

Bolton Council

Report to: The Cabinet
Date: 27th March 2017
Report of: Director of Place
Contact Officer: Graham Langley
Report Title: **Westhoughton Bypass**

Report No:

Tel No: 336463

Non Confidential:

This report does not contain information that warrants its consideration in the absence of the press or members of the public

Purpose:

To report on the work undertaken by Aecom to consider the feasibility of a Westhoughton Bypass.

To seek approval for the principle of a Westhoughton Bypass and to enable development of a scheme through engagement with Transport for Greater Manchester.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet is recommended to:

- approve the principle of a Westhoughton Bypass;
- enable the Council to work with TfGM to progress the scheme through the Growth Deal Major Scheme Pipeline; and
- enable the Council to refer to the requirement for a Westhoughton Bypass as part of any future discussions associated with development in Westhoughton.

Decision:

Background Doc(s):

(for use on Exec Rep)

Signed:

Leader / Executive Cabinet
Member

Monitoring Officer

Date:

Introduction

- 1 Traffic congestion has been a key issue in Westhoughton for a considerable period of time, most noticeably impacting on the operation of the A58 Park Road, Chequerbent Roundabout and the A58 Snyderdale Way to Junction 5 of the M61.
- 2 Members will be aware of the increasing pressure Westhoughton is likely to come under through the current 5 Year Housing Land Supply position and development of the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF).
- 3 It is important for the Council to have a clear vision of the infrastructure requirements to alleviating congestion in Westhoughton and to ensure any future development contributes towards a transport solution that benefits Westhoughton as a whole.
- 4 The following report reminds Members of the history associated with a Westhoughton Bypass, considers the implications of the potential for growth in Westhoughton and the pending Persimmon Homes Appeal on land to the south of Chequerbent and makes reference to the Aecom work on the feasibility and Strategic Outline Business Case for a Westhoughton Bypass.

Background

- 5 The concept of a Westhoughton Bypass has been considered for many decades with the idea of a link between the M6 and M61 originally raised in 1949 as part of the Road Plan for Lancashire. In 1970 the Government published a White Paper entitled "Roads for the Future" which noted a motorway "gap" between the M6 at Orrell extending to the M61 at Bolton. The paper noted the reluctance of motorists to cross the "gap" knowing the very difficult and trying conditions that already exist in the Wigan and other townships along the route. The scheme was later promoted by Lancashire County Council as the Mid-Lancashire Motorway and in the 1970's was included in the Governments Consultative Papers for the National Primary Trunk Road Network. The Greater Manchester Council (GMC) that was established through the Local Government Re-organisation in 1974 produced a Structure Plan which reviewed all inherited highway schemes and the M58-M61 Link Road was placed in the first priority band as a high priority. A GMC report in 1984 looked at the route (225) and considered its benefits both strategically and locally. The conclusion of the report was for the Department of Transport to include the route in the Trunk Road Programme at the earliest opportunity.
- 6 A defined route for A5225 was identified through the Public Inquiry process in 1993 that skirted around the east of Westhoughton and connected to Junction 5 of the M61. At the time it was noted that the "routes between these motorways are, however, congested and the communities of Wigan, Orrell, Ince-in-Makerfield, Hindley and Westhoughton have no

satisfactory east-west route giving access to these motorways and areas beyond them” (page 4, A5225 Wigan, Hindley & Westhoughton Bypass, Environmental Statement Non-Technical Summary, September 1993). Bolton Council’s support for construction of the A5225 by the then Department of Transport was set out in policy in the borough’s first Unitary Development Plan adopted in 1995 and the route was shown on the proposals map.

7 However the Government decided to withdraw the scheme from the Highways Agency’s programme in November 1996 as it was determined not to be a high priority. In February 1997, AMEC proposed a modified version of the scheme using private finance. That was considered by the Government in 1997-98, when they concluded that the proposed M6 to M61 link was not of sufficient strategic national importance to merit inclusion in the core trunk road network. The Government invited Wigan and Bolton Councils to consider whether they wanted to promote the AMEC proposals as part of their local authority transport plans. The Greater Manchester Local Transport Plan 2001/02 to 2005/06 Para A10.10 included the scheme as “currently outside LTP funding” but with its route protected from the M6 at Junction 26 to the M61 Junction 5. Bolton Council had supported the route protection for the A5225 in the Bolton Second Deposit UDP and at the Bolton UDP Public Inquiry. The Inspector in his report however recommended that the route be removed due to substantial uncertainty about funding and the prospect of any start within the plan period i.e. before 2011. The route was therefore removed from the UDP prior to the plan’s adoption in April 2005. The Planning Inspector who considered Wigan’s Replacement Deposit Draft Unitary Development Plan also recommended that it be modified by the deletion of the provisions for the safeguarding of land for the construction of the route. The Wigan document was modified accordingly and the revised UDP was formally adopted on 26th April 2006. Wigan Council continued to consider a version of the A5225 that started at the A49 (north of M6 Junction 25 instead of M6 Junction 26 Orrell) and finished at the A579 (north of Leigh Town Centre). The route would service new development sites and be part funded by development. The route now forms part of the Wigan’s Transport Strategy to improve east west connectivity.

8 In the absence of the A5225 scheme around 2005 Bolton Council looked at the feasibility of realigning Platt Lane through its Transport Infrastructure Fund (TIF) to take account of new employment and housing developments proposed at Gibfield Park, Gadbury Fold and the Leigh Sports Village in Wigan Borough and also Wigan’s aspiration to continue to implement a version of the A5225 improving east west connectivity and the prospect of increased traffic demand through Westhoughton to reach the Strategic Road Network. The scheme looked to straighten Platt Lane and linking directly to the road network around Chequerbent Roundabout, removing the heavily congestion Platt Lane / Park Road

Junction that had a high accident record. Council officers modelled various junction options for Chequerbent Roundabout in partnership with Greater Manchester Urban Traffic Control, however given the current levels of congestion and safety issues, it was deemed that a major junction improvement scheme was required at Chequerbent. The associated cost of such a scheme could not be accommodated in the Council's TIF budget. Due to insufficient funding this scheme did not make it into the Council's Capital Programme for approval and wider consultation.

- 9 Bolton Members have been informed via reports on the progress of the A5225 to Environment and Direct Services Scrutiny Committee 1st December 2003, Executive Member for Environment on the 24th January 2004, Executive Member for Environment Housing and Strategy on the 25 January 2005, Executive Member for Environmental Services 14th November 2006 and Environmental Services Policy Development Group on the 31 October 2006.

Demand for a Bypass

- 10 Congestion issues in Westhoughton have been a long standing concern for residents, Elected Members and council officers. The current Bolton Core Strategy notes that "consultation on the early stages of the Core Strategy shows that residents are concerned that the provision of infrastructure has not kept pace with housing development in Westhoughton, including lack of transport provision resulting in congestion" (para 5.41, page 84, Bolton Local Development Framework Core Strategy). Key concerns have been the level of congestion on the local highway network with specific concern for the A58 Park Road and Chequerbent Roundabout.
- 11 At a public drop in session on Thursday 10th September 2015 for the Persimmon Homes planning application for 300 dwellings on land to the south of Chequerbent Roundabout (94696/15), some of the local residents who attended acknowledged the need to provide new residential development in Westhoughton, but clearly concerned that significant transport improvements were required prior to any new development, with the desire to see a Westhoughton bypass mentioned. Residents hand written comments from the public drop in session and letters received as part of planning application consultation are available to view via online request to the One Stop Shop.

Future Growth

- 12 In calculating the latest position in terms of a 5 Year Housing Land Supply in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework the Council currently has a supply of 3.1 years. The result of this is that the policy that restrain housing are now considered out of date and

therefore limited weight can be placed on this. Proposals for new development will now be based in accordance with NPPF for a presumption in favour of sustainable development and the Council therefore anticipates pressure from developers to gain approval on existing protected open land sites.

- 13 The Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF) will consider growth across Greater Manchester to 2035. Both protected open land and green belt around Westhoughton have been put forward for development as part of this exercise. The Council will be required to meet specific housing figures and therefore it is likely that the release of some of this land for development will be needed.

Persimmon Appeal

- 14 Persimmon have already applied for planning permission for 300 dwellings on protected open land to the south of Chequerbent Roundabout which the Council is currently fighting an appeal on highway grounds. The Council is resisting this development on the basis that the appellant wished to add a 5th arm to the already heavily congested Chequerbent Roundabout which is likely to result in severe safety issues. In addition, the spatial layout and available land remaining following the proposed development compromises any potential route for a bypass that would provide benefit to the wider area. To enable officers to make this case at appeal the Council would be in a stronger position if the principle of a bypass had been approved by Cabinet.

Westhoughton Bypass

- 15 In association with reason for refusal four of the Persimmon Homes Planning Appeal “development may impact on the ability to deliver a link road in the future”, Aecom was commissioned to undertake a feasibility exercise focusing on a highway solution that alleviates existing congestion issues. The objectives of the brief was to derive a transport solution that provides the opportunity to significantly reduce peak period congestion and associated delays along the section of the A58 between Junction 5 of the M61 and the junction with the B5235 Leigh Road, whilst also unlocking potential development land to meet future housing demand which is likely to arise out of the GMSF and can contribute to the delivery of the scheme.
- 16 The economic assessment of the scheme undertaken by Aecom indicates that the forecast Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) has an estimate of 4.30. The Department for Transport (DfT) usually accepts schemes into the major scheme programme that has a BCR of over 2, which demonstrates that this scheme is of high value. The next stage is to work with TfGM to develop an Outline Business Case (OBC) to finalise the schemes alignment, design and

final costs. The Aecom work is sufficient to demonstrate that there are significant benefits to progress this scheme further.

Scheme Funding

- 17 National guidance and the approach taken by Greater Manchester through the devolution of major scheme funding prioritise major transport schemes that deliver economic growth. Whilst the Aecom work notes a Westhoughton Bypass would be high value for money, the scheme is unlikely to come forward in isolation to purely ease existing traffic congestion. A scheme that supports economic growth and benefits from private sector investment is likely to be a high priority and successful in future national/city regional bidding rounds.

Next Steps

- 18 If the Council is minded to support the principle of a Westhoughton Bypass scheme, then the next stage will be to engage TfGM to pursue the scheme through the future Greater Manchester Major Scheme Pipeline. TfGM through the Combined Authority is currently working up the details of a Major Scheme Development Fund to enable pipeline schemes to be developed through to an Outline Business Case (OBC) stage and ready for future Growth Deal bidding rounds.
- 19 If endorsed by the Council then Council Officers can press future developments in Westhoughton to take account of and to contribute to the delivery of a bypass scheme that will deliver the right mitigation measures to relieve congestion in Westhoughton.

Conclusion

- 20 The Council is likely to come under significant pressure to allow development of more open land around Westhoughton through the GMSF and lack of a current 5 year housing land supply.
- 21 The work undertaken by Aecom demonstrates the feasibility of a Westhoughton Bypass that can relieve the existing congestion issues and has a high value for money benefit.
- 22 The Council would benefit if it had a clear vision of the transport infrastructure requirements that will relieve existing congestion issues, but through the realisation that funding for such a scheme is unlikely to be secured without the support of private sector funding through the release of land for development.

23 If Members are minded to support the principle of a Westhoughton Bypass then the Council can engage TfGM to develop the scheme further and ensure future developments take account of and contribute towards a bypass scheme.

Recommendation

24 Members are recommended to: -

- approve the principle of a Westhoughton Bypass;
- enable the Council to work with TfGM to progress the scheme through the Growth Deal Major Scheme Pipeline; and
- enable the Council to refer to the requirement for a Westhoughton Bypass as part of any future discussions associated with development in Westhoughton.