



AGENDA ITEM: 5(j)

**CABINET:
14 January 2014**

Report of:	Assistant Director Planning
Relevant Managing Director:	Managing Director (Transformation)
Relevant Portfolio Holder:	Councillor M Forshaw
Contact for further information:	Mr P Richards (Extn. 5046) (peter.richards@westlancs.gov.uk)

**SUBJECT: DRAFT WEST LANCASHIRE HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT
MASTERPLAN**

Wards affected: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To inform Members of the draft West Lancashire Highways and Transport Masterplan document and to seek authorisation for the submission of the Council's formal response to the consultation that closes on the 24 January 2014 (Appendix A).

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That the attached comments at Appendix A as the Council's formal response to the consultation on the Draft West Lancashire Highways and Transport Masterplan be approved.

2.2 That call in is not appropriate for this item as the consultation closes on the 24 January 2014.

3.0 BACKGROUND

3.1 Lancashire County Council (LCC) is producing a set of five highways and transport masterplans to cover all 12 districts of Lancashire and, where necessary, neighbouring areas. These masterplans will contain LCC's ideas and

plans to improve the transport network in Lancashire over the coming years to ensure the right infrastructure to support future growth is delivered.

- 3.2 The plans set out major changes to the highways, public transport, walking and cycling facilities which would bring economic benefits across the county. The purpose of these changes is to unlock planned housing developments, create new jobs and provide the network needed to make sure the predicted increases in traffic are successfully managed.
- 3.3 LCC has so far produced masterplans for Central and East Lancashire which are available on the County Council's website and include details relating to delivery and funding. LCC are now developing the West Lancashire masterplan and have produced a draft document which will be subject to public consultation from 2 December 2013 to 24 January 2014.

4.0 ASSISTANT DIRECTOR PLANNING'S COMMENTS

- 4.1 The draft West Lancashire Highways and Transport Masterplan outlines the County Council's ambitious and wide-ranging vision to transform the transport network in West Lancashire over the coming decades. The plan includes options for major improvements to highways, public transport and walking and cycling facilities across the Borough to assist in delivering planned development and the potential for economic growth without detracting from the Borough's distinctive rural character.
- 4.2 Some early engagement between LCC and WLBC Officers has taken place to ensure that the masterplan reflects local priorities, as set out within the West Lancashire Local Plan 2012-2027. However, the current consultation exercise is the first opportunity for the Council to formally engage and share views about the draft masterplan to ensure that the final version is reflective of local circumstances and priorities and is a useful document that the Council can use as a focus for funding.
- 4.3 Members and Senior Officer's were also invited to a briefing session on the document by LCC on 17 December to allow them the opportunity to hear first hand about the proposals in the draft masterplan and to discuss the implications. In addition, the consultation exercise has included events in Ormskirk, Skelmersdale and Burscough to allow the general public to have the opportunity to talk to LCC staff about the plans in more detail. WLBC Planning Officer's have also supported these events.
- 4.4 In terms of the contents of the document, proposals in the draft masterplan include:
- Linking Skelmersdale to the rail network with a new rail station and bus interchange in the town centre.
 - Transforming the way people in Skelmersdale travel by redesigning roads, removing underpasses and making it easier for people to walk, cycle and use public transport within the town and to access wider job opportunities.

- Creating better cycling and walking links between Skelmersdale and Ormskirk, building on existing plans for a linear park along the former railway line.
- A dedicated cycling and walking link between Burscough and Ormskirk to provide a direct off-road route via a new linear park.
- Tackling congestion in Ormskirk town centre, building on options outlined in a recent study to manage and reduce traffic, focused on making walking and cycling more attractive options, including a new and innovative cycle hire scheme.
- The proposed replacement of the Grade II Listed Derby Street Bridge in Ormskirk which requires significant maintenance and is not fit for modern highway purposes.
- A complementary route management plan that would realise the potential of a new Thornton to Switch Island link road in Sefton to provide a better route for traffic travelling between the M58 and Southport, instead of the A570 through Ormskirk.
- Investigate options and prepare a business case for electrification of the Ormskirk to Preston railway line to fulfil its potential as a commuter route.
- Complete the proposed Tarleton Green Lane Link road by the end of 2016 to reduce HGV traffic through the villages of Hesketh Bank and Tarleton.
- Investigating options to ensure access to services from rural areas.

4.5 In terms of what the draft masterplan does not seek to deliver, the document rules out the option of pursuing a bypass of Ormskirk, as a recent study has shown current congestion is largely caused by local traffic, limiting the benefit of a bypass and meaning that a combination of other proposals as outlined in the masterplan (5th bullet point above) will be more effective. The draft masterplan also makes the case that it would not be feasible, at present, to pursue reinstatement of the railway curves at Burscough due to the lack of a robust business case. However, it is clear that the lines will remain protected to avoid prejudicing the future potential of reopening them, should circumstances change.

4.6 As reflected in the attached proposed consultation response (Appendix A), I recommend that the Council's consultation response to this draft masterplan should, overall, be positive, as there are many beneficial proposals outlined in the draft masterplan. In particular, the proposals for Skelmersdale, centred on a new rail link into Skelmersdale and complementary proposals to improve movement to and around the town by public transport, cycling and on foot, may potentially have a significant transformative impact on the town and positive benefits for the wider Borough.

4.7 However, I recommend that a few concerns should be raised in the Council's consultation response regarding specific proposals or matters within the draft masterplan:

- Derby Street Railway Bridge – I have significant concerns about the proposal to replace this Grade II Listed Building and would like to be engaged in a more thorough exercise to consider all the alternatives before any proposal to replace the bridge is taken forward.

- The need to address route management and congestion on all main highway routes through the Borough – the draft masterplan addresses some of the key highway routes through the Borough but there does not appear to be any proposals for the A570 through Scarisbrick and into Southport, the A59 through Burscough and the A577 between Ormskirk and Skelmersdale, all of which are routes that I have concerns about.
- Infrastructure for Electric Vehicles – the draft masterplan includes some very positive proposals so far as reducing the Borough’s transport-related carbon footprint, but makes no mention of electric vehicles and the necessary infrastructure for them, despite the West Lancs Local Plan requiring such infrastructure in new developments and actively encouraging electric vehicles.
- Burscough Curves – it is welcomed that the draft masterplan continues to protect the route of the Burscough Curves but I would like to see more positivity about the potential for re-opening the Curves to link Southport to both Ormskirk and Preston and a commitment to explore further actual proposals for doing so, before “shelving” the Curves indefinitely.

4.8 The final key concern in relation to the draft masterplan lies in the crucial area of funding. It is welcomed that LCC are being so positive about transport proposals in West Lancashire, but there needs to be a degree of certainty regarding the funding (and therefore realism) of all the proposals in the draft masterplan. The draft masterplan proposes a large number of schemes, many of which have no specific funding yet identified. CIL is referred to as a potential source of funding, but I would be concerned if too much emphasis and reliance were being placed on this, given that the funding available through CIL will be limited and will need to be used on various infrastructure needs related to new development, not just transport infrastructure.

4.9 The Single Local Growth Fund (SLGF) which will be available through LEPs from 2015/16 has been mentioned as a potential source of funding, but I would like to see more detail of how LCC will prioritise funding from this source to key projects within West Lancashire. This is particularly pertinent given that there are not only several costly transport proposals in West Lancashire, but others in the four other Highways and Transport Masterplans that have been, or are being, prepared by LCC as well.

4.10 As such, it is important that the issue of funding is explored in more detail in the masterplan and that other key partners, such as the Lancashire LEP and Liverpool LEP are brought on-board with, and commit to delivering, the schemes within the masterplan. Otherwise, I have concerns regarding how LCC and the Lancashire LEP will prioritise the spending of the SLGF in the face of several competing agendas within Lancashire and even potentially competing schemes within West Lancashire.

5.0 NEXT STEPS

5.1 Assuming that Cabinet endorse the submission of the Council’s formal consultation response (Appendix A), the comments will be submitted to, and

considered by LCC before the final document is amended (if necessary) and approved for publication.

6.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS / COMMUNITY STRATEGY

6.1 The draft West Lancashire Highways and Transport Masterplan outlines the County Council's plans to improve the transport network in West Lancashire over the coming decades. The plan includes options for major improvements to highways with a focus on public transport, walking and cycling facilities across the borough which is consistent with the principal aims and objectives of the West Lancashire Sustainable Community Strategy.

7.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The production of the draft West Lancashire Highways and Transport Masterplan has no direct financial implications to the Council, with only limited officer time resource implications through supporting the consultation process of this document. However, the longer term implications of the document may have positive financial implications to the Council as the masterplan may be used to channel future funding bids in support of the planned improvements within the document.

8.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

8.1 A failure to provide the Council's views through this important consultation may result in a missed opportunity on the part of the Council to ensure the masterplan truly reflects the Council's priorities in respect of highways and transport within West Lancashire.

Background Documents

<u>Date</u>	<u>Document</u>
October 2013	West Lancashire Local Plan 2012-2027 Development Plan Document
December 2013	Draft West Lancashire Highways and Transport Masterplan

<http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/corporate/web/?siteid=5489&pageid=43608&e=e>

Equality Impact Assessment

There is a direct impact on members of the public. Therefore an Equality Impact Assessment is required. A formal equality impact assessment is attached as an Appendix to this report, the results of which have been taken into account in the Recommendations contained within this report.

Appendices

- A. West Lancashire Borough Council Formal Consultation Response
- B. Equality Impact Assessment

