



Steven Abbott Associates LLP
Chartered Town Planners

PLANNING STATEMENT

Mr A Greaves

Outline planning application for residential development including
details of access, layout and scale

Former Greaves Butchers, 1-3 Chequer Lane, Up Holland, WN8 0DA

November 2023



REPORT DETAILS

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This Planning Statement has been produced to support an Outline planning application for the redevelopment of the site for residential purposes. A total of 8no. units are proposed comprising of 4no. dwellinghouses and 4no. flats/apartments. Details of access, layout and scale are included.
- 1.2. The application site is located on Chequer Lane, Up Holland and is within the designated settlement area of Skelmersdale with Up Holland.
- 1.3. The purpose of this Planning Statement is to set out the key relevant planning considerations for the proposed development, and to provide an informed assessment based on the relevant planning policy context and other material considerations.
- 1.4. In summary, this Planning Statement demonstrates that the proposed development represents a sustainable and acceptable form of development, which should be supported by the Local Planning Authority.

2. THE SITE AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

- 2.1. The application site is located on the eastern side of Chequer Lane, Up Holland and currently comprises of a collection of commercial buildings that were formerly used in connection with the applicant's butchery business – H Greaves and Son, which ceased trading in April 2023.
- 2.2. The frontage building facing Chequer Lane (No. 1-3 Chequer Lane) is an attractive stone-built building which in part served as the front of house/shop for the former butchers. The remainder of this building is within residential use. Behind 1-3 Chequer Lane, stretching eastwards into the site, are the more modern commercial buildings and associated yard area.
- 2.3. Currently, the site is served by 2no. separate access points. The first, essentially 'main' access, sits between the north of 1-3 Chequer Lane and to the south of the neighbouring retail premises (Venilde & Sons Ltd). The second is located to the south of 1- 3 Chequer Lane.
- 2.4. Aside from the retail premises located on the corner of Chequer Lane and Ormskirk Road (Venilde & Sons Ltd), the site is surrounded by residential properties on its northern, southern and eastern boundaries.
- 2.5. There is a pedestrian alleyway running parallel with the southern boundary which serves the adjoining Danbers residential development and beyond.
- 2.6. Located opposite the site, across the road, is an area of open space known as Chequer Lane Playing Fields.
- 2.7. The application site is located within the defined settlement area of Up Holland as designated within the West Lancashire Local Plan.

3. PLANNING HISTORY

3.1. The relevant planning history is as follows:

➤ **Planning Ref:** 1999/0455

Proposal: Erection of replacement building for use as butchers workshop/meat preparation/walk-in fridge

Decision: Planning permission granted.

➤ **Planning Ref:** 1995/0804

Proposal: Single storey extension to side elevation.

Decision: Planning permission granted.

4. DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

- 4.1. Outline planning permission including details of access, layout and scale is sought for the redevelopment of the site with a small residential development.
- 4.2. The proposals involve the retention of No. 1-3 Chequer Lane and the demolition of all the other commercial buildings on the site, as well as the domestic garage currently associated with the existing residential property along the frontage of Chequer Lane.
- 4.3. A total of 8no. residential units are proposed (net increase of 7no. dwellings) which will include the following:
 - The conversion of the former shop and attached dwelling to 2no. flats (Plots 1 & 2).
 - 2no. flats within the central area of the site (Plots 3 & 4).
 - 4no. mews style properties - 2no. two beds and 2no. three beds (Plots 5-8). These will be located within the eastern portion of the site with their frontages looking westwards. Private garden areas will be located to the rear with car parking located to the front of this row of dwellings.
- 4.4. A new primary access will be created to the south of 1-3 Chequer Lane through the removal of an existing domestic garage. This will serve the mews properties to the rear of the site. The existing access to the site will be retained as an access serving plots 1-4.

5. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

5.1. Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the local development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The current development plan for West Lancashire is the West Lancashire Local Plan (2012-2027) DPD.

The following documents and policies are relevant:

- **Policy SPI** – A Sustainable Development Framework for West Lancashire;
- **Policy GN1** – Settlement Boundaries;
- **Policy GN3** – Criteria for Sustainable Development;
- **Policy EC1** – The Economy and Employment Land; and
- **Policy RS1** – Residential Development.
- **Policy IF2** – Enhancing Sustainable Transport Choice
- **Policy EN2** – Preserving and Enhancing West Lancashire’s Natural Environment

5.2. The following Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is also relevant to this application:

- Design Guide SPD (January 2008).

5.3. The NPPF reiterates the statutory requirement that planning applications must be determined in accordance with the local plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. At paragraph 12 of the NPPF, it is made clear that the NPPF is “a material consideration in determining planning applications.” It follows, therefore, that the NPPF indicates that planning permission ought to be granted for a proposal whereas the Local Plan may not, the NPPF is a material consideration which is capable of overriding the provisions of the Local Plan.

5.4. The weight that can be attached to relevant policies of the Local Plan is influenced by factors such as the age of the plan (and whether it can be considered up to date), and the extent to which the Local Plan is consistent with the NPPF.

5.5. The following elements of national planning policy contained in the NPPF are relevant:

- Paragraph 60 - To support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed;
- Paragraph 119 - Planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions.
- Paragraph 123 - Local planning authorities should also take a positive approach to applications for alternative uses of land which is currently developed but not allocated for a specific purpose in plans, where this would help to meet identified development needs. In particular, they should support proposals to:
 - (a) use retail and employment land for homes in areas of high housing demand, provided this would not undermine key economic sectors or sites or the vitality and viability of town centres, and would be compatible with other policies in this Framework;

- Paragraph 126 - The creation of high-quality, beautiful and sustainable building 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; and
- Paragraph 130 - Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments add to the overall quality of the area", "are visually attractive as result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping" and "are sympathetic to local character.
- Paragraph 174 - Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment.

6. PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

6.1. The main planning considerations for the proposed development are:

- Principle of Development;
- Loss of Employment Use;
- Impact on Residential Amenity;
- Design, Layout and Scale;
- Highway Safety and Car Parking; and
- Ecology

Principle of Development

6.2. Policy SPI of the West Lancashire Local Plan states that when considering development proposals, the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. The application site is located within the Regional Town of Skelmersdale with Up Holland, which ought to take the vast majority of new development.

6.3. Spatially and economically, Skelmersdale with Up Holland is the main location for new development throughout the Local Plan period.

6.4. Policy GNI states that within settlement boundaries, development on brownfield land will be encouraged subject to other Local Plan policies being satisfied.

6.5. Consequently, given that the proposed development relates to the redevelopment of a brownfield site, we consider that the principle of this small residential development within a sustainable location is acceptable.

Loss of Employment Use

- 6.6. Policy GN4 of the West Lancashire Local Plan states that the Council will seek to retain existing commercial/industrial (B1, B2 or B8) and retail (A1) land/premises, together with agricultural/horticultural workers dwellings, unless it can be demonstrated that one of the following tests has been met:
- (a) The continued use of the site/premises for its existing use is no longer viable in terms of its operation of the existing use, building age and format and that it is not commercially viable to redevelop the land or refurbish the premises for its existing use. In these circumstances, and where appropriate, it will also need to be demonstrated that there is no realist prospect of a mixed-use scheme for the existing use and a compatible use; or
 - (b) The land/premises is no longer suitable for the existing use when taking into account access/highways issues (including public transport), site location and infrastructure, physical constraints, environmental considerations and amenity issues. The compatibility of the existing use with adjacent uses may also be a consideration; or
 - (c) Marketing of the land/property indicates that there is no demand for the land/property its existing use.
- 6.7. The application site previously operated as H Greaves and Sons Butchers until they ceased trading in April 2023. We consider that the buildings on the site would only attract a very niche market (refrigerated goods) and the constraints of the site (surrounded by residential properties, poor access) make other vacant commercial premises within the area more attractive than the application site for commercial use.
- 6.8. This is endorsed by the Supporting Statement that has been prepared by SHP valuers which concludes that:-

"We consider that there are any number of existing available employment premises in the locality which are located on suitable employment land. We are concerned that there will be a conflict both with residential neighbours immediately abutting the subject premises on three sides plus a concern of over-supply of commercial premises on the market which may be problematic to let and/or sell in this predominantly residential setting".

- 6.9. Overall, the statement provided by SHP Valuers clearly demonstrates that the continued use of the site is no longer viable, the land is not suitable for an ongoing commercial set up (given the surrounding residential uses and the restricted access to the site), and marketing of the site would prove unsuccessful because of the over-supply of commercial premises within the locality that have better suited accommodation and access.
- 6.10. We therefore consider that the requirements of Policy GN4 have largely been adhered to and the Council ought to accept the residential development of the site is a far better use, and, the loss of the commercial space will not be of detriment to the employment land availability within the Borough.

Impact on Residential Amenity

- 6.11. Policy GN3 of the West Lancashire Local Plan allows development provided it retains or creates reasonable levels of privacy, amenity and sufficient garden/outdoor space for occupiers of the neighbouring and proposed properties.
- 6.12. Given that the application site is surrounded on three of its boundaries with existing residential development, the proposed layout has been designed carefully so to comply with the Council's Design Guidance and required interface distances.

- 6.13. As such, the new properties have been designed and orientated in such a way that will not result in a loss of privacy or be overbearing to the neighbouring properties. The positioning of habitable room windows will be finalised as part of a reserved matters application; however, the proposed layout ensures at this Outline stage that a residential development on this site is achievable whilst maintaining acceptable interface distances. We therefore consider that the proposed layout and scale of the development will not have any detrimental impact upon the living conditions of any of the surrounding residential properties.
- 6.14. Fundamentally, we also consider that the removal of this unrestricted commercial use on the application site will result in significant betterment for the neighbouring properties. This is because the butchery business generated frequent customer and delivery traffic. The proposed residential use will significantly reduce the intensive use of the site and its access, thereby we consider that residential amenity will be greatly enhanced.
- 6.15. Regarding the amenity of the future occupants of the proposed residential units, the proposed 4no. mews type properties are each provided with a private garden area to their rear aspects, of a commensurate size to the scale of each of these properties.
- 6.16. The proposed site layout does not incorporate any private outdoor amenity space for the proposed 4no. However, within the central area of the development site, there is a small communal landscaped/seating area which will be accessible to occupants of the 4no. flats.
- 6.17. Furthermore, we do not consider that private outdoor space is essential in this instance given the proximity of the site to the open space on the opposite of Chequer Lane and to other areas of open space within walking distance of the site.

6.18. Overall, therefore, we are of the view that the proposed layout and scale of this residential development is respectful of existing and future occupants and the requirements of Policy GN3 and the SPD Design Guide will be adhered to on these grounds.

Design, Layout and Scale

6.19. Although proposed unit typology plans have been prepared for the separate units, at this stage this is for indicative purposes only as this matter is not included as part of this Outline planning application and will form part of a reserved matters application. The typologies have been included however to demonstrate what could be achieved on the site.

6.20. The Design and Access Statement notes that the application site is incredibly well contained, offering a discreet, redevelopment opportunity. Consequently, the proposed scale of the development has been established in reference to the scale of the existing residential development within this locality, along with the scale of the existing frontage property which will be retained.

6.21. All the new dwellings will be delivered across building envelopes that are two storeys in height which we consider will fit in extremely well with the surrounding development along Ormskirk Road in particular.

6.22. Whilst the residential units to the south of the application site (located on Danbers) are generally single storey in height, these have no direct visual relationship with the application area and will have no visual relationship or 'presence' in the resulting street scene.

6.23. In respect of the proposed site layout, this is a particularly constrained site being nestled amongst existing development and being broadly rectangular in shape. Careful consideration has been given to the arrangement of the site layout to retain the attractive building along the site frontage whilst incorporating additional residential development to the rear that is respectful of the surrounding properties.

- 6.24. As discussed earlier in this Planning Statement, the 4no. mews dwellings will each have their own private garden areas. Considering the relatively constrained and inherently urban site, the opportunities for delivery of areas of open space within the application boundary are limited. Notwithstanding this, the proposed site layout does incorporate an 18-20m² centrally positioned area accommodating a small communal garden and open space. Car parking is also integrated into the site layout with a total of 13no. spaces provided in conformity with Policy IF2 of the Local Plan.
- 6.25. We consider that the overall grain of the development to be consistent within this predominantly residential area and as such we would hope that the LPA agree that the proposed layout is acceptable and compliant with the relevant planning policies.
- 6.26. On this basis, we consider that the proposed scale and layout of the development is characteristic within this area and will not appear incongruous or out of keeping and complies with the requirements of Policy GN3 and the SPD Design Guide.

Highway Safety and Car Parking

- 6.27. The existing commercial site access located directly to the south of Venilde and Sons Ltd. is proposed to be retained in situ and will serve the 2no. flats proposed in the retained stone-built frontage building and 1-3 Chequer Lane and 2no. further new build 1 bed apartments (Plots 3 and 4) within the central area of the site.
- 6.28. The proposed access will be of identical width to the existing but has potential to be improved and resurfaced.
- 6.29. A new access located to south of the existing frontage building, achieved through the removal of an existing domestic double garage block is also proposed. This will serve as the site's primary access, and it is important to note that there is already a dropped kerb in this position.

- 6.30. Given the unrestricted use of this existing access for the lawful commercial use, we are of the strong opinion that the new access, along with the proposed residential use, will significantly improve highway safety in this location.
- 6.31. As referred to earlier in this statement, regarding on-site car parking, the proposed site layout incorporates adequate car parking spaces in line with Policy IF2 of the Local Plan. Furthermore, the application site is within a sustainable location being within walking distances of various amenities and facilities reducing the need to travel by car.

Ecology

- 6.32. Policy EN2 of the Local Plan states that where there is reason to suspect that there may be priority species, or their habitat, on or close to a proposed development site, planning applications should be accompanied by a survey assessing the presence of such species and, where appropriate, making provision for their needs.
- 6.33. As a number of buildings are proposed to be demolished as part of the redevelopment of the site, a Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment and subsequent Bat Survey have been undertaken on the site. The latter concluded that the emergence of bats was absent and bat activity was limited to commuting and foraging.
- 6.34. The survey does however recommend certain measures for the enhancement of this species. We are therefore of the view that the proposals will provide enhancements for biodiversity and are compliant with Policy EN2 of the Local Plan.

7. CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1. The redevelopment of this former commercial site represents an opportunity to reuse a brownfield site within a sustainable settlement that will provide much needed homes within the Borough.
- 7.2. At this Outline stage, the details of access, layout and scale are applied for. This Planning Statement has demonstrated that these are all acceptable and despite this being a constrained urban site, the proposals are policy compliant and a well-considered, small residential development is proposed.
- 7.3. The application is supported by information that justifies the loss of this non-designated employment site. Fundamentally, the proposed residential use is a more appropriate use within this residential area of Up Holland and will greatly improve the residential amenity of the existing neighbouring properties and highway safety in this location.
- 7.4. We therefore hope that the LPA are able to support the proposals and look forward to receiving a favourable decision.