

Higher College Farm Lower Road Longridge PR3 2YY

Erection of Mixed-Use Commercial Units (Use Class E) and Storage Facilities (Use Class B8), including the Conversion of Farmhouse to Provide Office Space (Use Class E), with Access from Lower Road

PLANNING STATEMENT

July 2022

REPORT CONTROL

Document	Planning Statement
Project	Higher College Farm
Client	Ribble Valley Properties Ltd
Job Number	21-1166
File storage	Z:\PWA Planning\Client files\21-1002 to 21-1250\21-1166 Higher College Farm - Commercial Development\4. Application\PWA Docs

Document Checking

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Revision Status

Issue	Date	Status	Checked for issue
1	30/05/2022	Draft V1	MS
2	31/05/2022	Draft V2	GT
3	13/06/2022	Draft V3	GT
4	01/07/2022	Final	GT

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/1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. PWA Planning is retained by Ribble Valley Properties Ltd ('the applicant') to submit a full planning application for the Erection of Mixed-Use Commercial Units (Use Class E) and Storage Facilities (Use Class B8), including the Conversion of Farmhouse to Provide Office Space (Use Class E), with Access from Lower Road ('the development') regarding the land associated with Higher College Farm, Blackburn Road, Longridge, PR3 2YY ('the site'). The application is made to Ribble Valley Borough Council ('the Council') and relates to the red edge application site boundary defined by the Location Plan.

- 1.2. This Planning Statement provides details in relation to the description of the site, the site's planning history and the proposed development. A review of the planning policy of relevance to the site is provided, along with an assessment of the development's compliance with these policies and other material considerations.

- 1.3. The Planning Statement is accompanied by the following documents:
 - Planning Application Form;
 - Planning Statement (this document);
 - Tree Survey;
 - Arboricultural Impact Assessment;
 - Bat Survey;
 - Preliminary Ecological Appraisal;
 - Flood Risk Assessment;
 - Travel Plan;
 - Transport Statement;
 - Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment;
 - Design and Access Statement (ref. 6478 – Version 1.4);
 - Drawn Information:
 - Proposed Landscaping Plan (ref. MR21-108);
 - Site Location Plan (ref. 6478);

- Existing Floor Plan (ref. 6478-02);
- Existing Elevations and Section A-A (ref. 6478-03);
- Existing Site Section A-A (ref. 6478-04);
- Proposed Site Layout Plan Colour (ref. 6478-05H);
- Proposed Site Layout Plan Black and White (ref. 6478-05H);
- Proposed Floor Plans for House Conversion and Extension (ref. 6478-06D);
- Proposed Elevations for House Conversion and Extension (ref. 6478-07A);
- Proposed Elevations (ref. 6478-08C);
- Proposed Floor Plans (ref. 6478-10A);
- Proposed Floor Plans and Elevations for Meeting Room (ref. 6478-11A);
- Proposed Visuals (ref. 6478-12B);
- Proposed Site Massing (ref. 6478-13A);
- Existing Site Survey Plan (ref. 6478-01C);
- Proposed Elevations Sheet 2 (ref. 6478-15); and
- Existing and Proposed Site Sections (ref. 6478-16).

1.4. Should the Local Planning Authority ('the LPA') require anything further to ensure the positive determination of the proposals, then it is requested that the Agent for the application is contacted in the first instance.

/2 EXISTING SITE

2.1. The application site, which extends approximately 1.53ha in size, is located at Higher College Farm, on the eastern periphery of Longridge settlement boundary. The site currently comprises an area of land used for pasture together with the residential dwelling and outbuildings at Higher College Farmhouse. The site is an allocated employment site within the Housing and Economic Development Document (2019), reference EAL3. An aerial image below illustrates the site and its wider setting in Figure 1.



Figure 1: Aerial image of the site (Source: Google Maps- not to scale)

2.2. The site is bounded to the north by Blackburn Road (B6243) which runs in an east to west direction, while mature hedgerows are present to the northern and eastern boundaries. To the west the site abuts a hedgerow lined track leading to Higher College Farmhouse located on the south of the site, beyond which lies 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 which forms the main access to the food processing businesses, beyond which lies agricultural land.

- 2.3. The application site is located on the eastern edge of Longridge, which has a broad range of facilities, that includes Berry Lane Medical Centre located approximately 1.1km from the site and Drakes Dental Care located approximately 1.4km from the proposed development. Longridge Church of England Primary School, Longridge High School and St Cecilia's RC High School are all located within 1.5km of the site. Booths and Aldi supermarkets are located within 2km of the site.
- 2.4. The proposed development is located off the B6243, meaning the site is easily accessible by car and close to local bus routes. The nearest bus stop for passengers travelling from Ribchester/Clitheroe towards the site is located opposite the Corporation Arms, 0.16km away from the site. A new bus stop on Blackburn Road (B6243) opposite the site, for passengers travelling from Preston/Longridge towards Clitheroe/Ribchester, has been delivered as part of the Tootle Green housing development. The footway along the southern side of Lower Road has recently been extended and improved to for a 2m width. These bus routes provide services to Blackburn, Clitheroe, Ribchester, and the centre of Longridge, where services to wider areas can be accessed.
- 2.5. The current access to the site is located along the western boundary, which is taken directly from Blackburn Road, located further to the north of the site.
- 2.6. There are no listed buildings within the site and, by reference to the Environment Agency's flood risk map, it does not fall within an area subject to flooding, lying wholly within Flood Risk Zone 1 which has a low probability of flooding. The site is not subject to any local or national ecological designations. The site is located within the Open Countryside Area, as defined Ribble Valley Borough Council's Proposals Map. The Forest of Bowland AONB lies approximately 1km to the north of the site.

/3 PLANNING HISTORY

3.1 A search of Ribble Valley Council's planning register has been carried out to understand the planning history relevant to the site and the proposed development. Planning applications relating to the site itself include:

- **3/2017/0602.** Outline planning permission for industrial units (use classes B1, B2, B8) and associated access, parking, landscaping and services infrastructure with all matters reserved except access and change of use of farmhouse to office (B1). Approved 1st December 2017.
- **3/2018/1105.** Outline planning permission for 21 dwellings and associated works. Refused 03/06/2019.

3.2 In addition, the following planning applications have been made relating to nearby sites:

- **3/2020/0507** Outline Planning application for business units use classes B1(b)(c) and B2 and storage use class B8 and associated improvements to existing access with all matters reserved except for access. Approved 18/11/2020.
- **3/2019/0644** Land south of Blackburn Road, Erection of business units (use class B1) comprising three new buildings with access, parking and provision of secure compounds. Approved 29/11/2019.
- **3/2017/0317** Land South of Blackburn Road, Outline Planning application for Employment Floorspace (use Class B1, B2, B8). Approved 04/09/2017.
- **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.

/4 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The proposal comprises a mixed-use commercial development to provide both Class B8 and Class E uses, through the erection of a range of business units and the conversion and extension of the existing farmhouse. Overall, the built footprint, including both existing and proposed, totals 3,410sqm across the site, which represents 22.2% of the total site area.
- 4.2 The proposals will offer flexible space for uses within Use Class E and Class B8. The applicant is willing to accept a suitably worded condition to control the amount of specific floorspace falling within each use class at the site. This will provide the LPA with a sufficient mechanism of control to ensure that there is not a proliferation of more 'town centre' uses at the site, a matter of concern discussed at the pre-application stage, while also offering the applicant greater flexibility with no defined end-users at this moment in time.
- 4.3 It is proposed to erect eight blocks of mixed-use commercial units, arranged around a central courtyard, which will accommodate the required car parking provision for each smaller unit, with a large opening between the blocks to be erected opposite the main entrance to help to fragment the massing of the development. The eight blocks are split depending on their design and size, with further clarity on this provided within the submitted Design and Access Statement.
- 4.4 The parking at the site will include provision for Electric Vehicle charging points and cycle storage alongside standard car parking, in line with the parking standards, as illustrated on the Site Layout Plan (ref. 6478_05H). In total, the site will provide 151no. car parking spaces, with 15no. accessible spaces. To add to this, 15no. secure cycle parking spaces are to be provided, as well as 6no. motorcycle parking spaces.
- 4.5 As detailed in the submitted Design and Access Statement, it is proposed to provide 2,840sqm of new commercial floorspace, which will be accommodated within the

- proposed 8 blocks of units, comprising of approximately 355sqm of floorspace in each unit.
- 4.6 It is considered that the units will satisfy demands of small to medium sized businesses. The units can be used to cater for a wide range of individual requirements, with the buildings having flexibility designed to allow them to respond to individual needs which would include commercial, business and service, as well as light industrial and to be suitable for storage.
- 4.7 It is also proposed to convert and extend the existing farmhouse, located in the southern section of the site, to provide office space, as detailed on plan ref. 6478_06D. The proposed office space will be accommodated within the existing footprint of the existing building, and also in the proposed extension to the south, as illustrated on plan ref. 6478_06D. The existing farmhouse will be extended by an additional 229sqm. It is proposed that the materials for the extension will complement the existing building, as illustrated on the submitted proposed elevations in plan ref. 6478_07A.
- 4.8 Furthermore, the proposal includes the conversion of the existing outbuilding associated with the Farmhouse, to provide a meeting room, to be utilised by businesses accommodating the converted Farmhouse. The proposed meeting room is illustrated in Plan ref. 6478_11A.
- 4.9 In terms of materials proposed for the new commercial units, high quality materials will be used. As detailed on Plan ref. 6478_08C, blocks A, B, C, K and L will feature zinc appearance aluminium cladding roofs and grey powder coated aluminium window frames, with natural stone clad walls and Zinc appearance aluminium vertical cladding walls.
- 4.10 Buildings D and J will also feature zinc appearance aluminium cladding roofs and grey powder coated aluminium window frames. The exterior walls will feature a Vertical Larch slat effect over dark grey membrane, set over a dark grey brick plinth course to add texture and interest to the building. Photovoltaic cells will be added to the south

- facing aspects of the roofs to provide a source of renewable energy to the development, increasing sustainability.
- 4.11 Building E will comprise of reclaimed stone with quoins and dressed surrounds, natural slate roofing and grey powder coated aluminium doors and windows. The suite of submission documents includes 3D visuals of the proposed buildings, which is illustrated in plan ref. 6478_12B. This illustrates the high-quality materials proposed. It is proposed that the converted farmhouse extensions will consist of similar materials to the existing farmhouse, which will comprise of reclaimed stone and quoins, natural slate, and painted timber.
- 4.12 The development has been designed with the existing topography, with the proposed commercial units 'stepping down' towards the south of the site, to accommodate the existing site levels. The scale of buildings will range from a ridge height from 8m to 10.4m, as detailed within the submitted Design and Access Statement and the Proposed Elevations Plan (ref. 6478_08C).
- 4.13 The development further responds to existing features with buildings set back from the site boundaries, to ensure the retention of existing mature hedgerows to the northern and eastern boundary of the site. Furthermore, open grassed areas and wildflower meadow planting is proposed around the perimeter of the site, to enhance the appearance of the rural setting and enhance wildlife and fauna. It is further proposed to retain existing mature trees within the site, with proposed tree planting, primarily to the central courtyard and the site main entrance.
- 4.14 A new access to the site is proposed to serve the new development, which will be accessed from Lower Road via a new simple priority T junction approved as part of the previous planning application at the site (ref. 3/2017/0602). The proposed access will provide a 7.3m wide access road into the site, with footways provided around the access bell mouth, featuring dropped kerbs and tactile paving to ensure safe crossing of the site access road.

- 4.15 In addition to the above, pedestrian access to the proposed development will be provided from the existing footway on the norther side of Lower Road by means of a pedestrian refuge. This will ensure that the site is readily accessible by foot from nearby residential properties to the west of the site and the bus stop to the east.
- 4.16 The existing access off Lower Road on the western boundary of the site is to be retained, to maintain the existing access arrangements for the adjacent agricultural field to the west of the site and provide an alternative access to the converted farmhouse to the south of the site, as detailed on Proposed Site Plan (ref. 6478_05H). The existing access will be retained but will only utilised to access the agricultural field to the west of the site, as per the existing access arrangement with the landowner. All traffic within the proposed development will be directed to utilise the new proposed access point to enter and exit the site.
- 4.17 A suite of 3D visual images has been provided (ref. 6478_12B), with Image 2 illustrating the proposed entrance as viewed from the highway.
- 4.18 Pre-application advice has been sought from LCC Highways and a response has been received. The response details that the previously approved access arrangements on application ref. 3/2017/0602 are required for this application, which includes off-site highways works, as listed on the decision notice. The off-site works have been detailed on the Proposed Site Plan (ref. 6478_05H), which will be implemented and includes a 2m wide pedestrian footpath, 30mph signage and appropriate visibility splays. A plan demonstrating the tracking for a 11.2m wagon internally, as requested in the LCC Highways pre-app response, has been provided within the submitted Transport Statement.
- 4.19 The pre-application response from LCC Highways further details that the layout should direct all traffic towards the new access point, this has been illustrated on the Proposed Site Plan (ref. 6478_05H) which includes a 2m footpath to connect the site to the wider highway network to support staff and potentially visitors arriving on foot. Furthermore, parking provision has been calculated and demonstrated on the Proposed Site Plan how this will be achieved, in line with the adopted parking standards.

4.20 The arrangement of the buildings around a central courtyard with a large opening between the buildings opposite the main entrance into the site has helped to fragment the massing of the development. The purpose of the proposed new buildings is to satisfy demand for small to medium size business units that can be used to cater for a wide range of individual requirements, with the buildings having flexibility designed in. Extensions to the house follow on from the existing single storey elements with eaves heights and feature glazed gables to match the existing and maintain their subservience to the main farmhouse.

/5 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

- 5.1. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.2. In this instance, the Development Plan for the application site comprises of the Ribble Valley Borough Council Core Strategy 2008 – 2028 (2014) and the Housing and Economic Development – Development Plan Document (2019). Additionally, key policy documents that comprise 'material considerations' include the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF), and any local supplementary planning guidance documents considered relevant to the proposal.
- 5.3. An extract from the adopted Proposals Map is provided at Figure 2, which illustrates that the site is located within the countryside, outside of the defined settlement boundaries.

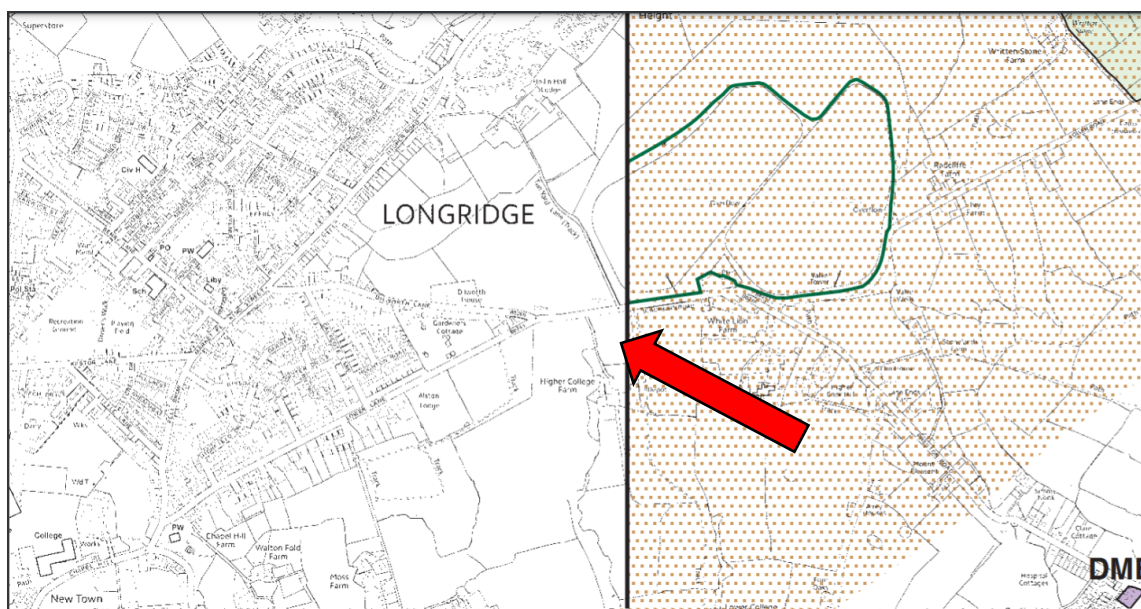


Figure 2: Proposals Map Extract

- 5.4. The application site is located within the countryside, outside the defined settlement boundary of Longridge, as per the Council's adopted proposal map. However, the Housing and Economic Development DPD (HED DPD), adopted in October 2019, allocated the site as an employment site, as per Policy EAL3 of the HED DPD, and as shown by Figure 3 below.

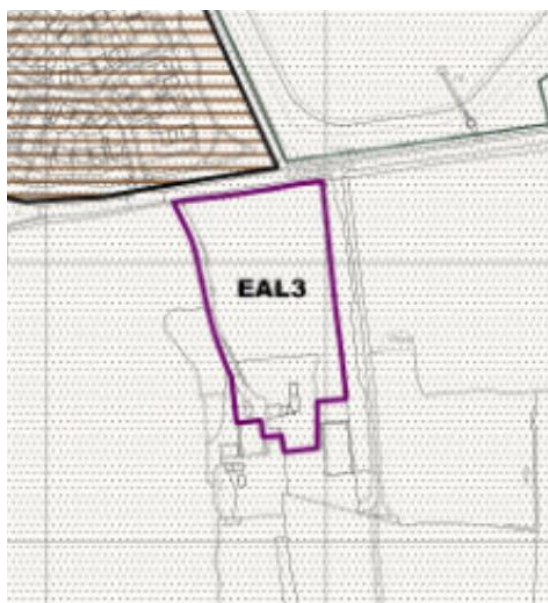


Figure 3: Extract from the HED Proposals Map

- 5.5. Within the HED DPD three sites, totalling 4ha collectively, are put forward to be developed for employment land, to ensure that the LPA deliver a sufficient number of employment sites, with particular reference to meet employment requirements for Longridge and facilitate economic growth.
- 5.6. Policy EAL3 clarifies that the site, named 'Land at Higher College Farm, Longridge', is roughly 1.5ha in size, with the extent shown below by Figure 4.

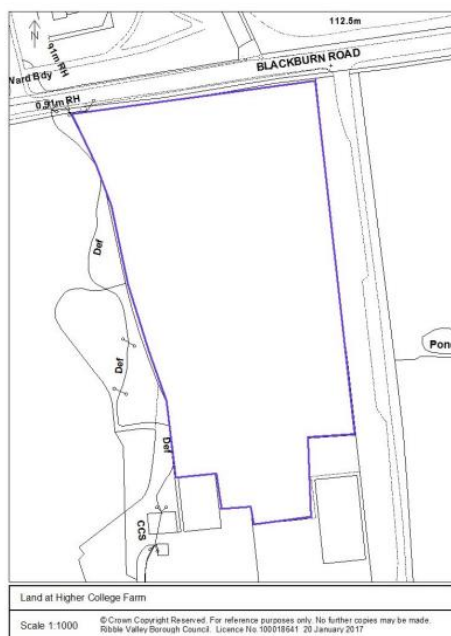


Figure 4: Policy EAL3 - Site Extent

- 5.7. **Key Statement EC1: Business and Employment Development** details the areas where employment and commercial growth should be directed in the borough. It states that most of the new commercial development should be directed towards the principal settlements in the borough, of which Longridge is one.
- 5.8. **Key Statement DS1: Development Strategy** states that the majority of new housing should be concentrated within the settlements of Clitheroe, Longridge and Whalley.
- 5.9. **Key Statement DS2: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development** echoes the NPPF, showing how the Council will favour proposals which reflect sustainable development.
- 5.10. **Key Statement EN2: Landscape** mainly focuses on protection of the Forest of Bowland AONB through ensuring development contributes to the conservation of the area by enhancing and protecting the landscape and character. The statement does offer more general coverage by linking the policy to the protection of all landscapes

outlining that the Council expects all development to be in-keeping with the character of the local landscape.

- 5.11. **Key Statement EN3: Sustainable Development and Climate Change** shows that the Council will seek to ensure all development is sustainable in its design and building standards, in order to address climate change.
- 5.12. **Key Statement EN4: Biodiversity and Geodiversity** illustrates that the Council will seek to conserve and where possible, enhance the area's biodiversity and geodiversity to preserve habits and species.
- 5.13. **Key Statement DMI2: Transport Considerations** illustrates that new development should be located to minimise the need to travel, especially by personal vehicle. All new developments should have convenient access to public transport, as well as pedestrian and cycle routes.
- 5.14. **Policy DMG1: General Considerations** states that new development should be of a high standard, being sympathetic to its surrounds.
- 5.15. **Policy DMG2: Strategic Considerations** shows that proposals within the principal settlements of Clitheroe, Longridge and Whalley should consolidate, expand or round-off existing development, in keeping with the surrounds.
- 5.16. **Policy DMG3: Transport and Mobility** illustrates that proposals will be assessed against their availability and adequacy of public transport and associated infrastructure, to serve new residents.
- 5.17. **Policy DME1: Protecting Trees and Woodlands** states that the Council seeks to protect existing trees and woodlands, specifically those of great quality, and whereby possibly, the Council expects new development to enhance the landscape.
- 5.18. **Policy DMB1: Supporting Business Growth and the Local Economy** relates to business growth and the local economy. It states that proposals for supporting

business growth will be supported in principle and approved so long as they adhere to the remainder of the core strategy and Local Development Framework.

- 5.19. **Policy DMB2: The Conversion of Barns and other Rural Buildings for Employment Uses** relates to the conversion of rural buildings for business use and sets out the criteria under which this would be acceptable.
- 5.20. **Policy DME3: Site and Species Protection and Conservation** relates to the biodiversity of sites and how this can be improved or retained.
- 5.21. **Policy EAL3: Higher College Farm** is the allocation of the site as employment land, found in the Housing and Economic Development Document (2019). Land will be allocated for employment uses (defined as uses falling within classes B1 to B8) to meet employment land requirements in the plan period (2008-2028) as follows and as shown on the Proposals Map. It is our view that the Local Planning Authority must be mindful of the amendments made to the Use Classes Order in September 2020, which saw offices (Use Class B1a) fall within the new Use Class E, a class which also includes shops, retail, cafés, and restaurants amongst a plethora of other uses. This change highlights that the Local Authority must consider a greater degree of flexibility at this and other sites in the Borough that have been imposed at the national scale.

National Planning Policy Framework (2021) (NPPF)

- 5.22. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a material consideration in planning decisions as per Paragraph 2 and Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- 5.23. The NPPF sets out Government planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. The golden thread running throughout the NPPF is the Government's presumption in favour of sustainable development (Paragraph 11) whereby proposed developments which correctly balance the requirements of economic, social, and environmental issues should be granted planning permission

unless there are strong reasons that permission should not be granted. The NPPF strongly supports economic development.

5.24. Sustainable development is broadly defined in Paragraph 8 of the Framework as having three overarching objectives:

a) an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;

b) a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and

c) an environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

5.25. **Paragraph 47** states that applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Decisions on applications should be made swiftly, and within statutory timescales unless an extension has been agreed with the applicant in writing.

5.26. **Section 6** of the NPPF establishes that building a strong, competitive economy, with planning policies and decisions working to promote investment, expansion, and adaptation within the economy.

- 5.27. **Section 9** of the NPPF seeks to encourage sustainable transport. It states that transport policies have an important role to play in facilitating sustainable development but also in contributing to wider sustainability and health objectives. The submitted supporting documentation confirms the development will have no severe impacts on the existing network.
- 5.28. **Paragraph 81** shows that planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand, and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future.
- 5.29. **Paragraph 85** states that: *"Planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable."* The proposed development will directly and indirectly support the principles of the NPPF through supporting a rural business and by making an important contribution to the local economy.
- 5.30. **Paragraph 106(a)** requires planning policies to support an appropriate mix of uses across an area, to minimise the number and length of journey needed for employment, shopping, leisure, education, and other activities.
- 5.31. **Paragraph 111** states development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

- 5.32. **Paragraph 126**, in relation to design, states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.
- 5.33. **Paragraph 130** states that planning policies and decisions should ensure that:
- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
 - b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
 - c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
 - d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;
 - e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and
 - f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.
- 5.34. **Section 15** documents that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment, aiming to conserve and where possible, improve the natural environment.

/6 PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE

- 6.1. Pre-application advice was sought from the Local Authority in relation to this development under reference RV/2022/ENQ/00001, with a response received on 11th of March 2022.
- 6.2. The advice received highlights that the site does indeed benefit from the employment land allocation of EAL3, where developments for use Classes B1 and B8 are to be supported. However, since the allocation of the site by the Council, national planning policy and legislation has been updated, with Class B1 assimilated into the newly formed Use Class E, as per the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2020, which came into effect from 1st of September 2020.
- 6.3. The core idea behind the creation of Use Class E was to provide businesses with a greater degree of flexibility; thus, allowing them to adapt and respond to changing needs, with this use class covering a wide mixture of uses.
- 6.4. It is noted within the pre-application advice that it is the Council's opinion that many of the use Classes within Class E, namely Class E(a) and E(d), are 'Town Centre Uses' as per the definitions contained within the Annex of the NPPF. It is the authority's opinion that these particular uses are unsuitable for the location because they fall outside of the main town centre of Longridge and could potentially 'undermine the viability and vitality of the town centre'.
- 6.5. In terms of the proposed scheme's design and landscaping, the advice received at the pre-application stage was wholly positive, with only minor notes regarding the location of the cycle storage areas, which are addressed within the submission of this planning application.
- 6.6. On the whole, the advice received within the pre-application meeting was largely positive, with the Council supporting the proposed development. Further justification in relation to the local planning policies is provided in the following section.

/7 PLANNING POLICY ASSESSMENT

Principle of Development

- 7.1. Key Statement DS1 and Policy DMG2 of the adopted Core Strategy identify that new development, which includes employment development, should be focused within the principal settlements of Clitheroe, Longridge and Whalley, with said development helping to expand, consolidate or round-off existing development, in keeping with the surrounds.
- 7.2. The proposed development would utilise an allocated employment site which, although lying outside of the defined settlement boundaries, has functional links to the services of Longridge town centre. It lies within walking distance of the settlement boundary, including the services and transport links available there, in line with Key Statement DS1 and Policy DMG2.
- 7.3. Given the allocation of the site for employment purposes, it is therefore considered that the principle of mixed-use commercial development (Class E and B8), and the conversion of the farmhouse to provide office space (Class E), is consistent with the allocation of the site for employment uses, under Policy EAL3 of the HED DPD. Importantly, the development of this site for such purposes will help to provide local residents, particularly those within Longridge, with new and/or improved employment opportunities.
- 7.4. Although Policy EAL3 specifically relates to 'traditional' employment uses that fall within classes B1 to B8, the national amendments to the Use Classes Order, which saw the loss of Use Class B1 and the creation of its replacement, Use Class E, a class which includes offices, as well as shops, retail, cafés, and restaurants amongst a plethora of other uses, clearly illustrates that a greater degree of flexibility must be imposed.
- 7.5. The proposed development is wholly for uses which fall within both Use Class E and B8, with the units providing employment uses at the site which will complement the other

nearby granted permissions within proximity to the site. It is considered that this development will meet localised needs, particularly within Longridge, and therefore is considered to adhere to the thrust of Policy EAL3.

- 7.6. As stated within Key Statement EC1, new employment opportunities are to be directed towards the principal settlements, including Longridge, with such locations able to accommodate the vast majority of growth within the Borough. Although the site lies outside the settlement boundary, it is merely 300m from the boundary and as such, benefits from being well-connected to Longridge in terms of services and transport connections, with it likely that the vast majority of employees at this site would live in and around the town, which is reiterated within the HED DPD.
- 7.7. The proposal would make an important contribution to the provision of local employment opportunities for the area and would support the economic aims of the Council to support local employment opportunities in line with Key Statement EC1 and Policies DMG2, DMB1, and DMB2, as well as Policy EAL3 of the HED DPD. Given that the proposals relate to the provision of employment land and the site is allocated for such, the principle of development is therefore considered acceptable.
- 7.8. Further to the above, it is pertinent to reiterate that the applicant is willing to accept a suitably worded condition to control the amount of specific floorspace falling within each use at the site. Again, this will provide Ribble Valley Borough Council with a mechanism of control at the site, without compromising upon the flexibility at the site.

Sustainable Development

- 7.9. Key Statement DS2 echoes Paragraph 11 of the NPPF, establishing that the Council will favour development which reflect sustainable development. Considering the NPPF as a whole, it is important to note that Paragraph 7 of the NPPF is clear that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. At Paragraph 8 it states that:

'Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives).'

- 7.10. Regarding the economic objective, the development will bring employment opportunities to Longridge, making suitable use of an allocated site, which includes the re-use of an existing building. The scale of development will mean that the construction period will bring significant revenue to the local economy and any contributions will add economic benefit to the Council. Future employees of the proposed development will also significantly increase local spending power, using the array of services which Longridge town centre has to offer, particularly food and drink services, to the benefit of local businesses.
- 7.11. The social objective of sustainable development is met since the development will provide a significant number of employment opportunities for local inhabitants of Longridge and surrounding areas. Furthermore, the proposals will create high-quality adaptable spaces to allow businesses to establish and grow or relocate to the premises; thus, bringing new people to the area.
- 7.12. Environmentally, the site has little ecological value, as confirmed within the submitted Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, which states that all plant species at the site are of low value, while no notable or protected species were recorded at the site. The proposed development includes the planting of multiple different species of plants, which will be maintained appropriately as well as all proposed landscaping around the site; therefore, the proposals are considered to have no negative environmental impacts and will work to improve the current state of the site.

Countryside Location

- 7.13. Given the sites location in the open countryside, development proposals are required to be considered 'essential to the local economy' to be deemed as acceptable, in line with Policy DMG2. This policy further seeks development in the open countryside to be in

keeping with the landscape, through the reuse of existing buildings. The proposed development is essential to the local economy and is an allocated employment site that would also result in a partial reuse of an existing building, while it will also reuse the existing farmhouse at the site; thus, satisfying the considerations for development outside of the settlement boundary in Policy DMG2. Therefore, it is considered that the development at hand is fully compliant with Key Statement EC1, Policy DMG2 and DS2.

- 7.14. In relation to Policy DS1, the policy states that new development for employment and retail should be directed towards the principal settlements of the borough first and foremost, of which Longridge is one. Although the site does not lie within the settlement boundary, it borders the settlement, and lies a short distance from the town and the services and transportation links there. As such, the site should be seen as serving Longridge and is well positioned to offer employment opportunities to enhance the local provision, despite lying within the countryside.

Design and Layout

- 7.15. The design of this proposal has been carefully considered within the local context where possible, with a mixture of materials that will be high-quality and durable. The scheme proposes a contemporary design that is suitable for the nature of the proposals, while also adding visual interest to the site and the locality as a whole, in line with Policy DMG1 and Key Statement EN3, as well as Paragraphs 126 and 130 of the NPPF.
- 7.16. In terms of neighbouring amenity, Policy DMG1 states that development should not adversely affect the amenities of the surrounding area. As detailed above, and within the supporting information, the scheme has been carefully considered and designed to ensure there is no impact on surrounding land uses, or future uses of neighbouring land.
- 7.17. The proposed development seeks to provide a mixed-use development, which would provide opportunities for both new and existing businesses to relocate their premises to the site, further providing additional employment opportunities to Longridge, creating

- an environment for new business to set-up and expansion of existing businesses. As aforementioned, the units are purposely designed to be high-quality and attractive spaces, that offer a significant degree of flexibility, to ensure that the units can be adapted to the suit the end user's requirements. It is therefore considered that the proposal is in line with the thrust of Policy DMB1.
- 7.18. Policy DMB2 is relevant by virtue of the conversion of the farmhouse into proposed office facilities. This policy details that the conversion of buildings should be of high-quality and in keeping with local character, while minimising harm and impact of the development on the landscape. In this case, the impact of the conversion is negligible, as the building is set back away from the road. Once the units are constructed in front of the farmhouse, visibility will be limited from the public space, maintaining the rural feel of the development.
- 7.19. Furthermore, the application is supported by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), which identified a number of public receptor locations chosen and visited, with these locations selected because of the nature of the site; thus, providing a fair representation of the proposed site and the locality. The LVIA concludes that there will be limited landscape and visual changes from the proposed development, due to the overall high-quality and appropriate design of the proposals upon an allocated employment site, with consideration to the undulating topography, local building infrastructure, extent of exiting mature vegetation and the proposed soft landscape measures. Any changes to the area are determined to be insignificant and importantly, they will only be to the site's immediate locality and not to the wider landscape, making the development appropriate to its location.
- 7.20. To add to the above, the proposals are also supported by a landscaping scheme (ref. MR21-108). The scheme incorporates new street tree planting, along with planting of hedgerows, ornamental shrubs, and woodland seed mixes, while also looking to retain the existing vegetation and trees to the west of the site. Overall, the landscaping scheme looks to bolster the borders of the site to soften any views into the site, while introducing greenery internally to break up built form.

- 7.21. Overall, the changes to the site are concluded to not be significant and importantly, they will only be to the site's immediate locality and not to the wider landscape, making the development appropriate to its location. Accordingly, the proposals are wholly consistent with local and national planning policies.

Highways and Parking

- 7.22. Key Statement DMI2 and Policy DMG3 states that new development should be located conveniently to minimise the need to travel, specifically by personal vehicle, while such developments should also have convenient access to public transportation links, as well as pedestrian and cycle links.
- 7.23. The application has been submitted alongside a Transport Assessment which confirms how the site is located within walking distance of Longridge and the array of services which the Town Centre has to offer, such as supermarkets and cafés, amongst a plethora of others. Moreover, the report confirms that the site also has good public transport links, which help to connect the site to nearby settlements which include Preston and Blackburn, as well as good cycle links. The site's central and convenient location to transport links and services, means that there is less of a need to travel to work via personal vehicle.
- 7.24. The planning application is further bolstered through the submission of a Travel Plan, which sets out how the end users of the proposed units will encourage and promote the use of alternative modes of transport to single occupancy car travel, and hence reduce the reliance on this mode of transport.
- 7.25. The Transport Assessment further clarifies that the development will be accessed via a new priority T junction from Lower Road, which was approved as part of a previous planning application. Further to this, it is confirmed that the level of car parking provided is in accordance with the appropriate parking standards, while accessible and electric vehicle parking will be included within the site, as well as parking facilities for cycles and motorcycles.

- 7.26. Finally, the submitted Transport Statement confirms that the proposals will not have a severe impact on the operation of the local road network. Moreover, the road safety data for the local highway network demonstrates that there is no evidence of a significant road safety problem in the vicinity of the proposed site access, or on the local road network. The proposals are consequently perceived to be in line with Key Statement DMI2 and Policy DMG3, as well as Section 9 of the NPPF, namely Paragraphs 106(a) and 111.

Environmental Matters

- 7.27. It is considered that the development has considered environmental matters appropriately. Policy DME1 aims to protect existing trees and woodlands, and where possible enhance them. The Tree Survey and Arboricultural Implications report highlights that six individual trees, four groups of trees and six hedges were surveyed at the site. One tree was categorised as a tree of high quality, one group was categorised as moderate quality, four six trees, four groups, and four hedges were categorised as low quality, and one tree was classed as unsuitable for long term retention regardless of the development proposals due to various physiological and structural related issues.
- 7.28. Overall, the Tree Survey and Arboricultural Implications report clarifies that the proposed development will require the removal of three low quality trees, two low quality groups and three lengths of low-quality hedge. Nonetheless, it is noted that the proposed site layout includes sufficient space for extensive new tree planting, which is determined to adequately compensate for the identified tree losses that are necessary to implement the development as proposed.
- 7.29. Key Statement EN2 shows that all development should be in keeping with the local landscape character, while Key Statement EN4 aims to conserve and where possible, enhance biodiversity and geodiversity. Adding to the above, Policy DME3 relates to the biodiversity of sites and how this can be improved or retained. The application is supported by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Bat Survey, which confirm that

there are no protected species at the site, while all of the flora currently at the site is of little importance. Moreover, the proposed landscaping scheme is attractive and practical, providing an overall improvement in regard to biodiversity and geodiversity, in line with Section 15 of the NPPF.

Flood Risk

- 7.30. The submitted Flood Risk document confirms that the site is wholly located within flood zone 1, where risks of all types of flooding are at their lowest. Overall, it is asserted that proposed development is at low risk from all sources of flooding and that surface water as a result of development will have to be managed in accordance with current practices and guidance so as not to increase the risk of flooding at the site or downstream of the site. This is wholly in accordance with national and local planning policies.

Summary

- 7.31. The application site is currently an underutilised resource, given its formal allocation for employment purposes and it being an accessible location, with significant benefits that could accrue from its development. The site is marginally outside of the defined settlement boundary, albeit with functional links to Longridge, and the development would represent the most appropriate use of the land for employment purposes; thus, promoting sustainable redevelopment in line with the NPPF.
- 7.32. Consideration has been given to the impact of the development on the built and natural environment and it is not considered that the development would give rise to any unacceptable impacts on the local highway network and matters of waste, car parking, flood risk, drainage, ecology, trees, and sustainability are all well considered.
- 7.33. Moreover, it has been demonstrated that the proposed development is fully consistent with relevant Development Plan policies and would be clearly consistent with the thrust of the NPPF policy, particularly in terms of sustainable development and representing

an effective use of land to promote economic development, in line with Section 6 of the NPPF, namely Paragraphs 81 and 85.

- 7.34. In terms of economic benefits, the proposals would make a positive contribution to the local economy during the construction phase and upon occupation by end-users. From a social dimension, the proposals would result in a contribution towards the area's employment opportunities, providing high-quality and flexible units for businesses to establish and grow. In terms of the environmental aspect, the application site is not subject to any ecological or landscape designations and would not have any unacceptable impacts on protected species or key habitats. The proposals seek to respect the landscape and biodiversity and appropriate mitigation measures with respect to the latter will be put in place should planning consent be granted.
- 7.35. The proposed development would result in the creation of a high-quality, mixed-use commercial development, that has been designed to be attractive, functional, and adaptable to suit the end user's needs, while too not compromising upon the surrounding rural area.
- 7.36. The proposals represent the appropriate usage of an allocated employment site that will deliver significant benefits to the local economy, namely Longridge, through the primary benefits of job creation and the downstream benefits of employees utilising the nearby services of the town centre; thus, boosting the surrounding economy, which is a matter important in achieving the aims of both Development Plan for the area and the NPPF.
- 7.37. It is considered that the proposed development would result in an attractive, high quality and sustainable development in the context of the NPPF, as confirmed by the LVIA. It would fit in well with neighbouring land uses and there would be no significant environmental impacts arising from the proposed development.

/8 CONCLUSION

- 8.1 PWA Planning is retained by Ribble Valley Properties Ltd to submit a full planning application for the Erection of Mixed-Use Commercial Units (Use Class E) and Storage Facilities (Use Class B8), including the Conversion of Farmhouse to Provide Office Space (Use Class E), with Access from Lower Road regarding the land associated with Higher College Farm, Blackburn Road, Longridge, PR3 2YY. The application is made to Ribble Valley Borough Council and relates to the red edge application site boundary defined by the Location Plan.
- 8.2 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 places a requirement upon Authorities when determining planning applications to do so in accordance with the adopted Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 8.3 This statement has set out the planning policy relevant to the determination of the planning application and has assessed the proposed scheme in this context. Section 7 of the statement discusses the planning policy context, and it is concluded that the proposed development is in overall compliance with the relevant policies of the plan and national planning policy.
- 8.4 The scheme is supported by the necessary technical information and other evidence which clearly demonstrate that there would be no harmful impacts resulting from the proposed development and there are no other suitable sites within the locale. This scheme works to provide high-quality employment opportunities on a well-connected allocated employment site at the edge of Longridge town centre.
- 8.5 The proposed development will result in key benefits, which are deemed relevant to the determination of the application, and these should be awarded significant weight in determining the planning balance, namely: -

- Appropriate use of an allocated employment site through the provision of a mixed-use scheme;
- The generation of a significant number of employment opportunities, creating flexible spaces for local businesses;
- Provision of a unique development within a sustainable location which is accessible by sustainable modes of transportation;
- Creation of attractive, high-quality, and adaptable employment spaces;
- Supporting the local economy through the creation of jobs for local people and for local contractors and builders, during the erection of the proposed building.

8.6 As addressed earlier within this statement, the proposal represents a sustainable form of development, which is consistent with the Development Plan for Ribble Valley and should be supported.

8.7 For the reasons identified within this statement, it is considered that planning permission for the proposed development should be granted, and this application is commended to the authority.



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