


Report to be read in conjunction with the Decision Notice.

Signed:	Officer:	BT	Date:	6/5/26	Manager:	LH	Date:	8/5/26
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Application Ref:	3/2024/0934			 <p>Ribble Valley Borough Council www.ribblevalley.gov.uk</p>
Date Inspected:	9/5/25 & 13/6/25	Site Notice:	9/5/25 & 22/1/26	
Officer:	BT			
DELEGATED ITEM FILE REPORT:				APPROVAL

Development Description:	Regularisation of unauthorised vehicle access, car park, seating areas and siting of tea cabin, use of land and erection of buildings for canine hydrotherapy and rehabilitation and dog grooming in association with existing business.
Site Address/Location:	Canine Hydrotherapy Centre, Howgill Farm, Howgill Lane, Rimington BB7 4EF.

CONSULTATIONS:	Parish/Town Council
Rimington and Middop Parish Council:	Consulted 24/4/25 & 12/1/26 – no response received.

CONSULTATIONS:	Highways/Water Authority/Other Bodies
LCC Highways:	No objections subject to conditions.
RVBC Environmental Health:	No objection subject to the applicant registering details of the site’s food and drink provision.

CONSULTATIONS:	Additional Representations.
None.	

RELEVANT POLICIES AND SITE PLANNING HISTORY:
<p>Ribble Valley Core Strategy:</p> <p>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</p> <p>National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)</p>
Relevant Planning History:
3/2011/0673:

Conversion of a redundant agricultural barn to create a canine hydrotherapy and rehabilitation centre (Approved)

ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT:

Site Description and Surrounding Area:

The application relates to a business premises in Rimington which provides canine hydrotherapy and grooming services. Access to the application site is from Howgill Lane with primary vehicular parking for the site being accommodated within an area of hardstanding which lies directly adjacent to the North-east of the site's converted barn building, with a smaller additional parking area sited to the Southern side of the converted barn building. The converted barn building which serves as the main premises on site has been subject to alterations which include the addition of a timber based single storey gabled / flat roof extension (used for laser / water treadmill therapy respectively) to its Eastern gable end and the addition of a timber based single storey lean-to extension to its rear Northern elevation which accommodates showers. A single storey flat roof building lies directly to the North of the barn building's extended sections which accommodates an office / store and hydrotherapy room. A smaller single storey flat roof building and enclosed strip of land lie directly adjacent to the North-east of the aforementioned building, with the smaller building and land strip used as physiotherapy and exercise spaces respectively. A tea cabin and seating area also lie directly adjacent to the East of the main premises. The neighbouring property of Howgill Farm adjoins the Western side of the converted barn building with the wider area surrounding the site comprising a mixture of woodland, agricultural land and open countryside.

Proposed Development for which consent is sought:

Planning consent was granted under application 3/2011/0673 for the partial conversion of the barn building adjoining Howgill Farm to form a canine hydrotherapy and rehabilitation centre. The current application as originally submitted sought retrospective planning consent for the retention of a new vehicular access, parking area, seating area and siting of a tea cabin to serve the existing business on site however numerous additional works in relation to the operation of the existing business were observed to have been undertaken during a site visit by the case officer and Head of Planning and Building Control.

The additional works observed on site were as follows:-

- Addition of a timber based single storey gabled / flat roof extension to the Eastern gable end of the converted barn (used for laser / water treadmill therapy respectively)
- Addition of a timber based single storey lean-to extension to the rear Northern elevation of the converted barn (used for showers)
- Construction of a single storey flat roof building to North of the barn building's extended sections (used as an office / store and hydrotherapy room)
- Construction of a single storey flat roof building and formation of an enclosed strip of land to North-east of office / store and hydrotherapy room (used as physiotherapy and exercise spaces respectively)

Following the aforementioned site visit the Council was also informed that the entirety of the converted barn building's floorspace was being utilised for the operation of the business, with the unauthorised use of additional floorspace being used for dog grooming activities and training. The application's supporting information states that the unauthorised use of additional floorspace within the converted barn building has occurred from 2011 through to the present day. In addition, analysis shows that the gabled / flat roof extension adjoined to the Eastern gable of the barn has been substantially complete for a period in excess of four years. Furthermore, the use of this extension does not deviate from the use approved under

application 3/2011/0673 (canine hydrotherapy) and the siting of this extension has not resulted in any change of use of land relative to that allowed under application 3/2011/0673. As such, the gabled / flat roof extension adjoined to the Eastern gable of the converted barn is considered to be lawful development.

The infill extension to the rear Northern elevation of the barn lies within the approved red edge pertaining to application 3/2011/0673 and appears to have been in place since at least 2013 however its use (for dog grooming) deviates from the use approved under the 2011 consent (no reference is made to dog grooming in the approved description of development for application 3/2011/0673). Furthermore, the buildings accommodating the office / store and hydrotherapy room and physiotherapy room and enclosed exercise space are sited outside of the approved red edge for the 2011 consent and as such have resulted in a change of use of land however aerial imagery suggests that this change of use of land has not been lawful for a period of 10 years or longer (aerial imagery dates full construction of the office / store and hydrotherapy room to 2018 at the earliest, and full construction of the physiotherapy room and enclosed exercise space to 2019 at the earliest).

In light of the unauthorised works undertaken on site an amended proposal has since been submitted which seeks retrospective planning consent to regularise the following works in relation to the current operation of the existing business:-

- Construction of vehicular access and parking area
- Construction of seating area and siting of tea cabin
- Addition of a timber based single storey lean-to extension to the rear Northern elevation of the converted barn
- Construction of a single storey flat roof building to North of the barn building's extended sections
- Construction of a single storey flat roof building and formation of an enclosed strip of land to North-east of office / store and hydrotherapy room

Principle of Development:

Key Statement EC1 of the Core Strategy states:

'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.'

Notwithstanding this general policy support offered to schemes which support the rural economy, it is necessary to apply Policy DMG2 to ascertain whether or not the principle of development is acceptable.

Policy DMG2 of the 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 well-being 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 a local need or benefit can be demonstrated.*
6. *The development is compatible with the enterprise zone designation*

Furthermore, Policy DMB1 of the Core Strategy states:

'Proposals that are intended to support business growth and the local economy will be supported in principle...The expansion of established firms on land outside settlements will be allowed provided it is essential to maintain the existing source of employment and can be assimilated within the local landscape.'

In this instance, the proposal relates to a well-established business operation located outside of the Borough's defined settlement areas. Additional buildings, seating areas, parking areas and food and drink provision have since been added to the application site following the establishment of the business in 2011. In addition, the existing business operation currently employs a total of 18 staff (sixteen full time staff and two part time staff, as opposed to just one full time employee as was originally intended under application submission 3/2011/0673) all of whom are understood to reside in the local area. Consequently, it is clear that the business in question has experienced considerable growth since its inception and given the number of people currently employed in relation to the existing business operation, retention of the existing business operation could be considered as essential to maintain this existing source of employment.

Furthermore, a comprehensive planning statement has been provided in support of the application which identifies the canine rehabilitation component of the business as being a niche service on account of no other comparable canine rehabilitation services being available within the Ribble Valley Borough and evidence and analysis has been provided to demonstrate this. Moreover, it is understood that the existing business operation provides training courses in dog grooming which attract students from across the UK and internationally which in turn provides economic benefits to the economy of the Borough through associated commerce to other businesses including local accommodation providers, restaurants, cafés and shops. Consequently, retention of the existing business operation could be considered as essential to the local economy of the Borough on account of the specialist nature of services provided and associated additional economic benefits delivered to the economy of the Borough through the operation of the business.

In light of the above, it is considered that retention of the existing business operation would be compliant with the provisions of Key statement EC1 and Policies DMG2 and DMB1 of the Core Strategy and is therefore considered to be acceptable in principle, subject to an assessment of additional material planning considerations.

Impact Upon Residential Amenity:

Paragraph 135 (f) of the National Planning Policy Framework states:

'Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.'

Furthermore, Policy DMG1 of the Core Strategy requires all proposals for development to consider the effects of development upon existing amenities.

In this instance, the application site is adjoined by one neighbouring receptor (Howgill Farm) however the unauthorised structures within the site are not located in close proximity to the aforementioned receptor and as such raise no concerns with regards to losses of natural light or outlook. In addition, the application site benefits from an approved consent for commercial development (canine hydrotherapy) and in this instance it is not considered that retention of the additional activities being undertaken in relation to the expansion of the business (dog grooming services / training and food / drink provision) would give rise to noise and disturbances that would be unduly harmful to the amenity of the aforementioned neighbouring property (which in any case lies within the ownership of the applicant). Furthermore, the next nearest neighbouring properties to the application site are otherwise located

approximately 70 metres away and in this instance the existing business operates on an appointment only system which in turn ensures that visitor numbers and comings and goings to and from the site are kept to a minimum (a condition has also been imposed on this consent to secure this). Moreover, the proposal has been subject to review from the Council's Environmental team who have raised no concerns in relation to potential noise or disturbances associated with retaining the existing business operation on site, subject to the applicant registering details of the site's food and drink provision.

Taking account of all of the above, it is not considered that retention of the unauthorised structures and business operation would give rise to noise or disturbances that would be unduly harmful to the amenity of any adjoining or neighbouring residents and would therefore be compliant with the aims and objectives of Paragraph 135 (f) of the NPPF and Policy DMG1.

Visual Amenity/External Appearance:

Paragraph 135 (c) of the NPPF states:

'Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting.'

Policy DMG1 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy provides additional general design guidance as follows:

'All development must be sympathetic to existing and proposed land uses in terms of its size, intensity and nature as well as scale, massing and style...particular emphasis will be placed on visual appearance and the relationship to surroundings, including impact on landscape character.'

In this instance, a vehicular access, seating area and parking area have been constructed on site without consent with these works being located on the site of a former field. Notwithstanding this, the existing vehicular access is modest in terms of length and width, with analysis showing the access as only being visible on approach to the site from the East. The Council originally stated preference for the area shown as 'additional parking' on the submitted plans to be returned to grassland if not required to support parking provisions for the existing business operation (in order to reduce the urbanising impact of the works undertaken on site) however the Local Highways Authority have since stated that it would be preferable to retain the area in question so as to reduce potential occurrences of on-street parking within the vicinity of the application site. As such, the area in question has been retained for vehicular parking. Notwithstanding this, the entirety of the unauthorised parking and seating areas are sited above the road level on Howgill Lane (approximately 2 – 3 metres) with a hedgerow and hit and miss timber fencing providing additional screening to the Southern side of the seating and parking area. As such, whilst the introduction of the vehicular access and seating and parking areas has introduced some urbanisation to the application site, these aspects of the works undertaken on site are largely screened from public view when facing into the site from Howgill Lane by virtue of the screening afforded by the site's topography and boundary treatments.

In a similar vein, analysis shows the unauthorised building accommodating the office / store and hydrotherapy room as only being predominantly visible on approach to the site from the East, with this building being modest in terms of height, located in close proximity to the main premises and detailed in horizontal timber cladding which is considered to be appropriate for the site's rural setting. As such, the building accommodating the office / store and hydrotherapy room reads an acceptable addition to the application site. Furthermore, the unauthorised extension to the Northern elevation of the converted barn and physiotherapy building sited to the North-east of the office / store and hydrotherapy room are both modestly sized structures with regards to their height and footprint, with both structures not being visible from within the public realm. The retention of these structures is therefore considered to be acceptable. Taking account of the above, it is not considered that retention of the unauthorised development undertaken on site would be harmful to the visual amenities of the area and would therefore satisfy the requirements of Paragraphs 135 (C) and Policy DMG1 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy.

Highways and Parking:

The proposed development has been subject to review from Lancashire County Council Highways who in their initial response made a request for further information to be provided in relation to access details, visibility splays, parking arrangements and details pertaining to the operation of the existing business. The above details have since been provided and reviewed by the LHA who have raised no further issues with the proposed development subject to the imposition of conditions with regards to access arrangements, visibility splays, surfacing materials, parking arrangements and use of the site by visitors and trainees. On this basis, it is not considered that retention of the unauthorised development would have any undue impacts upon highway safety as such the proposal satisfies Policy DMG1 of the Core Strategy (highways).

Landscape/Ecology:

BNG

The development is exempt from having to achieve the mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain requirement as it forms the basis of retrospective development.

Other Matters:

Signage

Signage pertaining to the existing business has been erected without consent on the Southern side of Howgill Lane. Details of the unauthorised signage have been provided as part of the application submission however the unauthorised signage needs to be assessed under a separate application submission (Application for Consent to Display an Advertisement(s)) and as such cannot be dealt with under this application.

Observations/Consideration of Matters Raised/Conclusion:

Retention of the existing business operation is considered to be essential to the local economy of the Borough on account of the specialist nature of services provided and associated additional economic benefits delivered to the economy of the Borough through the operation of the business, thus establishing the principle of development.

In addition, it is not considered that retention of the existing business operation would be harmful to the amenity of any neighbouring residents, nor would retention of the operational development undertaken on site result in any harm to the visual amenities of the area. Furthermore, the proposal raises no issues with respect to impacts upon highway safety or the ecology of the area.

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

RECOMMENDATION:

That planning consent be granted subject to the imposition of conditions.