



**Barratt Homes: Higgins Brook, Longridge**

**Statement of Community Involvement**

**August 2014**



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## 1.0 Overview

Barratt Homes, one of the nation's leading house builders, is preparing an outline planning application for 520 new homes, a new primary school and a replacement cricket pitch, including a new pavilion on land east of Chipping Lane in Longridge. The scheme will deliver high-quality homes, ranging from two to four bedrooms, with 30% of the properties being affordable. These could help those struggling to get their foot on the housing ladder, including families and first time buyers, as well as those looking to downsize, such as the elderly.

The plans on which the public were consulted were twofold. The first aspect of the plans were detailed proposals for up to 106 new homes on the western edge of the site, for which Barratt Homes submitted a planning application in April. The second aspect of these plans related to an outline residential development of approximately 500 new homes on the whole of the Higgins Brook site.

In preparing their plans, Barratt Homes has carefully listened to and considered the views of existing residents, stakeholders and the wider community. A thorough public consultation has been undertaken, allowing the local community to view the plans, speak with members of the development team and submit their feedback.

Barratt Homes has worked hard to ensure that the community engagement has been carried out in line with Ribble Valley Borough Council's Statement of Community Involvement, the Localism Act 2011 and the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). A summary of the engagement activity can be found below:

- A letter was sent to 31 residential properties on Redwood Drive, Firwood Close and Willows Park Lane which are directly adjacent to the proposed Higgins Brook site. The letter notified the owners and tenants of these properties about the draft proposals and invited them to a residents' preview session ahead of the public exhibition. Details about the scheme's dedicated website [www.landathigginsbrook.co.uk](http://www.landathigginsbrook.co.uk) and community information line telephone number were also provided in the letter. A copy of the resident letter is provided in Appendix 2.0.
- A letter was also sent to all members of Ribble Valley Borough Council to notify them about the proposed scheme and to invite them to a councillor preview session ahead of the public exhibition. The same letter was also sent to members of Longridge Town Council. Details of the dedicated website and the community information line telephone number were also provided in the letter. Prior to the exhibition, individual telephone calls were made to Longridge Borough and Town councillors to further raise their awareness of the councillor preview session. A copy of the correspondence is provided in Appendix 2.0.

- In addition, a range of local stakeholders from the public, private and voluntary sectors were contacted by letter about the proposals. These were the North & Western Lancashire Chamber of Commerce, Lancashire Enterprise Partnership, Longridge Business Group, The Alston Arms, Longridge High School, St Cecilia's RC High School, Longridge C of E Primary School, Barnacre Road Primary School, St Wilfrid's RC Primary School, the Parish Churches of St Lawrence with St Paul Longridge, Christ Church Methodist United Reformed Church, St Wilfrid's Church, Longridge Social Enterprise Company, Longridge Golf Club, Longridge Cricket Club, Longridge Town Football Club, Longridge Gymnastics Club, Longridge Sports Centre, 1st Longridge Scouts and 143 Longridge ATC Squadron. Each stakeholder was invited to attend the wider public viewing of the exhibition. Details of the dedicated website and the community information line telephone number were also provided in the letter. A copy of the correspondence is provided in Appendix 2.0.
- To ensure the wider Longridge area were notified about the proposals, a press release was issued to the Longridge News and Advertiser on Monday 17th March 2014 which announced the public consultation and exhibition and gave details of its dedicated website and online feedback form. The press release was covered in both the 19th and 26th March weekly editions of the newspaper. A further press release was issued on Tuesday 1st April 2014 and received coverage the next day. Copies of the press releases and the coverage are provided in Appendix 3.0.
- To further ensure the wider Longridge community were kept informed of the public consultation, a poster was put up on community notice boards at high footfall locations in the town and near to the site. The posters were put at Sainsbury's Supermarket, St Wilfrid's RC Primary School, Longridge County Primary School, Alston RC Primary School, Longridge CE Junior School, Longridge High School, St Cecilia's RC High School, Berry Lane Medical Centre, Stonebridge Surgery, Drakes Dental Care Surgery, Longridge Library and The Parish Churches of St Lawrence with St Paul Longridge. A copy of the poster is provided in Appendix 4.
- Throughout the launch of the consultation, a community information line telephone number, 0844 556 3002, was available for local residents to ask any questions to members of the project team. The line was manned throughout the public consultation from Monday to Friday, 9am to 5.30pm. An answerphone facility was also available outside of these hours.
- On Friday 28th March 2014, a public exhibition was held from 3pm - 7pm in the Workstation, at the Longridge Station, Berry Lane in Longridge which is an accessible and well known community venue situated in the centre of town. The purpose of the exhibition was to allow local residents the opportunity to view draft masterplans on four large roller

banners as well as ask any questions about the scheme to representatives of Barratt Homes.

- To ensure that local residents had their say, feedback forms and a comments box were also provided. The deadline for feedback was Thursday 3rd April 2014 which catered for residents who were unable to attend the public exhibition. Those residents could either return their forms by post or fill in the feedback form online at [www.landathigginsbrook.co.uk](http://www.landathigginsbrook.co.uk).

Following the public consultation, Barratt Homes and the project team collated and reviewed all the feedback received from the local community. The information received has helped shape the final proposals for the Higgins Brook outline application, which include:

- A high-quality development of 520 new homes and a public open space in a highly sustainable location.
- Up to 156 dwellings (30%) will be affordable.
- A range of property sizes, from 2, 3 and 4 bed homes, and types, including detached, semi-detached and mews properties.
- Accommodation designed for the elderly, such as those looking to downsize.
- New homes arranged to overlook the avenues, streets, lanes and open spaces.
- A new primary school to be built in the north east of the site, which would cater for 210 new school places and create up to 15 new jobs.
- The relocation of the existing cricket club to the north west of the site to provide enhanced facilities for the Club's members and supporters, including a new pitch, pavilion, practice nets, stores and a car park, all to English Cricket Board standards.
- A sensitively designed scheme that has considered the architectural styles in Longridge.
- Public open space and play areas for new residents and the existing community.
- Preserved views towards the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- Vistas towards the spire of St. Wilfrid's Church and the tower of St. Paul's Church ensuring the sense of place and character of the settlement is protected.
- Improvements to existing ecological features to ensure these are integrated within the development and their ecological benefit enhanced.
- The creation of a public open space by enhancing existing features, such as hedgerows and trees, and providing additional landscaping.
- The use of sustainable drainage solutions (SuDS) to effectively drain the site and ensure flood risk will not increase.
- Localised junction improvements and encouraging sustainable modes of transport, such as local bus services with the upgrading and replacement of the southbound bus stop on Chipping Lane.
- Two vehicular accesses from Chipping Lane away from existing residential streets.
- A high quality visual gateway at the Chipping Lane/Cricket Club boundary.

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- A highly accessible development for pedestrians and cyclists at the southern boundary of the site, including the formation of a new pedestrian only link from the site to Sainsbury's supermarket.
- Knock-on benefits delivered in Longridge from increased spending by the new residents of the development on new leisure and retail expenditure.
- The development will provide opportunities during construction, including opportunities for young people through Barratt Homes' apprenticeship scheme.

Through careful and comprehensive public consultation, Barratt Homes has listened to the feedback from local people and where possible addressed their concerns in the final plans and submission documents. Barratt Homes remains committed to maintaining a dialogue with interested parties throughout the planning process.

## 2.0 Planning Policy and Guidance: Role of Community Involvement

Planning guidance states that pre-application consultation with local communities, local authorities and statutory consultees can bring a number of benefits to the process of determining planning applications. Against this background, Barratt Homes has sought to consult with interested parties, in accordance with policy and guidance in relation to community involvement in the planning system.

### 2.1 Ribble Valley Borough Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

Ribble Valley Borough Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) was adopted in July 2009 and updated in 2013. The revised SCI encourages applicants to seek advice from officers, as well as undertake public consultation and report its findings. It emphasises the importance of consultation stating:

*'The Council believes that it is better for developers to talk to those who may be affected and refine their proposals while they are at a formative stage.'*

The SCI provides a number of options that developers should consider in order to fully inform the local community of development proposals. They include:

- Arranging meetings with groups in the community (parish councils, residents associations; interested parties, neighbours) and giving sufficient notice.
- The circulation of a leaflet or letter.
- Holding a public exhibition.
- Keeping a record of all consultation carried out, including correspondence, public notices and a record of persons attending exhibitions and meetings.

It further states that developers are encouraged to submit a consultation statement as part of their planning application including details of techniques used to gain stakeholder comments, the summary of responses received, main points of objection, other matters raised, developer comments on the responses and amendments made to the proposals as a result.

### 2.2 The Localism Act 2011

The Coalition Government has stated its intention to hand power back to communities through its ongoing legislative programme. Central to that aim is the Localism Act 2011, which received Royal Assent on 15 November 2011.

The Localism Act seeks to provide the local community with a voice throughout the planning

process, highlighted in the Department for Communities and Local Government's paper, *Decentralisation and Localism Bill: an essential guide*, which outlines one of its principles as:

*'Empowering communities to do things their way – by creating rights for people to get involved with, and direct the development of, their community.'*

Elaborating on this, the Localism Act outlines that developers must notify the local community about its proposals to *'bring the proposed application to the attention of a majority of the persons who live at, or otherwise occupy, premises in the vicinity of the land.'* It goes on to state that the publicity must explain how the developer can be contacted by those *'wishing to comment on, or collaborate...on the design of, the proposed development'* and that developer must consider the feedback received by having *'regard to any responses to the consultation.'*

### **2.3 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**

On 27 March 2012, the Government published its National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The document seeks to streamline national planning policy to promote sustainable development. Explaining the rationale behind the Government's plan to reform the planning system, then Minister for Planning, Greg Clark MP, expressed a need to engage with local communities regarding planning matters. In the foreword to the NPPF, Clark states:

*'Yet, in recent years, planning has tended to exclude, rather than to include, people and communities ... This National Planning Policy Framework changes that. By replacing over a thousand pages of national policy with around fifty, written simply and clearly, we are allowing people and communities back into planning.'*

### **2.4 Planning Practice Guidance**

The national Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), a new online national planning guidance resource, was launched on 6 March 2014. This streamlined planning practice guidance does not replace the NPPF, but is intended to make planning guidance more accessible and easier to keep up to date.

With regard to consultation and community engagement, the PPG notes:

*'Pre-application engagement by prospective applicants offers significant potential to improve both the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system and improve the quality of planning applications and their likelihood of success.'*

The guidance states that this can be achieved by consulting the local planning authority, statutory and non-statutory consultees, elected members and local people, with the level of engagement



proportionate to the nature and scale of the proposed development.

Against this background, prior to the submission of a planning application, Barratt Homes has worked to ensure that a thorough consultation has been undertaken on its proposals, to allow the community to have their say and contribute to the development of the plans.

### 3.0 Consultation programme

To open up the consultation process to the local community and to seek a wide range of views on the proposals, the engagement programme consisted of a number of elements.

#### 3.1 Letters to residents

On 18th March 2014, a letter was sent to 31 properties directly adjacent to the proposed Higgins Brook site. This was to ensure that those directly affected had the opportunity to attend a resident's preview where they could meet with and provide feedback to representatives of Barratt Homes. The letters also included details of the scheme's dedicated website and online feedback forms and the community information line telephone number.

The distribution area covered properties in Redwood Drive, Firwood Close and Willows Park Lane and can be viewed in Appendix 1.0.

#### 3.2 Letters to local stakeholders

Letters were also sent to key politicians inviting them to view the proposals at a councillor preview session ahead of the public exhibition. The recipients were:

- Councillor Stuart Hirst, Leader of the Council
- Councillor Simon Hore, Deputy Leader of the Council
- Councillor Stuart Carefoot, ward member for Derby and Thornley
- Councillor Jim White, ward member for Derby and Thornley
- Councillor Kind Hind, ward member for Dilworth
- Councillor Rupert Swarbrick, ward member for Dilworth
- Councillor Bridget Hilton, Chair of the Housing and Health Committee
- Councillor Terry Hill, Chair of the Planning and Development Committee
- Councillor Susan Bibby, Vice Chair of the Planning and Development Committee
- All other members of the Planning and Development Committee
- All other members of the Borough Council
- Maria Preston, Clerk to Longridge Town Council
- Nigel Evans, Member of Parliament for Ribble Valley

Prior to the exhibition, individual telephone calls were made to Longridge Borough and Town councillors to further raise their awareness of the councillor preview session and encourage their attendance.

Letters were also sent to local stakeholders in the Longridge and Lancashire area which included:

- North & Western Chamber of Commerce
- Lancashire Enterprise Partnership
- Longridge High School
- St Cecila's RC High School Chapel Hill
- Longridge Church of England Primary School
- Barnacre Road Primary School
- St Wilfrid's RC Primary School
- The Parish of St Lawrence with St Paul Longridge
- Christ Church Methodist/URC
- St Wilfrid's Church
- Longridge Business Group
- Longridge Cricket Club
- Longridge Town Football Club
- Longridge Gymnastics Club
- Longridge Sports Centre
- 143 Longridge ATC Squadron
- The Alston Arms

A copy of the letter is provided in Appendix 2.0

### **3.3 Publicity**

To help make the wider population of Longridge aware of the proposals, a press release was issued to the Longridge News and Advertiser on Tuesday 18th March 2014. The press release announced the public consultation on the proposals for Higgins Brook and gave details of the exhibition, dedicated website and the online feedback form. The announcement was printed in the 19th and 26th March editions of the paper. A further press release was issued on Tuesday 1st April 2014 to thank residents for attending the exhibition and remind those residents who hadn't yet responded to complete a feedback form online.

Further to the two press releases, posters were put up in prominent places in the town. Printed on the posters were details of the public exhibition and the community information line. The venues were:

- Sainsbury's Supermarket
- St Wildfrid's RC Primary School
- Longridge County Primary School
- Alston RC Primary School
- Longridge CE Junior School
- Longridge High School
- St Cecilia's RC High School
- Berry Lane Medical Centre
- Stonebridge Surgery
- Drakes Dental Care Surgery
- Longridge Library
- The Parish Churches of St Lawrence with St Paul Longridge Churches

A full size of the poster can be found in Appendix 4.0.

### **3.4 Website**

A dedicated website: [www.landathigginsbrook.co.uk](http://www.landathigginsbrook.co.uk) was created for the public consultation. This was to allow those residents unable to attend the public exhibition the opportunity to view the proposals and submit their feedback online.

The site went live on Friday 28th March 2014 on the day of the public exhibition. Details of the website were also included in: the letter to residents, politicians and stakeholders and the three press releases. The website was designed to be accessible and informative to give local residents the information they needed to comment on the plans. Within the website, residents could view different pages to find out about local housing need, the site, the plans, design and benefits of the scheme. Also included within the website was an online questionnaire to allow people to submit their feedback as well as register their interest in a new home.

From the launch of the website to the end of the consultation on Thursday 3rd April 2014, the website was viewed a total of 242 times by 151 unique users who, on average, stayed on the website for 5 minutes 41 seconds and viewed an average of 4.79 pages per visit.

Screen shots of the website are provided in Appendix 5.0.

### **3.5 Community Information Line**

Throughout the consultation, a community information line, 0844 556 3002, was set up to allow local residents the opportunity to speak with a member of the project team. The community information line was publicised in the letter to residents, politicians and stakeholders, on the website, in the two press releases and on the feedback forms that were provided at the exhibition. All calls and feedback received were logged and passed onto the development team. The information line was manned Monday to Friday, from 9.00am to 5.30pm, with an answer phone facility provided outside of these hours. Three calls in total were received.

### **3.6 Public exhibition**

A public exhibition was held in the Workstation, at the Longridge Station, on Berry Lane in Longridge, on Friday 28th March 2014, from 3pm to 7pm. This was to allow local residents the opportunity to speak with members of the development team in person, view the proposals on four large roller banners and submit their feedback. Beforehand, there were separate preview sessions for politicians and local residents who live adjacent to the proposed site from 1pm to 2pm and 2pm to 3pm respectively. The venue was ideally placed as it was off the high street in the centre of Longridge, just a ten minute walk from the proposed site.

A total of 99 people attended the public exhibition which included local residents, stakeholders and politicians, such as ward members of the site and members of the Planning and Development Committee. During the exhibition, local attendees raised many questions which were addressed by members of the development team.

On Friday 28th March 2014, representatives of Barratt Homes met with ward councillors for the site at the councillor preview session ahead of the public exhibition. Councillor Stuart Carefoot, ward member for Derby and Thornley, and Councillor Ken Hind, ward member for Dilworth, attended the meeting along with Councillor David Smith, ward member for Alston and county councillor for Longridge. Later in the day, Councillor Jim White, also ward member for Derby and Thornley, attended the exhibition along with Councillor Ian Brown, ward member for Salthill, and Councillor Jim Rogerson, ward member for Alston.

During this meeting, the members appreciated the opportunity to have their say on the proposals. It also provided an opportunity for Barratt Homes to listen to and seek to address their concerns as well as explain the need for new homes in Longridge and the benefits of the scheme.

As part of the exhibition, four large roller banners were displayed around the room. These provided details of the need for new homes in Longridge, the proposed site, the draft masterplan, the numbers and size of the proposed homes and key facts and benefits relating to the site.

Copies of the boards and photographs of the exhibition can be found in Appendices 6.0 and 7.0.

### **3.7 Meetings programme**

On Monday 12<sup>th</sup> May, members of the Higgins Brook development team met with the Headteacher and School Manager from Longridge High School. Discussions centred on the potential for pupil numbers to increase as a result of the development. In response, the School confirmed that it has capacity to accommodate additional pupils and is also looking to expand its facilities in the future.

Also on the same day, the development team held a meeting with the North and Western Lancashire Chamber of Commerce to discuss the economic impact of the proposals. The focus of the conversation related to the sustainability of the site's location to existing businesses in Longridge and how the increased spend of new residents would provide an economic boost to the local economy.

On Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> May, the Project Team met with the Lancashire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). Discussions were held on how the Higgins Brook proposals aligned with the strategic housing and economic aims of the LEP as part of its Preston, South Ribble and the Lancashire City Deal. During the meeting, the LEP recognised that high quality new homes in Longridge would provide a greater housing choice for potential new employees of the Samlesbury Enterprise Zone.

Barratt Homes remains committed to meeting with local stakeholders including residents, politicians and community organisations following the submission of the planning application.

## 4.0 Feedback Received

This section contains a breakdown of the feedback received throughout the public consultation on Barratt Homes’ proposals for Higgins Brook.

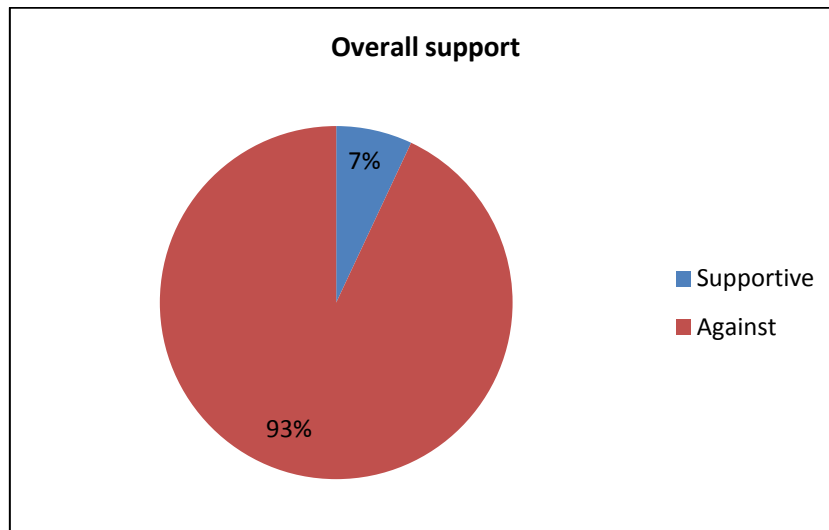
### 4.1 Summary

During the public consultation, 43 responses were received from local residents. The majority of the responses were received at the public exhibition although some residents sent their feedback online via the dedicated project website [www.landathigginsbrook.co.uk](http://www.landathigginsbrook.co.uk), by email to [landathigginsbrook@lexcomm.co.uk](mailto:landathigginsbrook@lexcomm.co.uk) or by post to the Manchester office of Lexington Communications.

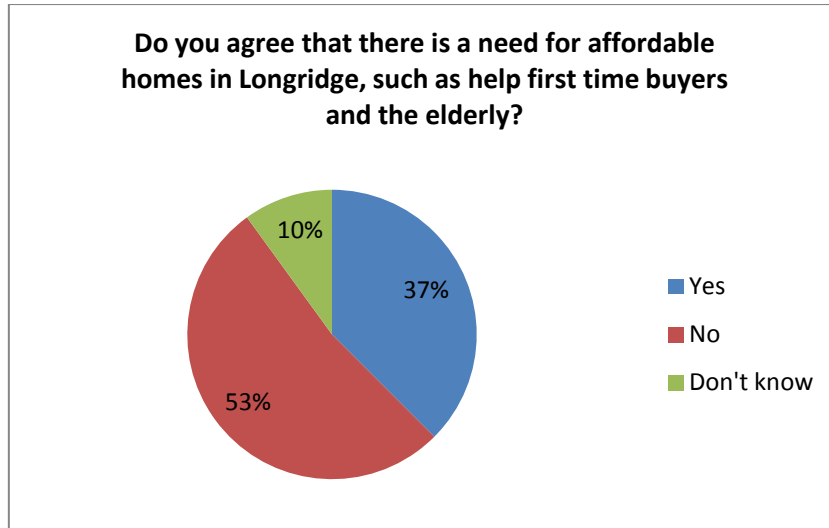
The breakdown of responses is shown below:

Response	
Exhibition	18
Online	12
Email	3
Post	10
	43

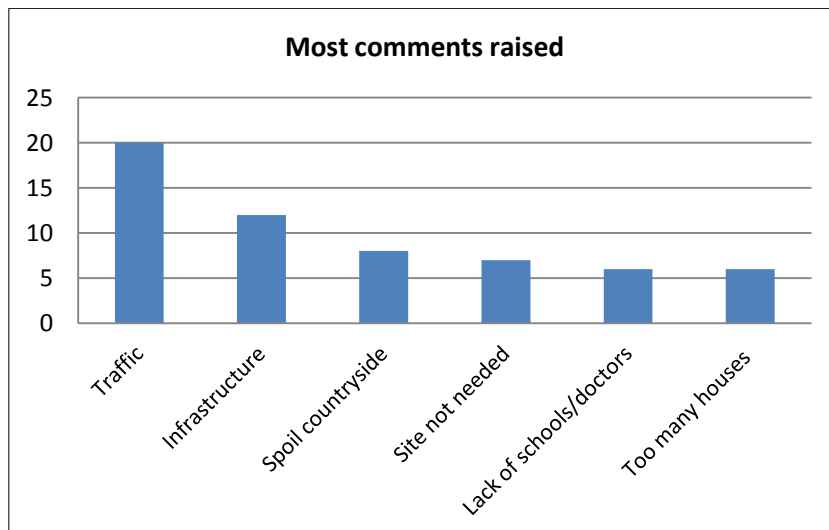
Out of the 43 responses, three (7%) were generally supportive of the plans, whilst 40 (93%) were against, which is shown in the chart below:



Whilst the overall support of the scheme was low, over a quarter of respondents (27%) believed there was a need for new homes in the town and 15 residents (37%) agreed that Longridge needed more affordable housing as shown in the chart overleaf.



The top six comments raised across all questions were as follows:



**Question 1 – Please tell us what you think of the proposals, including what you like, dislike or how you think the plans could be improved.**

The most frequently raised comment in this section was increased traffic levels that could be caused by the proposed development. Many respondents felt that the roads were already congested and more houses would contribute to increased traffic. Coupled with this, respondents also argued that the site would impact on Longridge’s infrastructure and that it would not be able to accommodate with the extra demand of new residents. A selection of the feedback in response to this question is provided below:

*“Site too big what about the infrastructure. Inglewhite Road is very busy takes a lot of traffic now also local services will suffer.”*

*“500 extra houses in one area will mean anything up to 1000 more cars on the road. We do not have A roads or a railway station. Also concerns about impact on health care provision and local schools.”*

*“I do not think the plans are feasible because of the extra traffic it will bring to an already congested area.”*

In addition, seven respondents said the site was not needed, five residents felt there were too many houses proposed, five residents also felt the development would impact on the town’s infrastructure and two residents felt that the town should not grow any bigger. Examples of the comments received include:

*“I think that Longridge has reached a point of maximum growth.”*

*“No need for any more housing developments as there are already other ones underway which should more than meet the demands for new homes in the area.”*

*“Too many houses in an already crowded village.”*

*“The infrastructure in Longridge is not good enough to support another development.”*

A further area of concern raised was the impact the proposed site could have on Longridge’s rural areas, with four residents suggesting that the surrounding countryside would be spoiled as part of the proposals.

Positive responses were received on the local need with one resident stating that the plans were needed. Another resident called for more bungalows to be included in the first phase of the development to cater for the elderly demand for houses in the area.

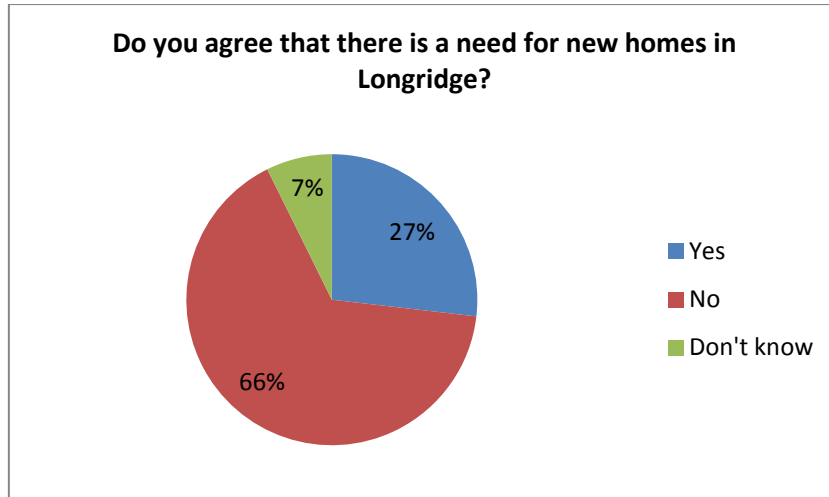
*“I think the plans are in line with the need for new homes.”*

*“Why not build some more bungalows to attract older people.”*

## **Question 2 – Do you agree that there is a need for new homes in Longridge?**

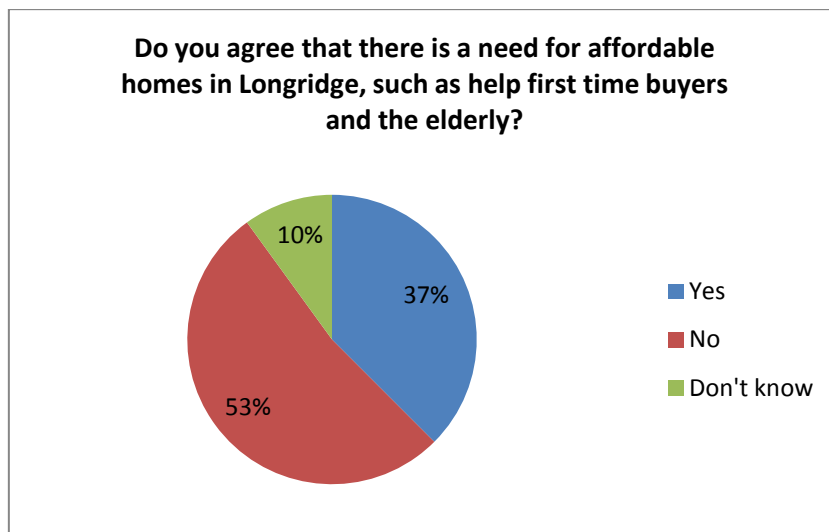
The majority of responses to this question (66%) did not agree that there is a need for new homes in Longridge. However, over a quarter of all respondents (27%) agreed with this statement and 7% were unsure.





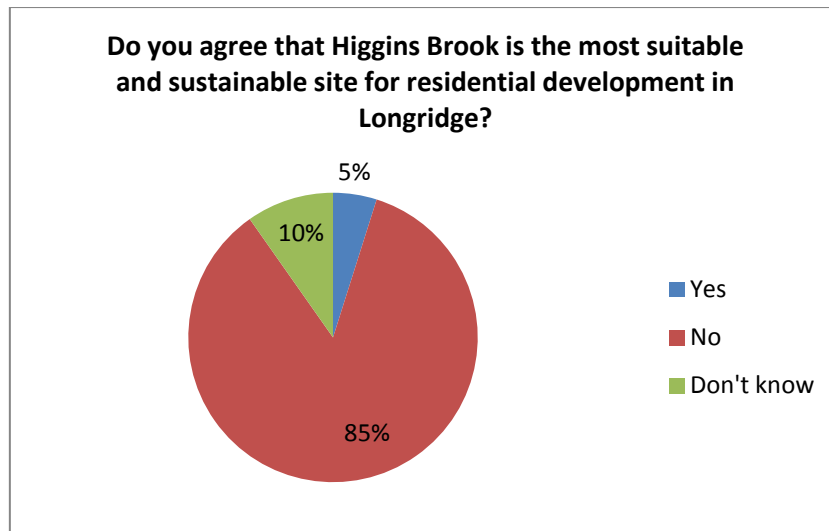
**Question 3 – Do you agree that there is a need for affordable homes in Longridge, such as those to help first time buyers and the elderly?**

Over a third of all respondents (37%) agreed that there is a need for affordable homes in Longridge with one resident commenting later in the feedback form that more bungalows needed to be built for the elderly. Whilst 53% of respondents disagreed and 10% were unsure.



**Question 4 – Do you agree that Higgins Brook is the most suitable and sustainable site for residential development in Longridge?**

In response to this question, the vast majority of responses (85%) did not agree that Higgins Brook is the most suitable and sustainable site for residential development in Longridge. Whilst 10% of respondents were not sure and only 5% agreed.



**Question 5 – Are there any specific issues about the plans which concern you?**

This question provided residents with six options where they could select different aspects of the plans they had concerns with. Residents could choose from the following options: highways, design, accessibility, ecology, landscaping and no concerns .

Broadly speaking, this question generated a mixed range of results. This would suggest that there were some residents with differing opinions of the scheme with no one concern dominating over another.

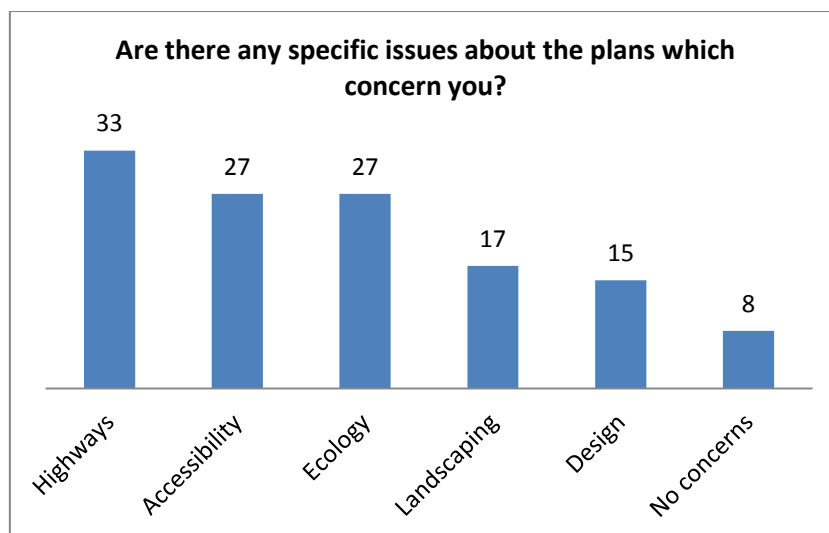
One of the highest concerns cited by 33 residents was the impact of highways of the proposed scheme. This is consistent with the feedback provided by residents in the first question where it was clear people believed that the roads in and around the site would not be able to accommodate increased traffic.

In addition, 27 residents mentioned that they were concerned about the accessibility of the site. This is supported by some respondents who said later in their feedback that there was a ‘bad bend’ on Chipping Lane when leaving Longridge Cricket Club.

A further 27 respondents said that they were concerned about the impact on ecology. This is supported by previous comments where some residents felt the development would spoil the environment of the village.

A much lower number of residents, (8), expressed concern over the design of the site, whilst 17 residents did not like the landscaping aspects. This suggests that overall most residents had few concerns over the layout of the proposed site.

The breakdown of residents concerns is shown overleaf.



### Question 6 – Any additional comments or suggestions about the plans

In response to this question, 12 residents once again highlighted their concerns over increased traffic levels in Longridge. Further comments on traffic related to a ‘bad bend’ on Chipping Road when exiting Longridge Cricket Club and congested traffic on Derby Road, Inglewhite Road and Berry Lane. A selection of traffic related comments are below:

*“Traffic will overcrowd already busy roads through Longridge and on the commuter route to Preston.”*

*“Additional traffic from both volume and pollution concerns.”*

*“Because of the school in Barnacre Road, and Sainsbury’s superstore, traffic in the area of Inglewhite Road from Alston Arms to the bottom of Berry Lane and on to Derby Road is heavily congested most of the day.”*

Four residents also added that the proposed development would spoil the rural feel of Longridge. Two residents were unhappy that greenfield and agricultural sites in the town such as Higgins Brook were being brought forward for development. Also given the proposed development is on the edge of the town, people were concerned that the proposals meant that Longridge would expand into the surrounding countryside. Comments included:

*“It is going to remove the whole rural feel of a beautiful town.”*

*“Spoiling the beautiful countryside, surrounding Longridge.”*

*“This is farming land and should be kept as that.”*

Moreover, five residents used the additional comments section to highlight their concerns that Longridge’s infrastructure would not be able to cope as a result of a new housing development. Whilst six residents stated that there were not enough schools in the town to accommodate this

growth. One resident also argued that some children may now be forced to go to school outside of the town in Preston, Ribchester and beyond.

There were some residents who used the additional comments section to highlight positive aspects of the scheme. One resident supported the idea that there would be no access to the Higgins Brook site from Redwood Drive as they did not want to see any additional traffic on their estate. Whilst another respondent supported the idea of a pedestrian and cycle access from Redwood Drive to the proposed site.

*“Happy to see that there is no through road access from Redwood Drive as this would make it a difficult position to raise a young family safely with increased traffic volumes.”*

*If planning is granted for this development, I trust that Barratt will honour their promises to make access to the town through the existing Redwood estate for pedestrians and cyclists only.”*

#### **4.2 Community information line**

The community information line, 0844 556 3002, was established at the beginning of the engagement process and was intended to provide residents, stakeholders and other interested parties with a direct line of communication for enquiries regarding the proposals. The telephone number was also included in the letter to residents and stakeholders, in the two press releases, on the dedicated website, on the posters that were displayed in the town; and on the feedback forms at the public exhibition.

The information line received three calls from the same local resident who requested a location map of the proposed development. This was to ascertain whether the access road his house was situated on would be affected by the development. The caller was advised that the access road would not be affected and was sent a location map by post.

## **5.0 Response to feedback**

Barratt Homes is grateful to all those who took the time to consider the proposals for Higgins Brook and submit their feedback. All the responses received have been fully considered by the development team and have been used to help shape the final plans for Higgins Brook before it is submitted to Ribble Valley Borough Council.

The section below outlines Barratt Homes' response to feedback and explains how the planning application responds to issues raised by the local community.

### **5.1 Traffic and access**

One of the major concerns raised by local residents was an increase in traffic in the town as a result of the proposed development. Many residents felt that the roads were already congested especially during rush hour and that more road users in the area would add to this. Coupled with this, some residents mentioned that there was a bad bend when leaving Longridge Cricket Club onto Chipping Lane and that Inglewhite Road, Derby Road and Berry Lane were already congested.

As part of the proposed development, Barratt Homes has worked hard to understand the traffic issues and has submitted a comprehensive Transport Assessment with the planning application. If the planning application is approved, Barratt Homes will work with Lancashire County Council to improve traffic congestion in the local area.

Furthermore, access to the Higgins Brook site will be from Chipping Lane only. This will keep traffic away from existing residential streets such as Calder Avenue, Redwood Drive, Crumpax Avenue, Firwood Close and Willows Park Lane. Chipping Lane is also deemed, in accordance with national highways safety standards, to exceed the required visibility standards and as such the junction created will be safe and able to accommodate the anticipated levels of traffic generated by the development. Two high quality gateways into the development will be installed on Chipping Lane to ensure they are easily seen by road users which would include right turning ghost islands. This is to prevent overtaking at this location and improve highway safety and junction visibility.

In addition, a 3 metre wide pedestrian and cycle access will be created from Chipping Lane along the front of the site. The footway next to the junction with Inglewhite Road and Chipping Lane will be set back in order to improve visibility. A pedestrian connection from the site to the bus stops along Chipping Lane will be provided making it easier for local residents to access public transport. The southbound bus stop on Chipping Lane will also be replaced and upgraded with a new bus stop.

Currently, a 30mph speed restriction is in force along Chipping Lane which changes into the national speed limit approximately 110 metres from Inglewhite Road. As part of the site access arrangements, it is proposed to extend the 30 mph speed limit to the north of the existing cricket club to reduce the speed limit in this location.

The conclusion of the Traffic Impact Assessment carried out by Barratt Homes is that whilst there would be an increase in pedestrian, cycle and vehicle flows at the proposed site, this can be accommodated on the local highway network without any requirement for highway improvement works.

It is important to note that the site is situated in a very sustainable location, close to local amenities and bus routes to economic centres in Preston and Clitheroe. Existing bus services are currently operating along Chipping Lane directly adjacent to the proposed site which are available for new residents to use. In the town centre which is 10 minutes way, there are other bus services that provide weekday peak hour services. In addition, Barratt Homes will create pedestrian and cycle paths through the site, to encourage residents to reduce their car use which will help link the development in a sustainable way to the village. A travel plan for Higgins Brook will also be prepared to encourage new residents to use existing bus services, car share and the cycle and pedestrian access.

## **5.2 Local infrastructure**

Another area of concern raised from the consultation was the perception that the town's infrastructure would not be able to accommodate the proposed development. Specific concerns related to sewers, drains, schools and doctors surgeries not being able to deal with the increased demand. Many respondents suggested that schools and doctors were already oversubscribed.

It is a widely accepted principle that developers should contribute to the additional costs brought about by their development. As such, Barratt Homes will liaise with Ribble Valley Borough Council, Lancashire County Council and the East Lancashire Clinical Care Commissioning group, to ascertain how demand for school places or medical services, for example, will grow and what capacity there will be in the area to manage increased numbers. If appropriate, Barratt Homes will make a financial contribution to the local authority through a Section 106 agreement, if the applications are approved. In addition, the proposed primary school earmarked for the north east of the site would help meet increased demand for school places in the town. This new facility would provide 210 school places, two playing fields, as well as create up to 15 new jobs.

As part of the proposed development, Barratt Homes is also proposing to install SuDs on the site, which during heavy rain will retain more water and slowly discharge it into existing drains to prevent the back up of the system. This is to ensure flood risk in the vicinity does not increase. The development team has undertaken pre-application enquiries with United Utilities, who confirmed that there is sufficient capacity in the local sewer network to accommodate the number of homes proposed.

Barratt Homes also believes the Higgins Brook site is located in a sustainable location in the town being a ten minute walk away from local services such as the high street on Berry Lane, local schools and health services. There are five schools within a mile of the site which include Longridge High School, St Cecilia's RC High School, St Wilfrid's RC Primary School, Longridge County Primary School and Barnacre Road Primary School. Additionally, there are three health practices in the centre of

Longridge namely the Longridge Community Hospital, Berry Lane Medical Centre and the Stonebridge Surgery. There are also two dental practices in the town.

Moreover, new homes at Higgins Brook could also deliver a range of benefits for the local community that would not otherwise be created. As such, employment opportunities could be created for local people during construction as well as opportunities for young people through the Barratt Homes apprenticeship scheme. It is also anticipated that knock on benefits in Longridge will be delivered from the increased spending of new residents from new retail and leisure expenditure.

In addition, if the application is approved, Ribble Valley Borough Council will receive an additional New Homes Bonus payment which is provided by the Government to support the building of new homes. Ribble Valley Borough Council and Lancashire County Council will also benefit from increased council tax revenues. These additional funds could help fund improvements to local services.

### **5.3 Longridge's rural character, ecology and wildlife**

Many residents commented that the Higgins Brook development would cause Longridge to lose its rural identity and that the existing wildlife and ecology of the site would be impacted upon. Barratt Homes fully appreciates people's concerns about the local environment and has worked hard to shape the final plans so that they integrate sensitively into the existing fabric of Longridge.

Prior to the submission of application, a number of environmental technical studies were carried out to assess the impact of the development on the site's ecology. As a result, careful attention will be made to ensure that any impacts upon ecology and wildlife are protected and mitigated.

It is also important to note that the landscape north of the cricket ground is more rural and open in nature. The development has responded to this by retaining the northern field parcels free from development for ecological mitigation and enhancement. A public open space will also be included in the proposed development for local residents and visitors to the town to enjoy.

As part of the plans, existing important landscape features such as field boundary hedgerows, hedgerow trees and ponds are to be largely retained and enhanced through additional planting. This is to restore the existing on-site vegetation and provide a structure to the layout of the new development.

In addition, Ribble Valley Borough Council has also advised that the Higgins Brook site is not located in a particularly environmentally sensitive or vulnerable location and has no known archaeological significance. As such, the proposed site does not fall under the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations 2011 as it is not likely to have significant effects on the environment.

Some residents expressed their concern that another greenfield site would be lost to development. Due to a growing population and the reduction in the availability of brownfield sites, greenfield sites such as Higgins Brook, will have to be made available for development to help Ribble Valley Borough Council meet its future housing requirements. Barratt Homes is confident that its plans to create an

attractive and sustainable residential development, which includes a network of public open spaces, will compliment the town of Longridge and deliver the new homes the Borough desperately needs.

#### **5.4 The suitability and sustainability of the site**

A large number of respondents believed that the site was not the most suitable and sustainable site for residential development in Longridge. As with any residential development, Barratt Homes is committed to building on sustainable sites that add value to the local area. The land at Higgins Brook is one such site. It is ideally located on the outskirts of Longridge, as opposed to the centre of town where there is limited space to accommodate new development. Similarly, Ribble Valley Borough Council has also identified this area of land in their 2013 Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) Report as a highly sustainable site that could accommodate new homes in the future.

Within the proposals there is also an intention to make the site sustainable by creating a public open space to meet local needs, as well as support healthy lifestyles and family life. These new spaces can be enjoyed by new and existing residents as well as visitors to the town.

A further sustainable element of the scheme is the proposed improvements and enhancement of the site's existing ecological features. This will include existing ponds and water habitats to ensure that their ecological benefit is retained or be improved. It is also intended that SuDs will be built as part of the development to drain the site effectively and ensure that surface water flood risk does not increase.

In terms of access to the site, this will be from two locations on Chipping Lane. These are the most suitable access points as they are designed to divert traffic away from existing residential streets and busy roads. In addition, Higgins Brook benefits from good public transport access which will safeguard existing bus services in the area. It also enjoys close proximity to key services being within 800m away from schools and the high street and within 2 kilometres away from dentists, doctors, employment areas, two supermarkets and the majority of the town's retail facilities.

#### **5.4 Local housing need**

Many residents who responded to the consultation disagreed that new homes were needed in Longridge. A large number of people also disagreed that affordable homes for first time buyers and the elderly were needed in the town.

With a growing population, longer life expectancies and increasing numbers of people living alone, the Borough needs new homes. This has been demonstrated by the fact that a number of large housing schemes in Barrow, Whalley and Clitheroe have been recently approved. In addition, following the opening of the public examination of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy in January 2014, the Council was instructed by the Government appointed Planning Inspector to increase the number of new homes and affordable houses to be built in the Borough up to 2028 from 200 to 280 per year.



According to figures from Right Move in April 2014, the current average sold property price in Longridge is £184,522; up 10% from 2013. Consequently, many young people are struggling to get their foot on the property ladder. As part of the consultation, one resident from Fullwood in Preston registered her interest in a three bedroom family home as she wanted to be near her family who live in Longridge. The need for affordable homes is emphasised in the Ribble Valley Borough Council's emerging Core Strategy where it states that "there is a strong requirement for affordable housing in the Borough." It is important to note that almost a third of the population of the Ribble Valley is aged between 65 and over. This is supported by the Council's emerging Core Strategy where it states that providing housing for older people is a priority of the Council.

In addition, Ribble Valley Borough Council has identified potential development sites in the Borough to help deliver their annual housing targets up to until 2028. The Higgins Brook site in Longridge was identified by the Council in their 2013 SHLAA report as a highly sustainable location for new family homes.

Barratt Homes remains committed to assisting Ribble Valley Borough Council meet its annual housing targets as well as providing an attractive range of sustainable new homes of which, 30% will be affordable to meet local needs.

## 6.0 Conclusions

In line with Ribble Valley Borough Council's Statement of Community Involvement, the Localism Act 2011 and the National Planning Policy Framework, Barratt Homes has carefully consulted the local community over its plans for 520 new homes at Higgins Brook in Longridge, a new primary school and a replacement cricket pitch with a new pavilion. Through a public exhibition and an interactive website it has given local residents, councillors and stakeholders the opportunity to have their say on the proposals. The feedback received has been used by the development team to help shape the final plans for the site.

The engagement programme that was carried out included a letter that was issued to: residents who live adjacent to the proposed site; all Ribble Valley Borough councillors including the Conservative Group leadership team and the ward councillors for Derby and Thornley and Dilworth; Longridge Town Council; and key stakeholder groups such as local schools, businesses and community organisations. Included within the letter were details of the public consultation and exhibition as well as the designated website where residents and local stakeholders could view the plans and submit their feedback online. To help make the wider community aware of the proposals, three press releases were also issued to the Longridge News and Advertiser and posters were put up in areas of high footfall in the town. A community information line was also provided for local residents to speak with a member of the project team. As well as online and at the exhibition, local residents were also given the opportunity to provide their feedback by email or post.

Barratt Homes is grateful to all those who have provided feedback. All feedback received has been useful in understanding the concerns of Longridge residents. Overall, these included increased traffic and highways concerns, infrastructure impacts, the number of houses proposed and the loss of countryside and ecology. Whilst there was a significant number of people who were not supportive, over a quarter of all respondents (27%) believed that new homes were needed in Longridge and over a third (37%) said that affordable homes for first time buyers or the elderly were also needed in the town.

Barratt Homes remains committed to helping meet Ribble Valley Borough Council's meet its housing shortfall by delivering sustainable and attractive new homes at Higgins Brook. As such, the outline plans for Higgins Brook, will deliver up to 520 high-quality homes, ranging from two to five bedrooms, with 30% of the properties being affordable. The plans will also provide a new primary school to meet the increased demand for primary school places in the town, as well as a replacement cricket facility for Longridge Cricket Club. This will include enhanced facilities for the Club's members and supporters, such as a new pitch, improved pavilion, practice nets, stores and a car park. In addition, a new open space will be created for new residents and visitors to enjoy. Improvements to existing ecological features are also being proposed within the development to ensure the existing ecological benefit of the site is retained. It is further anticipated that the scheme will create knock-on-benefits for Longridge from increased spending by the new residents of the development. If the new homes are built, Ribble Valley Borough Council is also set to benefit from the government's new homes bonus as well as increased council tax revenues. These new monies could provide increased funds to spend on local services.

As a responsible house builder, Barratt Homes has carefully consulted local residents to ensure the proposals for Higgins Brook scheme meet the needs of the Longridge community and remains committed to engaging with the local community throughout the planning process.