

Planning Application 3/2017/0317

Outline planning application for employment floorspace (use classes B1, B2 and B8) and associated access, car parking, landscaping and services infrastructure (all matters reserved except for access).

Land south of Blackburn Road, Hothersall

Planning Statement on behalf of BKW Developments Ltd.

June 2017

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Statement is prepared to support an outline planning application by BKW Developments Ltd for the creation of employment floorspace (use classes B1, B2, B8) on land at Blackburn Road, Hothersall.
- 1.2 All matters are reserved at this stage other than the proposed access. It is intended that the site will be presented in two phases in order to provide flexibility in the provision of employment land, to cater for both current and future needs of the Borough.
- 1.3 This statement describes the site and its surroundings; the proposal; sets out the approach taken to the design (although indicative at this stage); details the demand for employment land; summarises the relevant planning policies and assesses the proposals against planning policy.
- 1.4 The application comprises various supporting components, some of which have been amended or revised in response to feedback during the planning process to date. Those documents and drawings should be read in conjunction with this statement, which will detail the substantial benefits in developing a sustainably located area of land.
- 1.5 As the supporting documents and responses from statutory consultees demonstrate there are no overriding technical constraints that would prevent development in the manner proposed. The scheme also has the added benefit of offering solutions to long standing highway safety issues in the vicinity. The proposed development is in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the Ribble Valley Core Strategy and represents a viable proposal for the emerging the Development Plan. The development is appropriate in terms of its land use, indicative scale, design and layout. As a consequence, a presumption in favour of development should be applied.

2 Site and Surroundings

- 2.1 The application site comprises an area of open land to the south of Blackburn Road, Hothersall. It is located some 500m to the east of the defined settlement of Longridge. However, residential developments in recent history around and along Dilworth Lane (current Taylor Wimpey development of 195 dwellings not yet shown on aerial photograph excerpt below) mean that the built form of the settlement is only a short distance from the land, as reflected the revised, draft settlement boundary plans.



Figure 1: Site Location
(Source: Google Maps)

- 2.2 The centre of Longridge lies just over 1 kilometre to the west which contains all the services and facilities associated with a main settlement. To the north of the site are the Spade Mill Reservoirs and to the east a combination of residential properties, a public house (The Corporation Arms) and the Hillside Specialist School.
- 2.3 There are regular bus services which run past the site, with stops located in both directions within easy walking distance of the site, as shown denoted by blue boxes in Figure 1 above.

3 The Proposal

- 3.1 The proposal seeks to create circa 8,500 square metres of new employment floor space, falling within the 'B' Use Class Order categories. Subsequent to the original submission, a further 'parameters plan' has been provided which, shows the desired approach to future development on the site.
- 3.2 As a flexible proposal with consideration of potential future needs, the scheme would be broken in to two phases. The existing layout of the site lends itself to this arrangement with the larger parcel, measuring approximately 2 hectares in area coming forward as 'Phase 1'. The location and scale of the site allows for any development to sit comfortably within it whilst also providing a generous belt of screening to the perimeter to mitigate against any possible landscape impacts. In this regard, the scheme would respect its open countryside setting whilst ensuring that scale and massing are not inimical to this designation.
- 3.3 'Phase 2' measures roughly a hectare in area and is set back from Blackburn Road by 100m+. Owing to its size, it offers expansion opportunities for future development whilst also providing a sufficient buffer between existing and proposed buildings. Detailed layout proposals can fully consider those relationships and introduce design solutions to ensure minimal impact from the activities and structures on the site.

4 Design and Access

- 4.1 This section of the Planning Statement seeks to establish the design concepts for the development taking in to account local and national planning policy and guidance.
- 4.2 This section will:
- identify the key issues and opportunities offered by the site; and
 - provide information on the development in terms of use, amount, layout, scale and appearance.

Design Concept Objectives

- 4.3 There are several design parameters which have influenced the proposals – the adjacent land uses, site topography and the need to create safe access/egress for vehicle users, pedestrians and the adjacent school. It should be noted that the application is made in outline at this stage and matters of appearance and scale are reserved. However, we feel it is important to provide some details on the aspired designs in order to show the quality of development which is sought.
- 4.4 Adjacent uses are varied, but those nearest to the site boundary primarily consist of a small number of dwellings, the Hillside School, commercial units and agricultural land. The indicative layout shows that these uses have been accounted for, with supplementary landscaping to the perimeter, separation distances to sensitive receptors and the potential for improved access to Hillside School (see 'Access' section below).
- 4.5 Internally the site can be configured to ensure that any associated landscape impacts are minimal. The buildings within the site would be of a high quality and would not appear as a typical employment or industrial estate. The use of timber cladding, sections of stone and strategic landscaping both externally and within the site would create a development befitting of this edge of settlement location. Ridge and eaves heights would be kept to a practicable minimum to ensure that the massing and roofscape of the development does not have an adverse impact on the wider open countryside (see amended Design and Access Statement).

Use

- 4.6 The proposal will comprise a mixed employment use falling within use classes B1, B2 and B8, the finalised details of which would be established as part of any reserved matters submission.

Layout & Access

- 4.7 The proposed access to the site would be via a new vehicular and pedestrian entrance to Blackburn Road. As the illustrative plans show, there is more than sufficient space to accommodate estate roads, parking, circulation and turning areas. The application is supported by a Transport Statement prepared by PSA Design. Further work has also been undertaken in response to comments from statutory consultees. The access design has subsequently been revised to ensure adequate visibility, along with the provision of a pedestrian refuge to allow pedestrians to cross Blackburn Road safely. An updated statement is to be submitted shortly in support of these changes.
- 4.8 In total, the site covers circa 3 hectares, however as detailed in paragraph 3.2 above it is intended to deliver development in a two-phase process. The first and larger parcel is the focus of this submission and would allow the site to become established, offering a range of uses across the B1, B2 and B8 categories.
- 4.9 The additional land to the east allows for expansion of the site to cater for future employment demand and seeks to resolve an outstanding issue at the adjacent Hillside School. Due to its characteristics, catchment area for pupils and drop off/collection arrangements, significant highway safety issues occur outside the school entrance at the start and end of each day. Vehicles often queue back to (and beyond) the junction with the B6243, parking with two wheels on the public footway. This creates a twofold problem; firstly, pedestrians are unable to pass the vehicles with ease due to the reduced footway width, leading to them walking in the carriageway. This is particularly dangerous for those with pushchairs, wheelchairs or limited mobility. Secondly the position of parked vehicles close to, and within the junction generates significant highway safety issues for other road users.
- 4.10 This is a long-standing issue which is evident when undertaking a planning history search relating to the school. As the site has developed over recent years, comments from third parties, including neighbours, Parish Councils and County Highway Engineers have been invited. Responses regularly refer to problems around pupil drop off and collection arrangements. The County Highway Engineer relayed concerns to LCC Development Control Officers as recently as March 2016 when considering an application at the school. During a morning site visit he witnessed 11 waiting vehicles, parked partially on the footway, forcing pedestrians to walk in the road. He advised that measures should be implemented to address the highway concerns these issues posed. Despite this however, the matter continues to generate problems during peak periods and has yet to be resolved.

- 4.11 In order to alleviate this, it is proposed that a safer point of access for the school could be incorporated through the site, from Blackburn Road. The provision of land at the eastern school boundary for this purpose would enable vehicles to arrive with or wait for children without having an adverse impact on the surrounding highway network. Any activity would be contained wholly within dedicated land where a suitable queueing and turning area could be designed to the satisfaction of the school. It is noted that the review of the Transport Statement commissioned by Hothersall Parish Council questions the need for and benefits of alternative access arrangements (paragraph 3.12 of the review undertaken by J C Carruthers). However, this position appears to be contrary to Parish representations in response to earlier developments at the school where concerns were raised in relation to highway safety.
- 4.12 Appended to this statement are photographs, dated 10th May 2017, which show the level and type of vehicular activity associated with the school on a typical morning. Photograph 1 shows vehicles beginning to arrive and parking on the footway adjacent to the school entrance. Photographs 2 and 3 show the people carriers parking across the junction, preventing the free flow of traffic and severely limiting visibility to the east for vehicles emerging from the B6243. Photograph 4 shows queuing traffic, unable to pass due to a combination of parked vehicles and those oncoming. Photographs 5 and 6 show vehicles having to travel on the opposite side of the carriageway to pass (and take evasive action in photograph 6 to avoid an accident) the aforementioned queue.
- 4.13 The applicants, BKW Developments Ltd, are fully aware of this issue and acknowledge that the nature of the school, combined with its physical constraints mean that finding practical solutions are difficult. However, as a neighbouring land owner they are willing and able to assist in resolving the matter.

5 Planning Policy Context

- 5.1 Planning applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this case the Development Plan comprises the approved Ribble Valley Core Strategy 2008-2028.
- 5.2 Other key local and national policies and guidance that should be considered in the decision making process include the National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012).
- 5.3 The Council's Employment Land Study Refresh was undertaken in 2013 to provide an assessment of supply, need and demand for employment land in the Ribble Valley.
- 5.4 The recently published Housing and Economic Development DPD (with the associated Sustainability Appraisal Report) is also of some relevance and will be discussed in more detail below. However, accounting for its status at the Regulation 19 stage, it can be afforded limited weight at this time.
- 5.5 It should also be noted that both the Central Lancashire Core Strategy the Preston Local Plan (2012-2026) acknowledge the cross-boundary importance of Longridge. Considering its strategic role as a Key Service Centre, appropriate scales of employment growth and investment are to be encouraged and directed towards the area.

Development Plan

Ribble Valley Borough Council Core Strategy 2008-2028

- 5.6 The Core Strategy was adopted in December 2014 and sets out the overall strategic direction for the Borough.
- 5.7 The site is denoted as being in open countryside and is outside the defined settlement for Longridge. In light of this designation and the nature of the proposal, the following Core Strategy policies are relevant to the application;
- 5.8 *Key Statement DS1* – outlines the Borough wide development strategy and identifies Longridge as a 'principal settlement'.
- 5.9 *Key Statement EN2* – seeks to ensure that new development does not undermine landscape character.
- 5.10 *Key Statement EN4* – seeks to avoid adverse impacts on biodiversity in new development. Applications should be supported by appropriate information in this regard.

- 5.11 *Key Statement EC1* – directs employment growth to main settlements with Longridge highlighted as a preferred location. Land will be allocated to support growth during the lifetime of the plan.
- 5.12 *Key Statement DMI2* – advises that new development should be located to minimise the need to travel.
- 5.13 *Policy DMG1* – promotes high standards of design which is suitable in terms of appearance, density and relationship between buildings. Safe access should be provided which is suitable to accommodate the scale of traffic to be generated.
- 5.14 *Policy DMG2* – guides Borough wide strategic development which supports the spatial vision of the Council. New development in principal settlements should closely relate to main built up areas and be of an appropriate scale, particularly in open countryside.
- 5.15 *Policy DMG3* – requires the Council to consider the availability and adequacy of public transport which serves new development. This includes proximity to primary routes/road networks, provision for access by pedestrians, cyclists and those with reduced mobility and development which offers alternatives to reliance on private vehicles.
- 5.16 *Policy DME1* – seeks to protect trees and woodland, requiring an arboricultural assessment where development has the potential to impact on trees.
- 5.17 *Policy DME2* – advises that development which harms important landscape or landscape features will be refused.
- 5.18 *Policy DME6* – seeks to control and prevent flood risk and ground water contamination.
- 5.19 *Policy DMB1* – supports business and economic growth in line with the strategic vision of the Core Strategy.

Employment Land Study Refresh 2013

- 5.20 This evidence base document was developed to establish supply, need and demand for employment land within the Borough. When published it identified a need for an additional 8 hectares of land to cover the plan period until 2028. As part of the assessment, occupancy rates of existing industrial sites were found to be high. This is supported by a high volume of skilled tradespeople in the area who require a balanced employment land portfolio which caters for all sectors of the economy.

- 5.21 The study explicitly encourages the prioritised provision of land allocations in Longridge (with specific reference to sites at College Farm, which were described as being '*well connected in that access back to Preston and the M6 motorway would not necessitate road traffic passing through the town*'), above other settlements. Since the publication of the study, other employment sites have come forward which has reduced the Council's residual land requirements. This is reflected in the type and size of the options proposed within the HED DPD.

Housing and Economic Development DPD and Sustainability Appraisal 2017

- 5.22 This document forms part of the Council's Issues and Options consultation process and as such is not formally adopted at this stage. The DPD as a whole represents the Council's preferred options in terms of land allocations, including employment sites, and should be in conformity with the Core Strategy, especially Key Statement EC1. By way of existing and committed sites, the document advises that a minimum residual requirement for 2.4 hectares of land exists across the Borough. The application site does not form one of the Council's preferred options however, a neighbouring parcel of land to the west at Higher College Farm is nominated as one of three proposals. The Council advise that their intention is to allocate 4 hectares in total (an overprovision of 1.6 hectares) to meet identified demand whilst also ensuring the delivery of land to meet requirements for Longridge. We have significant concerns about this approach and have separately made formal representations in response to the HED DPD.
- 5.23 The amount of land to be delivered constitutes a Borough-wide figure, calculated in the context of committed sites elsewhere. However, we consider that the 4ha proposed represents an unsustainable amount. Of the committed sites, 1.1ha at Carr Hall Garden Centre, Wilpshire is to be occupied for B1 purposes by an identified end user, for a temporary period only. It is also outside of the spatial hierarchy identified in Key Statement EC1. At Standen in Clitheroe it is not clear when an area of 2.25ha of employment land will come forward, forming a later phase of a much larger site. In addition, proposed site allocation Policy EAL1 in the publication version HED DPD at Sykes Holt, Mellor Brook is also a user-specific proposal that is intended to be occupied by Thwaites Brewery rather than meeting general purpose employment needs. The allocation proposed in Policy EAL2 at Time Technology Park, Simonstone does not accord with the spatial requirements of Key Statement EC1, being outside the three main settlements and remote from the A59 corridor.

- 5.24 In light of these circumstances we consider that there are two significant issues in relation to the DPD. Firstly, by their nature those aforementioned sites fail to make provision for wider, general employment needs in line with the Core Strategy. As such their inclusion in the amount already committed creates an artificial ceiling to the remaining allocation. Secondly, the subsequent distribution of that reduced residual figure does little to meet identified need in Longridge. A modest portion of this smaller figure represents a short-term approach, contrary to all available evidence. A failure to provide enough employment land on strategically preferable sites may result in more haphazard piecemeal development around the town, which is unsustainable and inefficient.
- 5.25 Recent residential growth in Longridge has not been matched by business or employment growth. The lack of suitable sites has resulted in new or expanding business moving outside of the area in search of suitable premises. The approach taken within the DPD would not address this issue and fails to provide the necessary infrastructure for future development.
- 5.26 The Sustainability Appraisal which supports the DPD also contains information relevant to this proposal. As the application site has previously been nominated as a potential allocation in the 2016 Issues and Options consultation, it has been assessed and scored as part of the Appraisal process, as has the neighbouring site at Higher College which advanced as a preferred option. Appendix C of the document provides the detailed assessment of each. It should be noted that the application site performs better than its neighbour in the 'Landscape and Townscape' category. The preferred site at Higher College Farm is described as having the potential to have *moderate* effect on townscape character. In contrast, the application site is found to have a *neutral* impact.
- 5.27 The application site provides greater potential benefits than the land at Higher College Farm but also clearly represents a more sensitive option in terms of landscape impact as the Appraisal confirms. These issues aside it appears that the preferred option was carried forwards purely on the basis of its size, being smaller than the application site and therefore less likely to result in a perceived overprovision of employment land. The additional benefits of developing this site will be discussed in more detail in the Appraisal section of this statement below.

National Planning Policy Framework

- 5.28 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's policies for the planning system and how it expects them to be applied positively and pro-actively to deliver sustainable growth and new development to meet objectively assessed needs.

- 5.29 It confirms that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations including the Framework indicate otherwise, and that due weight should be given to development plan policies according to their consistency with the Framework. Weight can also be afforded to emerging development plans according to their stage of preparation, the number of unresolved objections against them and the degree of consistency with the Framework.

Sustainable development

- 5.30 The Ministerial foreword states the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, and that development which is sustainable, should go ahead without delay. Paragraph 7 confirms the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development and states these are inter-dependent and should not be treated in isolation in the consideration of planning issues.

- 5.31 Paragraph 14 explains that a presumption in favour of sustainable development lies at the heart of the Framework, which for decision taking means;

“approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay”, and; “Where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out of date granting planning permission unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole; or its specific policies indicate development should be restricted.”

- 5.32 Paragraph 17 sets out key principles which planning should seek to underpin plan making and decision taking. These include criteria to:

- *Proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the ...businesses that the country needs;*
- *Promoting the vitality of our main urban areas and respond positively to wider opportunities for growth;*
- *Seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity;*
- *Actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable*

- 5.33 The general perspective from the NPPF is that planning should proactively drive growth and support sustainable economic development. The Government is committed to ensuring that the planning system does everything it can to support sustainable economic growth and also promote a strong and competitive economy.

Promoting sustainable transport

5.34 Section 4 of the NPPF promotes sustainable transport. Paragraph 34 states that:

“Plans and decisions should ensure that developments that generate significant movement are located where the need to travel is minimised and the use of sustainable transport modes can be maximized.”

Requiring Good Design

5.35 The NPPF at section 7 considers design matters and confirms that the Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment (paragraph 56). Paragraph 58 lists a number of design criteria which Local Planning Authorities should ensure developments address and supplemented by paragraph 60 which provides general advice on design and states that:

“Planning policies and decisions should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes and they should not stifle innovation, originality or initiative through unsubstantiated requirements to conform to certain development forms or styles. It is, however, proper to reinforce local distinctiveness”.

5.36 Sections 10 and 11 of the NPPF outline how local authorities should promote development which minimizes the impacts of climate change, reduce flood risks and enhance and encourage biodiversity opportunities in and around developments.

6 Appraisal

- 6.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 refers to the development plan as a whole and requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The principle of development

- 6.2 The development seeks to create 8,500 square metres of employment floorspace to bolster the economy of the Borough and more specifically to meet an identified need in Longridge. Of the aforementioned policies and key statements, DS1, EC1, DMI2, DMG2 and DMB1 all recognise the role of Longridge as a principal settlement, encouraging development which helps to create employment for local people and prevent the outward migration of workers. The proposal accords with this approach and would bring sustainable development to Longridge and the immediate vicinity.
- 6.3 The application must also be determined in line with the requirements of paragraph 14 of the NPPF, in the absence of an adopted site allocations plan. Where the development plan is silent, absent or out of date, permission should be approved without delay unless the adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the Framework as a whole. There are significant benefits to the scheme (detailed below), which when weighed against the limited harm from development lead to a clear presumption in favour of development.
- 6.4 The site currently comprises open land but is only a short distance from Longridge, located on a prominent and well used highway. It is adjacent to the newly proposed draft settlement boundary of the town and in a highly sustainable location. The lack of suitable capacity within the settlement means that a site such as this represents the only viable option for delivery of land. The HED DPD also acknowledges the sustainably credentials of the site, highlighting its proximity to sustainable transport opportunities and being within 1km of existing jobs/services. The development provides benefits above and beyond those associated with the preferred site at Higher College Farm whilst also being in the same geographical proximity. Due to its size, the site can deliver development across two phases, this ensures responsive capacity to ensure that future demand can be met.

Need & Benefits of the Scheme

- 6.5 The committed sites and proposed allocations detailed in paragraph 5.23 above account for a significant proportion of the Council's intended supply across the plan period. However, they fail to provide for wider, general requirements and are of no direct benefit to Longridge, where local needs continue to go unmet despite an acknowledged deficit. The result is a sub-optimal allocation for the town, where no meaningful employment has taken place in recent history. Additional need cannot be accommodated within the settlement, therefore sustainably located sites in close proximity are required. The largest existing site, on Shay Lane, is at capacity and cannot be extended further. Vacancies at alternative sites have been highlighted in third party correspondence, (e.g. Red Scar Industrial Estate) however their distance from the town would not address the identified need in Longridge itself.
- 6.6 The imposition of a limited allocation could ultimately stifle development, especially when uptake is likely to be high accounting for the findings of the Council and local commercial property agents (please see attached report prepared by Trevor Dawson). The report finds that existing employers are often forced to leave the area in the pursuit of suitable premises. Equally this lack of available floorspace means that those wishing to set up new business do not have access to good quality buildings or facilities. This compounds the existing problem of outward migration of both businesses and work force. Allied with a potential under provision of suitable or developable land, it is unlikely that Longridge will be able to attract the necessary investment to see proposals fulfilled. The expansion opportunities which this site can offer would ensure that incentives exist for developers to deliver a high standard of mixed employment premises.
- 6.7 In terms of planning balance, paragraph 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework seeks to weigh any potential harm against the benefits of a proposal. The technical matters and physical constraints of the site are outlined from paragraph 6.15 below. These show that any harm associated in developing the site is extremely limited. When viewed against the significant benefits of sustainable economic growth; addressing an identified and unmet demand; reducing outward migration of jobs/commuters and supporting the local economy from the construction process onwards, it is clear that the balance is in favour of development. It also has the added benefit of providing an opportunity to resolve long standing highway safety issues relating to vehicular activity around the existing entrance to Hillside School.
- 6.8 The provision of employment land for Longridge is also supported by Colin Hirst, Head of Regeneration and Housing at Ribble Valley Borough Council. In a memorandum to the case officer, Adam Birkett, regarding this application, Mr Hirst advises;

"The concept of the provision of additional employment land at Longridge is supported as both a planning and economic development principle. The Council is seeking to address an objective of the provision of employment land and sites to serve Longridge are a particular concern to be delivered. The Core Strategy directs development towards the Longridge area but does not set a prescribed amount of employment land. A significant portion (some 2.2 hectares) of this application site was identified by the Council as being suitable for employment use and was proposed as a potential site in relation to the Housing and Economic DPD and was subject to an SA process that identified no matters that would prevent the site being considered.

The principle of development in relation to this area at this stage consequently raises no fundamental issues certainly in relation to the previously identified site. I do have concerns in relation to the extent of the wider proposal with particular regard to the relationship of the eastward extension of the site and its encroachment towards the sensitive neighbouring uses, namely the specialist school located to the east of the site. Consideration should be given to reducing the scale of the site because of these concerns.

I would also draw your attention to the fact that the current Regulation 19 consultation on the Local Plan now proposes an alternative site, to the west of the application site however my view is that this does not affect the principle of this site being used for employment. Each application has to be considered on its own merits and we need to bear in mind the relatively early stage of plan preparation the Council is in. Whilst the site is not identified as the councils preferred option it has to be considered on its merits."

- 6.9 In contrast to the site at Higher College Farm adjacent, development on this land provides sufficient separation from dwellings on the new Taylor Wimpey site, which is currently under construction. Future layout proposals can also allow for any development to avoid impacts on dwellings to the east (1& 2 Woodville Cottages; Ash Tree Barn and White Lion Farm). In terms of its proximity to Hillside School, any reserved matters scheme can be designed in such a way as to provide adequate separation and a generous belt of screening to the eastern boundary, ensuring no significant loss of amenity by way of activity or noise.

- 6.10 We therefore believe that this supporting information shows a clear benefit in a site which would make an essential contribution in securing the necessary employment land for Longridge. As the HED DPDP is only at consultation stage it can only be afforded minimal weight in the decision making process. In this application, the Council have a viable and deliverable option before them, which accords with the spatial aims of the Core Strategy, offers greater flexibility and scope for future development and has a lesser impact on residential amenity than its neighbour.

Design, character and appearance

- 6.11 Appearance, landscaping, layout and scale are reserved matters for consideration at a later date, however any development here would be of a high standard and not typical of an employment site in terms of its form and finish. Buildings would be kept to the lowest practicable height and walls would be finished in a combination of timber and stone. This would lend a rural, agricultural quality to the design and be appropriate at this edge of settlement site.
- 6.12 Suitable separation distances would be incorporated in to the layout in order to minimise any potential impact on residential amenity. Building orientation, use and style would all help the development comfortably integrate in to its surroundings. Future reserved matters submissions can also control the types of use and scale of development within areas adjacent to the residents and school grounds.
- 6.13 The development would not have an undue or unacceptable impact on the landscape. This is supported by the findings in the HED DPD Sustainability Appraisal, which raises no concern around townscape character. A greater landscape buffer to the western boundary of the site has also been incorporated in to the parameters plan, as requested by officers. This would ensure that any built form is suitably softened by existing and supplementary planting.
- 6.14 This intended design approach acknowledges and responds to site specific characteristics, which would accord with Policies EN2, DMG1 and DME2 of the Core Strategy.

Technical matters

- 6.15 There are a number of technical matters to consider in developing the site. These include access, ecology, trees and drainage.

Access

- 6.16 The planning application submission is accompanied a Transport Assessment undertaken by PSA Design. Further to this, additional work has been carried out in response to comments and observations from third parties. An updated assessment will be provided in due course which shows that safe and suitable access is achievable from Blackburn Road for both drivers and

pedestrians.

- 6.17 In response to views of LCC Engineers, we would highlight that the strategic purpose of developing land within Longridge is to meet a locally identified need. This aside, it is comfortably within walking or cycling distance of the main settlement, the nearest houses are some 150m to the west and bus stops located to the east. The HED DPD also confirms that the site is located in close proximity to jobs, services and sustainable transport opportunities.
- 6.18 Lancashire County Council information indicates that the nearest bus stops (both at the Corporation Arms adjacent to the site boundary) are covered by the number 5 and 35 services which travel as far afield as Blackburn, Clitheroe and Chipping. Each service stops up to 7 times throughout the day in either direction. This clearly provides opportunities for future users of the site who may live outside of Longridge, to travel using public transport.
- 6.19 A network of public footpaths and bridleways also exist to the north of the site which link to a wider catchment of residential areas. They provide a direct route to the development and offer choice in accessing the site.
- 6.20 Information on the Ribble Valley Borough Council website (by way of a cycle map which is available to download) also shows that Blackburn Road is part of a 'recommended on-road cycle route' forming part of the wider Lancashire Cycleway. This connects a number of the surrounding towns and villages and further adds to the sustainable credentials of the site.
- 6.21 Accordingly, the proposal complies with Core Strategy Policies EC1, DMI2, DMG1 and DMG3, being accessible by various means.

Ecology

- 6.22 The planning submission is accompanied by an Ecological Survey and Assessment which finds that the development would not have an adverse impact on biodiversity, subject to the advised elements of mitigation. The scheme also offers to opportunity to provide improved diversity through the retention of existing landscaping and water bodies within the site, along with supplementary planting.
- 6.23 Accordingly, the proposal complies with Core Strategy Policy EN4.

Trees and Arboricultural Issues

- 6.24 The application is supported by an Arboricultural Impact Assessment which details the likely outcomes if the site were to be developed in the manner shown on the indicative plans. It demonstrates that a number of existing trees can be retained and where removal of trees/hedges is proposed, suitable mitigation can be incorporated in to a landscaping scheme at the reserved matters stage.
- 6.25 The proposal therefore accords with Core Strategy Policy DME1.

Drainage

- 6.26 The application is supported by a Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy for the proposal. Both the Environment Agency (EA) and the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) have responded raising no objections in principle.
- 6.27 The EA have suggested that the possibility of connection to new mains drainage infrastructure associated with the nearby Taylor Wimpey site is investigated. Advice in relation to non-mains foul water discharge is also provided along with a condition requesting the provision of oil separators.
- 6.28 The LLFA seek confirmation that there is an agreement to allow the proposed surface water discharge in to the watercourse which runs beyond the application boundary. We can confirm that this adjacent land is within the control of the developer and therefore raises no issues. A number of standard conditions are also recommended which raise no insurmountable issues in this case.
- 6.29 The proposal therefore accords with Policy DME6

Other material considerations

- 6.30 It has been shown that the proposed development is in accordance with the NPPF and the overarching strategic approach in the Core Strategy. Additional matters to be taken into consideration in determining the planning application include job creation and the associated economic benefits of the scheme.

- 6.31 The development has the potential to create a high number of jobs for local people in a variety of sectors. The scheme would offer a range of employment accommodation, a need which is identified in both the Ribble Valley Core Strategy, supporting evidence base and our own assessment undertaken by Trevor Dawson. Investment and growth within Longridge is also acknowledged from outside the Borough, by way of the Central Lancashire Core Strategy and the Preston Local Plan.
- 6.32 The provision of a high quality employment site here will help to sustain the economic future of Longridge and this should be afforded significant weight in the decision making process, as supported by the NPPF.

7 Summary & Conclusions

- 7.1 The proposal comprises an outline planning application for the creation of new employment development on land at Blackburn Road, Hothersall.
- 7.2 The site is available, deliverable and offers all the benefits referred to in this statement. Development of the land would help the Council to achieve its strategic aims of providing and supporting local employment opportunities for Longridge.
- 7.3 It is considered that the site represents a more viable proposal than the adjacent land, which the Council are currently promoting as their preferred option. It provides for wider opportunities (such as the provision of land/access for Hillside Specialist School) and would not have as significant an impact on townscape character. Taking in to account the clear benefits of the site and in the absence of any other technical constraints, the proposal is wholly compliant with both national and local planning policies. As the Council do not currently have formal employment land allocations, the presumption in favour of sustainable development should therefore be applied in accordance with paragraph 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework.