



DECISION ITEM

REPORT OF	MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
HEAD OF PLANNING & HOUSING	PLANNING COMMITTEE	18 APRIL 2018	5
A585 - SKIPPOOL TO WINDY HARBOUR RELIEF ROAD			

PUBLIC ITEM

This item is for consideration in the public part of the meeting.

SUMMARY

Highways England are currently consulting on proposals to improve the A585 between Windy Harbour and Skippool ahead of submitting a planning application to the Planning Inspectorate in line with the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP) provisions. This report considers the representations to that consultation to be made on behalf of Fylde Council and seeks to establish a small group of members with delegated authority to comment on the proposal during the determination process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Council respond to Highways England's consultation to advise that Fylde Council support the principle of the construction of the proposed A585 Skippool – Windy Harbour relief Road subject to:
 - Appropriate mitigation being incorporated to minimise the impact of the proposed development on the amenity of neighbouring residential properties.
 - The provision of an ecological mitigation scheme that incorporates further blocks of woodland planting in order to offset the impacts of the loss of woodland resulting from the scheme.
 - The provision of a "Heritage Improvement Scheme" in order to offset any adverse impacts on the setting of locally, nationally and non-designated heritage assets.
 - Consideration of any consequential impacts of the proposed relief road along the remainder of the A585, particularly within Fylde Borough.
2. That a small group of members be established to oversee the council's case to be presented to the NSIP examination of the proposed development.
3. That authority is delegated to the to the group referred to in recommendation 2 above to prepare the council's case and respond to third party representations as appropriate.

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS DECISIONS

No decisions directly relating to this project have been made by the Council, although the general area of search and general support for the provision of an A585 Windy Harbour – Skippool relief road is included in the Fylde Local Plan to 2032 which has previously been approved by the Planning Committee and Council.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES	
Spending your money in the most efficient way to achieve excellent services (Value for Money)	
Delivering the services that customers expect of an excellent council (Clean and Green)	
Working with all partners (Vibrant Economy)	√
To make sure Fylde continues to be one of the most desirable places to live (A Great Place to Live)	√
Promoting Fylde as a great destination to visit (A Great Place to Visit)	√

REPORT

1. Highways England are currently consulting on proposals to improve the A585 between Windy Harbour and Skippool ahead of submitting a planning application to the Planning Inspectorate in line with the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP) provisions contained in The Planning Act 2008. Details of the NSIP process are available on the Planning Inspectorates website at:

<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/application-process/the-process/>

Although Fylde Council will not be responsible for deciding whether the project will go ahead or not, it has been identified as a “Host Authority” and so will have a central role to play in the determination process.

2. The A585 is the main road in and out of Fleetwood and surrounding areas. It is heavily congested between Windy Harbour and Skippool and drivers currently suffer from significant delays during peak periods. The road also has a poor safety record. Congestion is particularly severe at the junction with the A586 at Little Singleton and the signalised junction with the A588 at Shard Road. A high number of accidents are reported at these junctions and the volume of traffic is also a concern for local people, pedestrians, equestrians and cyclists. Highways England consider that, without improvements to this three-mile section of road, it is likely there will be a rise in traffic levels and the potential for the number of accidents, and delays to journey times, to increase.
3. By delivering the scheme, Highways England aims to improve:
 - Reliability: by reducing congestion especially around Little Singleton, Shard Road and Skippool junctions, which will improve journey times.
 - Socio-economic: by supporting the economic growth potential in both Wyre and Fylde and supporting planned residential developments in the local area.
 - Safety: by improving the safety of pedestrians, equestrians and cyclists around the existing A585.
4. Full details of the proposed improvements are available on the Highways England website at: <http://roads.highways.gov.uk/projects/a585-windy-harbour-to-skipool/>. In summary the proposed improvements would include:
 - a. Alterations to Breck Road Roundabout to produce a traffic light controlled junction (within Wyre Borough).
 - b. A new junction where the proposed bypass would leave the existing line of Mains Lane and swing to the south of existing dwellings on Mains Lane to meet Garstang Road East between Little Poulton and Little Singleton. This new stretch of road would essentially follow the line of the “Blue Route” as set out in the Fylde Borough Local Plan (2005) and Fylde Local Plan to 2032.
 - c. The provision of a new 4 way roundabout on Garstang Road East.
 - d. The provision of a highway that would proceed along a new alignment to the south of the 5 Lane Ends Junction and to the north of Singleton Hall before returning to meet the existing alignment of the A585 between Windy Harbour and 5 Lane Ends.
(All of the above works would provide a 4 lane dual carriageway.)
 - e. A new pedestrian footbridge would be provided close to the point where the new road meets the existing line of the A585.

- f. In the vicinity of Singleton Hall, a deep cutting is proposed for the new road and Lodge Lane would be elevated to cross over the new road. A new roundabout would be provided to replace the existing traffic light junction at 5 lane ends.
 - g. The existing road between 5 lane ends and the point where the new road re-joins the existing line of the A585 would be decommissioned.
5. Policy T1 of The Fylde Local Plan to 2032 acknowledges the need to improve this section of highway and supports the provision of the A585 Skippool – Windy Harbour improvements. However the economic benefits of delivering the road must be balanced against its potential environmental effects. Accordingly, the justification for Policy T1 (as modified) sets out that proposals for new roads and strategic highway improvements will need to comply with the requirements of Policy GD7 – Achieving Good Design in Development, ENV1 Landscape, ENV2 Biodiversity and Policy ENV5 on Historic Environment. The justification goes on to say that “The Council will work with LCC, as the Highway Authority, to minimise landscape, biodiversity, drainage, severance and noise impacts. There will be a commitment to environmentally sensitive design, mitigation and habitat restoration.” These policies contain the context against which the proposed works need to be assessed.

Amenity

- 6. The proposal would bring both positive and negative amenity impacts to the local community. The residents along the length of Mains Lane which is to be bypassed by the new road will experience a drop in traffic levels which will bring reductions in noise and pollution.
- 7. Those residents who will be in close proximity to the proposed bypass will be impacted as a result of potential generators of noise and pollution being in closer proximity to their homes. As most of these homes will currently enjoy very low levels of background noise due to the absence of any major traffic routes in their immediate vicinity any impacts are likely to be significant.
- 8. Overall the balance of the impact on local residents is difficult to assess, but it is likely that more residents will gain than be adversely affected. That said, it is vital to ensure that any adverse impacts of the new road on residential properties are mitigated as far as is practically possible.

Trees and Landscape

- 9. To the south of Garstang Road East, the proposed road would cross open fields to the north of Singleton Hall. In doing so, it appears that 3 established blocks of woodland protected by Fylde Council TPO 1974.01 (Singleton) would be needed to be felled to accommodate the works. A deep cutting and underpass that would allow the road to pass under Lodge Lane would potentially impact on a further area of woodland. These are lowland deciduous woodlands, mature, with in some cases very large trees approaching veteran status for their species. Most have a regenerative layer, so are self-sustaining. Species composition is mainly native – oak, beech and ash. Management of these woodlands has been minimal, if any. A residual stream divides one of the woodlands, possibly increasing its biodiversity value, and is perhaps a natural drain from the nearby pond.
- 10. These are trees of tremendous stature and maturity, visually-dominant, and integral to the Little Singleton landscape. The woodlands are possibly contemporaneous with Singleton Hall. The woodlands are not shown on the 1845 map, and although the area was probably once wooded it's likely the land was cleared of trees for farming before AD1600. This need not detract from the woodlands' importance, either in landscape, functional or biodiversity terms. Remediation and mitigation for their loss cannot be immediate, and like-for-like replacement is impossible. Compensation to ensure a gain is desirable if the loss cannot be avoided.
- 11. All woodlands in Fylde borough form components of its urban forest and any losses should be resisted or, where unavoidable because other interests are overriding, compensated for. Protection and enhancement by addition help Fylde Council to deliver its corporate goals, principally: A Clean and Green Borough, A Great Place to Live and A Great Place to Visit.
- 12. Government guidance introduced in April 2016 identified the significance of Green Infrastructure in planning and development issues
“Green infrastructure provides multiple benefits, notably eco-system services, at a range of scales, derived from natural systems and processes, for the individual, for society, the economy and the environment. Green

infrastructure should, therefore, be a key consideration in both local plans and planning decisions where relevant."

13. Trees and woodlands have a presence on the skyline that provides an amenity to the wider public and local residents in particular. Any net loss of woodland cover can only hold negative outcomes for Fylde. Since the proposed relief road may present a range of public interest benefits for the borough, compromise and compensation may have to be the outcome of the development.
14. The two woodlands that are the most prominent are open to view from Lodge Lane, not only to drivers, but to the increasing number of residents, and from the wide junction at Five Lane Ends.
15. The height and maturity of the trees adds to their visibility and increases their magnitude in the Singleton landscape. The loss of these will be experienced as a new gap in the skyline. While other woodland may be visible – ie at Singleton Hall - it will be at an increased distance, lacking immediacy.
16. Culturally and historically, the woodlands to be removed are linked with Singleton Hall, where they would have been used for leisure, hunting, firewood and possibly timber for construction and repair. The hall itself is now home to multiple residents after conversion to apartments in the mid-1990s. The woodlands offer seclusion and quietude to the development by separating the historic entrance drive from the highway to the north.
17. Submitted plans indicate the replanting is intended mainly as highway buffer strips, rather than as areas of woodlands. The land acquisition seems to be minimal, yet this offers an opportunity to replace lost woodlands and restore some element of the screening and sequestration given by existing woodlands.

Heritage

18. The area contains Singleton Hall, a non- designated heritage asset, and the proposed road will adversely affect the special historic and architectural interest of the asset. The asset comprises the hall (in use as permanent residential flats), gardens, parkland and curtilage structures, including nationally listed (grade 2) ice house; also estate homes in the cluster and also further from the hall at North Lodge (350m north west of the hall) and South Lodge (600m south of the hall). The Hall dates from 1855 and presents as a largely unchanged historical residential estate. It has high heritage value. The buildings are strong candidates for inclusion on the local list of heritage assets when this area is surveyed later this year.
19. The hall cluster containing Singleton Hall, The Manor, and Bankfield Manor House has a setting of open fields to the five land ends junction and this open landscape provides an appropriate rural setting for the estate cluster. The proposed road has potential to create a harsh, urban, and highly engineered band of tarmac thus impairing the setting of the cluster. The development would adversely affect the aesthetic, historic and communal value of the cluster and would result in harm to the historic environment.
20. The road would be approximately 90 metres from the icehouse and this very short distance would adversely affect the aesthetic and historic value of the icehouse and as such would harm the setting of the nationally listed building and result in harm to the historic environment.
21. The road would be approximately 30 metres south of the dwelling of North Lodge. The house was built for the Miller family as part of the estate and the proposal would separate the house from the cluster. The separation of the house by such a harsh urban wide road combined with the shutting down of the setting would adversely affect the evidential, aesthetic, communal and historic value of the house and would result in significant harm to the historic environment.
22. The road would divorce the driveway from the lodge so the harm to the imprecise setting would be accentuated by the precise wedging through the historic driveway. The driveway is an essential element of the Lodge and to cut off the driveway is highly insensitive to the heritage asset
23. The proposal would cause harm to the cluster and to the ice house and would cause significant harm to North Lodge. The overall impact is significant harm to the historic environment and there is a clear heritage objection to the proposal.
24. The NPPF advises that the local planning authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. It is appreciated that the route has been chosen as the most appropriate to deliver the necessary by-pass having

regard to a number of other factors than heritage impact, however it will harm the heritage assets and as such useful compensation for the harm caused should be provided in order to mitigate against the adverse impacts.

Administrative arrangements

25. As set out above, any planning application in regard to the proposed works will be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate. They in turn will write to the Fylde Council in order to ascertain the views of the council with regard to the proposal. The responses to these consultation are required to be made in line with statutory time limits and so it is important to put in place provisions that will allow these time constraints to be met, as the normal committee timetable will not always allow this to occur, Members are recommended to establish a small working group that will be able to oversee the formulation of the council's case and have the authority to respond as necessary at the various stages of the application process.

Conclusions

26. It is accepted that the preferred route for the by-pass must lie across this parcel of land and that the wider social, logistical and economic benefits it will deliver to Wyre and Fylde are overriding. This does not remove the necessity of replacing lost habitat and the green infrastructure services. The scheme should provide twin gains by increasing woodland cover substantially. Plans showing the Highways England's land take for the relief road indicate only minimal acquisition is intended and there is potential to provide additional land for the delivery of appropriate mitigation works. Pockets of surrounding land that might be bought by CPO could be brought under woodland cover. This would augment other areas and compensate for the 2 hectares of woodland around Singleton that will be removed. Small parcels of land for borrow pits and some that will be under temporary acquisition could be bought and planted as woodland with these new woodlands potentially passing into community ownership. This seems especially appropriate for Singleton. The proposed extension of Carr Wood (behind Mains Lane) and the addition of a large adjacent water body are welcome features but these are not in the vicinity of the lost woodlands, being 1.6 km distant.
27. There are future permissive pathways in the Singleton Park area that would allow the community to better appreciate the cluster of heritage assets and it is suggest that "Heritage Improvement Scheme" could be developed by Highways England that would seek to improve the setting and community access to these heritage assets.
28. The proposed scheme will pass in close proximity to a number of residential properties and it is important that all reasonably practical means are incorporated into the scheme in order to minimise any adverse impacts on those properties and their occupiers.

IMPLICATIONS	
Finance	None
Legal	None
Community Safety	None
Human Rights and Equalities	None
Sustainability and Environmental Impact	Included in the report
Health & Safety and Risk Management	None

LEAD AUTHOR	CONTACT DETAILS	DATE
Mark Evans	mark.evans@fylde.gov.uk & Tel 01253 658460	6 April 2018

BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Name of document	Date	Where available for inspection
Highways England Website	21 March 2018	http://roads.highways.gov.uk/projects/a585-windy-harbour-to-skipool/

