

Motion to Make Request that The Green at Greenside, Ribchester be designated as a Village Green

1. This Committee Notes:

- 1.1. An area of open space next to Greenside car park known informally as “The Green” in Ribchester is owned and maintained by RVBC.
- 1.2. It is used by local residents (and visitors) for various casual and organised activities for leisure and recreation.
- 1.3. The location is indicated by the yellow arrow in Figure 1 below.

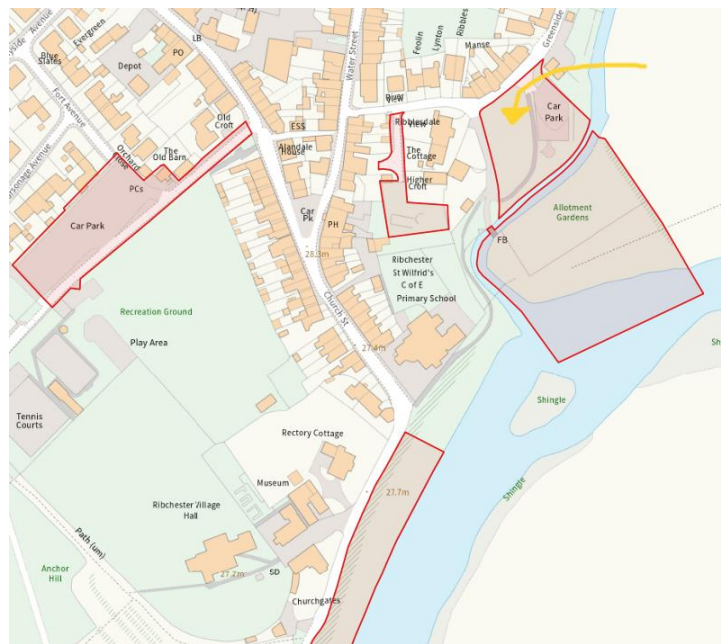


Figure 1: Location indicated by yellow arrow.

- 1.4. A request from the ward Councillor to the Director of Community Services to seek Village Green status was made on 1st December 2025 following discussions with local residents.
- 1.5. A request to the Director of Community Services to bring a report to Community Services Committee seeking approval to submit a request to Lancashire County Council to grant Village Green status was made on 29th January 2026. Further requests to bring the matter to Community Services were made throughout 2026.
- 1.6. Lancashire Council are ultimately responsible for maintaining the Register of Village Greens but act upon the advice and requests of resident's groups or landowners who make requests to them.

- 1.7. There are a number of pathways to the Village Green registration process. These are laid out in Appendix 2.
- 1.8. One of these pathways, and easily the simplest, is for Landowners to voluntarily apply for registration.
- 1.9. The capacity of RVBC Council Officers is under strain presently due to Local Government Re-Organisation preparation work and therefore it is important to choose the option which places less workload on officers.

2. This Committee Believes

- 2.1. Village Greens, as defined by the open spaces society, give protections and a certain kudos to villages and open spaces which have the status. They are a positive thing for the communities they serve and add community value.
- 2.2. The application of Village Green Status to Greenside would have no material effect on the management or ownership of the asset but will provide protections against development of the space.
- 2.3. Village Green registration would provide the land with statutory protection against development or encroachment that would interfere with its use for lawful sports and pastimes, while ownership and day-to-day management would remain with the Council.

“Village greens are protected from encroachment and development by the Inclosure Act 1857 s12 and the Commons Act 1876 s29. The only development permitted is for the better enjoyment of the green for sports and pastimes.” (Open Spaces Society, 2026)

- 2.4. The process of achieving Village Green registration can be streamlined by the simplest pathway, which is an application from the Landowner (RVBC) to LCC.
- 2.5. Alternative pathways as laid out in Appendix 2 may pass initial application work from officers to residents, however would ultimately require a greater amount of officer time in dealing with requests for permission, evidence and potential public enquiry.
- 2.6. The request to register “the Green” on Greenside as a Village Green fulfils all of the criteria laid out in the new Land Asset Management Plan, however despite repeated requests and a motion submitted in good order, with more than three weeks notice, no officers report to lay out any legal obstacles has been produced. With this in mind, Committee should direct Officers to proceed in principle with the application subject to the necessary positive outcome of legal checks.

3. This Committee Resolves

- 3.1. To direct the Director of Community services (or delegated person) to proceed to make a landowners request to Lancashire County Council to assign “The Green” on Greenside as a Village Green and add it to the Register of Village Greens, subject to checks on legal obstacles.
- 3.2. For the Director of Community Services to note progress on the matter in the General Report to Community Services and/or reports to this Committee until complete.

Appendix 1: Town and Village Green Explainer

3. Town and village greens (TVG)

Introduction

3.1 [TVGs](#) are land where local people have enjoyed informal recreation for at least 20 years, without challenge or permission (ie 'as of right'). TVGs were required to be registered under the 1965 act (each has a number with the prefix VG). They are recorded on the registers held by the commons registration authority (county or unitary council).

3.2 Land can be registered as TVG today provided there is evidence of use as of right. Registration gives local people rights of recreation there, and protects the land from development and encroachment.

Protection from development and encroachment

3.3 It is an offence under s12 of the Inclosure Act 1857 and s29 of the Commons Act 1876 to encroach on a TVG. [There is a power](#) for local inhabitants to take legal action against such interference, and the local council is best placed to pursue this. This requires a [prosecution in the magistrates' court](#).

Voluntary registration

3.4 Any landowner can [voluntarily register](#) his or her land as a TVG, without the need to gather evidence of use (2006 act s15(8)). Local councils should consider registering land which they own, to give local people rights of recreation and to protect it from development.

3.5 The local council can also press developers voluntarily to register as TVG green space in a development as mitigation to that development. Registration of green space will confer protection in perpetuity.

Unclaimed land

3.6 The local council has the power to protect unclaimed TVGs and to take such action as if it were the owner. See [paragraph 2.7](#) above.

Source: *Open Spaces Society Website*, 2026, accessible online at [What Local Councils Can Do for Public Access](#).

Appendix 2: Pathways to Village Green Registration

Pathway	Who applies?	Requirements	Advantages	Disadvantages
1. Voluntary Registration (s.15(8) Commons Act 2006)	Landowner (RVBC)	Council resolves to apply to Lancashire County Council. No need to prove 20 years' use.	Quickest, simplest and lowest-cost option. Protects the land permanently for recreation. Avoids disputes or a public inquiry.	
2. Application based on 20 years' use (s.15(2))	Local residents	Evidence that the land has been used "as of right" for lawful sports and pastimes for at least 20 years.	Can succeed without the landowner's agreement.	May require extensive evidence, legal submissions and a public inquiry. Outcome uncertain.
3. Alternative protections	Council or community	Local Green Space designation through the Local Plan or Neighbourhood Plan; Asset of Community Value listing.	Provides some protection against inappropriate development.	Does not provide the same level of protection as Village Green registration and may be temporary or policy-dependent.

Conclusion

As owner of the land, Ribble Valley Borough Council has the opportunity to choose the simplest, quickest and least resource-intensive route by voluntarily applying for registration under section 15(8) of the Commons Act 2006.

Appendix 3: Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Village Green?

A Village Green is land protected in law for the benefit of the community, where lawful sports and pastimes may continue in perpetuity.

Who owns the land after registration?

Ownership does **not** change.

The Green would remain the property of Ribble Valley Borough Council.

Does the Council lose control of the land?

No.

The Council would continue to own and manage the land. Registration simply protects it from development or encroachment that would interfere with public recreational use.

Will the land still be maintained as it is now?

Yes.

The existing maintenance regime can continue.

Does registration cost the Council anything?

The application itself carries no fee, and the application process is straightforward where the landowner applies voluntarily.

Why not leave things as they are?

Without Village Green registration, future decisions affecting the land could be taken by future administrations or successor authorities.

Registration provides long-term certainty that this valued open space will remain available for public recreation.

Would registration stop community events?

No.

Activities consistent with recreation and enjoyment of The Green can continue.

Why is this the preferred route?

Because it is the **simplest, least contentious** and **most cost-effective** route available.

It avoids the need for residents to gather decades of evidence or for the Council to become involved in a contested legal process.

Is this unusual?

No.

The Commons Act 2006 specifically allows landowners to register their own land voluntarily where they wish to protect it for future generations.

Appendix 4 – Benefits to Ribchester

1. Protects a valued community asset.
2. Supports health and wellbeing.
3. Demonstrates the Council's commitment to green spaces.
4. Leaves a lasting legacy ahead of local government reorganisation.
5. Achieves protection through the least resource-intensive route.