

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 May 2026

by J Buxton BA(Hons) DipArch ARB RIBA

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26 June 2026

Appeal Ref: 6006097

Land adjacent Preston Road, Ribchester PR3 3XL

Easting (x): 364706 Northing (y): 435556

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant permission in principle.
 - The appeal is made by Mr T Burns against the decision of Ribble Valley Borough Council.
 - The application reference is 3/2026/0050.
 - The development proposed is erection of up to two dwellings.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and permission in principle is granted for erection of residential development comprising a minimum of one dwelling and a maximum of two dwellings at land adjacent to Preston Road, Ribchester PR3 3XL in accordance with the terms of the application reference 3/2026/0050, dated 22 January 2026.

Preliminary Matters

2. The application form was not completed with a full postal address. I have adopted an address which is an amalgamation of the description on the application form and the address on the Council's Decision Notice, and which accurately describes the location of the appeal site. For completeness, I have also included the Easting and Northing co-ordinates in the banner above for clarity.
3. The proposal is for Permission in Principle (PiP). Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) advises that this is an alternative way of obtaining planning permission for housing-led development. The PiP consent route has 2 stages: the first stage (or PiP stage) establishes whether a site is suitable in-principle, and the second (Technical Details Consent) stage is when the detailed development proposals are assessed. This appeal relates to the first of these 2 stages.
4. The scope of the considerations for PiP is limited to location, land use and the amount of development permitted¹. All other matters are considered as part of a subsequent Technical Details Consent application if PiP is granted. I have determined the appeal accordingly and treated any details related to a Technical Details Consent as being illustrative only. There is no disagreement between the parties with regard to land use and amount of development and so my deliberations centre on whether the site is a suitable location for the proposed development.

Main Issue

5. Taking into account the above, the main issue is whether the site is a suitable location for the proposed development.

¹ PPG Permission in Principle Paragraph: 012 Reference ID:58-012-20180615

Reasons

6. The appeal site comprises an undeveloped parcel of land, broadly rectangular in shape and extending to approximately 0.19 hectares. It is located in Ribchester and fronts Preston Road. The site lies between existing residential properties along the road and is currently greenfield in nature. The topography of the site slopes gently downwards towards the main road. The land is bounded by vegetation along the frontage and north-western boundary, whilst the rear and south-eastern boundaries are more open. Access to the site is currently taken from the south-eastern boundary via an existing field gate.

Suitable location

7. The Council Officer's Report refers to Key Statement DS1 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy 2008 – 2028 (CS), adopted 16 December 2014 which sets out a development strategy for the Borough. The strategy directs the majority of new housing development to an identified strategic site and the principal settlements of Clitheroe, Longridge and Whalley. In addition, it states that development will be focused on Tier 1 Villages, which are the more sustainable of the defined settlements and states that new housing within and outside of the Borough's Tier 2 village settlements will be more tightly controlled with such development being permissible where local needs housing or regeneration benefits can be delivered. The appeal site is adjacent the settlement boundary of Ribchester, which is identified as a Tier 2 Village.
8. CS Policy DMG2 requires that, outside of defined settlement areas, development should meet at least one of several considerations. In addition, CS Policy DMH3 states that residential development within areas defined as open countryside is generally limited to specified types of development. In this case, the proposed development does not meet any of the listed considerations nor does it fall within the types of residential development typically supported for open countryside locations. As such, the proposal does not accord with the above policies. There is no evidence before me that would lead me to conclude differently.
9. The Decision Notice refers to CS Policies DM12 and DMG3 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy which seek to ensure that development is well related to the primary road network and can be accessed by sustainable modes of transport. These policies aim to promote development patterns which reduce reliance on private motor vehicles; in this respect there is disagreement between the parties regarding the suitability of the appeal site to access key services and facilities.
10. From my site visit, I observed that the site is located on a primary route through Ribchester and it is well connected by footpaths to the centre of the village which is within a reasonable walking distance. Within the centre there are a range of services, including public houses serving food, a retail shop, a post office, cafes, places of worship, a village hall, and a primary school. In addition, there are recreational facilities including an outdoor playground, tennis courts, and football pitches, as well as a range of local businesses. Collectively, these facilities provide for a range of day-to-day needs and contribute positively to the overall accessibility of the site.

¹ PPG Permission in Principle Paragraph: 012 Reference ID:58-012-20180615

11. I recognise that future occupants may need to travel further afield for employment, supermarkets and secondary schools, however, the site is located within close proximity of a bus stop providing an hourly service between 6am and 8.30pm. This offers a reasonable alternative to private car use, with journey time to Longridge which has a greater range of services, of approximately 8 minutes and onward connections to the wider area, such that future occupiers would not be wholly reliant on a private car.
12. In addition, the presence of a designated cycle route running along the frontage of the site offers further opportunities for travel by modes other than the private car. This offers connectivity to the surrounding area, and its proximity is likely to encourage its use by future occupiers.
13. Taking these factors together, future occupiers of the proposed development would not be wholly reliant on the private motor vehicle, and the site can therefore reasonably be regarded as being in an accessible location to local services by other modes of transport.
14. Although the proposal conflicts with the spatial strategy set out in CS Policies DS1, DMG2 and DMH3, I find that the site is well related to the existing settlement and occupies an accessible location. As such, it would accord with the objectives of Key Statement DM12 and Policy DMG3 of the CS which among other things seek to ensure that development is safely and sustainably accessible, does not harm highway safety, and meets criteria relating to design, environmental protection and overall development quality.

Other Matters

15. The parties have drawn my attention to the appeal decision² (The Chatburn Decision), where residential development outside a defined settlement boundary was allowed. My approach in this case is consistent with that decision. Whilst Ribchester is identified as a Tier 2 village, when its range of local services and public transport links are taken into account, I consider it to represent a suitable location for housing in principle.
16. The appeal site is positioned within open countryside but between existing built development and as a result is visually and physically related to the established settlement pattern along Preston Road. Whilst it lies outside the formal settlement boundary, it does not form part of an isolated or particularly sensitive rural landscape and as such it is also a suitable location for development in this regard.
17. I have had regard to the concerns raised by a neighbouring occupier in respect of the effect of the number of dwellings proposed on the character and appearance of the area, the living conditions of nearby residents and drainage. However, the application is made in the form of a PiP and the matter for consideration at this stage is whether the site is suitable for residential development of up to two dwellings. Whilst this establishes an upper limit, the precise form and layout of development, and the number of dwellings that would ultimately come forward within that parameter, would be determined at the technical details consent stage. Matters relating to parking provision for the dwellings, and any associated highway safety considerations, would also be assessed at that stage. Accordingly, whilst the indicative layout is a useful guide to how the site might be developed, it is not determinative.

² APP/T2350/W/25/3372635

18. I note that a public sewer crosses the site. However, this is a separate matter which can be addressed through engagement with the relevant statutory undertaker and considered at the technical details consent stage.
19. The proposal would also generate temporary economic benefits during the construction phase, alongside a small degree of ongoing support for local services through additional household expenditure. Given the limited scale of the development, these benefits carry limited weight.

Planning Balance

20. The proposed development would conflict with the spatial strategy set out in CS Policy DS1, together with Policies DMG2 and DMH3, as it would introduce residential development outside the defined settlement boundary within a Tier 2 settlement. However, the degree of conflict with these policies is tempered by the particular characteristics of the appeal site. It is bounded by existing residential development and reads as part of the built frontage along Preston Road. As such, the proposal would not result in isolated or sporadic development in the countryside, nor would it undermine the overall spatial strategy to any great degree. Nevertheless, as the proposal would be in conflict with the spatial strategy of the CS, it would conflict with the development plan as a whole.
21. The Council has not confirmed its current housing land supply position within the submitted evidence. However, having regard to the recent Chatburn appeal decision referenced by the appellant, issued in January 2026, it is understood that the Council's supply was approximately 3.45 years at that time. Whilst it is acknowledged that this position may have changed in the intervening period, no updated evidence has been provided by the Council to demonstrate that a full five-year housing land supply can now be sustained. In the absence of such evidence, it is reasonable to conclude that the Council cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites.
22. In these circumstances, the presumption in favour of sustainable development as set out in paragraph 11(d) of the Framework is engaged. As a result, the policies most important for determining the application, including those relating to the location and distribution of housing, are considered to be out-of-date.
23. Against this backdrop, the provision of additional housing, even at the modest level of up to two dwellings, attracts significant weight. This is particularly the case given that the appeal site is reasonably accessible to a range of services and transport options, such that it can be considered a sustainable location in planning terms.
24. In this context, I find that the adverse impacts of the proposal do not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the Framework as a whole and planning permission should be granted.

Conditions

25. The PPG makes it clear that it is not possible for conditions to be attached to a grant of permission in principle. Therefore, whilst I acknowledge the conditions suggested by the Council, I have not imposed them. The terms of the application already include site location, type of development and amount, and the amount has been expressed as a range in the decision paragraph, as required by the PPG.

Conclusion

26. I find this is a case where there are material considerations that indicate that the appeal should be determined otherwise than in accordance with the development plan. For the reasons given above the appeal should be allowed.

J Buxton

INSPECTOR