



# Feasibility Study for the Linear Park at Tarleton and Hesketh Bank





Executive Summary

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# 1.0 introduction

## 1.1 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

West Lancashire Borough Council commissioned Gillespies with Regeneris in November 2009 to carry out a Feasibility Study for a Linear Park along the Canal and River Douglas at Tarleton and Hesketh Bank. The Park is included as a proposal in the West Lancashire Replacement Local Plan and the Borough Council and other key stakeholders, including the two Parish Councils of Hesketh Bank and Beconsall, and Tarleton, are committed to the concept of creating a new park. This Feasibility Study is intended to outline potential options for the development of the Park, to develop those options into a series of costed projects and to make recommendations about potential funding sources and the resources required to take the project forward. Finally the Study outlines how the park could be managed in the long term.

## 1.2 BACKGROUND

The objectives of the Linear Park as outlined in the brief for this work are intended to serve a variety of purposes. These include:

- *To maximise the employment potential of Alty's Brickworks, Tarleton Mill and elsewhere through the use of enabling development.*
- *To improve opportunities for informal leisure and tourism,*
- *To enable the creation of sustainable and safe transport routes for cyclists, pedestrians and horse riders.*
- *To improve access to and alongside the River Douglas and the Rufford Branch of the Leeds-Liverpool Canal.*
- *To tie in with proposals for the Ribble Coastal and Wetlands Regional Park*
- *To protect the landscape and natural heritage of the area.*
- *To improve public appreciation of the historic and natural heritage of the local area.*

The Linear Park study area is made up of land that is almost entirely within private ownership and includes the site of the former brickworks, owned by Henry Alty Ltd and Tarleton Mill both of which are allocated for employment uses within the Local Plan. Other existing employment sites include two boatyards, a market garden and transport depot. Elsewhere land use is

generally limited to farmland but may have potential for a wider mix of uses that would add value to the park. It is recognised that the existing employment area will remain although they may be redeveloped and additional uses may be considered. The former tip and clay pit at Alty's offer potential for nature conservation and leisure uses.

### SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study is to consider the following:

- *How the Linear Park can contribute to the development of the Ribble Coast and Wetlands Regional Park and the North West/Lancashire Coastal Path.*
- *How the proposals can contribute to the emerging Green Infrastructure Strategies for the North West and Lancashire.*
- *How the proposals can benefit the local economy and local businesses. In particular how many jobs can be created and safeguarded.*
- *The potential of Alty's Brickworks, the boatyards, Tarleton Mill and other sites to create opportunities for job creation. In particular the potential to enhance and exploit heritage features for tourism and leisure.*
- *The potential to attract visitors and create tourism facilities.*
- *How the use of the river and canal by boats can be taken advantage of.*
- *Potential locations for car parks and proposals to improve access by alternative means of transport.*
- *How footpaths, bridle paths and cycle routes can be integrated into the park linking into the County Council Rights of Way Improvement Plan. Also how the Marine Bill will impact on the area.*
- *How to use the proposed bridge over the River to enhance the visitor experience.*
- *How the needs of people with disabilities can be catered for.*
- *How to make the most of the existing West Lancashire Light Railway at Alty's Brickworks.*
- *Options for the extent of the linear park.*
- *How the concerns of local businesses and residents about security and fear of crime can be addressed.*



- *How to handle the Health and Safety Issues connected with increasing access to a river bank that is suffering from erosion, allowing public access to the clay pit and the potential for conflict caused by the different users of the park.*
- *How the nature conservation interests of the area can be protected and enhanced.*
- *How the park can be developed as an educational resource to improve the public's appreciation of the historic and natural heritage of the local area, in particular the role played by the river and the canal.*
- *The scope for environmental improvements.*
- *The potential costs and funding sources for the creation of the various elements of the Linear Park.*
- *Options for arrangements for the management and maintenance of land within the park*

### 1.3 STUDY AREA

The study area equates with the area for the proposed linear park as outlined in the West Lancashire Local Plan. The area lies to the east of the settlements of Tarleton and Hesketh Bank and to the west of the River Douglas which forms its immediate eastern boundary. The site stretches from the A59 Liverpool Road in the south to Alty's Brickworks, immediately south of Beconsall Lane, Hesketh Bank in the north. The Proposed Linear Park follows the course of the river and includes the Rufford Branch of the Leeds Liverpool Canal which joins with the River Douglas within the study area. The core study area is approximately 55 hectares in size.

The study area within the Ribble Coast and Wetlands Regional Park. The old Southport/Liverpool railway line runs across the north of the study area and forms part of the National Cycle Network and Coastal Footpath within Lancashire. At its crossing point over the River Douglas a design competition has recently been held to develop designs for a new footbridge/cycleway over the river.

### 1.4 CONSULTATION

In addition to working with the Project Board established for the study comprising of Council officers and other Partners, individual consultations were undertaken as

part of the feasibility study.

Individual consultations have taken place with planning, leisure, environment, regeneration and transport officers from West Lancashire Borough and Lancashire County Council, the Parish Councils of Hesketh Bank and Tarleton, REMADE, British Waterways, the Environment Agency, the RSPB, Ribble Coastal and Wetlands Regional Park, Groundwork and the West Lancashire Light Railway to understand specific issues relating to the regeneration and development of the Proposed Linear Park. These consultations were carried out in one to one meetings and in telephone conversations. The main purpose of the discussions was to explain the study and for the stakeholders to identify key opportunities and constraints for the area from their perspective. Although a variety of views and opinions were expressed and recorded there was a general consensus that the area was under utilised and would benefit from environmental improvement. It was felt that existing employment and other areas within the study area could reasonably be developed without compromising the potential of the Linear Park.

### 1.5 REPORT STRUCTURE

After the introduction, the report is set out in the following sections:

#### SECTION 2 EXISTING CONDITIONS

A summary analysis of the area today and the challenges of regeneration, both physically and in terms of the market.

#### SECTION 3 THE OPTIONS

Sets out a variety of options for the Linear Park including the component parts and a series of regeneration and development options.

#### SECTION 4 THE PREFERRED APPROACH

Presents a vision for the Park and sets out the masterplan, key areas and design themes. Outlines on a project by project basis elements outlined within the masterplan.

#### SECTION 5 TAKING IT FORWARD

Envisages how West Lancashire Borough Council and its Partners could take the regeneration and development of the Park forward.



# 2.0

## Existing Conditions

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

It is important that any regeneration and development proposals for the area are based on a thorough analysis of the site and its context. This gives proposals credibility and ensures that whatever results evolves from the place and is not an arbitrary imposed solution.

The regeneration and development of the Park needs to build on the assets of the area in a sensitive way. This does not mean however that the result cannot be bold and imaginative.

### 2.2 LOCATION

The study area lies to the east of the settlements of Tarleton and Hesketh Bank and to the west of the River Douglas which forms its immediate eastern boundary. The site stretches from the A59 Liverpool Road in the south to Alty's Brickworks, immediately south of Beconsall Lane, Hesketh Bank in the north.

The study area is within the Ribble Coast and Wetlands Regional Park. The old Southport/Liverpool railway line runs across the study area and forms part of the National Cycle Network and Coastal Footpath within Lancashire. The city of Preston lies under ten miles to the north east and Southport lies under twelve miles to the west. Both are reached via local roads with the closest motorway link being the M6.

The site is contained by residential development to the west, with some areas of existing and under utilised employment land and Tarleton High School. To the east the site is bordered by predominantly agricultural land to the east of the River Douglas. The River Douglas forms the boundary of West Lancashire Borough Council with Chorley and South Ribble Borough Councils.



## 2.3 HERITAGE

The history of the area is directly related to the site's location on the banks of the River Douglas where the Leeds Liverpool Canal (Rufford Branch) joins the River. A branch line of the Preston Southport Railway was built to meet the canal system at this point, creating a small port and allowing the development of a concentration of local industries. It is not feasible for this report to go into the area's history in great detail, however the following pointers outline interesting components in the background to the area, which may develop a potentially interesting story behind the Linear Park. A significant amount of historical information and local knowledge has been provided by Graham Fairhurst (Representative from the West Lancashire Light Railway Trust) which has been collated in a separate appendix.

Hesketh Bank village originally developed in the angle where the River Douglas runs into the River Ribble and there has been a community here for about 1,000 years. In the 12th century, Hesketh and Beconsall were gifted to the Knights Hospitallers and belonged to them until their suppression in the reign of Henry VIII, after which the Beconshaw and Banastre families each held half of the land. The Beconshaw half, sold to Sir Thomas Hesketh of Rufford, was owned by the family until the 20th century when it was sold off at auction.

### RIVER DOUGLAS AND LEEDS LIVERPOOL CANAL

The River Douglas, a tributary of the River Ribble, is tidal over its last ten miles. In 1720 the river Douglas was made navigable from Wigan to the Ribble, to aid trade, help the poor, and assist carriage of 'coals, stone and slate' carried by water to Liverpool more cheaply than was possible by land. Shipping through Hesketh-with-Beconsall increased still further with the opening of the Douglas Navigation in 1742. The Rufford Branch of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal joins the river at Tarleton.

The River Douglas's link to the sea as well as the River Ribble and the Lancaster and Leeds Liverpool canals is as important now as it has always been. The Douglas Boatyard established in Hesketh Bank in 1900 continues today.

### THE WEST LANCASHIRE LIGHT RAILWAY

An Act of Parliament, in 1871, gave the West Lancashire Railway permission for a railway from Preston to Southport via Hesketh Bank, the first section (from Southport to Hesketh Bank) was completed in 1878 and by 1881 the whole line was finished. The railway bridge over the Douglas, originally constructed with a swinging centre section, was made a fixture in 1913 when there was no longer a need for the bridge to be opened. The railway was an invaluable means of transporting produce and Hundred End station was known locally

as 'Celery Junction'. The West Lancashire Light Railway is now a working museum for preserving and operating 2' gauge locomotives and rolling stock. The Railway has been in existence over 40 years and is a significant local tourism amenity with the aspiration and potential to develop into a regional facility. The WLLR is unique in the North West and represents appreciable value in terms of heritage, green tourism, local identity and educational aspects. The WLLR is soundly managed, constituted as a charity, voluntary run and has over 100 members. Its ability to develop is currently limited by its present lease and if the Linear Park can be brought forward, this would enable the Railway to develop both in terms of a longer, more interesting line and a museum/visitor attraction. In turn, the Railway could function as a strong anchor for the Linear Park and with its volunteer culture also provide a real community dimension to the Park.

### ALTY'S BRICKWORKS

Henry Alty established Alty's Brickworks in 1877 and, at its peak, the works employed 100 men and produced 400,000 bricks a week. The brick making operations closed in 1970. The remnant chimney and kiln buildings are still largely extant and the brick pit remains in part as an open water body. It is now well screened by vegetation and provides an attractive location for the local fishing club. Slopes within and around the site are often steep and currently unsuitable for safe public access.

### TARLETON MILL

The Mill was built in 1919 as a weaving mill located next to the canal for easy access to water to generate power from the stationary steam engine and for the transport of coal from the Wigan Coalfield. The location was also close to the terminus of the Tarleton Branch Railway although it is not known if it ever carried any traffic in connection with the Mill.

### BANKHALL

Bank Hall stands by the River Douglas in Bretherton, 9 miles from Preston, to the south of the Linear Park. From Tarleton the Hall is reached via the A59 at Bank Bridge. The Hall is contained by trees, limiting views from the road. Bank Hall is currently unoccupied and has deteriorated to a poor condition. The Clock Tower and its 17th Century oak staircase are significant features of the Grade II\* listed building. A successful application to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and following planning application should enable the restoration of the building. Although this will largely include private accommodation the entrance hall and the clock tower will be open to the public on event days and at other times by arrangement together with the Potting Sheds, former greenhouses and walled garden.







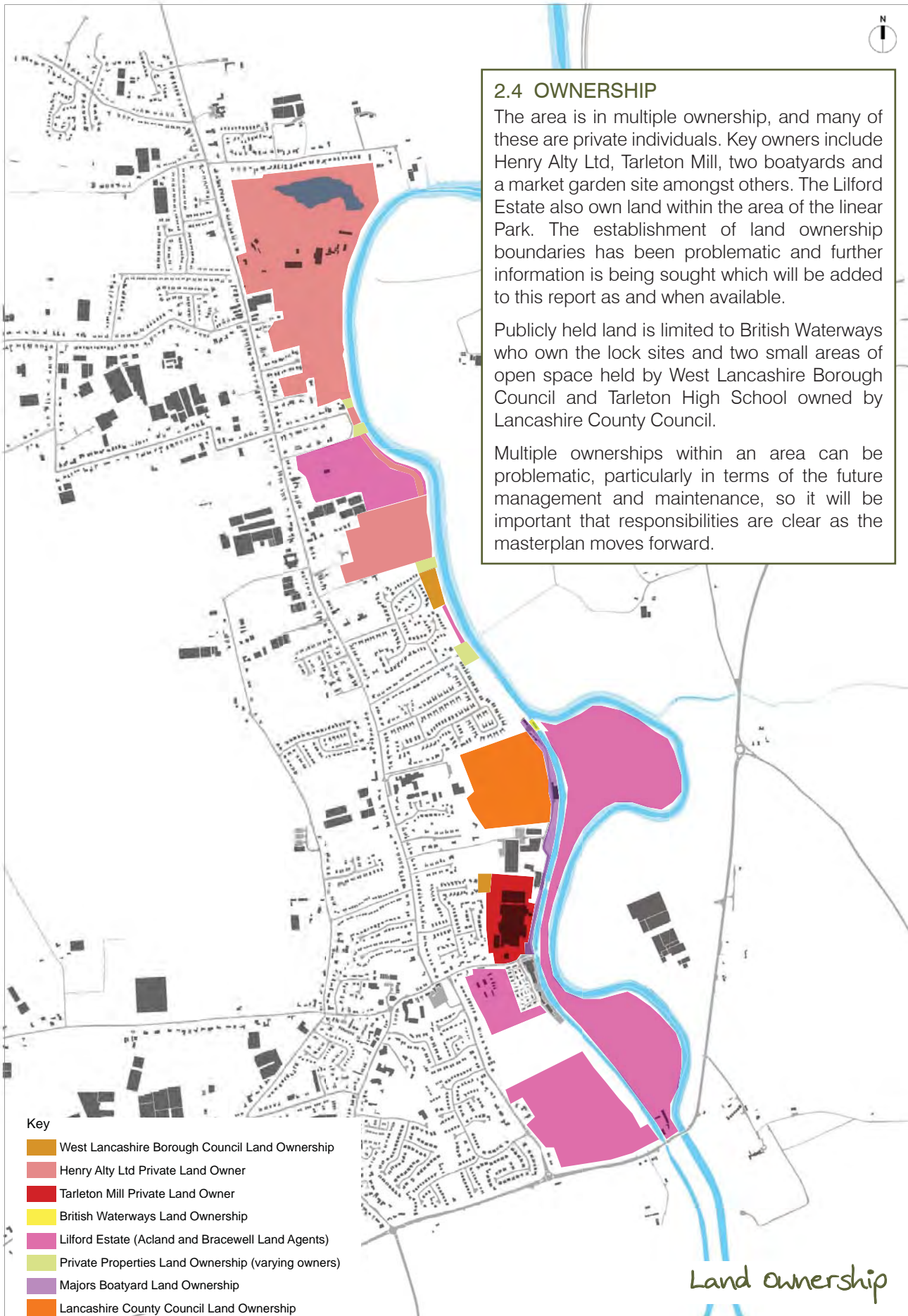


### 2.4 OWNERSHIP

The area is in multiple ownership, and many of these are private individuals. Key owners include Henry Alty Ltd, Tarleton Mill, two boatyards and a market garden site amongst others. The Lilford Estate also own land within the area of the linear Park. The establishment of land ownership boundaries has been problematic and further information is being sought which will be added to this report as and when available.

Publicly held land is limited to British Waterways who own the lock sites and two small areas of open space held by West Lancashire Borough Council and Tarleton High School owned by Lancashire County Council.

Multiple ownerships within an area can be problematic, particularly in terms of the future management and maintenance, so it will be important that responsibilities are clear as the masterplan moves forward.



- Key
- West Lancashire Borough Council Land Ownership
  - Henry Alty Ltd Private Land Owner
  - Tarleton Mill Private Land Owner
  - British Waterways Land Ownership
  - Lilford Estate (Acland and Bracewell Land Agents)
  - Private Properties Land Ownership (varying owners)
  - Majors Boatyard Land Ownership
  - Lancashire County Council Land Ownership

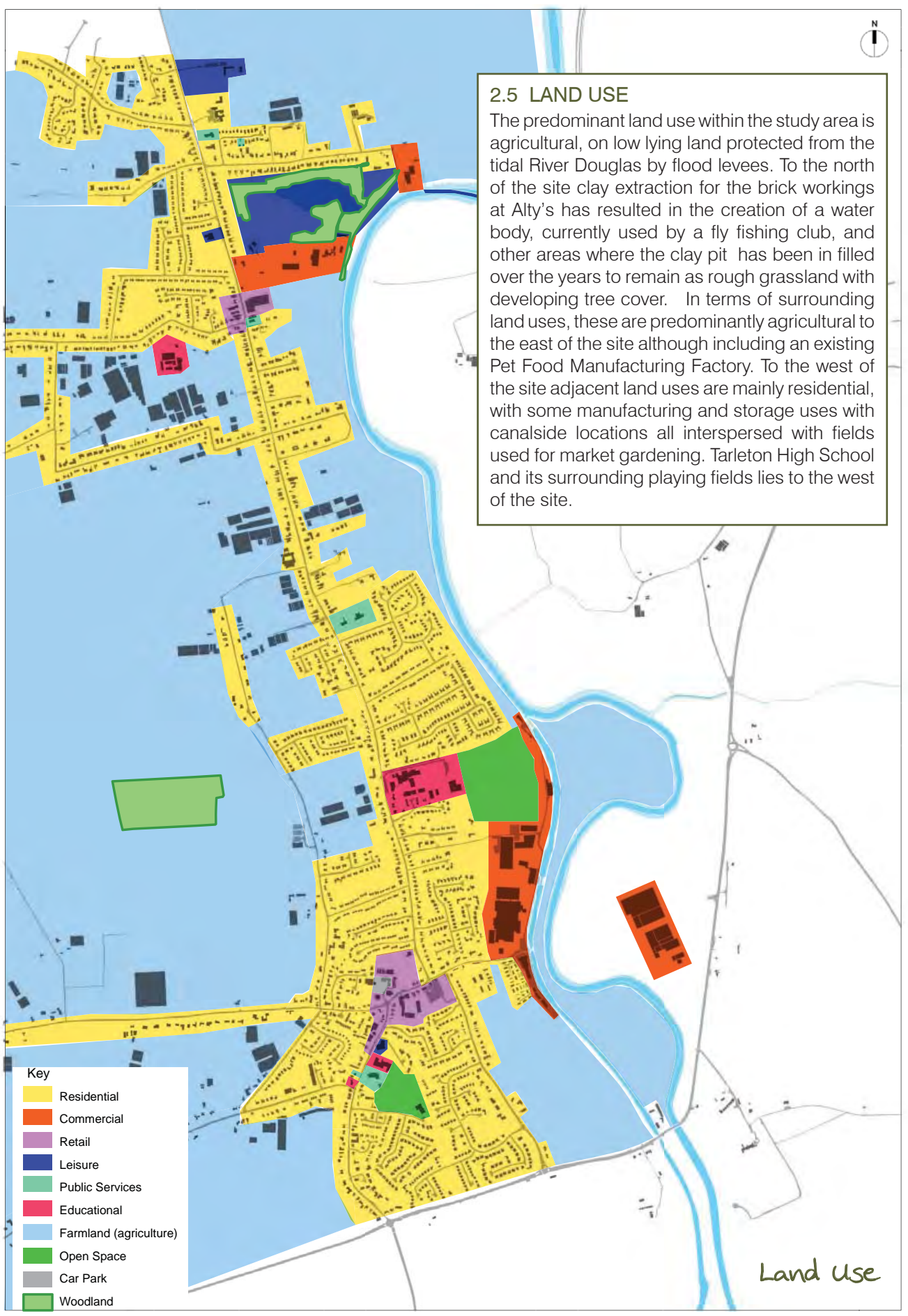
Land ownership





### 2.5 LAND USE

The predominant land use within the study area is agricultural, on low lying land protected from the tidal River Douglas by flood levees. To the north of the site clay extraction for the brick workings at Alty's has resulted in the creation of a water body, currently used by a fly fishing club, and other areas where the clay pit has been in filled over the years to remain as rough grassland with developing tree cover. In terms of surrounding land uses, these are predominantly agricultural to the east of the site although including an existing Pet Food Manufacturing Factory. To the west of the site adjacent land uses are mainly residential, with some manufacturing and storage uses with canalside locations all interspersed with fields used for market gardening. Tarleton High School and its surrounding playing fields lies to the west of the site.



- Key
- Residential
  - Commercial
  - Retail
  - Leisure
  - Public Services
  - Educational
  - Farmland (agriculture)
  - Open Space
  - Car Park
  - Woodland





## 2.6 PLANNING POLICY

The West Lancashire Replacement Local Plan, adopted by the Council in July 2006, sets out current planning policies for guiding development and protecting the environment in the area and will remain in place until the introduction of the Local Development Framework. The Local Development Framework is currently being progressed by the Local Authority and it may be possible to review policies that cover the study area as part of this process.

The study area is specifically covered within the Local Plan by Policy SC3- Linear Parks. The Canal and River Douglas Corridor in Tarleton and Hesketh Bank is one of three new linear parks proposed within the plan. The others, similarly based on historic transport routes, are the former Ormskirk-Skelmersdale Railway Line and the former railway line at Banks.

*"It is intended that these facilities will provide for informal countryside recreation opportunities, including horse riding where possible, as well as important cycling and pedestrian links between and within communities for leisure, travel to school, employment and shopping. It is intended that the linear park will also provide opportunities for the incorporation of public art features, as well as the interpretation of the local heritage of the route and improvements to its biodiversity potential.*

*In the case of the Tarleton and Hesketh Bank Linear Park, new or improved tourist attractions will be considered in the area of the former Alty's Brickworks site, provided that these do not adversely affect the local highway network or residential amenity, and that they complement and link to the function of the linear park."*

The Local Plan foresees the Linear Parks fulfilling a variety of roles, including informal leisure, safe and sustainable transport corridors for cyclists, pedestrians and horse riders. As linear routes, the parks will also be able to form important wildlife corridors and increasing the bio diversity potential should therefore be considered.

The Local Plan considers the Alty's Brickworks site could form a pivotal role in the development of the Park. It lies at the interchange of the cycle and pedestrian route to the south and the National Cycle Network and Coastal Footpath which may cross the River Douglas at this point. The former brickworks site already contains the West Lancashire Light Railway and a large area of water which could be developed to create a stronger tourist attraction which would complement the Linear Park and the wider Ribble Estuary Regional Park. The

Plan recognizes that any development should not adversely affect neighbouring residential property, wildlife habitats, and the local highway network.

A number of other planning policies within the Local Plan apply to the study area and include:

### ■ POLICY EN8 - Green Spaces

Development will not be permitted which would destroy or significantly impair the integrity of the main Green Spaces shown on the Proposals Map, or any other locally important area of open space, by:-

- i. *resulting in the loss of the undeveloped open character of the area;*
- ii. *restricting access to a publicly accessible Green Space;*
- iii. *causing the degradation of the visual, ecological and historical functions of the area; or*
- iv. *directly or indirectly damaging or severing links between Green Spaces, Corridors and the open countryside.*

Development may be permitted where it will provide a substantial environmental gain to the visual, ecological or appropriate recreational functions of the Green Space or where it forms part of a scheme which provides an overall benefit to the local community in social, environmental and economic terms.

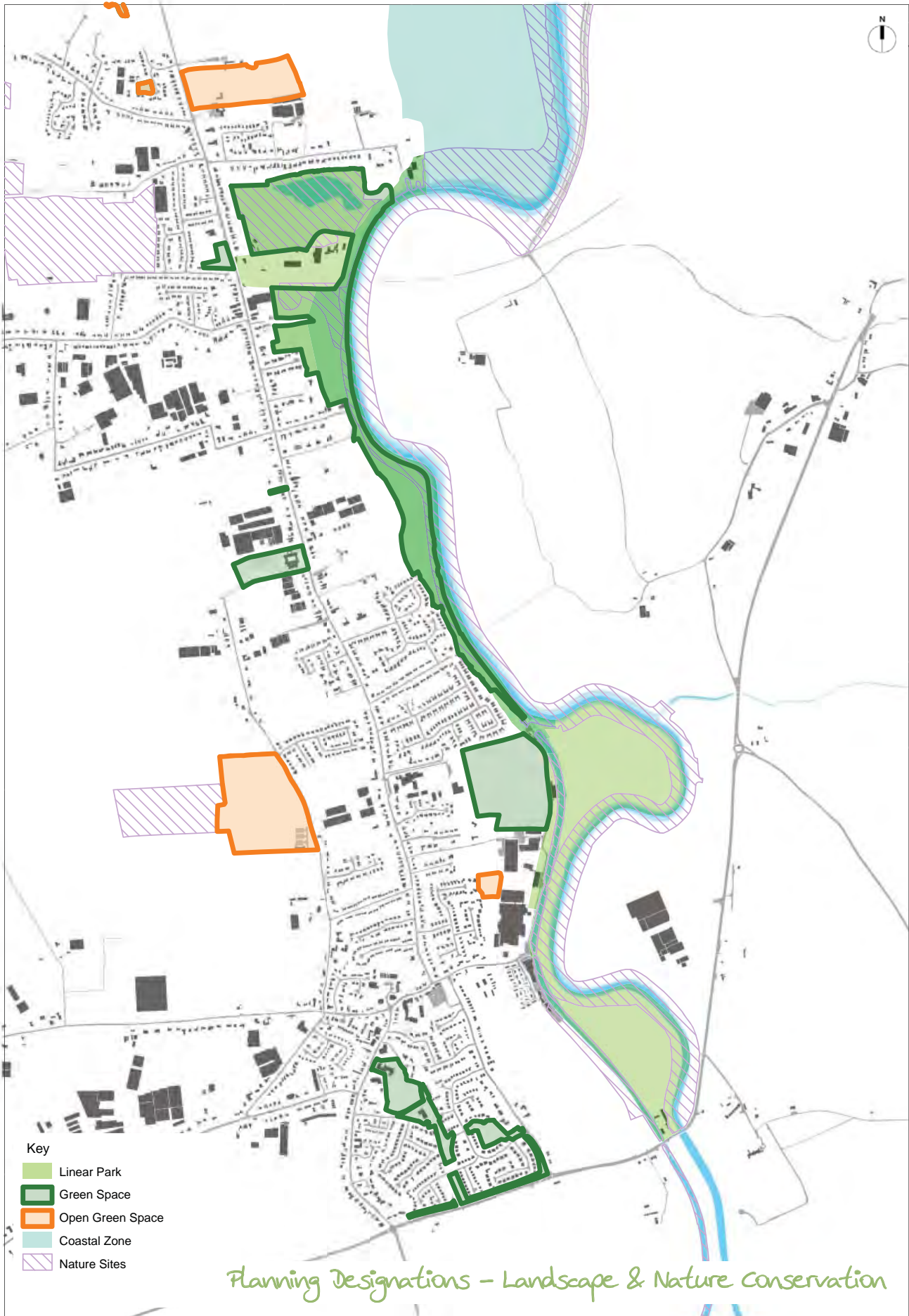
### ■ POLICY SC9 - Cycling and Walking Facilities

POLICY SC9 within the local plan covers the need to improve and increase Cycling and Walking Facilities within areas of new development and protect the current and proposed cycleway and pedestrian route network including the Lancashire Coastal Path including a bridge across the River Douglas.

### ■ POLICY EN1 - Biodiversity

The biodiversity of the District will be protected by not allowing development which would destroy or adversely affect important wildlife habitats or geological sites. Development which returns key biodiversity resources to viable levels, by promoting restoration, and re-establishment of habitats and species populations in accordance with National and Local Biodiversity Action Plans, is encouraged





## 2.7 LANDSCAPE AND NATURAL HERITAGE

### THE RIBBLE COAST AND WETLANDS REGIONAL PARK

The Linear Park lies within the Ribble Coast and Wetlands Regional Park. The principal for the Regional Park was established in 2001 when a partnership was set up to drive forward aims and ambitions for the park and create an internationally important destination, based on the conservation and enhancement of the existing environmental asset. This included its role as one of the most important areas for wildlife in Europe.

*"This wonderful secret can be discovered on the Ribble Estuary which stretches along the coast between the resorts of Southport and Lytham St Annes facing each other across the glistening water. It takes in natural attractions to the south of the estuary and continues up river to the east of Preston where gateway attractions are being developed.*

*This special area is one of the most important places for birdlife in Europe and home to internationally significant numbers of ducks, geese, swans and wading birds. It is a place of landscape contrasts; vast sun-baked sands, flocks of wading birds scurrying along the tidal edge, windswept dunes full of colourful butterflies and wildflowers, and marshes with gently grazing cattle. Low tide uncovers vast salt marshes and mudflats an apparent desolate wasteland, but the mud supports multitudes of small burrowing creatures, which feed the birds for which the Ribble Estuary is so important.*

*Steeped in history, the south side of the estuary was once home to the largest lake in England. Drainage in 17th century claimed most of the land for agriculture but smaller lakes, reedbeds, and wet meadows exist, attracting internationally important numbers of wildfowl. Pockets of sheltered woodland, sandy heaths and a network of freshwater ditches add to the variety and host nationally significant populations of dragonflies and water voles.*

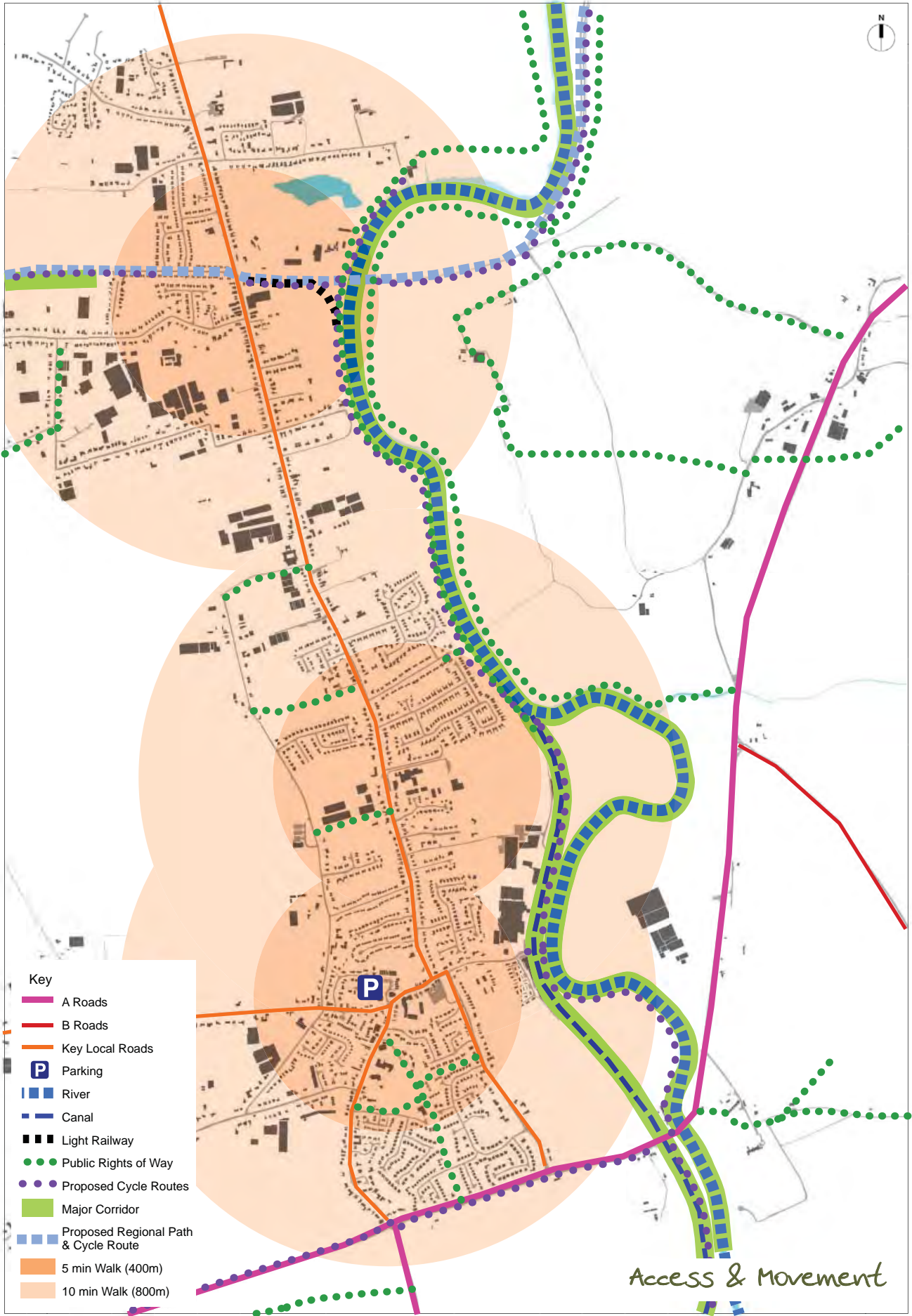
*In 2001, a range of organisations reflecting local conservation, governmental and community interests came together to steer the development of the regional park proposal. Outputs have included the production of Ribble Estuary Regional Park feasibility study 2003, The Ribble Coast and Wetlands: A Regional Park Vision document March 2007, A Business Plan for the Ribble Coast and Wetlands Regional Park May 2008 and a Communications Plan March 2009. Other work has taken place to position the proposal in regional, sub regional strategies and local planning frameworks.*

*A separate marketing group was established in 2005 to work with attraction and tourism managers to establish and promote the area as a new visitor destination. The group also coordinates the production of press releases, publicity for the annual walking festivals and*

*other promotional material. The group inputted to the development of the communication plan and oversaw the production of the Ribble Coast and Wetlands logo and branding guidelines."*

The study area lies within the Regional Park and forms a potential entrance point to the park, this is strengthened by the proposal to create the River Douglas Crossing at this point, bringing three elements which will encourage recreational interest and activity in the area.







## 2.8 ACCESS AND MOVEMENT

The study area is free from vehicular traffic with the exception of vehicles using local access roads to reach existing businesses and properties within the site. The adjacent road network includes the A59 which runs to the immediate south of the site. This is a well used route between Southport and Preston which crosses the River Douglas on the site boundary. Initial inspection suggests that access to the south end of the site directly from the A59 west bound would be difficult, although there is an existing access to a warehouse property at this point.

The north south route through Hesketh Bank and Tarleton is a well used local road and bus route with no cycling and poor pedestrian provision. Traffic can be heavy especially at critical periods such as the start and end of the school day. Local roads to the east of this route serve the housing areas on the edge of the linear park but routes to the study area are limited to Plox Brow which accesses Tarleton Mill and adjacent properties. This is a narrow road with no footway provision.

There are few pedestrian routes from the housing areas linking to the study area and business uses to the south of the study area limit free access to the canal side. Existing public footpaths are highlighted on the plan opposite, showing definitive pedestrian routes are limited to the north of the study area, however casual footpaths along the canal are used by dog walkers, fishermen etc. many of whom use the informal car park adjacent to the canal at Tarleton Mill.

The Local Plan outlines the creation of a cycle route through the Linear Park, in line with the District Council's Cycling Strategy. This proposed route will provide links to the main secondary school in Tarleton, as well as between the main centres of Tarleton and Hesketh Bank, avoiding the busy main road. The route along the river will also link to the Southport-Preston section of the National Cycle Network, which is currently being developed by Lancashire County Council.

### THE NORTHWEST COASTAL TRAIL

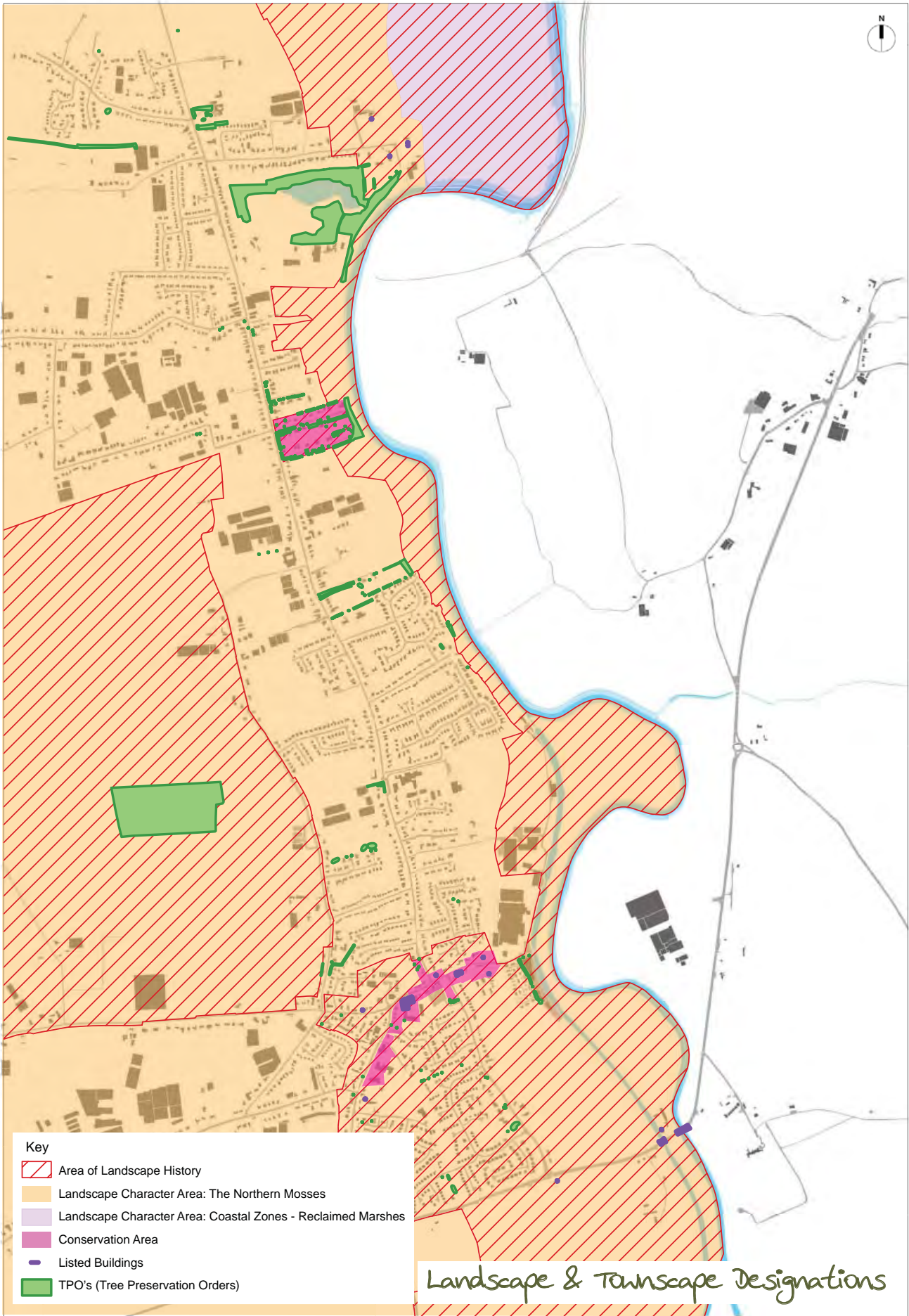
A regional coastal trail from Chester to Carlisle has been championed by the Northwest Coastal Forum since 2002, aiming to create a continuous 1,400km route for walking, cycling and horse riding that seeks to attract visitors on an international basis. The route may also include provision within the National Cycle Network, for leisure, utility, school travel and commuter use, providing part of a nationally signed cycle route between Southport and Preston. Current provision for cyclists within the area is limited with many cyclists using the main road network, including the A59.

### THE RIVER DOUGLAS CROSSING

The proposed Lancashire Coastal Path reaches a pivotal point within the study area as a new crossing of the River Douglas will be required to facilitate the completion of the Trail. The Trail will run along the line of the former Southport to Preston Railway line between Hesketh Bank and Much Hoole, crossing the study area in the south of the Alty's Brickwork site. The 85m long railway bridge over the River Douglas was demolished in the 1960's although the railway embankments and derelict abutments of the former bridge remain. To either side of the crossing a greenway will provide links to the existing public rights of way network in Hesketh Bank and South Hoole. The exact line of the greenway will be developed in consultation with stakeholders and the public and it is recognised that a route will need to be safeguarded across the Alty's Brickwork site.

REMADE commissioned the RIBA to run an international design competition for the new bridge crossing, the results of the competition were announced in October 2008 with the first prize awarded to JDA Architects with Arup, whose design is shown below. However the project has not progressed further due to lack of available funding.





## 2.9 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The study area largely falls within the Mosslands Character Area as defined by the Landscape Character Assessment from a Landscape Strategy for Lancashire (Lancashire County Council 2000). This character area is typified by an extremely flat, low lying landscape comprised of peat deposits, which are largely reclaimed lowland raised mires, managed for intensive crop production, including market gardening with some dairying. Fields are large and geometric, defined by straight drainage ditches and post and wire fences. Hawthorn hedgerows line straight, narrow roads and shelter belts, often of Scot's pine, are visible on the horizon. There are extremely long views across this open landscape and vertical elements, such as electricity pylons, are particularly visible. Small, loose-knit linear villages are sited on low sand and gravel or boulder clay ridges on the edges of the peat.

The low lying peat mosses formed over large areas of the low lying surface till which, until drained, created an incredibly rich ecological resource. However the intensive drainage and farming of the mosslands means there is little semi-natural habitat left. The network of drainage ditches are of great value to wildlife, particularly wildfowl. Farmland is also important as geese, swans and waders roost and feed on arable fields and pastures in the winter.

The landscape results from drainage in the medieval period however the rich habitats of the area were a likely source of food from the Mesolithic onwards. The drainage of the mosses in the early 17th century led to new watercourses being dug, fields drained and small settlements developing. The landscape around Tarleton Moss retains much of the original network of small rectangular fields, bounded by drainage ditches. Settlements on the sand and gravel or boulder clay ridges, such as Becconsall, are potentially very important archaeologically as they represent the areas which were historically easier to settle on the fringes of the mossland.

“16e Tarleton Mosses

*This distinctive area of reclaimed moss, located to the north-east of Southport, is distinguished by its dense settlement and abundance of glass houses. It is defined to the north by the more recently enclosed Ribble estuary coastal plain and to the south by the A565(T). It is a highly productive area of market gardening; green houses indicate intensive market gardening and exploitation of the rich peat deposits.*

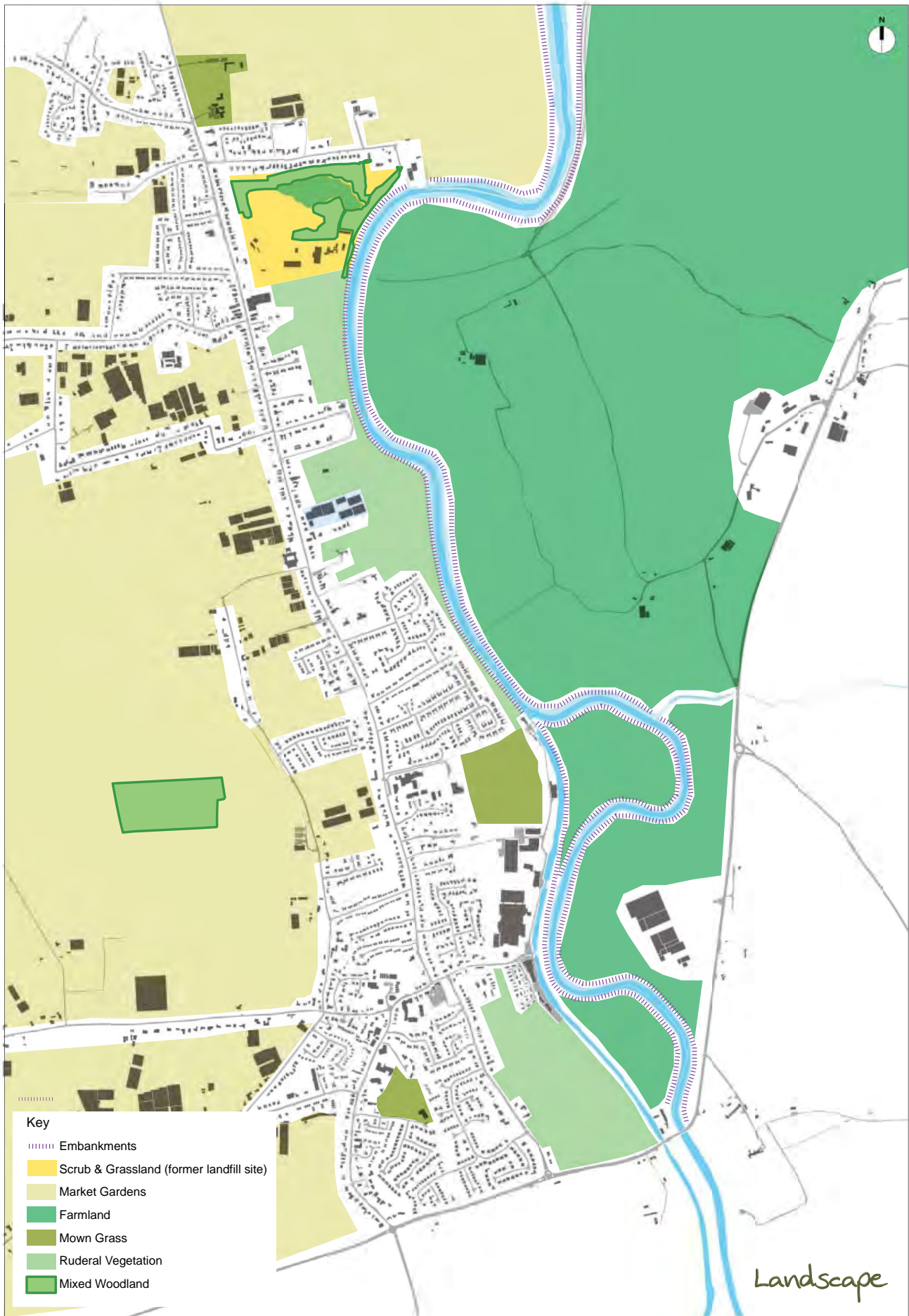
*Built development is dominated by modern bungalows which have extended along banked roads between the older settlements of Tarleton, Banks and Becconsall. These older settlements are located on low ridges and contain evidence of a long settled history. Further from the smallholdings and green houses are arable fields separated by ditches and fences. Shelter belts are important to local wildlife, as are the roadside hedges, which contain views from the narrow roads into the flat surrounding landscape.”*

The Landscape and Wildlife Assessment for West Lancashire (January 1994) gives an account of the development of the landscape and draws together current information on the state of the environment and the threats it faces. Five main Landscape Character Areas covering the entire District have been identified in the Landscape and Wildlife Assessment and these represent the geographical framework within which historical processes have developed and which have, in turn, been modified by those processes. The distinctive character of each Landscape Character Area imparts variety to the landscapes of West Lancashire. The study area falls predominantly within the Northern Mosses character area.

Within the Local Plan the need to preserve distinctiveness and variety to reflect the visual, ecological and historic characteristics of the Character areas will be expected within any areas of development. The importance of characteristic features and their retention and enhancement is required. This includes such features as woodlands, hedgerows, traditional walls, ditches, watercourses, field and settlement patterns, historical roads, track and footpath patterns, banks, cloughs, topography and sense of openness or enclosure.

The Council will initiate, implement and encourage environmental projects which enhance nature conservation value, creating appropriate habitats and protecting landscape features which contribute to the distinctive character of an area. Open spaces which provide informal treatments for public access, habitats for wildlife, community involvement, opportunities for interpretation and education and screening of unsightly uses will be encouraged.





## 2.10 LANDSCAPE TYPES

The study area contains a number of different landscape types, creating a distinct local environment. Overall, the study area is a landscape of few contrasts, but ranges from open arable farmland to lowland river environment. The types of landscape that have been identified include:

- *Market Gardens / Arable Farmland*
- *Farmland*
- *Mown Grass*
- *Ruderal Vegetation*
- *Mixed Woodland*
- *Scrub and Grassland*
- *River Embankments*
- *Watercourses*

A number of character areas, formed by a combination of landscape and land uses, can be identified within the study area.



### INDUSTRY EAST OF RIVER DOUGLAS (WITHIN CHORLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL)

The area to the south of the study area to the east of the River Douglas is dominated by the large scale industrial units of the existing pet food factory, with tall chimneys visible across the generally flat landscape. Some tree planting screening measures have reduced the impact of this development in views from the edge of Tarleton. Existing mature woodland blocks also provide some backdrop to the factory.



### LIGHT INDUSTRY WEST OF RIVER DOUGLAS

The area adjacent to the western bank of the Rufford Branch of the Leeds Liverpool Canal is characterized by low quality light industrial units surrounded by tarmaced parking areas and delivery space enclosed by palisade fencing. The units sit low within the flat landscape and, although they do not address or enhance the canalside environment, they are not highly visible in views from the wider landscape. There is little or none surrounding tree planting or vegetation.





**MARINE INDUSTRY (TARLETON LOCKS)**

To the north of the industrial units the canalside industry includes a boatyard area, characterised by a marine working landscape of visually low quality sheds / shelters between the Leeds Liverpool Canal (Rufford Branch) and access road and areas of boat storage and work yard. These works, although of low visual quality, are appropriate to the canalside environment, but are in need of improvement / maintenance . The locks themselves include visual reminders of the canal history of the area.



**EDGE OF SETTLEMENT GREEN SPACE WEST OF RIVER DOUGLAS**

To the north of Tarleton Locks and alongside the River Douglas up to Henry Alty’s site the space is characterised by ruderal vegetation between the River Douglas and housing to the eastern edge of Tarleton and Hesketh Bank. The residential properties mostly date from the twentieth century and have limited views from their position on the slightly higher ground overlooking the river and surrounding countryside. The views are limited both by garden fencing, intervening hedgerow vegetation and the aspect of the houses. The open space corridor is often constrained by gardens but also widens out in places to visually include small areas of adjacent open space and the school playing fields. The land slopes down towards the river and several belts of hedge and tree planting screen the houses from the River.





### FARMLAND EAST OF RIVER DOUGLAS

To the east of the River Douglas the landscape opens up into the wide and open plain of the River Douglas valley floor. It is characterised by large, flat fields divided into agricultural landscape patterns by hedgerows, the fields are interspersed with isolated farm buildings and houses. The open and wide landscape allows extensive views where the sky dominates, however these are affected by the dominant electricity pylon lines running across the landscape.



### HENRY ALTY'S / SEMI INDUSTRIAL / RAILWAY

The former brickworks at Henry Alty's to the northern end of the study area may be broken down into a series of discreet areas. These include the current storage and works areas for the company, including a number of old brickworks buildings and newer storage sheds which are used to store building/landscape supplies and house small scale independent businesses. This workmanlike landscape lies on slightly higher land adjacent to the main road through Hesketh Bank and is largely screened and remote from the river. The prominent brick kiln chimney sits at centre of site and adds character tying back to former uses of the landscape. The West Lancashire Light Railway also utilises old brick works buildings and sheds which are well maintained and used to house rolling stock which add interest to the semi industrial landscape.





**HENRY ALTY'S / BRICK PIT**

To the north of the working area of the Henry Alty site the old brick workings have in part been infilled and are left as emerging scrubland. The remaining water body is surrounded by very steep slopes in part and these are vegetated with mature native trees. The water body itself is contained by trees and landform and is an attractive and remote area within a relatively built up setting. There was evidence of potentially important wildlife and habitats. Trees form a visual screen between the rear of the Beconsall Lane properties and the forming Brickworks with the light railway route running along this perimeter. The area is contained and screened by scrubland / natural regenerated trees along the former railway line and along the river edge.



**BOAT MARINA AND RIVER WIDENING**

To the east and north of the old brickworks site the river becomes more estuarine and rural in character. The western bank of the river is well screened and contained by trees and hedgerow planting and limited by a distinct change in slope as the land banks up to the old brickworks site. There are few views to the brickworks. To the east the landscape is flat and open, with large arable and grazing fields on the low land of the river flood plain. The area includes the Douglas boatyard where the river has been widened to allow for a small marina, and the western banks include a boat storage and yard area. Timber piers and static caravans are found along the river bank..





## 2.11 WEST LANCASHIRE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT

### OVERVIEW

West Lancashire is a predominantly rural area with land use statistics indicating that over 85% land is rural greenspace, while only 37% of its residents live in an urban area. Employment is concentrated in five main sectors of the economy: wholesale and retail trade, manufacturing, education, real estate, renting and business activities, and health and social work account for 72.5% of all jobs in the area. West Lancashire's population has seen only modest increases recently (0.3% 2003-2008), and 2% per annum increases over the past 25 years. Its demographic profile is set to become more elderly, a trend already apparent in the eastern/southern and northern parishes. The district combines a number of small towns and villages that offer a very good quality of life; the largest extent of top grade farmland in the west of Britain; a new town which experiences problems of deprivation; Edge Hill University; and a range of natural attractions such as the River Ribble and Douglas, and Martin Mere.

This socio-economic assessment provides a brief overview of the socio-economic context for West Lancashire. It also provides a useful framework in which to view the proposed development of a Linear Park between Hesketh Bank and Tarleton. The assessment covers the following across West Lancashire:

- *Population*
- *Employment*
- *Tourism/Visitor related employment*
- *Levels of Worklessness*
- *Skills and Qualification*
- *Deprivation*
- *Population*

Lancashire is a particularly large economy. With a working age population of 711,300, 618,000 employees, and 52,000 enterprises, it accounts for 20% of all economic activity within the North West region. It also has considerable diversity, spanning rural economies, de-industrialised towns looking for new roles and functions, England's newest city and a tourism-oriented coastal area.

Within Lancashire, **West Lancashire** is an authority which covers 347 square kilometres and in 2008 had a total population of 109,400, with a slightly higher proportion of females than males. The population has grown only marginally over recent years (0.3% between 2003-2008), and between 2007 and 2008, there was a decline of -0.4%. This compares to an increase of 0.2% regionally and 0.7% at the level of Great Britain over the past year. In 2008, working age population represented 59.6% of the population (65,200 individuals)<sup>1</sup>; lower than that at regional and GB levels reflecting the older adult population of West Lancashire. Within Lancashire, West Lancashire is predicted to experience an ageing population over the next 25 years (c.47%); in terms of its projected 2031 proportion of pensioners, the authority ranks third behind Fylde and Wyre in the Lancashire area/county<sup>2</sup>.

The study area, **West Lancashire Linear Park**, for the purposes of this exercise, comprises two wards, Hesketh-with-Beaconsall and Tarleton, which, combined, had a total population of 10,000 in 2007, a 0.9% increase on the previous year<sup>3</sup>. This reflects around a 47% increase on the Census 2001 resident population in the area, which stood at 6,800<sup>4</sup>. This increase is likely in part to have been influenced by the area's attractiveness as a commuter area – while West Lancashire's villages offer appealing rural locations with good local facilities such as schools and quality housing; as well as being served well by motorways and other transport infrastructure into and beyond the district.

### EMPLOYMENT

In addition to the strength of the wholesale and retail trade sector, manufacturing continues to be a key feature of Lancashire's economy, accounting for around 76,900 jobs in 2008 (or 15.8% of all employment). The manufacture of transport equipment is a particular economic strength of the area, accounting for over 20,000 jobs and around 60 firms in 2008. The Aerospace sector is a distinct regional strength, representing the largest single concentration of aerospace employment and production in the UK. A strong dependence on public sector employment has also emerged, with health, social work, education and public administration now accounting for around 146,300 (30%) of jobs and 4,100 firms<sup>5</sup>.

1 *Labour Market Profile for West Lancashire, resident population and working age population, accessed from Nomis, 2010.*

2 *ONS 2006 based sub-national population projections, Crown Copyright material, accessed from ONS, 2009.*

3 *Census Area Statistics (CAS) Ward Population Estimates, mid 2007 (experimental statistics), downloaded from ONS, 2010.*

4 *2001 Census, theme tables, Resident population aged 16-74, ONS Crown Copyright reserved, downloaded from Nomis, 2010. Please note that Census data does not include those aged below 16, and therefore the figures are not directly comparable.*

5 *ABI, Workplace analysis, Lancashire, GB 2008, ONS Crown Copyright, downloaded from Nomis, 2010.*



For West Lancashire, the M58 motorway offers direct access to the M6 and in to Liverpool for employment beyond the area, although in 2008 West Lancashire itself had 44,400 employees, a 19% increase on 2003 levels of employment, and 4,100 firms. Wholesale and retail trade contributes the largest proportion of employees (8,100 or 18.4%), followed by the Manufacturing sector (7,500 or 16.9%). Manufacture of food and beverages and manufacture of fabricated metal products are significant manufacturing sub sector, accounting for 94 firms in the area and 3,200 employees. Other important local employers such as Matalan (HQ in Skelmersdale) and the Co-operative Bank add to the employment mix<sup>6</sup>. West Lancashire's economy provides relatively few well paid jobs. Only 29% of the workforce within West Lancashire is employed in higher wage managerial, professional and technical occupations, compared with between 39-43% across Lancashire, the Northwest and England and Wales<sup>7</sup>.

The proposed **West Lancashire Linear Park** area would stretch between the parishes of Hesketh-with-Becconsall and Tarleton. Historically the area was a small logistics and distribution hub, bounded by both the estuary of the River Ribble and the River Douglas, and close to the Leeds to Liverpool Canal<sup>8</sup>. More recently, the local economy has been dominated by the activities of the Manufacturing and Wholesale and retail trade sectors which combined, account for 46% of employment. Education is another significant sector, accounting for some 300 jobs (11% of total). The

location and expansion of an animal feed manufacturing facility at Plox Farm on the opposite side of the River Douglas from the Linear Park in Chorley Borough is another local employer.

#### TOURISM-RELATED EMPLOYMENT

Tourism-related employment in Lancashire accounts for 8.3% of jobs, or 40,500 individuals<sup>9</sup>. This is broadly the same proportion of employment as at regional and GB level (8.2%). This represents a small decrease on 2006 and 2007 levels of employment in the sector, but a 5% increase on 2003 tourism employment. Below the sub-region, tourism plays a less significant part in the economy of **West Lancashire**, employing 3,000, a total of only 6.5% of jobs. In 2008, there were 250 firms and 2,500 employees operating within the hotels and restaurants sector. 90 recreational, cultural and sporting sector firms employed 680 individuals in 2008.

Assets such as Martin Mere, Ribble Estuary Regional Park, the Leeds to Liverpool Canal, Beacon Country Park and other rural areas offer definite tourism and environmental attractions. The Borough is home to a number of heritage locations and other conservation areas which help to enhance the tourism draw of the area. Within the **West Lancashire Linear Park** area, employment within the Hotels and restaurants sector, supporting and auxiliary transport activities (including the activities of travel agents) and recreational, cultural and sporting activities accounts for 205 individuals (7.1%).

Table 1-1: Key employment sectors in West Lancashire and comparator areas, 2008.

	Key sector for employment	No. of Employees	% of total employment	No. of firms	Tourism as % of total employment	Top employment sub-sector
West Lancashire Linear Park	Manufacturing	700	23.9	40	7.1	Manufacturing of food and beverages
West Lancashire	Wholesale and retail trade	8,100	18.4	870	6.5	Education (5,800 employees)
Lancashire	Wholesale and retail trade	83,200	17.1	10,400	8.3	Health and Social Work (61,300 employees)
North West	Wholesale and retail trade	504,300	16.9	56,400	8.2	Health and Social Work (393,400 employees)
Great Britain	Real Estate, Renting and business activities	4,807,800	18.2	142,700	8.2	Other business activities (3,489,900 employees)

Source: Annual Business Enquiry, workplace analysis, ONS Crown Copyright Reserved (2008), downloaded from Nomis 2010

6 ABI, workplace analysis, West Lancashire, ONS Crown Copyright Reserved, downloaded from Nomis, 2010.

7 West Lancashire Borough Council, Economic Baseline report and action plan, Oct 2009.

8 Hesketh with Becconsall Parish Council website (<http://www.hwbpc.org.uk/>), accessed 2010.

9 Tourism-related jobs includes the following SIC sectors: 551 Hotels, 552 Camping sites etc., 553 Restaurants, 554 Bars, 633 Activities of travel agencies etc., 925 Library, archives, museums etc., 926 Sporting activities, 927 Other recreational activities).



Table 1-2: Claimants of all benefits as a % of WAP over the period 2004-2009					
	West Lancashire Linear Park	West Lancashire	Lancashire	North West	GB
2004	8.8	16.3	15.2	18.4	14.8
2005	8.8	15.9	14.9	18.0	14.6
2006	8.4	16.1	14.9	17.9	14.6
2007	8.4	15.5	14.4	17.4	14.2
2008	7.7	15.0	14.2	17.3	13.9
2009	8.6	17.1	16.0	19.2	15.7
% Increase 2004-2009	-2.6	2.9	7.1	6.4	9.7

Source: DWP, Benefit Claimants, working age client group, and working age clients for small areas, May 2004-2009 downloaded from Nomis 2010.

## UNEMPLOYMENT AND WORKLESSNESS

At the national level, claimants of out of work benefits amounted to 15.8% of the working age population in 2009. Eight of the 14 authorities in the broader Lancashire area had rates in excess of this national average. The Lancashire county area has experienced an increase of 7.1% in the number of claimants in 2009 compared to that in 2004 which compares to increases of 6.4% regionally and 9.7% nationally. The greatest claimant increase in Lancashire over the period 2004-2009 was between 2008 and 2009 (12%), reflecting the events of the recession. Analysis below the sub regional level shows that in total, 21 of the 301 Lancashire wards recorded working age claimant rates of 30% or more. Four of these wards were in **West Lancashire** <sup>10</sup>.

The West Lancashire area had a total of 11,200 benefit claimants in 2009, representing 17% of WAP, and has experienced increases in the numbers claiming benefits of 2.9% in 2009 compared to 2004. As at the sub-regional level, percentage increases are greatest over this period (13%) between 2008 and 2009, in line with the development of a recession and associated unemployment. Whilst the number of claimants as a percentage of WAP is greater than at the sub-region and nationally, it is lower than the North West average of 19%. Increases over the past 5 years in claimant levels are also considerably lower than for Lancashire, the region and nationally, suggesting the area has a stable employment base and is largely unaffected by activity beyond its borders.

The area of the proposed **West Lancashire Linear Park** has experienced a slight decline (-2.6%) in the numbers of claimants in 2009 from 2004 levels. This represents a total of 550 individuals claiming all benefits in 2009, with

the only increase over the past five years experienced between 2008 and 2009, most likely a result of a period of recession, with its associated unemployment and reduced opportunities for re-employment. Whilst there has been a recent increase in the number of benefit claimants, claimants as a percentage of WAP is low (9%) compared to the rest of West Lancashire and the region. Similarly, the trend of the past five years shows an overall decline in claimant levels year on year.

## QUALIFICATIONS

Around 27% of **West Lancashire's** working age population have no qualifications, 18% have NVQ Level 4/5 (degrees or postgraduate degrees). These headline figures are broadly similar to all of West Lancashire's neighbours (and indeed the proportion of residents with level 4/5 qualifications in West Lancashire is higher than in many of its neighbours and higher than the northwest average). These figures conceal major disparities between levels of qualifications in Skelmersdale and the rest of West Lancashire. Fewer than 10% of Skelmersdale's working age population have a degree and nearly 40% of Skelmersdale's working age population have no qualifications, significantly higher than anywhere else in the Borough<sup>11</sup>.

## DEPRIVATION

There are clear concentrations of deprivation within parts of **West Lancashire**, particularly in some wards of Skelmersdale. 61% of the super output areas (SOAs) in Skelmersdale are ranked within the top 20% most deprived SOAs nationally<sup>12</sup>.

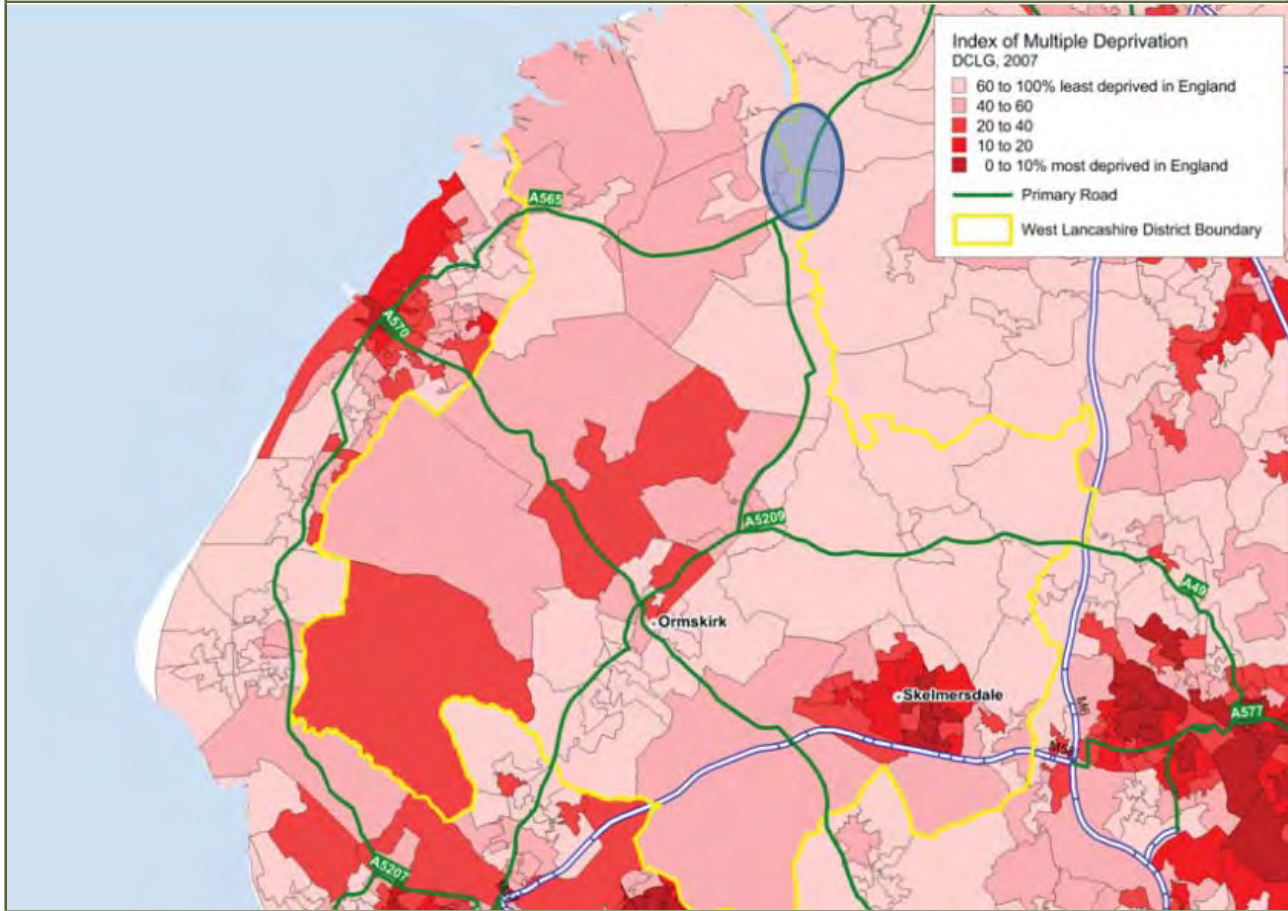
The overall Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) rank of **West Lancashire** amongst the 354 local authorities in England is 141, whilst in Lancashire it ranks 9 out of the 14 local authorities in the sub-region. The proportion of

10 Lancashire County Council website (Lancashire Profile, Working Age Benefits, Feb 2009) [http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/office\\_of\\_the\\_chief\\_executive/lancashireprofile/monitors/workingage.asp](http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/office_of_the_chief_executive/lancashireprofile/monitors/workingage.asp)  
 11 West Lancashire Borough Council, Economic Baseline Report and Action Plan, October 2009.  
 12 West Lancashire Borough Council, Economic Baseline Report and Action Plan, October 2009.



the district living within the most deprived LSOAs in the country is 0.16, which ranks West Lancashire 117 out of 309 local authorities in England (1 = most deprived)

Figure 1-1: Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2008



Note: Blue shaded area represents the Linear Park study area.

Source: Digital Mapping Solutions from Dotted Eyes. Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the controller of HMSO © Crown Copyright 2008. All rights reserved. Licence number 10001998



## 2.12 VISITOR ECONOMY BASELINE

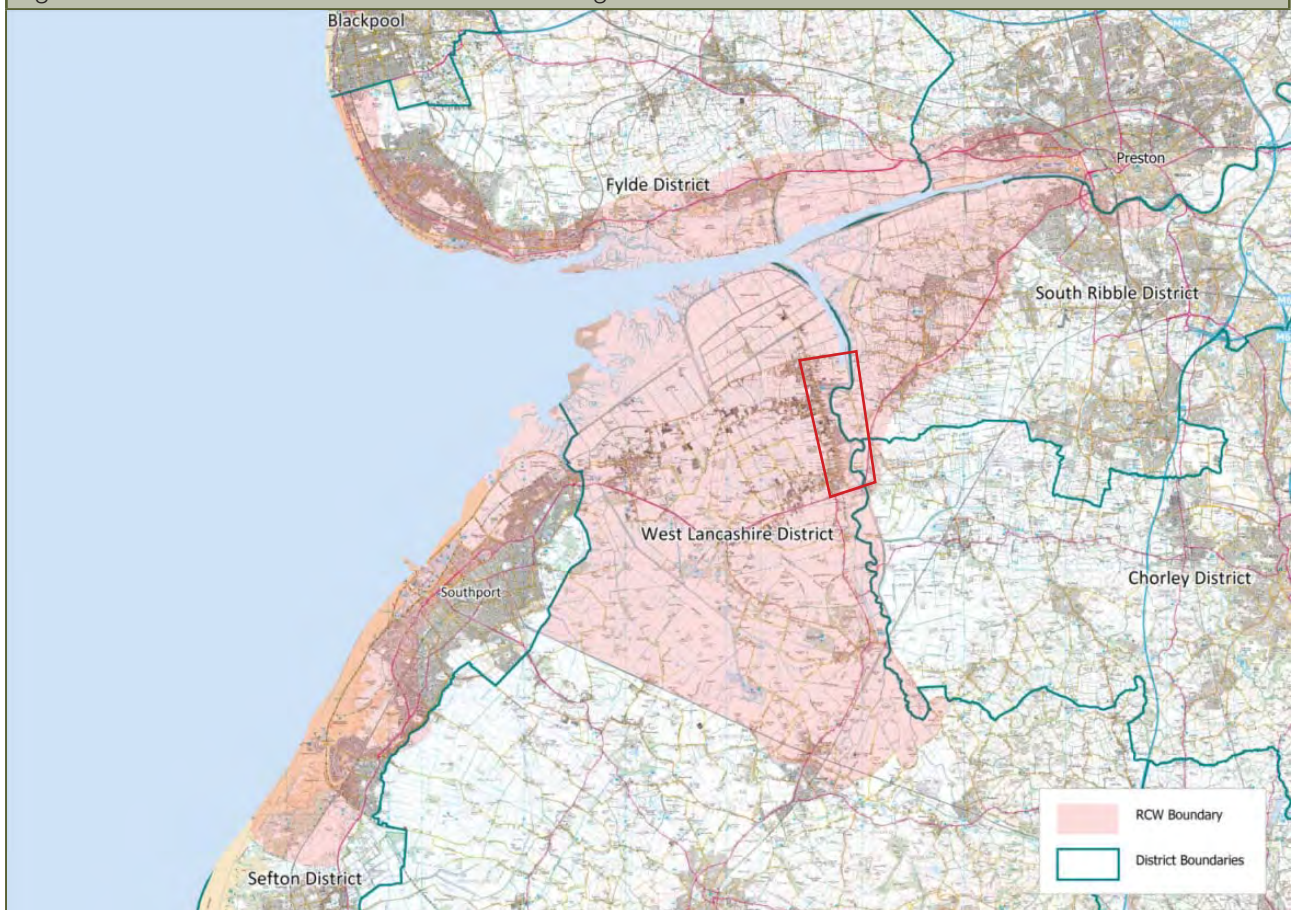
This section of the baseline report focuses on assessing the current scope and scale of the visitor economy of the study area, West Lancashire district, and more broadly the sub-region and the Ribble Coast and Wetlands Regional Park area. Data and information on the scope and scale of the visitor economy at a local level is typically harder to assemble, but is also often not terribly robust, or consistently captured. Consequently this assessment attempts to draw on local information provided by stakeholders, as well as data sources where possible.

## STRATEGIC CONTEXT

It is important to note that the Linear Park should not be seen in isolation as a project. The Park will play a key role in improving the quality of life for local residents through an improved amenity. It will also play an important role in attracting visitors to the area, and encourage visitors to experience the Ribble Coast and Wetlands Regional Park, and other visitor assets in the sub-region, as part of their visit.

Figure 2-1 clearly illustrates the strategic location of Tarleton and Hesketh Bank within the Regional Park. It also highlights the close proximity of the study area to key centres such as Preston and Southport. Preston has experienced significant employment and residential growth in recent years as the region's 'third city'; while Southport is a popular Lancashire resort town.

Figure 2-1: Linear Park Location within the RCW Regional Park



Note: Red boundary indicates the Linear Park area

Source: Regeneris Consulting – Ribble Coast and Wetlands Regional Park Business Plan. 'Digital Mapping Solutions from Dotted Eyes. © Crown Copyright 2009. All rights reserved. Licence number 100019918. Ordnance Survey Licence 100023320 © Crown Copyright, 2008



## THE SCOPE OF THE VISITOR ECONOMY

It is important to assess the scope of the visitor assets within the study area, but in doing so it is also necessary to take a wider, strategic view of the broader area. Visitors are typically drawn to an area where there is a critical mass of activities and attractions. The Linear Park's assets, as well as those in West Lancashire and in the Regional Park, taken together, present a strong visitor offer in this part of West Lancashire.

This section of the baseline has categorised the key visitor assets to provide a comprehensive overview of the scope of the visitor economy. The categories include:

- *Natural Habitats and Environments*
- *Wildfowl, Wildlife and Environmental Visitor Attractions*
- *Waterways*
- *Heritage*

## NATURAL HABITATS AND ENVIRONMENT

Parts of the Linear Park area are designated as sites of biological heritage. In Lancashire these sites are classified as the most important non-statutory wildlife sites in the county. The wider district and regional park area has a significant number of other important habitat and environmental designations. These designations reflect the importance of biodiversity issues in the area, and are also important drivers in attracting visitors to the area.

The following presents a brief overview of these designations with proximity to the Tarleton/Hesketh Bank study area:

- *International designations: These include RAMSAR and Special Protection Areas. The Ribble Estuary is designated as both a RAMSAR site and an SPA in relation to the many breeds which use the marine environment.*
- *National designations: Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) aim to protect flora, fauna, geological or physiological features for posterity. There are eight SSSIs within the Ribble Coast and Wetlands Regional Park area, including Martin Mere and the Ribble Estuary. Approximately half of the Ribble Estuary is also designated as a National Nature Reserve (NNR), as well as extensive areas of sand and mudflats reflecting the significance of the area as a location for wintering wildfowl.*
- *Local designations: The Regional Park has three local nature reserves within the boundaries including the reserves at Lytham St Annes, Longton Brickcroft, and Ainsdale and Birkdale Hills. There are also many small and large Biological and Heritage Sites across the area protecting valuable habitats.*

## WILDFOWL, WILDLIFE AND ENVIRONMENTAL VISITOR ATTRACTIONS

West Lancashire, and the wider regional park area, has a number of important wildfowl, wildlife and environmental visitor attractions. Many of these attractions are popular with visitors, and are a key driver in positioning this part of Lancashire as a national and international destination.

- *Martin Mere – Martin Mere is owned and managed by the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust. In winter the site has internationally important numbers of ducks, geese and swans which feed on the wetlands. There is a diverse mix of seasonally migrating birds as well as local wildfowl providing a year round wetland wildlife attraction. Martin Mere has ample parking space for visitors and offers a visitor shop and cafeteria for visitors. There are also classrooms for educational and other interest group visits.*
- *Mere Sands Wood – Located near to Rufford it is a 42 hectare wildlife reserve owned and managed by The Wildlife Trust. The reserve is made up of lakes, mature woodland, wet meadows and heaths. The reserve is also designated as a SSSI due to the reserves important geological composition. The reserve has a visitors centre as well as several walking routes and cycleways.*
- *Marshside RSPB Reserve – This reserve is one of the most accessible sites around the Ribble Estuary for viewing the Ribble's birds. The reserve has a number of freshwater pools and grassland areas which attract a wide range of birds (geese, wigeons and godwits). There is also a saltmarsh where birds of prey and owls can be spotted whilst high tides bring thousands of wading birds inshore. There are two hides within the reserve and three viewing screens.*
- *Longton Brickcroft – Longton is an 11 hectare wetland nature reserve owned by South Ribble Borough Council and managed as a Wetlands Nature Reserve. The reserve has a visitors centre with a picnic area for visitors.*
- *Hesketh Out Marsh – This is a 170 hectare site adjacent to the sea defences at Hesketh. The concept for Hesketh Out Marsh was to develop a haven for breeding birds as part of a new nature reserve. The reserve has some low key visitor facilities such as viewing areas and seating, whilst the reserve will be accessed by foot.*
- *Ribble Discovery Centre – Located adjacent to Fairhaven Lake, the RSPB Discovery Centre offers an interpretative introduction to the north shore of the Ribble Estuary. The centre is popular with local residents as well as visitors, and attracts many educational groups including schools and other interest groups. As well as interpretative information the centre also has a visitor gift shop.*



## WATERWAYS

The area's waterways are another key visitor asset. The River Douglas and the Rufford Branch of the Leeds-Liverpool canal are located within the study area. They provide an enjoyable environment for both informal recreation by local residents and visitors (e.g. cycling, walking, running), but also for leisure boaters. These two watercourses allow boaters to enjoy leisure time within this part of West Lancashire, and on the northern side of the Ribble, via the Ribble Link (a millennium canal link project), which allows boaters to cross the estuary and join with the Lancaster Canal.

The Rufford Branch of the Leeds Liverpool Canal is also home to two privately operated marinas, including St Mary's Marina. These marinas provide moorings for boats, workshop facilities, and coffee shops. The marinas are popular berthing locations for boat owners as well as starting points for leisure boaters for weekend and short breaks.

West Lancashire is also home to Leisure Lakes, a caravan and camping Holiday Park which offers outdoor pursuits activities, golfing and equestrian activities. The Park offers sailing, jet-skiing, fishing on its extensive lakes, whilst many of the walking routes are also focussed around the lakes. The Park is open to both staying visitors and day visitors.

## HERITAGE ASSETS

The Linear Park area has two key heritage assets within, or close to it: The West Lancashire Light Railway and Rufford Old Hall.

The West Lancashire Light Railway is a two foot gauge passenger carrying railway located in Hesketh with Beaconshall. The West Lancashire Light Railway was established in 1967 to conserve some of the equipment used on these old lines and to recreate something of the atmosphere and charm of this period of railway development. The railway is a non-profit making organisation and is supported via the light railway association and a volunteer network.

Rufford Old Hall is a National Trust managed property which is open from March to October for public visitors. The Hall attracts approximately 40,000 visitors per annum of which 32,000 are National Trust members. The Hall also has a tea-room and shop for visitors, as well as offering a programme of seasonal events throughout the year e.g. open air theatre.

As well as these two attractions there is also potential for a wider industrial heritage story to be developed further in the local area. The use of the canal and river as important goods transportation systems in the area is an interesting part of the area's heritage, as is the legacy of the brickworks.

Further from the Linear Park study area there is also the Grade I listed Scarisbrick Hall country house, currently used as a private school, but with limited public

access. The hall was designed by the famous Victorian architect, Augustus Pugin.

## THE SCALE OF THE VISITOR ECONOMY

It is not possible to measure the scale of the visitor economy of just the Linear Park area without undertaking a number of detailed local surveys, or by drawing on existing surveys. Little evidence is available at a local level and while commissioning new survey work is outside the scope of this commission, it is necessary to draw upon evidence from wider spatial scale. Given that the Linear Park has the potential to play an important role in the development of the wider district and regional park visitor economy, it is sensible to review the latest visitor economy data for West Lancashire. This is measured using the STEAM model.

The STEAM model estimates at a district level total annual visitors, total annual visitor expenditure, as well as direct and indirect employment supported through the visitor economy. It is also possible to estimate spend per visitor using the model's outputs. This model, as with all models, does not provide an accurate reflection of the scale of the visitor economy within an area. What it does provide is an indicative base by which policy makers can begin to understand the scale of their visitor economy.

The latest STEAM data indicates the following:

- *In 2008 West Lancashire attracted approximately 3.9m visitors. While not the largest attractor of visitors in the sub-region, with just 5% of all Lancashire visitors, the district has some distinct attractions which draw people into the district (e.g. Martin Mere, natural assets, and heritage and leisure pursuits).*
- *Visitors to the area are predominantly day visitors (93% of visitors in 2008 were day visitors). Only a small proportion (3%) of those visitors who do stay overnight in the district as part of their visit do so in a hotel or other paid for accommodation – reflecting the limited provision of quality/graded accommodation in the area.*
- *In 2008 visitors to the borough contributed approximately £142m per annum to the local economy.*
- *Day visitors, on average, spend approximately £27 per head as part of their visit; while all types of visitors on average spend £36 as part of their visit to West Lancashire.*
- *The visitor economy supported approximately 1,700 direct full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs in the borough in 2008; while a further 480 FTE jobs were supported indirectly. Excluding retail employment, food and drink and leisure businesses account for approximately 45% of all direct employment.*



	West Lancashire	Lancashire
Total Visitors (million)	3.95	60.19
Proportion of Day Visitors	92.8%	86.9%
Total Visitor income (£m)	£141.8	£3,032
Average Spend per Visitor (£)	£35.90	£50.38
Average Spend per Day Visitor (£)	£27.30	£27.30
Direct Employment Supported (FTEs)	1,709	44,874
Indirect Employment Supported (FTEs)	480	9,777

Source: STEAM 2008

It is also useful to place the STEAM employment estimates into context with the earlier estimates of the scale of the visitor economy measured by ABI data. The ABI analysis indicated that approximately 3,000 people in the borough were employed in tourism-related activities – particularly in accommodation and restaurants. This broad proxy of tourism-related employment accounted for approximately 6.5% of all employment in the borough. While the ABI data has stated a higher level of visitor economy employment it should be noted that this estimate has been built up from SIC codes, rather than specific modelling and employment definitions used in the STEAM assessment.

It has also been possible to collate some local visitor data from some attractions within the Linear Park area, but also more widely across this area of Lancashire to provide a bottom-up assessment of visitors to attractions. While this data provides useful contextual information this assessment cannot take account of the large number of visits to open countryside for walking and cycling, day visits and overnight visits to stay with friends and relatives as well as business trips (British Waterways data has been included for the 11km Rufford Branch). However, this data will allow an interpretation of the contribution of these attractions to the overall STEAM estimates of visitors.

Table 2-2 shows Martin Mere is the most popular visitor attraction in West Lancashire with approximately 165,000 visitors per annum. Mere Sands Wood and Windmill Animal Farm in West Lancashire, birding attractions in Southport and South Ribble, as well as the Eco Centre in Southport all point to the popularity in this area for wildlife and natural environment attractions.

Heritage attractions such as the West Lancashire Light Railway and Rufford Old Hall are also popular attractions in this part of West Lancashire. These two attractions receive over 50,000 visitors each year to the local area.

Evidence from British Waterways shows that the 11km of the Rufford Branch Canal attracts approximately 475,000 users each year. The majority of those using the towpaths do so for informal recreation purposes, e.g. walkers and runners. However, approximately 26,000 anglers and cyclists also use the canal towpath.

Additional evidence from British Waterways on boat movements shows that there were approximately 200 boat movements via the Ribble Link in 2008. Many of these boats will have passed through the Tarleton section of the canal to access the Ribble. British Waterways has estimated that this section of the canal could accommodate approximately 500-1,000 boat movements per annum, suggesting that currently the canal is significantly under-utilised.

Visitor Attraction	Visitors (Per Annum)
West Lancashire Light Railway (West Lancs)	12,000
Rufford Old Hall (West Lancs)	40,000
Martin Mere (West Lancs)	164,500
Mere Sands Wood (West Lancs)	40,000
Windmill Animal Farm (West Lancs)	60,000
Southport Eco Centre (Southport)	608,000
Marshside RSPB Centre (Southport)	25,000
Longton Brickcroft (South Ribble)	8,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>957,500</b>
Local attractions share of Lancashire STEAM estimates	1.6%
British Waterways Towpath visits (11km of the Rufford Branch)	475,000
Total (inc. Towpath Visitors)	1,432,500
Local attractions (inc Towpath Visitors) share of Lancashire STEAM estimates	2.4%

Source: Information provided by attraction, local authority or British Waterways. Some information is relatively dated due to a lack of recent monitoring information or based upon estimates.

## 2.12 CONSULTATION

### INTRODUCTION

In addition to working with West Lancashire Borough Council, individual stakeholder consultations either phone based or one to one (with key land owners) were undertaken as part of the baseline study. Stakeholders





were from a combination of local authority, statutory bodies, charitable trusts, private landowners and local business's. (For List of Stakeholders refer to Appendix). Consultations have taken place to understand specific issues relating to the Linear Park area and any potential future development within the Park.

The main purpose of the consultation / phone calls was to explain the purpose of the study and for the stakeholders to identify opportunities and constraints and to help generate ideas about the potential of the area. Although a wide range of views and opinions were expressed and recorded, there was a general consensus that the area identified as the Linear Park between Hesketh Bank and Tarleton is an under-utilized asset.

#### CONSULTATION – LOCAL AUTHORITY/STATUTORY BODIES/ CHARITABLE TRUST

- Area is currently underutilised and should be promoted more for its flat topography and its suitability for access for all
- Great regional opportunity for outdoor leisure that should be tied with other attractions such as Martin Mere, Hesketh Outmarsh, Rufford Old Hall and into the wider canal network
- Link into Lancashire Green Infrastructure agenda, Ribble Estuary Regional Park Initiatives and the Northwest Coastal trail proposal
- Access into the site is a weakness
- Knowledge of the canal and river offer is predominantly local due to poor access into the site and poor visibility of the area for main roads
- The bridge link would act as a catalyst to the Linear Park proposals and provide east – west connections. Bridge footings lie on private land which could be an obstacle for proposal
- Lack of car parking
- The flood risk issues provide issues for providing high quality long lasting finishes
- Lack of current funding for any projects
- Current tourism offer within the West Lancashire Light Railway could be expanded
- Historical assets within brickworks, canal, light railway
- Wider links within footpath and cycle routes need to be created
- For the Linear Park to be a success more focal points are needed along the route

#### CONSULTATION – PRIVATE LANDOWNERS / LOCAL BUSINESSES

*Discussions were held with a number of local businesses and landowners to establish their views on the development of the Linear Park and understand how those proposals might affect*

*and impact upon their landholding and business plans.*

- *Generally the private landowners are concerned that increased public access will increase liability and create health and safety issues. This was of particular concern to enterprises such as the boatyards where heavy machinery and the movement of boats within the yards conflicts with public footpaths which currently run through or adjacent to the working areas. Increased access, with the potential promotion of routes for cyclists and horses and greater visitor parking will increase health and safety issues.*
  - *However the boat yards would be happy with increased promotion of the waterways for recreation use although they are concerned that the new bridge will restrict the height of boats using the upper waterways.*
  - *Landowners generally expressed interest in development potential for areas within their landholding, including the potential for employment expansion, mixed use and housing development. They were open to the potential to improve open space areas and increasing the potential to attract visitors to appropriate areas of their landholdings.*
  - *Suggested recreation based uses mentioned within these early discussions included marina development, visitor centre, parking facilities, cafe and local food market.*
  - *Concerns were expressed over the expansion of Plocks Farm and effects on quality of views, landscape and smell of the area*
- Hesketh with Becconsall Parish Council has developed and adopted a Village Plan. This involved an extensive public consultation process to identify key issues and to address these through the Plan. The Linear Park was one of the issues considered and recommendations included
- *The Becconsall Hotel to be re-instated to its former glory again and become a valuable community asset*
  - *The river bank to become a 'Linear Park' with a bridge over the River Douglas to provide additional leisure and tourist amenities and a safe cycle path*
  - *To attract more visitors and offer more catering facilities, better parking facilities and a good family pub.*
  - *A new community facility offering a wide range of activities for everyone*

The outcomes of this baseline study has been presented to the individual stakeholders on a one to one basis and further consultation has been undertaken.



## STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS: BASELINE SUMMARY

### STRENGTHS

- Accessible to all (flat topography)
- Good regional access
- Gateway to the Regional Park and Coastal Trail
- Interesting heritage
- Links to navigable waterways

### WEAKNESSES

- Land ownership could be a major constraint if one or more parties are not behind the vision and masterplan
- Poor internal access and links to south. Signage/wayfinding could be improved in all areas to ensure a clear and coherent approach.
- Tidal river environment creates management and safety issues
- Communities turn away from the canal and river
- Lack of car parking and visitor facilities
- Surrounding low quality land uses
- Limited views and low landscape quality
- Narrow Access Roads

### OPPORTUNITIES

- Expand tourism offer – increase visitor spend
- Link to Regional Park and Coastal Trail , a visitor/interpretation centre to provide essential facilities and a hub for the local area.
- West Lancashire Light Railway expansion
- Link to wider green space initiatives
- Improve local access and path quality with improved pedestrian/cycle links, connecting communities in the area to each other and local services and facilities.
- Biodiversity could be enhanced through regeneration and development.
- Play, education, art could be promoted to increase the attractiveness and use of Park.
- Development opportunities
- Maintenance/ management could be improved in all areas and increase the attractiveness of the place and reduce fear of crime.

### THREATS

- Flood Risk
- Private land ownership
- Funding opportunities limited
- Planning Policy could restrict regeneration and development potential.
- Contaminated land,
- Services may affect regeneration and development proposals,
- Access may limit development potential



# 3.0

## The options

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The baseline information gathering and consultation process culminated in an understanding of the study area and the needs and ambitions of the stakeholders. The findings of the baseline stage are summarised in the SWOT analysis opposite. Three concept options were developed which considered different levels and types of intervention for the linear park. These three options are described and illustrated below

### 3.2 CONCEPT OPTIONS

#### OPTION 1 – MINIMUM INTERVENTION

Option 1 would propose a minimum level of intervention to deliver a linear park which will enable the local community and other visitors to access the waterside environment and adjacent open space, providing publicly accessible circular pedestrian and cycle routes through the park. Links to the new and improved footpath system would be strengthened and signage and local information improved.

#### OPTION 2A– ENABLING DEVELOPMENT

Option 2A focusses on the potential for private landowner led development which would enable improvement to the linear park infrastructure.

Consolidation of employment land within Alty's Brickworks and the development of housing on adjacent land will allow the potential improvement of recreation access and opportunities to the quarry area. The extension of the railway line and improvement of visitor facilities would be carried out in partnership with the Lancashire Light Railway Trust.

The development of Tarleton Mill for mixed use development would also allow the improvement of the canal frontage and car park at Tarleton, improving the immediate environment and access into the park.

#### OPTION 2B – ASPIRATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Option 2B considers the further development of the park to fulfill its potential which will be dependant on significant external funding sources or further private development.

To the north this centres on the creation of a gateway site to the Ribble Valley Regional Park. The delivery of the River Douglas River Crossing will allow the completion of the link in the coastal access trail as it passes through the linear park. A new visitor centre in association with the water body will introduce visitors to the potential of the Ribble Valley Regional Park as well as encourage use of the linear park. The facility could include education facilities, exhibition space and a small gift shop and cafe. This would be supported by parking and include the introduction of further pedestrian routes around the lake and open space, with strong links to the river crossing and the linear park routes. The project would also include the potential further development of the light railway, taking visitors alongside the River Douglas to the locks at Tarleton.

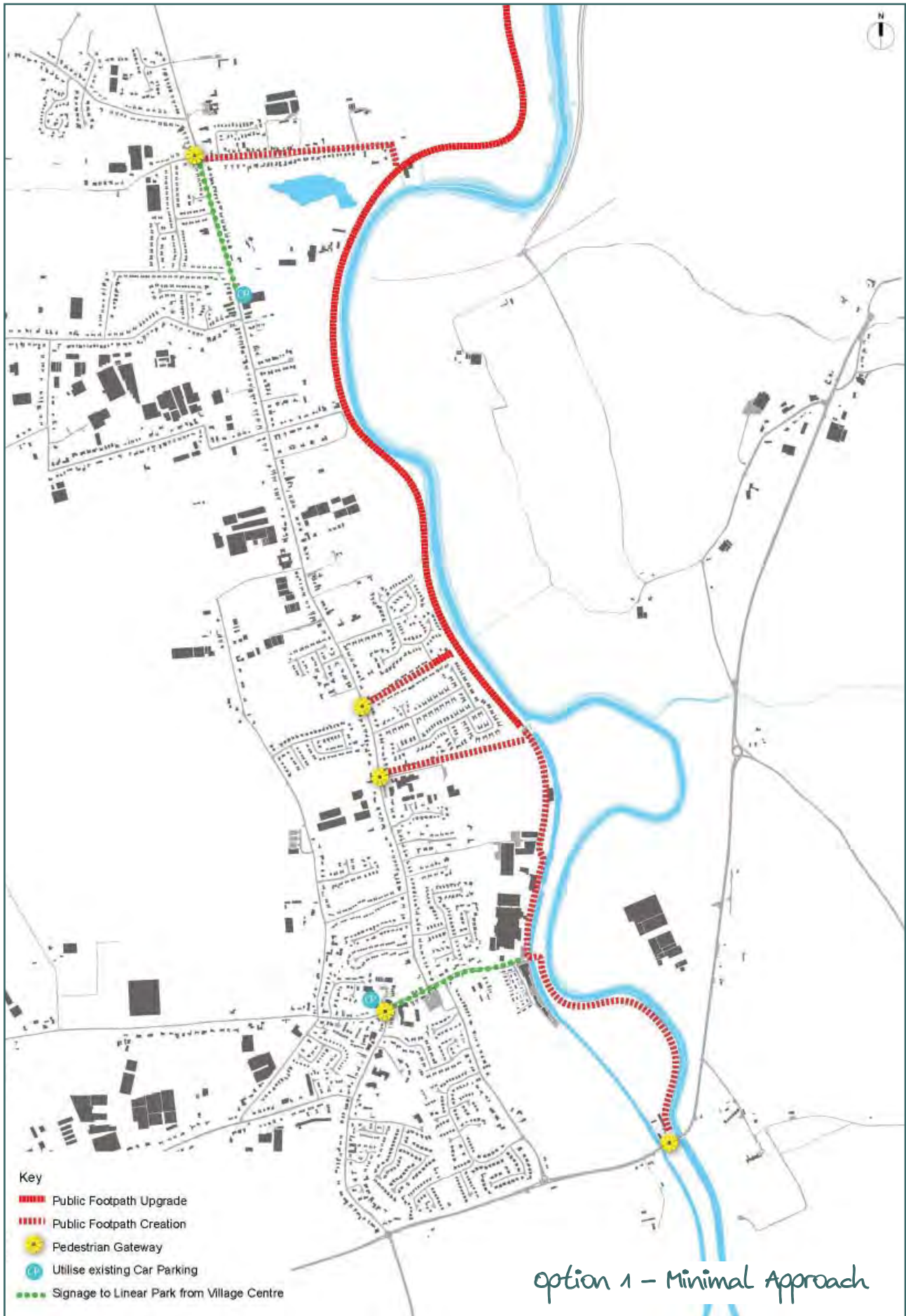
To the south of the site a second gateway site could be developed centered on the private development of a marina and cafe/market facilities, with associated car parking and play facilities.

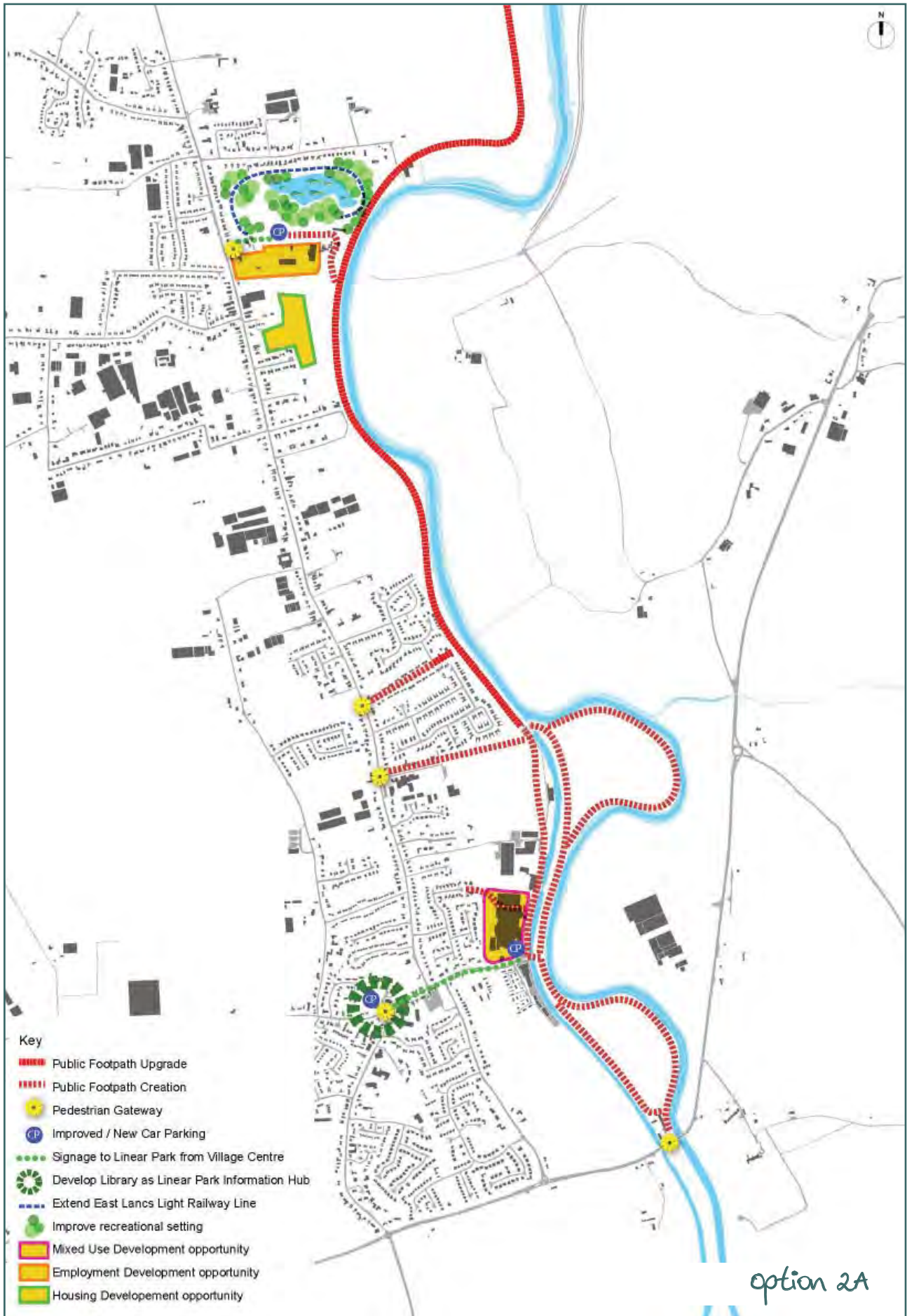
#### PREFERRED OPTION

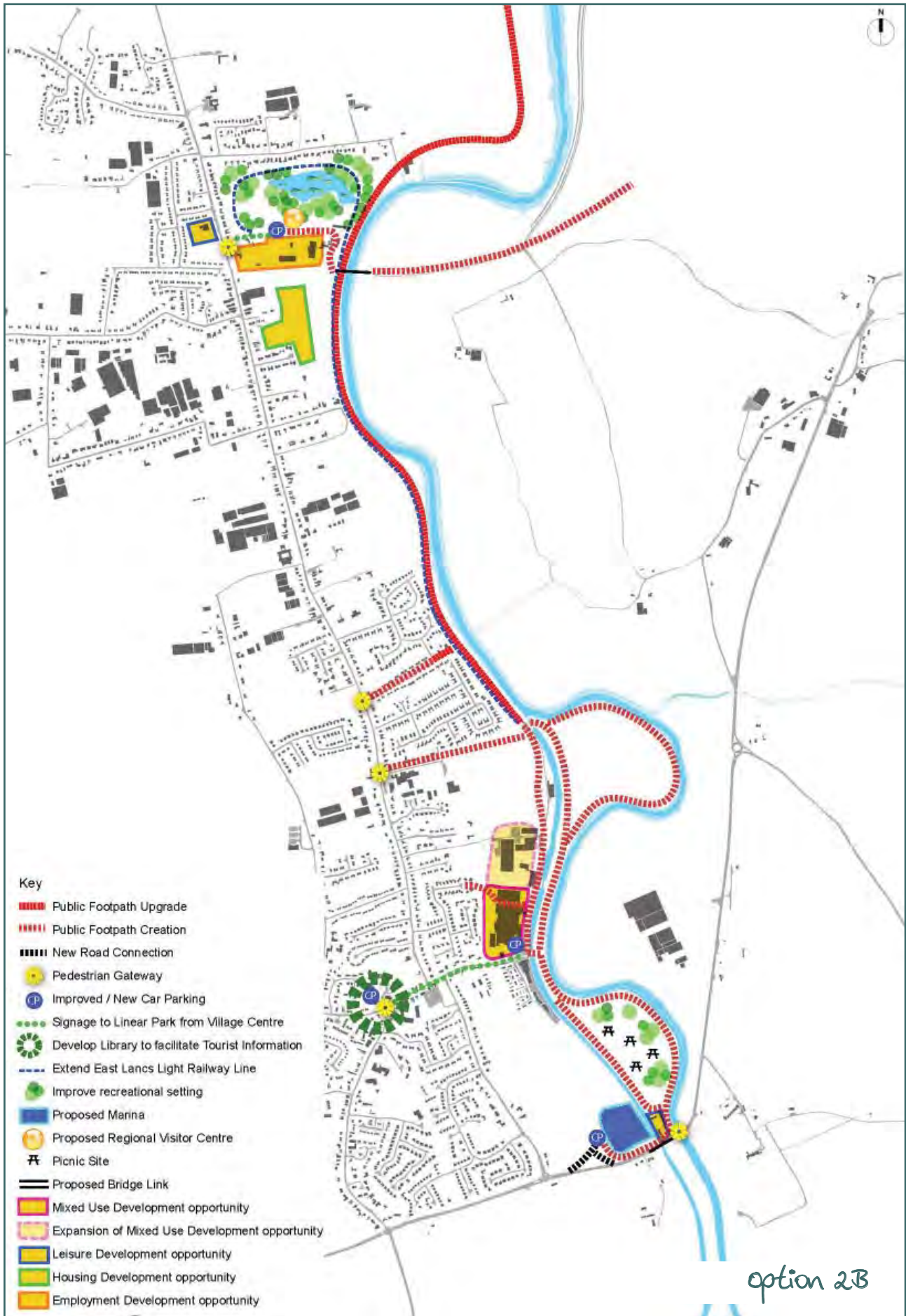
The options were reviewed and discussed with invited stakeholders previously consulted in the baseline process and it was generally felt that the options all had the potential to improve the area and therefore Option 2B was adopted as the preferred option. The stakeholder group felt that the more inspirational aspects of option 2B were important, and although perhaps difficult to fund in the short term, these proposals should form an intrinsic part of the overall aim.

The preferred option is explained in more detail in the following section 4.0: The Vision. In section 5.0: The Approach the components of the preferred option are broken down into a series of individual projects which can each be separately funded and constructed as the economic environment allows.









option 2B



# 4.0

## The vision

### 4.1 VISION

The overall vision for the Tarleton and Hesketh Bank Linear Park is

- *To create a high quality, well managed and accessible open space at the heart of the two communities of Tarleton and Hesketh Bank which is also a recognisable gateway to the Ribble Valley Regional Park and North West Coastal Trail.*

Key Objectives which will support the development of the Park are:

- **Community**  
*Improve access into and through the greenspace and waterside environment for nearby communities to enjoy leisure, recreation, socialising and learning.*
- **Walkability**  
*Create safe, pleasant and convenient paths for walkers and cyclists to and through the park for local residents and visitors.*
- **Nature**  
*Support and enhance the bio-diversity of the existing environment, providing opportunities for the encouragement of wildlife and their habitats and recognising the education potential.*
- **History**  
*Support and enhance the history of the area providing opportunity for the recreation and conservation of historic features and recognising the educational potential.*

- **Waterside**  
*Recognise the importance of the River Douglas and canal as a recreational opportunity and link to the wider waterways net-work.*
- **Gateways**  
*Exploit the wider potential of the Ribble Valley Regional Park and Coastal Trail by creating links.*
- **Opportunity**  
*Seek to maximise employment opportunities in and adjacent to the park which will support the growth and development of the park and create jobs for local people.*
- **Safety**  
*Create a safe place where users feel secure and where anti-social behaviour is minimised.*

The masterplan (Option 2B) encapsulates the vision outlined above and shows a number of key areas of development as follows:-

- *The northern gateway and environmental hub.*
- *The southern gateway and waterside hub.*
- *The railway.*
- *Access.*



### 4.3 KEY AREAS



#### THE NORTHERN GATEWAY

Project Breakdown Numbers:

Accessibility Projects: 6, 11, 14, 15

Tourism and Visitor Projects: 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9

Development: 2, 3, 7, 8

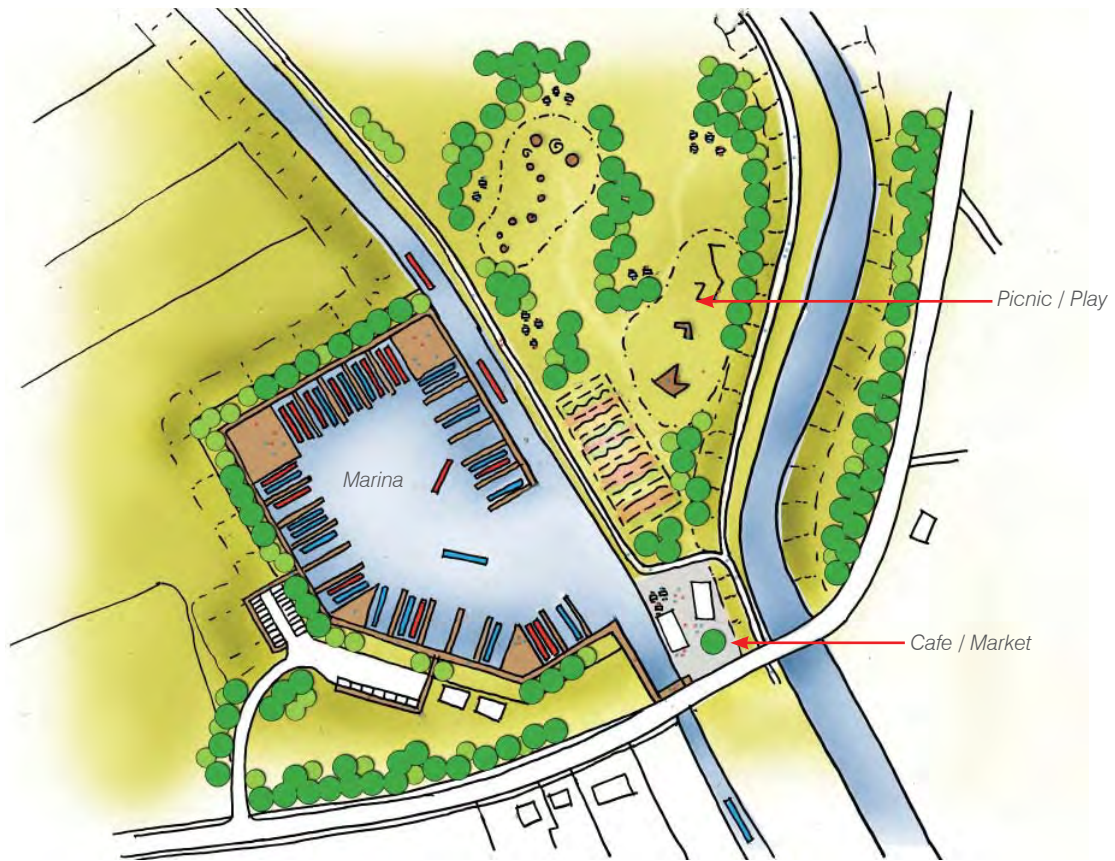
Centred on the water body at the old brickworks site, the northern gateway will be developed to :

- Provide a small scale visitor/education centre which will introduce visitors and the local community to the important wildlife potential of the immediate and wider area.
- Create safe and accessible all weather paths and boardwalks around the area, including interpretation opportunities.
- Provide low key parking.
- Potentially include a café and/or education room, toilets etc.
- Maintain and improve existing access for fishermen.
- Extend ecological value through new planting, habitat enhancement etc.
- Ensure adherence to management of landfill site
- Support the realisation of the River Douglas river crossing and, therefore, links to the Coastal Trail.

The re-development and consolidation of the Alty Brickworks employment area and the development of housing on adjacent land will be fundamental in the park funding and realisation of this project.







## THE SOUTHERN GATEWAY

*Project Breakdown Numbers*

*Accessibility Projects: 1, 7, 11, 12, 13*

*Tourism and Visitor Projects: 1, 10, 11*

*Development Projects: 4, 5*

Centred on the old canal side building at the A59 bridge over the river and canal, the southern gateway will be developed to:-

- *Provide a café and 'market' facility within the restored canal side building, which uses and sells local produce, recognising the heritage and quality of the surrounding market gardens.*
- *Create a small marina, accessed from the Rufford branch canal, which will encourage and allow safe overnight mooring of narrow boats and provide facilities for waiting time for tides on River Douglas and the Ribble link.*
- *Create a picnic and play area on land between the canal and river for use by the local community and visitors. This could include a substantial play facility and seating within an enhanced riverside setting.*

The development of the Southern Gateway will need to be private developer led, creating a business opportunity rather than relying on external and public funding sources.





## ACCESS PROJECTS

*Refer to Accessibility Projects Matrix*

Improved access to and within the site is seen as a fundamental requirement for the creation of the Linear Park. A suite of projects will be developed which together will improve access routes for pedestrians and cyclists, this will include:

- *Consistent and improved surfacing in bound gravel for all existing footpaths.*
- *Consistent surfacing in bound gravel for all proposed footpaths.*
- *Simple and consistent way finding and informational signage.*
- *Complementary interpretational signage.*
- *Improved car parking provision at the southern and northern gateways and at Tarleton Mill.*
- *Provision of benches, bins, dog bins, bollard fencing, gates and styles to manage access and provide facilities along routes. All designs to give consistent design and style to the park.*
- *No allowance has been made for equestrian visits as the users are not considered compatible with other users and the proposed train route alters the river side environment.*





## THE WEST LANCASHIRE LIGHT RAILWAY

*Project Breakdown Numbers*

*Tourism and Visitor Projects: 7, 9, 12*

*Development Projects: 8*

The West Lancashire Light Railway has long held ambitions to expand their operation from their current site at Alty's brickworks. A significant amount of investment has been put into the current short track and associated rolling stock, storage sheds and workshops. However, the current lease arrangements limit the charitable trust's ability to apply for external funding and plan for the long term. Given agreement of terms for the WLLT there is opportunity to expand the offer to visitors to the Light Railway to include:

- *Extended parking capacity, provide visitor facilities eg toilets, cafe*
- *Museum, maybe in association with Visitor Centre*
- *Extended railway line, potentially to Tarleton Lock, subject to feasibility, initial analysis suggests constrictions at certain points will limit ability to thread line through. Line to be fenced on both sides to limit access.*



SENSE OF PLACE



#### 4.4 DESIGN

The value of good design is essential to the successful regeneration and development of the Hesketh – Tarleton Linear Park, particularly considering the sensitive landscape context. Without being too prescriptive at this stage, a number of design principles are established which can guide future development proposals.

##### SENSE OF PLACE

The appearance of the built and natural environment defines an area's identity and character and creates a sense of place. The area already has an established character that needs to be enhanced and reinforced. The context, particularly that of the intersecting canal and river waterbodies, must be understood and responded to in order to develop something that is recognisable and special.

SOFT LANDSCAPE



Places that are distinctive are memorable and popular. A common element within an area will distinguish it from adjoining areas and create a sense of place. This is particularly important for the development of the Linear Park where 'brand' identity will be a key aspect of its success.

Character and distinctiveness can be found in the key buildings, views and landmarks, form of development, orientation, scale, style, materials, details, plant species, etc. The use of common materials and colour are the primary means of reinforcing an area's identity and the regeneration and development of the Park and Resort should be visually interesting if people are to enjoy being there.

The area also has a long and interesting history with a number of heritage elements which add to the sense of place, such as the Old Clay pit site and its shipping/trading relationship down the Rufford Branch of the Leeds Liverpool Canal and along the River Douglas. These valuable anchors to the past need to be carefully retained and promoted as attractions in themselves. In addition, water also adds to the unique sense of place of the area and features such as the Canal and the River should be enhanced and access improved.

HARD LANDSCAPE



##### SOFT LANDSCAPE

Soft landscape proposals must be considered within this Linear Park design ethos with an emphasis on naturalistic planting in most areas. Although there will be a number of different landscape character areas.

Special landscape elements will include local produce style market garden / cafe associated with the listed building on the bridge of the A59. And the improvements to the landscape setting at the old claypit site to create a more 'managed' and designed landscape.

New development within the park will involve the integration of buildings and planting design to create a unified design which sits comfortably in the landscape and topography.



Planting design should be considered in relation to the following functions:

- *Retention and enhancement of existing landscape character*
- *Protection and enhancement of existing ecological diversity, habitats and wildlife*
- *Creation of shelter and micro-climates*
- *Integration of new buildings and car parks within the adjoining landscape.*

Consideration should be given to the incorporation of green roofs on new development footprints, particularly in flood sensitive areas towards the river and canal. This could assist in mitigating any potential loss of grassland habitat and help with associated surface run off.

### **HARD LANDSCAPE**

In order to provide a quality step change for the Park and development within the Linear Park, good quality hard landscape materials should be specified throughout. This has benefits in appearance, durability and lifetime costs. A simple palette of materials should be used that make reference to the character of the area and enhance the sense of place and local identity.

Pedestrian and cycle paths proposed within the natural landscape should primarily be surfaced in a flexible material such as resin bound gravel. The softness of the colour and natural appearance of the aggregate will better integrate into the landscape, than conventional bitmac footpaths. Where footpaths are promoted through existing hard spaces / routes a more conventional bitmac would be suitable. Ground condition surveys will be needed along the lower banks of the river where existing footways lie, as timber decking may be more appropriate in key areas adjacent to water.

Main carriageways should primarily be surfaced in bitmac and a contrasting material/colour used where pedestrians and cyclists are likely to cross. This will help give pedestrians and cyclists greater priority in these areas.

Within car parks, access ways should primarily be surfaced in bitmac, but parking bays should be reinforced grass paving where possible. This has been used elsewhere in the Sankey Valley Park car parks. This will minimise storm water run off and give the car parks a green appearance. A 'sea' of tarmac is not acceptable for car parks in the Park and they should be integrated into the landscape as far as possible.

### **FURNITURE**

The provision of furniture within the landscape will have a key role in ensuring there is a clear identity established for the Park and Resort. This furniture will include play equipment, seating, general litter bins, Dog foul bins,

lighting, signage, artwork and boundary treatments. All of these elements must be considered together and the selection and co-ordination of furniture including signage can cause visual clutter if not carefully sited. Design proposals must ensure that these elements make a positive contribution to the landscape and produce a high quality and coherent environment. The siting of the park furniture needs careful consideration and spacing through the linear route to ensure provision is provided at the correct / desirable locations.

A common material could be used to visually connect these disparate elements and with the overall naturalistic approach to the landscape, wood should be considered. Where elements are not specified in wood, colour should be carefully chosen to ensure integration with wooden elements and the wider landscape. Green and brown would likely be the most appropriate colours in terms of a palette.

It is proposed that natural landscape feature – rocks, grassy slopes, boulders, trees, flowers and water will be integrated with traditional play equipment to provide a challenging and fun environment which encourages exploration and interaction with the environment and active play. Sensory elements (light, sound, smell, texture) and environments that allow for manipulation of physical natural elements will be promoted. At the proposed café along the A59 childrens play elements could add to the offer for a family destination, the choice of play elements needs to gel with the surrounding landscape, so wooden natural play equipment would be advised.

Public art can help enliven spaces and create memorable places. Artwork need not to be stand alone sculpture, but can also be incorporated into many elements of the landscape from signage to gates. Public art can also help interpret and create links to heritage and the natural world and enhance the play and educational value of greenspaces. Public art would also be a great way to involve local communities in the design of the Park and help foster a sense of ownership.

Fencing may be required along the route of some sections of existing and proposed footways, to segregate users from working operations. It would preferable to keep the fence as a low post and rail timber structure that does not visually effect the landscape setting. Where security prevails and securing sites from trespassers is inevitable, the choice of security fencing needs careful consideration.

### **SIGNAGE / GATEWAY FEATURES**

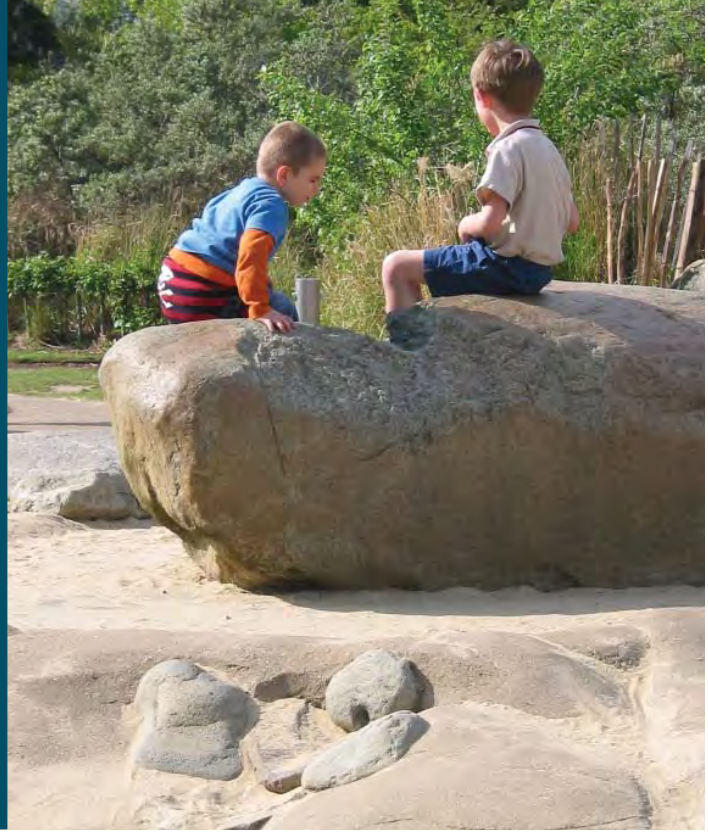
Gateway signage will be located at key access points along main vehicle and pedestrian routes that go through the two village centres. The Signs at more informal access points will be simple finger posts, signage in the two village centres will be more information board based, with the wider Linear Park Context. At these locations at the village centres leaflets



BUILT DEVELOPMENT



FURNITURE



SUSTAINABILITY



will also be provided for users to use to navigate the Linear Park. Gateway signage in close proximity to the bridge on the A59 needs careful siting, and needs to be clearly displayed for traffic moving in both directions, this key visible entrance to the Linear Park needs to be the most significant signage to inform passers by of the Linear Park offer.

### ACCESS FOR ALL

The creation of safe and pedestrian/cycle friendly paths and roads is one of the key objectives of the masterplan. Landscape proposals for the Park must provide for a safe and accessible pedestrian environment.

Main footways throughout the area should be designed to a minimum of 2.0 metres wide to allow easy access for pedestrians and a minimum of 3.0 metres wide when shared with cycles. Where possible, and allowing for the natural topography of the sites, slopes will be kept to 1:20. Some areas will be steeper however and steps may be unavoidable, a suitably attractive and convenient alternative route should try to be provided. The claypit site and associated fishing lake need serious consideration for safe access due to the steepness of the banks and the depth of the water.

### BUILT DEVELOPMENT

The need for the landscape to dominate the area and maintain the 'countryside' feel, all new architecture must integrate fully with that landscape. New built development should generally be low and arranged informally throughout the area. Through the planning process development should be strongly encouraged to face the waterfront and work in line with the Linear Park aspirations

### SUSTAINABILITY

The regeneration and development of the Park must demonstrate social, economic and environmental sustainability to be successful. The latest thinking in sustainable development will also bring opportunities for interpretation, education, delivery and management.

The latest standards of water, waste and energy efficiency should be incorporated into development proposals wherever possible to demonstrate best practice in Lancashire and the Northwest. All new development should therefore seek to attain at least a 'very good' BREEAM rating.

In view of the risk of flooding in the area, sustainable urban drainage (SUDs) measures should be considered with every element of the masterplan. This will be particularly important with large footprint buildings such as the reconfiguration of Henry Alty's and the employment use at Tarleton Mill.

Biodiversity should be maintained and increased where possible throughout the Park. Indeed, one of the attraction of the area now is its various habitats and migratory birds that flock to the Ribble Estuary and surrounding area, these need to be recognised in any proposals to ensure this aspect of the 'offer' is not lost.

### CONCLUSION

The Feasibility Study for The Hesketh – Tarleton Linear Park sets out an exciting vision and programme for action over the next decade which will transform the area. It seeks to secure real benefits across a broad front:

**For the local community:** the Study will secure better facilities for users of the Park, improved access and more opportunities for recreation. It will be a significant contribution to the Green Infrastructure programme promoted by the local authority.

**For the Visitor Economy:** the developments will hopefully aid in a change from casual local recreation to longer visitor focussed activity, generating additional spend from longer stays. It will create some new employment and training opportunities.

**For the environment:** the initiative will secure restoration of the historic built features, better care for the natural environment and much improved hard and soft landscape design.







# 5.0

## The Approach

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The overall masterplan for the Linear Park has been broken down into a series of improvement projects which fall into one of the following three types:

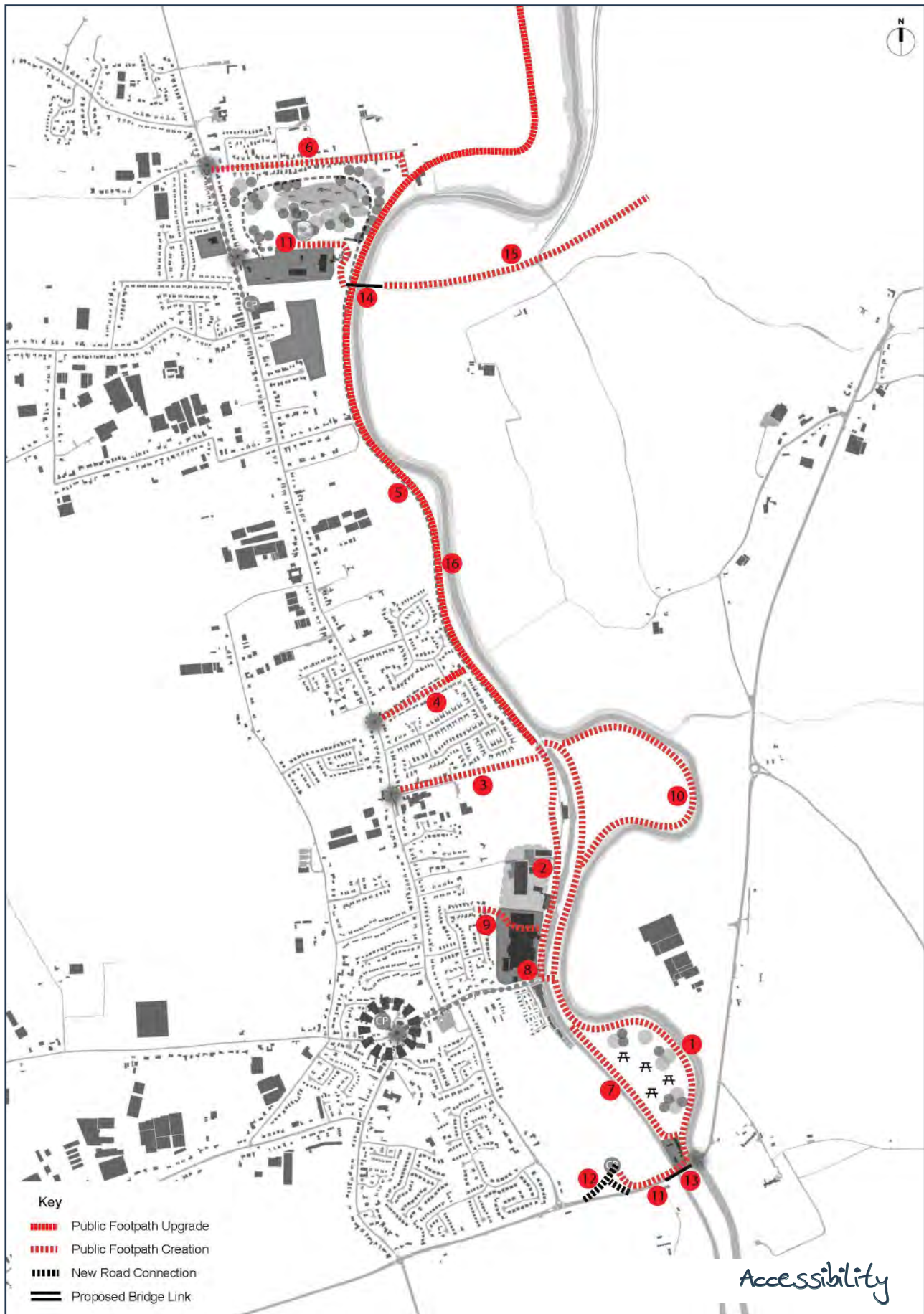
- *Accessibility*
- *Tourism/Visitor Facilities*
- *Development Opportunities.*

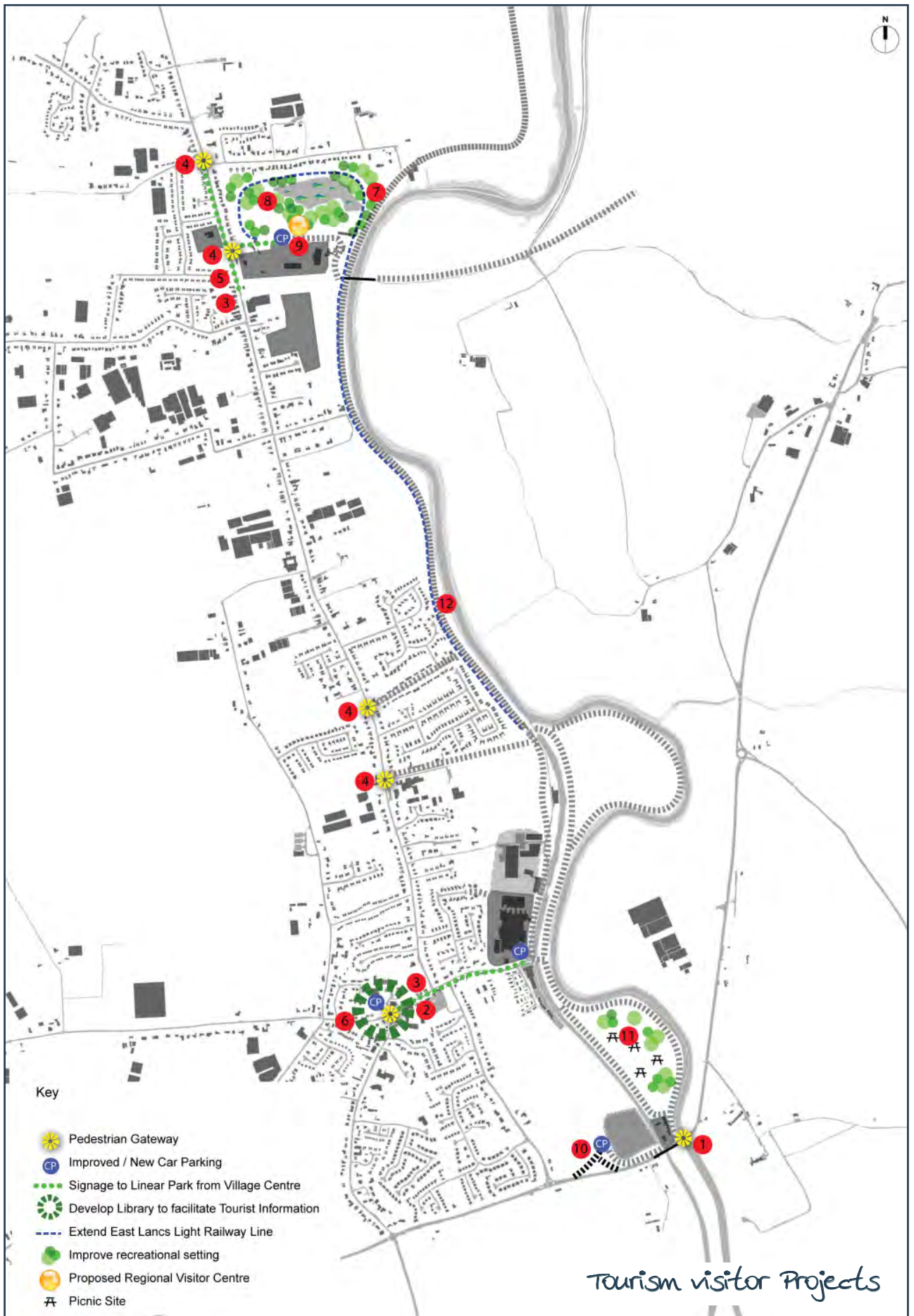
Each project is described in the following matrices in terms of its physical components, implementation timetable, sustainability, deliverability and outline costs.

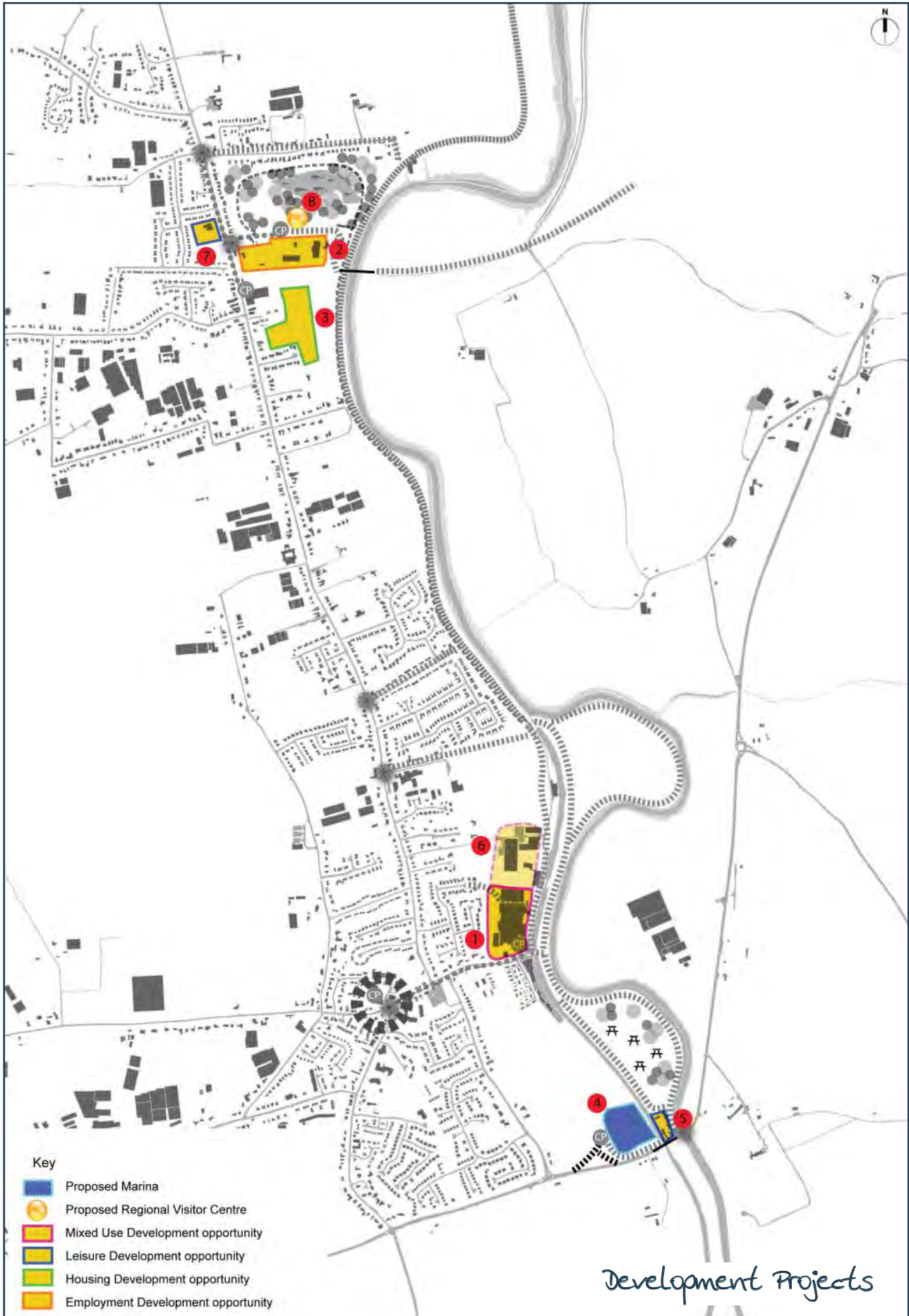
This is complemented by an appraisal of the potential funding sources for each project type.



## 5.2 KEY DESIGN THEMES - PROJECTS







5.3 PROJECT MATRICES  
ACCESSIBILITY

Proposal opportunities	Project	Description	TimeTable (years)	Sustainability		Deliverability				
				Environmental Impacts	Social Impacts	Site Constraints	Health and Safety Issues	Leadership	Costing	
			Short 0-5 Medium 5-10 Long 10+							
Order of Potential Deliverability - Accessibility										
Accessibility	1. Public Footpath Creation from A59 - Tarleton Mill	Pedestrian route along River Douglas embankment between A59 bridge and Tarleton Mill (Townend Swing Bridge) in the form of 2.5m wide hoggin path with timber edge	Short	Minor impacts on existing landscape, footpath creation on man made flood defence banks	Improved access would create link between Tarleton south towards Sollam avoiding heavily trafficked vehicle routes.	Private land ownership, Accessibility issues from A59 to river bank	Increase in public access onto private land could cause potential liability issues.	West Lanc Borough Council, Lancashire County Council, Environment Agency	860m length x £50 per linear metre 2m wide (hoggin with timber edge) = £43,000 Provision for dog foul bin £250. Provision for wooden benches 1no x £600 = £600	
Accessibility	2. Public Footpath creation from Tarleton Mill to Tarleton Locks (refer to appendix for options for alternatives)	Public footpath creation along the west side of the canal between Tarleton Mill and Mayors Boatyard. Public footpath to be taken onto school playing field recreation land at the bottom of Tarleton High to avoid conflict with the boatyard operations. Pathway before boatyard	Short	Minor impacts on the existing landscape other than upgrading roadway / footway surfacing to provide a safe walkable route.	The proposals will offer a safer environment for people to walk through than what is currently available. Clearly demarcated footways through this part of the study area.	Unknown land ownership for Public Footpath creation. Boatyard sits directly next to canal, so for this short section users will be diverted away from the waterside setting.	Promotion of public rights of way through / near operational boatyard. Possible heavy machinery and pedestrian / cyclist conflict. Increase in public access onto private land could cause potential liability issues.	West Lanc Borough Council, British Waterways, Lancashire County Council, Private Developers	690m length x £40 per linear metre 2m wide (tarmac) = £27,600 Provision for dog foul bin. £250. Provision for public waste bin £600.	
Accessibility	3. Public Footpath creation along Tarleton High School boundary to Tarleton Locks	Creation of public footpath from Hesketh Lane through Tarleton High down to the Canal locks	Short	Minor impacts on existing landscape, public right of way to be created at edge of playing fields along existing boundaries. The footpath will then go onto soft landscape land at Tarleton High and will be treated with hoggin pathway with timber edging	Enhanced links from Hesketh Lane to the Linear Park will provide alternative access routes for pedestrians and cyclists helping to relieve conflicts on the busy road	Unknown land ownership for Public Footpath creation. Promotion of using the canal / river corridor as alternative routes to schools may cause safety issues due to proximity to water	Promotion of using the canal / river corridor as alternative routes to schools may cause safety issues due to proximity to water. Increase in public access onto private land could cause potential liability issues.	West Lanc Borough Council, Lancashire County Council, Tarleton High School,	450m length x £50 per linear metre 2m wide (hoggin with timber edge) = £22,500 Provision for wooden benches 1no x £600 = £600. Fencing along Tarleton High School Boundary 300m x £150 per linear meter = £45,000	
Accessibility	4. Public Footpath creation along Sutton Avenue	Upgrading of the existing public right of way to be undertaken	Short	Minor impacts on existing landscape, public right of way to be along existing pavements	Enhanced links from Hesketh Lane to the Linear Park will provide alternative access routes for pedestrians and cyclists helping to relieve conflicts on the busy road	Minor impacts	Minor impacts	West Lanc Borough Council, Lancashire County Council, Private Land Owners	235m length total length, Utilise existing footway, 70m x £50 linear metre (hoggin with timber edge) = £3,500 Provision for dog foul bin = £250. Provision for public waste bin = £600. Provision for wooden benches 1no x £600 = £600	
Accessibility	5. Public Footpath Upgrade from Tarleton Locks beyond Douglas Marina	Public footpath upgrade from Tarleton Locks along the River Douglas beyond Douglas Marina to connect into proposed Northwest Coastal Trail Initiatives. Pathway to be created from resin bound gravel with timber edging.	Short	Minor impacts on existing landscape, footpath creation on man made flood defence banks	The upgrade of this existing footpath in hard landscape materials will enable yearly use of the footway and provide continuous waterside access from Tarleton to Hesketh Bank	North of Tarleton Locks the footway narrows creating a pinch point along the existing footway. The lock keeper has keys to a gate at the end of the existing footway that is occasionally locked, this would need resolution so that a continuous footway can be created. The footpath near Douglas marina is low lying and in the winter months becomes increasingly waterlogged resulting in restricted pedestrian access	The upgrade of the existing footway needs to take into account the changing nature of the river estuary to ensure the proposals are substantial to ensure that no health and safety issues arise from subsidence etc	West Lanc Borough Council, Lancashire County Council, Private Land Owners	2,765m length x £50 per linear metre 2m wide (hoggin with timber edge) = £138,250 Provision for dog foul bin = £250. Provision for public waste bin = £600. Provision for wooden benches 2no x £600 = £1200	
Accessibility	6. Public Footpath creation along Becconsall Lane	Public accessibility promotion from Station Road along Becconsall Lane to Douglas Marina	Short	Minor impact - utilise existing pavements and road way. Minor improvements to quality of surfacing along Becconsall Lane near to the boat yard	A link into the Linear Park from Hesketh village centre to the River Douglas	Existing pavement runs out after the properties	Possible pedestrian and vehicle conflict after the pavement ends	West Lanc Borough Council, Lancashire County Council, Private Land Owners	Use existing surfacing	



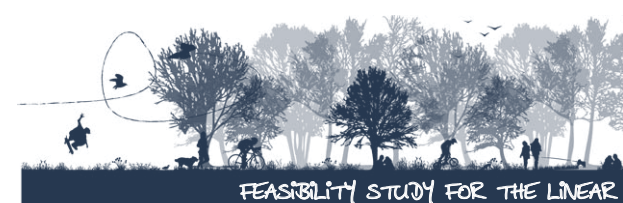
ACCESSIBILITY

Proposal opportunities	Project	Description	TimeTable (years)	Sustainability		Deliverability			
			Short 0-5 Medium 5-10 Long 10+	Environmental Impacts	Social Impacts	Site Constraints	Health and Safety Issues	Leadership	Costing
Accessibility	7. Public Footpath creation along Canal from A59 to Tarleton Locks	Public footpath creation from property on A59 along the left hand side of the Canal running to Townend Bridge at Tarleton to extend current footways along the canal network	Medium	Minor impacts on the current environment, possible removal of trees / scrub to create footway. Farming operations would need to adjust to take account of footpath location and possible conflicts with users	Users of the Linear Park have options at this location to follow the canal environment or the river environment, providing a more varied experience	Private land ownership for Public Footpath creation. Accessibility issues from A59 to Canal Side	Increase in public access onto private land could cause potential liability issues.	West Lanc Borough Council, Chorley Borough Council, British Waterways, Lancashire County Council,	540m length x £50 per linear metre x 2m wide (hoggin with timer edge) = £27,000 (could possibly be funded by Marina Development)
Accessibility	8. Improvement to Plox Brow Car Park	Upgrade and landscape enhancement to current car park outside Tarlton Mill to create attractive landscape for peoples arrival	Short	Creation of attractive landscaped car park will dramatically improve the setting for this stopping place	Creates an improved environment for visitors and locals to park and access the park	Land under private ownership. Improving setting might encourage inappropriate activity during the evening due to lack of surveillance	Increase in public access onto private land could cause potential liability issues.	West Lanc Borough Council, British Waterways, Tourist Board, Lancashire County Council	800m2 x £45 per square metre (tarmac with tegula setts demarcating bays) = £36,000. Provision for wooden benches 2no x £600 = £1200
Accessibility	9. Public footpath creation through Tarleton Mill development site to Fletcher Avenue	Public footpath through proposed redevelopment of Tarleton Mill to small pocket of open space	Short / Medium	Minor impacts on the current environment, possible removal of trees / scrub to create footway	Improved Linkages from the Linear park into existing open space	The private land owner would need to take the proposed right of way into account with their planning application	Promotion of public right of way through an employment site might result in pedestrian and vehicular conflict	West Lanc Borough Council, Lancashire County Council Private Land Owner	235 x length x £40 per linear metre 2m wide (tarmac) = £9,400
Accessibility	10. Public Footpath Creation along loop of River Douglas	Public footpath creation from the left of the Canal at Townend Bridge up to Tarleton Locks, with an adjoining circular route along the River Douglas	Medium	Minor impacts on the current environment, possible removal of trees / scrub to create footway. Farming operations would need to adjust to take account of footpath location and possible conflicts with users	Users of the Linear Park have options at this location to follow the canal environment or the river environment, providing a more varied experience	Public Footpath creation on Private land. Access back to the west side of the canal is restricted by the width of the bridge over Tarleton Locks.	Increase in public access onto private land could cause potential liability issues.	West Lanc Borough Council, Environment Agency, Lancashire County Council,	1,655m length x £50 per linear metre x 2 m wide (hoggin with timer edge) = £82,750
Accessibility	11. Public footpath creation between Henry Altys employment site and the recreation space	As part of the works associated with the improvements to the recreation space and associated car park, a public footpath link is to be created from the village here down to the River Douglas along the back of the reconfigured Altys site	Medium	Minor impacts on the current environment, possible removal of trees / scrub to create footway	Increased connectivity from the village centre at Hesketh Bank to the River Douglas, through an improved 'green' recreational space	The footpath will need to be carefully detailed to ensure that future connectivity into the River Douglas bridge is taken into account. The steepness of the footpath will need to be considered to allow for access for all. The land is in private ownership so funding for associated public footpath creation will need to be determined, but could be associated as part of the redevelopment	Sufficient delineation between Henry Altys site operations and the public footpath would be needed to ensure there is no conflict between users	West Lanc Borough Council, Lancashire County Council, Private Land Owners,	250m length x £50 per linear metre x 2 m wide (hoggin with timer edge) = £12,500. Fencing along Tarleton High School Boundary 300m x £150 per linear meter = £45,000
Accessibility	12. New road connection to facilitate the marina	Road connection in to proposed Marina development off A59	Medium / Long	New road creation will impact on ruderal vegetation site. The site is also designated as greenbelt	Land behind residential properties will be effected with the creation of the road,	Traffic impacts would need to be discussed with the local authority highway department	Increased traffic turning along the fast moving A59	West Lanc Borough Council, Lancashire County Council, Private Land Owners, British Waterways	200m x £120 per linear metre x6m wide, (Tarmac) = £24,000 (could be included as part of Marina Development)
Accessibility	13. Public footpath on canal side of bridge. Pedestrian link bridge required	A pedestrian link needed from the west of the canal to the right to link the marina with the proposed leisure development	Medium / Long	The pedestrian link is needed to link the marina to the property on the east of the canal. The footpath could run on the rear side of the bridge wall to create a small pedestrian bridge,	The pedestrian link will help encourage the use of water based activities at the south of the site	The bridge is a listed structure so any works to alter / add to the bridge may be restricted.	The footbridge will be next to a busy road, and also above the canal. The design needs to take these dnagers into account.	West Lanc Borough Council, Lancashire County Council, Private Land Owners, British Waterways	160m length of pathway x £50 per linear metre x 2 m wide (hoggin with timer edge)= £8,000. Pedestrian Bridge Link = £20,000 (could be included as part of Marina Development)



ACCESSIBILITY

Proposal opportunities	Project	Description	TimeTable (years)	Sustainability		Deliverability				
				Environmental Impacts	Social Impacts	Site Constraints	Health and Safety Issues	Leadership	Costing	
			Short 0-5 Medium 5-10 Long 10+							
Accessibility	14. River Douglas Bridge Link	A pedestrian and cyclist bridge link across the River Douglas (following on from the REMADE competition)	Medium	The link would help to promote wider green infrastructure agendas in the form of the Northwest Coastal Trail, Sustrans Routes and visions of the Ribble Wetlands Regional Park. The physical impact of the bridge would have an impact on the visual amenity of the area, and during construction would have an effect on the physical environment of the River Douglas	Helps to promote the east and west links between Preston and Southport linking two larger conurbations together and providing the 'missing link' for public 'green' access between the two areas	The land either side of the River Douglas where the bridge footings would land is in private ownership. The height requirements from the boatyards for masted boats was not met within the REMADE competitions	Increase in public access onto private land could cause potential liability issues, as the bridge landings are on either side of the river which is under private ownerships.	West Lanc Borough Council, British Waterways, Environment Agency, Lancashire County Council, South Ribble Borough Council, Private land owners	£3 million	
Accessibility	15. Footpath Creation to east of Douglas Crossing	Public footpath creation would be needed to be in place if the Douglas Bridge link was built	Medium	The public footpath could be located along the old Preston - Southport rail line. Minor impacts on existing vegetation. Farming operations would need to adjust to take account of footpath location and possible conflicts with users	Helps to promote the east and west links between Preston and Southport linking two larger conurbations together and providing the 'missing link' for public 'green' access between the two areas	Unknown land ownership for proposals to be taken forward	Increase in public access onto private land could cause potential liability issues.	Lancashire County Council, Chorley Borough Council, Private Land Owners,	500m length x £50 per linear metre x 2 (hoggin with timber edge) = £25,000	
Accessibility	16. Removal of Pipe bridge	Demolition of pipe bridge across River Douglas to allow higher masted vessels	Short / Medium	Short term environmental impacts during demolition, but long term effects will of the pipe being removed will aid in the upgraded aesthetic of the linear park	Enhanced views of the river channel will be promoted	Private land ownership on either side of the pipeline.	The demolition process will need careful consideration due to the navigable water channel below. Temporary closure to vessels may be needed	West Lanc Borough Council, South Ribble Borough Council, British Waterways, Environment Agency, Lancashire County Council, Private land owners	??????	



TOURISM & VISITOR FACILITIES / PROJECTS

Proposal opportunities	Project	Description	TimeTable (years)	Sustainability		Deliverability			
				Environmental Impacts	Social Impacts	Site Constraints	Health and Safety Issues	Leadership	Costing
Order of Potential Deliverability - Tourism / Visitor Facilities									
Tourism / Visitor Facilities	1. Gateway access point on A59	Improved access awareness from A59 involving gateway signage to footpath along River Douglas	Short	Low impact, regard for fast moving traffic to be considered on siting of signage	Gateway features along this A road will help attract users into the park and make it more accessible to passers by	Limited car parking facilities at this location	Fast moving traffic along the A59	West Lanc Borough Council, Chorley Borough Council, British Waterways, Tourist Board, Lancashire County Council	approx £2500
Tourism / Visitor Facilities	2. Signage to Linear Park from Village Centre (Tarleton)	Signage from Tarleton centre to improved car park for either pedestrians or people in vehicles	Short	Low environmental impacts, signage located on existing footways.	Greater connectivity from the local heart of the village to the currently underutilised waterfront environment	Signage to be located both at the village centre and along the route to ensure users feel comfortable that the destination is in easy reach. The topography of the landscape means there are limited views from the centre to the Canal and River, making it difficult for promotion of this asset	Promoting visitors to walk along Plox Brow road where there are no designated footpaths / pavements. Possible vehicle and pedestrian conflict	West Lanc Borough Council, Tourist Board, Lancashire County Council	approx £1500
Tourism / Visitor Facilities	3. Leaflets on Linear Park	Information leaflets available at both village centres, promoting the areas past history and current assests	Short	Improved knowledge on local wildlife attractions and seasonal bird migration will educate the local and visitor population	Greater knowledge of the areas historic past informing locals and visitors to what has shaped the current landscape	Location points for signage distribution would be within village centre buildings. People arriving at the linear park who do not visit these centres could miss out on the leaflet information	n/a	West Lanc Borough Council, Tourist Board, Lancashire County Council Local History Group	£5,000
Tourism / Visitor Facilities	4. Gateway access points on Hesketh Lane	Gateway signage on Hesketh Lane at Tarleton High School and at entrance to Sutton Avenue	Short	Low environmental impacts, signage located on existing footways.	Enhanced links from Hesketh Lane to the Linear Park will provide alternative access routes for pedestrians and cyclists helping to relieve conflicts on the busy road	The proposals would be for finger post signage at the two road entrances, there are few constraints with this proposal	Liaison with local highways authority regarding sighting of signs to ensure no impacts for vehicles, that could hinder the safety of pedestrians	West Lanc Borough Council, Tourist Board, Lancashire County Council	approx £1500 x 2 = £3000
Tourism / Visitor Facilities	5. Signage to Linear Park from Village Centre (Hesketh Bank)	Signage located on Hesketh Lane directing pedestrians and cyclists into the Linear Park	Short	No impacts involved with signage proposals	A link into the Linear Park from Hesketh village centre to the River Douglas and beyond	Location of proposed public right of way is on private land	n/a	West Lanc Borough Council, Tourist Board, Lancashire County Council	approx £1500 x 2 = £3000
Tourism / Visitor Facilities	6. Information Hub at Tarleton Libarary	The creation of a small information hub within Tarleton Library could act as a Tourist Information point for visitors and residents	Short	No environmental impacts	Increasing visitor and local knowledge of the Linear Park and wider tourist attractions	Few constraints	n/a	West Lanc Borough Council, Tourist Board, Lancashire County Council	approx £5,000
Tourism / Visitor Facilities	7. Extension of West Lancashire Light Railway	Extension of the West Lancashire Light Railway around the Henry Alty's old Clay Pit Site	Medium	The old Clay Pit site is a old inert landfill site so any proposals would need to take these ground conditions into account	The light railway extension could provide a larger visitor destination for locals and visitors	The West Lancashire Light Railway does not own the land the current or proposed track routes would use. Land under Private ownership	Increase in public access onto private land could cause potential liability issues, the light railway are on a short tern lease to Henry Alty's so any expansion works and associated rise in liability would need to be resolved	West Lanc Borough Council, Lancashire County Council, Private Land Owners, Charitable Trust (West Lancashire Light Railway)	435m length Further discussion swith WLLR needed to confirm costs
Tourism / Visitor Facilities	8. Improve Recreational Setting (Claypit Site)	Soft Landscaping work to the old clay pit site is needed to promote this resource as accessible open space and help improve the recreational setting for the fishing visitors.	Short / Medium	The old Clay Pit site is a old inert landfill site so any proposals would need to take these ground conditions into account, the enhancement of this man made setting could be dramatically improved and linked with the Linear Park as a recreational green space	Improvements to this area of green space and Nature Conservation site will offer local residents and visitors 'green' recreation space that the area currently lacks	Clay Pit site within private land ownership area, proposals to improve setting will require sufficient funding money.	Clay Pit site is a old inert landfill site, so any works associated in this area will need to have the necessary surveys undertaken. The land to the claypit is also very steep for people to access the waters edge. The Waterbody is also very deep.	West Lanc Borough Council, Lancashire County Council, Private Land Owners, Charitable Trust (West Lancashire Light Railway), Environment Agency	40,000m2 (excludes 15,000m2 for pond) x £15 per square metre = £600,000





TOURISM & VISITOR FACILITIES / PROJECTS

Proposal opportunities	Project	Description	TimeTable (years)	Sustainability		Deliverability			
				Environmental Impacts	Social Impacts	Site Constraints	Health and Safety Issues	Leadership	Costing
Tourism / Visitor Facilities	9. Car Parking at Claypit Recreation site	Car parking located at the recreation site and utilised by the West Lancashire Light Railway	Short / Medium	The car park will provide a facility to relieve parking along Hesketh Lane. The car park could be developed using Sustainable Urban Drainage Techniques to ensure that creating hard landscape areas does not effect the current surface run off from the site	Provision for car parking at this location will enable visitors to park in close proximity to the recreation setting	Clay Pit site within private land ownership area, proposals to improve setting will require sufficient funding money.	The location of the car park needs careful consideration with the operations of Henry Alty's and The Light Railway	West Lanc Borough Council, Lancashire County Council, Private Land Owners, Charitable Trust (West Lancashire Light Railway), Environment Agency	3,000m2 x £45 per square metre (tarmac with tegula setts demarcating bays) = £135,000
Tourism / Visitor Facilities	10. Car Parking at Marina	Car parking location for marina and leisure development	Medium / Long	The car park to the marina will impact on current ruderal vegetation that is generally classed as low quality. The car park could be developed using Sustainable Urban Drainage Techniques to ensure that creating hard landscape areas does not effect the current surface run off from the site	Car parking facilities will encourage visitors to stop at this key site and explore further what the linear park has to offer	The car park would need to be developed as part of the wider Marina proposals by the developer	The location of the car park needs careful consideration with the operations of the Marina and moving machinery to launch boats	Private Land Owners / Marina Developers,	4,000m2 x £45 per square metre (tarmac with tegula setts demarcating bays) = £180,000
Tourism / Visitor Facilities	11. Improve Recreational Setting on land between canal and river Douglas at south of site to create green open space focal point at this southern end of the study area	With the additional of the leisure development (project 21) the land to the north of the buildings could be promoted for recreation (picnic site / childrens play feature)	Medium / Long	The impacts on the environment would be minor but a change to the current agricultural use would need to be adopted to allow for a more recreational based activity	Improvements to this area of green space will offer local residents and visitors 'green' recreation space that the area currently lacks	Private land ownership	Increase in public access onto private land could cause potential liability issues.	West Lanc Borough Council, Lancashire County Council, Environment Agency, British Waterways, Private Land Owners	Item £100, 000
Tourism / Visitor Facilities	12. Extension to West Lancashire Light Railway from Alty's to Tarleton Locks	Extension of the West Lancashire Light Railway around Henry Alty's clay Pit site down the former railway line to Tarleton Locks	Medium / Long	The extension of the route along this longer length would involve some environmental works to ensure that the railway line is segregated from the existing Public Right of Way for Safety reasons.	The light railway extension could provide a larger visitor destination for locals and visitors and link Hesketh Bank and Tarleton by an alternative mode of transport	The extension line goes through a long route of land in private ownership. The practicalities of combining a pedestrianised route with a light railway through a tight river corridor embankment may provide engineering difficulties	Increase in public access onto private land could cause potential liability issues, the light railway are on a short tern lease to Henry Alty's so any expansion works and associated rise in liability would need to be resolved	West Lanc Borough Council, Lancashire County Council, Private Land Owners, Charitable Trust (West Lancashire Light Railway)	2060m length Further discussions with WLLR needed to confirm costs



## DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Proposal opportunities	Project	Description	TimeTable (years)	Sustainability		Deliverability			
				Environmental Impacts	Social Impacts	Site Constraints	Health and Safety Issues	Leadership	Development Areas
Order of Potential Deliverability - Development									
Development Opportunity	1. Tarleton Mill	Mixed use development opportunity at Tarleton Mill site. Development aspect needs to address waterfront environment and contribute to high quality linear park agenda, opportunity to create vibrant waterfront space.	Medium	The proposals could improve the current visual aspect of this part of the study area. Planning considerations needed with this proposal to tie with the Linear Park Agenda.	The creation of housing and employment at this location that utilises and embraces the waterfront environment could be pleasant for residents and visitors	The developments outward view across the Canal / River is currently dominated by Plocks Farm (pet food manufacturers), so measures need to be taken to ensure screening occurs between the two developments without blocking the views to the watercourses from Tarleton Mill	Increase in public access in front of private development could cause potential problems with the increased traffic down Plox Brow and promotion of route from village centre	West Lanc Borough Council, Lancashire County Council, Private Land Owners	28, 200m2 area
Development Opportunity	2. Henry Alty's LTD	Employment development opportunity. Reconfiguration of the current Henry Alty's buildings to create a more compact site with room for employment expansion	Medium / Long	This proposal could improve the visual function of Henry Alty's from Hesketh Lane	Improvement of appearance of the employment area within the village centre	Site is in private ownership so buy in required on the improvements and reconfiguration.	n/a	West Lanc Borough Council, Lancashire County Council, Private Land Owners	22,660m2 (5.6acres)
Development Opportunity	3. Housing development to land behind Booths Supermarket	Proposal for the council to consider housing allocation to the rear of Booths Supermarket by Private developer. Provided that it would assist in the implementation of the Linear Park	Medium / Long	The development site is proposed at this location as it would not be in the greenbelt land, flood zone, or on a landfill site. This would require a change to the development plan	Local people may be against housing expansion in the area.	Possible objection from existing residents and increased traffic generation	n/a	West Lanc Borough Council, Lancashire County Council, Private Land Owners	18,200m2 (4.5 acres)
Development Opportunity	4. Marina Development	Marina development to land at south of study area off the A59	Medium / Long	The creation of the marina will impact on the topography of the land to the west of the canal. The development proposal is within greenbelt land, so associated buildings with the Marina will also need to be considered	The marina will provide a new leisure based destination at the southern end of the linear park and hopefully create jobs associated with this water based activity	The Marina is on private land, to take this project forward the land owner would either need to develop the marina themselves or sell the land. The marina would need to be connected into the wider Linear Park footpaths, which are currently on the east of the canal. The proposal is within Greenbelt land.	The private developer of the Marina will need to ensure adequate health and safety provision for users	Private Land Owners, British Waterways,	10,000m2
Development Opportunity	5. Property on Bridge on A59	Leisure Development opportunity at the building at the south of the study area on the A59 for café / food market	Medium / Long	Improvement of the setting out this characterful building into a gateway leisure development that can utilise on the passing traffic	Local people and growers can promote fresh regional produce, and the location of the building is perfect for a physical gateway to the Linear Park	Land in private ownership for development proposal. Access to the site is limited by the traffic movement along the A59.	The private developer of the property will need to ensure adequate health and safety provision for users. And also review any risks with increased traffic during renovation stage	West Lanc Borough Council, Lancashire County Council, Chorley Borough Council, Private Land Owners	5,500m2
Development Opportunity	6. Expansion of Mixed Use Development next to Tarleton Mill	Continuation of Mixed use development opportunity adjacent to the Tarleton Mill site to create a continuous style of development that addresses the waterfront environment and has a positive relationship with the Linear Park.	Long	The proposals could improve the current visual aspect of this part of the study area. Planning considerations needed with this proposal to tie with the Linear Park Agenda.	The creation of housing and employment at this location that utilises and embraces the waterfront environment could be pleasant for residents and visitors	The developments outward view across the Canal / River is currently dominated by Plocks Farm (pet food manufacturers), so measures need to be taken to ensure screening occurs between the two developments without blocking the watercourses views	Increase in public access in front of private development could cause potential problems with the increased traffic down Plox Brow and promotion of route as public footpath	West Lanc Borough Council, Lancashire County Council, Private Land Owners	19,000m2
Development Opportunity	7. Becconsall Pub	Leisure development opportunity at the current derelict Becconsall Pub at Gateway Location along Hesketh Lane	Medium / Long	Reusing derelict building will have positive effects on the Village centre	Local residents and visitors can use an iconic building at the heart of the village centre	Viability of leisure development at this location when Becconsall Pub has recently closed indicating market conditions	n/a	West Lanc Borough Council, Lancashire County Council, Private Land Owners	9000m2 total area including building footprint 450m2
Development Opportunity	8. Visitor Centre	Development of a visitor centre (VC) to facilitate the aspirations of the Linear Park Projects listed above. The VC could also be home to a local history section, The VC could utilise the existing brickwork building to retain local heritage	Medium / Long	The VC could be an educational resource highlighting the local environmental setting, the links to the Ribble Wetlands Regional Park and the migratory birds that populate the estuarine environment.	The visitor centre would offer locals and visitors the chance to learn more about this environment and history, and could help lengthen the stay of people in the area	Visitor Centre location within private land ownership	The developer of the visitor centre will need to ensure adequate health and safety provision for users. Access into Henry Alty's site is also hindered by the blind bridge, consideration from the highway department is needed to ensure the increased traffic is managed safely	West Lanc Borough Council, British Waterways, Environment Agency, Lancashire County Council, RSPB, Charitable Trust (WLLR) Private land owners	Item



## 5.4 FUNDING

### Funding Approach and Routes

The current public sector funding environment is extremely challenging. The following presents a summary of the potential funding opportunities available to support the delivery of a wide range of Linear Park projects. The proposed projects have been grouped into three themes:

- *Accessibility*
- *Visitor facilities*
- *Development opportunities*

#### ACCESSIBILITY

A series of footpath improvements are proposed in the short-medium term development of the linear park. These footpaths are focussed on opening up access to the watercourses and adjacent land to encourage greater use by local residents, as well as visitors to the area. These projects are critical to shaping the use of the Linear Park, as well as perceptions of the park as a place to visit. Projects 1-7, and 10 in particular aim to create greater access to the linear park from various points. The initial cost estimate for these accessibility improvements is in the region of £361,000.

The NWDA will be the key public sector agency for partners to approach for funding to support these projects in the first instance. The agency's Single Programme makes provision in its tasking framework to support the creation or improvement of public realm across the region. While the funding environment has become increasingly competitive in recent years, notwithstanding the impacts of the recession on public sector finances, clearly these accessibility projects have the potential to contribute towards public realm outputs for the Agency.

The NWDA tasking framework supports public realm investments which contribute to 'infrastructure and environmental improvements in towns, cities and villages and include cycleways, footpaths, and open spaces which are accessible to the public'. There is an important exclusion whereby the Agency will not fund projects on private land which is not open to the public. However, this will need to be considered by partners and may require provisions to be made by the partnership or an alternative project delivery body to ensure that routes on private land will remain continuously open to the public.

Linear Park partners will need to approach the NWDA to discuss these projects and complete an expression of interest form which sets out the initial case for requiring NWDA support. Partners should emphasise the strategic fit with regional and sub-regional environmental and visitor economy objectives, in particular the role of the Linear Park in delivering accessibility improvements as part of the wider development of the Ribble Coast and Wetlands Regional Park.

Any application to NWDA for funding support will also require a demonstration of funding commitments from partners. Partners who are involved in the development of the Linear Park going forward are likely to include the following, all of whom will be able to bring differing levels of financial and non-financial support to bear for the partnership:

- *West Lancashire Borough Council*
- *Lancashire County Council*
- *Chorley Borough Council and South Ribble Borough Council (where appropriate)*
- *British waterways and the Environment Agency*
- *Private sector*
- *Voluntary organisations*
- *Public donations*

As well as contributions from mainstream public sector resources it may also be possible for partners, particularly Lancashire County Council, to assist in accessing funding from specific funds such as the Lancashire Environment Fund (LEF). This is an environmental body linked to the Government's regulatory body (ENTRUST) which provides land fill tax funding in support for projects which improve the environment and bring community benefits. Funding can be sought through two different funds (the Community Chest and the Strategic Fund) with differing funding levels. The Community Trust can fund £3-£15,000 for one-off projects, while the Strategic Fund can fund up to £30,000 of a project which has a total cost of no more than £250,000. This fund is largely targeted at not for profit organisations and organisations that are registered as an Environmental Body with Entrust.

Unfortunately Natural England's 2009-2011 Aggregates Levy Sustainability Grants Scheme is currently closed due to all funds being committed. One of the fund's key objectives is to support projects which improve access and informal recreation. The average grant committed has been approximately £75,000, with £7.3m committed 2009-2011. While the fund is currently closed, future programmes of this kind should be investigated further by partners. Discussions should also be undertaken with the Sustrans organisation which has a strong track record in supporting the development of cycling infrastructure in the UK. Sustrans have worked with funders such as the Big Lottery in the past to develop funding streams to support accessibility projects. While this particular fund has now been committed, further opportunities may arise in the future.

As outlined the funding environment for NWDA resource is extremely competitive and is likely to remain as such over the short and medium term. While partners should work closely with the Agency, it is important that partners also reflect on the scale of their own contributions to the advancement of these accessibility projects. If NWDA



support does not come forward for these particular projects partners will need to take a pragmatic view on what can be achieved through other sources.

A significant level of public sector funding would be required to take forward the medium and longer-term accessibility projects 14 and 15, which include the development of the Douglas Crossing and associated route works. It is estimated that the crossing and route development work would cost over £3m to implement. Again, NWDA Single Programme support through the development of public realm infrastructure would be the key tasking framework output by which this project could deliver against.

Partners should emphasise in their expression of interest, and in discussions with the Agency, the significance of this project to the wider delivery of the Ribble Coast and Wetlands 2008 Business Plan. Regional Parks were identified as key action areas in the 2003 and 2006 Regional Economic Strategies, and while that emphasis has been diluted somewhat in the consultation 2010 draft RES, the Linear Park's ambition to deliver this project would contribute towards the delivery of some of the regional park's original objectives. These projects would also greatly improve connectivity on the North West Coastal Trail, as well as other local and sub-regional routes (including Preston), and help catalyse an increase in pedestrian and cycle visitors to this area and the wider Regional Park.

ERDF funding is currently not an option for these types of projects so partners will again need to demonstrate the level of financial support they can contribute to this project. The only action area under the current programme that these type of Linear Park projects have a fit with is Action Area 3.3 – Supporting the improvement of the region's visitor offer and image. However, this fund is clearly focussed on supporting larger, more regionally significant projects which are identified as Signature projects or Attack brands in the Regional Tourism Strategy. Supported projects must also deliver clear economic benefits. While these Linear Park projects do not meet these criteria, funding under this action area is also currently committed to other projects in the region.

The remaining accessibility projects (8, 9, 11, 12 and 13) include car park improvements at Tarleton Mill, footpath development at Tarleton Mill, footpath development at Alty's between employment and recreation space, a pedestrian link bridge to marina, and a new access road to the marina off the A59. Under current circumstances it would seem appropriate that these types of projects be dealt with by the West Lancashire Borough Council and the private sector partners as development obligations as part of negotiated Section 106 agreements as part of the development of these particular sites.

## VISITOR FACILITIES

Under this theme projects 1-6 are focussed on

signposting residents and visitors towards accessing the Linear Park from various points. These projects build on the route development and accessibility projects, providing awareness of access points into the Linear Park, orientation, and local history and context. The total cost of these projects is estimated at over £23,500.

As part of discussions with NWDA partners should seek to explore whether the signage and orientation costs could be included as eligible associated works as part of the public realm accessibility projects. As well as approaching NWDA partners should also explore LEF funding for these projects as they would again match that fund's objectives on accessibility. Funding could also be sought from the Lancashire Tourist Board to support the implementation of information leaflets along the routes, as well as the establishment of a visitor hub within the library at Tarleton.

Projects 8 and 9 focus on the redevelopment of the claypit site at Alty's. The work requires soft landscaping at the site to promote this resource as accessible open space and help improve the recreational setting for fishing visitors, while additional car parking is also required for visitors. In total the costs of these projects are estimated at £740,000. While funding should be explored with a range of organisations, for example the RSPB, Groundwork, LEF, again the NWDA Single Programme fund will be critical to the delivery of this project.

NWDA's Single Programme supports projects which focus on reclaiming, redeveloping and regenerating brownfield land (Output 7). The claypit site is an historical part of the Alty's brick works site. The area was used for clay extraction for the brickworks, while in recent decades the areas was also used for landfill purposes. In light of the former uses of this site, as well as its present condition, this project has a very strong alignment with the requirements for this output. The programme guidance states that projects which offer environmental improvements or enhancements are eligible, in particular where they can bring greater access and public benefit. The guidance also outlines that the provision of green infrastructure through physical improvements and open spaces which have a management plan are also eligible.

Projects 7 and 12 which outline the expansion plans of the West Lancashire Light Railway would require little public sector financial support. It is understood that the volunteers already have all of the materials (track infrastructure) required, additional capital, as well as the skills and expertise of volunteers to construct the extensions.

Projects 10 and 11 seek to provide new car parking facilities at the marina development site, as well as provide a small recreation/picnic site on land between the waterways and adjacent to the leisure opportunity



off the A59. As part of the process of opening up the marina site with a private sector marina operator, partners will need to agree as part of a Section 106 development agreement that the developer will provide parking which can be used for the benefit of Linear Park visitors as well as marina users. Partners should also work with any future leisure operator of the site off the A59 and collaborate with them on the development of the picnic/recreation space, which could be utilised by the operator, as well as by general visitors to the park.

#### **DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

Eight development opportunities have been identified as part of the Linear Park masterplan. However, most of the development opportunities will require little or no public sector funding. In the main their advancement will rely on private sector developers and prevailing market conditions.

While funding requirements are unlikely to be required for many of these projects, they will play an important role in enabling key projects in the Linear Park to move forward. In particular the proposals for leisure, access and environmental improvements at Alty's and at Tarleton Mill. Partners, particularly the borough council, will need to work closely with the developers in each instance to ensure that the developments meet the objectives of the Linear Park. The use of Section 106 development agreements will be critical to this.

The development opportunity which will require public sector funding support is the visitor centre at the Alty's site. This site is a key gateway into the Linear Park for local residents, but importantly visitors. The proposed visitor centre, at a cost of £400K, would play a key role in educating visitors about the natural environment in this area, including birds and other wildlife (linking in with other facilities within the RCW regional park); the industrial heritage of the area; as well as provide general visitor facilities.

NWDA Single Programme funding should be investigated further by partners to support this project. The development of the visitor centre would help create a visitor destination that has the potential to enhance the visitor offer in the area. The key output which the NWDA could monitor their potential investment against is output 10 – the number of visitors attracted to a new or improved venue as a result of their investment.

However, this project would still require significant partner funding to be taken forward even if support was sought and successful from NWDA. While the Lancashire Tourist Board could be another potential funder, support could also include financial and non-financial contributions from private sector partners (e.g. buildings, peppercorn rents), organisations such as the RSPB, public donations, local interest group contributions, as well as financial and officer support from parish, local, and the county council.





# 6.0

## Taking it Forward

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

This study is intended to help guide the future regeneration and development of the Linear Park over the next decade. Through consultation with a number of stakeholders and potential project partners, it provides the foundation upon which more detailed proposals and funding bids can be developed and come forward.

The study represents a commitment to the development of a Linear Park at Tarleton and Hesketh Bank. The following section sets priorities, identifies potential funding sources and makes recommendations on how to 'make it happen'.

The development of the area will not occur on its own and further planning and design and private sector investment will be required to deliver the vision for the area and realise its potential.

The stakeholder consultation undertaken in drafting this report should ensure that they are able to broadly subscribe to the vision and themes within this study. West Lancashire Borough Council working with its partners such as the County Council, Ribble Valley Regional Park, the West Lancs Light Railway, the RSPB and private landowners should be able to continue this iterative process of participation and consultation to ensure an ongoing sense of ownership and involvement in the development process. Only with the support of the stakeholders and the local community can many of the proposals be taken forward.

The purpose of this study is to provide a common direction for all those involved to secure the commitment of public agencies as well as private sector investors in the development of the Linear Park. The study does not have any status within the local planning system and, as such, all proposals will be subject to normal planning controls.

### 6.2 DELIVERY

#### DELIVERING THE LINEAR PARK

The Linear Park is currently at a critical stage in its development, with stakeholders being brought together in support of this new vision for the area. With stakeholders holding a wide number of objectives it is important that the vision for the Linear Park is maintained going forward, and that they can work together in a collaborative and constructive manner to contribute to the effective delivery of these projects.

At this stage in the development of the Linear Park a bespoke delivery vehicle is not an approach which would bring most benefit to all stakeholders. With many stakeholders having differing reasons for involvement in the project, and with time required to build trust and understand working relationships amongst stakeholders, it is proposed that a partnership model would be the most appropriate approach to take forward the delivery of the linear park projects.

An effective partnership of Linear Park stakeholders would enable many parties to bring forward a wide range of skills, financial resources, and non-financial resources which will benefit the delivery of the Linear Park, as stakeholders work collaboratively to achieve the masterplan's vision and objectives. Therefore, it will be important for the partnership to establish and agree clear terms of reference for what it is set up to achieve, as well being the device by which important issues are debated and agreed (e.g. land access, negotiated long-term leases for leisure and recreational uses). This will be critical to ensure that all involved are aware of their various roles and responsibilities which are likely to, in part, be a reflection of the various attributes each stakeholder can bring to the partnership. For example, West Lancashire Borough Council has the expertise to play an important strategic role in liaising with public sector funding partners, as well as act as an accountable body for funding purposes.

While many of the projects identified in the masterplan involve a wide range of stakeholder organisations and bodies it is important that the partnership does not become too unwieldy and ineffective due to its size. It is recommended that core stakeholders make up the initial partnership in the formative years of the Linear Park, with the option to invite additional stakeholders to partnership meetings or for specific projects as the need arises (e.g. Groundwork, RSPB, the Wildlife Trust, and Lancashire Tourist Board). There could be scope to expand the partnership as projects progress in the future.

Core stakeholders should include:

- *West Lancashire Borough Council*
- *Lancashire County Council*
- *Chorley Borough Council and South Ribble Borough Council (depending on whether specific projects come forward)*
- *Tarleton and Hesketh with Becconsall Parish Councils*
- *British Waterways and the Environment Agency*
- *West Lancashire Light Railway*
- *Alty's and other private sector organisations within the Linear Park involved in particular projects.*
- *Representatives from other local voluntary and*



## community organisations

In future years as the Linear Park partnership progresses and stakeholders have demonstrated that they have worked together effectively; alternative delivery and management approaches could be explored. One possible approach could be the establishment of a development trust.

Development trusts place a greater emphasis on community leadership and delivering local benefit. They also offer the opportunity for partners to develop revenue generating activities which could contribute towards the future management and maintenance costs of the Linear Park. There is no standard organisational form for a development trust, but many register as a company limited by guarantee or as a charity. With charity status there are also tax advantages (e.g. no income tax on revenue generated), while raising funds in the future from grant-awarding bodies may also be easier than with non-charitable status.

## 6.3 MANAGEMENT

The land comprising the Linear Park is in various ownerships, including substantial areas of private landownership. This presents particular challenges in establishing a consistent and practical management regime. Yet coordinated management of the Park is highly desirable both from the users' and the site owners' points of view.

The strategic management aims should be:

- *to achieve consistently high quality management of the site across all ownerships*
- *to integrate access where appropriate so that the whole is seen as far as possible as an integrated offer*
- *to coordinate special events and programmes and achieve effective promotion of the area*
- *to secure effective supervision and security on the site and ensure the health and safety of all users and contractors.*
- *to take measures to mitigate any nuisance to local residents and community*

There is therefore a strong case for the continuation of the effective partnership group including the landowners and representatives of the local community and County and Borough Councils. While its powers could only be advisory it would exercise a strategic management role to achieve the key management aims, advise the landowners on practical management and oversee the performance of any contractors.

The practical management of the site will include operation of the Visitor centre, including any catering, visitor information, maintenance of grounds, water and

woodland, and provision of any events and activities.

An option that could be considered is for a Management Trust to be established

## 6.4 ECONOMIC IMPACT

The projects which largely require public sector support as part of the masterplan are unlikely to generate significant direct economic outputs (e.g. employment and visitor spend outputs). While there will be temporary construction employment and training opportunities generated as a result of some of the projects, the only publicly funded project which has the potential to generate employment outputs over the longer-term is the visitor centre at the Alty's site.

The development of the visitor centre has the potential to generate a small number of full-time equivalent jobs (2-4 FTEs) depending on the management of the site and the scope of facilities included. However, this would be likely to vary due to seasonal conditions. The visitor centre will also rely on volunteers to operate effectively during busy times of the year.

The expansion of the light railway at this site will also be important in generating indirect visitor expenditure at the centre, and within the park. With over 12,000 visitors annually this attraction would seek to significantly increase visitor numbers as a result of their expansion.

Other Linear Park projects will also help stimulate a range of indirect benefits which will contribute to the local and sub-regional visitor economy. While there is very limited baseline data available on current users of existing routes within the Linear Park, approximately 475,000 people use the Rufford Branch Canal each year. This is helpful proxy for other routes within the Linear Park. While a high proportion of these users will be local residents, the improvements proposed for cycling routes and walking routes in the Linear Park, allied with improved parking and visitor facilities, will be an important draw in attracting visitors to the area, and capturing their associated expenditure. Estimates in the RCW Business Plan in 2008 suggest that approximately 12,000 walkers and cyclists per annum could potentially use the Douglas Crossing. Again, the opportunities to encourage these users to visit other areas of the Linear Park and spend money at facilities in the park should be actively encouraged.

The proposals for the Linear Park have also played an important role in shaping how West Lancashire Borough Council has worked with private land owners and their proposals for developments at Tarleton Mill and at Alty's. While the economic and employment outputs from these developments are not directly attributable to the Linear Park's development, the Linear Park will play an important complimentary role, particularly around environmental improvements and the quality of life agenda for both businesses and residents who will be

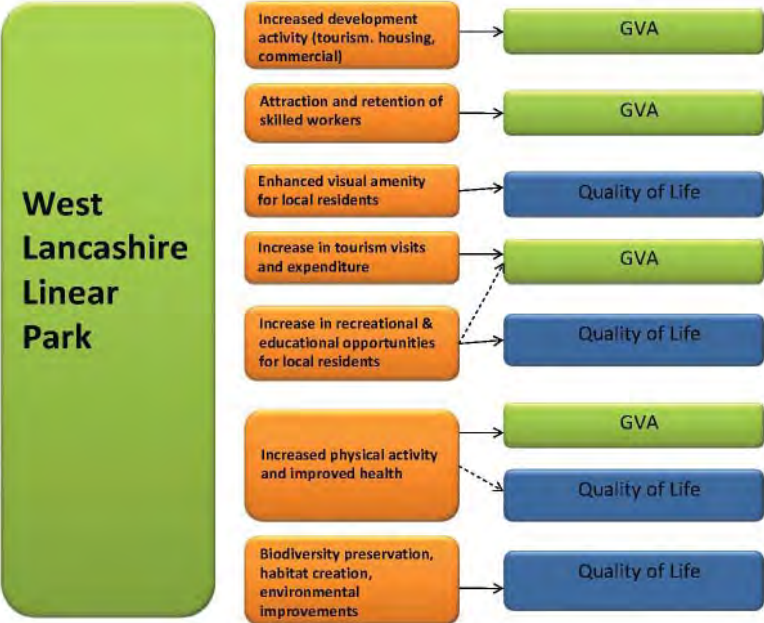




attracted to these locations. This will also be the case for future development towards the south of the park (employment at the proposed marina and other leisure uses of the A59, and visitor expenditure).

While not directly attributable analysis of recent plans for the Tarleton Mill employment space indicates that there is potential to generate approximately 150 office-related jobs; 90 jobs in light industrial uses; and 10 jobs as part of a restaurant /café use on this site. The rationalisation of Alty’s operations, as well as the operations of several small businesses operating on their site, will also ensure that these jobs are safeguarded in the local area.

While the direct economic outputs from the Linear Park are small, and there is significant uncertainty around the level of future visitors, the following graphic helps identify for partners the various ways in which investments in environmental and visitor assets in the Linear Park can directly and indirectly contribute towards GVA creation as well as deliver quality of life/ social benefits.



**6.5 CONCLUSION**

The Feasibility Study for the Linear Park at Tarleton and Hesketh Bank sets out an exciting vision which could transform the area. The implementation of the masterplan needs to be robust and effective to ensure that the vision is turned into reality.