

Report to be read in conjunction with the Decision Notice.								
Signed:	Officer:	LW	Date:	18/06/26	Manager:	LH	Date:	19/6/26

Application Ref:	3/2026/0274			 Ribble Valley Borough Council www.ribblevalley.gov.uk
Date Inspected:	15/05/26	Site Notice:	15/05/26	
Officer:	LW			
DELEGATED ITEM FILE REPORT:				APPROVAL

Development Description:	Proposed change of use and conversion of the existing detached garage into a single residential dwelling with parking.
Site Address/Location:	Ridings Cottage, 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 Key Statement DMI2: Transport Considerations 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 DMH4: The Conversion of barns and other Buildings to Dwellings National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Relevant Planning History: 3/2024/0069: Certificate of Lawfulness for an existing wall that was substantially completed more than four years ago (Refused). 3/2017/0403: Non-material amendment from planning permission 3/2014/0943 for amended fenestration details (Approved).

3/2014/0943: Extension at side of property to provide annexe accommodation; single storey at the front and two storey at the rear (Approved).

ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT:

Site Description and Surrounding Area:

The application site comprises a detached, three-storey outbuilding located within the residential curtilage of Ridings Cottage. The building is of traditional construction, finished in natural stone with a slate roof, and features timber windows and doors. The structure was granted planning consent in 1973 under historic planning application 6/9/3894 for use as a stable at lower ground floor, a garage at ground floor and hay loft/ store at first floor.

Access to the site is via a private track off Whalley Old Road which also serves a small number of neighbouring residential properties.

The surrounding area is predominantly rural in character, characterised by sporadic residential development set within open fields. The site lies outside of any defined settlement boundary and is located within the designated Green Belt. A public Right of Way runs along the access track.

Proposed Development for which consent is sought:

Planning permission is sought for the change of use and conversion of the existing detached outbuilding associated with Ridings Cottage to form a separate residential dwelling.

The proposed dwelling would be arranged over three storeys. The lower ground floor would provide a bedroom with en-suite facilities. The ground floor would accommodate the main living spaces, including a lounge and open plan kitchen/ dining area. At first-floor level, two additional bedrooms are proposed, together with an en-suite, a family bathroom and a study/ home office.

Externally, the building would be largely retained in its current form, with no significant alterations to its overall scale or footprint. Alterations are limited to the introduction of a modest oak-framed entrance canopy on the south-western elevation, the widening of an existing first-floor window on the north-western gable, and the insertion of a glazed feature door within the existing garage door opening on the south-east elevation.

All materials are proposed to match the existing building, with the natural stone walls and slate roof retained, and replacement windows to be timber framed to reflect the existing detailing.

The scheme also includes the formation of a hard surfaced parking area to accommodate one vehicle and the storage of bins to the south-west of the building, enclosed by retaining walls. An additional parking space is also proposed to be provided adjacent to the existing parking for Ridings Cottage further down the access track.

A new stone boundary wall is proposed to delineate the curtilage of the new dwelling and separate it from the amenity space of Ridings Cottage.

Principle of Development:

The application site lies within the designated Green Belt. As such, Key Statement EN1 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy and national Green Belt policy outlined in 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'*.

Paragraph 154 of the NPPF states that the construction of new buildings within the Green Belt should be regarded as inappropriate development, which should not be approved except in very special circumstances. However, it also confirms that the re-use of existing buildings is not inappropriate provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction and the proposal preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.

In this instance, the proposal relates to the conversion of an existing detached building, rather than the erection of a new structure. A Structural Condition Survey has been submitted which confirms that the building is generally in sound condition, with only localised repairs required. The building is therefore considered to be of permanent and substantial construction and capable of conversion without significant rebuilding. Furthermore, the proposed external works are limited in scope and would not materially alter the scale, form or footprint of the building. Accordingly, the proposed residential conversion would preserve the openness of the Green Belt and would not conflict with its purposes.

The proposal also includes the formation of a parking area and associated hardstanding. Paragraph 154 of the NPPF confirms that engineering operations can be appropriate in the Green Belt, provided they preserve openness. In this case, the works are relatively modest in scale and contained within the existing domestic curtilage of Ridings Cottage, such that they would not give rise to any significant loss of openness or encroachment into the countryside.

Policy DMH4 of the Core Strategy supports the conversion of barns and other buildings to residential use, subject to a number of criteria:

1. *The building is not isolated in the landscape, i.e. it is within a defined settlement or forms part of an already group of buildings, and*
2. *There need to be no unnecessary expenditure by public authorities and utilities on the provision of infrastructure, and*
3. *There would be no materially damaging effect on the landscape qualities of the area or harm to nature conservation interests, and*
4. *There would be no detrimental effect on the rural economy, and*
5. *The proposals are consistent with the conservation of the natural beauty of the area.*
6. *That any existing nature conservation aspects of the existing structure are properly surveyed and where judged to be significant preserved or, if this is not possible, then any loss adequately mitigated.*

The building to be converted must also:

1. *Be structurally sound and capable of conversion for the proposed use without the need for extensive building or major alteration, which would adversely affect the character or appearance of the building. The Council will require a structural survey to be submitted with all planning applications of this nature. This should include plans of any rebuilding that is proposed;*
2. *Be of a sufficient size to provide necessary living accommodation without the need for further extensions which would harm the character or appearance of the building, and*
3. *The character of the building and its materials are appropriate to its surroundings and the building, and its materials are worthy of retention because of its intrinsic interest or potential or its contribution to its setting, and*
4. *The building has a genuine history of use for agriculture or another rural enterprise.*

The application building is located within the curtilage of Ridings Cottage and in close proximity to other residential properties served by the same access track. It does not appear isolated within the wider landscape and instead forms part of a small group of buildings.

The proposal would utilise the existing access arrangements, with any improvements and servicing works to be undertaken at the applicant's expense. As such, the development would not give rise to any unnecessary expenditure by public authorities or utilities on the provision of new infrastructure.

In terms of landscape and character, the conversion is largely limited to the re-use of the existing structure, with minimal external alterations proposed. The building's traditional materials and form would be retained, ensuring that the development would not adversely affect the character or appearance of the surrounding area. It also not anticipated that the proposal would harm nature conservation interests or the rural economy.

Moreover, a bat survey has been submitted in support of the application which raises no concerns with respect to the impact of the proposed development upon protected species. With this in mind, the proposal is considered to comply with all the criteria set out within the first part of Policy DMH4.

Having regard to the additional criteria within Policy DMH4, the submitted structural survey confirms that the building is in generally sound condition and is capable of conversion without extensive rebuilding. The scale of the building is also sufficient to accommodate the proposed residential use without the need for extensions. The building's traditional character and materials reflect the local vernacular and makes a positive contribution to its rural setting, thus justifying its retention.

With respect to the final criterion, the original planning permission for the building indicates that it was used to accommodate a stable, garage and hayloft/store. Whilst there are rural in nature, it is likely that they served a private function rather than forming part of a wider rural enterprise. As such, the proposal is not considered to fully comply with this element of Policy DMH4, which requires the building to have a genuine history of use for agriculture or another rural enterprise.

Policy DMG3 of the Core Strategy also requires decision taking to consider the availability and adequacy of public transport and associated infrastructure to serve those moving to and from new developments. This is consistent with the NPPF which requires development proposals to promote sustainable transport. The site is located in a rural area outside of any defined settlement boundary, approximately 1.7km from Billington and 2.4km to Langho. Accessibility to services and public transport is limited, with the nearest bus stop approximately 1.6km away and accessed via an unlit road with no footways. Future occupants would therefore be reliant on private vehicles, which weighs against the proposal in sustainability terms. However, this is balanced against the sustainability benefits of re-using an existing under-utilised building.

Housing Supply

The most recently published five-year housing land supply figure for the Ribble Valley (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 (appeal ref: APP/T2350/W/25/3372635) has found that the Council no longer have a five-year housing land supply and the housing supply is calculated to be 3.45 years.

The consequence of not having a 5YHLS is that 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. While the application site is located within the Green Belt, the proposed development is not considered to give rise to harm to this designation that would amount to a clear reason for refusal. Accordingly, this subsection is not considered to be engaged in this instance.

In which case, the tilted balance should be applied and subsection ii) of Paragraph 11(d) requires the LPA to consider whether the adverse impacts of the development would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. This will be discussed later in this report.

Impact Upon Residential Amenity:

The proposed development has been assessed having regard to its potential impact on the living conditions of both neighbouring residents and future occupiers of the site.

The openings proposed to the front, rear and north-eastern elevations of the dwelling would not directly face any nearby residential properties, and as such would not give rise to issues of overlooking or loss of privacy.

Openings within the south-western elevation would face towards Ridings Cottage with a separation distance of approximately 18m maintained between the two buildings. Whilst this is marginally below the typically recommended separation distance between habitable room windows, the relationship is considered acceptable in this instance due to the proposed use of obscure glazing to the ground and first floor windows serving the lounge, bedroom 1, and the stairwell, which would significantly reduce opportunities for overlooking. This can be secured by a planning condition.

Given that the proposal relates to the conversion of an existing building with no extensions or increases in height, it is not anticipated that the development would result in any material harm in terms of overshadowing, loss of light, or overbearing impact upon neighbouring properties. The proposed boundary walls and retaining structures are modest in scale and would not appear unduly prominent or intrusive, nor would they adversely affect the outlook from neighbouring properties.

Overall, it is considered that the proposal would provide an acceptable standard of amenity for both existing and future occupants, subject to the imposition of a condition requiring obscure glazing to the ground and first floor windows on the south-western elevation.

Visual Amenity/External Appearance:

The proposal seeks to convert the existing building without extending its footprint or altering its overall scale or massing. As such, the development would retain the established form and proportions of the structure.

The scheme proposes to utilise the majority of the existing window and door openings, with only limited alterations proposed. These include minor changes to fenestration and the addition of a modest entrance

canopy. The external materials, comprising natural stone walls and a slate roof are to be retained, alongside the installation of replacement timber windows and doors. The development would therefore maintain the building's traditional character and its contribution to the local vernacular, subject to the submission and agreement of detailed specifications for the proposed windows and doors.

Given the limited nature of the external alterations, the proposal would not result in any material change to the visual character of the building. The development would therefore integrate sufficiently with its surroundings and would not give rise to any significant adverse visual impacts.

The proposed hardstanding, retaining walls and boundary treatments are modest in scale and would not appear anomalous or incongruous within the site. Accordingly, these elements are also considered acceptable in visual terms.

Overall, the proposal is considered acceptable with respect to visual amenity and external appearance.

Highways and Parking:

The application has been reviewed by Lancashire County Council, acting as the Local Highway Authority, and their comments have been received.

Pre-application advice was sought prior to submission of this formal planning application, and a copy of the Highway Authority's response has been included within their consultation comments.

The proposed dwelling would be accessed via an existing private track, which joins Whalley Old Road at an established junction. Whalley Old Road is a classified road subject to the national speed limit. The Highway Authority notes that the private track is currently in poor condition and, in the interests of highway safety, has requested that the first 5m of the access, measured from the carriageway edge, be surfaced in a bound material.

The development is also expected to result in a modest increase in vehicular movements at the junction. Visibility to the south is currently restricted by a group of trees within the verge of Whalley Old Road. The Highway Authority has therefore recommended that visibility improvements be undertaken in this direction, including the removal or reduction of vegetation to a maximum height of 0.9m above the carriageway level.

Although the submitted plans indicate such improvements, the land required to carry out the works lies outside the applicant's control. Consequently, these measures cannot reasonably be secured by condition. The Highway Authority has confirmed via email that, while the improvements would be beneficial, they do not wish to raise an objection in their absence.

In respect of internal site layout, the Highway Authority advised at pre-application stage that the access to the proposed parking area should achieve 45-degree visibility splays, measured 3m back from the nearside edge of the private track. This requirement may have necessitated a slight repositioning of the parking area. The submitted scheme situates the parking area sufficiently offset from the dwelling to maintain adequate visibility, and the Highway Authority have confirmed that this arrangement is acceptable.

With regards to parking provision, the scheme includes two spaces within the application site – one adjacent to the dwelling and one located to the south-west, near the existing parking area serving Ridings Cottage. This level of provision is considered appropriate for a three-bedroom dwelling.

The Highway Authority has requested a number of planning conditions be attached to any subsequent approval, including a condition requiring the submission of a Construction Management Plan/ Construction Method Statement to ensure the safe operation of the adopted highway during demolition

and construction. However, given the limited scale and nature of the proposed works, including minimal demolition and construction activity, such a condition is not considered necessary in this instance.

Overall, the proposal is considered acceptable in terms of highway safety and parking, subject to the imposition of appropriate conditions.

Landscape/Ecology:

Bats

A Bat Survey dated 3rd March 2026 has been submitted in support of the application. The report concludes that there is no evidence of bats either currently or historically present within the building, and that the site does not provide any high value potential for roosting either internally or externally. The proposed conversion to a dwelling is therefore unlikely to adversely affect local bat populations through the loss of roosting opportunities or disturbance to commuting or foraging routes. In light of these findings, further surveys are not considered necessary, and no mitigation measures are required.

Notwithstanding the above, it is recommended that roost enhancement measures are incorporated into the development. This should include the installation of two Sku Beaumaris (or similar) bat boxes on the south-east or south-west elevations of the building. This enhancement can be secured by way of an appropriately worded planning condition.

Trees

A number of trees are present within close proximity to the site. The proposed development is not expected to result in any significant direct impacts on these trees, and no tree removals are proposed. Nevertheless, to ensure their continued health and amenity value, tree protection measures during construction can be secured via a planning condition.

Biodiversity Net Gain

The proposed development is exempt from the requirement to deliver mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain, as it falls within the de minimis exemption.

Conclusion and Planning Balance:

As identified earlier in this report, the Council is unable to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply.

The NPPF at Paragraph 11(d) states that a presumption in favour of sustainable development means 'where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless the proposal conflicts with the policies of the Framework relating to the protection of assets or areas of importance or the adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the 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.'

The NPPF at Paragraph 11(d) footnote 7 identifies a number of protected areas of particular importance. While the application site is located within the Green Belt, the proposed development is not considered to give rise to harm to this designation that would amount to a clear reason for refusal.

As such, the tilted balance therefore applies, and the proposal must be assessed against Paragraph 11(d)ii. and a balancing exercise must be undertaken.

There are some benefits that would arise from the scheme. The granting of this permission would provide a small contribution to the Council's housing stock, although as the permission is for one dwelling only, this would not represent a significant gain in stock or significant contribution towards the Council's 5YHLS. The permission would result in the conversion of a building which makes a positive contribution to its setting. There would also be the benefit of consumer expenditure in the area, construction jobs and supporting the building industry supply chain. However, these benefits are considered to carry limited weight. Other benefits include re-using an existing, under-utilised building which accords with sustainability objectives.

In identifying the harm, Paragraph 11(d) section ii. required the LPA to have particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, and for the reasons outlined within this report, it is considered that the granting of planning permission would result in the creation of residential development in an unsustainable location. Additionally, the building is not considered to have a genuine history of use for agriculture or another rural enterprise, and therefore conflicts with Policy DMH4 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy.

Notwithstanding these conflicts, it is concluded that the adverse impacts identified would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposal. Taking all matters into account, the application is therefore recommended for approval.

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