DECISION DATE	APPLICATION NO.	PLANNING COMMITTEE:
23 December 2005	05/01114/OUT **A17**	**19 March 2007**

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED	SITE ADDRESS
OUTLINE APPLICATION FOR ERECTION OF SCIENCE PARK AND RESTAURANT/CAFE WITH CAR PARKING, SERVICING, ROADS, FOOTPATHS AND CYCLEWAYS, PUBLIC TRANSPORT FACILITIES, LANDSCAPING AND PUBLIC OPEN SPACE	**LAND FOR PROPOSED BAILRIGG BUSINESS PARK BAILRIGG LANE LANCASTER LANCASHIRE**
APPLICANT: North West Regional Development Agency Renaissance House PO Box 37 Centre Park Warrington WA1 1XB	**AGENT:** CAPITA Symonds Ltd

REASON FOR DELAY

The application was held in abeyance during late-2005 and virtually all of 2006 at the request of the applicant. The reasons for this were largely unconnected to the planning process. Amended proposals have been submitted.

PARISH NOTIFICATION

Scotforth Parish Council are pleased to note that most of their original, 2005 objections have been addressed. There are a few objections which remain but they believe that these could be "easily resolved". They propose the following:

- Amenity bunding should be constructed between Bailrigg Village and the whole eastern boundary of the Science Park, planted with trees at a 35-degree slope to limit noise and visual impact;
- The lowering of finished ground levels by 300mm (to provide soil for the bund and to limit visual and noise impact);
- The provision of cut-and-fill cross-sections across the site;
- Additional proposed bunding across the northern boundary of the site would be advantageous;
- Tree planting enhancement and bunding along the site frontage to limit the impact of new buildings;
- The provision of an independent hydrological study to consider impacts upon water table and ground conditions.

Ellel Parish Council objected to the original 2005 proposals but have since submitted correspondence which requests that the following issues be taken into account:

- A roundabout would be more effective method of access to the park than traffic lights and would allow for more even traffic flows.

- They are concerned about potential drainage into Ou Beck and would seek assurances that the sustainable urban drainage system has sufficient capacity to cope with heavy rainfalls that have occurred lately. A regular maintenance programme should be implemented to keep Ou Beck clear and flowing freely downstream to alleviate flooding.

LAND USE ALLOCATION/DEPARTURE

The Lancaster District Local Plan identifies this land as one of four greenfield locations for inward investment and high-quality economic development. It was formerly allocated as the 'Bailrigg Business Park', although it has since been acknowledged that this site would be developed as a Science Park. The allocation protects the site for B1 (Business) use only.

The adjacent A6 highway is part of the district's Primary Bus Corridor. The Strategic Cycle Network runs along Bailrigg Lane to the north. The university land immediately to the south is allocated as Key Urban Landscape and Urban Greenspace.

STATUTORY CONSULTATIONS

North West Regional Assembly - No comments submitted.

North West Regional Development Agency (NWDA) - Although the NWDA is the applicant, the application falls within the scope of the Agency's statutory consultation criteria. They are of the view that the development is consistent with the emerging Draft Regional Spatial Strategy, the 2006 Regional Economic Strategy and the Lancaster District Local Plan.

County Planning - The development conforms to Structure Plan policy and is acceptable. Bus linkage will require further exploration, as will measures to actively discourage private transportation.

Highways Agency - Due to the ongoing analysis relating to the impact of the development on the M6 Trunk Road, a Holding Direction has been placed upon the Local Planning Authority. The Holding Direction means that the Local Planning Authority cannot grant permission until the Direction is withdrawn by the Agency. The Direction has been placed due to the ongoing analysis of development flows and its impact on the M6 Trunk Road and at present, it remains valid until 25 March 2007. The applicants advise that negotiations will result in the removal of the Direction before the committee meeting. If the Holding Direction is not removed by the Agency then this application will be withdrawn from the Committee Schedule.

County Highways - Comments regarding the amended plans had not been submitted at the time of compiling this report and will be verbally summarised. In response to the original proposals, the County Highways Department objected to the proposal on highway capacity grounds. Their main concerns were the impact upon the A6/Hala Road junction and the A6/Galgate crossroads. Additional traffic during peak hours would have a significant adverse impact at these junctions. The increase in queues south of Galgate are likely to back up traffic to Junction 33 of the M6 and they advised that the Highways Agency will have concerns regarding this. However they are mindful that this is an allocated site in the Development Plan. Therefore if consent is granted a range of planning conditions are proposed, including:

- Off-site highway improvements;
- Installation of MOVA technology to both the Hala and Galgate junctions;
- Improvements to visibility;
- Provision of Quality Bus stops;
- Provision of cycle routes and associated signage;
- Provision of a car park management strategy;
- Imposition of a Travel Plan condition with penalties for non-conformance under a Section 106 (legal) agreement;
- Provision of appropriate public transport contributions.

County Ecology - The loss of hedgerow and trees would substantially reduce bat habitats. A condition requiring further survey before mature trees are felled should be imposed. Works during bird breeding season should be avoided. Working measures should be imposed (again via a condition) preventing the spread of Japanese Knotweed in accordance with Environment Agency guidelines. Suitable hedgerow compensation measures should be the subject of a planning condition to ensure no net loss of hedgerows. Reedbed filters could be included upstream of the proposed new ponds in accordance with Environment Agency advice. Landscaping proposals should comprise only native plant species - and the retention of some of the trees identified for felling would assist. A Habitat Creation/Management Plan should be required via planning condition.

County Archaeology - The site should have the potential to contain archaeological deposits associated with the Roman period. The applicants should be requested to provide further information as to the likely impacts on surviving archaeological deposits by means of pre-determination archaeological field evaluation. A condition should be imposed requiring a programme of archaeological work.

Environment Agency - In relation to the amended plans the Agency has requested a condition requiring a surface water regulation system to be implemented. Previously the Agency had requested a repeat water vole survey at an appropriate time of year be undertaken (which then occurred in May 2006, thus discharging this request). In order to maintain the character and provide undisturbed refuges for wildlife, an 8m vegetated buffer zone should be provided of locally native plant species along Ou Beck. The zone should be free of structures and boundary treatments. General advice regarded buffer zones is provided.

United Utilities - Comments regarding the amended plans have not yet been received. However they previously commented that they had no objections in principle. The only concern is that United Utilities have an 18" water main in a 10m easement that crosses the site. Dependent on the location of buildings the main would have to be diverted or the detailed site layout is fixed to protect the position of the main. The site would need to be drained on a separate system. General advice notes were provided for the applicant.

Natural England (formerly English Nature) - English Nature commented in March 2006 that further survey work should be undertaken to establish the presence or absence of protected species. This was undertaken by the applicant and a subsequent English Nature response confirmed that no features of significant nature conservation interest would be affected. A formal response to the amended plans has yet to be received but Natural England have verbally confirmed that their views are unchanged.

Sustrans - There is scope to improve the existing city centre-University cycle route especially along the A6, which provides a more direct route and for further linkage to surrounding residential areas. High quality cycle parking should also be provided and a Travel Plan with targets and regular monitoring should be required.

Employment Access & Cycling Co-ordinator - The Science Park concept should encourage pedestrian and cyclist-friendly layouts where they are given priority over motor vehicles at junction crossings. Cycling parking should be provided at each building. The Framework Travel Plan contains little about encouraging staff to walk or cycle and relies on the availability of buses. The new bus service (X1) linking the university to the bus and railway station is part funded by Lancaster University and St Martin's College. Car parking should be minimised to ensure more sustainable modes of transport.

Economic Development & Tourism Service - Supports the application for a number of reasons; it will contribute towards the aim of retaining graduates in the district, it is a Strategic Regional Site in the 2006 Regional Economic Strategy, it is supported through the Lancaster & Morecambe Vision Board, it will complement existing facilities and businesses at the University, and that there is a need for the development as identified by an NWDA Demand Study.

Environmental Health Services - No objections regarding the amended plans, but an hours of construction condition should be imposed. General advice notes relating to noise levels are also provided.

Engineering Manager - No objections.

OTHER OBSERVATIONS RECEIVED

At the time of compiling this report, 22 letters of objection have been received from local residents and residents further afield. Most of these objections were received in relation to the original plans deposited in 2005. However their observations remain valid. The following key issues have been cited as reasons for opposing the development:

- Loss of green space and erosion of open area between the city and the university;
- Substantial additional traffic generation;
- Additional set of traffic lights affecting traffic flows;
- Impact upon drainage, especially flooding of Ou Beck and its impacts further downstream in Galgate and the absence of a hydrological survey;
- Visual impact and scale of the structures;
- Health risks associated with working adjacent to pylons;
- Lack of landscape screening, especially to Bailrigg Village;
- No verification of figures for new jobs created;
- No justification for need;
- Failure to integrate satisfactorily with Lancaster University;
- Lack of Science Park 'synergy';
- Noise and air pollution;
- The need for more support services (schools, surgeries etc).

City Councillor Emily Heath has objected to the proposals for the following reasons:

- No business plan justification for a Science Park;
- No assurances than the site will be affordable;
- Contrary to Regional Planning Guidance because of location;
- The prospect of jobs being taken from outside the district due to its location outside the city boundary; No reference to renewable energy - at least 30% of its own energy use should be from renewable sources;
- Design statement is weak and is undermined by a vague layout drawing;
- The Green Travel Plan is inadequate and all reference to car parking spaces has been removed;
- Traffic impacts will adversely affect air quality.

In addition Lancaster University also recorded an objection to the proposal. They have since verbally confirmed that this has been withdrawn and written confirmation will be submitted in time for the Committee Meeting. They have been involved in discussions with the applicant during the latter part of 2006/early 2007, and this has resolved many areas of concern. The University's Enterprise & Commercialisation Unit sent a separate letter in September 2005 supporting the development, whilst the Estate Management Department also made separate representations during that month regarding transportation matters.

The Lancaster & Cumbria District Association of the National Cyclist's Organisation objected to the 2005 plans on the basis of the A6 junction arrangements, the phasing of the scheme, absence of improvements to cycle routes outside the site, potential for extending a 30mph speed limit.

REPORT

The Site and its Surroundings

The site that is the subject of this application is located between the southern periphery of the city and the northern boundaries of Lancaster University. Bailrigg Lane, a relatively narrow semi-rural road, bounds the site to the north and connects the residential hamlet of Bailrigg to the A6 to the west. The southern boundary of the site consists of a mature landscaping belt which forms an effective visual screen to the University's sporting pitches. Further agricultural land lies to the east of the site.

The land is best described as gently undulating, sloping towards the south-east. There are two low ridges running north-to-south which terminate at the valley of a small stream known locally as Ou Beck. The eastern edge of the site is most visible from Bailrigg Village. The site is not visually prominent from distant views along the A6, because of the orientation of the road and the successful existing planting. However the site is considerably visible at immediate quarters and the rising nature of the landscape emphasises its prominence. The roadside boundaries are hedgerow, stone wall and pockets of woodland.

There is one existing building in the north-west corner of the site, which is a small electricity sub-station which will be retained. Otherwise the land currently has no public access. It continues to be farmed and comprises 9.7 ha of Grade 3a and Grade 3b agricultural land.

The A6 is a recognised bus corridor and has services linking the University with the city's bus and rail stations. Services also operate (albeit less regularly) to the village of Galgate and to Preston and Blackpool. The West Coast Main Line runs adjacent to the A6 but there is no immediate rail access to the site. Bailrigg Lane forms part of the district's cycle network.

The site does not benefit from any statutory nature conservation or heritage status, nor is it crossed by public footpaths. However Tree Preservation Order No. 385 was made in 2005 and protects three trees in the south-eastern corner of the site.

History of the Current Application

This application was submitted by the North West (Regional) Development Agency (NWDA) in September 2005. It was submitted in outline form only with only the means of access into the site applied for. All other matters would be reserved for future consideration, should the application be successful. An illustrative masterplan was provided at the time with suggested site layouts and building plots. Full consultation took place and the Local Planning Authority listed a number of concerns, particularly relating to traffic and the potential siting/uses of buildings. The University also lodged a written objection via their consultants, CB Richard Ellis.

The applicant requested that the application be held in abeyance pending a review of the submission and due to internal problems at the NWDA.

Following closer liaison with the university a series of revised documents were eventually submitted on 2 February 2007 and these superseded all previous plans and statements. A further revision to the supporting planning statement was received on 22 February 2007. The consultation comments received during 2005 and 2006, including neighbour comments, are all still relevant, although for the purposes of clarity all consultees and neighbours have been consulted again on the amended proposals. The University have verbally confirmed that their objection has been withdrawn.

Planning Policy

There are considerable national, regional and local planning policies that are applicable to this development.

At the national level a number of Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPG) and Planning Policy Statements (PPS) are applicable and are listed below.

PPS 1 (Delivering Sustainable Development) underpins the planning system and states that planning should facilitate and promote sustainable and inclusive patterns of urban development by making suitable land available for development in line with economic, social and environmental objectives to improve people's quality of life; to protect the character of the countryside and existing communities; and to ensure that development has good and inclusive design using efficient resources. In terms of economic development, Local Planning Authorities are advised to promote economies by providing a positive planning framework for sustainable economic growth, in support of the Regional Economic Strategy.

PPG 4 (Industrial and Commercial Development and Small Firms) is a more dated document but its guidance is still relevant. It seeks to encourage development in accessible locations where more efficient modes of transport can be used, and states that "this is particularly important in the case of “campus style developments such as science parks". It says that development should be discouraged where it would be likely to add unacceptably to congestion and should avoid trunk roads (such as the M6) where these roads are designed for longer-distance movement.

PPS 9 (Biodiversity and Geological Conservation) encourages development to protect and enhance networks of natural habitats. Developments can offer opportunities for building-in beneficial biodiversity features as part of good design. Some individual species are statutorily protected under a range of legislative provisions.

PPG 13 (Transport) seeks to promote more sustainable modes of transport for people and for freight; to provide accessibility for jobs and services by public transport, walking and cycling; and to generally reduce the need for travel. There is specific guidance relating to offices and ICT (Information and Communication Technology) - Local Planning Authorities are advised to "adopt a positive, plan-led approach to identifying preferred areas and sites for B1 uses which are as far as possible highly accessible by public transport, walking and cycling. Businesses should make every effort by adopting travel plans to encourage car sharing and use of non-car modes of transport". The guidance continues by saying that the effects of ICT uses are difficult to predict, but can create opportunities to reduce the need for travel by flexible working patterns. Conversely it may also increase the distance between homes and places of work resulting in less frequent but longer journeys that may make less use of public transport.

PPS 22 (Renewable Energy) states that increased use of renewable energy resources is vital to facilitating the delivery of the government's commitments on both climate change and renewable energy.

PPS 23 (Planning and Pollution Control) advises that a number of matters should be considered when determining planning applications, including reductions in the need to travel, improvements to transport infrastructure, restoration and enhancement of habitats, the economic and wider social need for development, any impacts upon Air Quality Management Areas, and the need to make suitable provision for the drainage of water.

PPS25 (Development and Flood Risk) advises all regional and local planning bodies to appraise, manage and reduce flooding risks. In reducing flooding risk the use of sustainable urban drainage systems is advocated, as is the production of a surface water management plan for developments potentially affected by flooding. Authorities should work in partnership with the Environment Agency.

At the regional level, Regional Planning Guidance 13 (North West) became the Regional Spatial Strategy when provisions of the 2004 Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act were enacted. Regional guidance seeks to deliver sustainable outcomes for the region by steering development to the most sustainable towns and cities, making the most of existing and planned transport networks. There are a number of policies which are especially relevant to this application.

Policy DP1 states that proposals should make better use of land, buildings and infrastructure by reducing the need to travel and ensuring sites are genuinely accessible by public transport, walking and cycling. The sequential approach adopted should consider the use of existing buildings and infrastructure within settlements first, then the use of previously developed land within settlements, and finally the use of other land where this is well related in relation to houses, jobs and other services.

Policy SD8 stipulates that development should be of appropriate scale and nature in rural locations. Major built development should be discouraged, except where this would fulfil a significant regional or national need which cannot be met elsewhere.

Policy EC1 requires development plans to identify suitable employment sites which have the potential to promote clustering, take account of the sequential approach to site selection, reflect existing commitments, take account of the needs of business and communities, and promote diverse local economies.

Policy EC3 relates to knowledge-based industries and again says that these will be acceptable, in accordance with the sequential approach. Development plans should facilitate the development of sites with direct access to research establishments (e.g. universities) and priority locations will be in the main conurbations, or close to those centres of research, or within science parks. Sites should be well located in relation to transport infrastructure, especially public transport. Access to education, skills and training are key aspects of securing the development of this sector.

EC4 takes the clustering of knowledge-based industries further, and advises that provision should be made for networks based on ICT and, as a preference, be located near to higher education institutes, hospitals, research establishments or major-technology based businesses.

EC5 lists 11 Regional Investment Sites identified in the 2000 Regional Economic Strategy. Bailrigg was included in a list of 14 additional Strategic Regional Site designations in 2001, and is included in the updated 2006 Regional Economic Strategy. Again the policy says that, for reasons of practicality, sites should be in the proximity of higher education institutes, where appropriate. A further requirement is that sites should be capable of providing a good environmental setting.

EC8 concerns town centre development, but does contain a paragraph regarding the location of B1 uses. Office developments that generate a number of vehicle trips should be directed to suitable locations within or adjoining main city centres, and be near to public transport interchanges within those areas. Where capacity is not available in the centres the sequential approach should be followed.

Policy UR5 discusses existing commitments within development plans. It advises local planning authorities to ensure that land allocations provide for development to meet identified need only, and that the take-up of greenfield land is minimised. Employment land allocations are assessed in light of whether they provide for strategic investment which supports the Region's sectoral priorities and whether there are other sequentially preferable sites available.

The Draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the North West is currently under review and is scheduled to replace the existing RSS when it is adopted later this year. Policy W2 of this emerging guidance is particularly relevant to the current proposal. It says that plans should encourage regionally significant economic development in a number of locations, one of which is 'South of Lancaster'. It continues by encouraging "knowledge nuclei sites focusing on knowledge-based sectors which require specific links to higher education institutions and research and development facilities...close physical proximity is desirable, however it is the links between the knowledge nuclei sites and key knowledge infrastructure

that are most important". The South Lancaster site will be one that has a recognised impact upon growth and development of the regional economy.

Policy CNL4 provides the overall spatial policy for North Lancashire and says plans should build on the strengths and opportunities offered by Lancaster University and the broad South Lancaster designation for knowledge-nuclei employment.

The Regional Economic Strategy 2006 is also relevant, but this is discussed in greater detail under the heading 'Economic Implications' later in this report.

The Joint Lancashire Structure Plan 2001-2016 provides both generic and more site-specific policies that affect the proposal. Policy 1 states that development should be located in key urban areas which are highly accessible and provide a sustainable form of development. A high-quality built environment is also a requirement. Policy 2 recognises Lancaster and Morecambe as the main focus for development within the district, whilst Policy 15 specifically identifies Bailrigg as a Regional Investment Site for knowledge-based industries.

Policy EC1 of the Lancaster District Local Plan 1996-2006 (LDLP) identifies the site as a Business Park for B1 (Business) employment use. Other relevant LDLP policies include EC5, which sets out the criteria for new employment development; EC8, which protects employment allocated land from non-employment uses; T2 which discusses new railway stations; T5 which recognises the A6 as a Primary Bus Corridor; T9 which encourages the use of public transport and more sustainable modes of travel; T16 which expresses the County Council's maximum car parking and cycle standards; T17 which requires the submission of a Travel Plan for all major proposals; and T24 which includes the Lancaster-Bailrigg Lane-University cycle route as part of the wider Strategic Cycle Network.

The LDLP also contains environmental policies that are relevant to the proposal. E4 identifies surrounding land and a small parcel of land within the application site at the north-eastern corner as a 'Countryside Area'; E6 advises that development affecting the best and most versatile agricultural land (including Grade 3a land found at Bailrigg) will only be permitted where significant economic benefits outweigh the loss of the land; Policy E7 sets out the criteria for development affecting watercourses such as Ou Beck at Bailrigg; Policy E12 seeks to safeguard existing habitats and encourage habitat creation; E13 is a generic policy aimed at protecting areas of woodland and significant trees; and E29 and E31 identify the University Campus as an Area of Urban Greenspace and of Key Urban Landscape.

Supplementary Planning Guidance Note (SPG) 5 was adopted in April 2002 and provides a Development Brief for the site. It states that the Council's vision is for an ICT-based investment cluster in South Lancaster. In delivering this site the key principles include a high-quality campus-style development, reinforcement of perimeter planting and retention of hedgerows where possible, the use of Ou Beck as a possible pedestrian route and an area for habitat creation, and the provision of improved cycle linkage to the existing route off Bailrigg Lane and connectivity through to the University.

Therefore despite the locational concerns that are discussed later in this report, there is support throughout regional and local planning guidance for a knowledge-nuclei based science park in the Bailrigg locality.

The Principle of Development and the Concept of a Science Park

The site was adopted as one of 25 Strategic Regional Investment Sites by the NWDA in December 2001. These sites intend to provide business growth opportunities and expand the North West's 'knowledge assets', which include universities and knowledge-based industries. They are critical to the implementation of the Regional Economic Strategy. This Strategy indicates that the sites in question should be brought forward as Regional Investment Sites via the planning process.

Bailrigg Science Park seeks to attract technology, research and development uses and develop integration with uses already at, or arising from, the University campus. Uses referred to in the supporting statement include IT, telecommunications, medicine, bio-chemistry, aerospace and business services. The success of the Park would therefore largely be determined by the promotion of the University linkage and effective marketing. Although the B1 Use Class allocation theoretically includes light industrial uses, it is envisaged that only high-quality B1 uses would be accommodated and that any light industrial activities would be ancillary to the high-technology uses. More general industrial activities or call-centre type office uses would undermine the regional significance of the site and weaken the reasons for its allocation.

SPG 5 stipulated that the City Council's preference would be for a mixture of plot and unit sizes for small, medium and large firms. However Paragraph 3.5 does indicate that should a suitable single occupier be found which met the requirements of the allocation, then this would be considered sympathetically.

Science Parks are generally more attractive in visual and environmental terms than industrial parks. They often include innovative building designs and attempt to utilise renewable technologies and sensitive landscaping wherever possible.

The Outline Proposal and the Phasing of Development

The 2005 illustrative masterplan has been withdrawn and has been replaced by a less specific site masterplan. However this plan still includes phasing arrangements, building parameters, approximate amounts of development and potential uses. Whilst there are no detailed proposals, the plans do conform to national guidance relating to the submission of outline planning applications published by the government in 2006. Once again the means of access is the only matter being applied for.

Phase 1 (Sector A) is located in the south-west corner of the site adjacent to the University sport pitches. It proposes the construction of an Innovation Centre, which will be the first building erected and will be operated by the City Council. It will be no taller than 3-storeys high with a maximum ridge height of 15m. Other structures could include laboratories and high-technology offices. The total amount of development is estimated at 9,320 square metres.

Phase 2 comprises 2 areas of land (Sectors B and C). Sector B is in the north-western corner of the site, adjacent to Bailrigg Lane and the A6, and will be similar in terms of uses and scale of buildings to Sector A, although it has a smaller floorspace figure of 6,350 square metres. Sector C will be bounded by Ou Beck to the south and two arms of the internal access road. The estimated building area is 6,810 square metres and again development will be either 2 or 3-storey in height.

Phase 3 has 3 separate Sectors (D, E and F) and these are perhaps the most sensitive areas of the development. That said, Sector D is one of the larger areas on the site and will have a potential floorspace of 8,110 square metres. Buildings at the eastern end of Sector D will be no taller than 2-storeys high, equating to a maximum of 12m at the ridge. The western end of Sector D will maximise the absence of adjacent residential property by retaining the potential for 3-storey buildings. Sector E is a smaller area of land bounded by Ou Beck to the north and west and landscape buffers to the west, east and south. It will accommodate innovation-type uses only with an approximate floor area of 2,920 square metres and will be 2-storey in height. Sector F is smaller still on the southern boundary and has an estimated floorspace amounting to 1,210 square metres. The presence of existing boundary landscaping allows the potential for 3-storey buildings at a height of no greater than 15m. Again only innovation-type uses are proposed.

In total the developed floor area is estimated at 38,910 square metres.

Vehicular access into the site will be via the A6 to the west and the proposed junction is similar in layout to the existing vehicular junction at Lancaster University. It will have traffic signals and a turning lane into the site from both the north and the south. An internal, four-armed roundabout will be centrally

located within the science park. Two new bus stops will be located on either side of the A6 close to the new junction.

Pedestrian and cycle access through the site is shown from the end of the existing cycle route on Bailrigg Lane, around the eastern boundary of the site, along Ou Beck and out towards the University at the south-western corner. The precise route of the cycle route is dependent upon integration with the University campus, and therefore the arrow shown in the south-western corner is only an approximate potential route to the Campus. If the development is approved it would be on the proviso that the pedestrian, cycle and structural landscaping areas are provided as part of Phase 1.

The masterplan is notable for the inclusion of structural landscaping zones, which will be free from development and will provide opportunities for intensive landscape screening. The zones are greater adjacent to the A6 and in the north-eastern corner of the site adjacent to Bailrigg Village. The landscaping area continues along the eastern boundary and a smaller strip of land in the south-eastern corner (where two of the protected trees are located) would also be landscaped. A much smaller building exclusion zone is shown on the northern boundary and it is envisaged that the hedgerow will be retained here.

The blue area shown on the plan does not reflect the width of Ou Beck; it indicates a much wider strip of land either side of the Beck considered to be necessary for areas for maintenance and zones which could accommodate wetland planting along its length.

Locational Sustainability Considerations

During the preparation of the RSS, the North West Regional Assembly commissioned a sustainability analysis of all 25 Strategic Regional Sites. This was undertaken by consultants in May 2002 and used environmental, economic and social criteria, in association with the Draft RSS policies at the time and the potential for deliverability of the sites. The benchmark figure was set at 40% and sites exceeding this figure were deemed to have passed the sustainability test.

The Bailrigg site scored just 40% on sustainability, 43% on compliance with regional policies and 57% in terms of availability and deliverability. This amounted to an overall average score of 47%, thereby exceeding the benchmark figure. This is not a high score and placed Bailrigg in 22nd place out of the 25 sites assessed. The sustainability score of 40% was significantly below the 63% average figure due to the loss of a greenfield site, the impact upon agriculture and the lack of a significant local workforce (which could result in attracting commuters from outside the district). The applicant believes that the low score was due to the narrow focus of the study and believes that greater weight should have been attributed to the close proximity of the University, which would have economic benefits.

National, regional and local planning policies are broadly similar in encouraging the use of previously-developed (brownfield) land before the use of greenfield sites. Regional planning policies are especially important when considering a site with regional economic importance such as this and Policy DP1 advocates the use of a similar sequential analysis to site selection. Policy SD8 also advises that major developments in the countryside should be avoided unless the need for development cannot be accommodated elsewhere. Whilst the Bailrigg site does not constitute 'wider countryside', it has a rural appearance and is probably best described as rural fringe land between the city boundary and the university.

In the Lancaster District it is generally accepted that there is an (employment) land supply currently in excess of the strategic requirement. Most of the existing employment land is located north and west of the River Lune and the applicant argues that this land is poorly served by public transport, or is inappropriate in terms of scale, or would fail to benefit from the close linkage to the University Campus that the Bailrigg site offers. Looking at sites within the City, it is clear that Lancaster Business Park would be contrary to PPG 4 because of its much closer proximity to the M6 Trunk Road, and the potential for queues developing on this motorway. There are sites that could potentially accommodate a science park in the Luneside West/Lune Industrial Estate area, but these have their own problems due to

poor highway access, the existence of current general industrial uses which would be contrary to encouraging a much higher environmental standard of design and layout, and the consequential traffic impacts upon the Air Quality Management Area declared around the gyratory network in the city centre.

There are other commercial/industrial sites in the district, for example industrial land towards Heysham/Middleton that constitutes previously-developed land. Whilst this area has better access to the port, it does not have the same level of bus service or convenient connectivity to the cycle network that Bailrigg offers. It is also significantly detached from the university, and this is one of the locational preferences reiterated throughout regional and development plan guidance. These existing employment areas also contain more general industrial uses that would conflict with the physical and visual aspirations of the Science Park.

The JLSP succinctly summarises the issue. Whilst Bailrigg satisfied fewer of the criteria listed in Policy EC5 of the RSS, it is in close proximity to the university, and any development should be closely linked to the higher education provider to compensate for the lack of development opportunities on campus, and to facilitate company formations arising from research at the university. In stating this case, the applicant suggests that some businesses within InfoLab21 on the south-east side of the University Campus would need to relocate to larger premises, and that the science park would offer accommodation to retain knowledge-based industries around the centre of learning. Whilst there is an opposing view that modern-day businesses can communicate via electronic technologies and that location adjacent to the Campus is not essential, all regional and local planning guidance confirms that a close geographical relationship is preferable.

The locational argument therefore rests upon whether there is an exceptional justification for siting a Science Park in this location as opposed to previously developed buildings and land. Individual development plans are not, by themselves, a basis for an exceptional approach, even though the site is allocated throughout relevant planning guidance. However the potential for stimulating economic growth and diversifying the district's employment sector is, in the view of the Local Planning Authority, likely to be greater due to its close location to the Campus. There are no other suitable sites within or south of Lancaster that would be able to deliver this benefit without having other detrimental impacts.

Site Layout, Design and Visual Amenity

SPG 5 is quite specific in stating that steel cladding and breeze block buildings will not be approved. It does not seek to impose a particular design style and suggests that buildings could mirror the style of the Victorian Filter House building on the opposite side of the A6, or take its cue from the better modern buildings within the University Campus.

Before discussing the details of the design statement, it is worth referring to Drawing H-1604-SK18 (P1), which indicates the proposed earthworks. The areas that are hatched are those where earth will be cut from. The areas marked in solid grey, which is effectively the whole site frontage and a strip of land to the south of Ou Beck, constitutes the areas where land will be filled to raise levels. The figures shown on the drawings indicate proposed plateau levels created by the cut and fill exercises. Therefore the site will slope from the east down to the site frontage at the west, and will generally slope from the north down to the south. The submitted drawings indicate that the level of the land currently rises from approximately 37m to a maximum of 46m in the north-eastern corner. Generally the proposed plateaued areas will witness land levels of between 40m and 44m.

The applicant has also produced a sectional drawing which indicate generic building shapes at 2 and 3-storeys in height, and relates them to the proposed structural landscaping, the existing highway network and the proposed plateau levels. Although the proposals are of course made in outline, it is still possible to gain an impression of the building scales and their relationships with the surrounding features. The sectional drawings indicate the importance of the structural planting zones around the perimeter of the development and the approximate site levels.

The amended scheme does not illustrate the precise siting of buildings. This is reasonable given that the end users (and their needs for space) are not yet identified. In the absence of a layout plan, a general design layout strategy has been established. This seeks to position landmark buildings at the entrance of the site, providing an attractive massing of structures along the A6 behind the structural landscaping. It is also a key principle to integrate buildings into the landscape, especially in the more sensitive areas towards Bailrigg Village and Ou Beck, and to position the buildings so that they can take advantage of renewable technologies.

The buildings are expected to be contemporary, with glass and a wide range of solid cladding materials envisaged. Stone, rainscreening, curtain walling, render and metal cladding are all mentioned. Roofing materials will vary but the design statement suggests that the "overall theme will be low pitched metal profiled cladding". SPG 5 indicates that steel cladding is not considered an appropriate material and any planning approval should make this quite clear. Colours are expected to be neutral, although entrance areas and building 'fins' may be more striking to promote visual interest. Whilst a colour strategy is important in protecting the landscape, more individual forms of colour and architecture should be considered on the more prominent buildings.

Public spaces will be created in "development clusters", along with a "focal community space" in the hub of the park. Ornamental planting, as opposed to the native structural planting on the peripheries, will be included.

The majority of the visual amenity objections to the 2005 plans concerned the siting of three expansive warehouse-type buildings in the north-eastern corner, closest to Bailrigg Village. The Local Planning Authority was of the view that, aside from the inappropriate warehouse use, the positioning of large, unbroken buildings in this corner would be unacceptable because of the detrimental visual impact that would ensue. The fixing of building heights at 2-storey only in the eastern corner respects the residential hamlet in a manner that the original proposal did not. The provision of a more curved landscaping barrier alleviates the visual concerns, as does the setting of the plateau levels.

A further positive arising from the redrafting of the masterplan is the much stronger landscaping belt across the western/A6 boundary. This replaces the areas of car parking proposed on the first masterplan, and is important in limiting visual impact from the A6.

In general the masterplan proposals represent an improvement over the original plan, and the design statement provides a series of principles that will be adhered to throughout building construction and open space provision. Without knowing the precise areas of car parking and building orientations, it is difficult to provide more detailed comment. However these are justifiable matters for future consideration at the reserved matters stage.

Highway and Transport Assessment

A revised Transport Assessment was compiled in January 2007 in an attempt to alleviate the concerns of the Highways Agency and the County Highways Department. The Assessment uses trip generation rates based on average trip rates for Science Park developments. It analyses existing traffic conditions, the addition of new traffic and the enhancement of other modes of transportation. It also assumes traffic growth to the Lancaster University Campus of 25% by 2021.

Vehicular access will be taken from a new junction on the A6. The signalised junction has turning lanes akin to those at the existing University junction, with separate lanes for through traffic. There would also be separate northbound and southbound lanes out of the site. The addition of MOVA technology would allow signal timings to respond to changing traffic conditions such as those experienced during peak-time traffic.

It is anticipated that 60% of the science park traffic would access/egress the site from/to the north along the A6. This estimate is based upon a broad assessment of the likely catchment areas.

The Assessment measures traffic in 2021 with and without the development. 2021 is chosen as the 'design year' because it is ten years after the expected opening of the science park. Traffic volumes are calculated in relation to two stretches of the A6; one from Hala Road to the application site, and the other from the opposite direction, from the Galgate/Stoney Lane crossroads to the site. From Hala Road during the morning peak, traffic volumes along the A6 are estimated to rise by between 34-39%. The return journey during the evening peak would see a rise of between 24-28%. From Galgate to the science park, traffic volume would rise by between 22-25% in the morning peak and by 21-23% during the return journey in the evening peak.

These figures are then assessed further in terms of their impacts upon key junctions. Volume on the single carriageway A6 outside the site junction is expected to increase to 2,973 vehicles per hour during the morning peak. This equates to an overall increase about 2021 base rate volume figures of 34.7%. Evening peak hour totals would be numerically greater (at 3,046 vehicles per hour), but the increase above current figures would be comparatively smaller at 26%. These high figures are to be expected, given that the proposed junction does not currently exist.

Of greater use is the traffic volume analysis at the other key junctions. In all cases the volume of traffic increase by between 8 and 18.3% At the Hala Road (Booth's Supermarket) crossroad, traffic increases by 18.3% and 14.8% in the morning and evening peaks respectively; at the Galgate junction the increases are 14.9% and 11%; whilst at the A6/M6 Junction 33 roundabout traffic would increase by 11% and 8%. The University junction also, by default, witnesses increases in peak traffic at 11.9% and 9% respectively.

The applicant states that these are worst case scenarios and that the additional traffic can be accommodated on the network without a material effect on the operation of the existing and proposed junctions in the area, when compared to the background situation that would exist in 2021 without the development. The one exception is the northbound stretch of the A6 at the Hala Road junction (effectively used by vehicles travelling into the city). Queue lengths here would be excessive without the development traffic in 2021, and a highway solution to the lack in capacity should be sought irrespective of whether this development occurs. But if the science park is approved, the maximum queue length here could rise to 103 vehicles at evening peak.

The situation during the morning and evening peak along the A6 is problematic at present. Traffic tails back to the Junction 33 roundabout during the morning, and similar queues occur in the opposite direction between Galgate and Lancaster University during the evening. The single lane width of the Galgate crossroads and parts of the Hala crossroads are obstacles to free-flowing traffic along this stretch of highway. Whilst new MOVA technology to the signals would assist, it is by no means a panacea to the problem.

The impact upon the M6 is raised by the Highways Agency, who have placed a Holding Direction on the application in order that they can analyse the impacts further. This Holding Direction prevents the Local Planning Authority from determining the application in the favour of the applicant until it is lifted by the Agency. If this Direction remains in place then the application will not be presented to Members. Minutes of meetings between the applicant and the Highways Agency suggest that the Direction will be lifted before the committee meeting.

The additional traffic is, in the view of the Local Planning Authority, the most contentious issue associated with the scheme. Traffic levels will continue to rise on this stretch of road regardless of whether the science park is constructed or not, although the proposal will clearly exacerbate those volumes. At the time of drafting this report the County Highways Department does not support the proposal, although they recognise that the development is allocated in the LDLP. It is perhaps pertinent to mention that the County Council did not object to the site's allocation at the time of drafting the LDLP, and a highway objection based upon impacts at the Hala and Galgate crossroads would now

presumably similarly apply to any further major development at the University, or other significant proposals in the South Lancaster locality.

There is no explicit reference to car parking numbers in the submission, although figures of 800 parking spaces were referred to in the 2005 proposals. This figure was accepted by County Highways as being in accordance with parking standards, but the County Planning Department suggested that the figure should be reduced because of the good public transport and cycle network within the vicinity. The Local Planning Authority agrees that car parking should be limited wherever possible to promote sustainable modes of transport.

If Members are satisfied regarding all other elements of the scheme, but have concerns regarding the highway impacts, they have to consider whether the economic positives arising from the proposed use would outweigh the highway negatives. To that effect the measures contained in the applicant's Framework Travel Plan must also be taken into account.

Framework Travel Plan

The Framework Travel Plan (FTP) seeks to encourage more sustainable modes of transport to and from the site. In setting the Plan's aims and objectives the applicant has reviewed the current public transport, cycle and pedestrian facilities.

A number of bus services use the A6. During peak hours the number of buses per hour from Heysham to the university is recorded at 9, falling to 6 during off-peak times. In the opposite direction there are 5 services, reducing to 4 during off peak hours. The site is also served more infrequently by buses travelling to and from Preston.

There is of course no rail link to the university, although the concept of a rail station at Bailrigg was included in the previous Lancaster Local Plan. This is no longer allocated in the current LDLP, although the commentary to Policy T2 does state that "The scope for new stations on the West Coast main line is constrained by capacity issues at the present time, although if design, siting, funding and capacity constraints can be overcome, there may be opportunities for a station in the Bailrigg area". A bus service currently connects Lancaster University to St Martin's College and the railway station.

Pedestrian and cycle access to the site remains limited but would be improved by the continuation of the cycle network from its current termination point at Bailrigg Lane, through the application site along Ou Beck and potentially linking with a new cycle and pedestrian route to the university. Access to the A6 would also be improved by potential cycle provision, perhaps adjacent to the internal access roads.

The FTP contains generic targets based upon the proposed uses, the linkage to the university and the public transport connections that already exist. It envisages that 80% of journeys between the science park and the university would be undertaken on foot, by bicycle or by public transport. This is considered reasonable given the proximity between the two sites and perhaps should be the subject of an even more challenging target. A more ambitious target is the identification of a 40% figure for journeys to work to be made by public transport. Of the remaining 60% of car-borne journeys, it is suggested that 20% of these should be car-sharing trips.

In order to achieve those figures, a series of measures have been listed that would combine to create a detailed Travel Plan. It would then be incumbent on the local planning authority to impose a condition requiring a Travel Plan to be submitted and agreed, and for regular monitoring of its effectiveness by a range of bodies, including the local planning authority. The measures include obvious details such as publicising timetable information and public transport plans in all reception areas of the science park. More practical measures such as discounted public transport season tickets, cycle pools and linkages to minibus firms could all contribute, although these are only headline suggestions at the present time. Car sharing could be advocated through the Sharedwheels website used by the university with cash incentives for those who car share.

Whatever the proposals, it is clear that the FTP cannot be successful unless there is full integration with the university's own travel plans. This point has been emphasised by the Local Planning Authority throughout the application process. The FTP is still light in terms of how this would be achieved, although discussion has recently taken place between the applicant and the university with a view to developing joint targets.

A car parking management policy will be critical to the success of any travel plan and should be consistent with the university's own scheme. The applicant expects this to take the form of a permit system for employees of the science park and strict regulation of visitors. The system would have to prevent employees at the university parking their vehicles at the science park and then walking from there to the university. There are no details at this stage as to how this would be controlled.

The responsibility for implementation would rest with the science park management company. As a forerunner to this, a Travel Plan Steering Group is proposed which would comprise representatives of the management company and tenants of each unit, who would meet bi-annually and monitor targets via an annual questionnaire distributed to employees. It is the local planning authority's view that this alone would probably be inadequate in effectively monitoring travel habits, and annualised surveys/traffic counts would help to provide a clearer picture.

Whilst the FTP provides useful ideas, the absence of detailed integration with the university's travel plan prevents worthwhile expansion of those initiatives. It may be argued that this would be the role of a Travel Plan conditioned on any planning approval, rather than provided in detailed form at this outline stage. But further, earlier liaison with the university would have been advantageous in establishing firm proposals.

The Issue of Drainage and Flooding

Perhaps the most recurrent objection from local residents has concerned the potential for flooding from Ou Beck. Many of the objections refer to flooding in previous years due to capacity problems at the Beck. This is acknowledged in Paragraph 5.1 of SPG 5 where explicit reference is made to "existing capacity and flooding problems on Ou Beck upstream and downstream of the site affecting both property and land".

SPG 5 continues by stating that if surface water discharges are proposed to Ou Beck, developers would be required to carry out a catchment study to demonstrate the effect of the proposed discharge. It does not state that this has to be undertaken prior to the grant of outline permission, but clearly the details and the precise drainage solution would need to be in place (with written confirmation from both the Environment Agency and United Utilities) prior to the granting of any reserved matters consent.

The undulations of the site will invariably cause surface water run-off to Ou Beck and the applicant confirms that this will be discharged into the Beck via an "appropriate number of outfalls...in consultation with the Environment Agency". Surface water from car parking areas would pass through oil interceptors prior to discharge into the Beck.

SPG 5 indicated that the site should be drained on a separate system using a sustainable urban drainage system (SUDS). The applicant has confirmed in writing that separate SUDS-based foul and water systems will be designed in accordance with the requirements of United Utilities. This will include various forms of open and underground storage which will include infiltration trenches and balancing ponds. The precise scale and location of these measures is dependent upon the final layout but it is estimated that 40% of the required storage can be attenuated in an open water feature. Details would be provided at the reserved matters stage, should this application be successful. Responsibility for the maintenance of all open water features would rest with the developer. Foul water removal would ultimately connect to public sewers outside the site.

Because of the provisions of SPG 5, and in response to the residents' concerns regarding flooding, a condition will be necessary to further examine surface water discharge. This stance is agreed by the Environment Agency, who request that a Surface Water Regulation System be agreed and implemented prior to the approval of reserved matters.

Ecological Impact

The site does not have any statutory nature conservation or heritage status. A Screening Opinion was provided by the Local Planning Authority in January 2004 and advised that submission of an Environmental Statement (under the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations) was not required.

Previous Environment Agency records have suggested that Pipistrelle bats may have been sighted. It is also possible that the site contains water voles or their habitats. Both of these are protected species.

The applicant undertook an Ecological Survey and Nature Conservation Assessment in January 2006. This was a requirement of SPG 5 and was conducted in consultation with English Nature, the Lancashire Badger Group and the Lancashire Wildlife Trust. The Survey concluded that there were no habitats or species of high ecological interest that would be affected. However due to the seasonal constraints of the timing of the survey a further Water Vole and Bats Survey was undertaken in May 2006. No bats or water voles were recorded. Some of the trees contained crevices that bats could theoretically use as habitats. Similarly, the watercourse could support water voles even though it is very shallow and has been trampled by sheep. It was recommended that fencing be provide on either side of the Beck to help regenerate the banks and encourage habitat creation, although this would have to be undertaken in consultation with the Environment Agency and the County Ecologist.

A further outcome was that any trees that have the potential to support bats should be retained. The Local Planning Authority had already served a Tree Preservation Order (No. 385) protecting three mature trees, one of which was located on the north boundary of the site (a Lime) to Bailrigg Lane and the other two (Horse Chestnut and an Oak) located on the southern side of Ou Beck. The hedgerow along Bailrigg Lane was also to be retained. These features will require protection during development. In addition a full tree and hedge survey would allow consideration of the detailed landscaping arrangements. A policy of 'no net loss' of hedgerow is to be maintained and the development would have to adhere to this principle. Ornamental planting will be provided around the buildings and in boulevards/courtyards, but a more natural landscaping approach is proposed in the most visual and sensitive areas of the site.

The provision of the afore-mentioned balancing ponds will contribute to the enhancement of aquatic habitats, whilst it is envisaged that new native planting around the perimeters and along Ou Beck will improve biodiversity within the application site. Detailed aftercare will be imperative and will comprise of replacement of any defective planting, maintenance of irrigation and wetlands and weed/growth control.

Many of the above measures would be most appropriately controlled by requiring the submission of a habitat management and creation plan, as requested by the County Ecologist. This is a justifiable planning condition.

Environmental Implications

The statutory consultees had not, at the time of compiling this report, referred to the Air Quality Management Area designation (AQMA) in Lancaster City Centre. If the applicant's transport assessment is accurate, then it is reasonable to assume that there will be an increase in vehicular movements through the city centre, although the amount of traffic would presumably be less than if a central site accessed via the gyratory system close to the AQMA had been the subject of the application (e.g. at Luneside).

Environmental impacts upon designated AQMA's are material considerations to the planning process. Siting development in locations which have a range of sustainably-accessible travel options have a key role to play. The application site is served by an appropriate bus service and will have excellent, off-road cycle and pedestrian linkage to the university and the south of the city. No AQMA-based objections are anticipated as a result.

There will of course be an increase in noise as a result of this development, but the proximities between the proposed buildings and existing dwellings appear to be acceptable and have not prompted environmental objections.

SPG 5 indicates that the science park should be "energy efficient, maximising passive solar gain, avoiding hillcrests and making maximum use of south-facing slopes". Again the outline nature of the application prevents detailed building designs, and there are no 'typical' details of proposed renewable technologies. The supporting statement pays lip service to solar orientation, the need to avoid low-angle daylight penetration and the need to reduce artificial lighting. Physical temperature controls as opposed to mechanical systems will be preferred, and these features could include solar-reflective glazing. Other measures such as high standards of insulation and a hydrology strategy protecting the local water cycle are referred to. Building materials will, wherever possible, be sourced locally and preference given to natural materials.

Whilst good lighting and signage will be important, these features should not be intrusive and would need to be indicated in detail in accordance with the Environmental Health Service.

Overall a 'good-to-excellent' BREEAM rating is the target for all development in the park. To aid this objective, the Local Planning Authority considers that a condition imposing a Renewable Energy Strategy document for the whole site should be imposed, if the application is successful.

A geo-environmental investigation and assessment was undertaken in July 2003 in respect of ground contamination investigation. Whilst this study determined the ground conditions at the time, it occurred some years ago and a land contamination study condition should be imposed on any planning consent.

Economic Implications

The Regional Economic Strategy (RES) provides the economic overview for the region. It recognises the diversification of business markets and the development of skills, infrastructure and employment opportunities as strategic objectives. However it does also state that job creation should target disadvantaged communities and locations, and South Lancaster does not fall within this category.

RES Action 80 is one of a number of actions that are seen as fundamental priorities for delivering the RES vision. Action 80 specifically refers to the delivery of the designated strategic regional sites as regional investment sites, knowledge nuclei or inter-modal freight terminals. By virtue of its close proximity to the University, Bailrigg is deemed to be an appropriate location for this 'knowledge nuclei' role. Policy W2 of the Draft RSS identifies South Lancaster as such a site.

The Economic Development & Tourism Service confirm that the site will represent the fulfilment of a long-term ambition to secure a site adjacent to the university capable of attracting knowledge-based businesses. The Lancaster & Morecambe Vision identifies the science park as the centrepiece of the district’s knowledge economy and will enhance business creation, growth and inward investment by improving choice and availability of business space within the district.

In addition the NWDA’s Demand Study concluded that Lancaster has a need to create employment with a “high value-added content”. Moreover, the number of skilled people living in and around Lancaster is not commensurate with the number of high value-added jobs in the sub-region, strengthening the case for a specific knowledge-based initiative.

The planning application indicated a broad figure of 1000 new jobs. It goes without saying that this would be a substantial employment boost and will help retain graduates in the district by offering high-quality opportunities for 'start-up' and 'grow-on' businesses in innovative and wide-ranging fields.

SPG 5 confirmed the important role played by Lancaster University and St Martin's College which, when combined, could “form the basis of a regional ICT-based investment cluster". The creation of the Business Enterprise Centre at the university will develop the interface between small and medium businesses and the university itself. However the potential for growth could be lost unless the conditions are right to accommodate that growth in Lancaster.

Conclusions

The principle of the proposed development was established in the Local Plan. A science park within the district would provide a location for innovation, research and development that would be closely linked to existing facilities at the university.

Bailrigg is an identified Regional Investment Site. The JLSP states that all Regional Investment Sites should act as flagship developments for the North West, accommodating the needs of inward investment and indigenous businesses. Standards of layout design, building design, energy conservation, landscaping and quality of construction should ensure that the science park contributes positively to environmental quality. There should be a presumption in favour of innovative and quality architectural design solutions on all Regional Investment Sites.

These high standards should also apply to ecological issues. The requirement for a surface water regulation system in association with the Environment Agency should satisfy any concern regarding flooding to Ou Beck, whilst the provision of a buffer zone measuring 8m in width around the Beck will allow the habitat to recover from damage caused by livestock and the planting of dry and wet native species. The imposition of a Tree Preservation Order in 2005 illustrated the City Council's desire to retain key features of ecological importance within the site. A planning condition ensuring that there would be no net loss of hedgerows would also contribute to biodiversity. The inclusion of all these measures, and others through a Habitat Management and Creation Plan, will be an important condition of any planning permission.

The issue of location is one that has been the source of objection. But when other previously-developed options are considered, no other site provides the cumulative advantages of being in close proximity to higher education providers (especially the university); of enjoying current bus service linkage on a Primary Bus Corridor; of providing an excellent opportunity to extend the adjacent Cycle Network and thus also the potential to create a viable pedestrian route to residential areas in Lancaster and cycle/pedestrian linkage to the university; and of its location away from areas of general industrial activity which could adversely affect the high-quality environment required for knowledge-nuclei sites. The site is allocated specifically in the JLSP and LDLP, and South Lancaster is identified as a broader location in the Draft RSS. The loss of greenfield land resulted in a comparatively low sustainability/use of land score when surveyed, but compliance with the Regional Investment Site Analysis was still achieved in 2002 demonstrating that the site is sustainably acceptable.

The most considerable concern relates to highway and traffic impact. The traffic scenarios submitted are worst-case scenarios. The Transport Assessment indicates that volumes of traffic will continue to rise in the locality, but that these volumes will of course increase if the development is permitted. The matter that has to be determined is whether the highway capacity issues outweigh the positives associated with development of the site.

If the Highway Agency removes their Holding Direction, then they will be confirming that they are satisfied with the impact upon strategic highway issues. If the Direction remains in force, this application will not be considered at the March committee meeting. At the time of compiling this report, the removal of the Direction appeared to be connected to the implementation of MOVA signal technology to detect queue lengths and to assist in improved traffic flows.

This leaves the County Highways objection. They are clearly concerned about the impacts upon the Galgate and Hala junctions and are minded to oppose the development on highway capacity grounds. MOVA technology could be imposed but the County are concerned that additional developments would revert the situation back to current levels, which are still unacceptable. Consequently, it could therefore be concluded that highway objections would be likely for any future major development associated with the university or any other potential major development that requires access out from the south of the city.

National planning guidance is useful in considering this issue. PPG 4 encourages development in accessible locations where more efficient modes of transport can be used, and states that "this is particularly important in the case of “campus style developments such as science parks". It says that development should be discouraged where it would be likely to add unacceptably to congestion. PPG 13 also provides specific B1-use advice by saying that local planning authorities should "adopt a positive, plan-led approach to identifying preferred areas and sites for B1 uses" and should, as far as possible, be highly accessible by public transport, walking and cycling. It also acknowledges the role that businesses should make by adopting travel plans to encourage car sharing and use of non-car modes of transport.

This raises the issue of the Framework Travel Plan. There is worthwhile rhetoric but development of the travel initiatives could have been developed further by the applicant in discussion with the university. It is possible to make the grant of planning consent conditional on the provision of a strict Travel Plan with identified rolling targets, initiatives and monitoring.

It is worth mentioning that the phased nature of the science park will not suddenly mean a dramatic increase in traffic levels. The development will occur over a long, possibly 20-year period with the timescale being in line with anticipated demand. This phased approach provides a realistic opportunity for influencing travel behaviour at the earliest possible stage. Given that the site is in an area served by an appropriate level of public transport, and cycle and pedestrian linkages will be provided in the first phase of development, the local planning authority conclude that this is an acceptable site for a science park proposal, providing that a robust and exhaustive Travel Plan is required by planning condition and subsequently implemented.

There will need to be a wide range of highway and visibility improvements, most of which will be delivered under Section 278 of the Highways Act. Highway contributions will also be necessary to further improve public transport access, and these will be delivered by a Section 106 legal agreement in accordance with the County's Accessibility Questionnaire criteria.

The legal agreement is probably the most appropriate document to list the entry criteria for potential businesses. A planning condition can limit the use of the site to the B1 use class and prevent any retail operations, but the legal agreement would be compiled in association with the applicants and the Economic Development Service, and would seek to restrict entry by developing entry criteria, which could be potentially linked to ICT, research or other similar high-quality business collaborations with higher education providers.

Subject to these measures, and conditions considered appropriate to delivering a high-quality science park environment, Members are advised that the proposal to develop this Regional Investment Site can be supported.

HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

This application has to be considered in relation to the provisions of the Human Rights Act, in particular Article 8 (privacy/family life) and Article 1 of the First Protocol (protection of property). Having regard to the principles of proportionality, it has been concluded that there are no issues arising from the proposal which appear 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.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That **OUTLINE PLANNING PERMISSION BE GRANTED**, subject to the signing of a Section 106 legal agreement to address issues of public transport provision, site accessibility and the entry level criteria for businesses. The permission is subject to the following conditions:

1. Standard 3 years consent.
2. Submission of all other reserved matters .
3. Amended plans condition.
4. Development as per approved plans.
5. Use of the development to be restricted to B1 uses only, in association with the provisions of the entry criteria contained in the legal agreement.
6. Phasing of the development to be as per approved plans.
7. Notwithstanding the phasing plan, the Phase 1 of the development to include provision of the internal access road, all pedestrian and cycle linkage, all areas of structural landscaping and the provision of the vegetated buffer zone to Ou Beck.
8. Details of all external materials, including roof materials to be agreed and samples provided (but to exclude steel cladding).
9. Details of all surfacing materials to be agreed.
10. Provision of all off-site highway improvements in accordance with S.278 of the Highways Act, including the installation of MOVA technology to both the Hala and Galgate junctions; the necessary improvements to visibility; the provision of Quality Bus stops on both sides of the A6
11. Submission and agreement of a site-wide Travel Plan prior to the submission of a reserved matters application, to be implemented in stages prior to the first occupation of each phase of development
12. Submission of a separate car parking management strategy.
13. Details of all cycle parking and associated facilities to be agreed.
14. Submission and implementation of a Habitat Management and Creation Plan, including provision of new hedgerows on a no-net-loss basis, prior to approval of reserved matters.
15. A tree and hedgerow survey of the site to be submitted (including details of all species to be removed and retained).
16. Tree and hedgerow protection zones to be established during construction.
17. Submission of a Surface Water Regulation System to be submitted and agreed prior to approval of reserved matters.
18. Submission and implementation of a Renewable Energy Strategy prior to approval of the reserved matters.
19. Details of all street and building lighting, signage and signage lighting to be agreed.
20. Standard archaeological survey condition.
21. Standard land contamination condition.
22. As requested by consultees.