

**REPORT TO SHEVINGTON PARISH COUNCIL POLICY AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE-MARCH 2<sup>ND</sup> 2017.**

**WEST LANCASHIRE GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE AND CYCLING DRAFT STRATEGY.**

**Introduction**

Green Infrastructure is a network of high quality green spaces and other natural environmental areas. Cycling is an increasingly popular activity that is intrinsically linked to Green Infrastructure and has the potential to play an important role in contributing towards improved health and general environmental quality. Recognising the importance of Green Infrastructure and cycling in the area, West Lancashire Borough Council has prepared this strategy to retain and enhance Green Infrastructure and to facilitate increased levels of cycling. They have asked for our views on the strategy.

The strategy sits alongside the West Lancashire Local Plan 2012-2027, the Borough's 15 year planning framework, and the Infrastructure Delivery Plan. It updates and supersedes the 2006 West Lancashire Cycling Strategy.

**Vision**

The identity and distinctive landscape of West Lancashire will be valued, sustained and enhanced, enabling people to access and enjoy all that it offers whilst protecting the assets that make the landscape and environment so valuable.

This will incorporate Green Infrastructure such as:

- Wildlife, habitats, and sites of biodiversity value.
- Agriculture.
- Green Spaces and waterways.
- Attractive countryside, including the “Ribble Coast and Wetlands Regional Park” and other Linear Parks.

The identification of new and existing Green Infrastructure will require actions in order to assist in delivering its full potential such as:

- Reductions in the effects of climate change.
- The widespread use of sustainable modes of transport, in particular cycling, and a corresponding reduction in the use of private vehicles.
- Maintained and improved safe pedestrian and cycle routes to provide easier access to education, employment and other key services, as well as providing a leisure and tourism offer, and offering opportunity for exercise as part of a healthier lifestyle.
- Maintenance of the Borough's recreational features and extensive areas of green open space, in order to increase access to, and enjoyment of, Green Infrastructure and cycling by residents of the Borough and visitors. Stewardship of the distinctive landscape and varied biodiversity of rural West Lancashire for its natural environment and as a recreational resource.
- Sustainable tourism, which will be based on the attractive countryside and local heritage including the Leeds-Liverpool Canal and the Ribble Coast and Wetlands Regional Park.

## **Objectives**

### **General Green Infrastructure-related Objectives**

- Protect and enhance the unique character, heritage, function, quality and sense of place of West Lancashire's Green Infrastructure network.
- Provide a network of interconnected Green Infrastructure and spaces rich in habitat and home to a diverse range of wildlife.
- Improve the health of residents through providing attractive opportunities for recreation and sustainable travel.
- Promote the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats, ecological networks and where possible linking habitats together in West Lancashire.
- Ensure ancient woodland and trees and hedgerows which are of local amenity and ecological value are protected wherever possible.
- Integrate planting schemes within all new developments and, on larger housing schemes, encourage the creation of new areas of woodland.
- Involve users, including "friends of" groups, and neighbours of Green Infrastructure in its design, ensuring usability and helping to create a sense of stewardship, ownership and pride.
- Support economic growth, attract inward investment and support redevelopment of brownfield land by improving the setting of industrial and commercial areas through the delivery and enhancement of quality, distinctive and attractive Green Infrastructure.
- Create a quality, distinctive and productive Green Infrastructure network to support rural diversification and tourism.
- Protect and enhance a wide range of high quality opportunities for safe and accessible formal and informal sport, recreation and leisure facilities, to encourage the community and visitors to undertake a variety of healthy exercise within attractive settings.

### **Cycling-specific objectives**

- Capitalise on any opportunities to provide or enhance provision for cycling, whether through planning obligations, or specific funded projects.
- Ensure key green hubs, such as parks, play spaces and woodlands, are linked by means of safe and easily accessible green networks and cycle paths and footpaths that together form a high quality Green Infrastructure grid across the whole of the Borough.

## **Current Green Infrastructure and Cycling Resources**

### **Nature Conservation Sites**

West Lancashire has a range of nature conservation sites, covering all levels of the hierarchy from local through to international importance: local nature reserves, local nature conservation sites, County Biological Heritage Sites, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, National Nature Reserves, and Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation, and Ramsar Sites.

### **Ramsar sites / Special Protection Areas / National Nature Reserves**

The Ribble Estuary and Martin Mere.

## Appendix A

### **Sites of Special Scientific interest (SSSI)**

- Ribble Marshes
- Martin Mere
- Mere Sands Wood
- Wrightington Bar Pasture
- Downholland Moss
- Ravenhead Brickworks

### **Lancashire County Biological Heritage Sites**

Biological Heritage Sites are the most important non-statutory wildlife sites in Lancashire. Biological Heritage Sites contain valuable habitats such as ancient woodland, species-rich grassland, and bogs. Many provide a refuge for rare and threatened plants and animals. Biological Heritage Sites form an irreplaceable part of West Lancashire's environment and play an important part in the strategy to conserve the biological richness of Lancashire. These sites are adjacent to Shevington Parish.

<b>Site Name</b>	<b>Parish</b>
Dean Wood	Up Holland
Fairy Glen and Delf House Wood	Parbold /Wrightington
Big Wood and Wrightington Ponds	Wrightington

### **Local Nature Conservation Sites**

Work is currently being undertaken by Lancashire County Council and Lancashire Wildlife Trust to map the County's Ecological Network. This will incorporate local and county nature conservation sites and wildlife corridors. These sites are adjacent to Shevington Parish.

<b>Site Name</b>	<b>Parish</b>
Appley Lock Pasture	Parbold
Old Varnish Works, Appley Bridge	Parbold
Wrightington Hall and Park	Wrightington

### **Open Space / Playing Fields / Sports Provision**

Existing open spaces have been assessed as part of the work for the Council's 2016 Leisure Strategy. The vast majority of pitches and greens are located at the Borough's main settlements of Skelmersdale, Up Holland, Ormskirk, Aughton, Burscough, Tarleton and Hesketh Bank. Play provision within West Lancashire is generally only catered for within the main settlements of Ormskirk, Skelmersdale and Burscough, with gaps in provision especially to the north of Appley Bridge.

### **Waterways / 'Blue Infrastructure'**

#### **Leeds – Liverpool Canal**

The Leeds Liverpool Canal runs from the south-west of the Borough at Lydiate, northwards towards Scarisbrick Hall, then eastwards to Burscough. The Rufford Branch runs northwards from the Burscough Top Locks junction past Rufford to Tarleton Lock where it connects to the River Douglas and the Ribble Estuary beyond. The main canal continues eastwards from Burscough past Parbold and Appley Bridge towards Wigan. The canal provides an important wildlife corridor and significant leisure resource, for boaters, anglers, walkers and cyclists. The towpath along the Leeds Liverpool Canal has

## **Appendix A**

already seen significant upgrading at various points, improving access for cyclists and wheelchairs. Sections of the towpath comprise the Pier to Pier cycle route

### **River Douglas**

The River Douglas flows westwards from the M6 at Shevington / Gathurst (at which point it comprises the parish boundary), following the line of the Leeds Liverpool Canal to Parbold, before heading north towards Rufford, Tarleton and the Ribble Estuary.

Whilst the river does not have a public footpath alongside it, the Douglas Valley south of Parbold and Appley Bridge is a very attractive landscape criss-crossed by public footpaths.

### **Other Watercourses**

There are various other minor watercourses throughout the Borough. One significant Green Infrastructure asset is Fairy Glen, a very attractive wooded area west of Appley Bridge flanking Sprodley Brook, which is a Biological Heritage Site.

### **Cycling Infrastructure**

Much of West Lancashire has a mostly flat or gently undulating topography, as well as an extensive network of attractive and generally quiet lanes, several railway stations, and easy access to facilities such as cafes, public houses, and small scale tourist attractions.

Currently West Lancashire has around 25 km of designated cycle routes, the majority of which are off-road. There is a section of the Lancashire Cycle Way (NCN Regional Route 91) which is a signed on-road route for leisure cycling which passes close to Shevington Parish. (Appley Lane) One recent successful project has been the Pier to Pier route, a medium distance route which extends from Southport to Wigan, passing through Burscough and covering some 34km (21 miles), utilising quiet lanes and the Leeds-Liverpool Canal towpath. Cycle storage facilities have been installed or improved at various locations in West Lancashire (including Appley Bridge railway station.)

### **Other Cycle Links**

West Lancashire Borough Council, working with Lancashire County Council and other partners such as the Canal and River Trust, will seek to progress a strategic network of multi user paths to facilitate travel by bicycle and on foot around the Borough. Important considerations will include safety, convenience, and year-round usefulness, as well as the extent to which the network will be maintained. It is important that all new developments plan from the outset to accommodate cycle infrastructure to create sustainable development.

### **Allotments**

West Lancashire will support the development of new allotments and protect existing allotments from development, encouraging sustainable food production and healthy lifestyles. 34 new allotments have recently been provided in Skelmersdale, and more are planned.

### **Conclusions**

West Lancashire Borough Council is thanked for this opportunity to comment on the draft strategy. Suggested comments are set out below.

- The **visions** and **objectives** of the strategy are supported.

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- There are important **green infrastructure and cycling links** with Shevington Parish Council particularly along the Leeds-Liverpool Canal and the Douglas Valley and in the vicinity of Wrightington Hospital.
- The Lancashire County Biological Heritage Site of **Big Wood and Wrightington Ponds** is part of an area that extends into Shevington Parish .
- It is noted that there is a gap in provision of **play areas** to the north of Appley Bridge. In Shevington there is provision in Stockley Park near the shopping centre in Woodnook Road.
- The **canal and river Douglas** continue into Shevington where they provide a link into **Dean Wood** and carry on as a strategic link through Crooke into Wigan forming part of the “Pier to Pier” route. Although certain stretches of the canal towpath have been improved there are sections in both Shevington and West Lancashire that need improvement.
- There is no mention of East Quarry Appley Bridge. Is this because it does fit into the definition of Green Infrastructure or for another reason?
- There are also **cycle storage facilities** at Gathurst station close to cycle routes in West Lancashire.
- It would be useful to indicate the location of the **allotments** in West Lancashire. Shevington has its own allotments at Forest Fold halfway between Shevington and Appley Bridge. Further allotments are to be provided on land purchased by the council at Vicarage Lane nearer the centre of Shevington.

Barry King  
February 25<sup>th</sup> 2017