

**APPEAL REFERENCE 6002485**

**RIBBLE VALLEY PLANNING APPLICATION REFERENCE 3/2025/0196  
LAND OFF LONGSIGHT ROAD LANGHO BOUNDED BY THE RAILWAY  
NORTHCOTE PARK AND WILDMANS FARM**

**SUMMARY PROOF OF EVIDENCE ON ECOLOGY MATTERS**

**Derek Richardson BSc Hons MPhil, Principal Ecologist**

**March 2026**

## **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 This Summary Proof of Evidence is submitted on behalf of Ribble Valley Borough Council with reference to the decision to refuse planning application **3/2025/0196, land off Longsight Road Langho.**
- 1.2 I am Derek Richardson. I hold a BSc (Hons) degree in Environmental Biology and an MPhil in plant sciences. I am the Principal Ecologist at the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU). GMEU provides advice to, and on behalf of, local authorities including Ribble Valley Borough Council on ecology and nature conservation matters.
- 1.3 I have provided evidence focused on the relevant ecological matters that apply to the proposed development at Land off Longsight Road Langho, in particular in relation to impacts of the scheme on irreplaceable and priority habitats.

## **2 The Appeal Site and the Proposed Development**

- 2.1 The Appeal relates to an area of previously undeveloped land measuring 20.01 hectares outside the defined settlement boundary of Langho, Ribble Valley. The site is bounded to the north by Longsight Road (A59), to the east by Northcote Park (an existing residential development), to the south by the railway line and to the west by Whitehalgh Lane.
- 2.2 The application seeks outline planning permission for up to 300 dwellings which comprises the following:
- 300 dwellings including 30% affordable homes
  - New railway station car park
  - Green infrastructure
  - Sustainable drainage systems including attenuation basins
- 2.3 Access is applied for in this application, with the scheme proposing a direct vehicular access onto the A59 and a new pedestrian / cycle access point from Whitehalgh Lane. The existing pedestrian access points from the A59 and the railway station underpass in the south-east corner of the site would be retained. Details of appearance, landscaping, layout and scale are all reserved for a later stage.
- 2.4 The planning application (LPA ref: 3/2025/0196) was refused by a Decision Notice dated 27<sup>th</sup> June 2025 for a number of reasons, including the following reasons relating to ecology:
1. The application fails to carry out appropriate assessments to fully assess the impacts of the development upon habitats within and adjacent to the

site including whether appropriate protection and enhancement can be provided for protected species and their habitat. This is contrary to Key Statement EN4 and policy DME3 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.

2. The proposed development would result in the loss of existing habitat, hedgerow and watercourse units, with insufficient details being submitted to demonstrate an appropriate strategy for achieving the statutory requirement for Biodiversity Net Gain contrary to Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (inserted by the Environment Act 2021).

My Proof of Evidence considers matters relating to the ecological impacts of the proposed development and the proposals for mitigating and compensating for these ecological impacts.

- 2.5 Since the planning application was refused more comprehensive ecological survey information has been provided by the applicant to address the reasons for refusal on ecology grounds. This new information has concluded that the development proposals will affect an area of ancient woodland and areas of priority habitat including lowland meadow and hedgerows.
- 2.6 Although the information now available provides a reasonable description of the ecological status of the site, it is my professional opinion that the development proposals have failed to appropriately apply the ecological mitigation hierarchy and have failed to offer satisfactory mitigation and compensation for ecological harm.
- 2.7 Since the planning application was determined the ecological status of parts of the site have changed.
  - A small area of woodland within the site has now been designated as ancient woodland, an irreplaceable habitat *and*
  - The Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for Lancashire has been published. Parts of the application site have been identified in this strategy as areas of particular importance for biodiversity (the ancient woodland) and areas that could become of particular importance for biodiversity.

### **3 Main Ecology Issues**

- 3.1 The development proposals will cause indirect harm to an area of ancient woodland, an irreplaceable habitat, resulting in habitat isolation, compromising opportunities to expand the woodland and causing disturbance to the retained area of woodland.
- 3.2 The development proposals will result in the attempted translocation of an area of lowland meadow, a priority habitat for conservation, from one part of the application site to another. It is my opinion that this approach will likely be unsuccessful.

3.3 The application fails to correctly apply the ecological mitigation hierarchy. The mitigation hierarchy sets out a series of steps for minimising harm to habitats and species when planning for development. The steps are -

- (1) Avoid harm,
- (2) Minimise harm,
- (3) Compensate,
- (4) Enhance.

Before proposing mitigation and compensation for impacts on ancient woodland and lowland meadow the development should instead aim to avoid these impacts.

3.4 The development will also compromise the creation of the LNRS for Lancashire by causing harm to an area of principal importance for biodiversity and by preventing the effective enhancement and expansion of notable habitats and by causing habitat and landscape fragmentation.

#### **4 Conclusions**

On balance I would advise that the Appeal is refused because –

- 4.1 The development would cause unacceptable impacts on irreplaceable and priority habitats,
- 4.2 The development proposals have not followed the mitigation hierarchy,
- 4.3 Proposals for habitat compensation and mitigation are inadequate.
- 4.4 Proposals for on-site habitat enhancement are likely to be unsuccessful
- 4.5 The development will compromise the establishment of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Lancashire.
- 4.6 The development would therefore be contrary to Key Statement EN4 and Policy DME3 of the Ribble Valley Council Core Strategy. In particular, the development will not conserve and enhance areas biodiversity and geodiversity will not avoid the fragmentation and isolation of natural habitats, or help to develop green corridors
- 4.7 The development would also be contrary to biodiversity net gain best practice
- 4.8 If the Appeal is allowed I have recommended a range of Conditions which should be applied to any permission to protect nature conservation impacts.

Derek Richardson BSC Hons MPhil  
Principal Ecologist