

TDC Ref No: CEJ LMH
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APPENDIX A



**Proof of Evidence
Of
Caroline James
Trevor Dawson & Co**

**Planning Appeal
Against the refusal of consent for residential development**

Land off Milton Avenue
Clitheroe
Lancs.

On behalf of
The Huntroyde Estate

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 My name is Caroline James. I am a Chartered Surveyor and Senior Partner of Trevor Dawson Chartered Surveyors of Blackburn, Burnley and Bolton.
- 1.2 I hold a BSc (Hons) in Urban Land Administration and am a member of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors.
- 1.3 Trevor Dawson, established in 1989, is one of the largest practices operating in Lancashire from three offices, specialising in all aspects of commercial property and residential land.
- 1.4 The practice has acted for a range of public and private sector landowners in the sale and acquisition of land for residential development.
- 1.5 I have acted as an Expert Witness at appeals.
- 1.6 I have lived and worked in the Ribble Valley for 22 years.

2.0 SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONTEXT

POPULATION

- 2.1 Ribble Valley Borough has a population of 57,700 (2010) and is the largest district in the county, but with the smallest population. Over 10% of the Borough is in the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- 2.2 Clitheroe is the main economic and administrative centre, with 15,038 inhabitants (2010) and 6,737 households, the balance of the population of the Borough is in Longridge with a population of 8,253 (2010) and a range of large and small villages and hamlets such as Whalley and Sabden.
- 2.3 Between 1961 and 2010 Ribble Valley Borough has seen the largest population increase in Pennine Lancashire of 22.4%. In the same period the nearest positive increase was in Pendle of 3.7%.
- 2.4 Pennine Lancashire as a region has a growing young population which exceeds regional and national averages.
- 2.5 In the Ribble Valley Borough 20% of the population are aged 65 and over, with a higher than average 29.8% of the population aged between 45 and 64. This is projected to increase over the next fifteen years. 78% of those of driving age own a car, which is a sign of a wealthy population.

2.6 The latest mid year population estimate for 2010 referred to earlier shows an increase in the population of the Borough since 2009 and is projected to increase by 36% by 2025.

2.7 The Borough is a significant tourist destination and since 2004 there has been an overall increase in tourist numbers.

3.0 **ECONOMY**

3.1 Clitheroe is at the heart of the Borough's economy, where unemployment is 3.5%, well below the national and regional figures of 7.6% and 7.8% respectively. Ribble Valley continues to have the lowest level of deprivation in the Lancashire region.

3.2 Over half the working age population commute out of the Borough each day to work.

3.3 Overall, the jobs available in the Ribble Valley do not seem to match the skills of the local labour supply. This suggests that the in and out commuting flows between Ribble Valley and the surrounding districts have different characteristics. The Ribble Valley exports its managerial and professional residents, and imports skilled trades to work in its industrial sector. It is acknowledged that as the key service centre, Clitheroe can accommodate the largest and growing population and therefore requires more family housing of a modern nature to sustain its economy.

3.4 Agriculture is one of the top five employers in the district and, with the exception of BAE Systems at Samlesbury, the remaining top employers are based in Clitheroe.

3.5 Clitheroe, as the largest service centre in the Borough, is a vibrant market town with excellent communications via road and rail.

3.6 Clitheroe is the main economic centre in the Ribble Valley with 15,038 inhabitants (2009). The balance of the population of the Borough is in Longridge with a population of 8,253 (2010) and a range of large and small villages and hamlets such as Whalley and Sabden. The Local Competitiveness Index (2010) shows that many localities have experienced the greatest decline in competitiveness are more rural in nature. Ribble Valley has recorded the greatest fall in rankings, 62 places since 2009 and 46 places since 2008. The report states that whilst many of the cities have benefitted from urban renewal programmes, there have been fewer resources allocated to maintaining the competitiveness of more rural areas. The Ribble Valley is just one of two districts with above the national average proportions of people travelling more than 5 km to work.

- 3.7 Clitheroe, by far accommodates the largest goods-based retail economy in the Ribble Valley (approximately £59m). However, it is showing signs of decline (despite relatively high Zone A rents reflecting demand for shop units from local traders). Retailers report a fall in shopper numbers and a decline in trade. This could be compounded in coming years as nationally, consumer spending is curbed by the credit crunch. For its size, the town captures a very low market share of retail spend from the catchment and is overshadowed by the retail economies of Preston, Blackburn, Burnley, Accrington and Nelson. Its retail economy is dominated by spend on convenience goods at its three supermarkets and is the main reason shoppers visit the town. More people appear to be visiting the town centre out of necessity rather than for an experience. Retailers' main concerns are the poor variety of shops and lack of national retailer representation to draw more people in.
- 3.8 Clitheroe has a vital role in terms of service provision to its hinterland the surrounding rural areas. Development is vital across all sectors to underpin its ongoing sustainable growth.

4.0 **RESIDENTIAL MARKET**

- 4.1 The Ribble Valley Borough is recognised as one of the most desirable places to live in the United Kingdom. (Channel 4 News).
- 4.2 Generally house prices in the Ribble Valley are higher than national averages.
- 4.3 Clitheroe has a wide range of housing from traditional terraced to large detached properties with low density occupation, and is of a good quality. Ribble Valley has the least number of empty homes in Lancashire (www.emptyhouses.com).
- 4.4 The lack of development in the Ribble Valley, largely due to the moratorium in the early 2000's and economic factors, has ensured the market and house prices remain relatively buoyant.
- 4.5 The average house price in the Ribble Valley in June 2012 was £201,625 with detached properties asking an average of £315,202. Affordability is recognised as an issue and emphasises the importance of bringing forward a wide range of affordable family housing.

- 4.6 Market information (October 2012) confirms comparable properties in the area as follows:

4 bed detached:	Holme Hill, Clitheroe	£349,950
	Denbigh Drive, Clitheroe	£312,500
	Copperfield Close, Clitheroe	£299,950
	Spar Garth, Clitheroe	£279,950
	Mearley Syke, Clitheroe	£249,950
3 bed detached:	Moorland Crescent, Clitheroe	£285,000
	Bracken Hey, Clitheroe	£237,500
3 bed semi detached:	Warwick Drive, Clitheroe	£199,950
	Mearley Syke, Clitheroe	£176,950
	Brownlow Street, Clitheroe	£175,000
2 bed terraced:	Hawthorn Place, Clitheroe	£190,000
	Pimlico Road, Clitheroe	£175,000
	Spring Meadow, Clitheroe	£178,000

- 4.7 This highlights the disparity between the price of the desirable terraced Town Centre property and a typical three bed semi and detached property.
- 4.8 This climate has ensured continued interest from private housing developers in opportunities in the Ribble Valley but the funding climate still remains unpredictable and only the better sites such as the subject site will come forward attracting developers in a shorter timeframe than its competitors.
- 4.9 Clitheroe has the largest population and economy in the Ribble Valley and yet over the last twelve months no family housing has been delivered of any significance.
- 4.10 Since the Henthorn decision in March 2012, no detailed application has been submitted. Whilst we are aware that the landowner is in discussion with a national housebuilder, at the earliest delivery of this site will not be until the end of 2013/early 2014. A further two year unfulfilled supply of housing.
- 4.11 In our opinion the Henthorn site and recently Low Moor site are poorer locations than the subject site.
- 4.12 The very recent decision in Whalley at Lawsonsteads further puts the supply to Clitheroe out of kilter with its economic significance and places further strain on the vulnerable Town Centre.

- 4.13 The proposed scheme gives the opportunity to deliver a range of family homes, affordable and starter homes, particularly in the 2/3/4 bedroom, detached and semi detached sectors which are conveniently located within easy walking distance of all Town Centre amenities.
- 4.14 The scheme will also deliver the opportunity to satisfy the needs of the increasing elderly downsizing population who require a range of housing.
- 4.15 The scheme is of a size that will enable developers to bring forward an exceptional offer of high, medium and low density on a phased basis. The development will attract family purchasers and first time buyers predominantly from the immediate area but with scope to bring people from the wider area. The excellent accessibility to the transport network and Town Centre will create further economic and employment opportunities to stem the flow of commuters out of the Borough. Additional accessible housing adjacent to the town centre creates further guaranteed spend in the town and the use of its amenities.

5.0 **CONCLUSIONS**

- 5.1 The subject site occupies an excellent location adjacent to the Town Centre, in a popular residential neighbourhood which is surrounded mainly by older housing.
- 5.2 This part of the Town Centre has not seen any significant new development since the Barratt scheme some 22 years ago, off Waddington Road.
- 5.3 Clitheroe needs a range of different sized sites capable of early delivery. Recent decisions further exacerbate the supply of new housing to Clitheroe, with a bias towards other areas of the Ribble Valley.
- 5.4 The site's sustainable location in comparison with others maximises the opportunity for economic benefits to flow through the Town Centre. In addition the provision of modern family housing improves the prospects of maximising the growing population and retaining employment within the borough.
- 5.5 In demand terms, the appeal site ranks with location very highly. TDC as marketing agents for the site have been approached by several developers who confirm our opinion and are very keen to acquire the site and deliver a scheme to the market within twelve months.