

# Memo

**From:** COLIN HIRST

**To:** John Macholc

**Ref:** CH/CMS

**Ext:** 4503

**Date:** 13 APRIL 2016

**Re:** LAND AT BACK KING STREET, WHALLEY – ABBEY WORKS - Proposed Car Park

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Further to your e-mail of 12 April 2016 seeking clarification on the employment implications of the above proposal, I set out some background information below and comments which I trust will be of assistance.

The proposed car park is within an area of the town centre known as Abbey Works, which has a mix of small business operators. The Council has previously explored the redevelopment of this site undertaking initial investigations following the area being identified as having potential for the creation of a car park to support the town centre. This was an issue highlighted through the work of the Whalley Village Team, which is led by the Parish Council and includes representatives from the Whalley Chamber of Trade, Ribble Valley Borough Council and LCC and the work of the Council's Economic Development Working Group.

The wider Abbey Works site was considered for acquisition by the Council late in 2014 following an approach by the landowners' agent. The District Valuer was subsequently engaged to provide provisional valuation advice. Internally Tim Lynas, Adrian Dowd and Adrian Harper and his team provided input to the project as early concepts were being drawn together. No council scheme or planning proposal was ever prepared however.

In February 2015 following a meeting with the agent, John Atherton, work on the Council project was stopped. During that meeting in February, we were advised that the site was no longer being offered for sale but an alternative proposal to retain the site and create car park through private investment was to be progressed by the land owners. The opportunity for the Council to lease back and operate the car park was proposed.

John Atherton, in an email from me (dated 9 March 2015) was advised to contact the Development Management Team to seek guidance on his proposal ahead of any work being undertaken. A subsequent meeting was held with Giles Bilton, who is joint owner of the land, to discuss the car park and in particular, the mechanism by which the Council would lease and operate the car park. In my e-mail of 1 May to Mr Bilton arranging the meeting, I confirmed that the meeting would not provide pre-application advice and that this was dealt with by the Development Management Team. At the meeting with Giles and his surveyor to discuss the proposal, the advice to seek pre-application advice was reinforced again and I note on the application forms that the applicant has confirmed they have not sought pre-application advice, as advised.

I note the comments in the Design and Access Statement submitted by the applicant that makes reference to pre-application discussions with the local authority planning department, parking authority and executive which identified a need for the facility. As you will see, there have indeed been discussions regarding the need for a facility albeit subject to the requirements of addressing planning permission. Adrian Harper provided feedback from JLCC on the project and Adrian Dowd had also provided comments on heritage issues to be addressed, but I am not aware that any further pre application guidance has been sought.

Following receipt of the application Adrian Dowd sought some clarification on the application and was advised by email on 27 October that from a Regeneration viewpoint, the creation of additional central parking was supported. As you are aware, we have been working with LCC and the Village Team to improve the parking situation in Whalley for some time now.

The Core Strategy provides support for the proposal through the principles of Policy DMB1 and DMG3(5), with the requirement established in Key Statement EC1 and reflected in the two Development Management policies cited to demonstrate that the loss of any employment use will not give rise to any adverse impact upon the local economy. I would expect an application to address these factors in order to demonstrate that it meets the policy tests. Policy DMB1 sets out the key criteria that an application needs to satisfy in relation to sites with employment generating potential.

Clearly, the creation of town centre car parking is considered a positive effect on the Local economy. The proposed scheme would limit the loss of employment land to those units that would need to relocate as a result of demolition and creation of the new car park. There is some available space within the remaining area of Abbey Works and recent activity in the market leads me to conclude that there are opportunities available for relocation within the local area. Additional land has recently been approved for the creation of small scale employment uses in nearby locations and certainly within the borough. In my view the limited loss of employment land is mitigated by the positive benefits to the town centre which will serve to strengthen the village centre and local economy to which our Adopted policy attaches considerable weight. There are of course other policies in the plan, (which has to be read as a whole), that will need to be taken into account whilst assessing the details and judging the planning balance to determine the application.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information, or if you want to view the project file to see the background in detail.



Colin Hirst  
Head of Regeneration & Housing