> <p>Other suggestions included alternative crossing types, such as those with traffic lights or barriers.</p> <p>Respondents also suggested that the railway line and the surrounding areas should be tidied up, and security features should be added, to make the footpaths and pedestrian areas more user friendly. It was also suggested that low-level landscaping should be considered to improve aesthetics, as well as measures to deter vermin.</p> <p>Some suggested that the existing crossing should be retained, and that money should instead be spent on increasing CCTV in the area.</p>
<b>Anti-social behaviour (all options)</b>	9	<p>Comments in this theme noted that the all the options will cause anti-social behavior and there are safer crossings that take little time to walk to, that are well lit at night, and where less loitering occurs.</p> <p>One comment also stated that people are too quick to expect anti-social behavior from young people.</p>
<b>General opposition to closure</b>	8	<p>Comments in this theme stated that closure will negatively impact family members who will struggle to use a diversion (e.g. those with autism) and lead to a reduction of mobility for cyclists and walkers. A respondent stated that they use the crossing regularly and rarely witness any trouble. It was also stated that there has been a high number of trains passing through in the past and the respondent doesn't believe there will be more traffic now than there was then.</p>
<b>Cost</b>	7	<p>A respondent believes that the surrounding area needs to be considered, not just the cost. It was also suggested that it would be better for the community for that money to be spent on something else within the community, or that the savings made could be utilised to enhance other parts of the line or station facilities</p>
<b>Current issues</b>	3	<p>Comments in this theme stated that there are problems with the current crossing relating to misuse, trespass, vandalism and anti-social behavior.</p>
<b>All options - safety</b>	3	<p>Respondents suggest that the safety of local residents, many of whom elderly, should be</p>

Theme	Number of responses making comments in this theme	Detail of comments in responses
		taken into consideration. It was also stated that there are safer alternative crossings either side of the crossing where there is less anti-social loitering.
<b>Mobility/accessibility</b>	1	The comment in this theme expressed that generally people of poor mobility use a mobility scooter, so diversion should not be an issue.

# Appendix A: Response form



## Northumberland County Council

### Hospital Level Crossing closure consultation response form

We want to understand your views on the options we have presented for the proposed closure of Hospital Level Crossing as part of the Northumberland Line scheme. Please read our consultation materials to help you complete this form. These are available online at [nland.cc/HXL](http://nland.cc/HXL). If you have any questions after reading the consultation materials, please contact us using the contact details given below.

You can complete this response form online at [nland.cc/HXL](http://nland.cc/HXL). Alternatively, you can return the completed form by email to [rail@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:rail@northumberland.gov.uk) with the subject line '*Hospital Level Crossing consultation response*', or post it to us using our Freepost address: **Freepost NORTHUMBERLAND LINE**.

If you would like this response form or any of the consultation materials in an alternative format, including large print, braille, audio or in another language, please contact us using the details below.

Email: [rail@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:rail@northumberland.gov.uk)

Telephone: 0345 600 6400

### About this form

This response form is split into three sections. The first section asks about your current usage of Hospital Level Crossing. The second section includes a series of questions about the options we have presented for the closure of the crossing. The third is an optional 'About You' section, which if completed will help us to understand your relationship to the scheme and the audience reached by the consultation.

You can respond to all of the questions, or just those you feel are relevant to you.

If you need additional space to complete your answers to any of the questions, please enclose additional sheets and include references to make it clear which questions the additional sheets relate to.



# Northumberland

## County Council

### Use of Hospital Level Crossing

The questions in this section will help us to understand your relationship to the proposals, in particular whether you use Hospital Level Crossing and, if so, how. Please only respond to those questions you feel are relevant to you.

1. Do you use Hospital Level Crossing?

Yes ☐ (please go to question 2)

No ☐ (please go to question 6)

2. If you use Hospital Level Crossing, how frequently do you use it on average? (*Tick one only*).

- ☐ More than once a day
- ☐ Four or five times a week
- ☐ Once or twice a week
- ☐ Occasionally (less than once a week)
- ☐ Very rarely (less than once a month)

3. When you use Hospital Level Crossing, what type of journeys are you generally making? (*Tick all that apply*).

- ☐ Leisure (e.g. going for walks)
- ☐ Shopping
- ☐ Visiting friends or family
- ☐ Getting to school (including taking children to school)
- ☐ Getting to work
- ☐ Other (please specify)



## Northumberland County Council

4. When you use Hospital Level Crossing, do any of the below apply? (*Tick all that apply*).

- ☐ Crossing with children
- ☐ Crossing in a group
- ☐ Crossing with a dog
- ☐ Pushing / riding a bike
- ☐ Pushing a pushchair or buggy
- ☐ Carrying heavy bags or equipment

5. Do you consider yourself to have mobility issues or accessibility requirements (e.g. user of a wheelchair or mobility scooter, difficulty climbing stairs)?

- Yes ☐
- No ☐

### Proposed closure of Hospital Level Crossing

As noted in the consultation materials, Northumberland County Council's current preference is to close Hospital Level Crossing with no replacement, given the objections received to the planning application for a replacement underpass. The questions in this section seek to understand your views on this option, as well as the others we are currently considering.

6. To what extent do you support the option to close the existing level crossing, without providing an underpass or bridge at the crossing location, or a bridge at Ashington Station?

- ☐ Strongly support
- ☐ Slightly support
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Slightly oppose
- ☐ Strongly oppose
- ☐ Don't know



## Northumberland County Council

7. Please use the space below to provide your comments to explain your answer to question 6. Please include reasons for support, any concerns you would have about a such a closure, and whether you consider a diversion needs to be provided.

8. Do you have any comments or suggestions specific to the option to replace the level crossing with an underpass close to the location of the current level crossing?

9. Do you have any comments or suggestions specific to the option to replace the level crossing with a ramped or stepped footbridge close to the location of the current level crossing?

10. Are there any further comments or suggestions you would like to make? Please include anything additional that you think we should consider to inform our decision.



# Northumberland

## County Council

### About you

The questions in this section will help us to understand the audience reached by the consultation. Your answers will only be used for the purpose of informing the analysis of this survey and will be treated confidentially. Be assured that this will not be used to identify or contact you, and these details will never be shared beyond the remit of this consultation.

11. Are you responding on behalf of an organisation or business?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

12. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation or business, what is the name of your organisation or business?

13. Please provide your home or organisation/business postcode: *(Full UK postcodes only)*

14. Which one of these age groups are you in? *(Please tick one only)*

Under 16	<input type="checkbox"/>	45-54 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
16-17 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	55-64 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
18-24 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	65-74 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
25-34 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	75+ years	<input type="checkbox"/>
35-44 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/>

15. Which of the following best describes how you think of yourself? *(Tick one only)*

Woman	<input type="checkbox"/>	Prefer another term	<input type="checkbox"/>
Man	<input type="checkbox"/>	Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/>



**Northumberland**  
County Council

**About you (continued)**

16. Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability?  
(Tick one only)

Yes, limited a lot	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Yes, limited a little	<input type="checkbox"/>	Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Thank you for completing this response form.**

## **Appendix B: List of organisations and businesses that responded to the consultation**

- Rays Landscape DIY Repairs
- Ashington Town Council
- Bernicia Homes