

**APP/Q2371/V/07/1200928 &**

**APP/Q2371/V/07/1200929**

**LMC/TJ/1**

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 – SECTION 77**

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (INQUIRIES PROCEDURE) (ENGLAND)  
RULES 2000**

**CALL IN INQUIRY TO CONSIDER LANCASHIRE COUNTY  
COUNCIL'S APPLICATION FOR PLANNING  
PERMISSION IN RELATION TO THE CONSTRUCTION  
OF THE HEYSHAM TO M6 LINK**

## **PROOF OF EVIDENCE**

**of**

**TIM JONES, PGDURP; MRTPI  
of Urban Vision Partnership Ltd on behalf of  
Lancaster and Morecambe College.**

**JUNE 2007**

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## **1 Experience and Qualifications**

- 1.1 My name is Tim Jones and I am a Principal Planning Consultant with Capita Symonds, based in the Regulatory Services Department at Urban Vision.
- 1.2 I have a Post Graduate Diploma in Urban and Regional Planning obtained in 1991 at Sheffield Polytechnic, now Sheffield Hallam University, and an Advanced Diploma in Urban Regional Planning obtained in 1988, also at Sheffield Polytechnic. I have been a corporate member of the Royal Town Planning Institute since October 2004.
- 1.3 I have worked in planning and related disciplines since 1984 giving me over 20 years experience. Much of this experience has been within local authorities. More recently I worked as a Principal Planner in the Spatial Planning Team at Salford City Council for 3 years, prior to taking up my current post. Prior to that I worked as the Principal Environmental Policy Officer for Bury MBC for 6 years, based in the Chief Executive's Directorate and leading corporate policy on a wide range of planning related and environmental initiatives.
- 1.4 This proof has been prepared to address the impact of the Link Road on Lancaster and Morecambe College. In doing so it also addresses a number of matters identified in the Secretary of State's Call-In letter together with a range of other relevant planning matters.

## **2.0 Scope and Content of Proof**

2.1 This proof concentrates on the impact of the proposal on Lancaster and Morecambe College, at the local level, and will not therefore refer to many development plan policies affecting the more strategic issues of the route selected for the Link Road.

2.2 Evidence is presented according to relevant policy documents and in particular, the development plan. In doing so my evidence contributes to a number of matters that the Secretary of State wishes to be informed about, as identified in the call-in letter, and where relevant to the Lancaster and Morecambe College site.

2.3 In this proof of evidence I will: -

- a) Set out the current position at the Lancaster and Morecambe College site;
- b) Consider the impacts of the proposed Link road on the college;
- c) Consider whether the proposed development accords with the development plan for the area (in this instance RPG 13 and emerging draft replacement RSS for the North West, the Joint Lancashire Structure Plan, and the Lancaster Local Plan), having regard to the provisions of Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- d) Consider the extent to which the proposed development is consistent with Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development.
- e) Consider the impact of the proposal in relation to car parking facilities at the College and car parking standards, also paying regard to consistency with the advice in Planning Policy Guidance note 13: Transport.
- f) Consider the effects of the proposed development on the local environment at the college including amenity space and sports pitches, paying regard to Government policy advice on open space, sport and recreation as set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation, and development plan policies.

### **3.0 The Development Plan**

3.1 The Development Plan for the area comprises of the following documents: -

- Regional Planning Guidance for the North West was published by the Secretary of State in 1996 but is in the process of being replaced by the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy as set out in the Submitted Draft Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West of England: January 2006 (RSS) which is now generally accepted as the regional planning document for development plan purposes.
- The Joint Lancashire Structure Plan: March 2005 (JLSP).
- The Lancaster District Local Plan: April 2004 (LDLP).

#### **4.0 A) Lancaster and Morecambe College – the Current Position**

4.1 Lancaster and Morecambe College (LMC) is a General Further Education College with over 180 years of history. The College has existed on its current site since 1953, and has expanded considerably in recent years to cope with its increasing intake of students due to the excellent range of courses now on offer.

4.2 The College's Mission Statement sets out its role as a key element at the heart of the local community – "LMC – providing excellence in education and training within the community".

4.3 The facilities at the College include the following, (see also Wood Chapter 4 for a fuller description of these facilities): -

- **A BLOCK** – used for vocational workshops in Craft and Construction and Engineering; classrooms for tuition in Health & Social Care and general classrooms.
- **B BLOCK** - IT and science facilities; administration offices and specialist provision for students with learning difficulties.
- **MODULAR BUILDING** – constructed in 2002 and containing general classrooms and administration offices.
- **C BLOCK** – Containing classrooms for tuition in Health & Social Care and IT; Learning Resource Centre, Library, Reception, Shop, Bistro and Restaurant Facilities.
- **D BLOCK** – Containing classrooms for tuition in Health, Hair, Beauty, Business, Travel and Tourism; Hospitality Provision.
- **E BLOCK** – This is a two-storey building, constructed by the Local Authority and refurbished in 1993. Containing classrooms for tuition in IT, AS, A levels and Access.
- **ROTARY HOUSE**, An adapted building providing a training flat for people with learning difficulties and disabilities to enable them to practice living skills in a real work environment.

- **F BLOCK** – Containing classrooms for tuition in the Construction Trades including brickwork, carpentry and joinery.
- **H BLOCK (HEXAGON THEATRE)** – a recently refurbished building used as an Assembly Hall, performance space, exhibition space and for examinations.
- **K BLOCK** – A relatively new building providing classrooms for tuition in Art and Design; media and multi media, and only opened in 2002.
- **N BLOCK** – Containing a nursery, not only providing facilities for the children of learners and staff, but also the children of members of the public.
- **S BLOCK** – This is another relatively new building. It is a purpose built sports centre containing sports halls, gymnasium and classrooms, and the construction costs were part funded by the National Lottery. This facility is again not only used by the College but also as a valuable addition to the local community facilities.

4.4 Outside the buildings the College benefits from valuable open space, a considerable amount of which is also used for teaching purposes. The College has three sports pitches that will be affected by the proposed link road. These include one senior sized pitch, one suitable for 13-15 year olds and a small training pitch, all of which are essential to the existence of the College's Football Academy and Football Development Centre, due to the increasing numbers of young people wishing to join these academies and also community use.

4.5 These pitches are an extremely valuable resource to the College and are in constant use. Soccer training takes place for four hours on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays with matches taking place on Wednesday, Saturdays and Sundays. The demand for pitch usage is so great that the College hires an additional pitch at Salt Ayre Leisure Centre for Wednesday afternoon fixtures.

4.6 In addition to the above usage by Soccer Academy and the Football Development Centre students, the pitches are also used by other full time sports students as part of

their practical modules, enhancing physical fitness and contributing to the general well-being.

- 4.7 To the south west of the car park is an open space designated by the College as a wildlife area. This area is used for teaching in Biology lessons, and some practical conservation work has taken place on the area including the construction of a small pond as a habitat enhancement.
- 4.8 The open spaces on the College campus all contribute to the learning experience at the College. The open spaces are well used in between classes and in free periods, providing valuable amenity space away from the classroom in which to relax. These spaces contribute in a way that is hard to measure to the well-being of staff and students alike also contributing to an enhanced learning environment, an aspect that should not be undermined.
- 4.9 The open spaces also present a 'public face' for the College, providing a valued amenity setting for the College buildings, a pleasant outlook on approach from either Morecambe Road or Torrisholme Road. These open spaces on approach to the College are the 'first impression' obtained by prospective students, many accompanied on their first visit by parents and play a valuable role in attracting students to the College.
- 4.10 The Campus contains 474 car parking spaces. These parking spaces are crucial to the efficient running of the College and they are in high demand. With 660 staff employed on the main site, 10% of whom live over 10 miles away, 25% of full time students travelling over 3 miles to get to the College and the wide catchment area of the College, attracting students from considerably greater distances such as Cumbria and North Yorkshire, the demand for car parking is significant.
- 4.11 The fact that the College employs 660 staff on-site and a further 290 off-site providing educational services to Lancashire prisons demonstrates the economic significance of the College to the local economy. These figures make the College one of the largest employers in the area. The College also has an overall budget in excess of £20m.

- 4.12 The College's role in the Community is also significant in that through the provision of real life learning environments it provides not only services to customers but develops the business and employability skills of the students involved in these classes. Some relevant figures for the numbers of people using the facilities include over 30,000 using the sports facilities at the College, 6,000 customers a year in the Restaurant and a similar number benefiting from hair and beauty services.
- 4.13 As the only provider of general further education to the community of Lancaster and Morecambe, the College's welfare and stability is crucial to enable it to fulfil its role as a provider of education and training to the community.
- 4.14 The College provides educational services to 300 14 – 16 year old pupils from schools, meets the needs of employers via a range of open and customised courses that generate over £200K of income, provides a range of academic and vocational courses to enable young people and adults to acquire trade and professional qualifications, many of whom in turn enter the local job market. In total the College is providing services to 5,000 students. The College also works with other agencies including Connexions and Job Centre Plus to engage workless adults and young people not in education, in employment and training programmes and courses.
- 4.15 The College therefore plays a crucial role in the local community, through its employment, the inward investment generated for the local economy, its impact on the future workforce, its contribution to young people, preparing them for work by building necessary life skills and the qualifications to enable them to gain employment. To this end, the role performed by the College substantially contributes towards the achievement of one of the Government's four key aims for sustainable development, namely "*social progress which recognises the needs of everyone*". Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development recognises that the Government is committed to developing strong, vibrant and sustainable communities and to promoting community cohesion. This means meeting the diverse needs of all people and, in particular, promoting development which ensures that the impact of development on the social fabric of communities is considered and that access to jobs, education and community facilities is addressed. The role performed by the College

within the local community accords entirely with the Government's aims and aspirations in this regard.

#### **4.16 B) Lancaster and Morecambe College – Impacts of the Proposed Link Road**

4.17 The impact of the Link Road on the College can be separated into two elements including the impacts during the construction phase and secondly, the long term impacts on the future of the College.

4.18 The construction phase of the road will be 32 months, with a further remedial and maintenance phase of 1 year. Leighton and Leversedge in their proofs have identified the following key impacts on the College during the construction phase: -

- Noise;
- Mud and dust;
- General disruption.

#### **4.19 Construction Phase**

##### 4.20 Noise during Construction

4.21 David Leversedge sets out in his proof that the Environmental Statement fails to provide sufficient information to fully evaluate the noise impacts at the College. However, based on the applicants own calculations and what information there is in the Environmental Statement, they have advised that noise levels at the College would significantly increase and be above recommended levels.

4.22 Wood (8.4 – 8.13) sets out in some detail the impact of noise on the learning environment, setting out clearly that teaching in Blocks F and E will be badly affected, that students with learning difficulties would not be able to work effectively in Rotary House, and that the impact of noise on the outdoor classrooms would be particularly challenging for staff and students alike.

4.23 Mud and dust during construction

4.24 Leighton points out that even when construction contracts include terms for the control of mud it is often an on-going problem. When the mud dries out it creates an additional impact of contributing to dust. Leversedge sets out the impacts of dust disturbance that will be created during the construction period. The College prides itself on maintaining one of the best kept and attractive campuses of any further education college in the country, a major selling point to students and their families (Wood 8.14).

4.25 Disruption during construction

4.26 Leighton in 3.3.2.4 sets out that there will be considerable disruption during the construction phase. This will include construction traffic including up to 2,000 lorry loads of materials being delivered and construction plant, all of which would pose a safety threat to students, staff and visitors attending the college.

4.27 David Wood in his proof at 8.5 and in 8.17 sets out his fear that the disruption and disturbance will be so great that the College will lead to a significant decline in student enrolment and that the overall offer of the range of services to its community will not be the same as it is today. He expresses concern that the College will not be able to survive the 32 month construction period.

4.28 **Long term impacts on the future of the College**

4.29 Loss of car parking provision

4.30 The College currently has 474 car parking spaces, including 26 disabled spaces. There is evidence that this current provision is inadequate. When the car parking spaces are full, cars overspill on to neighbouring residential areas, causing complaints from neighbours. The Link Road proposal will result in the loss of 180 car parking spaces leaving the College with only 294 usable spaces. This equates to a 38% decrease in on-site parking provision.

4.31 The loss of car parking provision will have a damaging effect upon the College's ability to deliver its current range of educational and other public services and will deter students, community groups and others from using the campus.

4.32 Loss of sports pitches and severance of the campus

4.33 The College currently has three pitches on the area to the west of the proposed link road – one senior sized pitch, one suitable for 13-15 year old play and a small training pitch. The playing fields will not only be physically separated from the rest of the campus by the road proposal, but will also be severely reduced in size. This will result in the loss of the training pitch, extended travel distance, resulting from underpass being located at the northern extreme of the site, loss of visual link between the pitches and the campus which enhances both amenity and, through informal surveillance, the security and safety of the users. It would not be possible to replace any of these facilities elsewhere on site due to the confined space around the College buildings.

4.34 These pitches are a valuable resource to the College and are in constant use.

4.35 David Wood sets out at 9.25 in his Proof that any reduction on the number or size of pitches within the campus is completely unacceptable to the College as it would seriously jeopardise the sports provision, particularly that of the Sports Academy which supplies players to Morecambe FC whose league status requires a specified level of facility and pitch. The Sports Academy enjoys a high profile position in the College and contributes enormously to the College's local and regional reputation.

4.36 Noise impacts

4.37 David Leversedge sets out in his proof that he considers that the Environmental Statement supplied by the applicant is deficient in that it has not considered the extent to which noise from the Link Road will impact on activities being carried out at the College during both the construction and the operational phases. It is further noted that despite a specific reference being made to schools as noise sensitive premises to be identified, there is no noise data available specifically for the College.

4.38 David Wood in his proof at 9.7 to 9.10 sets out the sensitivity of the closest buildings to the proposed Link Road route and the impact that noise from the road will have on the learning environment in these buildings.

## **5.0 The Development Proposals and Planning Policy**

5.1 In relation to the Lancaster District Local Plan the following policies are relevant:-

### **5.2 General Background Context of the LDLP**

5.3 Chapter 1 of the LDLP sets out the following matters of relevance.

5.4 In the section on ‘The Environment’ (commencing at 1.1.10) it points out that an overriding objective of the plan is to protect and enhance the environmental wealth of Lancaster District (1.1.11), the Council will seek to ensure that the policies and proposals of the plan do not cause unnecessary environmental damage (1.1.12) and that development proposals are complemented by detailed proposals to provide and protect urban and rural open space, conserve countryside areas, and wildlife habitats, amongst other things (1.1.13). The Link Road if approved will result in the loss of valuable open spaces within the College grounds, areas that are protected by LDLP policies as Urban Green Space under Policy E29 and Outdoor Playing Space under Policy R1 respectively (both dealt with separately below).

5.5 “The Council’s Vision is of a District which provides the best possible quality of life for all its residents and seeks to reduce disadvantage; meets the employment needs and aspirations of its residents ...; is easy, safe and convenient to get around by bus, rail, on foot and by bicycle ...; where new development is of the highest possible quality, reflects the District’s distinctive characteristics, respects the principles of sustainable development and enriches cultural heritage” ( all from 1.1.15). In relation to the issues of reducing disadvantage and meeting the employment needs and aspirations of its residents, the College plays a significant, District wide role. It is the only provider of general further education to the community of Lancaster and Morecambe. The College provides educational services to 300 14-16 year olds, meets the needs of employers through a range of open and customised courses and provides a range of both academic and vocational training courses which enable young people and adults to acquire trade and professional qualifications. The College also works with a number of agencies to engage workless people, provides a range of Real Work Environments and provides training and education services overall to 5,000 students.

The College is also a major employer, employing 660 staff on site with another 290 staff employed in prisons. As David Wood explains in his proof, the overall impact of the Link Road would have a lasting detrimental impact on the College. The Link Road proposal is therefore in direct conflict with the Council's Vision of a District which provides the best possible quality of life for all its residents and seeks to reduce disadvantage; meets the employment needs and aspirations of its residents.

5.6 The Council's Development Strategy in 1.1.16 sets out as one of its main elements the protection of the North Lancashire Green Belt, ... the District's countryside and its nature conservation sites from development. In 1.1.17 the Council's Environmental Strategy sets out a range of issues that reflect the principles of sustainable development including amongst others the provision of a Framework for the conservation and enhancement of wildlife habitats, landscape features, open spaces, and public access to the countryside, it also talks about minimising the demand for travel and recognising and protecting the importance of green corridors and green spaces for wildlife, people, urban structure and the quality of life.

5.7 In conclusion and taken together, the above elements of the background framework to the Lancaster District Local Plan sets out aims that the current proposal for the Link Road does not comply with.

5.8 In my consideration of the more detailed policies in the Local Plan I intend to refer back to these underlying principles to further demonstrate that the Link Road as currently proposed does not sit comfortably with the development plan framework and will cause cumulatively very significant damage to Lancaster and Morecambe College and the local area.

## **6.0 The Consultation Process**

- 6.1 The consultation process undertaken leading to submission of the planning application is worthy of consideration.
- 6.2 TSLM set out considerable concern in their document ‘Objections to Planning Application’ in relation to Transport Guidance.
- 6.3 Whilst comments relating to consultation processes set out in transport guidance and advice from the Department for Transport are covered by TSLM, similar concerns can be expressed in relation to planning policy guidance as follows. ‘Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development’, published in 2005 by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, sets out the overarching planning policies on the delivery of sustainable development through the planning system.
- 6.4 A number of points made in PPS 1 are relevant. Paragraph 2 of PPS1 states “Good planning is a positive and proactive process, operating in the public interest through a system of plan preparation and control over the development and use of land”. Paragraph 11, “...More effective community involvement is a key element of the Government’s planning reforms. This is best achieved where there is early engagement of all the stakeholders in the process of plan making and bringing forward development proposals. This helps to identify issues and problems at an early stage and allows dialogue and discussion of the options to take place before proposals are too far advanced.” PPS 1 contains a specific section on ‘Community Involvement’ demonstrating the importance of effective consultation to the Government. Paragraphs 40 to 44 include the following principles: -
- “The planning system operates in the public interest...
  - The outcomes from planning affect everyone, and everyone must therefore have the opportunity to play a role in delivering effective and inclusive planning...

- Community involvement is vitally important to planning and the achievement of sustainable development...
- One of the principles of sustainable development is to involve the community in developing the vision for its area. Communities should be asked to offer ideas about what that vision should be, and how it can be achieved. Where there are external constraints that may impact on the vision and future development of the area (for example, those that may arise from planning policies set at the regional or national level) these should be made clear from the outset. Local communities should be given the opportunity to participate fully in the process for drawing up specific plans or policies and to be consulted on proposals for development. Local authorities, through their community strategies and local development documents, and town and parish councils, through parish plans, should play a key role in developing full and active community involvement in their areas...
- Community involvement in planning should not be a reactive, tick-box, process. It should enable the local community to say what sort of place they want to live in at a stage when this can make a difference. Effective community involvement requires an approach which:
  - tells communities about emerging policies and proposals in good time;
  - enables communities to put forward ideas and suggestions and participate in developing proposals and options. It is not sufficient to invite them to simply comment once these have been worked-up;
  - consults on formal proposals;
  - ensures that consultation takes place in locations that are widely accessible;
  - provides and seeks feedback.

6.5 In the Lancaster District Community Strategy, launched in March 2004, it states that the council will achieve its vision in paragraph 2a) as follows, “Build trust in local democracy and ensure that all people can play a part in decision making by: engaging in early public consultation, debate and decision making in all areas ...”. In 5a)

“Improve the provision, integration and use of road, rail, cycling and walking networks by: implementing M6 link road and river crossing...”. In 10b) “work with the community to promote regeneration and improve the planning process by: ...Making the entire planning process accessible, effective and efficient and remove the barriers that prevent people taking part.”

- 6.6 In the context of these policy documents it is important to consider the gestation of this proposal.
- 6.7 Full and effective community involvement should start at an early stage in the planning process. What has happened in this case has not been conducive to a proper debate involving people effectively in the consideration of any possible alternative solutions to the problem.
- 6.8 Whilst the City Council makes clear its intention to ensure that the proposed Heysham M6 Link Road is not prejudiced by development, The Lancaster District Local Plan does not set out a clear identification of the proposed line of the Link Road. The Indicative Plan provided even comes with a warning, pointing out that it is only an illustration of the general location of two options. This would have made it difficult during the development plan process for anyone affected by the current proposed route to have a clear understanding of the potential impact, and thus will have removed an effective forum for debate, and halted any objections at that stage.
- 6.9 Although some consultation has since taken place in connection with the planning application, the process by which this proposal has been worked up and brought to its present stage does not measure up to the requirements of PPS1. The community have not been told about the emerging policies in good time, have not been invited to put forward ideas and suggestions and have not been able to participate effectively in developing proposals and options. The community consultation exercises, including exhibitions, have presented the community with one proposal, a lack of alternatives on which to present their views, and a scenario in which the only alternative that could have been considered has been declared unbuildable in the Major Scheme Business Case (Annex A). In all these matters the principles of effective planning consultation as set out in PPS1 have not been fulfilled.

6.10 So I consider that the consultation process in relation to the Link Road is seriously flawed with respect to meeting the principles of sustainable development set out by the Government in PPS1.

## **7.0 The Impact of the Proposal on College Car Parking Facilities**

7.1 The college currently has 448 car parking spaces, plus 26 spaces for disabled motorists. If the proposed Link Road were to be approved it would result in a loss of approximately 180 car parking spaces to the College. This would leave the College with only 294 spaces, a decrease in provision of 38%.

7.2 It is not straightforward to assess parking standards on existing developments such as Lancaster and Morecambe College, as the planning policies on parking standards refer to standards for new developments or change of use. However, given that the College is facing a significant reduction in the number of car parking spaces available to it if the Link Road is approved, and despite compensatory provision suggested by the applicant of an extra 34 spaces, though this does little to allay the problem and would use other open space that is valuable to the College, I propose to use these standards to calculate what the maximum provision might be for this type of facility.

7.3 Lancashire County Council Car Parking Standards are set out in Appendix 6 of the LDLP.

7.4 The maximum number of car parking spaces that would be considered appropriate under these standards would be 580. The calculations are set out in Table 1 below. Other standards can also be considered.

7.5 **Planning Policy Guidance 13: Transport** - Guidance in relation to car parking standards in Planning Policy Guidance 13: Transport, (published in March 2001 by the ODPM) sets the standard for Sixth Form and Further Education colleges at 1 parking space per 2 members of staff plus 1 space per 15 students. The following is an extract from Annex D of PPG 13.

## 7.6 Annex D: Maximum Parking Standards

Use	National Maximum Parking Standard	Threshold from and Above Which Standard Applies (gross floorspace)
Higher and further education	1 space per 2 staff + 1 space per 15 students (see note 1)	2500m <sup>2</sup>

Several footnotes accompany Annex D and two are of particular relevance here. Footnote 1 points out that the standard for students relates to the total number of students attending an educational establishment, rather than full-time equivalent figures, and footnote 3, that parking for disabled people should be additional to the maximum parking standards.

7.7 The maximum number of car parking spaces that would be considered appropriate under PPG 13 is 694.

7.8 **Submitted Draft RSS Standards** – Guidance in the Submitted Draft Regional Spatial Strategy is set out in Table 10.1 on page 43. Lancaster is identified in this Table under the heading of ‘Regional Towns and Cities’. Applying the parking standard according to this definition for Higher and Further Education Institutions, sets a standard according to RSS of 1 space per 2 staff.

7.9 The maximum number of car parking spaces that would be considered appropriate under this standard would be 347. This policy pays no regard to car parking for students.

7.10 The College employs 950 staff but 290 are predominantly working in Lancashire prisons. The staff working in Lancashire prisons have not been included in the calculations below, leaving 660 on site staff. Parking for people with disabilities has been included in the Table in line with PPG 13, as discussed above under the extract from Annex D and footnote 3 which states that parking for disabled people should be additional to the maximum parking standards. Furthermore, RSS in Appendix RT6.1 in paragraph 5 and Table 6 sets out standards for ‘Parking for people with disabilities’ as follows. The supporting text states that parking for people with disabilities is the only situation where minimum standards are applicable. Table 6 sets a standard in

relation to these additional spaces according to the number of parking spaces already supplied - in all scenarios presented in Table 1 below the car parking available for the College exceeds 200 spaces, thus the standard that can be applied is a minimum of 4% of capacity plus 4 reserved spaces.

7.11 Table 1 below demonstrates the maximum number of car parking spaces that could be expected to allow the college to function effectively, according to the above standards, and is included for ease of reference and to facilitate discussion regarding the potential damage the Link Road could do to parking availability at the College.

7.12 **Table 1**

<b>Standard</b>	<b>College position in relation to this standard</b>	<b>Calculation</b>	<b>No of spaces under this standard</b>	<b>Plus 4% + 4 parking spaces for disabled people</b>	<b>Total spaces</b>
LDLP Standard set at 1 space per 35 sq.m. gross floorspace	Current gross floorspace at the college is 19,400 sq.m.	$19,400 / 35$	<b>554</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>580</b>
PPG 13 standard set at 1 space per 2 staff, plus 1 space per 15 students	Total Staff 630 <sup>1</sup> on site, plus 5,000 students.	$660 / 2 = 330$ , plus $5,000 / 15 = 333$	<b>663</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>694</b>
RSS is set at 1 space per 2 staff.	Total Staff of 630	$660 / 2 = 330$	<b>330</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>347</b>

7.13 **Conclusion on Parking Standards**

7.14 Using the lowest standard set out above, that in RSS, the College would still be facing a shortage of car parking spaces for both staff and students, of 53 spaces or 84% of the spaces that could be expected under this standard. It is also worth noting that paragraph 10.24 in RSS states that the parking standards set out (in Table 10.1 of RSS) are intended to be equally restrictive as those in PPG13. However, as Table 1

above demonstrates, they are considerably more restrictive than the standards set out in PPG 13. The Table demonstrates that RSS would restrict a development similar to this College to a maximum of 347 car parking spaces, compared with a maximum of 694 under the Guidance in PPG 13. Far from being equally restrictive, RSS would allow only 50% of the car parking that may be permitted in line with PPG 13. Using the Lancashire County Council standard, as set out in the LDLP, the College would only be left with approximately half of the spaces likely to be considered acceptable (50.7%) if the Link Road were to be approved. If the standards set out in national guidance under PPG13 are utilised, the College would be left with only 42.4% of the spaces that could be expected, if the Link Road were to be approved.

7.15 There are a number of potentially adverse consequences of this reduction in car parking spaces including the following: -

- It may lead to additional local on street parking causing problems for nearby residents. The College car parks are operating at full capacity and the College already receives complaints from nearby residents about the problem – which is certain to be exacerbated by the proposed Link Road;
- If the ability of the College to provide car parking facilities for staff and students, some of whom travel from Cumbria, North Yorkshire and beyond is compromised it could result in loss of students, possibly even being a deterrent factor in attracting staff. The College serves a regional catchment area and adequate provision of car parking is a significant factor in meeting these needs. It should also be noted here that the College recognises its responsibilities in relation to the provision of sustainable solutions and provides a free bus service for students from North Lancashire, Cumbria and North Yorkshire. It is also seeking to address the issue of green travel plans for staff through investigating alternative methods of transport. Nonetheless, the College car Park is still often full, resulting in overflow to nearby residential areas and complaints to the college.

7.16 The loss of parking space that would be caused by the Link Road could cause such irreparable damage to the College as to warrant contributing to a refusal, potentially affecting the future financial viability of the College by reducing its ability to attract

new students and removing its ability to grow on site to meet the demands of the competitive market in which it survives (as outlined by David Wood).

## 8.0 **Environmental Protection and Enhancement Policies**

8.1 Section 5.6 of the LDLP on Protecting Green Spaces sets out the importance of open areas and green spaces within towns, recognising that they play an important role in providing relief from otherwise developed areas, recreational opportunities and the setting for many important groups of buildings. Paragraph 5.6.1 points out that development pressures have led to concern, particularly in Morecambe, that there is now insufficient amenity space within the main urban areas. 5.6.3 sets out that Lancashire County Council have identified through a Green Audit that Lancaster District has the lowest provision of urban open space per 1000 population in the County. Lancaster has in fact only 1.4 ha of urban open space per 1000 population, around half of the average for the County. Given this overall lack of urban open space the City Council pledges in 5.6.4 to resist any reduction in the number or size of the green spaces identified on the Local Plan Proposals Map. Most of the open space around the College buildings is identified as urban green space on the Proposals Map and therefore subject to Policy E29, as follows.

8.2 **Policy E29** states that “the areas identified on the Local Plan Proposals Map as Urban Green Spaces will be protected from development and where appropriate enhanced. Exceptionally, essential education or community related development or the limited expansion of existing uses will be permitted.”

8.3 The role of this urban green space fulfils many functions for the College and has wider community benefits. It: -

- Provides relief in an otherwise densely developed area;
- Provides valuable recreational space for staff, students and nearby residents;
- Provides a valued visual amenity setting for the College;

- Provides a relaxing area for staff and students, enhancing the learning environment;
- Provides a valuable function for students in relation to general health and well being;
- Provides a valued amenity ‘public face’ to neighbours on the north east, north west, south west and south east boundaries;
- Provides a valuable open air learning environment for students on a number of courses, not least in relation to biology lessons and sports courses;
- Enhances the appearance of the College on approach from either Lancaster or Morecambe;
- Provides a good and lasting first impression for prospective students, often accompanied by parents on their first visit;

8.4 The College has been on this site since 1953 and development at the campus over the last 10 years has acknowledged the original planning intention and preserved a significant landscaped margin to most boundaries (see Wood). The College has also been actively investing in new buildings, minor works and maintenance programmes to the value of over £5m in recent years (see Wood).

8.5 The Link Road will cause serious damage to the urban green spaces protected by this policy, not only in terms of the physical land take but also in terms of the amenity value of the remaining open spaces that would have a major road running adjacent to them with associated noise pollution and significant visual intrusion.

8.6 The buildings which run along the line of the proposed Link Road were not designed to be seen from the main public approaches to the College and are therefore not of an appropriate quality or appearance to present a dynamic public image of the College. This could have a significant negative impact on the College at a time when it has invested and continues to invest considerable capital resources on new buildings and fabric upgrades to make the campus more attractive to its users and potential clients.

- 8.7 From within the College campus the proposed Link Road will also cause serious detriment to views out of the site for both existing and prospective students. Once on the site, and looking around they will be faced with the significant impact of a dual carriageway Link Road. At the moment the college grounds and playing fields act as a relatively quiet retreat, views from the buildings are dominated by the open spaces in the short distance, contributing to an enhanced learning environment.
- 8.8 The Link Road is in direct conflict with Policy E29, and the Urban Green Spaces identified within the College grounds should be protected from development under this Policy. This matter has enough significance to warrant contributing to a refusal.
- 8.9 There is also a wildlife area on the College grounds which will be completely destroyed if the Link Road is permitted. This piece of land is another valuable green space for the College, as the area is used as a teaching resource for biology lessons. There will be limited space within the College grounds to create an alternative wildlife area suitable for teaching purposes. No alternative site offered could meet the needs of the College in this way, and a remote site away from the College would lead to unacceptable disruption and potentially increased health and safety risks to staff and students when compared to the secure on site resource currently available.
- 8.10 In addition to these LDLP policies that relate to the loss of the open spaces on the college site there is also the not insignificant matter of the fact that the Link Road, prior to actually reaching the College site from Junction 34 of the M6, runs through the North Lancashire Green Belt.
- 8.11 PPG2 sets out a general 'Presumption against inappropriate development' within the Green Belt. To this end, the Link Road constitutes inappropriate development.
- 8.12 Inappropriate development, which is by definition harmful, should not be granted planning permission, except in very special circumstances, which the applicant is required to establish. Very special circumstances to justify inappropriate development will not exist unless the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

8.12 The harms to the College posed by the Link Road are one of the “any other harms” which must be weighed in the balance when assessing whether there very special circumstances to justify inappropriate development in the Green Belt. When the proposals for the Link Road were considered, Lancashire County Council clearly underestimated the harms that would be caused to the College and, therefore, the requisite balance cannot have been struck.

## 9.0 **Chapter 6 of the LDLP - Recreation and Community Services**

9.1 This Chapter of the LDLP sets out clearly in the opening paragraph that “The City Council is committed to protecting outdoor playing space and areas used for informal recreation. It will also seek to improve provision wherever possible. In particular, in the main urban area of Lancaster, Morecambe and Heysham, it will work towards the provision of 2.43ha (6 acres) of useable outdoor playing space per 1000 people and to improve the supply of public informal recreation areas.”

9.2 Section 6.2 looks at the supply of outdoor playing space and compares it with the standards set by the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA). In Lancaster, Morecambe and Heysham there is a long standing shortage of recreational provision. The NPFA has set a recommended minimum standard for outdoor playing space of 2.43 ha per 1000 population. Paragraph 6.2.3 sets out that there should therefore be around 240 ha of outdoor playing space in Lancaster, Morecambe and Heysham, but there are currently only around 150 ha of sports pitches and other play areas located within this area.

9.3 The NPFA standard sets out typologies of outdoor playing space with a distinction between, in basic terms, sports facilities and playgrounds/informal areas. It can also be seen in Paragraph 6.2.3 that in relation to sports facilities which should make up between 1.6 and 1,8 of the 2.4 ha under the standard, Lancaster, Morecambe and Heysham are even more deficient in sports facilities, than they are in playgrounds/informal areas, with supply of around 112 ha against a standard of 160 to 180 ha.

- 9.4 The College playing fields are identified on the proposals map in the LDLP as 'Outdoor playing space' bringing them within the remit of Policy R1. Policy R1 states "The areas identified on the Local Plan Proposals Map as outdoor playing space will be protected from development. Exceptionally where there is clear justification for development which would result in the loss of such space, this will be permitted only where sport and recreation facilities can best be retained and enhanced through the redevelopment of a small part of the site or alternative provision of equivalent benefit is made available." No alternative provision of equivalent benefit has been made available.
- 9.5 The College currently has three pitches on the area to the west of the proposed road - one senior sized pitch, one suitable for 13-15 year old play and a small training pitch.
- 9.6 The playing fields will not only be physically separated from the rest of the campus by the Link Road proposal, but will also be severely reduced in size. This will result in the loss of the training pitch, extended travel distance which will disrupt class times and training periods resulting from the proposed underpass being located at the northern extreme of the site, loss of visual link between the pitches and the campus which will result in loss of amenity and loss of informal surveillance increasing the risk to the security and safety of the users. The buffer planting proposed on the western boundary of the site, designed to assist in screening noise from residential properties behind the playing fields will also result in isolation of the playing pitches and loss of natural surveillance, important in safety and security terms for staff and students. These factors may play a part in reducing take up of sports studies courses in the future.
- 9.7 The College currently has a thriving sports academy which is the largest growth area for the College, and is striving to achieve Centre for Sports Excellence status.
- 9.8 As Mr Wood points out in his proof (*see Wood 5.1 and 10.10*), with the impending build up to the 2012 Olympic Games, the College's excellent sports provision will be in even greater demand and is already growing year on year. Any impact e.g., the loss

of pitches, would severely undermine the College's ability to respond to local demand, and students would go elsewhere.

- 9.9 The existing pitches are an extremely valuable resource to the College and are in constant use. The demand for pitch usage is already so great that the College hires an additional pitch at Salt Ayre Leisure Centre for Wednesday afternoon fixtures. The playing pitches are available for clubs outside the College and in total, all the football and rugby pitches, together with the indoor facilities at the College are used by approximately 900 users per week.
- 9.10 Any reduction on the number or size of pitches within the campus is completely unacceptable to the College as it would seriously jeopardise the sports academies. The sports academies enjoy a high profile position in the College and contribute enormously to the College's local and regional reputation. The College First XI Academy Soccer Team is of an excellent standard, and has reached the final of the English Schools' Football Association under 18 national knock-out competition this year, which they also did in 2001. The negative impact of the road on this facility would lead to a significant reduction in student enrolments on sports studies courses, resulting in loss of status as a Sports Academy, but more importantly the income generated for the College from these courses.
- 9.11 The applicant has proposed a range of mitigation measures, stating that the proposed development includes proposals for reorientation and improvement of the soccer pitches belonging to the College and an indication that they would provide an additional junior sized pitch. As a result, they say, there will be sufficient compensatory works to ensure that there is no loss of formal playing pitches. However the proposal utilises College land currently used as a playing pitch which is essential for existing Sports Courses.
- 9.12 However Sport England in their letter of 23 May 2007 to Julie Wilkinson, the Director of Corporate Services at the College, make it clear that they believe that the mitigation proposals put forward by the applicant fail to meet the criteria for compensatory provision, and confirm their objection to the proposal on these grounds.

- 9.13 The issue of planning for open space, sport and recreation is also covered by Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG17).
- 9.14 **Planning Policy Guidance 17: Planning for open space, sport and recreation**
- 9.15 PPG 17 sets out policies needed to be taken into account by regional planning bodies in preparation of Regional Planning Guidance and by local authorities in the preparation of development plans. It may also be a material consideration in relation to decisions on individual planning applications.
- 9.16 The LDLP appears to address the main implications of PPG 17, as set out above, in that an assessment of needs and opportunities has been carried out and it identifies a deficiency in relation to the standards. PPG 17 suggests that national standards cannot cater for local circumstances and local authorities should use information gained from their assessments to set locally derived standards. The City Council has done this and Policy R1 as set out above, outlines clearly that areas identified as outdoor playing space will be protected from development, presumably in connection with the identified lack of supply.
- 9.17 PPG17 goes on to suggest that local standards should include quantitative elements, a qualitative component and accessibility. In relation to these the City Council has identified a lack of quantity as set out above. The qualitative component of the College playing fields has been identified above and by Mr Wood, the College Principal, in that the College has excellent sports facilities. In relation to accessibility, the playing pitches currently have excellent accessibility, being within the College grounds the pitches are also safe and secure, all aspects that will be severely disrupted if the Link Road were to be approved. In terms of assessing needs and opportunities it is clear that the pitches at the college should be protected.
- 9.18 PPG 17 also sets out how planning policies should maintain an adequate supply of open space and sports and recreation facilities. Paragraph 10 opens with the following statement 'Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land should not be built on unless an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space or the buildings and land to be surplus to requirements. For

open space, 'surplus to requirements' should include consideration of all the functions that open space can perform. Not all open space, sport and recreational land and buildings are of equal merit and some may be available for alternative uses.'

- 9.19 The College sports pitches and open spaces are clearly not surplus to requirements and should therefore not be built on. Furthermore, the statement that not all open space, sport and recreational land is of equal merit is relevant here as it has been demonstrated that the College pitches serve a much more important function than say an equivalent park pitch. They are highly utilised, provide training and educational facilities, have time allocated for use by local primary schools and are available to the public, providing a valued resource for the whole community.
- 9.20 Paragraph 11 provides additional protection for such facilities as follows: - "Open space and sports and recreational facilities that are of high quality, or of particular value to a local community, should be recognised and given protection by local authorities through appropriate policies in plans ...". Policy R1 in the LDLP provides this protection.
- 9.21 Paragraph 13 sets out a range of conditions that can be expected to apply (if an argument can be justified for substitution of loss of open space, sports or recreational facilities), and, even though that argument does not exist in this case as relevant substitution has not been offered by the applicant, it is worth considering the expected mitigation that could be required. Paragraph 13 states that "...The new land and facility should be at least as accessible to current and potential new users, and at least equivalent in terms of size, usefulness, attractiveness and quality. Wherever possible, the aim should be to achieve qualitative improvements to open spaces, sports and recreational facilities. Local authorities should use planning obligations or conditions to secure the exchange land, ensure any necessary works are undertaken and that the new facilities are capable of being maintained adequately through management and maintenance agreements." The alternatives proposed by the applicant do not fulfill any of these criteria.
- 9.22 PPG 17 clearly sets out the principles to be followed by local planning authorities in relation to developments within open spaces. Local authorities should avoid any

erosion of recreational function, and maintain and enhance the character of open spaces. They should ensure that open spaces do not suffer from increased overlooking, traffic flows or other encroachment and amongst other things consider the impact on biodiversity and nature conservation. Again the proposed Link Road would be contrary to all of these issues.

9.23 To meet the terms of PPG 17, the local planning authority should be doing everything it can to prevent this development, and should be looking to improve existing open space and facilities, promoting compatibility with adjoining land uses, encouraging better access, and promoting better use of the limited open spaces, sports and recreation provision at the College and elsewhere, rather than proposing a Link Road in this location that will undermine the very essence of National Planning Guidance as set out in PPG 17.

9.24 In conclusion, the Link Road as proposed will result in the loss of playing pitches at the College. Though alternative layouts and mitigation proposals are being suggested by the applicant, there is still a net loss in playing pitches, directly contravening Policy R1 of the LDLP and the principles of PPG 17. In addition to this net loss the Link Road, if permitted, would sever the remaining main area of playing pitches from the College, causing damage to the College facilities, will increase health and safety risks for staff and students using the facilities due to it creating a remote site with no direct surveillance from the College campus. The damage to the College in the future is difficult to quantify but it has been demonstrated above that the negative impact would lead to a significant reduction in student enrolments on sports studies courses, resulting in significant damage to the financial foundations of the College.

9.25 The Link Road is therefore in direct contravention of Policy R1 and PPG 17, and as such the application should be refused.

## 10.0 Conclusions

- 10.1 The development of the Link Road as proposed would have the following adverse effects in planning policy terms: -
- 10.2 I conclude that the way in which the proposal has been brought forward is in direct contravention of the principles set out in paragraph 11 of PPS1 in relation to early engagement in the process of plan making.
- 10.3 The Link Road conflicts with the Council's Vision of a District which provides the best possible quality of life for all its residents and seeks to reduce disadvantage; meets the employment needs and aspirations of its residents.
- 10.4 The Link Road if approved will seriously affect the amenities of the College including the loss of the local wildlife area, important as a teaching resource to the College, and of other open spaces within the College grounds. These areas are protected by LDLP policies on Urban Green Space under Policy E29 and Outdoor Playing Space under Policy R1 respectively (both dealt with separately below).
- 10.5 I conclude that the loss of parking space that would be caused by the Link Road could cause irreparable damage to the College, potentially affecting the future financial viability of the College by reducing its ability to attract new students and removing its ability to grow on site to meet the demands of the competitive market in which it survives (*as outlined by David Wood in 9.4.4*).
- 10.6 I consider issues in relation to the loss of and damage to the playing pitches at the College, concluding that the Link Road proposal is in direct contravention of LDLP Policy R1 and PPG 17.
- 10.7 The Link Road proposal if approved would therefore be in conflict with or would contravene the following policies: -

- E29 of the LDLP
- R1 of the LDLP
- PPG 17
- Parking standards

10.8 The cumulative effect of the Link Road would be to cause serious damage to the College. In particular, I conclude that the cumulative impact of the following matters will cause such harm to the College as to threaten its future viability: -

- The loss of playing pitches, which would undermine the sports academy status of the College;
- The loss of open spaces and a wildlife area used for teaching purposes. These areas provide a valuable amenity benefit and help to maintain the status and image of the College as a pleasant place to learn;
- The impact of noise, both during construction and in the long term would cause serious harm to teaching and learning at the College;
- The loss of car parking, which would be unsustainable for the College and would cause serious problems in relation to attracting new students and staff.
- In accordance with PPG2, the harms to the College posed by the Link Road are one of the “other harms” which must be weighed in the balance when assessing whether there are very special circumstances to justify inappropriate development within the Green Belt. When the Link Road proposals were considered, Lancashire County Council had an insufficient grasp of the nature and extent of the harms posed to the College. Therefore, the requisite balance cannot have been struck.
- Furthermore, the harms that will be caused to the College by the Link Road are not outweighed by other considerations in such a manner as to warrant ‘very special circumstances’ that might justify inappropriate development in the Green Belt.