

Report to be read in conjunction with the Decision Notice.								
Signed:	Officer:	EP	Date:	30/07/2026	Manager:	LH	Date:	31/7/26

Application Ref:	3/2026/0311			 Ribble Valley Borough Council www.ribblevalley.gov.uk
Date Inspected:	24/05/2026	Site Notice:	24/05/2026	
Officer:	EP			
DELEGATED ITEM FILE REPORT:				APPROVAL

Development Description:	Retrospective application for the retention of 8 out of the 14 solar panels on the southeast facing roof slope.
Site Address/Location:	Rushton House, Lower Chapel Lane, Grindleton, BB7 4QT.

CONSULTATIONS:	Parish/Town Council
Grindleton Parish Council:	No objection.

CONSULTATIONS:	Highways/Water Authority/Other Bodies
N/A	
CONSULTATIONS:	Additional Representations.
No comments received.	

RELEVANT POLICIES AND SITE PLANNING HISTORY:
Ribble Valley Core Strategy: Key Statement DS1: Development Strategy Key Statement DS2: Sustainable Development Key Statement EN2: Landscape Key Statement EN3: Sustainable Development And Climate Change Key Statement EN5: Heritage Assets Policy DMG1: General Considerations Policy DMG2: Strategic Considerations Policy DME3: Site And Species Protection And Conservation Policy DME4: Protecting Heritage Assets Policy DME5: Renewable Energy Policy DMH5: Residential and Curtilage Extensions Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Section 72 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
Relevant Planning History: 3/2023/0973: Retention of 14 solar panels on the South East facing roofslope. Resubmission of 3/2023/0297. (refused) 3/2023/0297: Proposed addition of 16 x 395kw solar panels on the south east facing roof slope (Refused)

ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT:

Site Description and Surrounding Area:

The application relates to a detached two storey property in Grindleton. The property comprises stone elevations with render, UPVC windows and a slated cross gabled roof. The property has been previously extended by way of a single storey lean-to extension on its South-western gable end. The property's principal and rear elevations face into and adjacent to Lower Chapel Lane and Main Street respectively with the property's garden area running directly adjacent to Main Street. The surrounding area is residential and comprises a mixture of house types of different ages. The wider area comprises woodland, agricultural land and open countryside with the application site lying within the Forest of Bowland National Landscape and Grindleton Conservation area.

Proposed Development for which consent is sought:

Retrospective planning consent is sought for the retention of 8 x 395kw solar panels on the South-eastern facing roof slope of the application property.

Impact upon Character/appearance of Conservations Area:

The proposal site is situated within the Grindleton Conservation Area. With reference to making decisions on applications for development in Conservation Areas, Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that:

"...special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area."

This guidance is reiterated in Key Statement EN5 of the Ribble Borough Valley Core Strategy which stipulates that all development proposals should respect and safeguard the character, appearance and significance of all Conservation Areas.

The *Grindleton Conservation Area Appraisal (2005)* identifies the following elements as contributing to the Conservation Area's special interest:

- Visibility of Grindleton within surrounding AONB area
- The survival of the village's medieval street plan
- Numerous historic buildings
- Local details such as wells, farmhouses and barns, a pinfold, stone field boundaries and other reminders of the agricultural history of the village
- The close proximity of relatively wild moorland and open fields, which provide a rural setting to the village.
- Panoramic views to Chatburn, on the opposite side of the River Ribble, and to the shoulder and scarp of Pendle Hill

The Conservation Area's key views are listed as the panoramic views of Pendle Hill from the upper end of the Main Street, Sawley Road and the Methodist Chapel. Threats to the Conservation Area are listed as the continuing loss of original architectural details and use of inappropriate modern materials or details.

The *Grindleton Conservation Area Management Guidance (2005)* offers the following with respect to the external alteration of properties:

'The roof is nearly always a dominant feature of a building and the retention of its original structure, shape, pitch, cladding and ornament is important...the poorly thought out introduction of services can be detrimental to the appearance and character of a building...[these] should be located carefully in a visually unobtrusive position away from the principal elevation.'

From the site visit it was evident that the solar panels have been installed on the property's South-eastern roof slope which is sited directly adjacent to Main Street which serves as a main artery through the Conservation Area. The large majority of the property's South-eastern roof slope is publicly viewable from more than one viewpoint when facing North-eastwards towards the application property from Main Street therefore the existing solar panels in place are clearly discernible from within the Conservation Area. In addition, the existing solar panel arrangement occupies the large majority of the property's South-eastern roof slope and whilst the panels in situ comprise a recessed flush fitting design, the installed solar panels nonetheless read as a noticeable and incongruous addition to the area by virtue of the contrast in materials, reflective surface and the predominant coverage of the property's South-eastern roof slope and by virtue of the absence of any other roof mounted microregeneration equipment within the immediate vicinity of the application site. However, the current application proposes to reduce the number of panels, following discussion, to 8. As a result, due to the elevated position of the application property, only very limited views of the panels, if any at all, would be afforded. Given the panels will benefit from a largely screened position, any impact to the character and visual amenities of the area would be negligible.

In this instance, the level of harm to the Conservation Area arising from the unauthorised development is therefore considered to be less than substantial and at the lower end of the scale.

Paragraph 208 of the NPPF states:

'Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.'

The application's supporting statements make reference to public benefits arising from the unauthorised development. In this instance, installation of the solar panels has involved the use of contractor employment, and the continued use of the solar panels have the potential to reduce the carbon footprint of the application property. Given the reduced number of panels now proposed, it can be argued that the development inflicts a low level of less than substantial harm. Whilst the public benefits may be limited, given the low level of harm identified, they are considered proportionate to outweigh the low level of harm identified in this instance.

As such, it is not considered there would be any significant impact to the Character of the Conservation Area to warrant refusal.

Impact Upon Residential Amenity:

No impacts upon neighbouring amenity are identified from the proposal.

Visual Amenity/External Appearance:

Paragraph 135 (c) of the NPPF states:

'Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting'.

Policy DMG1 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy provides additional general design guidance as follows:

'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, including impact on landscape character.'

With respect to development within National Landscapes, Paragraph 182 of the NPPF states:

'Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.'

The above is reiterated within Key Statement EN2 of the Core Strategy:

'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. 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.'

Policy DME5 of the Core Strategy seeks to support the use of renewable energy schemes, subject to assessment of the visual impact of the proposal, including design, colour, scale and impact upon the surrounding landscape, with a greater degree of scrutiny to be applied to proposals for renewable energy schemes within or close to the Forest of Bowland National Landscape.

The application property lies within the Forest of Bowland National Landscape which in this instance is predominantly characterised by stone based dwellings comprising a largely uninterrupted roofscape set against a backdrop of wider open countryside. As conveyed above, the existing unauthorised solar panel arrangement occupies the large majority of the property's South-eastern roof slope with the installed solar panels being publicly visible and reading as largely anomalous by virtue of the absence of similar roof mounted microregeneration equipment within the locality. The amended scheme reduces any visual prominence so that the panels will appear inconspicuous within the streetscene and wider National Landscape. The proposal is therefore considered acceptable from a visual perspective.

Landscape/Ecology:

A bat survey carried out at the application property on 18/05/2026 found no evidence of any bat related activity. The application property was deemed to hold negligible roosting potential for bats therefore no further survey work has been recommended. No other ecological constraints were identified in relation to the proposal.

Observations/Consideration of Matters Raised/Conclusion:

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 permission be refused for the following reasons:
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