


Report to be read in conjunction with the Decision Notice.

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| Signed: | Officer: | LW | Date: | 21/04/26 | Manager: | LH | Date: | 21/4/26 |
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| Application Ref: | 3/2026/0112 | | |  Ribble Valley Borough Council <small>www.ribblevalley.gov.uk</small> |
| Date Inspected: | 26/03/26 | Site Notice: | 26/03/26 | |
| Officer: | LW | | | |
| DELEGATED ITEM FILE REPORT: | | | | REFUSAL |

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| Development Description: | Proposed construction of phase 1 of poultry house to accommodate 16000 free-range chickens for egg production. |
| Site Address/Location: | Wheatley Farm, Four Acre Lane, Longridge, PR3 2TD. |

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| CONSULTATIONS: | Parish/Town Council |
| A consultation response from Thornley and Wheatley Parish Council was received on 13 th March 2026 raising no issues with respect to the proposed development. | |

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| CONSULTATIONS: | Highways/Water Authority/Other Bodies |
| LCC Highways: | No objection subject to conditions. |
| United Utilities: | Direct the applicant to further sources of support and guidance on matters that might impact their proposal including drainage. |

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| CONSULTATIONS: | Additional Representations. |
| <p>Two letters of objection have been received with respect to the proposed development. The concerns raised can be summarised as below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noise impact due to increased vehicular movements; • Increased odour levels and air quality; • Increased risk to the environment; • Impact on public health; • Negative impact on roads due to increased farm vehicles; • Visual impact on the landscape; • Numerous farm developments taken place recently which do not have planning permission; • Birks Brow is regularly covered in muck, manure, mud or effluent running from recent developments being accessed from the field – causing drains to block and the road to flood; • Imposition of a condition requiring access to be from Four Acre Lane not Birks Brow. <p>One letter of support has also been received stating that the proposal will allow a local farmer to develop their business.</p> | |

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| RELEVANT POLICIES AND SITE PLANNING HISTORY: |
| <p>Ribble Valley Core Strategy:</p> <p>Key Statement DS1: Development Strategy Key Statement DS2: Sustainable Development Key Statement EN2: Landscape Key Statement DMI2: Transport Considerations</p> |

Policy DMG1: General Considerations
Policy DMG2: Strategic Considerations
Policy DMG3: Transport & Mobility

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Relevant Planning History:

3/2026/0113: Proposed construction of phase 2 of a poultry house to accommodate 16000 free-range chickens for egg production (Awaiting determination).

3/2025/0099: Prior notification for the construction of one poultry building 90m long, 10, wide, 4m high to ridge and 3m high to eaves (Refused).

3/2024/0131: Prior notification for the construction of one concrete agricultural track 130m long by 4.6m wide and 50m long by 7.6m wide (Permission Required).

3/2023/0938: Prior notification for the erection of an agricultural storage building (Withdrawn).

3/2017/0712: Conversion of brick barn (barn 1) to one dwelling, creation of curtilage with access and parking and installation of package treatment plant. Resubmission of application 3/2017/0292 (Approved).

3/2017/0293: Conversion of stone barn to one dwelling, creation of curtilage with access and parking and installation of package treatment plans (Approved).

3/2017/0292: Conversion of brick barn to one dwelling, creation of curtilage with access and parking and installation of package treatment (Withdrawn).

3/2015/0054: Erection of livestock building (Approved).

3/2015/0357: Prior notification for a harp track for cattle to walk on reducing damage to grass land in wet weather (Permission not required).

3/2013/0193: Proposed change of use of a single storey brick shippon to one residential dwelling (Withdrawn).

3/2012/0451: New roof over existing silage clamp (Approved).

3/2011/0813: Proposed change of use of agricultural barn to residential unit and to include retention of existing detached garage to be used as domestic garaging (Approved).

3/2008/0687: Proposed new building to provide extra accommodation for the dairy herd (Approved).

3/2005/0899: Conversion of three barns to dwellings, erection of farm office and store/workshop and two farm buildings (Refused).

3/1991/0780: Construction of slurry store (Approved).

ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT:

Site Description and Surrounding Area:

The site is comprised of Wheatley Farm, an agricultural unit which incorporates numerous agricultural buildings accessed via Four Acre Lane. The farmstead is located within the Open Countryside, over 2km north-east of the defined settlement of Longridge and within the Forest of Bowland National Landscape.

Proposed Development for which consent is sought:

Consent is sought for the construction of Phase 1 of a proposed poultry house to accommodate a total of 16,000 free-range chickens for egg production.

Phase 1 would comprise a building measuring 60m by 16.4m with an eaves and ridge height of 3.5m and 5.6m respectively and would be constructed from vertical steel cladding, with steel roof sheeting and steel framed doors. As part of the development, a new field track would also be created extending from Birks Brow to the proposed poultry house.

Phase 2 is applied for under concurrent application 3/2026/0113 and comprises an extension to the poultry building proposed under this application, resulting in a cumulative floorspace of 88m by 16.4m.

Principle of Development:

The site is not located within a defined settlement boundary and as such, Policy DMG2 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy is of relevance.

Policy DMG2 states that within Tier 2 villages and outside the defined settlement areas, development must meet a number of criteria. This includes development that is needed for the purposes of forestry or agriculture.

As such, an assessment must be made as to whether the proposed development is reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture.

The proposed development relates to the construction of an 88m by 16.4m poultry house, applied for in two phases with this application relating to Phase 1 (60m by 16.4m) and concurrent application 3/2026/0113 relating to Phase 2 (28m by 16.4m).

In this respect, it is important to highlight refused application reference 3/2025/0099. This was a Prior Approval application for a poultry building measuring 90m by 10m with an eaves and ridge height of 3m and 4m respectively, in the same location as the building proposed under this full planning application. The application was refused, in part, as it was considered that the applicant had failed to prove that the development was reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture, and as such could not be considered Permitted Development under Part 6 Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended) (GPDO). That conclusion was based on the following considerations:

The submitted application form states that the agricultural holding is 90 hectares in area and the proposal is for a free-range poultry building which would be utilised for egg production and allow farm diversification.

However, the test of 'reasonably necessary' is a core test of the GPDO which requires applicants to demonstrate that the proposed development is needed to support the agricultural activity in operation and is well-related to both the scale and nature of that activity. In this instance, the submitted information provides no details in relation to existing livestock numbers or the scale of the agricultural activity in operation to justify a building measuring 90m by 10m. As such, it is not considered that sufficient evidence has been provided to demonstrate that a functional agricultural need exists for a building of the size proposed.

In response, the applicant has provided additional information with respect to the agricultural enterprise within this application, as outlined below:

The agricultural holding is 100 hectares in area, of which 80 hectares is owned and 20 hectares is rented. The existing farming enterprise consists of 200 dairy cattle, 170 dairy cattle in calf, 15 beef cows, 25 bulls, 150 youngstock and 4,000 poultry with the existing buildings at Wheatley Farm currently utilised for cattle accommodation and storage.

The proposed building is required for the applicant's growing egg business, to supply eggs all year round across two farms for disease control and modernisation. The complex, inclusive of Phase 1 and Phase 2, is to accommodate 16,000 chickens with all necessary facilities under one roof.

However, having regard to the above, it is still not considered that the application has been supported by sufficient evidence and justification that the building is reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture. The proposed building would comprise a substantial footprint and the applicant has failed to justify the size/scale of the building for the number of chickens to be housed. In addition, whilst it is stated that the applicant wishes to spread the egg production business across two separate farms, the applicant has not provided any information in relation to the type and number of buildings at the other farmstead so as to justify the construction of a new building, of the size and scale proposed, at Wheatley Farm.

Furthermore, the building is proposed to be accessed via a new field track extending from Birks Brow through the centre of the field for a distance of approximately 200m. However, the main farmyard at Wheatley Farm is accessed off Four Acre Lane and there is understood to be an existing access into the field to the south of the existing agricultural buildings. With this in mind, the applicant has failed to provide sufficient justification for the proposed new field track from Birks Brow or demonstrate why the poultry house cannot be accessed via the existing farmyard.

With the above in mind, the applicant has failed to demonstrate a justifiable need for the proposed building and field track, and as such the principal of development is not secured and it is not considered that the proposal is reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture in this instance, as per the requirements of Policy DMG2 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy.

In addition, the site lies within the Forest of Bowland National Landscape and therefore in making a decision, the Local Planning Authority should give weight to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty of the National Landscape which has the highest status of protections in relation to these issues in accordance with Paragraph 189 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Impact Upon Residential Amenity:

The proposed development would be sited approximately 100m from a number of residential receptors located to the north of the Wheatley Farm. As such, consideration must be given towards the implications of constructing a new poultry building with respect to impacts upon neighbouring amenity.

The application has been subject to review by the Council's Environmental Health Team. The Environmental Health Officer has raised concerns about odour from the proposed development and the potential for this to cause a nuisance to nearby residential properties. The Officer has therefore requested that an Odour Management Plan be submitted in support of the application.

If the Local Planning Authority were minded to support the development, an Odour Management Plan would have been requested during the course of the application. However, given the concerns raised throughout this report in respect to the principle of development and visual amenity, this has not been requested. In the absence of an Odour Management Plan, insufficient information has been submitted in order to determine whether or not the proposed development would be sympathetic to neighbouring

land uses and that nearby residential receptors would not be subject to adverse odour issues. The proposal is therefore contrary to Paragraph 135 and 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy DMG1 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy.

The Environmental Health Officer also noted that poultry units can be associated with flies and rodent problems and have therefore requested that a condition be attached to any subsequent planning approval requiring the submission of a Pest Management Plan which identifies hazard or annoyance from pests in particular rodents and insects. The Officer also requested a condition requiring a scheme detailing the provisions to be made for the safe storage of waste to be submitted in order to ensure that no detriment to amenity from smell, flies or vermin arises. If the Local Planning Authority were to approve the development, these conditions would be considered appropriate in order to protect the amenity of the locality, especially for nearby residential receptors.

Visual Amenity/External Appearance:

Key Statement EN2 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy states that:

'The landscape and character of the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty will be protected, conserved and enhanced. Any development will need to contribute to the conservation of the natural beauty of the area.'

'The landscape and character of those areas that contribute to the setting and character of the Forest of Bowland Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty will be protected and conserved and wherever possible enhanced.'

'As a principle the Council will expect development to be in keeping with the character of the landscape, reflecting local distinctiveness, vernacular style, scale, style, features and building materials.'

In addition, Policy DMG1 of the Core Strategy states that development must *'not adversely affect the amenities of the surrounding area'* and *'consider the density, layout and relationship between buildings, which is of major importance.'*

Policy DMG2 states that in the National Landscape *'where possible new development should be accommodated through the re-use of existing buildings, which in most cases is more appropriate than new build. Development will be required to be in keeping with the character of the landscape and acknowledge the special qualities of the AONB by virtue of its size, design, use of materials, landscaping and siting.'*

Policy DMG2 also states that the AONB Management Plan should be considered and will be used by the Council in determining planning applications.

Paragraph 135 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that planning decisions should ensure that development:

- 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;*
- c) *are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surroundings built environmental and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities).*

With respect to development in the National Landscape, Paragraph 189 of the National Planning Policy Framework also states that:

Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and National Landscapes which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads. The scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.

It is considered that the proposed development would result in a change to the character of the rural landscape.

Phase 1 of the proposed poultry house would comprise a significant footprint in its own right measuring 60m by 16.4m with a height of 5.6m. The building would be situated in the eastern extents of the agricultural field approximately 70m from the main farmyard at Wheatley Farm and on a higher land level than Birks Brow which runs parallel with the western border to the field, resulting in the building occupying a visually prominent position when viewed from the public highway. The development, by virtue of its overall size, scale and siting would therefore read as an incongruous addition to the surrounding area, detached from the existing agricultural buildings associated with the farmstead and resulting in harm to the landscape character.

Whilst it is noted that this application relates to Phase 1 only, the submitted supporting information suggests that both Phase 1 and Phase 2 are required in order to accommodate the 16,000 chickens, hence why both phases have been submitted for planning approval at the same time. It is therefore reasonable to assume that both phases would be constructed simultaneously and therefore a consideration of the cumulative visual impact is also considered necessary.

As mentioned above, Phase 1 would comprise a footprint of 60m by 16.4m, with Phase 2 of the proposal increasing the building by a further 28m to create an overall footprint of 88m by 16.4m and total floor area of 1,443 square metres.

In this respect, it is again considered important to highlight refused Prior Approval application 3/2025/0099 for the construction of a similar scheme. Whilst the previous scheme was not considered Permitted Development under Part 6 Class A of the GPDO, in the interest of transparency, the Council went on to assess whether or not prior approval would have been required as to the siting, design and external appearance of the proposal in accordance with condition A2 (2) (i) with the delegated report reading as follows:

'Whilst the proposed building would incorporate traditional agricultural materials, including green box profile tin, the development would comprise a significant footprint and would be detached from the existing cluster of agricultural buildings, instead being sited within the adjacent open agricultural field. The siting of the proposed building, combined with the size of the development, would therefore result in an incongruous addition to the surrounding landscape.

As such, even if the proposed development would meet the permitted development criteria, prior approval is required and refused in terms of siting and design/ appearance.'

Whilst it is noted that the total length of the building (inclusive of Phase 1 and Phase 2) has been reduced by 2m, the width and height of the proposal has been increased from 10m to 16.4m and 4m to 5.6m respectively, resulting in a larger overall building than that originally proposed under the refused prior approval application. The building is also to be sited in the same location and as such, the concerns raised under 3/2025/0099 remain.

In addition to the above, the proposed poultry house would be accessed via a new field track from Birks Brow measuring a total of 200m in length. The track would dissect the agricultural field, with the

aforementioned change in land levels meaning that that the track would be clearly visible from the public highway, thus causing detrimental harm to the visual amenities of the landscape. The submitted *'Proposed Landscaping to Include BNG Mitigation'* plan also shows the incorporation of post and wire stock fencing and planting to both sides of the track, as well as planting to the west of the proposed poultry building. This would only increase the proposal's urbanising appearance and would further erode the existing rural landscape.

The long-term vision for the National Landscape within the AONB Management Plan is *'The Forest of Bowland landscape retained its sense of local distinctiveness, notably the wide-open moorland character of the Bowland Fells, undulating lowland farmland, clough woodlands, traditional buildings and the settlement patterns of its villages, hamlets and farmsteads.'*

The management plan also notes that some of the challenges within the Forest of Bowland National Landscape include traditional agricultural buildings becoming redundant and replaced with large, modern buildings as well as the construction of new tracks in open countryside for farming, forestry and moorland management purposes. Whilst it is considered that the erection of new agricultural buildings and tracks are inevitable to allow the modern farm to function adequately, development within the Forest of Bowland National Landscape is required to be sensitively designed and to contribute to the conservation of the natural beauty of the area.

The construction of the proposed poultry house would result in a significant addition to an open agricultural field which would be of such a size and scale that it is considered to result in harm to the special qualities of the National Landscape. In addition, the proposed field track and landscaping is considered to result in a harmful urbanising impact and erosion of the rural landscape, without clear justification, failing to protect or conserve the special qualities of the Forest of Bowland National Landscape.

As such, the development fails to comply with the aims and objectives of Key Statement EN2 and Policies DMG1 and DMG2 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy, as well as Paragraph 135 and 189 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Highways and Parking:

The proposal has been subject to review by Lancashire County Council Highways who are of the opinion that the proposed development would not have a detrimental impact on highway safety and highway capacity within the immediate vicinity of the site.

The Local Highway Authority (LHA) note that the submitted documentation indicates that the proposed new poultry house will be serviced by a new 3m wide hardcore field access track. This will utilise an amended field gate access onto the adopted highway network. However, it is also noted that the plans submitted incorrectly show the position of the access. If the Council were minded to approve the application, amended plans showing the correct location of the access would be requested.

The LHA also request a number of conditions relating to surfacing, drainage and the construction phase of the development which would be attached to any planning approval.

Landscape/Ecology:

Biodiversity Net Gain

The application has been accompanied by a Retrospective Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment. However, during a site visit it was noted that the area where the building and track are proposed had not been laid and as such, the scheme is not considered to be wholly retrospective.

Notwithstanding this, the submitted Assessment indicates that a post-development biodiversity net gain of 10.22% could be achieved on site taking account of Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the development as a whole. The proposal therefore satisfied the statutory requirements with respect to Biodiversity Net Gain subject to the statutory condition being satisfied.

Environmental Impact Assessment

The development proposes the construction of a poultry house to accommodate 16,000 free-range chickens for egg production with a total floorspace of 1,443 sqm (inclusive of Phase 1 and Phase 2). Whilst the development does not exceed the stipulated threshold of 50,000 layers as set in the NPPG – EIA Annex: Indicative Screening Thresholds (column 3 in the table at Paragraph 58), the proposal does exceed the threshold criteria in Schedule 2 1c and is in a sensitive area. As such, the development must be screened.

The Screening Exercise was completed on 6th March 2026. It was concluded that considering the nature, scale and location of the proposed development and the nature of the receiving environment, whilst there may be some impact on the surrounding area and designated sensitive area as a result of the development, it would not be of a scale and nature likely to result in significant environmental effects. As such, an Environmental Impact Assessment is not considered necessary in this particular instance.

Other Matters:

Unauthorised Works

During a site visit, it was noted that a new (unauthorised) silage clamp has recently been constructed in the field and concerns regarding this have also been raised by a third-party representation. Given this structure does not benefit from any formal consent from the Local Planning Authority, the presence of this existing structure is given limited weight in the determination of this application; however, the Council’s Planning Enforcement Team have been notified.

Observations/Consideration of Matters Raised/Conclusion:

As such, it is for the above reasons and having regard to all material considerations and matters raised that the application is recommended for refusal.

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| RECOMMENDATION: | That planning consent be refused for the following reasons: |
| 01: | The applicant has failed to demonstrate a justifiable need for the proposed poultry house and field access track. As such, it is not considered that the development is reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture in this instance as per the requirements of Policy DMG2 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy. |
| 02: | The proposed poultry house by reason of its size, scale and siting would result in the loss of openness within the site. In addition, the proposed field access track would result in a harmful urbanising impact and erosion of rural landscape, both of which would fail to protect, conserve or enhance the landscape and character of the Forest of Bowland National Landscape, contrary to Key Statement EN2 and Policies DMG1 and DMG2 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy and Paragraph 135 and 189 of the National Planning Policy Framework. |
| 03: | The application has failed assess the potential implications for nearby residents with respect to odour. Therefore, it cannot be concluded that the proposed development would be sympathetic to neighbouring land uses and that nearby residential occupants would not be subject to adverse odour issues contrary to |

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| | Policy DMG1 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy and Paragraph 135 and 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework. |
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