

AREA ACTION PLAN PUBLIC EXAMINATION MARCH 2009

Responses by TAG to questions raised by the Inspector for discussion

Appendix D Additional Responses

1 Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) and lack of public engagement:

The SCI sets out the standards which must be adopted by the council regarding engaging with the community and key stake holders in the plan-making process. It aims to achieve greater public involvement in the preparation of all documents in the Local Development Framework (LDF) and in significant Development Control decisions. Improved public engagement ensures that any decision making is transparent, accountable and reflects local needs. It will also encourage community 'ownership' of the LDF.

Engaging with the public has comprised presenting the Issues and Options (I&O) and the subsequent stages, to the Local Area Forums (LAF). The LAF has never been widely publicised in any meaningful way, and the vast majority of residents will even now be unaware of its existence or purpose. Furthermore the use of the LAF by WBC as a means to lecture residents, whilst failing to listen to what the public have to say and failure to maintain a regular schedule, often cancelling at short notice, and failing to widely publicise them has resulted in what was initially an encouraging number of attendees dwindling to sometimes as few as 20.

The various opportunities to publicise the LAF more widely have been steadfastly ignored by WBC. We can only speculate on the reasons for this failure to engage more widely, and the way the public response to the I&O (Appendix K of the Submission Document (SD)) has been selectively used by WBC perhaps provides a clue. Analysis of Appendix K shows that the support for Option 3 to be of the order of 30% of the total respondents, compared with about 20% for Option 1, which WBC present as clear support for Option 3, whilst ignoring the single biggest issue raised by the consultation process, namely the need to improve the transport infrastructure before allowing further development, a view supported by 60% or more of respondents. The recent consultation on the Addendum (AD) highlighted further problems in this regard with WBC not notifying previous respondents about the AD for 10 days after it had been published as well as some failing to consult with parish councils within Fylde Borough which will be significantly affected by these proposals.

If the AAP/LDF as now proposed by WBC is adopted we believe few, if any, residents will be willing to claim ownership, and this is no doubt evident from the representations made. 116 residents have objected to the Addendum. No residents have supported the Addendum – the final stage of the AAP. In addition objections have been received from Singleton Parish Council, Little Eccleston Parish Council and TAG all representing residents.

2 Sustainable Communities Strategy:

The Wyre Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) Vision states "By valuing, listening to, respecting and empowering the people of Wyre, together we can build safe, healthy, skilled, planned and diverse communities, based upon the principles of sustainability, enterprise, civic pride and fair trade".

"The Vision from the SCS has specifically been important in guiding and producing the AAP" - Preferred Options Document 1.10.

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To demonstrate the degree of compliance with this in respect of the AAP requires a review of the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Report (Main Report) (2nd Revised Final), and our comments are noted below:

Para 2 on page iii states “Sustainable development is about ensuring a better quality of life for everyone, now and in the future. Sustainability looks at balancing the competing range of social, environmental and economic objectives.” – The I&O offered something that could perhaps have come close to achieving this ideal within the context of the AAP. Many of the matters that would have improved quality of life of local people, or at least mitigated the impacts of the proposed large scale developments, have been removed by WBC in the Addendum Document.

Para 1.6 of the Introduction states “The Fleetwood Thornton Area will be an accessible, diverse and vibrant location for mixed development; ..” – Without significant improvements to the highway network that had already been identified as necessary before any of the AAP developments take place, we consider the accessibility and opportunity for new business investment will diminish in direct relation to the increase in traffic and congestion.

Para 2.34 states “Many environmental problems result from cumulative effects. These effects are very hard to deal with on a project by project basis through Environmental Impact Assessment. It is at SA level that they are most effectively identified and addressed.” – A view we wholeheartedly endorse, and which previously appeared to be embedded within the AAP proposal presented for public consultation, and which has been subsequently discarded even before the SD and AD were published.

Table 3.2 gives the Derivation of Key Sustainability Themes. Our comments on many of the objectives listed therein:

1. Health – problems will be accentuated by traffic pollution, financial cost to individuals of the increased congestion, deterrence to pedestrians and cyclists and lack of affordable housing.
2. Housing needs – problem is not addressed in terms of numbers of affordable houses to meet local needs.
3. Access – problems will increase owing to lack of necessary improvements to the transport infrastructure.
4. Crime – we consider that there is a risk that crime levels will rise in the absence of new businesses in the area creating gainful employment and insufficient decent and affordable housing.
7. Sustainable modes of transport – without early improvement of the transport infrastructure, walking and cycling will remain too hazardous for many to even contemplate as an everyday mode of travel to and from work or school. Bus services will be compromised by unpredictable journey times on the highway network.
8. Energy – failure to improve the highway network in advance of development has led to significant waste of fuel and this problem will grow along with associated increase in traffic pollution, as well as financial cost to individuals of the increased congestion. The disincentive to business in the area attributable to the inadequate highway network, and the lack of affordable housing does and will continue to lead to energy waste through commuting which could be avoided.

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15. Air quality – will be affected by unnecessary traffic pollution arising from the increased congestion due to the failure to ensure the necessary improvements to the transport infrastructure were carried out in advance of development.

17. Greenhouse gas emissions – will be higher as a result of unnecessary traffic pollution arising from the increased congestion.

20. Competitiveness of local business & 21. Employment – the previously existing inadequacy of the local highway network is known to have deterred employment in the area, and the continuing failure to improve the transport infrastructure will undoubtedly reduce further the competitiveness of local business, deter potential new employment possibilities and likely lead to existing business relocating to areas with better infrastructure.

Table 3.4: Key Sustainability Issues, Table 3.5: SA Framework - both recognise most of the issues raised above, so it is vital that they are reflected in the AAP.

Para 4.22 is quite clear in its statement – “It is also acknowledged, that the capacity issues of the road system needs to be significantly improved before any large scale development takes place within the Area. It is therefore essential that the Area Action Plan recognises that further growth within the Area should be directly linked to the need to improve the road system, particularly the A585.” The junctions that need to be improved are clearly identified in Para 5.8 and this same message is reinforced in Appendix E under the section heading Development Principle 1: Integrated Transport. – we find it quite extraordinary that WBC has chosen to ignore this most fundamental concept in producing a sustainable community.

3 Junction Improvements within Transport Strategy of Addendum:

The WBC published Addendum Transport Strategy incorporates layouts for improvements to a number of junctions on the A585 to cope with the anticipated traffic increases, although it is unclear how valid the traffic figures are as there appears to be some doubt that the traffic deriving from all the approved and likely developments have been included in these figures. It would also appear that these proposals were produced without any real understanding of the reality of existing traffic movement at the junctions. For instance in some cases delays on the junctions could be reduced by providing a lay-by at each of the bus stops situated a short distance from the junction exit.

We have specific concerns regarding a number of the proposed junction improvements as follows:

- a. West Drive Junction – This appears to remove the traffic signals and the existing east-west right of way across the A585, except for buses. This right of way is of long standing and its removal is likely to lead to an enforcement issue as it is rather much to expect someone to take a detour via the Victoria Road roundabout, or via Bourne Way when they could simply follow a bus across the junction. The removal of the traffic signals will make the passage of pedestrians and cyclists more dangerous on what is one of very few established routes between the residential areas of Thornton and Cleveleys.

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It is concluded that this is done so as to avoid three sets of traffic signals in a short length of highway.

We suggest a roundabout at Bourne Way with the existing junction being improved by refining the phasing of the signals.

b. Victoria Road Junction – This appears to add additional approach lanes on the A585, and an extra lane on the roundabout itself. This is likely to increase the queuing on the other approaches as it will encourage higher speed approaches, and with the additional lane of traffic crossing the Victoria Road approaches make joining the roundabout more hazardous, whereas a slowing of the A585 traffic approaching would be likely to permit more traffic to enter the roundabout from the non A585 approaches, thus enabling the junction to operate more effectively. The passage of pedestrians and cyclists across this junction is already dangerous on what is one of very few established routes between the residential areas of Thornton and Cleveleys and the Morrison's supermarket, and the changes proposed will increase the hazard to these users.

We suggest as a minimum proper safe provision for pedestrians and cyclists from Victoria Road East to the supermarket access and Victoria Road West. Unless this were to be provided by bridge or subway, we consider it would be better to reconfigure the junction completely as a signal controlled junction and remove the roundabout. Any signals here must have their phasing coordinated with the other signals on the A585 to the north.

c. Norcross Junction – This appears to add additional approach lanes to the A585, an additional approach lane on Norcross Lane and an extra lane on the roundabout itself. This is likely to increase the queuing on the non A585 approaches as it will encourage higher speed approaches, and with the additional lane of traffic crossing the Fleetwood Road and Norcross Lane approaches make joining the roundabout more hazardous, whereas a slowing of the A585 traffic approaching would be likely to permit more traffic to enter the roundabout from the non A585 approaches, thus enabling the junction to operate more effectively. The biggest issues currently here are queuing traffic on the roundabout, due to bus stops a short distance from the Fleetwood Road exits, and long queues on the non A585 approaches generally due to the sheer volume, and speed, of traffic from the A585 approaches. It is not unknown for three Number 14 buses to be in the southbound queue on the Fleetwood Road approach in the morning peak, and as these are scheduled at ten minute intervals the scale of the delays here are clear. A typical morning trip to Blackpool Sixth Form College from The Gardeners Arms Thornton can take from 15 to 45 minutes, with the greatest part of the delay usually occurring at this junction. As this is the primary route from the AAP area to Blackpool and Poulton, delays of this scale are a considerable detriment to the viability of the area.

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The passage of pedestrians and cyclists across this junction is barely satisfactory at times due to the traffic speed on the A585, and these proposals will increase the hazards to such users on what is the only established route between the residential areas of Thornton and the major employment site on Norcross Lane.

We suggest as an absolute minimum proper safe provision for pedestrians and cyclists from Fleetwood Road to Norcross Lane. Such an improvement may well lead to reduced car use by staff at the Norcross site.

To reduce the significant delays on both the Strategic and the Local Highway Network that are caused by the limitations of this junction, and to offer proper safe provision for pedestrians and cyclists across it, we consider the only real solution is a graded separated junction which would remove the conflict between local and trunk route traffic, and avoid pedestrian and cyclists having to negotiate the growing volume of A585 traffic.

d. Skippool Junction – This appears to add additional approach lanes to all approaches and an extra lane on the roundabout itself.

This is likely to exacerbate the problem for traffic from Skippool Road as the eastbound (EB) A585 traffic already often approaches at speeds which encourage people to delay entry to the roundabout, and fails to address any of the issues which cause regular significant delays here. Slow moving and stationary traffic backs up onto the roundabout owing to the hold up caused by EB traffic waiting to turn into the filling station just east of Skippool Bridge, by delays caused by the signalised junction at Shard Road and by delays to southbound (SB) traffic on Breck Road. The frequent incidence of traffic backing up here also causes EB A585 traffic to queue up all the way back to Norcross. The additional lane on the roundabout will most likely increase the problem by increasing the conflict actually on the roundabout, especially in view of the high numbers of articulated HGV vehicles on the route.

As this junction is on a primary route from Thornton to Poulton and the M55 delays of this nature and scale are of considerable detriment.

The passage of pedestrians and cyclists across this junction is barely satisfactory at times due to the traffic speed on the A585, and these proposals will increase the hazards to such users on what is one of the only established routes between the residential areas of Thornton and Poulton and is much used by school children.

We suggest as an absolute minimum proper safe provision for pedestrians and cyclists from Skippool Road to Breck Road. Such an improvement may well lead to reduced car use by staff at the Civic Centre and parents of secondary school students.

To reduce the significant delays on both the Strategic and the Local Highway Network that are caused by the limitations of this junction, and to offer proper safe provision for pedestrians and cyclists across it, we consider the only real solution is a graded separated junction which would remove the conflict between local and trunk route traffic, and avoid

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pedestrian and cyclists having to negotiate the growing volume of A585 traffic.

e. Shard Road Junction – This appears to add an additional lane EB and westbound (WB). The WB turning lane is unprotected by an island and this could make stationary vehicles vulnerable to the movement of EB traffic as two lanes from the approach converge into one on the exit from the junction. This junction is known to regularly cause traffic to back up to the Skippool junction. In isolation the junction could work adequately, however, it appears to have not to have been considered in the overall context of the operation of the A585. It could be reasoned that a signalised pedestrian crossing is needed between this junction and Skippool. If this were to happen, then we consider a simple roundabout here would be a more appropriate solution.

f. Singleton Crossroads – This appears to add an additional EB approach lane to the A585 with no corresponding increase in exit lanes. This is likely to increase delays at the junction as EB traffic already backs up regularly from Windy Harbour, and three lanes of traffic competing for one in slow moving traffic will likely lead to vehicles backing up onto the junction itself at times. As this junction is already a major cause of delay on all days of the week, and we understand the Highways Agency (HA) have already proposed a roundabout, this tinkering with the existing configuration seems rather nonsensical.

We suggest a more radical approach is needed to deal effectively with this Junction, by removing traffic from the EB A586 and Lodge Lane completely. This would be likely to improve safe provision for pedestrians and cyclists.

This could be implemented by construction of a spur road from Garstang Road to Mains Lane just east of Little Singleton with a roundabout at each end.

g. Windy Harbour Crossroads – This appears to add nothing of any consequence to this junction, which is somewhat surprising and this is severely congested at times and has been highlighted by the HA and the WBC SA as being in need of improvement.