

Report to be read in conjunction with the Decision Notice.

Signed:	Officer:	MC	Date:	18/07/2025	Manager:	LH	Date:	22/7/25
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Application Ref:	3/2025/0381			 Ribble Valley Borough Council www.ribblevalley.gov.uk
Date Inspected:	16/07/2025	Site Notice:	N/A	
Officer:				
DELEGATED ITEM FILE REPORT:				APPROVAL

Development Description:	Proposed change of use of existing repair garage (Use Class B2) to incorporate MOT testing use (Sui Generis).
Site Address/Location:	Lane Ends Farm, Hothersall Lane, Hothersall, PR3 2XB

CONSULTATIONS:	Parish/Town Council
Hothersall Parish Council:	Hothersall Parish Council wish to support approval of the application for the provision of MOT. They wish to highlight that page 8 of the noise assessment report supporting the application indicates that some of the equipment used by the consultants should have been recalibrated in March 2025 and were used for the assessment in April 2025, but do not think that this should adversely affect the application approval.

CONSULTATIONS:	Highways/Water Authority/Other Bodies
LCC Highways:	Lancashire County Council acting as the Highway Authority does not raise an objection regarding the proposed development 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.
RVBC Environmental Health:	The Environmental Health Officer raises concerns regarding the noise impact which are considered to be adverse.

CONSULTATIONS:	Additional Representations.
One objection has been received raising the following concerns: - The building has not been operated as a garage and was a basic repair workshop to for the landscape company to maintain their vehicles - Works have already started and included the removal of trees - Important screening between Bowe Cottage and the site has been removed - The new walls and roofing have already been carried out - The Landscape Gardening Business was never open to the General Public - There is no sewer for surface water to dispose into - Most works were off site when the business was run by the landscaping company and was never open for the public access - Biodiversity has already been affected by the decimation of trees and woodland - Concerns regarding how oil, battery fluids, trade waste will be disposed of - Concerns relating to how an MOT centre will be run with no employees and no hours of opening - The site can be seen now from public view - Noise concerns	

RELEVANT POLICIES AND SITE PLANNING HISTORY:

Ribble Valley Core Strategy:

Key Statement DS1: Development Strategy
Key Statement DS2: Sustainable development
Key Statement EN3: Sustainable Development and Climate Change
Key Statement EN4: Biodiversity and Geodiversity
Key Statement DMI2: Transport Considerations
Key Statement EC1: Business and Employment Development

Policy DMG1: General considerations
Policy DMG2: Strategic considerations
Policy DMG3: Transport and Mobility
Policy DME1: Protecting Trees And Woodlands
Policy DME2: Landscape And Townscape Protection
Policy DME3: Site and Species Protection and Conservation
Policy DME6: Water Management
Policy DMB1: Supporting Business Growth and the Local Economy
Policy DMB2: The Conversion of Barns and Other Rural Buildings for Employment Uses

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Relevant Planning History:

3/2007/0022

Erection of horticultural polytunnel, 6.4m x 14.63m for protection of shrubs and plants in temporary storage.
Approved with Conditions

3/1996/0051

Single storey office building.
Approved with Conditions

3/1976/1285

Demolition of buildings. Erection of building for storage of agricultural and horticultural equipment.
Approved with Conditions

ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT:

Site Description and Surrounding Area:

The site was previously used by a Landscaping Business and was vacant until recently when the applicant purchased the site and started using part of the site as a repair garage business. The site is located approximately 0.6km to the east of the settlement of Longridge, within the Open Countryside. The site has an existing garage/workshop and office building as well as some storage containers within a yard. The garage/workshop was granted in the 1970's as an agricultural/horticultural storage building but the applicant has confirmed it has been used for vehicle garage/workshop by the landscaping business and a site visit confirmed the presence of a garage inspection pit.

The site has a vehicular access off Hothersall Lane and is bounded by trees/hedgerow. There is residential accommodation located approximately 6 metres from the northern boundary (Bowe Cottage and The Willows) and residential dwellings also located approximately 54 metres to the south of the site (Airey Houses).

The site is located within a Mineral Safeguarding Area and is at risk of groundwater flooding. In addition, the existing access is located within an area at risk of surface water flooding.

Proposed Development for which consent is sought:

The proposed development is for the change of use of an existing repair garage (Use Class B2) to incorporate an MOT test centre (Sui Generis). The garage was previously used by the landscaping company for vehicle repair and maintenance associated with the business. The building includes an inspection pit and ramp and the supporting statement indicates that the previous owner has confirmed its use in this manner.

It should be noted that the red line boundary has since been amended to identify the planning unit for the MOT test centre. This includes an additional building which is used as an office and areas of hardstanding, including the car parking area, adjacent to Hothersall Lane.

Principle of Development:

Key Statement DS1 of the Core Strategy states:

Strategic employment opportunities will be promoted through the development of:

- the Barrow Enterprise Site as a main location for employment;
- the Samlesbury Enterprise Zone

In addition, Key Statement EC1 states:

'Employment development will be directed towards the main settlement of Clitheroe, Whalley and Longridge as the preferred locations to accommodate employment growth together with land at Barrow Enterprise Site, the Lancashire Enterprise Zone at Samlesbury and locations well related to the A59 corridor.'

Policy DMG2 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy is also of relevance and makes provision for development outside of the Borough's defined settlement areas on the basis of the development in question meeting at least one of the following considerations:

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.*

It should be noted that the proposed development is for a change of use to an existing industrial use and would not result in any additional buildings. The proposed development is assessed under Criterion '5' of Policy DMG2. The applicants supporting statement considers that Policy DMG2 is satisfied as the development is small scale (and is simply adding MOT testing to a long established repair use) and would be significantly less intensive than the former industrial landscaping business which previously occupied the site. They also consider that the relatively modest size of the building is a natural constraint to the level of activity which can take place each day and in the regard there is no conflict with the Core Strategy.

It should be noted that the red line boundary does not extend around the wider site which was previously used by the landscaping company and would be restricted to the building itself and areas of land immediately next to the building.

As such, it is considered that the proposed use would comply with Policy DMG2 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy.

Policy DMB1 states that:

“Proposals that are intended to support business growth and the local economy will be supported in principle. development proposals will be determined in accord with the Core Strategy and detailed policies of the LDF as appropriate”.

In addition, Policy DMB2 states:

Planning permission will be granted for employment generating uses in barns and other rural buildings, provided all of the following criteria are met:

- 1. The proposed use will not cause unacceptable disturbance to neighbours in any way.*
- 2. The building has a genuine history of use for agriculture or other rural enterprise.*
- 3. The building is structurally sound and capable of conversion for the proposed use, without the need for major alterations which would adversely affect the character of the building.*
- 4. The impact of the proposal or additional elements likely to be required for the proper operation of the building will not harm the appearance or function of the area in which it is situated.*
- 5. The access to the site is of a safe standard or is capable of being improved to a safe standard without harming the appearance of the area.*
- 6. The design of the conversion should be of a high standard and be in keeping with local tradition, particularly in terms of materials, geometric form and window and door Openings.*
- 7. That any existing nature conservation aspects of the existing structure are properly surveyed and where judged to be significant preserved or, if this is not possible, the any loss adequately mitigated.*

The conversion of buildings should be of a high standard and in keeping with local tradition. The impact of the development, including the creation of servicing, storage areas and car parking facilities (or other additions) should not harm the appearance or function of the area in which it is situated.

With regards to Criterion 1, this shall be assessed later in this report.

Turning to criterion 2, it is clear that the site has a long-established history as a landscaping company and the building is considered to have a history of a rural enterprise use. It should also be noted that the building has undergone external alterations under permitted development to improve the thermal efficiency of the building.

Turning to Criterion 4, the main building would function as its previous use as a maintenance and repair garage for the landscaping company but with the addition of MOT testing at the site. It is not considered that the additional element of MOT testing would harm the appearance or function of the area, given the previous use of the wider site as a landscaping company which would have involved the use of large vehicles coming and going from the site.

An assessment of criterion 5, 6 and 7 shall be made later in this report as this relates to other material planning considerations.

Policy DMG3 requires development to be sustainable and reduce the reliance on travel by private motor vehicle. With regards to the sustainable location of the site, the site is located outside of the settlement boundary of Longridge and is not therefore considered to be sustainably located. The LHA note that whilst the site is not in a sustainable location, the bus services 45 Preston/Blackburn and 5/5A Clitheroe/Chipping run along Preston Road past the site which would provide opportunities for staff and customers to travel sustainably to site. However, the LPA considers that staff and customers would need to walk in the carriageway of Hothersall Lane for circa 84m to join Preston Road and the site's rural location together with the nature of the business being an MOT test centre, means there will be car travel involved. That said, this

is not considered to be significantly greater than the comings and goings associated with the landscaping company and so the conflict with DMG3 would not justify a refusal on this basis.

Design/Layout/Visual Impact:

Paragraph 135 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 also states that all development must:

1. be of a high standard of building design which considers the 8 building in context principles (from the CABE/english heritage building in context toolkit).
2. be sympathetic to existing and proposed land uses in terms of its size, intensity and nature as well as scale, massing, style, features and building materials.
3. consider the density, layout and relationship between buildings, which is of major importance. particular emphasis will be placed on visual appearance and the relationship to surroundings, including impact on landscape character, as well as the effects of development on existing amenities.
4. use sustainable construction techniques where possible and provide evidence that energy efficiency, as described within policy dme5, has been incorporated into schemes where possible.
5. the code for sustainable homes and lifetime homes, or any subsequent nationally recognised equivalent standards, should be incorporated into schemes.

In addition, Policy DMG2 also states that:

“Within the open countryside development will be required to be in keeping with the character of the landscape and acknowledge the special qualities of the area by virtue of its size, design, use of materials, landscaping and siting. Where possible new development should be accommodated through the re-use of existing buildings, which in most cases is more appropriate than new build.”

The proposal does not involve any external changes to the building or the surrounding area and is for the change of use only. The submitted plans confirm that alterations have previously been carried out to the building as permitted development under Part 7 Class H of the GDPO. Policy DMG1 does however require the development to be sympathetic to existing and proposed land uses in terms of its size, intensity and nature.

There may be more comings and goings to the site when compared to the existing use, however given the previous industrial use of the site, it is not considered that the inclusion of an MOT testing centre would result in such a change to the nature of the site that would harm the overall character and appearance of the surrounding area.

Overall, the proposal is considered to accord with Policy DMG1 and DMG2 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy.

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’.

In addition, Paragraph 198 (a) of the National Planning Policy Framework states:

“Planning policies and decisions should also ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development. In doing so they should:

a) mitigate and reduce to a minimum potential adverse impacts resulting from noise from new development – and avoid noise giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and the quality of life”

Policy DMG1 is also of relevance in as much that it provides general guidance with respect to the impact of proposals for development upon existing amenities, with a stipulation that all development must be sympathetic to existing and proposed land uses in terms of its size, intensity and nature.

The closest residential property is located ‘Bowe Cottage’ which is located approximately 13 metres from the red line boundary at its closest point. There have been concerns raised from neighbours regarding potential noise impacts arising from the development. They consider that the noise levels would be greater than the previous use by the landscaping company as most of the works were undertaken off site.

A Noise Assessment has been submitted with the application which concludes that appropriate noise limits can be met by the new unit; however, as with all such assessments they cannot demonstrate that the limits will be met under any and all circumstances; for example, were doors to be left open for prolonged periods or if working to take place outside the building.

It would not be possible to condition that doors are kept shut as this would not be enforceable and would therefore fail to meet the tests.

The Environmental Health Officer still raises concerns that the noise impact would be adverse with the garage doors were to remain open. Nonetheless, the Council acknowledge that the building has been previously used as a repair garage as part of the landscape business which falls within B2 use (light industrial). The findings of the noise report were that based on the measurements, the available data and calculations of the noise impact, a BS4142 assessment indicates that garage operations at the proposed unit would NOT have a "significantly adverse impact", even if the doors to the unit were left open.

The Council consider it would be unreasonable to refuse the scheme on noise grounds for a car MOT test centre when compared to the use as a B2 light industrial unit, where the site could still be used for industrial purposes which have the potential to generate a similar level of noise pollution to the existing B2 use.

The agent for the application has confirmed that the business currently has 10 employees with working hours 7am – 6pm Monday to Saturday. These hours do not seem unreasonable for the nature of the business and could be secured by way of planning condition.

On balance, giving weight to the fall-back position of a B2 use, the development is considered to be acceptable on noise grounds, in accordance with Policy DMG1 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy.

Highways and Parking:

Ribble Valley Core Strategy Policy DMG3 states that:

‘All development proposals will be required to provide adequate car parking and servicing space in line with currently approved standards’.

In addition, Policy DMG1 states that all development must:

‘1. consider the potential traffic and car parking implications.

2. ensure safe access can be provided which is suitable to accommodate the scale and type of traffic likely to be generated’.

The site would utilise the existing vehicular access. The LHA notes that the parking standards for a vehicle repair centre is 1 space per 50sqm which equates to 4 spaces. They consider there to be sufficient space within the red edge for car parking to be provided and note that all vehicles must enter and leave Hothersall Lane in forward gear.

Having regard to the above, it is considered that the proposal complies with Policy DMG1 and DMG3 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy.

Landscape/Ecology:

The objection raised by the neighbour notes that a number of trees/hedgerow have been removed from the wider site which the Council were made aware of at the time but they did not require the Council’s consent. The development is considered to be exempt from the Mandatory Biodiversity Net-Gain requirement as it would impact less than 25sqm of on-site habitat (even taking account of the aforementioned habitat degradation) and is for a change of use only.

Other matters:

Concerns have also been raised by the occupiers of neighbouring properties regarding drainage at the site and concerns that there is no foul water sewage system in place. It should be noted that this application is for a change of use only and therefore would not be expected to provide additional drainage beyond the existing arrangements.

Observations/Consideration of Matters Raised/Conclusion:

The proposed change of use on balance is considered to be acceptable and would not likely result in any greater impacts by way of amenity concerns or parking/highways issues than the existing B2 (light industrial) use.

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.
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