

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

Signed:	Officer:	KH	Date:	08/01/2026	Manager:	LH	Date:	9/1/26
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<b>Application Ref:</b>	3/2025/0710			 <b>Ribble Valley Borough Council</b> <a href="http://www.ribblevalley.gov.uk">www.ribblevalley.gov.uk</a>
<b>Date Inspected:</b>	10/12/2025	<b>Site Notice:</b>	10/12/2025	
<b>Officer:</b>	KH			
<b>DELEGATED ITEM FILE REPORT:</b>				<b>APPROVAL</b>

<b>Development Description:</b>	Permission in Principle for the residential conversion of an existing building to a single dwelling. No non-residential development is proposed.
<b>Site Address/Location:</b>	Blue Bell Farm Higher Road Longridge PR3 2YX

<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 recommends that the technical matters address parking standards, vehicular and pedestrian access and provision of cycle storage and EV charging points.

<b>CONSULTATIONS:</b>	<b>Additional Representations.</b>
United Utilities – comments provided about a drainage scheme	

**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

Policy DMG1: General Considerations  
 Policy DMG2: Strategic Considerations  
 Policy DMG3: Transport and Mobility  
 Policy DME3: Site and Species Protection and Conservation  
 Policy DMH3: Dwellings in the Open Countryside and AONB  
 Policy DMH4: The Conversion of Barns and Other Buildings to Dwellings  
 Policy DMB1: Supporting Business Growth and The Local Economy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)  
 Longridge Neighbourhood Plan

**Relevant Planning History:**

**2007/0629:** Retrospective application for the demolition of existing buildings and erection of two new buildings for the breeding/rearing of pigs and production/packaging of sausages – Withdrawn.

**2015/0918:** Retention of unauthorised change of use from Agricultural to B1(a) and B1 (b) (office and laboratory) in addition to car storage and private workshop (sui generis) – Approved.

**2018/0330:** Erection of one new dwelling with occupier restricted to those associated with Alchemie Technology; extension to existing laboratory and office (use class B1a and B1b) – Withdrawn.

**2019/0471:** Proposed single storey extension and conversion of laboratory and office to a live work unit - Approved.

**2022/0927:** Proposed change of use from Class B1(a) and Class B1(b) and use of the building for storage of private cars and workshops to Class E – Refused.

## **ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT:**

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

The site is situated on the northern side of Higher Road outside of any settlement within an area designated as National Landscape (formerly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty).

The site consists of former agricultural buildings and is relatively isolated, with a few dwellinghouses opposite, otherwise surrounded by agricultural fields.

The site consists of an access drive, parking area and hardstanding which surrounds the existing buildings which have been used for office and laboratory use (B1(b), car storage and private workshop (SG) and are currently vacant.

The site is bounded by fencing to the north and east, vehicular access to the south and an existing wall to the west within a larger agricultural field.

This rural location is sited some 2km away from the Tier 1 Settlement of Longridge. The previous permission was approved subject to conditions restricting the use and occupancy.

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

The application seeks 'Permission in Principle' (PiP) consent for conversion of an existing commercial building to a single detached residential dwelling.

### **Principle of Development:**

Permission in Principle applications may only deal with the principle of development. Any other details relating to any other material planning consideration are to be dealt with within any future Technical Details application.

In this instance, the proposed development comprises of conversion of a commercial building to residential use which would result in the loss of a site with employment generating potential.

Policy DMB1 of the Core Strategy states:

*'Proposals for the development, redevelopment or conversion of sites with employment generating potential in the plan area for alternative uses will be assessed with regard to the following criteria:*

*1. The provisions of policy DMG1, and*

2. The compatibility of the proposal with other plan policies of the LDF, and
3. The environmental benefits to be gained by the community, and
4. The economic and social impact caused by loss of employment opportunities to the borough, and
5. Any attempts that have been made to secure an alternative employment generating use for the site (must be supported by evidence (such as property agents details including periods of marketing and response) that the property/ business has been marketed for business use for a minimum period of six months or information that demonstrates to the council's satisfaction that the current use is not viable for employment purposes.)

Having regard to criteria point 1 of Policy DMB1, the proposed development raises no issues with design (to be fully considered and assessed at the technical details stage), access, amenity or impacts upon existing infrastructure. Policy DMG1 requires developments to consider the environmental implications of any works proposed, including impacts upon protected species. In this instance, the proposed development would involve works to the existing building in order to convert the structure to residential use which could result in disturbances and harm to protected species, this would be assessed at the technical details stage when ecology is a consideration.

Turning to criteria point 2 of Policy DMB1, Key Statements EC1 and Policy DMH3 and DMH4 are of relevance with respect to the development proposed.

Having regard to the provisions of Key Statement EC1, the policy states:

*Proposals that result in the loss of existing employment sites to other forms of development will need to demonstrate that there will be no adverse impact upon the local economy.'*

In this instance, the application's supporting information states that the existing building has been marketed since the existing user vacated the premises in 2018/2019 with four offers made, none of which progresses to completion following the identified lawful use and the restrictive planning conditions attached. Therefore, this evidence confirms that there is no demand for the building in its current use and an alternative long-term use is required to secure the building.

Accordingly, it is considered that sufficient information has been provided in support of the application to demonstrate that the proposed loss of an existing employment site to a residential use would not result in any adverse impacts upon the local economy. As such, the proposal satisfies the requirements of Key Statement EC1 criteria 4 and 5.

Having regard to the provisions of Policy DMH3, the policy states:

*'Within areas defined as open countryside or AONB on the proposals map, residential development will be limited to the appropriate conversion of buildings to dwellings providing they are suitably located and their form and general design are in keeping with their surroundings. Buildings must be structurally sound and capable of conversion without the need for complete or substantial reconstruction.'*

Furthermore, Policy DMH4 of the Core Strategy states:

*Planning permission will be granted for the conversion of buildings to dwellings where:*

1. The building is not isolated in the landscape, i.e. it is within a defined settlement or forms part of an existing group of buildings, and
2. There need be no unnecessary expenditure by public authorities and utilities on the provision of infrastructure, and
3. There would be no materially damaging effect on the landscape qualities of the area or harm to nature conservation interests, and
4. There would be no detrimental effect on the rural economy, and
5. The proposals are consistent with the conservation of the natural beauty of the area

*6. 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, then any loss adequately mitigated.*

*The building to be converted must:*

*-Be structurally sound and capable of conversion for the proposed use without the need for extensive building or major alteration, which would adversely affect the character or appearance of the building;*

*- Be of a sufficient size to provide necessary living accommodation without the need for further extensions which would harm the character or appearance of the building –*

*- The character of the building and its materials are appropriate to its surroundings and the building and its materials are worthy of retention because of its intrinsic interest or potential or its contribution to its setting, and*

*The building has a genuine history of use for agriculture or another rural enterprise.*

Having regard to criteria point 1 of Policy DMH4, the application site is within close proximity to neighbouring properties and as such does not read as isolated features within the surrounding landscape. The proposal would therefore satisfy the requirements of criteria point 1 of Policy DMH4 and in turn, the locational requirements of Policy DMH3.

Turning to criteria point 2 of Policy DMH4, access to the application site would be via the existing access from Higher Road with the building previously being used for commercial use and therefore existing services and therefore it is not anticipated that the residential conversion of the buildings would warrant any unnecessary expenditure by public authorities or utilities on the provision of infrastructure. The proposal would therefore satisfy the requirements of criteria point 2 of Policy DMH4 with full assessment at technical details stage.

Having regard to criteria point 3 of Policy DMH4, details of design would be dealt with at the technical details stage therefore the impact of the proposed development upon the amenity of the surrounding landscape cannot be assessed under the current application. The same applies to impacts upon ecology / nature conservation interests.

Turning to criteria point 4 of Policy DMH4, sufficient information has been provided in support of the application to demonstrate that the proposed loss of the existing site to residential use would not result in any adverse impacts upon the rural economy. The proposed development would therefore satisfy the requirements of criteria point 4 of Policy DMH4.

Having regard to criteria point 5 of Policy DMH4, details of design would be dealt with at the technical details stage in order to consider impact on the surrounding area.

Turning to criteria point 6 of Policy DMH4, this again would be a matter for the technical details stage.

The policy also requires a building that is structurally sound and capable of conversion without the need for extensive building or major alteration. Whilst a structural survey work has not been provided to confirm this, the application's supporting information states that previous applications to convert the building into residential use have been accepted and approved thus deeming the building to be structurally sound and capable of conversion.

Whilst no details have been provided with respect to the internal layout of the proposed dwelling or number of bedrooms given the size of the existing buildings it is considered that these could be accommodated without the need for further additions , to be assessed at technical details stage.

With respect to the character of the existing building, this reflects the vernacular of farm buildings within the locality and contributes to the rural setting of the area and as such is considered to be worthy of retention.

Whilst the building has not been used for agriculture for several years the site history does indicate that the building in the past has benefited from a genuine history of use in relation to agricultural and rural enterprise.

The proposed development therefore satisfies the local economy and structural requirements of Policy DMH4. As such, the proposed development would not result in any conflict with the aims and objectives of Policy DMH3 and DMH4 and therefore would satisfy criteria point 2 of Policy DMB1.

Having regard to criteria point 3 of Policy DMB1, sole residential usage of the buildings would likely result in fewer comings and goings to and from the site when compared to commercial usage of the site. As such, it could be argued that a de-intensified use of the application buildings could deliver a minor enhancement to the amenity of the adjacent neighbouring properties and therefore the proposed development is considered to be broadly compliant with criteria point 3 of Policy DMB1.

Having regard to criteria point 5 in this instance, the application's supporting information states that the existing building has been marketed since the existing user vacated the premises in 2018/2019 with four offers made, none of which progresses to completion following the identified lawful use and the restrictive planning conditions attached. Therefore, this evidence confirms that there is no demand for the building in its current use and an alternative long-term use is required to secure the building.

Accordingly, it is considered that sufficient information has been provided in support of the application to demonstrate that the proposed loss of an existing employment site to a residential use would not result in any adverse impacts upon the local economy. As such, the proposal satisfies the requirements of Key Statement EC1 criteria 4 and 5.

Taking account of all of the above, the proposed development satisfies the requirements of Key Statement EC1 and Policies DMG1, DMH3, DMH4 and DMB1 of the Core Strategy and as such is considered to be acceptable in principle.

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

This application relates solely to principle of development and whether the proposal would align with the spatial and locational strategy of the borough.

As such, the impact upon the amenity of the occupiers of surrounding residential properties does not fall to be assessed within the scope of this application and would be reserved for consideration/assessment following the submission of 'Technical Matters'.

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

This application relates solely to principle of development and whether the proposal would align with the spatial and locational strategy of the borough.

As such, matters relating to the potential for any potential adverse impacts upon the character or visual amenities of the area resultant from the development do not fall to be assessed within the scope of this application and would be reserved for consideration/assessment following the submission of 'Technical Matters'.

#### **Highways and Parking:**

Lancashire Country Council Highways have been consulted on the application and have raised no concerns on highway safety matters and issues such as parking standards, vehicular and pedestrian access and provision of cycle storage and EV charging points can be considered and addressed as part of the submission of 'Technical Matters'.

**Landscape/Ecology:**

Appropriate surveys would be required to be undertaken (bats/nesting birds) and submitted in support of any subsequent 'Technical Matters' submission to determine whether the proposal is likely to result in adverse impacts upon protected species or species of conservation concern.

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

The proposed development is in accordance with the development strategy for the Borough and would satisfy the requirements of Key Statement EC1 and Policies DMG1, DMH3, DMH4 and DMB1 of the Core Strategy and as such is considered to be acceptable in principle.

<b>RECOMMENDATION:</b>	That Permission in Principle be granted subject to appropriate conditions.
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