

9th May 2025

The Planning Department
Ribble Valley Borough Council
Council Offices
Church Walk
Clitheroe



Our ref: LJG338
Your ref: -

By email only

Dear Sir/Madam,

**PROPOSED CHANGE OF USE TO INCLUDE MOT TESTING
LANE ENDS FARM, HOTHERSALL LANE, PRESTON**

I am pleased to submit this planning application on behalf of my client, Browns of Grimsargh Ltd, for the change of use of an existing repair garage (Use Class B2) to incorporate MOT testing, which is considered to be a sui generis activity, at Lane Ends Farm, Hothersall Lane, Preston.

The application has been made via the Planning Portal (PP – 14005748) and is supported by a suite of drawings prepared by ALH Design Services and a Noise Assessment prepared by Martec Environmental Consultants.

Site description

The site in question comprises brownfield land in the open countryside, measuring circa 0.06 hectares in size, bound by Hothersall Lane and Ribchester Road.

Despite its rural environs, it lies only a short distance from Longridge and benefits from good transport links owing to the direct access available to the surrounding road network. Bus stops are located on Ribchester Road (the B6245), adjacent to the site boundary, which offer regular mainline services to Preston, Blackburn, Clitheroe and destinations between those larger urban centres.

Vehicular access is taken from Hothersall Lane and this is a long established entrance.

Until earlier this year it was occupied by a commercial landscaping business and used for the storage of equipment, materials and vehicles. Historic aerial photographs indicate that it has been in active use for at least 25 years and the former owner has confirmed that he worked at the site for over 60 years, and it belonged to his immediate family before that.

The building in question was used for the repair and maintenance of vehicles associated with the business, containing and inspection pit and ramp for this purpose. Again, the previous owner confirms that it was used in this manner during his time operating from the site.



Figure 1 – site location

With regard to known constraints, the site is not within or in close proximity to any heritage assets which would be affected by the proposals.

There are no public rights of way within or adjacent the site which would need to be closed or diverted as a result of the scheme as proposed.

The site is wholly within Flood Zone 1 and therefore at limited risk in this regard.

Proposals

Whilst the site clearly benefits from an established, lawful use for B2 purposes (which would include the continued use for vehicle repair), the Council have confirmed that they consider MOT testing to be a sui generis use, requiring planning permission.

Accordingly this submission is made to secure these additional activities and the attached drawings show some external alterations made to the building in order to facilitate the use, including cladding and new roller shutter doors to the east facing elevation, carried out under Part 7, Class H of the GPDO.

In all other regards the position and overall nature of the site remains unchanged.

Policy context

The site is located within the open countryside, a short distance from Longridge as shown in the policy map excerpt below.

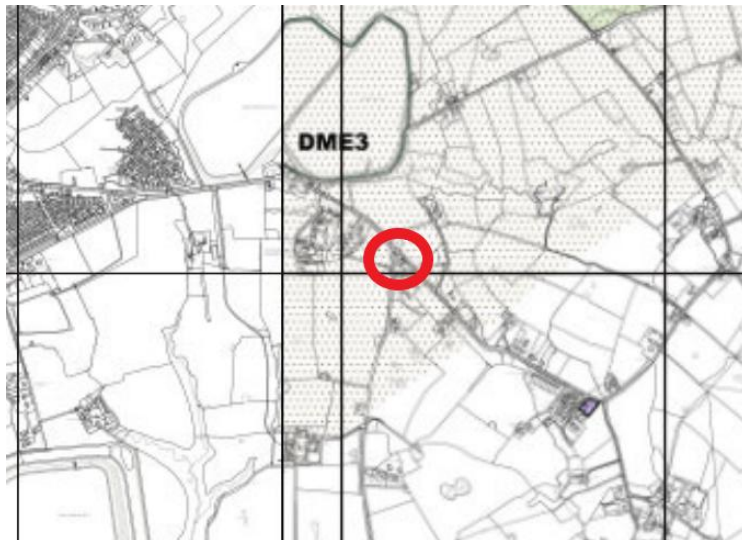


Figure 2 – policies map excerpt

Accounting for this designation, the following policies of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy (2014) would be engaged when considering the principle of development in this location:

- **Key Statement DS1** outlines the Council's development strategy with regard to housing, employment, retail and leisure;
- **Key Statement DS2** confirms that when considering development proposals, the Council will take a positive approach which reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Wherever possible, it will aim to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area;
- **Key Statement DM12** is supportive of development which minimises the need to travel and benefits from access by means other than private car;
- **Key Statement EC1** seeks to locate new employment development towards Clitheroe, Whalley, Longridge and the A59 corridor. Priority will be given to the use of appropriate brownfield sites, ensuring that existing sites are utilised before alternatives are considered;
- **Policy DMG1** sets out various criteria to be considered in assessing planning applications, requiring new development to be sympathetic to existing land uses, highway safety and not adversely affect the amenities of the area;
- **Policy DMG2** states that development outside of settlements will be required to meet one of five listed criteria (which will be considered in the Appraisal section below);
- **Policy DMG3** supports the provision of sustainable and accessible development;
- **Policy DMB1** is permissive of development which supports business and economic growth. On sites outside of defined settlements, schemes will be supported which help to secure and maintain employment and can be assimilated into the local landscape. An additional limb of the policy is also explicit in requiring that the loss of existing sites with employment generating potential must be robustly justified.

- **Policy DMB2** relates to the conversion and reuse of rural buildings for employment uses and contains a range of criteria which are required to be met.

In addition to the above, the contents of the National Planning Policy Framework are a material consideration, having been updated most recently in December 2024.

The Framework is clear that the achievement of sustainable development contains an economic objective with the need to deliver a strong, responsive and competitive economy, delivered through the use of the “right types” of land in the right location (paragraph 8).

Paragraph 39 confirms that local authorities should approach decision making in a manner which secures development that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of an area. Paragraph 85 further states that significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth, including the requirement to be flexible enough to meet needs which might not be anticipated on the development plan.

Paragraphs 88 and 89 confirm that support should be given to strengthening the rural economy by facilitating the sustainable growth and expansions of all types of businesses in rural areas. It is also recognised that such development opportunities may be found beyond existing settlements.

Paragraph 124 emphasises the requirement to make effective use of land, particularly brownfield sites.

Appraisal

Principle of development

The primary consideration in establishing the principle of development is whether the proposals meet the aforementioned allowances within the Core Strategy.

In response to an earlier pre-application enquiry, the Council confirmed that an application of this nature would primarily be considered against the provisions of Policies DMG2 and DMB2.

With regard to Policy DMG2 it was advised that development of this nature would be assessed under subsection 5, which states that development outside of defined settlements will be considered favourably if it is for:

- “...small scale uses appropriate to a rural area where local need or benefit can be demonstrated”

This is satisfied as the development is considered to be clearly 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.

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.

Policy DMB2 contains 7 criteria which must be satisfied when considering the re-use of existing rural buildings for employment uses. These are outlined below, with commentary below each.

The proposed use would not cause unacceptable disturbance to neighbours;

The application is supported by a Noise Assessment, with monitoring and readings having been taken in April of this year.

It confirms that activity from the unit results in noise below preexisting ambient levels at the nearest gardens to the site, accordingly it would not have an unacceptable impact on amenity, even if the shutter doors were to be left open.

The introduction of MOT testing to the lawful use, in practical terms, does not result in a significant change in the nature of the activities which would take place as part of typical repairs. Therefore, this criterion is satisfied.

The building has a genuine history as a rural enterprise;

The building was used in association with the former industrial landscaping business for decades. Further information on this matter can be provided if required.

The building is capable of conversion without the need for major alteration;

The existing building, due to its age, was in a poor state of repair. As such the applicant has re-clad the exterior and inserted new roller shutter doors to the side elevation to improve access, using permitted rights available. None of these changes amount to major alterations and are a clear improvement on what was in situ.

The impact of the proposal would not harm the appearance or function of the area;

The external alterations to the building have resulted in a clear enhancement to the site. The building is modest in scale and does not hold a prominent position within the local landscape, as such there is no harm in this regard.

In terms of function, the site has been occupied by an employment generating use for a significant period and the introduction of these new occupants do not significantly alter that and would result in reduced activity overall.

The site access is of a safe standard;

The site benefits from a long established access from Hothersall Lane and no changes are proposed in this regard. This access has served HGV traffic and the delivery/dispatch of heavy duty horticultural equipment over numerous years and the proposed use is significantly less intensive than this.

The design of any conversion should be of a high standard and in keeping;

The appearance of building has been and modernised, which it was much in need of, but remains appropriate in terms of the setting and historic nature of the site.

That any nature conservation aspects are duly considered and mitigated where needed

This change of use raises no concerns in this regard.

Other matters

The proposals result in no other issues which would prevent permission from being granted.

Summary

The proposals set out in this application would result in the sustainable re-use of an existing commercial building. Permission is only required as MOT testing is considered to be a sui generis use, beyond that of the long established B2 repair activities.

It has been demonstrated that there would be no undue noise impacts associated with this additional element and that there is no other conflict with the Core Strategy.

Approving this application will help to secure a number of jobs, which have been relocated into the borough from Preston and in this regard there are clear economic benefits to the continued use of this brownfield site. The application therefore accords with the National Planning Policy Framework and the need to support sustainable economic growth.

If you require any further information to assist with your deliberations please feel free to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Lee Greenwood

LJG Planning Consultancy

