
Consultation FAQ's

Date: 06/11/17

- What is happening?

Warrington Borough Council (WBC) wants to improve the town for residents, business and visitors alike. Western Link is a new road to tackle congestion, improve traffic flow, unlock key development land and improve the quality of life for residents within the borough.

The project team is recommending a preferred route option to the council's Executive Board for approval and adoption as an official council scheme.

- Which option is the preferred option?

Following feedback from the consultation, plus the technical assessments undertaken as part of producing the Outline Business Case (OBC), the project team is recommending that the revised Red Route option is taken forward as the Preferred Option to the council's Executive Board.

- Why is the Red Route considered the preferred option?

The project team has undertaken a number of technical assessments in addition to analysing the feedback from the public consultation. All the routes were appraised in a multi-criteria appraisal known as INSET, which matches the DfT's appraisal guidance. This considers factors such as design, cost, deliverability, equality, environmental impact, social impact, public consultation response, cost-benefit analysis and other factors. The Red Route performed best based on this appraisal process.

The full technical assessment can be seen in the 'Outline Business Case' section of the Western Link webpage.

- What other routes have been considered?

We initially identified and explored the merits of a number of route corridors, including 10 schemes that did not involve building a new road.

These were then developed into 44 options for further consideration, with most connecting the A56 at Higher Walton to the A562 & A57 at Liverpool Road and Sankey Bridges.

Following this, the project team reduced the number of potential routes based on an appraisal of the options against the agreed scheme objectives. The council then consulted the public on six potential route options.

- What are the scheme benefits for Warrington people?

In appraising the various route options, the red route option has been estimated to deliver the following key benefits:

- Improvements to the performance of junctions in the town centre;
- Reduction in north-south and south-north journey times;
- Delivery of a number of housing and employment sites associated with the Western Link;
- Reduction in traffic using the town centre;
- Reductions in the air quality and noise impacts in the town centre; and
- Delivery of sites that continue sustained economic growth.

- How long will it take to build?

The programme contained within the OBC estimates a construction period starting in 2020 and concluding in 2023.

- What happens next?

The recommended preferred route option will be submitted to the Council's Executive Board on the 13th November 2017 for approval and permission to submit the Outline Business Case to the DfT for consideration as a funding bid. Should that bid be successful, the council anticipate hearing in May 2018 and further work can commence in areas such as land acquisition, detailed design, planning inquiry, environmental assessment and other areas.

- What happens if the council is unsuccessful in being granted funding from this round of bids for DfT funding?

The council is bidding to the second round of the Large Local Majors Fund from the DfT. The submission for this round is in December 2017. Should the council not be successful in receiving funding from this round of the Large Local Majors Fund, the DfT has stated that the council can resubmit to the third round in mid-2018.

The DfT has also noted that wider national funding opportunities are going to be coming forward under the new National Roads Fund, which will run from 2020-25. Should the council be unsuccessful in any of the Large Local Majors Funding rounds, the DfT has advised we would be eligible to apply for the National Roads Fund.

- Will the scheme impact on surrounding green spaces and habitats?

As part of the planning application, programmed for October 2018, a full Environmental Impact Assessment will be completed. The OBC contains an initial assessment of the impact of the Western Link on the green spaces and habitats within Warrington.

- What about Moore Valley Nature Reserve?

The preferred route option avoids Moore Valley Nature Reserve.

- What about Sankey Valley Park and Morley Common?

The Red Route option contains a section of proposed highway that would require land take at the southern end of Sankey Valley Park, between Old Liverpool Road and A57 Sankey Way and at the edge of Morley Common. Plans will be subject to a full Environmental Impact Assessment during the planning application.

We would look to provide nearby suitable 'exchange' land that would become accessible to the public to compensate for the loss of existing public greenspace.

Sankey Valley Park is a public park that occupies part of the Sankey Valley - the main park itself covers over 1½ miles between Sankey Bridges in the south and Callands in the north and is shown on this plan:

http://www.warrington.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/649/sankey_valley_park_map.pdf

- What will happen to Morley Common's facilities?

WBC is sensitive to the fact that Morley Common is a well-used public space with facilities including football pitches, changing areas and a new playground. Should the scheme receive funding from central government, the council will relocate facilities affected at Morley Common.

- What associated development/housing is proposed?

At this stage only a new highway is proposed. However, the draft Local Plan, with the issue of housing and business site allocations around the borough, proposes areas of housing and employment around the Western Link.

- Will this just be an alternative route to the Mersey Gateway?

Following the opening of the Mersey Gateway in October 2017, WBC is currently monitoring traffic flows to understand the impact, if any, on Warrington's highway network.

The Mersey Gateway, including its operation with tolling, has been included in the transport modelling within the OBC.

- Will Arpley Meadows be affected?

The draft Local Plan will deal with proposed housing allocations across the borough, including the areas around the Western Link. However, if housing allocations are identified for Arpley Meadows as part of the draft Local Plan, Western Link will certainly be connected to these homes.

- Won't congestion just get worse during construction?

As with any large construction scheme that involves changes to an existing highway, there is always a certain amount of disruption. We will seek to minimise this disruption through a combination of evening and weekend working, plus the use of off-site construction to reduce on highway construction time. We would also aim to keep all affected highways open, using temporary signals and other measures where necessary.

- Where will the money come from?

The submission of the OBC includes a section outlining the financial arrangements for the delivery of the scheme. The council is bidding for 67% of the overall scheme funding, amounting to £142.54m from central government. The

remaining 33% (£70.20m) will be drawn from prudential council borrowing. The total cost of the red route is an estimated £212.74m.

- Why has the cost increased?

The costings are based on the most accurate information available at this point in the development of the project and include a £27.62m risk allocation for identified areas where estimates have been made of potential cost increases. The design process needed to estimate costs, in itself, costs a considerable amount of money. It is good practice to initially carry out a basic amount of design to compare different schemes and when the preferred scheme is identified, more detailed design work is carried out, risks are further assessed and this, in turn, increases the cost.

- How will this improve traffic congestion in the borough?

Modelling work highlighted that the scheme has a positive impact on traffic congestion at key pinch points within Warrington. A more detailed overview of the main scheme benefits is contained within the OBC on the Western Link webpage.

- What will happen to impacted houses/businesses?

The council has identified which properties and rights to land would be required to construct the scheme. The council has written to the impacted land owners or has approached them directly. We appreciate this will be significant cause of anxiety to those affected individuals and the council wishes to deal with these matters as sensitively as possible over the coming months. More information will be available on the Western Link webpage should the council's Executive Board approve the recommended route.

- What plans will be in place to ease congestion over the construction period?

The council will aim to minimise disruption through a combination of evening and weekend working, plus the use of off-site construction to reduce on-site construction time. More detailed plans will be available prior to the start of construction.

- How does this affect the swingbridges? Can they be refurbished too?

The swingbridges are owned and operated by the Manchester Ship Canal Company and, as such, the council can only try to influence any refurbishment activity. The council is regularly updated on the condition of the swingbridges by the Manchester Ship Canal Company and they maintain that the bridges are kept in good working order. With regard to the appearance of the swingbridges, Peel has recently announced that they will be embarking on a £1.5m refurbishment of the swingbridges.

The council has an accepted issue that the highway network is vulnerable to disruption through a lack of control over opening of the swingbridges on the Manchester Ship Canal. The preferred option includes a fixed, high-level bridge that will give drivers an alternative route option should the bridges open during travel around Warrington.

- What are you doing to help cyclists, pedestrians and public transport users?

The preferred option will include new sections for cyclists and pedestrians; this includes 'on-road' cycle lanes and pedestrian footways. These will connect into further 'off-road' footpaths and cycleways. The Western Link will provide improved access to the south west of the town centre for new public transport routes. The Western Link will have appropriate bus stops located along its length. Further work is required at the detailed design stage, particularly relating to the existing Trans-pennine Trail.

- What is a business case? Why not just build it?

An outline business case is a standard government document that assesses the benefits of a transport scheme, plus details how the council intends to deliver and build the scheme. This allows central government, in this case the DfT, to make decisions about funding investments within their departmental budgets. The Western Link is in a competitive process against 19 other schemes being promoted by other authorities within England.

- My house is near to a line on the plan – would I get compensation for the extra noise and air pollution?

There are certain parameters for meeting the requirements for compensation claims against new highway schemes. If your property is close enough to be affected, then you can apply for compensation known as a 'Part 1 Claim'.

- Why is this money not being spent on schools and healthcare?

Central government funding is allocated by department in the annual budget. Each department sets their spending priorities based on the government manifesto and the relevant policies. Central government has allocated funding for the Department for Transport as part of the current spending policies. The focus of the DfT is to ensure that central

government spending maximises the contribution to the economy, promoting growth in jobs, housing and overall economic growth.

- How much Greenbelt is affected by the scheme?

The Preferred Option currently connects the A56 to the A57. Land to the south of the Manchester Ship Canal from Chester Road is designated as green belt.

- What happens next?

If the business case is approved by the council on the 13th November, we will submit a bid for the scheme to the Department for Transport in December 2017. The successful bids should be announced in May 2018.

If successful, Warrington Borough Council will spend the period from Spring 2018 to Spring 2019 completing a full business case, producing detailed designs, undertaking extensive geotechnical and environmental site work, appointing a contractor and working with businesses and residents to acquire property needed for the preferred option. This period will also include a further public consultation on the preferred option.