



CABINET: 22 February 2017

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**Report of: Director of Development and Regeneration**

**Relevant Portfolio Holder: Councillor J Hodson**

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**SUBJECT: PROVISION OF NEW CYCLE & PEDESTRIAN LINK THROUGH THE  
TAWD VALLEY, SKELMERSDALE, LINKING TO WEST LANCASHIRE COLLEGE**

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Wards affected: Birch Green and Skelmersdale North

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To seek approval for proposed amendments to the plans for the Tawd Valley cycle and pedestrian link in Skelmersdale, which is being part-funded by Section 106 monies held by the Council.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 That the proposed amendments to the route of, and proposals for, the Tawd Valley cycle and pedestrian link be approved
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## **3.0 THE SCHEME AND PROPOSED AMENDMENTS**

- 3.1 In January 2014, Cabinet delegated authority to the (then) Assistant Director Planning, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, to:
- i) Negotiate and enter into agreement with Lancashire County Council to provide a grant using S106 funding to assist them with the construction of the proposed cycle and pedestrian link through the Tawd Valley and to also to give Lancashire County Council access to land owned by West Lancashire Borough Council to conduct work to construct the proposed route.

- ii) Release section 106 funds of up to £200,000 secured through planning permissions related to West Lancashire College, to contribute towards the implementation of a new cycle and pedestrian path through the Tawd Valley linking the college campus with surrounding residential areas.

3.2 Subsequently, a scheme was agreed and Lancashire County Council (LCC) submitted a planning application for the route, which runs from Skelmersdale Library to the western end of the road named Irwell through the Tawd Valley, with a route coming off this main route into the rear of the West Lancashire College Campus. The planning application proposed lighting the route with specialist, low level street lights designed to minimise disruption to the Bats that roost and feed in the Tawd Valley.

3.3 The application (2015/1140/FUL) was granted permission on 1 August 2016 but the Council were informed later in 2016 by LCC officers that the cost of the scheme had increased given the need to replace two bridges on the permitted route and potentially improve the existing footbridge over Houghton's Road to the north of the permitted route to enable bicycles to use the bridge safely, and so allowing LCC to designate a cycle route to link the permitted Tawd Valley route up to the existing cycle routes in the Manfield / Summer Street area of Ashurst. As such, officers from both Councils met to consider how costs could be reduced on the scheme whilst still delivering this key connection.

3.4 As a result of these discussions the following amendments have been proposed to the route:

- An alternative route for a section of the link through the Tawd Valley to utilise more of an existing footpath and to involve a route which only requires improvements to one bridge.
- A more appropriate link into Inglewhite.
- This phase of the link will terminate at Irwell, meaning that any connection across Houghton's Road into Ashurst will form a second phase to be funded separately at a later date.
- No lighting will be provided as part of these proposals, although there will be the option of adding lighting in at a later date should it prove necessary and cost-effective.

It is anticipated that the above amendments would allow the scheme to be delivered within the available budget.

3.5 The plan at Appendix 1 shows the section through the Tawd Valley which will no longer be implemented, together with the new proposed route to replace it. That section of the new route which follows an existing adopted footpath can be more easily upgraded and benefits from permitted development rights for such engineering works. However, the section marked with a hatched box will require a fresh planning permission, just for that section, in order to progress.

3.6 The other new section, providing a more appropriate link into Inglewhite, behind the College Campus, will also require a fresh planning permission. Both of these sections are only a small section (approximately 150m in length) of the overall route of the proposed Tawd Valley cycle and pedestrian link and therefore it is

possible for work to commence on the remainder of the route that already has permission while planning permission is sought for the two new sections.

- 3.7 The bridge that will require improvement as part of the new section is currently unadopted and is owned and maintained by WLBC. The bridge is capable of being upgraded to safely accommodate bicycles, but it will not be upgraded to an adoptable standard as this would significantly increase the cost of the scheme and thereby prejudice its delivery. As the upgraded bridge will not be adopted, the Borough Council will retain ownership and responsibility for its future maintenance.
- 3.8 Should Cabinet accept the recommendation at 2.1 above and LCC also formally approve the amendments, then it is anticipated that work will start on site later this year.

#### **4.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS/COMMUNITY STRATEGY**

- 4.1 The proposed scheme will have positive sustainability implications and help support the community strategy. The proposed scheme will help provide safer communities by providing a new route through the Tawd Valley, develop stronger communities by linking residential areas with educational, employment and social opportunities and provide improved health for all by encouraging cycling and walking.

#### **5.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 All financial / resource implications arising from this report in respect of the delivery of the proposed scheme will be met using funding from Section 106 commuted sums secured through planning permissions related to West Lancashire College and funding allocated through the Lancashire County Council LTP3. Any costs for WLBC related to maintenance responsibilities for the scheme once delivered (such as for the improved bridge) will be met within existing budgets.

#### **6.0 RISK ASSESSMENT**

- 6.1 The proposals for a new cycle way between the Tawd Valley and West Lancashire College provide an opportunity to spend that Section 106 funding secured through the recent planning permissions at West Lancashire College to provide a safe and sustainable alternative mode of transport between the College and residential areas via the Tawd Valley. Given that LCC will be delivering and maintaining the cycle way (except for the existing WLBC bridge to be improved), there is limited risk for WLBC in this project.
- 6.2 If a suitable scheme is not agreed that enables the S106 monies to be spent within 10 years, the monies would have to be returned to West Lancashire College.
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## **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**

The Tawd Valley cycle and pedestrian link may have a direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders. Therefore, an Equality Impact Assessment is required and is appended at Appendix 3.

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Plan of route for Tawd Valley cycle and pedestrian link

Appendix 2 – Minute of Cabinet, 14 January 2014, Item 78.

Appendix 3 – Equality Impact Assessment

Appendix 1

