

LANCASHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**CALLED IN PLANNING APPLICATION FOR
PROPOSED HEYSHAM TO M6 LINK ROAD**

LAND TO THE NORTH OF LANCASTER BEGINNING AT THE END OF
THE A683 HEYSHAM TO M6 LINK PHASE 1 AND RUNNING IN AN
EASTERLY DIRECTION TO CONNECT WITH THE M6 AT JUNCTION
34 OF THE M6.

Planning Inspectorate Reference:
APP/Q2371/V/07/1200928 and
APP/Q2371/V/07/1200929

LPA Reference:
01/05/1584

SUMMARY OF PROOF OF EVIDENCE

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Landscape and Visual Impact
Lancashire and Morecambe College
Sports Playing Field

June 2007

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 I am Elaine Demming. I am a fully qualified Chartered Landscape Architect. I have worked on a wide range of schemes within the public sector, including the design and implementation of landscape and ecological mitigation works relating to County Council Highways and Highways Agency Trunk roads.

2. SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

- 2.1 In my evidence, I have:
- a. Described the Planning Policy context in relation to the Landscape issues.
 - b. Referred to the description of the existing landscape in relation to County Council Landscape Character Types and Local Character Areas.
 - c. Described the methodology used in assessing the effect/impact on the existing landscape and visual receptors.
 - d. Described the alignment of the route as it crosses from west to east through each Local Character Area.
 - e. Described the proposed landscape mitigation and degree of effect the route has on each of the Local Character Areas.
 - f. Described the degree of visual impact the route has on receptors through each Local Character Area.
 - g. Concluded my evidence addressing the Landscape issues.
 - h. Provided evidence relating to the playing field affected by the route at Lancaster and Morecambe College.

3. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 My evidence with respect to Planning Policy refers mainly to the Joint Lancashire Structure Plan (adopted 2005/2006), specifically the Supplementary Planning Guidance: "Landscape and Heritage" Policies 20 and 21 and the Indicators and Targets contained within.

4. DESCRIPTION OF THE EXISTING LANDSCAPE (BASELINE CONDITIONS)

4.1 My evidence refers to the detailed description included in the Environmental Statement, Vol 1 Part A: Report 10 Landscape and Visual Effects, under Section 10.2 Baseline Conditions.

4.2 The alignment of the route crosses two distinct landscape character types and impinges slightly on a third. The majority of the route is within the Low Coastal Drumlin landscape character type with the Urban Landscape Character type to the west and Drumlin Field Landscape Character type to the east.

4.3 In addition, the area has been broken down further into 8 Local Character Areas to allow a more detailed assessment to be made.

5. LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (METHODOLOGY)

5.1 The assessment of the impact of the route on the landscape and the visual impact of the route on receptors necessitates 2 forms of methodology as recommended by the Department for Transport. These are set out in the Transport Analysis Guidance Unit 3.3.7/3.3.8 and in the Design Manual for Road and Bridges, Vol II, Section 3, Part 5, Chapter 4.

5.1.1 Both methodologies measure or categorise the scale of impact in terms of magnitude – 3 beneficial, 1 no change or neutral and 3 adverse.

5.2 Landscape Impact Assessment and Procedure

5.2.1 The Landscape Impact Assessment draws on Policy 20 of the Joint Lancashire Structure Plan, Lancaster City Local Plan Proposals Map and site visits in order to identify the character type and quality of the landscape.

5.2.2 By gathering information about the landscape (and townscape) features that characterise the Area and then assessing the effects of the route on those features, a level of impact was arrived at. An assessment score was given for each of the 8 Local Character Areas with an overall score being given for the whole scheme, based on the worst value.

5.3 Visual Impact Assessment and Procedure

5.3.1 The Visual Impact Assessment was assessed by gathering information based on Ordnance Survey Maps, the Lancashire County Council Gazetteer and site visits which led to the identification of a Zone of Visual Influence and the identification of receptors; receptors in this context being residential properties, public buildings, public open space and footpaths.

5.3.2 By applying the methodology previously referred to, the degree of change brought about by the effect of the route on each receptor was estimated and an assessment score (level of impact) arrived at.

6. DESCRIPTION OF THE ROAD ALIGNMENT OF THE ROUTE IN RELATION TO THE EXISTING LANDSCAPE

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 As a result of the changes referred to in documents, “Response to Objections & Comments” (June 2006) and the “Revised Planning Application Report” (September 2006), I have included in my proof a revision of the description of the route in relation to the existing landscape through the eight Local Character Areas.

7. MITIGATION

7.1 Planning Conditions

7.1.1 The Development Control Committee (November 2006) detailed a resolution to grant Planning Permission of the scheme subject to 38 conditions. The commitment to mitigate the impact of the road scheme on the landscape and receptors is evident in the extent of the landscape issues addressed in 13 of these conditions.

7.2 Compliance with Planning Policy

7.2.1 My evidence demonstrates that I have taken on board the relevant strategies, recommendations and in particular the indicators and targets contained in Policy 20 and 21 of the Joint Lancashire Structure Plan.

7.2.2 The commitment to meet the three principal County Council targets identified in Policy 20 is evident by the extent of the proposed woodland planting (approximately 50 hectares), replacement planting and translocation of hedgerows (19.4km proposed to replace 9.3km lost) and the creation of 3 ponds. The inclusion of 8 Habitat Creation Areas supports Policy 21.

8. SUMMARY OF THE LANDSCAPE IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF THE ROUTE

8.1 In summary, the level of impact of the road with landscape mitigation proposals in place, through each of the eight Local Character Areas ranged from slightly beneficial to large adverse.

8.2 In conclusion, therefore, the overall landscape impact assessment has been judged as Large Adverse.

9.0 SUMMARY OF THE VISUAL IMPACTS OF THE ROUTE ON RECEPTORS

9.1 My evidence includes a summary of the effects, a brief description of the proposed mitigation and a summary of visual impacts on the receptors at the time of opening of the route in year 0 and in year 15.

9.2 The concluding result for some receptors is acknowledged as substantial adverse, even after the planting proposals have established.

10. CONCLUSION

10.1 It is acknowledged that a development of this scale will have an impact on the landscape and my evidence has shown that detailed assessment using the appropriate methodology has been carried out to measure the magnitude of this.

10.2 However, my evidence also demonstrates that the extensive landscape proposals and mitigation measures to be detailed in conjunction with the Ecologist, embody the relevant planning policies in relation to landscape issues at national, regional and local level. County Council targets have been

addressed relating to Policy 20 of the Joint Lancashire Structure plan as well as taking on board recommendations identified in Policy 21 relating to Biodiversity.

10.4 Compliance with the planning conditions endorsed by the Development Control Committee will ensure that the most appropriate and acceptable proposals for mitigating the effects of the road on the landscape will be carried out. The specific condition that the development should be subject to Lancashire County Council entering into a unilateral undertaking for the management of all landscaping and ecological mitigation for a period of 20 years emphasises the commitment to ensure the successful establishment, development and protection of all planting and habitat creation areas.

11.0 PLAYING FIELD PROVISION AT LANCASTER AND MORECAMBE COLLEGE

My evidence is based on the landscape/layout of the playing fields and not planning policy, (specifically PPG17 Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation). The latter will be addressed by my colleagues.

11.1 Existing Playing Field Provision at Lancaster and Morecambe College

11.1.1 In summary, the playing fields are currently laid out to provide two football pitches of different sizes and a training area marked out in a grid pattern. There is a roughly mown area of the playing field which appears unused for pitch provision.

11.2 Impact of the Proposed Road Construction on Playing Field Provision

11.2.1 The route would physically separate the affected playing field from the main college campus. The road would be on embankment from a high point

(approximately 8 metres) in the northeast at Torrisholme Road sloping down to its lowest point, at grade on Morecambe Road. The specific area of playing field lost by the road construction can be described as the area to the southeast of the line of the existing overhead transmission lines.

11.3 Mitigation Proposals

11.3.1 I have included in my proof, two possible solutions for accommodating the football pitches.

11.3.2 The first solution demonstrates that two full size football pitches could be accommodated on the existing playing field with a further pitch or training area accommodated elsewhere on the college campus.

11.3.3 The second solution was arrived at following a more detailed investigation and measurement of the existing pitches and playing field area. This exercise was purely to demonstrate that all existing pitches, including the training area, could be accommodated on the remaining playing field following construction of the road.

11.3.4 I acknowledge that both solutions would involve disruption in the provision of football pitches. The proposals would, however, ultimately result in improved quality of facilities due to drainage works, levelling, reseeding and provision of ball stop fences.

11.4 Summary

11.4.1 I have demonstrated two possible solutions for the provision of the football pitch facilities. However, I am confident that there could be other possibilities

which would utilise the open space within the college grounds more effectively.