

**Chorley 3 Tier Forum
18th November 2013**

Adoption of Estates O&S Task Group: The County Councils response to the recommendations set out in the Borough Councils O&S Task Group in relation to the adoption of estates

Dear Ms Scambler

Thank you for providing a copy of Chorley Borough Council's report of the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group – Adoption of Estates. I apologise that we have not responded more promptly. I have identified that the following recommendations relate to the County Council and I would respond as follows:

Recommendation 1

Road and adoption discussions already commence at the earliest possible stages of the planning process with due consideration given to the following issues:

- Construction Management Plans are considered on a site-by-site basis with input from planning officers, to establish and condition the use of matters including agreed access routes, working times and control of nuisances such as noise/dust/mud.
- Phased implementation of larger developments is already an integral part of the Section 38 agreements to encourage the developer to plan his construction/sales profiling in consultation with Council officers.
- Targeted advice is provided to residential developers throughout the development process about the need for adoptable highway layouts and construction methods and how these might be achieved. Adoption will not always be possible, for example where the developer chooses not to meet adoptable standards, or where the development relies on some basic features outside the limits of what will be safe to use or practical to maintain (for example substandard road widths or turning facilities).

Recommendation 2

The County Council is willing to work with Chorley Borough Council Planning Officers to explore in more detail the prospect of using the Department for Transport-approved draft conditions, requiring that highway adoption and management matters are secured at the earliest possible stage of the planning process.

Recommendation 3

The County Council's Section 38 caseload is already under review as part of our ongoing commitment to continuous improvement. As soon as the Chorley Borough information is available it will be issued to Chorley Borough Council Officers. I anticipate that the first tranche of information will be available by the middle of November 2013.

Recommendation 4

The County Council already has a flexible approach to setting bonds as part of the Section 38 processes. They are established on a site-by-site basis, using a formula that accurately reflects the current costs of road construction and the scale of the highway areas to be offered for adoption on each site.

Elements of the bonds are released before full completion of the roads subject to satisfactory completion of the necessary works at each stage of bond release.

Our approach is frequently benchmarked against other highway authorities around the country; at the current time it is significantly more flexible than many and it compares favourably on comparisons of cost to the developers.

Recommendation 6

The County Council has recently completed a review of its resources and operational practices relating to the highways aspects of new development, including adoption procedures. This has resulted in updated procedures being established across the County.

Recommendation 7

The County Council endorses the need for and benefits of improved communications. We shall provide relevant and timely information on progress with developments to Chorley Borough Council in parallel with our communications to other interested people and organisations.

Recommendation 8

There are no arrangements in place for the County Council to charge fees for pre-application highways and transport related advice. All the potential implications of introducing such a charge would need to be considered before forming a view on whether this would be an appropriate change to make to our service. It is therefore not possible to respond on this point at the present time.

Recommendation 10

The County Council already provides map-based information on highway adoptions through the Map Zone facility, available to Chorley Council Members and officers on a confidential basis. We welcome suggestions for optimising the use of this information.

Recommendation 11

Following completion of our internal review (6 above) we are in the process of updating our website-based frequently-asked questions (FAQs) on the County Council's web site. I regret that I cannot indicate timescales for this process because of the need to fit into a wider corporate project, but I can assure you that the work is being completed as quickly as possible.

Thank you for inviting the County Council to consider how to work with you to improve our services to local developers, residents and others with an interest in adoptions in new estates. I am sure the measures already in hand and outlined above will be of value in this regard.

Yours sincerely

Phil Barrett
Director Lancashire Highway Services