

# CONSULTATION SUMMARY REPORT

## Draft Green Infrastructure and Cycling Strategy

September 2017

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## **1. Introduction**

The development of a the Green Infrastructure and Cycling Strategy offers supporting guidance and a delivery plan for a network of green infrastructure and cycling.

The draft Green Infrastructure and Cycling Strategy looks to establish a high quality, accessible network for green infrastructure and cycling that links the borough's major settlements with one another and visitor attractions.

In accordance with this, the Council prepared a Draft Green Infrastructure and Cycling Strategy for consultation and publically consulted between 26 January 2017 and 10 March 2017.

This document provides a summary of how the Council consulted, the general issues raised through representations and the Council response to those issues. This document also sets out how the Draft Green Infrastructure and Cycling Strategy will be shaped as a direct result of the comments received, to illustrate how consultation informs decision making.

It should be acknowledged that the Council do consider all comments received, although may not always agree with opinions and therefore changes cannot be made in all cases. The Council is required to make balanced decisions, taking into account the views from all sides.

## **2. Consultation and publicity methods**

The Council publicised consultation on the Draft Green Infrastructure and Cycling Strategy through the following methods:

- Press advert in the free, local Champion paper
- Email / letters to all consultees on the consultation database, including statutory consultees
- Press release
- Council website

Throughout the consultation, planning officers were available to answer questions:

- By email
- By phone
- In person at Council offices

Consultation materials were available to read at:

- Libraries
- Council offices
- On the Council Website

Comments were invited through

- By returning forms through email or post
- By returning questionnaires through email or post

### **3. Summary of comments received**

34 responses were received on the Draft Green Infrastructure and Cycling Strategy. A report containing those comments, in full, can be found on the Council webpage at [www.westlancs.gov.uk/GICS](http://www.westlancs.gov.uk/GICS) or in Appendix 1 to this document. Comments generally focused on a series of key concerns, as set out below.

#### Cycleway/Footpaths

A number of representations were received focusing on the quality of cycle paths/footpaths throughout the Borough with particular reference to safe routes and the canal towpaths.

#### Maintenance

Issues were raised throughout the consultation representations regarding the maintenance of paths/routes. For example where developers will construct part of the new routes within a development site who will maintain the path and what mechanisms will be in place to do so for this section of land.

#### Bridleways

One representation was received requesting that new cycle routes be developed to also function as Bridleways offering alternative recreational uses.

#### *Council response*

It is currently Council protocol to ensure that all new cycle paths are constructed up to Lancashire County Council's adoption standards and therefore can be maintained by the Highways Authority.

The introduction of paths up to bridleway standards is a positive representation, however there is not any demand evidence to suggest such uses are sought within West Lancashire and there are safety implications for having pedestrians cycles and horses on a single track. Previous Lancashire County Council advice would be to have the bridleway separate from a cycle path/footpath and this would come with additional funding and sourcing of land implications.

#### Green Infrastructure

#### Biodiversity

There was a common theme from representations for the encouragement of biodiversity within the Borough; there was a request for areas that are not registered as having any particular environmental designation to be mentioned in the Strategy. This was part of requests to include more information in the GICS in relation to the different functions of green infrastructure.

## Flood Refuge areas and drainage

One representation made reference to the Council planning/allocating areas for flood refuge/ drainage as part of the wider green infrastructure for the Borough.

### *Council response*

The Council recognise the importance of the biodiversity throughout the Borough and encourage the enhancement and management of such areas, throughout the adopted West Lancashire Local Plan. However, in order to reference all of the areas that people claim has some form of habitat would require significant amounts of evidence / surveying work for which funding is not available, therefore the Council will only reference those sites that have a local, regional or national designation and reference the Ecological Network which is a specific document / evidence base where updated and new site could be examined. In addition, whilst officers recognise the importance of different functions of green infrastructure, 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.

The Council are not providing any reference to creating flood storage areas or remedies for drainage throughout the Green Infrastructure and Cycling Strategy, other than to identify flood storage as an Objective. This matter is left to the Lead Local Flood Authority to deal with who are responsible for this area and are specialist in this field. Such uses would also require Environmental Impact Assessments and would require allocating through the Local Plan process where up to date evidence such as a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment was available.

### Site Specific Issues

Canal towpath improvements

Yew Tree Farm

Within the Strategic projects section the Ormskirk to Burscough Linear Park route indicates a cycle path directly through the site, this is not the same as that in the latest planning application.

Owners to be named on delivery tables

It was expressed in one representation that the Council name all partners and owners of land within the delivery tables.

A5209 off road

Representations requested that all routes be delivered off road, particularly along the A5209.

River Douglas double charging on this site

A representation in relation the River Douglas Linear Park was received which expressed concern over the funding section of the Strategy, it is suggested in the representation that S106 agreements should not be used for the delivery of the Linear Park and scheme should be funded via the Community Infrastructure Levy only.

#### Edge Hill Cycle Link – funding

A common theme throughout the representation is that the proposal for the Edge Hill Cycle link should be provided by the University.

#### Firswood Road

Concerns are expressed that a recently approved planning application did not make provision for the element of the linear park along the Ormskirk to Skelmersdale route to be implemented.

#### Burscough Industrial Estate

A view was expressed that walking and cycling to work on the industrial estate(s) is difficult due to the lack of pavements and walking routes and that a safe footpath and cycling network should be outlined for the Burscough Industrial Estate.

#### Southport-Wigan Pier to Pier Cycle Route

A view was expressed that the need for upgrading the Leeds-Liverpool canal towpath between Parbold and Appley Bridge should be included within the GICS.

#### *Council response*

In relation to the path via Yew Tree Farm the plans state that the routes are indicative.

The Council refrain from naming individual landowners as this can frequently change and as some schemes are noted to be long term and with a 15 year delivery period this could cause an issue of data becoming out-dated.

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. Whilst it is an aim of the strategy to deliver an off road route for cycling where possible in this instance 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.

In relation to the River Douglas development site, officers consider that on site provision of a section of the River Douglas linear park as part of development proposals for the site 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.

No changes are needed to the GICS in relation to the Edge Hill Cycle route which is largely being funded by a S106 agreement from development that occurred at the university and LTP funding.

The approved Development Brief for Firwood Road states that provision for the Linear Park must be made allowing for the route to pass through the site. There is provision in planning permission 2016/1027/FUL for a financial contribution towards the cost of the Firwood Road to Neverstitch Road section of the proposed Ormskirk to Skelmersdale Linear Park.

The GICS will include a reference to investigating linkage to and pedestrian and cycling improvements within the Burscough Industrial Estate and will include 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 Issues

#### Allotments

There was a request that all areas containing allotments be listed within the strategy.

#### Lack of detail in mapping

Concern expressed over the lack of detailing in mapping, especially the West Lancashire Wheel proposal.

#### Safety

There were concerns expressed about the need for additional crossing points introduced in order for the safe crossing of walkers/cyclists where proposals are intersected by a highway. Concerns were also raised regarding on road cycling routes and the impact on safety for these cycling designations with a preference for off road cycle routes.

### Council response

The Council recognises the importance of allotments as part of green infrastructure and supports the development of new allotments and protects existing allotments from development, however the Strategy is not the correct evidence base for listing or assessing the need for allotment sites. This will be undertaken through the emerging Open Space Study as an audit of types of open space.

Whilst the Council understands comments regarding the lack of detail in relation to mapping of the proposed cycle routes, in order to show the Council's future intentions it is necessary to have indicative plans. It will be made clear that these



plans are indicative. The 'West Lancashire Wheel' plan will be made larger to enable more detail to be seen.

Highway safety on the existing network is primarily a matter for the Highway Authority (either Highways England or Lancashire County Council as appropriate). 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. It is an aim of the strategy to deliver an off road route for cycling where possible; where a development site is located on part of the proposed route the section can be incorporated into the site. However, on most occasions this option is not available and there are land ownership constraints therefore the only way of connecting routes is via an on-road alternative.

#### **4. Council actions and influences on the Green Infrastructure and Cycling Strategy**

Engagement including written representations has proved to be extremely useful in cataloguing a significant level of detailed feedback from a broad section of the community.

All of the written representations have been responded to directly within Appendix 1 to this document.

In terms of moving the Strategy forward to the final stage, a number of specific actions will be carried forward as a result of comments from representations.

The below table lists a number of key actions that will be carried forward into the Strategy. For clarity it does not list every matter, rather it focuses on the key issues that were flagged up through the consultation.

<b>Action</b>
1. Reference the Canal & River Trust – Better Towpaths for Everyone. A national policy for sharing towpaths to be inserted in the 'Links to Other Strategies and Documents' section of the introduction to the GICS.
2. Reference the West Lancashire Open Space Study to be inserted in the 'Links to Other Strategies and Documents' section of the introduction to the GICS.
3. Provide clarification on West Lancashire Borough Council being an associate member of the Liverpool City Region.
4. Add reference to the Greater Manchester City of Trees initiative in 'Other policy considerations' section.
5. Add reference to involving landowners and developers in the design, usability etc of green infrastructure at Objective no.7.
6. Add new Objective 'Create flood storage opportunities, as a function of slowing down surface water run off.'
7. Add reference at section 6 under 'Ribble Estuary' heading to managed retreat of tidal defences at Hesketh Out Marsh East and consequential inundation and creation of tidal saltmarsh.
8. Add reference to Woodland Access Standard at Section 6 as part of commentary in relation to ancient woodland and trees.
9. Make Indicative West Lancashire Wheel Plan larger to assist readability.
10. Insert reference that all plans, particularly those of linear parks, are indicative routes.
11. Amend section 1 of Ormskirk-Skelmersdale linear park project table to refer to delivery partners as LCC, WLBC and developers.
12. Add Burscough Industrial Estate cycling and pedestrian access to be investigated to the Burscough and Western Parishes table of strategic projects.
13. Add Parbold to Appley Bridge 'Pier to Pier' route improvements to the canal towpath to the Eastern Parishes table of strategic projects.

## **5. Conclusions / Next steps**

The consultation responses have highlighted that there are a small number of minor modifications to be made to the Final Green Infrastructure and Cycling Strategy.

The Council has considered the feedback relating to these issues and will ensure that as the Final Strategy addresses these issues that require actions.

Using the comments received through the consultation process, the Strategy has been refined and the next version, Final Green Infrastructure and Cycling Strategy, Presented to Cabinet and Planning Committee for adoption in September 2017.

The Final Green Infrastructure and Cycling Strategy will be adopted and assist in guiding applications for development of a connected Green Infrastructure and Cycling network across West Lancashire.

## **Appendix 1 – Consultation Representations and the Council’s Responses**