

Report to be read in conjunction with the Decision Notice.

Application Ref:	3/2019/0471	 Ribble Valley Borough Council www.ribblevalley.gov.uk
Date Inspected:	26/06/19	
Officer:	RM	
DELEGATED ITEM FILE REPORT:		APPROVAL

Development Description:	Proposed single storey extension and conversion of laboratory and office to a live work unit
Site Address/Location:	Blue Bell Farm, Higher Road, Longridge

CONSULTATIONS:	Parish/Town Council
No comments received	

CONSULTATIONS:	Highways/Water Authority/Other Bodies
LCC Highways:	
Requested a plan showing visibility splays at entrance to site. This has been provided and the Highway officer raises no objection subject to conditions.	
CONSULTATIONS:	Additional Representations.
No representations have been received	

RELEVANT POLICIES:
Ribble Valley Core Strategy: Key Statement DS1 – Development Strategy Key Statement DS2 – Sustainable Development Key Statement EN2 - Landscape Key Statement H1 – Housing Provision Key Statement H2 – Housing Balance Key Statement DMI2 – Transport Considerations Key Statement EC1 – Business and Employment Development Policy DMG1 – General Considerations Policy DMG2 – Strategic Considerations Policy DMG3 – Transport & Mobility Policy DME2 – Landscape and Townscape Protection Policy DMH3 – Dwellings in the Open Countryside and AONB Policy DMH4 – The Conversion of Barns and Other Buildings to Dwellings Policy DMB1 – Supporting Business Growth and the Local Economy National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Longridge Neighbourhood Plan
ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT:

Site Location/Address:

The application relates to a site known as Blue Bell Farm, situated on the northern side of Higher Road, within both the open countryside and AONB.

The site consists of a former agricultural building which has been converted for use as a laboratory and office under planning permission 3/2015/0918, and this building also includes a car storage garage with associated workshop. The building is single storey in height and of stone construction with a corrugated sheet roof.

Being within the open countryside the surrounding area is rural in nature, adjoined by agricultural fields to the north, east and west. To the south is the highway of Higher Road and on the opposite side is a cluster of three residential dwellings.

The application details how the site is occupied by the applicant's company (Alchemie Technology) who create digital technologies for the application of material science. The company employ 12 people across three sites including the application site, a site in Cambridge and a site in Budapest. There are currently 3 people employed at Blue Bell Farm.

In 2018 an application was submitted for the erection of a new dwelling with the occupier restricted in association with Alchemie Technology, including extensions to the laboratory and office. The application was however withdrawn.

Description of Proposed Development:

The application seeks consent for two single storey extensions to the existing building, and the change of use of the building to a live work unit.

One of the proposed extensions would be sited at the southern end of the building, projecting out 6m from the existing elevation and having a length of 9.9m. This extension would have a pitched roof design measuring 4.4m high to the ridge, which would be set approximately 200mm below the ridge of the existing building.

The other extension would infill a recessed area within the existing building, measuring approximately 6m x 8.5m. This infill would continue the existing ridge line of the building and would not project out beyond the existing elevations. The application also involves other external alterations to the existing building including increasing areas of glazing and a new entrance door.

The application includes detailed plans of the proposed internal layout, showing the section of the building that would be used as residential accommodation and the new layout in respect of the commercial element of the use. The proposed residential use includes two en-suite bedrooms and a shared lounge/kitchen/dining area (measuring a total of 186 sqm). The altered commercial area includes an office, meeting/board room, manufacturing lab, smart textile lab, clean room, printhead assembly room and storage space. The commercial element of the building would measure 312 sqm.

The application is accompanied by a detailed planning statement explaining how the applicant wants to move elements of the business from the site in Cambridge to the application site and thus there is a requirement for the applicant to reside at the site. In addition to the detailed statement, the application is accompanied by exempt information and representatives of the Council have met with the applicant to discuss the business and the requirement for the residential use on site.

The existing access point onto Higher Road will need to be relocated slightly to the east to allow for

the siting of the proposed extension to the south of the building.

Relevant Planning History:

3/2018/0330 – *Erection of one new dwelling with occupier restricted to those associated with Alchemie Technology; extension to existing laboratory and office (use class B1a and B1b) - withdrawn*

3/2015/0918 – *Retention of unauthorised change of use from Agricultural to B1(a) and B1(b) (office and laboratory) in addition to car storage and private workshop (sui generis) – granted subject to conditions*

Principle of Development:

The submitted planning statement claims that whilst the building is currently in commercial use (B1) prior to this it was in agricultural use and therefore as the proposal relates to the conversion of part of a former agricultural building to residential use, it complies with Policy DMH4. In response to this the LPA accept that the building has a history of agricultural use, however this is not the only criterion upon which such conversions should be assessed. Amongst other criteria Policy DMH4 requires *“The character of the building and its materials are appropriate to its surroundings and the building, and its materials are worthy of retention because of its intrinsic interest or potential or its contribution to its setting”*. In respect of this matter the LPA do not consider that this former agricultural building is of any intrinsic interest or contributes to the setting of the AONB and thus is not worthy of retention. As such the conversion of part of the building to residential use does not accord with Policy DMH4.

The application site lies outside of any defined settlement boundary and is therefore within the open countryside, and as mentioned above is also within the AONB. Key Statement DMG2 of the Core Strategy states that within the open countryside all new development must meet one of a list of criteria, of which criterion 2 is *“the development is needed for the purposes of forestry or agriculture”*. More specifically, policy DMH3 relates to dwellings in the open countryside and AONB, and states that within the Open Countryside and AONB, residential development will be limited to *“Development essential for the purposes of agriculture or residential development which meets an identified local need.”* Policy DMH3 goes on to state that *“In assessing any proposal for an agricultural, forestry or **other essential workers dwelling**, a functional and financial test will be applied” [emphasis added]*.

Similarly Paragraph 79 of the NPPF is also relevant, commenting that Local Planning Authorities should avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless there are special circumstances such as the essential need for a rural worker to live permanently at or near their place of work in the Countryside.

In view of the above, Key Statement DMG2 only allows development for *“forestry and agriculture”* workers and Paragraph 79 of the NPPF only refers to *“rural worker”*. However Policy DMH3 does refer to an *“essential workers dwelling”* and it is on this basis that the applicant seeks to justify the proposed dwelling. In order to determine whether there is a justification for a workers dwelling at Blue Bell Farm it must be established that there is a functional and financial need for an essential workers dwelling. A functional test is necessary to establish whether it is essential for the proper functioning of the business for one person to live at the site and be readily available at most times.

Functional test

The submitted planning statement explains how the business has operated from this site (Blue Bell

Farm) for five years and employs three people. The applicant (owner of the business) currently lives in Kirby Longsdale (36 miles from the application site) and commutes to the application site. The application explains that the business operates from three locations (Longridge, Cambridge and Budapest) and the intention is create a North West Centre of Excellence. The application details, and this was reiterated in an on-site meeting, how an essential manufacturing procedure that currently takes place in Cambridge will now take place at the application site for confidential reasons. This manufacturing process will require the applicant to reside on site to manage production and communicate with clients and business associates aboard (in different timezones). The submission explains how a mini testing robot is to be installed at the site and this will need periodic monitoring (eg. every 15 mins for 2 hrs up to 12 x a day) and therefore the applicant needs to live at the site in order to carry out such monitoring works. The application also explains how a new element of the business (pharmaceutical pill printing) will be researched and developed at the application site if this application is successful.

The application lists other reasons why the applicant/owner needs to live at the site and these include:

- To provide confidentiality and security;
- Cannot commute from a nearby dwelling outside the development site because of the isolated location and the need to be on site to monitor the equipment.

Having carefully considered the information provided, and discussed the proposal at length with the applicant, it is considered to be essential that the applicant lives at the application site in order to progress and expand the development of the business at Blue Bell Farm in the way that the application proposes.

Financial test

In addition to the functional test the applicant must demonstrate that the business is economically viable and able to support the "essential worker". The applicant has provided confidential information in respect the proposed business operations, including financial information in respect of the business plan and five year revenue projections. This business plan includes details of existing contracts with other companies and it is considered that the business can financially support a worker on the site.

Legal Agreement

For the reasons detailed above the LPA accept that the way the site at Blue Bell Farm is to be developed and the commercial element expanded, there is a justification for an essential workers dwelling. However, in the way that the business currently operates from this site there is no requirement for an essential workers dwelling. As such, from the LPA's point of view it is paramount that the business operates in the way that it is detailed in the submitted application, for there to be a legitimate need for a workers dwelling.

With this in mind the LPA has agreed with the applicant/agent that in order to secure that the new manufacturing processes detailed within the application takes place at the site, a Legal Agreement (S106) is required to secure that the business will operate as detailed within the submission and that the residential unit can only be occupied in conjunction the applicant's business.

Level of accommodation

With regard to the level of accommodation, the application proposes a modest sized two bedroom unit (186sqm) which would be formed by way of converting part of the existing building and an infill extension. The proposed residential accommodation would equate to approximately 40% of the

building, with the other 60% in commercial use, and such a split is considered to be reasonable. The residential accommodation would be attached to the commercial use and would therefore be easily incorporated back into the commercial element of the business should the need for the residential use at the site cease in the future.

Previous application

An application was submitted and withdrawn in 2018 (3/20180330) for the erection of a new dwelling which would be restricted to those associated with the business operating from the site. The current application differs significantly from this previous application in that a greater justification of the need for the proposed use has been provided, and the level of residential accommodation proposed is significantly less than on the previous application, and thus would have a lesser visual impact upon the character of the area (open countryside and AONB).

Impact Upon Residential Amenity:

Policy DMG1 seeks to ensure that development proposals do *“not adversely affect the amenities of the surrounding area”* and *“provide adequate day lighting and privacy distances”*.

The proposed infill extension would have no impact upon neighbouring land uses as it would not extend out beyond the existing elevations of the building. The proposed extension at the southern end of the building would bring it closer to the gable elevation of the nearest property opposite at Moss Hall. The main principal elevation of the dwelling at Moss Hall faces west and therefore would not be directly in line with this extension. There are some windows in the gable elevation of Moss Hall, however these are not in line with the application building and would not be negatively impacted by the proposal. In addition to the above a separation distance of approximately 18m would still be provided between the nearest corner of the extension and the dwelling, and such a distance is considered to be acceptable given the single storey nature of the proposed extension.

The front elevation of the dwelling at High House Farm would face towards the proposed extension, however a separation distance of 29m would be achieved between the front elevation of this dwelling and the proposed single storey extension.

It is acknowledged that the application site does rise up slightly in relation to the dwellings opposite but given the above mentioned relationship and distance the proposed extensions would not have any undue impact in respect of overshadowing, loss of daylight or outlook.

In respect of usage, the unit already has consent for B1 use and whilst the proposed use would include the manufacturing/production of a specific device, along with other research and development and office space, the use class of the unit would still remain as B1 and thus not have any greater impact upon neighbouring amenity.

With regard to the residential use, this would be sited at the northern end of the building/unit, away from neighbouring residential uses. The residential use will contain high levels of glazing however these would face east and west into the neighbouring field and the applicant's own land.

Visual Amenity/External Appearance:

The application site is located within the AONB and Key Statement EN2 of the Core Strategy states *“As a principle the Council will expect development to be in keeping with the character of the landscape, reflecting local distinctiveness, vernacular style, scale, features and building materials”* and Policy DMG1 requires development to be of a high standard of design and be sympathetic to

existing and proposed land uses in terms of size, intensity and nature.

The proposed extensions are single storey and would be in keeping with the character and scale of the existing building in terms of their scale and design. The whole of the building would have a stone base with Yorkshire timber cladding above and a standing seam metal roof. The residential element of the building would contain high levels of recessed glazing in the east and west facing side elevations so as to provide natural light into the open plan layout. The recessing of the glazing with overhanging roofs would ensure that the high levels of glazing do not result in excessive light spillage in this rural setting.

The submitted plans show which external areas will be utilised as part of the commercial element and which form part of the residential curtilage, with an existing stone wall and gate defining the two areas. The commercial element includes some soft landscaping areas at the front of the site and a car parking area capable of providing 5 spaces. The residential curtilage would include an area for residential parking and landscaped areas including a fruit tree orchard. A field gate would provide access from the residential curtilage into the adjacent field, which currently contains a horse, however this adjoining field is not within the site edged red and therefore does not form part of the residential curtilage, although it is within the applicant's ownership.

In summary of the above, the proposed extensions and alterations to the existing building are considered to be modest and would not detract from the visual appearance of the existing building or have an unacceptable visual impact on the character of the area in accordance with both local and national planning policies.

Landscape and Trees:

The submitted plans show new hard and soft landscaped areas to be created around the application building, including the planting of a new hedge along the northern and eastern boundaries shared with the adjoining field. As mentioned earlier the plans also show the planting of a fruit tree orchard and two new trees to be planted at the front of the site, by the access. The erection of the southern extension would result in the loss of a couple of trees situated along the western boundary however these are not high quality specimen trees and their loss would not have a negative impact on the landscape character of the area, particularly as the proposal includes new tree planting. A condition has however been attached to the approval requiring the applicant to submit a landscaping scheme to the LPA to ensure that the landscape qualities of the area are retained after the development has taken place.

The application is accompanied by an Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey and Baseline Ecological Impact Assessment . No evidence of any specifically protected or otherwise important species were found however a number of minor mitigation measures have been recommended and a condition has been attached requiring the development to be carried out in accordance with these measures has been attached to the recommendation.

Highways:

The proposal does involve the slight repositioning and widening of the access point onto Higher Road. The Highway Officer has requested that a plan be provided showing a visibility splay of 2.4m by 140m in either direction from the new access.

A plan has been submitted showing visibility splays of 120m in one direction and 140m in the other and the Highway Officer is satisfied with this.

Drainage:

The submission states that foul drainage would be via an existing package treatment plant and surface water via a sustainable drainage system. A condition has been attached to ensure that foul and surface water are drained on separate systems.

Other issues/Conclusion:

Considering all of the above and having regard to all material considerations and matters raised, the application is considered to be acceptable and subsequently the application is recommended for approval, subject to conditions.

RECOMMENDATION:

That conditional planning permission be granted

1. The development must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of this permission.

Reason: Required to be imposed by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. Unless explicitly required by condition within this consent, the development hereby permitted shall be carried out in complete accordance with the proposals as detailed on drawings:

3109 010 (Location and Existing Site Plan)

3109 030 (Proposed Site Plan)

3109 040 (Proposed Plan & Elevation)

3109 050 (Proposed Elevations)

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to clarify which plans are relevant to the consent.

Materials and details

3. Notwithstanding any description of materials in the application and the requirements of condition 2 of this permission, prior to their use within the development hereby approved, samples or full details of all materials to be used on the external surfaces of the extended and altered building, including all new windows and doors, shall have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Such details shall include the type, colour and texture of the materials. The development shall thereafter be implemented in accordance with the duly approved materials.

Reason: In order to ensure use of appropriate materials which are sympathetic to the character of surrounding buildings and area in the interests of visual amenity.

4. Notwithstanding the submitted details, details of all new proposed boundary walling, gates and fencing shall have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority prior their installation on site. The development shall be carried out in strict accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In order that the Local Planning Authority may ensure that the detailed design of the proposal is appropriate to the locality.

Landscaping and ecology

5. Notwithstanding the details shown on the approved plans and the requirements of condition 2 of this permission, within three months of the commencement of the development a landscaping scheme for the site (including elements of both 'hard' and 'soft' landscaping) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Such a scheme shall include details of the proposed surface treatment of all new hard surfaced areas and the type, species, siting, planting distances and programme of planting of any trees, hedges and shrubs. The duly approved landscaping scheme shall be carried out within 12 months of the residential use hereby approved first being occupied and the areas which are landscaped shall be retained as landscaped areas thereafter. Any trees or shrubs removed, dying, being severely damaged or becoming seriously diseased within five years of planting shall be

replaced by trees or shrubs of similar size and species to those originally required to be planted.

Reason: In order to achieve a satisfactory level of landscaping and provision of adequate off-road parking facilities for the dwellinghouse in the interests of visual amenity and highway safety.

6. No clearance of any trees, shrubs or hedging in preparation for or during the course of development shall take place during the bird breeding season (March - August inclusive) unless an ecological survey has first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority which demonstrates that the trees and hedges to be cleared are not utilised for bird nesting. Should the survey reveal the presence of any nesting species, then no clearance of any vegetation shall take place during the bird breeding season until a methodology for protecting nest sites during the course of the development has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Nest site protection shall thereafter be provided in accordance with the duly approved methodology.

Reason: To ensure that there are no adverse effects on the favourable conservation status of birds and to protect the bird population from damaging activities and reduce or remove the impact of development.

7. The development hereby approved shall be carried out in complete accordance with the "Conclusion & Summary Recommendations" detailed within Section 5.0 of the submitted Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey & baseline Ecological Impact Assessment (February 2018).

Reason: In the interests of biodiversity and to enhance opportunities for species of conservation concern and reduce the impact of development.

8. Prior to any above ground works taking place on the construction of the extensions hereby approved, details of the provisions to be made for building dependent species of conservation concern, artificial bird nesting boxes / artificial bat roosting sites have been submitted to, and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

For the avoidance of doubt the details shall identify the nature and type of the nesting boxes/artificial roosting sites and the locations(s) or wall and roof elevations into which the above provisions shall be incorporated.

The artificial bird/bat boxes shall be incorporated into the building during the construction stage of the development and made available for use before the dwelling element of the approval is first occupied and thereafter retained. The development shall be carried out in strict accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In the interests of biodiversity and to enhance nesting/roosting opportunities for species of conservation concern and reduce the impact of development.

Amenity

9. No building or engineering operations within the site or deliveries to and from the site shall take place other than between 07:30 hours and 18:00 hours Monday to Friday and between 08:30 hours and 14:00 hours on Saturdays, and not at all on Sundays or Bank Holidays.

Reason: In order to protect the amenities of nearby residents

Highways

10. Before the access is used for vehicular purposes, any gateposts erected at the access shall be positioned 5m behind the nearside edge of the carriageway and visibility splay fences or walls shall be erected from the gateposts to the existing highway boundary, such splays shall be 45° to the centre line of the access. The gates shall open away from the highway.

Reason: To permit vehicles to pull clear of the carriageway when entering the site and to assist visibility.

11. Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015, the visibility splay measured from the centre of the new access onto Higher Road shall be provided and retained as detailed on the approved site plan ref: 3109 100 (amended plans received 31/07/19). The sight line splays will require walls, fences, trees, hedges, shrubs, ground growth, structures etc. to have a maximum height of 1.0m above the height at the centre line of the adjacent carriageway and they shall be maintained below this height for the perpetuity of the development.

Reason: To ensure adequate visibility at the site access and in the interest of highway safety.

12. Prior to the access being used for vehicular purposes, the part of the access extending from the highway boundary for a minimum distance of 5m into the site shall be appropriately paved in tarmacadam, concrete, block pavements, or other approved materials and retained as such thereafter.

Reason: To prevent loose surface material from being carried on to the public highway thus causing a potential source of danger to other road users.

Drainage

13. The site shall be drained via separate systems for the disposal of foul and surface water.

Reason: To secure a satisfactory system of drainage and to prevent pollution of the water environment.

Informatives:

- The grant of planning permission will require the applicant to enter into an appropriate Legal Agreement, with the County Council as Highway Authority. The Highway Authority hereby reserves the right to provide the highway works within the highway associated with this proposal. Provision of the highway works includes design, procurement of the work by contract and supervision of the works.
- The applicant is advised that the new site access, may need to be constructed under a section 278 agreement of the 1980 Highways Act. The Highway Authority hereby reserves the right to provide the highway works within the highway associated with this proposal. Provision of the highway works includes design, procurement of the work by contract and supervision of the works. The applicant is advised to contact the Community Services before works begin on site. Further information and advice can be found at www.lancashire.gov.uk

and search for "278 agreement". These works will require the reformation of a raised kerb fronting the development with the exception of the area used for dropped crossing.

- The developer should be aware that any works on, or immediately adjacent to the adopted highway network, would require the appropriate permits from Lancashire County Council's Highways Regulation Team, who would need a minimum of 12 weeks' notice to arrange the necessary permits. They can be contacted on lhsstreetworks@lancashire.gov.uk or on 01772 533433