

# Summary Proof of Evidence

Evidence of:  
**Richard John Purser**

On Behalf of:  
**Ribble Valley Borough Council**

In Respect of:  
**Appeal by Gladman Developments Ltd  
against refusal of planning permission for**

**Proposed Development of up to 270 residential dwellings,  
doctors' surgery, landscape, open space, highways and  
associated roads**

**At Land at Henthorn Road, Clitheroe**

Reference:  
**RP/12797.1/PO002m**

Appeal Reference:  
**APP/T2350/A/11/2161186**

Local Planning Authority Reference:  
**3/2010/0719**

Date:  
**23 December 2011**

## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 My evidence is my professional opinion which I present to the Inquiry as an independent assessment and evidence in support of the Member's decision and grounds to refuse planning permission, which I consider have been reasonably made.
- 1.2 The appeal proposal is an outline planning application for 270 new homes, (optional) doctors' surgery, open space, landscaping, highways and associated infrastructure. All matters are reserved except for access.
- 1.3 The application was reported twice to Planning Committee, in July and then in September 2011. Officers recommended approval on both occasions as they considered on balance the proposals to be in general conformity with policy. However, Members disagreed and resolved to refuse planning permission on two grounds:
  - Firstly, Member's considered the proposal isolated and distant from primary routes, leading to harm to traffic infrastructure and contrary to sustainable development objectives set out in national planning policies PPS1 and PPS3.
  - Secondly, with reference to Local Plan Policy T1 they considered linkages to town centre facilities for pedestrians and cyclists, and public transport links inadequate, leading to increased reliance on the use of the private motor car.

## 2.0 Background

- 2.1 As context it is a matter of agreement that the present housing position is that the Council can demonstrate a 3.3 year supply of housing as at 1st October 2011.
- 2.2 It is also accepted that affordable housing is need and the offered 30% on site provision by the appellant will assist in redressing that need.
- 2.3 The Council is in process of replacing the adopted Districtwide Local Plan, resolving in December 2011 to consult on Core Strategy Preferred Options which will set the direction of travel for new spatial development strategy. This will include a new

strategic allocation at Standen Hall, (south of Clitheroe), which will largely meet identified strategy housing requirement for Clitheroe in the new plan.

### **3.0 Appeal Site and Context**

- 3.1 The appeal site lies on the southwest edge of the Clitheroe. It is a greenfield site with a single point of access off Henthorn Road.
- 3.2 Clitheroe is home to around 15,000 people, a traditional market town well provided for shops and facilities. Clitheroe's growth has been shaped by local topography and in particular the railway line that dissects the town which has led to around two thirds of the built up area, including the town centre and main employment areas, to lie southeast of the railway line. The appeal site lies to northwest of the line.
- 3.3 Few facilities and services are situated near the appeal site. For example the nearest newsagent is over 800 metres away; a Spar convenience store 1.2km away; and a primary school 1km away.

### **4.0 Planning Policy Framework**

- 4.1 Relevant legislation requires that decisions on planning applications must be taken in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 4.2 For the sake of brevity given this is a summary of my main proof of evidence I do not list relevant policy documents or individual policies of relevance. I can however confirm that a key policy consideration of the Council's case is whether this proposal forms a sustainable development when regard is had to PPS1 and PPS3 policy.

### **5.0 Sustainable Development**

- 5.1 I have assessed the development against the core principle in PPS1 that all development should be sustainable; a matter reaffirmed in the Government's Draft

National Planning Policy Framework. Key sustainable development matters relating to the appeal proposal in my view are:

- Is the development genuinely accessible by sustainable transport choices?
- Is it accessible to a reasonable level of infrastructure, facilities and services?
- It is well connected to the neighbourhood? and,
- Will it form a high quality development?

5.2 On review of the evidence I find that there are no local shops, facilities or services within desirable or acceptable walking distances of the appeal site. Indeed most facilities are even beyond preferred maximum walking distances. The only exception is access to leisure facilities, but even here this is partially dependent on delivery of an uncertain, second pedestrian access.

5.3 Pedestrian inaccessibility to services is compounded by the single point of access and lack of permeability and connectivity with the local neighbourhood, creating a new, isolated community. The planned bus service will have little more than a short-term impact over 7 years, but considerably less for occupiers of later development phases. With an uncertain future the bus service may not deliver any sustained modal choice by residents to travel by bus. As cycling is unlikely to form significant numbers of journeys, I draw the conclusion that the site cannot reasonably be regarded as accessible.

5.4 The proposal will not form a high quality design as the new homes will form an inward looking development, disconnected from the wider neighbourhood and community; a result of the single access point. Also the masterplan is uncertain with regard to the building of a doctors' surgery or not, or provision of the second pedestrian access.

5.5 I therefore find that the proposals will become an isolated, poorly designed peripheral estate where residents will depend on the car to make most journeys to regularly visited places. It does not reasonably support sustainable development and transport principles set out within PPS, PPS3 and other relevant policies.

## 6.0 Housing need

- 6.1 The Council is unable to demonstrate an up-to-date five year supply of housing and in the circumstance PPS3 paragraphs 71 and 69 apply.
- 6.2 PPS3 paragraph 69 raises five matters which if supported might indicate support for the development, but these are not the only considerations of PPS3 that are relevant. Turning to the five matters I find support is absent or uncertain in these areas:
- A high quality development may not be formed;
  - The site is unsuitable as it is relatively unsustainable for a large housing development; and,
  - The development might pre-empt the direction of the emerging spatial strategy which is soon to be subject of public consultation.
- 6.3 I acknowledge delivering new housing when there is less than a five year supply holds weight as a material planning consideration, as does the supply of affordable housing. However, I find the weight is greater to the need to deliver a sustainable housing development.

## 7.0 Development Plan Policies

- 7.1 On balance I find the development does not conform to relevant adopted development plan policies. My reasons relate to, and centre on, the main issue of whether the development can reasonably be considered a sustainable development.
- 7.2 Not all policies of relevance are harmed by the proposal. Several matters are capable of resolution at reserved matters or by planning condition. However, I find on balance the failure to support core principles on sustainable development holds greatest weight.
- 7.3 Turning to emerging planning policy in the LDF Core Strategy Preferred Options, this will reach public consultation in early 2012. The appeal proposal is not necessary to the preferred spatial growth option, which sees a strategic allocation south of Clitheroe at Standen Hall as sufficient for long term growth.

## 8.0 Other Material Considerations

- 8.1 The proposed second pedestrian access on the northwest site boundary is omitted from red line boundary. This is an important material consideration. The consequence of omission is that the appeal proposal under consideration cannot be delivered within the remit of the application made.
- 8.2 To assist the Inquiry a 'Grampian style' condition is proposed to prevent development until a further permission is granted to form this access. However, I find this is unreasonable as it will pre-determine a future application, and does not meet the tests of Circular 11/95.
- 8.3 Uncertainty also persists as a separate legal agreement will be needed for the access as it will involve the Council, appellant and a third party to reach agreement.

## 9.0 Conclusions

- 9.1 Much of the overall case presented centres on whether the development can reasonably be considered sustainable development. By this I mean whether future residents will, in all reasonable probability, live in a manner that will embrace opportunities to travel and access places of work, school, shops and facilities by some other means than the private car.
- 9.2 Inherent in the appeal site location is a problem of inaccessibility to nearly all regularly accessed facilities and services. Nothing is located within a desirable or acceptable walking distance. The appellant offers mitigation in some off site highway improvements, but this does not overcome the physical distance which is the real problem. The proposed bus service is a benefit, but for a short time, and less so for residents of later phases, and it will not assist establishing long term travel patterns to use the bus. As mitigation it only papers over the cracks of the inherent inaccessibility of the site.
- 9.3 Need for additional housing and for affordable housing is acknowledged, but in my opinion this does not override the importance that long-term housing development should be created in the right location; one that is sustainable and well connected to

the community which it will form part of.

- 9.4 Public consultation on the emerging spatial strategy for housing in Ribble Valley, and Clitheroe in particular could be harmed by allowing such a large housing development now when it is not required as part of the preferred option.
- 9.5 On balance I find the greatest weight falls to those policies of the development plan and other material considerations that support objectives for sustainable development; and for this reason find the appeal proposal unacceptable. Therefore, I respectfully request the Inspector to make a recommendation to refuse the planning permission for the proposed development.