

Conversion of farm buildings to 8 dwellings
with associated curtilages, landscaping and
car parking

Brockhall Farm, Old Langho

Planning Statement

Mr C Willan

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared on behalf of Mr C Willan for the conversion of a group of existing agricultural buildings to create eight dwellings at Brockhall Farm, Brockhall Village, Old Langho.
- 1.2 The Statement describes the application site, its surroundings and the proposed development, assessing its merits against the up-to-date policies of the development plan, the National Planning Policy Framework and all other relevant material considerations. The application submission is supported by a full drawing package and also accompanied by the following reports:
- Design and Access Statement
 - Drainage Strategy
 - Structural Survey
 - Ecological Assessment
 - Archaeological Assessment and Historic Building Survey
 - Transport Assessment
 - Viability Statement
 - Tree Survey and Arboricultural Impact Assessment
- 1.3 The Statement concludes that the proposed development is wholly compliant with the objectives of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework, representing the sustainable re-use of existing buildings in the open countryside.

2 Site, surroundings and pre-application advice

- 2.1 The application site comprises an existing cluster of farm buildings located some 60m to the north of the Brockhall Village settlement boundary. The site is within the open countryside as defined in the Council's Housing and Economic Development DPD draft Proposals Map and includes a number of existing structures associated with the agricultural enterprise which has gradually reduced in recent years. It is understood that the site once operated as part of the Brockhall Hospital which originally occupied the wider site, prior to wholesale redevelopment.



Figure 1 – Site Location

- 2.2 The village now primarily consists of residential properties and the training complex for Blackburn Rovers, alongside some small ancillary uses. The application site has its own separate access from Old Langho Road, to the east of the main driveway, and is partially surfaced along its length.
- 2.3 The cluster of buildings to be converted as part of these proposals are arranged in a courtyard formation to the rear of Brockhall Farm House and Brockhall Bungalow. They are finished in red brick and contain areas of architectural detail in the more prominent elevations. A number of peripheral and dilapidated structures around the main block will be demolished to facilitate development and create an overall improvement in the appearance of the site when seen from the network of public footpaths adjacent.

2.4 Pre-application advice was sought from Ribble Valley Borough Council in May 2019 and following the withdrawal of the application 3/2020/0180, we entered into further pre-application discussions, receiving a response in December 2020. The response confirmed that the principle of development was acceptable and broadly compliant with the adopted Core Strategy, subject to final designs and compliance with certain policy requirements. These include:

- Loss of a potential rural employment site
- The suitability of the conversion works
- An assessment of impact on any elements of historic interest which the building may possess
- Compliance with all other relevant material considerations

These matters will be fully addressed in this Statement and through the submission of a supporting package of technical information, which will allow the Council and the statutory consultees to consider these issues in detail.

3 The proposal

3.1 The application is made in full and seeks consent for the following:

- The conversion of existing agricultural buildings to create 8 dwellings with associated access, parking and landscaping and demolition of ancillary outbuildings.

3.2 The proposed units are to be delivered within the fabric of the existing red brick barns which are now almost entirely redundant for agricultural purposes due to their limited suitability for modern farming.

3.3 The scheme has been informed by the style and vernacular of the original buildings, which due to their features and general form naturally lend themselves to conversion without the need to undertake significant or insensitive alterations which would dilute the 'model farm' quality of the structures. The buildings are not typical of the traditional stone field barns often found in the Ribble Valley, having been built in red brick in the early 1900's. They were understood to have been used in conjunction with the original hospital site as part of treatment and therapy for residential patients.

3.4 Following the closure of services at the hospital and the redevelopment of the village, the site has been farmed by the applicant. Due to a number of circumstances the level of agricultural activity has reduced, as has the amount of land used in association with Brockhall Farm. The site is no longer considered suitable for modern farming practices and therefore an alternative use for sustainable residential development is sought.

3.5 The building will be divided to make the most effective use of the site and creates a range of dwelling types and sizes. The schedule of accommodation is as follows:

- Unit 1 – 4 bed property; single storey
- Unit 2 – 3 bed property; two storeys
- Unit 3 – 3 bed property; two storeys
- Unit 4 – 4 bed property; two storeys
- Unit 5 – 3 bed property; single storey
- Unit 6 – 5 bed property; two storeys
- Unit 7 – 5 bed property; two storeys
- Unit 8 – 6 bed property; two storeys

3.6 The removal of additional buildings to the perimeter of the site, will result in a visual enhancement as will the introduction of landscaping to screen the newly created curtilages.

- 3.7 The existing site access from Old Langho Road will be utilised and where appropriate, passing places will be provided along the length of the track to enable two-way traffic flows. On-site parking will be provided for each unit and those outbuildings fit for re-use will be converted to create some garages, alongside new build structures.
- 3.8 Individual bin stores are incorporated within the domestic curtilage of each property, and a bin collection area has been included for collection day.

4 Planning policy and guidance

- 4.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 refers to the development plan as a whole and requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this case the development plan comprises the Ribble Valley Core Strategy (adopted December 2014). Whilst recently adopted, the Housing and Economic Development DPD does not have a direct bearing on the outcome of an application of this nature.

Relevant Core Strategy policies

- 4.2 The following policies are relevant to the determination of this application:

- Key Statement EN2: This policy seeks to ensure that new development is in keeping with the character of the landscape, reflecting local distinctiveness, vernacular style, scale, features and materials.
- Policy DMG1: Covers general matters of design, access, amenity and environmental issues.
- Policy DMG2: Supports the appropriate re-use of existing buildings in the open countryside.
- Policy DME1: Seeks to protect existing trees and woodland.
- Policy DME3: Seeks to ensure that protected species are not harmed as a result of new development.
- Policy DME4: Seeks to protect heritage assets and their significance.
- Policy DME6: Seeks to ensure that new development does not create flood risk issues and provides suitable surface/foul drainage systems.
- Policy DMH3: Supports the conversion of buildings to dwellings in the open countryside.
- Policy DMH4: Provides a number of criteria which barn conversions are expected to satisfy.

National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.3 The Framework promotes sustainable new development and it is considered that the re-use of this soon to be redundant farm complex helps to achieve those aims. Whilst the site is not isolated, paragraph 79 supports the re-use of existing/redundant buildings where the setting can be enhanced as a result, which would be the case at Brockhall Farm.
- 4.4 The site is considered to be a non-designated heritage asset owing to its relatively unique character and style. Paragraph 197 of the Framework states the applications which affect non-designated assets (either directly or indirectly) require a balanced judgement and regard should be had to the scale of any harm/loss and the significance of the asset. These matters will be discussed in more detail as part of this Statement.

5 Planning appraisal

- 5.1 The principle of converting barns to residential properties in the open countryside is supported by Core Strategy policies DMG2 and DMH4. The latter details a number of qualifying criteria. For clarity each is addressed below and considered against the scheme as proposed.

Isolation

- 5.2 The policy seeks to avoid the development of isolated barns, requiring the buildings to be within a settlement or forming part of an existing group in the landscape. The site is located immediately adjacent to the Brockhall settlement (see Proposals Map excerpt below) and is part of a long established cluster. As such there is no conflict with this requirement.

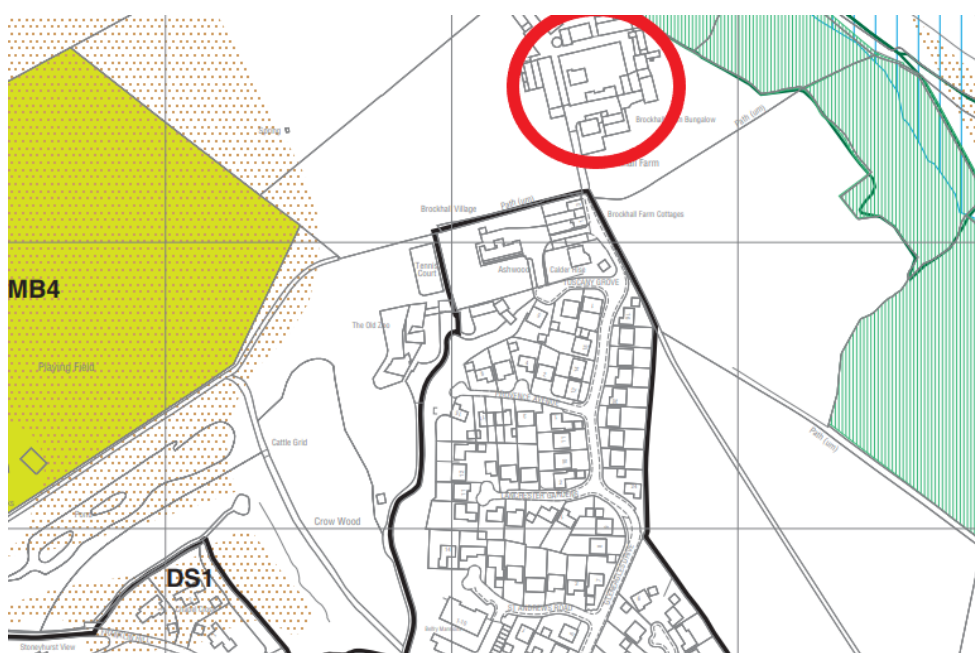


Figure 2 – RVBC Proposals Map

Infrastructure

- 5.3 Services already exist in the immediate area and a new drainage system is to be provided in accordance with the strategy submitted with this application. Therefore, no significant expenditure is expected to be required from public bodies to facilitate development.

Landscape/Nature Conservation

- 5.4 The development is not considered to generate any adverse landscape concerns and would ultimately lead to an enhancement of the immediate area. The main conversion works will take

place within the envelope of the primary building, whilst larger, dilapidated outbuildings will be removed and replaced by a small number of modest, ancillary outbuildings to serve the development. In terms of nature conservation, the supporting biodiversity appraisal fully details the ecological value of the site and provides a mitigation strategy which will result in improved habitat and increased landscaping.

Impact on the rural economy

- 5.5 Policy DMB1 seeks to protect against the loss of land /buildings with employment generating potential, to ensure that sustainable business growth is achieved. The unit has been farmed since 1974 by the applicant, though activity has reduced in recent years and the buildings have become less suitable for modern agricultural methods. Significant investment in new buildings and infrastructure would be required to support a stock/herd size which would be viable.
- 5.6 Owing to its semi-rural location, position at the end of a long access track and the likely expenditure required to facilitate alternative commercial uses, it is not considered that the site represents an attractive or viable option for alternative business uses. Accordingly, its loss is would not be of significant detriment to the rural economy, nor would it impact on the Council's strategic approach to the delivery of sustainable employment land across the Borough.

Conservation of the natural beauty of the area

- 5.7 With the exception of the addition of some modest ancillary new outbuildings, the proposals will remove a number of dilapidated outbuildings and convert the host barn in a manner sensitive to its character and appearance. It is not considered that the proposals will undermine the character of the open countryside and will result in some demonstrable benefits in terms of the overall appearance of the site.

Structural stability

- 5.8 The application is supported by a structural survey, prepared by Michael Holden Chartered Surveyors, which confirms that the barns are fit for conversion without the need for major structural works or alteration.

Suitability for conversion without the need to significantly alter/extend

- 5.9 The site of the main barn is such that it can comfortably accommodate the proposed dwellings without any need to extend the building.

Suitability for retention due to intrinsic interest/contribution to setting

- 5.10 The main barn has some historic interest by way of its use, having originally been built in association with the hospital site which opened in 1904 as a residential institution. The farm complex is understood to have been used by patients as part of their rehabilitation and recovery. The applicant's father purchased the buildings from the hospital authority and began using it as an independent agricultural enterprise. The applicant subsequently purchased the farm from his father in 1974 and has used it ever since.
- 5.10 Because of its origins, the site is not typical of more traditional field barns found in the Ribble Valley. The use of architectural detailing and red brick, which was common in the wider hospital site, sets it apart and provides an intrinsic historic and visual quality which is worthy of retention. The removal of the later, more modern farm buildings and infrastructure at the perimeter of the site will help to reveal the barn and the modest, sympathetic repairs associated with the conversion works will help to restore the building in an appropriate manner.
- 5.11 Owing to the aforementioned historic value, the main farm cluster is considered to be a non-designated heritage asset. Both the Core Strategy and the Framework require an applicant to describe any assets affected by proposals. The Local Authority should then reach a balanced judgement having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the asset.
- 5.12 The asset is as described earlier in this statement and derives historic and architectural interest from its association with the now redeveloped hospital site. This link has long since ceased and whilst the structures have clearly been subject to some piecemeal changes to meet changing requirements over several years, their general form remains largely unchanged. As seen in the Design and Access Statement (page 7), drawings from circa 1945 show a number of proposed alterations at that time, but the building is clearly recognisable and the vast majority of the features remain in situ to this day.
- 5.13 The scheme of conversion will work wholly within the fabric of the existing building and a large number of existing openings are suitable for re-use. Some additional doors and windows are proposed to facilitate the works; however, it is not considered that these would dilute or unduly harm the present character. The scheme would result in the retention and refurbishment of the building and create an enhancement in its setting. When taking a balanced approach as required by the Framework, it is considered that this sustainable re-use of this building would secure its future. Therefore, the scale of any harm/ loss is minimal and the significance of the non-designated asset is maintained.

Genuine history of agriculture

- 5.14 The site dates back to the early 1900's and has been farmed by the applicant since 1974, although now in a reduced capacity. The site therefore has a genuine history of agriculture.

Technical matters and material considerations

- 5.15 In assessing the suitability of the site for new residential development, a number of associated technical matters and material considerations have been reviewed, these include:

- Drainage
- Ecology & Biodiversity
- Highways
- Trees/Woodland
- Landscaping & boundary treatments
- Residential amenity

Drainage

- 5.16 The application is supported by a Drainage Strategy prepared by Reford. Local geology is such that infiltration is unlikely to be feasible, therefore it is intended to attenuate surface water to the adjacent watercourse, reflecting current pre-development volumes.
- 5.17 Foul water will be discharged into a new package treatment plant, replacing the existing septic tank on site. The proposals are therefore considered to be in accordance with the Practice Guidance hierarchy for drainage and Policy DME6 of the Core Strategy.

Ecology and Biodiversity

- 5.18 An Ecological Appraisal has been undertaken by ERAP to assess the impact of the proposals on protected species and their habitats. Whilst evidence of bats, birds, barn owls and Himalayan balsam was found, the scheme provides more than sufficient opportunity to incorporate the necessary mitigation to create biodiversity gains.
- 5.19 Planting and landscaping will also be used to enhance habitat potential, as detailed within Sections 5 & 6 of the Appraisal. The proposals therefore raise no adverse issues.

Highways

- 5.20 The application site is served by an existing track from Old Langho Road, via Larkhill. Whilst there is an existing fall back of agricultural traffic using the lane, the applicant intends to

install 3 new passing places to aid traffic flows to and from the site.

- 5.21 Within the site, parking and manoeuvring areas are provided for each unit either on or immediately adjacent to the plot, with dedicated spaces and garages.

Trees and Woodland

- 5.22 The proposals do not result in the removal of any mature trees. Brockhall Wood is located to the north east of the site; however, the development would not impinge on it by way of any new buildings in the proximity. As an ancient woodland it has the potential to support habitats, therefore the scheme includes the provision of additional bat boxes along the woodland edge to support biodiversity.

Landscaping and boundary treatments

- 5.23 New boundaries and plots for each curtilage would be created through the introduction of soft landscaping and post and rail fencing at the perimeter to reflect the countryside location (see drawing no. 18). This is considered to be appropriate and the removal of the dilapidated buildings to the north and west would create a more open and rural setting for the barn.

Residential amenity

- 5.24 Each property (existing and proposed) is afforded curtilage spaces immediately adjacent to the plot. Dwellings also have dedicated access to the internal courtyard areas, which are to be divided for each unit.
- 5.25 Whilst the layout is not typical of residential development each property would be provided with private amenity space and separate, and individual bin stores within the curtilage of each property.

6 Summary and conclusions

- 6.1 This Planning Statement is prepared to accompany an application for full planning permission for the conversion of existing agricultural buildings to create 8 dwellings, on behalf of Mr C Willan.
- 6.2 The site is no longer suited to modern agricultural use and would require significant new investment to support a viable farming enterprise. The sympathetic conversion to 8 dwellings represents the sustainable re-use of a non-designated heritage asset and delivers a range of accommodation types and sizes, in close proximity to the Brockhall settlement.
- 6.3 It has been demonstrated that the scheme is fully in compliance with the aims of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework. No technical or environmental constraints have been identified which would weigh against the proposals and the scheme should be supported.



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