

Report to be read in conjunction with the Decision Notice.

Application Ref:	3/2019/0436	 Ribble Valley Borough Council www.ribblevalley.gov.uk
Date Inspected:	28/06/2019	
Officer:	AB	
DELEGATED ITEM FILE REPORT:		APPROVAL

Development Description:	Conversion of agricultural buildings to form holiday let
Site Address/Location:	The Old Reservoir, Simonstone Road, Sabden BB7 9HA

CONSULTATIONS:	Parish/Town Council
None received.	
LCC HIGHWAYS:	
No objection subject to conditions.	

CONSULTATIONS:	Additional Representations.
No representations have been received.	

RELEVANT POLICIES:

Ribble Valley Core Strategy:

Key Statement EN2 – Landscape
Key Statement EC3 – Visitor Economy
Policy DMG1 – General Considerations
Policy DMG2 – Strategic Considerations
Policy DMG3 – Transport and Mobility
Policy DMB1 – Supporting Business Growth and the Local Economy
Policy DMB2 – The Conversion of Barns and Other Rural Buildings for Employment Uses
Policy DMB3 – Recreation and Tourism Development

National Planning Policy Framework

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY:

3/2018/0459 - Proposed conversion of existing agricultural buildings to form a holiday let.
Withdrawn.

ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT:

Proposed Development for which consent is sought:

Planning consent is sought for the conversion of existing agricultural buildings to form a holiday let at The Old Reservoir, Simonstone Road, Sabden. The application site was the original reservoir for the village of Sabden and more recently has been used as an agricultural holding. The application building was used for keeping livestock. The site is located close to the defined settlement of Sabden in the open countryside and Forest of Bowland AONB.

Travelling south along Simonstone Road the site is around 200 metres from the village boundary. The site is situated on the north side of Simonstone Road where the land slopes down to the valley bottom.

The application building is a single storey stone building with a mono-pitched roof that has been built into the earth. Approximately 1 metre of the rear stone walls of the buildings are above earth and are completely screened by the roadside stone wall. The existing roof is

partly covered with grass and/or moss and as such the building is unnoticeable from passing motor vehicles.

The proposal is to convert the building into one holiday unit comprising a dining/living area and a single bedroom. The proposals indicate two new window openings on the north-east (front) elevation. The existing openings would be retained in the conversion works. A small section of the existing roof would be raised by 200-300mm. The timber roof construction would be renewed and given a sedum green roof finish. Four new velux roof lights would be installed within the roof slope and the existing windows would be replaced by timber window frames.

A small planting area would be provided to the front of the building and a new flag path laid to provide suitable access to the building from the parking area. The parking area for the site would be provided in the existing gravel courtyard to the north-east of the building. There is an existing agricultural entrance from Simonstone Road that would be used to serve the development.

Observations/Consideration of Matters Raised/Conclusion:

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

In relation to its potential use for holiday accommodation Core Strategy Key Statement EC3 relates specifically to the visitor economy stating that proposals that contribute to and strengthen the visitor economy of Ribble Valley will be encouraged. The proposed development would contribute to the tourism economy and accords with the general intentions of Key Statement EC3. Key Statement EC1 'Business and Employment Development states that *"Developments that contribute to farm diversification, strengthening of the wider rural and village economies or that promote town centre vitality and viability will be supported in principle"*.

The application site is located in the Forest of Bowland AONB. Core Strategy Policy DMG2 requires development outside of defined settlement areas to meet at least one of six considerations one of which is the following:

4. The development is for small scale tourism or recreational developments appropriate to a rural area.

The proposal is for a small scale tourism development of a type that is appropriate to a rural area. Policy DMG2 has regard for the economic and social wellbeing of the AONB but is clear that the more important consideration is the protection, conservation and enhancement of the landscape. Policy DMB3 relates specifically to recreation and tourism development. Tourism and visitor attractions are generally supported subject to the following criteria being met:

1. *The proposal must not conflict with other policies of this plan;*
2. *The proposal must be physically well related to an existing main settlement or village or to an existing group of buildings, except where the proposed facilities are required in conjunction with a particular countryside attraction and there are no suitable existing buildings or developed sites available;*
3. *The development should not undermine the character, quality or visual amenities of the plan area by virtue of its scale, siting, materials or design;*
4. *The proposals should be well related to the existing highway network. It should not generate additional traffic movements of a scale and type likely to cause undue problems or disturbance. Where possible the proposals should be well related to the public transport network;*
5. *The site should be large enough to accommodate the necessary car parking, service areas and appropriate landscaped areas; and*
6. *The proposal must take into account any nature conservation impacts using suitable*

survey information and where possible seek to incorporate any important existing associations within the development. Failing this then adequate mitigation will be sought.

Additional criteria apply in the Forest of Bowland as follows:

1. *The proposal should display a high standard of design appropriate to the area.*
2. *The site should not introduce built development into an area largely devoid of structures (other than those directly related to agriculture or forestry uses).*

In the AONB it is important that development is not of a large scale. In the AONB and immediately adjacent areas proposals should contribute to the protection, conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the landscape. Within the open countryside proposals will be required to be in keeping with the character of the landscape area and should reflect the local vernacular, scale, style, features and building materials.

In assessing the development proposal against the above criteria I am mindful that the applicant sought pre-application advice in March 2018. It was considered by the officer that the proposals complied with the relevant policies of the Core Strategy and was closely related to the settlement of Sabden and that, based on the level of information submitted at that time, the conversion of the existing building would be acceptable.

The building is some 200 metres from the settlement of Sabden. There is a clear visual gap between the development site and the built up area. However, there is some intervisibility between the outer limits of the village and the development site. A more important consideration here relates to the fact that the proposal relates to the conversion of an existing building. The building in question is particularly well-screened from public view and would retain its traditional and inconspicuous appearance. The main visual impact of the proposal is likely to be the parking area for the development; however, given the small scale of the development it would generate a maximum of 2 vehicles.

A structural survey has been provided and indicates that the stone walls of the building show no signs of bulging, cracking or subsidence. It is considered the building is appropriate for conversion without significant alteration or re-building.

Access to the proposed holiday let would be via an existing access point onto Simonstone Road. An automatic traffic count has been conducted to determine the speed of vehicles travelling close to the access point and required sightlines calculated accordingly. There would be a requirement to lower the existing boundary wall fronting the highway or re-position and set back the existing wall in order to achieve the required visibility splays. Parking for up to three vehicles would be provided and this is considered sufficient to serve the development.

A Bat Survey Report dated 8 July 2018 has been submitted with the application. Whilst no evidence was found to suggest bats were present inside the building at the time of the survey, there is considered to be excellent bat feeding habitat immediately available due to the woodland clearing next to a well-vegetated water body. The recommendations section of the report advises that two bat activity surveys should be undertaken in the summer prior to commencement of the development. Due to the period of time that has lapsed since the survey was completed, the applicant was advised that an updated survey of the application building was necessary.

A further Bat Roost Assessment Report (by Dave Anderson dated 16.07.2019) has been submitted and finds no evidence to suggest bats roosting within the building and states the building is of negligible potential for roosting bats. As such, conversion of the building to holiday accommodation is unlikely to cause disturbance to bats, result in the loss of a bat roost or cause injury or death to bats. Given the high feeding potential in the area should consent be granted there would be a conditional requirement for bat roosting features to be incorporated into the building in order to achieve net biodiversity enhancement in

accordance with Key Statement EN4 and Policy DME3 of the CS.

Taking into account the above the proposal would be acceptable. The development would provide additional tourism accommodation and would be provided through the conversion of an existing building which is considered more appropriate than new build. The building is close to the settlement of Sabden and due to its siting, design and appearance the proposal would conserve the landscape and character of the AONB. The development would make a contribution, albeit small, to the local economy. It is recommended that consent be granted subject to a planning condition to ensure the building is used only for short-time holiday accommodation.

RECOMMENDATION:	That planning consent be approved.
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