

## Planning Statement

---

Alty's Brickworks, Station Road, Hesketh Bank



## **Introduction**

This Planning Statement is to accompany a reserved matters application for the proposed erection of 211 dwellings including associated infrastructure and landscaping. This statement will highlight the current position relative to the Planning Policy of West Lancashire Borough Council.

The site already benefits from Outline planning permission (ref: 2013/1258/OUT) which establishes the principle of development on the site as well as the means of access. There are also 34 conditions guiding the development including the approved access plans showing details of both southern and northern entrances. Alongside the decision notice is a Section 106 agreement dated 30<sup>th</sup> April 2015.

This statement is to summarise the above and to ensure the appropriate policy context is highlighted locally and nationally.

The determination of development proposals should have regard to Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 which requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the adopted plans unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The local development plan consists of the West Lancashire Local Plan (2012 – 2027). There are further Supplementary Planning Documents.

Other material considerations that need to be considered include the National Planning Policy Framework as well as the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulations 2010.

## Site Location and Planning History

The site is within the boundary of the existing residential area to the east of the village centres of Hesketh Bank and Tarleton. The site comprises of 20 acres of land located on the periphery between the two large villages of Hesketh Bank and Tarleton. The site is within close proximity to shops, schools and existing public transport routes.

The site is an irregular shape and comprises of a greenfield and brownfield element. The site is therefore currently used as a mixture between the Alty's brickworks and grazing.

The site is bounded by the river Douglas to the east and residential development to the south and west. There is a large open space and lake to the north also which also includes the recreational element of the Light Railway group and a proposed employment use. These uses have been approved by the outline planning approval (2013/1258/OUT) but will be subject to separate reserved matters applications when delivery is achievable.

As this site has the benefit of an outline planning permission, a reserved matters application must be made within three years of the decision. This has been met with an application submitted within 2016. Due to the outline planning permission in place, this statement will not consider the principle of residential development. This has been established (alongside the two accesses) and accepted by West Lancashire Borough Council through the Local Plan (2012) and through this Outline approval. It should therefore be noted that this is an important site as it current contributes to the 5 year supply of the Council.

Alongside the outline planning permission, a Section 106 agreement has been agreed. The following principles are established through this:

- Public Open Space;
- Affordable Housing;
- Specialist Housing;
- Primary Education Contribution; and
- Obligations subject to viability.

How the above is being met or not being met will be dealt with under a separate statement, but it is useful to make clear that the use of a viability assessment has been included within the Section 106 agreement.

The Community Infrastructure Levy will also be payable on this development. This will amount to £85 per sqm. This equates to £1,583,295 and this will be paid in instalments as outlined in the Council's CIL policy.

The outline planning permission has numerous planning conditions attached and these will be discharged at the relevant time. The application that accompanies this statement is for the reserved matters; namely the landscaping, scale, layout and appearance.

## **National Policy**

Determination of a planning application, including a reserved matters application, has to consider the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as a material consideration. This framework guides plan and decision making.

Paragraph 14 highlights a presumption in favour of sustainable development that needs to accord with decision taking. If the proposed scheme accords with the development plan then it should be approved without delay. The application details the proposal which does accord with the relevant local and national planning policy which this statement and the accompanying documents will confirm.

During the consultation, the impact on the local highway network was a primary concern. Further details can be found in the Statement of Community Involvement. The NPPF ensures that any developments that generate a significant amount of traffic movement should be supported by Transport Assessment (paragraph 32). This was undertaken as part of the Outline planning permission and an Environmental Statement which concluded that impact was low and there were some benefits including the formation of links through the site and proposed off-site highway works to specific junctions. These are a condition (no. 10) on the Outline planning permission. As such, the tests of the NPPF are met including providing the opportunity for sustainable transport modes, a safe and suitable access and further improvements undertaken on the local highway network.

NPPF ensures that a wide choice of high quality homes (paragraph 50) is delivered which will support the development of sustainable communities. This has been achieved by proposing a range of houses including smaller apartments to larger detached dwellings that support large families.

There is a requirement for good design within the NPPF (paragraph 56). Good design is inseparable from sustainable development and the design merits of the proposal has been included in the accompanying Design and Access statement. The strong design is evident from the proposed layouts including extensive soft landscaping which creates a Linear Park, prominent views over the adjacent River Douglas and open space which will enhance the biodiversity and protect the existing habitats. The site is easy to navigate, with certain landmark features including squares and corner buildings. The location of the roads, especially on the eastern side of the site allow for a strong integration with the open space and the watercourse. The mixture of housetypes will give an interesting streetscene and a mixture of bricks are proposed. The site will be easily accessible and inviting which partly develops a previous brownfield site. This will improve the character and quality of the area and the way it functions (paragraph 64).

Being able to enhance the local natural environment is an integral part of the planning system (paragraph 109). There is a well established Biological Heritage Site within the boundary of the proposal and this is being retained in full. The impact on biodiversity will therefore be minimal especially as the site is already partially developed (light industry). This has been expanded upon by with the accompanying ecology reports that considers Great Crested Newts and Bats.

Development schemes which encourage the effective use of land by recycling previously developed land should be looked upon favourably (paragraph 111). A total of 122 dwellings

(58%) are to be constructed on the brownfield element. This will avoid any harm to biodiversity, even on the greenfield element of the site (paragraph 118).

The NPPF also ensures that when pursuing sustainable development and determining proposals, attention to viability and the deliverability of the scheme is important (paragraph 173). As such, and under the mechanisms of the Section 106 agreement, affordable housing is not being proposed here and this is explained in further detail within the accompanying application documents.

## Local Policy

The Local Plan (2012 – 2027) details the material considerations that need to be considered as part of the determination of the submitted planning application. The majority of these policies were necessary to consider under the Outline planning application. A brief overview of the relevant policies will therefore be given that relates specifically to this application.

The starting point for this site is policy EC3 (Rural Development Opportunities). This allocates this site for a mixture of uses, with an anticipated site capacity of 270 dwellings. The policy also stipulates that not all of the site will comprise of built development. The application meets this criteria, with acres of open space proposed and 211 dwellings in total. This reserved matters application is for the residential element, the employment (as reserved within the policy and under the Outline planning permission) will be approved separately.

Policy GN3 (Criteria for Sustainable Development) is also an important policy to consider. This ensures that new development adheres to the West Lancashire Design Guide SPD and that amenity for existing residents but also complementing local distinctiveness. This will be covered in greater depth within the Design and Access Statement. Further, a previous iteration of the scheme has 231 dwellings. During discussion with the Council, concerns were raised about density and therefore the scheme's relationship with the local character. The number of dwellings as a result have been lowered and this has reduced the density to a similar grain as the adjacent houses; especially in the southern portion of the site.

Site accessibility and transport (policy GN3) is also of importance. The site will integrate well with the surrounding area, including the installation of off-site highway works and junction improvements. Pedestrians and cyclists will be encouraged to use the open space features, especially the Linear Park and the proposal ensures that access will be made available at the site boundaries. A safe road layout design has also been achieved, which will include slow speeds and shared surfaces. By ensuring there is sufficient off-street parking, it will mean that the road is free from obstructions and visibility is maintained.

The impact of flooding needs to also be considered (policy GN3). This was comprehensively explored as part of the Outline, the conclusion of which maintains that with some mitigation measures, this will reduce the potential impacts to 'negligible'. A drainage scheme has been included as part of the application and will be assessed as part of the determination.

Policy GN3 also considers landscaping and the natural environment. The policy is to ensure that the distinctive character and visual quality is maintained or enhanced as part of proposals. This can be considered to be met, with the retention of the BHS and the proposed landscaping scheme. The visual quality will be maintained and enhanced in part. Existing landscaping features are also going to be retained where possible, including prominent trees and hedgerows within the proposed open spaces.

To ensure the efficient use of land, an appropriate density for the development proposal is expected (policy RS1 (d)), which ensures a minimum of 30 dwellings per hectare. The development proposed is at a density of 38 dwellings per net hectare, which will ensure an efficient use of land but will also mean it is not overcrowded. This is enhanced by the inclusion of public open space.

The Local Plan policy relating to the construction of a Linear Park in Hesketh Bank (policy IF2). This policy is being met as much as possible, with the infrastructure being delivered

within the application site. This will allow for the remainder of the Linear Park to connect in to once it has been delivered.

A criticism of the site is that the development contravenes policy EN2.5, relating to the Coastal Zone. The North West Inshore Coastal Zone includes a portion of the River Douglas, including part of the site. Subsequently, approximately 22% of the proposed dwellings are within this zone. This was considered at length during the Outline planning process, and the conclusion has been that as there has not been any objection from the Marine Management Organisation and the Environment Agency, the residential use for this area is acceptable. There is no issue of flood risk (subject to the planning conditions) and there will be no works taking place below the mean high water springs. This will ensure the proposal is adequately protected against flooding. The inclusion of the Linear Park helps also as it is adjacent to the river. Taking the above into consideration, and the need for more housing in the area, the criticism is therefore not justified.

The Biological Heritage Site is subject to policy EN2.1 (Nature Conservation) which stipulates that development will only be approved where it is necessary to meet an overriding local public need or where it is in relation to the purposes. Although the pressure for delivering housing and having a continual 5 year supply is an important material consideration, we have proposed a layout which avoids the BHS areas which ensures that the impact is minimal. This will allow for the BHS to be protected and enhanced further.

Policy EN2.6 has also been satisfied which ensures new developments take advantage of its landscape setting and to ensure the landscape is enhanced where possible. The development proposed takes account of the landscape character by proposing views onto the river and the open spaces within the BHS. Further, soft landscaping is proposed which includes a mix plant species that complements and enhances the existing environment and to ensure the built development is properly integrated.

## **Conclusion**

The application site will deliver additional housing and will actively assist the Council in meeting the NPPF's objective of "boosting significantly the supply of housing", which meets the objectively assessed needs. This site makes up the Council's rolling land supply and as such, this application should be supported.

Overall, the proposals provide much needed and high quality housing of multiple sizes on a site which has Outline planning approval. The proposals and delivery of the scheme are in line with this approval and local and national planning policy.

It has been demonstrated that there are no adverse impacts arising from the proposed reserved matters submission that significantly nor demonstrably outweigh the benefits that would be gained once approved and construction begins. There will be range of economic benefits from the CIL monies but also from the New Homes Bonus, a positive impact on the local facilities and the potential for use of local labour and materials.

There is a strong environmental ethos within these proposals, which ensures that biodiversity is maintained and enhanced, new planting will occur and a strong rural feel will be delivered. The site connectivity is strong, with pedestrian access available and the delivery of a portion of the Linear Park will ensure a pleasant natural environment is preserved.

The site, once approved, can start delivering houses quickly with anticipated legal completions in early 2017. This will assist the Council in providing enough housing for a growing and diverse population in a sustainable location.

