

**RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL**



Ribble Valley  
Borough Council

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**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
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**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.

**SUMMARY 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- 1.3 The Council has withdrawn the first reason for refusal relating to the principle of housing outside a settlement boundary.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.
- 1.4 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 The submitted 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.

1.9 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.

1.10 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 material 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.

1.11 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 not reiterated here.

## 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.

3.4 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

3.2 All other policies contained within the Ribble Valley Core Strategy remain relevant to this Appeal and have full weight except 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)

### **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.

3.8 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).

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

4.1 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.

4.2 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.

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

4.5 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 positively contributes to the surrounding open countryside and the scale and intensity of development would change and adversely effect the site's countryside character 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. The site will, however, 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. Vehicular access to the site would be via Longsight Road (A59) with cycle and pedestrian links are proposed to Whitehalgh Lane to the west and the PROW would remain.

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 and effectively a barrier to accessing public transport in a safe manner.

5.3 A new pedestrian/cycle access onto Whitehalgh Lane, has been proposed. Whitehalgh is a narrow, rural lane with limited potential for improvement.

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, separated by the railway line, this element of the scheme has limited benefits.

5.6 Mr Carter provides clear and cogent evidence regarding the impact which this development would have on accessibility and sustainability.

5.7 The site lies adjacent to the settlement boundary of Langho to the south and eastern boundaries. A housing development was approved (3/2018/0844) to the eastern edge of the site in 2019. Access to the train station and bus stops is constrained by the railway line and the topography of the site. The station is only accessible by stepped access. The bus stops are accessed either via the constrained underpass onto Whalley Road or the busy major road of the A59. There are proposals to create a new pedestrian/cycle link onto Whitehalgh Lane, which has limited capacity for improvements and route limited natural surveillance raising safety concerns.

5.8 The proximity of the site to the railway station is promoted as a benefit, however, this is a local line with an hourly service (two hourly on Sundays). At present the Sunday service is a bus replacement service which extends journey times. Without significant change to public transport future occupiers would be reliant on the use of private motor vehicles.

5.9 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 difficulty in accessing

suitable pedestrian and cycle links, bus stops and the railway station. The proposed improvements do not address these concerns. Future residents would be heavily reliant on car borne travel to access their day-to-day needs as such the proposed development fails to accord with Key Statement DM12, Policy DMG3 and Para 117(b) of the NPPF.

## **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.

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, the development would not conserve or enhance areas of biodiversity and geodiversity and would isolate the ancient woodland resulting in harm to areas of particular importance for biodiversity identified in the Lancashire Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), impact on Ancient Woodland and loss of Priority Habitats.

6.3 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. Therefore, the proposal would conflict with Key Statement EN4 which requires a net enhancement in biodiversity. It is uncertain how this meets the mandatory BNG requirement and what extent this will be accommodated on site to satisfy biodiversity net gain best practice.

## **7. Contributions**

7.1 Contributions have been requested from LCC Highways towards Travel Plan and public transport. The appellant is agreeable to this.

7.2 NHS Lancashire & Cumbria Integrated Care Board have requested a contribution per dwelling towards Whalley Medical centre. Further justification has been requested by the Appellant and this contribution has not been agreed at this stage.

7.3 A contribution towards off-site leisure and recreation facilities has been requested, with two options identified. 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.
- 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. RVBC does not currently have a five year housing land supply therefore 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 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 on-site open space would predominantly be used by the occupants of the development and carries limited weight;
- Provision of a surface level car park to promote rail use would carry limited weight as it would be accessed from the A59 and therefore 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– however, this is an existing greenfield site with ancient woodland and priority habitat which positively contributes, there is uncertainty to the extent of enhancement 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. 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 an incongruous, unsympathetic, and discordant form of development which carried moderate to significant harm particularly when viewed from public vantage points, the Public Footpath and residential properties of Langho village.

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 carries 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 including 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 provide an adequate strategy for the protection of the Ancient Woodland and Priority Habitat and demonstrate the development meets 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.
- 8.13.1 For the reasons outlined above, whilst having regard to all material matters raised, that the Inspector is respectfully requested to dismiss the appeal.