

Mr Ben Taylor  
Ribble Valley Borough Council  
Development Control  
Council Offices Church Walk  
Clitheroe  
Lancashire  
BB7 2RA

**Our ref:** NO/2026/117301/01-L01  
**Your ref:** 3/2026/0052  
**Date:** 02 February 2026

Dear Mr Taylor

**APPLICATION IN PRINCIPLE FOR RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT OF UP TO 9 DWELLINGS.**

**LAND AT WOONE LANE, CLITHEROE, BB7 1BJ**

Thank you for consulting us on the above application, on 29 January 2026.

**Environment Agency position**

We object to the grant of permission in principle for the proposed development because we require more assessment information to understand the environmental risks and determine whether mitigation is possible and/or viable.

**Reasons**

The application site lies within Flood Zone 3a, which is land defined by the planning practice guidance (PPG) as having a high probability of flooding. The National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 181, footnote 63) states that a flood risk assessment (FRA) be submitted when development is proposed in such locations.

An FRA is vital to making informed planning decisions and, in its absence, we are unable to understand the risk posed both to and from the proposed development.

**Sequential test - advice to LPA**

**What is the sequential test and does it apply to this application?**

In accordance with the NPPF (paragraphs 175-177 (inc. footnote 62)), development in flood risk areas should not be permitted if there are reasonably available alternative sites, appropriate for the proposed development, in areas with a lower risk of flooding.

Environment Agency  
Lutra House Walton Summit, Bamber Bridge, Preston, PR5 8BX.  
Customer services line: 03708 506 506  
[www.gov.uk/environment-agency](http://www.gov.uk/environment-agency)  
Cont/d..

The sequential test establishes if this is the case.

Development is in a flood risk area if it is in Flood Zone 2 or 3, or it is within Flood Zone 1 and your strategic flood risk assessment shows it to be at future flood risk or at risk from other sources of flooding such as surface water or groundwater.

The only developments exempt from the sequential test in flood risk areas are:

- Householder developments such as residential extensions, conservatories or loft conversions
- Small non-residential extensions with a footprint of less than 250sqm
- Changes of use (except changes of use to a caravan, camping or chalet site, or to a mobile home or park home site)
- Applications for development on sites allocated in the development plan through the sequential test and:
  - the proposed development is consistent with the use for which the site was allocated; and
  - there have been no significant changes to the known level of flood risk to the site, now or in the future, which would have affected the outcome of the test
- Developments where no built development within the site boundary, including access or escape routes, land raising or other potentially vulnerable elements, would be located on an area that would be at risk of flooding from any source, now and in the future

Avoiding flood risk through the sequential test is the most effective way of addressing flood risk because it places the least reliance on measures such as flood defences, flood warnings and property level resilience.

### **Who undertakes the sequential test?**

It is for you, as the LPA, to determine an appropriate area of search and to decide whether the sequential test has been passed, with reference to the information you hold on land availability. You may also ask the applicant to identify any other 'reasonably available' sites which are on the open market and to check on the current status of identified sites to determine if they can be considered 'reasonably available'. Further guidance on the area of search can be found in paragraphs 027-030 of the planning practice guidance [here](#).

### **What is our role in the sequential test?**

We can advise on the relative flood risk between the proposed site and any alternative sites identified - although your strategic flood risk assessment should allow you to do this yourself in most cases. We won't advise on whether alternative sites are reasonably available or whether they would be suitable for the proposed development. We also won't advise on whether there are sustainable development objectives that mean steering the development to any alternative sites would be inappropriate. Further guidance on how to apply the sequential test to site specific applications can be found in the planning practice guidance [here](#).

### **Exception test – advice to LPA**

The exception test should only be applied as set out in flood risk [table 2](#) of the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) following application of the sequential test. The exception test should not be used to justify the grant of planning permission in flood risk areas when

the sequential test has shown that there are reasonably available, lower risk sites, appropriate for the proposed development.

In those circumstances, planning permission should be refused, unless you consider that sustainable development objectives make steering development to these lower risk sites inappropriate as outlined in PPG (ref ID: [7-031-20220825](#)).

### **Our role in the exception test**

The exception test is in two parts, described in the NPPF (paragraph 178). In order for the test to be passed it must be demonstrated that:

- a) the development would provide wider sustainability benefits to the community that outweigh flood risk; and
- b) the development will be safe for its lifetime taking account of the vulnerability of its users, without increasing flood risk elsewhere, and, where possible, will reduce flood risk overall.

Paragraph 179 of the NPPF makes clear that both parts need to be met for the test to be satisfied. It is for the applicant to demonstrate this.

We provide advice on the second part of the test, but it is for you, as the LPA, to consider the first part of the test, accounting for the findings of the flood risk assessment and our flood risk advice, and to determine whether the test, overall, has been satisfied. Development that does not satisfy both parts of the exception test should be refused.

### **Where the flood risk assessment shows the development will be safe throughout its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere**

Even where a flood risk assessment shows the development can be made safe throughout its lifetime without increasing risk elsewhere, there will always be some remaining risk that the development will be affected either directly or indirectly by flooding. You will need to weigh these risks against any wider sustainability benefits to the community.

### **Environmental permit – Flood risk activities - advice to applicant**

The Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016 require a permit or exemption to be obtained for any of the following activities:

- erecting any temporary or permanent structure in, over or under a main river, such as a culvert, outfall, weir, dam, pipe crossing, erosion protection, scaffolding or bridge
- altering, repairing or maintaining any temporary or permanent structure in, over or under a main river, where the work could affect the flow of water in the river or affect any drainage work
- building or altering any permanent or temporary structure designed to contain or divert flood waters from a main river
- dredging, raising or removing any material from a main river, including when you are intending to improve flow in the river or use the materials removed
- diverting or impounding the flow of water or changing the level of water in a main river
- quarrying or excavation within 16 metres of any main river, flood defence (including a remote defence) or culvert

- any activity within 8 metres of the bank of a main river, or 16 metres if it is a tidal main river
- any activity within 8 metres of any flood defence structure or culvert on a main river, or 16 metres on a tidal river
- any activity within 16 metres of a sea defence structure
- activities carried out on the floodplain of a main river, more than 8 metres from the river bank, culvert or flood defence structure (or 16 metres if it is a tidal main river), if you do not have planning permission (you do not need permission to build agricultural hay stacks, straw stacks or manure clamps in these places)

For further guidance please visit [Flood risk activities: environmental permits - GOV.UK](#) or contact our National Customer Contact Centre on 03708 506 506 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm) or by emailing [enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk).

The applicant should not assume that a permit will automatically be forthcoming once planning permission has been granted, and we advise them to consult with us at the earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely

**Mrs Dana Binns**  
**Sustainable Places Planning Advisor**

E-mail [clplanning@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:clplanning@environment-agency.gov.uk)