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| **Report to be read in conjunction with the Decision Notice.** |
| **Signed:** | **Officer:** | SK | **Date:** | 19.1.23 | **Manager:** | LH | **Date:** | 19.1.23 |
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| **Application Ref:** | 2022/0553 |  |
| **Date Inspected:** | 20/07/22 | **Site Notice:** | 20/07/22 |
| **Officer:** | SK |
| **DELEGATED ITEM FILE REPORT:**  | **APPROVAL** |
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| **Development Description:** | Proposed erection of commercial units (Use Class E(g)) including conversion and extension of existing farmhouse for purposes of Use Class E (g). |
| **Site Address/Location:** | Higher College Farm Lower Road Longridge PR3 2YY |
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| **CONSULTATIONS:**  | **Parish/Town Council** |
| **Hothersall Parish Council have raised no objection to the proposal stating the following:***I am able to confirm, on the Council’s behalf, that there is agreement that the latest plans are acceptable and that no specific objections are being raised to the plans as presented. However, there is some caution in making this statement as there are residual concerns about the impact on the surrounding area – in particular the adjoining road system. In its consideration of the application the Council stated that ‘all traffic on the section of Blackburn Road between Dilworth Lane and Hothersall Lane should be subject to a 30mph speed limit.’ This concern is based on knowledge of current traffic issues on that stretch of Blackburn Road, which have been the subject of much debate and requests for assistance from Lancashire CC Highways for a considerable length of time – to no avail. It is recognised by the Council that there will, no doubt, be increased traffic volumes to and from the new development and issues created by the new turning into the development area and a new traffic island on the road. There are also the added (and, again, long-standing), issues with the on-road parking for Hillside School, the poor visibility at the Corporation Arms junction and the difficulties regularly experienced at the junction with Hothersall Lane where school buses, agricultural machinery, and private vehicles have to exit a small country lane onto a B road where the current speed limit is 60 mph. The lack of objection to the current application is confirmed on the basis of an expectation that these identified problems will be addressed as part of the on-going development work.**One other matter of importance to the Council is the effect on wildlife on the site – particularly the presence of brown hares. We ask that due recognition is given to the impact on the indigenous wildlife of the area and steps taken to mitigate this impact.* *Over many years we have come to be cautious about the discrepancies which occur between the granting of planning permission and the eventual outcomes of a development. We therefore urge the Borough Council to ensure compliance with all the conditions of planning approval and to take prompt remedial action should there be any deviation from the application as approved.***Following the submission of amended information Hothersall Parish Council have made further representations as follows:***In considered response to the information sent to the Council in respect of the above application I write to confirm that the following are the concerns raised by this Parish Council:* 1. *The stated Car Parking provision appears to be inadequate, with a shortfall of approximately 50 spaces. If confirmed, this would lead to a risk of parking on the surrounding verges, which, in turn, would obscure sightlines for manoeuvring traffic;*
2. *The potential increase in number of journeys to the site eg,, for the use of the proposed gym, could be considerably higher than the number of car parking spaces suggests;*
3. *There are already a number of serious concerns about the speed limits (and changes at various points) along the road between Longridge and Ribchester which have been raised with LCC Highways. Traffic merging onto Preston/Ribchester Road from Hothersall Lane or Hillside School is doing so with limited visibility and into the path of fast-moving traffic. It is acknowledged that a blanket speed limit of 30mph to Ribchester to Longridge might prove problematic (but is worthy of consideration) but as a minimum the speed limit past Hillside School should be reduced to 30mph and should be imposed as a condition of this planning application on safety grounds and also in consideration of the increased numbers of vehicles visiting a site which currently only has residential traffic for one dwelling;*
4. *The detail that the site access is tracked for 16.5m articulated lorries for deliveries must be based on an assumption that this size and number of vehicles will use the roads through Longridge (eg Chapel Hill) and Ribchester (eg Blackburn Road). These roads are unsuitable for such traffic and any increase in its volume will create problems for these points on the route;*
5. *There has long been a problem with the presence of waiting Taxis on the road, waiting-for or dropping-off , Hillside School pupils in the morning and afternoon. It may be that because this notification has been sent out during the School holidays that potential problems will not yet have been considered by the School. Every effort should be made to consult with that establishment before decisions are taken.*
6. *Reference is made in the application to’ a previously approved improvement to the Corporation Arms junction will also be undertaken as part of this application’. This Council wishes to reiterate its previous points made about the dangerous nature of this junction – especially for traffic coming from Ribchester, turning right towards Clitheroe.*

*Finally, it should be noted that this Council is currently developing plans to provide and maintain CCTV cameras on the main road to monitor traffic as part of its crime prevention plan.***Ribchester parish council have offered the following observations:***I write to notify you that this Council is extremely concerned about the above planning application, but very pleased to note that we (along with Longridge Town Council and Hothersall Parish Council) have been invited to specifically comment on the particular aspect of increased traffic movements and to consider what impact these might have on our village.* *During the last two years we have noticed a worrying increase in the number of very large vehicles (particularly articulated lorries) which are entering the centre of the village and then causing serious problems during their manoeuvres to turn around and return to the main road. For a longer period still, we have been dismayed by the degradation of the road surface from Longridge to Ribchester. True this was given some attention, in part, during the early part of this year, but there is already evidence of further ‘wear and tear’ to the surface. We are firmly of the opinion that this is down to the increased volume of heavy vehicles en route to and from Longridge at one side and to the A59 junction at the other.* *Ribchester residents frequently use Preston Road to Longridge and beyond and as a Council we receive regular negative comments about the speed of traffic on that road. There appears to be some inconsistency in the application of speed limits on this stretch of road. At points where one might expect the speed limit to be 30 mph, it is not so designated. The junction at the Corporation Arms is particularly hazardous and the term-time Taxi waiting outside Hillside School in Hothersall creates a daily hazard. Again, there have been numerous comments about the dangers of overtaking on this part of the road made to the Parish Councillors.* *We are particularly concerned that the anticipated increase in large vehicles accessing the proposed development will have serious implications for the size, volume and speed of traffic entering Ribchester. We are very exercised by the likely increase in road traffic accidents and potential dangers to our residents.* |
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| **CONSULTATIONS:**  | **Highways/Water Authority/Other Bodies** |
| **LCC Highways:** |  |
| No objection subject to the imposition of relevant planning conditions. |
| **LLFA:** |  |
| No objection subject to the imposition of relevant planning conditions. |
| **Cadent Gas:** |  |
| No objection subject to the imposition of an informative relating to gas infrastructure within the vicinity. |
| **Environment Agency:** |  |
| No objection subject to the imposition of relevant planning conditions. |
| **United Utilities:** |  |
| No objection subject to the imposition of relevant planning conditions. |
| **CONSULTATIONS:**  | **Additional Representations.** |
| Two letters of representation have been received objecting on the following grounds:* Detrimental impacts upon habitat
* Increase in traffic
* Noise pollution
* Increase in pollution
* Adverse visual impacts
* Adverse highways impacts
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| **RELEVANT POLICIES AND SITE PLANNING HISTORY:** |
| **Ribble Valley Core Strategy:**Key Statement DS1: Development StrategyKey Statement DS2: Sustainable DevelopmentKey Statement DMI2: Transport ConsiderationsKey Statement EN4: Biodiversity and GeodiversityKey Statement EC1: Business and Employment DevelopmentPolicy DMG1: General ConsiderationsPolicy DMG2: Strategic ConsiderationsPolicy DMG3: Transport & MobilityPolicy DME1: Protecting Trees & WoodlandPolicy DME2: Landscape & Townscape ProtectionPolicy DME3: Site and Species ConservationPolicy DMB1: Supporting business Growth and the Local EconomyPolicy DMB5: Footpaths and Bridleways**Housing and Economic Development DPD:**Policy EAL: Employment AllocationPolicy EAL3: Land at Higher College Farm, LongridgeNational Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)Longridge Neighbourhood Plan |
| **Relevant Planning History:****2017/0602:**Application for Outline planning permission for industrial units (use classes B1, B2, B8) and associated access, parking, landscaping and services infrastructure with all matters reserved except access. Change of use of farmhouse to office (B1). (Approved) |
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| **ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT:** |
| **Site Description and Surrounding Area:**The application relates to an area of land associated with ‘Higher College Farm’. The site is located at the eastern extents of Longridge, being located to the south of and outside the defined settlement limits of the settlement. The site is approximately 1.53 Hectares in area including the former farmhouse associated with Higher College Farm. The site is also located outside (to the east of) but directly adjacent the Longridge Neighbourhood Development Plan Area.The site is bounded to the north by Blackburn Road and established hedgerow with the eastern extents of the site being bounded by existing hedgerow and an existing road providing access to a food processing business to the south of the site beyond the existing farmhouse. The eastern extents of the site is delineated by existing hedgerow and an existing access road that provides access to the existing farmhouse and associated agricultural buildings.With the exception of the existing dwelling, the site is greenfield in nature presently used for agricultural purposes. The adjacent site to the east previously benefitted from outline consent for ‘employment floorspace (use classes B1, B2 and B8) and associated access, car parking, landscaping and services infrastructure with all matters reserved except for access’ (3/2017/0317) – this consent has since expired and no longer remains extant.The existing site accommodates a number of tress and areas of well-established hedgerow, being relatively open in aspect. A Public Right of Way (FP23) runs north to south outside of and directly adjacent the eastern extents of the site.The site to which the application relates currently benefits from an ‘EAL’ designation, being designated as Site EAL3 within the Housing and Economic Development – Development Plan Document 15th October 2019 (HED-DPD). With the Employment Allocation Policy stating the following:*Land will be allocated for employment uses (defined as uses falling within classes B1 to B8) to meet employment land requirements in the plan period (2008-2028) as follows and as shown on the Proposals Map:** *Policy EAL1 Land at Sykes Holt, Mellor (1.7ha);*
* *Policy EAL2 Land at Time Technology Park, Simonstone (0.8ha); and*
* *Policy EAL3 Land at Higher College Farm, Longridge (1.5ha)*

With the supporting justification stating:*The Council proposes to allocate 4ha of employment land. This results in an overprovision against the identified requirement in the Core Strategy of 1.6ha. In making these allocations the plan addresses the identified requirements of the Core Strategy whilst also ensuring the delivery of necessary employment land to meet requirements for Longridge. Overall, the Council when taking these allocations and existing commitments into account provides through this plan for a choice of sites and locations to accommodate economic growth.* |
| **Proposed Development for which consent is sought:**The application seeks consent for the erection or a range of buildings including the conversion and extension of the existing farmhouse to accommodate commercial uses falling within Use Class E sub-class/sub-activity (g).The submitted details propose two ranges of buildings, both being of an ‘L’ shaped configuration being located on the eastern and western extent of the site, a further range of buildings is located to the southern extents of the aforementioned eastern and western buildings creating an informal rectangular central courtyard area that will accommodate parking provision and a central landscaped area. It is further proposed that the existing farmhouse will be converted with the addition of further extensions to the eastern wing creating an easterly extension, with a further extension being proposed to the southern elevation of the primary building, all of the proposed extension are single storey in scale with the submitted details further proposing that a small existing outbuilding be converted to that of a ‘meeting room’ ancillary to the primary uses within the site. The submitted details propose that vehicular and pedestrian access will be provided at the northern extents of the site located off Blackburn Road via a new access. It is proposed that the new buildings will be faced in vertical ‘zinc appearance’ cladding, reclaimed natural stone with quoin detailing and dress stone surrounds. The buildings will be roofed in a mixture of ‘zinc appearance’ aluminium roofing and natural slate with the fenestrational arrangement being that of primarily powder coated aluminium windows.The buildings will benefit from pitched roof arrangements with projecting eaves, the elevational language of the buildings is semi-contemporary with a clear vertical emphasis being reinforced through the window proportioning of the buildings and elevational projecting elements that interface with the eaves of the buildings to breakdown the potentially overtly linear configuration of the eaves, with these visual devices providing visual interest, depth and relief to the eastern and western buildings.Concealed ‘plant decks’ are integrated into the eastern and western buildings roof area to ensure that margins to accommodate future plant/HVAC are provided to preclude the need for externally mounted equipment. These are accompanied by vertical ‘ventilation chimneys’ which aid in ensuring the roofscape of the proposal is not overtly homogenous and ensuring the buildings, at upper levels, benefit from adequate visual animation and interest. The extensions to the existing farmhouse will be faced in natural stone with the elevational language of the extensions responding positively to that of the farmhouse, embodying a semi-domestic but agricultural austere language. |
| **Principle of Development:**The site to which the application relates is located within an area designated as defined open countryside, being located outwith any defined settlement limits. However the site currently benefits from an EAL Designation, being designated as ‘Site EAL3’ within the Housing and Economic Development – Development Plan Document (HED-DPD). The Employment Allocation states that the site is designated to accommodate ‘uses falling within classes B1 to B8’. Subsequent to the original site designation in October 2019, the Use Classes Order experienced significant revisions that came into effect on the 1st of September 2020 whereby a number of differing use classes were now considered to fall within the same use class, namely Use Class E which reads as follows:*Use, or part use, for all or any of the following purposes:**a) Shop other than for the sale of hot food**b) Food and drink which is mostly consumed on the premises**c) the following kinds of services principally to visiting members of the public*1. *financial services*
2. *professional services (other than medical services)*
3. *any other services which it is appropriate to provide in a commercial, business or service locality*

*d) Indoor sport and recreation (not swimming pools, ice rinks or motorised vehicles or firearms)**e) Medical services not attached to the residence of the practitioner**f) Non-residential creche, day centre or nursery**g)* 1. *office*
2. *ii. the research and development of products or processes or*
3. *iii. any industrial process, (which can be carried out in any residential area without causing detriment to the amenity of the area)*

In respect of the above, it is noted that the designation solely relates to that of uses fall within use classes B1-B8. In respect of the changes to the Use Classes Order, uses previously falling within use Classes B1(a), (b) and (c) are now considered to fall within Use Class E - sub-class/sub-activity (g).Taking account of the above, the proposal seeks consent for uses falling within Use Class E sub-class/sub-activity (g) with Use Class E(g) now incorporating uses that would be considered compliant with the previous B1-B8 designation. As such and notwithstanding other development management considerations, the principle of the development is considered acceptable insofar that it aligns with the EAL designation of the site and raises no direct significant measurable conflict with the adopted development plan for the borough. |
| **Impact Upon Residential Amenity:**The proposal site is relatively remote from nearby residential receptors save that for those to the north-west of the site on the opposing side of Blackburn Road/Dilworth Lane. As such and taking account of the separation distances between the proposed buildings and the residential dwellings to the north-west (approximately 70m) it is not considered that the proposal will result in any measurable undue impacts upon existing residential amenities.  |
| **Visual Amenity/External Appearance:**Whilst it is recognised that the site benefits from an employment land designation, the site remains within the defined open countryside, afforded a high level of visibility upon approach from the east and west along Blackburn Road. As such significant consideration must be given in respect of the proposals visual compatibility with the immediate and wider landscape setting and its visual compatibility with the character of the wider open countryside designation.Significant negotiation has been undertaken in respect of the proposal to ensure the proposed buildings are of a ‘non-standard’ commercial appearance, particularly given the somewhat anomalous spatial and locational relationship of the site in respect of its relationship with the settlement of Longridge and its relative remoteness from any similar built-form that would be of a quantum, pattern, density or scale commensurate to that which is proposed.In this respect, the proposal embodies a non-standard architectural language that employs a juxtaposition of contemporary architectural elements including archetypes and features that are of both a semi-rural and to some degree semi-commercial language.The primary northern frontage of the proposal is articulated by two buildings, which when read in concert, benefit from an element of visual symmetry with feature gables and ventilation chimney detailing. The remainder of the elevations of the new-build elements of the proposal embody a similar language with a balanced solid to void ratio, with the fenestrational proportioning being largely that of a vertical emphasis which assists in lessening and balancing the visual horizontal emphasis of the overall built-form, particularly in relation to the eastern and western buildings.The conversion of the existing farmhouse entails minimal interventions into the existing building save that for the proposed extension which remain largely subservient and sympathetic to the character and architectural language of the dwelling. The proposed extensions will be read as a range of single storey extensions that will be visually subservient to the new-build element of the proposal to the north and are of a language that to some degree preserves the semi-rural and agricultural character of the existing farmhouse.As such and taking account of the above, the proposal is considered to align with the aims, objectives and requirements of Policies DMG1 and DMG2 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy and Paragraphs 130 and 134 of the National Planning Policy Framework insofar that the proposed development will not result in any significant measurable detrimental impact upon the character or visual amenities of the immediate or wider area. |
| **Highways and Parking:**The Local Highways Authority (LHA) have raised no objections to the proposal subject to the imposition of conditions relating to the following matters:* Construction Method Statement
* Phasing for the construction of the access road/track
* Measures to control access to the existing Lower Lane access
* Visibility splays
* Details of off-site highways work including:
1. Provision of pedestrian refuge and localised carriageway widening
2. Signing and lining
3. Junction realignment at the Blackburn Road, Lower Lane, Preston Road junction
4. Provision of a footway on the south side of Blackburn Road from the proposed pedestrian refuge to Woodville cottages
5. Advertising and implementation of a 40mph speed limit on Blackburn Road from the current 30mph terminal point in an easterly direction
* Motorcycling and cycle storage/parking facilities
* Provision of vehicular charging points
* Delivery Goods Management Strategy
* That the Travel Plan be adhered to for a period of 5 years

As such and taking account that the LHA have raised no objections in respect of the proposed development, the proposal is considered to align with the aims, objectives and requirements of Key Statement DMI2 and Policy DMG3 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy insofar that the proposed development will not result in any significant measurable detrimental impact upon the safe operation of the immediate or wider highways network. |
| **Landscape/Ecology:**The application has been accompanied by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, Bat Survey and Arboricultural Impact Assessment. The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal concludes that the site is of low ecological significance and there will be no direct impacts upon protected species or species of conservation concern resultant from the proposal.The submitted Bat Survey does not identify that the proposed development will have any significant direct impacts upon European Protected Species but has identified the potential for new and existing buildings to accommodate provisions for building dependant species to enhance existing roosting/nesting opportunities. As such conditions will be imposed requiring details of such provision to be submitted to and agreed by the Local Planning Authority.The accompanying Arboricultural Impact Assessment identifies the retention of the majority of the hedgerow bounding the site and trees within the site – with the proposed removal of two small Category ‘C’ groupings and the removal of three category C trees. The proposal has been accompanied by an ‘Outline Landscaping’ proposal – whilst the proposal does not provide details of species mix or density, they do demonstrate that adequate landscape mitigation and enhancement can be accommodated on-site to mitigate the impacts of the development whilst resulting in overall ecological and biodiversity uplift.As such and taking account of the above, the proposal is considered to align with the aims, objectives and requirements of Key Statement EN4 and Policies DME1, DME2 and DME3 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy. |
| **Observations/Consideration of Matters Raised/Conclusion:**The proposal represents a form of development of which the principle is considered compatible with the EAL3 Designation of the site (Housing and Economic Development – Development plan Document 15th October 2019). As such there are no identified overriding conflicts with the adopted develop plan or inherent development strategy that would preclude the ability for the principle of the development to be supported.Furthermore, it is not considered that the proposal will result in any significant measurable harm upon the character or visual amenities of the area nor any measurable or quantifiable harm to existing nearby residential amenities to a degree that would warrant the refusal to grant planning permission.As such and for the above reasons, having regard to all material considerations and matters raised, that the application is recommended for approval. |
| **RECOMMENDATION**: | That planning consent be granted subject to the imposition of conditions. |