



The Growing House:

A dwelling of exceptional design quality (NPPF 84e) with associated curtilage, landscaping and access, together with a car park for visitors to the remains of the roman road within the site

Land at Higher Road,
Longridge

Planning Statement

February 2025

commissioned by:
Mr N Richards

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by S&L Planning Consultants on behalf of the applicant in support of their planning application for a proposed new dwelling, known as 'The Growing House', on land at Higher Road, Longridge.
- 1.2 The application is made in accordance with the national policy exception provided in paragraph 84(e) of the National Planning Policy Framework 2024 which justifies the development of isolated new homes in the countryside where their design is of exceptional quality.
- 1.3 The full description of the proposed development is:
- *Erection of a part single-storey and part two-storey dwelling of exceptional design quality (NPPF 84e) with associated landscaping, habitat restoration, change of use of land to residential curtilage and access from Higher Road, together with the creation of a small visitor car park for members of the public to view the remains of the roman road to be preserved (if feasible) within the site.*
- 1.4 This Planning Statement provides a brief description of the site and surroundings, summarises The Growing House proposal, and summarises the relevant policies of the statutory development plan for Ribble Valley and other material policy documents. It then assesses the merits of the planning application against the identified policies, Government policy in the National Planning Policy Framework 2024 and all other material considerations.
- 1.5 In conclusion, it demonstrates that The Growing House proposal is in accordance with the relevant landscape, biodiversity and general development management policies of the adopted Ribble Valley Local Plan Core Strategy 2008 to 2028 and, insofar as there is a conflict with spatial development, countryside and housing policies, material considerations, and expressly the countryside policy exception at NPPF 84(e), indicate that a decision other than in accordance with the development plan, is justified in this case.
- 1.6 Consequently, it is demonstrated that having regard to the development plan and all material considerations, there is a clear and compelling case for planning permission to be granted in accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

Supporting information

- 1.7 This Planning Statement should be read together with the following list of plans and supporting documents submitted with the application:
- a) Application drawings:
- Location plan
 - Topographical survey 180220/TOP

- Existing site sections (1 of 2) 04001
- Existing site sections (2 of 2) 04002
- Proposed site plan 01003
- Proposed access layout plan H4322-H-01 Rev P1
- Proposed elevations 03002
- Proposed ground floor plan 02002
- Proposed first floor plan 02003
- Proposed landscape masterplan 12870-LUC-XX-00-DR-L-0101 P01
- Proposed garden plan 01004
- Proposed planting plan (1 of 2) 12870-LUC-XX-00-DR-L-0400 P02
- Proposed planting plan (2 of 2) 12870-LUC-XX-00-DR-L-0401 P02
- Proposed sections (1 of 3) 04001
- Proposed sections (2 of 3) 04002
- Proposed sections (3 of 3) 04003
- Proposed street scene 03004
- Proposed photomontages

b) Application documents:

- Application form
- Design and access statement
- Landscape and visual appraisal
- Biodiversity net gain metric calculation and assessment
- Ecological appraisal
- Arboricultural constraints appraisal
- Flood Risk assessment and drainage strategy
- Archaeological desk based assessment
- Energy and sustainability statement
- Highway access technical note
- Mineral resource assessment
- Geo-technical assessment (Phase I)

2 Site and surroundings

- 2.1 A full description of the application site and surrounding area is provided in the Design and Access Statement and the Landscape and Visual Appraisal which accompany the planning application.
- 2.2 In summary, the three hectare application site is set in an elevated position on the southern side of Longridge Fell within the Forest of Bowland National Landscape. It is located on Higher Road approximately 4 km northeast of Longridge and west of the junction with Stonegate Lane.
- 2.3 It lies on the south side of Higher Road, from which it is accessed, and comprises grazing pasture divided into two fields by a stone wall and enclosed by walls and hedges, and with a number of trees along the road frontage. The site slopes downwards from north to south, and also from east to west. The highest point in the northeast corner is 197.09m AOD and the lowest point in the southwest corner 179.35m AOD. The average gradient across the site is 1 in 7. The terrain and topography of the site is shown on the topographic survey plan (180220/TOP), the east-west and north-south existing cross sections (04001 and 04002) and 3D image on pages 5 and 6 of the Design and Access Statement.
- 2.4 The western part of the site also includes the steep valley side of Cowley Brook which runs along the west boundary and is covered by dense deciduous woodland. The east boundary is marked by a gravelled agricultural access track and stone wall and there are also two field gate access points on the Higher Road frontage. The site is not crossed by, or adjacent to, any public rights of way and the nearest footpaths are FP-0335002 which is approximately 165 metres to the east and FP-0335004 which is approximately 160 metres to the south.
- 2.5 There are two isolated properties immediately north of Higher Road, namely Cowley Brook Cottage and Cowley Brook Farm, but no other neighbouring buildings, and there are no nearby listed buildings or other designated heritage assets.
- 2.6 The site is crossed diagonally from northwest to southeast by the known alignment of the roman road between Ribchester and Carlisle which is visible in places as a surface earthwork feature. It is a non-designated heritage asset and below ground remains of road surface may be preserved.

3 Proposed development

3.1 The Growing House proposal is a bespoke, contemporary, new dwelling which has been individually designed for the applicant and their family. The application seeks full planning permission for:

- *Erection of a part single-storey and part two-storey dwelling of exceptional design quality (NPPF 84e) with associated landscaping, habitat restoration, change of use of land to residential curtilage and access from Higher Road, together with the creation of a small visitor car park for members of the public to view the remains of the roman road to be preserved (if feasible) within the site.*

3.2 The proposed dwelling, and its design development, is described in detail in the Design and Access Statement and drawings and reports submitted with the application, and is summarised below.

3.3 The overall concept and architectural design of The Growing House has been developed, and has evolved, since 2022, and with critical review and rigorous testing provided by the RIBA Places Matter design panel via four design reviews between February 2023 and August 2023. The Places Matter Design Review Reports are enclosed at Appendix 1 of this Statement.

3.4 The proposal is founded on the basis enabling the applicant and their family to live a more sustainable and self-sufficient life, and how this translates into all aspects of the landscape, engineering and architectural design of the dwelling. It is named 'The Growing House' because it is centred on a robust commitment to biodiversity and the concept of being a living, 'growing medium' in which vegetation and organic plants and food production is integrated, and can be grown:

- inside the house - in the two integrated grow-houses (glazed spaces) which are part of the ground floorplan design
- outside around the house - in the kitchen garden / vegetable allotment and fruit orchard, and
- on the house - on green external walls (vertical farming), and also because the proposed landscaping (fruit trees, lichen, mosses and wildflowers) will be encouraged to grow on the house walls using innovative 'bio-receptive concrete' and green roof, as it does on the stone walls in the local landscape.

3.5 The four-bedroom dwelling is an L-shape floorplan and orientated to face almost south to take advantage of the views and solar gain. It is arranged around a sheltered courtyard to the rear (north) from which it is also entered via the access and driveway from Higher Road, and is partly set into the sloping site. The accommodation is provided in a flat-roof single storey ground floor apart from a single first floor element which is a purposely-projecting part-cantilevered feature. The ground floor (see plan 02002) provides an entrance hall, kitchen, lounge, office, gym, guest accommodation and the 2 no. 'grow-house' spaces, and the first floor (see plan 02003) contains two bedrooms and bathrooms.

- 3.6 The new dwelling, integral garage and courtyard are set towards the south east corner of the application site, perpendicular to the alignment of the roman road, and will be accessed via a low-key agricultural-type gravelled track from Higher Road alongside the retained stone wall, and which uses the existing field access point. A drystone wall 'pen' and protecting 'ha-ha' will enclose the house and provide shelter for the food growing garden and outdoor spaces.
- 3.7 The dwelling will incorporate PV panels on the first floor roof with battery storage, an air source hot water tank, infrared radiators, and rainwater harvesting and clean wastewater recycling systems to provide water for irrigation. Water from a natural spring within the site will also feed a new pond and wetland habitat area and feed and to fill a livestock drinking trough. The main materials for the dwelling are local facing stone (Longridge sandstone and millstone grit), bio-receptive concrete, stone gabion cages, timber cladding, matt-finish grey metal structural elements, cladding, windows and doors, and green / wildflower roofs.
- 3.8 The land within the wider application site (approximately 82%) will remain undeveloped as pasture and natural habitat. Fields F1, F2 and F3 (see Proposed Site Plan 01003 and Landscape Masterplan 12870-LUC-XX-00-DR-L-0101 P01) to the north and south of the dwelling, will be managed as restored hay meadow (in association with the Forest of Bowland Hay Time Project which seeks to restore managed, species-rich, hay meadows in the landscape of this part of the National Landscape). The wooded valley side of Cowley Brook will also be managed and 'rewilded', and extended with new native scrub planting. The landscaping, planting and biodiversity habitat-restoration proposals are shown and explained at pages 11 and 18 of the Design and Access Statement and in the Ecological Appraisal and Biodiversity Net Gain Report.
- 3.9 The proposal also includes the potential to excavate and permanently preserve the remains of the roman road which crosses the site depending on its condition. This is being investigated by the Roman Roads Research Association and, if it is possible to display a section of the road as a heritage asset which members of the public will be able to view, a small visitor car park (up to 4 no. spaces) will be provided (as a heritage benefit) adjacent to Higher Road, and using the existing field access. The location of this car park and the proposed access works on Higher Road, is shown on the Proposed Site Plan (01003) and the Proposed Access Layout Plan (H4322-H-01 Rev P1).

Pre-application consultation

- 3.10 A pre-application enquiry (2023/ENQ/00061) was submitted on 27th September 2023 and a response was received on 16th February 2024. In summary, the Council commented that:
- In spatial terms:
 - the proposal would conflict with Key Statement DS1 and Policies DMG2 and DMH3 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy insofar that it would create a new dwelling, located in the countryside outside of defined settlement limits, without sufficient justification - whereby it is not a dwelling intended to meet local housing needs, and it would not meet any of the other exception criteria within the policies.

- In landscape and visual terms:
 - the scale, configuration, siting and design of the proposal would be an anomalous and discordant introduction into the landscape that would result in significant visual and landscape harm to the Forest of Bowland National Landscape and the immediate and wider character of the area. It would not be in keeping with the character of the landscape, reflecting local distinctiveness, vernacular style, scale, style, features and building materials' as required by Key Statement EN2.
 - the proposal would not result in the 'protection, conservation and enhancement of the landscape and character of the area' and not 'be in keeping with the character of the landscape and special qualities of the AONB by virtue of its size, design, use of material, landscaping and siting' as required by Policy DMG2.
 - the proposal would not be 'sympathetic to existing and proposed land uses in terms of its size, intensity and nature as well as scale, massing, style, features and building materials' as required by Policy DMG1, and would conflict with its aim of ensuring that proposals consider the 'density, layout and relationship between buildings, with particular emphasis placed on visual appearance and the relationship to surroundings, including impact on landscape character'.
 - the scope (number and location of receptor viewpoints) of the LVA submitted with the planning application is adequate and the proposal is not EIA development.
- In terms of NPPF 84(e):
 - the Council confirms that the site would be considered as 'isolated'
 - the proposal may represent 'high quality' design but it would not be considered as being 'of an exceptional quality' or 'truly outstanding'. Particularly insofar that 'exceptional' or 'truly outstanding' design could not be considered as that which would result in adverse landscape and visual harm.
 - the proposal would not be 'sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area' and would not 'significantly enhance its immediate setting'.

3.11 The Council also commented that the proposal would lead to an unsustainable pattern of development, insofar that it is not within walking distance of local services and facilities and will be largely reliant on access by private car, and therefore conflict with Key Statement DMI2 and Policy DMG3 of the Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework presumption in favour of sustainable development.

3.12 The applicant and design team have duly considered the feedback received from the Council in preparing the final-scheme planning application. It is therefore submitted with full and comprehensive supporting evidence to demonstrate that The Growing House will not have an adverse impact upon the Forest of Bowland National Landscape and clearly meets the criteria and requirements of NPPF 84(e), and that planning permission should be granted.

4 Planning policy

- 4.1 Relevant policy is provided in the adopted statutory development plan for Ribble Valley and in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2024) and the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) which are important material considerations.

Development plan

- 4.2 For the purposes of this application, this comprises the Ribble Valley Local Plan Core Strategy covering the period 2008 to 2028. This confirms that the application site is located in a countryside area, outside any settlement, and within the Forest of Bowland National Landscape. In this context, the most important policies for determining the planning application are:

- Key Statement DS1 Development strategy
- Key Statement DS2 Sustainable development
- Key Statement EN2 Landscape
- Key Statement EN3 Sustainable development and climate change
- Key Statement EN4 Biodiversity and geodiversity
- Key Statement DMI2 Transport considerations

- Policy DMG1 General considerations
- Policy DMG2 Strategic considerations
- Policy DMG3 Transport and mobility
- Policy DME1 Protecting trees and woodlands
- Policy DME2 Landscape and townscape protection
- Policy DME3 Site and species protection and conservation
- Policy DME4 Protecting heritage assets
- Policy DME5 Renewable energy
- Policy DME6 Water management
- Policy DMH3 Dwellings in the open countryside and the AONB
- Policy DMB5 Footpaths and bridleways

Other material considerations

Forest of Bowland National Landscape Management Plan 2019 - 2024

- 4.3 Approved in November 2019, and informed by the Forest of Bowland National Landscape 'Landscape Character Assessment 2009', this is the current version of the statutory Landscape Management Plan for the Forest of Bowland.
- 4.4 It is the basis for identifying the aspects of the National Landscape which are critical in contributing to its natural beauty as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. It explains that new development within the Forest of Bowland National Landscape is expected to conform to a high standard of design; to be in keeping with local distinctiveness; and, fundamentally, that it seeks to conserve and enhance natural beauty.

National Planning Policy Framework 2024

4.5 This sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how they should be applied. The most relevant parts of the NPPF 2024 in this case are:

- Paragraph 2 Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The National Planning Policy Framework is a material consideration in planning decisions.
- Paragraph 3 The Framework should be read as a whole including its footnotes and annexes.
- Paragraph 12 Local planning authorities may take decisions that depart from an up-to-date development plan (but only) if material considerations in a particular case indicate that the plan should not be followed.
- Paragraph 84 Planning policies and decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside unless..... the following circumstances apply:
- e) the design is of exceptional quality, in that it:
 - i) is truly outstanding, reflecting the highest standards in architecture, and would help to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas; and
 - ii) would significantly enhance its immediate setting, and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area.
- Paragraph 131 The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. 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.
- Paragraph 137 Design quality should be considered throughout the evolution and assessment of individual proposals. Applicants should, where applicable, provide sufficient information to demonstrate how their proposals will meet the design expectations set out in local and national policy.
- Paragraph 138 Local planning authorities should ensure that they have access to, and make appropriate use of, tools and processes for assessing and improving the design of development. In assessing applications, local planning authorities should have regard to the outcome from these processes, including any recommendations made by design review panels.

- Paragraph 187 Planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:
- b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services - including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;
 - d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures and incorporating features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs;
 - e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability.
Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans.
- Paragraph 189 Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Landscapes which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited. When considering applications for development within National Parks, the Broads and National Landscapes, permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest.
- Paragraph 216 The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.
- Paragraph 219 Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset, or which better reveal its significance, should be treated favourably.

5 Planning assessment

5.1 On the basis that the proposed development is submitted as an isolated new home of exceptional design quality in the countryside, the main issues to be considered in determining the planning application are:

- 1) whether the site is a suitable location for the proposed dwelling having regard to local and national planning policies
- 2) the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the Forest of Bowland National Landscape
- 3) the effect of the development on heritage assets
- 4) the effect of the development on residential amenity
- 5) the technical and environmental effects of the development:
 - a) trees and hedgerows
 - b) biodiversity
 - c) drainage and flood risk
 - d) energy and sustainability
 - e) ground conditions and mineral resources
 - f) access and highways

5.2 These issues are considered below and, after which, the overall planning balance is drawn.

1) Suitability of the site location for the proposed dwelling

5.3 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 refers to the development plan as a whole and states, that 'if regard is to be had to the development plan for the purposes 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'.

5.4 The relevant policies of the adopted Ribble Valley Local Plan are therefore the starting point for decision taking however the NPPF 2024, and expressly NPPF 84(e), is a key material consideration in determining the planning application in this case, and it establishes the Government's view of what sustainable development means in practice where an isolated new home in the countryside of exceptional design quality is proposed.

Conflict with Ribble Valley spatial strategy

5.5 The Growing House development is proposed in the open countryside outside a defined settlement boundary and, by definition, does not meet the requirements or exception criteria of Policies DMG2 and DMH3 of the Local Plan Core Strategy. There is, consequently, conflict with the spatial development strategy in Key Statement DS1, as the Council refers to in its pre-application response. However the conflict is limited, whereby the proposal is a single dwelling (rather than a multiple dwelling scheme) and the harm is solely 'policy harm'. There is no meaningful 'practical harm' to the development strategy as its continuing application and effectiveness as a development management tool is not undermined.

- 5.6 Also, whilst Policies DS1, DMG2 and DMH3 of the Core Strategy do not make explicit provision for isolated new homes of exceptional design quality in the countryside, they also do not explicitly resist them. The position is that the development plan is silent on the matter.
- 5.7 Therefore, and moreover, as the proposed development is put forward, expressly, on the basis of being an isolated new home in the countryside of exceptional design quality, the limited policy harm is also outweighed by the national policy exception at NPPF 84(e), and which must be referred to in the absence of a relevant development plan policy. As a material consideration in planning decisions¹ which is capable of outweighing conflict with the relevant policies of an adopted development plan², the NPPF justifies exceptions to be made to the restriction placed on the development of new dwellings in the countryside, and thereby any conflict with local spatial development policies, if the requirements and criteria of NPPF 84(e), which collectively determine that design is of exceptional quality, are met.

Compliance with NPPF 84(e)

- 5.8 Before assessing the NPPF 84(e) criteria which determine if the design of a proposed dwellings is of exceptional quality, the pre-qualifying requirement which applies to all of the types of housing permitted by NPPF 84, is to determine that The Growing House qualifies as an 'isolated home in the countryside', in order that national policy is correctly engaged and applies in this case.

a) An isolated location

- 5.9 The test of 'isolation', in terms of the meaning of the word and its practical application, has been examined by the courts and the principal legal authorities³ have determined that:
- a) 'Isolation' is not determined by the presence or absence of existing houses, buildings and/or development⁴ in terms of their physical proximity to, or remoteness from, the site of a proposed new dwelling;
 - b) 'Isolation' is determined by the presence or absence of an existing settlement in terms of its physical proximity to, or remoteness from, the site of a proposed new dwelling, and noting that a 'settlement' is undefined, and what constitutes a 'settlement' and whether a proposed development would be isolated from it, are matters of planning judgment for a decision maker on the facts of an individual case.

¹ NPPF 2

² Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and NPPF 12

³ *Braintree District Council v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and Others* [2018] EWCA Civ 610 and *City and Country Bramshill Ltd v Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government* [2021] EWCA Civ 320

⁴ This is also clear from the content of NPPF 84(a) concerning the development of new rural workers' dwellings as 'isolated homes in the countryside' and which are commonly located at or adjacent to farms and cannot therefore be remote from existing buildings and development.

- 5.10 In this case, the application site is clearly physically separated from the nearest defined settlements of Longridge, Ribchester and Hurst Green which are several kilometres away, and the two existing properties and development located on Higher Road and within the immediate vicinity of the site, clearly lacks the necessary scale and characteristics to be classed as a hamlet, and does not amount to being an undefined settlement.
- 5.11 Therefore, it is demonstrated that The Growing House qualifies as a proposal for an isolated home in the countryside for the purposes of engaging NPPF 84(e). The Council also agrees with this conclusion as confirmed in its pre-application response dated 16th February 2024.

b) A design of exceptional quality

- 5.12 Having determined that the application site is a qualifying location so that NPPF 84(e) is engaged, the applicant and their design team have consulted the Design Review service provided by RIBA Places Matter to demonstrate that the design of The Growing House is of exceptional quality by meeting the requirements and criteria of NPPF 84(e)(i) and (ii).
- 5.13 A series of four Design Review panel meetings were held with RIBA Places Matter between February 2023 and August 2023, and these follow initial engagement with Places Matter in 2021 and 2022⁵. These earlier engagements considered a different scheme to that proposed now, whereby the proposed dwelling was positioned closer to Higher Road.
- 5.14 The engagement with Places Matter during 2023 has been an intense and iterative process whereby the Design Review panel has meaningfully tested the proposal against both parts (i) and (ii) of NPPF 84(e). The Design Review panel members were purposely selected to achieve this and included suitably-qualified architectural and rural landscape experts.
- 5.15 The four 2023 Places Matter Design Review panel reports are submitted with this planning application and enclosed in Appendix 1 of this Planning Statement. When read together, they clearly demonstrate the positive progression and design development of The Growing House to the point, by the time of the last review dated 1st August 2023, it was concluded that:
- The Panel's recommendation is based specifically on the high quality of the proposals shown in these documents and we would expect that any planning consent condition the delivery of the project accordingly.
 - All of the changes that have been made are very positive and it is in that context that the Panel supports the project. You [the applicant] have engaged with the Places Matter process in a very collaborative and cooperative spirit and that is commended.
 - In summary, the Panel considers that [The Growing House] proposal meets the test set out in NPPF 84(e) and it is considered to be of an exceptional quality of design.

⁵ The Council's design and conservation officer and head of planning were involved with the initial engagement with RIBA Places Matter.

5.16 It is recommended, and the Council has advised in connection with other NPPF 84(e) schemes, that a proposal for a new isolated home in the countryside made on the grounds that it is of exceptional design quality, should be presented to a design review panel (e.g. Places Matter) for assessment before a planning application is submitted, and that officers will consider a Panel's expert feedback as material evidence in a planning decision.

5.17 This is also made clear in NPPF 138 which explains that 'local planning authorities should ensure that they have access to, and make appropriate use of, tools and processes for assessing and improving the design of development. In assessing applications, local planning authorities should have regard to the outcome from these processes, including any recommendations made by design review panels.' It is therefore surprising, and unclear on what basis, the Council reached the view it expressed in the pre-application response of 16th February 2024, that The Growing House would not be considered as being 'of an exceptional quality' and thereby ignoring the views of the RIBA Places Matter expert design panel members and, as confirmed at the time, not seeking alternative expert design advice.

5.18 On this basis, the requirements of NPPF 84(e)(i) and (ii) are satisfied as follows.

i) Compliance with NPPF 84(e)(i)

5.19 This requires that the design must be 'truly outstanding, reflecting the highest standards in architecture, and 'would help to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas.'

• **'truly outstanding, reflecting the highest standards in architecture'**

5.20 As a purposely-convened panel of the most-suited RIBA architectural experts and LI landscape experts to advise the applicant and design team, the process of critical assessment and the sequence of evolving design advice and input provided by the Places Matter panel, and the overall concluding expert opinion that it has expressed, verifies how and why the architectural and landscape design of The Growing House is truly outstanding and reflects the highest standards in architecture.

5.21 The design has been thoroughly scrutinised and rigorously tested by architectural and landscape experts to ensure that it achieves the necessary quality appropriate to its setting and demanded by its location in the Forest of Bowland National Landscape, and they are satisfied, and have endorsed the proposed design, on the basis that it meets the requirements of NPPF 84(e). This requirement of NPPF 84(e)(i) is therefore satisfied.

• **'would help to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas'**

5.22 It is clear that, if granted planning permission and implemented, The Growing House will be an exemplary development which demonstrates how outstanding contemporary rural design can be achieved in Ribble Valley, and from which a wide range of residential and commercial future applicants and architects can draw inspiration and ideas at all levels, in terms of sensitive design, form, scale, appearance, materials, detailing and landscaping.

- 5.23 The outstanding design quality of The Growing House will also be carried forward into its implementation and construction. Its development will provide a wide range of opportunities for skilled tradespeople and craftspeople in Ribbles Valley to employ and adapt traditional rural construction techniques and detailing for contemporary use, and to learn from the process.
- 5.24 This can be achieved as part of the process to procure and select a main contractor and sub-contractors for The Growing House by requiring them to implement an employment and skills plan which is focused on furthering traditional building skills, education and training opportunities, and apprenticeships, as well as general CPD and links to industry bodies and students studying construction, building, architecture and related courses at local universities and colleges.
- 5.25 The same approach will be applied to the landscaping and biodiversity proposals for The Growing House, whereby the applicant is already working with the Forest of Bowland National Landscape 'Hay Time Project' officer and Lancashire Wildlife Trust and the scheme can help to share knowledge, experience and public awareness of the benefits of reinstating, restoring and managing traditional upland hay meadows as one of our rarest habitats and a priority for conservation and enhancement in the Forest of Bowland National Landscape and the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.
- 5.26 These and other methods of securing opportunities and sharing knowing to raise standards of rural design in connection with design and construction of The Growing House and its landscape proposals, can be achieved by suitable planning conditions. This requirement of NPPF 84(e)(i) is therefore satisfied.

ii) Compliance with NPPF 84(e)(ii)

- 5.27 This requires that the design 'would significantly enhance its immediate setting, and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area.'
- **'would significantly enhance its immediate setting'**
- 5.28 The NPPF (and PPG) does not prescribe how this requirement is to be achieved or measured and nor, as a matter of principle, can only a site which is currently degraded, be enhanced. As many dwellings qualifying under the NPPF 84(e) exception (and previous versions) have been permitted in protected landscapes, it also cannot be the case, as a matter of principle, that a site located within a National Landscape cannot be significantly enhanced.
- 5.29 The 'design vision' section of the Design and Access Statement, together with the Landscape Masterplan and planting plans, explain how the siting, architecture and landscape, planting and biodiversity strategies for The Growing House are designed to integrate with and enhance its immediate setting and the surrounding landscape. The immediate setting is grazing pasture surrounded by perimeter stone walls and hedges, and a woodland valley on the western side. The upland landscape and sloping topography of the land are also features of the immediate setting. The elements of the proposal which are therefore considered to significantly enhance the immediate setting are summarised as follows:

- 1) The creation of new and restored species-rich hay meadow, and its future management, across the majority of the immediate setting of the proposed dwelling (approximately 82% of the application site) is a significant visual and natural enhancement of the immediate setting whilst retaining the open fields and stone walls which are an element of wider landscape character. (see Fields F1, F2 and F3 on Proposed Site Plan 01003 and Landscape Masterplan 12870-LUC-XX-00-DR-L-0101 P01).
- 2) Additional native woodland and shrub planting to the internal facing edge of the perimeter woodland lining Cowley Brook, providing a renatured/rewilded habitat and enhanced woodland edge.
- 3) Strengthening of existing landscape features through new and enhanced hedgerow planting, tree planting and new and repaired drystone walls.
- 4) A package of biodiversity net gain measures including (but not limited to the above) which will significantly improve the biodiversity at the site.
- 5) The siting of a house of truly outstanding design significantly improves the visual interest of the immediate setting and its landscape qualities (in terms of continuing the 'country house tradition'). The Growing House accentuates the sloping topography of setting through its siting, form, scale and orientation without detriment to the prevailing wider landscape character of the National Landscape.



5.30 Taken as a whole, these measures will significantly enhance the immediate setting of The Growing House (as shown in the image above). They can be achieved without detriment to the protected landscape character of the Forest of Bowland as the siting of the dwelling in the landscape, and the retention of open fields and landscape features, ensures that prevailing landscape character is not compromised but, rather, is improved through the improvements to the immediate setting. This requirement of NPPF 84(e)(ii) is therefore satisfied.

- **‘be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area’**

- 5.31 The ‘design vision’ section of the Design and Access Statement, together with the Landscape and Visual Appraisal, also explains how the architectural and landscape design of The Growing House is sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area and Forest of Bowland National Landscape.
- 5.32 Whilst the architecture is purposely contemporary, The Growing House has been informed by an appraisal of the local area and identification of its defining characteristics, in terms of the landscape character type; landscape features; the settlement form and pattern, comprising scattered farms and freestanding barns and dwellings; vernacular building types, forms and designs; and traditional building materials, boundary treatments and means of enclosure.
- 5.33 The Growing House therefore uses a range of local vernacular materials and is a simple and low-key building form and design which does not detract from the landscape. The dwelling is clad using local stone, and further enclosed and screened by drystone walls. The overall tone, colour and texture of building and its external facing materials, and hard landscape materials, therefore all blend with those visible in the surrounding landscape. The same approach is employed with the soft landscape and planting strategy including green / wildflower roofs, native hedges, trees and woodland, and species-rich upland hay meadow. On this basis, and whilst an intentionally modern design, The Growing House is clearly sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area. This requirement of NPPF 84(e)(ii) is therefore satisfied.

Conclusion on the suitability of the site location for the proposed dwelling

- 5.34 It is demonstrated that The Growing House is a design of exceptional quality which is truly outstanding, reflecting the highest standards in architecture, and which will help to raise standards of rural design in Ribble Valley, and will significantly enhance its immediate setting and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area and the Forest of Bowland National Landscape.
- 5.35 The criteria of NPPF 84(e) are very clearly met and therefore, by exception, the isolated location of The Growing House in the countryside beyond a defined settlement boundary, is suitable, and therefore acceptable, having regard to local and national planning policy.
- 5.36 Additionally in this respect, the Council considers in its pre-application response, that the proposal will conflict with Policies DMI2 and DMG3 on the basis that the application site is not within walking distance of local services and facilities and will be largely reliant on access by private car. This point was considered by the Inspector in the allowed appeal APP/T2350/W/24/3339770 of 8th August 2024 at Land adjacent to Further Lane, Mellor. At paragraphs 72 to 74 of the decision letter, the Inspector confirms:

Paragraph 72 As the site is isolated, the exception set out in paragraph 84(e) of the Framework is engaged. Having regard to my conclusions above, the proposal therefore benefits from that exception.

Paragraph 73 Given the implicit acceptance in paragraph 84(e) of the likely inherent unsustainability of such sites in transport terms, and my comments above, this reinforces my finding that there is no overall conflict with Policy DMG3 of the Core Strategy.

Paragraph 74 Taking the above together, having regard to both the development plan and relevant material considerations, I find the appeal site is a suitable location for the development proposed, having regard to its location outside of any defined settlement boundaries and the likely reliance on the private car.

5.37 The conclusion that the proposed isolated location of The Growing House in the countryside beyond a defined settlement boundary is acceptable, having regard to local and national planning policy, is therefore not overturned by the limited accessibility of the application site.

2) Effect on the Forest of Bowland National Landscape

5.38 NPPF 189 requires great weight to be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Landscapes, and that the scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited. Additionally, NPPF 190 requires that planning permission for major development should be refused other than in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest.

5.39 In this case, it is clear that The Growing House is not major development within the Forest of Bowland National Landscape. There is no statutory definition of 'major development' within a National Landscape in the NPPF or PPG, and NPPF FN67 confirms that the assessment is a matter for the decision maker, taking account of 'the nature, scale and setting' of a proposed development and whether it could have a 'significant adverse impact on the purposes for which the area has been designated.'

5.40 The 'nature' and 'scale' of The Growing House is a single, freestanding, residential dwelling. Single dwellings are a common form of development in the Forest of Bowland, and are widespread, with several examples in the surrounding area of varying sizes and designs. The 'setting' of The Growing House is also towards the bottom of the sloping application site in a largely concealed location where it cannot be easily seen from public vantage points. These factors clearly characterise The Growing House as limited and, thereby, 'minor' development.

5.41 The Forest of Bowland National Landscape was designated on 10th February 1964 as a landscape of national significance due to its key characteristics of:

- the grandeur and isolation of its upland core area
- steep escarpments of the moorland hills area
- undulating lowlands area
- serenity and tranquillity
- distinctive pattern of settlements
- wildlife
- historic and cultural associations

5.42 It is a landscape characterised by human settlement and isolated farms and dwellings are a visible, defining, feature. The Growing House is proportionate and will fit this pattern and characteristic, and as this planning application demonstrates, it will not have a significant adverse impact on the Forest of Bowland purposes of designation, whereby:

- The application site is outside the upland core area
- The application site is outside the steep escarpments of the moorland hills area
- The application site is outside the undulating lowlands area
- The proposed dwelling will not harm serenity and tranquillity
- The proposed dwelling does not harm the distinctive pattern of settlements
- The proposed dwelling will not harm wildlife
- The proposed dwelling will benefit, and not harm, the historic and cultural associations of the area

5.43 For these reasons, The Growing House is not major development and the exception and public interest tests of NPPF 190 are not engaged. Therefore, applicable policy context for determining the planning application is NPPF 189 and the corresponding local Policies EN2, DMG1, DMG2 and DME2 of the Core Strategy.

5.44 To assess The Growing House against these policies, the planning application is supported by a Landscape and Visual Appraisal which is based on a 2 km study area around the site. Its scope of receptors and viewpoint locations was agreed by the Council at the pre-application stage, and a draft was included as part of the supporting evidence supplied to the RIBA Places Matter expert panel for Design Review. It describes the key issues and constraints affecting the site and proposed development in relation to landscape character, visual amenity and the special qualities of the Forest of Bowland National Landscape.

a) Landscape effects

5.45 Notwithstanding the loss of the limited area of pasture where The Growing House and its curtilage will stand (18% of the application site area), the Landscape and Visual Appraisal demonstrates that the proposal will have a limited effect on landscape receptors. The development of a single dwelling at the application site is not out of keeping with the Moorland Fringe landscape character area (D:11 Longridge) of the Forest of Bowland National Landscape (see Figure 3 of the Landscape and Visual Appraisal Appendix A), and it will not have a significant impact on landscape features including the National Landscape itself and the boundary hedgerows (including trees) and drystone walls, and which will be mostly retained and incorporated into the layout.

5.46 The results of the Landscape and Visual Appraisal confirm that there are no residual landscape effects which are classified as being of 'greater importance' and, at Year 15, following establishment of the proposed landscape mitigation features, which reflect the key local landscape characteristics including drystone walls, native trees, scrub, reinforced hedgerows and species-rich hay meadow, the proposed development will result in only minor to moderate-minor adverse effects the pastoral field and National Landscape. There will also be a minor beneficial effect on boundary hedgerows and boundary drystone walls.

b) Effects on visual amenity

- 5.47 Figure 4 of the Landscape and Visual Appraisal Appendix A demonstrates that there is no public access to the application site and the nearest footpaths are FP-0335002 which is approximately 165 metres to the east and FP-0335004 which is approximately 160 metres to the south. There are no other public rights of way adjacent to the application site and, overall, the site is not visible or prominent in longer range views.
- 5.48 Figure 7 of the Landscape and Visual Appraisal Appendix A shows the zone of theoretical visibility around the application site and areas of woodland and forest. There are no available views from public receptors to the north, other than from Higher Road, and there is only a small number of localised receptors to the east around Stoneygate Lane and one to the west at Cuckoo Hall Farm where parts of the development will be visible. These are shown in Viewpoints 2, 3 and 4 in Appendix A. There are more-distant receptors further south (represented by Viewpoints 5 to 10) but the application site is indistinguishable and/or screened in the wider landscape from that distance and the change in views will be imperceptible.
- 5.49 The results of the Landscape and Visual Appraisal show that there are no residual visual effects which are classified as being of 'greater importance' and, at Year 15, following establishment of the proposed visual mitigation features, including the hay meadows, native tree, scrub and hedgerow planting, together with the planting on the exterior of The Growing House which will have matured and weathered, the proposed development will not be prominent in the landscape. It will result in only a minor adverse effect on close range visual receptors and will have a negligible effect on longer-range views within and from the edge of the National Landscape.

Conclusion on the effect on the Forest of Bowland National Landscape

- 5.50 The Landscape and Visual Appraisal shows that The Growing House will have a very limited and localised landscape and visual impact and there will be very limited harm overall to the landscape character, visual amenity and the special qualities of the Forest of Bowland National Landscape. Despite the Council response to the pre-application enquiry, the evidence therefore confirms that with regard to its siting, form, massing, design and materials, the proposed development is acceptable within the National Landscape and there is no conflict with Policies EN2, DMG1, DMG2 and DME2 of the Core Strategy and NPPF 189.

3) Effect on heritage assets

- 5.51 The application is accompanied by an Archaeological Desk Based Assessment (DBA) which has been produced to assess (prior to on site investigation) the significance, and potential for remains to exist, of the roman road which crosses the site and is visible in places as a surface earthwork feature. The road is not a scheduled monument and is therefore a non-designated heritage asset for the purposes of determining the planning application and assessment under NPPF 216.

- 5.52 The DBA confirms that The Growing House will be positioned clear of the alignment and likely width (12 metres) of the roman road and side ditches, and therefore it will not harm its significance and will not have an adverse heritage impact. Cowley Brook Farm to the north of the application site on Higher Road, is also identified as a non-designated heritage asset as a post-medieval farmstead. The Growing House is proposed 140 metres south of the farm and at a lower contour further down the slope of the hillside. It will not therefore harm the setting and significance of the farm. Overall, there is no conflict with NPPF 216 and Policies DME4 and DMG1 of the Core Strategy on this basis.
- 5.53 In addition, the application includes a proposal to excavate the roman road (which is currently being assessed by the Roman Roads Research Association) and, providing that there are remains of the road surface which can be preserved, it is intended to consolidate a section and protect it as a permanent feature which will be open for the public to visit. A small car park will be provided off Higher Road using the existing field access for this purpose. This is a heritage gain (public benefit) which carries favourable weight in the planning balance whereby NPPF 219 encourages applicants and LPAs to look for opportunities to 'enhance or better reveal' the significance of heritage assets in connection with new development proposals.

4) Effect on residential amenity

- 5.54 There are only two properties within the immediate vicinity of the application site, at Cowley Brook Cottage and Cowley Brook Farm, on the opposite side of Higher Road. The Growing House is located 140 metres south of Higher Road at a lower contour, as shown on Proposed Sections B-B and D-D (plans 04002 and 04003), and designed to ensure that it sits at a level which protects the amenities of the neighbouring properties in terms of privacy, daylight / sunlight, orientation and outlook.
- 5.55 On this basis the proposed development is compatible with adjacent development so that the residential amenity of neighbouring residents is protected, and it therefore accords with the design and amenity requirements of Policy DMG1 of the Core Strategy and the relevant policies of the NPPF 2024.

5) Technical and environmental effects of the development:

- 5.56 In considering the suitability and sustainability of the application site for The Growing House development, the following environmental and technical matters have been considered;
- a) trees and hedgerows
 - b) biodiversity
 - c) drainage and flood risk
 - d) energy and sustainability
 - e) ground conditions and mineral resources
 - f) access and highways
- 5.57 Surveys and impact assessments have been commissioned in connection with these matters and accompany the planning application. A summary of their conclusions is outlined below.

a) Trees and hedgerows

- 5.58 The application is accompanied by a Tree Survey and Arboricultural Constraints Report prepared by Bowland Tree Consultancy. This shows that there are five individual trees, two groups and a single hedgerow along the application site frontage on Higher Road.
- 5.59 By utilising the existing field access positions as the entrance for The Growing House driveway and the entrance for the proposed visitor car park for people viewing the roman road (assuming that it can be excavated and preserved), the proposed development does not result in the loss of any of these trees and hedgerow, as shown on the proposed site plan (drawing 01003) and the proposed access layout plan (drawing H4322-H-01 Rev P1). The other surveyed trees are those forming the woodland belt within the western part of the application site and forming the valley side of Cowley Brook. These were assessed as a woodland group and it is confirmed that the woodland will not be adversely impacted by the proposed development and will be positively managed and enhanced (rewilded) as part of the package of on-site biodiversity net gain improvements.
- 5.60 The development is therefore acceptable and in accordance with Policies DME1 and DMG1 of the Core Strategy and the relevant policies of the NPPF 2023.

b) Biodiversity

- 5.61 A Preliminary Ecological Assessment including an extended Phase 1 habitat survey was carried out in June 2021 and updated following a further survey on 20th June 2024, with the aim of identifying any potential ecological constraints in connection with The Growing House.
- 5.62 The results are submitted with the application and confirm that the site has limited ecological value, comprising semi-improved grassland and no Priority Habitats and other notable habitats present. Although located within the Forest of Bowland National Landscape, the development will not have an adverse effect on any statutory and non-statutory designated nature conservation sites. The trees and woodland within the site may be suitable for roosting bats and nesting birds, and the dry stone walls could support reptiles and amphibians, but no further surveys are required to determine the application.
- 5.63 Compensatory planting and habitat enhancement is proposed including native and tree, plant and hedgerow species in the landscape planting proposals, and especially the new and restored hay meadow at Fields F1, F2 and F3 (see Proposed Site Plan and Landscape Masterplan) in association with the Forest of Bowland Hay Time Project, and the wooded valley of Cowley Brook which will be managed, 'rewilded' and extended with new native scrub planting. Bird nesting and bat roosting boxes will also be incorporated into the development together with habitat improvements for reptiles, amphibians, insects and ground mammals.
- 5.64 A biodiversity impact assessment has also been carried out and is submitted with the application. This shows a baseline habitat of 17.92 units on site. These will mostly be retained and the proposed new landscaping and ecology enhancements will add area and hedgerow habitat units to achieve an on-site net gain of 19.73% and a hedgerow gain of 135.4%.

5.65 The ecological appraisal and biodiversity net gain assessment therefore demonstrates that The Growing House is feasible and acceptable in ecological terms, and can deliver biodiversity net gain and ecological enhancement for fauna suited to the Forest of Bowland National Landscape and especially the contribution to the Forest of Bowland Hay Time Project and rewilding of the woodland along the valley of Cowley Brook. The proposed development is therefore compliant with Policies DS2, EN4, DME3 and DMG1 of the Core Strategy and NPPF 187.

c) Drainage and flood risk

5.66 Due to its elevated location and sloping topography, the application site is located in Flood Zone 1 and therefore has a very limited annual probability of flooding of less than 1 in 1000. It is also at very low risk of surface water flooding and there are no recorded instances of historic surface water flooding or flooding associated with Cowley Brook.

5.67 The Growing House is designed to be highly sustainable and will collect (harvest) and recycle rainwater and surface water run-off. Where excess run-off is to be drained, this will be stored in an attenuation tank and piped to outfall into Cowley Brook at a greenfield run-off rate plus climate change allowance. Foul drainage will be piped to a Wastewater Package Treatment plant and treated outfall will also discharge to Cowley Brook subject to an EA permit. These arrangements are shown on the proposed site plan (01003) and described in the Flood Risk and Drainage Strategy report submitted with the application.

5.68 On this basis, the proposed development is safe from the risk of flooding and can be provided with surface water and foul water drainage infrastructure. It is therefore in accordance with Policies EN3, DME6 and DMG1 of the Core Strategy and relevant policies of the NPPF 2024.

d) Energy and sustainability

5.69 The application is supported by a detailed Sustainability and Energy Statement by Beechfield Consulting Engineers. This, together with the Design and Access Statement, summarises the sustainability features of the Growing House in terms of its construction and occupation, including the use of resources, waste minimisation and recycling and pollution minimisation. The report also confirms that the dwelling will follow Passivhaus standards and achieve energy performance that significantly exceeds Part L (2001) building regulation requirements. By using PV and air source hot water renewable energy technologies, the development can also achieve a 101.73 CO₂ reduction rate and will therefore be 'zero carbon' in terms of regulated energy demand.

5.70 The Growing House proposal is therefore in accordance with Policies DS2, EN3, DME5, DME6 and DMG1 of the Core Strategy and the relevant policies of the NPPF 2024.

e) Ground conditions and mineral resources

5.71 The application is accompanied by a Phase I Preliminary Risk Assessment and a Mineral Resource Assessment, both prepared in May 2024, to assess any ground contamination and/or ground gas risk, and any potential for commercial mineral extraction.

- 5.72 The ground assessment shows that, based on historic mapping, the application site has always been in greenfield agricultural use and the risk of significant contamination being present, and a potential risk/s to human health requiring ground remediation, is therefore considered to be very low. Similarly, no on or off site sources of toxic ground gases have been identified and therefore no ground gas precautions are required for the development.
- 5.73 On this basis, The Growing House development is considered to be safe and acceptable to human health in terms of ground contamination, and is in accordance with Policy DMG1 of the Core Strategy and the relevant policies of the NPPF 2024.
- 5.74 In terms of mineral resources, the application site is within a safeguarding area and overlies sandstone (Pennine Gritstone). The small site area combined with its location in the Forest of Bowland National Landscape and environmental, noise and traffic impact, together with the availability of sandstone aggregate product from other quarries in Lancashire, mean that extraction, notwithstanding a technical feasibility assessment of the depth of the bedrock (and which is at least 12 metres below ground level), is uneconomic and not viable to extract.

f) Access and highways

- 5.75 The application is supported a short Transport Statement and the proposed access layout plan (H4322-H-01 Rev P1) prepared by PSA Design. It confirms that The Growing House can be provided with safe and suitable vehicular access arrangements from Higher Road, which can also accommodate emergency and servicing requirements, and will re-use and upgrade the existing field gate and provide adequate visibility splays without having to remove any sections of the frontage hedgerow and trees. As a four bedroom single dwelling, the proposed development will generate a very low volume of traffic, and between no more than 6 to 8 two-way vehicular trips per day. The visitor car park for the roman road will generate infrequent vehicle trips, and consequently, the overall development will have a negligible impact on the operation of the local highway network and no further analysis is required.
- 5.76 It is demonstrated that the proposed development is therefore acceptable in terms of safe access and highway network operation, and there is no conflict with Policies DMI2, DMG3 and DMG1 of the Core Strategy and the relevant policies of the NPPF 2024.

Planning balance

- 5.77 This planning application for the erection of The Growing House (a new dwelling) on land at Higher Road, Longridge, is made in accordance with the national policy exception provided by NPPF 84(e) which justifies the development of isolated new homes in the countryside outside defined settlement limits, where their design is of exceptional quality.
- 5.78 The application site is an isolated location, meaning that NPPF 84(e) is engaged, and The Growing House proposal is a design of exceptional quality which is truly outstanding, reflecting the highest standards in architecture, and which will help to raise standards of rural design in Ribble Valley, and will significantly enhance its immediate setting and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area and the Forest of Bowland National Landscape.

- 5.79 Notwithstanding its location in the countryside and the Forest of Bowland National Landscape, The Growing House proposal does not conflict with relevant landscape policies EN2, DMG2 and DME2; heritage policy DME4; sustainability and biodiversity policies DS2, EN3, EN4, DME3 and DME5; transport policies DMI2 and DMG3; and general development management policy DMG1 of the adopted Ribble Valley Core Strategy 2008 to 2028.
- 5.80 However, because of its countryside location outside a defined settlement, there is a conflict with the spatial development policies DS1 and DMG2 and housing policy DMH3 of the Core Strategy. The Growing House would, consequently, conflict with the development plan when taken as a whole.
- 5.81 As a single dwelling, and proposed in unprecedented circumstances, The Growing House proposal would not cause any meaningful 'practical' harm a consequence of that policy conflict, in terms of undermining the continuing application and effectiveness of the development strategy. The countryside policy exception at NPPF 84(e) is also an important material consideration, on which the development plan is silent, and which points favourably to permission and must be taken into account.
- 5.82 Therefore, in the absence of any substantiated harm arising from the conflict with Policies DS1, DMG2 and DMH3 of the Core Strategy, the favourable material consideration of NPPF 84(e) outweighs the failure of The Growing House to accord with the development plan when taken as a whole. This indicates that a decision taken contrary to the development plan is justified in this case.
- 5.83 Overall, it is demonstrated that having regard to the development plan and all material considerations, there is a clear and compelling case for planning permission to be granted in accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

6 Summary and conclusion

- 6.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of the planning application for a proposed new dwelling, known as 'The Growing House', on land at Higher Road, Longridge.
- 6.2 The application is made in accordance with the policy exception provided in paragraph 84(e) of the National Planning Policy Framework 2024 which justifies the development of isolated new homes in the countryside where their design is of exceptional quality.
- 6.3 The Growing House proposal is in accordance with the relevant landscape, biodiversity and general development management policies of the adopted Ribble Valley Local Plan Core Strategy 2008 to 2028 and, insofar as there is a conflict with spatial development, countryside and housing policies, material considerations, and expressly the countryside policy exception at NPPF 84(e), indicate that a decision other than in accordance with the development plan, is justified in this case.
- 6.4 Consequently, it is demonstrated that having regard to the development plan and all material considerations, there is a clear and compelling case for planning permission to be granted in accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

Appendices

Appendix 1

RIBA Places Matter Design Review Reports:

- 1) PM_2023_007 : 15.02.2023
- 2) PM_2023_012 : 26.04.2023
- 3) PM_2023_017a: 30.05.2023
- 4) PM_2023_025b: 01.08.2023

PlacesMatter

Design Review Report
The Grow House P80e

28 February 2023

The Grow House Higher Road, Longridge

Reference: PM_2023_007

Report of the Online Design Review Panel

Date of Review: 15 February 2023
Format: Online
Lead Designers: Jackson-Crane & WM Design for NRL

Findings

As presented, the proposal does not yet meet the standard required for NPPF Paragraph 80e, but does have much to commend its approach and it does seem to be well on its way.

The connection of the proposition to nature was supported, as was the bio-receptive concrete, but more could have been done to inform the design narrative and to ensure that the design is 'of its place'.

The Panel encouraged you to explore the geometry of the proposition and to push and rotate the building North and East, to avoid overhanging the Roman road.

The cantilever feels conceptually wrong. The upper box should be the "floaty bit" but as presented it lacks rigor and this 'box' needs a much greater depth of thought.

Sustainability needs much more thought and you should seek Passivhaus certification and expand the team to include sustainability expertise. This building is "crying out for ground source heat".

You must get agreement from the LPA to the viewpoint positions. The Biodiversity Net Gain approach needs clear metrics and you need a robust carbon calculation for the building.

Background

The site of the proposed new dwelling lies to the south of Higher Road, Longridge, in open countryside adjacent to the course of a Roman Road, within the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

The proposal envisages a single bespoke dwelling, The Grow House, which is being presented in the context of NPPF Paragraph 80e. The Panel was therefore considering whether the house was of exceptional quality of design, in that it:

- *is truly outstanding, reflecting the highest standards in architecture and would help raise the standards of design more generally in rural areas; and,*
- *would significantly enhance its immediate setting and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area.*

Design Review

The Panel thanked you for your very clear presentations, which it felt had demonstrated a lot of thought and a number of good design principles. The Hay Time Project was felt to be a great opportunity to add something to the landscape and for the community and would enhance the setting. The connection of the proposition to nature was supported, as this made the whole feel like it was “emerging from the ground”. The bio-receptive concrete was also felt to be a strong idea in principle.

More could be have been done on the context, townscape and history though, to inform the design narrative. Farm cottages and clusters of buildings dominate this landscape and so it would have been good to see how that had informed the scale, mass and size of the plot. The Panel appreciated that much had gone before in earlier design iterations and that you were necessarily limiting the material presented.

The Panel felt unsure that this design was truly “of its place” and encouraged you to do more on the concept to ensure that it was. The siting of the building and the approach to it could usefully have considered other options. There are a number

of paths and PROWs away from the site and these should be used as links to the wider landscape and patterns of the valley.

Whilst you have understandably picked up the Roman road, this was not felt to be related to the concept or story of the dwelling, which is not necessarily a problem. The Panel was taken by the idea that emerged in conversation that you might leave sections exposed once the full survey and excavation had taken place. So, don't bridge the cantilever over the road, make the road the feature in the landscape at this point. The Panel encouraged you to emphasize the significance of this Roman road in your application.

The landscape led approach and idea is a strong one, but it does feel as if the building has been placed in the landscape first and there was no landscape proposals plan to show otherwise, or how it all weaves together. You need more analysis on that. In terms of the approach and sense of arrival, it is a nice surprise to find the dwelling behind the wall and you were encouraged to explore that more, in terms of the notion of farmsteads that group buildings around a courtyard.

The Panel also encouraged you to explore the geometry of the proposition, which is very linear and has straightness that may jar with the woodland edge, the field patterns and the angles on the ground. The dry-stone wall is not perpendicular and so you were asked to consider rotating the building and not to be confirmed to the upper storey necessarily having the same geometry as the ground floor.

Push the building North and East as you rotate it, to help address the geometry of the dry-stone wall, which as presented is a missed opportunity. The overall height may also be a problem, so drop down and look for a sweet spot where you don't need to step things out. Any rotation may need you to get light into the plan from the top though, so carefully consider that. In conversation you showed the Panel a sketch idea that might start to resolve this.

Your current rigid approach feels uncomfortable next to the Roman road and generates a geometry that doesn't exist, with a cantilever that feels conceptually wrong. The upper box should be the "floaty bit" and the materiality of the rest needs to be more grounded. As presented it lacks rigor and the 'box' needs a real depth of thought, as it is really important to get that element right. If you are referencing geomorphological strata, then why is this box shown with vertical materials, when they should really be horizontal? If you were to push this back it

would avoid shadowing the living spaces below and could be positioned to shelter the main entrance on the North side. During discussion you showed how it could also recognise the alignment of the Roman Road. In this regard, the Panel indicated it would create more sense of 'this place'.

Its materiality is also very important and needs a clear rationale. It jars a little with the local vernacular and needs to be better connected to the to the box below, either in form or materials. The chimney stack seems alien and very big, so you were asked to explore stone rather than concrete for that. There was concern expressed about the scale and proportionality of the window openings, which whilst these will give great views, need greater rigor, so do a study of stone walls with openings and find the local scale for these, even if that means having more, smaller windows. You were also asked to provide extended long sections out from the building in to the landscape to show how the proposition sits in its context.

You have clearly given consideration to the wider views, but the Panel felt that the elevation to the South was quite hard and needs more work in the way in which it works with the landscape and woodland wrapping around it. Some of the extended walls here look like a "bit of an add on", adding to the sense of things being too hard, and the steps stand out in the CGI perspective as neither being very elegant nor thought through. So, more exploration of the boundaries is needed, alongside the ha-ha, which was felt to be a good idea.

Your material choices are referencing agricultural buildings. But these are also very hard, even if the end result of the bio receptive concrete does add a softness. More natural materials might be softer, and in this landscape, stone is an obvious choice. That you could explore and test. Your metal 'farm gate' to the lower garden was not felt to be working and you were asked to make this from wood, reflect a more sustainable approach and to "add more beauty".

Whilst the ground floor plan was felt to be generally successful, you were asked to "take the labels off the plan and be sure just what all of the walls are doing". The notion of the elevated box being for bedrooms was questioned. This has the best views and you were asked to consider flipping the arrangement for the kitchen to East and linking that with a living area on the first floor, which would have the best views, but all in discussion with your client.

The Panel discussed sustainability with you and noted that this really needs much more thought and integration at an earlier stage in the design journey. You

indicated a desire to design at Passivhaus levels, which the Panel would support, but you really need to seek certification for that if it is to be done properly. The mechanical and energy demands of the building will affect the parapet widths and sections, so they need to be known now and be fully integrated in the design solutions. The Panel also felt that this building was “crying out for ground source heat”.

The Panel recognised your efforts to get agreement from the LPA to the viewpoint positions. This agreement will still be needed, but the positions do feel fit for purpose and reasonable at this stage and you have a clear message on drainage and SUDs. Whilst you have explained your Biodiversity Net Gain approach, this needs clear metrics to support your case. Similarly, the bio-receptive concrete may be innovative, but you will need a more robust carbon calculation for the building. If there are examples of it in use in other countries, then seek those out to support your claims that this is the first use in this country.

The images and approach to re-wilding and food production were felt to be very commendable, but be clear as to whether or not your client requires any areas of less wild and more ornamental garden and if so, plan them in now. You also need to do more sunshine analysis to determine whether you have the living spaces in the correct positions – for example, why have the afternoon sun in the kitchen, when it might be better to have it in the morning? So, step back and look again at the organisation of the main elements of the building.

In summary, the Panel thanked you for your presentations and constructive conversation. As presented, the proposal does not yet meet the standard required for NPPF Paragraph 80e, but does have much to commend its approach and it does seem to be well on its way.

The connection of the proposition to nature was supported, as was the bio-receptive concrete, but more could have been done on the context, townscape and history to inform the design narrative and to ensure that the design is ‘of its place’.

The Panel encouraged you to explore the geometry of the proposition, which is very linear and has a straightness that may jar with the woodland edge, the field patterns and the angles on the ground. So, push and rotate the building North and East to align with the geometry of the dry-stone wall and avoid overhanging the Roman road.

The cantilever feels conceptually wrong. The upper box should be the “floaty bit” and the materiality of the rest needs to be more grounded. As presented it lacks rigor and the ‘box’ needs a much greater depth of thought.

Sustainability needs much more thought and you should seek Passivhaus certification and expand the team to include sustainability expertise. This building is “crying out for ground source heat”.

You must get agreement from the LPA to the viewpoint positions. The Biodiversity Net Gain approach needs clear metrics to support your case and you will probably need a more robust carbon calculation for the building.

The Panel would welcome the opportunity to see the next iteration of this scheme once you have refined your proposition in response to this Design Review, expanded the team, and any discussions with the Local Planning Authority and confirmation of the viewpoints are concluded on this current proposal.

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Design Review Report
The Grow House P80e

26 April 2023

The Grow House Higher Road, Longridge

Reference: PM_2023_012

Report of the Online Design Review Panel

Date of Review: 19 April 2023
Format: Online
Lead Designers: Jackson-Crane Architects & WM Design for NRL

Findings

As presented, the proposal does not yet meet the standard required for NPPF Paragraph 80e, but it is getting very close.

Consider the relationship of the built elements and whether these could be a number of structures linked by glazing. The size of the courtyard may be too small.

Test the materiality of the 'box' and work harder on the details of the 'glass beam' and finished building.

The position of the chimney and inclusion of the pergolas need a rethink. Explore the final alignment of all the elements – plan geometry, box alignment and chimney position.

Sustainability will be at the core of this proposition, so the inside / outside relationships and reduced carbon footprint should come to the fore.

Background

The site of the proposed new dwelling lies to the south of Higher Road, Longridge, in open countryside adjacent to the course of a Roman Road, within the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

The proposal envisages a single bespoke dwelling, The Grow House, which is being presented in the context of NPPF Paragraph 80e. The Panel was therefore considering whether the house was of exceptional quality of design, in that it:

- *is truly outstanding, reflecting the highest standards in architecture and would help raise the standards of design more generally in rural areas; and,*
- *would significantly enhance its immediate setting and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area.*

This report should be read in conjunction with the previous one dated 28 February 2023, reference: PM_2023_007.

Design Review

The Panel thanked you for your very clear presentations and the lovely axonometric sketch, which brought together the design of the housing and landscape. The new materials and visuals were all thought to be very helpful. You were urged to continue with the rigour in design thought that you have brought to this design evolution.

The fact that you are only proposing to build on 6% of the site was applauded. The landscape is all really positive, with woodland, deadwood structures, orchards and meadow, all very strong elements of the wider design proposition. The proposed level of BNG at c.39% was also felt to be very positive.

The proposition now really feels as if it has emerged from the landscape. The townscape analysis was felt to be useful, but you were asked to take this a step further and be very clear about widths and depths of vernacular buildings.

Whilst there may be no one single pattern of development this will help you to define the dimensions of the built elements in relation to the courtyard, which it was felt could be larger.

You should be presenting this so that the narrative ties in with the townscape analysis as presented. This might be more as a pavilion on the landscape, rather than a modern take on a farmstead.

The revised rotation of the plan and the new geometry were felt to be improvements which help the building sit better in the landscape, create levels that add to its sense of emergence and which has resonance with the heritage assets on the site.

You were urged though to avoid over complicating things. This might best be seen as three built elements connected by glazed sections. This would allow you to reconsider the chimney and the “fussy” Southern elevation, as well as the alignment of the ‘top box’.

The long site section has clearly described and shown how the built elements relate to the landscape and wider townscape. The biophilic concrete is a really interesting choice and it was confirmed after the meeting that this is attached to a SIP panel main structure, which will reduce the carbon footprint of the whole.

The ‘glass beam’ to the upper box will need very careful consideration to ensure that it doesn’t become too reflective. You were asked to test further the geometry of the ‘box’ and explore the final roof appearance if you felt that this could still accommodate the desired solar PV elements in the required alignment. The materiality of the ‘box’ may be too close to that of the main structures, so test that further.

The Panel was not convinced that the pergolas presented an integrated element to either the architecture or landscape and you were asked to reconsider these. It was suggested this be reviewed together with the arrangement of the building elements as it might work better attaching the pergola to the building at the front. You were also encouraged to merge your drawings, as you have done with the 3D-axio, to show the architecture and landscape on one page. This will enhance your joint rigor of the proposals and might reveal whether the dominant central wall is really needed at all.

The required sections of the building are still missing and you need to “zoom in to the details”, for example to the edge of the roof, to ensure that this can be delivered with the required level of quality to elevate this way beyond any sense of it being a normal house.

You were asked to consider mirroring the internal arrangements of the upper box, as this might help with the chimney arrangements and alignment. It might also offer the opportunity for egress on to the green roof and the spectacular views that would be seen from there.

In summary, the Panel thanked you for your presentations and constructive conversation. As presented, the proposal does not yet meet the standard required for NPPF Paragraph 80e, but it is getting very close.

Consider the relationship of the built elements and whether these could be a number of structures linked by glazing. The size of the courtyard may be too small. Test the materiality of the 'box' and work harder on the details of the 'glass beam' and finished building. Be rigorous in furthering the design and ensure the narrative is based on evidence.

The position of the chimney and inclusion of the pergolas need a rethink. Explore the final alignment of all the elements – plan geometry, box alignment and chimney position. Sustainability will be at the core of this proposition, so the inside / outside relationships and reduced carbon footprint should come to the fore.

All of the Panel's previous recommendations need to be adhered to if this is to be delivered as at P80e dwelling. The Panel would expect the LPA to impose suitable conditions to all elements of the design to ensure that happened.

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Design Review Report
The Grow House P80e

30 May 2023

The Grow House Higher Road, Longridge

Reference: PM_2023_012

Report of the Online Design Review Panel

Date of Review: 19 April 2023
Format: Online
Lead Designers: Jackson-Crane Architects & WM Design for NRL

Findings

As presented, the proposal still does not yet meet the standard required for NPPF Paragraph 80e, but this is not something that can't be remedied.

You should consider the final comments made in this report and make further amendments.

Background

The site of the proposed new dwelling lies to the south of Higher Road, Longridge, in open countryside adjacent to the course of a Roman Road, within the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

The proposal envisages a single bespoke dwelling, The Grow House, which is being presented in the context of NPPF Paragraph 80e. The Panel was therefore considering whether the house was of exceptional quality of design, in that it:

- *is truly outstanding, reflecting the highest standards in architecture and would help raise the standards of design more generally in rural areas; and,*
- *would significantly enhance its immediate setting and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area.*

This report should be read in conjunction with the previous one dated the 28 February 2023, reference: PM_2023_007 and the 19 April 2023, reference PM_2023_012.

Desk Review

The Panel thank you for the updated materials.

The Desk Review is considering whether the previous findings have been fully resolved or not. These were:

Consider the relationship of the built elements and whether these could be a number of structures linked by glazing. The size of the courtyard may be too small.

Test the materiality of the 'box' and work harder on the details of the 'glass beam' and finished building.

The position of the chimney and inclusion of the pergolas need a rethink. Explore the final alignment of all the elements – plan geometry, box alignment and chimney position.

Sustainability will be at the core of this proposition, so the inside / outside relationships and reduced carbon footprint should come to the fore.

In response to your submission the Panel has the following comments and observations:

We agree with your assertion that a pitched roof option is not successful, and we support your view that it should not be pursued, as we agree that the building sits better in the landscape in the proposed form.

We also welcome the rotation of the upper-level volume and its alignment with the lower level geometry, which has significantly improved the building's architectural expression, with the three components of the plan now simply expressed.

The splitting of the built elements into three, which reflect the internal functionality works well. But, glazing the element between the main living spaces and the guest suite, the sitting area, was suggested and would be an additional improvement.

The removal of the pergolas also has helped to streamline the appearance of the building, which is very much welcomed.

The inside/ outside relationship is improved. We agree that the size of the courtyard now looks fine.

However, this has resulted in possibly an unintended consequence of a very hard and unwelcoming entrance. This is not something that can't be remedied. Fenestration is needed and particularly to the upper levels of the cantilevered volume.

Comparing the elevations, the north elevation is windowless. The image of the built example (page 3 of changes document) is quite beguiling, but its charm is in the relationship of the windows (floor to ceiling) with the stone-filled cages and their metal surrounds.

The move to gabions is a surprise and has added to the heaviness of the cantilevered upper floor. It makes the ground level building appear low in height.

Additional moves that would improve all of this include:

- Inclusion of tall, narrow window(s) in the north elevation of the cantilevered upper floor (could be resolved by moving the bed to the opposite wall);
- consider vertical not horizontal timber to workshop door;

- ensure that there is sufficient differentiation between the materials for the ground floor and the cantilevered upper floor.
- extending the glazed divide between workshop and main house out over the entrance to the end of the cantilevered element;
- ensure that use of the gabions is not creating structural challenges with the added weight;
- add some landscape interest to the approach to the house – a single tree/ a planter?
- Puncturing some vertical gaps in the approach wall (page 16);
- Reconsider the gate – solid metal sliding gate adds to the fortress character, which goes against the overall concept. Completely perforated would be better and consider if circular is the right pattern as all else is geometric. It could be a bespoke pattern in iron-work;
- Can you please confirm what the material is to the soffit of the balcony to the end of the cantilevered upper floor, as this will be very prominent from views of the building from the bottom of the site; and,
- Similarly, can you also confirm the material to the soffit above the balcony, as this will also be very prominent from views of the building from the bottom of the site.

In summary, the proposition is nearing the standard required, but it is not quite there.

We would welcome the opportunity for a final Desk Review on this project.

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Design Review Report
The Growing House P80e

01 August 2023

The Growing House Higher Road, Longridge

Reference: PM_2023_025b

Report of the Design Review Panel

Date of Review: 31 July 2023
Format: Desk
Lead Designers: Jackson-Crane Architects & WM Design for NRL Holdings

Key Findings

As presented, the Panel undertaking the desk review considers that the proposal meets the test set out in NPPF Paragraph 80e and is considered to be of an exceptional quality of design.

The Panel's recommendation is based specifically on the high quality of the proposals shown in the submitted documents and we would expect the LPA to impose suitable conditions to all elements of the design to ensure that this is what is delivered.

Background

The site of the proposed new dwelling lies to the south of Higher Road, Longridge, in open countryside adjacent to the course of a Roman Road, within the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

The proposal envisages a single bespoke dwelling, The Growing House, presented in the context of NPPF Paragraph 80e. The Panel was therefore considering whether the house was of exceptional quality of design, in that it:

- *is truly outstanding, reflecting the highest standards in architecture and would help raise the standards of design more generally in rural areas; and,*
- *would significantly enhance its immediate setting and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area.*

This report should be read in conjunction with the previous reports, references: PM_2023_007, PM_2023_012 and PM_2023_017a.

Desk Review

The Panel undertook a second Desk Review of this project using a set of drawings, a video and documents as follows:

- Revised narrative July 2023;*
- Revised presentation July 2023, and;*
- Undated animation received 28 July 2023*

The Panel's recommendation is based specifically on the high quality of the proposals shown in these documents and we would expect that any planning consent condition the delivery of the project accordingly.

All of the changes that have been made are very positive and it is in that context that the Panel supports the project. You have engaged with the Places Matter process in a very collaborative and cooperative spirit and the Panel commends you for that.

In summary, the Panel undertaking the desk review considers that the proposal meets the test set out in NPPF Paragraph 80e and is considered to be of an exceptional quality of design.

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