

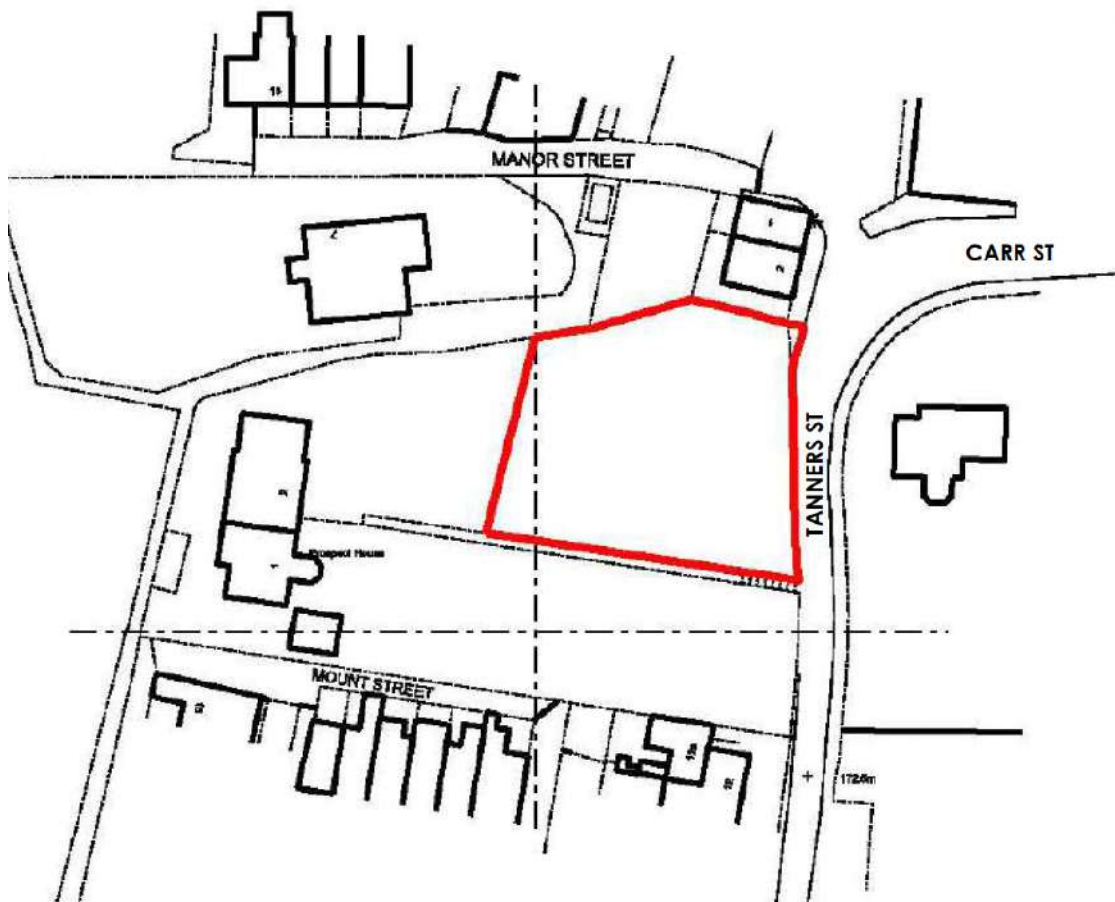
Development Management
Bury Council
3 Knowsley Place
Duke Street
Bury
BL9 0EJ

Our Ref: MJ/RG/G315/L001
Date: 17 September 2021

Dear Sir / Madam

**LAND ON WEST SIDE OF TANNERS STREET, RAMSBOTTOM
PROPOSED ERECTION OF ONE DWELLING WITH ASSOCIATED GARAGE, PARKING
/ MANOEUVRING SPACE AND GARDEN CURTILAGE, TO BE ACCESSED VIA
TANNERS STREET**

On behalf of Blakeman Design & Build, we are pleased to submit this full planning application proposing the erection of a single house over split levels, with associated terraces / patio, garage, parking and garden area, with the formation of a vehicular access onto Tanners Street on land on the above site. The extent of the application site is marked in red below.

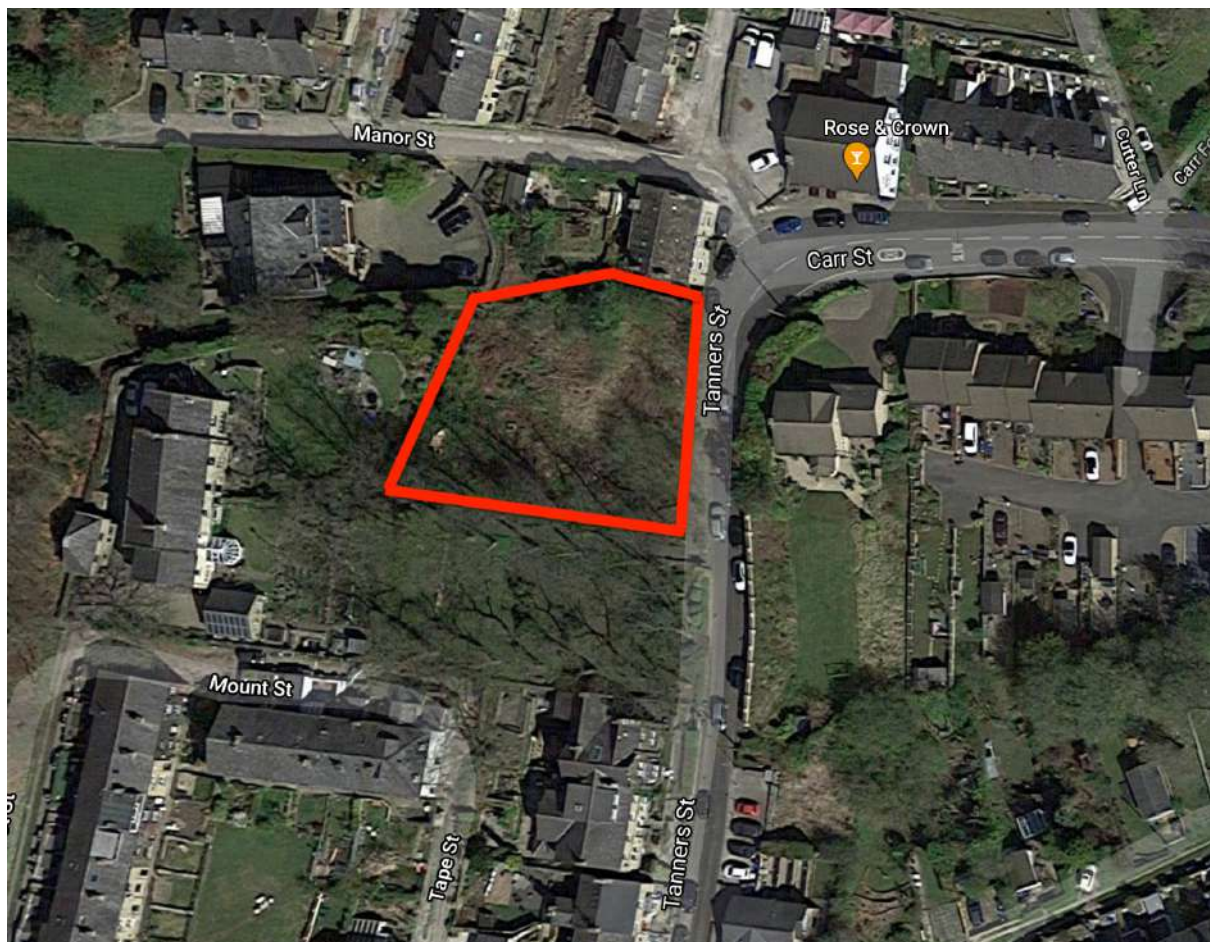




The application has been formulated on the basis of helpful and positive pre-application advice from the LPA over an extended period of around 2 years. Various machinations of the proposal have been prepared, and the details have been adjusted in response to feedback from the LPA and the Council's highways, trees and conservation officers. At the close of that process, the LPA confirmed that it is supportive of the proposal.

The Site and Proposal

The site is 1,211 sqm, located close to the junction between Tanners Street, Carr Street and Manor Street, approximately 300 metres from the centre of Ramsbottom Town Centre.



It is a vacant, elevated plot of land – a former garden – that is somewhat overgrown and largely hidden behind a stone wall and vegetation flanking Tanners Street (see photographs on following page).

While much of the vegetation is not of good quality or value, the better quality trees (subject to TPO) are to be retained, and will be supplemented by new trees and other planting.

The site is surrounded on all sides by houses, and located within the Ramsbottom Conservation Area.



The Applicant has purchased the site and (subject to obtaining permission) proposes to build the house as his new family home.



The intention is to deliver a bespoke, innovative, beautiful and (subtly) stunning family home, nestling on the sloped site. Due to the relief of the land, the house is 'layered', with a garage and parking space at ground level, behind a new stone wall. The house then rises in tiers, set against the hillside.

Reflecting the sensitive heritage context of the site, a great deal of thought and attention has been put into the design process, with careful consideration to its likely visibility and its impact on the special character and appearance of the Conservation Area. It is our contention that this will be a beautiful, special and exemplar house, which will introduce a new, complementary layer onto the Conservation Area.

The proposal materials will be of the finest quality :

- Stone walls with artstone details
- Complementary grey facing brick and grey render
- Feature 'living green wall' elements
- Dark grey windows and doors
- Dark glass balustradings serving a series of terraces / patio at various levels.

The design rationale and evolution is set out in the submitted Design and Access Statement.

A detailed landscaping scheme has been prepared, showing a lush mix of new native trees, shrubs and ground cover to supplement the retained trees.



Planning History

The site has been the subject of a good deal of planning history, summarised below :

November 1990: 2 detached dwellings – refused at appeal.
October 1999: Outline Planning for 2 detached houses – APPROVED reference 99/35744.
March 2002: 13 apartments – refused.
July 2002: 10 apartments – withdrawn.
December 2002: 8 apartments – withdrawn.
March 2003: 8 apartments – refused, and dismissed at Appeal.
June 2004: 5 dwellings – withdrawn.
August 2004: 2 dwellings – refused.
November 2005: 2 no. split level houses with integral garages and associated vehicular access – refused and dismissed at Appeal.

It is worth reproducing the comments of the Inspectors in dismissing the two historic appeals referred to above.

In 2003 – dismissing a proposal to build 8 flats – the Inspector said :

1. Bearing in mind the reasons for the refusal of planning permission, I consider that the main issues to be determined in this appeal are:

- a) the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the surrounding area, and
- b) the effect of the proposals on highway safety.

I consider that the design of the proposed flats would be out of character with this surrounding development. The four storey front elevation would be built very close to the road and would appear incongruous in this location because of its unsympathetic façade with its balconies, balustrades, dormer windows and lack of interest at ground floor due to the integral parking area at this level. None of these details are features of the surrounding well proportioned, traditional stone houses.

The trees and stone wall along the frontage of the site would be breached in order to form the vehicle access, and the proposed building would be built very close to the narrow road. This would unacceptably detract from the village-like character of this part of Tanner Street.

The vehicle access to the proposed development would be formed on a bend in the road at a point where Tanners Street is narrow and on rising land. There is poor visibility of the proposed access when approaching the site, particularly from the east. I therefore consider that the proposed access to 8 dwellings would be a hazard to other road users.

Because of the steeply sloping nature of the site and the excavation which would be needed for the development to proceed, I do not consider that there would be adequate or useable outside amenity space for the occupants of the proposed flats to enjoy. This adds weight to the conclusions I have reached on the other issues.



In July 2006 – dismissing a proposal to build 2 houses – the Inspector wrote :

The development proposed is the erection of 2 no split level houses with integral garaging and associated vehicular access.

As the site slopes steeply down towards Tanners Street the proposed houses would be cut into the hillside. The excavation required to construct the house on Plot 1 would be located very close to the spreads of the trees, particularly towards the rear. The elevation drawings show that a significant volume of material would need to be removed very close to the trees. Mature trees can be vulnerable to root damage. While I understand that a protective fence would be erected during development, I have little information regarding the likely extent of root spread or of the extent to which excavation might cause root damage. Thus I am unable to assess the likely effect of the proposal on the health of the trees.

Historically, the buildings in the area have used small levels of cut and fill in response to the local terrain. In this case the scale, depth and height of the proposal and the extent of excavation required fail to respect the established built form. Furthermore, the central section of the building contains two garage openings, features which are not characteristic of nearby houses in the Tanners Conservation Area and which would therefore look out of place. In addition, the stone retaining wall fronting Tanners Street is a strong feature which contributes to the character and appearance of the streetscene. The wall would be breached to form a vehicular access and I consider that this would have a harmful visual effect.

Local residents have expressed very strong concerns that the addition of two houses would exacerbate existing unsatisfactory conditions in terms of highway safety. However, I note that the Council has raised no objections to the proposal on highway safety grounds and I consider that the traffic likely to be generated by two houses would be unlikely to materially worsen the current situation.

The scheme presented by this application is fundamentally different to both of those appeal schemes.

In respect of the proposal for 8 apartments, it seems inconceivable that a scheme of such scale (with its associated access and parking requirements) could sensibly be accommodated on this constrained site, and it is hardly surprising that the Inspector dismissed it out of hand.

In respect of the second appeal, that proposed 2 houses – double what is now contemplated. That application was submitted in outline format, with practically no details about how the site would be developed and no proper / reliable drawings. Bearing in mind the Conservation Area status, it is again unsurprising that the Inspector dismissed it.

It is of importance, however, that the Inspector did not raise any access or traffic concerns for 2 houses and their 2 sets of associated traffic. He noted the traffic concerns that had been expressed by local residents, but he also noted that Bury's Highways Team had raised no concerns or objections, and he took the view that 2 houses on the site would not compromise road safety and could be accessed efficiently. While 15 years have passed since that decision, the extent / type of traffic using local roads has not changed to a significant extent, and as such we suggest that, if the traffic and access arrangements associated with two houses were acceptable to both Bury Council and the Planning Inspectorate in 2006, the traffic and access arrangements associated with just one house today are similarly acceptable. This matter has been discussed at length with the Council's



Highways Officer as part of our pre-applications. Constructive advice was provided, and the scheme details adjusted in response, such that we understand that Bury Highways is comfortable with the access / parking arrangements being presented.

Policy Considerations

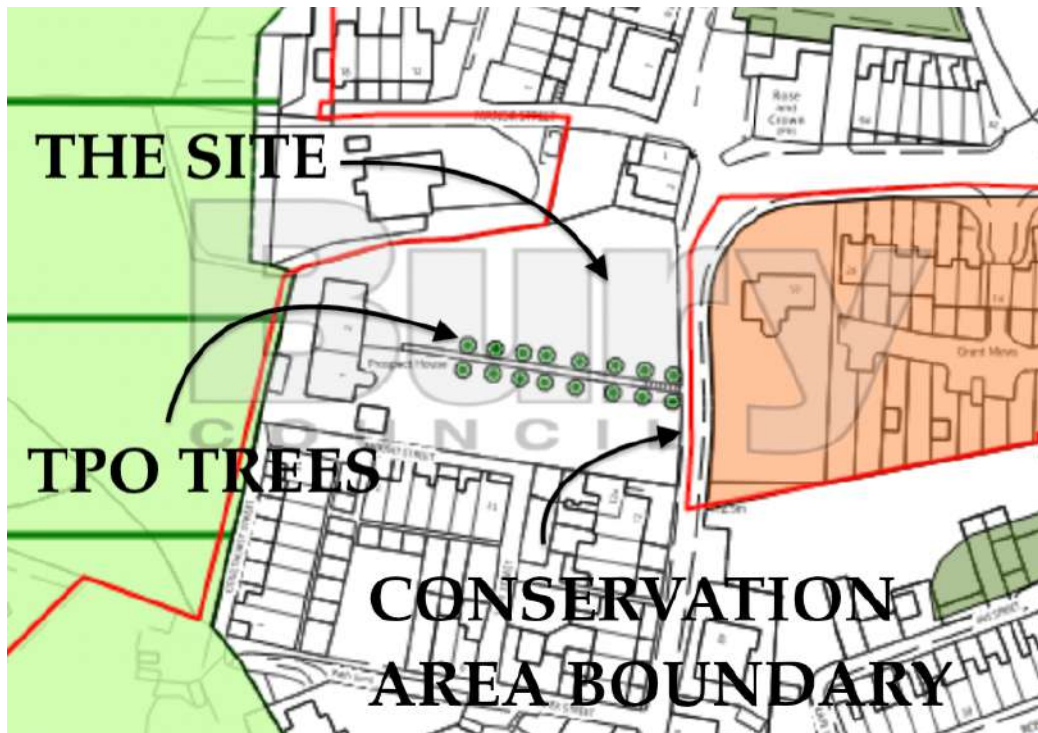
Compliance with the Development Plan

The Development Plan currently comprises the Bury Unitary Development Plan (UDP) adopted in August 1997. The Plan is very old and it is inarguable that some of its policies are out of date and cannot be fully relied upon – for example, its policies on housing land supply are no longer relevant, and policies in respect of built heritage do not fully reflect the provisions of the more recent NPPF.

The Council is currently working to replace the UDP with a new Local Plan. That is associated with progress on the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF), the recent progress of which has been less than smooth.

Key policy documents that comprise ‘material considerations’ include the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG), the National Design Guide and relevant local supplementary planning guidance documents.

The site is marked on the extract below from the Council’s online Policies Map.



It will be seen that the site falls inside Ramsbottom’s settlement boundary and its Conservation Area (marked by the red line). The double row of protected trees along the southern edge of the site are also highlighted.



Aside from its location within the Conservation Area, the site is not subject to any specific designation or allocation.

The UDP's policies in respect of housing land requirements are now entirely out of date, and the Council cannot currently demonstrate the minimum 5 year supply required.

The UDP allocated a number of housing sites. Beyond those, *Policy H1/2 'Further Housing Development'* states that the Council will have regard to the following factors when assessing proposals for housing development on sites not identified on the Proposals Map:

- the need to direct development towards the urban area;
- the availability of infrastructure;
- the need to avoid the release of peripheral open land, unless this can be shown to be consistent with urban regeneration;
- the suitability of the site in land use terms with regard to amenity, the nature of the local environment and surrounding land uses;
- other policies and proposals of the Plan.

There is no conflict with this policy. The site is located in the urban area, surrounded on all sides by housing. Just one house is proposed, and Ramsbottom's infrastructure can clearly accommodate one additional home. The suitability of the site for a home – in the heart of the residential area – is clearly appropriate.

Policies H2/1 'The Form of New Residential Development' and *H2/2 'The Layout of New Residential Development'* promote well designed houses, having regard to height; impact on residential amenity; respect for density and character; the position and proximity of neighbouring properties; and materials, especially their colour and texture. There is no conflict with these policies. The application presents exemplary design and materials, and - while contemporary in style - a house that will be respectful to its context and neighbouring properties.

Policy EN1 'Built Environment' states that the Council will seek to protect, preserve and enhance the character, appearance and amenity of the Borough's built environment. *Policy EN1/1 'Visual Amenity Development'* takes this further, stating that development will not be permitted if it would have a detrimental effect on public views of prominent or important buildings. *Policy EN1/2 'Townscape and Built Design'* adds to this. It states that the Council will give '**favourable consideration**' to proposals which do not have an unacceptable adverse effect on the particular character and townscape of the Borough's towns, villages and other settlements. It suggests that factors to be considered will include external appearance and design in relation to its height, scale, density and layout; the relationship of the proposal to the surrounding area; the choice and use of materials; access and other design features for the mobility impaired; the design and appearance of access, parking and service provision; and landscaping.

There is no conflict with this suite of design-orientated policies. Key views and vistas will not be harmed, and very careful attention has been given to the site design and layout, using sensitive, high quality materials and a thoughtful / respectful design.



There is no conflict with *Policy EN1/3 'Landscaping Provision'*, as the proposal incorporates a good deal of high quality native landscaping.

There is no conflict with any of the UDP's heritage-related policies, namely :

- *EN2 - Conservation And Listed Buildings*
- *EN2/1 - Character of Conservation Areas*
- *EN2/2 - Conservation Area Control*

Those policies set out a framework to preserve the Borough's built heritage, especially that affecting Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings and areas of local historical importance. They state that development within a Conservation Area will only be acceptable if it preserves or enhances the special character or appearance of the area. In considering proposals for development in Conservation Areas, it states that regard will be had to the following criteria:

- the nature of the development in terms of its bulk, height, materials, colour, design and detailing; and
- the relationship between the proposed development and the architectural and visual qualities of the surrounding area.

It is the Appellant's case that the proposal will both preserve and enhance the character of the Conservation Area. The application is supported by a Heritage Assessment prepared by Graeme Ives Heritage Planning. In this, Mr. Ives suggests that, given the evolution of the site and the many elements of the conservation area, such as the street pattern, views, character areas, materiality and key buildings, the application site as it stands makes a neutral contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

The Assessment acknowledges that the proposed development will cause change within the conservation area and therefore has the potential to cause a direct impact on its character and appearance. However, change is not necessarily harmful. All places – including historic conservation areas – need to adapt and change.

In this context, the Heritage Assessment suggests that the change proposed by the scheme would be confined to the Tanners and Carr Character Area, and in this respect has been designed with considerable care and creativity to interpret the site conditions and its contribution to the conservation area with a bespoke and well considered approach.

The Assessment notes that the townscape of the conservation area has been heavily influenced by the topography of the valley side. The street pattern and building forms have adopted various means of coping with the slope. In the Tanners and Carr character area, this includes cutting into the slope with retaining walls, contrasting juxta-positions in respect to building height and tiered approaches to the street pattern.

It is suggested that the proposed development will continue this pattern / relationship with the valley side by bringing forward a highly creative approach to 'layering' the house with a series of 'steps' that will climb the slope.



The proposed development is therefore considered to represent an intelligent and highly creative approach to introducing a modern building onto a site, and aptly manage / respond to its physical constraints. It will add a further layer of architecture to the cluster of buildings that originally formed the small settlement of Carr to the west of Ramsbottom, and will continue the development of the conservation area.

So, while the proposed development will inevitably cause direct change within the conservation area, it has been designed with care. The Heritage Assessment confirms that 'great weight' has been given to the significance of the conservation area, while developing a bespoke scheme that takes a creative approach to the site conditions.

The proposed development is therefore assessed to 'preserve' the character and appearance of the conservation area and is in turn considered to be in accordance with S. 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

The Assessment also notes that the draft Local List identifies two buildings near the application site, although the List entries provide a limited description of the two buildings. In respect to Prospect House, the Assessment suggests that it is questionable whether the building has sufficient quality to meet the expectations of the Planning Practice Guidance relating to the identification of non-designated heritage assets, which states that only a minority of buildings will have sufficient heritage value to be a material consideration to a planning decision. Notwithstanding the doubts regarding the draft Local List entries, the proposed development has been designed with creativity and care for the site context, and would make a positive contribution to the western edge of the conservation area.

There is therefore no conflict with the UDP's heritage policies (setting aside their relative outdatedness).

Nor is there conflict with *Policy EN6 'Conservation of the Natural Environment'*. This policy seeks to retain, protect and enhance the natural environment, particularly in relation to areas of ecological, wildlife and geological importance. The site is not the subject of any special ecological designation, and the application is supported by an ecological report (Rachel Hacking Ecology) that concludes that the habitats on site offer limited ecological value and are species-poor. The proposed development will involve the loss of scrub, tall, ruderal vegetation and introduced shrub. The trees and boundary hedgerows are proposed to be mostly retained. Good quality landscaping is proposed to be incorporated. Given the low ecological value of the habitats to be lost, and with suitable landscaping, no specific habitat mitigation is considered necessary. However, it is recommended that bird and bat boxes are erected and the landscaping aims to bring ecological gain to the site, with species-rich native planting.

There is no conflict with *Policy EN8 'Woodland and Trees'*, given the very limited tree / vegetation loss, which calls to be balanced with the excellent scheme of soft landscaping / trees which represents a betterment in terms of native trees and other planting.

By the same token, the application is consistent with *Policy EN8/2 'Woodland and Tree Planting'*, which encourages the planting of hedges, trees and woodlands using locally native species.



Having regard to the above assessment, we conclude that the application is consistent with all relevant policies of the development plan. That said, having regard to Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the application ought to be approved, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. There are no such material considerations that weigh against the proposal. Quite reverse – see our assessment against SPG, NPPF and National Design Guide below.

Compliance with Supplementary Policy

The Council's Development Control Policy Guidance Note 16 'Design and Layout of New Development in Bury' (October 2008) was prepared as a manual to inform and inspire the development process. It sets out a series of principles for good design, including :

- Development should be informed by a detailed understanding of the site.
- Development should respond to local context and character.
- Development should be designed to respect, enhance and create relationships between buildings.
- Development should improve the townscape
- Development should provide a coherent and recognisably urban built form
- Development should incorporate a mix of uses that add richness and variety to the local area.
- Development should use materials which support the overall architectural and urban design approach of the existing area

The proposal is consistent with those principles. It has been in gestation / evolution for 2 years. It has been influenced by the positive pre-application guidance of the LPA. It is contemporary in style and appearance, but it is respectful to local character and distinctiveness. In short, it is excellent and it is exemplary. It will preserve and enhance the special character and appearance of the Conservation Area, and represents a new layer of quality and change.

Compliance with the NPPF (and the National Design Guide)

The NPPF is an important material consideration, and particularly so at a time the development plan is out of date.

Section 5 details the need to continually deliver a sufficient supply of homes. The council is currently unable to demonstrate a sufficient supply of housing. Lack of a five year supply of deliverable housing land calls to be treated as a material factor when determining applications for residential developments, and - in situations where the NPPF's presumption in favour of sustainable development applies - the need for housing must be weighed against other policies of the NPPF and UDP.

The NPPF promotes sustainable development. It seeks to 'significantly boost' housing supply, and recognises how important small windfall sites (such as this) are in delivering this.



Considering the sustainability credentials (and public benefits) of the scheme, a viable, bespoke, high quality home is being promoted on a windfall site, at time of great economic uncertainty arising from Covid and Brexit. It will assist the Council (admittedly in a very small way) in ‘boosting significantly’ its housing supply, at a time it is falling well short of its minimum housing target, and – via the stuttering progress of the GMSF – is contemplating the release of Green Belt land in order to accommodate future needs.

The NPPF explains that achieving ‘sustainable development’ means that the planning system has three overarching objectives (economic, social and environmental), which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives).

Paragraph 10 states that, at the heart of the Framework, is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, while paragraph 11 states that LPAs should apply this presumption. For decision-taking this means:

- approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or (as in this case)
- where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:
 - the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or
 - any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

We explained above the extent to which we consider the proposal complies with the (out of date) adopted development plan, but it is also important to demonstrate that the proposal is sustainable.

As noted above, the NPPF confirms that there are three core strands / roles relating to sustainable development : **economic, social and environmental**. We consider each in turn below.

Economic Benefits

In terms of its **economic** role, the proposal will assist in supporting sustainable economic growth, through the provision of a quality new home, helping Bury to maintain its supply of housing and to ‘boost significantly’ that supply. One house may be a very small contribution to the supply, but it is a positive contribution at a time when the supply is deficient.

The application scheme will draw upon local labour for the construction of the new home. Some of those jobs will be located on the site itself, whilst others will be based in the wider Bury area, with some further afield within the construction supply chain.



The proposal is likely to accommodate 3 people. It will be the Applicant's new family home, relocating from Oldham. Those are therefore 3 new Ramsbottom residents.

According to the latest 2019/20 Living Costs and Food Survey from the Office of National Statistics (ONS), on average, UK households spend £588 per week (£2,548 a month) to cover living expenses including housing, food, clothes and transport. The average UK household spends £3,312 a year on groceries and non-alcoholic drinks at home. Another £484 is spent on alcohol (mostly wine) for consumption at home. Eating and drinking out consumes a further £2,132 from our household budgets.

This new household would be expected to spend a significant proportion of its household income in Ramsbottom and wider Bury. Taking the above £588 per week (£2,548 a month) as a proxy (to cover living expenses including housing, food, clothes and transport), that suggests an annual injection of around £30,576 arising from the proposal. That figure excludes items such as dining out and spending on leisure activities, which will inject further cash into the local economy.

Much of that will inevitably be spent in local shops and on local services. This in turn will have positive knock on effects for employment in the local area, helping to sustain local shops, supporting the supply chain of firms benefiting from household expenditure, and consequently the spending of salaries of those employed as a result of spending by new residents. All of this will serve to improve the vitality and viability of Ramsbottom Town Centre.

Furthermore, it is reasonable to assume that there would be benefits to the suppliers and fitters of fixtures and fittings for new homes.

On the above basis, there can be no question that this scheme will deliver economic benefits to Bury. Those might be very small in global terms (bearing in mind the small scale of the proposal), but those are real and positive economic benefits.

There will also be further modest economic benefits arising from New Homes Bonus and a Council Tax payment.

Social Benefits

Socially, the proposal will play a small part in addressing the need for more housing in Bury and 'boosting significantly' its supply.

The provision of sufficient good quality housing goes to the heart of a good and strong society, and is undoubtedly an important social benefit.

The NPPF makes it clear that planning should be a proactive process to deliver the homes the country needs. Paragraph 38 states that local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development 'in a positive and creative way', while paragraph 60 states that :

'To support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed ...'



Of relevance to this application, paragraph 69 highlights that small sized sites such as this can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area, and are often built-out relatively quickly. To promote the development of a good mix of sites local planning authorities, it advises that LPAs should, *inter alia* :

‘support the development of windfall sites through their policies and decisions – giving **great weight** to the benefits of using suitable sites within existing settlements for homes.’

The social dimension (and associated benefits) of striving to deliver the right type and mix of homes, in the right locations where people wish to live, is self evident. In February 2017, the Government published its Housing White Paper titled ‘Fixing Our Broken Housing Market’. This made it clear that more houses need to be built to help drive towards a more affordable housing market. The Paper emphasised that the current pace of development is too slow, and there is a need “**to build homes faster**” and to “**help people now**”. The White Paper also put important emphasis on housebuilding as a mechanism to achieve wider economic growth.

‘Britain’s broken housing market hurts all of us. Sky high property prices stop people moving to where the jobs are. That’s bad news for people who can’t find work, and bad news for successful companies that can’t attract the skilled workforce they need to grow, which is bad news for the whole economy.’

Low levels of house building means less work for everyone involved in the construction industry – architects, builders, decorators and manufacturers of everything from bricks to kitchen sinks. If people must spend more and more to keep a roof over their head they’ll inevitably cut back elsewhere – meaning less money gets spent in the wider economy. High rents are bad news for all taxpayers including those who own their own home. If rents are too high, then private renters struggle to pay - and the taxpayer has to foot the bill with more Housing Benefit. That’s money that could be spent on schools, hospitals and other frontline services.

If we fail to build more homes, it will get harder for ordinary working people to afford a roof over their head, and the damage to the wider economy will get worse.’

On 6th August 2020, the Government published its Planning White Paper, which set out radical reforms to the planning system, with the aim of creating a ‘**significantly simpler, faster and more predictable system**.’

The reforms are being brought forward in the context of the Government’s aspiration to build 300,000 homes per year - a target which has yet to be delivered. Just 241,000 new homes were built in 2019, and in its ‘*Housing supply: Indicators of new supply, England Statistical Release*’ (published 30 September 2020), the MHCLG unsurprisingly (due to Covid) predicted a downturn in the rate of delivery in 2020 (as below).

‘The number of dwellings where - according to building control figures - building work has started on site was 15,930 in April to June 2020. This is a 52 per cent decrease when compared to last quarter and this steep fall in activity reflects UK government COVID-19 lockdown measures. It follows a recent trend of a slowdown in growth with six of the last six quarters showing a decrease.



There has been a sustained decrease in starts and more recently a steep fall in starts and completions reflecting UK government COVID-19 lockdown measures.'

The White Paper acknowledges that the result of long-term and persisting undersupply is that housing is becoming increasingly expensive, and that through overhauling the planning system there is an opportunity to better streamline the planning process, accelerate the delivery of new homes, and address the issue of affordability.

The White Paper makes clear however that 'we are cutting red tape, but not standards', highlighting that as important as it is to boost housing, it is equally vital that good design and high quality of development in the right place is secured.

This premise reflects the interim report prepared by the *Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission*, which strongly advocates that the housing industry achieves beautiful design and good place-making.

The Council cannot currently demonstrate a strong, robust, minimum housing supply, and is therefore failing to 'boost significantly' its supply. Delivery of housing is now even more important in the uncertain economic climate arising from the combination of Brexit and Covid.

This proposal is proportionate to the capacity of the application site and the efficient use of land to provide housing. It is responsive to the need to secure ongoing growth and meet local need for housing, and it should be acknowledged as being in 'the right place', where people wish to live.

It is against that context that the social dimension of this application calls to be considered.

There are further social benefits that link with our commentary on environmental and heritage benefits above and below. There is a very clear and obvious social dimension in improving the environment, delivering superb quality architecture that 'raises the bar', planting trees and other vegetation, and preserving and enhancing heritage assets.

We therefore consider that the proposal will deliver social benefits.

Environmental Benefits

In considering **environmental** benefits, the NPPF confirms that, to achieve sustainable development, economic, social and environmental "objectives" should be sought :

'Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives).'

This requires 'net gains' across each objective, and as such it is important to explain the 'net gain' in environmental terms.



During the formulation of the scheme design and layout, due regard has been paid to the site's context and appearance, and the policies in place that emphasise the need to deliver good quality urban design, architecture and landscaping. Such issues, together with an explanation of the rationale behind the layout is contained in the Design & Access Statement.

New trees and other planting will be introduced, selected not only for its visual 'softening' appearance, but also to enhance its contribution to biodiversity (based on ecological advice). Bat and bird boxes will also be provided.

The intention is that the new home will contribute to local character, respecting the heritage context, adding visual interest and reflecting local distinctiveness. In these regards, the proposal will be designed to reflect and respond to well to the townscape, and will present an appropriate, thoughtful and respectful design solution in terms of its height, scale, siting, massing, and its proportionate relationship with the retained buildings and surrounding spaces.

Overall, therefore, we contend that the proposal represents sustainable development, which will contribute **economically, socially and environmentally**. Those may be small benefits, but they are benefits nonetheless, and should be acknowledged as such.

We therefore anticipate that this application will be welcomed by the Council in respect of its deliverance of sustainable development and much needed, excellent quality, bespoke homes, and exemplar landscape provision.

The application is also consistent with the remainder of the NPPF. It will create a much needed quality home on an accessible, sustainably located site.

The proposed development will help to deliver the housing objectives set out in the NPPF, which confirms that a key aim of the Government is to ensure that everybody has the opportunity of living in a decent home, which they can afford, in a community where they want to live. The applicant wishes to live in Ramsbottom, in a beautiful contemporary home that he will build himself as his 'forever' family home.

The NPPF promotes good design, beautiful environments and tree provision, suggesting that this is fundamental to the creation of sustainable, mixed communities. It encourages developers to make effective and efficient use of land and existing infrastructure.

As reported in the Transport Statement, there is no conflict with §104. Transport issues have been carefully considered and discussed / agreed with the Council's highways officer, who has provided constructive and helpful pre-application advice. The site access point (for both vehicles and pedestrians / cyclists (including those reliant on wheelchairs and pushing prams) will provide safe and convenient access, reflecting §110.

§111 states that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road



network would be 'severe'. The Transport Statement demonstrates that the impacts will not be severe. We would add that – in considering an appeal scheme for two houses 15 years ago – the Inspector agreed with Bury's Highway officer that such a scheme could readily be accommodated in traffic / highways terms. Traffic conditions have not changed to such extent over recent years to move away from that assessment, and this proposal promotes just one house (not two).

For the reasons stated above, there is no conflict with §112. The scheme has been designed insofar as possible to give priority first to pedestrian and cycle movements, and to address the needs of people with disabilities and reduced mobility. A lift is provided as part of the scheme, reflecting "design for life" principles. The scheme will create a safe, secure and attractive environment, which looks to minimise the scope for conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles, as well as responding to local character and context.

In respect of 'Making Efficient Use of Land and Achieving Appropriate Densities', the scheme has been formulated with regard to the requirement at §119 states that promotes the effective use of land in meeting the need for homes, while balanced against the safeguarding of the environment.

The application is consistent with §120 in that it responds to the opportunity to achieve net environmental gains, including new habitat creation.

The application responds to §124 by taking into account the need for different types of housing, the desirability of maintaining an area's prevailing character and setting, and the importance of securing a well-designed, attractive and healthy place.

Likewise, the scheme reflects §125 by creating a beautiful and sustainable place.

Under the heading 'Achieving Well Designed Places', §126 seeks the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places, and suggests that this is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. It states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. The application seeks to respond to this - the Design and Access Statement explains the design philosophy and rationale.

We are also mindful of §132, which states that design quality should be considered throughout the evolution and assessment of individual proposals, and that discussion between applicants and the local planning authority about the design and style will lend weight to planning applications. The concept of the proposal was presented at pre-application stage, and the LPA provided a helpful and supportive response. The scheme details have been adjusted to reflect that advice.

The scheme also responds positively to §130, which looks to ensure that developments will function well and add to the overall quality of the area; are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping; and are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting. In this regard, we note that the NPPF does not seek to prevent or discourage 'appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities).'



Here we refer to the **National Design Guide**. This explains that the underlying purpose for design quality at all scales is to create well-designed and well-built places that benefit people and communities. It suggests that a well-designed place is unlikely to be achieved by focusing only on the appearance, materials and detailing of buildings. It comes about through making the right choices at all levels, including:

- the layout;
- the form and scale of buildings;
- their appearance;
- landscape;
- materials; and
- their detailing.

It states that well-designed places are:

- based on a sound understanding of the features of the site and the surrounding context, using baseline studies as a starting point for design;
- integrated into their surroundings so they relate well to them;
- influenced by and influence their context positively; and
- responsive to local history, culture and heritage.

It reiterates that well-designed development proposals are shaped by an understanding of the context that identifies opportunities for design, as well as constraints upon it, and states that:

‘... well-designed places do not need to copy their surroundings in every way. It is appropriate to introduce elements that reflect how we live today, to include innovation or change such as increased densities, and to incorporate new sustainable features or systems.’

In respect of valuing heritage, local history and culture, §46 states that, when determining how a site may be developed, it is important to understand the history of how the place has evolved. The local sense of place and identity are shaped by local history, culture and heritage, and how these have influenced the built environment and wider landscape. At §49 the Guide states :

‘Today’s new developments extend the history of the context. The best of them will become valued as tomorrow’s heritage, representing the architecture and placemaking of the early 21st century.’

This proposal is consistent with all the above policy objectives of the National Design Guide. It is based on a sound understanding of the features of the site, the surrounding context, and the history and evolution of this part of Ramsbottom, including a proportionate baseline assessment that formed the design starting point and has helped to influence the indicative design and layout.

While we would not be so bold or arrogant to claim that this proposal is a listed building of the future, the proposal has nevertheless been designed as an attempt to **‘extend the history’** of Ramsbottom, introducing a new layer, delivering a home of exceptional quality that might possibly - one day - be heralded as a good example of **‘architecture and placemaking of the early 21st century’** and an exception to the bland and standardised architecture that has become far too commonplace.



Returning to the NPPF, §134 states that development that is not well designed should be refused, and that significant weight should be given to development which reflects local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes. The same paragraph encourages outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings. All of these considerations have been taken on board, such that we consider the design and landscape quality of the proposal to be excellent.

We therefore suggest that very considerable weight ought to be attached to the scheme's excellent design quality and landscaping in the assessment and determination of this application.

The application is also consistent with §159, which states that development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk (whether existing or future). The application site falls within Flood Zone 1 and is not susceptible to flooding.

In respect of 'Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment', the application is consistent with §174, which requires proposals to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment.

In considering 'Ground Conditions and Pollution', there is no conflict with §183 or §185 of the Framework. The land is not contaminated and there are no risks arising from land instability. We anticipate that, in the event of approval, a condition will be attached requiring the carrying out of site investigations and appropriate reporting to / approval by the LPA in conjunction with its Contaminated Land team.

Part 16 of the NPPF seeks to conserve and enhance the historic environment. Paragraph 194 requires :

“an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting”.

Such significance is recorded in the submitted Heritage Assessment.

§201 states that, where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss. §202 states that, where a development proposal will lead to 'less than substantial' harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

The application proposal will not cause any heritage harm. The reverse is the case. We maintain that it will not only preserve, but enhance the special character and appearance of the Conservation Area (as explained in the separate Heritage Assessment).



In the unlikely event that the LPA was to conclude that '*less than substantial*' harm will arise, we would first strenuously disagree, but would then invite the LPA to weigh any such perceived harm against the following public benefits:

- The scheme will deliver an excellent quality family house in a place where people wish to live, assisting the Council in 'boosting significantly' its currently deficient housing supply.
- New native trees and other vegetation will be provided, diversifying and improving biodiversity and greening the environment.
- The currently poor quality boundary stone wall alongside Tanners Street will be replaced with a better quality, safer structure.
- The project will help to sustain and create local construction jobs.
- The household expenditure arising from the residents of the new house will be spent in local shops and on local services, assisting in sustaining the vitality and viability of local shopping centres.
- The scheme will generate a New Homes Bonus and Council Tax payment.

We consider that the above public benefits would outweigh any suggested '*less than substantial*' heritage harm that the LPA might possibly identify, albeit we entirely reject any notion that such harm will occur. There will be heritage benefits arising from this proposal, and no harm.

Having regard to the above assessment, this application is consistent with all of the Framework's key policy aims and objectives. That lends further support to approval of the application.

Concluding Comments

We have explained how and why we consider that the proposal complies with the most important policies of the development plan and the NPPF.

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compensation Act requires planning decisions to be in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The effect of the NPPF is that, in making such decisions, where the development plan is out of date (as in this case), a 'tilted balance' is undertaken whereby the other material considerations (including the presumption in favour of sustainable development and the core planning policies of the NPPF) will be determinative.

The effect of the NPPF presumption in favour of sustainable development is that planning permission should be granted for the application proposals unless there are reasons which not only outweigh the benefits of the development, but which outweigh those benefits '**significantly**'.



We have explained why the proposal is consistent with all relevant development plan policies. It will assist the Council in boosting its housing supply at this uncertain time associated with the ongoing Covid situation and the economic implications of Brexit. It will deliver an excellent / exemplar quality family home in a place where people wish to live.

It will both preserve and enhance the special character and appearance of the Conservation Area and the setting of buildings on Bury's draft local list.

The NPPF encourages local planning authorities to :

'support the development of windfall sites through their policies and decisions – giving great weight to the benefits of using suitable sites within existing settlements for homes.'

We therefore anticipate that the LPA will give **'great weight'** to this windfall proposal.

Biodiversity will be protected, diversified and improved through new native trees, other planting, bird and bat boxes.

The project will help to sustain local construction jobs and deliver other economic benefits. The household expenditure arising from the residents of the new houses will be spent in local shops and on local services, assisting in sustaining the vitality and viability of Rambottom Town Centre. The scheme will generate New Homes Bonus and Council Tax payments.

The application addresses all of the Framework's key policy aims and objectives: boosting housing supply; excellent quality and sensitive / respectful design; making efficient use of unused land and buildings; respect for heritage, context and local distinctiveness; provision of excellent quality landscaping; delivering biodiversity gains; and helping to build the wider community of Ramsbottom in a sustainable, balanced fashion, the ambition being to create a well-designed, beautiful and safe place.

The proposal complies with all relevant policies of the adopted development plan. There are no material considerations or technical / environmental impacts that would significantly or demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposal or indicate that development should be restricted.

We have explained why, in accordance with the Framework, the development proposal constitutes 'sustainable development'. Accordingly, we anticipate that the Council will determine the application - in accordance with NPPF paragraph 38 - **'in a positive and creative way'**.

That said, in accordance with section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and §11 of the NPPF, this planning application should be approved **'without delay'**.



Application Documents

The application is supported by the following documentation :

- Application form
- This planning support letter
- Drawing sss-8984 Revision A – Topographical Survey (Site Surveying Services Ltd)
- Design and Access Statement (RGP Architects)
- Architectural drawings as listed in the drawing register (RGP Architects)
- The following landscaping drawings (Square Yard) :
 - YD2_TL_LP001 – Landscape Plan Planting Proposals
 - YD2_TL_LP200 – Green Wall Indicative Details
- Transport Statement (Highways Advice)
- Extended Phase I Habitat Survey (Rachel Hacking Ecology)
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment (Bowland Tree Management)
- Preliminary Risk Assessment (Ian Farmer Associates)

We look forward to receipt of confirmation and validation of the application in due course, and if we can assist further, please do not hesitate to contact Richard Gee at the above offices.

Yours faithfully
for Roman Summer Associates Ltd

Richard Gee
Director