

1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction and Context

Faber Maunsell was appointed in January 2007 to develop a comprehensive 15—20 year Transport Vision and Strategy for the Lancaster District. The key objectives outlined in the study brief and addressed in this report include:

- To assess the strengths and weaknesses of the existing transport network in the area and recommend future improvements and other measures to ensure the network fully responds to and supports the long term vision;
- To identify current and planned development opportunities on the road network;
- To identify the key strategic transportation issues emerging as a result of the proposed Lancaster City Centre Developments;
- To develop a range of deliverable transport solutions to facilitate economic growth and address social inclusion and accessibility; and
- To produce an implementation plan for the vision and strategy including phasing and prioritisation, potential early wins, indicative costs and potential delivery mechanisms.

The vision is to be ambitious, yet realistic and maximise the benefits for Lancaster and Morecambe, by addressing the following issues:

- Improve access and movement between the two key centres;
- Alleviate congestion in the city centre and at other key hotspots;
- Improve the quality of life for local residents, addressing the environment and air quality;
- Address the negative impact of traffic and parking on the major architectural and historic assets and public spaces;
- Restore public confidence in public transport as a viable alternative to the car;
- Connecting the rural hinterland; and
- To assist economic development and support regeneration in the district, with particular reference to Morecambe.

In order to illustrate a number of the emerging transport and development opportunities presented by the Vision, Faber Maunsell enlisted Taylor Young, a multi-disciplinary design-orientated practice, to assist in developing and presenting these ideas. In particular, Taylor Young has developed a number of options for public realm and landscaping opportunities.

Work throughout this project has been undertaken through close contact with Lancashire County Council and Lancaster & Morecambe Vision.

In October/November 2007, a significant public consultation exercise was undertaken to ensure that the people of the Lancaster District were aware of both the potential and the overall objectives of this strategy. Similarly, local city politicians were also, via the Lancaster & Morecambe Vision Transport Steering Group, engaged at appropriate times throughout the process to make sure we were aware of their views and that the overall aim and scale of proposals was understood.

Within our brief for this work, it was stipulated that the Major Scheme proposal – the Heysham to M6 Link Road, which links Junction 34 of the M6 motorway to the existing Lancaster-Morecambe Bypass (A683) was taken as a fixed element of the evolving strategy for the District. Faber Maunsell looked to capitalise on the relief provided to the local network and to use this to the benefit of the city, in terms of allowing both increased amenity within the City Centre and improved transport and air quality on the approaches to and within the City Centre.

This document follows on from the Baseline Report finalised in January 2008, which summarised the details of: -

- Review of available data, including a large number of previous studies, reports and scheme proposals, both policy and scheme led.

- Regular and comprehensive site visits to the District and in particular, to Lancaster and Morecambe to consider issues at different times of the day/week; and
- Discussion with a variety of key stakeholders and the client study team group, including public transport/planning officers at Lancashire County Council and relevant officers of Lancaster City Council.

Owing to the nature of this work, this document is not based on extensive quantified data analysis – i.e. not based on extensive city wide modelling or analysis of statistics. It is based on a broad range of evidence and is aimed at producing a qualitative based Vision and Strategy for more extensive refinement. Detailed economic and financial appraisal is for a later stage as clarity over land use options and viability of individual schemes becomes clearer. The most imperative output of this work is the development of the missing high level vision for the District, from which to develop future year schemes. This document therefore aims to build on the work presented in the baseline and provide clarity over the way forward for the Lancaster District to develop its Transport Vision and Strategy.

The work is the important first step in presenting a clear vision for access and movement within the District. Schemes have been suggested that allow relatively early ‘wins’, however we suggest that the real gain is in some of the longer term, bolder and sometimes politically, more difficult schemes. A single Lancaster-Morecambe entity has an excellent opportunity, to strengthen its attractiveness and increase its economic viability to the obvious benefit to those working and residing in the District.

Clearly, funding will always be an issue for infrastructure schemes, no matter what their scale. Our view is however that without an overriding vision, it is impossible to develop or strengthen funding cases. The city of Lancaster, together with Morecambe has excellent credentials to become an exemplar location with regard to access and movement. The urban core is large enough to have significant problems that need addressing, relatively indigenous so that results can be monitored and reviewed effectively, yet small enough that within a relatively limited public funding pool, real results can be achieved.

This report continues by drawing out Baseline conclusions before moving on to suggest strategic transport objectives for the District, which aims to provide clarity over the strategy being proposed and the reasons behind it. **Chapters 2 to 5** then go on to identify and clarify the range of schemes suggested to cumulatively build towards the overall vision. It is not realistic to suggest that all schemes can be implemented in short succession and it is therefore important that we have considered incremental changes towards the Vision, as opposed to attempting to provide significant change ‘overnight’. **Chapter 6** concludes the report and points to the way forward for progression.

1.2

Baseline Findings

The Baseline Report provides an extensive current context of the Lancaster District as Faber Maunsell understands it to be. A series of issues and pressures were identified, many of which have been created by either historical or physical constraints.

Analysis of travel patterns in the Lancaster District has identified five key types of movement pattern/groups, namely;

- **Non-detrimental strategic movements** through and beyond Lancaster – primarily using the M6 motorway and West Coast Mainline rail, providing little benefit but having little adverse effect locally;
- **Detrimental strategic through movements** – for example, from Southern Scotland/Cumbria or from the south towards Morecambe/Heysham, which need to travel via the centre of Lancaster at present due to limited River Lune crossings, thereby creating significant negative impact upon core areas of the city. The Heysham to M6 Link is clearly a key element in terms of addressing one of these patterns of movement;
- **Movements from the hinterland into Lancaster/Morecambe**, both for commuting/business activity and related to its position, providing the concentration of the district’s economic, culture and social activities;
- **Movements from within Lancaster/Morecambe urban core to the City Centre** – those who live within close proximity and seek to use the central amenities and are the journeys for which provision of attractive non-car mode opportunities could really make the difference to the overall quality of life; and

- Movements across the City** – increasingly over recent decades ‘de-centralising’ developments such as Lancaster Business Park at junction 34 and Lancaster University have created demand across the City Centre, providing no immediate benefit to it, but generating traffic demand detracting from the City Centre’s attractiveness, both environmentally and physically.

No strategic vision for the District would be complete without considering how to address these different movement patterns in tandem with one another. They are not mutually exclusive and where proposals to address one or more of these patterns can be combined, there is clearly potential for greater overall benefit for the Lancaster District.

Our baseline work identified that the fundamental issue facing the District revolves around the peninsula nature of Heysham and Morecambe and the added pressure that their reliance upon the constrained network of historic Lancaster, places upon movement both between the key centres and between Heysham and Morecambe and the strategic M6 corridor to the east.

As stated, the River Lune and lack of crossing points forms a key constraint on the road network. In a similar way, the canals and railway infrastructure with limited crossing points and physical/visual severance of railway lines present significant barriers to movement. The transition from rail to road has left a legacy of relative isolation in Morecambe and Heysham and this dependence on Lancaster is illustrated in Figure 1.1.

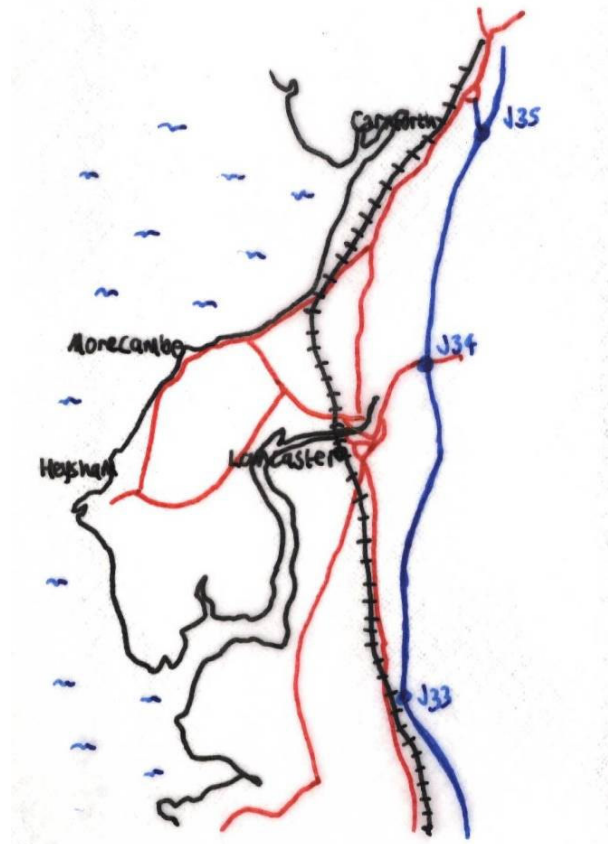


Figure 1.1: Peninsula Effect

As part of the baseline work, several core existing characteristics, largely relating to the city of Lancaster, were concluded:

- Congestion, not just limited to peak hours, is focussed on some of the key pinch points and barriers related to the above physical constraints and tends to be relatively localised in terms of affecting the gyratory systems and approaches to it;
- HGVs and larger vehicles create significant impacts on key corridors within the City Centre, but appear to relate to either through city movements or to outlying industrial areas – for example, traffic from the M6 to Heysham Port is required to use sections of the core central network;
- Typically, traffic flows appear ‘tidal’ in nature, with AM peaks reversing in the PM peak. This often leads to delays occurring in one direction, with free flowing traffic in the other. This makes effective use of sometimes limited roadspace along key corridors such as the A6 and A683 difficult;
- Lancaster’s bus provision is focused on a core ‘crescent’ of regular service linking Lancaster University in the south to Lancaster City Centre and Morecambe/Heysham to the west. Away from this core network, and particularly in the rural hinterland and in the evening and weekend, the level of services deteriorates, limiting modal choice;
- Internally to the District, rail as a mode of commuting is limited to Lancaster, Morecambe or Carnforth. A major challenge for the city is the step from providing good public transport at key times to ‘exemplar’ amenities that provide real potential for modal shift;

- Walking and cycling appear to be generally accepted modes of transport. Indeed, there are several corridors, such as the Lancaster-Morecambe Greenway and the River Lune Valley, where regular pedestrian and cycling flows are significant;
- Significant collision and road safety issues appear to be concentrated on several critical junctions in and around the City Centre, partially as a result of the relatively high volumes of activity in such locations, but potentially due to imbalance between vehicular provision and that for other modes; and
- Off street parking offer may be deemed poor by some at a number of facilities in quality and location in terms of availability. To take a significant step up and achieve major physical project led regeneration will require a significant change in parking strategy.

The baseline work also concluded that the following were key issues to address and resolve:

- Lack of connectivity between Lancaster and Morecambe, and between Lancaster and University;
- Congestion in Lancaster City Centre and on key radial routes;
- Lack of integration between main leisure, retail, business, and transport hubs in Lancaster City Centre;
- Lack of quality public transport on offer encourages car trips;
- Limited River Lune crossing opportunities;
- Development in the south curtailed by limitations of Galgate crossroads;
- Insufficient public transport priority in Lancaster City Centre adding to journey time and diluting bus offer;
- Poor pedestrian facilities and public realm particularly in Morecambe;
- Lack of/discontinuity of Cycle Routes in the area;
- Cross-town movement of trips;
- Poor public transport infrastructure;
- Need for increased clarity of directional signing; and
- Increasing linkages to surrounding rural residential communities.

Subsequently, a series of key challenges were concluded being:

- Removal of unnecessary traffic from core areas of the City Centre;
- Expansion of pedestrianisation and enhancement of public realm;
- Creating bus priority at areas of key delay to buses and developing new ways of allowing bus based provision to take a step upwards;
- Undertaking corridor led improvements along main routes;
- Rationalising off-street parking – creating gateway parking opportunities on key approaches;
- Improving pedestrian linkages between the City Centre and surrounding residential areas, overcoming severances;
- Providing a stronger image of the city from core corridors, particularly the West Coast Mainline;
- Improving signing and way-finding to create a far more legible District;
- Creating a District that is accessible to all, with strong emphasis on health and mobility; and
- Promoting a Park & Ride strategy as part of a balanced public transport and parking strategy.

1.3

Key Identified Themes

The Key Themes identified for the Lancaster District Transport Vision and Strategy are as follows:

- To reduce the influence of traffic that simply passes through Lancaster City Centre – the Heysham to M6 Link Road is a major building block towards this aim;
- To build upon the core existing transport assets of the city rather than create new, such as the west coast mainline and the M6;
- To intercept long stay and long distance visitors to Lancaster and Morecambe at the edges and offer them attractive alternatives to driving into the centre;
- To encourage greater use of more sustainable, high occupancy modes for longer trips (e.g. rail, bus, car clubs);
- To create a walkable and cycleable urban area, making greater use of natural resources such as the River Lune Corridor and Lancaster Canal corridors in particular; and
- To develop a climate that ‘raises the bar’ in terms of public transport.