

Report to be read in conjunction with the Decision Notice.

Signed:	Officer:	KH	Date:	13/5/26	Manager:	LH	Date:	13/5/26
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Application Ref:	3/2025/0823	 <p>Ribble Valley Borough Council www.ribblevalley.gov.uk</p>
Site Notice:	16/1/26	
Officer:	KH	
DELEGATED ITEM FILE REPORT:		REFUSAL

Development Description:	Proposed conversion of vacant care home (Use Class C2) 622 sq.m. into two semi-detached residential 5 bed dwellinghouses; Use of two storey annex as incidental accommodation; erection of two storey rear extension to one dwelling and erection of single storey side and rear extension to one dwelling together with dormers to front and rear elevation, first floor balconies to rear elevation, portico to front elevation, changes in fenestration and introduction of additional doors and windows to both properties and associated parking and landscaping
Site Address/Location:	Longworth House Higher Ramsgreave Road Ramsgreave BB1 9DJ

CONSULTATIONS:	Parish/Town Council
Ramsgreave Parish Council:	Consulted 9/12/25 – no response.

CONSULTATIONS:	Highways/Water Authority/Other Bodies
LCC Highways:	No objections subject to conditions.

CONSULTATIONS:	Additional Representations.
One letter of support has been received stating that the proposal is a positive and appropriate reuse of a long-vacant building.	

RELEVANT POLICIES AND SITE PLANNING HISTORY:

Ribble Valley Core Strategy:

- Key Statement DS1: Development Strategy
- Key Statement DS2: Sustainable development
- Key Statement DM12: Transport Considerations
- Policy DMG1: General considerations
- Policy DMG2: Strategic considerations
- Policy DMG3: Transport and Mobility
- Policy DME1: Protecting Trees and Woodland
- Policy DME2: Landscape & Townscape Protection
- 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 DMH5: Residential and curtilage extensions
- Policy DMB1: Supporting Business Growth And The Local Economy
- Policy DMB5: Footpaths and Bridleways

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Relevant Planning History:

No recent planning history with respect to the building to be converted.

ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT:

Site Description and Surrounding Area:

The site is located outside the settlement boundary within open countryside. The land on the opposite side of the road is Green Belt. The site lies within a cluster of residential development collectively known as the top of Ramsgreave and is close to the Spread Eagle public house. The site is located between Mellor and Ramsgreave (approx. 1 mile from each) and approx. 2.5miles from Blackburn.

The property is a former care home which has been vacant for some years set back from the road with mature trees along the boundary with Ramsgreave Rd and flanking the drive. There is a car park to the west of the building and a garage and store building to the east.

Proposed Development for which consent is sought:

Consent is sought for the extension, alteration and conversion of the building from a care home (C2 use) to a pair of semi-detached houses. The extensions proposed involved new front porticos, two-storey rear extension, single storey side and rear extensions and front and rear dormers. The existing access and car park would be retained.

Principle of Development:

The site is situated within an area of open countryside. Policy DMH3 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy 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.'

Expanding on the above requirements, Policy DMH4 of the Ribble Valley 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 conservations 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 alternation, 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.

In this instance, the building to be converted is located adjacent to residential properties. As such, it is not considered to be an isolated feature within the landscape.

Access to the building would be via an existing access / driveway and it is not anticipated that conversion of the building would warrant any unnecessary expenditure by public authorities or utilities on the provision of infrastructure.

Supporting ecology surveys confirm the the proposed development would not be harmful to any nature conservation interests and whilst there is no structural report submitted, the overall condition of the building is considered to be structurally sound and capable of conversion for residential use, subject to some refurbishment work.

The building has a genuine history as a rural enterprise. Due to the length of time the building has been vacant for (approx. 2018), there are no detrimental effects on the rural economy.

The character of the building and its materiality contributes to the setting of the surrounding countryside therefore the building in question is considered to be worthy of retention.

Notwithstanding the above, Policy DMH3 carries a requirement for all buildings being converted to residential use to be in keeping with their surroundings with respect to their form and general design. Similarly, criteria points 3 and 5 of Policy DMH4 and its additional criteria require proposals to be consistent with the conservation of the natural beauty of the area without causing undue harm to the visual amenities of the surrounding landscape or harm to the character or appearance of the building.

The proposal involves significant additions which cause concern, in particular a two-storey rear extension with rear gable, a number of dormers on the front and rear, rear balcony and front porticos. There are other design concerns which are set out later in this report. The agent has been invited to make a number of changes to address the concerns but has asked for the application to be determined in its current form.

In this instance, the two storey rear gable extension, front and rear dormers, rear balcony and front porticos would read as bulky, over dominant and largely unsympathetic additions to the building which will result in a noticeable increase in the scale and massing of the structure. Accordingly, the proposal fails to satisfy the requirements of Policy DMH4.

Policy DMG3 of the Core Strategy requires decision taking to consider the availability and adequacy of public transport and associated infrastructure to serve those moving to and from new developments. This is consistent with the NPPF which requires development proposals to promote sustainable transport. Due to the rural location of the site future occupants of the dwellings would be reliant on the use of private motor vehicles, however this is balanced with the sustainable benefits of re-using an existing building and having regard to previous traffic movements associated with the care home. As such the reliance on private motor vehicles in this instance is not considered to justify a refusal.

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.)*

Sites with "Employment" generating potential are taken as sites with potential for employment under classes E(g), B2 and B8. Whilst the proposed use does not currently fall within any of these use classes, this policy is still engaged because the potential for the building to be used for those purposes needs considering.

An employment generating use suitable in a rural area would not be in conflict with DMG1 however it is acknowledged that a residential use would be more compatible with nearby residential properties. It is acknowledged that a residential use of the proposal site would likely result in fewer comings and goings to and from the site (in addition to a potential reduction in noise levels) when compared with the noise and activity levels associated with an employment site. As such, it could be argued that a C3 use of the building could potentially deliver a minor enhancement to the amenity of the site's neighbouring receptors. No evidence has been provided to demonstrate that attempts have been made to secure an alternative employment generating use for the proposal site. The proposed development would therefore fail to satisfy criteria point 5 of Policy DMB1. However, due to the lack of conflicts identified with other parts of this policy, and in the context of a lack of five-year housing supply, it is not considered that this conflict alone would justify a refusal of permission.

Other Material Considerations – Housing Supply

In January 2026 an appeal decision determined that the Council's housing supply position is 3.45 years. Consequently, strategic policy DMH3 referenced above is considered to be out-of-date in so far as its ability to restrict housing from coming forward and there is a requirement for the Council to assess the proposed development against Paragraph 11 (d) (i) & (ii) of the Framework.

Paragraph 11 (d) of the NPPF states:

Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development...For decision-taking this means:

d) where there are no relevant development plan policies or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date (this includes, for applications involving the provision of housing, situations where the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites – see footnote 8 of the Framework), granting permission unless:

i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or

ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key

policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination

This assessment will be done in the concluding section of this response once all matters have been duly considered.

Impact Upon Residential Amenity:

The nearest neighbouring receptor is approx. 45m away. Accordingly, it is not considered that the proposal would be harmful to the amenity of any neighbouring residents.

The rear balcony proposed to serve the new westerly dwelling, by virtue of its size and close proximity to the shared boundary, will result in unacceptable levels of overlooking for future occupiers of the easterly dwelling. The agent has been invited to make a number of changes to address the concerns, including pulling it away from the boundary and introducing a screen, but has asked for the application to be determined in its current form. As such the proposal will conflict with policy DMG1 of the Core Strategy by virtue of unacceptable levels of overlooking.

Visual Amenity/External Appearance:

Paragraph 135 of the NPPF states [planning] decisions should ensure that developments:

- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
- b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;*

In addition, Policy DMG1 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy states:

'All development must be sympathetic to existing and proposed land uses in terms of its size, intensity and nature as well as scale, massing and style...particular emphasis will be placed on visual appearance and the relationship to surroundings, including impact on landscape character.'

Policy DMG2 requires all development within the open countryside 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.

Policy DMH4 of the Core Strategy offers specific guidance with respect to the conversion of rural buildings to dwellings as follows:

'Planning permission will be granted for the conversion of buildings to dwellings where there would be no materially damaging effect on the landscape qualities of the area...the building to be converted must 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 proposal involves significant additions which cause concern, namely the introduction of a two-storey rear extension with rear gable and a number of dormers which read as bulky, over dominant and largely unsympathetic additions to the building which will result in a noticeable increase in its scale and massing. Furthermore the dormers do not align with the window arrangement below. Additionally, a new second floor window in the side elevation is considered to exacerbate the massing of this gable, and the rear balcony is considered to be large and out of character, as are the two new front porticos on the frontage. In respect of these, the agent has been advised to reduce the rear balcony and reduced/remove the porticos to a more appropriate design in terms of scale and height, and the double, glazed(?) entrance doors could make more of a statement as these resemble patio doors usually found to the rear/side of a

dwelling. The agent has been invited to make a number of changes to address the concerns but has asked for the application to be determined in its current form.

The agent has been asked to provide an updated proposed site plan which clearly identifies the curtilage for each dwelling including access / parking and garden area, however this has not been forthcoming. Whilst this could be secured by condition, based on the extent of the site boundary the residential curtilage would encroach further into the countryside than the existing curtilage limits of neighbouring properties. This encroachment including introduction of domestic paraphernalia into this land would have a harmful urbanising impact on the countryside character.

A public footpath (FP7) runs down the driveway and along the eastern side of the building / eastern edge of the site, as such the additions and alterations proposed to the front, eastern side and rear as well as the large residential curtilage would be clearly visible from this receptor.

The agent has been asked to confirm that no external alterations are proposed to the annex building and to provide a proposed floor plan of the garage and store building to be retained, however this has not been forthcoming. In the absence of this information, any grant of permission would need to secure this by condition.

Taking account of all of the above, the proposed development would fail to satisfy the requirements of Paragraphs 135 of the NPPF and Policies DMG1 and DMH4 of the Core Strategy.

Highways and Parking:

Policy DMB5 is relevant due to a public footpath crossing the site. However, no development is proposed that would obstruct this route and the development would result in lower vehicle movements along the PROW compared to the former care home. No conflict with policy DMB5 of the Core Strategy is identified.

LCC Highways have reviewed the proposal and have raised no issues with the proposed development with respect to parking, access or general highway safety. The LHA have made a request for conditions to be imposed with regards to construction management, parking and cycle storage provision. Notwithstanding this, it is not considered that the proposed development would have any undue impact upon the surrounding highway network and would satisfy policies DMG1 and DMG3 of the Core Strategy.

Trees /Ecology:

An arboricultural impact assessment and method statement was submitted with the application. No tree works are required as a result of this development. Protective fencing is required which could be secured by condition. As such no conflict with policy DME1 is identified.

A preliminary bat roost assessment was prepared in July 2025 which identified the building to be of moderate roost suitability. A bat activity survey results report was then prepared in September 2025 confirming two dusk emergence surveys were undertaken within the main active season for bats. From the survey undertaken bats were absent from the building. Due to some bat foraging identified around the building and the presence of suitable foraging opportunities around the site mitigation and enhancement is recommended which could be secured by condition. As such no conflict with policy DME3 is identified.

The development is subject to the de minimis exemption in respect BNG.

Observations/Consideration of Matters Raised/Conclusion:

The two storey rear gable extension, front and rear dormers, rear balcony and front porticos would read as bulky, over dominant and largely unsympathetic additions to the building. As a result they would harm the character and appearance of the building so that it would fail to be in keeping with its surroundings in terms of its form and design. Concerns are also raised in respect of the large residential curtilage proposed and the urbanising impact this would have on the countryside character. Accordingly, the proposal fails to satisfy the requirements of Policies DMG1, DMG2, DMH3 and DMH4 of the Core Strategy.

As outlined above, in light of the Council’s housing supply position, it is necessary to assess the proposal against Paragraphs 11 (d) (i) and (ii) of the Framework.

Having regard to Paragraph 11 (d) (i) of the NPPF (flat balance), the application site is not afforded protection under the relevant parts of the Framework (see footnote 7 of the NPPF), as such it is necessary to consider the proposal against Paragraph 11 (d) (ii) of the NPPF (tilted balance).

Having regard to Paragraph 11 (d) (ii) (tilted balance), the Council considers Paragraphs 115, 129, 135 and 139 as being relevant to the development proposed under this application (see footnote 9 of the NPPF). The site is not located within a sustainable location although the proposal would result in lower levels of vehicle movements compared to the former care home, as such there is not considered to be a conflict with Paragraphs 115 (a) and 129 (c) of the NPPF. However, turning to paragraphs 135 and 139 and it is not considered that the scheme of residential conversion represents good design or would be sympathetic to the surrounding built environment and landscape setting. Additional concerns in respect of overlooking from the proposed rear balcony are also identified.

In light of the above, the limited benefits that would arise from delivering two additional dwellings to the Council’s housing supply as well as limited benefits in respect of the creation of jobs during construction and supporting the building trade are not considered to outweigh the harm that would arise from the aforementioned Framework policy conflicts with regards to design and visual impact and the harm to residential amenity by virtue of overlooking from the rear balcony. The application form states the units are to be self-build and/or custom build housing however no Unilateral Undertaking has been submitted to secure this as such this carries no weight. Consequently, the development cannot be supported even through applying Paragraph 11 (d) (ii) of the Framework.

It is for the above reasons and having regard to all material considerations and matters raised that planning consent be refused.

RECOMMENDATION: That planning consent be refused for the following reason:

<p>01:</p>	<p>The proposed two storey rear gable extension, front and rear dormers, rear balcony and front porticos would read as bulky, over dominant and largely unsympathetic additions to the building. As a result they would harm the character and appearance of the building so that it would fail to be in keeping with its surroundings in terms of its form and design. Concerns are also raised in respect of the large residential curtilage proposed and the urbanising impact this would have on the countryside character. Accordingly, the proposal fails to satisfy the requirements of Policies DMG1, DMG2, DMH3 and DMH4 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy and Paragraphs 135 and 139 of the National Planning Policy Framework.</p>
<p>02:</p>	<p>The rear balcony proposed to serve the new westerly dwelling, by virtue of its size and close proximity to the shared boundary, would result in unacceptable levels of overlooking for future occupiers of the easterly dwelling. As such the proposal would conflict with policy DMG1 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy by virtue of unacceptable impacts on residential amenity.</p>