

| Report to be read in conjunction with the Decision Notice. |                 |           |              |                 |                 |           |              |                |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------|--------------|----------------|
| <b>Signed:</b>                                             | <b>Officer:</b> | <b>LW</b> | <b>Date:</b> | <b>16/07/26</b> | <b>Manager:</b> | <b>LH</b> | <b>Date:</b> | <b>17/7/26</b> |

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| Application Ref:            | 3/2026/0341 |              |          |  <div>Ribble Valley<br/>Borough Council</div> <hr/> <a href="http://www.ribblevalley.gov.uk">www.ribblevalley.gov.uk</a> |
| Date Inspected:             | 29/05/26    | Site Notice: | 29/05/26 |                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Officer:                    | LW          |              |          |                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| DELEGATED ITEM FILE REPORT: |             |              |          | APPROVAL                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

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| <b>Development Description:</b> | Proposed erection of three single storey leisure facility buildings within the hotel grounds. |
| <b>Site Address/Location:</b>   | Foxfields Country Hotel, Whalley Road, Billington, BB7 9HY.                                   |

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| <b>CONSULTATIONS:</b> | <b>Parish/Town Council</b> |
| No comments received. |                            |

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| <b>CONSULTATIONS:</b>                                                                                     | <b>Highways/Water Authority/Other Bodies</b> |
| <b>LCC Highways:</b>                                                                                      | No objection subject to conditions.          |
| <b>CONSULTATIONS:</b>                                                                                     | <b>Additional Representations.</b>           |
| One third-party representation has been received raising concerns with regards to surface water flooding. |                                              |

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| <b>RELEVANT POLICIES AND SITE PLANNING HISTORY:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <p><b>Ribble Valley Core Strategy:</b></p> <p>Key Statement DS1: Development Strategy<br/> Key Statement DS2: Sustainable Development<br/> Key Statement EN4: Biodiversity and Geodiversity<br/> Key Statement EC1: Business and Employment Development<br/> Key Statement EC3: Visitor Economy<br/> Key Statement DMI2: Transport Considerations</p> <p>Policy DMG1: General Considerations<br/> Policy DMG2: Strategic Considerations<br/> Policy DMG3: Transport &amp; Mobility<br/> Policy DME1: Protecting Trees &amp; Woodland<br/> Policy DME3: Site and Species Protection and Conservation<br/> Policy DME6: Water Management<br/> Policy DMB1: Supporting Business Growth and the Local Economy<br/> Policy DMB3: Recreation and Tourism Development</p> <p>National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)</p> <p><b>Relevant Planning History:</b></p> <p>3/2017/0626: 2 wall signs positioned on the building and 1 totem sign positioned at the entrance to the site (Approved).</p> |

3/2016/1052: Nonmaterial amendment to planning permission 3/2015/0474 to raise the lower section of two-storey roof to restaurant for eaves and ridge level to be the same height as existing two-storey element; two windows added to front elevation; approved glazed void above gas cupboard to be replaced with an oriel window to roof void to top of gable above gas cupboard; addition of buttresses to existing outer wall (Approved).

3/2015/0474: Modifications to the fenestration of the hotel reception areas and restaurant; addition of entrance plinth and disabled ramp to hotel reception; removal of an existing entrance lobby and bay window to the rear of the restaurant; addition of a glazed canopy and new restaurant lobby; conversion of first floor staff accommodation to additional restaurant area; addition of a roof terrace to the first floor and a fire escape; replacement of solid canopy at function room entrance with a glazed canopy; addition of a chimney to road elevation to restaurant; new pitched roof to existing gas cupboard on road elevation of restaurant (Approved).

3/2002/0589: Renewal of existing planning permission for hotel extension to provide 26 bedrooms (Approved).

3/2001/0277: Advertisement consent for 3 flagpoles for banner advertisements (Approved).

#### **ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT:**

##### **Site Description and Surrounding Area:**

The application site comprises an area of greenfield land associated with Foxfields Country Hotel. It is located outside of any defined settlement boundary and within an area designated as Open Countryside.

##### **Proposed Development for which consent is sought:**

Consent is sought for the erection of three single storey leisure facility buildings with flat roofs, each measuring 10m by 12m with a maximum height of 3.1m. The proposed buildings would be constructed using natural stone, incorporating reclaimed stone quoins and aluminium window frames with stone surrounds.

Each building would accommodate facilities designed to support and enhance the hotel's existing leisure and wellness offer. These include a dedicated treatment room for nail and massage therapies, an additional gym facility, and a flexible multi-purpose space incorporating an area for Pilates sessions. Ancillary facilities, including a WC, kitchenette and storage area, would also be provided within each building.

The buildings would be interconnected by a pedestrian pathway, allowing convenient access between the facilities.

##### **Principle of Development:**

The use of the site as a hotel is well established through previous planning permissions. The current proposal would introduce additional floorspace and associated facilities; however, the supporting information demonstrates that the development is intended to enhance and consolidate existing operations through the provision of purpose-built accommodation for activities that are already being undertaken on site.

At present, nail and massage treatments are carried out within hotel bedrooms, requiring equipment to be moved between rooms. The proposed dedicated treatment facilities would therefore improve operational efficiency whilst enhancing the experience of guests.

Furthermore, it is understood that the existing gym is operating at or near capacity. The additional fitness space would enable a greater number of guests to access these facilities during their stay and would improve the overall leisure offer of the hotel.

The hotel's conference room is also currently used to store Pilates equipment, which limits its functionality and reduces its suitability for hosting events. The proposed development seeks to address this conflict by providing a dedicated and accessible space for Pilates sessions, thereby allowing the conference facilities to be used for their intended purpose.

Taken together, the proposed development would support the continued operation of the hotel by improving the quality, efficiency and functionality of its existing facilities.

Having regard to these factors, it is considered that the need for the additional floorspace has been adequately justified. The proposal would not result in a material intensification of the established hotel and leisure use; rather, it would represent the improvement and consolidation of existing facilities and services. Subject to the imposition of appropriate planning conditions restricting the use of the proposed facilities to hotel guests only, the development is considered acceptable in principle.

#### **Impact Upon Residential Amenity:**

The nearest residential property is Foxcroft, which is located adjacent to the hotel access from Whalley Road. The proposed buildings would be situated approximately 50m from this dwelling and would be separated from it by the existing hotel car park. Given this separation distance and relationship, the development does not give rise to concerns relating to overlooking, loss of privacy, overshadowing, loss of outlook or reduction in daylight to neighbouring occupiers.

The proposed gym/ fitness use has the potential to generate noise associated with exercise activities and the operation of the facility. The application has therefore been reviewed by the Council's Environmental Health Officer, who recommended the imposition of a number of planning conditions to control noise emissions arising from the development. However, in the absence of supporting evidence, such as a noise assessment, demonstrating that the proposed development would be capable of achieving the recommended noise limits, the Local Planning Authority considered that the suggested conditions alone could not be relied upon to adequately safeguard the amenity of nearby sensitive receptors.

In response to these concerns, the applicant has confirmed that no amplified music will be played within the premises and that the buildings will not be used for fitness classes. In addition, all external doors will be self-closing and access to the facility will be controlled through a membership entry system, thereby minimising opportunities for noise breakout during operation. These measures can be secured through appropriately worded planning conditions.

Taking the above into account, the Local Planning Authority is satisfied that the proposed development is capable of complying with the noise limits recommended by the Environmental Health Officer.

Accordingly, it is considered that the proposed development can be adequately controlled through planning conditions and could operate in a manner that would not result in unacceptable harm to the amenity of neighbouring residents. As such, there is not considered to be any residential amenity grounds to justify refusal of planning permission.

#### **Visual Amenity/External Appearance:**

The proposed development would not occupy a visually prominent position within the wider landscape. It would be located to the rear of the hotel grounds, set back from the public highway and situated in close association with the existing built form and established use of the site. Furthermore, mature trees

along the eastern and southern boundaries would provide additional screening, particularly in longer-distance views across the surrounding countryside. As such, the development would appear as a natural extension of the existing hotel complex and would not result in an unjustified encroachment into the Open Countryside.

In terms of its scale and massing, the proposed development would remain clearly subservient to the main hotel building. The division of the development into three separate units would further reduce the perceived bulk of the development and help break up its overall mass.

The proposed materials, including natural stone walling with stone quoins and window surrounds, together with the relatively modest architectural design of the units, would reflect the character of the local area and integrate sympathetically with the rural landscape.

Consequently, the development would not appear incongruous, intrusive or unduly dominant within its setting.

The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in terms of visual impact, design, and effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

#### **Highways and Parking:**

The application has been reviewed by Lancashire County Council Highways, who raise no objection to the proposed development.

The Local Highway Authority (LHA) notes that the application form confirms the site currently provides 136 parking spaces. As the proposed development is to be located adjacent to the existing car park, it is not expected to result in any loss of on-site parking provision. Furthermore, the development is intended solely for use by existing hotel guests and is therefore not anticipated to generate additional parking demand.

The proposal is also not expected to give rise to a material increase in vehicle trips to or from the site. The activities to be accommodated within the proposed building are already undertaken elsewhere within the hotel complex, and the development therefore represents a reorganisation and consolidation of existing facilities rather than the introduction of a new use. Consequently, it is unlikely to result in additional traffic movements or place undue pressure on the surrounding highway network.

In light of the above, the LHA considers that the proposal would not have an adverse impact on highway safety, capacity or amenity within the vicinity of the site. No objection is therefore raised, subject to conditions requiring the submission and approval of a Construction Management Plan (or Construction Method Statement) and restricting the use of the development to purposes ancillary to the operation of the hotel and for use by existing hotel guests only.

The LHA also recommended that the proposed footpath surrounding the new buildings should connect directly to the existing stone-flagged pedestrian route around the main hotel building, rather than through the car park. This would provide a dedicated and segregated pedestrian route, improve pedestrian safety and reduce the potential for conflict with vehicles manoeuvring within the car park. These comments were relayed to the applicant, who has subsequently submitted amended plans incorporating this change.

#### **Landscape/Ecology:**

The application is supported by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, dated April 2026. The Appraisal confirms that there are no statutory nature conservation designations within 2km of the site and that the proposed development would not give rise to the need for any assessment of impacts on Sites of Special

Scientific Interest within the wider area. Furthermore, the separation distances and intervening land between the site and nearby locally designated wildlife sites are considered sufficient to avoid adverse effects. No impacts are anticipated on the adjacent area of deciduous woodland located to the north-east of the site. The proposed development would result only in the loss of habitats of low ecological value.

The appraisal also concludes that the development is unlikely to have any significant impacts on amphibians, nesting birds, bats or other protected and notable species. Nevertheless, a range of precautionary working methods and ecological enhancement measures are recommended, including the installation of bat and bird boxes. These measures can be secured through appropriately worded planning conditions.

An Arboricultural Impact Assessment has also been submitted in support of the application. The survey identified four individual trees, five groups of trees and one woodland area with the potential to be affected by the proposed development. The assessment confirms that no trees would need to be removed to facilitate the development, although limited pruning works may be required. It concludes that the retained trees can be adequately protected during construction through the installation of temporary protective fencing in accordance with the submitted Tree Protection Plan, together with adherence to the site-specific and general tree protection measures set out within the report. These requirements can be secured by condition.

The submitted Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Strategy demonstrates that the development is capable of delivering a biodiversity net gain of 0.03 habitat units, representing an increase of 15.89%. This would be achieved through the planting of ten new trees within the grounds of the hotel. As such, the proposal is considered acceptable in biodiversity terms and is capable of satisfying the statutory BNG requirements, subject to compliance with the mandatory biodiversity net gain condition.

#### **Other Matters:**

##### Drainage

Concerns have been raised in a third-party representation regarding the potential impact of the development on surface water drainage. However, the proposed development is not located within an area identified as being at risk of surface water flooding.

The application is supported by a drainage strategy which demonstrates that surface water would be disposed of via infiltration to the ground and/or soakaways, while foul water would be directed to the existing foul drainage system. The proposed drainage arrangements are considered acceptable in principle and can be secured through the imposition of an appropriately worded planning condition.

Accordingly, no objection is raised to the proposal on drainage grounds.

#### **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.

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| <b>RECOMMENDATION:</b> | That planning consent be granted subject to the imposition of conditions. |
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