


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

<b>Signed:</b>	<b>Officer:</b>	<b>LW</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>08/01/26</b>	<b>Manager:</b>	<b>LH</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>9/1/26</b>
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<b>Application Ref:</b>	3/2022/1034				<b>Ribble Valley Borough Council</b> <small>www.ribblevalley.gov.uk</small>
<b>Date Inspected:</b>	16/12/25	<b>Site Notice:</b>	N/A		
<b>Officer:</b>	LW				
<b>DELEGATED ITEM FILE REPORT:</b>					<b>REFUSAL</b>

<b>Development Description:</b>	Additional usage to commercial property from E(g) to E(d) gym.
<b>Site Address/Location:</b>	Woodfield Farm, Longsight Road, Clayton le Dale BB2 7JA.

<b>CONSULTATIONS:</b>	<b>Parish/Town Council</b>
No comments received with respect to the proposed development.	

<b>CONSULTATIONS:</b>	<b>Highways/Water Authority/Other Bodies</b>
<b>LCC Highways:</b>	No objection subject to conditions.

<b>CONSULTATIONS:</b>	<b>Additional Representations.</b>
No representations received.	

**RELEVANT POLICIES AND SITE PLANNING HISTORY:**

**Ribble Valley Core Strategy:**

Key Statement DS1: Development Strategy  
Key Statement DS2: Sustainable Development  
Key Statement EC1: Business and Employment Development  
Key Statement DMI2: Transport Considerations

Policy DMG1: General Considerations  
Policy DMG2: Strategic Considerations  
Policy DMG3: Transport & Mobility  
Policy DMB1: Supporting Business Growth and the Local Economy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

**Relevant Planning History:**

3/2021/0594: Proposed demolition of small storage building and erection of a new commercial building (Approved).

3/2020/0168: Discharge of condition 17 from 3/2019/0827 (landscaping) (Approved).

3/2020/0007: Discharge of conditions 23 (construction method statement), 20 (Himalayan balsam removal) and 17 (landscaping: tree planting schedule) from planning permission 3/2019/0827 (Approved)

3/2019/0827: Use of land as a storage compound and construction of building for vehicle servicing area, workshop, tool store, offices and ancillary accommodation to create a depot for a civil engineering company (Approved).

3/2014/0101: Retrospective application for change of use from agriculture to domestic curtilage (Approved).

3/2013/0442: Proposed change of use of approved garage, store and office accommodation to reinstate original dwelling (Refused and dismissed on appeal).

3/2008/0020: Agricultural storage building (Prior Approval Not Required).

3/2006/0688: Erection of replacement dwelling to include a basement, and the conversion of existing dwelling to provide garaging and office accommodation and the extension of residential curtilage to include former farm yard area (Approved).

3/2006/0343: Erection of a replacement dwelling and the conversion of the existing dwelling to provide garaging and office accommodation and the extension of the residential curtilage to include the former farm yard area. Re-submission (Approved).

3/2005/1071: Erection of a replacement dwelling and the conversion of the existing dwelling to provide garaging and office accommodation and the extension of the residential curtilage to include the former farm yard area (Withdrawn).

3/2005/0766: Two storey side extension and single storey rear extension to farmhouse (Approved).

3/2005/0536: Steel portal frame agricultural storage building (Permission Not Required).

#### **ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT:**

##### **Site Description and Surrounding Area:**

The application relates to an existing box profile metal sheeting building constructed on a 1-metre-high blockwork dwarf wall with steel roller shutters and uPVC windows which was granted planning consent in 2021 under application reference 3/2021/0594. Condition no.5 on planning permission 3/2021/0594 restricts the use of the building for Class E(g) business use only, with the use of the building for any other purpose, including any other purpose within Use Class E, requiring planning permission in order to prevent any other uses within the use class being created which may not be appropriate in this location.

The building is associated with Woodfield Farm and is located on the north side of Longsight Road (A59) on land designated as Open Countryside. The wider site comprises a former farmhouse and barn (converted to offices), a dwellinghouse and an additional large box profile metal sheeting building currently occupied by the civil engineering company, Wade Group. To the south-west is Woodfield Garage and a dwelling known as Strathaven.

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

The application seeks consent for the change of use of the building from Use Class E(g) (business) to Class E(d) (gym), including an extension of opening hours to 6.00am to 10.00pm Monday to Friday, 8.00am to 5.00pm on Saturdays and 8.00am to 2.00pm on Sunday and Bank Holidays.

It is noted that the proposal has now been implemented, with the building currently occupied by "Prime Performance".

**Principle of Development:**

In respect of the principle of the change of use of the building, given the application relates to an existing commercial unit, Policy DMB1 is engaged insofar that it relates to development that supports Business Growth and the Local Economy, with the Policy reading as follows:

*Proposals for the development, redevelopment or conversion of sites with employment generating potential in the plan area for alternative uses will be assessed with regard to the following criteria:*

- 1. The provision of Policy DMG1, and*
- 2. The compatibility of the proposal with other plan policies in the LDF, and*
- 3. The environmental benefits to be gained by the community, and*
- 4. The economic and social impact caused by loss of employment opportunities to the borough, and*
- 5. Any attempts that have been made to secure an alternative employment generating use for the site (must be supported by evidence (such as property agents details including periods of marketing and response) that the property/ business has been marketed for business use for a minimum period of six months or information that demonstrates to the council's satisfaction that the current use is not viable for employment purposes).*

In respect of the provisions of Policy DMB1, the policy provides material considerations which exist as 'exceptions' to allow for the loss of employment generating uses in certain circumstances. However, in this case there would be no associated environmental benefits to be gained by the community.

The economic impact of losing employment generating floorspace, originally granted consent for Use Class E(g) (pursuant to permission 3/2021/0594), and the introduction of a 'Main Town Centre Use' in an out-of-town centre location is considered to be more harmful than any benefits that would be resultant from the granting of consent.

In respect of 'Main Town Centre Use(s)' – the use of the premises as a gymnasium would be considered a 'health and fitness centre' use, with such uses being considered as being 'Main Town Centre' uses within the National Planning Policy Framework.

Paragraph 91 of The Framework, in relation to such uses, states that 'Local planning authorities should apply a sequential test to planning applications for main town centre uses which are neither in an existing centre nor in accordance with an up-to-date plan. Main town centre uses should be located in town centres, then in edge of centre locations, and only if suitable sites are not available (or expected to become available within a reasonable period) should out of town centre sites be considered'.

In respect to the provisions of Paragraph 91 – the applicant has failed to provide any information that would satisfy the requirements of The Framework.

As such and taking account of the above, it is considered that the proposal would result in the loss of employment generating floorspace through the introduction of a use falling within the definition of a 'Main Town Centre Use' in an out-of-town centre location. No material considerations have been presented in this case to justify or warrant the harm resulting from the loss of employment generating floorspace use. As such, the proposal would result in direct conflict with Policy DMB1 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy and Paragraph 91 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

The application site is also located outside of a defined settlement area and within the Open Countryside. Policy DMG2 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy requires development outside of defined settlement areas to meet at least one of six exceptions which are as follows:

- 1. The development should be essential to the local economy or social wellbeing of the area*

2. *The development is needed for the purposes of forestry or agriculture*
3. *The development is for local needs housing which meets an identified need and is secured as such*
4. *The development is for small scale tourism or recreational developments appropriate to a rural area*
5. *The development is for small-scale uses appropriate to a rural area where local need or benefit can be demonstrated*
6. *The development is compatible with the enterprise zone designation*

In this instance, it is not considered that the development satisfies the requirements of being essential to the local economy or social wellbeing or the area. In addition to this and as stated above, the use of the premises as a gymnasium would be considered a 'health and fitness centre' use, with such uses being considered as being 'Main Town Centre' uses within the National Planning Policy Framework. Accordingly, the proposal is not considered to be appropriate to the rural area and therefore it cannot be considered that the proposal would meet any of the exception criterion contained within Policy DMG2 in relation to new development outside of defined settlement limits, in which case there is no explicit policy support for a gymnasium in the location proposed.

Having regard to the sustainability of the site location, Policy DMG3 of the Core Strategy requires decision making to consider the availability and adequacy of public transport and associated infrastructure to serve those moving to and from new developments. This is consistent with the NPPF which requires development proposals to promote sustainable transport.

In this instance, the proposal site is not within walking distance of any defined settlement area and whilst it is located within reasonably close proximity to bus services on Longsight Road, it is considered that users of the gym would largely be dependent upon private motor vehicles. Accordingly, the proposed change of use of the building would amount to unsustainable development by virtue of the site being in an unsuitable location for a gymnasium.

Taking account of the above, the proposal would fail to meet the aims and objectives of Policies DMB1, DMG2 and DMG3 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy and Paragraph 91 of the National Planning Policy Framework and is therefore considered to be unacceptable in principle.

**Impact Upon Residential Amenity:**

Taking account of the location of the unit directly adjacent to existing commercial uses, it is not considered that the proposal would result in any measurable direct impacts upon existing nearby residential amenities.

**Visual Amenity/External Appearance:**

The submitted details do not propose any external alterations to the building nor alterations to the existing site configuration. As such the proposal is unlikely to result in any measurable visual impacts upon the character or visual amenities of the immediate area.

**Highways and Parking:**

The application has been subject to review by Lancashire County Council Highways. The Local Highway Authority (LHA) have no objection to the use of the existing access with it being established and approved to serve the commercial building under application reference 3/2021/0594. The LHA also welcome the erection of a 'No Entry' sign adjacent to the proposed parking spaces to inform users of the parking area to not use the access down the side of the existing commercial building which is occupied by the 'Energy Centre' and instead use the same access in which they entered the site. The proposal will also provide 12

car parking spaces which complies with the LHAs parking guidance given the internal floor area of the buildings.

With the above in mind, the LHA does not raise an objection to the proposal and are of the opinion that the proposed development will not have a significant impact on highway safety, capacity or amenity in the immediate vicinity of the site subject to the imposition of conditions.

**Landscape/Ecology:**

No ecological constraints have been identified with respect to the proposed development.

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

As such, for the above reasons and having regard to all material considerations and matters raised, the application is recommended for refusal.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

That planning consent be refused for the following reason:

**01:**

The proposal would result in the loss of employment generating floorspace through the introduction of a use falling within the definition of a 'Main Town Centre Use' in an out-of-town centre location. No material considerations have been presented in this case to justify or warrant the harm resulting from the loss of employment generating floorspace use. As such, the proposal would result in direct conflict with Policy DMB1 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy (2008-2028) and the aims and objectives of Paragraph 91 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

**02:**

The proposal would result in development within the designated open countryside outside of a defined settlement that fails to meet any of the exception criteria for allowing development in such locations. Furthermore, the rural location of the application site means that users would largely be reliant on a private motor vehicle to access the site. As such, the development is contrary to Policies DMG2 and DMG3 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy (2008-2028) as well as the National Planning Policy Framework which has a presumption in favour of sustainable development.