

Warrington Western Link FAQs

We're sure that you have lots of questions about our latest plans. If your question isn't covered by the information provided below, you can get in touch with us using the contact details at the bottom of this document.

The Proposals

What are you proposing?

Warrington Borough Council is proposing a new Link road, connecting north and south Warrington to the west of the Town Centre.

The new Warrington Western Link will help tackle congestion, improve traffic flow, unlock key development land, and improve the quality of life for residents within the Borough.

Describe the route of the WWL

Following feedback from the earlier engagement, plus the technical assessments undertaken as part of producing the Outline Business Case (OBC), the Route as shown in our virtual exhibition is the option that is being taken forward. This road will link the A56 Chester Road in Higher Walton with the A57 Sankey Way in Great Sankey.

Why was this route chosen for the WWL?

The project team has undertaken a number of technical assessments in addition to analysing the feedback from the public consultation undertaken previously. All of the potential 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 route we selected, previously known as 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 were considered?

WBC and its advisors 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 and the 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.

This information can be found on the Warrington Borough Council website in the OBC documentation submitted to the Department for Transport.

Has any housing or other development been proposed alongside the scheme?

At this stage only a new highway is proposed to be constructed. The draft Local Plan separately proposes areas of housing and employment around the Western Link. Please refer to the Council's Local Plan webpages to see the housing and employment proposals.

What happens if the road reaches full capacity?

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 the traffic impact be to/from Port Warrington, in particular HGV traffic?

The Council is developing a new local plan for Warrington, a process which requires the impacts of proposed future development on the transport network to be tested. The exact form of development at Port Warrington is still subject to the adoption of the Local Plan, which as was recently announced, is currently subject to a pause in work and period of reflection. However, current traffic assumptions are based on the published Draft Local Plan (Proposed Submission Version Summer 2019) which proposes a multi-modal distribution development. The generated traffic includes a significant proportion of HGV trips consistent with this type of development. Further detail on the predicted levels of traffic associated with Port Warrington will emerge as the review of the Draft Local Plan is progressed.

Can you tell me exactly how many additional vehicles will be on local roads if these proposals go ahead? The WWL is expected to reduce traffic volumes in the town centre area, and improve connectivity between north and south Warrington. The planning application will be supported by a Transport Assessment, which will contain details of predicted traffic flows.

Will the road be tolled?

There are no plans to toll the Western Link.

What effect on traffic levels is anticipated as a consequence of COVID-19? If traffic levels are anticipated to reduce, is there still a need for the WWL?

Whilst there is at present a short-term reduction in traffic levels (traffic flows in October 2020 were at around 85% of the comparable period in 2019), the WWL will not be fully constructed for several years and will be in place permanently thereafter. Whilst the long term impacts of COVID-19 are uncertain, traffic levels are expected to return to broadly similar levels to those experienced before Covid by the time the scheme is operational.

What effect is the Mersey Gateway bridge having in Warrington? Will the WWL 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. Whilst current levels are affected by the COVID -19 Pandemic, the monitoring will continue and, if trends change adversely in the future, the Memorandum of Understanding the Council has with Halton Borough Council will allow discussion around potential mitigation measures to be had.

Will the new road impact emergency service routes?

Full consideration will be given to emergency service routes so that there is no adverse effect on public safety. The emergency services will be consulted at the planning application stage and their comments will be fully considered in the detailed design of the WWL.

Why are you proceeding with the scheme whilst the Local Plan has been delayed?

The Council has paused its Local Plan process until Summer 2021.

The wide range of objectives of the Warrington Western Link scheme and the associated benefits that can be supported and delivered means that continuing to develop proposals, and keeping the public informed, is the right approach. The timeline for the Western Link stretches over many years and therefore it would not be appropriate to stop at this juncture as a result of a short pause to the Local Plan.

Funding

How is the Western Link being funded?

During 2018, the scheme was independently scrutinised by the Department for Transport. It was considered against other major infrastructure schemes across England, as part of their Large Local Majors Fund. In April 2019, we were informed that we had been conditionally given funding of £142.5m towards the scheme. The remaining £70.2m will be funded from the Council's Capital Programme. The total construction cost of the scheme is an estimated £212.74m.

Why is this money not being spent on local services such as hospitals and schools?

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.

Economic and Community Benefits

How will the WWL improve traffic congestion in Warrington?

The Red Route option has been estimated to provide improvements to the performance of junctions in the town centre, a reduction on north-south and south-north journey times and a reduction in traffic using the town centre. The corresponding reduction in traffic in the town centre area will enable the Council to deliver complementary schemes in the town centre to improve accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport, helping to make the town centre a more attractive and vibrant place for residents and visitors. A number of work streams are underway to identify these complementary measures for the town centre.

Further details can be found in Local Transport Plan 4.

How will this help the people of Warrington?

WWL is expected to deliver a wide range of impacts that could benefit Warrington's economy. Anticipated impacts include reduced congestion across the Borough's highways network as well as delivery of access to the Waterfront development, the Port of Warrington intra-modal freight facility, and housing and employment sites in south west Warrington. Associated economic benefits include the creation of many employment opportunities and significant net additional GVA per annum. The complementary measures currently being identified through the Local Transport Plan 4 to improve non-car accessibility, will support the economy of the town centre, attracting visitors to retail and leisure developments and helping to encourage regeneration of underused or vacant development sites.

How many jobs will be created during the construction phase?

Analysis carried out at the Outline Business Case found that the WWL is capable of supporting over 350 net additional jobs. The jobs figure will be refined as the detailed design of the Western Link is progressed.

Environment

Have you considered how the road will impact on greenspaces and ecology?

The Outline Business Case contains an initial assessment of the impact of the Western Link on the green spaces and habitats within Warrington. As part of the planning application, a full Environmental Impact Assessment will be completed.

A suite of ecological surveys have been undertaken and these will accompany the planning application.

Have you considered air pollution?

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. 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.

Have you considered noise pollution?

Noise 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.

Have you considered light pollution and/or the visual impact?

Visual impact 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. Lighting effects will be described in the same chapter of the Environmental Impact Assessment.

What will the visual impact be on neighbouring properties?

Visual impact 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.

How much Green Belt land is impacted by the scheme?

The selected route connects the A56 to the A57. Some land to the south of the Manchester Ship Canal, and north of Chester Road, is designated as Green Belt. The plan of the route is available on the virtual exhibition page.

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. We are working on these proposals currently, but Warrington Borough Council is aware of the requirement to ensure the link remains between the north and south green areas, over the canal.

Will there be vehicle access to WWL from Forrest Way?

The selected route does not provide vehicle access from Forrest Way to WWL and it is not envisaged that this will change.

Will the footbridge between Sankey Expressway and Sankey Valley Park be retained, and if not what alternative arrangements will be made?

One of the upcoming activities will be a detailed design that will inform the layout of this junction. The current proposal is for the footbridge to remain – as part of our design work we will review crossing facilities to ensure safe pedestrian routes are included within the junction arrangements.

How will this road affect Sankey Valley Park?

The scheme contains a section of proposed highway that will 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. We will look to provide appropriate compensation for the loss of existing public greenspace

Will Coach and Horses' entrance be opened for Saxon Park/Forrest Way access?

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.

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.

Will the scheme affect protected habitats in the local area?

The consultant team has been undertaking detailed ecology surveys throughout 2020 and the findings of these will be submitted as part of the planning application alongside detailed plans on how we propose to mitigate any effects the scheme may have.

Are there any conservation areas within the land you are seeking to develop upon?

There are two conservation areas within the wider surroundings of the selected route but there is no impact on these from the scheme due to distance from the route and other nearby developments.

Are there any heritage assets within the proposed route?

There are various heritage assets within and in the vicinity of the proposed route. An assessment of the impact on those assets will be undertaken and will form part of the planning application submission.

Community

Will the new road make provision for cycling and walking routes?

The WWL will include new sections for cyclists and pedestrians; this includes 'on-route' cycle lanes and pedestrian footways. These will connect into further 'off-route' footpaths and cycleways. The WWL will provide improved access to the southwest of the town centre for new public transport routes. Further work is required at the detailed design stage, particularly relating to the existing Trans Pennine Trail.

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 playground. During the detailed 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. As was planned at the time of installation, the existing playground will be relocated to an alternative location at Morley Common.

What will happen to the properties that are impacted by the road?

The Council has identified which properties and rights to land will be required to construct the scheme. The Council has

written to the impacted landowners or has approached them directly. We appreciate this will be a 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.

My house/business is near to the proposed route, will I receive compensation?

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'. Visit the Council webpage to find out more about this.

What are you doing to encourage sustainable travel such as walking, cycling, and using public transport?

The Council is committed to sustainable travel and the WWL will include new sections for cyclists and pedestrians; this includes 'on-road' cycle lanes and pedestrian footways, which 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 WWL will have appropriate bus stops located along its length.

Furthermore, we are working with the Council's active travel team to ensure our plans link with LTP4 and sustainable travel initiatives.

Will I be able to hear the construction and future road traffic from my property?

Noise effects from construction and the scheme 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. Noise generated by traffic using the WWL will be mitigated to ensure that effects on nearby receptors are within acceptable limits.

Flooding

Have you considered flood risk and how will this be mitigated?

Flood modelling will be undertaken to determine any impacts of the scheme on surface water. A flood risk assessment will be submitted as part of the planning application for the scheme.

Planning Process (as of December 2020)

What stage is the planning application at?

We are currently preparing the proposals and associated documentation that is required in order for us to submit a formal planning application. As such, we are currently in the pre-application engagement stage.

How have you engaged with local residents?

Unfortunately, owing to Government guidance and restrictions related to the coronavirus pandemic, we were unable to meet face to face the way we have in the past. However, we were able to engage with local people in a number of ways. Between the 11th November 2020 and 23rd December 2020 we hosted:

- An interactive website
- video Q&A session
- Monitored an email, phone line and feedback form
- Sent out over 6,500 letters to those who would of received correspondence in 2017

What are the next steps in the planning process once the engagement period has closed?

Following the close of the engagement period, the project team review the feedback, which will be used to input into the Statement of Community Involvement for the scheme planning application.

When will the application be determined?

We are currently aiming for the application to be submitted in May 2021. As such determination of the application is likely to take place in the Autumn/Winter of next year.

Construction

How long will construction take?

The construction period will be around three years – starting in 2023 and concluding in 2026.

Will construction affect congestion in the area?

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 will 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.

Further Questions

If you have any further question please email us at:

<mailto:WesternLink@warrington.gov.uk>