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| Agenda Item A17 | Committee Date 11 May 2009 | Application Number 09/00279/CCC |
| Application Site Various Locations Along The Route Of The Completion Of The Heysham To M6 Link Scheme Lancaster | Proposal Works on additional parcels of land to facilitate the development of the completion of Heysham M6 link scheme approved under planning permissions 01/05/1584 and 01/08/0821 and the development of a new farm access track at Beaumont Gate Farm | |
| Name of Applicant Lancashire County Council | Name of Agent | |
| Decision Target Date | Reason For Delay Committee cycle - the 21 day consultation period expired prior to this Committee meeting. | |
| Case Officer | Andrew Drummond | |
| Departure | None. | |
| Summary of Recommendation | Support for the proposal in principle, subject to the satisfactory resolution of the specific matters. | |

1.0 The Site and its Surroundings

- 1.1 The Heysham M6 link road will run from the roundabout at the junction of the A589 and A683 (by Lancaster and Morecambe College) in the east to a revised M6 junction (No. 34) at Caton Road to the east (west of the village of Halton). The road will pass through mainly agricultural land to the north of Scale Hall, Skerton and Beaumont.
- 1.2 The topography of the land along this stretch changes. Furthermore, the link road needs to cross the West Coast mainline railway, the Lancaster Canal and a number of local roads, whilst providing an adequate connection into the A6 (Lancaster Road) between Skerton and Slyne.
- 1.3 The route of the Heysham M6 link road is predominantly located within the North Lancashire Green Belt. It will also affect four County Biological Heritage Sites (BHSs), two of which are the River Lune and the Lancaster Canal, where the towpaths comprise designated Informal Recreation Areas. Long Bank Wood and Dale Wood are the other BHSs. Tree Preservation Order 44 at Cross Hill Field is located close to the proposed route.

Land to the east of Junction 34 is designated as a Countryside Area, whilst land on the western fringes of Torrisholme and Scale Hall are allocated as Urban Greenspaces and Areas of Outdoor Playing Space.

The A6 (Lancaster Road), the A683 (Caton Road) and the A589 (Morecambe Road) are Access Corridors, as is the West Coast Mainline. Primary Bus Corridors affected are identified as the B5321 (Lancaster Road/Torrisholme Road) and the A589 at Morecambe Road.

2.0 The Proposal

2.1 A previous application (see 3.1 below) was approved for the construction of a new vehicular highway comprising of a dual carriageway linking Junction 34 of the M6 Motorway with Phase I of the Heysham Link Road. The road will measure 4.8km in length and will incorporate a combined footway/cycleway on the western carriageway. Subsequent to the granting of that application, a number of additional measures have been identified that will need to be incorporated into the road scheme. This application seeks permission for these measures which would be located on various small parcels of land along the length of the M6 link road and adjacent to existing highway network where altered by the new road scheme.

2.2 The measures include:

1. Creation of a cyclepath link near junction of Northgate and A683 beyond planning boundary
2. Relocation of culvert headwall at Hadrian Road
3. Provision of ball-stop fencing to the Morecambe Road frontage of Lancaster & Morecambe College
4. Demolition of outbuildings at 179 Torrisholme Road
5. Provision of boundary hedge beyond planning boundary (adjacent to Beaumont Gate Junction, and on the north and south sides of the link road between Kellet Lane and Halton Road)
6. Provision of additional working space required beyond planning boundary (on Lancaster Road, on the south side of the River Lune by the new river crossing, and on the north side of Caton Road adjacent to the Holiday Inn)
7. Provision of farm tracks at Beaumont Gate Farm
8. Diversion of Howgill Brook (at landowner's request)
9. Reduction to the height of the retaining wall by including a wider cutting slope on the west side of Halton Road north of the new river crossing)
10. Removal of the retaining wall by including a wider cutting slope on the east side of Halton Road north of the new river crossing)
11. Removal of the retaining wall by introducing an embankment by the M6 southbound exit slip road adjacent to Hudson's Farm
12. Diversion to the Grimeshaw Lane access track on the west and east sides of the M6
13. Provision of a hard shoulder at Grimeshaw Lane New Bridge on M6 northbound carriageway

3.0 Site History

3.1 A number of relevant applications relating to the Heysham M6 link scheme have previously been received by the Local Planning Authority for comment. These include:

| Application Number | Proposal | Decision |
|---------------------------|---|-----------------|
| 05/01584/CPA | Construction of the Heysham M6 Link and improvements to existing highways | Approved |
| 08/00821/CPA | Creation of a Park & Ride with 519 spaces at Junction 34 of the M6 | Approved |

4.0 Consultation Responses

4.1 The following responses have been received from internal consultees:

| Consultee | Response |
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| Environmental Health | No comments received to date – any comments will be verbally reported. |
| Engineers | No comments received to date – any comments will be verbally reported. |
| Economic Development | No comments received to date – any comments will be verbally reported. |
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| Tree Protection Officer | The proposed works have implications for existing 'on' and 'off' site trees in close proximity to the development, requiring the removal and replacement of trees and hedges in certain areas. However, the applicant has not included detailed arboriculture proposals within the applications. It is therefore recommended that additional information is required before a full assessment can be made. This should include an Arboriculture Implications Assessment detailing existing trees within a detailed Tree Survey (TS), Tree Constraints Plan (TCP), Tree Protection Plan (TPP) and detailed Arboriculture Method Statement (AMS) in compliance with the recommendations set out in <i>BS 5837 (2005) Trees in relation to construction</i> , and secondly the proposals to mitigate the loss of any trees should be made within a detailed Landscape Scheme, including species, quantity, location, size at planting, protection, and maintenance regime for the initial 10-year period post planting. |
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5.0 Neighbour Representations

5.1 No correspondence has been received at the time of compiling this report. Formal Neighbour Consultation is undertaken by the County Council in respect of this application. Any comments subsequently received by the City Council will be reported verbally.

6.0 Principal Development Plan Policies

6.1 **It must be made clear that this report does not consider the need for the road.** This has already been considered during the Development Plan process, and the Lancaster District Local Plan (LDLP) states that the City Council "supports the completion of the Heysham-M6 link road as a matter of priority". The LDLP was adopted in April 2004 without identifying a specific route for the M6 link, although both potential routes were protected pending a final decision by the County Council. In September 2004, following environmental assessment of both options and having taken Counsel's opinion, the Northern Route was selected as the preferred option and also received the support of the City Council. The County Council subsequently approved an application for the Northern Route and this was supported by the Secretary of State.

6.2 National Planning Policy Statements (PPS) and Guidance notes (PPG)

PPG2 (Green Belts) - Development within the Green Belt is generally inappropriate and with the exception of a number of listed use should only be permitted if very special circumstances exist. Where development is appropriate, it should seek to protect and maintain the openness of the Green Belt area.

PPS7 (Sustainable Development in Rural Areas) - Development must raise the quality of life and the environment in rural areas by a number of measures including the protection of the open countryside (especially valued landscapes) and the promotion of sustainable, diverse and adaptable agriculture sectors where farming manages valued landscapes and biodiversity and contributes both directly and indirectly to rural economic diversity.

PPS9 (Biodiversity and Geological Conservation) - This statement aims to ensure that planning decisions maintain, and enhance, restore or add to biodiversity and geological conservation interests. Prevention of harm to biodiversity and geological conservation interests is paramount. Where development would result in significant harm to biodiversity and geological interests which cannot be prevented or adequately mitigated against, appropriate compensation measures should be sought.

PPG13 (Transport) - When considering planning applications, Local Planning Authorities should (amongst other transport related matters) seek to secure community and road safety, protect sites and routes which could be critical in developing infrastructure to widen transport choices for both passenger and freight movements and make facilities accessible to pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users.

6.3 Regional Spatial Strategy (adopted September 2008)

RT4 (Management of the Highway Network) - Traffic management should focus on improving road safety, reducing traffic growth and maintaining a high quality environment through mitigating the impacts of road traffic on air quality, noise and health, with traffic encouraged to use the most appropriate routes wherever possible. In rural areas, particular emphasis should be given to maintaining the tranquility of the countryside. Where safety is not compromised, highway engineering measures should reflect local character, including landscape and conservation.

RT7 (Freight Transport) - The Heysham M6 link road is identified as a route of regional importance. It forms part of the North West's strategic network for the movement of freight by road.

RT9 (Walking and Cycling) - Integrated networks of continuous, attractive and safe routes for walking and cycling should be developed to widen accessibility and capitalize on their potential environmental, social and health benefits.

6.4 Lancaster District Local Plan (adopted April 2004)

E4 (Countryside Area) - Development within the Countryside Area will only be permitted where it is in scale and keeping with the character and natural beauty of the landscape, is appropriate to its surroundings in terms of siting, scale, design materials, external appearance and landscaping, would not result in a significant adverse effect on nature conservation or geological interests and makes satisfactory arrangements for access, servicing, cycle and car parking.

E12 (Nature Conservation) - Development should seek to protect and enhance wildlife habitats.

T24 and T26 (Cycle Strategy) - Development and protection of the strategic cycle network is a matter of priority for the City Council. Where development proposals include or lie close to the network, links and improvements to the network should be provided.

6.5 Lancaster District Core Strategy (adopted July 2008)

E1 (Environmental Capital) - The District's environmental capital will be safeguarded and enhanced by various measures including protecting of the Green Belt, making roads safer, enhancing wildlife habitats and protecting valued landscapes from inappropriate development.

CE1 (Transportation Measures) - Land should be protected for strategic transport improvements, such as the Heysham M6 link.

7.0 Comment and Analysis

7.1 Though there are a number of measures proposed via this application, their impacts are minimal. For example, the relocation of the culvert headwall, diversion of the Howgill Brook and the diversion of the Grimeshaw Lane access track will have little, if any impact, visual or otherwise. The changes to the planning boundary to allow additional working space do not alter the permitted scheme, but merely provide greater access to construct the approved infrastructure.

7.2 However, in some cases the impact is a positive one. The planting of hedgerows provides a small biodiversity benefit that previously did not exist, whilst also providing additional landscaping and natural screening. However, it is important that the hedgerows comprise native species, and their planting and maintenance regime is agreed in advance of works commencing so their delivery and ongoing health is assured.

7.3 The visual impact of the road scheme on the landscape is reduced further by the lowering of some of the retaining walls, or in some cases the complete removal of these structures.

7.4 The creation of a cycle link will benefit the District by improving connectivity across the cycleway network, promoting a sustainable form of transport.

- 7.5 The provision of farm tracks to Beaumont Gate Farm will benefit this rural business in line with national and local planning policy without adversely affecting the countryside landscape.
- 7.6 The provision of a hard shoulder at Grimeshaw Lane New Bridge will improve highway safety, so again this is supported by planning policy.
- 7.7 The demolition of outbuildings at 179 Torrisholme Road will improve the outlook of neighbouring residential buildings subject to the land being restored appropriately after the buildings have been removed.
- 7.8 The only measure that would have a negative impact in the view of the Planning Service is the 4-metre high ball-stop fencing, which is proposed along the Morecambe Road frontage to Lancaster and Morecambe College. Though the type of fencing proposed would use a mesh material, rather than a solid material that would obscure views into, out of and across the college campus, it would still enclose an area of land that is currently quite open in nature. It is recognised that the area of adjacent green space may be used informally, but it is not marked up as a sports pitch, so the need for such a fence is questionable. The existing boundary treatment should ideally be retained with no additional means of enclosure added. The fence would have a detrimental visual effect on one of the District's key access corridors.

8.0 Conclusions

- 8.1 The measures proposed support the permitted scheme. Though some measures would have a neutral effect, others would be an improvement on those proposed in the approved scheme. The only exception to this is the proposed erection of the fencing at Lancaster and Morecambe College, and potentially the demolition of outbuildings at 179 Torrisholme Road if the land is not satisfactorily restored after their removal. It is for these reasons that the measures are supported subject to these 2 issues being resolved.

Recommendation

That the **City Council supports the proposal in principle**, subject to the satisfactory resolution of the following matters:

1. The exclusion of the ball-stop fencing to the Morecambe Road frontage of Lancaster and Morecambe College.
2. Details to be agreed of how the land at 179 Torrisholme Road would be restored following the removal of its outbuildings.
3. The use of native species for the new hedgerows, with planting and maintenance programme to be agreed prior to works commencing.
4. The submission of an Arboriculture Implications Assessment shall be submitted in writing detailing existing trees within a detailed Tree Survey (TS), Tree Constraints Plan (TCP), Tree Protection Plan (TPP) and detailed Arboriculture Method Statement (AMS) in compliance with the recommendations set out in *BS 5837 (2005) Trees in relation to construction* and the proposals to mitigate the loss of any trees shall be made within a detailed Landscape Scheme, including species, quantity, location, size at planting, protection, and maintenance regime for the initial 10-year period post planting. These are to allow a full assessment to be made.

Human Rights Act

This recommendation has been reached after consideration of the provisions of The Human Rights Act. Unless otherwise stated in this report, the issues arising do not appear to be of such magnitude to override the responsibility of the City Council to regulate land use for the benefit of the community as a whole, in accordance with national law.

Background Papers

None.