

Report to be read in conjunction with the Decision Notice.								
Signed:	Officer:	LW	Date:	14/07/26	Manager:	KH	Date:	15/07/26

Application Ref:	3/2026/0140			 Ribble Valley Borough Council www.ribblevalley.gov.uk
Date Inspected:	20/03/26	Site Notice:	20/03/26	
Officer:	LW			
DELEGATED ITEM FILE REPORT:				APPROVAL

Development Description:	Proposed demolition of existing dwelling and replacement with one new dwelling (self-build), outbuilding and garage.
Site Address/Location:	Rose Hill Farm, Whalley Old Road, Billington, BB7 9JF.

CONSULTATIONS:	Parish/Town Council
No comments received.	

CONSULTATIONS:	Highways/Water Authority/Other Bodies
LCC Highways:	No objection subject to conditions.
CONSULTATIONS:	Additional Representations.
No representations received.	

RELEVANT POLICIES AND SITE PLANNING HISTORY:
Ribble Valley Core Strategy: Key Statement DS1: Development Strategy Key Statement DS2: Sustainable Development Key Statement EN1: Green Belt Policy DMG1: General Considerations Policy DMG2: Strategic Considerations Policy DMG3: Transport & Mobility Policy DME1: Protecting Trees & Woodland Policy DME3: Site and Species Protection and Conservation Policy DME5: Renewable Energy National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Relevant Planning History: No relevant planning history.

ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT:
Site Description and Surrounding Area:

The application site relates to a detached, two-storey dwelling known as Rose Hill Farm (formerly Smalley's Farm House). The property is finished in render with a grey slate roof and combination of timber and uPVC framed windows and doors. It includes an integral double garage and benefits from a large, detached outbuilding.

The site is accessed via an existing track taken from Whalley Old Road to the east, which also serves several other residential properties.

With respect to topography, the site sits at a notably lower level than Whalley Old Road, with land levels falling towards the north in the direction of the railway line.

The site lies outside of any defined settlement boundary and is located within the designated Green Belt. The surrounding area is rural in character, predominantly comprising a mix of agricultural land and sporadic residential development.

To the east of the site lies Smalley's Farm Biological Heritage Site, which is an area of ecological importance. To the west is Mytton Fold Golf Course, separated from the site by open grazing land also within the applicant's ownership. A Public Right of Way runs to the south and west of the site, affording views of the proposal site and surrounding countryside.

Proposed Development for which consent is sought:

Consent is sought for the demolition of the existing dwelling and associated outbuilding, and the erection of a replacement two-storey dwelling, together with a detached garage and a separate outbuilding.

The replacement dwelling would provide five bedrooms and associated residential accommodation, arranged across two storeys. The proposed outbuilding would be used for ancillary purposes, including a gym and annex accommodation, whilst the detached garage would provide parking for two vehicles in addition to a store and plant/services room.

The proposed development would be constructed using a palette of materials comprising natural stone and timber cladding, with a natural stone slate roof and light grey/ taupe aluminium-framed glazed openings with stone window surrounds. Timber garage and stable-style doors are also proposed to the detached garage, along with solar panels to the south-eastern roof pitch of the dwellinghouse.

The scheme has been subject to amendments since its original submission. The design of the replacement dwelling and outbuilding has been revised and the originally proposed new vehicular access from Whalley Old Road has now been omitted from the scheme, with the development intending to utilise the existing access serving the site.

Principle of Development:

Impact on Green Belt

The application site lies within the designated Green Belt and therefore Key Statement EN1 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy and national Green Belt Policy contained within Section 13 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) are engaged.

Key Statement EN1 relates solely to development within the defined Green Belt and states that '*the overall extent of the green belt will be maintained to safeguard the surrounding countryside from inappropriate encroachment. The development of new buildings will be limited to the purposes of agriculture, forestry, essential outdoor sport and recreation, cemeteries and for other uses of land which preserve the openness of the green belt, and which do not conflict with the purposes of its designation*'.

In addition, the NPPF states that there is a general presumption against inappropriate development in the Green Belt and advises that when considering any planning application, Local Planning Authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt.

NPPF Paragraph 154 sets out that the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt should be regarded as inappropriate, subject to a closed list of exceptions. One such exception is the replacement of an existing building, provided the new building is in the same use and is not materially larger than the building it replaces, and it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.

There is no specific definition within the NPPF or Ribble Valley Core Strategy in relation to what constitutes 'materially larger'. The generally accepted approach is for an assessment of the increased footprint and volume that the development would create above that of the existing building. However, the assessment of whether a replacement dwelling is 'materially larger' is not solely a numerical exercise and must also take into account factors such as height, external dimensions and visual perception.

In this respect, the existing dwellinghouse comprises a relatively contained footprint with both two-storey and single storey elements. The main two-storey element of the property has a maximum width of 16m, depth of 14.3m and height of 7.5m, with the single storey elements including a relatively modest front and rear porch and integral double garage measuring 4.3m in height.

In comparison, the originally proposed replacement dwelling comprised a U-shaped configuration, with two pitched roof wings projecting from the south-eastern elevation to create a central courtyard area. One of the aforementioned wings was to be single storey in design but with a maximum height of 6m, whilst the two-storey element of the proposal comprised an L-shaped footprint measuring 23.4m by 21m with a maximum height of 8.7m. With this in mind, it was considered that the overall design of the development would result in dwelling which would appear significantly greater in both bulk and massing when compared to the existing property. It is acknowledged that the existing property and outbuilding are cumulatively large; however, within the context of the overall design of the proposed replacement dwelling, the additional size and scale (40% increase in volume from existing to proposed) would have been readily discernible, significantly extending the visual impression of built development at the proposal site. It was therefore considered that the proposal as originally submitted would appear 'materially larger' than that of the existing property.

In addition to this, whilst Paragraph 154 of the NPPF allows for engineering operations (such as hard surfaced access tracks) in Green Belt, this is provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.

The proposal originally submitted with the application included a new access track which extended approximately 140m between Whalley Old Road and Rose Hill Farm, with a width of 3.8m, winding through the centre of the of the field, along with 0.9m high stone walls and a gate at the entrance. Whilst it was acknowledged that the gravel geogrid system track with a central verge would appear somewhat agricultural in appearance, the length and position of the track and associated hard surfaced entrance and stone walls was considered to intensify and urbanise the site which is currently an undeveloped grassland accessed via a modest field gate. The proposal would thus result in a fundamental change to the character of the field and a loss of openness in the Green Belt.

In view of the above, the original scheme was considered to constitute inappropriate development, insofar that it would fail to meet any of the Green Belt exceptions outlined in Paragraph 154 of the NPPF.

Grey Belt

Paragraph 153 of NPPF states that *"when considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its*

openness". Although the footnote to Paragraph 153 refers to "Other than in the case of development on previously developed land or grey belt land" this is only in cases "where development is not inappropriate".

As such, the site was also considered in the context of 'Grey Belt' as defined within the December 2024 NPPF:

"Grey belt: For the purposes of plan-making and decision-making, 'grey belt' is defined as land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b) or (d) in Paragraph 143. 'Grey belt' excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 (other and Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development."

With respect to the above, Green Belt purposes (a), (b) and (d) are as follows:

- (a) To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.
- (b) To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another.
- (d) To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns.

However, even if it is accepted that the proposal site falls to be considered Grey Belt, in order to be regarded as not inappropriate, the development must also meet the criteria at Paragraph 155 of the NPPF.

Paragraph 155 sets out that the development of homes, commercial and other development in the Green Belt should not be regarded as inappropriate where the following apply:

- a) The development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan;
- b) There is a demonstratable unmet need for the type of development proposed;
- c) The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of this Framework; and
- d) Where applicable the development proposed meets the 'Golden Rules' requirements set out in paragraphs 156-157 below.

In consideration of whether the site falls to be considered grey belt as set out above, the Council did not consider that all of the proposal site fell to be considered previously developed land within the meaning set out in the glossary of the NPPF (see below), given the site included the undeveloped grassland to the south-east of Rose Hill Farm.

***"Previously developed land:** Land which has been lawfully developed and is or was occupied by a permanent structure and any fixed surface infrastructure associated with it, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed). It also includes land comprising large areas of fixed surface infrastructure such as large areas of hardstanding which have been lawfully developed. Previously developed land excludes: land that is or was last occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for mineral extraction or waste disposal by landfill, where provision for restoration has been made through development management procedures; land in built-up areas such residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments, and land that was previously developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface have blended into the landscape."*

Nevertheless, it is not considered that this area of Green Belt strongly contributes to purposes (a), (b) or (d) in Paragraph 143 of NPPF. The proposal site also does not fall within any of the relevant areas or assets outlined in footnote 7 (other than Green Belt). As such, the land is considered to meet the definition of grey belt, and the relevant tests of Paragraph 155 are considered below: -

With regards to Paragraph 155(a), the Green Belt Review (currently being undertaken to inform the new Local Plan) is not sufficiently advanced as yet to determine the extent to which the proposal would affect

the ability of all remaining Green Belt across the Borough from serving all five Green Belt purposes in a meaningful way. In the context of the emerging Green Belt Review, the Council is not in a position to demonstrate that the test at Paragraph 155(a) has not been satisfied.

However, with respect to Paragraph 155 (b), there is not considered to be a demonstratable unmet need for the proposed replacement dwelling or new access. The existing property at Rose Hill Farm is an occupied residential dwelling and there is an existing access that serves at least three other residential properties and provides access to Whalley Old Road to the east. As such, criterion (b) of Paragraph 155 is not met.

Turning to Paragraph 155 (c), the location of the proposal site means that the occupants of the development would be reliant on the use of private motor vehicles to meet their day-to-day needs and would therefore fail to meet Paragraph 115(c) of the NPPF. However, the proposal relates to a replacement dwelling and therefore the development would not be any less sustainable in terms of reliance on the private car than the existing situation. With this in mind, there is not considered to be any direct conflict with the test at Paragraph 155 (c).

As such, whilst the land in question is considered to fall within the definition of Grey Belt, for the reasons outlined above, the development would not fall within the exceptions at Paragraph 155 of the NPPF is therefore considered inappropriate. In this case, substantial weight should be given to the Green Belt harm identified above.

Amended Scheme

In light of the above concerns, and following discussions with the agent, the proposal has been substantially amended. The previously proposed access has been removed in its entirety, and the design of the replacement dwelling has been revised.

The amended dwelling has been reduced in overall scale and massing, resulting in an approximately 23% increase in volume when compared to the existing building. Importantly, this increase would be considerably less perceptible than that proposed under the previous scheme. The projection of both wings has been reduced, including the removal of the previously proposed flat-roofed link elements. Furthermore, the pitched roof formerly proposed over the single-storey wing has been replaced with a flat green roof, further reducing the visual impact of the development. The associated outbuilding has also been scaled down and redesigned as a simpler linear form, resulting a more restrained and subordinate appearance.

These amendments are considered to have sufficiently addressed the concerns identified above. The revised design results in a more cohesive form of development, improving both the spatial and visual relationship of the proposal with its surroundings. On balance, the replacement dwelling is not considered to be materially larger than the building it would replace for the purposes of Paragraph 154(d) of the NPPF.

Furthermore, the amended scheme would not result in a significant loss of openness, either spatially or visually, nor would it conflict with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt. The proposal is therefore not inappropriate development and is considered to comply with Key Statement EN1 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy and Section 13 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Impact Upon Residential Amenity:

The nearest residential properties to the proposal site are Smalley's Farm approximately 100m to the west, West Lodge 230m to the southwest and Arlington Grange approximately 220m to the south. Given these separation distances, it is not anticipated that the proposed development would result in any significant undue harm upon the existing amenities of any nearby residents by way of overshadowing, loss of outlook, daylight or privacy.

The development is therefore considered acceptable with respect to impact upon residential amenity.

Visual Amenity/External Appearance:

Policy DMG1 of the Core Strategy states that development must *'by sympathetic to existing and proposed land uses in terms of its size, intensity, and nature as well as scale, massing, style, features and building materials'* and *'particular emphasis will be placed on visual appearance and the relationship to surroundings'*.

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

- a) *Will function 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 surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities).*

The scheme as originally submitted comprised a large and architecturally complex dwelling, incorporating a U-shaped footprint with projecting gables, flat roofed linking elements, extensive areas of glazing and a varied palette of materials. Whilst contemporary design is not in itself unacceptable, the cumulative effect of these elements resulted in a building of considerable visual complexity and combined with its scale and massing, the dwelling would have appeared overly prominent and incongruous within this rural landscape setting.

In addition, the originally proposed access track and associated entrance walls and gate would have introduced a visually intrusive feature across the open field to the south of the dwelling. Due to the topography and public vantage points, these elements of the scheme would have been visually prominent, resulting in a harmful urbanising effect and eroding the rural qualities of the landscape.

As mentioned above, the scheme has been amended since initial submission and adopts a more coherent and balanced architectural approach, with a clearer hierarchy of built elements. The overall massing has been consolidated into a more compact form, reducing visual spread across the site.

The palette of materials has also been rationalised, with natural stone serving as the primary material and timber cladding used more sparingly which better reflects the local vernacular whilst still incorporating some contemporary detailing. The two feature rooflights have also been omitted.

As a result of these amendments, the proposed dwelling is considered to achieve an improved balance between traditional and contemporary design approaches. It would sit more comfortably within its landscape setting and would not appear as a discordant or overly dominant feature when viewed from surrounding vantage points so as to warrant the refusal of planning permission.

The removal of the access track is also a significant improvement, ensuring that the open field to the south remains free from intrusive built form, thereby preserving the rural character and visual amenity of the wider area.

The proposed outbuildings, although cumulatively large, would replace the existing large, detached structure and would remain subordinate to the primary dwellinghouse in which they would relate. The overall design and materiality would also appear in keeping with the proposed replacement dwelling and therefore no significant concerns are raised in this respect.

Overall, it is considered that the amended proposal sufficiently addresses the aforementioned concerns. The proposal is therefore compliant with Policy DMG1 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy and Paragraph 135 of the NPPF.

Highways/ Footpaths:

The application has been subject to review by Lancashire County Council Highways Authority who raise no objection to the proposed development.

The scheme as originally submitted included the formation of a new vehicular access onto Whalley Old Road. The Highway Authority advised that the access would require works to be secured through a legal agreement and constructed to an appropriate specification. However, this element has been removed from the amended scheme, and the development will instead utilise the existing access arrangement which serves the dwelling and several other residential properties. As such, no highway works are required in association with the proposal.

The proposed parking provision is considered adequate, comprising a double garage and a hard-surfaced driveway capable of accommodating residential parking needs. Provision is also made for secure cycle storage within the garage and an electric vehicle charging point.

A public Right of Way passes in close proximity to the site, and the submitted plans indicate a potential diversion. This is not a matter that can be controlled through the planning permission itself and would need to be addressed separately under the relevant legislation. Notwithstanding this, Lancashire County Council Footpaths has been consulted on the application; however, no response has been received at the time of writing. The applicant is therefore advised to liaise to Lancashire County Council's Public Rights of Way team to secure any necessary order prior to the commencement of development.

Overall, the proposal is considered acceptable in highway safety terms.

Landscape/Ecology:

An Ecological Survey and Assessment has been submitted in support of the application. The report identifies a number of habitats of local ecological value in the vicinity of the site, including woodland, hedgerows and grassland. The proposed development would retain these features, with the woodland, grassland and hedgerows unaffected by the amended scheme. Smalley's Farm Biological Heritage Site (BHS), located to the east of the application site, would also be unaffected by the development. No direct impacts on these habitats have been identified; however, the report recommends the installation of temporary protective fencing during the construction phase to prevent inadvertent damage to retained ecological features.

Invasive plant species have been identified within or adjacent to the site. It is an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) to cause the spread of Indian Balsam, Wall Cotoneaster Virginia Creeper and Montbretia in the wild. As such, it is recommended that a specialist contractor be employed for the eradication/ control of these species at the site, and that this is completed under a suitable Invasive Species Management Plan.

The existing dwelling is known to support bat roosts, including brown long-eared bats and common pipistrelle, which are European Protected Species. The proposed works therefore have the potential to result in harm to bats and the loss of roosting habitat. The submitted assessment concludes that, subject to the implementation of an appropriate mitigation strategy and the securing of a Natural England European Protected Species Mitigation Licence, the impacts can be reduced to an acceptable level.

In order for the Natural England Licence to be granted, Natural England requires three tests for the development to be met: (a) Preserving public health or public safety or other imperative reasons of overriding public interest; (b) there is no satisfactory alternative; and (c) the action will not be detrimental to maintaining the population of the species concerned as a favourable conservation status in its natural range. As competent authority, the Habitats Directive places a duty on Local Planning Authorities to consider whether there is a reasonable prospect of a licence being granted and apply the three tests.

With regard to the first test, replacing an older building which is not considered worthy of retention with a new energy efficient dwelling is considered to be acceptable as this would deliver both environmental benefits and improve the quality of the Borough's housing stock which in turn is considered to be in the public interest. As such, the proposal would meet the requirements of the first test.

In terms of the second test, the provision of any replacement dwelling on site would require the demolition of the existing property and therefore there it not considered to be any satisfactory alternative.

The final test is an ecological one, which the submitted ecology report suggests could be met, subject to appropriate mitigation measures being secured and implemented.

Accordingly, the proposed development would meet the requirements of all three tests and as such, there is considered to be a reasonable prospect that Natural England would grant a licence for the proposed development. The requirement to obtain a licence and implement any necessary mitigation measures can be secured by a planning condition.

The site also provides suitable habitat for nesting birds and Priority Species such as hedgehog and brown hare. Appropriate safeguards during the construction phase, including timing of vegetation clearance and precautionary working methods, are recommended and can be secured by condition.

An Arboricultural Impact Assessment has also been submitted. This identifies a number of trees and hedgerows of varying quality, including one high quality veteran tree. The proposal does not necessitate the removal of any trees or hedging; however, limited pruning works are required to facilitate the demolition of the existing outbuildings. These impacts are limited in extent and the retention and protection of retained trees and hedgerows during construction can be secured through a condition.

The Assessment notes that the Proposed Site Plan does not indicate the location of proposed services or drainage infrastructure. However, it is anticipated that these will principally utilise existing connections, and there is no evidence to suggest that new infrastructure would need to be installed within the Root Protection Areas (RPAs) of retained trees or hedgerows. Should new services be required, including service trenches, electric vehicle charging infrastructure and associated connections, or foul and surface water drainage, these should be located outside the RPAs of retained trees and hedgerows wherever practicable. In circumstances where installation within an RPA is demonstrably unavoidable, works must be undertaken in accordance with NJUG Volume 4 guidance, using hand excavation only and adopting methods that minimise damage to roots and avoid adverse impacts on the long-term health and stability of retained trees and hedgerows.

In respect of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), the amended scheme is considered to be exempt from the mandatory requirements due to the self-build nature of the proposal, which has been secured via a unilateral undertaking. The originally proposed access, which triggered the need for a BNG assessment, has been removed from the scheme.

Subject to the implementation of the recommended mitigation and enhancement measures, the proposal is not considered to result in any unacceptable impacts on ecology, trees or the wider landscape.

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 approval.

RECOMMENDATION:	That planning consent be granted subject to the imposition of conditions.
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