

REPORT TO:	Planning Committee
APPLICATION REF:	11/25/0167
APPLICATION ADDRESS:	Church Bridge Works, Mill Street, Church, BB5 4EL
DEVELOPMENT DESCRIPTION:	Change of use of existing building (Use Class E (c) (iii)) to private hire function hall (Use Class F2) (Retrospective)
DATE REPORT WRITTEN:	31 October 2025

Reason for Committee Decision

The application is presented to Planning Committee as the Chief Planning and Transportation Officer considers that the application should be considered by members.

Description of the Site and the Proposed Development

The application site relates to part of Church Bridge (or Churchbridge) Works located off Mill Street, Church. It is within the urban boundary of Accrington and its townships. The site is part of a designated existing employment area, which was identified as good quality by the Hyndburn Borough Council Employment Land Study: Final Report (January 2016).

The application seeks retrospective planning permission for the change of use of the building to a private hire function hall. It would be used for events such as Asian weddings, seminars, workshops and training events. The proposed operating hours for seminars, workshops and training events are 09:00am until 17:00 Monday to Friday with weddings being mostly seasonal but seven days a week from 10:00am to 23:00.

Consultation Responses/Representations

Consultation

Hyndburn Borough Council (HBC) Ecology: 23 May 2025: No Objections

HBC Environmental Health: 22 October 2025: The application is recommended to be refused based on the grounds of an adverse impact on residential amenity and the submitted noise assessment being considered inadequate to demonstrate the use would not significantly impact on nearby residential properties.

Lancashire County Council (LCC) Highways: 27 October 2025: Recommend that the application is refused based upon the lack of information regarding the wider car parking management at the site should the remaining parts of the building become occupied. A shortfall in car parking for the remaining units may result in overspill car parking onto the surrounding highway network which would be a highway safety concern.

Publicity

Neighbour notification letters were sent and a site notice was placed in the area. 33 objections were received which highlight the following concerns (summarised):

- The noise generated by weddings unacceptably impacting on occupiers of residential properties in the surrounding area which has already been experienced.
- The light generated unacceptably impacting on occupiers of residential properties in the surrounding area which has already been experienced.
- The dense vegetation mentioned within the submitted information was removed approximately 2 years ago. Therefore, does not act as a sound barrier.
- The wildlife and farm animals in the surrounding area will be impacted by the use.
- The application site is in the centre of a residential area.
- The additional traffic and large numbers of cars being left on the highway results in harm to highway safety.
- The vulnerable residents in the area would be impacted by the noise generated by the use.
- The rooftop garden would intensify the harm of the noise and light pollution.
- The use would harm the enjoyment of the canal.
- There are concerns about residents not being consulted.
- There are fireworks being set off past 11pm
- There is anti-social behaviour taking place with cars have been witnessed speeding through the area, revving engines, and performing dangerous stunts such as "donuts" in the car park late at night.

- The rooftop garden area generating a loss of privacy in the wintertime due to the loss of foliage.
- The proposed use of the building depreciating the value of nearby residential properties

Relevant Planning History

No relevant planning history.

Relevant Policies

Hyndburn Core Strategy (CS)

Policy BD1 The Balanced Development Strategy

Policy E2: Protection, Modernisation and Development of Employment Sites

Policy Env6 High Quality Design

Policy Env7 Environmental Amenity

Policy A2 Accrington Town Centre

Hyndburn Development Management Development Plan Document (DMDPD)

Policy DM1 Employment Development

Policy DM3 Development of main town centre uses

Policy DM26 Design Quality and Materials

Policy DM29 Environmental Amenity

Policy DM31 Waste Management in all new development

Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework

National Planning Policy Guidance

DMDPD GN3 Materials and colour

DMDPD GN8 Car parking and access standards

Observations

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The statutory Development Plan for Hyndburn includes the CS and DMDPD.

The main issues raised by this application relate to whether the location is suitable for the proposal with particular regard to employment and town centre policies; impact on residential amenity; impact on highway safety and parking provision; and the impact on the character and appearance of the area. Each of these issues will be considered in turn.

1. Whether the location is suitable for the proposal with particular regard to employment and town centre policies

Loss of existing employment use

- 1.1. Policy E2 of the CS seeks to safeguard and enhance the Borough's existing employment land while encouraging its gradual modernisation. The policy recognises the value of retaining good and adequate employment sites for continued or improved business use, while allowing for the redevelopment of poorer-quality sites for alternative uses, such as housing, where appropriate. Where redevelopment occurs, proposals are expected to include an element of modern employment provision to offset any loss, ensuring that Hyndburn maintains a balanced supply of employment land and supports sustainable economic growth. Policy E2 of the CS states:

“a) Existing business parks, major industrial estates and other good quality employment sites will be retained for employment uses.

b) The development of existing employment sites of adequate quality for alternative uses will only be permitted when part of the site is redeveloped for appropriate employment (within class B1) and where the criteria set out in part (c) below are satisfied.

c) Employment sites not falling within the scope of a or b above will remain in employment use unless it can be demonstrated that:

- continued use of the site would give rise to unacceptable environmental impacts, or;*

- *there is no current or likely future demand for the site or premises for employment uses, or;*
- *permitting an alternative use is the only viable means of retaining a building or premises which has particular architectural or historical significance.*

In all cases, redevelopment for alternative uses should not prejudice the operating conditions of other remaining employment uses.”

- 1.2. Policy E1 of the CS defines employment uses as the former Use Class B1 (now Use Class E), Use Class B2 and Use Class B8.
- 1.3. The application site is part of a designated existing employment area, which was identified as good quality by the Hyndburn Borough Council Employment Land Study: Final Report (January 2016). The proposed use would not fall within the employment uses defined by Policy E1 of the CS. Therefore, the proposal conflicts with Policy E2 of the CS, which seeks to retain existing good quality employment sites for employment sites. While it could be argued that the proposal only relates to part of the employment site, for the reasons given below, it is likely that the proposal would also prejudice and sterilise the rest of the employment site due to the parking provision impact.
- 1.4. Although not in reference to good quality employment sites, the supporting text of Policy E2 of the CS states that in order to demonstrate that there is no current or likely future demand for the site or premises for employment uses the site shall be marketed by at least one commercial agent for employment purposes for at least 18 months. Additionally, applications for non-employment uses will need to include information as to why they cannot be redeveloped for employment purposes. The marketing must relate to the sale, and leasing, of land or property and either the reuse or redevelopment of the site or premises for employment purposes.
- 1.5. Additionally, Policy SP5 of the Emerging Local Plan would only permit the redevelopment of good quality employment sites in exceptional circumstances where the applicant can demonstrate sound reasons why the employment use cannot remain on the site and the proposed new use will be expected to comprise a reasonable scale of employment on site to compensate for the loss. The terms reasonable will be considered in terms of the previous use and job on the site.
- 1.6. The submitted Loss of Employment Land & Marketing Justification Statement states that the application premises have been marketed by several different Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors accredited agents since August 2024. Therefore, the site has not been marketed for the minimum time expects by Policy E2 of the CS for lower quality site. Moreover, limited information has been submitted regarding the marketing strategy, periods of listings, or details of any offers received. Consequently, it is not

possible to assess whether the property has been marketed to attract a continuing or new employment use.

- 1.7. The submitted Loss of Employment Land & Marketing Justification Statement includes an email received from Taylor Weaver property agents. It is mentioned that market demand for space of this specification and size within East Lancashire is very limited with there being no enquires of that size currently seeking space. It also mentions that the demand for office space in Hyndburn is low, presenting that in general office space is in less demand after COVID-19. However, the lawful use of the site presumably comprises some form of general industrial or storage and distribution use with an incidental officer. Therefore, this justification is not relevant.
- 1.8. In short, the submitted justification for the loss of the existing employment use should attract limited weight in favour of the proposal. It is not sufficient to outweigh the conflict with Policy E1 of the CS identified.

Proposed town centre use(s)

- 2.1. Policy BD1 of the CS states that, amongst other things, individual proposals should adhere to the principle of Accrington Town Centre being the principal centre and providing for the Borough's key services, retail and town centre needs.
- 2.2. Policy A2 of the CS reiterates that Accrington Town Centre will consolidate and develop as the principal centre, providing for the Borough's key services and comparison and food retailing needs. It states that new comparison and convenience (including food) retailing will be focussed in Accrington Town Centre. Existing and future day to day shopping needs will be met in town, township and neighbourhood centres and, at an appropriate scale, in sustainable locations where there are identified deficiencies.
- 2.3. Policy DM3 of the DMDPD sets out that proposals for main town centre uses that are not located in defined Town Centres or Local Centres, and are not in accordance with specific policies in the Site Allocations DPD, should address the following:
 - a. demonstrate that no sequentially preferable site is available or suitable through a proportionate but thorough assessment of more central sites;
 - b. that in the application of the sequential assessment above, developers and operators demonstrate flexibility in terms of scale and format;
- 2.4. The NPPF defines main town centre uses as retail development (including warehouse clubs and factory outlet centres); leisure, entertainment and more intensive sport and recreation uses (including cinemas, restaurants, drive-through restaurants, bars and pubs, nightclubs, casinos, health and fitness centres, indoor bowling centres and bingo

halls); offices; and arts, culture and tourism development (including theatres, museums, galleries and concert halls, hotels and conference facilities).

- 2.5. The application site is located within an out-of-centre location for the purposes of town centre policies. The submitted Sequential Assessment considered four alternative sites within Accrington Town Centre and edge of centre defined areas. The assessment demonstrates that the sites identified were significantly smaller than the than the application proposal. Alongside a review of the submitted Sequential Assessment, an assessment of available premises listed on Rightmove and Zoopla was undertaken by the Case Officer, extending to properties within a tolerance of $\pm 10\%$ of the proposed floor area. However, no premises were identified as suitable to accommodate the requirements of the proposed development within or on the edge of Accrington and Oswaldtwistle town centres. Therefore, no available and suitable sequentially preferable site was found.
- 2.6. In conclusion, the submitted Sequential Assessment has demonstrated that there are no suitable and available sites in sequentially preferable locations for the proposed main town centre use(s). However, the proposal would involve the loss of a good quality employment site, which conflict with Policy E2 of the CS. The submitted justification for the loss of the existing employment use should attract limited weight in favour of the proposal. Therefore, the location is not suitable for the proposal.

3. Impact on the living conditions of nearby occupants

- 3.1. Policy Env7 of the Core Strategy seeks to protect environmental amenity, seeking to ensure that new development does not give rise to unacceptable adverse impacts or loss of amenity through a range of factors including traffic, visual impact, noise, dust, odour, over-looking and loss of light. Policy DM29 concerns environmental amenity and, amongst other things, sets out the distances that should be taken into consideration when examining the relationships between existing and proposed development including outlook and overlooking.
- 3.2. Hyndburn Council Environmental Protection have objected to the application. Their response is summarised as follows.
- 3.3. In August 2025, the Council received ten separate noise complaints relating to a function held at the application premises. The complaints referred to amplified music, fireworks, and vehicle noise originating from the venue and affecting residential properties to both the south and west of the site.
- 3.4. Given these previous complaints, it was expected that a detailed and informed noise assessment would be submitted in support of the application, addressing sound

insulation and mitigation measures to prevent recurrence of disturbance. However, the submitted Noise Assessment Report does not adequately reflect the proposed use described within the accompanying planning documents and fails to address the issues previously raised by the Environmental Protection team.

3.5. Specifically, the noise report makes assumptions and omissions which undermine its reliability, including:

- There has been no consultation with the Environmental Protection during its preparation, despite several months in which such engagement could have occurred.
- There are inconsistencies between the report and other submitted documents. The submitted Planning, Design, Access and Transport Statement refers explicitly to the venue's use for Asian weddings, and the revised floor plan dated 26 March 2025 shows features characteristic of a wedding venue (such as a bride's room and large round banquet tables for up to 500 guests).
- The report's suggestion that weddings will be occasional and that there would be no internal speakers conflicts with the scale and function of the venue as described elsewhere in the application. It is considered unrealistic that a wedding venue of this nature could operate without live or amplified music.
- Lack of clarity regarding the monitoring locations and the sound level assumptions used. The report references an internal noise level of 85 dB(A), derived from health and safety regulations, without justification that this figure accurately reflects the likely operational noise levels associated with the proposed use.
- A failure to properly assess the impact of car park activity and fireworks, despite previous complaints and the site's proximity to sensitive residential receptors.

3.6. The HBC Environmental Protection team considers that the submitted noise report is inadequate, lacking in transparency, and fails to accurately assess the true nature and intensity of the proposed use. In its current form, the report does not provide a reliable basis upon which to determine the likely noise impacts or to establish appropriate mitigation measures. It is highly likely that the proposed use would have a negative impact on the amenity of occupiers of nearby premises. It is recommended that the application be refused.

3.7. The objections received mentioned that lighting would result in a detrimental impact on the occupiers of residential properties nearby. However, as HBC Environmental Protection have not raised any concerns regarding lighting.

3.8. In view of the concerns raised by HBC Environmental Protection and the inadequacy of the submitted noise assessment, it is considered that the proposal fails to demonstrate that the proposed use could operate without giving rise to significant adverse impacts on the amenity of nearby residents. Therefore, the proposal conflicts with Policy ENV7 of the CS and policies DM25 and DM29 of the DMDPD.

4. Impact on highway safety and parking provision

4.1. GN8 of the DMDPD does not provide specific parking requirements for a venue of the proposed use. LCC Highways have been consulted and their final response mentioned the following with regard to parking:

“Parking

There are 170 car parking spaces allocated to the proposal within the red edge. Based upon a maximum capacity of 500 guests at the venue and regularly 100 guests would attend a wedding and 50 for a meeting or seminar this number is acceptable. This equates to a range of between 33 – 167 car parking spaces based upon an average of 1 space per 3 guests and we would expect guests to travel by car rather than by other sustainable modes.

We would expect staff to be supported to travel sustainably by the provision of secure and covered cycle parking.

The site is part of a larger complex of buildings which share the car parking at the site. It is stated that there are a further 195 spaces at the site. Although the other parts of the building are currently vacant it is important for us to establish that the remaining car parking provision is suitable to accommodate the other uses, should they become occupied.

We would seek to apply the parking standards to the remaining part of the building for its approved use - B2 use – ratio 1 space per 45sqm, B8 – ratio 1 space per 100sqm.

No floor areas are provided.

The information states that the leisure use would not conflict with the remaining B2/B8 uses at the site which are daytime uses, however it is commonplace for large manufacturing warehouses to operate shifts with overnight and weekend working therefore we would request that approximate floor areas are provided to provide some assurances going forward.

Conclusion

Lancashire County Council acting as the Highway Authority would recommend that the application is refused based upon the lack of information regarding the wider car parking management at the site should the remaining parts of the building become occupied.

A shortfall in car parking for the remaining units may result in overspill car parking onto the surrounding highway network which would be a highway safety concern.”

- 4.2. In conclusion taking into account the above it is considered that insufficient information has been provided to determine if the remaining units on site, if brought back into use, would result in in overspill car parking onto the surrounding highway network which would be a highway safety concern. Therefore, it is not possible to determine if the proposals would accord with Policy DM32 of the DMDPD.

5. Impact on the character and appearance of the area

- 5.1. Policy Env6 of the Core Strategy seeks to conserve and enhance the quality of Hyndburn’s urban and rural environment through the application of high-quality design. Policy DM26 is concerned with design quality and materials and sets out a variety of criteria that should be taken into consideration when assessing planning applications.
- 5.2. There are no external changes proposed under this application. The loss of the existing use would not significantly harm the character of the area. Therefore, the proposal accords with Policies ENV6 of the CS and Policy DM26 of the DMDPD.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1. In conclusion, the proposal seeks to redevelopment an existing good quality employment site, which conflicts with Policy E2 of the CS. Moreover, there are significant concerns regarding the impacts on the living conditions of nearby occupants and highway safety with particular regard to parking provision. The proposal conflicts with the development plan taken as a whole.
- 6.2. The proposal would be accompanied by some social and economic benefits. However, there is no demonstrable need for the proposal. Moreover, for the reasons given, the submitted justification for the loss of the existing employment use should only attract limited weight in favour of the proposal. It is not considered that the benefits and other considerations outweigh the conflict with the development plan and harm identified.

6.3. On this basis, as the proposal conflicts with the development plan and there are no material considerations to indicate a decision otherwise than in accordance with the plan, it is recommended that planning permission be refused.

Recommendation:

That planning permission is refused for the following reasons:

1. The proposed development would result in the loss of an existing good quality employment site. Therefore, the proposal conflicts with Policy E2 of the Hyndburn Core Strategy. The submitted justification for the loss of the employment use does not outweigh the conflict or harm identified
2. The submitted Acoustic Survey and Assessment fails to provide a robust or reliable evaluation of the likely noise impacts associated with the proposed wedding and events venue. It does not accurately reflect the scale and nature of the proposed use and omits consideration of key noise sources, including amplified music, vehicle movements and outdoor activity. As such, it cannot be demonstrated that the proposed use would operate without giving rise to significant adverse impacts on the living conditions of nearby residents. It is likely that the proposed use would have a negative impact on the amenity of occupiers of nearby premises. Therefore, the proposal conflicts with Policy ENV7 of the Hyndburn Core Strategy and policies DM25 and DM29 of the Hyndburn Development Management Development Plan Document.
3. There has been insufficient information has been provided to demonstrate that adequate car parking provision would be available across the wider site to accommodate the proposed use alongside any potential reoccupation of the remaining employment site. In the absence of this information, it cannot be concluded that the proposal would not result in overspill parking onto the surrounding highway network, which would be to the detriment of highway safety. Therefore, the proposal conflicts Policy DM32 of the Hyndburn Development Management Development Plan Document.

List of Background Papers

Copies of documents included in this list must be open to inspection and, in the case of reports to Cabinet, must be published on the website.

<https://planning.hyndburnbc.gov.uk/Northgate/ES/Presentation/Planning/OnlinePlanning/OnlinePlanningOverview?applicationNumber=11%2F25%2F0167&guid=5878708d-2bb8-467c-89d9-20e9b83ab22f>