

Report to be read in conjunction with the Decision Notice.							
Signed:	Officer:	LW	Date:	09/10/26	Manager:	LH	Date: 9/10/26

Application Ref:	3/2026/0569			 Ribble Valley Borough Council www.ribblevalley.gov.uk
Date Inspected:	04/09/26	Site Notice:	04/09/26	
Officer:	LW			
DELEGATED ITEM FILE REPORT:				APPROVAL

Development Description:	Proposed installation of solar PV panels to roof.
Site Address/Location:	2 The Walled Garden, Woodfold Park, Mellor, BB2 7QA.

CONSULTATIONS:	Parish/Town Council
No comments received.	

CONSULTATIONS:	Highways/Water Authority/Other Bodies
LCC Highways:	N/A

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 EN3: Sustainable Development and Climate Change Key Statement EN4: Biodiversity and Geodiversity Key Statement EN5: Heritage Assets Policy DMG1: General Considerations Policy DMG2: Strategic Considerations Policy DMG3: Transport & Mobility Policy DME3: Site and Species Protection and Conservation Policy DME4: Protecting Heritage Assets Policy DME5: Renewable Energy Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
Relevant Planning History: 3/2023/0163: Proposed alterations to existing roof lights (Refused and appeal allowed). 3/2008/0181: Erection of blockwork retaining wall to replace collapsed section of existing brickwork wall and 2m either side of collapsed section. Includes facing brickwork skin reclaimed from collapsed wall and re-use of existing stone coping (Approved).

3/2003/0692: Proposed development of 2no. new dwellings on site of former walled garden using reclaimed brick from existing ruined structure (Approved).

ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT:

Site Description and Surrounding Area:

The application relates to No. 2 The Walled Garden, a dwelling situated within the former walled kitchen garden serving Woodfold Hall, a Grade II listed building. The site also lies within the wider Woodfold Park, which is designated as a Grade II Registered Park and Garden.

The application property is a two-storey detached dwelling which, together with the adjacent No. 1 The Walled Garden, was constructed following the grant of planning permission under application reference 3/2003/0692. The two dwellings were designed as complementary, mirror-image buildings characterised by simple architectural forms and long roof slopes. Although arranged over two storeys, the first-floor accommodation is predominantly contained within the roof space, with natural light provided by rooflights. As a result, the buildings present a predominantly single-storey appearance in many views.

Permitted development rights were removed from both dwellings as part of the original planning permission and remain restricted.

The dwellings are located approximately 200 metres from Woodfold Hall and are separated from it by an area of mature woodland. The site also lies within the designated Green Belt.

Proposed Development for which consent is sought:

The application seeks planning permission for the installation of solar PV panels mounted onto the rear, south facing roof slope of No.2 The Walled Garden.

The proposal has been amended since initial submission, with the number of solar PV panels proposed to be installed having been reduced from 37 to 16.

Principle of Development:

Green Belt

The application site lies within the designated Green Belt and therefore Key Statement EN1 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy and national Green Belt policy contained within 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'*.

In addition, the NPPF states that there is a general presumption against inappropriate development in the Green Belt and advises that when considering any planning application, Local Planning Authorities (LPA) should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt.

NPPF Policy GB7 sets out that new development in the Green Belt should be regarded as inappropriate unless it falls within a closed list of exceptions. Of relevance to this proposal is exception (b), which permits

the alteration of an existing building, provided that the building is of permanent and substantial construction, is lawful in planning terms, and the alterations do not result in a disproportionate increase in size compared to the original building.

The proposal relates solely to the installation of solar PV panels on the roof of the existing building. The development would not increase the footprint, volume, height or overall scale of the building.

Accordingly, the proposal is considered to accord with Key Statement EN1 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy and the relevant Green Belt provisions of the NPPF.

Renewable Energy

The proposal seeks permission for the installation of solar PV panels and therefore consideration must also be given to the Council's objectives relating to climate change mitigation and energy consumption reduction.

In this regard, Key Statement EN3 and Policy DME5 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy are of particular relevance. Key Statement EN3 requires development proposals to demonstrate how they will contribute towards reducing the Borough's carbon footprint and states that development should optimise energy efficiency through the use of new technologies and by minimising energy consumption.

Policy DME5 supports renewable energy development where it can be demonstrated that the proposal would not result in unacceptable harm to the local environment or residential amenity. In assessing such proposals, particular regard is given to:

1. *The immediate and wider impact of the proposed development on the landscape, including its visual impact and the cumulative impacts of development.*
2. *The measures taken to minimise the impact of the proposals on residential amenity*
3. *The potential benefits the proposals may bring*
4. *The visual impact of the proposals, including design, colour and scale*
5. *The degree to which nuisance caused by noise and shadow flicker to nearby residential amenities, agricultural operations, recreational areas or the function of the countryside can be minimised*
6. *National or local targets for generating energy from renewable sources and for reducing carbon emissions as specified within policy DMG1*
7. *The potential impact on biodiversity*

The policy further states that renewable energy proposals affecting nationally or locally designated landscapes, ecological sites or heritage assets will only be supported where it can be demonstrated that the objectives of the designation will not be compromised and any adverse impacts have been appropriately mitigated. Outside such designated areas, renewable energy schemes are acceptable in principle, subject to compliance with other relevant development plan policies.

National policy similarly provides strong support for renewable and low-carbon energy development. The NPPF advises that substantial weight should be given to the benefits of renewable energy proposals in supporting energy security, economic growth and the transition to a net-zero future. It further recognises the valuable contribution that small-scale renewable energy projects can make towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions and confirms that applicants should not be required to demonstrate a specific need for renewable or low-carbon energy development.

The proposed installation of roof-mounted solar PV panels would contribute towards reducing carbon emissions and improving the energy efficiency of the existing building. As such, the development aligns with both local and national planning policy objectives relating to climate change and renewable energy generation.

Having regard to the above, the proposal is considered acceptable in principle, subject to an assessment of the detailed material planning considerations set out below.

Impact upon Historic Environment and Setting and Visual Amenity/ External Appearance:

Although Registered Parks and Gardens do not benefit from the same statutory protection afforded to listed buildings, they are designated heritage assets and Chapter 20 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires great weight to be given to their conservation. The site is also located in proximity to the Grade II listed Woodfold Hall and its associated orangery. Consequently, the Local Planning Authority has a statutory duty under Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to have special regard to the desirability of preserving these listed buildings, their settings and any features of special architectural or historic interest that they possess.

At the local level, Key Statement EN5 and Policy DME4 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy are also of relevance. These policies establish a presumption in favour of the conservation and enhancement of heritage assets and their settings and seek to ensure that development proposals preserve significance and avoid harm to designated heritage assets.

Policy DMG1 of the Core Strategy is also relevant, requiring development to be sympathetic to existing and proposed land uses in terms of its size, intensity and nature and consider the relationship between buildings, with particular emphasis placed on visual appearance and the relationship to surroundings, including impact on landscape character.

As set out elsewhere within this report, the application property, together with the adjoining dwelling at No.1 The Walled Garden, was constructed following the grant of planning permission in 2003. The dwelling is relatively simple in form, with accommodation provided partly within the roof space and served by rooflights on both the front and rear roof slopes. There is, however, a clear distinction between the architectural character of the front and rear elevations. The principal north-facing elevation is characterised by comparatively modest window and door openings and a small gabled porch, giving the appearance of a traditional cottage. In contrast, the south-facing rear elevation has a more contemporary appearance, incorporating three large sliding door openings extending across much of the elevation together with two rooflight and window combinations approved at appeal under application reference 3/2023/0163 (Appeal Ref: APP/T2350/D/23/3326791).

Whilst the installation of proposed solar photovoltaic panels would be viewed in the context of the dwelling's more modern rear elevation, the scheme as originally submitted proposed 37 solar panels covering the majority of the rear roof slope.

The application property occupies an elevated position, with land levels falling away to the south. As a result, the rear elevation and roofscape are visible from parts of the parkland, particularly towards the north-western area of Woodfold Park. Concerns were therefore raised by the LPA that the extent and coverage of the originally proposed solar arrangement would cause the panels to become the dominant feature of the roofscape when viewed from these vantage points to the detriment of the character and appearance of the property and the surrounding historic parkland.

In an attempt to address these concerns, amendments were sought to reduce the extent of the installation and thereby minimise the visual impact of the development.

Amended plans have subsequently been received reducing the number of solar panels from 37 to 16. The panels are now centrally positioned, set in from the gable ends and comfortably below the ridge and above the eaves. The revised arrangement results in a significantly more balanced and discreet appearance, allowing substantial areas of the roof to remain visible. Consequently, the proposed solar installation would be read as a subordinate addition to the dwelling rather than the defining feature of the roof slope.

With respect to Woodfold Hall and its associated orangery, the application property is located approximately 200 metres from these designated heritage assets, with mature woodland intervening between the two sites and substantially restricting intervisibility. Given this degree of separation and the limited visual relationship between the sites, it is not considered that the application property forms an important component of the hall's setting. The proposed development is therefore not considered to adversely affect the significance or setting of the listed buildings.

Overall, the amended proposal is considered a more proportionate and sympathetic form of development compared to the scheme originally submitted with the application. By virtue of the reduced number of panels and their revised arrangement, the installation would not appear as an unduly prominent or dominant feature within views of the dwelling from the surrounding parkland. The proposal would preserve the character and appearance of the host dwelling, conserve the significance of Woodfold Park as a Grade II Registered Park and Garden, and preserve the settings of Woodfold Hall and its orangery. Accordingly, the development is considered to accord with Chapter 20 of the NPPF, the statutory duty under Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, and Key Statement EN5 and Policies DME4 and DMG1 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy.

Impact Upon Residential Amenity:

The nearest residential property to the application site is the adjacent dwelling known as No.1 The Walled Garden. Given the nature of the proposed development and the relationship between the proposed roof-mounted solar PV panels and the rear elevation and garden area of this property, the development is not anticipated to result in any unacceptable impacts on residential amenity.

The Coach House and Woodfold Hall are located approximately 170m to 190m to the east of the application site. Owing to this separation distance, it is not considered that the proposed development would give rise to any adverse impacts on the living conditions of the occupiers of these properties.

Accordingly, the proposal is considered to have an acceptable impact on residential amenity.

Highways and Parking:

No highway related issues have been identified with respect to the proposed development.

Landscape/Ecology:

A bat survey has been submitted in support of the application, dated 20th July 2026. The report notes that a previous survey in 2022 identified a pipistrelle maternity roost using the eastern and western gable ends of the existing building. An emergence survey in 2026 has confirmed ongoing use of the building by a maternity roost of Common Pipistrelle bats with bats observed emerging from previously identified roost entrances on the eastern and western gable ends.

Despite this, the report advises that the development is not considered likely to affect the roost or roost entrances. Solar panels will be installed on the south facing roof section and mounted on a rail system which requires temporary lifting of individual roof tiles to fix the mountings. However, mitigation in the form of timings of works, and reasonable avoidance measures, have been proposed to manage risk of disturbance during the proposed development. This includes, among other things, carrying out works only between September and March, lifting roof slates by hand, and avoiding installing scaffolding in locations alongside the gable ends where it may interfere with flightlines to or from the roost entrances. These measures are considered adequate to avoid disturbance to bats, and any damage to or disturbance of their roosts, and can be secured by condition.

Subject to the imposition of such a condition, the proposed development is not considered to have a harmful effect on protected species or their habitat.

The development is exempt from having to achieve the mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain requirements as it falls under the householder planning application exemption.

Observations/Consideration of Matters Raised/Conclusion:

As such, for the above reasons and having regard to all material considerations and matters raised the application is recommended for approval.

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