

Cabinet - 9 October 2014

Report of the Interim Executive Director of Environment

Electoral Divisions affected: All in West Lancashire

Approval to Adopt the West Lancashire Highways and Transport Masterplan

(Appendices 'A', 'B', and 'C' refer)

Contact for further information:

Marcus Hudson, (01772) 530696, Environment Directorate,
marcus.hudson@lancashire.gov.uk

Executive Summary

In order to determine its future transport planning and investment priorities, and provide a sound and defensible basis for decisions affecting development across Lancashire, the County Council has embarked on an ambitious programme to put in place highways and transport masterplans to cover the county.

The West Lancashire Highways and Transport Masterplan is presented here for approval; in setting out our future priorities, the masterplan also sets out which current major schemes in the West Lancashire area will be taken forward.

A public consultation exercise for the consultation draft West Lancashire Highways and Transport Masterplan ran for 10 weeks, finishing on February 7th 2014. The response to the consultation exercise has, on the whole, endorsed the County Council's vision for West Lancashire's highways and transport networks and for the work needed to take the masterplan forward.

A number of concerns and suggestions were raised through the consultation. Whilst many of these are very detailed and will be carried forward into scheme development, a number of changes have been made to the draft masterplan as a result. Most of these changes are in the detail of the proposals and add to the strength of the masterplan rather than altering it. However, several significant changes have been made since the draft masterplan was published:

- 1) There was very significant objection to the proposal not to progress the Burscough Curves. In view of this, the masterplan commits to including the potential reinstatement of the curves as an option to be pursued as part of the proposed electrification of the Ormskirk to Preston line. The recent publication of the Liverpool City Region Long Term Rail Strategy, which includes reinstatement of the curves, supports our position.
- 2) Also as part of the proposed electrification of the Ormskirk to Preston line, the masterplan commits to considering the potential for a Burscough Rail

Interchange. This proposal has come from discussions with stakeholders and again the Liverpool City Region Long Term Rail Strategy supports our position.

- 3) The Ormskirk Bypass remains a contentious issue with significant numbers both for and against the scheme. Many of those who support the bypass are concerned that alternative measures will not be effective. We have therefore changed how we set out our approach to alternative measures in order to work more closely with Sefton Council and to make it clear that there is a robust alternative to the bypass.
- 4) A new proposal for public realm and cycling improvements in Burscough has been included, to be developer funded. This provides a synergy with other measures in the masterplan, particularly relating to rail and cycling.
- 5) The support for the cycling measures proposed in the draft masterplan was so strong, both from stakeholders and from the general public that we have now set out more ambitious plans to develop a network of strategic cycle routes linking the main towns within West Lancashire to each other and to key destinations outside the area.

In making these changes, the way the masterplan document is structured has been altered to show how the changes integrate.

The transformational opportunity that a new Skelmersdale rail link and town centre station with connections to Liverpool and Manchester will provide cannot be over-emphasised. The proposed station will open up the potential of the area and be an integral part of current / future town centre regeneration schemes and the long-term objective of stimulating a more commercially-driven approach to maximising Skelmersdale's employment and housing land opportunities.

As the proposals in the masterplan do not include the Ormskirk Bypass, the route protection currently afforded to the scheme alignment is no longer required.

This is deemed to be a Key Decision and Standing Order 25 has been complied with.

Recommendation

Cabinet is asked to:

- (i) Approve the publication of the West Lancashire Highways and Transport Masterplan, presented at Appendix 'A', and the delivery of the strategies that will allow the masterplan to be taken forward;
- (ii) As part of the masterplan, approve the rescinding of the route protection on the line currently protected for an Ormskirk Bypass.

Background and Advice

As the local transport and highway authority for Lancashire, the County Council is responsible for the preparation of a local transport plan (LTP) that sets out a strategy and priorities for transport and travel in the area and a delivery programme for transport improvements, sustainable travel, road safety and maintenance.

In order to determine its future transport planning and investment priorities, and provide a sound and defensible basis for decisions affecting development across Lancashire, the County Council has embarked on an ambitious programme to put in place highways and transport masterplans to cover the county.

The West Lancashire Highways and Transport Masterplan is presented here, at Appendix 'A', for approval for publication.

The masterplanning exercise looks to identify problems, gaps and opportunities on the highways and public transport systems serving Lancashire and, importantly, how they impact on the County's economy. These masterplans will form the transport evidence base for a much more pro-active role for the County Council in forward planning activities, and the improvements they identify will be a key influence on future patterns of development, at a strategic and local level, set out in local plans and development briefs across Lancashire.

Each masterplan, supported by its evidence base and public consultation, should form an integral part of the evidence base to the development plan, and the County Council would expect transport infrastructure identified in each masterplan to attract developer contributions, through planning obligations or Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) monies to be included in district Infrastructure Delivery Schedules ('Regulation 123 lists'). At the detailed planning stage, the masterplans will be a material planning consideration in determining planning applications in its area.

Masterplans will also form the basis for the County Council's dealings with other transport infrastructure and service providers such as the Highways Agency, Network Rail, train and bus operating companies and neighbouring local authorities.

A key driver for Lancashire's economic development is the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership (LEP). The Partnership's Strategic Economic Plan: 'A Growth Deal for the Arc of Prosperity' submitted to the Government in March 2014 sets out the LEP's vision for economic growth across the Lancashire for the next 10 years and its priorities and proposals for funding through a growth Deal. The Strategic Economic Plan outlines key priorities and projects (for example, sector development, innovation, skills, business growth and support, releasing local growth potential via the Growing Places fund) that will support growth in West Lancashire and across the county. The Strategic Economic Plan also includes specific local spatial interventions. For West Lancashire, this

includes key transport and infrastructure projects in Skelmersdale (for example, rail connectivity, public realm and movement around the town).

A second driver comes from the County Council's responsibility for some work that was previously carried out by the NHS. The County Council and the NHS will now work together to tackle some of the key issues that affect people's health and wellbeing, helping people to stay healthy and prevent illness.

The cost of delivering the package of measures identified in the masterplan, and those that will come out of the work proposed, cannot be borne entirely by public sector funding. It has been shown that, in areas where the county can come to rely on the development industry to contribute funding to new infrastructure, investor confidence increases together with the ability to attract other sources of funding, and in turn improves the prospects of delivery.

Moving forward, investment in major new infrastructure will increasingly need to demonstrate an economic justification. In practice, this means a clear strategy towards bringing forward integrated development proposals for new development and economic growth alongside the infrastructure to support it.

Changes due to consultation

Consultation on the draft West Lancashire Highways and Transport Masterplan opened on 2 December 2013 and ran until 7 February 2014. Views were sought from a range of stakeholders which included councillors, district and parish councils, stakeholders and members of the public. There were 264 responses to the consultation (excluding comments made at the consultation event).

A number of concerns and suggestions were raised through the consultation. Whilst many of these are very detailed and will be carried forward into scheme development, a number of changes have been made to the draft Masterplan as a result. Most of these changes are in the detail of the proposals and add to the strength of the masterplan rather than altering it. However, several significant changes have been made:

- 1) There was very significant objection to the proposal not to progress the Burscough Curves. In view of this, the masterplan commits to including the potential reinstatement of the curves as an option to be pursued as part of the proposed electrification of the Ormskirk to Preston line. The recent publication of the Liverpool City Region Long Term Rail Strategy, which includes reinstatement of the curves, supports this position.
- 2) Also as part of the proposed electrification of the Ormskirk to Preston line, the masterplan commits to considering the potential for a Burscough Rail Interchange. This proposal has come from discussions with stakeholders and again the Liverpool City Region Long Term Rail Strategy supports such a move.
- 3) The Ormskirk Bypass remains a contentious issue with significant numbers both for and against the scheme. Many of those who support the bypass are concerned that alternative measures will not be effective. We

have therefore changed how we set out our approach to alternative measures in order to work more closely with Sefton Council and to make it clear that there is a robust alternative to the bypass.

- 4) A new proposal for public realm and cycling improvements in Burscough has been included, to be developer funded. This provides a synergy with other measures in the masterplan, particularly relating to rail and cycling.
- 5) The support for the cycling measures proposed in the draft masterplan was so strong, both from stakeholders and from the general public that we have now set out more ambitious plans to develop a network of strategic cycle routes linking the main towns within West Lancashire to each other and to key destinations outside the area.

The Masterplan

Following consultation, this masterplan has been restructured to make our intent clearer and now sets out 5 strands to the highways and transport interventions we need to put in place so that:

Skelmersdale becomes a town fit for the 21st Century, with jobs, facilities and transport connections that can support good living standards across the town that everyone shares in.

- 1) We will work with Network Rail and Merseytravel to bring forward a business case for a new rail link and town centre station. The station would see direct services to both Liverpool and Manchester (including potentially the airport) and would have 'parkway' facilities to serve the wider West Lancashire area. Network Rail supports this approach and with a successful business case, we and our partners will work towards implementation through the next rail industry investment period covering 2019 to 2024 (known as Control Period 6).
- 2) To take full advantage of the new station, we will work with all interested stakeholders, including the residents of Skelmersdale, to take forward a large scale public realm improvement programme that will transform the town, making access to the town and local centres, and to employment and lifelong learning, easy and attractive for all.
- 3) Again with an eye to the new rail station, we will look at how public transport is provided in Skelmersdale, including a new bus interchange and service provision, particularly with respect to employment and lifelong learning, ensuring that interchange between all modes is easy.

The transformational opportunity that a new Skelmersdale rail link and town centre station with connections to Liverpool and Manchester will provide cannot be over-emphasised. The proposed station will open up the potential of the area and be an integral part of current/future town centre regeneration schemes and the long-term objective of stimulating a more commercially-driven approach to maximising Skelmersdale's employment and housing land opportunities.

The LEP's Strategic Economic Plan recognises the significance of the reconfiguration of Skelmersdale's transport opportunities and that this is a Lancashire-wide priority recognised by the Government.

Ormskirk becomes a vibrant market town at the heart of West Lancashire's education and tourism sectors, with a town centre that is no longer dominated by the car.

- 1) We will develop and implement a movement strategy for Ormskirk, building on the work done through the M58 to Southport Corridor Study and also including an innovative bicycle hire scheme. The strategy will focus on measures to reduce traffic in Ormskirk, especially the town centre, and to better manage the traffic that cannot be removed; it will provide the opportunity to fundamentally review how traffic is managed.
- 2) We will build on the work done both by ourselves and by Sefton Council to work together to bring forward junction improvements, which will include work at the A570/B5242 junction (The Morris Dancers) in Scarisbrick. We will also work with our partners including the Highways Agency to produce a detailed route management plan that will set out how traffic using the A570 can be reduced, where small-scale improvements are needed and how such improvements can be brought forward.
- 3) The Ormskirk Movement Strategy will give us the opportunity to challenge how the Derby Street railway bridge is currently used. A detailed report on the bridge's current condition will be available in autumn 2014.

Burscough becomes a thriving small town where there is plenty of transport choice and commuters don't need to use a car.

We will work with West Lancashire Borough Council to produce a public realm improvement plan for Burscough that can be the basis for discussions with other stakeholders. However, we acknowledge that such improvements may need to be funded through private sector contributions.

Rural Communities are free of unnecessary traffic and everyone knows that travel options are there if they cannot use a car

- 1) The Green Lane Link at Tarleton will remove heavy goods vehicles from the inappropriate roads in the village centre and other surrounding routes.
- 2) Based on work to be undertaken as a part of other masterplans, we will identify options for providing access to services in our remote and rural areas, whether by conventional bus services or other means, particularly for access to employment, lifelong learning and health. The study will also consider how the take up of electric vehicles can best be supported for those who have to own a car.

and

Connected networks make travel easy for West Lancashire's residents, businesses and visitors and reduce the impact of longer distance journeys through the borough.

- 1) We will work with our partners, particularly Network Rail and Merseytravel, to seek, as a priority, electrification of the Ormskirk to Preston line and effective interchange opportunities at Burscough.
- 2) We will work with partners in neighbouring authorities and with the Highways Agency to put in place a Route Management Plan for West Lancashire that maximises the benefits of all new road construction and highways and transport improvements in the area.
- 3) We will work with West Lancashire Borough Council to progress a strategic network of multi-user paths based on the linear park model. The network will need to address issues of personal safety and of year round usefulness, as well as the extent to which the network will be maintained.

Cycling

In response to very strong support for the cycling measures proposed, we have now set out more ambitious plans to develop a coherent network of strategic cycle routes linking the main towns within West Lancashire to each other and to key destinations outside the area. Whilst the focus remains on cycling, the routes will now be designed to be multi-user, so as to allow the widest range of users to benefit, including horse riders. A number of responses have made it clear how important equestrian provision is to West Lancashire's active leisure offer, both for residents and visitors.

The masterplan provides an integrated package of measures that will support delivery of West Lancashire Borough Council's Local Plan and the economic development aspirations of the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership. It aims to provide residents, businesses and visitors with rail, car, bus, cycling and walking connectivity that will make more destinations easily available and make sustainable travel choices attractive.

Tarleton Green Lane Link

In February 2013, the County Council made a commitment to fund the Tarleton Green Lane Link through capital grant, with the scheme being identified as the first call on available resources.

In confirming the establishment of the Local Growth Fund (LGF) in June 2013, the Government announced the reduction in the annual Integrated Transport Block grant funding payable directly to the County Council from £12.3m in 2014/15 to £6.054m for each of the three years 2015/16 to 2017/18 (confirmed) and an indicative £6.054m per annum for the subsequent three years to

2020/21. Consequently, the County Council will have significantly less funding available than was thought at the time the commitment was made.

Whilst the County Council's Local Transport Plan prioritises schemes with demonstrable economic development business cases, there has previously been scope to fund other schemes with capital grants of circa £12.00M per year.

It was in that context that it was recommended that the Green lane Link road should be prioritised.

The demands now placed upon the limited £6.0M annual grant to fund schemes with major economic development benefits means that it is no longer viable to continue to prioritise the Green Lane Link road without impacting upon our ability to deliver the growth deal. It is therefore proposed to defer the Green Lane Link scheme until 2019/20, or such time as resources become available.

Current development work on the scheme will be continued to a point where this work will not be abortive. We will also conclude land negotiations and acquire the land for the scheme in the current year. This can be contained within the existing budget allocation.

Ormskirk Bypass.

The masterplan does not contain any proposal to implement the Ormskirk Bypass. There are several long-standing road schemes across the county. In order to decide if these schemes still offer benefits, or if there are now more effective alternatives that could be put in place, the County Council has made a commitment in the LTP to revisit each scheme. The schemes were to be compared to current policy criteria and evaluated using current traffic information.

In 2012, Jacobs completed the M58 to Southport Corridor Study, presenting options for the corridor including the bypass of Ormskirk and an alternative set of measures that could be put in place in Ormskirk itself.

Congestion in the town is significant. Ormskirk lies on what is currently the main route from the M58 to Southport, as well as the major junction between the A570 and the A59. The one way gyratory system in the town centre struggles to cope with the volume of traffic using it, particularly in the rush hours. Congestion increases travel time and pollution and makes the town centre an undesirable place to travel to or through.

The Jacobs study concluded that the bypass was not the most appropriate solution to Ormskirk's traffic problems. Much of the traffic in the town centre is not genuine through traffic, but starts or finishes its journey in Ormskirk.

The bypass scheme includes 4 new roundabout junctions along its length that link to existing roads around Ormskirk. The cost was estimated to be £39m in 2007 but is thought to be at least £54m if inflation is taken into account.

The proposed bypass would run along the protected route from Four Lane Ends roundabout north of the M58 Junction 3 passing to the east and north of Ormskirk to re-join the existing A570 at Hurlston Lane west of the town.

The bypass is currently unfunded and does not contribute strongly to either LTP or LEP priorities. The bypass will not remove local traffic from Ormskirk, although it might change its path through the network. A bypass could also encourage more traffic onto the A570, with consequences for the communities to the north-west of Ormskirk and for the Kew area of Southport. The bypass runs through agricultural land and would have environmental impacts.

The protection of a route for the bypass does cause the County Council issues however. As well as the ongoing possibility of costly blight payments, the County Council has had to acquire premises because of the route protection. To continue to protect the line at this time would continue to expose the County Council to blight risk.

In February 2009, the County Council acquired premises known as Wellfield on Vicarage Lane, Ormskirk, for a sum of £2,034,823, having been obliged to do so by the then owner pursuant to the blight provisions of the Land Compensation Act 1973. The property had become blighted as a result of the proposed Ormskirk Bypass, the route of which crosses the property. The County Council is proposing to dispose of the property when the status of this road scheme proposal is confirmed; either via a re-endorsement of the plan or a cancellation of the project. Recent valuations obtained from local agents suggest that the current value of the property is in the region of £1.5 million. The property was rented-out for a number of years following its purchase by the County Council, but this became uneconomic when it became necessary to undertake costly refurbishment works.

There is currently no realistic prospect of delivering an Ormskirk Bypass. There is no economic imperative for the scheme provided by development within Lancashire, and this makes it unlikely to attract Government funding in the foreseeable future. No other funding source is available for a scheme of this size. Ormskirk has significant congestion issues that need resolution now; that resolution can be provided without the bypass.

Although there is a very vocal pressure group that is determined to see the bypass progressed, there is also significant opposition to the scheme. There is therefore no clear mandate either for or against the scheme based on the masterplan consultation.

We therefore believe that Ormskirk is better served by the masterplan proposals than by continuing to divert resources to progressing the bypass, and are therefore seeking to remove the protection from the route.

Consultations

Consultation on the draft West Lancashire Highways and Transport Masterplan opened on 2 December 2013 and ran until 7 February 2014. Views were sought

from a range of stakeholders which included councillors, district and parish councils, stakeholders and members of the public. There were 264 responses to the consultation (excluding comments made at the consultation event).

Member engagement:

A briefing for county councillors was held on 26 November 2013. All county councillors were invited to attend. For those councillors who were unable to attend, the event was webcast and documents were posted on the members' portal C-First.

Details of the consultation were also posted on the C-First member portal. Emails were also sent to a wide range of stakeholders informing them of the consultation as well as promoting the events in West Lancashire. A briefing was also given to West Lancashire councillors on 25 November.

Media relations

The masterplan was approved for consultation by the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport on 10 October 2013. A news release was issued and a series of briefings were held with the media. These included BBC Radio Lancashire and BBC North West Tonight.

A further two news releases were issued, the first to promote the local consultation events and the second as a reminder about the final event at Skelmersdale Concourse. Media relations activity has resulted in extensive media coverage. From 19 November 2013 to 12 February 2014 there were 27 articles printed in the local media.

For each story we create a total score depending how positive or negative the story is and how widely the story appears. This total score can range from -8 to +8 for each story with any positive score representing a positive story. The average score for all West Lancashire masterplan related stories is 3 (fairly positive).

Website

A dedicated area for the consultation was developed on the County Council's website. Visits to the page between 2 December 2013 and 9 February 2014 were as follows:

Website stats for 02.12.13 to 09.02.14	Page views	Unique page views	Avg. time on page
	1,104	912	00:03:47

Social media messages

A series of messages were posted on the county council's social media channels - Facebook and Twitter - throughout the consultation period.

Our messages on Facebook reached nearly 4,600 people.
Our messages on Twitter reached over 40,000 people.

Consultation documents

Consultation documents were made available at the following locations across West Lancashire from 2 December:

- West Lancashire Borough Council offices
- Skelmersdale Concourse Information Centre
- Ormskirk County Information Centre
- Burscough Bridge Interchange
- Ormskirk Library
- Skelmersdale Library
- Burscough Library
- Upholland Library
- Parbold Library
- Tarleton Library
- Glenburn High School

A full report on the consultation, including comments, is presented at Appendix 'B'.

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Financial

The programme of studies and work potentially stemming from them as presented in the masterplan, covering development stages and construction works, will be funded from a number of sources, details of which are presented in Appendix 1 of the masterplan document. The County Council's financial contribution for the period 2014/15 to 2015/16, which will provide for preparatory scheme identification and design works, with the prospect for some physical works, is contained within the agreed Capital Programme and Local Transport Plan Implementation Plan for that period. Beyond then, the County Council's contributions will be contained within the LTP Integrated Transport Block grant from Government, alongside any financial commitments arising from the other Masterplans which have yet to be brought forward for consultation.

No final commitment to the implementation of any project in this masterplan will be made until all required funding has been confirmed.

However, as reported it has become necessary to make some alterations to the timescale for delivery of this masterplan since the draft was published for consultation.

The proposed movement strategies for Skelmersdale and Ormskirk represent a substantial revenue commitment in terms of either consultancy costs or staff time to progress them. Given anticipated revenue funding, the intention is to

pursue the movement strategies 'in house' with limited input from our framework consultants. However, the transformation of the County Council could present a risk to delivery if staff are no longer available to carry the programme forward.

Legal

The recommendations contained within the masterplan are in compliance with relevant legislation; and will be procured in accordance with appropriate legislation and protocols, including, where relevant, European directives.

Environmental

The draft Environmental Report on the West Lancashire Highways and Transport Masterplan is attached at Appendix 'C'. This report sets out the potential environmental and health impacts of the masterplan and provides background information as to where mitigation may be needed as schemes develop. No significant risks are identified. The report also contains a Habitat Regulations Assessment and an Equality Impact Assessment.

Risk management

Risks are outlined in the report.

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Directorate/Tel
West Lancashire Highways and Transport Masterplan Consultation Draft	December 2013	Marcus Hudson, Environment, (01772) 530696
Lancashire Local Transport Plan Implementation Plan for 2012/13-2014/15	August 2012	Marcus Hudson, Environment, (01772) 530696
M58 to Southport Corridor Study: Stage 2: Option Development, Appraisal and Strategy Report	August 2012	Marcus Hudson, Environment, (01772) 530696
Liverpool City Region Long Term Rail Strategy	August 2014	Marcus Hudson, Environment, (01772) 530696
Lancashire Strategic Economic Plan: A Growth Deal for the Arc of Prosperity	March 2014	Kathryn Molloy, Office of the Chief Executive (01772) 538790

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A