

5a New Consultation on borough-wide travel plans.

Janet Cass (Wigan Councils Planning and Transport Policy Team) recently contacted Graham to notify him and local community groups that the council has recently prepared a draft Travel Plan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), that is now available for public consultation. *“Travel plans have formed a key part of the planning process for some time, however, success has been limited This draft SPD represents a shift away from the traditional approach to Residential Travel Plans and a move towards a more collaborative approach to the development, management and implementation of these plans”.*

A six-week public consultation on the SPD will run from Thursday 8 February until **23:59 on Thursday 21 March 2024**. They would be pleased to receive any comments you may have on the content. The draft SPD (26p) can be viewed online at <https://participate.wigan.gov.uk/en-GB/projects/draft-travel-plan-supplementary-planning-document>.

Sadly, Wigan Council have previously ignored many Travel Plans that are a mandatory requirement for planning developments – this has been pointed out to them on many occasions. It now looks as if they will now have to take them more seriously from now on!

“The stated primary purpose of a travel plan is to identify opportunities for the effective promotion and delivery of active travel and public transport initiatives and reduce single occupancy car trips. The road user hierarchy should be adopted when developing travel plans with the aim to promote modes of transport at the top of this hierarchy while encouraging people to make less use of modes towards the bottom of the hierarchy. Road User Hierarchy”

We really need to ensure that the council sticks to a rigorous Travel Plan policy from now on. Their earlier plans were never enforced even though there was a requirement to do so. What we clearly need is sight of ACTUAL data and not assumed ‘vested interest data’ being quoted!

5b Feedback from Teams meeting 9th Jan chaired by Andy Burnham

In 2021 Andy Burnham supported the formation of a Mayoral-backed Working Group to consider ‘Local Traffic and Transport Plans for Lowton and Golborne (LTTPLG)’. Both Andy Burnham and local MP James Grundy stated that it is important for the local communities of Lowton and Golborne to have a key role in the development of plans and strategy since they were the ones with local knowledge.

This enabled the views of local residents to be transmitted to GMCA, TfGM and officers of Wigan Council via LaGTAC and the four other community groups LHSRG, LENDF (Lowton East Neighbourhood Development Forum), LWR (Lowton West Residents) and GLW ‘voice (Golborne and Lowton West ‘Voice).

At the last meeting (09 Jan 2024), it was noted that significant events had recently taken place in relation to potential funding towards the Atherleigh Bypass extension; and the upcoming

'Wigan Local Plan' consultations scheduled for early 2024. There was urgency to discuss many interactive and common issues for any local traffic and integrated transport plan for Lowton and Golborne. Once again Graham asked Andy to chair this meeting. Andy Burnham indicated that priority issues are seen to be (i) Golborne Station and (ii) The completion of the Atherleigh Bypass Extension to the M6 at Junction 22. These were the key plans that will mainly influence the Lowton and Golborne traffic. However, it is essential that we all move forward on all fronts that will impact on traffic and transport infrastructure via various Network Reviews and agreed plans and strategy. Conversations are urgently needed to feed into the various traffic and transport reviews which are ongoing within Wigan Council and TfGM. A local plan specifically for Lowton and Golborne is key to moving forward utilising the local knowledge of the community.

Peter Boulton B (TfGM) Added that to support these various consultations there is a need to share data. Simon Elliot (TfGM) will look at what data can be shared with participants without compromising data protection within the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

As a General Action: Andy Burnham asked Graham (LaGTAC) to arrange for the formation of working sub-groups to undertake specific tasks related to Travel and Transport issues. GW will report back to this Working Group in approximately 6 months' time on progress (or as soon as possible). Meanwhile GW would contact the pertinent partners involved in specific tasks.

These subgroups will focus on community group interactions with local residents and to bring forward and present the results of these discussions with appropriate Wigan Council, TfGM and GMCA officers for full and frank consultations. Fortunately, there are excellent working relationships between all five local community groups on many issues - so good inter-group networking arrangements and local residents' interaction already exists.

Key discussions are expected to focus on the following:

A) Bus routes and cycling routes to Golborne Station

Graham was to arrange a meeting with Dame Sarah Storey (GM cycling commissioner) and Andy for an inspection visit. The aim is also to have a meeting during March with local Council officers. Graham has contacted GMCA and Dame Sarah's office and is awaiting the confirmation of suitable date(s).

A small working party was to be formed – to include canvassing/consulting with regular bus users, cyclists who use the local roads and pedestrians. Following a Wigan council officers meeting with local ward councillors, Stephen Riley invited Kath Houlton (Lowton East) to arrange for an initial scoping meeting with Liz Brown (LENDF), Linda Graham (LWR) and Graham Wardle (LaGTAC) 5th Feb. Liz and Linda have produced some excellent initial thoughts in respect of cycling and walking, and bus routes respectively. Kath and Graham will pull together a synopsis of the initial thoughts from this meeting for transmission to Steven later

this week (w/c 12 Feb). These initial idea thoughts are to be supplemented by overall vehicular movement issues and their effect on traffic movements. The intention is to canvass residents on their opinions in the coming weeks.

B) Completion of the Atherleigh Way bypass extension to the M6

There is already a Working Group (established in Sept 2023) led by TfGM to look at the financing of the bypass extension and options for the route of the bypass. The local community groups already have a 'Community Bypass Group' (CBG) which has been meeting since July 2023 with local Lowton East councillors. It is expected that these two groups will meet for further discussions on progress along with GMCA, Highways England, DfT, local MPs Wigan Council officers and local councillors. However, it is essential that discussions between Wigan Council officers, local ward councillors for Lowton East and community groups take place soon and prior to the TfGM Working Group.

C) Wigan Local Plan (Traffic and Transport) and the Draft Wigan Transport Strategy document

Graham, James Grundy MP and former Lowton East councillor Edward Houlton wrote (Dec 2023) to Cllr Paul Prescott (Transport portfolio holder) requesting a meeting between Paul, Graham and interested parties to arrange for a suitable Council officer/community groups' meeting to discuss the inclusion of the proposed bypass extension within the overall Wigan Transport Strategy document to be discussed with Wigan residents as part of the Wigan Local Plan in the upcoming months of 2024.

There has already been some contact between Wigan Council officers (Nick Clarke, etc), local residents and community groups in respect of the overall Wigan Local Plan. The community groups have already provided a 'traffic issues' document to the Wigan Local Plan Team that deals with specific traffic and transport issues.

It is essential that the community groups and the Local Plan Team meet to discuss the specific traffic and infrastructure plans for Lowton and Golborne (especially Lowton which is majorly impacted by traffic plans) for discussions before mid-2024. Graham is to set this up with the Local Plan Team in the next few weeks. Ongoing.

D) Service Road and modifications to A580

There is currently an outstanding action from the LTTPLG Working Group (from 2021) in relation to S106 funding of road infrastructure projects. Andy Burnham had previously requested that Wigan Council meet with the community groups (see previous LTTPLG minutes). Unfortunately, this scheme is seen by local residents as one of the most contentious schemes proposed by Wigan Council in relation to road infrastructure to affect traffic within the Lowton and Golborne boundary – particularly Lowton East (Lane Head). To date Wigan Council has refused to engage with the residents or community groups in any meaningful consultation!

The community groups, residents affected by the proposed modifications, local councillors and James Grundy MP have all objected to these plans and have made formal complaints. These complaints have all been rejected outright. Further actions, after further discussions with local affected residents, will be sought through the Local Government Ombudsman and Secretary of State for Local Government and Communities. Litigation against Wigan Council is a potential option.

Wigan Council recently (Dec 2023) sent letters to the affected residents on the Service Road at the A580/Newton Rd junction. This is only supposed to be a consultation on the details of this junction modification and is not a meaningful consultation! Letters of complaint have again been sent to the Council clearly stating that the residents do not wish for this planned junction to go ahead. It does not mitigate under S106 rules and would dramatically and deleteriously affect the health and wellbeing of those affected and will do little to benefit the traffic situation within Lowton in comparison with the bypass extension scheme.

Bizarrely, when the Atherleigh Way bypass extension goes ahead then these modifications to the A580 junctions as proposed by Wigan Council are not needed. Andy Burnham intimated this at an earlier LTTPLG meeting!

A meeting is urgently needed between Wigan Council officers, the local community groups, local ward councillors and local MP James Grundy. Graham will again attempt to organise a meeting between these interested parties. This debacle is presently clearly alienating the community from local government!

E) General issues relating to local thoroughfares and key road junctions

Sadly, as a consequence of the excessive housebuilding and commercial development programmes within and adjacent to the Lowton and Golborne boundary. This has dramatically impacted on the efficiency of an already ineffective local road infrastructure putting severe pressure on many thoroughfare junctions. At the first LTTPLG meeting a significant number of transport issues were identified to Wigan Council. A meeting between the Highways Department and local community groups and councillors is urgently needed. Once again, Graham will contact appropriate council officers to arrange a meeting.

5c Opinions required for bus routes, cycle routes and walking routes to Golborne station

As noted above, there is a need for the community groups to liaise with local residents prior to further meetings with Wigan Council officers. Meetings will need to be arranged.

5e GMP's Community Speed Watch (CSW) scheme

LaGTAC has been undertaking speed measurements on numerous roads within Lowton and Golborne since 2020 and feeding information back to the community, GMP traffic enforcement and to Wigan Council. A LaGTAC survey of local residents' concerns had suggested 49 speeding hotspots. LaGTAC can only monitor traffic and has no powers of enforcement – only GMP enforcement officers have that power.

In 2021 a new Lowton and Golborne neighborhood speed policing plan was to be put together between GMP (Leigh) and LaGTAC. However, this was superseded by a GMP initiative when they took over the Community Speed Watch Scheme from Local Authorities within Greater Manchester. This new GMP CSW scheme was opened to 'Police Support Volunteers', in March 2023 when applications for volunteers within the Wigan area were posted on the GMP website. Despite a lot of interest shown for reducing excessive speeding and promotion of this opportunity on social media and at community group events there have disappointingly only been 5 applicants to date (as I am aware of) for Lowton and Golborne. Two are to undergo induction training next month, with hopefully a further two further LENDF volunteers soon.

LaGTAC results indicate that there are 1 to 2% of motorists who are excessive speeders (i.e. exceeding the speed limit by 15mph). However, some of these excessive speeders have been found to be driving dangerously and monitored: at 74mph in a 20 zone, 83mph in a 30 zone, and 125mph in a 40mph zone.