

**Town And Country Planning Act 1990 - Planning Appeal**

**FORMER DXC TECHNOLOGY SITE, EUXTON HOUSE, EUXTON  
LANE CHORLEY PR7 6FE**

**By Bellway Homes Limited**

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**EMPLOYMENT LAND PROOF OF EVIDENCE OF VINCENT  
GEORGE SANDWELL  
SUMMARY PROOF**

**APPLICATION REFERENCE: 21/01475/FULMAJ**

**APPEAL REFERENCE: APP/D2320/W/22/3309262**

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## **Introduction**

- i. The following Proof of Evidence is prepared by Vincent George Sandwell on issues of Need in relation to planning application **21/01475/FULMAJ** for the redevelopment of the Former DXC Technology Site, Euxton House, Euxton Lane, Chorley for housing.
- ii. I have received instructions from Chorley Borough Council ('the Council') acting as the Local Planning Authority (LPA).
- iii. I am a Director at BE Group, an economic and regeneration consultancy based in Warrington. My qualifications are a BSc degree in Urban Estate Management, and I am a Member of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS). I am based in Warrington and have 41 years' experience of the local property markets in the North West specialising in providing property market and agency advice with an emphasis on business parks and industrial estates.
- iv. For the past nine years I have led the company's economic and regeneration consultancy work with a particular focus on economic needs and employment land reviews. Over 2017-2022 I project managed multiple employment land studies for the Central Lancashire sub-region of Chorley, Preston and South Ribble to support the emerging joint local plan. Specifically, those employment land studies were:
  - CD6.3/CD6.4 Central Lancashire Employment Land Study (November 2017 – updated April 2019)
  - CD6.5 Central Lancashire Employment Land Study Update (February 2022)
  - CD6.6 Chorley Market Update, prepared by BE Group (August 2022).
- v. As a result, I am familiar with Former DXC Technology Site, Buckshaw Village and other nearby developments successfully delivered.

## **PROPOSALS/BACKGROUND**

- vi. This chapter outlines the refused proposals for the Former DXC Technology Site as relevant to this Proof of Evidence.
- The Former DXC Technology Site – Planning Application 21/01475/FULMAJ***
- vii. The site comprises 3.02 ha of land, mostly comprising hardstanding and car parking, surrounding, and associated with, the vacant Former DXC Technology office building,

Euxton House. Located off Euxton Lane the appeal site falls within the Buckshaw Village Strategic Site as defined in CD2.1 Central Lancashire Core Strategy (2012).<sup>1</sup>

- viii. The refused application would, if delivered, result in the demolition of the existing 5,110 sqm E(g)(i) building and the erection of 108 no. dwellings, and associated parking and other infrastructure, leading to the loss of 3.02 ha of land, last in employment use, to C3 residential use.
- ix. This Proof of Evidence examines the need for the employment land that would be lost if the refused development is progressed.

## **CONTEXT**

- x. This section considers the policy context and supporting evidence that is relevant to determining need and demand and to which I have had regard when preparing this evidence.

### **National**

- xi. I reference the relevant national guidance – National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) which guides the assessment of need. Such studies are used as evidence to inform decision making on the use of sites, though it is the Development Plan itself that determines the use of sites.

### **Local**

#### **Development Plan**

- xii. For Chorley Borough Development Plan comprises:
- CD 2.1 Central Lancashire Core Strategy, adopted July 2012, with a plan period of 2010-2026
  - CD 2.2 Chorley Local Plan 2012 – 2026, adopted July 2015.
- xiii. Core Strategy Policies 1 and 9 highlight that Buckshaw Village, which includes the appellant's site, as a Strategic Site in Central Lancashire where growth and investment

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<sup>1</sup> CD 2.1 Central Lancashire Local Development Framework, Adopted Core Strategy (2012) – Pg 143

will be concentrated in to help meet local housing and employment needs.<sup>2</sup> Core Strategy Policy 10 seeks to protect all existing employment premises and sites last used for employment use. There will be a presumption that Best Urban' and 'Good Urban' sites will be retained for B use class employment use..<sup>3</sup> All of Buckshaw Village is identified as Best Urban, or has the potential to be Best Urban, in the Core Strategy.<sup>4</sup>

- xiv. The planning application was refused on the grounds that proposed development does not satisfy the criterion of Core Strategy Policy 10. Criterion which the development does not satisfy were subsequently identified to be:

*“a) there would not be an unacceptable reduction of the type, quality or quantity of employment land supply*

*c) the relative suitability of the site for employment and for the alternative use*

*d) the location of the site and its relationship to other uses – Considered separately in the evidence submitted by Richard Wood of Richard Wood Associates on behalf of Chorley Borough Council*

*g) Convincing evidence of lack of demand through a rigorous and active 12 month marketing period for employment re-use and employment redevelopment*

*h) An assessment of the viability of employment development including employment re-use and employment redevelopment.”<sup>5</sup>*

- xv. CD 2.2 Chorley Local Plan Policy EP1 identifies a requirement for 106.99 ha excluding relevant completions. To meet this outstanding need 88.74 ha of employment land is allocated at EP1, with 30.4 percent of this, 26.98 ha, being in Buckshaw Village.<sup>6</sup>

### **Objectively Assessed Needs for Employment Land**

- xvi. Three assessments of OAN for employment needs, employment land studies, have been completed since 2017. All show a shortage of employment land in Chorley Borough, meaning the Borough needs to increase its employment land supply and cannot support employment land losses which will increase that identified shortfall.

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<sup>2</sup>CD 2.1 Central Lancashire Local Development Framework, Adopted Core Strategy (2012) – Pg 50 and 87, Policy 1, Point c(iii); Policy 9, Point (a) and Point (c)(iii)

<sup>3</sup>CD 2.1 Central Lancashire Local Development Framework, Adopted Core Strategy (2012) – Pg 88, Policy 10, Paragraph 1

<sup>4</sup>CD 2.1 Central Lancashire Local Development Framework, Adopted Core Strategy (2012) – Pg 45, Para 5.36

<sup>5</sup>CD 2.1 Central Lancashire Local Development Framework, Adopted Core Strategy (2012) – Pg 88, Policy 10, Points a-h

<sup>6</sup> CD 2.2 Chorley Local Plan 2012 – 2026 Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document (2015) – Pg 33, Table 2 Employment Land Supply Requirements and Pg 34, Policy EP1

***Central Lancashire Employment Land Study, (BE Group November 2017 – updated April 2019) (CD 6.3/CD 6.4)***

- xvii. The 2017 study forecast an objectively assessed needs of 95.50 ha over 2014-2034, in Chorley Borough. Less realistic supply of 59.45 ha, Chorley had a shortfall of 36.05 ha of employment land to 2034.<sup>7</sup>
- xviii. The 2017 Employment Land Study also confirmed the commercial elements of Buckshaw Village, but not the appeal site specifically, as a ‘A Grade’ or ‘Best Urban’ high value employment area in Central Lancashire.<sup>8</sup>
- xix. The OAN element of the study was updated in 2019. This suggested that Chorley had a slightly increased shortfall of 37.18 ha of further need, against the above realistic supply level.<sup>9</sup>

***Central Lancashire – Employment Land Study Update (BE Group February 2022) CD 6.5***

- xx. In this 2022 Update Study, the OAN for Chorley was identified as 76.34 ha to 2038. Less a land supply of 56.28 ha as at October 2021, Chorley has a shortfall of 20.06 ha of employment land over 2021-2038.<sup>10</sup>

**Historic Market Assessments**

- xxi. Up to date, 2021-2022, market assessments were produced by BE Group both for the CD 6.5 Central Lancashire Employment Land Study Update (2022) and separately in the CD 6.6 Chorley Market Update (BE Group August 2022). The latter notes that throughout the Covid-19 Pandemic, and on into 2022, national, regional and local industrial markets have boomed in the face of growing manufacturing and logistics sectors. Local demand is for units of 501-1000 sqm, although market activity extends up to units of 5,000 sqm. Again, Buckshaw Village is a focus for market activity in the sub region while, at this time, Chorley Borough’s total industrial stock was 98.6 percent occupied by premises number and 96.9 percent by floorspace. High occupancy rates (above 90-95 percent) are an indicator of supply shortfall, and businesses having

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<sup>7</sup>CD 6.3 Central Lancashire Employment Land Study – Technical Report (2017) – Pg 145, Table 56

<sup>8</sup> CD 6.3 Central Lancashire Employment Land Study – Technical Report (2017) – Pg 234-235, Paragraph 12.7 also Appendix 10, Table A10.1

<sup>9</sup>CD 6.4 Central Lancashire Employment Land Study – Objectively Assessed Needs Update (2019) – Pg 42, Table 24

<sup>10</sup> CD6.5 Central Lancashire Employment Land Study Update (2022) – Pg 141, Table 35

difficulty in finding premises and make it important to protect existing stock, particularly in high demand locations.<sup>11</sup>

- xxii. In terms of offices, demand favoured flexible serviced/unserviced offices, of 0-100 sqm in size. In this regard, Chorley benefited from its strong stock of affordable serviced/unserviced small offices, in locations with parking/affordable parking including in Buckshaw Village. While there was judged to be sufficient accommodation to meet needs at the time of writing, the lack of a pipeline of development moving forward will create shortages.<sup>12</sup>

### **Chorley Economic Strategy (2022) (CD 9.8)**

- xxiii. Providing 'Space for Businesses' including "*Fit for purpose accommodation for key sectors that is green and sustainable including office, light industrial and advanced technologies*" and "*Unlocking land and assets to enable business growth*" is a priority for the Strategy<sup>13</sup>

### **REASON FOR REFUSAL ONE**

- xxiv. This chapter provides evidence of the ongoing need for the appellant's site to meet requirements for E(g), B2, or B8 uses, supporting Reason for Refusal One, namely that: "*The proposed development would result in an unacceptable reduction in the type and quantity of employment land supply contrary to Policy 10 of the Central Lancashire Core Strategy.*" The evidence provided here is linked to the relevant criteria of Core Strategy Policy 10 which the appellant's scheme has not satisfied.
- xxv. Having accepted at Para 8.14 of the Main Statement of Common Ground that "*office re-use and office redevelopment are not viable on the appeal site*" the focus here is the deliverability of the site for industrial and warehouse uses which as shown throughout this section and in the previous analysis of historic reports, are strongly in demand. At average densities the site could support up to 11,800 sqm of E(g), B2, B8 floorspace.

### **The Need for the Former DXC Site**

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<sup>11</sup> CD 6.6 Chorley Market Update (2022) – Pg 19-20, Paragraph 5.3-5.4

<sup>12</sup> CD 6.6 Chorley Market Update (2022) – Pg 20, Paragraph 5.6-5.8

<sup>13</sup> CD 9.8 Chorley Economic Strategy (2022) – Pg 8, 'Space for Business Priority'

xxvi. Here I demonstrate that, as per Core Strategy Policy 10, criteria a), the redevelopment of the 3.02 ha appeal site, for housing, would represent an unacceptable loss for a Borough which already has insufficient land to meet its long term needs.

### ***Regional Market Demand***

xxvii. Savills in its half yearly review – ‘*Big Shed Briefing (Jan 2022)*’ recorded a record year for take up of larger B2/B8 premises in 2021, in the North West, 40 percent above 2020 levels. Vacancy rates in the region were only 3.09 percent. As noted, it is generally accepted that a vacancy rate of around 10 percent is required to provide a reasonable level of supply and choice.

xxviii. Demand in 2022 was only marginally reduced on 2021, with the Knight Frank ‘*Logic North West Q2 2022*’ (July 2022) identifying a vacancy rate of only 3.5 percent for B2/B8 units of 5,000 sqm or larger, as of the end of 2022, with a particular shortage of Grade A units. Most of the accommodation in the development pipeline at the end of 2022 had already been pre-let/pre-sold meaning that it could not contribute to addressing this supply shortage.

### ***Local/Sub-Regional Employment Land Needs***

xxix. As noted above, three separate assessments of OAN, completed since 2017, identified that Chorley Borough, and Central Lancashire as a whole, has a shortage of employment land, over the remainder of the adopted Core Strategy period and on into the next Local Plan period. The most up to date, 2022, analysis shows a shortage of 20.60 ha of employment land, in Chorley Borough over 2021-2038 and a shortage of 34.28 ha across Central Lancashire more generally.<sup>14</sup> The identified shortfall means that Chorley Borough needs to increase its employment land supply and has no capacity to support losses of E(g), B2, B8 land.

xxx. While it is accepted that the appeal site is not an allocation of employment development land in an adopted local plan, it is still land in an employment use within a strategic employment area. Its loss would still have impacts on the employment land supply and need position, in various ways, including by increasing land losses recorded by monitoring and by requiring employment generating businesses to take up land elsewhere.

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<sup>14</sup>CD 6.5 Central Lancashire Employment Land Study Update (2022) – Pg 162, Table 41

xxxi. It is understood that the appellant will be submitting assessments of employment land OAN and land supply, into evidence, which differ from those set out in the 2022 Central Lancashire Employment Land Study. The CD 6.5 Central Lancashire Employment Land Study (2022) remains the most up to date employment land study for Chorley Borough. It's findings regarding Objectively Assessed Needs and employment land supply remain the position of Chorley Borough Council and the Council will not agree to alternate measures of need and supply which are inconsistent with agreed evidence base documents. A review of the appellant's evidence on employment land supply and need, as it was understood prior to the submission of this Proof, is provided in Section 4.0 of the Main Proof document.

xxxii. As of January 2023, the industrial stock of Chorley Borough was 98.4 percent occupied by premises or 96.5 percent by floorspace. High occupancy rates (above 90-95 percent) are an indicator of supply shortfall, and businesses having difficulty in finding premises and make it important to protect existing stock, particularly in high demand locations.

#### **The Suitability of the Former DXC Site for Employment Use**

xxxiii. In terms of Core Strategy Policy 10: c) in this section I establish that the Buckshaw Village Strategic Site, within which the appeal site is located, is a focus for industrial, warehouse demand in Central Lancashire and has seen multiple successful industrial developments in recent years.

#### ***Location***

xxxiv. Stakeholders consulted for the CD 6.3/CD 6.4 '*Central Lancashire Employment Land Studies (2017 and 2021 Update)*' as well as for the CD 6.6 '*Chorley Market Update (2022)*' consistently identified Buckshaw Village a focus for market demand in Central Lancashire for industrial, warehouse and out of centre office uses. Factors which make Buckshaw Village an area of high demand include its strong links to the national motorway network, large stock of modern industrial, warehouse and office premises, and its critical mass of established companies on the Strategic Site.

#### ***Examples of Successful Industrial Development in the Buckshaw Market Area***

xxxv. I have identified a number of other locations in Buckshaw Village, and in a common market area along Euxton Lane and along the A49, north to the M6/M65 Junction, where industrial premises 46-810 sqm have been successfully delivered in the last decade.. All are presently well occupied and two are fully occupied,

xxxvi. In five of the six schemes, the majority of the units were sold on a freehold or long leasehold basis, achieving best freehold values of £274.03/sqft (£2,950/sqm) and best long leasehold values of £245.77/sqft (£2,645/sqm). At the nearby new build Strawberry Meadows scheme, off Euxton Lane, 26 of 33 units have been let in some two years of marketing. The best rent achieved rent on the scheme, to date, was £18.90/sqft (£203/sqm).

#### **The Developability of the DXC Site**

xxxvii. In terms of Core Strategy Policy 10 criteria g) and h) I note that:

1. The 12 month marketing campaign required in criteria g) has not been carried out
2. Accordingly, any assessment of viability provided by the appellant is of limited utility as it is not backed by a long term marketing campaign to gather real world data on what rents, values, etc. parties showing interest in the site might be willing to pay  
Additionally testing of viability and deliverability, provided by the appellant, did not consider the full range of E(g)/B-Class uses which could be brought forward here, specifically redevelopment for industrial and/or warehouse uses.

xxxviii. Overall, I highlight that the appeal site could not just accommodate E(g) office uses, as it does at present, but the full range of E(g)/B-Class uses including industrial and warehouse options. In this Proof I have established that there is a strong demand for industrial and warehouse uses on, and around, the appeal site, with interest ranging from small workshops of 46 sqm up to larger B2/B8 facilities of 11,800 sqm, i.e., the maximum capacity of the site. This demand was not considered by the appellant prior to the refusal of the application.