

PLANNING STATEMENT



PARTICULARS

Document Title	CLASS R STATEMENT
Proposal	Change of Use of Agricultural Building to Class E Commercial Use – Dog Day Care
Applicant Details	Mr Darrin Robinson
Site Details	Squire House, Clitheroe Road, Knowle Green, Preston, PR3 2YS
Prepared by	Morwenna Saunders Farm Planning Consultant
Agent details	Foxes Rural Ltd Bullbanks Farm Halstead Road Eight Ash Green Colchester Essex CO6 3PT



INTRODUCTION

This planning statement is submitted in support of an application for prior approval for the change of use of an agricultural building to a flexible commercial use falling within Class E (commercial, business or service) of Schedule 2 to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended). The application is made pursuant to Schedule 2, Part 3, Class R of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended), including as amended by the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development etc.) (England) (Amendment) Order 2024 (SI 2024/579), in force from 21 May 2024.

The application relates to an agricultural building at Squire House, Clitheroe Road, Knowle Green, Preston, PR3 2YS, within the administrative area of Ribble Valley Borough Council ("the site"). The building was erected pursuant to prior notification reference 3/2011/0865, granted by Ribble Valley Borough Council on 3 February 2012. It measures 23.1 metres in length by 15.5 metres in breadth, with an eaves height of 3.8 metres and a ridge height of 5.7 metres, giving a total floor area of 358 square metres, as shown on drawing D1-A1.

The application is submitted on behalf of Mr Darrin Robinson, who farms the established agricultural unit at Squire House. The proposed commercial use of the building is for a dog day care business, providing supervised daytime care, exercise and feeding of dogs on behalf of their owners. No dog will be kept overnight, boarded, bred or offered for sale at the site; the operation is confined to a day-visit drop-off and collection service.

The building exceeds 150 square metres in floor area. Prior approval is accordingly required from Ribble Valley Borough Council as to the following matters under Class R.3(1)(b): transport and highways impacts; noise impacts; contamination risks; and flooding risks. This statement addresses each of those matters in turn, together with the classification of the proposed use and the wider Class R compliance position.

ENCLOSURES

The following documents are enclosed with this application.

Reference	Description
Floor plan and elevations (drawing D1-A1)	Scale 1:200
Location map plan	Scale 1:35,000
Site plan	Scale 1:1,250
Block plan	Scale 1:500 — shows measured distances to nearest dwellings
Prior notification decision 3/2011/0865	Dated 3 February 2012
Planning Statement	
Planning Forms	Submitted via Planning Portal

STATEMENT OF EXPERIENCE

This planning statement has been prepared by Morwenna Saunders. I am a farm planning consultant employed by Foxes Rural Limited, which specialises in rural planning matters. The company regularly advises on agricultural related planning applications, justifications and proposals throughout Essex, Suffolk and Hertfordshire, and nationally.

The company is registered with the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and the Central Association of Agricultural Valuers.



THE BUSINESS

Mr Darrin Robinson farms the established agricultural unit at Squire House, Knowle Green, and proposes to diversify part of the farm's built estate to provide a dog day care business. The business would offer a supervised day-visit care service: dogs are dropped off by their owners in the morning and collected later the same day, with care, feeding and exercise provided in the intervening period. The business will also offer a collection and delivery service to clients as part of its day-to-day operating model.

The proposal does not involve the overnight boarding, breeding, sale or residential-type accommodation of animals. No dog would remain at the site outside normal daytime operating hours. Exercise would take place within the building and the land within its curtilage. The proposed diversification would help improve the viability for a small farm which has struggled economically since the withdrawal of the Single Farm Payment by central government. The diversification will create new employment with one employee in the early stages of development with the potential for up to 10 new jobs dependent upon demand and growth of the business. This notification of change of use fits within RVBC's Core Strategy - Policies DMB1 and DMB2 and is supported by them.

The proposed diversification would bring a redundant part of the agricultural building into productive economic use, consistent with the established character of the farm and its rural location.

CLASSIFICATION OF THE PROPOSED USE

Class R permits change of use of an agricultural building to a flexible use falling within one of a defined list of use classes, including Class E (commercial, business or service) of Schedule 2 to the Use Classes Order. It is necessary to consider the correct classification of the proposed dog day care use for the purposes of paragraph R(a)(iv).

The proposed operation is, by design, a day-visit service only. Dogs are dropped off and collected within the same operating day; no animal is kept overnight, boarded across multiple days, bred, or bought or sold on site. The service is provided, for a fee, directly to visiting members of the public who bring their dogs to the site for the day.

A use of this character — the provision of a service principally to visiting members of the public in a commercial, business or service locality — falls within Class E(c)(iii) of Schedule 2 to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended): "any other services which it is appropriate to provide in a commercial, business or service locality." This classification was confirmed by the Planning Inspectorate in Appeal Ref APP/V0510/C/22/3294896 (Unit 12 Oak Lane Business Park, Littleport, Ely, decision dated 5 September 2023), in which a use providing professional dog therapy services — including dog exercise, washing and associated facilities, provided to visiting members of the public with no overnight accommodation of animals — was found by the Inspector to fall within Class E, and not to constitute a sui generis use, notwithstanding that the local planning authority had alleged the use to be sui generis.

This is to be distinguished from a kennels or animal boarding establishment, which typically involves the overnight or extended residential-type accommodation of animals and which has, in other cases, been treated as a sui generis use falling outside Class E. No such overnight accommodation forms any part of the proposal at Squire House; the use is confined to a day-visit model directly analogous to that considered and accepted as falling within Class E in the Oak Lane Business Park appeal.

On this basis, the proposed dog day care use — restricted to day-visit care with no overnight boarding — is considered to fall within Class E(c)(iii) of the Use Classes Order, and accordingly within the flexible commercial use permitted by Class R(a)(iv) of the GPDO 2015 (as amended). The applicant's operation should be maintained strictly on this day-visit basis in order to preserve this classification; any future proposal to provide overnight boarding would fall outside the scope of this prior approval and would require separate planning consideration.



SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is located at Squire House, Clitheroe Road, Knowle Green, Preston, PR3 2YS, within the administrative area of Ribble Valley Borough Council. The site comprises an agricultural building and land within its immediate curtilage. The site lies within the Forest of Bowland National Landscape (formerly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty).

The building was erected pursuant to prior notification 3/2011/0865, granted by Ribble Valley Borough Council on 3 February 2012 for the erection of a general purpose agricultural building. The building measures 23.1 metres in length by 15.5 metres in breadth, with an eaves height of 3.8 metres and a ridge height of 5.7 metres, as shown on drawing D1-A1. The total floor area is 358 square metres.

The building is well screened by mature trees and shrubs and is not visible from neighbouring residential properties. The two nearest neighbouring residential dwellings are located approximately 230.1 metres and 265.3 metres from the site, as measured on the Block Plan (drawing BP01). Substantial tree lines lie between the site and both neighbouring properties, providing further attenuation of noise and visual impact.

A public right of way runs up the access track and continues through the farmstead. Use of the right of way is light, typically limited to 0 or 1 users per day and up to 2–3 users per day in warm weather, predominantly comprising neighbours walking their dogs. The right of way is shown on the accompanying site location plan and block plan, and the proposed change of use would not affect it or the ability of the public to continue to use it.

Access to the site is taken from Clitheroe Road via a short single-track private lane, with passing places, in the sole ownership of the applicant and extending the full distance to the public highway. The site access has good visibility in both directions and there has been no recorded accident at the junction during the applicant's 16 years of occupation. The established agricultural unit extends to approximately 57.1 acres (23.11 hectares).

SITE PROPOSAL

This application is submitted for prior approval of the change of use of the agricultural building at Squire House, and land within its curtilage, from use as an agricultural building to a flexible commercial use falling within Class E (commercial, business or service) of the Use Classes Order, pursuant to Schedule 2, Part 3, Class R of the GPDO 2015 (as amended).

The proposed use is the operation of a dog day care business as described above, classified as falling within Class E(c)(iii) for the reasons set out above.

Class R does not confer any right to carry out operational development. No external alterations to the building are proposed as part of this prior approval application. Any subsequent operational development required to make the building suitable for the proposed commercial use would be the subject of a separate application to Ribble Valley Borough Council, as necessary.

By virtue of Class R.2(b), upon the change of use taking effect the site will be treated as having a sui generis use for the purposes of the Use Classes Order. This is a deeming provision that applies to every change of use effected under Class R, irrespective of the use class within which the flexible use itself falls, and does not affect the classification of the proposed use set out above. Thereafter, any change of use to a further use within the flexible commercial uses permitted by Class R may be undertaken without a further application, provided the relevant criteria continue to be met.

The floor area of the building (358 square metres) exceeds 150 square metres. Prior approval is accordingly required under Class R.3(1)(b) and the provisions of paragraph W of Schedule 2, Part 3 of the GPDO apply. The 56-day determination period applies from the date of valid receipt of this application. Development must commence within three years of the grant of prior approval.



Class R – agricultural buildings to a flexible commercial use – CLASS E USE ONLY

Permitted development: R.

R. Development consisting of a change of use of a building and any land within its curtilage from a use as an agricultural building to a flexible use— (a) falling within one of the following provisions of the Use Classes Order— (i) Class B2 (general industrial) of Schedule 1; (ii) Class B8 (storage or distribution) of Schedule 1; (iii) Class C1 (hotels) of Schedule 1; (iv) Class E (commercial, business or service) of Schedule 2; or (v) Class F.2(c) (outdoor sport or recreation) of Schedule 2; or (b) for the provision of agricultural training.

Development not permitted

R.1 Development is not permitted by Class R if—

(a) the building was not used solely for an agricultural use as part of an established agricultural unit—

(i) on 3rd July 2012.

(ii) in the case of a building which was in use before that date but was not in use on that date, when it was last in use, or

(iii) in the case of a building which was brought into use after 3rd July 2012, for a period of at least 10 years before the date development under Class R begins.

The building was erected pursuant to prior notification 3/2011/0865, granted by Ribble Valley Borough Council on 3 February 2012, and was brought into sole agricultural use as part of the established agricultural unit on 3 September 2012. The grant of prior notification under Part 6, Class A of the GPDO confirms that the building was designed and constructed for agricultural purposes as part of an established agricultural unit.

As the building was only brought into use after 3 July 2012, the test at R.1(a)(i) does not apply and the applicable test is that in R.1(a)(iii): that the building has been in agricultural use for a period of at least 10 years before the date development under Class R begins. The building has been in continuous sole agricultural use since 3 September 2012, a period in excess of 10 years as at the date of this application, and that use has continued without interruption and will continue up to the date development under Class R begins. Class R.1(a) has therefore been complied with.

(b) the cumulative floor space of buildings which have changed use under Class R within an established agricultural unit exceeds 1,000 square metres.

The building the subject of this application has a total floor area of 358 square metres, as shown on drawing D1-A1. This is the only building within the established agricultural unit to have changed use, or be proposed to change use, under Class R. The cumulative floor area is accordingly 358 square metres, well within the 1,000 square metre threshold. This limit was increased from 500 square metres by the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development etc.) (England) (Amendment) Order 2024. Class R.1(b) has therefore been complied with.

(c) the site is, or forms part of, a military explosives storage area.

The application site does not form part of a military explosives storage area. Class R.1(c) has therefore been complied with.

(d) the site is, or forms part of, a safety hazard area; or

The application site does not form part of a safety hazard area. Class R.1(d) has therefore been complied with.

(e) the building is a listed building or a scheduled monument.



The building is not a listed building or a scheduled monument, and is not within the curtilage of a listed building. Class R.1(e) has therefore been complied with.

Class R.3(1) states that: R.3— (1) Before changing the use of the site under Class R, and before any subsequent change of use to another use falling within one of the use classes comprising the flexible use, the developer must—

(a) where the cumulative floor space of the building or buildings which have changed use under Class R within an established agricultural unit does not exceed 150 square metres, provide the following information to the local planning authority— (i) the date the site will begin to be used for any of the flexible uses; (ii) the nature of the use or uses; and (iii) a plan indicating the site and which buildings have changed use.

The total combined floor space of the building the subject of this application exceeds 150 square metres. Class R.3(1)(a)(i)(ii)(iii) is therefore not applicable.

(b) where the cumulative floor space of the building or buildings which have changed use under Class R within an established agricultural unit exceeds 150 square metres, apply to the local planning authority for a determination as to whether the prior approval of the authority will be required as to— (i) transport and highways impact of the development; (ii) noise impacts of the development; (iii) contamination risks on the site; and (iv) flooding risks on the site, and the provisions of paragraph W (prior approval) apply in relation to that application.

The cumulative floor space exceeds 150m², therefore consideration is given to the four impacts and risks in turn below. Development must not commence until written notice has been received from Ribble Valley Borough Council that prior approval is either not required or is granted.

Transport and highways impact of the development

The proposed dog day care business will operate a collection and return service for clients as part of its day-to-day model, with a small amount of direct drop-off and collection by owners; however, this is expected to be minimal due to the free collection/return service offered. At maximum operating capacity, the applicant anticipates approximately 6 to 8 vehicle exits and returns per day. Drop-off and collection times will be controlled by the operator (for example, by appointment or scheduled time slot), spreading movements predictably through the day rather than generating concentrated peaks. This represents a low volume of movements, predictable in scheduling and comprising small vehicles (cars and vans) rather than heavy goods vehicles.

The previous and continuing agricultural use of the wider unit generates vehicle movements associated with farm operations, including tractors, trailers, agricultural machinery and supply vehicles, which are typically larger, heavier and less predictable in scheduling than the movements associated with the proposed use. The proposed commercial use would generate a lower-impact pattern of traffic by comparison.

The access to the site is taken via a short single-track private lane, with passing places, in the sole ownership of the applicant, extending the full distance to Clitheroe Road. The exit from the lane has clear visibility in both directions, and there has been no recorded accident at the junction throughout the applicant's 16 years of occupation. Given the single-track character of the access, the applicant will control drop-off and collection times by appointment or scheduled slot, ensuring that vehicle movements are limited in number and predictable in timing, and that the passing places remain available to accommodate any oncoming farm or other traffic. Vehicles associated with the proposed use will park and turn within the existing farm yard, with no need for parking on the public highway.

A public right of way runs up the access track and continues through the farmstead, sharing the track with vehicular traffic associated with the established agricultural use. Given the controlled, low-volume and predictable scheduling of traffic associated with the proposed use, no adverse impact on users of the right of way or on highway safety is anticipated, and a dedicated traffic survey is not considered necessary.



The transport and highways impact of the proposed change of use is considered acceptable, and prior approval on this matter should not be refused.

Impact on properties along the access track

The access track passes a small cluster of neighbouring properties — including New Row Cottages, Airey Houses, Oaklea and Kemple Side — before reaching Squire House. The historic and continuing agricultural use of the wider unit generates vehicle movements along this same track at all hours of the day and night, including seasonal HGV grain lorries, tractors and trailers, and livestock and feed deliveries, all of which are substantially heavier and louder than the movements associated with the proposed use.

By contrast, vehicle movements associated with the proposed dog day care use would be limited to light vehicles (cars and vans), at controlled, pre-booked drop-off and collection times, confined to normal daytime hours, with no movements outside those hours. The proposed use therefore represents a reduction, both in the volume and character of traffic and in the associated noise, in the impact experienced by properties along the track, when compared with the established agricultural fallback use.

Noise impacts of the development

The proposed use is a day-visit dog care service; no dog will be kept at the site overnight. Activity would be limited to normal daytime operating hours, comprising the supervised exercise, feeding and care of dogs within the building and land within its curtilage.

The site benefits from a substantial degree of natural screening. The two nearest neighbouring residential properties lie approximately 230.1 metres and 265.3 metres from the site (as measured on the Block Plan, drawing BP01), with substantial tree lines situated between the site and each of those properties, providing significant attenuation of noise and makes this site an ideal venue for this nature of business given its significant distance from residential property, privacy, shielded sight lines and natural barriers to sound. The barn itself is not visible from neighbouring properties, being shrouded by surrounding trees and shrubs.

The previous and continuing agricultural use of the wider unit involves the operation of farm machinery and associated equipment, which generates noise levels at least equivalent to, and in many respects greater than, those likely to arise from a day-visit dog care use of the scale proposed.

This is particularly relevant to the cluster of properties along the shared access track (including New Row Cottages, Airey Houses, Oaklea and Kemple Side), which currently experience noise from agricultural vehicle movements at all hours of the day and night, especially during seasonal peaks. The controlled, daytime-only and low-volume movements associated with the proposed use would represent a reduction in the noise experienced by these properties by comparison with the existing agricultural fallback use.

Given the distance to the nearest neighbouring dwellings, the intervening tree screening, and the restriction of the use to daytime hours with no overnight boarding, the noise impact of the proposed change of use is considered acceptable, and prior approval on this matter should not be refused.

Contamination risks on the site

The building has been used since construction for general storage purposes in connection with the established agricultural unit. No chemicals or fuel have been stored within the building, and no activities are known to have occurred within the building giving rise to ground or water contamination.

The proposed dog day care use would not introduce any processes, substances or storage capable of causing ground or water contamination. Any animal waste arising from the use would be collected and disposed of in accordance with normal good practice for animal care premises.

On the available evidence, there are no contamination risks on the site associated with the proposed change of use, and prior approval on this matter should not be refused.



Flooding risks on the site

The application site is located within Flood Zone 1 and is therefore at low risk of flooding.

The proposed change of use would not alter the physical form of the building and would not increase impermeable surfacing within the curtilage. The proposed use does not involve the storage or use of substances that would create a pollution risk in flood conditions, and does not increase the vulnerability of the site to flooding by comparison with its existing agricultural use.

The flooding risk associated with the proposed change of use does not give rise to concerns that would warrant refusal of prior approval on this matter.

Historic use of the building

The building was erected pursuant to prior notification 3/2011/0865, granted by Ribble Valley Borough Council on 3 February 2012. The prior notification confirms that the building was constructed as an agricultural building for the purposes of agriculture within an established agricultural unit.

The building has been in continuous agricultural use since it was first brought into sole agricultural use on 3 September 2012, for general storage purposes in connection with the farming operations on the established agricultural unit. As the building was brought into use after 3 July 2012, it falls to be assessed under R.1(a)(iii) rather than R.1(a)(i): the building has been solely in agricultural use as part of an established agricultural unit for a period in excess of 10 years preceding the date of this application, satisfying the requirements of Class R.1(a)(iii).

Site designations

The site lies within the Forest of Bowland National Landscape (formerly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty). Class R applies within National Landscapes; there is no restriction within Class R preventing its use in areas of special landscape designation, and landscape impact does not constitute a ground for refusing prior approval under Class R, the prior approval matters being limited to transport and highways, noise, contamination and flooding.

The site does not fall within the Green Belt. In any event, Class R applies within the Green Belt, and change of use under Class R does not constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt; Green Belt policy does not constitute a ground for refusing prior approval under Class R.

The site does not fall within or adjacent to a Site of Special Scientific Interest. In any event, SSSI status does not preclude an application under Class R and does not constitute a ground for refusing prior approval on the four enumerated matters.

Listed buildings

There are no listed buildings located within the immediate vicinity of the application site, and the building subject to this application is not listed, nor curtilage listed, nor is it a scheduled monument.

The proposal involves only the change of use of an existing agricultural building. These changes will not materially alter the character or appearance of the building, nor will they result in any visual or physical impact upon any heritage assets.

CONCLUSION

This application seeks prior approval for the change of use of an existing agricultural building at Squire House, Knowle Green, to a flexible commercial use (Class E) comprising a dog day care business, under the provisions of Schedule 2, Part 3, Class R of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended).

The proposed use, restricted to day-visit care with no overnight boarding of animals, falls within Class E(c)(iii) of the Use Classes Order, consistent with the Planning Inspectorate's decision in Appeal Ref APP/V0510/C/22/3294896, and accordingly within the flexible commercial use permitted by Class R.



It has been demonstrated that the building forms part of an established agricultural unit and, having been brought into sole agricultural use on 3 September 2012 (after 3 July 2012), has been in continuous agricultural use for a period in excess of 10 years preceding this application, satisfying the test at Class R.1(a)(iii). It has further been demonstrated that the cumulative floorspace of buildings changing use under Class R does not exceed the 1,000 square metre threshold.

The proposed use is low-intensity in nature and will generate minimal traffic, noise, or operational impacts, with movements controlled by the business by providing a collection and return service. It has been demonstrated that the development will not give rise to unacceptable effects in respect of transport and highways, noise, contamination, or flood risk (the site being within Flood Zone 1) — the matters for which prior approval is required.

In these circumstances, the proposal fully complies with the legislative requirements of Class R and is supported by RVBC's Core Strategy and represents an appropriate and sustainable diversification of a redundant agricultural building. Prior approval for the change of use is respectfully requested.

Morwenna Saunders

**FARM PLANNING CONSULTANT
FOR AND ON BEHALF OF FOXES RURAL LIMITED**

DATE: 9 July 2026

