


**Report to be read in conjunction with the Decision Notice.**

<b>Signed:</b>	<b>Officer:</b>	<b>MC</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>14/04/2026</b>	<b>Manager:</b>	<b>LH</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>21/4/26</b>
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<b>Application Ref:</b>	3/2025/0612			 <p>Ribble Valley Borough Council <a href="http://www.ribblevalley.gov.uk">www.ribblevalley.gov.uk</a></p>
<b>Date Inspected:</b>	07/01/2026	<b>Site Notice:</b>	07/01/2026	
<b>Officer:</b>	MC			
<b>DELEGATED ITEM FILE REPORT:</b>				<b>APPROVAL</b>

<b>Development Description:</b>	Proposed change of use from vacant cinema (sui generis) to children's role play centre (use class E(d)) with ancillary cafe (use class E (b)). External alterations to the building to include alterations to fenestration and insertion of new first floor window.
<b>Site Address/Location:</b>	The Palace Market Place Longridge PR3 3RR

<b>CONSULTATIONS:</b>	<b>Parish/Town Council</b>
No response received.	

<b>CONSULTATIONS:</b>	<b>Highways/Water Authority/Other Bodies</b>
<b>LCC Highways:</b>	No objection subject to conditions relating to the submission of a Construction Management Plan
<b>RVBC Environmental Health Officer:</b>	Concerns in relation to noise from the removal of partition walls have been overcome.  No odour assessment required due to types of operations within the kitchen.
<b>Theatres Trust:</b>	The Theatres Trust requested additional information in relation to demonstrate that the building had been marketed as a cinema/similar use. The Theatres Trust raise concerns that once within Class E use, the use of the building could be changed to any use within Class E. The creative, community and social benefits of the proposed use are noted but there remains no objective appraisal and evidence of marketing efforts and need. They consider it is for the council to determine whether such evidence is required or whether a departure can be justified through the proposed use bringing sufficient "defined and demonstrable benefits" as set out within Core Strategy Key Statement EC2 to classify this as an 'exception' enabling change of use.  The Theatres Trust suggest the use of a condition (if permission were to be granted) to prevent an alternative use within Class E which would preserve the building as a community use.

<b>CONSULTATIONS:</b>	<b>Additional Representations.</b>
Three representations have been received raising the following comments:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Support for the scheme as it would enhance community facilities in the town</li> <li>- Concerns regarding parking and access for emergency services at Brewery Street</li> <li>- Querying why cycle storage is needed</li> </ul>	

- A Travel Plan may help to alleviate concerns

## **RELEVANT POLICIES AND SITE PLANNING HISTORY:**

### **Ribble Valley Core Strategy:**

Key Statement DS1: Development Strategy

Key Statement DS2: Sustainable Development

Key statement DMI2: Transport Considerations

Key Statement EC1: Business and Employment Development

Key Statement EC2: Development of Retail, Shops and Community Facilities and Services

Key Statement EC3: Visitor Economy

Key Statement EN5: Heritage Assets

Policy DMG1: General Considerations

Policy DMG2: Strategic Considerations

Policy DMG3: Transport & Mobility

Policy DME2: Landscape and Townscape Protection

Policy DME4: Protecting Heritage Assets

Policy DMB1: Supporting Business Growth and The Local Economy

Policy DMB3: Recreation and Tourism Development

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

### **Adopted Longridge Neighbourhood Development Plan:**

Policy LNPD3: Longridge Design Principles

Policy LNPD10: Protecting Existing Community Facilities

Policy LNPD11: Development of New and Improvement of Existing Community Facilities

### **Relevant Planning History:**

#### **3/2019/0416**

Installation of ground-mounted satellite dish to rear.

Approved with Conditions

#### **3/1992/0002**

REAR EXTENSION TO FORM INCREASED BOWLING CENTRE AREA, BAR AND FIRE ESCAP

Approved No Conditions

#### **3/1991/0145**

CONVERSION OF EXISTING CINEMA TO TWIN CINEMA, BAR AREA, REFURBISHMENT OF BAR AREA, PROVISION OF OFFICE AND STORAGE AREAS

Approved No Conditions

#### **3/1989/0618**

CONVERSION OF EXISTING CINEMA TO GROUND/LOWER GROUND - RETAIL, RESTAURANT AND ANCILLARY FIRST FLOOR - TWO SCREEN CINEMA, LOUNGE BAR AND ANCILLARY

Approved with Conditions

## **ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT:**

### **Site Description and Surrounding Area:**

The site comprises The Palace Cinema which fronts Market Place in the main settlement of Longridge. The building is two storeys in height and internally comprises a large hall with stage and other ancillary rooms. The surrounding area is a mix of residential and commercial properties but the property adjoins numbers 28 and 26 Market Place to the south and north, with no. 5 Brewery Street and Apple Tree Cottage being adjacent to the rear parts of the site.

The site is located within the Longridge Conservation Area and is identified as a building of townscape merit. As such, it is considered that the building is a non-designated heritage asset.

The site is also located within the adopted Longridge Neighbourhood Plan Area.

**Proposed Development for which consent is sought:**

The cinema has been vacant since 2020 and the proposed development is for the change of use of the building from a cinema to a role play centre for children up to seven years. The main play centre area would occupy the former auditorium of the cinema. A seating area for adults accompanying the children with tables and chairs at the side of the play area is also proposed. The main entrance into the building is retained in its current position to create a reception area with seating. A kitchen is also retained to provide a café area and towards the rear of the building is a separate room to be used as a soft play area for children aged 0-2 years. On the first floor, the existing projection room is to be removed, and the balcony reinstated to provide a seating area where it would be possible to observe the children play in the main area below. The existing first floor window is to be enlarged to its original size. Another first-floor room would be bookable for separate hire for children's parties. Some internal alterations are proposed to facilitate the change of use, such as the removal of existing partitions.

Externally, some of the existing front entrance doors from the main street are to be replaced with timber glazed doors to allow more light to enter the building. In addition, the existing first floor window is to be enlarged to its original size with fenestration to match the existing. To the rear elevation, a new first floor window would be inserted, as well as a kitchen extractor.

The plans have also been amended prior to determination of the application to include a covered cycle store to allow for 4 no. cycle storage/parking spaces.

**Principle of Development:**

The proposal would involve the change of use from a cinema to a children's role play centre. As such, an assessment as to whether the proposal would result in the loss of a community asset for Longridge and the impact that the change of use may have.

Key Statement EC1 states that:

*"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."*

In addition, Key Statement EC2 states that:

*"Development that supports and enhances the vibrancy, consumer choice and vitality and unique character of the area's important retail and service centres of Clitheroe, Longridge and Whalley will be supported in principle. Proposals that have an adverse impact on existing community facilities would only be permitted as an exception where the proposed development would bring defined and demonstrable benefits."*

Also of relevant is Policy LNDP10 of the adopted Longridge Neighbourhood Plan which identifies the site as a community facility. The policy states that the facilities listed in this policy are *“considered fundamental to developing and maintaining Longridge as an attractive place for residents and visitors alike. They will be protected for community use”*.

Key Statement EC3 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy relates to visitor economy and states that:

*“Proposals that contribute to and strengthen the visitor economy of Ribble Valley will be encouraged, including the creation of new accommodation and tourism facilities through the conversion of existing buildings or associated with existing attractions. Significant new attractions will be supported, in circumstances where they would deliver overall improvements to the environment and benefits to local communities and employment opportunities”*

Policy DMB3 also states:

*“Planning permission will be granted for development proposals that extend the range of tourism and visitor facilities in the borough. this is subject to the following criteria being met:*

- 1. the proposal must not conflict with other policies of this plan;*
- 2. the proposal must be physically well related to an existing main settlement or village or to an existing group of buildings, except where the proposed facilities are required in conjunction with a particular countryside attraction and there are no suitable existing buildings or developed sites available;*
- 3. the development should not undermine the character, quality or visual amenities of the plan area by virtue of its scale, siting, materials or design;*
- 4. the proposals should be well related to the existing highway network. it should not generate additional traffic movements of a scale and type likely to cause undue problems or disturbance. where possible the proposals should be well related to the public transport network;*
- 5. the site should be large enough to accommodate the necessary car parking, service areas and appropriate landscaped areas; and*
- 6. the proposal must take into account any nature conservation impacts using suitable survey information and where possible seek to incorporate any important existing associations within the development. failing this then adequate mitigation will be sought.”*

Whilst the site is noted within the neighbourhood plan as a ‘community facility’ it is not designated as an ‘Asset of Community Value’ under the Localism Act 2011. The proposal would introduce a new recreational use within the main settlement of Longridge. The use would also introduce a leisure/recreational use which is considered an appropriate use within the main town centre of Longridge. As such, the proposal is considered to be compliant with the spatial strategy for development within the Borough, in particular Key Statement EC1, EC2 and Policy DMB3 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy.

In addition, it is important to ensure that the change of use would not result in the loss of a community facility. It is considered that the use as a children’s role play centre would constitute a community use as it would bring benefits to the local community, providing facilities for indoor recreational activities. As such, whilst the proposal would result in the loss of a music/film entertainment venue, it is not considered that there would be a loss of a community facility as a result of the proposed development as it is anticipated that the role play and soft play areas would host community sessions for parent and toddler groups as well as provide sessions or nursery schools to hire and for children with sensory difficulties.

In addition, some weight can be given to the contribution to the vitality of the town centre as the proposal would utilise an existing vacant building, providing five full time jobs and one part time job.

The Theatres Trust have been consulted on the application and raised an objection due to the loss of cinema/cultural use with no marketing evidence to demonstrate that the prospect of such use could be retained. Additional information in relation to demonstrate that the building had been marketed as a cinema/similar use was submitted. The Theatres Trust have been re-consulted on the scheme and raise concerns that once within Class E use, the use of the building could be changed to any use within Class E. The

creative, community and social benefits of the proposed use are noted but there remains no objective appraisal and evidence of marketing efforts and need. They consider it is for the council to determine whether such evidence is required or whether a departure can be justified through the proposed use bringing sufficient “defined and demonstrable benefits” as set out within Core Strategy Key Statement EC2 to classify this as an ‘exception’ enabling change of use.

The Theatres Trust suggest the use of a condition (if permission were to be granted) to prevent the change to an alternative use within Class E which would preserve the building as a cultural/community use.

It is considered that the use of a planning condition to restrict movement between Class E would retain the building as an appropriate community use as its originally intended purpose. As previously noted, there are benefits to the scheme, such as bringing a redundant building back into use and as such, it is considered that the principle of development is acceptable and the change of use from a cinema (sui generis) to a children’s role play/soft play centre (Class E (d)) would not be in direct conflict with any of the above policies outlined above.

With regards to the sustainable location of the site, Key Statement DMI2 of the Core Strategy states that *‘new development should be located to minimise the need to travel and incorporate good access by foot and cycle.’*

In addition, Policy DMG3 of the Core Strategy states:

*‘In making decisions on development proposals the local planning authority will, attach considerable weight to the provision made for access to the development by pedestrian, cyclists and those with reduced mobility [and] proposals which locate development in areas which maintain and improve choice for people to walk, cycle or catch public transport rather than drive between homes and facilities which they need to visit regularly’.*

The site is located in a sustainable location, in the centre of Longridge with access to frequent bus services for customers to access the site by public transport. In addition, cycle storage would also be provided to the rear of the property to encourage sustainable travel.

As such, the proposal is considered to accord with Key Statement DMI2 and Policy DMG3 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy.

#### **Impact Upon Residential Amenity:**

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

*‘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<sup>51</sup>; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience’.*

Furthermore, Policy DMG1 of the Core Strategy requires all proposals for development to consider the effects of development upon existing amenities stating that development must not adversely affect the amenities of the surrounding area.

Policy LNDP3 of the Longridge Neighbourhood Plan states that proposals should:

*‘Have no significant adverse impact on residential amenity for existing and future residents’*

The Environmental Health Officer has been consulted on the scheme. They note that the applicant is proposing to remove some of the stud walls to the soft play area but they are satisfied that as this area would not

physically adjoin any properties and as such, this is satisfactory and details of sound insulation would not be required.

The applicant has confirmed that a new kitchen extractor would be fitted. No concerns have been raised by the Environmental Health Officer with regards to the extractor. They do not consider an odour assessment necessary due to the kitchen operations mostly consisting of heating foods without large extraction.

The enlargement of the first-floor front window is not considered to result in any greater overlooking to the occupiers of neighbouring properties than existing window and the separation distances between windows would be similar to the existing distances along Market Place between first floor windows. As such, whilst there may be some overlooking to the occupiers of no. 25 and 27 market place, this is not significant enough to result in any adverse loss of privacy due to the existing levels of overlooking.

In addition, the insertion of a new first floor rear window is not considered directly overlook any residential receptors to the extent that any overlooking would be adverse.

As such, the proposal is considered to accord with Policies DMG1 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy and Policy LNDP3 of the Longridge Neighbourhood Plan.

#### **Visual Amenity/External Appearance and Heritage:**

Policy DMG1 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy states that:

In determining planning applications, 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 DMG5, has been incorporated into schemes where possible.*

In addition, Policy LNDP3 of the adopted Longridge Neighbourhood Plan states that:

*“All new development proposals will only be supported when they are of good design that responds positively to the local character and distinctiveness of the surroundings.”*

In addition, Policy LNDP11 states that:

*“Development of new or improvements to existing community facilities will be supported when they conserve local character and distinctiveness, and do not harm the landscape or residential amenity of existing and future occupiers.”*

With regards to heritage, the Longridge Conservation Area Character Appraisal comments as follows:

*“The Palace Cinema, between nos. 26 and 28 Market Place, is two storeys high with a wide gable facing the street, decorated with Moorish-inspired symbols, probably of the 1920s.”*

In addition, Key Statement EN5 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy states that:

*There will be a presumption in favour of the conservation and enhancement of the significance of heritage assets and their settings.*

Policy DME4 also states that:

*“Proposals within, or affecting views into and out of, or affecting the setting of a conservation area will be required to conserve and where appropriate enhance its character and appearance and those elements which contribute towards its significance. This should include considerations as to whether it conserves and enhances the special architectural and historic character of the area as set out in the relevant conservation area appraisal. Development which makes a positive contribution and conserves and enhances the character, appearance and significance of the area in terms of its location, scale, size, design and materials and existing buildings, structures, trees and open spaces will be supported.*

*In the conservation areas there will be a presumption in favour of the conservation and enhancement of elements that make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area.”*

and;

*“Alterations or extensions to listed buildings or buildings of local heritage interest, or development proposals on sites within their setting which cause harm to the significance of the heritage asset will not be supported.”*

Paragraph 216 of the NPPF also states that:

*“The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.”*

Paragraph 7.2 of the submitted heritage statement states that the interest is largely confined to the Market Place frontage, where early 20th century alterations led to the current appearance, and the interest here is slightly diminished by the partial blocking of the first floor opening in the auditorium block. The other parts of the exterior are of little or no interest architecturally, though they contribute in a nominal way to its historic interest, while internally it is only the auditorium, stage and balcony which survive as legible spaces relating to its use as a theatre or cinema.

The proposed replacement of the doors into the existing auditorium with fixed glazing and a pair of glazed doors would reflect the existing six panel model. In addition, the first-floor windows would also reflect the multi-pane glazing pattern of the existing ground floor and first floor windows. As such, subject to conditions for specific details to be provided, this is acceptable.

It is considered that the impact of the proposed changes of the Longridge Conservation Area are positive by reinstating the window opening on the first floor on the front elevation to its original size and the introduction of new windows and doors would reflect the design features of the existing building. As such, it is considered that subject to a condition, requiring a sample of materials and window/door sections, the proposed development would enhance the special architectural and historic character of the area and would not result in the loss of the significance of the non-designated heritage asset as modern windows/doors would be removed with minimal historic fabric removed.

The proposal is therefore considered compliant with Key Statement EN5, Policies DMG1 and DME4 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy, Policies LNDP3 and LNDP11 of the adopted Longridge Neighbourhood Plan and Paragraph 216 of the NPPF.

**Highways and Parking:**

Paragraph 116 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that *'Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network, following mitigation, would be severe, taking into account all reasonable future scenarios'*.

With regards to parking, Policy DMG3 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy states that:

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

Policy DMG1 also states that 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.

Some concerns have been raised by the occupiers of neighbouring properties with regards to the lack of parking at the site and the potential for there to be increases in traffic and worsened on-street parking.

The Local Highway Authority (LHA) have been consulted on the application. They note that the site would retain the existing pedestrian access point onto Market Place which is how customers will access the site and they consider that the hardstanding to the rear of the site could be utilised as a service area and allows access to refuse collection.

With regards to parking provision, the LHA have reviewed the proposed floor plans and the floor area detailed within the application form and are aware that the internal gross floor area is 474.4 square meters. It is also acknowledged that whilst there are café facilities on site, these are ancillary to the play centre use and would only be accessible to those already using the play centre. The LHA would usually require the site, when considering the use type, to provide parking at a ratio of 1 space per 25 square metres and applying the Joint Lancashire Structure Plan parking standard, this yields a requirement of 19 parking spaces.

It is noted that the site has no dedicated off-street parking provisions, although there is access to a hard-standing area at the rear of the site, which could support servicing of the building off the highway. The LHA are aware that the development is located in the centre of Longridge, where key local amenities can be found within walking distance and there is access to sustainable transport modes such as local bus services which are located a short walking distance from the site. In addition, they note that a public car park, Barclay Road Car Park, is within 400m of the site and there is also a comprehensive package of Transport Regulation Orders along the nearby roads which should prevent inappropriate parking. The cinema would have previously had a lack of parking and taking into account the above considerations, this would not warrant refusal of the application.

The site would also benefit from the introduction of covered secure cycle storage within the development to ensure the provision and availability of adequate cycle parking and the promotion of sustainable forms of transport, which can be utilised by employees. One of the neighbours has queried the requirement for cycle storage. However, this is considered beneficial to encourage sustainable travel for employees and parents with children.

The LHA has reviewed the submitted documentation titled Business Plan Little Worlds Child Development & Role Play Centre and are of the opinion that the proposal will not intensify the use of the site.

As such, conditions are recommended which include the submission of a Construction Management Plan/Method Statement and the provision of cycle storage, the latter of which have already been provided prior to the determination of the application.

Taking the above into consideration, it is not considered that the proposal would impact on highway safety in accordance with Policy DMG1 and DMG3 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy.

**Landscape/Ecology:**

The proposal is considered to fall within the exemption for mandatory Biodiversity Net-Gain and would impact under 25sqm of on-site habitat. As such, the proposal falls within the Di Minimis exemption.

**Observations/Consideration of Matters Raised/Conclusion:**

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

<b>RECOMMENDATION:</b>	That planning consent be granted subject to conditions.
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