

APP/T2350/A/11/2161186

FINAL



Town and Country Planning Act

Appeal by Gladman Developments Ltd

Land at Henthorn Road, Clitheroe

**Proof of Evidence
in Relation to Design and Environmental Matters**

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December 2011



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“The evidence which I have prepared and provide for this appeal reference: T2350/A/11/2161186 is true and has been prepared and is given in accordance with the guidance of my professional institution and I confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional opinions”

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 My name is Carl Philip Rech. I am a director in the long established, award winning, multi-disciplinary environmental design partnership FPCR. My full qualifications and the track record of FPCR are set out in Appendix 1. Supporting plans, photographs, and documents for the proof are included within the Core Documents and at Appendices 2 & 3.
- 1.2 I have over 30 years experience of complex masterplanning projects, often involving environmentally sensitive sites, in terms of urban design, landscape character, visual resources and biodiversity. These range from major urban expansion schemes (over 3,000 homes planned and built to the south west of Basingstoke) to Coston Park, the first PPS7 country house to be approved by the Secretary of State. Recent large scale sustainable mixed use schemes which have gained consent include Bilston Urban Village, North East Bridgwater and Edwalton on the southern edge of Nottingham. Here FPCR led both the urban design and environmental assessment process for 1200 new homes together with appropriate community facilities in a Green Belt location. All the necessary conditions have recently been discharged successfully
- 1.3 FPCR has received numerous design awards over the years, including the 2003 Civic Trust Partnership Award for "Conkers", the National Forest Discovery Centre, in recognition of its contribution to the regeneration of the former Leicestershire Coalfield. Our Design Code prepared to guide the development of Weedon Hill, an urban extension for 850 homes at Aylesbury, features as an exemplar scheme in the Milton Keynes - South Midlands Sustainable Communities Guide (April 2005) In the past 18 months we have prepared numerous Design and Access Statements and Design Codes in support of masterplanning applications, together with the accompanying Environmental Statements where these have been required.
- 1.4 The practice acts as a consultant to government bodies such as the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA - formerly known as English Partnerships), Natural England, English Heritage and the Environment Agency, and I serve on the East Midlands Design Review Panel, which fulfils a similar role to that of CABI, assessing new development proposals in the region. For many years I was a committee member of the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust, and was co - author of the city's first Urban Wildlife Strategy, which was instrumental in identifying and securing long term management commitments for important habitats within the urban area. I was also responsible for Natural England's preliminary report on the potential for restoration of Sherwood Forest Heathland.
- 1.5 FPCR also acts as consultants to many local authorities across the United Kingdom. We have received Landscape Institute Awards for projects carried out on behalf of Cambridge County Council (The County Waste Strategy Design Guide) and Hinckley and Bosworth (The Borough Wide Landscape Character Assessment) The Practice recently assisted Nottinghamshire County Council on their updated Landscape Character Study. On behalf of Rushcliffe Borough Council we prepared their latest Residential Design Guide, now adopted as supplementary planning guidance.
- 1.6 I have a particular interest in the Henthorn Road project, as I grew up in Clitheroe, and recognise the great importance of the setting of the town adjacent to the River Ribble within the wider Forest of Bowland. I am very confident that the package of proposals and the Masterplan will complement the town and deliver substantial overall benefits, particularly in terms of recreational amenity, biodiversity and landscape character

2.0 THE EVOLUTION OF THE PROPOSALS & THE SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

- 2.1 FPCR were appointed by GDL in April 2010 to prepare the Illustrative Masterplan, supporting Design and Access Statement (DAS) and Landscape & Visual Assessment. These are included within the Core Documents (CD 1.8, 1.12 & 1.21 respectively). I accepted the commission having first satisfied myself that the site was appropriate for development.
- 2.2 We worked very closely with all of the other members of the design and environment team in order to prepare a scheme which evolved in response to the constraints and opportunities presented by the site. FPCR's ecology team were responsible for the Phase 1 Habitat Survey and subsequent Protected Species Surveys. The objective was to create a highly sustainable place to live which minimises potential environmental disruption whilst maximising benefits to the wider community. The process by which the Masterplan was prepared was therefore an iterative one taking full account of the respective inputs from the Applicant's retained experts.
- 2.3 The Appeal Proposal is to create a sustainable urban extension to Clitheroe providing up to 270 homes and a new doctors surgery together with a new community park overlooking the River Ribble, associated public open space within the scheme and highway/townscape improvements. The appeal site abuts the existing settlement edge with ready access to the town centre and its various amenities. The proposal is in outline with all matters reserved for subsequent determination, save for access. The Appeal site has a total area of 15.70 hectares and the proposal seeks to make the most efficient use of land consistent with the guidance in PPS3.
- 2.4 An outline planning application was submitted on 17th August 2010, accompanied by a comprehensive suite of supporting information which encompassed all the base line environmental studies carried out by the team. Amongst others, these included :-
1. Planning Statement
 2. Design & Access Statement
 3. Transport Assessment and Travel Plan
 4. Flood Risk and Drainage Assessment
 5. Archaeological Assessment
 6. Landscape & Visual Assessment
 7. Ecological Assessment
 8. Arboricultural Assessment
 9. Agricultural Land Quality Assessment
 10. Services and Utilities Statement
 11. Site Investigation
 12. Energy Statement
 13. Statement of Community Involvement
 14. Heads of Terms for Section 106 Planning Obligation
 15. Air Quality Assessment

An Environmental Statement was not required, as confirmed by the Screening Response received from Ribble Valley Borough Council (RVBC) on 20th July 2010 - (CD 3 26). All the base line analysis was utilised to inform the Illustrative Masterplan (4370-P-01- I) Core Document (CD 2.2 and the accompanying DAS (CD 2.3)

- 2.5 The methodology adopted by the design and environmental evaluation team is tried and tested, following the latest guidance and advice produced by bodies such as DCLG, CABE, the Landscape Institute, Natural England and the Environment Agency. This type of rigorous approach was endorsed by the Secretary of State when granting consent at Edwalton for up to 1200 new homes and ancillary development in the Green Belt. The Design and Access Statement and Masterplan were subject to scrutiny at Inquiry and were endorsed as being satisfactory.
- 2.6 The Development Framework Plan (4370-P-01 G – CD 2.1) sets out the components and parameters for the sustainable urban extension. The planning application comprises:-
1. Indicative residential (8.72 ha) (270 dwellings at 30 - 40 dph) 2 – 2.5 Storey Maximum : 10m High, including doctors surgery
 2. Community Park (4.19 ha)
 3. Green Corridors (3.14ha)
 4. Equipped Play Areas (0.40ha)
 5. Total Site Area = 15.70 Ha (38.74 acres)
- 2.7 The Henthorn Road Design and Access Statement sets out in detail the sensitive approach adopted by the design team in their evaluation of the site and the preparation of the resulting masterplan. Guidance has been followed from the latest best practice documentation provided by CABE and other Government Agencies in order to deliver a responsive sustainable proposal.
- 2.8 Taken together, the Illustrative Masterplan, Development Framework Plan and DAS provide RVBC with certainty about the scale, nature and design quality of the proposed development. The parameters that the Appellant is committing to are set out in pages 20 to 26 of the Design and Access Statement.
- 2.9 The principles within the Design and Access Statement can be attached to any consent granted on the site by way of an appropriately worded condition such as that employed at Edwalton, (refer to Appendix 3) and subsequently these can be reinforced by a Design Code prepared in consultation with RVBC, should that be required.
- 2.10 Officers at RVBC were unequivocal in recommending approval for the application proposals in the Committee Report dated 15th September 2011. The summary of reasons for Approval stated simply that :-

“The proposal has no significant detrimental impact on nearby residential amenity, nor would it have an adverse visual impact or be to the detriment of highway safety”.

- 2.11 Despite this very strong positive recommendation, permission was refused by the Committee on 19th September 2011 for the following two reasons:
- 1 **The proposal is contrary to National Policy in the form of PPS1 and PPS3 in that the development due to its isolated location distant from a primary route network, lack of cycling or sufficient pedestrian access to the town centre and its infrastructure would lead to the proposals being contrary to the principles of sustainable development. The proposal would also have a detrimental impact on the traffic infrastructure of Clitheroe and key traffic junctions of Henthorn Road, Woone Lane, Eshton Terrace and the railway crossing which would lead to the proposal being contrary to the principles of sustainable development.**
 - 2 **Given the site's relationship to the primary route network the development is considered contrary to the principles of sustainable development in that it fails to provide sufficient pedestrian and cycle linkages back to the town centre facilities or have adequate transport facilities and as such would increase reliance on the use of the private motor car be contrary to Policy T1 of the Ribble Valley Districtwide Local Plan.**
- 2.12 Neither of these cites matters such as urban design, landscape character, visual amenity, or biodiversity as part of a reason for refusal. However, "sustainable development" is much more than just proximity to a primary route network and provision of linkages to town centre facilities. In my proof therefore I will demonstrate the overall positive environmental and urban design credentials of the appeal proposals, and the beneficial effect that they can bring to the town.
- 2.13 I am also aware from the public consultation process and the responses set out in the full Committee Report that Clitheroe Town Council and local residents (primarily those from Fairfield Drive and Fairfield Close which immediately overlook the site) have expressed concerns about the loss of views and privacy, the perceived impact on the landscape and wildlife, and the effect upon the historic character of the town. I will address these concerns in my proof.
- 2.14 I will focus on the sustainable and comprehensive design approach which has been adopted by GDL, thus addressing government design criteria set out in PPS1, PPS3 and PPS9 and a range of supporting documents. I will show that the proposal will preserve and enhance the character, appearance and recreational value of the area. Furthermore I will also demonstrate that the visual amenity of the area will not be harmed to any material degree by this sensitively designed high quality scheme. Indeed overall the town will be enhanced as a result of the proposed development, since the south western morphology of the settlement will be better integrated with its existing facilities and its landscape setting.
- 2.15 I will show how the design has been led by the existing site constraints including the existing watercourse and the hedgerows and trees on and around the site. These are retained and protected to form key components of the new Green Infrastructure (GI) framework. This integrated network of Community Park, open spaces and interconnecting corridors will provide excellent opportunities for the public recreation and for biodiversity enhancement. Furthermore, the setting of the site close to the River Ribble and its location in relation to the sensitive features such as Clitheroe Castle and the surrounding Forest of Bowland has also been addressed by the design proposals. The site is well placed to successfully assimilate the proposed level of built development in a way which will not cause harm to the historic character or setting of the town and its landscape context.

- 2.16 Tim Dean will deal with the overall planning issues, whilst Carol Ashley addresses all transportation and highway matters. Marc Hourigan will deal with the matters of deliverability of alternative sites, whilst Stephen Clyne addresses Educational issues.
- 2.17 On the topic of alternative sites, I have been asked to consider two other sites which are understood to be under consideration for inclusion with the Council's allocations DPD. I have therefore worked alongside Mr Hourigan to assess the true development potential of the two primary alternatives, these being the Standen Estate and land at Barrow.

3.0 THE PROPOSED SITE - LOCAL CONTEXT AND CHARACTER

- 3.1 The DAS sets out the key characteristics of the site in terms of landscape character, visual resources and biodiversity. The principle features can be summarised as follows :-

Context

- 3.2 Figures 01 and 02 from the DAS show the context of the appeal site in relation to the settlement. It abuts the existing south western urban edge, with the residential areas of Fairfield Drive and Henthorn lying to the north east and the long established recreational focus for the town of Roefield Leisure Centre and Edisford Park to the north and north west. The River Ribble and the Ribble Way long distance footpath lie adjacent to the sites south western boundary. Figure 12 from the DAS shows the proximity of the site to a wide range of facilities in the town, and Mrs Ashley deals with the accessibility of the site in more detail.

Existing Land Use

- 3.3 The site is currently used for grazing and consists of improved grassland. It comprises five managed fields subdivided by low cropped hedgerows with occasional hedgerow trees. The southernmost area falls away quite steeply towards the River Ribble, with the Ribble Valley Way following the river bank before turning east to skirt the well treed, Siddows Hall, an unlisted 20th century house. A small unnamed watercourse flows from the site in a southerly direction beneath Henthorn Road, and this has created a small incised valley in the south eastern most field. It is understood to have been culverted to the north towards Fairfield Drive.
- 3.4 The oblique aerial photograph (DAS Figure 01) shows all these features. Furthermore, it sets the immediate context for the site, showing the relationship to Fairfield Drive, Henthorn and Low Moor, together with the multiple recreational facilities of Roefield and Edisford. In the summer months, Edisford Park is something of a honeypot, with visitors attracted by the riverside and its safe, expansive "beach" together with the miniature railway, play areas, golf course and the associated caravan and camping club site. The area can get very busy, and there is a large multi purpose car park linked to the Roefield Leisure Centre, which features the town's swimming pool and a café.

Topography

- 3.5 The Ribble Valley in general benefits from a very varied topography, with often dramatic features such as Pendle Hill and Kemple End rising above the more subdued valley landform. Clitheroe Castle sits on a prominent limestone knoll in the middle of the town, with St Marys Parish Church located on a second slightly lower knoll just to the north.
- 3.6 The site itself is relatively level for the most part, with the existing residential edge lying at 60-62m. The western most field descends towards the caravan park which is at 55m. The southern field has a localised high point at 65, which then falls away more steeply by the river, dropping to 50m at the rivers edge.

Biodiversity

- 3.7 The site is dominated by intensively managed improved grassland, bounded by low cropped hedgerows, which are relatively species rich. Although not "important" under the Hedgerow Regulations, they are a UKBAP habitat. The hedgerows also support a small number of mature hedgerow trees, predominantly Ash, and these are worthy of retention, save for one large dead specimen by the caravan club. No evidence of protected species such as great crested newts were found on site. (DAS, figures 06 & 07)

Landscape/Townscape Character

- 3.8 FPCR carried out a detailed Landscape & visual Appraisal in August 2010 (CD 1.21). The findings are interpreted into the DAS at pages 10-14, and Figures 9-12 illustrate the key characteristics and viewpoints of the site.
- 3.9 Whilst the site itself is currently open fields, it is generally unremarkable, and has never benefitted from any form of qualitative landscape designation. For example, whilst the Forest of Bowland AONB encompasses Pendle Hill to the east and Longridge Fell/Kemple End to the west, Clitheroe and the local stretch of the Ribble Valley are excluded from the AONB.
- 3.10 There are distinct urban influences adjacent to the site due to the immediate proximity of Fairfield Drive and Henthorn together with the well used recreational complex at Roefield and Edisford. Furthermore Henthorn Road itself culminates in the town's civic amenity site and sewage works, albeit well hidden from the appeal site itself. The site is well related to the urban area.
- 3.11 The adjacent River Ribble and its well defined valley to the immediate west is very attractive, flowing south towards the wider rural countryside around Great & Little Milton.

Visual Resources

- 3.12 Due to the interaction of urban fabric, local topography and vegetation, the proposed development site has a restricted visual envelope, with any significant views limited to the immediate periphery of the site. This is demonstrated by reference to Figures 4 & 5 from the Landscape & Visual Appraisal.
- 3.13 Viewpoints A-C are helpful in understanding the visual context and containment of the site, but are internal shots which are not currently publicly accessible. Whilst approximately 35 properties on the existing residential edge overlook the site, (with visibility depending upon the degree of garden screening which exists), there are few other locations which offer significant visibility into the site, save for Henthorn Road itself.
- 3.14 Importantly, views from more sensitive locations, such as the River Ribble, Clitheroe Castle, or the open countryside fringing the AONB to the west of the river, are of no real significance. There are no views from the environs of the River Ribble itself due to the steep topography, and views from the vicinity of the listed Edisford Bridge are strongly filtered by overlapping vegetation (Viewpoints G, H & I). Whilst the site is distantly visible from the top of Clitheroe Castle's keep, it is seen in the context of the established roof space of Henthorn and would not materially affect the setting of the Grade 1 listed Castle (Viewpoint H).
- 3.15 In a similar fashion, views from the Ribble Valley Way in the vicinity of Siddows Hall are at a distance and the new development would be seen against the established urban edge, with the Castle and Pendle Hill rising clearly above the lower lying existing residential and employment areas. (Viewpoint F)

- 3.16 The site therefore is comparatively well contained, and does not fulfil any strategic role in providing an important approach view or vista towards the town's key landmarks of the Castle or Parish Church. It does not constitute an important element in the setting of the historic town, nor does it encroach into the setting of the River Ribble. The site is not distinguishable in views from within the Forest of Bowland AONB. This would not alter after the proposed development is complete.
- 3.17 In summary therefore, the analysis of baseline factors demonstrates the following:-
1. **The application site is well contained and directly related to the urban edge of Clitheroe, abutting both residential and recreational uses.**
 2. **It is within easy reach of a wide range of facilities within the local area and the town itself.**
 3. **There are no significant landscape or ecological constraints on site.**
 4. **The corridor of the River Ribble is screened from the site by the interaction of topography and overlapping vegetation.**
 5. **The site does not fulfil any strategic role either in providing key vistas to landmarks such as the Castle or in providing the historic setting of the town.**
 6. **There would be no detriment to the AONB.**
- 3.18 Whilst from a planning policy perspective the site may be classed as "open countryside", from a landscape and visual viewpoint it is clearly strongly related to the existing settlement framework on two sides, and has an unavoidable "*urban fringe*" feel about it. It provides a good location for a genuinely sustainable settlement extension which does not project out significantly into truly open countryside

4.0 THE MASTERPLAN PROPOSAL

4.1 A "ground up" approach has been adopted from the outset, with the masterplan responding directly to the setting and context of the site. In view of the comparative paucity of features of merit on the site itself, it is external influences that have played the biggest role in the eventual masterplan.

4.2 The Design & Access Statement, (DAS) sets out fully the lengths to which the masterplanning team have gone in order to deliver a sustainable and appropriate Masterplan for the site, addressing identified constraints and opportunities with a high quality design approach. The Development Framework Plan (CD 2.1) sets the parameters for the proposals in terms of the nature and extent of the development components and environmental factors such as the maximum height of buildings.

4.3 It is not necessary to repeat the detailed content of the design components of the DAS here, but key objectives are as follows:-

- 1 Establish a legible environment with a choice of interconnecting attractive streets and pedestrian routes which provide excellent connectivity across the site and with the existing settlement and the countryside.
- 2 Deliver a mix of housing, offering 2-5 bedroom properties, comprising a range of house types, from terrace/linked mews cottages to detached properties that will compliment the existing surrounding settlement.
- 3 Adopt best practice for the delivery of high quality development following the example of "By Design", "Manual for Streets 1 & 2" and "Safer Places".
- 4 Employ locally distinctive designs which respond sensitively to the character of the neighbourhood. Contemporary building technology will target sustainability and the reduction of energy consumption.
- 5 Ensure that local distinctiveness is reflected in the individual architectural styling, derived from characteristic materials, colours and detailing themes found in the best examples from the surrounding area.
- 6 Respond positively to the physical assets of the site, utilising existing features such as hedgerows to create green infrastructure corridors and open spaces.
- 7 Provide a "walkable neighbourhood" layout of legible streets, routes and spaces.
- 8 Create a strong "sense of place" which is attractive, safe and enduring.
- 9 Adopt inclusive design by making the place accessible for all;
- 10 Establish a landscape and public open space resource with the development, which provides amenity, recreational, biodiversity and sustainability benefits for both new residents and the wider community.

The Appellant is offering a Masterplan and Design Code Condition in order to ensure that these objectives are met at the Reserved Matters Stage, should that be required.

- 4.4 The DAS (CD 2.3) sets out the principle components for the design. Figures 14, 17 & 24 provide illustrative details of the proposed Green Infrastructure framework which defines the built components of the site, and thus establishes the principles for the Illustrative Masterplan (Figure 18). The site analysis identifies a number of key opportunities which can be summarised as follows :
1. **There is potential to expand and enhance Green Infrastructure links from the south-western settlement edge to the Roefield and Edisford recreational areas adjacent to the River Ribble, the sports pitches, the Ribble Valley Way and other recreational routes, and to encourage people to use and appreciate the open space opportunities at the edge of Clitheroe and in the wider countryside on their doorsteps.**
 2. **Is it possible to maintain and enhance the existing landscape framework and the biodiversity of the site through the provision of tree and woodland planting, wildlife ponds and introduction of meadow management within proposed open space areas.**
 3. **There is potential to provide a substantial Community Park extension linking to the existing heavily used riverside recreational corridor.**
 4. **It is possible to introduce a green settlement edge character with a lower density development and looser built form with green spaces and landscape buffers, creating a more gradual transition town urban to country than presently exists.**
 5. **There is the opportunity to reinstate the watercourse as a landscape and ecological feature within the development.**
 6. **It is possible to ensure that there is good integration between the new development and the existing settlement through the provision of bus routes and pedestrian/cycle connections, extending right through to the town centre and the railway station.**

Ribble View Community Park

- 4.5 Figure 14 of the DAS demonstrates the design response to the site. The more elevated southernmost field provides an excellent opportunity to create an accessible Community Park which provides an appropriate transition between built development and the Ribble Valley recreational facilities. Figure 25 illustrates how the design of this Community Park could evolve.
- 4.6 It is anticipated that it would be a low key parkland facility with passive recreation and biodiversity enhancement as the key objectives. The views down the meandering incised Ribble Valley and across to Kemple End and the Forest of Bowland are very appealing and a viewpoint feature is suggested to take advantage of the natural highpoint within the Community Park. The informal recreational nature of the site would ideally complement the more intensive activity which occurs at Edisford Park, providing visitors with the opportunity to escape the hubbub of the riverside and to enjoy more expansive peaceful views along the river and out into the Forest of Bowland.
- 4.7 The boundaries of the Community Park would be reinforced by belts of native woodland planting, and the setting of Siddows Hall would be protected by additional planting. New wetland features would make a significant contribution to biodiversity, supplemented by management of the existing ponds. A network of new footpaths would provide connections to the Ribble Valley Way and across to Henthorn Road. A play area serving the new residential area is set in the slightly lower lying area to the north of the Viewpoint

- 4.8 This strategic approach to addressing and opening up public access to the riverside is long established in Clitheroe. In addition to the Ribble Way long distance footpath, Brungerley Park further north in the town is an important riverside asset (which now features a sculpture trail.) This serves the established residential areas to the north of Waddington Road. The Ribble View Community Park would anchor the southern end of this riverside access corridor for the town.

The Green Edge & The Valley

- 4.9 These areas connect the Ribble View Community Park through to Henthorn Road and provide a robust filtered green edge to the southern façade of the built development. The existing internal valley feature is retained and expanded, with the current culverted watercourse to the north being opened out. A series of balancing facilities within the valley will be utilised to create new wetland habitats of value to local wildlife. Built development will be designed to overlook the valley will therefore integrate well with the landscape features and the adjacent countryside.
- 4.10 The existing hedgerows and trees which subdivide the fields and define the southern site boundary are retained and strengthened as the framework for the Green Edge. A new public footpath and cycleway follows this corridor and provides access to the Ribble View Community Park, as well as heading north and west, connecting to the sports and leisure facilities at Roefield by way of the caravan club access road. A further area of open space with a second play area is provided in the northern corner of the site adjacent to the Rose Cottage Kennels and Cattery, which is further buffered by the provision of acoustic fencing set within new planting areas.
- 4.11 Detailed illustrative plans of each of these areas are provided as part of the planning application package, and therefore provide an appropriate level of detail to support the Illustrative Masterplan (4370-P-01-08)

Built Development

- 4.12 The illustrative Masterplan (DAS Figure 18) shows how the built components of the development are contained and subdivided by the Green Infrastructure Framework. New housing is directly related either to the existing residential edge along Fairfield Drive, or the established recreational uses such as the Roefield Sports Field and the caravan club. A descending hierarchy of streets, lanes and courts subdivides the urban framework, creating the opportunity for a range of discrete character zones, with density reducing towards the rural edge. The amenity of the existing homes along Fairfield Drive and Close will be protected, since garden areas are proposed adjacent to the existing urban edge. There is therefore good potential for further landscape screening to be provided at the detailed design stage.
- 4.13 The perspective sketches within the DAS (Figure 20-23) illustrate how the residential layout responds to the site characteristics. It is very important that the detailed design reflects the best townscape assets found in Clitheroe, of which there are many examples, such as those shown on page 27 of the DAS. There is an excellent eclectic mix of locally distinctive architecture found throughout Clitheroe, ranging from generously proportioned stone built bay windowed terraces to the very diverse individual properties which line Church Brow on the approach to St Marys. It is very important that the Henthorn Road proposals reflect this range of styles, rather than replicating the rather mundane suburban estate layout immediately adjacent to the site. All these design issues can be addressed successfully by means of a Design Code Condition as was employed at Edwalton.

- 4.14 This attention to detail in terms of urban design does not stop at the site boundary. Carol Ashley sets out in her proof the offsite highway improvements that have been agreed in principle with Lancashire County Council to enhance connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists between the site and the town centre. Appendix 3 to my proof illustrates the present pedestrian experience along a range of key routes from the site and demonstrates that these are realistic and desirable routes for existing and new residents to utilise. Townscape treatment is proposed to enhance the street scenes en route to the town. This includes new crossings for Henthorn Road opposite Henthorn Park, and a comprehensive controlled parking solution to Woone Lane adjacent to the Castle grounds. High quality street furniture and paving materials are to be used at Woone Lane, reflecting the distinctive character of Clitheroe. Montages are included at Appendix 13 of Carol's proof to demonstrate how a high quality urban design solution can be provided which meets the aspirations of "*Streets for All*" (English Heritage and DoT), the "*Manual for Streets*" 1 & 2 (DfT) and "*Creating Civilised Streets*". (LCC).
- 4.15 Taken together, these street scene enhancements will be beneficial to the whole of the south western sector of the town, improving urban design quality and accessibility to the town centre for the existing community as well as the new residents of the appeal proposals. There has been a lack of investment in the townscape of this area over the years, and this is now very evident on the ground.
- 4.16 An illustrative Aerial perspective (DAS Figure 15) demonstrates how effectively the fully developed site will be assimilated into the settlement edge of Clitheroe, being very well related to existing features. In particular, it also demonstrates what a major asset the Ribble View Community Park will become, complementing the existing recreational facilities adjacent to the River whilst opening up new opportunities.
- 4.17 In summary therefore:-
- 1 A responsive "ground up" approach has been adopted. The constraints, largely arising from the external landscape framework, have influenced the development form and capacity, and a bespoke solution has been provided.
 - 2 The overall design from the outset has been designed to respond to the context of site, minimising encroachment on the wider countryside and the sensitive River Ribble Corridor. There is substantial scope for the enhancement of facilities.
 - 3 Careful consideration has been given to the protection of the residential amenity of the existing dwellings which abut the application site.
 - 4 A very high quality sustainable scheme can be delivered.
 - 5 The Green Infrastructure Framework protects and enhances site features of value, such as existing trees and hedgerows, and the setting of the Ribble Valley.
 - 6 The Ribble View Community Park creates a strong sense of place and unique character, complementing the existing facilities at Edisford & Roefield, and the overall strategy for riverside access to the west of the town.
 - 7 The associated interconnecting Green Corridors provide a strong footpath/cycleway network, and help create distinctive urban character zones which enhance overall diversity. Accessibility to the riverside recreation hub is improved for the whole of south west Clitheroe.

- 8 **Further townscape enhancements can be provided along the key connecting routes to the town. These in turn improve the approaches to the town centre and its numerous facilities.**

5.0 POLICY COMPLIANCE

5.1 As a result of the rigorous and iterative environmental evaluation and masterplanning process adopted by the appellant's team, the application encompasses a highly sustainable urban extension which fits logically within a clearly defined settlement framework. The Masterplan has evolved from a thoroughly researched environmental evidence base to deliver the optimum solution.

5.2 Consequently the proposals prove to be robust when assessed in the light of the cascade of development plan environmental policies extending from PPS1 through to PPS9. These can be summarised as follows:-

5.3 **PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development** - sets out at paragraph 5 the key criteria for sustainable and inclusive patterns of development. These include:

- 1) **Protecting and enhancing the natural and historic environment, the quality and character of the countryside, and existing communities.**
- 2) **Ensuring high quality development through good and inclusive design, and the efficient use of resources**
- 3) **Ensuring that development supports existing communities and contributes to the creation of safe, sustainable, liveable and mixed communities with good access to jobs and key services for all members of the community.**

5.4 Addressing design matters (paragraphs 33-39) PPS1 focuses on the fundamental importance of good design. In particular, the latter sentence of paragraph 34 states: "*Design which is inappropriate in its context, or which fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, should not be accepted*".

Paragraph 35 goes on to state that;

High quality and inclusive design should create well-mixed and integrated developments which avoid segregation and have well-planned public spaces that bring people together and provide opportunities for physical activity and recreation. It means ensuring a place will function well and add to the overall character and quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development.

Good design should:

- Address the connections between people and places by considering the needs of people to access jobs and key services;
- Be integrated into the existing urban form and the natural and built environments.

5.5 These principals are reinforced by paragraph 124 from the Draft National Planning Policy Framework, which sets out the Government's objectives for sustainable communities as follows:

The Government's objective is to create, strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by creating a good quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect community needs and support well-being. To achieve this objective the planning system should:

- Create a built environment that facilitates social interaction and inclusive communities
- Deliver the right community facilities, schools, hospitals and services to meet local needs; and

- Ensure access to open spaces and recreational facilities that promote the health and well-being of the community.

5.6 The Design and Access Statement for Henthorn Road sets out the care which has been taken to ensure a responsive and appropriate design for the development. As a consequence of this rigorous approach, the proposals are fully in tune with the critical design objectives of PPS1, as follows:

1. **The proposal results in a high quality scheme which will help create a balanced sustainable community.**
2. **The Green Infrastructure framework will ensure successful assimilation into the landscape with whilst significantly improving community access and recreational opportunities by way of new Ribble View Community Park.**
3. **Access to community and retail services is readily available.**
4. **Community safety has been addressed from the outset following the principles set out in "Safer Places". The development would be fully accessible to all sectors of society.**
5. **High quality integrated urban and architectural design will create a positive identity and strong "sense of place" for the Henthorn Road proposal which reflect the best examples of local distinctiveness from Clitheroe.**

PPS1 Supplement : Planning & Climate Change

5.7 In response to the PPS1 Climate Change Supplement, the proposals perform well when measured against the criteria set out at paragraph 25.

1. **A comprehensive sustainability strategy has been prepared for the site addressing renewable energy**
2. **The Travel Plan provides for significant improvements to public transport**
3. **The Green Infrastructure network is multi-functional and robust, addressing both recreational amenity, sustainable drainage and biodiversity**
4. **There is no encroachment on flood plains**

PPS3 – Housing

5.8 PPS3 builds upon the strategic design guidance found within PPS1. At paragraph 9 it sets out strategic objectives, one of which is: "To create sustainable, inclusive mixed use communities in all areas, both urban and rural." I have already demonstrated in relation to PPS1 that this is the case.

5.9 Addressing the need to achieve high quality housing, paragraph 14 establishes several criteria, as follows:

1. **Design which is inappropriate in its context, or which fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, should not be accepted.**

- 2 **Creating places, streets and spaces which meet the needs of people, are visually attractive, safe, accessible, functional, inclusive, have their own distinctive identity and maintain and improve local character.**
 - 3 **Promoting designs and layouts which make efficient and effective use of land, including encouraging innovative approaches to help deliver high quality outcomes.**
- 5.10 Paragraph 16 then establishes seven matters pertaining to design quality. Any development must be assessed as to whether or not it:
1. **Is easily accessible and well connected to public transport and community facilities and services, and is well laid out so that all the space is used efficiently, is safe, accessible and user-friendly.**
 2. **Provides, or enables good access to, community and green and open amenity and recreational space (including play space) as well as private outdoor space such as residential gardens, patios and balconies.**
 3. **Is well integrated with, and complements, the neighbouring buildings and the local area more generally in terms of scale, density, layout and access.**
 4. **Facilitates the efficient use of resources, during construction and in use, and seeks to adapt to and reduce the impact of, and on, climate change.**
 5. **Takes a design-led approach to the provision of car-parking space that is well-integrated with a high quality public realm and streets that are pedestrian, cycle and vehicle friendly.**
 6. **Creates, or enhances, a distinctive character that relates well to the surroundings and supports a sense of local pride and civic identity.**
 7. **Provides for the retention or re-establishment of the biodiversity within residential environments.**
- 5.11 Whilst the proposals are only illustrative the masterplan and its supporting documentation clearly demonstrate that each of these matters can be successfully addressed. By creating a walkable community which promotes pedestrian & cycle access to local facilities, the proposals would be responsive to the pressures arising from climate change, in particular by reducing the need to travel.
- 5.12 As has been stated earlier, it is anticipated that the detailed development proposals would be subject to a condition requiring the provision of a Design Code to ensure the delivery of a high quality scheme, in accordance with paragraph 18 from PPS3. This would build upon the evidence base provided by the Design and Access Statement

PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas

- 5.13 PPS7 sets out objectives for sustainable development in rural areas. The site currently consists of undeveloped farmland on the edge of the settlement and relevant objectives from this policy include:
1. **To promote more sustainable patterns of development;**
 - **focusing most development in, or next to, existing towns and villages; the site is clearly located in a logical location adjacent to the existing settlement.**

- preventing urban sprawl; The site is very well defined by the existing urban edge on two sides and would not encroach out into the open countryside.
- discouraging the development of 'greenfield' land, and, where such land must be used, ensuring it is not used wastefully; The proposals are of an average density of 32dph which is an efficient use of land.
- promoting a range of uses to maximise the potential benefits of the countryside fringing urban areas; The proposals include recreational open space, play facilities and footpaths which will be of benefit to the surrounding community
- providing appropriate leisure opportunities to enable urban and rural dwellers to enjoy the wider countryside. The current site does not have any public access and the proposals will improve access for existing residents of Clitheroe into the wider countryside.

PPS9 : Biodiversity & Geological Conservation

5.14 PPS9 sets out the Government's objectives for biodiversity, "working with the grain of nature". Key objectives include :

1. To promote sustainable development by ensuring that biological and geological diversity are conserved and enhanced as an integral part of social, environmental and economic development, so that policies and decisions about the development and use of land integrate biodiversity and geological diversity with other considerations.
2. To contribute to rural renewal and urban renaissance by :
 - a) enhancing biodiversity in green spaces and among developments so that they are used by wildlife and valued by people, recognising that healthy functional ecosystems can contribute to a better quality of life and to people's sense of well-being.
 - b) ensuring that developments take account of the role and value of biodiversity in supporting economic diversification and contributing to a high quality environment.

The Henthorn Road, Clitheroe proposals have embraced this approach from the outset. The preparation of a Green Infrastructure Biodiversity Management Plan will demonstrate the ability of the scheme to conserve and enhance the overall biodiversity of the site, and to improve public appreciation of these assets.

5.15 From an overall biodiversity perspective, there will be significant overall gains arising from the application proposals. In accordance with PPS9 paragraph 14, beneficial biodiversity is built in to the development proposals. The Cambourne Case Study within the PPS9 Guide to Good Practice (Page 56) confirms how positive this interaction can be. The Ribble View Community Park can provide an exemplar of creative conservation techniques, and this approach will flow through the entire development site.

6.0 THE BENEFITS OF THE APPEAL PROPOSALS AND THE INAPPROPRIATE NATURE OF THE REASONS FOR REFUSAL

- 6.1 Taken holistically, the development proposals are very sustainable, delivering much needed housing in a genuinely sustainable location which minimises impact upon environmentally sensitive resources. Furthermore, there are substantial associated recreational, landscape and biodiversity benefits which are delivered by the proposals at no cost to the public purse. The most significant of these is the Ribble View Community Park, which will greatly enhance the recreational potential of the Ribble Valley corridor for the wider community.
- 6.2 As I have illustrated previously, the area of the site proposed for built development is well contained in the broader landscape and does not encroach significantly on features of acknowledged importance such as the River Ribble or the Forest of Bowland AONB. There is no detrimental effect upon Clitheroe Castle or its setting. The Illustrative Masterplan shows that the site can successfully assimilate built development.
- 6.3 The south western sector of Clitheroe has for many years been seen as the “*poor relation*” of the town, due to a long term lack of investment. The Roefield Leisure Centre has been seen as being “*out on a limb*” and not well related to the town.
- 6.4 The Appeal Proposals will deliver a substantial range of benefits over and above the critical provision of high quality new dwellings, including affordable homes. The integrated network of accessible green infrastructure, culminating in the Ribble View Community Park, will be a major asset to this part of the town, overcoming the current shortfall in environmental facilities. The enhanced accessibility to the town centre and its attractions will complement the new network of routes linking the Roefield, Edisford and the Ribble Valley corridor.
- 6.5 Roefield in particular will be more readily accessible to both new and existing residents, and will be perceived as being less isolated from the community. Taken together with the existing recreational focus at Edisford Bridge and the contrasting but complementary informal public parkland of the Ribble View Community Park, the south western edge of the settlement will have a new and sustainable focal point which is much better integrated with the town as a whole.
- 6.6 As I set out earlier in my proof, there are no specific elements in the reasons for refusal which cite urban design, landscape or environment matters, other than the suggestion that the proposal is contrary to PPS1 & PPS3. On the contrary, the Committee Report is generally very supportive of the proposals in terms of design.

At page 85 it states:-

“Overall the Council’s Head of Regeneration and Housing views the site as acceptable as a land use principle. He supports the proposals inclusion of open space and recreational enhancement of the riverside.....”

It goes on to state at page 88

“A new area of woodland planting is welcomed as part of the overall development”

Both the Council’s Countryside Officer and the ecologists from LLC and the Environment Agency agree that there are no matters of significant ecological concern.

- 6.7 Dealing with layout, scale and visual amenity, the Committee Report is again supportive, stating at page 90 that:

"No significant detriment would be caused were the development to be approved Clitheroe has grown incrementally over the years, and I do not consider the level of growth proposed here would be disproportionate in visual terms.

It acknowledges the role of the Community Park in "maintained an open setting between the town's development edge and the riverside," thus ensuring that development would not "significantly compromise the visual amenities of the area".

- 6.8 Turning to the effect upon existing properties on Fairfield Drive and Henthorn Road, the report judges that the proposals would create an ***"appropriate relationship"*** which would be acceptable. (Page 91). There would be no harm to the setting of the Grade II listed Henthorn Farmhouse (Page 92).
- 6.9 Whilst I understand the concerns expressed by the 197 objectors and local residents, all the environmental matters raised have been taken into account and carefully considered within the Masterplanning process. I consider that many of the fears are based on a lack of understanding of the actual proposals, and others on the understandable desire to avoid change to private views.
- 6.10 In August 2011 FPCR were instructed to carry out a review of the alternative SHLAA sites around the edge of Clitheroe, together with the Regulations 25 proposals. No better alternative site of a significant size was identified that was clearly preferable in overall landscape terms to the appeal site. Those to the north west encroached upon attractive countryside that plays an important role in providing the setting for the Castle, and also prejudiced the perception of separation between the town and Low Moor. Those to the south east, and particularly the Standen Estate Land (Option D) encroach both on setting of Standen Hall itself and also the setting of Pendle Hill within the AONB.
- 6.11 Furthermore, none of the alternative sites appear to have the potential to bring forward a major asset for Clitheroe which is comparable to the Ribble View Community Park provided by Henthorn Road. In short, they certainly offer no substantial advantages that suggest they should be preferred to Henthorn Road.
- 6.12 Mr Hourigan sets out in his proof a fuller analysis of the two primary alternative sites. I and members of my team have provided technical advice on these sites and the constraints which potentially affect their development capacity.
- 6.13 Carol Ashley and Tim Dean have demonstrated in their proofs that the Transportation, Infrastructure and wider planning aspects of the reasons for refusal can be given very little weight, and when all factors are taken into account, the Henthorn Road proposals are robustly in tune with the principles of sustainable development. I therefore respectfully request that this appeal is allowed.

7.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 FPCR were appointed by GDL to prepare the Masterplan, supporting Design and Access Statement (DAS), as well as the Landscape & Visual, Arboricultural and Ecology Assessments for the site. We worked very closely with other members of the design and environment team in order to prepare a scheme which evolved in response to the constraints and opportunities presented by the site. The objective was to create a sustainable place to live which minimises potential environmental disruption whilst maximising benefits to the wider community.
- 7.2 The Henthorn Road Design and Access Statement sets out in detail the sensitive approach adopted by the design team in their evaluation of the site and the preparation of the resulting Masterplan. Guidance has been followed from the latest best practice documentation provided by CABE and other Government Agencies in order to deliver a responsive sustainable proposal.
- 7.3 Whilst the site is currently open fields, it is generally unremarkable and is influenced by the adjacent open settlement edge presented by properties on Fairfield Drive and Henthorn together with the well-used recreational complex at Roefield and Edisford. No significant landscape or ecology constraints have been identified on the site. It is also important to recognise that the site and its setting have never been judged worthy of a specific landscape character or quality designation. Whilst the Forest of Bowland AONB encompasses Pendle Hill to the east and Longridge Fell / Kemple End to the west, Clitheroe and the local stretch of the Ribble Valley are excluded from the AONB.
- 7.4 Furthermore, the visual envelope of the site (and hence of development within it which respects the landform) is very tightly defined. The site is well contained and directly related to the urban edge of Clitheroe, abutting both residential and recreational uses. Importantly the site does not fulfil any strategic role in providing an important approach view or vista towards the town's key landmarks of the Castle of Parish Church. It does not constitute an important element in the setting of the historic town, nor does it encroach into the setting of the River Ribble. The site is not distinguishable in views from within the Forest of Bowland AONB. There would be no detriment to the AONB once the development is complete.
- 7.5 Whilst from a planning policy perspective the site may be classed as "open countryside", from a landscape and visual viewpoint it is well contained and clearly related to the existing settlement framework on two sides and has an unavoidable "urban fringe" feel about it. It provides a good location for a genuinely sustainable settlement extension which does not project out significantly into truly open countryside. The potential for adverse effects on both landscape character and visual resources is inherently limited by the nature of the site and its confined setting.
- 7.6 In addition to this, the comparative landscape and visual assessment of potential alternative housing sites around Clitheroe, undertaken by FPCR, confirms that the setting of Clitheroe to the east/south east and west is of higher overall sensitivity than that to the south.
- 7.7 Whilst a degree of adverse landscape and visual impact is unavoidable if a green field site is released for built development, the high quality sustainable nature of the appeal proposals is such that the loss of the Henthorn Road site must be balanced against the generous provision of publicly accessible green infrastructure and the creation of the Green Infrastructure including a new Community Park. The Green Infrastructure proposals and new Community Park will enhance accessibility to the riverside recreation hub for the whole of the south west of Clitheroe. The pedestrian routes illustrated at Appendix C demonstrate that the site is already well

connected to the urban environment with a number of pleasant walking route options from the site to local facilities and the town centre. Great care has been taken to ensure that the Masterplan is responsive to the assets of the existing site, with capacity being determined by the rigorous base line analysis.

- 7.8 Taken together, the Landscape and Visual Assessment, the DAS and my evidence before this Inquiry robustly demonstrates that the appeal site can successfully assimilate the level of development proposed. Furthermore, the Green Infrastructure proposals bring forward significant wider benefits in terms of landscape character enhancement, public accessibility and biodiversity. The Vision (Figure 15 of the Design and Access Statement, CD 2.3) illustrates how well the built development relates to both the River Ribble and the settlement edge introducing new connections from the south western settlement edge to the Ribble corridor via the Community Park
- 7.9 I have also shown that the proposals prove to be robust when assessed in the light of development plan policies extending from PPS1 through to PPS9, and that there is no overall conflict with the design objectives set out in either the North West of England Plan Regional Strategy or the saved policies of the Ribble Valley Local Plan.
- 7.10 As a consequence, and bearing in mind the proven need for sustainable growth in the region, I conclude that the site can be sensitively developed in a way which reduces any harm to the visual amenity of the countryside to an acceptable level when balanced against the benefits which accrue from the proposals.
- 7.11 I therefore respectfully request that the Inspector allows this Appeal.