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PLANNING STATEMENT

IN RESPECT OF A FULL PLANNING APPLICATION FOR THE ERECTION OF THREE POLYTUNNELS

AT

NEWLANDS NURSERY, SAWLEY ROAD,
CHATBURN, BB7 4LD.

Prepared by: Robert Black
Our Clients: Mr Peter Bristol & Mr Christopher Bristol
Our Ref: Bri/910/2998/RCB
Date: June 2021



Chartered Surveyors ■■■ Planning & Development ■■■ Land Agents
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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 a further three polytunnels at Newlands Nursery, Sawley Road, Chatburn. The existing development has been very successful giving rise to this proposed expansion which will enable the applicants to produce more stock to meet demand.

1.2 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.

1.3 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 site comprises a parcel of land adjacent to an existing plant nursery which has been operational for just over a year having been approved under application 3/2019/0463 in August 2019.

The application site occupies part of a 5 acre field 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.

2.2 The site is adjoined to the west and south by other agricultural fields. To the north there is the existing nursery and beyond this an access track to a large residential property that is located approximately 150m to the northwest 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 The existing development on the site which was approved under application reference number 3/2019/0463 was for the erection of six polytunnels and formation of car parking area in association with the formation of a market garden which is now known as Newlands Nursery.

- 2.4 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 The proposed development is for a further three polytunnels to be used for the growing and sale of perennials, plants, shrubs, hedging and fruit and vegetables which represents an expansion and growth of their existing business, as shown on the submitted plans.
- 3.2 Two of the polytunnels have approximate dimensions of 48m x 8m and one is 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 is level and therefore no earthworks will be required.
- 3.3. Rainwater from the roofs of the polytunnels is harvested and used for watering the plants that are to be grown on the site. The proposed three polytunnels are for stock only and not for access to the public and therefore the current car parking arrangements are sufficient.

4. PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1 We set out below the recent planning history in respect of the applicant's property.
- 4.2 Application reference number 3/2019/0463 was for the erection of six polytunnels and formation of car parking area in association with the formation of a market garden which is now known as Newlands Nursery. Ribble Valley Borough Council approved the application with conditions on the 2 August 2019.

5. PLANNING POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

General

- 5.1 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)

- 5.2 We set out below extracts from the relevant documents to facilitate the assessment of the application proposal against the appropriate policies and guidance.

National Planning Policy Framework February 2019 (NPPF)

- 5.3 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.
- 5.4 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.
- 5.5 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.
- 5.6 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

- 5.7 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.

- 5.8 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 the 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.

- 5.9 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.

Key Statement EN2: Landscape

- 5.10 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.
- 5.11 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. The only ‘buildings’ within the proposal are 3no. polytunnels that will be used for growing plants etc. 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 additional polytunnels will be positioned on the lower part of the sloping site next to the existing polytunnels which were approved under application number 3/2019/0463. 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.
- 5.12 In the officer’s report for the previous application the officer addresses concerns raised regarding the location of the development as follows: “5.1.8 *Concerns have been raised in respect of this being the correct location for this type of use, however a market garden which grows its own produce would be expected to be located within the open countryside (not within a settlement) purely on the basis*

of the amount/area of land that would be required to grow the produce. Furthermore, as detailed elsewhere in this report the site is situated very close to the settlement boundary of Chatburn (140m) and the A59 (450m), and therefore benefits from good transport links in comparison to other sites in the open countryside. As such it is considered that this is an acceptable location for the proposed use.”

Key Statement EC1: Business and Employment Development

- 5.13 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 the expansion of a market garden that is solely involved in the growing and selling of plants etc. Customers that come to the market garden to buy produce are 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.
- 5.14 In the officer’s report for the previous application the officer refers to this policy as follows: *“5.1.1 The Ribble Valley Core strategy seeks to support business growth and the local economy. Key Statement EC1 states that “Employment development will be directed towards the main settlements of Clitheroe, Whalley and Longridge as the preferred locations to accommodate employment growth together with land at Barrow Enterprise Site, the Lancashire Enterprise Site at Samlesbury and locations well related to the A59 corridor”. The application site is located approximately 450m to the south of the A59 and will be accessed off Sawley Road which connects directly to the A59. Given the short distance from the application site to the A59 it is considered that the application site is “well-related” to the A59 corridor in accordance with Key Statement EC1.”*

Key Statement EC3: Visitor Economy

- 5.15 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.
- 5.16 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.

- 5.17 The officer's report in respect of the previous application also acknowledged the fact that the development would contribute to the visitor economy as follows: *"5.1.4 Policy DMB3 relates to recreation and tourism development and given that the proposed development would likely result in people visiting the site, particularly as a result of its location in relation to the A59, this policy is also considered to be of some relevance. Policy DMB3 seeks to support proposals that would attract visitors to the Ribble Valley, provided that the site is physically well related to an existing main settlement, village, or existing group of buildings. In this case the application site is located 140m from the settlement boundary of Chatburn (Tier one village) and therefore is considered to be well related to a main settlement."*

Policy DMG1: General considerations

- 5.18 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.
- 5.19 The above points were considered through the process of the previous application (Ref: 3/2019/0463) when the case officer Robert Major at the time commented as follows: *"5.2.5 In view of the above it is considered that the proposed development will share an acceptable relationship with neighbouring uses in accordance with the amenity requirements of Policy DMG1."*

5.20 We will now briefly respond to each of the above numbered points in turn:

- 1) The locality of the application site is rural in nature and apart from the existing development on the site the only other substantial built development is Ribblesdale Hall 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. The proposed development in our opinion is appropriate to this rural locality, 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 is appropriately sited whilst still allowing “circulation space” for customers/staff. With regards to the relationship with existing adjoining buildings other than the existing polytunnels, 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. We consider that the relationship of the proposal to its surroundings, and its impact upon landscape character, is appropriate and acceptable.
- 3) Vehicular access into the site will be via the existing approved access that benefits from visibility splays in both directions, which has considered to be safe and adequate for the level of traffic generated. The existing number of parking spaces and the associated maneuvering areas is still appropriate for the nature and scale of the business.
- 4) 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 therefore we do not consider that the proposed development will have any detrimental impacts upon the natural environment.

5.21 Overall we consider that we have demonstrated through the submission documents that all the requirements of Policy DMG1 are satisfied.

Policy DMG 2: Strategic considerations

5.22 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.
- 5.23 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 4 full time posts, 2 part time posts and 2 seasonal posts.
- 5.24 The proposal development is agricultural development and is therefore needed for the purposes of agriculture, for the avoidance of doubt the planning definition of agriculture includes horticulture.
- 5.25 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.'* We consider that the proposal satisfies this particular requirement of the Policy.
- 5.26 Overall, we consider that the proposal satisfies the intentions of Policy DMG2.

Policy DME 2: Landscape and Townscape

- 5.27 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. As shown on the submitted plans additional landscape planting has been provided from the existing approved development (Ref No: 3/2019/0463)
- 5.28 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 are to be sited well outside the root protection areas of these trees.
- 5.29 Overall, we therefore consider that the proposal fully satisfies the requirements of Policy DME2.

Policy DMB 1: Supporting Business Growth and the Local Economy

- 5.30 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.

- 5.31 This proposal relates to an expansion of the applicant’s existing business and arises as a consequence of the great success of the last development. Paragraph 5.1.3 of the officer’s report in respect of the previous application clearly recognise the benefit of the business growth and this application proposes more of the same:

5.1.3 Policy DMB1 also supports proposals that are intended to support business growth and the local economy. This includes “The expansion of established firms on land outside settlements will be allowed provided it is essential to maintain the existing source of employment and can be assimilated within the local landscape”. It is accepted that this proposal relates to a new site, however the submission details how the proposal relates to an expansion and diversification of the applicants existing landscaping and maintenance business and will generate an additional six jobs (2 x full time, 2 x part time and 2 x seasonal). The visual impacts of the proposal are discussed later in this report.

Policy DMB 3: Recreation and Tourism Development

- 5.32 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.

- 5.33 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.

5.34 As referred to in paragraph 5.17 above the officer's report in respect of the last application identified that this type of development contributed positively to tourism.

5.35 Overall, we conclude that the proposal is fully compliant with the adopted core strategy. 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.

6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 The proposed development seeks to secure the continued operation and expansion 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 existing location, and it will be assimilated into the local landscape. The existing 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 increase and therefore will not have any harmful impact on the wider local highway network.

6.2 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.

6.3 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: *R.C. Black*
Robert Black

Dated: *24 June 2021*