Statement of Community Involvement

Submitted as part of the Outline Planning Application for

Land to the east of Clitheroe Road (Lawsonsteads Farm), Whalley

COMMERCIAL ESTATES GROUP

Land east of Clitheroe Road (Lawsonsteads), Whalley

Statement of Community Involvement

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Indigo

In conjunction with

Beattie Communications
Redwood Consulting

Indigo Planning Limited
Lowry House
17 Marble Street
Manchester

Tel: 0161 836 6910
Fax: 0161 836 6911

info@indigoplanning.com
indigoplanning.com

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1. Introduction

1.1. This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is submitted on behalf of Commercial Estates Group (CEG). It relates to proposals for a mixed residential development on land east of Clitheroe Road (otherwise known as 'Lawsonsteads'), Whalley in the Ribble Valley.

1.2. This Statement outlines the applicant's approach to pre-application consultation and identifies who has been consulted, a summary of the responses received and how the applicant has addressed the main points and issues raised in preparing proposals for the site.

1.3. The majority of the consultation undertaken was associated with proposals for an earlier planning application relating to a larger site area (Application Reference 3/2011/0111). However, given the nature of the latest scheme is in accordance with those proposals consulted on previously, the consultation process and extent of stakeholder engagement undertaken as part of that application remains valid in the context of this application. In particular, the site-specific issues remain the same and the principle of development in this location has not changed.

1.4. The consultation process undertaken by the applicant is compliant with the requirements of the recently published National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Ribble Valley Borough Council's own SCI (2007 and 2010 Review) and is intended to supplement the formal process that the Council will undertake further to submission of the application.

1.5. The following sections of this Statement detail the extent of consultation and community engagement that has previously been undertaken, having regard to the planning policy context; consultation findings; implementation; and, rationale for the proposed scheme.

2. Policy Context

2.1. Government policy and guidance encourages community engagement with the planning system, both in the context of developing local plans and informing specific development proposals.

2.2. This section provides a brief overview of key policy and guidance and how this has informed the approach to pre-application community engagement for the purpose of developing proposals for the application site.

National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012)

2.3. Paragraph 188 of NPPF states:

> *'Early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality pre-application discussion enables better co-ordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community.'*

2.4. Paragraphs 189 and 190 encourage developers to engage with local authorities, the local community and statutory consultees (where possible) before submitting planning applications in adopting a pro-active approach and in seeking to avoid unnecessary delays and costs.

Localism Act (2011)

2.5. The Act strengthens the role of local communities in planning by introducing a requirement for developers to consult with local communities before submitting planning applications for certain developments (Section 122). This is intended to give local people a chance to comment when there is still genuine scope to make changes to proposals.

2.6. Whilst Section 122 is yet to be brought into effect, the accompanying Statement of Community Involvement submitted with the application identifies the extent of community consultation and stakeholder engagement undertaken to date.

Local growth: realising every place's potential (White Paper, October 2010)

2.7. The Coalition Government published a white paper in October 2010 which outlined a new approach to growth, shifting power away from central government to local communities. In particular, it outlines proposals to enable places to tailor their approach to local circumstances and provides incentives for those places that support new growth and development.

2.8. The premise of the white paper is two fold; the need to restore stability to public finances whilst also creating the right conditions that will assist businesses and help the economy to grow.

2.9. It identifies that local authorities have a critical role in supporting the economy of their area and have a wide array of mechanisms for doing so. Box 2.A identifies a number of key roles, including:

- supporting growth and development through ensuring a responsive supply of land that supports business growth and increases housing supply;
- supporting local infrastructure – transport investment, in particular is a key enabler of

growth; and

- providing high quality services, such as schools and transport.

2.10. Box 3.B reaffirms the role of housing in driving growth as it can play a key role in supporting an efficient labour market, which is critical to economic growth.

2.11. With regard to planning, the Government outlines intentions to 'pass power to communities' and restore confidence in the planning system. In particular, Paragraph 3.4 states:

> *"We also need to ensure that local communities which opt for growth are able to reap the benefits from doing so, changing the culture of planning so that the default position is in favour of development. Neighbourhoods will welcome growth because they will be sharing in the gains it produces, and because they will be able to shape how economic development looks and where it happens, subject to the requirements of national policy".*

2.12. The paper encourages collaboration between local authorities, public and private bodies and for developers to consult with others and engage with the local community before submitting planning applications.

Ribble Valley Borough Council: Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) (2007)

2.13. The Council's adopted SCI sets out how local people, organisations and key stakeholders will be involved in the planning process with regard to both the preparation of development plans and development proposals.

2.14. Section 4.2 identifies how developers can consult with the community, with reference to a number of techniques which encourage engagement in the planning process, including:

- Undertaking pre-application discussions with development control officers;
- Making detailed proposals available for public view;
- Circulating a leaflet outlining the proposals to local residents;
- Arranging meetings with groups in the community (e.g. the local Parish Council, Ward Councillors, interested parties and local residents); and
- Keeping a record of all consultation undertaken, including correspondence, public notices, a record of persons attending exhibitions and meetings.

2.15. Section 4.3 outlines the Council's consultation process which they will undertake upon receipt of planning applications and includes reference to neighbour notification; informing statutory consultees and other interested groups; the publication of press articles in local papers and use of site notices.

Ribble Valley Borough Council: Revised Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) (2010 Review)

2.16. The Council formally adopted its revised SCI on 1 December 2010.

2.17. The main changes (caused by publication of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) (Amendment) Regulations of 2008 and 2009 are:

- Removal of the preferred options stage for Development Plan Documents (DPDs) and the introduction of a more flexible participation process;

- The removal of the requirement of the SCI to be subject to independent examination; and

- The removal of the requirement for Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) to be subject to sustainability appraisals.

2.18. These changes do not alter the approach to community consultation set out with regard to specific planning applications and therefore the information contained within the 2007 SCI.

Summary

2.19. Community participation is a key objective of Government policy and its importance is reaffirmed through the Council's own SCI.

2.20. The following sections of this Statement provide details of the scope of consultation and community engagement undertaken prior to submission of the application and in accordance with the Government's requirements for pre-application community involvement on major planning applications.

3. Approach to Community Consultation

Background

3.1. The applicant (CEG) has been and continues to be committed to engaging with the community in developing proposals for the site. CEG realises the value this can add to a development and the overall planning process and has a long history and track record of working with key stakeholders and local residents on this basis.

3.2. Extensive public consultation and engagement was undertaken as part of the previous application for the wider site. Although this consultation did not specifically relate to the current application, it invited comments on the principle of development in the area, and flagged up various local highways and infrastructure issues and concerns. This Section sets out the objectives and strategy behind the consultation that was carried out as part of the previous application, and the consultation strategy for this proposed development.

Consultation objectives

3.3. Prior to engaging with stakeholders and the local community, the applicant devised a series of pre-application consultation objectives in order to inform the approach taken and scope of interested groups/individuals involved.

3.4. The objectives set are as follows:

- To understand the community's views on the development of the site;
- To allow adequate opportunity for the community to consider, understand and comment on the nature of the proposed scheme;
- To promote understanding of the proposals for the site;
- To allow the early resolution and solutions to any issues or concerns raised;
- To take on board or have regard to the comments provided during the consultation process in masterplanning the site; and
- To ensure the community and key stakeholders are kept informed of progress of proposals for the site.

Consultation strategy

3.5. Throughout the pre-application consultation process, the applicant sought to actively engage with a variety of stakeholders and the local community and, where possible, respond positively to the comments and consultation responses received.

3.6. To date, the consultation process has involved:

- Meetings with officers from both Ribble Valley Borough Council and Lancashire County Council;
- Meetings with statutory consultees, including the Environment Agency and United Utilities;
- Meetings with political representatives from both Ribble Valley Borough Council (including the local Ward Councillors Joyce Holgate and Terry Hill), Lancashire County

Council and Nigel Evans MP;

- Meetings with representatives from Whalley Parish Council;
- Undertaking a Public Exhibition (held on two separate dates);
- Creation of an interactive website (www.lawsonsteads.com); and
- Preparation of a newsletter providing feedback on the exhibition and timescale for submission and determination of the planning application.

3.7. Further details of this approach are set out below.

Pre-application consultation

Pre-application discussions with Ribble Valley Borough Council (RVBC)

3.8. In addition to an extensive number of meetings undertaken during the course of the earlier application (including pre-application meetings outlined in the then submitted SCI), the applicant has undertaken a further formal pre-application meeting with Council officers, prior to submission of the application.

3.9. This was held on 31 January 2012 and the purpose of this was to discuss revised proposals for the application site in the context of the reasons for refusal of the earlier scheme.

3.10. This meeting was attended by representatives of the Council with regard to both planning policy (including landscape and heritage) and development control matters.

3.11. The Council subsequently provided a letter to the applicant confirming the extent of discussion that had taken place and identifying how certain planning issues (predominantly landscaping and heritage) ought to be addressed through the submission (dated 2 March 2012).

Meetings with Interested Parties

3.12. Aside from on-going discussions with RVBC, the applicant has also met with the local Ward Councillors in providing an update on promotional activity including presenting the revised scheme which takes the form of this application.

3.13. Whilst these meetings have not raised any new issues further to those raised during the course of the previous application, the applicant has kept an open dialogue with the parties, to keep them updated as to the progress of the proposals.

3.14. A full schedule of meetings to have taken place to date both during the course of this and the earlier application is provided at **Appendix 1**.

Pubic Consultation Event

3.15. The applicant has not undertaken a further public consultation event on the revised application proposal on the basis that the nature of the latest proposal remains unchanged from the earlier scheme in so far as the proposal is for a mixed residential development.

3.16. An exhibition was held on the earlier scheme, however, in 2010. Details of the outcomes of this and how issues arising were addressed are detailed in the SCI submitted with that application. For ease of reference and in seeking to avoid repetition of this information here, a copy of the previous SCI is provided at **Appendix 2**.

Summary

3.17. It is evident that the pre-application consultation strategy undertaken fully accords with the requirements of the NPPF and Localism Act (2011).

3.18. During the course of the sites promotion, the applicant has provided a series of pre-application consultation opportunities for key stakeholders and local residents to engage in the planning process and inform proposals for the site.

3.19. The following section sets out how the feedback received has influenced the application proposals.

4. Implementation of Consultation Findings

Background

4.1. Section 3 reflected on the scope of issues raised by stakeholders including RVBC, LCC, the MP, local Ward Councillors, the Parish Council and local residents with regards the earlier scheme proposals. Given that the applicant has not undertaken any new consultation in advance of submission of this application, regard has been had to issues raised previously in preparing revised proposals for the site.

4.2. To recap, the main issues arising from the consultation (including the latest pre-application meeting with officers in January 2012) can be summarised as follows:

- Questions about why development is being proposed in Whalley rather than elsewhere in the Ribble Valley;
- Development impacts on traffic and parking in the village;
- The impacts on drainage, in particular, surface water run-off from the site and risk of flooding in the village;
- Impact on local schools and how the education needs of the development will be met;
- Loss of greenfield land and views across the site;
- Impact on the Whalley Conservation Area;
- The cumulative effects of the development with other recent proposals in and around Whalley (i.e. the Co-operative Estates application Ref: 3/2010/0820); and
- Why an application was being prepared now rather than waiting for the LDF to progress.

Applicant's Response to Issues

Housing

4.3. There is clearly concern amongst local residents there is a limited requirement for new housing (if any) in Whalley. This was reaffirmed in responses to the previous application and with regards other scheme proposals in Whalley.

4.4. As a general point, there is both a quantative and qualitative need for housing across the Borough and Whalley has been identified as one of the main settlements for accommodating some of this new growth. The technical case for new housing is set out in detail in the Planning Statement (see Section 5 of Planning Statement).

4.5. However, the scale of the development has been reduced in line with pre-application advice from the Council in January and with landscape and heritage issues influencing the design. This does not detract from the continued need for housing in Whalley.

4.6. The masterplan has retained provision of a 50 bed nursing home reflecting on the need to provide an overall mix of house types and meet growing demographic and housing needs.

4.7. With regard to the issue of affordable housing provision, some people are concerned that insufficient affordable housing is provided whilst others are against provision of any affordable homes.

4.8. The scheme will provide 30% affordable housing in accordance with the Council's policy requirements. Whilst the applicant is not seeking detailed layout at this stage, it will comprise a mix of house types and sizes and promote affordable market housing in order to adequately address local needs.

Traffic, Transport and Access

4.9. Concerns have been raised about the impact of development traffic on the village centre, parking provision and wider access considerations.

4.10. The application is accompanied by a comprehensive Transport Assessment (TA) which provides an assessment of the existing highway network, existing and predicted flows and the impact traffic from development of the site will have on the network's safe and efficient operation. The assessment demonstrates that traffic from the development can be adequately accommodated within the local highway network.

4.11. The TA is accompanied by a Green Travel Plan which sets out measures for encouraging sustainable travel patterns including the provision of improved pedestrian and cycle links between the site, village centre and bus and train stations.

4.12. In addition, further to complaints from local residents about parking issues in the village, the applicant has undertaken detailed parking surveys to assess the level of existing parking provision available in the village, how this is utilised and existing parking patterns including on adjacent residential streets.

4.13. The survey results show that, overall, there is not a shortage of parking within the village, however, the surveys have shown that a significant proportion of parking exceeds two hours and this results in a perceived shortfall of spaces for shoppers.

4.14. The applicant proposes to enter into discussions with the Local Highway Authority (Lancashire County Council) regarding the potential for the introduction of two hour on-street parking restrictions in the village centre. The intention is that this will release more than sufficient short stay spaces to satisfy the shopping demands of both existing and new residents and will therefore increase the attractiveness of local shops.

Drainage

4.15. Surface water run-off from the site and existing drainage and flooding problems in Brookes Lane and King Street have been frequently raised as issues. The fear is that development could exacerbate this problem.

4.16. The applicant has therefore undertaken detailed discussions with the Environment Agency with regard to existing flooding problems in Whalley and whether the development of the application site might create additional problems.

4.17. A detailed Flood Risk Assessment has been prepared and is submitted in support of the application. This identifies the pattern of existing surface water drainage on site and models the impacts of the development on future surface water run-off. It demonstrates that discharge of surface water run-off from the site can be accommodated within the existing drainage network with discharge rates from the site better managed. This will ensure that drainage along King Street is not adversely affected by the proposal. Further details are contained in the accompanying Flood Risk Assessment.

4.18. The overall design of the masterplan has taken into account existing sensitive areas of the site and its surrounds in terms of drainage and makes provision for incorporation of measures to attenuate surface water run-off on site.

Education

4.19. The previous proposal included land reserved for a new primary school, to meet the then projected needs of the development (at a primary school level) in addition to the cumulative effects of other developments coming forward in the catchment area.

4.20. At the time of determination of the previous application, the position reached (and agreed) with the education authority was that a financial contribution would be provided for the estimated number of school places required, with the offer of the land for a new school offset against this contribution.

4.21. The development proposal has been significantly reduced in scale. Therefore, mindful of the approach agreed with the education authority on the earlier scheme (i.e. the making of a monetary contribution) and that this approach has been accepted with regards other recent approvals in the area, the draft Heads of Terms no longer reserve a site for a new school but make provision for a financial contribution to provide new school places (if necessary) associated with the development.

Landscape and heritage

4.22. Local residents and the Council have raised concerns regarding the impact of the development on the visual amenity of nearby residents and the potential loss of key views of the site, including to/from the Whalley Conservation Area. Concerns were also raised over the potential loss of trees on the site as a result of the development.

4.23. A full tree survey and assessment of existing features on site has informed preparation of the revised masterplan. It is proposed to keep tree removal to a minimum other than where this is necessary to accommodate the development. Conversely, the proposed scheme makes provision for supplementary landscaping and protection of key views and pedestrian routes across the site thereby seeking to minimise the visual impacts of both within the development and of the site as a whole.

4.24. Development will inevitably lead to changes in the landscape when viewed by adjoining local residents, however, the masterplan seeks to minimise visual impacts where possible.

4.25. For the avoidance of doubt, a detailed Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment is provided within the submitted Design and Access Statement. This includes photomontages which, based on the proposed parameters of development, articulate key views from which the development will be visible or not.

4.26. Details of the associated heritage impacts on the Whalley Conservation Area (based on an assessment of these key views) is contained in the Planning Statement.

Overall Impact

4.27. A number of residents have previously raised concern about the impacts development would have on the community and village life. In particular, comments were made suggesting that the development would result in urbanisation of Whalley to the extent that it becomes a town.

4.28. The application proposals have been prepared to respect and maintain the character of the village and its wider environment. The masterplan promotes parameters which reflect the need to respect the site's wider context and environment, details of which are set out in the submitted Design and Access Statement The proposal will add positively to the village and further strengthen the community by way of a carefully managed and phased development.

Other

4.29. The consultation responses also raised a number of other issues, relating to:

- the effect of development on the village's tourism potential;
- the scale of development being too large;
- the potential for a supermarket to be provided;
- there not being a need for affordable housing in Whalley;
- the need for new community spaces to be provided;
- the need for retirements homes and bungalows; and
- a general distrust in developers.

4.30. These issues are addressed throughout the application submission, in particular, through the Planning Statement and Design & Access Statement.

5. Summary

5.1. The pre-application consultation strategy that has been implemented has sought to be inclusive and take account of the different interests in the proposals for the site, whilst taking account of any limitations and scope for change through the process. The level of pre-application consultation with the local community as a whole has exceeded the requirements of national and local policy and guidance.

5.2. The process has allowed the views of local people to be taken into consideration and informed the revised planning application proposals for the site.

5.3. The masterplan has been revised to reflect concerns relating to traffic and access and, in design terms seeks to maintain the overall character of the village by carefully set parameters for development which respect the site's immediate constraints and wider environment, in particular in landscape and heritage terms.

5.4. The proposed mix of uses addresses the needs identified by the Council, stakeholders and local residents, in particular with regard to the provision of affordable housing and accommodation for the elderly.

5.5. Not all of the concerns raised can be addressed as there are technical planning reasons (the significant need for more homes in the Ribble Valley) why the development proposal is coming forward at this time and in the proposed form.

5.6. A key aim of the applicant is to continue to involve the community at all stages of the planning and development process. In this regard, a database has been created of all stakeholders and interested parties (including those who attended the exhibition event) so that they can be kept informed throughout the process. This will be supplemented by further meetings with officers and Councillors of RVBC and LCC and other local stakeholders as necessary.

5.7. Following the submission of the application, CEG will monitor any responses which are made to RVBC during the statutory consultation process and will continue in its efforts to address these where possible.