

Appeal Ref: 6002485
Council Ref: 3/2025/0196

Outline planning application for up to 300 residential dwellings, associated access, rail station car park, green infrastructure and sustainable drainage systems (all matters reserved except for access) at Land south of Longsight Road, Langho

Inspector's Summary Note of the Case Management Conference Held at 10:00 on Monday 23 February 2026 via Microsoft Teams

Introduction

1. The Case Management Conference (CMC) was led by me, Gareth Jones MRTPI, as the Inquiry Inspector.
2. The main parties were represented at the CMC by:
 - Shemuel Sheikh, Counsel, for the Council
 - Constanze Bell, Counsel, for the appellant
3. Mr Sheikh will also perform the role of advocate for the Council during the Inquiry. For the appellant, Paul Tucker KC will be lead counsel at the Inquiry supported by Ms Bell.

Main Issues

4. I have reviewed the main issues in light of the Council's Statement of Case, particularly that "for the purposes of determining this appeal, the Council's position is that ... it cannot demonstrate a five-year supply [of deliverable housing land]" (para 4.3) and that the Council "is no longer in a position to pursue refusal reason 1" (para 4.5). Having done so, as things stand, the main issues are likely to be:
 - The proposed development's effect on the character and appearance of the area;
 - Its effect on sustainable modes and patterns of transport;
 - Its effects on biodiversity, including in terms of Biodiversity Net Gain; and
 - Whether any harm that might result from the development would be outweighed by other considerations, including housing land supply.
5. I shall, nonetheless, review them once the evidence has been exchanged in accordance with the timetable set out at the end of this Note. The Council shall notify the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) and the appellant as soon as possible should it opt not to defend anymore of its refusal reasons.
6. I would also stress that the Council must also communicate the specific nature of its concerns regarding biodiversity relative to its fourth and fifth reasons for refusal as a matter of urgency to the appellant and to PINS. I would remind the Council that there is a statutory requirement for the provision of 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) associated with development of the type proposed.

For qualifying schemes, any grant of planning permission is subject to the condition that development may not commence until a biodiversity gain plan has been approved demonstrating how the objective of delivering at least a 10% BNG will be achieved.

Inquiry Dates, Venue, Format, Running Order & Timetable

7. At this stage, it is anticipated that the 7 days that have been set aside for the Inquiry, 28 April to 1 May and 6-8 May 2026, will be sufficient.
8. The appellant will call up to six witnesses, albeit that only four may be called depending on the amount of common ground that may yet be found with the Council. The Council will call four witnesses, such that it is anticipated that there will be between 8 and 10 witnesses in total.
9. The evidence will be dealt with on a topic basis, most likely in the following order with the likely method identified in brackets: Landscape (roundtable), Biodiversity (roundtable), Sustainable Transport (cross examination), Planning (cross examination).
10. The venue shall be the Council Chamber of Ribble Valley Borough Council's Civic Suite, 13 Church Street, Clitheroe BB7 2DD. Suitable retiring rooms shall be provided for the Council, appellant and myself.
11. The Inquiry is scheduled to open at 10.00am. On subsequent days it will normally resume at 9.30am. I will aim to finish each day at around 5.00pm, albeit that on the final day of each week I shall aim to finish earlier to allow time for those who have travelled along way to return home.
12. In terms of running order, following my opening comments on Day 1 I will invite opening statements from the advocates, which should be no longer than around 10 minutes*, the appellant first and then the Council. I will then hear from any interested parties, which will be followed by the main parties' witnesses following the order and method outlined in para 9 above.
13. After the main evidence there will be the usual roundtable session on conditions and planning obligations. I shall then hear the closing submissions of the Council and then the appellant, which should be no longer than an hour**, setting out your respective cases as they stand at the end of having tested the evidence, before I close the Inquiry.
14. Once proofs have been exchanged, each party shall provide detailed timing estimates (openings*, evidence in chief, cross-examination and closings**) to Mr Skeates, the PINS Case Officer, to help me produce a more detailed draft Inquiry timetable / programme. I note that, due to Mr Sheikh's availability, there is no scope for the closing submissions to be heard in the three weeks following the scheduled Inquiry dates. It is, therefore, imperative that Inquiry time is used as efficiently as possible.
15. I shall conduct a site visit after the Inquiry has opened, most likely on Tuesday 5 May or at some point after the Inquiry has closed.

Documents and Evidence

16. The revised deadlines for submitting documents and evidence, including the main Statements of Common Ground (SoCG) and topic specific SoCG, are set out in the timetable at Appendix A thereto. Nonetheless, I would stress the importance of reaching agreement on the SoCG as soon as possible to help ensure that the proofs of evidence are as focussed as possible. With that in mind, I would encourage you to have made significant progress on completing the main SoCG by the end of next week.
17. The required approach to common terminologies and methodologies is set out in the Pre-Note.
18. With reference to para 41 of my Pre-Note, during the CMC the Council confirmed that it would have no objection to the appeal being considered and determined on the basis of the revised versions of the plans: Landscape Masterplan and Illustrative Masterplan. On that basis and bearing in mind that 'landscaping' is a reserved matter, I confirm that this would be acceptable.
19. The Pre-Note sets out the approach to the Core Documents (CDs). In short, the appellant will lead on compiling the list and the Council shall host the CDs in electronic form on its website.
20. I do not require a hard copy set of most of the documents, provided that there is a good quality electronic set. Nonetheless, any landscape and visual impact material you are likely to ask me to view during the Inquiry or as part of my site visit, such as photomontages, should be provided to the correct size, along with any other limited extracts from the CDs that you consider may be of assistance to me. These can be provided to me at the venue.
21. It is essential that parties effectively communicate with one another to seek to narrow the issues for consideration at the Inquiry. This should be an on-going conversation. I encourage on-going work to narrow down and clarify areas of disagreement and expect to be kept up to date and for witnesses to adhere to agreed timetables.
22. In the event that there are any unexpected matters arising following the exchange of evidence that might be helpfully addressed in writing prior to the Inquiry, I would encourage the parties to discuss these and address them by way of an addendum to the SoCGs. In this way I would expect 'rebuttals' to be avoided.
23. The Annex to the Pre-Note sets out the required preferred format and content of proofs.

Conditions and S106 Agreement

24. It is, of course, standard practice for Councils at all planning appeals to produce a set of suggested conditions that might be imposed in the event that an appeal is allowed. This is done on a non-prejudicial basis and will not alter the outcome of the appeal. In this case the appellant and the Council are working together to compile the suggested conditions.

25. A full schedule agreed between the Council and the appellant will need to be included in the completed main SoCG or provided as a freestanding document as soon as possible.
26. Regarding the planning obligations, before the Inquiry starts, I shall need:
 - A copy of the final draft of the legal agreement / undertaking;
 - The relevant proof of title from the appellant; and
 - A CIL Compliance Statement prepared by the Council containing detailed justification for each obligation sought, setting out how it complies with the CIL Regulations, and including reference to any policy support and, in relation to any payments that would be secured, exactly how they have been calculated and on precisely what the money would be spent.
27. I shall endeavour to provide you with any feedback or thoughts on the conditions and the legal agreement prior to the roundtable session in order to streamline that session as much as possible.
28. At my discretion, I may allow a short time, perhaps a week, after the Inquiry closes for the submission of a signed version of the final s106 agreement / undertaking.
29. The appellant is to submit express written confirmation of its acceptance of any pre-commencement conditions within 1 working day of the close of the Inquiry.

Site Visit

30. At this stage I anticipate that my formal Site Visit shall be unaccompanied, following an itinerary to be agreed between the main parties. To this end, I would like the appellant to liaise with the Council with a view to preparing such an itinerary covering all matters the parties want me to see and visit, both on and off-site.
31. All being well, I shall also visit the area prior to the Inquiry on an informal basis.

Costs

32. No potential applications for an award of costs were flagged during the CMC. Wider considerations regarding Costs are set out in the Pre-Note.

Other Matters

33. To assist Mr Skeates, the PINS' case officer, if it has not already done so, the Council is to confirm which of its officers is / are its main point of contact for appeal related correspondence by close of business today.

G D Jones

INSPECTOR

24 February 2026

Appendix A - Timetable for Submission of Documents & Other Deadlines

Date	Submission / Action
17 March 2026 <i>6 weeks before the Inquiry opens</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All finalised SoCGs, including any topic specific SoCGs
31 March 2026 <i>4 weeks before the Inquiry opens</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All proofs • Core Documents (e-versions for Inspector) • Website/page for the appeal to include Core Documents hosted by the Council • Schedule of agreed conditions if not included in the main SoCG • Draft S106 (appellant)
7 April 2026 <i>3 weeks before</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council to submit a copy of the Inquiry notification letter and list of those notified
14 April 2026 <i>2 weeks before the Inquiry opens</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estimated timings from both main parties • Addendum SoCG (in preference to Rebuttals), if necessary • Key drawings pack (i.e. those likely to be referred to during EiC and XX – see para 20 above) • Final draft S106 agreement (appellant) • Proof of title (appellant) • CIL Compliance statement (Council)
24 February 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation of Inspector retiring room and parking (Council) • Draft Site Visit itinerary (appellant to lead)
3 March 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inquiry opens at 10.00 am