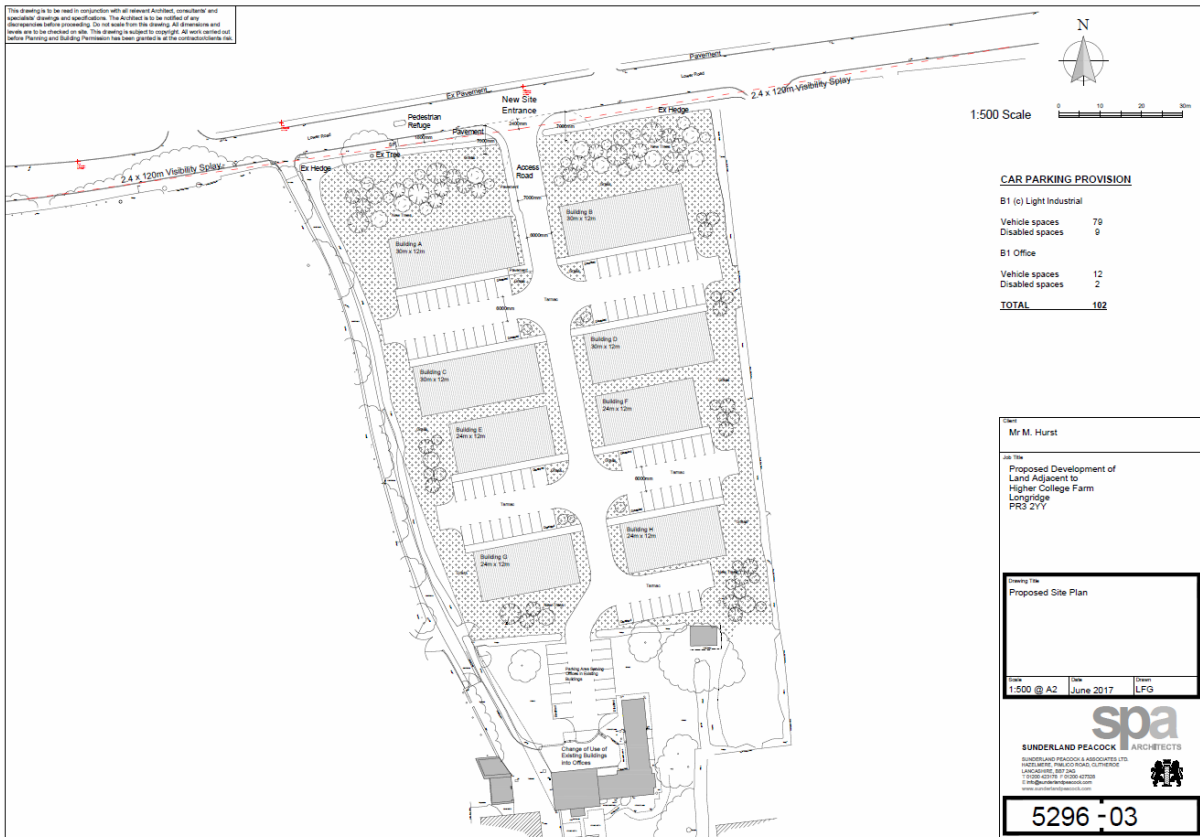


## Higher College Farm, Lower Road, Hothersall, Preston PR3 2YY



Outline planning application for employment floorspace use Class B1, Class B2 and Class B8 and associated vehicle and pedestrian access, car parking, landscaping and service infrastructure with all matters reserved except access and change of use of farmhouse from residential to Class B1.

Planning Statement

June 2017

JDTPLo059

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This outline planning application has been prepared by Judith Douglas Town Planning Ltd on behalf of the Mr M Hurst for the construction of light industrial units on land at Higher College Farm and the change of use of the farmhouse to office accommodation B1 use. A new vehicle and pedestrian access is proposed off Lower Road/ Blackburn Road. The illustrative layout with the application shows a new built floor area of 2592m<sup>2</sup> conversion of the farmhouse to office accommodation would provide an additional 476sq m.

1.2 The application should be read in conjunction with:

Location Plan 5296-01A

Access details and indicative site layout plan 5296-03

Ecological appraisal dated 20.6.17 June 2017

Aboricultural Constraints Appraisal

Flood Risk and Drainage Assessment

Bat Survey

Transport Statement

## 2.0 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

2.1 The site at Higher College Farm is located at the eastern edge of Longridge. The site lies some 1000 metres from Longridge town centre with its range of retail, commercial, public transport, social and educational facilities, and near to established, recent and developing areas of housing. A development by Taylor Wimpey for 195 dwellings is presently under construction to the north side of Blackburn Road opposite to my client's Higher College Farm site.

2.2 The site extends to approximately 1.545 hectares and include the former farm house of Higher College Farm. The site is bounded to the north by a hedgerow fronting Blackburn Road; to the west by a hedgerow lined track leading to the buildings at Higher College Farmhouse and a reclamation and landscaping business that occupies an area of land to the west of the track; to the south stands Higher College Farmhouse (a dwelling and associated outbuildings) and a range of commercial buildings used by Clegg's Chilled Food Service and Anderton's Ribble Butchers for food processing, packaging and distribution, along with external parking and servicing areas; to the east is a roadway leading to the food processing businesses. Higher College Farmhouse is presently accessed via the track leading from Lower Road running the length of the western side of the site.

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- 2.3 The site is flat and presently used for pasture together with the domestic dwelling and outbuildings at Higher College Farmhouse. There are no natural features within the site. A number of bus services run along Lower Road/Blackburn Road, with stops within 200 metres of the site. The services provide links to Longridge town centre, Ribchester, Whalley and Blackburn. There is a frequent bus service linking Longridge town centre to Preston city centre.
- 2.4 The surrounding area is varied in character, with the built-up area of Longridge extending to the west and north, a cluster of development to the east centred on Hillside School and The Corporation Arms, the Spade Mill reservoirs to the north east and open countryside to the south.

### **3.0 PLANNING SITE HISTORY**

- 3.1 There is no relevant planning history relating to the site land to be developed on the site except for that relating to the existing dwelling as follows

- 3/2008/0268 Higher College Farm rebuilding existing outbuildings to form an extension to the existing dwelling approved 19/05/2008.
- 3/2006/0195 Higher College Farm closure of existing access and provision of new access off existing access of Lower Road approved 21/04/2006

However, it should be noted that the adjoining site to the south of Higher College Farm has the following planning history:

- 3/2012/0399 – Erection of swimming pool for teaching purposes. Planning permission granted July 2012;
- 3/2006/0195 – Formation of new access road. Planning permission granted April 2006;
- 3/2003/1009 – Erection of new building for cheese making. Planning permission granted February 2004;
- 3/1997/0437 – Conversion of barn for the storage, re-packing and distribution of cheese, formation of car park and erection of garages. Planning permission granted October 1991; and

- 3.2 On the land to the east of the site there is current outline application for Outline planning application for employment floorspace (use classes B1, B2 and B8) and associated access, car parking, landscaping and services infrastructure with all matters reserved except for access reference 3/2017/0317.

## 4 PLANNING POLICY

### National Planning Policy Framework

4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) clearly states *'that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development'* (paragraph 6). Paragraph 14 states that a presumption in favour of sustainable development is at the heart of the NPPF. It goes on to say that *'for decision-taking this means:*

- *approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay; and*
- *where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, granting planning permission unless:*
  - *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; or*
  - *specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted'.*

4.2 The main body of the NPPF addresses the components of sustainable development. The aspects of those components most relevant to this submission are:

- *'building a strong, competitive economy' – emphasises that 'the Government is committed to securing economic growth in order to create jobs and prosperity' (paragraph 18), and ensuring 'the planning system does everything it can to support sustainable economic growth' (paragraph 19) and states that 'local planning authorities should plan proactively to meet the development needs of businesses' (paragraph 20);*
- *'promoting sustainable transport' – states that decisions should take account of a number of factors, including whether safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all people (paragraph 32);*
- *'protecting green belt land' – states that the Government attaches great importance to the protection of green belt land (paragraph 79);*
- *'meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change' – states that 'inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk' (paragraph 100) and 'when determining planning applications, local planning authorities should ensure flood risk is not increased elsewhere' (paragraph 103);*
- *'conserving and enhancing the natural environment' – among other things, the planning system is expected to protect and enhance valued landscapes and minimise impacts on biodiversity (paragraph 109); and*
- *'conserving and enhancing the historic environment' – applicants are expected to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, the level of detail provided being*

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proportionate to the potential impact (paragraph 128) and *'in determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets'* (paragraph 131).

- 4.3 In relation to decision-taking, the NPPF indicates that *'local planning authorities should approach decision-taking in a positive way to foster the delivery of sustainable development'* (paragraph 186) and *'in assessing and determining development proposals, should apply the presumption in favour of sustainable development'* (paragraph 197).

#### Ribble Valley Core Strategy Core Strategy

- 4.4 The Ribble Valley Core Strategy was adopted by the Council on 16 December 2014 following receipt of the Inspector's examination report which found the Plan to be sound, subject to a number of modifications being made.

The following Core Strategy policies (as modified) are relevant.

- 4.5 Key Statement DS1 (Development Strategy) – defines the principal settlements of the Borough as Clitheroe, Longridge and Whalley.
- 4.6 Key Statement DS2 (Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development) – sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development and reiterates the provisions of paragraph 14 of the NPPF.
- 4.7 Key Statement EC1 (Business and Employment Development) – states that *'employment development will be directed towards the main settlement of Clitheroe, Whalley and Longridge as the preferred locations to accommodate employment growth'* together with other specified sites. The aim is to allocate an additional 8 hectares of land for employment purposes over the plan period and *'new sites will be identified in accord with the development strategy'*. The supporting text to the Key Statement confirms that *'employment development will generally be directed to the main areas of population growth linking to the underlying strategy of aligning jobs with homes in key areas'*. The text continues with reference to achieving a *'sustainable balance between land uses'* with the *'potential to reduce the levels of out-commuting and increase self-containment'*.
- 4.8 Policy DMG2 (Strategic Considerations) – expects development to be in accordance with the Development Strategy and that development proposals in defined settlements should

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consolidate, expand or round-off development so that it is closely related to the main built up areas, ensuring this is appropriate to the scale of, and in keeping with, the existing settlement.

4.9 Policy DMB1 (Supporting Business Growth and the Local Economy) – states that *‘proposals that are intended to support business growth and the local economy will be supported in principle’*. The supporting text to the policy refers to the *‘the Council in accord with its vision and key statements wishes to create the right environment for business growth whilst ensuring development is sustainable’*.

4.10 Other policies and statements of the Core Strategy deal with more detailed considerations such as built and natural environment conservation, transport considerations, landscape and design.

The policies and key statements of most relevance include:

- Key Statement EN2 – Landscape;
- Key Statement EN3 – Sustainable Development and Climate Change;
- Key Statement EN4 – Biodiversity and Geodiversity;
- Key Statement EN5 – Heritage Assets;
- Key Statement DMI2 – Transport Considerations;
- Policy DMG1 – General Considerations;
- Policy DMG3 – Transport and Mobility;
- Policy DME1 – Protecting Trees and Woodlands;
- Policy DME2 – Landscape and Townscape Protection;
- Policy DME3 – Site and Species Protection and Conservation;
- Policy DME4 – Protecting Heritage Assets;
- Policy DME6 – Water Management; and
- Policy DMB1 – Supporting Business Growth and the Local Economy

4.11 No site allocations for employment development are made by the Core Strategy. However, Longridge is shown as one of the three principal settlements in the Borough.

#### Ribble Valley Emerging Policy – Housing and Economic Development DPD

4.12 The Council has recently completed the formal regulation 19 consultation stage in the preparation of the HEDPD for the borough. The next stage will be submission to the Secretary of State. The site has been included in the HEDPD as a potential employment land allocation site Policy EAL3: Land at Higher College Farm, Longridge (1.5ha).

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## 5 PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE

- 5.1 Pre-application advice was sought from the Council initially for the development of the land for B1 B2 and B8 development excluding the farmhouse. The response received dated 25<sup>th</sup> January 2017 pre-dates the more recent draft allocation of the site as policy EAL3. The advice from the planning policy section at that time was supportive as follows

*“The Core Strategy evidence base does indicate that employment sites are needed in Longridge and is broadly supportive of economic development. Key Statement EC1 states that the Borough needs an additional 8 hectares of employment purposes during the plan period and that a significant portion of that should be directed towards Longridge as a preferred location. Whilst brownfield land is given a priority status over greenfield sites such as this our evidence indicates that there is an absence of such sites coming forward in Longridge and also that existing sites such as Shay Lane Industrial Estate, are currently at capacity with additional sites restricted by Longridge’s location on the boundary with Preston City Council, who are directing their land supply in other locations”.*

- 5.2 This indicated that in principle the development is acceptable. Advice received was to consider the visual impact on the landscape, the impact on trees and hedgerows, and to avoid two storey development. Impact on the residential amenity of Higher College Farmhouse due to the proximity of the development was raised as Higher College Farmhouse was not then part of the development.

## 6 EVALUATION

- 6.1 The main planning issues relating to the proposal are considered to be:

- the principle of the development;
- highway safety;
- design and visual impact;
- neighbour amenity;
- built heritage;
- natural environment;
- drainage and flood risk; and
- other miscellaneous considerations.

### The Principle of the Development

- 6.2 As described above the NPPF emphasises the presumption in favour of sustainable development and that the Government is committed to securing economic growth in order to

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create jobs and prosperity and ensuring the planning system does everything it can to support sustainable economic growth.

- 6.3 In turn, the Ribble Valley Core Strategy states that proposals intended to support business growth and the local economy will be supported in principle. Also, that development in general and employment development, in particular, will be directed towards the main settlements including Longridge. The Core Strategy highlights the limited employment opportunities available in the Borough, which results in a high level of daily out-commuting to access employment opportunities, which is unsustainable. The Core Strategy points to a requirement to identify additional employment land. The Council's Employment Land Review identifies a specific requirement for additional employment land at Longridge. The site has been included as potential employment land allocation in the HEDPD.
- 6.4 A similar outline planning application on the land to the east of the site is currently under consideration by the council reference 3/2017/0317. Comments by the Head of Housing and Regeneration on this application states *"The concept of the provision of additional employment land at Longridge is supported as both a planning and economic development principle. The Council is seeking to address an objective of the provision of employment land and sites to serve Longridge are a particular concern to be delivered. The Core Strategy directs development towards the Longridge area but does not set a prescribed amount of employment land..... The principle of development in relation to this area as this stage consequently raises no fundamental issues certainly in relation to the previously identified site"*. This indicates that principle of economic development in this area of Longridge is supported by the Officers preparing the HEDPD.
- 6.5 The site is well located for the local population to access it, being within 2km of all the built-up areas of Longridge, and conveniently located for local bus services that serve Longridge's hinterland.
- 6.6 This proposal would support the underlying strategic approach of the Core Strategy to align jobs with homes in the main settlements, including Longridge. Longridge has attracted a considerable amount of new housing in recent years and more housing is planned. However, new employment sites have yet to be allocated, and whilst an outline planning application has been submitted on the neighbouring site this has not yet been approved nor has any new employment development been delivered. The site is in a highly sustainable location. An employment development at the site would contribute to achieving sustainable development,



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which is the golden thread running through national and local planning policy. Development of the site for employment purposes would consolidate development at the main settlement of Longridge. The site's development for employment purposes would also assist in making up the evident shortfall in employment land within Longridge and the wider Borough.

6.7 The development of the site for employment purposes would be readily achievable as the site has no inherent constraints on its development. The grant of outline planning permission would assist in meeting the identified residual employment requirement (which, in any event, should not be regarded as a 'maximum') for the Borough. It would provide for future flexibility, choice and additional opportunities for generating jobs in the local area without reliance on unsustainable out-commuting levels.

6.8 To conclude on the issue of principle, it is demonstrated that:

- the proposal is aligned with the Council's adopted development strategy;
- the site is eminently suitable for an employment development and has been identified as an employment site in the emerging HEDPD;
- its development would make a valuable contribution to the local and wider Borough economy;
- its development for employment purposes would contribute positively to a sustainable pattern of development; and
- its development would be entirely in accord with the expectations of the NPPF and the general Core Strategy policies DS1, DS2, EC1, DMB1 and DMG2.

6.9 The site lies outside of the defined settlement area of Longbridge. However, that settlement boundary dates back to the former Ribble Valley Local Plan, which was prepared in the 1990s. It was prepared within a very different overall planning policy context and can no longer be regarded as up-to-date. Indeed, the Council has acknowledged this by consulting on the settlement boundary and its call for employment sites as part of its work on the Housing and Economic Development DPD.

#### Highway Safety

6.10 As established above, the site is in a sustainable location and development of the site for employment purposes would assist in achieving an improved balance between the locations of homes and jobs. This 'improved balance' would create the potential for reducing total traffic movements (or, at least, reducing the growth of traffic movements) on the highway network, easing congestion and improving overall highway safety.

- 6.11 The site is within convenient walking and cycling distance of all homes in Longridge and close to bus stops, all of which would assist in minimising traffic movements and achieving sustainable development. See Transport Statement.
- 6.12 With the site's location on Lower Road/ Blackburn Road, the site is well connected to the primary road network. Turning to the site specifics, a new vehicular access is proposed at a mid-point on the site's Lower Road/Blackburn Road frontage as indicated on the submitted site plan. The frontage hedge to either side of this point is set back from the kerb line allowing good visibility along Lower Road/Blackburn Road in both directions. Sight lines of 2.4m by 120m are proposed with 7m radii and a 7m road entrance reducing to 6m. A footpath is to be created to the west of the access point with a pedestrian refuge indicated in Lower Road to assist crossing the road. This will also reduce current traffic speeds. The 30mph traffic speed limit sign entering Longridge is located on the frontage of the site between the new access and the existing access to Higher College Farm. It is preceded by raised red tarmac to encourage deceleration. There is a continuous pavement on the northern side of Lower Road/Blackburn Road in both directions. A pedestrian refuge crossing west of the application site was included in the approved development for housing at Tootall Green. This pedestrian crossing will allow pedestrians to access the site along footways from both Lower Lane and Dilworth Lane. The plans approved under planning permission 3/2015/0065 (for the residential development of the site on the northern side of Blackburn Road / Dilworth Lane) shows the 30mph speed limit restriction to be relocated from its present position at the western end of my client's site to a new position at the eastern end of my client's site with associated advance red bar road markings across the entrance to Clegg's and Anderton's Butchers. This will have the effect of bringing the whole of my client's site frontage within the 30mph area and slow traffic movements in the area. In short, there would be ample visibility for traffic speeds of 30mph at the proposed site entrance / exit to allow for safe vehicle movements into / out of the development site. As such, the proposal would accord with the relevant provisions of the NPPF and Core Strategy policies DMG1 and DMG3.

#### Design and Visual Impact

- 6.13 The site is visually contained by hedgerows to its north, east and west sides and it is envisaged that additional landscape planting would be provided as part of the development. Particularly along the site frontage. It is anticipated that the proposed units would be of single storey scale. This would reflect the general scale of built development in the wider area and allow for the development to be readily absorbed into the landscape without any undue visual intrusion. A carefully considered choice of facing materials would further assist in this regard. It should also be noted that the proposed development would adjoin existing development, including modern

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commercial style buildings, to the south and development presently under way to the north of Blackburn Road. The proposed development would be seen within this built-up context and without any undue visual intrusion.

6.14 The AONB lies some 1km to the north east of the site. Given the distance, the intervening Spade Mill reservoirs and the different character of the site from the higher land of the AONB, there is no reason to consider that the development of the site would have any harmful impact on the character or appearance of the AONB.

6.15 Having regard to the above, it is concluded that the proposal would be compliant with the relevant provisions of the NPPF and Core Strategy policies EN2, DME2 and DMG1.

#### Trees and hedges

6.16 The Arboricultural Constraints Appraisal has identified and assessed the trees and hedgerow on the site. The building and hard surfaces in the illustrative layout plan avoids the root protection areas of all of the identified trees and hedgerows with the exception of the access points. It is proposed to break through the hedge on the site frontage H1 to create the access into the site and through the hedge between the field and the farmhouse H4 to provide and access to the offices within the farmhouse. Both hedges are regarded as C2 low quality. The Ecological Appraisal paragraph 1.1.5 also confirms that the hedgerows are not consider important under the Hedgerow Regulations 1997. The proposal is compliant with DME1.

#### Neighbour Amenity

6.17 The ongoing residential development of land to the north of Blackburn Road / Dilworth Lane, by Taylor Wimpey, provides for a deep landscape buffer to its southern and eastern boundaries. This in combination with a considered layout and design of buildings at the proposed development site would ensure that the amenities of the future occupiers of the Taylor Wimpey development would be safeguarded.

6.18 As such, the proposal would be compliant with the relevant provisions of the NPPF and Core Strategy policies DMG1.

#### Built Heritage

6.19 The site is not subject to any local or national built heritage conservation designations, nor has the site any known archaeological value. Longridge's Conservation Areas relate to the historic centre of the town, some 700 metres to the east at the closest point, and other areas at greater

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distances. The proposed development would have no visual relationship to or harmful impacts upon the Conservation Areas. The nearest listed buildings are some 900 metres from the proposed development site. There would be no visual relationship between the two or other adverse impact upon the setting of these listed buildings.

- 6.20 Accordingly, the proposal would be compliant with the relevant provisions of the NPPF and Core Strategy policies EN5 and DME4.

#### Natural Environment

- 6.21 An Ecological Appraisal has been submitted with the application. The report concludes that there was no conclusive evidence of any specifically protected species regularly occurring on the site or the surrounding areas which would be negatively affected by the development following the mitigation proposed. The vegetation to be cleared has a low ecological significance the local area.

- 6.22 A bat survey has been carried out and a report submitted with the application this concludes that the proposed change of use of the farm house will not impact on the bat population currently roosting in the roof. The garage and store room provide sub optimal roost potential and are not used by the local bat population. Development on the field will not impact adversely on the bat population but it is essential that the tree/hedge boundaries to the west and east are maintained and ensure the foraging routes are not broken. Thus, the proposal would be compliant with the relevant provisions of the NPPF and Core Strategy policies EN4, DMG1 and DME3.

#### Drainage and Flood Risk

- 6.23 The entire site lies within flood risk area 1, ie at the lowest risk of flooding. A flood risk and drainage assessment is submitted with the application which concludes the primary source of flood risk to the site is from an increase in surface water run-off. It is considered that infiltration at the site is unlikely to be viable due to the underlying boulder clay at the site therefore following the hierarchy of surface water disposal, it is recommended that surface water is discharged into the unnamed watercourse/ land drain to the west of the site. Surface water attenuation requirements have been determined and attenuation storage requirements have been suggested. The proposed development would be able to manage surface water generated as a result of the development and would not increase flood risk at the development or downstream of the site. On that basis, the proposal would be compliant with the relevant provisions of the NPPF and Core Strategy policies EN3 and DME6.

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## **7 CONCLUSION**

- 7.1 There is a clear and established policy and evidence based need for further employment land development within Ribble Valley generally and at Longridge, in particular, which this proposal would help to satisfy. The proposal would align with the Council's development strategy as set out in the recently adopted Core Strategy. The proposed development site is in a sustainable location, with ready access by future employees and staff on foot, cycle and public transport, and is well related to the existing settlement. The site's development for employment purposes would assist in providing an improved balanced between jobs and homes and has the potential to assist in reducing out-commuting. For these reasons, the site is suitable for employment development, entirely in accord with the expectations of the NPPF and the general Core Strategy policies DS1, DS2, and DMG2.
- 7.2 With regards to the more specific national and local policies for development, a safe access could be provided to the local highway network, the development could be absorbed into the local landscape without any undue visual intrusion, the amenities of neighbours would be safeguarded, there would be no harm to the natural or built heritage, and there would be no flood risk to the development or increased flood risk elsewhere.
- 7.3 To sum, the site's development is aligned with the Council's development strategy. The site is available, and an employment development would be achievable and deliverable thereby providing local job opportunities to help balance the growth in housing numbers in the area and assist in reducing unsustainable patterns of out-commuting. For these reasons and those set out in more detail above, and having regard to the nature of the proposal and relevant planning policy, it is submitted that the proposal would be appropriate and acceptable in planning terms. Indeed, there are clear benefits associated with the proposed development and no adverse impacts to outweigh those benefits have been identified. It is, therefore, respectfully submitted that outline planning permission should be granted for an employment development at this site.