

Personal Statement

Appellant: Ben Simmonds

Site Address: Evesons Barn, Simonstone Lane, Simonstone, BB12 7NU

Local Planning Authority: Ribble Valley Borough Council

Application Ref: 3/2025/0146

Development: Change of use of land for residential access including boundary treatments, parking at the rear of the dwelling, and bin storage

Decision: Refused (10 October 2025)

1. Introduction

I request that this statement is considered by the Planning Inspector as part of my appeal against the refusal of planning permission for the above proposal. The application I made sought approval for a revised vehicular access and associated works serving the recently converted Evesons Barn (approved under Ref. 3/2023/0521). The proposal introduces a safer, more practical access from Simonstone Lane, along with boundary treatments, parking, and a bin storage area that will, in my view, enhance the function and appearance of the site.

2. Site and Background

Evesons Barn is a former agricultural building located on Simonstone Lane, adjacent to Evesons Farm, a Grade II listed dwelling. The site lies within the Green Belt, on the edge of Simonstone. The barn conversion was approved under Ref. 3/2023/0521 and is nearing completion as a single private residence.

The original conversion approval relied on a narrow existing shared access serving multiple properties. This access is substandard in width and visibility, creating highway safety concerns for residents and road users.

The current proposal introduces a new access at the position of a historic former field gate on Simonstone Lane, reinstating the route of an old farm track. The access track (approximately 60m) would be surfaced with macadam suitable for vehicles, enclosed with low stone walls and post-and-rail fencing, and complemented by landscaped wildflower areas to the roadside.

3. The Proposal

The scheme includes:

- Formation of a new vehicular access from Simonstone Lane.
- A 4m wide access track following the line of the former field entrance.

- A setback timber gate to allow off-road vehicle waiting.
- Reduced boundary wall height and trimmed hedgerow to improve visibility splays.
- Post-and-rail fencing to maintain rural character.
- Parking area and bin store to the rear of the dwelling.

The works are modest in scale, use natural materials, and have been designed with regard to highway safety and rural landscape character.

4. Planning Policy Context

In terms of the key planning policy considerations, these have been assessed and dealt with by the planning consultant in the appeal statement of case.

5. Grounds of Appeal

5.1 Green Belt and Openness

I clearly cannot accept the view of the LPA when they say that the development I propose is inappropriate, harmful and is expanding the urbanization of Simonstone so that it joins up with the adjacent settlement which is in Hyndburn that is nonsense. Even if the proposal were considered 'inappropriate' in Green Belt terms, very special circumstances clearly exist through the safety and accessibility improvements the new access delivers. The existing approved access—used by agricultural traffic, delivery vehicles, and pedestrians accessing neighbouring dwellings—is steeply graded, often subject to surface water flooding and freezing during winter, and substandard for safe two-way traffic. Its alignment offers limited visibility when emerging onto Simonstone Lane, with vehicles forced to edge into the carriageway before sight lines are achieved. This situation is further exacerbated by the fact that the dwellings opposite this access park vehicles on the public highway causing highway safety issues generally. In contrast, the proposed access is located where visibility splays meet highway standards and where the gradient allows for safe entry and exit in all weather conditions. The improvement to safety and access reliability for residents and the wider public using Simonstone Lane is therefore a clear public benefit that outweighs any negligible and reversible impact on Green Belt openness.

5.2 Visual Impact and Rural Character

The proposal uses locally appropriate materials and modest detailing, designed specifically to blend with its rural context. The post-and-rail fencing and stone walls are features typical of the Ribble Valley countryside.

While width is not the primary issue, the functional limitations and safety risks of the existing track justify the need for an alternative route. The current shared access must accommodate agricultural machinery, pedestrian users, and domestic vehicles, resulting in regular conflict and safety concerns. Its steep gradient and poor drainage create difficult and sometimes hazardous conditions, particularly in wet or icy weather. The proposed access, by contrast, provides a safer, all-weather surface and a gentle gradient, ensuring accessibility without compromising the rural character of the area. The existing access will

remain available for agricultural, neighbouring properties and pedestrian use, thereby reducing pressure on that shared route while maintaining its established function.

5.3 Biodiversity Net Gain

The submitted BNG assessment identifies only a very minor reduction in habitat and hedgerow units. These impacts can be readily offset through the proposed on-site wildflower meadow creation and hedgerow reinforcement along Simonstone Lane—all within the appellant's ownership.

The appellant is willing to submit a Revised Biodiversity Enhancement Plan that would deliver the required 10% uplift through on-site enhancement measures secured by condition. Should full delivery of the 10% net gain not be achievable within the site's blue line, the appellant is also prepared to secure the balance through an accredited off-site habitat bank, in line with the Defra Statutory Biodiversity Metric and Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by the Environment Act 2021). This ensures that the BNG obligation will be fully met, whether on-site or off-site, and can be formalised by condition or legal undertaking.

I would like to draw to the Inspector's attention the fact that, having read the reasons for refusal in the decision notice and discussed the substance of those reasons with my consultant, that at no time during the whole application process with the LPA did the case officer make any attempt to discuss the finer details of the submission. I'm more than willing to provide whatever more appropriate surface for the track is deemed necessary, to put up a more appropriate form of fencing [post and wire] and likewise to put up a more appropriate entrance gate; why the LPA did not enter into any discussions with my architect Peter Hitchen is frankly unacceptable in my view. Further, as is set out in the submissions made both others with regard to the BNG requirement, I will meet the necessary requirements.

6. Conclusions

The appellant has demonstrated clear compliance and willingness to address all technical matters raised in refusal:

- The access preserves openness and delivers measurable public safety benefits.
- The design reinstates a historic track using rural materials sympathetic to context.
- Biodiversity Net Gain will be achieved through on-site enhancement or, where necessary, off-site habitat bank contributions.

The proposal therefore represents a balanced and sustainable solution consistent with national and local planning policy. Accordingly, the appellant respectfully requests that the Planning Inspectorate allow the appeal and grant planning permission for the development at Evesons Barn, Simonstone Lane, Simonstone.

Submitted by: Ben Simmonds Appellant
October 2025