

PLANNING STATEMENT

Proposed Change of Use from Taxi Office to Children's Indoor Role Play Centre

Unit D
29–33 Berry Lane
Longridge
PR3 3JA

1.0 Introduction

This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a planning application seeking permission for the change of use of an existing commercial premises to a children's indoor role play centre, including ancillary refreshment facilities, at Unit D, 29–33 Berry Lane, Longridge.

The proposal seeks to bring an existing commercial unit back into active use and introduce a family-focused recreational facility within Longridge town centre. The development will contribute positively to the vitality of the town centre while providing a safe and engaging environment for young children to participate in imaginative play and early learning activities.

The proposed development involves internal alterations only, with no material changes to the external appearance of the building.

2.0 Site Location and Description

The application site is located at Unit D, 29–33 Berry Lane within the centre of Longridge. Berry Lane forms the principal commercial street within the town and contains a wide variety of retail units, cafés, services and community facilities.

The surrounding area is characterised by a mix of commercial premises at ground floor level with some residential accommodation located above shops and services. The wider town centre includes independent retailers, restaurants, public houses and community facilities that collectively contribute to the vitality of the settlement.

The premises currently operate as a taxi office and comprise a ground floor commercial unit with a total internal floor area of approximately 85 square metres.

The site lies within the Longridge Conservation Area, which covers the historic core of the town including Berry Lane and the surrounding streets.

3.0 Proposed Development

The proposal seeks permission for the change of use of the premises to a children's indoor role play centre designed primarily for young children and their families.

The facility will provide a safe and stimulating environment where children can engage in imaginative role-play activities designed to support creativity, communication and early childhood development.

Internally, the building will be arranged to provide a range of play zones alongside supporting facilities for visitors and staff. These will include:

- reception and welcome area
- themed role-play activity spaces for children
- seating area for parents and carers
- refreshment preparation area
- kitchen area for pre-prepared food
- toilet facilities

The total internal floor area of the premises is approximately 85m². The proposal does not involve any external alterations to the building.

4.0 Operational Details

The role play centre will primarily cater for children aged 0–7 years, providing themed play environments designed to encourage imaginative play, social interaction and learning through exploration.

The centre will operate during daytime hours only, with proposed opening hours of 09:30 to 17:00 Monday to Sunday. These hours are consistent with surrounding town centre uses and ensure compatibility with neighbouring properties.

The centre will operate on a session-based booking system, enabling visitor numbers to be carefully managed. Each session will accommodate approximately 25 children, accompanied by parents or carers.

Staffing levels are expected to consist of approximately two to three members of staff per session, ensuring safe and effective supervision.

A small refreshment area will provide pre-prepared food and beverages only, including items such as sandwiches, snacks and drinks. No cooking will take place on site and therefore no extraction equipment or external flues are required. The refreshment provision will be ancillary

Commercial waste generated by the premises will be stored within a designated bin storage area located at the rear of the property, with collections undertaken by licensed commercial waste contractors.

5.0 Planning Policy Context

Planning applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The relevant development plan comprises the Ribble Valley Core Strategy (2014) together with the Longridge Neighbourhood Plan. National policy is set out within the UK Government (NPPF).

5.1 Ribble Valley Core Strategy

DS1 – Development Strategy identifies Longridge as a principal settlement where new retail, leisure and community uses will be directed in order to support sustainable communities. The application site lies within the defined settlement boundary and town centre, making it an appropriate location for a leisure and community facility.

DS2 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development confirms that the Council will take a positive approach to development proposals that improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the borough. The reuse of an existing commercial unit to provide a family-focused recreational facility is consistent with this objective.

EC1 – Business and Employment Development supports development that contributes to the vitality and viability of town centres. By introducing a family-orientated leisure use within the town centre, the proposal will increase visitor numbers and support surrounding businesses.

EC2 – Development of Retail, Shops and Community Facilities seeks to support and protect community facilities and services that contribute to sustainable communities. The proposed role play centre represents a recreational facility that will serve local families and contribute positively to the social infrastructure of Longridge.

EN5 – Heritage Assets seeks to conserve and enhance the significance of heritage assets and their settings. The site lies within the Longridge Conservation Area and the proposal has been designed to ensure that the character and appearance of the conservation area is preserved.

Policy DMG1 – General Considerations requires development proposals to be sympathetic to surrounding land uses and not adversely affect residential amenity. The proposed daytime leisure use is considered compatible with the surrounding town centre environment.

Policy DMG3 – Transport and Mobility encourages development in accessible locations with good access to public transport and local services. The application site occupies a central location within Longridge where visitors can access the premises by foot, public transport or existing town centre parking.

Policy DME2 – Landscape and Townscape Protection requires development to respect the character and appearance of the surrounding area. As the proposal involves internal alterations only, the existing streetscape and townscape will remain unchanged.

Policy DME4 – Protecting Heritage Assets establishes a presumption in favour of conserving heritage assets and their settings. The proposed development will preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area.

5.2 Longridge Neighbourhood Plan

The Longridge Neighbourhood Plan forms part of the statutory development plan and provides additional locally specific planning policies.

Policy LNDP10 – Longridge Main Centre supports development for town centre uses within the defined main centre boundary, including leisure, recreation and community facilities. The proposed role play centre clearly falls within these categories.

Policy LNDP5 – Longridge Design Principles requires new development to respond positively to the local character and distinctiveness of the area. As the proposal does not involve external alterations, the existing character of the building and surrounding streetscape will be maintained.

Policy LNDP6 – Conserving and Enhancing Designated Heritage Assets supports development that preserves or enhances heritage assets including conservation areas. The proposal retains the building and ensures the continued active use of premises within the conservation area.

Policy LNDP13 – Development of New and Improved Community Facilities supports the creation of new community facilities where these do not harm residential amenity or local character. The proposed role play centre will provide a new recreational facility for families in the town.

6.0 Planning Evaluation

The key planning considerations in the assessment of this application include the principle of development, the impact on the conservation area, highway considerations and the impact on residential amenity.

6.1 Principle of Development

The application site lies within the defined settlement boundary and town centre of Longridge where retail, leisure and community uses are actively encouraged by the development strategy.

The proposed role play centre represents a leisure and community use which will contribute positively to the vitality of the town centre and provide a facility for local families. The proposal therefore aligns with the objectives of Key Statements DS1, EC1 and EC2 of the Core Strategy and Policy LNDP10 of the Longridge Neighbourhood Plan.

6.2 Impact on the Conservation Area

The site is located within the Longridge Conservation Area, which is characterised by historic commercial buildings forming the core of the town centre.

The proposed development involves internal alterations only, meaning there will be no changes to the external appearance of the building or the wider streetscape.

The continued use of the premises as an active town centre business will support the vitality of the conservation area while preserving its character and appearance. The proposal therefore complies with Core Strategy Policy DME4 and neighbourhood plan Policy LNDP6.

6.3 Highways and Accessibility

The application site occupies a sustainable and accessible location within Longridge town centre. The premises are within walking distance of local services and public transport routes, and visitors can utilise existing town centre parking facilities.

Due to the modest scale of the premises and the session-based operation of the facility, visitor numbers will be managed and the proposal is not expected to generate significant additional traffic.

The development therefore accords with Core Strategy Policy DMG3 relating to transport and mobility.

6.4 Residential Amenity

The proposed use is compatible with the surrounding town centre environment and will not give rise to unacceptable impacts on neighbouring properties.

All activities will take place within the building and the centre will operate during daytime hours only. The development does not involve amplified music, outdoor play areas or late-night activity.

In addition, as no cooking will take place on the premises, there will be no odour or extraction impacts associated with the refreshment provision.

The proposal therefore complies with Policy DMG1 relating to the protection of residential amenity.

7.0 Conclusion

This application seeks permission for the change of use of an existing commercial premises to a children's indoor role play centre at Unit D, 29–33 Berry Lane, Longridge.

The development represents the sustainable reuse of an existing building within the town centre and will provide a valuable community facility for local families. The proposal will support the vitality of the town centre, preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area and generate minimal impact on the surrounding area.

For these reasons, the proposal is considered to be in accordance with national and local planning policy. It is therefore respectfully requested that planning permission be granted.