

Warrington Western Link – Frequently Asked Questions

Updated 28/1/2020

- **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. Following submission of the Outline Business Case (OBC) in 2017, the Department for Transport (DfT) awarded us funding in April 2019 to develop the business case for a potential new road.

- **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 Red Route is the proposed option to take forward. This road would link the A56 Chester Road in Higher Walton with the A57 Sankey Way in Great Sankey.

- **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 construction period will be around three years - starting in 2023 and concluding in 2026.

- **What happens next?**

We were made aware in April 2019 that the DfT provisionally award the funding to take the project forward. Since then the project team, with the assistance of third parties, have started to undertake a review of any changes that have occurred since the OBC was submitted to DfT. We are now working with a contractor to develop a detailed design which will be completed along with a planning application will be submitted for the scheme over the next 12 – 18 months.

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

As part of the planning application, 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. During detailed design we will look at exactly what land will be impacted. We will look to provide nearby suitable 'exchange' land that would become accessible to the public to compensate for the loss of existing public greenspace.

- **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 playground. During the design phase we will fully review how facilities will be impacted and develop options for relocation, or replacement. Exchange land will be provided as close as possible to the common itself. The existing playground will be relocated to an alternative location at Morley Common.

- **What associated development/housing is proposed?**

At this stage only a new highway is proposed to be constructed. 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. Please refer to the councils local plan webpages to see development proposals.

- **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 as much as possible. We would also aim to keep all affected highways open, using temporary signals and other measures where necessary.

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.

- **Where will the money come from?**

Funding Approval has been given by the DfT. The council was successful 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.

- **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 Outline Business Case on the 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 is available on the project website.

- **How does this affect the swing-bridges? Can they be refurbished too?**

The swing bridges 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 swing bridges by the Manchester Ship Canal Company and they maintain that the bridges are kept in good working order.

The council has an accepted issue that the highway network is vulnerable to disruption through a lack of control over opening of the swing bridges 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 southwest 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 Transpennine Trail.

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

An outline business case and a full business case are standard government documents that assess the benefits of a transport scheme, plus detail 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.

- **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'. More information is available on the project website.

- **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. The plan of the route is available on the website.

- **Will there be access to Sankey Valley Park from Liverpool Road?**

When entering the Sankey Bridges Park Area from Liverpool Road there will be detailed work undertaken to ensure a link remains to the canal bridge that allows people to access Sankey Valley Park. The exact proposals at this stage is unknown by Warrington Borough Council are aware of the requirement for to ensure the link remains between the north and south green areas, over the canal.

- **What will the access be to cross the road at Sankey Expressway from Sankey Valley Park, if the footbridge over the expressway is lost?**

One of these upcoming activities will be a detailed design that will inform the layout of this junction. One aspect which will be included in this will be to review the crossing facilities and to ensure safe pedestrian routes are included within the junction arrangements.

- **Will there be access to WWL from Forrest Way?**

The preferred route option does not allow access from Forest Way to WWL and it is not envisaged that this will change. An Environmental Impact Assessment will be undertaken for the Western Link Scheme and this will be submitted as part of the planning application for the scheme.

- **Will there be a change in air quality due to the construction of western link?**

Additional Air monitoring stations are being commissioned to assess the impact of the Western Link Road for the planning application and for any pre and post assessment of the scheme. There is a substantial lead in period for this equipment but WBC are in the process of arranging this to be procured and installed.

Air quality will be one item which is reviewed as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment that will be submitted as part of the planning application for the scheme.

- **What happens when this road is at full capacity?**

As with The council has a Network Management Duty to ensure the expeditious movement of traffic on its networks and as such, the road will be managed as part of this wider highway network. The council has a long term set of policies and actions to improve and manage travel in Warrington as set out in the Warrington Local Transport Plan (LTP). The LTP can be found online at <https://www.warrington.gov.uk/LTP4>

- **What will be the impact on the memorial garden located behind The Sloop?**

The impact on the memorial garden will be investigated as part of the detailed design process. We will liaise with stakeholders who are associated with this feature.

- **Will coach and horses entrance be opened up for Saxon Park/Forrest Way access be improved?**

This action will not be undertaken as part of the Western Link Scheme. It is a planning condition on the existing development at Saxon Park that the route along Quay Fold is for emergency use only.

- **Has the costing changed as it is now 2 years on since first costed?**

The project budget remains at £212.74m. At outline business case submission in December 2017, the costings at that time were based on the most accurate information available at that point in the development of the project and included a suitable risk allocation for potential cost increases going forward.

- **What will the traffic impact be to/from Port Warrington, in particular HGV traffic?**

The council is currently developing a new local plan for Warrington and is in the process of testing the impacts of proposed future development on the transport network. The exact form of development at Port Warrington is still subject to the adoption of the Local Plan, but based on the published draft local plan policy, traffic assumptions are based on the highway element of a multi-modal distribution development. This generated traffic includes a significant proportion of HGV trips consistent with this type of development. Once the local plan is finalised, the predicted levels of traffic generated by Port Warrington will be fully understood.

- **Will new road be tolled?**

There are no plans to toll the Western Link.

- **What affect is the Mersey Gateway bridge having in Warrington? Will the WLP just be an alternative route to the Mersey Gateway?**

The Council has been monitoring key parts of its road network since before the opening of the Mersey Gateway to understand what impacts, if any, the imposition of tolls would have on traffic levels in Warrington. To date it appears from assessing the monitoring data from before and after opening, that the impact during the daytime has been marginal and raises no cause for concern.

The monitoring will continue and, if trends change adversely, the Memorandum of Understanding the Council has with Halton Borough Council will allow discussion around potential mitigation measures to be had. The most notable increase in traffic on Warrington's road network following the introduction of the tolls is during the evening and overnight, where some significant percentage increases have been measured.

However, as the traffic levels are very low during this period, the absolute numbers of additional vehicles is correspondingly low and does not cause any significant concern. Nevertheless, Warrington will be raising this matter with Halton Borough Council to understand if any measures can be taken to reduce these small increases.

In terms of any impact of traffic diverting from the Mersey Gateway onto the Western Link this is an issue which will be examined closely as part of the development of the Full Business Case for the scheme. Further updates on this will be provided in due course.

- **What Flood Defenses are planned? Sankey Bridges is a high-risk flood area and Eastford Road a medium risk.**

Flood modelling will be undertaken to determine any flood defences required as part of the scheme. A flood risk assessment will be submitted as part of the planning application for the scheme.