



**CORPORATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:**
1 December 2016

CABINET:
10 January 2017

Report of: Director of Development and Regeneration Services

Relevant Portfolio Holder: Councillor J Hodson

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SUBJECT: DRAFT GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE AND CYCLING STRATEGY

Wards affected: All wards

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To seek Cabinet approval to consult on the draft Green Infrastructure and Cycling Strategy as attached as Appendix A to this report.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO CORPORATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

2.1 That agreed comments from the Committee be recommended to Cabinet for consideration alongside the draft Green Infrastructure and Cycling Strategy.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET

3.1 That Cabinet approve the draft Green Infrastructure and Cycling Strategy at Appendix A for public consultation.

4.0 BACKGROUND

4.1 The vision for a Borough-wide Green Infrastructure and Cycling Strategy follows on from Policy EN3: Provision of Green Infrastructure and Open Recreation Space of the West Lancashire Local Plan 2012-2027, adopted in October 2013.

4.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) defines Green Infrastructure as “a network of multifunctional green space, both urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities”. Green Infrastructure is making a positive contribution to creating sustainable communities, improving people’s health and wellbeing, and tackling

climate change, which is becoming increasingly important in the context of balancing housing growth with environmental protection.

- 4.3 Green Infrastructure is a term used to summarise the variety of functions of open spaces around us including parks, sports facilities, play areas, natural and semi natural open spaces, footpaths or green corridors, allotments and the inland waterways and canal network. Good quality Green Infrastructure can help improve where people live and work, mitigate and adapt to climate change, provide alternative modes of transport and assist in regeneration, as well as helping to attract visitors and improve the visitor economy. With this in mind, the development of the Green Infrastructure and Cycling Strategy has a key role in delivering healthy sustainable communities, and is as important as other more 'conventional' forms of infrastructure.
- 4.4 The Strategy sets out the general and policy context for Green Infrastructure and cycling; a vision for Green Infrastructure and cycling in West Lancashire, and a set of objectives through which the vision can be realised. Future plans for improving Green Infrastructure and cycling facilities in West Lancashire are also identified, looking briefly at how the Strategy can be delivered and funded via a series of projects and initiatives. The Strategy also looks beyond the site specific issues and considers the bigger picture, seeking to identify current gaps in provision or linkages, and opportunities for enhancing existing provision and filling gaps.

5.0 CURRENT PROPOSALS

- 5.1 The Strategy proposes a wide-range of potential Green Infrastructure and Cycling projects in West Lancashire, many of which need to be worked up further to identify specific costs and funding in order to bring forward their delivery. As such, the Strategy, at this stage, is very much a list of potential projects that the Council and partners can develop further over the coming years and seek funding for as they develop (and as funding becomes available) to gradually, over a period of years, build-up the Green Infrastructure and cycling networks in West Lancashire.
- 5.2 However, the list of projects, which is necessarily very cycling-based, is not just a random selection of projects but an attempt to co-ordinate and focus effort on establishing a high quality, accessible network for Green Infrastructure and cycling that links up the major settlements in the Borough with one another and with visitor attractions, thus allowing residents of the Borough to use the network for commuting and leisure and allowing visitors / commuters from outside the Borough to travel sustainably by train and then bicycle to attractions and workplaces.
- 5.3 The centre-piece of the network, which delivers a key ask of the West Lancashire Economic Development Strategy, is the creation of a "West Lancs Wheel" by adding to and improving existing cycle routes to create a circular route between Skelmersdale, Ormskirk, Burscough, Parbold and back around to Skelmersdale. This would be achieved by delivering two of the four Linear Parks in the West Lancs Local Plan (Skelmersdale-Ormskirk and Ormskirk-Burscough), improving access along the Leeds-Liverpool Canal between Burscough and Parbold (along a section of the Pier-to-Pier route) and then designating a mixture of on-road and

off-road cycle routes between Parbold and Skelmersdale town centre, incorporating the proposed Tawd Valley Cycle Route.

- 5.4 In addition, it is important that other parts of the Borough, including larger settlements and key visitor attractions such as Martin Mere, are connected to this West Lancs Wheel by cycle routes off the main Wheel. In particular, the long-term aspiration would be to create a primarily off-road route from Top Locks in Burscough along the Rufford Branch Canal up to Tarleton and on to Hesketh Bank, Banks and connecting into the Sefton cycle network into Southport. A key stretch of this connection would be the River Douglas Linear Park in Tarleton and Hesketh Bank.
- 5.5 Other key parts of the network to be created / improved would be more direct links to Southport from Burscough through Scarisbrick on the Pier-to-Pier route and, in the long-term, improving the canal towpath west and south from Burscough into the Western Parishes to be more accessible for cyclists and ultimately linking with the Cheshire Lines Cycle Path which passes through Great Altcar and Downholland and provides connections into Formby and Maghull and beyond.
- 5.6 In relation to non-cycling parts of the network, in particular specific spaces or attractions on the network, projects within the Strategy include improvements to the Tawd Valley Park in Skelmersdale, a Beacon Country Park Visitor Centre, a Mere Sands Wood Visitor Centre and several other improved facilities across West Lancashire, but it is hoped that more projects of this nature can be identified and added into the Strategy going forward.

6.0 NEXT STEPS

- 6.1 If Cabinet approve the draft Green Infrastructure and Cycling Strategy for consultation, the consultation will take place for six weeks from late January until early March 2017. Following consultation, the Strategy will be amended and updated if necessary, in the light of the comments received, and will be brought to Cabinet for adoption in June 2017. However, it is hoped that the Strategy can be a regularly updated document as specific projects develop and progress and as new projects are identified and added in.

7.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS / COMMUNITY STRATEGY

- 7.1 The Green Infrastructure and Cycling Strategy will help deliver the policies and vision set out within the Local Plan and so will help fulfil objectives within the Sustainable Community Strategy by creating sustainable methods of movement throughout the Borough.

8.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The preparation of the Green Infrastructure Strategy and Cycling Strategy has been resourced through the Planning Service's revenue budget. Whilst the Strategy identifies capital projects to meet the Council's aspirations, this report does not commit the Council to the funding of any of the projects. Funding of the individual projects will need to be determined on a case-by-case basis as external funding opportunities arise. In particular, while CIL will be one source of funding, there will need to be a wider consideration by the Council of what to prioritise CIL

funding to given the wide range of infrastructure demands that will wish to draw from the finite CIL monies likely to be collected. However, development opportunities in general may well provide opportunities to lever in funding which CIL or other funding sources can match in order to deliver projects within this Strategy.

9.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

9.1 This report seeks authorisation of the Draft Green Infrastructure and Cycling Strategy to go out for a period of consultation with the public. Responses received will help shape the document further before a decision is required in respect of the adoption of the document. As such, no final decision on the strategy is being made at this time and so this report does not require a formal risk assessment and no changes have been made to risk registers.

Background Documents

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Report.

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 Appendix B to this report, the results of which have been taken into account in the Recommendations contained within this report.

Appendices

Appendix A – Draft Green Infrastructure and Cycling Strategy

Appendix B – Equality Impact Assessment

Appendix C – Minute of Corporate and Environmental Overview & Scrutiny Committee –
1 December 2016 (*Cabinet only*)