


Report to be read in conjunction with the Decision Notice.

Signed:	Officer:	LW	Date:	05/03/26	Manager:	LH	Date:	6/3/26
----------------	-----------------	-----------	--------------	-----------------	-----------------	-----------	--------------	---------------

Application Ref:	3/2026/0074			 Ribble Valley Borough Council <small>www.ribblevalley.gov.uk</small>
Date Inspected:	10/02/26	Site Notice:	10/02/26	
Officer:	LW			
DELEGATED ITEM FILE REPORT:				REFUSAL

Development Description:	Permission in principle for development of up to 9no. bungalows for the over 55 age group.
Site Address/Location:	Land to the south of Elker Meadows, Elker Lane, Billington, BB7 9YB.

CONSULTATIONS:	Parish/Town Council
<p>A consultation response from Billington and Langho Parish Council was received on 24th February 2026 raising an objection to the proposed development. The concerns outlined within the objection can be summarised as below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposal is unsuitable for the site based on established planning history, environmental safety and infrastructure capacity. • The land was originally integrated into the planning consent for the Elker Meadows estate specifically designated for a children’s nursery. This designation was a key component of the community infrastructure design. Permitting a different development on this plot contradicts the original planning intent and the conditions under which the Elker Meadows development was initially justified. • The site poses demonstratable flood risk to both new and existing residents. • Increased traffic volume on Whalley Road and Elker Lane leading to congestion, parking on grass verges and increased safety concerns. • The development is outside the settlement area. 	

CONSULTATIONS:	Highways/Water Authority/Other Bodies
LCC Highways:	No objection to the principle of the proposed development.
United Utilities:	United Utilities have provided comments to direct the applicant to further sources of support and guidance on matters that might impact their proposal.

CONSULTATIONS:	Additional Representations.
<p>Five letters of representation have been received. The concerns raised within these representations can be summarised as below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The site is outside the settlement boundary and promotes a harmful precedent for building on inappropriate land. • Contravention of proposals contained in the Core Strategy Plan for the area. • It will add to the already harmful traffic around St Augustine’s at pick up and drop off time – area is already overly congested. • There should be a thorough review of vehicle speeds in the area – a reduction in speed limit in certain sections would be more suitable in aiding the safe and sustainable development of the area. 	

- Lack of amenities in Billington to cater for over 55s.
- Adding too much pressure to an already under resourced Billington with little amenities.
- Spoiling the natural habitat for wildlife – loss of local wildlife such as squirrels, rabbits, bares, bats, sheep and cows.
- Negative impact on the mental health and wellbeing of current residents in the area.
- Flood risk – additional drainage, waste and sewerage outflow will create additional demands on the current system within the area which already struggles.
- Ribble Valley has exceeded the number of houses that they are required to build.
- Green belt land.
- Sufficient land in the Ribble Valley already earmarked for similar development.

RELEVANT POLICIES AND SITE PLANNING HISTORY:

Ribble Valley Core Strategy:

Key Statement DS1: Development Strategy
 Key Statement DS2: Sustainable Development
 Key Statement DMI2: Transport Considerations

Policy DMG1: General Considerations
 Policy DMG2: Strategic Considerations
 Policy DMG3: Transport & Mobility
 Policy DMH3: Dwellings in the Open Countryside and AONB

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Relevant Planning History:

3/2022/0400: Variation of Conditions 2 (Plans) and 17 (Flood Risk Assessment) of planning permission 3/2014/0801. Owing to post completion issues with ponding and standing water, a section of swale has been replaced with pipework as a remediation solution (Approved).

3/2022/0168: Variation of Condition 2 (Plans) of planning permission 2/2014/0801. Owing to post completion issues with ponding and standing water, a section of swale has been replaced with pipework as a remediation solution (Refused).

3/2016/0106: Discharge of condition(s) 10 (Car parking layout), condition 11 (cycling facilities for over 55's), condition 12 (motorbike facilities), 13 (travel plan), and 14 (acoustic barriers) or planning permission 3/2014/0801 (Approved).

3/2015/0374: Discharge of condition 20 (materials) on planning permission 3/2014/0801 (Approved).

3/2015/0286: Discharge of condition 6 (tree protection) or planning permission 3/2014/0801 (Approved).

3/2014/0801: Construction of 19 2-bed apartments for the over 55s and a 120 place children's day nursery, associated car parking and landscaping (Approved).

ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT:

Site Description and Surrounding Area:

The application relates to an area of land located to the south of Elker Meadows and west of Elker Lane, Billington. The site is bounded to the north by existing residential development which was granted consent under application reference 3/2014/0801 for the construction of 19 2-bed affordable apartments for the over 55's. As part of this permission, the proposal site the subject of this application was also granted consent for a 120 place children's day nurse and associated car parking; however, this element of the extant permission has not been implemented with the proposal site being predominantly greenfield in nature. To the east of the site, on the opposite side of Elker Lane, is St Augustine's Roman Catholic High School.

The proposal site is situated outside of the defined settlement limits of Billington and on land which benefits from an Open Countryside designation.

Proposed Development for which consent is sought:

Consent is sought for 'Permission in Principle' (PiP) for the construction of up to nine residential bungalows for the over 55's. Given the application seeks consent solely for matters pertaining to the principle of development, no details in respect of the proposed layout, configuration, nor external appearance of the bungalows are required to be submitted for consideration at this stage.

Principle of Development:

Permission in Principle applications may only deal with the principle of development and are not applications for planning permission. Any other details relating to any other material planning consideration are to be dealt with within any future Technical Details application. Planning practice guidance confirms the scope of permission in principle as being limited to matters of location, land use and amount of development. As such these matters have been assessed as follows:-

Location

The application seeks permission in principle for the erection of up to nine residential bungalows for the over 55's on land located outside of the defined settlement limits of Billington. As such, it is necessary to consider whether the location of the proposed new dwellings would be compatible with the overall spatial strategy for housing growth within the borough as identified within the currently adopted development strategy.

When considering the principle of a new residential development, Key Statement DS1 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy outlines a spatial strategy for new housing development which are to be directed to the strategic sites and principal and Tier 1 settlements. Policies DMH3 and DMG2 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy seeks to restrict residential development within the Open Countryside and AONB to that which meets a number of explicit criteria.

Policy DMG2 is two-fold in its approach to guiding development. The primary part of the Policy DMG2(1) is engaged where development proposals are located 'in' principle and tier 1 settlements with the second part of the policy DMG2(2) being engaged in circumstances when proposed development is located 'outside' defined settlement areas or within tier 2 villages, with each part of the policy therefore being engaged in isolation and independent of the other dependent on the locational aspects of a proposal.

The mechanics and engagement of the policy are clear in this respect, insofar that it contains explicit triggers as to when the former or latter criterion are applied and the triggers are purely locational and based on a proposals relationship to defined settlement boundaries and whether, in this case, such a proposal is 'in' or 'outside' a defined settlement.

The proposal is located outside of any defined settlement boundary, in this respect, when assessing the locational aspects of the development, it is the secondary element of Policy DMG2 that is engaged (Policy DMG2(2)) which states that:

Within the tier 2 villages and outside the defined settlement areas development must meet at least one of the following considerations:

- 1. The development should be essential to the local economy or social wellbeing or the area.*
- 2. The development is needed for the purposes of forestry or agriculture.*
- 3. The development is for local needs housing which meets an identified need and is secured as such.*
- 4. The development is for small scale tourism or recreational developments appropriate to a rural area.*
- 5. The development is for small scale uses appropriate to a rural area where a local need or benefit can be demonstrated.*

Given the site is located outside of any defined settlement limits, DMH3 is also applicable, with the policy being engaged in parallel with Policy DMG2. In this respect, Policy DMH3 states that:

Within areas defined as open countryside or AONB on the proposals map, residential development will be limited to:

- 1. Development essential for the purposes of agriculture or residential development which meets an identified local need. In assessing any proposal for an agricultural, forestry or other essential workers dwellings a functional and financial test will be applied.*
- 2. The appropriate conversion of buildings to dwellings provided they are suitably located and their form and general design are in keeping with their surroundings. Buildings must be structurally capable of conversion without the need for complete or substantial reconstruction.*
- 3. The rebuilding or replacement of existing dwellings [subject to a number of criteria].*

In respect of the above first criterion, it is clear from the submitted details that the proposal could not be argued as being 'essential to the local economy or social wellbeing of the area' nor could it be considered that the proposal 'is needed for the purposes of forestry or agriculture'.

Turning to the second criterion, in respect of the matter of 'local need', no robust evidence has been provided to suggest that the proposal would align with the definition of 'local needs housing'. The Ribble Valley Core Strategy states that local needs housing is '*the housing developed to meet the needs of existing and concealed households living within the Parish and surrounding parishes which is evidenced by the Housing Needs Survey for the parish, the Housing Waiting List and the Strategic Housing Market Assessment*' and that '*the most recent SHMA and Housing Needs Survey and waiting list evidence would always be used in determining if the proposed development meets the identified need.*'

The submitted details propose that the bungalows will be for those aged 55 or over. However, the submitted information indicates that the proposal remains for that of open market residential development and as such it must be assessed against relevant adopted development plan policies related to the location aspirations for new residential development in the Borough with policies DMH3 and DMG2 of the Adopted Core Strategy, once again, remaining fully engaged.

Turning to the matter of the bungalows being for occupation solely for those ages 55 years of age or over. Notwithstanding the potential occupancy restrictions that would be required to be imposed, the proposal would still remain for that of open market housing albeit occupancy of the bungalows would be age restricted. In this respect, the imposition or engagement of an age-related occupancy restriction alone would also fail to satisfy any of the explicit exception criterion contained within Policies DMG2 and DMH3.

In respect of the current proposal, no evidence in respect of over 55 housing need in the parish or adjacent parishes has been provided that would warrant the proposal being considered as being for that of an identified and outstanding local need.

As such, the proposed development would conflict with the spatial strategy set out in the development plan as the site lies outside the settlement boundary. Furthermore, it would not meet any of the identified considerations or exceptions which are required for residential development to be acceptable in the open countryside.

The most recently published five-year housing land supply figure (base date of 31st March 2025) indicated that Ribble Valley Borough Council has a housing land supply of 6.2 years. However, a recent appeal decision (dated 7th January 2026) at Land to the South of Chatburn Old Road, Chatburn (APP/T2350/W/25/3372635) determined that the Council has a housing land supply of 3.45 years.

The consequence of not having a 5YHLS is that in the case of this application, paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF is engaged in the decision-making process. On this basis the restrictive approach toward new housing development outside of settlements must be considered to be out-of-date.

Specifically for decision taking this means if the most relevant Local Plan policies for determining a planning application are out of date (such as when a 5YHLS cannot be demonstrated), 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

In terms of areas or assets of particular importance referred to at subsection i) above, these are identified as habitats sites and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest; land designated as Green Belt, Local Green Space, or a National Landscape, irreplaceable habitats; designated heritage assets (and other heritage assets of archaeological interest...); and areas at risk of flooding or coastal change. The application site is not affected by any such areas or assets as such this subsection does not apply. Whilst the site is at risk of surface water flooding, this is not a relevant matter for consideration at this PIP stage.

In which case the tilted balance should be applied and sub section ii) of Para 11d) requires the LPA to consider whether the adverse impacts of the development would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.

In terms of whether the site is in a sustainable location referred to at ii.) above and as required by policies DM12 and DMG3 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy, the site is located within the Open Countryside, outside of the settlement of Billington which is a Tier 1 settlement.

Despite being a Tier 1 settlement, the nearest local services/ facilities to the proposal in Billington are limited to a modest sized village store on Whalley Road and St Augustine's Roman Catholic High School. These facilities are within a 10-minute walking distance from the proposal site which is considered reasonable. However, given Billington does not benefit from a full complement or wide range of local services and facilities, future occupiers of the development would rely heavily on the provisions of neighbouring towns in order to meet their day-to-day needs.

There are bus stops on Whalley Road that are serviced by routes that provide connections to centres with a substantially broader range of services, or onward connection points for other public transport services.

The nearest bus stop is approximately 250 metres away, which Lancashire County Council Highways have confirmed in their consultation response is serviced by three subsidised services - 22 (Clitheroe – Shadsworth), 25 (Clitheroe – Blackburn) and 280 (Preston – Skipton). However, the Local Highway Authority also note that not all these services operate seven days a week and some operate on a limited frequency. In addition to this, whilst it is acknowledged that the principal settlement of Whalley would provide residents with a broader range of services, the centre of Whalley is a 1.9km (approximately 26 minute) walk from the proposal site. As such, it is not considered that the existing connectivity of the area would make travelling by public transport or walking an attractive method of transport for future occupiers.

The Council is also aware of recent planning appeal decision APP/T2350/W/25/3363889 which related to the development of a Clas C2 Continuing Care Retirement Community on land adjacent to the proposal site. In dismissing this appeal, the Inspector stated the following with respect to accessibility to services:

“The nearest local services of relevant to the proposal in Billington are limited to a modest sized village store on Whalley Road. There are also bus stops on Whalley Road that are fairly well served by routes that provide connections to centres with a substantially broader range of services, or onward connection points for other public transport services.

Such services would not be likely accessible to a considerable number of the residents of the proposal. They would likely be of some greater age and need assistance and so have greater difficulties in accessing services. As a consequence, where technical guidance applies acceptable walking distances has a limited bearing for the prospective residents. This lack of accessibility would likely give greater rise to the use of the car, where future residents would still have that degree and level of independence.

[...]

I conclude that the proposal would be unacceptable with regard to the accessibility to local services. As a result, it would not comply with Policy DMG3 of the Local Plan where it relates to the availability of public transport, the provision made for access by pedestrians, cyclists and those with reduced mobility, and locating proposals in locations that are highly accessible by means other than the private motor car. It would also not accord with the Framework, where such matters concern the presumption in favour of sustainable development.”

With respect to the above, whilst it is reasonable to assume that the future occupiers of the proposed development would have a higher level of accessibility than those of the previously dismissed Retirement Community, the lack of easily accessible services and facilities in the local area has been highlighted.

In this respect, it is considered that the proposal would result in a development where future occupants would be reliant upon the private motor vehicle to access services and facilities necessary to meet their day-to-day needs, including employment, supermarkets, medical services and other community facilities such as a post office and public houses.

Land Use

Policy DMG1 of the Core Strategy stipulates that all development must be sympathetic to existing and proposed land uses in terms of its size, intensity and nature. In this instance, the proposal seeks to introduce new housing to the application site which is located within a predominantly residential setting. Whilst it is acknowledged that St Augustine’s Secondary School is located to the east of the site, this use already co-exists alongside residential development. As such, the proposed use of the land within the application site for residential development would be sympathetic to the prevailing residential character of the area. Accordingly, the proposed development would be compliant with the provisions of Policy DMG1 and is therefore considered to be acceptable with regards to land use.

Amount of development

Policy DMG1 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...'

In this instance permission in principle is sought for the development of up to nine bungalows within the application site. Whilst an indicate site layout plan has not been provided, it is considered likely that the site would comprise sufficient space to accommodate the scale of development proposed with associated gardens and parking areas. As such, no concerns are raised at this permission in principle stage with respect to the amount of development being proposed.

It is also relevant to consider at this stage whether or not the amount of residential development could be successfully integrated within the landscape. Immediately to the north of the proposal site is the existing apartment complex approved under application 3/2014/0801, whilst St Augustine's High School and a row of terraced residential properties are situated directly to the east on the opposite side of Elker Lane. The proposed dwellings would therefore be read in this context, and no concerns are raised at this permission in principle stage with regards to the amount of development proposed.

Impact Upon Residential Amenity:

The remit of assessment of the application is limited to solely that of the principle of the development and as to whether the proposed development would align with the spatial and location aspirations for residential development within the Borough.

As such, matters relating to the potential for adverse impact(s) upon nearby residential amenities resultant from the development cannot be fully determined nor assessed at this stage and will be reserved for consideration/ assessment at any subsequent pursuant 'Technical Matters' submission(s).

Visual Amenity/External Appearance:

The remit of assessment of the application is limited to solely that of the principle of the development and as to whether the proposed development would align with the spatial and locational aspirations for residential development within the Borough.

As such, matters relating to the potential for adverse impact(s) upon the character or visual amenities of the area resultant from the development cannot be fully determined or assessed at this stage and will be reserved for considerations/ assessment at any subsequent pursuant 'Technical Matters' submission(s).

Highways and Parking:

Lancashire County Council Highways have been consulted on the application and comments have been provided. The Local Highway Authority, having considered the documents submitted together with site observations, and the site's previous planning permission, does not raise an objection to the principle of the proposed development. Despite this, the LHA note that occupants of the proposed development would likely be reliant on the private car due to the limited alternative modes available.

The LHA make reference to the proposal site's previous permission for the construction of a children's day nursery, noting that this would have generated higher levels of traffic movement compared with the proposed residential development. However, permission for the children's day nursey was granted in excess of 10 years ago under application reference 3/2014/0801, with no works to implement this element of the consent having been evident. It is therefore reasonable to assume that the children's day

nursery is now unlikely to be brought forward and therefore carries limited weight in the determination of this application.

With respect to the proposal itself, the LHA note that the road, footway and all infrastructure on Elker Meadows are privately maintained as the developer for the previously approved development did not enter into the necessary Section 38 legal agreement with the LHA for the development to be adopted. As such, if any development came forward on the site, this would also remain private and would not be considered for future adoption by the LHA. In this respect, the development red edge should be extending to Elker Lane as Elker Meadows does not form part of the publicly maintained highway network.

The LHA have also provided additional guidance with respect to matters which would need to be addressed as part of any subsequent 'Technical Matters' submission, relating to internal layout, car and cycle parking, refuse collection, off-site highway improvements and construction phase. However, the detailed assessment of the appropriateness/ adequacy of any internal highways arrangement and matters relating to on-site parking provision are reserved for consideration/ assessment as part of any subsequent pursuant 'Technical Matters' submission(s).

Landscape/Ecology:

No issues evident at this stage given the remit of the application relates solely to that of matters of principle. However, there will be the requirement for appropriate surveys to be undertaken and submitted in support of any subsequent 'Technical Matters' submission(s) to ascertain as to whether the proposal is likely to result in adverse impacts upon protected species or species of conservation concerns.

In addition, at the 'Technical Matters' stage, the applicant would be required to demonstrate how the proposal would achieve the mandatory 10% Biodiversity Net Gain requirements or provide an appropriate exemption in accordance with Section 4 of the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) regulations 2024.

Other Matters:

Flood Risk

The proposal site is at risk of surface water flooding and concerns have been raised about increased flood risk. The Council is aware of recent planning appeal decisions (APP/H1840/W/23/3329778, APP/H1705/W/21/3281406 & APP/F0114/W/22/3313796) which confirm the issue of flood risk (including the application of the Sequential Test and any necessary mitigation) as a matter to be dealt with at the Technical Details stage.

As such, whilst no concerns are raised at this stage, given the remit of the application relates solely to that of matters of principle, should consent be granted, there will be the requirement for an appropriate Flood Risk Assessment (and flood risk sequential test if applicable) to be undertaken and submitted in support of any subsequent 'Technical Matters' submission(s) to ascertain as to whether the proposal is likely to result in adverse impacts upon flood risk.

Conclusion and Planning Balance:

As identified earlier in this report, the Council are unable to demonstrate a Five-Year Housing Land Supply (5YHLS) and so Paragraph 11 d) of the NPPF is engaged and in this case the tilted balance applies, and the proposal must be assessed against 11 d) ii and a balancing exercise must be undertaken.

The benefits of the development have been considered, namely the delivery of housing especially in the context of a lack of 5YHLS, albeit the development would contribute up to nine bungalows to the Council's

housing supply. As such, this is considered to carry moderate weight. There would also be the benefit of consumer expenditure in the area, construction jobs and supporting the building industry supply chain. However, these short-term temporary benefits are considered to carry limited weight.

Paragraph 11 d) section ii) also requires the LPA to have particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, and for the reasons outlined within the report, it is considered that the granting of this permission in principle, would result in the creation of residential development in an unsustainable location.

The granting of residential development in this location is therefore considered to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits as there would be a reliance of private motor vehicles for future occupiers to access key services and facilities which is considered to be significant and even on the application of the tilted balance, there would not be justification to grant planning permission.

As such, the application is recommended for refusal.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Permission in Principle be refused.

01:

The proposal is considered to be in direct conflict with Key Statement DMI2 and Policy DMG3 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy and the overarching objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) insofar that approval would lead to the creation of up to nine new residential bungalows in an unsustainable location whereby there would be a reliance on private motor vehicle by occupiers of the dwellings to access key services and facilities.

When applying Paragraph 11 d) ii. of the NPPF, the resultant harm from allowing residential development in this unsustainable location is considered to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.