

Higher College Farm Blackburn Road Longridge PR3 2YY

The erection of 40 no. Class E(g) units and 1 no. battery storage and maintenance unit with associated parking and access

PLANNING STATEMENT INCORPORATING DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

September 2023

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INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. PWA Planning is retained to progress a full planning application for the erection of 40 no. Class E(g) units and 1 no. battery storage and maintenance unit with associated parking and access ('the proposed development') at land associated with Higher College Farm, Blackburn Road, Longridge, PR3 2YY ('the application site').
- 1.2. The purpose of this Planning Statement is to assess and conclude on the acceptability of the proposals in terms of relevant national and local planning policy, together with any material considerations.
- 1.3. This statement should be read in conjunction with the submitted application package, which includes the following documents:
 - Application form, relevant certificates and notices;
 - Planning Statement (this document);
 - Tree Survey and Arboricultural Impact Assessment;
 - Bat Survey;
 - Preliminary Ecological Appraisal;
 - Flood Risk Assessment;
 - Travel Plan;
 - Transport Statement;
 - Drawn Information:
 - Site Location Plan (ref. EAD_203_01);
 - Existing Site Plan (ref. EAD_203_02);
 - Proposed Site Plan (ref. EAD_203_03);
 - Proposed Floor Plan (ref. EAD_203_04);
 - Proposed Elevations (ref. EAD_203_05);
 - Building Plan and Elevation (ref. EAD_203_06);
 - Existing Site Section (ref. EAD_203_07); and
 - Proposed Site Section (ref. EAD_203_08).

SITE DESCRIPTION

- 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. Figure 1 below illustrates the site and its wider setting.



Figure 1: An aerial image of the site in its wider setting

- 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 and services.

- 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.
- 2.7. 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.

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:

- **3/2022/0553:** *Full planning permission for the erection of commercial units (Use Class E (g)) including conversion and extension of existing farmhouse for purposes of Use Class E (g).* Approved 19th January 2023.
- **3/2018/1105:** *Outline planning permission for 21 dwellings and associated works.* Refused 3rd June 2019.
- **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.

3.2. 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 18th November 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 29th November 2019.
- **3/2017/0317:** *Land South of Blackburn Road, Outline Planning application for Employment Floorspace (use Class B1, B2, B8).* Approved 4th September 2017.

3.3. The above applications illustrate that the Council approved a similar application at the site earlier this year, relating to the erection of commercial units; illustrating the acceptability of such uses at the site. The outline planning application approved in 2017 at the site also demonstrates that the Council believe that the site is suitable for industrial-type developments.

DESIGN AND ACCESS

- 4.1. The proposed development seeks to deliver 40 no. business units (Use Class E(g)) including an accompanying maintenance store and battery storage unit, with access taken from the B6243 due north as per the previous consent at the site (LPA ref. 3/2022/0553).
- 4.2. The submitted Proposed Site Plan (Drawing No. EAD_203_03) indicates the arrangement of the proposed units, which are to be uniform in their design, comprising forty units each roughly 70m² in size.
- 4.3. As shown on the proposed layout plan, the proposals intend to create four blocks with ten units each with associated parking due north and south of each block, to provide convenient parking arrangements for future employees and visitors. The proposed units occupy the central portion of the site, with vehicle parking accessed directly from the access into the site.
- 4.4. Refuse stores are conveniently located adjacent to each block of units, with five units sharing a refuse store area which is deemed sufficient for the anticipated levels of waste generation at the site.
- 4.5. In total, the proposals will create 83no. standard car parking spaces, along with 10no. mobility spaces, and 8no. electric vehicle charging points. Additional parking will be provided for motorbikes (4no. spaces) and bicycles (10no. spaces) with covered stands to be erected to shelter the bikes.
- 4.6. The proposed units are uniform in their design, with a floor-to-eave height of 4.275m and floor to ridge height is 6.810m. Each unit will consist of rustic red multi facing brick, vertical timber cladding over composite cladding and timber fascia boards. The units will have a secure personal door and a powder coated roller shutter. The roof of the units will comprise of corrugated composite roof sheeting, roof lights, and a black half round gutter.
- 4.7. The proposals also include a unit roughly 140m² in size that will contain battery storage for the Photo Voltaic (PV) System and a general maintenance store in the south eastern corner of the site. The design of this unit mimics the proposed business units, to ensure that it blends seamlessly into the surroundings, standing at the same height and composed of the same materials. This will allow the development to produce, store, and utilise renewable

energy, in line with demands, while conveniently providing on-site facilities for the upkeep of the units.

- 4.8. The design of the buildings replicates agricultural style buildings that are prevalent within the locale and rural areas of the Ribble Valley and beyond. Each block will be a simple portal frame design to replicate typical large agricultural buildings. The elevations will have low level brickwork with vertical timber cladding above. The roof will be a corrugated metal composite sheet.
- 4.9. The current proposals have reverted back to a similar proposal that was illustrated in the outline approval (ref: 3/2017/0602). The layout for the outline scheme indicated commercial units facing inwards towards centralised parking areas. However, this would not lead to an active frontage to Lower Road, as typical commercial unit designs have a single façade with all other elevations blank and free of windows. The current proposals address this and rotate the buildings to face the road, connecting the blocks where they are back-to-back.
- 4.10. Having the main façade of the buildings and associated parking on the roadside will provide the active frontage needed to meet good design practices. The design also aims to soften the impact of the introduction of these new buildings by introducing new perimeter landscaping and providing raised areas to the front. This is illustrated on the proposed site section (drawing no EAD_203_08).
- 4.11. The proposed access into the site will have 2.4m x 61m vision splays, with the width of the access 7.3m. Access is also provided for pedestrians, with 3.25m running lanes and 2m wide islands, which will allow for pedestrians to easily navigate the site.

PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

- 5.1. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that *'if regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise'* including any supplementary / supporting planning documents and government guidance as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021).
- 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 Proposal Map is provided in Figure 2, which illustrates the site is located with the countryside, outside of the defined settlement boundaries. However, the extract shows that the site is an allocated employment site, as per Policy EAL3 of the HED DPD.

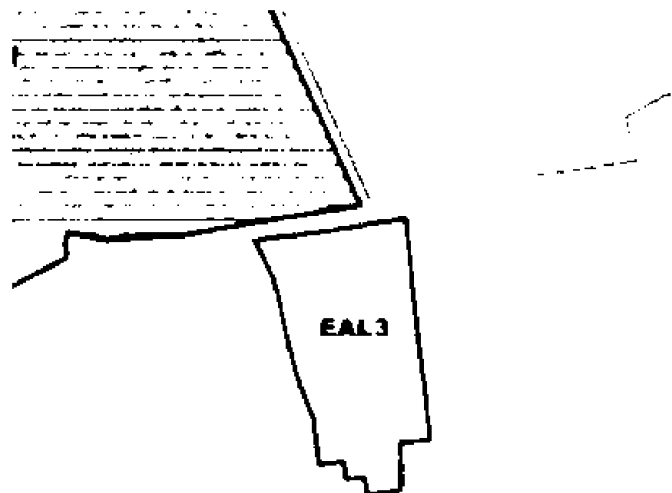


Figure 2: Extract from the Proposals Map

- 5.4. 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.
- 5.5. 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 3.

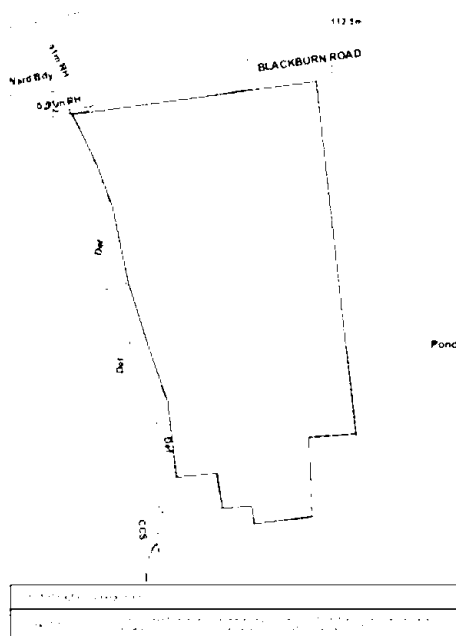


Figure 3: Policy EAL3 - Site Extent

- 5.6. **Key Statement EC1: Business and Employment Development** allocates 9 hectares of land for employment in appropriate and sustainable locations. The policy states land will be made available for employment use in order to support the health of the local economy and wider sustainable job creation.
- 5.7. **Key Statement DS1: Development Strategy** states that the majority of new housing should be concentrated within the settlements of Clitheroe, Longridge and Whalley.
- 5.8. **Key Statement DS2: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development** echoes the NPPF, showing how the Council will favour proposals which reflect sustainable development.
- 5.9. **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.

- 5.10. **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.
- 5.11. **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.
- 5.12. **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.
- 5.13. **Policy DMG1: General Considerations** states that new development should be of a high standard, being sympathetic to its surrounds.
- 5.14. **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.
- 5.15. **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.
- 5.16. **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.
- 5.17. **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.

- 5.18. **Policy DME3: Site and Species Protection and Conservation** relates to the biodiversity of sites and how this can be improved or retained.
- 5.19. **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 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)

- 5.20. 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.
- 5.21. 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.
- 5.22. 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
- 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.

- 5.23. **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.
- 5.24. **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.
- 5.25. **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.
- 5.26. **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.
- 5.27. **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 by supporting a rural business and by making an important contribution to the local economy.

- 5.28. **Paragraph 106(a)** requires planning policies to support an appropriate mix of uses across an area, to minimise the number and length of journeys needed for employment, shopping, leisure, education, and other activities.
- 5.29. **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.
- 5.30. **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.
- 5.31. **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.

5.32. **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.

TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1. A number of technical documents are submitted in support of the proposed development and form part of this full planning application submission. It is pertinent to note that these documents were submitted in support of the planning application ref. 3/2022/0553, which was approved at the site earlier this year.
- 6.2. Nonetheless, given the recency of the reports and the fact that the current proposals are broadly the same as the approved scheme, it is deemed that the reuse of the reports is appropriate in this case, to expedite the planning process.

Flood Risk

- 6.3. 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. As such, the report concludes that the proposed development is at low risk from all sources of flooding. Moreover, the report notes that surface waters at the site 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.

Trees and Landscaping

- 6.4. Policy DME1 aims to protect existing trees and woodlands, and where possible enhance them. The submitted 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. 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.

- 6.5. The proposed site layout provides an opportunity for new tree planting which will help to break up the built form at the site and compensate for any losses that are necessary to implement the development. The applicant is willing to agree to a suitably worded condition regarding the provision of soft landscaping proposals, prior to the commencement of the development.

Ecology

- 6.6. 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 (PEA) and Bat Survey, which confirm that there are no protected species at the site. The PEA further confirms that the flora that is currently present at the site is of little importance, with the species common within the local area.

Transport and Parking

- 6.7. Key Statement DMI2 and Policy DMG3 states that new development should be located conveniently to minimise the need to travel, specifically by personal vehicles, while such developments should also have convenient access to public transportation links, as well as wider pedestrian and cycle links.
- 6.8. 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.
- 6.9. 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 the previous planning approvals at the site.

- 6.10. Further to the above, the submitted Transport Assessment confirms 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.
- 6.11. This 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.
- 6.12. Overall, the information submitted 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.

PLANNING POLICY ASSESSMENT

Principle of Development

- 7.1. Policy EAL3 is of pertinence to the proposed development, given that this policy, as contained within the Housing and Economic Development Document (HEDNA, 2019), allocates this site specifically for B1 (now contained within Use Class E), B2, and B8 uses. Through the allocation of this site for employment purposes, the Council acknowledges that the development and subsequent occupancy of this site is necessary to meet the employment land requirements across the Council's planning period (2008-2028).
- 7.2. The HEDNA document was adopted in October 2019; however, the Use Classes Order was last updated on the 1st of September 2020. The revision to the Use Classes Order saw the replacement of Use Class B1, by Use Class E, which encompasses Commercial, Business, and Service uses. More specifically, Use Class B1 (Business) were formerly uses that could be "carried out in a residential area without detriment to its amenity" comprising three sub-divisions, as per the below:
- B1(a) Offices - Other than a use within Class A2.
 - B1(b) Research and development of products or processes.
 - B1(c) Industrial processes.
- 7.3. Use Class E(g) echoes the above wording, again being split into three sub-divisions, with Use Class B1(a) now E(g)(i), Class B1(b) now Class E(g)(ii), and Use Class B1(c) now Class E(g)(iii). In accordance with the site's allocation, this full planning application seeks to erect 40no. units that will be utilised within Use Class E(g), i.e. uses that can be carried out in residential areas without causing detriment to its amenity.
- 7.4. Although the proposals do not include the provision of Use Classes B2 or B8, it is trusted that the principle of development at the site is acceptable, delivering a number of high-quality employment opportunities as envisioned by the sites allocated. Furthermore, the proposals will provide a significant number of commercial units for local businesses to expand and establish, without leading to any adverse noise or traffic impacts, given that the uses are suitable for residential areas.

- 7.5. It is acknowledged that the proposals also include the erection of a proposed maintenance and battery store at the site, within the south-eastern portion of the site. The purpose of the battery store at this site is to store and release renewable PV energy at the site, in line with demands. The PV arrangement will help to generate a portion of the energy for the proposed units, which will be stored by the on-site batteries and utilised as needed, helping to reduce overall energy costs and create a lower-carbon development.
- 7.6. Similarly, the proposed maintenance store will be utilised to store equipment that is necessary to maintain and upkeep the units at the site, consolidating this within one building at the site. Given that this unit forms only a small portion of the overall site, it is trusted that this is acceptable in principle, given that it is ancillary storage, used in connection with the commercial uses.
- 7.7. Adding to the above, Key Statement EC1 establishes that employment development should be directed the Ribble Valley's three 'main' settlements of Clitheroe, Whalley, and Longridge, given their sustainability and ability to support further growth and development. This Key Statement also notes that land will be made available for employment uses in order to support the health of the local economy and wider sustainable job creation, while also showing that allocated employment sites will be protected.
- 7.8. Although the site lies outside the defined settlement boundary of Longridge, it is merely 300m from the boundary and as such, benefits from being well-connected to Longridge in terms of services and transport connections. It is very likely that a significant number of employees at this site would live in and around the town, which is reiterated within the HED DPD whereby the site is allocated for employment purposes.
- 7.9. Similar to the above, 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. Policy DMB1 adds to the above, stating that proposals for supporting business growth will be supported in principle and approved whereby they adhere to the remainder of the core strategy and Local Development Framework.
- 7.10. 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 lies within close proximity, 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'.

- 7.11. Given the sites location in the countryside, development proposals are required to be considered 'essential to the local economy' to be deemed as acceptable, in line with Policy DMG2. The proposed development is considered to be essential to the local economy, given its allocation as an employment site (EAL3) and the proposed use of the site; thus, satisfying the considerations for development outside of the settlement boundary in Policy DMG2.
- 7.12. 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. It is likely that once occupied, future employees and visitors of the site would visit the local shops and services within Longridge on their lunch breaks or for informal meetings.
- 7.13. The proposed development is wholly for Use Class E(g) units, 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 wording of Policy EAL3, with the delivery of this site importance to ensure that employment needs are being met.
- 7.14. 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. Given that the proposals relate to the provision of employment and the site is allocated for such, the principle of development is therefore considered acceptable.

Previous Application

- 7.15. As aforementioned, the site was previously subject to a planning application which was approved with conditions on the 19th of January 2023. The description of the development at the site read: *"Proposed erection of commercial units (Use Class E(g)) including conversion and*

extension of existing farmhouse for purposes of Use Class E (g)." However, the original planning application made at the site related to the *"proposed 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)."*

- 7.16. This full planning application no longer includes the conversion of the existing dwelling, which was formerly to be converted into an office area – this unit is to remain unaffected by the proposals. Indeed, the nature of the uses proposed, i.e. uses that can be carried out without detriment to residential areas, mean that the existing dwelling adjacent to the site will not be negatively impacted by the proposed development.
- 7.17. Moreover, the nature of the proposals differs, with the previous application initially containing both Use Class E and Use Class B8 units. However, the uses at the site were amended to refer only to Use Classes E(g) and Use Classes B8, following feedback received by the Council. However, this planning application relates solely to the provision of units that will be utilised within Use Class E(g) as per the previous consent, with such units deemed to comply with the relevant policies and allocation of the site.

Sustainable Development

- 7.18. 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).'

- 7.19. Regarding the economic objective, the development will bring employment opportunities to Longridge, making suitable use of an allocated site. 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.

- 7.20. 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 spaces to allow businesses to establish and grow or relocate to the premises; thus, bringing new people to the area.
- 7.21. 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 will likely include a decent amount of planting and landscaping around the site, with a particular emphasis on the boundaries to obscure views and internally to break up hardstanding. Furthermore, the proposed battery storage unit will allow the proposals to store the solar energy generated from the PV panels, released as demands increase creating renewable energy. As such, the proposals are considered to have no negative environmental impacts and will work to improve the current state of the site.

Design and Layout

- 7.22. The design of the proposals varies when compared to that of the previously approved planning application at the site. The current proposals are much more uniform in their design and configuration, given that each unit is to be utilised for the same purpose, whereas the previously approved scheme originally involved a number of different uses, which required different spaces that could be adapted to suit individualised needs.
- 7.23. Previously, the proposals were set around a central courtyard with eight blocks of mixed-use commercial units created, with each block split depending on its design and size. The current design shares some similarities with the former, such as including car parking to the north of the site to soften the impact of the development when viewed from the highway.
- 7.24. Nonetheless, the current design is clearly more functional and rigid, creating fit-for-purpose units, while also using materials prevalent within rural areas, including timber cladding and red multi facing brick, to help the site blend into its surrounding vernacular, which includes the dwelling adjacent to the site.

- 7.25. The design of the proposed development has been influenced by nearby developments within the Ribble Valley, including the popular 'Mitton Road Business Park' in Whalley. A number of the existing units at the business park are utilised for similar purposes, with an extract provided at Figure 4 below. As shown, this unit features similar materials, including vertical timber cladding, corrugate composite roof sheeting with rooflights and powder coated Upvc windows.



Figure 4 - Google StreetView Image from Mitton Road Business Park

- 7.26. Within the previous application, the materials used varied between the units depending on their size and use, utilising materials such as reclaimed stone, zinc cladding, and stone cladding, as well as containing large, glazed elements and aluminium cladding roofs. Nonetheless, given the restrictions with regards to the end uses of the units, this degree of design quality is no longer financially viable; hence, why the proposals are to be altered to be more uniform, helping to build them at a higher volume and lower materials cost from purchasing in bulk.
- 7.27. Nonetheless, it is still considered that the proposals promote a high-quality of design that bears similarity to other units within the Borough, carefully responding to the local context, i.e. the rural to urban transition between Longridge, with a mixture of materials that will be high-quality and durable.
- 7.28. Key Statement EN3 seeks to ensure that all development is sustainable in its design and building standards. As aforementioned, the proposals intend to erect a battery and maintenance storage unit at the site. Ribble Valley Borough Council have a target to be carbon neutral by 2030, adopting a climate change strategy in August 2021, after Parliament declared a

climate change emergency in May 2019. The strategy itself notes that the *"planning system is the most powerful tool local authorities have for ensuring development will be sustainable in a changing climate"* while acknowledging that *"Planning has a key role to play in helping to tackle Climate Change."* As such, it is trusted that the Council are supportive of appropriate methods to reduce climate change emissions whereby possible, which logically extends to this battery storage unit that will store and release energy as and when required. It is further pertinent to note that the proposals will be built in accordance with the most up-to-date Building Regulations (Part L) which strive to deliver more energy efficient and lower-carbon developments.

- 7.29. Overall, the posed development provides a functional, yet appropriate 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.
- 7.30. In terms of neighbouring amenities, Policy DMG1 states that development should not adversely affect the amenities of the surrounding area. The scheme has been carefully considered and designed to ensure there is no impact on surrounding land uses, or future uses of neighbouring land, which includes the existing farmhouse at the site.
- 7.31. The proposed development seeks to provide a high-quality employment 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. It is therefore considered that the proposal is in line with the thrust of Policy DMB1.

Landscaping

- 7.32. A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) is submitted in support of this full planning application which was undertaken as part of the previous application at the site – given the similarities between the current proposals, the findings are deemed to still be of significance.
- 7.33. The LVIA identified and visited a number of public receptor locations, 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, with consideration to the undulating topography, local building infrastructure, extent of existing 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.

- 7.34. The applicant is willing to accept a suitably worded condition requiring the submission and agreement of a soft landscaping scheme with the LPA, which will include the locations, species type and any other relevant details.

Summary

- 7.35. The application site is currently an underutilised resource, given its formal allocation for employment purposes and the sustainable location of the site, with significant benefits that could accrue from its development for employment purposes. 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.
- 7.36. 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.
- 7.37. 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.
- 7.38. 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 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.

- 7.39. The proposed development would result in the creation of a high-quality development, that has been designed to be functional and fit-for-purpose, while too not compromising upon the surrounding rural area or adjacent farmhouse, aiding the rural-to-urban transition into Longridge.
- 7.40. 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.
- 7.41. It is considered that the proposed development would result in an attractive, high quality and sustainable development in the context of the NPPF. It would fit in well with neighbouring land uses and there would be no significant environmental impacts arising from the proposed development.

CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1. PWA Planning is retained to progress a full planning application for the erection of 40 no. Class E(g) units and 1 no. battery storage and maintenance unit with associated parking and access at 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 8 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 high-quality commercial development;
 - The generation of a significant number of employment opportunities, creating opportunities for local businesses to invest and grow;
 - Provision of employment within a sustainable location which is accessible by sustainable modes of transportation and private vehicle;
 - Generation and storage of renewable energy, to create a low-carbon and largely self-sufficient employment site;

- Delivery without harm to neighbouring land uses, without adverse visual impact and hence without harm to the fundamental character of the area;
- Adequate vehicle access and parking space for all users, including mobility spaces, cars, motorcycles, bicycles, and electric vehicles.
- 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. This planning statement has demonstrated that the proposed development complies with local planning policy, the NPPF and other relevant material considerations and as such, the proposed development should be deemed acceptable and be approved without delay.



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