

Plan:8 Town Planning Ltd

PLANNING SUPPORT STATEMENT v1.3

Application for: Retrospective Planning Permission for Tea Cabin, Office and
Store Buildings, Physiotherapy Cabin, Exercise Areas, and Associated
Development

Site Address: Canine Health and Hydro Ltd, Howgill Farm, Howgill Lane,
Rimington, Clitheroe, Lancashire, BB7 4EF

Applicant: Steven Maney

Prepared by: Plan:8 Town Planning Ltd



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PLANNING SUPPORT STATEMENT

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1. INTRODUCTION AND SITE DESCRIPTION

1.1 Site Location and Context

The application site is located at Howgill Farm, Howgill Lane, Rimington, in the Ribble Valley Borough Council area. The site comprises an established canine hydrotherapy business that has been operating lawfully since 2011 under planning permission reference 3/2011/0673.

The site is situated within the open countryside but benefits from an existing lawful planning consent for canine hydrotherapy use. The business operates from a complex of converted farm buildings and purpose-built facilities that have evolved to meet the growing demands of this specialist veterinary service.

1.2 Planning History

Planning permission reference 3/2011/0673 was granted on 7th December 2011 for the establishment of a canine hydrotherapy centre. The applicant commenced lawful use of the premises in accordance with this permission in late 2011, and this use has continued continuously since that date.

2. THE PROPOSAL

2.1 Development Subject to this Application

This application seeks retrospective planning permission for the following elements:

Elements in use for less than 10 years (requiring planning permission):

- Tea cabin and sandwich bar facility
- Small office and store building
- Physiotherapy cabin
- Small exercise areas

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- Extension to car parking area

Elements benefiting from the 10-year rule (immune from enforcement):

- Expanded use of ground floor of former barn for grooming and training activities (in use since 2011-2012)
- Extended car parking area created in 2014
- New vehicular access from Howgill Lane created over 10 years ago

2.2 Description of Business Operations

Canine Health and Hydro Ltd operates as a specialist canine hydrotherapy business providing essential therapeutic services including:

- Canine hydrotherapy using custom-built heated indoor pool
- Water treadmill treatments
- K-Laser CUBE 4 therapy (advanced Class IV laser therapy)
- Physiotherapy services
- Joint supplements and health products
- Dog grooming services
- Professional training courses for dog groomers

The business serves both local and national markets, with training courses attracting students from across the UK and internationally.

3. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 Development Plan Policies

The following Ribble Valley Core Strategy policies are considered relevant:

- **Key Statement DS1** – Development Strategy
- **Key Statement DS2** – Sustainable Development
- **Key Statement EC1** – Business and Employment Development
- **Policy DMG1** – General Considerations
- **Policy DMG2** – Strategic Considerations
- **Policy DMB1** – Supporting Business Growth
- **Policy DME2** – Landscape & Townscape Protection

3.2 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) December 2024

Relevant NPPF paragraphs include:

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- **Paragraph 85:** Supporting economic growth and productivity, placing significant weight on the need to support economic growth and productivity
- **Paragraph 88:** Enabling sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, including through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings
- **Paragraph 89:** Recognising that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport

4. PLANNING ASSESSMENT

4.1 Principle of Development

Policy DMG2 Compliance

The proposed development complies with Policy DMG2 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy, which permits development outside defined settlement areas where it meets specified criteria. The proposal satisfies criteria 1 and 5:

1. **Essential to local economy:** The business provides essential veterinary services for dogs requiring hydrotherapy and physiotherapy treatments. These specialized services are not readily available elsewhere in the region.
2. **Small scale rural use with demonstrated local need:** The development comprises modest ancillary facilities supporting an established rural business with clear economic and social benefits.

Evidence of Comparable Facilities within Ribble Valley Borough

A detailed review has been undertaken to identify comparable canine hydrotherapy or physiotherapy facilities within the Ribble Valley Borough. The only partially comparable facility identified is Valley Animal Therapy in Whalley. However, this is a small-scale operation that provides treatment solely using a single water treadmill. It does not provide a full hydrotherapy pool. This significantly limits the range of therapeutic treatments available, as some veterinary diagnoses are unsuitable for treadmill therapy and require pool-based hydrotherapy for safe and effective treatment.

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By contrast, Canine Health and Hydro Ltd is a fully equipped rehabilitation centre featuring two hydrotherapy treadmills, two Class IV K-lasers, a full-size hydrotherapy pool, and dedicated physiotherapy areas. This enables the business to adapt treatments and manage every referred veterinary case safely and effectively.

Furthermore, Valley Animal Therapy has close operational links with the adjacent Bowland Vets practice, with both facilities having been built and opened together approximately two years ago. Such direct relationships can discourage other local veterinary practices from referring clients to that facility due to potential conflicts of interest. Canine Health and Hydro Ltd operates independently, ensuring that all veterinary practices within the Ribble Valley can refer clients without concern.

The applicant's facility was the first rehabilitation centre established in the Ribble Valley and remains the only comprehensive centre providing a full suite of hydrotherapy, physiotherapy, and rehabilitation services. Over the past 14 years, the business has rehabilitated thousands of dogs from across the Borough, and beyond, and has become a highly respected centre of excellence in animal rehabilitation.

A Google Maps search for 'canine hydrotherapy Ribble Valley' confirms that Canine Health and Hydro Ltd is the only comprehensive hydrotherapy and physiotherapy centre located within the Ribble Valley. The next nearest comparable facilities are situated outside the Borough, meaning that without the applicant's business, local residents would need to travel approximately 80 miles round trip to access equivalent rehabilitation services elsewhere. A screenshot of this search is included as Figure 1 in the appendices to this statement.

Economic Benefits

The business generates significant economic benefits at multiple levels:

Direct Employment: The business employs 18 staff members in total (16 full-time and 2 part-time), with up to 11 staff on site at any one time, providing secure local employment opportunities in skilled veterinary and animal care roles and supporting 18 families in the local community.

Training and Education: Professional training courses in dog grooming attract students from across the UK and internationally, with up to 9 grooming students attending training sessions at any one time. This establishes the

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facility as a regional centre of excellence and generates substantial indirect economic benefits.

Indirect Employment: Visiting clients and trainees utilise local accommodation, restaurants, cafés and shops throughout the Ribble Valley, creating indirect employment and supporting the rural economy. The business serves both local and national markets, bringing external spending into the Borough.

Veterinary Services: The facility fills a specialist niche in animal healthcare provision, serving thousands of dogs over the past 14 years and providing essential rehabilitation services that would otherwise require residents to travel a minimum 80 miles round trip to access equivalent care.

Business Operations

The business operates in a professional and controlled manner:

- **Operating Hours:** 8:30am to 9:00pm Monday to Friday; 8:30am to 5:30pm on Saturdays
- **Staffing Levels:** 11 staff on site at any one time, supported by up to 9 grooming students during training sessions
- **Client Numbers:** Approximately 48 dogs (with owners) visit the site daily on average. At any one time, there are typically around 14 owners on site, of which approximately 8 are short-duration drop-off visits associated with the grooming training function
- **Appointment System:** All visits operate strictly on an appointment-only basis to ensure efficient site management, avoid congestion, and maintain animal welfare standards
- **Business Composition:** The operation is broadly 50% canine rehabilitation and 50% dog grooming. Both functions operate in close synergy: rehabilitation clients often progress to grooming for ongoing maintenance and comfort, while grooming clients frequently transition to therapy services as preventative or post-treatment care

4.2 Ten Year Rule Application

Significant portions of the current operation benefit from the ten-year rule under Section 171B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. The statutory declaration confirms continuous use since 2011-2012 of:

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- Ground floor of former barn for grooming and training (over 10 years)
- Car parking extension created in 2014 (over 10 years)
- Vehicular access from Howgill Lane (over 10 years)

These elements are now immune from enforcement action and represent established lawful development rights.

4.3 Scale and Impact Assessment

Visual Impact

The retrospective elements are modest in scale and ancillary to the established use:

- Tea cabin: Small portable building serving existing customers
- Office/store: Minor ancillary facilities
- Physiotherapy cabin: Portable structure supporting core business activities
- Exercise areas: External therapy spaces integral to treatment provision

All buildings are located within the established business curtilage and do not extend the visual envelope of development significantly.

Landscape Impact

The site benefits from substantial existing screening through mature trees and hedgerows. The proposed development does not extend beyond the established building complex and maintains the rural character of the area.

Highway Impact

The business generates vehicular movements consistent with its established use. The tea cabin serves existing customers rather than creating a new visitor destination. Access arrangements utilize the established entrance with adequate visibility and capacity.

4.4 Justification for Retrospective Elements

Tea Cabin and Sandwich Bar

The tea cabin serves a legitimate business need, providing refreshment facilities for customers whose dogs undergo treatment sessions lasting 1-2 hours. This ancillary facility:

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- Enhances customer experience during treatment periods
- Supports the core business function
- Primarily serves existing clients who are waiting while their dogs receive treatment
- Occasionally serves local walkers who stop by for light refreshments
- Does not function as a public café or visitor attraction
- Does not create an independent visitor destination
- Serves primarily customers already visiting the site for therapeutic services

Office and Storage Facilities

Essential administrative and storage facilities supporting business operations, including:

- Client records and appointment systems
- Equipment and supply storage
- Staff facilities

Physiotherapy Cabin

Provides additional treatment space for the expanding physiotherapy services, representing natural business growth within the established use class.

Exercise Areas

External therapy and rehabilitation spaces integral to the hydrotherapy and physiotherapy treatments offered.

5. PRECEDENT ANALYSIS

Precedent Analysis - 3/2021/0952 (Dunsop Bridge)

Planning permission 3/2021/0952 provides highly relevant precedent support for this application. The decision involved conversion of farm buildings to employment use (Use Class E) plus new build workshop facilities at Root Farm, Dunsop Bridge - an isolated rural location within the Forest of Bowland AONB. The officer's report for 3/2021/0952 explicitly concluded that *"The conversion, new build and alterations to create workshop areas aimed at supporting the local community and generating employment use would be beneficial to the area and serve to meet a key objective of the Council in offering employment opportunities to the borough."*

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Key parallels with the current application include:

- **Rural Location:** Both sites are in isolated countryside locations outside settlement boundaries
- **Mixed Development:** Both involve conversion of existing buildings combined with new build elements
- **Employment Generation:** Both provide rural employment opportunities and economic benefits
- **Policy Framework:** Both assessed under the same DMG2 criteria for rural development

The Dunsop Bridge decision confirms that Ribble Valley Borough Council actively supports rural employment development that generates local economic benefits, even in remote locations where transport sustainability may be limited.

The current proposal demonstrates similar characteristics:

- Rural location with established business use
- Employment generation
- Specialized services meeting regional need
- Modest scale appropriate to rural setting

6. COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS

6.1 Healthcare Provision

The business provides essential healthcare services for dogs with mobility issues, arthritis, post-surgical rehabilitation needs, and other conditions requiring hydrotherapy. This specialized service is not readily available elsewhere in the region.

6.2 Education and Training

The facility offers professional training courses in dog grooming, attracting students from across the UK and internationally. This generates:

- Course fees and revenue
- Accommodation bookings in local hotels/B&Bs
- Spending in local restaurants, cafes, and shops
- Enhanced reputation for the area as a centre of excellence

6.3 Employment

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The business provides direct employment for local residents and supports indirect employment in related sectors through its visitor economy.

7. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

7.1 Biodiversity

The site retains substantial areas of natural landscaping and mature trees. The business operations are compatible with rural biodiversity, and opportunities exist for enhancement through additional planting if required by condition.

7.2 Sustainability

The business model promotes sustainability through:

- Reuse of existing rural buildings
- Provision of local services reducing travel needs
- Focus on animal welfare and health

8. CONCLUSION

This application seeks retrospective permission for modest ancillary facilities supporting an established and successful rural business. The proposed development:

Complies with Policy Framework:

- Satisfies Policy DMG2 criteria for rural development as development essential to the local economy
- Supports NPPF objectives for rural economic growth
- Represents sustainable development in planning terms

Demonstrates Clear Benefits:

- Provides essential veterinary services with no comparable alternative within the Borough
- Generates significant economic activity through direct employment of 18 staff members (16 full-time, 2 part-time) supporting local families, and indirect benefits from visiting clients and training students
- Creates local employment opportunities in skilled animal care roles
- Attracts visitors supporting wider rural economy through accommodation, dining and retail spending
- Operates as a regional centre of excellence for professional training

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Operates Professionally and Appropriately:

- Functions strictly on an appointment-only basis ensuring controlled site management
- Maintains appropriate staffing levels and visitor numbers for the rural setting
- Tea cabin serves existing clients and is not open as a public attraction
- Business composition balances rehabilitation services with complementary grooming activities

Minimizes Environmental Impact:

- Utilizes established site with existing screening
- Modest scale appropriate to rural location
- No significant landscape or visual impact

Builds on Established Rights:

- Significant portions benefit from 10-year rule immunity
- Natural evolution of lawful business operations established since 2011
- Proportionate expansion of established use

The development represents a logical and appropriate evolution of an established rural business that provides essential services while generating significant economic benefits for the local area. The business operates in a professional and controlled manner, ensuring that activity levels remain proportionate to the site's rural setting while delivering substantial employment, education, and healthcare benefits that maintain the vitality of the rural economy.

The retrospective elements are modest in scale, well-integrated within the site, and essential to the continued operation and growth of this specialized business that has served the community for over 14 years.

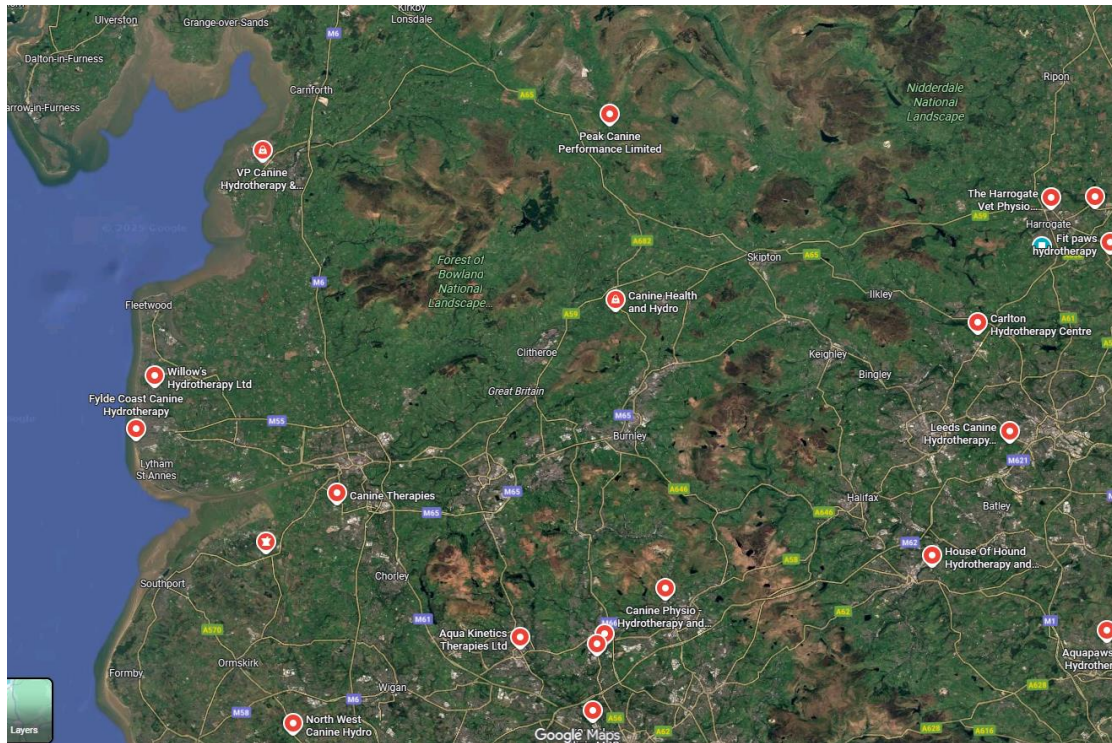
Recommendation: The application merits approval as sustainable rural development that supports the local economy while respecting the character and appearance of the countryside location.

APPENDIX 1 follows which includes Google Maps Search Results: Canine Hydrotherapy Facilities and analysis

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APPENDIX

Google Maps Search Results: Canine Hydrotherapy Facilities



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The above screenshots show Canine Health and Hydro Ltd as the only comprehensive hydrotherapy and physiotherapy facility located within the Ribble Valley Borough. The nearest alternative facilities are located outside the Borough, requiring approximately an 80-mile round trip for local residents seeking equivalent rehabilitation services.

Key Findings from Google Maps Search:

- Canine Health and Hydro Ltd (Howgill Farm, Rimington) - Within Ribble Valley Borough - Full service facility with hydrotherapy pool, treadmills, physiotherapy and Class IV laser therapy
- Valley Animal Therapy (Whalley) - Within Ribble Valley Borough but limited to single water treadmill only, closely linked to adjacent veterinary practice
- All other comparable facilities are located outside the Ribble Valley Borough boundary

This spatial analysis demonstrates that without Canine Health and Hydro Ltd, residents of Ribble Valley would have extremely limited access to comprehensive canine rehabilitation services within the Borough, with the nearest full-service alternatives requiring significant travel distances.

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