

OPEN

Highways & Transport Committee

3 April 2025

Greater Bollin Trail

Report of: Tom Moody, Director of Transport and Infrastructure

Report Reference No: HTC/42/24-25

Ward(s) Affected: Mere, Little Bollington with Agden, Millington and Rostherne, Ashley, Mobberley, Pott Shrigley, Prestbury, Styal, Handforth, Adlington, Poynton with Worth, Wilmslow, Mottram St Andrew, Disley, Kettleshulme and Lyme Handley

For Decision or Scrutiny: Decision

Purpose of Report

- 1 This report highlights the recent work undertaken to develop a walking, wheeling and cycling route within the north of the Borough known as the Greater Bollin Trail.

Executive Summary

- 2 The Council's new corporate plan is centred on enabling prosperity and wellbeing for all. Commitment 1 includes connecting communities with Active Travel. The Local Transport Plan also puts walking and cycling at the heart of its planning and design of the Borough.
- 3 On 9 March 2021 Cabinet approved the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) for Crewe, Congleton, Macclesfield and Wilmslow, The LCWIPs set out the Council's plans for high quality walking and cycling networks and how the infrastructure should be planned and delivered across the Borough. The LCWIPs identified several schemes that could be delivered in the short-medium, and medium- long term. This work prompted key stakeholders to work together to develop a longer term, ambitious plan, to improve active travel links across North Cheshire.
- 4 In 2024 technical work has been undertaken to investigate a Greater Bollin Trail (GBT). This would provide a high-quality multi-use and

primarily traffic-free walking, cycling, and wheeling connection providing east-west connectivity across the north of the Borough, and linking into Greater Manchester. The initial work has identified a route corridor that could be taken forwards subject to the Committees approval and subject to appropriate funding being available. This will be a long-term endeavour.

- 5 The route corridor identified will be subject to further detailed development and design work, with public consultation necessary before sections of the route are developed and implemented. There is a need to work with stakeholders to further develop the route and resolve any land and property agreements required, as the proposed route crosses the boundary of a number of neighbouring local authorities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Highways & Transport Committee is recommended to:

1. Support the concept and objectives of the Greater Bollin Trail, noting the indicative phasing approach as set out in Appendix 1 and that the general route corridor is included in the Council's Statutory Plans, including the newly emerging Local Transport Plan and Local Plan.
2. Delegate to officers to work with neighbouring authorities to ensure aspects of the route outside of Cheshire East are incorporated into their relevant statutory plans.
3. Delegate that the Head of Infrastructure works with key stakeholders to identify, develop and submit external funding bids to take forward to delivery elements of the route.
4. Delegate to the Head of Infrastructure and Head of Estates authority to enter into agreements, licences, easements for the acquisition of land or other rights required for the scheme, in consultation with the S151 Officer and the Executive Director of Place.

Background

- 6 On 9 March 2021 Cabinet approved the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) for Crewe, Congleton, Macclesfield and Wilmslow. The LCWIPs set out the Council's plans for high quality walking and cycling networks and how the infrastructure should be planned and delivered across the Borough. The LCWIP identified a number of schemes that could be delivered in the short-medium, and medium- long term. In developing the LCWIP it considered the following policies, the Cheshire East Local Transport Plan 4 (2019-2024), Cheshire East Local Plan, Cheshire and Warrington LEP transport strategy, Public Health Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, Cheshire East Local Air Quality Strategy and Sustainable Modes of Travel to school strategy.

- 7 Building on the adopted LCWIPs, stakeholders identified potential for a longer-term east-west trail and the need to provide some mitigation for (at the time) proposed HS2 construction routes.
- 8 In 2024, technical work has been undertaken to investigate a GBT. The GBT would provide a high-quality multi-use and primarily traffic-free walking, cycling, and wheeling connection providing a connection across the north of the Borough, and linking into neighbouring authorities. The initial work has identified a route corridor that could be taken forwards subject to the Committees approval and subject to appropriate funding being available.
- 9 The route would provide connections between established trails, such as the Middlewood Way, Bridgewater Way and the Trans Pennine Trail, to public transport nodes and links to towns, villages and their communities and places of interest including Lyme Park, Quarry Bank Mill, the proposed Tatton Services, Tatton Park and Dunham Massey. In doing so, the trail will attract visitors to the area, boosting spend in the local economy while also providing connections to key trip attractors for local populations to walk, cycle and wheel to work, school or to enjoy the outdoors in addition to equestrian use. The route would also provide links to key employment connections such as to Manchester Airport, the proposed Tatton Services, Adlington Business Park and Altrincham. The route would also link into the Handforth Garden Village and, in part, relies on this development coming forward.
- 10 There is an ambition to deliver the GBT as it will improve the attractiveness of the region which will encourage inward investment and enable businesses to prosper, it will also support local decongestion, thus improving air quality and the local environment. The Trail will also provide accessibility to rural areas and will provide access to the associated health benefits of walking and cycling. The route would also encourage sustainable development should developments in the vicinity of the route come forward.
- 11 The technical work, documented in an Options Assessment Report (OAR) in Appendix 1, outlines the preferred route corridor. It also explains the technical work undertaken to come to this conclusion which involved site visits, workshops, evidence gathering, setting a vision and objectives and assessment of various route options.
- 12 The Objectives of the GBT are:
 - (a) Provide east-west connectivity across the borough as well as linking to other surrounding districts and boroughs where possible, including links to/ with local communities and job

opportunities, key public transport nodes, providing both leisure and utility use of the trail

- (b) Provide a high-quality route, accessible to all, which considers the impact of potential major infrastructure schemes e.g. NPR on walking, wheeling, equestrians, runners and cycling.
 - (c) Improve access to leisure routes, green space and the countryside that enhances the natural environment including green/ blue infrastructure where possible.
 - (d) Increase the number of walking, wheeling and cycling for everyday journeys, supporting decarbonisation across the borough and improving health and wellbeing.
 - (e) Increase the value of the borough's visitor economy, attracting additional users and supporting the growth of new and existing businesses.
- 13 The route is a long-term strategic aim and will take many years for the full route to be completed. With the route covering a sizeable distance, it is necessary to provide the route corridor in phases into the short, medium and long-term. The priority short-term section has been identified as the central section between Manchester Airport and the Middlewood Way. This section utilises some existing infrastructure and provides key links to leisure, tourism and employment opportunities. Further detail on the remainder of the phasing can be found in Appendix 1.
- 14 It is important to recognise that progression of this route is not funded at this stage. Initial work to date has been funded by the Shared Prosperity Fund. Acknowledging this ambition within statutory plans would mean the Council is more likely to receive Department for Transport (DfT) funding in future years, as part of national funding programmes. Funding to deliver the Greater Bollin Trail could be drawn from external sources such as DfT specific grants or developer contributions or from mitigation because of Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR).
- 15 Previous HS2 plans had a significant construction impact on the local highway network, particularly along Ashley Road, that would have been mitigated by the GBT proposals. There remains the potential for the route to overlap with the proposed NPR construction plans, although NPR plans remain under development. This will need to be further reviewed when the proposals are known.

Consultation and Engagement

- 16 Stakeholder engagement has been integral to the development of route options. Through site visits and workshop sessions, stakeholders

supported development of the vision, objectives and route principles as well as emerging route options, and were engaged throughout to provide feedback as the routes progressed. Stakeholders included representatives from neighbouring Local Authorities, the National Trust, Tatton Estates, British Cycling, Sustrans, Manchester Airports Group (MAG), Transport for Greater Manchester, National Highways and the British Horse Society.

- 17 Further stakeholder engagement was held with key organisations across Autumn-Winter 2024. This included online briefings with Town and Parish Councils, neighbouring Local authorities and transport organisations such as Sustrans. A summary of feedback is included in Appendix 2 which shows support for the route.
- 18 When the route progresses to more detailed design stages, wider consultation will be required.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 19 Technical work has been undertaken in 2024 to determine a preferred corridor for the Greater Bollin Trail – the Options Assessment Report can be found in Appendix 1. It is recommended that the Council support the concept, objectives and route corridor and seek to include this in policy going forward to provide a strategic approach when any grant funding opportunities arise.
- 20 Noting the above, to progress this ambition, officers need to both work with key stakeholders to develop and seek external funding opportunities that may arise to progress the route, including developers and, if applicable, Northern Powerhouse Rail.

Other Options Considered

- 21 The Greater Bollin Trail is not a mandatory route however development of walking, wheeling and cycling ambitions and infrastructure is important, and local authorities with plans in place are well placed to make the case for future investment that is coordinated and integrated. Having the plan as adopted Policy will strengthen the Council’s negotiating position if NPR has similar construction impacts to the previous HS2 scheme.

Option	Impact	Risk
Do not include route in policy	Reduced chance of gaining external funding	Route does not progress

Implications and Comments

Monitoring Officer/Legal

- 22 As the local highway and transport authority, Cheshire East Council has a legal duty to maintain a safe and efficient highway network and develop and maintain a Local Transport Plan. Developing a coordinated, high-quality walking, wheeling and cycling network will contribute to fulfilling this legal duty.
- 23 If the Greater Bollin Trail is included as is suggested in any future Council policies and plans, they will be subject to future consultation and formal decision making by the appropriate Council committee.
- 24 In developing this route further, the appropriate legal processes will need to be followed for the implementation of specific schemes e.g. Traffic Regulation Orders. This will be completed for specific schemes as they come forward for development and implementation.
- 25 Subject to agreement with landowners, there may in the future be a need to update the Council's Definitive Map and Statement that records details of all public rights of way to include the new routes created so that they can be formally used by the public.
- 26 To progress the scheme, it will be necessary for the Council to apply for grant funding when / if it becomes available, currently there is no budget set aside for this project. If grant funding does become available officers should follow the Financial Procedure Rules detailed within the Constitution as to who should make the application and what reporting mechanisms need to be put in place.
- 27 The scheme will require the acquisition of land, this should be carried out initially by negotiation, should the negotiations fail the Council may need to consider if it should use its compulsory powers of purchase ensuring that the powers are only used when necessary, that they are used in the public interest and that the purposes for which the compulsory purchase order is made justify interfering with the human rights of those with an interest in the land affected, and that the purposes for which the compulsory purchase order is made justify interfering with the human rights of those with an interest in the land affected. In addition, the Council needs to ensure that there are no legal, financial or other impediments to the enable the scheme to be brought forwards.

Section 151 Officer/Finance

- 28 Feasibility funding was authorised by a decision delegated to the Executive Director in October 2024 following an expression of interest

from the Council's Active Travel team. Work to date has been funded by a grant from the Shared Prosperity Fund.

- 29 There are no direct finance implications arising from this committee report, however, recognising the proposed route corridor in policy will put the Council in a stronger position to gain external funding for taking this forward.
- 30 This report adopts a preferred corridor, not a preferred route, and therefore there are no blight implications associated with this.
- 31 The Greater Bollin Trail would become part of the approved Capital Programme for Transport and Highways once a funding stream has been formally agreed and the necessary financial approvals are in place. In order to ensure that the Council's capital programme is affordable and sustainable in the long term any scheme requiring Council resources will require review by the Capital Programme Board before going forward for appropriate approval in line with the constitution.

Policy

- 32 Supporting the concept and objectives of the Greater Bollin Trail, and including it in the Council's Statutory Plans, including the newly emerging Local Transport Plan and Local Plan, will ensure a joined-up policy approach. The new Corporate Plan priorities this reports supports are set out below.

Unlocking Prosperity for all	Improving health and wellbeing	An effective and enabling Council
Communities connected through an improved, accessible rural and urban transport network including active travel	Reduce health inequalities across the borough through access to Active Travel and the Countryside	Service delivery and new ideas are shaped by consultation and engagement

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 33 The Council will fully evaluate the equality implications of the proposed Greater Bollin Trail through an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) when the route gets taken forward to the next stage of delivery. The EqIA will focus on the protected characteristic groups (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race/ethnicity, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and marriage and civil partnership). It is not

anticipated that there will be any equality impacts as the route will be designed to relevant national standards where possible.

Human Resources

34 There are no direct implications for Human Resources.

Risk Management

35 Risk registers and risk assessments will be produced as part of the Council's standard approach to project management and governance as sections of the route come forward for delivery.

Rural Communities

36 The Greater Bollin Trail route passes through and connects rural areas. The route should be integrated into Statutory Plans going forward, including the newly emerging Local Transport Plan and Local Plan to ensure policy is joined up and coordinated with other transport improvements in rural areas.

Children and Young People including Cared for Children, care leavers and Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

37 The Greater Bollin Trail would aim where possible to be in line with Local Transport Note 01/20 – Cycle Infrastructure Design and therefore aimed to be suitable for a competent 12-year-old. Pedestrian infrastructure should follow best practice including guidance set out in the Manual for Streets 1 & 2. Parts of the Greater Bollin Trail in the vicinity of schools could be considered as part of the Council's Sustainable Modes of Travel to School programme.

Public Health

38 The public health benefits of active travel are well established. Travelling actively helps people meet the recommended physical activity targets, improves physical and mental health, whilst reducing the risks of poor health and premature death.

Climate Change

39 Cheshire East Council have Carbon neutral council with minimum offset by 2030, influencing carbon reduction and green energy production across the borough by 2045. The Greater Bollin Trail would enhance active travel infrastructure and help encourage walking, wheeling and cycling as a mode of travel and support carbon reduction and more sustainable travel.

Access to Information

Contact Officer:	Paul Griffiths Head of Infrastructure Paul.Griffiths@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	1 – Greater Bollin Trail Options Assessment Report 2 – Stakeholder Engagement Summary 3 – Proposed corridor / route
Background Papers:	None