

**RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL**



Ribble Valley  
Borough Council

[www.ribblevalley.gov.uk](http://www.ribblevalley.gov.uk)

**TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990: Section 78**

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (INQUIRIES PROCEDURE)  
(ENGLAND) RULES 2000**

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (HEARINGS AND INQUIRIES PROCEDURE)  
(ENGLAND) (AMENDMENT AND REVOCATION) RULES 2015**

<b>Planning Inspectorate Reference:</b>	6002485
<b>LPA Application Reference:</b>	3/2025/0196

<b>Appeal By:</b>	Hallam Land Management Ltd
-------------------	----------------------------

**Against the refusal by Ribble Valley Borough Council to grant outline planning permission  
for:**

Up to 300 residential dwellings associated access, railway station car park, green infrastructure and sustainable drainage systems (all matters served except for access).

**Site Address:**

Land off Longsight Road, Langho bounded by the railway, Northcote Park and Wildman's Farm.

**PROOF OF EVIDENCE OF KATHRYN HUGHES MPI, MRTPI**

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 I am Kathryn Hughes, Principal Planning Officer within the Development Management & Building Control Service / Economic Development & Planning Directorate at Ribble Valley Borough Council. I hold a Masters in Planning awarded by The University of Manchester. I am a Member of the Royal Town Planning Institute. I have over 27 years' experience in two Local Planning Authorities.
- 1.2 This Proof of Evidence will address the specific development management issues concerning this planning appeal and will apply a planning balance to the Council's position.
- 1.3 It is a matter of record that my recommendation to the Planning Committee was to refuse the application on five grounds relating to (1) location of housing outside a settlement boundary, (2) the acceptability of the development in terms of landscape and visual impact, (3) the sustainability of the site in terms of accessibility and (4 & 5) the acceptability of the development on ecology and biodiversity. The Committee agreed and the application was refused on these grounds.
- 1.4 The Council has since withdrawn the first reason for refusal relating to the principle of housing outside a settlement boundary. This is because at the time of determining the application the Council had a five-year housing land supply. This position has, however, altered in the intervening period. For the purposes of my decision making and for the remainder of my proof, I accept that the Council is unable to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply.
- 1.5 The Council is defending its position on refusal reasons 2-5.
- 1.6 I have had the benefit of reading the detailed assessments supplied by TP Landscaping, AECOM and Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU). I have assessed the application against the adopted development plan policies and other material considerations and weighed the harm identified by the experts in their respective topic areas against the benefits of the scheme. My professional view is that on balance the appeal should be dismissed.
- 1.7 My Proof of Evidence should be read in conjunction with the Proof of Mr. Carl Taylor, Director of TPM Landscape, Chartered Landscape Architects, the Proof of Mr. Chris Carter, Regional Director at AECOM and the Proof of Mr. Derek Richardson, Principal Ecologist at GMEU.

- 1.8 Mr. Taylor is the expert witness appearing on behalf of the Local Planning Authority who will address the impact of the development with regards to Landscaping and Visual Amenity concerning this planning appeal. Mr. Taylor's Proof is supported by the National Design Guide, Natural England, National Character Area Profiles and Lancashire Character Assessment by Lancashire County Council.
- 1.9 Mr. Carter is the expert witness appearing on behalf of the Local Planning Authority who will address the impact of the development with regards to Sustainability concerning this planning appeal. Mr. Carter's Proof is supported by the National Travel Survey (2025), Census 2011 and 2021, Manual for Streets (DoT), railwaydata.co.uk, Guidelines for Providing Journeys on Foot The Institution of Highways & Transportation (2000) , Planning for Walking CIHT (2015), Journal of Public Transportation (2024) and Cycle Infrastructure Design, Local Transport Note 1/20, Dept. for Transport (2020)
- 1.10 Mr. Richardson is the expert witness appearing on behalf of the Local Planning Authority who will address the impact of the development with regards to Ecology and Biodiversity concerning this planning appeal. Mr. Richardson's Proof is supported by one Appendix comprising an Appeal Decision relevant to the LNRS. [Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 12990 (inserted by the Environment Act 2021), the National Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006, the Environment Act 2021, Protection of Badgers Act 1992, the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), Biodiversity Net Gain – good practice principles for development, CIRIA 2019 and Articles 37A and 37D of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.
- 1.11 The Statement of Case provides descriptions of the site and its context, the proposed development including application documents, relevant planning history and the policy context for the appeal.
- 1.12 The Statements of Common Ground establish areas where the Council and the Appellant are in agreement and also cover the matters which are in dispute. It also confirms each party's position on the Council's five-year land supply for the purpose of this appeal.
- 1.13 In this Proof of Evidence, I shall address the general planning issues raised by the development and provide my views on the overall planning balance. I conclude in summary that the proposed development is contrary to the development plan and that there are no materials

considerations of sufficient weight to outweigh the presumption that permission should be refused accordingly. Even applying the Tilted Balance at 11(d) ii the harms significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.

1.14 I confirm that the evidence I have prepared and opinions expressed are my true and professional opinion.

## 2 The Appeal Site

2.1 The majority of the details relating to the appeal site and its surroundings have already been set out in the Statement of Case and the Statements of Common Ground and therefore these are only set out briefly below in order to provide context for the rest of this document.

2.2 The application sought outline planning permission for up to 300 dwellings which comprises the following:

- 300 dwellings including 30% affordable homes
- New railway station car park
- Biodiversity net gain strategy to deliver a minimum 10% improvement
- Sustainable drainage systems including attenuation basins

2.3 The appeal site is 20.1 Hectares in size being located outside the defined settlement boundary of Langho, as such the site is located on land that benefits from an open countryside designation.

2.4 The site is bounded to the north by Longsight Road (A59), to the east by Northcote Park (a residential development approved in 2018) to the south by the railway line and to the west by Whitehalgh Lane.

2.5 The appeal site is greenfield, agricultural land and slopes from south to the north. The land includes a protected ancient woodland, Green Nook Wood, which lies to the northeast of the site and supports veteran and mature trees within the site. Since the application has been determined the woodland has been designated as Ancient Woodland. There is also an existing watercourse which runs north to south through the centre of the site.

2.6 Vehicular access to the site is to be provided via a new vehicular access off Longsight Road (A59). An existing Public Right of Way (PROW) 3-6-FP6 runs across the site (north to south) from the A59 to the railway station and is to be retained. A new pedestrian/cycleway access is proposed to be provided off Whitehalgh Lane towards the southwest extents of the site.

### **3 Relevant Planning Policy & Guidance**

#### **Local Policy Context**

3.1 The Ribble Valley Core Strategy satisfied the requirements of Section 20(5) of the 2004 Act and was adopted at a Meeting of Full Council on Tuesday 16th December 2014. The plan period runs from 2008 – 2028. Key Statements within the Core Strategy set out the strategic vision and spatial strategy for the Borough whilst the Development Policies set out detailed requirements.

3.2 The Local Development Scheme (LDS) published in 27<sup>th</sup> November 2025 states that the emerging Local Plan is to undergo consultation in Spring 2026 on the Preferred Options Draft (Preferred Option) Local Plan consultation (Regulation 18) as set out in. This is not afforded any weight in decision making.

3.3 There is no neighbourhood plan for Langho.

3.4 It is acknowledged that as the Council does not have a 5-year housing land supply that not all of its adopted policies are up to date and therefore the following policies are considered to be fully or partly out of date:

- Key Statement DS1: Development Strategy
- Key Statement H1: Housing Provision
- Policy DMG2: Strategic Considerations with regards to location.
- Policy DMH3: Dwelling in the Open Countryside and AONB

3.5 The following policies remain relevant to this Appeal and have full weight:

- Key Statement DS2: Sustainable Development
- Key Statement EN3: Sustainable Development and Climate Change
- Key Statement EN4: Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- Key Statement H2: Housing Balance
- Key Statement H3: Affordable Housing
- Key Statement DMI1: Planning Obligations
- Key Statement DMI2: Transport Considerations
- Policy DMG1: General Considerations
- Policy DMG2: Strategic Considerations (in so far as it's requirement for development within the open countryside to be in keeping with the character of the landscape etc)
- Policy DMG3: Transport & Mobility
- Policy DME1: Protecting Trees and Woodlands
- Policy DME2: Landscape and Townscape Protection
- Policy DME3: Site and Species Protection and Conservation
- Policy DME6: Water Management
- Policy DMH1: Affordable Housing Criteria
- Policy DMB4: Open Space Provision
- Policy DMB5: Footpaths and Bridleways

### **National Policy Context**

3.6 The National Planning Policy Framework (Dec 2024) provides the most up to date national planning policy context for the determination of the appeal and is therefore a material consideration in planning decisions.

3.7 The NPPF (Para.2) reaffirms that the planning system is plan-led and that planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The National Planning Policy Framework must be taken into account in preparing the development plan and is a material consideration in planning decisions. Planning policies and decisions must also reflect relevant international obligations and statutory requirements.

3.8 The NPPF Chapter 2 sets out the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to sustainable development with the three overarching objectives, which are independent and mutually supportive:

- (a) An economic objective;
- (b) A social objective; and
- (c) An environmental objective.

At the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11).

3.9 Paragraph 11 of the NPPF for decision-taking this means:

c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or

d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date (footnote 8), granting permission unless:

i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance (footnote 7) provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or

ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies of this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.

(Footnote 7 provides a list of examples, whilst footnote 8 references applications for the provision of housing where the LPA cannot demonstrate a five-year housing land supply for delivering housing sites which is the case here).

#### **4 Landscape Character and Visual Amenity**

4.1 The proposal would be readily visible from Longsight Road, Whitehalgh Lane, Langho Railway Platform, public footpath 3-6-FP 6a which crosses the site from North to South along the eastern side and those residential properties next to the site. Longer term views would also be afforded

from the surrounding highways on higher ground to the north as well as public footpaths and highways further to the south.

4.2 The site lies within National Character Area (NCA) 35 Lancashire Valleys. The NCA covers key characteristics of this area, however the scale of assessment is limited in considering landscape impacts due to its broad coverage.

4.3 A Landscape Strategy for Lancashire Landscape Character Assessment (LCC, 2000) identified the site as Character Area 5C: Lower Ribble which is of the Undulating Farmland Landscape Type 5C: Lower Ribble which is described as an area of lowland gritstone farmland between Longridge Fell to the north and Mellor Ridge to the south.

4.4 Mr Taylor provides clear and cogent evidence regarding the impact which this development would have on landscape character and visual amenity. In summary:

- The existing beck, trees, underground sewer are physical constraints whilst the railway line and housing to the north are also constraints;
- The design of the proposed development and extent of development across the site do not offer opportunities of enhancement for the woodland;
- Typically, residential development does not contribute to ecological connectivity and diversity due to the harmful additions such as hard landscaping, removal of landscape features, excavation and re-engineering the site leading to disturbance and damage to ecology with the addition of human activity and predators that can preclude wildlife from the site;
- Lack of attempt to integrate the proposals with the existing village of Langho in terms of its urban grain; visual links; and vistas/views;
- The site lies within National Character Area 35, Lancashire Valleys with Key Characteristics of note including agricultural land 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;
- Statements of opportunity to highlight specific areas of enhancement and restoration of habitats local to the area that would have significance at National Level. In the context of this site these could be:

- SEO 2: Increase the resilience and significance of woodland and trees, manage and expand existing tree cover to provide a range of benefits;
  - SEO 3: Manage and support the agricultural landscape through conserving, enhancing, linking and expanding the habitat network;
  - SEO 4: Conserve and manage the distinction between small rural settlements and the densely urban area and ensure new development is sensitively designed to contribute to settlement character, reduce impact on urban fringe and provide well designed green infrastructure to enhance recreation, biodiversity and water flow regulation.
- The local landscape surrounding including the site and Langho are far less influenced by the large conurbations of Burnley, Blackburn and Clitheroe and reflect more part of the Ribble Valley with its pastoral landscapes towards the Trough of Bowland uplands;
  - The river valley and ridgelines of the Fells to the north play a significant role in defining this landscape within the National Character setting. The surrounding landscapes are predominately grazing farmland and settlement in the form of small villages, hamlets and individual dwells and farmsteads are common;
  - Small, and often ancient woodland and trees are present and notable on the site as it the case here;
  - Long distance panoramic views are possible towards Longridge Fell and the surrounding
  - There is a formal right of way crossing the site which has recreational value for walkers as a recreational resource
  - Landscape change would be prominent
  - Development of this site would result in a reduction in the contribution which open countryside makes to the setting of Langho and some loss of distinction between the smaller rural settlements
  - Development of the site would result in significant adverse visual effects for many receptors within close range of the site and these would be largely long terms and irreversible

4.5 Clearly the proposal would result in the significant urbanisation of a large expanse of undeveloped greenfield land which currently provides a green buffer between the A59 and the railway line and village of Langho beyond. This proposal would result in the loss of the site's

open and rural character which currently positively contributes to the surrounding open countryside and it is clear from the LVIA that the scale and intensity of development would change and adversely effect the site's countryside character currently experienced by residents, road users and public footpath users. Spatially the quantum of development would result in an increase of around 35% the size of Langho village.

4.6 In this respect, the quantum of development proposed fails to accord with Policy DMG1 in that the proposal fails to meet criterion (2) of the Policy which requires that development proposals be sympathetic to existing and proposed land uses in terms of its size, intensity and nature as well as scale and massing. The proposal is not in keeping with the character of the landscape nor does it respect the special qualities of the area by virtue of its scale and fails to accord with Policy DMG2. It also fails to accord with the National Planning Policy Framework in particular paragraph 135 insofar that the proposed development would not be sympathetic or respond positively to the inherent character of the area.

4.7 Policy DMG2 is two-fold in its approach to guiding development. The first part of the policy DMG2(1) is no longer engaged in assessing the locational aspects of the development, it is the second part of Policy DMG2 that is engaged (Policy DMG2(2)) which relates to development within the open countryside is required to be in keeping with the character of the landscape and acknowledge the special character of the area with regards to its size, design, use of materials, landscaping and siting.

## **5 Accessibility and Sustainability**

5.1 In terms of sustainability, the site is located adjacent to Longsight Road (A59) and the Langho Railway Station, however, the site will be segregated from the village of Langho by the railway line. As such there would be little scope for integration with the village, which itself provides limited facilities, with only a small convenience store/post office, pharmacy, sandwich shop as well as hair and beauty facilities. With the nearest supermarket in Great Harwood and other supermarkets within Clitheroe. The only vehicular access to the site would be via Longsight Road (A59) and although cycle and pedestrian links are proposed to Whitehalgh Lane to the west and the PROW would remain (albeit part diverted) to the east, however, both of these routes are

constrained and provide limited access for anyone with mobility issues due to the topography of the site and distances involved.

5.2 Para 117(b) of the NPPF requires that development addresses the needs of people with disabilities and reduced mobility in relation to all modes of transport. Pedestrian infrastructure along the A59 is poor in terms of continuous pavements resulting in multiple crossings of the A59 for those with reduced mobility, effectively preventing them from accessing public transport (train or bus) in a safe manner.

5.3 A new pedestrian/cycle access onto Whitehalgh Lane, has been proposed. Whitehalgh is a narrow, rural lane which has limited potential for improvement due to its limited width, lined with hedges, shrubs and vegetation, and topography to enable appropriate, safe walking routes. The lane is in regular use due to its access onto the A59 with limited pedestrian refuge and lack of suitable lighting along its length. The development, as proposed, therefore fails to meet the requirements of the NPPF in terms of addressing the needs of people with disabilities and reduced mobility.

5.4 The indicative layout includes a new car park to accommodate circa 40 vehicles to park and ride at Langho Railway Station due its position within the site this element of the scheme has limited weight. Users of the proposed car park are unlikely to live within or close to the village due to the access on the A59 and the future occupiers of the proposed dwellings would be more likely to leave their vehicles within their own properties. The potential for future provision of a ramped access to the platforms to provide access for all users as set out in the Department for Transport 'Option selection report DfT 'Access for all' Programme Langho Station' cannot be given any weight as this land use does not form part of this proposal and it is understood that funding has not been secured.

5.5 Mr Carter provides clear and cogent evidence regarding the impact which this development would have on accessibility and sustainability. In summary:

- There are limited employment opportunities in the village of Langho itself;
- There are primary and high schools located within 3km of the village;
- There is a Spar convenience store approx. 1.km to the south of the site for day to day needs, larger shops are located further away in Great Harwood, Blackburn and Clitheroe;
- There is a pharmacy within the village. There is no GP surgery or Dentist;

- Other facilities include multiple hair and beauty salons and a sandwich shop;
- Northcote Hotel and Restaurant is located on the A59 650 to the east of the site entrance;
- There is limited other facilities within walking distance of the site;
- The Transport Assessment and Statement of Case consider the centre of the village to be Whalley Road/Whinnie Road junction near the train station, there are limited facilities for future occupiers in this location;
- Genuine travel choices are based on why people travel and where they travel to;
- Langho has provision for primary education, a convenience store and some very limited additional facilities for occasional use;
- For employment, higher order retail, some secondary education, leisure, etc then future residents are likely looking further afield, therefore the attractiveness of public transport would be considered in order to provide genuine travel choice;
- It is noted that many services and facilities can be accessed online particular in terms of home working, however, whilst physical trips may become less important accessing needs online does not address inherent sustainability challenges with development locations;
- Three routes have been outlined which would provide pedestrian/cycle routes into the site, these vary from 406m to 1.2km walk and all of these have challenges;
- Mitigation measures proposed on Whitehalgh Lane would not be sufficiently effective to address concerns for pedestrian and cyclists and those with reduced mobility;
- New bus stops are proposed on the A59 and upgrades to stops on Whalley Road, together with pedestrian infrastructure to support people walking to these stops which will benefit public transport users as well as a contribution towards bus services and the proposed rail station car park which will all weigh into the balance.

5.6 It is acknowledged that the site lies adjacent to the settlement boundary of Langho to the south and eastern boundaries and that housing development was approved at the Northcote Park development (3/2018/0844) to the eastern edge of the site in June 2019. However, this development must be assessed on its own merits and in particular in terms of transport and mobility options for future residents of the site. Policy DMG3 attaches considerable weight to the availability and adequacy of public transport and associated infrastructure to serve those moving to and from the development. In this respect access to the train station and bus stops is

constrained by the railway line itself and the topography of the site. With the station only being accessible by stepped access and the bus stops either via the constrained underpass to Olive Bank to the south east or the busy major road of the A59 to the north. There are proposals to create a new pedestrian/cycle link onto Whitehalgh Lane, however this Lane is narrow and steep with limited width to allow for improvements such as dedicated walkways, cycle lanes and lighting. This route has limited natural surveillance. Certainly, for those with mobility issues and children this option would raise safety concerns.

5.7 The proximity of the site to the railway station is promoted as a benefit, however, this is a local line with an hourly service during the week and Saturdays with a two hourly service on Sundays. There are often delays and cancellations on early and late-night services and at the present time the Sunday service has a bus replacement service which extends the journey times to Blackburn (from 24m to 38m) and Manchester (from 1hr 16m to 1hr 48m). Local residents do not consider the service to be reliable for everyday travel. Without significant change to the quality of public transport the future occupiers would still be reliant on the use of private car.

5.8 It is considered that on balance the site is not a sustainable location to support the proposed 300 houses by virtue of its ineffective connections to Langho village and the difficulty that future residents would have in accessing suitable pedestrian and cycle links, bus stops and the railway station, particularly by future residents with disabilities and reduced mobility or with prams/pushchairs/young children. The proposed improvements do not address these concerns. The proposal would not integrate the future residents by providing suitable access to the limited local services and facilities provided within Langho. Instead, future residents of the site would be heavily reliant on car borne travel to access their day-to-day needs such as work, education, medical, shopping and leisure facilities. As such the proposed development fails to accord with Key Statement DM12 in respect of the minimising the need to travel, very limited local facilities, access by foot and cycle is not good with challenges to walking and cycle routes and Policy DMG3 in terms of the limited availability and adequacy of public transport and associated infrastructure, poor pedestrian and cycle access or highly accessible by means other than the private car of the Core Strategy and Para 117(b) of the NPPF as the proposed development would fail to meet the requirements of the NPPF in terms of addressing the needs of people with disabilities and reduced mobility.

## **6 Ecology, Trees and Biodiversity**

6.1 Mr Richardson provides clear and cogent evidence regarding the impact which this development would have on ecology, trees and biodiversity. In summary:

- The development would cause unacceptable impacts on irreplaceable and priority habitats;
- The development proposals have not followed the mitigation hierarchy;
- The proposals for habitat compensation and mitigation are inadequate;
- The proposals for on-site habitat enhancement are likely to be unsuccessful;
- The development will compromise the establishment of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Lancashire;
- The proposal would result in the Ancient Woodland being constrained on the site with limited opportunity for growth and connectivity resulting in isolation;

6.2 The proposal fails to demonstrate that the proposed development would not result in harm to established wildlife habits which conflicts with Key Statement EN4 and Policy DME3 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy as the development would not conserve or enhance areas of biodiversity and geodiversity and would result in the isolation of ancient woodland and loss of hedgerow, nor would the proposal assist in developing green corridors. Moreover, harm would be caused to areas of particular importance for biodiversity identified in the Lancashire Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), impact on Ancient Woodland caused by fragmentation and isolation and Priority Habitats caused by losses in translocation.

6.3 Mr Richardson raised some queries regarding the outstanding ecology surveys and BNG requirement during the application process. Since then further outstanding surveys have been undertaken and applicant proposes that retained grassland and woodland habitats on the site will be enhanced, however it is questionable as to whether these enhancements could be achieved in practice, given that the habitats will be fragmented and subject to significant public pressure from the development. Mr Richardson advised that the applicants should re-visit these proposals to assess whether the claimed enhancements could realistically be achieved.

6.4 The development will result in a significant loss in local biodiversity with Biodiversity Units proposed to be sourced off-site contrary to biodiversity best practice.

6.5 In this respect the proposal would conflict with the requirements of Key Statement EN4 which requires a net enhancement in biodiversity. Furthermore it is uncertain how this meets the

mandatory BNG requirement and to what extent this will be accommodated on the site and therefore satisfy the biodiversity net gain best practice.

## 7. **Contributions**

- 7.1 Contributions have been requested from LCC Highways towards Travel Plan of £60.00 per dwelling and public transport of £583.33 per dwelling per annum for a period of five years. The appellant is agreeable to this.
- 7.2 NHS Lancashire & Cumbria Integrated Care Board have requested a contribution per dwelling towards an extension of Whalley Medical centre. Further justification has been requested by the Appellant in regard to this and this contribution has not been agreed at this stage.
- 7.3 A contribution of £216.90 per person towards off-site leisure and recreation facilities has been requested, with two options in Clitheroe and Langho being identified for improvements. The Appellant has agreed to this request.
- 7.4 A contribution towards ongoing monitoring of Biodiversity Net Gain over a 30-year period of £5,000 would also be required.
- 7.5 LCC Education have not requested a contribution towards school places at this time given the projected spaces available in schools to accommodate this development.
- 7.6 These contribution requests are considered to align with policies DMB4 and DMI1 of the Core Strategy

## 8. **Planning Balance:**

- 8.1 The application site lies within the defined open countryside being located outside any defined settlement limits, as such and given that RVBC does not currently have a five year housing land supply and as the application seeks consent for new residential development, Key Statement DS1, Policies DMH3 and DMG2 (in terms of their restrictive

approach towards the location of housing) of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy are no longer engaged for the purposes of assessing the proposal in this respect.

8.2 The scheme has been thoroughly assessed above and will now be weighed against the benefits of the scheme as set out below:

#### Benefits of the Scheme

- Up to 210 market dwellings would contribute towards meeting the Council's 5YHLS and carries significant weight;
- Up to 90 affordable homes would contribute towards meeting the Council's affordable housing need and carries significant weight;
- Up to 45 market/affordable over 55s dwellings would contribute towards meeting the Council's older persons housing need and carries moderate weight;
- Provision of publicly accessible open space including amenity space and children's play space would predominantly be used by the occupants of the development as opposed to the wider community and carries limited weight;
- Provision of a surface level car park to promote rail use would carry limited weight as it can only be accessed from the A59 and therefore is of little benefit for the residents of Langho. Additionally no named operator is identified at this stage;
- Off-site highways improvements would predominantly benefit occupants of the development and therefore have limited weight;
- Improvements to promote cycle use would predominantly benefit occupants of the development and therefore have limited weight;
- A financial contribution towards bus service provision would be necessary for the development and would not enhance the service provided and therefore has limited weight;
- Significant areas of planting, green infrastructure provision and ecological enhancement areas are proposed along with their future management – however given that this is an existing greenfield site with ancient woodland and priority habitat which positively contributes to the area, along with the fact that there is uncertainty as to the extent of enhancement that can be achieved on site, this is given limited weight;
- Off-site local habitat enhancement and overall BNG of 12.15% is proposed - whilst this is above the national requirement there is uncertainty how and where this will be achieved, and the hierarchy not being adhered to, therefore this is given limited weight;
- Short-term, temporary economic benefits including job creation and supporting the building industry during the construction period is given low weight;

- Provision of large SUDs attenuation basins - as this is required for the development this is given limited weight;
- New Homes Bonus – this no longer applies and therefore carries no weight;
- Additional local expenditure creation to support local services and economy - with the sites limited access to Langho any benefits to the village would be limited but it is acknowledged that there would be expenditure in the wider area and this would have low weight.

8.3 The development of 300 houses is considered to result in adverse spatial, visual and landscape harm, and impacts on ecology have not been properly considered.

8.4 The proposed development, by virtue of the quantum of development, would result in a large-scale development in a rural location resulting in future users being reliant on a private motor vehicle which carries moderate weight.

8.5 The proposed development would result in the introduction of an incongruous, unsympathetic, and discordant form of development which carried moderate to significant harm particularly when viewed from public vantage points along Longsight Road (A59) approaching the site from both the western and eastern directions, the Public Footpath and residential properties to the north of Langho village afforded direct views of the site.

This proposal would result in adverse, long term and permanent visual and landscape harm which carries significant weight.

The impacts of the development upon habitats within and adjacent to the site including appropriate protection and enhancement for protected species and their habitat carried significant weight.

The proposed loss of existing habitat, hedgerow and watercourse units, with insufficient details for an appropriate strategy for achieving the statutory requirement for Biodiversity Net Gain carries significant weight.

8.6 For the reasons outlined above the proposed development is considered to be in direct conflict with the development plan. That includes Policy DMG2 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy insofar that approval would result in a form of development in the introduction of an incongruous and discordant form of development within the open countryside that fails to respond positively to

the inherent character of the area contrary to DMG1, DMG2, DME1 and DME2 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy.

8.7 The proposal has failed to demonstrate that the proposed development would not result in harm to established wildlife habits contrary to Key Statement EN4 and Policy DME3 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy and that it can provide an adequate strategy for the protection of the Ancient Woodland and Priority Habitat within the site that would demonstrate how the development can meet the statutory BNG provision as well as conserving and enhancing the on-site habitat provision and Ancient Woodland, and adhere to the biodiversity net gain – good practice principles for development, CIRIA 2019.

#### Flat v Tilted Balance

8.8 The most recently published five-year housing land supply figure (base date of 31st March 2025) indicated that Ribble Valley Borough Council has a housing land supply of 6.2 years. However, a recent appeal decision (dated 7th January 2026) at Land to the South of Chatburn Old Road, Chatburn (APP/T2350/W/25/3372635) whereby an Inspector determined that the Council has a housing land supply of 3.45 years.

8.9 Therefore, for the purposes of determining this proposal, the Council cannot demonstrate a five-year housing land supply, the relevant strategic policies are not considered to be up-to-date and in terms of the planning balance paragraph 11 (d) of the NPPF is engaged.

8.10 Specifically for decision taking this means - granting permission unless:

- i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or
- ii. or any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.

8.11 In terms of areas or assets of particular importance referred to at i.) above, these are identified as habitats sites and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest; land

designated as Green Belt, Local Green Space, or a National Landscape, irreplaceable habitats; designated heritage assets (and other heritage assets of archaeological interest...); and areas at risk of flooding or coastal change. In this instance footnote 7 refers to irreplaceable habitats which includes designated Ancient Woodland which is present on this site. Given the conflicts identified with respect to Ancient Woodland then subsection i.) would provide a strong reason for refusing the appeal.

8.12 However, even applying the tilted balance under paragraph 11(d) ii), the adverse impacts of granting planning permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, and as such the development should be refused if the tilted balance were to be applied in any event.

8.13 For the reasons outlined above, whilst having regard to all material matters raised, that the Inspector is respectfully requested to dismiss the appeal.