

Planning Statement: Millom Leisure, Proposed Northern Access Road to Activity & Leisure Centre

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

This Planning Statement accompanies a full planning application (reference PP-14400857) submitted to Cumberland Council for the construction of a new northern access road to serve the approved Millom Activity & Leisure Centre (the "Facility") within the Millom School campus, located at Salthouse Road, Millom, Cumbria, LA18 5AB (the "Site"). The application seeks permission for engineering works to create a dedicated vehicular access primarily for Maintenance, disabled parking, alongside enhanced pedestrian and cycle routes, to improve safety and accessibility for users of the Facility.

The Facility itself was granted planning permission 4/24/2355/0F1 on 20th February 2025 and is under construction as a new community leisure hub designed to provide modern sports and recreational amenities for the local population. The approved scheme relies on an existing single-lane access road from the school's main car park, which serves both pedestrians and limited vehicular traffic (e.g., maintenance and disabled access). However, post-approval assessments have identified inherent safety risks in this shared arrangement, necessitating the current proposal for a segregated northern access.

This Statement sets out the requirements for the proposed new access, justifies its necessity in light of the approved Facility, and details the works involved. It demonstrates full compliance with national and local planning policies, emphasizing the proposal's role in enhancing community infrastructure while mitigating any potential impacts.

1.2 The Applicant and Agent

- **Applicant:** Cumberland Council, Parkhouse Building, Baron Way, Carlisle, CA6 4SJ (represented by Mrs. Wendy Devlin).
- **Agent:** Cohesion Consult Ltd, Lytchett House, Wareham Road, Poole, Dorset, BH16 6FA (Mr. Stuart Ainsley).
- **Design Team:** Architects Plus (UK) Limited, Suite 3, Carlyle's Court, St Mary's Gate, Carlisle, CA3 8RY (drawing reference: 24015-9022B).

The Site falls within the administrative boundary of Cumberland Council, and the proposal aligns with the Council's emerging priorities for sustainable community development.

2. Site and Context

2.1 Location and Description

The Site comprises approximately 1,450 sqm of existing field access and verge adjacent to Millom School's northern boundary, fronting Salthouse Road (A5093). It is situated within the Millom School campus, a key educational and recreational asset in the town. The grid reference is Easting 317305, Northing 480455.

The surrounding area is predominantly residential and educational, with Salthouse Road providing vehicular access to the school and nearby housing. The approved Facility is located to the east of the school buildings, with its primary access currently routed via a narrow, single-lane road from the main school car park. This existing route traverses playing fields and involves shared surfaces for pedestrians (including Facility users from the car park) and vehicles (maintenance and disabled parking), creating conflict points.

The Site is not within a designated flood zone (per Environment Agency Flood Map) but is adjacent to minor watercourses. No protected species or irreplaceable habitats are present, with a pre-development biodiversity value of 0.23 (calculated 03/09/2025 using the 2025 Biodiversity Metric version).

2.2 Planning History

The Facility benefits from prior approval for its construction, which included the existing access arrangement. This application is a non-material or minor material amendment in practice, focused solely on access improvements to operationalize the approved scheme safely. No pre-application advice was formally sought, but informal consultations with Council officers confirmed the need for enhanced segregation of traffic modes.

3. Description of the Proposal

3.1 Overview

The proposal involves the formation of a new northern access road (approximately 100m in length) from Salthouse Road to the Facility's entrance, primarily to provide dedicated vehicular access for disabled parking bays (up to 6 spaces). Pedestrian, cycle, and maintenance vehicle access will utilize the existing northern school road, with enhancements to ensure safe segregation.

The works will not alter the approved Facility footprint but will improve connectivity, visibility, and inclusivity. The total site area affected remains 1,450 sqm, with no loss of non-residential floorspace or residential units.

3.2 Detailed Works

The scheme is illustrated in the submitted drawing (24015-9022B - Proposed Northern Access Road, Rev B, dated 06/10/2025, scale 1:200 @ A1). Key elements include:

- **Vehicular Access:**
 - New tarmac-surfaced access road (3.3m wide carriageway) from a revised junction on Salthouse Road, with improved visibility splays (2.1m x 2.1m) and a tightened junction radius to enhance highway safety.
 - Direct link to 4 dedicated disabled parking bays at the Facility entrance, eliminating the need for vehicles to negotiate the existing shared route.
 - Removable bollards at key points of the existing single track that will become pedestrian only to restrict unauthorized access while permitting emergency/maintenance vehicles.
- **Pedestrian and Cycle Enhancements:**
 - A new 3m-wide shared pedestrian/cycle path (tarmac surfaced) running parallel to the access road from Salthouse Road to the Facility.
 - Pedestrian-only route from the main school car park to the Facility, incorporating a new tarmac ramp (with kerbed upstands and metal key-clamp railings at two levels) to achieve compliant gradients (1:20 max).
 - Gated stepped access (double timber field gate, 3m wide, with 5 risers at 158mm rise/300mm going and tubular handrails) into the playing fields for maintenance/pedestrian overflow.
 - Raised crossing on Salthouse Road linking to wider town improvements (e.g., connective paths).
- **Boundary and Landscaping Treatments:**
 - 1.2m-high timber post-and-rail fencing along the access road and between the running track/playing fields.
 - Low retaining walls (max. 1.05m height) to accommodate road construction on sloped terrain, battered at 1:3.
 - Pin kerbs between surfaces and minor battering of grass banks for visual integration.
 - Retention of existing access links from the car park/school to playing fields; no trees/hedges affected (no survey required per BS5837).
- **Drainage and Utilities:**
 - Surface water disposal existing highway drainage at Salthouse Road.
 - No trade effluent or hazardous substances involved.

Construction will use standard materials: tarmac for roads/paths, timber for fencing/gates, and concrete for steps/kerbs. Works are phased to minimize disruption, with no hours of operation changes (daytime school/leisure use).

4. Planning Policy Context

4.1 National Policy

The proposal accords with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2023, as amended):

- **Paragraph 92:** Supports the development of community facilities to enhance well-being, with the new access enabling safe delivery of the approved leisure hub.
- **Paragraph 110:** Requires safe and suitable access for all users, prioritizing pedestrians and cyclists. The segregated design improves visibility, reduces conflict, and promotes active travel.
- **Paragraph 174-180:** Protects and enhances biodiversity; the scheme achieves net gain compliance (metric calculation submitted: ERAP Ltd 2025-248, dated 03/09/2025).

4.2 Local Policy

Cumberland Council's emerging Local Plan (adopted February 2025) provides the framework for sustainable growth, replacing saved policies from predecessor authorities (Allerdale, Carlisle, Copeland Local Plans). Relevant provisions include:

- **Policy SA1 (Spatial Strategy):** Promotes infrastructure improvements to support community needs in Millom, a priority growth area.
- **Policy INF1 (Infrastructure):** Requires development to provide or contribute to necessary access enhancements, with this proposal directly addressing highway safety for an approved facility.
- **Saved Policy from Copeland Local Plan (2013):** Policy ST2 supports transport improvements that prioritize safety and accessibility, aligning with the segregated access.
- **Cumbria County Council Planning Obligations Policy (2023):** Justifies infrastructure contributions for highways, with no Section 106 sought here as works are on-site.

Pre-planning guidance from Cumberland Council (Highways Advice, 2025) confirms that access proposals must demonstrate no material harm to the highway network, which is satisfied via the improved junction and low traffic volumes (leisure use only).

5. Justification and Benefits

5.1 Need for the New Access

The approved Facility anticipates up to 500 weekly users, including school pupils, families, and disabled visitors. The existing single-lane access poses significant risks:

- **Safety Conflicts:** Pedestrians from the main car park must share the route with maintenance/disabled vehicles, requiring negotiation on blind corners and shared surfaces.
- **Accessibility Barriers:** Limited disabled parking access via the narrow road discourages inclusive use, contravening Equality Act 2010 duties.
- **Operational Inefficiency:** Post-approval traffic modelling (internal) indicates peak-hour congestion, with visibility splays below Manual for Streets standards.

The new northern access addresses these by:

- Segregating modes: Vehicles (disabled only) on the new road; pedestrians/cyclists/maintenance on the existing route with bollards for controlled access.
- Enhancing connectivity: Links to Salthouse Road improvements and town-wide paths, promoting walking/cycling (3m shared path).
- Supporting the Approved Scheme: Without this, the Facility risks delayed opening or safety objections from users/highway authority.

5.2 Benefits

- **Community and Economic:** Improves access to a vital leisure facility, boosting health outcomes and local retention (aligning with Levelling Up agenda).
- **Highway Safety:** Revised junction reduces accident risk; low additional traffic (est. 20 vehicles/day).
- **Inclusivity:** Dedicated disabled access ensures compliance with Building Regulations Part M.
- **Sustainability:** Encourages active travel; minimal biodiversity impact (net gain certified).

No adverse effects on neighbours, ecology, or heritage; the low-scale works blend with the campus landscape.

6. Assessment of Impacts

Impact Area	Assessment	Mitigation
Highways/Access	Minor increase in turning movements; improved visibility.	Junction redesign per Cumberland Highways standards; no capacity issues.
Flood Risk	Site not in high-risk zone; <20m from watercourse.	no increased risk elsewhere.
Biodiversity	Pre-dev value 0.23; no irreplaceable habitats/loss since 30/01/2020.	Net gain via metric; habitat enhancements (e.g., grass banks).
Contamination	Green field verge; no known issues.	N/A.
Visual/Residential Amenity	Low walls/fencing; screened by existing vegetation.	Materials match locality; no overlooking.

All assessments confirm no significant adverse impacts.

7. Conclusion

The proposed northern access road is essential to safely deliver the approved Millom Activity & Leisure Centre, addressing safety, accessibility, and operational shortcomings in the existing arrangement. By segregating disabled vehicular access while enhancing pedestrian/cycle routes, it delivers clear public benefits in line with NPPF and Cumberland Local Plan objectives.

Cumberland Council is respectfully requested to grant full planning permission at the earliest opportunity to support this community-focused infrastructure.

Prepared by: Cohesion Consult Ltd **Date:** 29 October 2025

Appendices (submitted separately):

- Drawing 24015-9022B (Proposed Northern Access Road).
- Biodiversity Metric Calculation (ERAP Ltd 2025-248).
- Engineering Details (Highways/Drainage).