


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

<b>Signed:</b>	<b>Officer:</b>	<b>SK</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>1.10.25</b>	<b>Manager:</b>	<b>LH</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>1.10.25</b>
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<b>Application Ref:</b>	2025/0653			 Ribble Valley Borough Council <small>www.ribblevalley.gov.uk</small>
<b>Date Inspected:</b>	27/8/25	<b>Site Notice:</b>	27/8/25	
<b>Officer:</b>	SK			
<b>DELEGATED ITEM FILE REPORT:</b>				<b>REFUSAL</b>

<b>Development Description:</b>	Variation of condition 2 (Plans) on permission 3/2023/0706 for the proposed erection of 34 Class E(g) units and one battery storage and maintenance unit with associated parking and access. Resubmission of application 3/2022/0553.
<b>Site Address/Location:</b>	Higher College Farm Lower Road Longridge PR3 2YY

<b>CONSULTATIONS:</b>	<b>Parish/Town Council</b>
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Hothersall Parish Council have objected to the proposal stating the following:

*Hothersall Parish Council wish to object to the Section 73 application for the variation of Condition 2 relating to the elevations and roof design of this development. In particular we wish to raise the following points and objections:*

1. *Hothersall Parish Council previously objected to the visual impact and massing of the approved development with the two blocks fronting onto Blackburn Road. We didn't believe that the test had been met by the approved proposal for a higher standard of development on open and undeveloped land in a rural area in the transition zone from the settlement of Longridge into Hothersall. This application to vary one of the key conditions set by the planning committee in its approval of the design in March 2025 demonstrates a further lack of concern for good design and a disregard of the planning committee insistence that the planning conditions are firmly upheld.*
2. *In paragraph 4.2 of the Planning Statement, the applicant refers to the planning committee refusing the previous application in November 2024 due to its uniformity and utilitarian form. This current application requesting a variance to the elevations and roof design, firmly returns the design to the original uniform and utilitarian form on which the previous application was refused by members.*
3. *Paragraphs 7.22 and 7.23 of the Planning Statement refer to Paragraphs 131 and 135 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024), which state that "good design is a key aspect of sustainable development" and "add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development". It is the view of Hothersall Parish Council that the proposed simplification of the design elevations and roof design from the March 2025 approval, does not satisfy either of these requirements.*
4. *Paragraph 8.3 of the Planning Statement acknowledges that the recessed elements in the approved scheme contribute to softening the appearance in its semi-rural setting, but goes on to say that the revised elevations achieve a "comparable outcome". This is incomprehensible as the elevations and roof structures are completely different and have been simplified.*
5. *Paragraphs 8.9 to 8.13 of the Planning Statement refer to the viability of the scheme. The Parish Council find it hard to believe that a local businessman and entrepreneur did not cost the design which was submitted for and achieved planning approval in March 2025, which is what these paragraphs are inferring. Indeed, Mr Myers presented to the committee in March 2025 and according to my notes, he referred to submitting a revised and viable scheme for approval. Making representation now that the original approved design was not viable and now needs to be redesigned as a result is unbelievable and appears to the Parish Council to be disingenuous.*

6. Paragraph 8.10 of the Planning Statement uses a projected sale figure of £175/sq ft for the viability calculation. The Parish Council have obtained details of a comparable valuation of a similar new build development and planning use, in Blackburn, which is currently on the market for £210/sq ft. This would mean that the currently approved planning design would provide a return on investment of 15.83% (or 37.85% if the revised submission is accepted, which is over 80% more than the RICS guidance quoted!). The comparable site does not incorporate solar panels and therefore reduced running costs, which would attract a further premium to the sale price of this development, so the rate of £175/sq ft is seriously questioned by the Parish Council based on the evidence that we have obtained.
7. Paragraph 8.16 of the Planning Statement refers to the scheme being difficult to deliver due to rising construction costs. The RICS Building Cost Information Service (BCIS) produces information which demonstrates that construction tender prices have only risen 1.35% in the 6 months since the scheme was approved by RVBC Planning Department. Furthermore, these tender prices are only predicted to increase by 2.60% in the next 12 months, since the market has been particularly stable recently. Hothersall Parish Council therefore challenge this statement being made by the applicant that rising costs are affecting the financial viability.
8. In supporting the previous approval, members of the Planning Committee urged officers to be robust in the management of the conditions on which the development was being approved. Hothersall Parish Council further urge officers to uphold this requirement and we trust that we have provided sufficient evidence above to refuse this application to revise the conditions and refuse this amendment application.

<b>CONSULTATIONS:</b>	<b>Highways/Water Authority/Other Bodies</b>
<b>N/A:</b>	
N/A	
<b>CONSULTATIONS:</b>	<b>Additional Representations.</b>
Five letters of representation have been received objecting to the proposal on the following grounds:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impacts upon wildlife</li> <li>• Increase in traffic</li> <li>• Noise and disruption from construction</li> <li>• Safety issues</li> </ul>	

**RELEVANT POLICIES AND SITE PLANNING HISTORY:**

**Ribble Valley Core Strategy:**

Ribble Valley Core Strategy

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

Policy DMG1: General Considerations  
 Policy DMG2: Strategic Considerations  
 Policy DMG3: Transport & Mobility  
 Policy DME1: Protecting Trees & Woodland  
 Policy DME2: Landscape & Townscape Protection

Policy DME3: Site and Species Conservation  
Policy DMB1: Supporting Business Growth and the Local Economy  
Policy DMB5: Footpaths and Bridleways

Ribble Valley Housing and Economic Development DPD:  
Policy EAL: Employment Allocation  
Policy EAL3: Land at Higher College Farm, Longridge  
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

#### **Relevant Planning History:**

##### **2025/0614:**

Proposed change of use of the existing dwellinghouse (C3) to a small children's residential home (C2). (Approved)

##### **2023/0706:**

Proposed erection of 34 Class E(g) units and one battery storage and maintenance unit with associated parking and access. Resubmission of application 3/2022/0553. (Approved)

##### **2022/0553:**

Proposed erection of commercial units (Use Class E(g)) including conversion and extension of existing farmhouse for purposes of Use Class E (g). (Approved)

##### **2018/1105:**

Application for Outline planning permission for 21 dwellings and associated works. (Refused)

##### **2017/0602:**

Application for Outline planning permission for industrial units (use classes B1, B2, B8) and associated access, parking, landscaping and services infrastructure with all matters reserved except access. Change of use of farmhouse to office (B1). (Approved)

#### **ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT:**

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

The application relates to an area of land associated with 'Higher College Farm'. The site is located at the eastern extents of Longridge, being located to the south of and outside of the defined settlement limits of Longridge. The site is approximately 1.53 Hectares in area including the former farmhouse associated with Higher College Farm. The site is also located outside (to the east of) but directly adjacent the Longridge Neighbourhood Development Plan Area.

The site is bounded to the north by Blackburn Road and established hedgerow with the eastern extents of the site being bounded by existing hedgerow and an existing road providing access to a food processing business to the south of the site beyond the existing farmhouse. The western extents of the site is delineated by existing hedgerow and an existing access road that provides access to the existing farmhouse and associated agricultural buildings.

With the exception of the existing dwelling, the site is greenfield in nature presently used for agricultural purposes. The adjacent site to the east previously benefitted from outline consent for 'employment floorspace (use classes B1, B2 and B8) and associated access, car parking, landscaping and services infrastructure with all matters reserved except for access' (3/2017/0317) – this consent has since expired and as such no longer remains extant.

The existing site accommodates a number of trees and areas of well-established hedgerow, being relatively open in aspect. A Public Right of Way (FP23) runs north to south outside of and directly adjacent the eastern extents of the site.

The site to which the application relates currently benefits from an 'EAL' designation, being designated as Site EAL3 within the Housing and Economic Development – Development Plan Document Adopted 15th October 2019 (HED-DPD).

Subsequent to the granting of the original consent to which the current application relates, the dwelling known as 'Higher College Farmhouse' now benefits from an extent consent for the change of use of the existing dwellinghouse (C3) to a small children's residential home (C2) pursuant to planning permission 3/2025/0614.

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

The application seeks to vary condition 2 of planning permission 3/2023/0706 with the nature of the proposed variation being limited to that of elevational changes to the buildings as approved and the lowering of the overall ridge and eaves height of the buildings. In this respect the information submitted in support of the application states the following:

*Planning permission was granted on 14 March 2025 under application reference 3/2023/0706 for the erection of 34 Class E(g) units and one battery storage and maintenance unit, along with associated access and parking. This followed a previous consent (ref: 3/2022/0553) and was supported by a revised design approach brought forward to address Member concerns raised at the November 2024 Planning and Development Committee meeting.*

*At that meeting, Members had been minded to refuse the application on the basis that the proposed development would, by virtue of its uniformity and utilitarian form, result in harm to the character and appearance of the open countryside. In response, the applicant undertook a series of negotiated design revisions with the Local Planning Authority to secure planning permission. These included:*

- *Revised roof form, introducing a dual mono-pitch design with a recessed central spine to create visual articulation across each unit block. This adjustment added complexity to the roof construction but was intended to soften the perception of massing and introduce variation to the silhouette of the buildings.*
- *Enhanced materials palette, including vertical timber cladding and reconstituted stone plinths at ground floor level, combined with full-height recessed panel elements to break up elevations. These changes aimed to reflect a more 'vernacular-inspired' industrial typology in keeping with the site's edge-of-countryside setting.*
- *Façade detailing improvements such as the removal of continuous roller shutters across unit frontages, the introduction of articulated bays, and the suggestion of window insertions to improve activation of building frontages (though some remained non-glazed for operational reasons).*
- *Intensive landscape enhancements, most notably the formation of landscape bunds to the north (fronting Blackburn Road), reinforced with the planting of 67 trees, native shrubs, hedgerow enhancements and species-rich meadow grassland. The intent was to create a multilayered green buffer that would filter views of the built form and help integrate the development into its semi-rural context*

*While the revised scheme was ultimately approved, these changes collectively introduced a significant increase in build cost, material specification, and maintenance liabilities. In practice, the cumulative effect of these enhancements — though arguably beneficial from a landscape perspective — has presented a clear challenge to the financial viability and deliverability of the scheme.*

*These updated plans reflect the following changes to the approved buildings:*

- *Overall reduction in eaves and ridge height*
- *Removal of recess and associated dual mono pitched roof*
- *Return to a dual pitch roof across the building.*
- *Retention of the contrasting mono-pitch roof forming the buildings entrance*
- *Retention of contrasting Vertical Timber Marchall Marchmarlite stone.*

*This is to allow for a more practical and economically deliverable version of the scheme. The proposed changes focus on simplifying the external design of the buildings, including a reduction in eaves and ridge height, removal of recessed elements, and the adoption of a consistent dual-pitch roof profile across the blocks. The mono-pitch roof feature at the building entrances will be retained to help define access points.*

*The revised scheme results in a significant cost saving when compared to the previously approved design. Based on the cost appraisal prepared by Conlon Consulting (June 2025), the construction cost of the original design (Option 1) was estimated at £4,889,107 (excluding VAT). In contrast, the simplified revised design (Option 2) brings the total construction cost down to £4,040,105. This represents a cost saving of £849,002, equating to a reduction of approximately 17.4%.*

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

Given the proposal solely relates to the variation of the approved elevational form and height of the previously approved buildings it is not considered that the proposed variation will result in any direct measurable impacts upon nearby residential amenities.

As such, and taking account of the above matters, the proposal does not raise any significant direct conflicts with Policy DMG1 which seeks to ensure of adequate standards of residential amenity and protect against development(s) that would result in measurable detrimental impact(s) upon nearby existing residential amenities.

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

Given the proposal site is located within land that benefits from an open countryside designation, Policy DMG2 is engaged which 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'.

With Policy DMG1 being engaged in parallel with Policy DMG2 insofar that the Policy sets out general Development Management considerations and provides an overarching series of considerations that the Local Planning Authority will have regard to in ensuring and securing high-quality and appropriate forms of development. In this respect Policy DMG1 states:

#### **Policy DMG1:**

*In determining planning applications, all development must:*

#### *DESIGN*

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.

#### ACCESS

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.
3. Consider the protection and enhancement of public rights of way and access.

#### AMENITY

1. Not adversely affect the amenities of the surrounding area.
2. Provide adequate day lighting and privacy distances.
3. Have regard to public safety and secured by design principles.
4. Consider air quality and mitigate adverse impacts where possible.

#### ENVIRONMENT

1. Consider the environmental implications such as SSSI's, county heritage sites, local nature reserves, biodiversity action plan (bap) habitats and species, special areas of conservation and special protected areas, protected species, green corridors and other sites of nature conservation.
2. With regards to possible effects upon the natural environment, the council propose that the principles of the mitigation hierarchy be followed. this gives sequential preference to the following: 1) enhance the environment 2) avoid the impact 3) minimise the impact 4) restore the damage 5) compensate for the damage 6) offset the damage.
3. All development must protect and enhance heritage assets and their settings.
4. All new development proposals will be required to take into account the risks arising from former coal mining and, where necessary, incorporate suitable mitigation measures to address them.
5. Achieve efficient land use and the reuse and remediation of previously developed sites where possible. previously developed sites should always be used instead of greenfield sites where possible

#### INFRASTRUCTURE

1. Not result in the net loss of important open space, including public and private playing fields without a robust assessment that the sites are surplus to need. in assessing this, regard must be had to the level of provision and standard of public open space in the area, the importance of playing fields and the need to protect school playing fields to meet future needs. regard will also be had to the landscape or townscape of an area and the importance the open space has on this.
2. Have regard to the availability to key infrastructure with capacity. where key infrastructure with capacity is not available it may be necessary to phase development to allow infrastructure enhancements to take place.
3. Consider the potential impact on social infrastructure provision.

#### OTHER

1. Not prejudice future development which would provide significant environmental and amenity improvements.

Given the proposal seeks to vary the elevational detailing, form and height of the buildings previously approved pursuant to planning permission 3/2023/0706, Paragraph 140 of the National Planning Policy Framework is a material consideration with Paragraph 140 stating that:

**Paragraph 140:**

*Local planning authorities should ensure that relevant planning conditions refer to clear and accurate plans and drawings which provide visual clarity about the design of the development, and are clear about the approved use of materials where appropriate. This will provide greater certainty for those implementing the planning permission on how to comply with the permission and a clearer basis for local planning authorities to identify breaches of planning control. Local planning authorities should also seek to ensure that the quality of approved development is not materially diminished between permission and completion, as a result of changes being made to the permitted scheme (for example through changes to approved details such as the materials used)*

**Assessment of Visual Impacts:**

The submitted details seek to vary the originally approved roof-form of the proposed buildings with a slight reduction in height also being proposed. In this respect it is proposed that there will be an overall reduction in eaves and ridge height, the removal of the previously approved recess and associated dual mono pitched roof and a return to a dual pitch roof across each of the buildings.

The previously approved mono-pitch roof-form and central recessed elements were considered to be features that were fundamental to the proposal being supported. With the features allowing the for the overall building mass of each of the buildings to be visually broken down into smaller 'visual components' with the side elevations also possessing an element of visual depth and relief. The dual mono-pitch roof arrangement was also considered to assist in breaking down the overall visual extent of the proposed roof-form, also allowing for greater visual articulation and once again an element of relief and visual interest within the roofscape across the proposal.

In this respect the removal of these elements, whilst it is recognised there will be a slight lowering of the overall ridge and eaves height of the buildings, the overall resultant built-form and overall roofscape across the site will fail to benefit from adequate visual depth or relief, with the buildings adopting an overall stark utilitarian appearance - that would fail to respond positively to the character of visual amenities of the area, being of detriment to the character and visual amenities of the defined open countryside and the immediate area.

Taking account of the above, the proposal is considered to be in direct conflict with Policies DMG1 and DMG2 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy insofar that approval would result in the introduction of buildings, of an overtly utilitarian appearance, that fail to benefit from adequate articulation or visual interest and fail to respond positively to the inherent character of the open countryside setting of the site, being of significant measurable detriment to the character and visual amenities of the area.

With it further being considered that the proposal would also be in direct conflict with Policies DMG1 and DMG2 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy and Paragraph 140 of the National Planning Policy Framework insofar that approval would result in a diminished quality of development, comparative to that of the approved, resulting in a form of development that would fail to respond positively to the character of visual amenities of the area, being of detriment to the character and visual amenities of the defined open countryside and the immediate area.

**Highways and Parking:**

Given the proposal solely relates to the variation of the approved elevational form and height of the previously approved buildings it is not considered that the proposed variation will result in any direct measurable impacts upon the safe operation of the immediate highways network.

As such, taking account that no objection has been raised by the Local Highways Authority, , it is not considered that the proposal will result in any measurable conflict(s) with Key Statement DMI2 or Policy DMG3 which seek to ensure the continued safe operation of the highways network and to ensure adequate pedestrian infrastructure and vehicular parking provision is brought forward to accommodate development.

**Landscape/Ecology:**

Given the proposal solely relates to the variation of the approved elevational form and height of the previously approved buildings it is not considered that the variation will result in any direct impact(s) upon landscape or ecology.

As such and taking account of the above, the proposal does not raise any significant measurable conflict(s) with Policies DME1, DME2 nor DME3 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy which seek to protect against adverse impacts upon habitat, biodiversity, ecology or protected species and species of conservation concern.

**Other Matters:**

It is noted that in support of the application the applicant has submitted a Cost Appraisal which provides a comparative breakdown of costs comparing the construction costs of the previously approved proposal with that of the currently proposed revised building configuration.

The appraisal states that the current configuration would result in a reduction in build costs of approximately £849,002 compared to that of the previously approved scheme, with the supporting planning statement stating that the previously consented proposal would be considered unviable.

Whilst the content of both the appraisal and supporting planning statement are noted, neither of the submitted documents represents a full viability appraisal. Furthermore, it has not been demonstrated that the applicant has explored other options which would be closer to the configuration of the previously approved scheme.

**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 refusal.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

That planning consent be refused for the following reason(s).

- |            |   |
|------------|---|
| <b>01:</b> | The proposal is considered to be in direct conflict with Policies DMG1 and DMG2 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy insofar that approval would result in the introduction of buildings, of an overtly utilitarian appearance, that fail to benefit from adequate articulation or visual interest and fail to respond positively to the inherent character of the open countryside setting of the site, being of significant measurable detriment to the character and visual amenities of the area. |
|------------|---|

**02:**

The proposal is considered to be in direct conflict with Policies DMG1 and DMG2 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy and Paragraph 140 of the National Planning Policy Framework insofar that approval would result in a diminished quality of development, comparative to that of the approved, resulting in a form of development that would fail to respond positively to the character of visual amenities of the area, being of detriment to the character and visual amenities of the defined open countryside and the immediate area.