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## PLANNING STATEMENT

**IN RESPECT OF A FULL PLANNING  
APPLICATION FOR THE ERECTION OF  
POLYTUNNELS IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE  
FORMATION OF A MARKET GARDEN**

**AT**

**LAND ON THE WEST SIDE OF SAWLEY ROAD,  
CHATBURN BB7 4LD.**

**Prepared by: Colin Sharpe**

**Our Clients: Mr Peter Bristol & Mr Christopher Bristol**

**Our Ref: Bri/910/2635/CS**

**Date: May 2019**



Chartered Surveyors ■■■ Planning & Development ■■■ Land Agents  
Valuers ■■■ Property Agency ■■■ Property Management



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## **1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 1.1 Gary Hoerty Associates has been instructed by Mr. Peter Bristol and Mr Christopher Bristol to submit a full planning application on their behalf for the erection of polytunnels in association with the formation of a market garden on land on the west side of Sawley Road, Chatburn.
- 1.2 The applicants purchased the land in question in 2016. They are both landscapers and have run a landscaping and maintenance businesses for the last 15 years. Since their purchase of the land, they have carried out some improvements including the replacement of boundary fences and the planting of native boundary hedgerows in order to provide screening and to shelter the land from the elements. They have also planted approximately 1000 Christmas trees in the south eastern corner of the land.
- 1.3 Previously, this land has only ever been used for agriculture, it does not contain any buildings, and it does not appear to have been the subject of any planning applications for either change of use or the erection of buildings or other structures.
- 1.4 In this Planning Statement we set out the following:
  - A description of the application site and its surroundings
  - A more detailed description of the proposal
  - A consideration of the proposal against national planning guidance and local planning policies
  - Summary and Conclusions.
- 1.5 We request that the Council pays full regard to the contents of this Statement in the consideration of the application.

## **2. THE APPLICATION SITE AND SURROUNDINGS**

- 2.1 The application relates to a single field, with an area of approximately 5 acres, on the west side of Sawley Road, Chatburn. It is approximately 250m to the north of the village of Chatburn and approximately 450m to the south of the junction of Sawley Road with the A59. The field slopes downwards away from Sawley Road in an east to west direction. There is a mature hedge on the field boundary to Sawley Road within which, in a roughly central position, there is a field gate. On the other boundaries of the site boundary fences have recently been replaced by the applicant and native hedgerows have been planted.
- 2.2 The site is adjoined to the west and south by other agricultural fields. To the north there is an access track to a large residential property that is located approximately 150m to the north west of the application site. To the east of the

site (on the opposite side of Sawley Road) there is an agricultural field and a large area of allotments. Other than this dwelling and the allotments (with their associated buildings and structures) although it is relatively close to the village of Chatburn, the immediate vicinity of the application site is largely devoid of built development.

- 2.3 In planning policy terms, in the Council's Core Strategy, the site is within the open countryside but not within the AONB and is not subject to any special designations (such as SSSI's).

### **3. THE PROPOSAL**

- 3.1 As previously stated, the applicants have operated a landscaping and maintenance business, based locally, for the last 15 years. The proposed development, although on a new site, represents an expansion and diversification of their existing business. As shown on the submitted plans, the proposal relates to the erection of six polytunnels and the formation of an off-road parking area. Although comprising six polytunnels, internally there will be no dividing walls, just a single space that will be used for the growing and sales of fruit, vegetables and plants.
- 3.2 Each of the polytunnels has approximate dimensions of 24m x 8m. Their sides are 2.3m high above which is a curved roof resulting in a maximum height of 4.3m. They are of diffused polythene construction with the sides being green in colour. They will be sited on lower ground towards the north western corner of the site in an L-shaped layout as shown on the submitted plans. As also shown on the plans, the ground will be levelled in order to provide a flat floor for the polytunnels whilst also reducing their impact on the local landscape.
- 3.3. Rainwater from the roofs of the polytunnels will be harvested and used for watering the fruit, vegetables and plants that are to be grown on the site.
- 3.4 We consider it important to stress that the proposal is for an agricultural business and that only fruit, vegetables and plants grown at the site will be sold from the site. It will not be a garden centre where tools and other garden related goods are sold. The crops that will be grown at the site are such that the applicant will qualify for the Agricultural Flat Rate Scheme (VAT Notice 700/46).
- 3.5 The parking area is to be sited on the higher ground close to the front boundary of the site. In order to reduce its visual impact, the parking area will have a loose surface and parking will be on an informal basis with no marking out of the individual spaces. Initially, it will be large enough to accommodate 30 cars, which we consider to be sufficient to cater for the demands of the proposed, relatively small scale, market garden business. However, should it be necessary in future to increase the size of the parking area, our clients confirm that there is land available for this purpose and, in discussion with the Council's Planning Officers (and LCC Highway Officers if necessary) the

parking area will be increased in size in order to avoid any parking of customers' vehicles on the public highway.

- 3.6 Access to the car park will be through the existing field gate. There is a 2.4m wide pavement across the frontage of the site. The field gate is set 2.6m into the field away from the inside edge of the pavement, such that the gate is set back 5.0m from the edge of the carriageway of Sawley Road. The existing boundary hedge is splayed from each side of the gate back to the pavement providing visibility splays of 2.4m by in excess of 200m in both directions.
- 3.7 The south eastern corner of the site has already been planted with Christmas trees. The south western corner of the site will also be used in the future for the outdoor growing of fruit, vegetables and plants.

#### **4. PLANNING POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**

##### **4.1 General**

- 4.1 Local Planning Authorities are required to determine planning applications in accordance with the Statutory Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. If it is to be approved, any development must therefore satisfy, as far as possible, guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework 2019 (NPPF) and the relevant policies of the Council's Core Strategy 2008-2028 A Local Plan for Ribble Valley (Adopted December 2014)
- 4.2 We set out below extracts from the relevant documents to facilitate the assessment of the application proposal against the principal appropriate policies and guidance.

##### **National Planning Policy Framework February 2019 (NPPF)**

- 4.3 The National Planning Policy Framework 2019 is now the main national planning policy guidance influencing planning decision making in England. It sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied and provides a framework within which locally-prepared plans for housing and other development can be produced.
- 4.4 Paragraphs 11 – 14 of the NPPF highlight the presumption in favour of sustainable development. The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making and therefore proposed development that accords with an up to date development plan should be approved, unless other material considerations indicate that the plan should not be followed.

- 4.5 Importantly, paragraph 11 of the NPPF states that plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For plan-making this means that plans should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area and be sufficiently flexible to adapt to rapid change. For decision taking this means approving development proposals that accord with an up to date development plan without delay.
- 4.6 Paragraph 11 also clearly spells out the Governments presumption in favour of allowing development that accords with an up to date development plan unless any adverse impacts of doing so would demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole.

**Council's Core Strategy 2008/2028 – A Local Plan for Ribble Valley Adoption Version**

- 4.7 There are a number of Key Statements and Policies within the Adopted Core Strategy that are relevant to the proposal and which we will therefore comment upon below.

**Key Statement DS2: Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development.**

- 4.8 Key Statement DS2 identifies that the Council when considering development proposals should take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in NPPF; and that it will always work proactively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved whenever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area. The policy also states that where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision, the Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise, taking into account whether any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the Policies in NPPF taken as a whole; or specific policies in that framework indicate that development should be restricted.
- 4.9 There are clearly Key Statements and Policies within the Core Strategy that are relevant to the application, although not all of them are a “precise fit” for this particular proposal. We therefore comment below on those Key Statements and Policies that we consider to be relevant. Overall, we conclude that the proposal is fully compliant with the adopted core strategy which, by virtue of its adoption, must be compliant with NPPF. Therefore, in our opinion, the application should be

approved. If, however, there are any aspects of the proposal that would, in the Council's opinion, prevent its approval, no doubt you will work proactively with us to find solutions, in line with the commitment contained within DS2.

#### **Key Statement EN2: Landscape**

- 4.10 The AONB in Ribble Valley is split into two sections, the Forest of Bowland and the Forest of Pendle. The application site is not within the AONB but is located between the two sections. Key Statement EN2 states, firstly, that the landscape and character of the AONB will be protected, conserved and enhanced; and that any development will need to contribute to the conservation of the natural beauty of the area. Secondly, and of relevance to this application, it states that the landscape and character of those areas that contribute to the setting and character of the AONB will be protected and conserved and wherever possible enhanced. Finally, the Key Statement also identifies that as a principle the Council expects development to be in keeping with the character of the landscape, reflecting local distinctiveness, vernacular style, scale, style, features and building materials.
- 4.11 As the site is not within the AONB, EN2 does not specifically require the proposal to enhance the landscape and character of the locality. The proposal, however, is agricultural in nature and involves the growing of trees outside with approximately 1000 Christmas trees having already been planted. The only 'buildings' within the proposal are 6no. polytunnels that will be used for growing the fruit, vegetables and plants. We consider polytunnels to be a type of development that is common and acceptable in the countryside areas, not only in Ribble Valley, but also elsewhere in the Country, and that they do not therefore appear as particularly discordant features in the landscape. Having said that, in this application the polytunnels will be positioned on the lower part of the sloping site. Additionally, giving them a level floor will be achieved by cutting into the land, rather than building it up. The excavated soil will also be retained on-site and used in the landscaped areas. Overall, therefore, we consider that the proposed development will not have a harmful impact upon the appearance and character of the immediate locality or upon the setting of the two areas of AONB to the north and south of the site. As such, we consider the proposal to comply with the requirements of Key Statement EN2.

#### **Key Statement EC1: Business and Employment Development**

- 4.12 Key Statement EC1 states that developments that contribute to farm diversification, strengthening of the wider rural and village economies or that promote town centre vitality and viability will be supported in principle. Although not a farm diversification, the proposal relates to an agricultural-type use and represents a diversification and expansion of the applicants' existing business. The proposal is for a market garden that is solely involved in the growing and selling of fruit, vegetables and plants. It is not to be a garden centre where tools and other garden-related goods would be sold. Customers coming to the market

garden to buy produce would also be likely to use the shops and public houses etc in Chatburn and other local villages. As such we consider that the proposal would strengthen the wider rural and village economies in accordance with the intentions of Key Statement EC1.

### **Key Statement EC3: Visitor Economy**

- 4.13 This Key Statement relates specifically to the visitor economy stating that proposals that contribute to and strengthen the visitor economy of Ribble Valley will be encouraged; and that significant new attractions will be supported in circumstances where they will deliver overall improvements to the environment and benefits to the local communities and employment opportunities.
- 4.14 We consider that the proposed development will attract both tourists and local residents thereby contributing and strengthening the visitor economy of Ribble Valley both in itself and through increased custom to other local businesses and facilities as stated in respect of Key Statement EC1.

### **Policy DMG1: General considerations**

- 4.15 This is a general development management policy which states that, in determining planning applications, all development must satisfy a total of 20 criteria relating to the matters of design, access, amenity, environment and infrastructure. We consider only the following criteria to be of particular relevance to the consideration of this application:
- 1) The development must be sympathetic to existing and proposed land uses in terms of its size, intensity and nature as well as scale, massing, style, features and building materials.
  - 2) The development must consider the density, layout and relationship between buildings, which is of major importance. Particular emphasis will be placed on visual appearance and the relationship to surroundings, including impact on landscape character, as well as the effects of development on existing amenities.
  - 3) The development must consider the potential traffic and car parking implications and must ensure that safe access is suitable to accommodate the scale and type of traffic likely to be generated.
  - 4) The development must not adversely affect the amenities of the surrounding area.
  - 5) The environmental implications of the proposal should be considered.



4.16 We will now respond to each of the above numbered points in turn.

- 1) As stated previously, the locality of the application site is rural in nature with the only substantial built development being the large dwelling to the north west of the site and the large allotment development, with the usual array of sheds, greenhouses, polytunnels and other structures, on the opposite side of Sawley Road. In the application proposal, the majority of the application site will remain as open land. The only structures, the polytunnels, are, in our opinion, a type of structure that is appropriate to this rural locality. They are also to be sited on the lowest part of the site (that will be lowered further) where they will have least visual impact. This is in contrast with the allotment development where the various buildings and structures are spread over the whole of the site. As such we consider that the application proposal will have considerably less of an impact upon the appearance of the locality than the existing allotments. To further illustrate this point, at Appendix 1 of this Statement is a Google Earth image of the allotments (covering an area of approximately 10,375 sq.m.) shown in comparison to the area of 1,160 sq.m. that will be covered by the polytunnels in the application proposal. Overall, we consider the proposed use, size, intensity and materials to all be sympathetic to the existing land uses in compliance with this particular requirement of Policy DMG1.
- 2) The proposed development does not involve any built structures, only the six polytunnels. These are appropriately sited next to each other whilst still allowing “circulation space” for customers. With regards to the relationship with existing adjoining buildings, the only relevant property is the large dwelling to the north west of the site. However, due to the separation distance of approximately 150m we do not consider that the proposal will have any detrimental effects upon the amenities of that dwelling. For reasons previously stated with respect to land levels etc we consider that the relationship of the proposal to its surroundings, and its impact upon landscape character, is appropriate and acceptable.
- 3) As we have previously stated, vehicular access into the site will be via the existing field gate that benefits from visibility splays in both directions as detailed in paragraph 3.5 above. We consider the access to be safe and adequate for the level of traffic expected to be generated by the proposed business; and do not consider that there would be any harm to traffic conditions on the wider local highway network. We consider the number and location of proposed parking spaces and the associated manoeuvring areas to be entirely appropriate for the nature and scale of the proposed business.
- 4) For reasons already stated, we do not consider that the proposal would have any detrimental effects upon the amenities of the occupiers of the large dwelling to the north west of the site.

5) With regards to environmental considerations, the site is not subject to any specific designation/protection (such as SSSI's) and does not contain any existing buildings that might have provided habitat for protected species. As the development will leave the majority of the site unaffected and does not involve any built development (other than the insubstantial polytunnels) we do not consider that it will have any detrimental impacts upon the natural environment.

4.17 Overall, for the reasons given in this Statement, we consider that we have demonstrated that all the requirements of Policy DMG1 are satisfied.

#### **Policy DMG 2: Strategic considerations**

4.18 Policy DMG2 requires development to be in accordance with the Core Strategy Development Strategy and to support spatial vision and identifies certain forms of development that are acceptable outside of the settlement areas, four of which are as follows:

1. The development should be essential to the local economy or social well-being of the area.
2. The development is needed for the purposes of forestry or agriculture.
4. The development is for small scale tourism or recreational developments appropriate to a rural area.
5. Development is for small scale uses appropriate to a rural area where a local need or benefit can be demonstrated.

4.19 The proposed development is to facilitate the continued operation and diversification of the applicants' existing local business. The proposal will therefore benefit the local economy by securing the existing employment and creating new job opportunities in the form of at least 2 full time posts, 2 part time posts and 2 seasonal posts.

4.20 The proposal is for a market garden and relates to the growing and sales of fruit, vegetables and plants (and none of the other goods that would be sold at a garden centre – as opposed to a market garden). As such, we contend that the proposal is agricultural in nature.

4.21 We consider the proposal to be small-scale and, as it will be an attraction for tourists as well as local residents, it satisfies criteria 4 and 5 of Policy DMG2

4.22 Policy DMG2 also states that *'within the Open Countryside development will be required to be in keeping with the character of the landscape and acknowledge the special qualities of the area by virtue of its size, design, use of materials, landscaping and siting.'* For reasons given elsewhere within this Statement, we consider that the proposal satisfies this particular requirement of the Policy.

4.23 Overall, we consider that the proposal satisfies the intentions of Policy DMG2.

### **Policy DME 2: Landscape and Townscape**

4.24 This policy identifies that development proposals will be refused which significantly harm important landscape features and sets out a list of relevant landscape features of which only hedgerows and individual trees are relevant to this application. There is a mature hedgerow on the front boundary of the site to Sawley Road. This will be retained to provide screening for the proposed development. As shown on the submitted plans additional landscape planting will be provided just inside the hedge along approximately half of the frontage. There are hedges on the other boundaries of the site that will also be retained.

4.25 There are a number of trees that are either on or close to the boundaries of the site, including a group of trees at the north east corner of the site. As can be seen on the submitted plans, the proposed polytunnels have been sited so that they are outside the root protection areas of these trees.

4.26 Overall, we therefore consider that the proposal fully satisfies the requirements of Policy DME2.

### **Policy DMB 1: Supporting Business Growth and the Local Economy**

4.27 Policy DMB1 indicates that the Council will support proposals that are intended to support business growth in the local economy provided such proposals are in conformity with other relevant policies of the local plan. The policy states that:

*"The expansion of existing firms on land outside settlements will be allowed provided that it is essential to maintain the existing source of employment and can be assimilated within the local landscape. There may be occasions where due to the scale of the proposal relocation to an alternative site is preferable.*

4.28 Although it is on a new site, this proposal does relate to an expansion and diversification of the applicant's existing landscaping and maintenance business. The business currently comprises the applicants and two apprentices all of whom will continue to work in the business following the implementation of the proposal. Additionally, however, it is anticipated that the proposal will generate at least 6 additional jobs as described above. The two existing employees are

young people who have been to college and who are continuing to learn about the business. It is part of the applicants' intentions to continue the recruitment of young persons as apprentices who will be taught about the business as opposed to just being workers. As such, the proposal will increase the existing source of employment in general terms but also including the provision of job opportunities for young people. As we also consider that the proposal will be appropriately assimilated within the local landscape, we consider the proposal to comply with the general intentions of Policy DMB1. We also consider it appropriate to comment that the proposal is fully compliant with the intentions of NPPF to support a prosperous rural economy

### **Policy DMB 3: Recreation and Tourism Development**

- 4.29 We consider this policy to be relevant although it might be considered that it is not an "exact fit" for this particular application. Although agriculturally based, the proposal involves a retail element that is obviously going to be used by local residents. However, the precise rural nature of the retail part of the business, and its rural location, is such that, in our opinion, it will also be an attraction for visitors to the area. We consider that, in its rural location, the role of the business as a tourist/visitor attraction will be increased. It will be an additional attraction for people visiting the area to enjoy its natural beauty and other existing tourist attractions. For these reasons we do consider it appropriate to consider the proposal against the requirements of Policy DMB3.
- 4.30 The Policy states that planning permission will be granted for development proposals that extend the range of tourism and visitor facilities in the Borough subject to a number of criteria being met. As far as the criteria are concerned the proposed development does not conflict with other policies of the plan. The proposal does not undermine the character, quality or visual amenities of the plan area by virtue of its scale, siting, materials or design. The proposal is well related to the highway network and would not create any adverse traffic problems. Overall, the proposed development will therefore support the development of tourism in the Ribble Valley in compliance with Policy DMB3.

## **5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

- 5.1 The proposed development seeks to secure the continued operation, expansion and diversification of an existing business that will serve both local residents and tourists/visitors to the area to the benefit of the rural local economy. It will provide jobs for local people including employment opportunities for young people. It is an agriculturally based business that is appropriate to its proposed location and it will be assimilated into the local landscape. The access into the site has good visibility splays such that the proposal will have no detrimental effects on highway safety, and the level of traffic generated by the proposal will not have any harmful impact on the wider local highway network.

- 5.2 The NPPF and the Council's adopted Core Strategy are both supportive of rural tourism and strengthening the visitor economy in the Borough. We believe that this proposed development will assist the Council in achieving that objective.
- 5.3 Within this Planning Statement we consider that we have provided a reasoned justification explaining how the proposed development conforms to the adopted Core Strategy and the NPPF. In order to satisfy the statement at paragraph 11 of NPPF, and Key Statement DS2, we therefore consider that permission should be granted without delay subject to any reasonable and necessary conditions.

Signed..........Date..........  
Colin Sharpe DipTP MRTPI  
For and on behalf of Gary Hoerty Associates

## **APPENDIX 1**

**Image Showing Comparison of the Area of the Existing Allotments with the Area of the Polytunnels Proposed in the Application.**



River Ribble

Sawley Rd

A59

Sawley Rd

Sawley Rd

Google