

**Report to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport**  
**Report submitted by: Interim Executive Director for Environment**  
**Date: 11 November 2014**

**Part I**

Electoral Divisions affected:  
Preston Rural, Preston West  
and Fylde East

**Adoption of Routes for the Preston Western Distributor Road and Associated East-West Link Road and Cottam Link Road**  
(Appendices 'A' and 'B' refer)

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**Executive Summary**

Approval is sought to adopt and protect the routes for the Preston Western Distributor (PWD) and the routes for the associated links serving strategic housing development areas in North West Preston, namely the East-West Link Road and Cottam Link road shown on Appendix 'A'.

Route adoption and protection is identified as an early activity under the Infrastructure Delivery Plan to the Preston, South Ribble, and Lancashire City Deal. Once these routes are approved, the County Council will be in a position to progress a planning application and start land assembly procedures.

A six-week public consultation exercise was held on one preferred alignment rather than options for these routes, for the reasons that, as described in this report, the search corridor for the PWD has already been identified in the published Central Lancashire Highways and Transport Masterplan, and constraints and design imperatives along that corridor point to a route. For the East-West Link Road, an extensive masterplanning exercise has already been undertaken which has shown an indicative line which this exercise bases a route on.

The consultation received 510 responses, 44% of which cited support for or raised no issue with the preferred choice of routes. Those who raised issues or concerns sought assurances over the timing and potential impact of the construction of the roads and the traffic conditions that would follow. Additionally they raised matters over the impact of the new roads on the existing environment and residences.

Whilst these matters do not directly impact on the choice of route, they will be given full consideration as detailed designs for the roads schemes and environmental measures to mitigate for their potential impacts are developed to support a planning application. A Consultation Report, presented at Appendix 'B', compiles and summarises the comments received and responds to these. None of the issues identified through the consultation impede the progression of the routes at this stage.

This is deemed to be a Key Decision and the provisions of Standing Order No 25 have been complied with.

### **Recommendation**

1. The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport is asked to agree that;
  - i. the Cabinet Member for Environment, Planning and Cultural Services be requested to adopt and safeguard the routes of the proposed Preston Western Distributor, East-West Link Road and Cottam Link Road as that shown on Appendix 'A' for development control purposes,
  - ii. subject to approval of recommendation i. set out above, the routes, as shown on Appendix 'A', be approved and adopted as the route of the proposed Preston Western Distributor, East-West Link Road and Cottam Link Road,
  - iii. Preston City Council and Fylde Borough Council be notified that the routes shown on Appendix 'A' should be included in the Development Plan as the site of the proposed Preston Western Distributor, East-West Link Road and Cottam Link Road.
2. Subject to approval of recommendation i. above, the Cabinet Member for Environment, Planning and Cultural Services is asked to give approval to adopt and safeguard the routes of the proposed Preston Western Distributor, East-West Link Road and Cottam Link Road as that shown on Appendix 'A' for development control purposes.

### **Background and Advice**

The Central Lancashire Highways and Transport Masterplan (CLTM) was published by the County Council in March 2013 and provides the basis for determining future transport investment priorities across Preston, South Ribble and Chorley. Many of the transport priorities identify large-scale improvements and additions to the existing highway network.

The Preston Western Distributor (PWD) road is the most substantial road scheme proposed in Central Lancashire, a new 4 kilometre long dual carriageway linking the A583 at Lea to the M55 at Bartle and forming a new junction, Junction 2, on the M55 motorway. It will provide direct access to the strategic housing areas in North West

Preston shown in the adopted Central Lancashire Core Strategy and detailed in the City Council's published Masterplan for that area, served from the PWD by a new East-West Link Road and Cottam Link Road.

The PWD will also enable provision of, and provide a direct connection to, the proposed Cottam Parkway Railway Station presented in the CLTM, and much improved access to the motorway network from the Enterprise Zone at Warton. Importantly, this new road capacity will provide relief to peak hour congestion for east-west journeys using city centre routes and allow bus priority measures, public realm enhancements and improvements to prioritise and promote walking and cycling along existing road corridors.

The notion of a westerly distributor road to serve Preston is not new and can be traced back to a Government Green Paper Roads for The Future, published in 1969, which introduced a number of 'Strategy Routes', including a Westerly bypass of Preston. The principle of a Western bypass formed part of the Outline Plan published in 1974 for the Central Lancashire New Town. As part of a substantial investment in road and other transport infrastructure to support development of the new town area, the outline plan established the principle for a western bypass of Preston to provide a link from the M55 linking to the A583 on a route very similar to that that has been the subject of public consultation and is now presented in this report. The Preston Box Western section or Preston Western By-Pass, as it came to be known, continued to be promoted into the early 1980s because of the contribution it would make to relieving congestion on the internal roads of the new town and to ensuring that all through traffic could avoid the congested centre of Preston. Subsequently, it briefly came to form a Department for Transport scheme as part of the Government's National Roads Programme but was withdrawn in March 1994 in line with the then Government's policy of minimising the creation of new trunk route corridors in favour of using existing transport corridors.

It has been evident over many years that the existing transport network serving Preston and the wider area is becoming increasingly congested, despite a range of improvements and sustainable travel measures that have been introduced. Recognising this issue, the Central Lancashire local authorities agreed to fund a transport model to study traffic flows on the transport network and permit a more comprehensive and strategic analysis of how the area's transport network functions and the potential alternatives to satisfying current and future traffic demands.

This study was brought into particular focus with the preparation of the Central Lancashire Core Strategy and the scale and distribution of new housing to be accommodated as part of the area's development strategy. The strategic development areas identified in these plans, in North West Preston and along the A582/B5253 in South Ribble, prompted the County Council, as Transport and Highway Authority, to conclude that simply relying on improvements to the existing network and even with a much greater investment in sustainable travel measures, Central Lancashire's transport network would not be able to cope. Instead, substantial additional transport infrastructure would be required to serve this new development and growth in the wider area. The County Council undertook to develop a solution to support the area's growth and deliver the Core Strategy.

As a result, Central Lancashire was the first area in the County to have a highways and transport masterplan put in place. These masterplans were identified in the Local Transport Plan as a means for highway and transport implications to properly inform and influence Lancashire's development and growth, and provide a sound basis to determine transport investment priorities.

The Central Lancashire Highways and Transport Masterplan (CLTM) was published in March 2013 following a public consultation exercise, and represents the County Council's considered position of the transport infrastructure needed to support the delivery of its development strategy. Its findings and proposals have been fully incorporated into the emerging Local Plans, and more particularly site allocations policies, in the area.

Supporting the development of the CLTM, consideration was given to whether and what measures to improve travel on the existing road network could provide a level of relief sufficient to resolve existing problems and serve future demand from proposed development and growth of the area. Numerous measures were identified across the area and across all modes of travel, but these assessments made it clear that even with a major programme of sustainable transport improvements these would not have the necessary impact. Indeed, these measures would not compensate for even a modest traffic growth between now and 2026.

What became apparent through independent technical assessment underpinning the CLTM is that the current transport network serving Preston and South Ribble simply does not have enough spare capacity to allow for significant changes to improve bus journey times and enhance the public realm to encourage walking and cycling. This led the masterplan to conclude that significant additions to existing highway infrastructure, of a scale and location to support the area's strategic development sites, would be needed to support the development aspirations of Central Lancashire.

Accepting that there is no choice but to create new highway capacity to serve new development, consideration was given through the masterplan exercise to the route for a new western distributor for Preston as part of major package of integrated transport improvements, including the creation of new highway capacity, to support new development and allow as well as significant improvements to sustainable transport provision and resolve issues that could otherwise mean gridlock for the existing network.

The initial indication of this major highway improvement came as part of the public consultation exercise for the CLTM, and showed a route from A583 in the general vicinity of the junction of A5085 and A583, northwards to M55. The final published CLTM identified an 'indicative search corridor' along this same line, 500m wide, in which the proposed road would be situated.

In support of this road scheme, the submitted Preston Local Plan (Site Allocations and Development Management Policies) (July 2014) contains a policy (IN1) that presents a corridor of search and requires a road alignment to be identified.

Since this initial identification, a route for the PWD and its associated link roads has been developed within the search corridor and consulted on, and whilst alternative alignments have been considered the constraints within the corridor present few if any

options for the route. After given full consideration to the comments and suggestions made as part of the public consultation exercise, a preferred choice of routes for adoption is presented on Appendix 'A'.

### **Preston, South Ribble and Lancashire City Deal**

The Preston, South Ribble and Lancashire City Deal was signed in September 2013 and provides a financial structure to deliver these roads, subject to planning, land assembly and other statutory procedures, and in advance of the bulk of development so to minimise as far as possible the impacts on the existing transport network and on local communities and road users.

In April 2014, a programme for delivery, presented in the City Deal Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) for 2014/15 was endorsed by the Cabinets of the 3 Local Authorities and approved by the City Deal Executive. The IDP timetable programmes the development and approval of routes for the Preston Western Distributor and the East West Link Road to be adopted for the purpose of seeking protection of the route from other developments which might impede its delivery. This protection will come through identification and safeguarding of the routes in the Preston Local Plan. The Local Plan's Site Allocations and Development Management are currently the subject of public examination and the City Council and County Council have submitted a joint statement to the Planning Inspector which suggests a modification to the Local Plan in order to identify and safeguard these routes as appropriate as necessary infrastructure to support development in NW Preston and in the case of the PWD its broader strategic purpose. Formal adoption of these routes will also allow for detailed survey and design activities to proceed and statutory planning and land assembly processes to formally commence.

### **Consultations**

A 6-week period of public consultation was held during May and June 2014. A series of events were held in the local area; affected communities, landowners and parish councils were engaged. Web-based and media information presented the technical justification to the choice of route and invited comments thereon.

The consultation presented a single route design for each road proposal, rather than a series of options for these routes, for the reasons that, as described in this report, the search corridor for the PWD has already been identified in the published Central Lancashire Highways and Transport Masterplan, NMPM and emerging Preston Local Plan, and constraints and design imperatives along that corridor point to a specific route. For the East-West Link Road, an extensive masterplanning exercise has already been undertaken which has shown an indicative line which this exercise bases a route on.

510 responses were received during the consultation. A comprehensive report of the consultation is included in Appendix 'B'. 44% of which cited support for or raised no issue with the preferred choice of routes. Those who raised issues or concerns sought assurances over the timing and potential impact of the construction of the roads and the traffic conditions that would follow. Additionally they raised matters over the impact of the new roads on the existing environment and residences Whilst these matters do not directly impact on the choice of route, and do not lead to amendments to the choice of routes at this stage, they will be given full consideration as detailed designs for the

roads schemes and environmental measures to mitigate for their potential impacts are developed to support a planning application.

The main issues to emerge through the consultation, and a summary response for each, are:

- Air and noise pollution concerns

As part of the statutory planning process an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) containing detailed analysis of how the new roads could benefit or adversely affect the local area will be submitted in line with the Planning Application. The application will include a detailed scheme design which will include measures to mitigate for the impacts identified in the EIA.

- Design and alignment of the proposals

The north and south alignment and the northern and southern limits of the Preston Western Distributor road are influenced by the search corridor identified in the Central Lancashire Highway and Transport Masterplan (CLHTM) and the scope of the Masterplan. In turn, this corridor recognised that, in order to meet the objectives for the road, but also reflecting various land use, physical and engineering obstacles and imperatives, the choice of a line between A583 and M55 is tightly constrained along much of its route.

This search corridor was influenced by the following scheme objectives: to provide a bypass on the city's westerly side; to directly and conveniently serve the NW Preston development; to provide the means to service a new railway station at Cottam; to provide the maximum opportunity to divert traffic passing through Preston; and to provide the means to achieve a longer term aspiration to bridge the River Ribble and link to the South Ribble Western distributor (A582), in addition to the design imperatives to minimise land take, avoid residential property loss in particular, and ensure an acceptable and workable junction arrangement with the M55.

Within this search corridor a line of best fit that requires limited land take and avoids any demolition of existing properties has been identified. A significant constraint on the alignment is the positioning of a new M55 junction 2 which is positioned to avoid any effect on the existing M55 bridges and adjacent properties on Rosemary Lane and Sandy Lane and to provide sufficient space for motorway slip roads. The proposed southern alignment of the PWD is constrained by the 'avenue' of electricity pylons and seeks to use this sterilised corridor in avoiding Lea Town and the business and amenity of the golf course whilst avoiding relocating the pylons.

A suggestion was made for the alternative choice of route for the northernmost section between the roundabout to the East West Link Road and M55 junction. This suggested an alternative route running to the western side of Bartle Hall rather than the eastern side. This has been duly considered, and officers have concluded that this alignment would encounter engineering issues, would have greater impact on the surroundings than the preferred route due to the requirement for high embankments and bridges over the existing roads in close proximity to residential properties and the Hall.

The East-West Link road is required to provide access to strategic housing sites defined in the adopted Central Lancashire Core Strategy and presented in the North West Preston Masterplan. The proposed alignment will form a central spine road capturing the through traffic and that

leaving or entering the area. Its central alignment provides a median distance travel from all properties in the area thereby minimising traffic volumes through residential streets.

A representation was received that sought to alter the section of the Link Road as it passes north of residential properties along Lightfoot Lane/Abbott Croft. This suggestion would see the Link Road take a more northerly route than proposed. This suggestion has been duly considered, and the Council's consultation route remains its preference for the reason that it provides the better alternative for residential traffic from the new housing developments and so the best means to relieve Lightfoot Lane of traffic.

- Impacts on existing local network

The design and delivery of the new roads will be supported by detailed traffic modelling to confirm the ability of the new roads to handle future demand and also to determine any further local improvements on the existing network, supporting both the planning application and business case submission.

Providing these new roads will allow opportunities for bus priority measures, public realm enhancements, and improvements to prioritise and promote walking and cycling along the B5411 Tag Lane / Woodplumpton Road and A583 Riversway corridors and in the Lane Ends local centre.

Suitable and complementary measures will be put in place to deal with specific local issues where this is appropriate.

The effect on the existing highway network including the rights of way network has been carefully considered and adjustments to the network will not impinge on its effectiveness or intrinsic value as a transport, connectivity or leisure facility

- Negative impacts on the rural environment

The EIA will consider all aspects of the proposed schemes including the impact of development on sites of significant biological and ecological interest.

The design of these roads will seek as a first principle to avoid damaging recognised habitats and settings of value. Where this is not practicable, suitable mitigation measures will be introduced to compensate or reduce impacts to acceptable levels.

### **Determining Factors for the Route for Preston Western Distributor**

At the southern end the position of the connection with the A583 in the area of the Blackpool Road, Riversway Junction provides for a junction configuration to allow all movements at the junction of the existing and proposed roads. In addition, in utilising an existing junction location it avoids the need for an extra junction on the A583 or its adjacent roads. In the proposed location the future aspiration for a connection across the River Ribble can be accommodated.

Moving north the corridor is restricted throughout its entire length by the overhead very high voltage power lines and their supporting pylons. With these and the narrow corridor offered between Ashton and Lea Golf Club and Lea Town the route remains significantly restrained for approximately 1.2km. Immediately north at this point, the

road must bridge the Lancaster Canal and Preston-Blackpool rail line which largely fixes a perpendicular approach to minimise the degree of engineering and impact in this location. This arrangement also provides for connection to a new Cottam Parkway station using the same roundabout junction which will serve traffic into Cottam.

The next point of constraint is a further 1.4km to the north where the existing roads - Lea Lane, Sidgreaves Lane, Bartle Lane, Rosemary Lane and Blackleach Lane - converge within a small area. Allied to the requirement for a connection to a new East-West Link Road to serve the North West Preston development, a roundabout junction is provided in the vicinity of the convergence thereby providing single connection point.

The most northerly section connecting to the M55 is defined to avoid Bartle Hall and position a new motorway junction as far west as possible to minimise the disturbance to the Bartle Wetland Biological Heritage Site without affecting the existing motorway bridge at Rosemary Lane and the adjacent residential and medical properties.

The Highways Agency also confirms this to be a suitable location for the junction and generally has responded very positively to the creation of a new motorway junction as part of PWD, and has recently secured funding through the Department of Transport's Pinch Point Scheme for the amount of £25-30 million.

Importantly, the line designed at this stage does not necessitate demolition of any residential or other buildings.

The road would be built as a dual carriageway with separate shared use cycle track along its length between A583 and the connection to the East-West Link Road. No cycling or footway provision would be made along the section serving M55 traffic. Junctions along its length would be limited to a large roundabout serving the East-West Link Road and other local roads and a second roundabout junction to serve a Cottam Link Road and potential Cottam Parkway station.

### **Determining Factors for the Route of East-West Link Road**

Turning to these associated link roads, the North West Preston Masterplan (NWPM) published for consultation provides a comprehensive special planning framework for the area of North West Preston including parts of Cottam, Bartle and Ingol and provision of upwards of 5,000 or so new homes. The NWPM has explored the idea of an East West Link Road which was identified through the public consultation exercise for the CLTM to ensure ready and convenient access to and from the PWD for both local and long-distance journeys, in order to deter through traffic and locally generated traffic from using already congested routes to the east towards A6, Preston city centre and M55 Junction 1.

The CLTM and, in turn, NWMP identify an indicative east-west line for a spine road through the development area from Lightfoot Lane in the east to a connection to the Preston Western Distributor Road at its western end. The line of the link road has been adjusted subsequent to discussions with the house builders who hold options on the developable land within the NWPM area and other interested parties along its proposed route to provide a deliverable solution.



Following extensive public consultation, the preferred choice of route for the East West Link Road commences at its eastern limit with a new traffic signal controlled junction on Lightfoot Lane approximately 400 metres west of the existing junction with Wychnor. After initially taking a northern direction the route turns west to commence and maintain its East West alignment. It passes through existing agricultural land which the NWPM allocates for future housing. Following this first 1.3km the route approaches Tabley Lane which has properties along its length in this area. The proposed crossing point would avoid all residential properties with the intention that the Melbourne Industrial Estate can be reconfigured whilst maintaining the viability of the businesses. A junction would be created with Tabley Lane.

Proceeding west the route runs immediately adjacent and parallel to Maxy Lane which it would replace. A new junction would be created with Sandy Lane.

Continuing to its connection with PWD at Lea Lane the route crosses agricultural land which the NWPM allocates for future housing. Whilst there are no specific engineering constraints along this route, it is aligned with field and ownership boundaries to maximise the developable land and minimise environmental losses.

### **Determining Factors for the Route of Cottam Link Road**

The Cottam Link Road forms a short section of road to link to Cottam Way. The route is limited by built residential and other properties, including Lea Endowed CE Primary School. The line seeks to minimise the impact on these properties and would remove passing traffic from the junction, and its immediate vicinity, of Sidgreaves Lane and Lea Lane.

Both link roads will be a single carriageway along their length with a grassed verge adjacent to the carriageway and then a shared used cycletrack. As the detail of the development area develops the possibility exists that the shared used cycletracks may detach further from the carriageways through the green areas to be provided as part of NWPM.

### **Implications:**

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

### **Risk management**

If the recommendation is not followed, there is the risk that development will take place along the route making the future construction of a new road either more difficult or impossible.

Risk to uncertainty and delay on progressing statutory planning and land assembly procedures and in turn construction of road schemes.

The route affects land forming part of Lea Endowed CE School for which approval will be required from the Secretary of State. The route will reduce the school's playing field area which is already less than the required area for playing fields set out in the Area Guidelines for School Playing Fields. The County Council is committed to address this issue through remedial works and potential additional land.

Financial implications are referred to below

### **Financial, Legal, Property**

There are financial implications in relation to the protection of the routes for the PWD and the associated East-West Link Road and Cottam Link Road. A small number of properties are directly affected by the route. Under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, the authority may receive claims relating to blight.

Funding for the whole scheme including any potential costs associated with blight has been secured through the Preston, South Ribble and Lancashire City Deal Infrastructure Delivery Fund.

### **List of Background Papers**

Paper	Date	Contact/Directorate/Tel
Preston Western Distributor, East West Link Road and Cottam consultation report	2014	Phil Wilson/ Environment/34559

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A.