

**Report to be read in conjunction with the Decision Notice.**

**Application Ref:** 3/2018/0279

**Date Inspected:** 16/05/2018

**Officer:** AB



**Ribble Valley  
Borough Council**

[www.ribblevalley.gov.uk](http://www.ribblevalley.gov.uk)

**DELEGATED ITEM FILE REPORT:**

**REFUSED**

**Development  
Description:**

**Proposed sub-division of existing dwelling (the original farmhouse) into two dwellings.**

**Site Address/Location:**

**Mere Syke Farm Settle Road Wigglesworth BD23 4SN**

**CONSULTATIONS:**

**Parish/Town Council**

None received.

**CONSULTATIONS:**

**Highways/Water Authority/Other Bodies**

**LCC Highways:**

No objections.

**CONSULTATIONS:**

**Additional Representations.**

No representations have been received.

**RELEVANT POLICIES:**

**Ribble Valley Core Strategy:**

Policy DS1 – Development Strategy

Policy DS2 – Sustainable Development

Policy EN2 – Landscape

Policy H1 – Housing Provision

Policy DMG1 – General Considerations

Policy DMG2 – Strategic Considerations

Policy DMG3 – Transport and Mobility

Policy DMH3 – Dwellings in the open countryside and AONB

**National Planning Policy Framework**

**RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY:**

3/2018/0278 - Proposed conversion of the existing, approved residential accommodation in the attached former barn into a separate dwelling. Awaiting Determination

3/2010/0736 - Partial demolition and alterations to existing outbuildings to form a self-contained annex residential unit and workshop. Approved with conditions

3/2009/0381 - Proposed internal remodelling of previously converted residential store adjoining house at Mere Syke Farm, including associated external fenestration alterations and improvements. Partial demolition and alterations to existing residential garage/workshop and store outbuilding. Approved with conditions

**ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT:**

**Proposed Development for which consent is sought:**

Planning consent is sought for the sub-division of an existing residential property at Mere Syke Farm, Wigglesworth. The application site is located within the open countryside on the east side of Forest Becks Brow and close to the northern boundary of the Borough. The site is remote in terms of access to services and facilities; the nearest village is Wigglesworth

around 3km away by road and in the neighbouring Craven District.

The building which is the subject of this application forms part of the property known as Mere Syke Farm. The building originally comprised a farmhouse with an attached barn on the southern side. Planning application 3/2009/0381 sought consent to, part retrospectively, convert the attached barn to extended living accommodation. Planning consent was granted and the result was that the barn was converted to form an extension to the existing farmhouse.

This application seeks to sub-divide the original farmhouse into two dwellings. In addition, this application is submitted alongside a separate planning application, ref. 3/2018/0278, which seeks to establish the former barn as a separate planning unit. By establishing the former barn as a separate planning unit the result of the two applications would be the formation of three separate residential properties.

As existing, the farmhouse has already undergone significant change without the benefit of planning consent. Internally the farmhouse has been converted into two self-contained cottages which each contain a lounge and kitchen on the ground floor and two bedrooms on the first floor. No external alterations are proposed to the building itself. The two units are divided internally by a set of lockable double doors on the ground floor and have been used as holiday lets. The middle unit, known as Gradon Cottage, has been let for a limited number of nights since October 2017 and has also been used by visiting family members. The unit to the northern end, Adair Cottage, has not yet been advertised. Each of the two cottages has its own private rear garden at the end of which is a hard-surfaced area for vehicular parking. This is accessed via an existing track the entrance to which is around 65m south along Forest Becks Brow.

This application seeks consent to regularise the sub-division of the farmhouse. However, rather than regularise the cottages for their existing use as holiday let accommodation this application proposes the use of the cottages as independent open market dwellings without restriction.

**Observations/Consideration of Matters Raised/Conclusion:**

In determining the application it is important to consider the principle of the development, its impact of the visual appearance of the surrounding area, its effect on the residential amenity and its impact on highway safety.

Applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The development plan for the Borough is the Ribble Valley Core Strategy adopted in December 2014. The policies contained within the Core Strategy can be given full weight.

Key Statement DS1 of the Core Strategy provides the development strategy for the borough and directs the majority of new housing development towards the Principal Settlements and also focuses some development towards the more sustainable Tier 1 settlements. Policy DMG2 assists in the interpretation of the development strategy. It states that within the less sustainable Tier 2 villages and outside the defined settlement areas development must meet one of six considerations. None of these apply to the proposed development.

The proposed sub-division would take place in an area that is isolated from services and facilities. There are no services or facilities within walking distance and therefore the future occupants of the properties would be solely reliant on private motor vehicles. This would be contrary to the sustainability aims and objectives that underpin both national and local planning policy.

Paragraph 55 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which states that '*Local planning authorities should avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless there are special circumstances*'. The proposed development does not meet any of the special

circumstances listed under paragraph 55. Nonetheless, it is the applicant's contention that the proposed new dwellings would not be isolated in the countryside given the fact that there are other residential properties to the north and south.

The understanding of this government policy at paragraph 55 of the NPPF (i.e. new isolated homes in the countryside) was the subject of a High Court decision *Braintree DC v SSCLG* dated 28 March 2018. Lord Justice Lindblom in his consideration of the matter stated:

*Under the policy, as a general principle, the aim of promoting "sustainable development in rural areas" will be achieved by locating new dwellings within settlements and by avoiding "new isolated homes in the countryside". The examples of "special circumstances" given in the policy illustrate particular circumstances in which granting planning permission for an isolated dwelling in the countryside may be desirable or acceptable. But what is perfectly plain is that, under this policy, the concept of concentrating additional housing within settlements is seen as generally more likely to be consistent with the promotion of "sustainable development in rural areas" than building isolated dwellings elsewhere in the countryside. In short, settlements are the preferred location for new housing development in rural areas. That, in effect, is what the policy says [paragraph 29].*

*In my view, in its particular context in paragraph 55 of the NPPF, the word "isolated" in the phrase "isolated homes in the countryside" simply connotes a dwelling that is physically separate or remote from a settlement. Whether a proposed new dwelling is, or is not, "isolated" in this sense will be a matter of fact and planning judgment for the decision-maker in the particular circumstances of the case in hand [Paragraph 31].*

As stated above, there are no services or facilities within walking distance of the site. The nearest defined settlement in the Ribble Valley is Bolton-by-Bowland over 5km away and this is identified as a Tier 2 settlement with only limited services and facilities. The application site is close to the boundary with Craven District Council to the north east. The nearest settlements in this neighbouring district are Wigglesworth (approx. 3km away) and Long Preston (approx. 6km away). These settlements are categorised towards the lower end of the range of sustainability with Long Preston, the larger of the two settlements, recognised as offering only basic facilities.

Transport considerations are key to the delivery of sustainable development. There are no public transport facilities to serve the development and it is not considered that the proposals would result in any protection or enhancement of vitality or viability of the closest village centres by virtue of intervening distances.

Taking into account the site location and the High Court decision noted above, it is concluded that the proposals would result in a net increase of one dwelling in an isolated location. Whilst the provision of one additional dwelling would result in a small contribution to housing supply this would not overcome the failure to comply with the development strategy or Key Statements DS1 and DS2 and Policies DMG2, DMG3 and DMH3 of the Core Strategy and paragraph 55 of the NPPF and the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Having regard to the visual impact of the development, there are no alterations proposed to the application building. In terms of the impact on the residential amenity of neighbouring occupiers, there would be no overlooking or loss of privacy arising from the proposed subdivision of the farmhouse. The proposed units would provide an acceptable standard of living accommodation to enable its use as two independent units of residential accommodation.

The County Highways Surveyor has raised no objection to the proposed development on highway safety grounds.

In conclusion, having regard to the above the proposal would be in direct conflict with the key sustainability principles contained within the Core Strategy and in direct conflict with the development strategy for the borough. It would result in the creation of one additional residential planning unit within the defined open countryside without sufficient justification and it is recommended that the application be refused.

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| <b>RECOMMENDATION:</b> | That planning permission be refused for the following reason(s):                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>01</b>              | The proposal is considered contrary to Key Statements DS1, DS2 and Policies DMG2 and DMH3 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy in that the approval would lead to the creation of a new residential dwelling in the defined open countryside without sufficient justification, which would cause harm to the development strategy for the borough. It is further considered that the approval of this application would lead to the perpetuation of an unsustainable pattern of development in a location that does not benefit from adequate access to local services or facilities placing further reliance on the private motor-vehicle contrary to the aims and objectives of Policy DMG3 of the adopted Core Strategy and the NPPF presumption in favour of sustainable development. |
| <b>02</b>              | The proposed development would create a harmful precedent for the acceptance of other similar proposals in the defined open countryside without sufficient justification, which cumulatively would lead to the perpetuation of unsustainable patterns of development, outside the existing defined settlement which would have an adverse impact on the implementation of the Development Strategy as adopted within the Ribble Valley Core Strategy, contrary to the interests of the proper planning of the area in accordance with the core principles and policies of the National Planning Policy Framework.                                                                                                                                                                       |