



CABINET: 12 September 2017

Report of: Director Development and Regeneration

Relevant Portfolio Holder: Councillor J Hodson

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SUBJECT: WEST LANCASHIRE GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE AND CYCLING STRATEGY

Wards affected: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To inform Cabinet of the feedback received through public consultation undertaken on the draft West Lancashire Green Infrastructure and Cycling Strategy; seek endorsement of the responses proposed to the feedback received contained in the Consultation Summary Report; and to seek adoption of the amended Green Infrastructure and Cycling Strategy.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That the proposed responses to the feedback received through public consultation upon the draft West Lancashire Green Infrastructure and Cycling Strategy, as contained in the Consultation Summary Report at Appendix A, be endorsed.

2.2 That the amended West Lancashire Green Infrastructure and Cycling Strategy attached at Appendix B be adopted.

2.3 That the Director of Development and Regeneration, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, be authorised to make any necessary minor amendments to the West Lancashire Green Infrastructure and Cycling Strategy.

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Green infrastructure is a term used for the variety of green and blue spaces around us, including parks, sports facilities, play areas, natural and semi natural open spaces, footpaths, green corridors, allotments and the inland waterways and canal network. 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”.
- 3.2 The vision for a West Lancashire 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.
- 3.3 Through its multifunctional role, good quality green infrastructure can help enhance where people live and work, encourage active lifestyles and improve wellbeing, 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. Improving cycling infrastructure will encourage sustainable travel which is beneficial for the environment and for health.
- 3.4 Public consultation was undertaken on a draft West Lancashire Green Infrastructure and Cycling Strategy (GICS) between 26 January and 10 March 2017. The consultation was publicised through a variety of methods including the Council's website, press advertisement, press release and correspondence with consultees on the Council's Local Plan consultation database. GICS documentation was made available on the Council's website, as well as at libraries in West Lancashire, at the Council offices in Ormskirk and the Customer Service Point in Skelmersdale. Comments were invited by email and post, with the option of completing a questionnaire. A total of 34 respondees replied to the consultation which included a mix of residents, Parish Councils, developers, landowners and statutory bodies such as Natural England and the Environment Agency. The main content of those responses are considered in section 4 below.
- 3.5 The GICS contains a vision for green infrastructure and cycling in West Lancashire and a set of objectives through which the vision can be realised. Importantly, it also identifies a series of future projects and initiatives for improving green infrastructure and cycling facilities in West Lancashire, including details of how they may be delivered and funded and over what timescales. The Strategy seeks to identify current gaps in provision or linkages required and opportunities for addressing this by enhancing that which exists. Where possible, off-road cycleway solutions are sought.
- 3.6 One significant gap in cycling provision in West Lancashire is a high quality and safe cycling route which offers connectivity between the Borough's main settlements. As such, a key proposal is the formation of a circular route between Ormskirk, Burscough, Newburgh / Parbold and Skelmersdale, termed the 'West Lancashire Wheel'. This would incorporate two proposed linear parks between Ormskirk and Burscough and Ormskirk and Skelmersdale respectively. It would also include part of the existing Southport to Wigan 'Pier to Pier' route along the

Leeds-Liverpool canal towpath between Burscough and Parbold as well as currently planned improvements along the Tawd Valley into Skelmersdale. Two further linear parks are planned at Banks and the River Douglas at Tarleton and there are also a number of other strategic projects which are identified for Ormskirk, Skelmersdale, the Eastern Parishes, the Northern Parishes and Burscough and Western Parishes. They include the development of a cycle link between Ormskirk bus and rail stations and Edge Hill University and improvements to several sections of the Leeds-Liverpool canal towpaths. In addition, bridleways upgrades are planned at Rufford and North Meols to provide off-road cycle paths.

4.0 MATTERS ARISING FROM PUBLIC CONSULTATION

- 4.1 The Consultation Summary Report, providing details of the responses received to the public consultation that took place between 26 January and 10 March 2017, is attached at Appendix A. Appended to that report are all detailed comments received and Council officers' proposed responses to them. The main issues arising during the consultation can be summarised as follows.
- 4.2 First, there were requests for more information to be included in the Green Infrastructure and Cycling Strategy in relation to the different functions of green infrastructure (GI) and the need to undertake an assessment of those functions, including biodiversity, flood storage and drainage. Additionally, the need to identify allotments as a green space type was also raised. Whilst officers recognise the importance of these different functions, if adopted the GICS will sit alongside existing and proposed documents including the Lancashire Ecological Network and West Lancashire Open Space Study, Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and Leisure Strategy which will provide specific evidence in relation to these matters. In particular, the Borough-wide Open Space Study will assess the need for different types of green spaces in the Borough, including allotments, and will go some way towards assessing GI. As such, no changes to the GICS are proposed other than referring to links to these other documents in the introduction to the Strategy.
- 4.3 Secondly, the quality, usage, lighting and maintenance of existing and planned cycleways and footways was also raised. In response, it is currently Council protocol to ensure that, wherever possible, all new cycle paths are constructed to Lancashire County Council (LCC) adoption standards and can therefore be maintained by the Highway Authority. The introduction of bridleways for use by horses on new cycleways was suggested and could be investigated at the design stage of a project; however it is understood that LCC advice has been to separate such use from cycle and footpaths. Again, no significant changes to the GICS are required as a result of these comments.
- 4.4 Thirdly, safety was raised as an issue in connection with existing routes through Scarisbrick, in the vicinity of Appley Bridge, the A59 at Burscough and along the A5209. Highway safety is a matter for the Highway Authority (either Highways England or Lancashire County Council as appropriate) and so these specific concerns can be referred to them. West Lancashire Borough Council will liaise with Lancashire County Council where assisted crossing points are required on new proposed routes and these proposals will undergo a health and safety audit.

- 4.5 Fourthly, plan detail and the long timescales for delivery of projects contained in the GICS were questioned. Minor changes are proposed to the Strategy in response by increasing the size of the 'West Lancashire Wheel' plan and giving greater emphasis to plans being for indicative purposes only. Timescales for the delivery of projects have not been amended as they need to be realistic and as such still refer to short term (up to 10 years) and longer term (greater than 10 years).
- 4.6 The majority of comments received related to specific sites and proposals, including Alty's Brickworks, the Burscough Industrial Estate, the Southport-Wigan Pier to Pier Route (particularly between Parbold and Appley Bridge), the A5209 and querying costs of and funding for the Edge Hill Cycle Route. The A5209 comments refer specifically to the planned on road cycle route in the Newburgh-Parbold area as an on-road section of the West Lancs Wheel. Unfortunately, there is no obvious off-road solution to provide a connection between the canal at Parbold and the top of the Tawd Valley in Skelmersdale and so an on-road section is necessary, including a short section along the A5209. Investigations will therefore focus upon making the A5209 on-road route safe for cyclists.
- 4.7 No changes are needed to the GICS in relation to the Edge Hill cycle route and as a clarification the scheme is to be largely funded by Section 106 contributions from development at the University and Local Transport Plan funding. Comments relating to Alty's Brickworks queried the validity of requiring on site provision of a section of the River Douglas linear park as part of development proposals for the site. However, officers consider that this provision is a Local Plan policy requirement and under the Council's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) regulation 123 list it is appropriate for it to be funded separately from any CIL payments.
- 4.8 Proposed amendments to the GICS in response to site and location specific comments received involve including a reference to investigating linkage to and pedestrian and cycling improvements within the Burscough Industrial Estate and including the Leeds-Liverpool canal towpath improvements between Parbold and Appley Bridge within the strategic schemes for Burscough and Western Parishes and the Eastern Parishes respectively. Other proposed changes to the draft Green Infrastructure and Cycling Strategy are of a more minor nature and are detailed in section 4 of the Consultation Summary Report under 'Actions'. A copy of the Green Infrastructure and Cycling Strategy for which approval is sought as Council policy is attached at Appendix B. This highlights all proposed changes as a result of responses to public consultation comments received.

5.0 NEXT STEPS

- 5.1 If the West Lancashire Green Infrastructure and Cycling Strategy is adopted as Council policy it will be used to guide planning decisions (as a material consideration) and as an Implementation Strategy in the following ways:
- to allocate CIL monies toward projects within the GICS;
 - to identify delivery partners for specific projects and therefore establish the responsibilities and range of funding required; and/ or

- to identify where projects within the GICS fall completely or partially within a development site.

5.2 Progress in project delivery will be monitored and it is intended that the Strategy will be regularly updated as specific projects develop and progress and new projects are identified and added in. The delegation sought in paragraph 2.3 above will allow minor updates to the GICS to be made as necessary as minor details on particular projects evolve.

6.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS/COMMUNITY STRATEGY

6.1 The Green Infrastructure and Cycling Strategy will help to deliver the vision, strategy and policies set out in the West Lancashire Local Plan and so will help to fulfil objectives within the Sustainable Community Strategy by creating sustainable patterns of movement within the Borough and enhancing a better environment for people who live, work and spend their leisure time in West Lancs. There would be no significant impact on crime and disorder.

7.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

7.1 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 these 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.

8.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

8.1 This report seeks a decision in relation to adopt the Green Infrastructure and Cycling Strategy. While the GICS includes a wide range of aspirations for infrastructure improvements, it does not commit the Council to having to deliver all those aspirations, only to exploring opportunities for delivering wherever funding opportunities arise. As such, there are no risks associated with adopting the GICS.

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, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders, therefore an Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken at the time of producing the draft West Lancashire Green Infrastructure and Cycling Strategy. The results of the Equality Impact Assessment were taken into account when producing the draft Green Infrastructure and Cycling Strategy and are not materially altered as a consequence of the proposed changes to the GISC resulting from public consultation. No further Equality Impact Assessment is therefore required.

Appendices

Appendix A - Consultation Feedback Summary Report (including comments received and proposed response in full).

Appendix B - West Lancashire Green Infrastructure and Cycling Strategy (including tracked changes).