

Unit 45, Mitton Road Business Park, Mitton Road, Walley, BB7 9YE

Regularisation of change of use from Class B2/B8 (General Industrial) to Class E (Commercial, Business and Service) and provision of mezzanine floor – Re-submission of Planning Application
Reference: 3/2024/0124

PLANNING STATEMENT

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/1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. PWA Planning has been appointed by Per4m Health Ltd (the Applicant) to submit a full planning application to regularise the change of use of Unit 45, Mitton Road Business Park, Mitton Road, Whalley, BB7 9YE (the application site), including the provision of a mezzanine floor internally. Planning permission is sought retrospectively to regularise the change of use, including the provision of a mezzanine floor and the extension of opening hours to 6.30am–9.00pm Monday to Friday, 7.00am–2.00pm on Saturdays, and 7.00am–1.00pm on Sundays.
- 1.2. This Planning Statement is submitted to Ribble Valley Borough Council (the 'Local Planning Authority' or 'LPA'), alongside a supporting Main Town Centre Use Sequential Test Assessment, in order to assess and justify the proposed development against the adopted Development Plan and other material considerations.
- 1.3. This Planning Statement is submitted alongside a suite of supporting plans and drawings which illustrate the existing and proposed arrangements at Unit 45. These include a Location Plan, Existing and Proposed Floor Plans, and Existing and Proposed Elevations, prepared by Evolve Architectural Design Ltd.
- 1.4. This application is a re-submission of an earlier application (Planning Reference Number 3/2024/0214) submitted by the Applicant that was refused by the LPA in June 2025. This earlier application did not contain key information or material considerations, or a Sequential Test, to justify the proposal against the key Policies and guidance within the NPPF. The application was refused for one reason, which was;

The proposal would result in the loss of employment generating floorspace through the introduction of a use falling within the definition of a 'Main Town Centre Use' in an out-of-town centre location. With no material considerations have been presented in this case to justify or warrant the harm resulting from the loss of employment generating floorspace use.

As such the proposal would result in direct conflict with Policy DMB1 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy and the aims and objectives of Paragraph 91 of the National Planning Policy Framework.



- 1.5. As advised to the LPA, this application will provide further supporting information alongside the required Sequential Test Assessment in order to fully justify this proposal and its acceptability in planning terms, including its accordance with the Development Plan, when read as a whole, and alongside other material considerations.
- 1.6. The application seeks to regularise the existing use of the unit by Per4m Health, a health, fitness and wellbeing business operating from the site. The proposal relates to the use of the existing building only, the internal works already carried out, and with only limited external alterations proposed.
- 1.7. The commercial unit is located within the main body of the established Mitton Road Business Park, accessed from Mitton Road. The surrounding area is predominantly commercial in character, comprising units of similar scale, appearance, and configuration.
- 1.8. This statement sets out the planning merits of the proposal and demonstrates that the development represents an appropriate and sustainable use within the established Mitton Road Business Park, having regard to national and local planning policy.



/2 SITE DESCRIPTION

- 2.1. The application site comprises Unit 45 at Mitton Road Business Park, located off Mitton Road to the north of Whalley, within the administrative area of Ribble Valley Borough Council. Shown on the Location Plan
- 2.2. Mitton Road Business Park is an established commercial and employment area, developed as part of a wider industrial estate comprising a range of modern units of similar scale, form and appearance. The units are arranged around internal estate roads with associated parking and servicing areas.
- 2.3. Unit 45 is a modern industrial unit of steel portal frame construction with profiled metal cladding and a pitched roof. The unit benefits from a roller shutter door and separate pedestrian access to the front elevation, together with dedicated car parking spaces located within the business park. The as-built form and appearance of the building are illustrated on the Proposed Floor Plans and Proposed Elevations (Drawing refs. EAD_307_P_03 and EAD_307_P_04). Figure 1 below shows Unit 45 (yellow pin) within the wider context of the Mitton Road Business Park.



Figure 1: The Site and Wider Context of Mitton Road Business Park



- 2.4. The unit was approved as part of a wider expansion of this business park under planning application reference: 3/2017/0714. The originally approved plans for this building included for a mezzanine floor over a quarter of the ground floor. This scheme includes a larger expansion of mezzanine floor covering over half of the ground floor, and which has already been installed within the building forming part of the existing internal layout. The only change externally to the building is the moving of the single door from one side of the front elevation to the other.
- 2.5. The surrounding area is characterised predominantly by commercial and industrial uses within Mitton Road Business Park. Mitton Road lies to the west of the site, providing access to the wider highway network. Whalley town centre is located to the south of the site. From Mitton Road, the Calderstones Park development is walkable to the business park.
- 2.6. The application site is not subject to any statutory environmental or heritage designations.



/3 PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1. The application site forms part of Mitton Road Business Park, which was granted planning permission under application reference 3/2017/0714 for the extension to an existing industrial estate to provide units for Class B1, B2 and B8 uses, together with associated car parking, landscaping and service infrastructure. Planning permission was granted on the 1st of December 2017.
- 3.2. Subsequent applications relating to the wider business park have included the discharge and variation of conditions associated with the approved development, including matters relating to highways, drainage and external materials.
- 3.3. An application was submitted under reference 3/2024/0214 seeking retrospective planning permission for the change of use of Unit 45 from Class B2/B8 to Class E, the provision of a mezzanine floor and the extension of opening hours. That application was refused by Ribble Valley Borough Council.
- 3.4. The refusal of application 3/2024/0214 was based on a single reason, relating to the perceived loss of employment generating floorspace arising from the introduction of a Main Town Centre Use in an out of centre location, contrary to Policy DMB1 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy and paragraph 91 of the National Planning Policy Framework. The reason is provided in full in Chapter 1, p1.3, of this Statement.
- 3.5. No other matters of planning policy or technical concern were identified in the refusal of the application.



/4 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1. The application seeks full planning permission for the regularisation of the **change of use of Unit 45 at Mitton Road Business Park** from Class B2/B8 (general industrial and storage and distribution) to Class E (commercial, business and service).
- 4.2. Unit 45 has a gross internal floorspace of approximately 483 sqm (circa 5,200 sq ft), comprising ground floor accommodation together with an internal mezzanine level. Part of the mezzanine was formed as part of the existing lawful internal layout of the building however this has been altered and extended as per the proposed plans however no further alterations to the mezzanine already installed are proposed. (Drawing refs. EAD_307_P_03).
- 4.3. The unit is occupied by Per4m Health, which operates as a health, fitness and wellbeing business providing structured training, rehabilitation and associated services. The operation is appointment based and does not function as a retail, leisure or unrestricted public access use.
- 4.4. Internally, the unit accommodates open plan training and treatment space, staff areas, storage and ancillary facilities associated with the operation of the business illustrated on the Proposed Floor Plans (Drawing ref. EAD_307_P_03). The nature of the use requires flexible, open floor space and the ability to accommodate specialist equipment within a single self-contained unit.
- 4.5. The proposal seeks to regularise the use of the existing building, alongside all the other internal and external alterations carried out that have taken the form of the building beyond that which was originally approved.
- 4.6. The proposed hours of operation are as follows:
 - Monday to Friday: 6:30 to 21:00
 - Saturday: 7:00 to 14:00
 - Sunday: 7:00 to 13:00
- 4.7. Vehicular access to the unit will continue to be taken from the existing access arrangements serving Mitton Road Business Park. Car parking and servicing associated with the use will be accommodated within the existing parking provision serving the site.



/5 ABOUT THE APPLICANT

- 5.1. The applicant, Per4m Health, is a physiotherapy led health, fitness and wellbeing provider delivering an integrated model of clinical care and performance-based training. The business specialises in supporting safe movement, injury prevention and long-term physical wellbeing within a community setting.
- 5.2. Per4m Health provides a clear community benefit by offering accessible rehabilitative and preventative health services at a local level. Its physiotherapy led approach supports individuals recovering from injury, managing long term conditions, or seeking to improve mobility and fitness in a medically informed and supervised environment.
- 5.3. Unlike a conventional gym, the applicant operates a collaborative model where qualified physiotherapists and performance specialists work together to deliver tailored programmes based on evidence led practice. This ensures activity is safe, inclusive and appropriate for a wide range of users.
- 5.4. The facility operates as a hybrid health and wellbeing hub, combining clinic grade physiotherapy services with functional fitness spaces, group classes and personalised training. This operational model allows physiotherapy treatment, rehabilitation and ongoing physical training to be delivered within a single setting.
- 5.5. The business is registered with several major private healthcare insurers, enabling patients to access physiotherapy services through recognised healthcare referral pathways. This enhances local access to healthcare provision and strengthens the role of the facility within the wider community health infrastructure.
- 5.6. Per4m Health is an established local business and currently employs **8 full time members of staff**, with **1 part time employee**, the majority of whom are residents of the Ribble Valley.



/6 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Development Plan

- 6.1. In accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, planning applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 6.2. The Development Plan for the purposes of this application comprises the Ribble Valley Core Strategy (2008–2028). National planning policy, as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), together with associated Planning Practice Guidance, represents a material consideration in the determination of this application.

Ribble Valley Core Strategy

- 6.3. The following Core Strategy policies are of particular relevance to the determination of this application:
 - **Key Statement DS1: Development Strategy**
 - **Key Statement DS2: Sustainable Development**
 - **Key Statement EC1: Business and Employment Development**
 - **Key Statement DMI2: Transport Considerations**
- 6.4. In addition, the following Development Management policies are relevant:
 - **Policy DMG1: General Considerations**
 - **Policy DMG2: Strategic Considerations**
 - **Policy DMG3: Transport and Mobility**
 - **Policy DMB1: Supporting Business Growth and the Local Economy**
- 6.5. The **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** is a material consideration in the determination of this application.
- 6.6. Of particular relevance is **Paragraph 91** of the NPPF, which relates to the identification of main town centre uses and the application of the sequential test where such uses are proposed outside of defined town centre locations.



Use Classes Order and Other Material Considerations

- 6.7. Regard has also been had to the **Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended)**, in respect of the proposed change of use from Class B2/B8 (General Industrial) to Class E (Commercial, Business and Service).

- 6.8. The site's planning history, including the findings of the Council's delegated officer report in respect of application reference 3/2024/0214, represents a material consideration and is addressed further within the Planning Policy Assessment section of this statement.



17 PLANNING POLICY ASSESSMENT

Principle of Development

- 7.1. The application site comprises an existing commercial unit located within the established Mitton Road Business Park, a designated employment area characterised by commercial and industrial uses of similar scale, form and function. The proposed development involves the use of this unit for a physiotherapy led health, fitness and wellbeing use, and includes for the expansion of the floor area of the unit through the addition of a larger mezzanine floor; beyond that originally approved for this unit originally as illustrated on the Existing Floor Plans and Existing Elevations (Drawing refs. EAD_307_P_01 and EAD_307_P_02).
- 7.2. In principle, the use of an existing commercial building within an established business park for an employment generating use is entirely consistent with the spatial objectives of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy. The proposal does not introduce an incompatible use, nor does it result in the loss of built employment floorspace. Instead, it represents an alternative form of economic activity that continues to support jobs, investment and local services.
- 7.3. The site is located immediately adjacent to the Tier 2 settlement of Calderstones, within a sustainable and accessible location that benefits from existing infrastructure, established access arrangements and a predominantly commercial surrounding context. See Figure 2 below. Directing economic activity to such locations accords with the principles of sustainable development by supporting local employment opportunities while minimising the need for new development elsewhere.



Figure 2: Aerial View of The Calderstones Development Directly Adjacent from The Business Park



- 7.4. As demonstrated, the proposal represents an appropriate and sustainable form of development in principle, making effective use of an existing employment site and supporting the continued economic function of the business park.

Employment Land and Policy DMB1

- 7.5. Policy DMB1 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy seeks to support business growth and the local economy, while carefully managing proposals that would result in the loss of employment generating land. In this instance, the proposal does not result in the loss of employment floorspace or employment opportunities. Rather, it facilitates a change in the nature of employment activity within this Unit on this site.
- 7.6. The proposed use will continue to generate employment through the provision of physiotherapy services, fitness instruction, administrative roles and ancillary support functions, with **8 full time and 1 part time member of staff**. The operation of the facility will support both direct employment on site and indirect economic activity through engagement with other local businesses, suppliers and service providers elsewhere on this Business Park.
- 7.7. Importantly, the proposal makes productive use of an existing commercial unit within a designated employment area. There is no displacement of industrial activity to less sustainable locations and no removal of the overall employment function of the business park. Per4m Health were the first to fill this unit meaning there was no business removal from the site for them to move here. The proposal therefore aligns with the economic objectives of Policy DMB1 by supporting diversification and resilience within the local employment base.
- 7.8. When assessed in sustainability terms, the proposal performs strongly across the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. It is an employment generating use on designated employment land, adjacent to a Tier 2 settlement, utilising an existing building and existing infrastructure.
- 7.9. In planning terms, it is difficult to identify how the proposal could be more closely aligned with the spatial and sustainability objectives of the development plan.



Use Class E and Main Town Centre Considerations

- 7.10. The proposed use falls within Use Class E and, as a gym and health facility, is capable of being categorised as a main town centre use for the purposes of national planning policy. However, it is important to consider the nature, scale and operational characteristics of the proposal when applying this designation.
- 7.11. The facility operates as a specialist, physiotherapy led health and wellbeing space, providing appointment based clinical services alongside structured fitness and rehabilitation activities. It does not function as a retail led or leisure destination in the conventional sense, and its modest scale and specialist offer are materially different from town centre leisure uses that are intended to drive footfall and linked trips.
- 7.12. The proposed floorspace of approximately 483 square metres is modest and well below the threshold at which significant impacts on town centre vitality and viability would or could arise. The use is primarily destination based and serves a defined catchment, limiting any potential diversion of activity away from established centres.
- 7.13. The proposed floorspace of approximately 483 square metres is modest and well below the threshold at which significant impacts on town centre vitality and viability would arise. The use is primarily destination based and serves a defined catchment, limiting any potential diversion of activity away from established centres.

Sequential Test Compliance

- 7.14. A full Sequential Test has been undertaken and submitted in support of the application. The scope and methodology of the assessment were agreed with the Local Planning Authority in advance and appropriately considered Whalley, Clitheroe and other relevant Tier 1 and Tier 2 settlements within a reasonable drive time catchment.
- 7.15. The Sequential Test demonstrates that there are no suitable, available or viable sites within sequentially preferable town centre or edge of centre locations capable of accommodating the proposed development, even when applying the flexibility in format and scale required by national policy.
- 7.16. The findings of the Sequential Test are set out in full within the submitted Retail Sequential Assessment. The assessment confirms that the application site represents the most



appropriate and sustainable location for the proposed use and that the requirements of paragraph 91 of the National Planning Policy Framework have been satisfied.

Health, Wellbeing and Community Benefits

- 7.17. The proposed development delivers clear health and wellbeing benefits by providing access to physiotherapy led fitness, rehabilitation and preventative healthcare services within the local community. The facility contributes positively to local health infrastructure and supports wider public health objectives by encouraging active lifestyles, injury prevention and long-term wellbeing.
- 7.18. The integration of clinical services with structured fitness provision differentiates the proposal from conventional gym uses and reinforces its role as a community focused health facility. These benefits carry significant weight in the planning balance.

Highways and Parking

- 7.19. Lancashire County Council Highways Authority has previously raised no objection to the proposal, subject to conditions. The site benefits from an existing access arrangement and adequate parking provision within the wider business park.
- 7.20. The proposal will not give rise to any detrimental impacts on highway safety or capacity and accords with Key Statement DMI2 and Policy DMG3.

Other Material Considerations

- 7.21. There are a couple of material considerations that we wish to bring to your attention when considering this proposal.
- 7.22. As you are aware, permission was granted for 'Extension to existing industrial estate (Class B1, B2 and B8 Use) to include car parking, landscaping and service infrastructure'. Condition 2 of the approved scheme, which confirms the approved plans, includes reference to the site plan, 4487-04-02o, which specifies for buildings E-T the number of units in each building, the size of those units AND the entry for each building states a use class. For example, the entry for Building E is:

'BUILDING E Use Class B1
1 units @ 216m²
1 units @ 288m²



The entry for Building M, which is now known as Unit 45, is:

'BUILDING M Use Class B2/B8
1 units @ 360m2

7.23 Whilst the Committee Report refers to the floor space being divided as follows:

2880 sqm B1(c) (light industrial)
1800 sqm B2 (general industrial), and
1800 sqm B8 (storage and distribution)

There is nowhere that limits the uses on the site to ONLY B1(c) uses (and B2/B8), either via condition or the plans.

7.24 Condition 4 of the originally approved scheme provides that:

'No single unit of B1 (c), B2 or B8 accommodation hereby approved shall have a ground floor area of more than 360m2 and, notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended) or any Order revoking or re-enacting that Order, no internal alterations involving the removal of walls between these individual units shall be carried out which would enlarge them so that any single unit has a ground floor area of more than 360m2 unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.'

As such, other than these references to B1(c), the only parts of the permission that confirm control of the uses on the site, and in terms of which buildings, are the description of development and Condition 2.

7.25 Given the change made by Regulation 7 of The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2020, any unit approved for B1 can be used for any use within Class E under Permitted Development – which is a material consideration. The existence of such units (B1 now E) on the Business Park has relevance to any application for Unit 45. Indeed, if Per4m Health were based in any of the other B1 buildings originally approved, matters to regularise this use would be significantly simpler, indeed perhaps lawful.



- 7.26 It is therefore material to this revised application that the Business Park could lawfully accommodate the same use (within Class E(d)) within either of the units mere metres away.
- 7.27 Whilst this does not on its own address the protection of employment land under DMB1, it is material and relevant to the Council's concern regarding the protection of main town centre uses: we consider that Use Class E confirms that this Business Park is a lawful location for a use such as Per4m Health, and indeed for other more 'town centric' uses in Class E.
- 7.28 This leads to a second material consideration, that the Unit does not lie within allocated employment land within the Development Plan. Figure 3 below shows the approximate location of Unit 45 marked with a blue cross. This sits outside the allocated employment site, albeit within the now expanded Mitton Road Business Park.

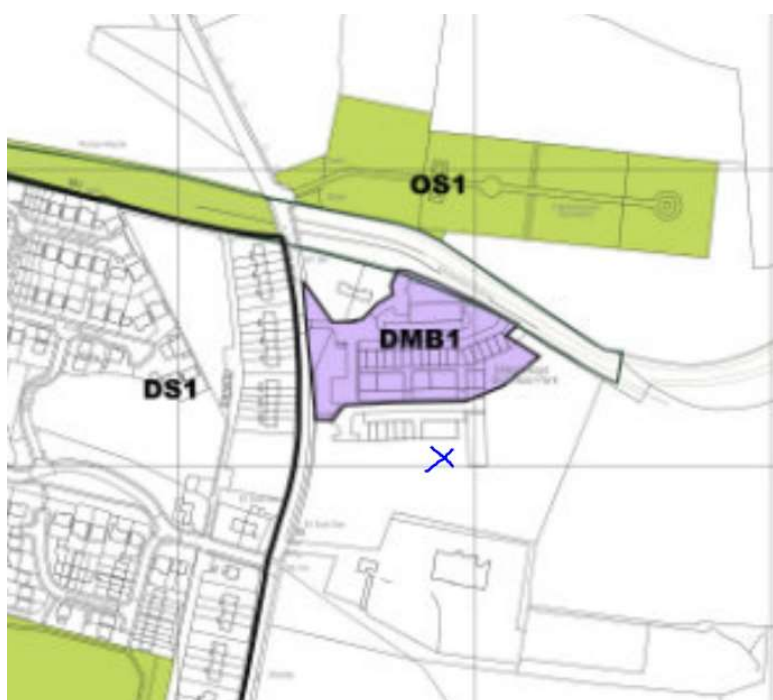


Figure 3: Location of Unit 45 as shown on the HED DPD Proposals Map

- 7.29 Despite the Unit subject to this submission not being sited within an allocated employment site, Policy DMB1 does still apply as the Policy supports proposals that promote business growth and the local economy in principle, subject to compliance with the Core Strategy and relevant detailed LDF policies. As set out earlier in this Chapter, Policy DMB1 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy seeks to support business growth and the local economy, while



carefully managing proposals that would result in the loss of employment generating land. In this instance, the proposal does not result in the loss of employment floorspace or employment opportunities. Rather, it facilitates a change in the nature of employment activity within this Unit on this site. The proposal makes productive use of an existing commercial unit within a designated employment area and therefore aligns with the economic objectives of Policy DMB1 by supporting diversification and resilience within the local employment base.

Planning Balance

- 7.30 The proposal represents a highly sustainable form of development, delivering an employment generating use within an existing commercial building on an existing Business Park, adjacent to a Tier 2 settlement, and without giving rise to any environmental or technical harm.

- 7.31 Any limited policy tension arising from the classification of the use within Class E is clearly outweighed by the proposal's strong economic, social and health benefits, the absence of technical harm, and full compliance with the sequential test.

- 7.32 When assessed against the development plan as a whole and other material considerations, the proposal constitutes sustainable development and should be supported.



/8 CONCLUSION

- 8.1. This Planning Statement has demonstrated that the proposed regularisation of the use of Unit 45 at Mitton Road Business Park to a Class E health, fitness and wellbeing use is acceptable in planning terms and accords with the Development Plan, when read as a whole and alongside other material considerations.
- 8.2. The principle of development is clearly established. The proposal relates to the reuse of an existing commercial unit within a designated employment area and does not result in the loss of built employment floorspace. There was no displacement of industrial activity to less sustainable locations and no removal of the overall employment function of the business park as Per4m Health were the first to fill this unit meaning there was no business removal from the site for them to move here. The unit will remain in active commercial use and continue to support employment and economic activity within Mitton Road Business Park, in accordance with the objectives of Policy DMB1 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy.
- 8.3. The proposed use will continue to generate employment through the provision of physiotherapy services, fitness instruction, administrative roles and ancillary support functions. The business currently employs 8 full time and 1 part time members of staff, the majority of whom are local residents, and continue to contribute positively to the local economy. The operation of the facility will support both direct employment on site and indirect economic activity through engagement with other local businesses, suppliers and service providers elsewhere on this Business Park. The proposal therefore aligns with the economic objectives of Policy DMB1 by supporting diversification and resilience within the local employment base.
- 8.4. While the proposed use falls within Use Class E and is capable of being categorised as a main town centre use, its scale, specialist nature and appointment-based operation distinguish it from a 'conventional' town centre leisure uses. A Sequential Test has been undertaken in accordance with Paragraph 91 of the National Planning Policy Framework and demonstrates that there are no suitable, available or viable sites within sequentially preferable town centre or edge of centre locations capable of accommodating the proposal.
- 8.5. The proposal raises no technical planning concerns. The Council has confirmed that there would be no adverse impacts in respect of residential amenity, highway safety, parking provision or environmental considerations. The development involves no external alterations



and makes efficient use of an existing building and established infrastructure, demonstrated on Drawings EAD_307_P_03 and EAD_307_P_04.

- 8.6. The proposed use supports health, wellbeing and employment objectives by providing physiotherapy led services within the local area, while maintaining the economic function of the business park. These factors represent material considerations which weigh in favour of the proposal.
- 8.7. When assessed in sustainability terms, the proposal performs strongly across the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. It is an employment generating use on designated employment land, adjacent to a Tier 2 settlement, utilising an existing building and existing infrastructure. In planning terms, it is difficult to identify how the proposal could be more closely aligned with the spatial strategy and sustainability objectives of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 8.8. Significant weight should also be afforded to the health and wellbeing benefits arising from the provision of physiotherapy led rehabilitation, preventative healthcare and structured fitness services within the local community. These benefits, alongside continued employment generation and the absence of harm, represent strong material considerations in favour of the proposal.
- 8.9. Overall, the proposed development represents a sustainable and appropriate form of development within Mitton Road Business Park. There are no material considerations that indicate planning permission should be withheld, and it is therefore respectfully requested that Ribble Valley Borough Council grant planning permission for the proposed development.



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