

# Landscape Proof of Evidence

In Respect of 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

On behalf of Hallam Land Management Limited

Date: 31 March 2026 | Pegasus Ref: P24-2318

PINS Ref: 6002485 LPA Ref: 3/2025/0196

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## Document Management.

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# 1. Witness Particulars

- 1.1. My name is Andrew Cook, and I hold a Bachelor of Arts degree in Geography (BA Hons) and a Masters Degree in Landscape Design (MLD). I am a Chartered Landscape Architect, Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute (CMLI), Chartered Environmentalist (C Env) and Member of the Institute of Sustainability & Environmental Professionals (MISEP) (formerly known as IEMA). I am one of the founding Executive Directors of Pegasus Group, which was established in 2003, and I am also the National Head of Environment team. Since then, the company has grown, establishing sixteen offices across the UK, employing approximately 600 planning and environmental planning professionals and staff. I am the national head of the environmental planning service line. The company is a corporate member of the Institute of Sustainability & Environmental Professionals (MISEP) (formerly known as IEMA) and was a founding member of IEMA's Quality Mark scheme, under my direction.
- 1.2. I have gained over 35 years of landscape planning consultancy experience. Prior to Pegasus, I was an Environmental Director at RPS (formerly Chapman Warren Planning Consultants) where I specialised in addressing landscape planning issues related to a wide range of projects. I have had considerable experience and involvement in a wide range of residential projects throughout the UK, many of which have involved appeal sites in Green Belts as well as statutory protected landscapes, including National Parks (NP), National Landscapes as well as non- statutory landscape designations such as Special Landscape Areas (SLAs), as 'valued landscapes'. I have presented evidence at Public Inquiries on many occasions to address various landscape planning, design and visual issues, and how these relate to landscape character and appearance.
- 1.3. I am based in the Cirencester office of Pegasus, where I manage a team of Environmental Planners and Landscape Architects. The Landscape Architects within my team at Pegasus and I undertake our work in compliance with the Landscape Institute's Code of Standards of Conduct and Practice for Landscape Professionals.
- 1.4. This Landscape Proof of Evidence is based on my own professional judgement and is presented in accordance with the guidance of my professional institution, the content of which is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and is presented irrespective of by whom I am instructed.



## 2. Introduction and Scope of Evidence

### Introduction

- 2.1. I am instructed on behalf of Hallam Land Management Limited, thereafter referred to as the Appellant, to present evidence relating to Landscape and Visual matters in respect of the appeal, submitted pursuant to Section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, concerning development of Land South of Longsight Road, Langho ("the site" or "appeal site"). This evidence should be read in conjunction with the Planning Statement prepared by Mark Saunders and other statements submitted on behalf of the Appellant.
- 2.2. I was not instructed to consider this matter until after the application was refused. I was specifically asked to advise whether I could professionally support the proposed scheme, and if so, whether I would be willing to provide evidence to the inquiry. I can confirm that before accepting the instructions I considered the papers, visited the site, and specifically considered of the relevant the work submitted on behalf of the Appellant in support of the Application as well as the views of the officers of the Council, and where relevant, the views of third parties – I thereafter confirmed that I was willing to act, and accepted instructions in this matter.

### Background to the Appeal

- 2.3. A full summary of the background to the appeal is set out within the appellant's Planning Statement of Case (CD9.1).
- 2.4. The site consists of one large agricultural field to the south of Longsight Road, Langho. The whole of the residential scheme is located within the administrative boundary of Ribble Valley Borough Council.
- 2.5. A comprehensive suite of technical reports and plans were submitted with the application in line with Ribble Valley Borough Council's validation requirements. The documents submitted during the course of the application are in the Core Documents List.
- 2.6. The full planning application for the site was received, validated and given the planning application reference 3/2025/0196. The Planning Case Officer prepared a report for the Planning Committee (CD3.1) and recommended that the application be refused.
- 2.7. This appeal follows the refusal (CD3.3) by Ribble Valley Borough Council with regard to the application for planning permission for the following Proposed Development ("the appeal scheme"):  
  

***"In respect of 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)"***
- 2.8. The Decision Notice was issued on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2025 and included five Reasons for Refusal, which so far as relevant to my consideration provide:

"1. ...

2. ...

**3. The proposed development, by virtue of its overall scale and footprint, would result in the introduction of an incongruous, unsympathetic, and discordant form of development, particularly when viewed from public vantage points along Longsight Road (A59) approaching the site from both the western and eastern directions, Public Footpath FPO606a which crosses the site and residential properties to the north of Langho village afforded direct views of the site. This would result in adverse, long term and permanent visual and landscape harm. The resultant impact fails to respond positively to the inherent visual and landscape character of the area contrary to Policies DMG1, DMG2, DME1 and DME2 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework including paragraph 135."**

4. ...

5. ...

2.9. In light of the third Reason for Refusal, this Proof addresses specific points raised as follows:

- Views from Longsight Road;
- Views from public footpath which crosses the site;
- Views from residential properties on the north side of Langho village;
- Effect on visual amenity;
- Effect on landscape character; and
- The effectiveness of the proposed mitigation.

## Scope of Evidence

2.10. My Proof of Evidence addresses Reason 3 in the Decision Notice with regard to alleged harm to the landscape and the recreational value of the site. My Proof describes how I consider the proposed development would have a bearing upon the landscape character and appearance of the locality, as well as the recreational value of the site. My conclusions of analysis in this Proof also form the basis of my separate Summary Proof of Evidence.

2.11. I rely upon the Statement of Common Ground/s (SoCG) where the parties have reached agreement. In preparing my evidence, I have additionally reviewed the following documents to inform my professional judgement:

- Decision Notice (**CD3.3**);
- Case Officer's Committee Report (**CD3.1**);
- Application LVIA (**CD1.13**);
- Application Drawings (relevant plans as referenced in **CD1**);
- Relevant published landscape reports (**CD6.12** to **6.13**);
- Design and Access Statement (**CD1.4**);

- Planning Statement (**CD1.3**);
- Relevant planning policies (relevant documents as referenced in **CD5**); and
- Other Relevant Published Documents (relevant plans as referenced in **CD6**).

- 2.12. Where appropriate, I draw upon relevant information from these documents. However, in presenting my evidence and in the interests of brevity, I do not unnecessarily state detailed amounts of information where this has been previously documented. I have reviewed the application LVIA (**CD1.13**). I have also reviewed the scheme with reference to the application LVIA viewpoints surrounding the appeal site. I have set out my own analysis with regard to the scheme in this Proof of Evidence. Whilst I note that an LVIA (**CD1.13**) was prepared for the application, in preparing for this Inquiry, I have undertaken my own independent analysis, which has assisted me in forming my professional judgements.
- 2.13. That said, there were no methodological concerns expressed in relation to the submitted LVIA (**CD1.13**) – the differences between the authors of the LVIA and of the officer’s report lay in respect of matters of judgment. I also note that at the time of determination, there were no outstanding requests for additional information.
- 2.14. In undertaking the exercise of auditing the work hitherto submitted, I note that there are some differences between my analysis and that of the original author (assessor) of the LVIA (**CD1.13**). However, both overall conclusions are not dissimilar.

## **Representative Viewpoints and Visualisations**

- 2.15. I consider the LVIA (**CD1.13**) photographs to be suitably representative viewpoints in the landscape surrounding the appeal site. It is anticipated that the Inspector would visit these representative viewpoints and use all the visuals, including photomontages (**Appendix 12**) that have been provided as an aide memoire. As part of the appeal process, I have taken the opportunity to provide further context photographs (**Appendix 14**), in particular to illustrate the visual amenity associated with the public access across the site.
- 2.16. It should be recognised that it is not practical to include viewpoints from every possible location. I consider that the viewpoints which have been selected illustrate an appropriate range of visual receptors at different distances and directions from the appeal site. I also note that the viewpoints are largely representative of moving through the landscape and should not be considered to amount to static viewpoints. I consider that the locations of the viewpoints have obviously been carefully considered, and the photography was undertaken when atmospheric conditions and visibility were acceptable. I also consider that the photography is appropriate given the type and scale of development. The representative viewpoints and visualisations have been prepared mindful of the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition (GLVIA3) (**CD6.5**) and its Clarification Note (**CD6.9**), however, it is recognised that there is no substitute for visiting the viewpoints in the field to gain a first-hand appreciation of the viewing context, which will be appreciated by the Inspector.

## **Professional Judgement**

- 2.17. Mindful of the Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note (LITGN) 2024-01 (August 2024) “Notes and Clarifications on Aspects” and the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact

Assessment Third Edition (GLVIA3) (CD6.9). I have reviewed the refused application and revised appeal schemes, and visited the viewpoints as part of my field work and site visits. This has allowed me to ascertain both the landscape and visual effects and make informed professional judgements concerning these matters, and establish the level and nature of change from a landscape and visual perspective. My assessment was based on summer views; however, I am mindful of winter views representing the worst-case scenario in terms of visibility, which I have taken into account in my analysis, following my recent site visit.

- 2.18. The degree of landscape or visual effect is identified by means of a descriptive scale as per the GLVIA3 guidance (CD6.5 and 6.9). However, it is also necessary to consider the nature of the landscape and visual effects. GLVIA3 (CD6.5), assists with regard to landscape effects, and paragraph 5.37 states that:

***“One of the more challenging issues is deciding whether the landscape effects should be categorised as positive or negative. It is also possible for effects to be neutral in their consequences for the landscape. An informed professional judgement should be made about this and the criteria used in reaching the judgement should be clearly stated. They might include, but should not be restricted to:***

***The degree to which the proposal fits with existing character.***

***The contribution to the landscape that the development may make in its own right, usually by virtue of good design, even if it is in contrast to existing character.***

***The importance of perceptions of landscape is emphasised by the European Landscape Convention, and others may of course hold different opinions on whether the effects are positive or negative, but this is not a reason to avoid making this judgement, which will ultimately be weighed against the opinions of others in the decision-making process.”***

- 2.19. With regard to visual effects, paragraph 6.29 (CD6.5) states that:

***“As with landscape effects an informed professional judgement should be made as to whether the visual effects can be described as positive or negative (or in some cases neutral) in their consequences for views and visual amenity. This will need to be based on a judgement about whether the changes will affect the quality of the visual experience for those groups of people who will see the changes, given the nature of the existing views.”***

- 2.20. The effects upon the landscape are specifically considered in terms of effect upon landscape elements which helps inform landscape character and reflects the combinations of landscape elements. The statement also sets out how the proposal would have a bearing upon the visual amenity associated with the area.

- 2.21. Whilst the scheme is an outline one with only the means of access into the site for detailed determination at this stage, nonetheless, I have carefully reviewed the illustrative masterplan and proposed green infrastructure proposals with care, as the Appellant’s assessment of one suitable basis upon which the scheme could be satisfactorily delivered.

- 2.22. The proposed design includes green infrastructure, which would be in character and in keeping with the rural area. I am aware that people on the whole generally adopt an adverse reaction to change, particularly with regard to their local environments with which they are



very familiar, irrespective of whether harmful or indeed beneficial (in whole or part). I have therefore adopted a precautionary approach here, and as such, I consider that the proposed scheme would be adverse in terms of nature of effect in landscape character and visual terms unless otherwise stated. However, I note that there would also be beneficial effects for some landscape elements.

## **Rule 6 Parties**

- 2.23. I am not aware that there is a Rule 6 Party with regard to this Public Inquiry.
- 2.24. I am, however, aware of third-party objections made regarding the appeal scheme from members of the public, and therefore, matters raised, where relevant, are addressed in evidence.

## 3. Description of the Proposal

### Design Iteration at Appeal Stage

- 3.1. Subsequent to the scheme being determined, on my advice, the appellant has proposed some minor modifications to the green infrastructure proposed as follows:
- The existing public footpath that runs through the site would pass through a proposed residential area. The configuration of the hard landscaping of this area, including access road and driveways, has been slightly adjusted to create a wider landscape corridor in order to accommodate the existing footpath alignment.
  - The northern boundary of the site would accommodate a significant tree belt running along its northern boundaries to augment the existing hedge so as to provide a greater degree of physical and visual containment, leaving the balancing pond areas in broadly the same locations.
- 3.2. It was confirmed during the Case Management Conference (CMC) on 23rd February 2026 and summarised in the Inspectors Post CMC Summary (**CD8.2**) that the Council confirmed that it would have no objection to the appeal being considered and determined on the basis of the revised versions (revised appeal scheme) of the plans, bearing in mind that landscape is a Reserved Matter; to which the Inspector confirmed that this would be acceptable.
- 3.3. For the avoidance of doubt, any further references to the appeal scheme, proposed development or proposals ect within this Proof are referring to the Landscape Masterplan (Drawing ref: P24-2318\_EN\_07\_B (Rev B)) (**Appendix 4, CD4.2**) as the revised appeal scheme. This also applies to any assessment within this Proof which relates to landscape features, character or visual matters.

### Introduction

- 3.4. A detailed description of the proposals is set out in the application documentation, including the Planning Statement (**CD1.3**) and the Design and Access Statement (DAS) (**CD1.4**). It is also set out at the start of the Officer's Report to Committee (**CD3.1**) and addresses the landscape matters in particular. I rely upon these detailed descriptions rather than repeating this information. Fully conversant with the proposals, I have set out my analysis and professional judgement. In this section of my Proof, I proceed to comment upon some aspects of the proposal that are particularly pertinent to landscape character and appearance.

### Proposed Residential Scheme & Green Infrastructure

- 3.5. The proposed development is for 300 dwellings together with green infrastructure forming an integral element of the overall scheme (**Appendix 4, CD4.2**). The intention is to create a new residential neighbourhood set within a high-quality green infrastructure framework. The north-eastern corner of the site is characterised by a small woodland known as Green Nook Wood, which would be retained. The scheme would include a small area of parkland in the south-eastern corner of the site, which would be punctuated with a number of existing trees that would be retained and augmented with additional standard tree planting. The area would also accommodate a 43 space car park (including 5 blue badge spaces, 4 EV charging spaces

and secured, covered cycle parking) for the adjacent Langho railway station. Much of the southern boundary of the site would be framed by a landscape corridor, again punctuated with tree cover. Internally within the site running through its centre would be a north-south orientated landscape corridor which would accommodate existing tree cover complemented with additional tree planting.

- 3.6. The western most part of the site, adjacent to Whitehalgh Lane, would form a parkland setting between this lane and the proposed residential area. A second north-south-oriented landscape corridor would weave through a residential area and accommodate a line of mature trees. The northern part of the site, adjacent to Longsight Road would accommodate tree belts adjacent to the highway and areas of open grassland which would be seasonally wet, forming surface water attenuation areas during the winter months.

## Proposed Green Infrastructure

- 3.7. The design for the residential scheme includes green infrastructure that would provide a network of green spaces to reinforce the character of the local farmed landscape.
- 3.8. At a macro level, the proposed green infrastructure would ensure that the development would:
- Conserve and reinforce local landscape character;
  - Protect and enhance existing green infrastructure assets, namely the trees and hedgerows, so that they can be appreciated and valued by everyone for future generations;
  - Protect and create habitats to enable biodiversity habitats and flora and fauna species to thrive;
  - Provide a resilient and adaptive environment in the face of climate change; and
  - Protecting and enhancing landscape character and biodiversity by using land improvements and management to deliver biodiversity gain and overall landscape enhancement.

## Northern Boundary Treatment

- 3.9. It is proposed that the northern boundary of the site adjacent to Longsight Road would accommodate a tree belt running continuously along the boundary, except for the vehicular access point and public footpath connecting onto Longsight Road (**Appendix 4, CD4.2**). This woodland would connect into Green Nook Wood to the north-east and wrap around the north-western corner of the site which excludes a number of small field compartments.

## Eastern Boundary Treatment

- 3.10. The northern part of the eastern boundary would retain the existing Green Nook woodland whilst the southern half of the eastern boundary would form a small parkland area designed to accommodate existing trees and complemented with additional tree planting, and as such would be able to accommodate and retain the existing footpath that runs diagonally through



the site (**Appendix 4, CD4.2**). For reasons of Ecology, addressed by Mr Goodman, an appropriate means of enclosure in order to limit public access to it is proposed.

### **Southern Boundary Treatment**

- 3.11. The majority of the southern boundary would form a landscape framework of grassland, shrubs, and trees to provide separation between existing houses on the south side of the railway line (**Appendix 4, CD4.2**).

### **Western Boundary Treatment**

- 3.12. The western-most part of the site, framed on two sides by Whitehalgh Lane, would accommodate existing trees and form naturalistic parkland punctuated with additional tree planting (**Appendix 4, CD4.2**).

### **Central Open Spaces**

- 3.13. Within the site itself, there would be a principal landscape corridor orientated north-south running through the entire width of the site, connecting the northern boundary with the southern boundary and would accommodate existing tree cover, which would be reinforced with further tree planting and would provide new pedestrian north-south routes through the site (**Appendix 4, CD4.2**). A secondary north-south orientated landscape corridor would lie further to the west, which is designed to accommodate a row of mature trees within green space.

## 4. Effect on Landscape Elements

### Introduction

- 4.1. This section of my proof assesses the effects on those landscape elements (features) that currently characterise the site itself. It particularly considers the introduction of the new elements that make up the scheme and how these will physically affect the existing features present within the site. It also explains why the scheme would, in overall terms, result in a beneficial effect as far as some landscape elements are concerned.

### Topography

- 4.2. The proposed development is residential in nature with green infrastructure. The footprints of the houses would be modest in size. Given the gentle, undulating nature of the site, the degree of cut and fill would be modest to accommodate the proposed layout, together with the surface water balancing areas proposed. I consider that the overall **magnitude of change** to the ground profile of the site would be **low**. With a **medium sensitivity** combined with a **low magnitude of change**, the overall degree of effect on the topography would be **minor (adverse)**.

### Trees/Tree Cover

- 4.3. As illustrated in the Landscape Masterplan, there is significant tree cover in and around the site, a number of hedgerow trees within the internal hedgerows and small tree groups which would be retained as part of the green infrastructure (**Appendix 4, CD4.2**). This would, however, be reinforced with new tree planting primarily comprised of standard trees located within hedgerows. A Detailed Planting Plan can be secured by means of a suitably worded condition. Overall, the **magnitude of change** is assessed as **low**, which, when combined with a **high sensitivity**, results in a **moderate (beneficial)** effect on the tree resource of the site.
- 4.4. The woodland afforded protection by Ribble Valley Borough Council Tree Preservation Order designation, TPO 3/19/3/238 Green Nook Wood 2024 and the single veteran tree (T75) recorded within this woodland, are both shown to be retained and would be physically unaffected by the proposals (**CD1.11** and **1.12**). I defer to the evidence of Mr Goodman, the appellant's Ecology witness, who considers this topic in greater detail.

### Hedgerows

- 4.5. The scheme would involve minimal loss of hedgerows. The Landscape Masterplan (**Appendix 4, CD4.2**) shows that the scheme would deliver a clear 'net gain' of hedgerows within the landscape areas, landscape corridors, and areas of public open space.
- 4.6. To accommodate the proposed site access, there would be, as a result, a loss of a short section of the hedgerow along Longsight Road. It is anticipated that the existing hedgerow would be translocated, strengthened and relocated behind the visibility splays. Since most views from beyond the site will be lateral when travelling along the A59, hedgerow planting in these locations would be beneficial in filtering views into the development.

- 4.7. Additional hedgerow planting across the proposal (**Appendix 4, CD4.2**) presents the opportunity to introduce new native hedgerows throughout the development both within areas of public open space and associated with individual residential curtilages. The Landscape Masterplan prepared by Pegasus illustrates how new hedgerows could be accommodated within the site resulting in an overall net gain in the hedgerow resource and beneficial effects with regard to the hedgerow resource on the site, with a **medium** level of **susceptibility, value** and **sensitivity** combined with a **high magnitude of change** which would result in a **major beneficial effect**.

## Land Use/Land Cover

- 4.8. The site currently comprises permanent pastureland. Whilst the proposed development would result in the loss of this pasture to accommodate the development area, the proposed scheme would create areas of naturalistic grassland including species rich grassland, wetland wet meadow associated with the surface water attenuation areas, native rich grasslands which are proposed across the areas of open space (**Appendix 4, CD4.2**). The scheme would inevitably result in the loss of some permanent pasture. Given a **low susceptibility, value** and **sensitivity**, combined with a **medium magnitude of change**, the proposal would result in a **moderate (adverse) degree of effect** to the site itself. However, this needs to be balanced against the fact that a significant proportion of the proposal would introduce wildflower meadow areas with a condition to ensure their retention.

## Public Rights of Way

- 4.9. There are a number of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) and footpaths in the locality and all those beyond the site would be physically unaffected with the scheme in place.
- 4.10. With regards to the on-site footpath (ref 606), no diversions of any footpaths are required in order to facilitate the proposed scheme with the existing route retained on its current alignment. PRoWs are considered to be **high susceptibility, value**, and **sensitivity** which when combined with a negligible magnitude of change, result in no physical degree of effect on the public routes as a resource and facility. Effects upon uses of these routes are considered elsewhere in this proof of evidence, which deals with visual amenity and recreational amenity. The existing footpath across the site would be retained as part of the scheme to connect to existing PRoWs and in order to extend the PRoW network. With a **high susceptibility, value**, and **sensitivity**, which when combined with a **negligible magnitude of change**, would result in a **negligible (beneficial) degree of effect** with regard to this resource.

## Water Features

- 4.11. The proposed scheme would include two surface water attenuation areas within the northern part of the site, which would form shallow scrapes and be managed as seasonally wet grassland designed to be naturalistic in character and would provide sustainable blue infrastructure for the proposal (**Appendix 4, CD4.2**). Based on a **medium susceptibility, value, sensitivity**, and a **medium magnitude of change**, this would result in a **moderate beneficial degree of effect**.

## Summary of Effects upon Landscape Elements

- 4.12. In overall terms, whilst significant parts of the site would change from undeveloped to developed, it is important to note that the scheme would result in some beneficial effects with regard to the landscape elements that currently define the landscape character of the site. The site would change from pastoral fields to a high-quality design residential neighbourhood set within an attractive, substantial landscape framework. The elements that currently contribute to defining the character of the site, namely trees, shrubbery and hedgerows, would all be strengthened and form more prominent elements in the medium and longer term, but I recognise this would be in the context of a new residential neighbourhood.

## Landscape Character of the Site

- 4.13. Collectively, if one draws the different elements of the site together, it defines the overall character of the site itself. In summary, the site is characterised by field boundaries but is significantly influenced visually by the adjacent dwellings and Longsight Road. The site is framed to the south and east by residential areas and by the highway, Longsight Road, to the north and is currently significantly affected by the substantial urbanising influences of other adjacent development. I also note that this includes the adjacent railway line which accommodates both passenger and freight rail. The site, in terms of its character, appears as an urban fringe edge of Langho settlement environment.
- 4.14. The scheme would introduce a high-quality residential built environment which would be in keeping with the local settlement and character area and therefore, is not at odds or out of character or appearance with its context. However, adopting a precautionary approach the proposals would result in an overall adverse effect in landscape character terms. The proposal would however accommodate extensive new green infrastructure which would replace several pastoral fields and again change this character of the site to be more representative of the local landscape character area and therefore would result in some beneficial effects at the site level.
- 4.15. The boundaries of the site are on the whole, framed by a combination of built form and mature vegetation, which provide a sense of visual containment and enclosure associated with the site. Indeed, the extent of enclosure is notable.
- 4.16. The existing residential curtilages are close to the site's southern boundary which creates a strong sense of physical and visual connection between the current settlement edge and the adjacent parts of the site. The settlement boundary is currently defined by an ad-hoc arrangement of vegetation and fencing along the site boundary and railway line and as such this forms a harsh urban edge. The proposals would provide a much more robust landscape framework to a new northern settlement boundary.
- 4.17. At the site level, with a **medium susceptibility** (given its urban fringe character), **value** and **sensitivity** combined with a **high magnitude of change** would result in an overall **moderate (adverse)** effect in landscape character terms which would be highly localised to the site and its immediate visual environs; diminishing to **negligible** beyond this extent.

## 5. Effect on Landscape Character

### Introduction

- 5.1. This section of my Proof explains how the scheme would have a bearing upon the landscape character of the surrounding area. As defined in the GLVIA glossary landscape character is defined as “A distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different to another...”.
- 5.2. To further clarify a distinction in the use of terms, Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) are discrete geographical areas of a particular landscape, as opposed to Landscape Character Types (LCTs), which are defined in GLVIA, page 157 (CD6.5) as follows:
- “These are distinct types of landscape that are relatively homogeneous in character. They are generic in nature in that they may occur in different areas in different parts of the country, but wherever they occur they share broadly similar combinations of geology, topography, drainage patterns, vegetation and historical lands use and settlement pattern, and perceptual and aesthetic attributes.”***
- 5.3. A number of landscape character assessments have been undertaken in recent years to identify both **Landscape Character Types (LCTs)** and **Landscape Character Areas (LCAs)** as defined above and have been published to assist professionals in understanding how decisions can affect landscape character.
- 5.4. I have provided some narrative here in this section to explain the extent to which the proposed scheme would, and would not, have a bearing upon the wider landscape character of the area beyond the site.

### National Level – National Character Area 35–Lancashire Valleys

- 5.5. The site and the surrounding area of Langho are located within the National Character Area 35–Lancashire Valleys (CD6.12). This NCA forms part of an assessment of the character of England’s landscape, first undertaken by the Countryside Agency but now the responsibility of Natural England.
- 5.6. The document provides a summary of the NCA (CD6.12) and identifies the key defining characteristics of the landscape as follows:
- ***“Broad valleys of the rivers Calder and Ribble and their tributaries run northeast to south–west between the uplands of Pendle Hill and the Southern Pennines.;***
  - ***A Millstone Grit ridge extends between the Ribble and Calder catchments (including the Mellor Ridge and part of Pendle Hill).;***
  - ***A broad trough underlain by Carboniferous Coal Measures provided the basis for early industrialisation;***

- *Field boundaries are regular to the west and more irregular to the east. They are formed by hedges with few hedgerow trees and by stone walls and post and-wire fences at higher elevations.;*
- *Agricultural land is fragmented by towns, villages and hamlets, industry and scattered development, with pockets of farmed land limited to along the Ribble Valley, the fringes of Pendle Hill, the area to the west of Blackburn, and in the north around Skipton.;*
- *Farmed land is predominantly pasture for grazing livestock, with areas of acid and neutral grassland, flushes and mires. There is some upland heath and rough pasture on Pendle Hill and the higher land to the south;*
- *Small, often ancient, broadleaved woodlands of oak, alder and sycamore extend along narrow, steep-sided cloughs on the valley sides – for example, at Priestley Clough, Spurn Clough and south of Blackburn. Traditional stone-built weavers' cottages;*
- *There are numerous large country houses with associated parklands, particularly on the northern valley sides away from major urban area*
- *The many towns, including Blackburn, Accrington and Burnley, which developed as a result of the Industrial Revolution give the area a strong urban character.*
- *Robust Victorian architecture of municipal buildings contrasts with the vernacular sandstone grit buildings of the quiet rural settlements on the valley sides.*
- *Numerous communication routes run along the valley bottoms, including the Leeds and Liverpool Canal, the Preston–Colne railway and the M65 motorway.”*

5.7. All of these key defining characteristics would continue to remain and prevail beyond the immediate visual environs of the site where effects would effectively be negligible.

5.8. With regards to Statements of Environmental Opportunity (CD6.12), SEO2 and 4, have guided the strategic landscape and visual advice with regard to the design of the development layout and state the following:

- *“SEO 2: Increase the resilience and significance of woodland and trees and manage and expand existing tree cover to provide a range of benefits, including helping to assimilate new infrastructure; reconnecting fragmented habitats and landscape features; storing carbon; and providing fuel, wood products, shelter and recreational opportunities.*
- *SEO 4: Conserve and manage the distinction between small rural settlements and the densely urban areas and ensure that new development is sensitively designed to contribute to settlement character, reduce the impact of the urban fringe and provide well-designed green infrastructure to enhance recreation, biodiversity and water flow regulation.”*

- 5.9. In addition, a number of landscape opportunities are also set out within the NCA. These include the following which have guided the masterplan and are reflected in the landscape strategy:
- ***"Protecting, conserving and enhancing the mosaic and diversity of existing woodlands, especially ancient semi-natural woodland, and improve their connectivity***
  - ***Managing and restoring hedges and field boundary trees and connecting to existing fragmented and degraded habitats.***
  - ***Bringing the area's small broadleaved woodlands, particularly on farms, into management, focusing on the visually important clough and ridgeside woodlands on the lower hillsides and the wet woodlands in the valley bottoms, and focusing on farm shelter plantings and copses that are distinctive to the industrial foothills and valleys.***
  - ***Ensuring that new woodland strengthens the local landscape and enhances biodiversity, providing recreational opportunities where possible.***
  - ***'Designing in' green infrastructure principles with housing expansion***
  - ***Improving the urban-rural fringe through careful design and integration of green infrastructure with housing and industry, through linking new developments with the wider countryside and sustainably manage urban activities within agricultural areas."***
- 5.10. The evidence base provided within the NCA description (CD6.12) provides a useful contextual overview of the wider landscape character and the SEOs provide a framework for design considerations for the site. This scale of assessment, however, is of limited assistance in considering landscape impacts due to its broad coverage.
- 5.11. Although the document has been reviewed as part of the baseline study, it is not necessary to assess the effects of the proposed development on landscape character at this national scale. The development (contiguous with the urban edge) is of such a relatively small scale that it is not considered to have the potential to result in any noteworthy effects to the host national landscape character area.
- 5.12. The scheme would accord with these broad strategies. With regard to this, the proposal would protect and maintain general views of the village seen from the surrounding countryside as well as general panoramic vistas across the NCA. The proposal would also retain and enhance the strong hedgerow field pattern. It would maintain the character and views from and into the village in general terms and the design has ensured that the locally distinctive vernacular is respected and reflected in the proposed scheme as set out in the DAS (CD1.4).
- 5.13. The overall key characteristics (CD6.12) reveal a settled and farmed landscape with many specific references to built infrastructure and individual settlements. This NE document is inevitably a high-level character assessment, which provides a useful overview by which to understand the character of the local landscape and its surroundings. At this higher level, it is considered that the scheme would bring about negligible change to the key characteristics of this NCA beyond the site. At the character area level, this landscape would have a **medium**

susceptibility and a medium value resulting in a medium sensitivity, which combined with a negligible change of magnitude, would result in a negligible degree of effect as a consequence of the scheme being in place. The proposal would be in keeping with the character of the adjacent settlement and would be in accordance with this Natural England landscape strategy.

## Landscape Strategy for Lancashire Landscape Character Assessment

5.14. The Landscape Strategy for Lancashire Landscape Character Assessment (LCC, 2000) (CD6.13) identifies 21 LCT's, which are then identified as geographically specific LCA's which share similar characteristics within the county. The site falls within **LCT 5: Undulating Lowland Farmland**, and at the finer level of assessment, **LCA 5E: Lower Ribblesdale**.

5.15. The Undulating Lowland Farmland LCT (CD6.13) is described as follows:

*“Generally below 150m, the Undulating Lowland Farmland lies between the major valleys and the moorland fringes. The underlying geology is largely masked by heavy boulder clays and hedgerows predominate over stone walls. This lowland landscape is traversed by deeply incised, wooded cloughs and gorges. There are also many mixed farm woodlands, copses and hedgerow trees, creating an impression of a well wooded landscape from ground level and a patchwork of wood and pasture from raised viewpoints on the fells. Some of the most picturesque stone villages of the county occur within this well settled landscape type. The towns of Longridge and Clitheroe also occur within this type but are not typical of the settlement pattern. The area also has many country houses whose boundary walls and designed landscapes add to the species diversity and visual appeal. There is a high density of farms and scattered cottages outside the clustered settlements, linked by a network of minor roads.”*

5.16. The site falls within LCA 5E: Lower Ribblesdale (CD6.13), which is then described as follows

*“This area forms the southern valley side of the Ribble, between Copster Green and Gisburn, on the lowland fringes of Pendle Hill. It is a particularly well settled area and provides a corridor for communication routes along the Ribble Valley. The A59(T) runs the length of the area, linking the settlements of Copster Green, Whalley, Clitheroe, Chatburn and Gisburn. The railway links the valley to Blackburn and Yorkshire. This communication structure has encouraged built development and industry; the large cement works at Clitheroe is a prominent visual landmark for miles around. This character area is underlain by limestone and has some good examples of limestone reef knolls, particularly around Clitheroe; Clitheroe Castle is located on top of one of these knolls.”*

### LCT 5 Undulating Lowland Farmland: LCA 5E Lower Ribblesdale (CD6.13)

5.17. The Lower Ribblesdale forms part of the southern valley side of the Ribble and the lowland fringes of Pendle Hill. There is a particularly distinctive pattern of wooded cloughs which continues to the north of the site, traversing the wider, valley side and broad valley. When combined with the complex hedge-lined medium-scale field pattern, this varies the levels of enclosure and overall provides a well-wooded landscape pattern.

- 5.18. Despite being a rural valley, the area is well settled with a dense network of winding lanes linking the many dwellings and farmsteads dispersed throughout the area. The presence of settlements and nearby suburban character of clustered settlements lining the A59 transport corridor also exert a strong influence over this character area. Langho as a settlement extends north-eastwards to the Whalley Road roundabout and includes a relatively recently constructed residential neighbourhood which is accessed by means of a residential road called Northcote Park. This extends as far north as Longsight Road, with a footpath connection to the south providing access to the nearby railway station. To the east of this is a further area of residential development east of Northcote Road. The proposed development would not extend the settlement any further north than currently exists extending up to Longsight Road. Road users travelling along Longsight Road (the A59) are at present aware of Langho as they travel past Northcote Park residential area. Furthermore, the general disposition of settlements across the area would not change with the proposed scheme in place. Copster Green/Salesbury lies to the west of Langho, separated by countryside, and similarly, Billington, Whalley and Nethertown all lie some distance to the east of Langho separated by countryside. These spatial relationships between these settlements would remain with the proposed development in place.
- 5.19. The course of the river is largely well enclosed by woodland and so forms the backdrop to views looking north from adjoining character areas which limits its presence in the wider landscape in particular to the south of the A59.
- 5.20. The same undulating farmland character continues to the east and west of the site's immediate context which is interrupted by the suburban character of Wilpshire to the south-west and to a lesser extent, the village of Billington to the north-east.
- 5.21. The farmed ridges of the south side of the Ribble Valley overlook the character area, which appears as a patchwork of wood and pasture from raised viewpoints on the fells above Langho.
- 5.22. The A59 divides the more settled south side of the character area from the predominantly rural farmed areas to the north, and the somewhat more remote Forest of Bowland beyond. Most built infrastructure in the district is located within or set close to this corridor, which forms a break in character and zone which is considered to be of lower overall sensitivity. Whilst both the landscape either side of the site and in the farmland to the north have some notable landscape features these are largely commonplace structural landscape elements, namely field boundary hedgerows and woodland blocks. These elements that provide the wider context for the site will be fully retained so as not to be physically affected by the change in character experienced at the site and its immediate context.
- 5.23. The undesignated landscape of the character area comprises commonplace elements but does present some locally distinctive features of scenic value, which together provide an overall medium value.
- 5.24. Looked at in the round, the **susceptibility** of LCA 5E: Lower Ribblesdale is assessed as **medium**. A combination of **medium value** and **medium susceptibility** results in a **sensitivity of medium**.
- 5.25. Within the wider character area, the proposed development would be perceived as a northern extension to the settlement edge of Langho, adjacent to the recently constructed Pringle development. Due to the nature of the landscape and the size and scale of the

proposed development, it would be visible from areas within the character area, including the adjacent rural landscape to the north, west, southeast and south-west, along a short section of Longsight Road (A59) in both directions, from the adjacent residential development to the east, and for a few north facing properties at the edge of existing built form of the settlement. The development proposals, however, would not be out of character with the locality, with similar built elements surrounding the site and located throughout the character area. Therefore, the proposals would not constitute an especially notable adverse element within the wider landscape. In this regard it is noted that the geographical extent of the landscape which would experience the identified long-term effects of the development is generally already partly influenced by development.

- 5.26. The proposed development would represent an alteration to baseline character, introducing built elements that may be prominent in some localised situations but not necessarily substantially uncharacteristic with the attributes of the receiving landscape where similar development is seen in close proximity, but which could nevertheless co-characterise parts of the landscape. With regard to the site itself, the **magnitude of change** is assessed as **high**, resulting in a **major adverse** level of effect, diminishing rapidly to **negligible** beyond the immediate visual environs of the site across the wider LCA 5 and LCT 5E. However, as existing and proposed vegetation matures, this effect upon landscape character would reduce gradually in the medium to long term.

LCT 7 Farmed Ridges: LCA 7A Mellor Ridge (CD6.13)

- 5.27. To the south and set above Langho is the Mellor Ridge LCA, part of the Farmed Ridges LCT. This is a distinct area with a ridge profile and steep side slopes, which separates them from the adjacent lowland landscapes. The wooded sides form distinctive points of orientation from the lowland landscape. The landscape is a mosaic of mixed farmland and woodland, which provides a vegetative backdrop to the surrounding lowlands inclusive of the site. Langho is one of several clustered stone villages with scattered outlying stone cottages and farmsteads dispersed along local roads, along with more recent development following main roads often less in keeping with wider character. The ridges also host local reservoirs such as those above Langho and communication masts and occasional wind turbines.
- 5.28. The Screened Zone of Theoretical Visibility, which factors in areas of built form and blocks of woodland as screening features, demonstrates the constrained visibility towards the site from higher ground within the area of the ridge due to the enclosure of the settlement of Langho directly to the south of the site. Oblique views are likely possible either side of the settlement from the PRoW network. However, woodland at the west side of Langho and the recent development, Northcote Park, to the east of the site alongside existing woodland screening does preclude most viewing opportunities to the east and west of Langho until reaching higher vantage points where the site reveals itself, set within wide panoramic views looking north over the Ribble Valley. The development would only slightly increase the perception of built form within Langho from higher ground on the north and south sides of the valley as it would be interspersed by vegetation breaking up its visible elements and there would be limited opportunities to experience the changes such that it appears as a natural extension bound by the road corridor (A59). Langho, as a settlement, sits on the southern slopes of a wide valley formed by the River Ribble across the vale of which, further to the north, the land rises again. With the proposed scheme in place, the character of the surrounding valley landscape associated with the River Ribble would be negligible in terms of the overall degree of effect.

- 5.29. Although this agricultural landscape is predominantly rural in nature, the surrounding residential uses influence its **value (medium)** and **susceptibility (medium)** to change and therefore, on balance, these areas have been assessed as having a **medium sensitivity**.
- 5.30. With the proposed scheme in place, there would be a **negligible magnitude of change** to this landscape type, resulting in a **negligible adverse degree of effect**.

## Site Landscape Character

- 5.31. As previously described, the character of the site is formed by gently sloping pastures, a central wooded watercourse, scattered mature trees and field boundary hedgerows. The site is semi-enclosed by woodland blocks to the south-east and north-west and native hedgerows on the northern, eastern, and western boundaries, which provide some visual separation between the site and agricultural land to the north and immediate west. The southern boundary is slightly more open, where some existing residences at the edge of Langho are afforded views over the site and to the far side of the valley.
- 5.32. The character of the site is influenced by adjacent residential development to the east and lower lying agricultural land to the north, as well as equivalent farmland to the immediate west. It is also affected by the wider surrounding rural landscape set beyond the village settlements. The boundary hedgerows are dense with the exception of parts of the southern boundary, which includes open sections with little vegetation. The field boundary hedgerows present on three sides of the site are a common feature in the wider landscape which is mainly well enclosed in contrast to the site's open internal boundaries following hedgerow removals and their replacement with post and wire fence lines.
- 5.33. The site is not covered by any designation that recognises a specific landscape or scenic importance. However, it does have some recreational value as it provides a public footpath route (FP6) which links Langho to the wider PRoW network within the Ribble Valley. The site contains some elements of value, namely the boundary hedgerows and individual trees which provide some visual connectivity to the wider landscape beyond its boundaries. It is considered therefore, that the landscape **value** of the site is **medium**.
- 5.34. Overall, as an area of settlement fringe agricultural pastureland type with a **medium value** and **medium susceptibility**, the character of the site is therefore considered to be of **medium sensitivity**.
- 5.35. The character of the site is presently influenced by both built form and agricultural uses. The proposed development would result in an inevitable change to the character of the site, along with localised effects. Effects relate to a change in the current land use from undeveloped fields for the majority of the site area, to residential development with associated infrastructure. It is acknowledged, however, that the proposed layout means that the site would retain most of its valuable features in the form of boundary woodland and hedgerows and individually important trees. Overall, as stated previously, the magnitude of change within the site is assessed as **high**, resulting in **major adverse** effects overall, noting that this effect would be highly localised and would diminish rapidly to **negligible** beyond the immediate visual environs of the site.

## Summary

- 5.36. As far as landscape character is concerned, I acknowledge that the site itself would see some considerable change from several pastoral fields. However, the baseline that needs to be taken into account here is that the proposed scheme is framed by housing, a rail line and roads. No significant off-site works are proposed, and as such, the character of the local landscape beyond the site in both physical and experiential terms would remain materially unchanged with the scheme in place.
- 5.37. I recognise that the scheme would bring about an inevitable change to the character of the application site itself, however, such a change would, in physical terms, be predominantly confined within the application site boundaries. Off site, the pattern of the land cover, tree and hedge cover and agricultural mix, undulating topography, the variety of building materials, Langho's settlement pattern as identified in the various published reports, would all continue and prevail with the scheme in place. Consequently, it is considered that those key characteristics of the wider landscape and settlement beyond the application site boundary as identified above would be physically unaffected with the scheme in place. It is only the experiential factors of character, both visual and audible elements that would be influenced to some limited degree locally. The scheme would not change the broad character of the wider area as the 'settled agricultural scene', which would continue to prevail with the scheme in place. The sensitive design of the proposed scheme would reflect the local settlement character of Langho. Any such effects would be highly localised, therefore.
- 5.38. With regard to the site itself, it is currently pastoral land. The boundary of the site is, in the main, framed by a combination of mature hedgerows and standard trees, which provides a strong sense of visual containment and enclosure associated with the site. There are significant urbanising influences associated with the site including housing. There are a number of residential areas which are close to the site's southern and eastern boundaries which reveals a strong sense of physical and visual connection between the settlement of Langho and the adjacent areas of the site. The site does accommodate some features such as trees and hedgerows, which contribute to the defining characteristics of the locality, but all of these elements would be retained, and their presence reinforced with the green of structure proposals as an integral part of the scheme.

## 6. Effect on General Visual Amenity

- 6.1. To reiterate, character and appearance are two different aspects. The physical character of the surrounding landscape would remain unaltered with the scheme in place.
- 6.2. In order to gain a better understanding of the extent and nature of the change brought about by the scheme on the appearance of the local landscape, I examine the effect of the proposed scheme on the general visual amenity of the landscape and the perception of those visual receptors (people) using the landscape.
- 6.3. My assessment relates to the representative LVIA viewpoints (**CD1.13**) and additional context viewpoints (**Appendices 13 and 14**).
- 6.4. Visual amenity is defined on page 158 in the Glossary of Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment – Third Edition (April 2013) (**CD6.5**) as:
- “The overall pleasantness of the views people enjoy of their surroundings, which provides an attractive visual setting or backdrop for the enjoyment of activities of the people living, working, recreating, visiting or travelling through an area.”***
- 6.5. The LVIA analysis (**CD1.13**) demonstrated that much of the landscape within the locality would be visually unaffected by the proposed scheme. In reality, the actual visual envelope from where the proposed scheme would be seen would be very limited and highly localised owing to the layering effect of vegetation, principally the extensive woodlands in the intervening landscape between the visual receptor (person) and the site boundary. Detailed analysis is set out in the LVIA (**CD1.13**), which I do not repeat in my proof. Notwithstanding this analysis, I have undertaken my own analysis to provide further context to this LVIA analysis (**CD1.13**).
- 6.6. The appreciation of views from the countryside is mainly gained from vantage points accessible to the public. The two main ways in which members of the public can gain an appreciation of views when in the countryside are primarily from public highways and by using the various rights of way that pass through the landscape.
- 6.7. Within the local area, beyond the A59 corridor, the network of public highways is limited as the land slopes gently towards the River Ribble. It includes a number of unclassified roads that connect the various settlements in the landscape. The typical character of these minor roads tends to be narrow with hedgerows, hedgerow trees and built form situated immediately beyond the metalled surface of the carriageway. Consequently, within the local landscape, the presence of such roadside vegetation and built form means that a road user using these highways often has only a restricted opportunity to gain views of the countryside. The view of the user is most often channelled along the lane itself in the direction of travel, or where PRoWs diverge from lanes – views are constrained by topography and intervening landscape. The user’s appreciation of the wider countryside is very much limited to the direction of travel and to a narrow landscape corridor associated with the highway in front of the vehicle. Thus, the opportunity to gain a panoramic appreciation of the landscape and of the proposed residential scheme within the site would be very restricted. Indeed moving along the PRoW to the north, it is only as one approaches the floodplain of the Ribble that views tend to open out, albeit that the appeal site is not evident in such views.
- 6.8. The detailed analysis is set out within the LVIA (**CD1.13**). I comment here to provide a further narrative to that analysis. There are a number of public highways and public access routes in

the vicinity of the site which I proceed to address with regard to the cardinal points of the compass.

## **Views from the Countryside to the North**

- 6.9. Forming the northern boundary of the site is Longsight Road. From this major highway, the A59, there would be views of the proposed scheme where the road is adjacent to the site which forms a short section of this highway which runs north-eastward to Skipton to Preston in the south-west and accommodates a high volume of traffic. Immediately east of the site in the vicinity of Green Nook Wood the proposed scheme would fall from view and not be visible due to the presence of this woodland and adjacent residential area to the east of the site. A public footpath passes across the site which enables people to gain access between the Longsight Road to the north and Langho south of the railway line.
- 6.10. Similarly, west of the site, the proposed scheme would not be visible from this highway due to the presence of a complex of buildings and tree cover and vegetation adjacent to the south side of this highway.
- 6.11. Along the A59 immediately to the north of the appeal site, initially there would be open views from the A59 where it runs alongside the site as it is currently flanked by a low continuous hedgerow. However, it is proposed that a tree belt would be planted along the northern boundary except for the vehicular access point into the site and the existing public footpath. With the establishment and maturity of the tree belt, the proposed scheme would not be visible from this highway except fleetingly through these 2 access points. I regard the roadside pavement as a road user category given the focus is to walk along this footway in the context of a busy highway.
- 6.12. To the north-west of the site lies a country lane known as Chapel Lane which is broadly orientated north-south running northwards to Old Langho. This highway is flanked by mature hedgerows and trees with occasional gaps as field access points and as such, there would be very limited opportunity to observe the proposed scheme from this highway.
- 6.13. With regard to PRoWs, there is one public footpath extending across the countryside to the north of the site which extends from Monks Barton to the south, with Lower Fold Farm to the north. Given its orientation together with its low elevation, as the land drops to the River Ribble and tree cover in the intervening landscape, there is little opportunity to observe the proposed scheme from this public footpath, and it is notable it is not referenced in the specific reason for refusal.
- 6.14. To the north of the site the general topography continues to fall in levels to the north which is illustrated by Viewpoints 10 and 11 in the LVIA. This area is also gently undulating in terms of its local topography and accommodates the River Ribble. The area is also heavily punctuated with a patchwork quilt of woodlands, copses and tree belts which collectively creates a strong sense of visual enclosure with a greater propensity towards short to middle range views rather than long range views. Further north of the River Ribble and Longridge Road (B6243) the land gradually rises to form a ridge of local high ground known as Longridge Fell, much of which is blanketed in woodland. From the southern boundary of this wood adjacent to an unclassified lane, Old Clitheroe Road, there is a viewpoint location and associated parking area which is annotated on Ordnance Survey maps. This provides a view in a south-eastwards direction towards Langho and lies at approximately 5km north of the site. The area accommodates a network of public footpaths and bridleways which connect

various small villages. The opportunity to observe the proposed scheme from the north side of the valley would be very limited. Where the proposal would be seen, it would form a very small element in the views and would always be observed in the context of the wider settlement of Langho itself. Effects upon such views would range from minor to negligible degree of effect where visible.

## **Views from the Countryside to the East**

- 6.15. There is a network of roads to the east of the site converging on a major roundabout on the A59. Northcote Road lies to the north of this junction. The A59 straddles eastward and westward of the junction. The A666 extends southward from this junction to run through Langho whilst a further country lane, Whalley Road extends from the roundabout north-eastwards to connect into the village of Whalley. Given the topography, built form with residential properties and vegetation, there would be no opportunity to observe the proposed scheme from the highways to the east of the site.
- 6.16. There is a network of PRoWs to the east of the site, which form local public footpaths. The majority of these routes would be visually unaffected due to topography, built form and vegetation screening the proposal on these routes. Where observed, the scheme would have a negligible degree of effect upon views given the existing viewing context of these footpaths locally, and particularly in the context of observing the village of Langho. Where it is perceived it will be perceived as a logical extension to the settlement

## **Views from the Countryside to the South**

- 6.17. There are a number of residential roads a short distance to the south of the site, within the settlement where there would be little opportunity to observe the proposed scheme. There is also a network of main roads through the village and across the countryside to the south of the settlement, however due to topography, built form and vegetation these routes would be generally visually unaffected by the proposals.
- 6.18. There is a network of public footpaths to the south of Langho on the site with a long-distance waymarked route known as the Ribble Valley Jubilee trail which passes over a local ridgeline to the south of the site but sits on a broad ridge of local high ground such that it would be generally visually unaffected by the proposed scheme.
- 6.19. Immediately to the south of the site is a railway line linking Blackburn (and thence Manchester) to the south with Clitheroe to the north and indeed Langho Station is immediately to the south-east of the site with associated platforms. From this station and a short section of railway line adjacent to the site, the proposed scheme would be visible but would be observed in the context of the adjacent existing Langho settlement. For train passengers along this route, visual effects would be restricted to a very short length of the rail route, and the change would be very limited.

## **Views from the Countryside to the West**

- 6.20. Immediately to the west of the site lies Chapel Lane which effectively forms the boundary of the site. This is framed by topography in a local cutting which passes under the railway line, tree cover and hedgerows, roadside banks which would limit the opportunity to observe the

proposed scheme, though there would be a few locations where there would be fleeting, framed views from field access points.

- 6.21. There are a few public footpaths west of the site, though due to topography, tree cover and built form, these routes would be generally visually unaffected with few locations where the proposed scheme would be visible and form a small element in the local viewing context.

## **PRoW Across the Site**

- 6.22. The Illustrative Masterplan shows that is proposed to retain the footpath within a broad landscaped corridor, referenced 606, across the site, albeit with the prospect of a diversion towards the northern section. This diversion would require a legal order and a suitable diversion route around the balancing pond areas. I note that the layout is a Reserved Matter such that the indicative layout may change, at that stage. At all events, the majority of the current alignment of this route would be retained and accommodated by the proposed design of the neighbourhood and green infrastructure.
- 6.23. The footpath is reasonably well used by the local community, although from my visits there seems to be a tendency for some users to wander away from the line of the path. Use of this route provides open views across the site. I note from the work undertaken by Mr Blair (the Appellant's Highways Expert) that most of those using the footpath travel to and from the direction of the railway station towards the A59. Only a handful of users appear to cross the A59 to the wider footpath network to the South, and no-one was noted to be travelling to and from the A59 (i.e. with an origin to the South of the road). The same survey noted that a minority of users did not stick to the public right of way – and indeed some even travelled into the area of woodland. Since this latter activity comprises acts of trespass I afford this limited weight in assessing the effect upon such receptors, however, it does evidence that there is a desire on the part of some parts of the public to use a wider area of land close to the existing settlement, which will, in part be addressed by the proposals for a generous area of open space located to the immediate north of the railway station.
- 6.24. With the proposed scheme in place, the PRoW would in the future, pass along a generous landscape corridor through part of the residential scheme whilst the southern section of the path would pass through naturalistic parkland landscape, with the opportunity to wander beyond the path and into the area of open space. Clearly the visual context of that experience would change. The current context comprises an open field with a backdrop of existing houses both to the east and south of the site. With the scheme in place, there would be views of the housing across the site. A high-quality design with regard to the residential neighbourhood and green infrastructure would ensure that the landscape would be attractive and the housing sympathetic in design terms, reflective of the local area. With a **high susceptibility, medium value, high sensitivity**, and a **medium magnitude of change**, there would be a **major adverse visual effect** with regard to users of this route through the site.

## **Summary of Visual Effects**

- 6.25. It is evident from the LVIA (CD1.13) and the visual analysis I have undertaken for this proof that the proposed development would be visually well contained due to surrounding woodland, tree cover and the settlement of Langho, and in due course, the proposed mitigation. The proposed development would be set within a series of existing fields within a wider field pattern where field boundaries are demarcated by established hedges and tree cover. Substantial tree cover frames much of the site. Based on the Viewpoint Assessment,

it is evident that the proposed scheme would be well contained as a result of topographical variation in the local landscape, vegetation screening including hedgerows, woodland and tree cover, roadside vegetation, as well as existing residential areas. The majority of the visual receptors would be highly localised, i.e. those who are generally within or close to the site and its perimeters. More distant views across the landscape towards the site would see the proposed scheme in a wider valley context associated with Langho village and viewed as a minor addition to the settlement. The majority of the identified and assessed viewpoints and receptors would not be subject to a major degree of visual effect. Indeed, the majority of the visual effects would be negligible to minor in terms of scale of effect.

- 6.26. It is anticipated that the tree belts would frame the screen once established, as would the green infrastructure generally, which would increase the degree of visual containment of the scheme from the surrounding countryside and settlement in the medium and longer term.

## 7. Effect on Residential Visual Amenity

- 7.1. I note that residential visual amenity as a specific concern is raised in the Decision Notice. However, the officer's report to committee (CD3.1) did not consider this matter to be of sufficient concern to be raised as a Reason for Refusal. However, I am aware that some local residents have made representations with regard to the application raising residential amenity as a matter from their perspective. In light of this and the Reason for Refusal, I have therefore considered the matter of residential visual amenity and set out my analysis in this section.
- 7.2. It is right to make a distinction between residential and general visual amenity. The latter term from a planning policy perspective, usually relates to the public realm and the wider landscape, whilst the former is concerned with the private visual amenity of an individual residential property.
- 7.3. Planning decisions proceed on the basis that no individual has the right to a particular view and that an unwelcome change in that view is not of itself a concern of the planning system. Nonetheless, past decisions make it clear that there does come a point where, by virtue of the proximity, size and scale of a given development, a residential property or properties would be rendered so unattractive as a place in which to live that planning permission should justifiably be refused. The test relates to the position which would pertain with the proposed scheme in situ, irrespective of the position beforehand. In other words, the test is not whether, in relative terms, a property would become a substantially less attractive place to live, the test is whether, viewed objectively and in the public interest, a property would become an unattractive place in which to live<sup>1</sup>. Such a situation, if left unchecked, would lead clearly to undesirable consequences. It is useful to pose the question:

***“Would the proposal affect the outlook of these residences to such an extent, i.e., be so unpleasant, overwhelming and oppressive that this would become an unattractive place to live?”***

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<sup>1</sup> The so called “Lavender Test” from North Dover (Enifer Downs) Public Inquiry, PINS Appeal Reference APP/X2220/08/2071880. Decision Letter dated 16 March 2009



- 7.4. The test of what change would be unacceptably impactful to residential amenity to become a matter of land use concern to a decision maker should be an objective test, albeit that professional judgement is required in its application to the circumstances of each particular case. There needs to be a degree of harm over and above an identified substantial adverse effect on a private interest to take a case into the category of refusal in the public interest. It follows that such a change, to amount to a determinative issue in a planning decision, would be a rare eventuality. Mere change in the outlook from within a property is patently not sufficient; indeed, even a fundamental change in outlook is not necessarily unacceptable.
- 7.5. It is worthy of note that the visual component of residential amenity should be addressed “in the round” taking into account factors such as distance, the direction of the view, the size of the residential scheme and its layout, the layout of particular dwellings in terms of their floor plans, their garden environment, and the lines of sight towards the scheme.
- 7.6. I have visited the site and noted that there are some residential properties relatively close to the edge of the appeal site.
- 7.7. Given the arrangement of the residential scheme and the distances between the proposed dwellings and the existing residential properties, which in the main lie to the south of the railway line and positioned at a higher level of elevation, mindful that there are substantial existing mature trees and hedgerows along the boundary between the properties and the residential scheme, and mindful of the proposed additional planting, any effect on the outlook for the elevations of these properties and their garden spaces would not breach the public interest test here. To the contrary, the proposed relationship to new development, evidenced by the Illustrative Masterplan, seems to me to be well thought out and appropriate.

## **Officer’s Report (OR)**

- 7.8. The Officer’s Report (CD3.1) specifically addresses residential visual amenity and notes the following observations:

***“Whilst the details of the layout of the proposed dwellings are reserved for a later date, the relationship with a number of nearby residential dwellings must be considered in respect of the potential for the proposal to result in undue impact upon existing or future residential amenities.***

***In this respect, the nearest residential properties are Wildmans Farm, Wildman Barn, 1 and 2 Wildmans Barn located approximately 23- 36m from the closest part of the site, Wade Platt Farm is located 140m, Foxghyl, Redwoods and Redwoods Barn are located between 300 - 380m all to the west of the site. Properties on Bushburn Drive and Moorland Road are located on the southern boundary of the site with the railway line adjacent to the boundary providing a separation distance of around 20m. Northcote Park development is located immediately adjacent to the eastern boundary of the site. To the north of the site is Longsight Road (A59) with properties on this side located some distance away.***

***In respect of the existing properties to the south of the site, taking into account that the land levels slope downwards from south to north, these properties would have uninterrupted views of the proposed site from their rear (south) aspects. The majority of these properties are two storey or have rear dormers which overlook the site and therefore careful consideration of the proposed house types and proximity***



*of these to the railway line boundary would need to be considered at the Reserved Matters stage to avoid the existing residential units experiencing significant direct overlooking from elevated positions that would significantly compromise and undermine the sense of privacy afforded to the private garden areas.*

*The existing properties to the east of the site on Northcote Park would be separated to some degree by the brook and existing woodland trees. With the proposed site plan indicating no built form within close proximity to the eastern boundary. As such those properties are not considered to be unduly affected.*

*The existing properties to the west consist of detached farm properties the nearest of which is Wildman's Farm and Barn which is located within its own grounds which abut the site to the east and south and therefore offer some protection in terms of impacts. Foxghyl and Redwoods are separated from the site by Whitehalgh Lane and therefore would not be unduly impacted by the development in term of amenity."*

## Summary

- 7.9. The Case Officer (CD3.1) considered that the proposed development could be accommodated on the site without undue impacts on the existing neighbours' properties, subject to appropriate house types, appropriate land levels and scale, appropriate design, and distances to the eastern and southern boundaries and to the individual residential units to the west. I have undertaken a site visit and looked at the properties adjacent to the site, and reviewed these in the context of the proposed scheme and consider that the proposed scheme would not breach the public interest test with regard to this scheme and is common ground with the Case Officer's report (CD3.1).

## 8. Comment on Reason for Refusal No 3

### Introduction

- 8.1. This section of my Proof addresses the second Reason for Refusal where the Council allege that the development would result in significant deterioration on the recreational value of the site. I interpret that as relating specifically to recreation enjoyed by members of the public, and as such, members of the public having access to the landscape that forms the site itself. I therefore proceed to consider how the proposal would have a bearing upon the public access route across the site and its associated amenity which primarily relates to visual senses and therefore, visual amenity (recognising 'hearing' sound is an experience too).

### Public Footpath Across the Site (FP0606)

- 8.2. The Illustrative Masterplan shows that is proposed to retain the footpath largely along its present alignment, referenced 606 with a minor diversion towards the northern section (**Appendix 4, CD4.2**). This diversion would require a legal order and a suitable diversion route around the balancing pond areas. I note that the layout is a Reserved Matter such that the Illustrative Masterplan may change. The majority of the current alignment of this route would be retained and accommodated by the proposed design of the neighbourhood and green infrastructure.
- 8.3. The footpath is used by the local community. Use of this route provides open views across the site. With the proposed scheme in place, this route would pass along a narrow landscape corridor through part of the residential scheme whilst the southern section of the path would pass through naturalistic parkland landscape. Clearly, the viewing context would change, and I of course recognise that such a change will be unwelcome to many of the current users. The current viewing context reveals an open field with a backdrop of existing houses both to the east and south of the site. With the scheme in place, there would be views of the housing across the site. Nonetheless, in future high-quality design with regard to the residential neighbourhood and green infrastructure would ensure that the landscape would be attractive and the housing sympathetic in design terms reflective of the local area. With a **high** susceptibility, **medium value**, **high sensitivity**, and a **medium magnitude** of change there would be a **major adverse** visual effect with regard to users of this route through the site.
- 8.4. I would note the following with regard to useability of the PRow; the footpath currently cuts across grassland and therefore during the winter months, is muddy and difficult to cross, particularly for some members of the community, such as those who may require a better surface. The intention is that a bound gravel surface would be constructed 2m in width across the public open space and a sealed tarmac surface through the residential area which would ensure consistent useability throughout the seasons of the year, thereby increasing its useability.
- 8.5. Currently, the only formal legal public access to the site is along the PRow with any other use of the land regarded as tolerated trespass. If the land were grazed and required fencing, the landowner could run a fence line on the higher the side of the path to keep stock in and the public out on the rest of the land without any requirement for planning.

- 8.6. The proposal provides extensive open space which would allow unrestricted public access to all of the green space within the site area which would be a substantial benefit in terms of recreation space and opportunity within the site itself.
- 8.7. As part of the proposal, as well as the proposed open space, it is intended that the scheme would facilitate a Footpath Improvement Strategy Plan. There is one footpath across the site. There are a number of measures that could be introduced as part of the proposals that could be delivered through a suitably worded condition. These measures would include the following:
- repair of existing gates and stiles.
  - signposting at each junction of routes.
  - interpretation boards at specific key locations.
  - new security barriers could be introduced to discourage anti-social behaviours such as motorcycling.
  - the area is popular for dog walking and so waste bins could be located at specific points.
  - local circular routes could be promoted with coloured way markings to encourage use and navigation through the local landscape both within the site and immediate surroundings.
  - seats and benches provided at key locations to offer rest points where views are available.
  - public art installations engaging local artists and reflecting local landscape history associated with the coal mining heritage.
  - management of vegetation to ensure good access year-round.
  - appropriate ground surface reinforcement around nodes to compensate for heavy footfall to ensure year-round accessibility.
  - replacement of stiles with gates.
  - the surfacing of the north-south existing route.

### **Public Vantage Points on Longsight Road (A59)**

- 8.8. Forming the northern boundary of the site is Longsight Road. From this major highway, the A59, there would be views of the proposed scheme where the road is adjacent to the site which forms a short section of this highway and runs north-eastward to Skipton to Preston in the south-west and accommodates a high volume of traffic, such that it is unattractive to walk along the roadside pavement on the north side of this highway given the speed and volume of traffic on this road. I apprehend that the use of this pavement is likely to be utilitarian and not recreational. Immediately east of the site, in the vicinity of Green Nook Wood, the proposed scheme would fall from view and not be visible due to the presence of this woodland and the adjacent residential area to the east of the site.

- 8.9. Once the proposed landscaping matures, views of the proposed development will be heavily filtered, and the change will be limited. Users of the A59 generally travel at speeds suitable for an A-road. The existing hedgerows channel views along this road to some degree. Proposed tree belt planting along the northern boundary of the site would channel views along the alignment of the highway like other stretches of this road, and as such, there would be little perception of the proposed scheme once the landscape mitigation matures except for fleeting views at the vehicular access point, not dissimilar to the Northcote Park residential scheme to the east of the site.

## **Residential Properties on the North Side of Langho Village**

- 8.10. The Case Officer considered that the proposed development could be accommodated on the site without undue impacts on the existing neighbours' properties subject to appropriate house types, appropriate land levels and scale, appropriate design, and distances to the eastern and southern boundaries and to the individual residential units to the west. I have undertaken a detailed site visit and looked at the properties adjacent to the site and reviewed these in the context of the proposed scheme and consider that the proposed scheme would not breach the above public interest test with regard to this scheme and is common ground with the Case Officer's report.

## **Landscape Character of the Area**

- 8.11. Collectively, if one draws the different elements of the site together, it defines the overall character of the site itself. In summary, the site is characterised by field boundaries but is significantly influenced visually by the adjacent dwellings and Longsight Road. The site is framed to the south and east by residential areas and by the A59, Longsight Road, to the north and is currently significantly affected by the substantial urbanising influences of other adjacent development. I also note that this includes the adjacent railway line which accommodates both passenger and freight rail. The site, in terms of its character, appears as an urban fringe edge of Langho settlement environment.
- 8.12. The scheme would introduce a high-quality residential built environment which would be in keeping with the local settlement and character area and therefore, is not at odds or out of character or appearance. However, adopting a precautionary approach the proposals would result in an overall adverse effect in landscape character terms. The proposal would accommodate significant new green infrastructure alongside a new residential neighbourhood and therefore would result in some landscape beneficial effects.
- 8.13. The boundaries of the site are on the whole, framed by a combination of built form and mature vegetation, which provide a sense of visual containment and enclosure associated with the site.
- 8.14. The existing residential curtilages are close to the site's southern boundary which creates a strong sense of physical and visual connection between the current settlement edge and the adjacent parts of the site. The settlement boundary is currently defined by an ad-hoc arrangement of vegetation and fencing along the site boundary and railway line and as such this forms a harsh urban edge. The proposals would provide a much more robust landscape framework to a new northern settlement boundary.

- 8.15. At the site level, with a **medium susceptibility** (given its urban fringe character), **value** and **sensitivity** combined with a **high magnitude of change** would result in an overall **major (adverse) effect** in landscape character terms.
- 8.16. As far as landscape character is concerned, I acknowledge that the site would see some considerable change from several pastoral fields. However, the baseline that needs to be taken into account here is that the proposed scheme is framed by housing, a rail line and roads. No significant off-site works are proposed, and as such, the character of the local landscape beyond the site in both physical and experiential terms would remain materially unchanged with the scheme in place.
- 8.17. I recognise that the scheme would bring about an inevitable change to the character of the application site itself; however, such a change would, in physical terms, be confined within the application site boundaries. Off site, the pattern of the land cover, tree and hedge cover and agricultural mix, undulating topography, the variety of building materials, Langho's settlement pattern as identified in the various published reports, would all continue and prevail with the scheme in place. Consequently, it is considered that those key characteristics of the wider landscape and settlement beyond the application site boundary as identified above, would be physically unaffected with the scheme in place. It is only the experiential factors of character, both visual and audible elements that would be influenced to some limited degree locally. Any noise associated with the habitation and use of this scheme would be negligible in the wider landscape and settlement context particularly given the nearby roads. The scheme would not change the broad character of the wider area as the 'settled agricultural scene', which would continue to prevail with the scheme in place. The sensitive design of the proposed scheme would reflect the local settlement character of Langho. Any such effects would be highly localised, therefore.
- 8.18. I proceed to consider the character of the landscape at the site level i.e. with regard to the site itself. The site is currently pastoral land. The boundary of the site is in the main, framed by a combination of mature hedgerows and standard trees, which provides a strong sense of visual containment and enclosure associated with the site. There are significant urbanising influences associated with the site including housing. There are a number of residential areas which are close to the site's southern and eastern boundaries which reveals a strong sense of physical and visual connection between the settlement of Langho and the adjacent areas of the site. The site does accommodate some features such as trees and hedgerows, which contribute to the defining characteristics of the locality, but all of these elements would be retained, and their presence reinforced with the green of structure proposals as an integral part of the scheme.

## Summary

- 8.19. The proposed scheme would essentially retain the mature tree cover and shrubbery which extends across the site. Whilst there would be a loss of some pastureland to accommodate a new residential neighbourhood, there would, nonetheless, be a net beneficial effect with regard to some landscape features with the creation of a comprehensive area of green infrastructure. The site benefits from a degree of physical and visual containment such that the effect of the proposal on the prevailing landscape character of the area would be limited and localised. Similarly, the context of the existing settlement of Langho and the heavily treed and undulating nature of the local landscape would mean that the proposal's visibility from the surrounding settlement and countryside would be equally heavily limited and localised, and where observed, would be seen in the context of Langho. It is therefore my view that on



landscape and visual grounds there are no substantive reasons for refusing planning permission for the proposed residential scheme on land south of Longsight Road. Therefore, the Inspector is respectfully requested to uphold the scheme and allow the grant of planning permission as far as landscape and visual issues are concerned as it relates to the appeal scheme.

## 9. Summary and Conclusions

### Introduction

- 9.1. I am instructed on behalf of Hallam Land Management Limited, thereafter referred to as the appellant, to present evidence relating to Landscape and Visual matters in respect of the appeal, submitted pursuant to Section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, concerning development of Land off Longsight Road, Langho ("the appeal site" or "site"). This evidence should be read in conjunction with the Planning Statement prepared by Mark Saunders and other statements prepared by the appellant.
- 9.2. In light of the third Reason for Refusal this Proof addresses specific points raised as follows:
- Views from Longsight Road.
  - Views from public footpath which crosses the site.
  - Views from residential properties on the north side of Langho village.
  - Effect on visual amenity.
  - Effect on landscape character.

### Description of the Proposals

- 9.3. The proposed development is for 300 dwellings together with green infrastructure forming an integral element of the overall scheme. The intention is to create a new residential neighbourhood set within a high-quality green infrastructure framework. The north-eastern corner of the site is characterised by a small woodland known as Green Nook Wood which would be retained. The scheme would include a small parkland in the south-eastern corner of the site, which would be punctuated with a number of existing trees that would be retained and augmented with additional standard tree planting. The area would also accommodate a 43 space car park (including 5 blue badge spaces, 4 EV charging spaces and secured, covered cycle parking) for the adjacent Langho railway station. Much of the southern boundary of the site would be framed by a landscape corridor, again punctuated with tree cover. Internally, within the site running through its centre would be a north-south orientated landscape corridor which would accommodate existing tree cover, complemented with additional tree planting.
- 9.4. The western most part of the site adjacent to Whitehalgh Lane which would form a parkland setting between this lane and the proposed residential area. A second north-south orientated landscape corridor would weave through a residential area and accommodate a line of mature trees. The northern part of the site adjacent to Longsight Road would accommodate tree belts adjacent to the highway and areas of open grassland which would be seasonally wet forming surface water attenuation areas during the winter months.
- 9.5. Subsequent to the scheme being determined, the appellant has made some minor modifications to the green infrastructure proposed (**Appendix 4, CD4.2**) which were accepted by the Inspector (**CD8.2**) as follows:
- The existing public footpath that runs through the site would pass through a proposed residential area. The configuration of the hard landscaping of this area, including access road and driveways, has been adjusted to create a landscape corridor to accommodate the existing footpath alignment.

- The northern boundary of the site would accommodate a tree belt running along its northern boundaries to provide a greater degree of physical and visual containment leaving the balancing pond areas in broadly the same locations.

## Effect on Landscape Elements

- 9.6. In overall terms, the scheme would result in some beneficial effects with regard to the landscape elements that currently define the landscape character of the site. The site would change from pastoral fields to a high-quality design residential neighbourhood set within an attractive substantial landscape framework. The elements that currently contribute to defining the character of the site, namely trees, shrubbery and hedgerows would all be strengthened and form more prominent elements in the medium and longer term, but I recognise this would be in the context of a new residential neighbourhood.

## Effect on Landscape Character

- 9.7. Collectively, if one draws the different elements of the site together, it defines the overall character of the site itself. In summary, the site is characterised by field boundaries but is significantly influenced visually by the adjacent dwellings and Longsight Road. The site is framed to the south and east by residential areas and by the busy highway, Longsight Road, to the north and is currently significantly affected by the substantial urbanising influences of other adjacent development. I also note that this includes the adjacent railway line which accommodates both passenger and freight rail. The site, in terms of its character, appears as an urban fringe edge of Langho settlement environment.
- 9.8. The scheme would introduce a high-quality residential built environment which would be in keeping with the local settlement and character area and therefore, is not at odds or out of character or appearance. However, adopting a precautionary approach the proposals would result in an overall adverse effect in landscape character terms. The proposal would accommodate significant new green infrastructure which would replace several pastoral fields and again change the character of the site to be more representative of the local landscape character area and therefore would result in some beneficial effects at the site level.
- 9.9. The boundaries of the site are on the whole, framed by a combination of built form and mature vegetation, which provide a sense of visual containment and enclosure associated with the site.
- 9.10. The existing residential curtilages are close to the site's southern boundary which creates a strong sense of physical and visual connection between the current settlement edge and the adjacent parts of the site. The settlement boundary is currently defined by an ad-hoc arrangement of vegetation and fencing along the site boundary and railway line and as such this forms a harsh urban edge. The proposals would provide a much more robust landscape framework to a new northern settlement boundary.
- 9.11. At the site level, with a **medium susceptibility** (given its urban fringe character), **value** and **sensitivity** combined with a **high magnitude of change** would result in an overall **major (adverse) effect** in landscape character terms.
- 9.12. As far as landscape character is concerned, I acknowledge that the site would see some considerable change from several pastoral fields. However, the baseline that needs to be

taken into account here is that the proposed scheme is framed by housing, a rail line and roads. No significant off-site works are proposed and as such the character of the local landscape beyond the site in both physical and experiential terms would remain materially unchanged with the scheme in place.

9.13. I recognise that the scheme would bring about an inevitable change to the character of the application site itself, however, such a change would, in physical terms, be confined within the application site boundaries. Off site, the pattern of the land cover, tree and hedge cover and agricultural mix, undulating topography, the variety of building materials, Langho's settlement pattern as identified in the various published reports, would all continue and prevail with the scheme in place. Consequently, it is considered that those key characteristics of the wider landscape and settlement beyond the application site boundary as identified above would be physically unaffected with the scheme in place. It is only the experiential factors of character, both visual and audible elements that would be influenced to some limited degree locally. Any noise associated with the habitation and use of this scheme would be negligible in the wider landscape and settlement context particularly given the nearby roads. The scheme would not change the broad character of the wider area as the 'settled agricultural scene', which would continue to prevail with the scheme in place. The sensitive design of the proposed scheme would reflect the local settlement character of Langho. Any such effects would be highly localised, therefore.

9.14. I proceed to consider the character of the landscape at the site level i.e. with regard to the site itself. The site is currently pastoral land. The boundary of the site is in the main, framed by a combination of mature hedgerows and standard trees, which provides a strong sense of visual containment and enclosure associated with the site. There are significant urbanising influences associated with the site including housing. There are a number of residential areas which are close to the site's southern and eastern boundaries which reveals a strong sense of physical and visual connection between the settlement of Langho and the adjacent areas of the site. The site does accommodate some features such as trees and hedgerows, which contribute to the defining characteristics of the locality, but all of these elements would be retained, and their presence reinforced with the green of structure proposals as an integral part of the scheme.

## **Effect on General Visual Amenity**

9.15. It is evident from the LVIA (CD1.13) and the visual analysis I have undertaken for this proof that the proposed development would be visually well contained due to surrounding woodland, tree cover and the settlement of Langho. The proposed development would be set within a series of existing fields within a wider field pattern where field boundaries are demarcated by established hedges and tree cover. Substantial tree cover frames much of the site. Based on the Viewpoint Assessment, it is evident that the proposed scheme would be largely well contained as a result of topographical variation in the local landscape, vegetation screening including hedgerows, woodland and tree cover, roadside vegetation, as well as existing residential areas. The majority of the visual receptors would be generally close to the site and its perimeters. More distant views across the landscape would see the proposed scheme in a wider valley context associated with Langho village and viewed as a minor addition to the settlement. The majority of the identified and assessed viewpoints and receptors would not be subject to a major degree of visual effect. Indeed, the majority of the visual effects would be negligible to minor in terms of scale of effect.

- 9.16. It is anticipated the tree belts to frame the screen would establish and grow as would the green infrastructure generally which would increase the degree of visual containment of the scheme from the surrounding countryside and settlement in the medium and longer term.

## **Effect on Residential Visual Amenity**

- 9.17. The Case Officer (**CD3.1**) considered that the proposed development could be accommodated on the site without undue impacts on the existing neighbours' properties subject to appropriate house types, appropriate land levels and scale, appropriate design, and distances to the eastern and southern boundaries and to the individual residential units to the west. I have undertaken a site visit and looked at the properties adjacent to the site and reviewed these in the context of the proposed scheme and consider that the proposed scheme would not breach the public interest test with regard to this scheme and is common ground with the Case Officer's report.

## **Comment on Reason for Refusal No 3**

### **Views from Longsight Road**

- 9.18. Forming the northern boundary of the site is Longsight Road (A59). From this highway, there would be views of the proposed scheme where the road is adjacent to the site which forms a short section of this highway and runs north-eastward to Skipton to Preston in the south-west and accommodates a high volume of traffic, such that it is quite challenging to walk along the roadside pavement on the north side of this highway given the speed and volume of traffic on this road. Immediately east of the site in the vicinity of Green Nook Wood the proposed scheme would fall from view and not be visible due to the presence of this woodland and adjacent residential area to the east of the site.
- 9.19. Similarly, west of the site, the proposed scheme would not be visible from this highway due to the presence of a complex of buildings and tree cover and vegetation adjacent to the south side of this highway. Initially there would be open views from the A59 where it runs alongside the site as it is currently flanked by a low continuous hedgerow. However, it is proposed that a tree belt would be planted along the northern boundary except for the vehicular access point into the site and the existing public footpath. With the establishment and maturity of the tree belt, the proposed scheme would not be visible from this highway except fleetingly through these 2 access points. I regard the roadside pavement as a road user category given the focus is to walk along this footway in the context of a busy highway.

### **Views from public footpath which crosses the site**

- 9.20. The Illustrative Masterplan shows that is proposed to retain the footpath, referenced 606, across the site, albeit with a diversion towards the northern section (**Appendix 4, CD4.2**). This diversion would require a legal order and a suitable diversion route around the balancing pond areas. I note that the layout is a reserved matter such that the indicative layout may change. The majority of the current alignment of this route would be retained and accommodated by the proposed design of the neighbourhood and green infrastructure.
- 9.21. The footpath is used by the local community. Use of this route provides open views across the site. With the proposed scheme in place, this route would pass along a narrow landscape corridor through part of the residential scheme, whilst the southern section of the path would pass through naturalistic parkland landscape. Clearly, the viewing context would change. The

current viewing context reveals an open field with a backdrop of existing houses both to the east and south of the site. With the scheme in place, there would be views of the housing across the site. A high-quality design with regard to the residential neighbourhood and green infrastructure would ensure that the landscape would be attractive and the housing sympathetic in design terms, reflective of the local area. With a high susceptibility, medium value, high sensitivity, and a medium magnitude of change, there would be a major adverse visual effect with regard to users of this route through the site.

#### **Views from residential properties on the north side of Langho village**

- 9.22. The Case Officer considered that the proposed development could be accommodated on the site without undue impacts on the existing neighbours' properties, subject to appropriate house types, appropriate land levels and scale, appropriate design, and distances to the eastern and southern boundaries and to the individual residential units to the west. I have undertaken a site visit and looked at the properties adjacent to the site, and reviewed these in the context of the proposed scheme and consider that the proposed scheme would not breach the public interest test with regard to this scheme and is common ground with the Case Officer's report.

#### **Effect on visual amenity**

- 9.23. It is evident from the LVIA and the visual analysis I have undertaken for this proof that the proposed development would be visually well contained due to surrounding woodland, tree cover and the settlement of Langho. The proposed development would be set within a series of existing fields within a wider field pattern where field boundaries are demarcated by established hedges and tree cover. Substantial tree cover frames much of the site. Based on the Viewpoint Assessment, it is evident that the proposed scheme would be largely well contained as a result of topographical variation in the local landscape, vegetation screening including hedgerows, woodland and tree cover, roadside vegetation, as well as existing residential areas. The majority of the visual receptors would be generally close to the site and its perimeters. More distant views across the landscape would see the proposed scheme in a wider valley context associated with Langho village and viewed as a minor addition to the settlement. The majority of the identified and assessed viewpoints and receptors would not be subject to a major degree of visual effect. Indeed, the majority of the visual effects would be negligible to minor in terms of scale of effect.
- 9.24. It is anticipated the tree belts to frame the screen would establish and grow as would the green infrastructure generally which would increase the degree of visual containment of the scheme from the surrounding countryside and settlement in the medium and longer term.

#### **Effect on landscape character**

- 9.25. At the site level, with a **medium susceptibility** (given its urban fringe character), **value** and **sensitivity** combined with a **high magnitude of change** would result in an overall **major (adverse) effect** in landscape character terms.
- 9.26. As far as landscape character is concerned, I acknowledge that the site would see some considerable change from several pastoral fields. However, the baseline that needs to be taken into account here is that the proposed scheme is framed by housing, a rail line and roads. No significant off-site works are proposed and as such the character of the local landscape beyond the site in both physical and experiential terms would remain materially unchanged with the scheme in place.

9.27. I recognise that the scheme (**Appendix 4, CD4.2**) would bring about an inevitable change to the character of the application site itself; however, such a change would, in physical terms, be confined within the application site boundaries. Off site, the pattern of the land cover, tree and hedge cover and agricultural mix, undulating topography, the variety of building materials, Langho's settlement pattern as identified in the various published reports, would all continue and prevail with the scheme in place. Consequently, it is considered that those key characteristics of the wider landscape and settlement beyond the application site boundary, as identified above would be physically unaffected with the scheme in place. It is only the experiential factors of character, both visual and audible elements that would be influenced to some limited degree locally. Any noise associated with the habitation and use of this scheme would be negligible in the wider landscape and settlement context, particularly given the nearby roads. The scheme would not change the broad character of the wider area as the 'settled agricultural scene', which would continue to prevail with the scheme in place. The sensitive design of the proposed scheme would reflect the local settlement character of Langho. Any such effects would be highly localised, therefore.

9.28. I proceed to consider the character of the landscape at the site level i.e. with regard to the site itself. The site is currently pastoral land. The boundary of the site is in the main, framed by a combination of mature hedgerows and standard trees, which provides a strong sense of visual containment and enclosure associated with the site. There are significant urbanising influences associated with the site, including housing. There are a number of residential areas which are close to the site's southern and eastern boundaries which reveals a strong sense of physical and visual connection between the settlement of Langho and the adjacent areas of the site. The site does accommodate some features such as trees and hedgerows, which contribute to the defining characteristics of the locality, but all of these elements would be retained, and their presence reinforced with the green of structure proposals as an integral part of the scheme.

## **Conclusion**

9.29. For the reasons stated above, it is my view that on landscape and visual grounds there are no substantive reasons for refusing planning permission for the proposed residential scheme on land south of Longsight Road, Langho. Therefore, the Inspector is respectfully requested to uphold the scheme and allow the grant of planning permission as far as landscape and visual issues are concerned as it relates to the appeal scheme.

Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)  
Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

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