



PLANNING, DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

CONVERSION OF STABLES TO HOME OFFICE AND GYM WITH EXTENSION & BASEMENT

27th September 2022



Land off Arthur Lane, Ainsworth, BL2 5PN

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on behalf of Mr P. Brown

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This planning statement follows a request for pre-application advice for the conversion of an existing stable building with the addition of a small ground floor extension and part basement to form a combined home office and home gym for the applicant who lives at Sunnybank close by.
- 1.2. The applicant operates his main business from a site in the centre of Bury but following a re-evaluation of both his business and lifestyle after the Covid pandemic, the applicant would propose to work more frequently from home in the proposed facility and to entertain and meet with important clients. A limited number of his team who live close by would also work from the site.
- 1.3. In addition, the applicant also wishes to add also a gym/recreation area in the proposed basement area for home use for the use of himself and his family.
- 1.4. This statement details the proposed development and reviews the national and local planning policies in so far as they impact upon the proposed development.

2. THE APPLICATION SITE

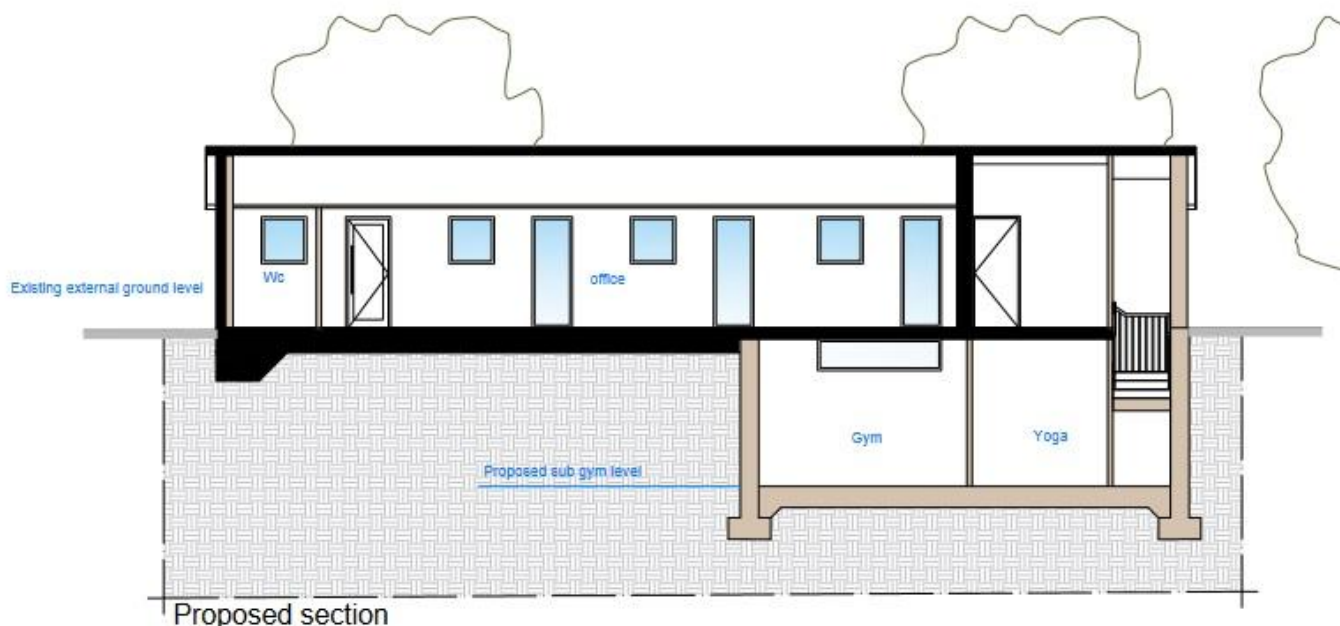
- 2.1. The overall site comprises 0.1 ha (1076 sq metres) of grassland which has previously been used for equestrian purposes. The paddock is located south of a small group of 3 large detached houses which includes Sunnybank which is the home of the applicant. Site and location plans submitted show the extent of the site including its access edged red and other property owned by the applicant edged blue.
- 2.2. The stable block which forms the subject of this enquiry is located on the west side of the site abutting Arthur Lane. The stables have previously been used to accommodate up to 4 horses. Mr Brown does not have an interest in equestrian sport, so the stables are currently unused other than for storage.
- 2.3. The site is well located in respect of transport links with Bury Old Road (B6196) some 150 metres to the south providing excellent links to the primary local settlements of Bury to the east and Bolton to the west. There are bus stops on Bury Old Road linking the main towns. It is therefore an accessible and sustainable location.
- 2.4. The access to the stables site has a splayed entrance which provides good visibility in both directions for vehicles entering or leaving the site. As the road is generally straight in either direction, it is relatively easy to see any movements around the entrance. This will be adapted further as part of the application to further improve visibility for vehicles leaving the site.



3. THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT - Layout and design

- 3.1. Conversion of the single storey stables building is proposed with the addition of a modest ground floor extension and partial basement. The method of conversion proposed will result in very limited change to the existing built form which will retain the overall footprint and shape of the stable incorporating footings that have previously been installed for an extension on the eastern end. A structural report is attached with the application which confirms that the existing building is sufficiently robust and that conversion to include a basement is feasible.
- 3.2. The basement will ensure that the development will not have a significantly greater impact on the openness of the area than the existing buildings and structures on site.

A significant proportion of the extra space is below ground and is not visible in any way such that it would have no significant impact upon the openness of the countryside. The character of the building and of the area is therefore maintained in terms of the basic form and scale of the converted building.



- 3.3. Further, the Court of Appeal judgement *Turner v Secretary of State* 2016 para 14, states "The concept of openness of the green belt is not narrowly limited to volumetric approach..... (in the context of which, volumetric matters may be a material concern, but are by no means the only one) and factors relevant to the visual impact on the aspects which the Green Belt presents."
- 3.4. In terms of design detailing, the basic openings have been adapted and enhanced so that they are not fundamentally different from the previous stables with the addition of some extra windows to improve the daylight and working amenity of the occupiers.
- 3.5. The existing stable building is clad with timber under a dark grey tiled roof. The converted building will have a similar appearance to the original stable with materials that reflect the existing building on the site. The materials are also representative of other buildings in the surrounding area.
- 3.6. The converted building would therefore predominantly match the existing such that there would not be a significant change in the outlook or impact upon the openness or character of the area.
- 3.7. In terms of the use of the internal space, the ground floor has been laid out for office use with the leisure use in the basement. This will make best use of the natural light for working and for entertaining visitors and meetings. A CGI is enclosed which offers a representation of how it could be laid out.

- 3.8. The applicant is actively involved in boxing and wishes to provide facilities at home to pursue hobbies with his partner and young son. The family also has an interest in other leisure pastimes and the basement provides an additional quiet leisure space (marked as “yoga area”).
- 3.9. A WC is provided for at ground floor along with a shower associated with the gym and exercise area downstairs and for visitors cycling to the facility. There is also a small kitchenette area for entertaining meeting guests and the use of the day to day occupants.
- 3.10. The entrance is improved and 6 car parking spaces have been laid out to cater for both day to day users and visitor clients.



4. PLANNING POLICY

- 4.1. Paragraphs 147 and 148 of the NPPF state that inappropriate development in the Green Belt is by definition, harmful and should not be approved except in Very Special Circumstances (VSC). All forms of development are not prohibited in the Green Belt however and every planning

application should be determined on its own merits against the Development Plan which the NPPF sits atop.

4.2. Planning Authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm in the Green Belt. VSC will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

4.3. Paragraph 149 of the NPPF regards the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt as inappropriate development. Exceptions to this are:

- a) buildings for agriculture and forestry;
- b) the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;
- c) **the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;**
- d) the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;
- e) limited infilling in villages;
- f) limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan (including policies for rural exception sites); and
- g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would:
 - not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development; or
 - not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, where the development would re-use previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority.

4.4. There is no definite list for what will constitute very special circumstances, but the threshold will turn on the facts and circumstances of the individual application. Also, where other

considerations cumulatively outweigh the harm to the Green Belt this can qualify as very special circumstances.

- 4.5. Paragraph 8 of the NPPF states that achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways :

a) an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;

b) a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and

c) an environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

5. PLANNING APPLICATIONS IN THE AREA

- 5.1. A review of planning in the area indicates that a site opposite the subject site at 41 Bury Old Road was granted consent for conversion from stable use to residential with an extension App. ref. 65373 and 64731. Prior to that consent was granted (app. Ref. 63321) for change of use of stable to dwelling and single storey extension at side with subterranean accommodation in 2018.
- 5.2. Although the use is different, the principle of conversion of a stable to another use (with basement) has therefore been established very close by. Many of the issues in respect of the impact upon the countryside are the same with both sites.

6. PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT AND IMPACT ON THE GREEN BELT

6.1. Based on the pre application advice received, the main issues were identified as follows and will be reviewed in turn:

- Conversion
- Extension
- Gym Use
- Office Use
- Layout and design
- Highways
- Air Quality
- Coal Authority
- Ecology
- Heritage

6.2. Conversion

The pre-app concluded that conversion of the stables appears to comply with UDP and NPPF policies as long as it can be demonstrated that the stables are of a permanent and substantial construction, and are capable of conversion without major or complete reconstruction. A structural survey has been commissioned and is enclosed with the application which shows that subject to some minor repairs and improvements which are appropriate for a building of this age, this is possible. Similarly, the structural survey and assessment concluded that subject to the applicant being satisfied with the cost of undertaking the works, the addition of the basement area is also feasible.

6.3. Extension

The volumes have been confirmed and agreed as follows:

	Area	Volume
Existing ground floor	82.08 sq m	262.14 cu m
Proposed ground floor	102.6 sq m	323.2 cu m
Proposed basement area (gross inc stairwell)	39 sq m	93.6 cu m
Total proposed	141.6 sq m	416.8 cu m

Although this would equate to an increase of approximately 58.99% overall, a significant proportion of the extra space is below ground such that the increase in volume at ground floor level is only 23.29% which is well below the 33% set out within SPD 8, so it would have a limited impact on this sensitive area.

- 6.4. The re-use and extension of the same building has also previously been considered at appeal in 2015 (App/T4210/W/15/3002886) when the Inspector determined that a similar size extension would not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.

6.5. Gym use

The proposed gym use is outside of the domestic curtilage of Sunnybank although it adjoins the garden of Sunnybank which also contains other ancillary buildings such as a swimming pool. Previous advice was that proposals to build a supplementary family annexe will be considered on the individual merits of each scheme. It was suggested annexes should:

- normally be physically connected to the main property with a direct interior link. That is clearly not the case with the proposal, but that does not preclude re-use of a redundant building to provide a use ancillary to and for the benefit of the occupiers of Sunnybank. Extending other buildings would clearly have an impact upon the open nature of the area.
- remain ancillary to the original dwelling at all times. As above, it is intended to be ancillary to the main house in the same way that the stables were for the benefit of the residents.
- not have separate vehicular access. Given its use for stabling, the access is pre-existing and appropriate. It can be further improved with relatively minor adaptations and will have no greater impact upon the countryside than a use for stables with frequent comings and goings and the parking of multiple horse boxes and similar vehicles.
- only have one bedroom. There would be no bedroom.
- be appropriate in scale and position in relation to the plot and original dwelling. The scale and position has been considered more fully above and careful attention has been paid such that there will be no significant change.

- 6.6. The proposal would be linked to the main dwelling by way of surfaced pathways. Where surfacing is needed materials will be in keeping with the surrounding area. The proposed

route of such pathways are shown on the location plan enclosed with the application (plan reference 2136-PO4).

6.7. Business Use

6.8. The NPPF and UDP Policies advocate office uses should be located in town centres and that a sequential test will need to be applied to planning applications for main town centre uses. The use proposed is clearly associated with Sunnybank. The applicant is resident in the adjacent house and it is intended that the office use should be clearly linked in terms of its use with his home. Following Covid, the applicant has found substantial benefits to his personal life from working from home which he wishes to continue through the adaptation of existing buildings to form a separate working space.

6.9. The main offices of his business will remain in Bury (the building would not be large enough in any event to transfer the business across), but the converted stables will allow him to develop and grow his business whilst improving the environment for himself and some of his clients. The intention is for the applicant to be based at the former stables attending his offices in Bury as and when required. In addition, he would be supported by two or three key support staff such as a personal assistant and high level managers who live in the locality and for the storage of key documents.

6.10. A further use for the facility will be as a meeting hub for key clients. The nature of the applicant's business is such that he regularly meets with high net worth clients and the new facility will be a quiet quality hub highly suitable for such meetings. It will therefore assist him to grow and develop the business. As indicated in the pre-application advice paragraph 84a of the NPPF supports a prosperous rural economy through "the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings." This is clearly a conversion with minor extension of the previous building with no significant additional impact upon the local area.

6.11. Layout and Design

6.12. Although the scale of the property will not change significantly, the extension and design details have sought to retain the overall feel of the building. The existing and proposed elevational treatment is shown on the plans as existing and as proposed enclosed with the application. It should also be noted that the views of the building are limited anyway as it is enclosed within mature hedging and further planting is proposed as a part of the application.

6.13. The proposal retains the shape and form of a stables particularly when viewed from the site entrance. The openings on the front elevation maintain the scale and rhythm of stable doors. The canopy has also been retained which will help to retain the character of the original

building. Glazed openings on the rear and side elevations have been provided for although large scale windows have been omitted following consultation although some additional openings have been provided to improve the conditions for the occupiers. The use of timber cladding and repairs to the existing roof will further maintain the look and feel of the existing building.

- 6.14. Given the sensitive nature of the site, full details of landscaping, and any proposed hardstanding and boundary treatments have been carefully considered and are included within the site layout plan submitted.
- 6.15. Highways - Previous advice provided by The Traffic Section is addressed in this submission.
- 6.16. Both uses as a gym/leisure area and home office are linked to the existing house. They are not intended to form a separately occupied and operated business or facility. If a condition is required to confirm this, the applicant would be willing to entertain this.
- 6.17. It is not anticipated that there will be an intensification of daily use of the site. Stables of this size could be used by a number of horse owners who would visit relatively frequently in order to feed, exercise and otherwise attend to their animals. There would therefore be a need to visit in some cases on multiple occasions during the average day. In addition, there could be a need for slow moving and lengthy vehicles such as horseboxes and vehicles delivering hay and straw bales and feed to enter and leave the site. The proposed use will be different in that the principal user of the property will be the applicant and his family who reside at Sunnybank. As a result, there will be reduced need for the family to travel to and from work off-site and to use leisure facilities elsewhere.
- 6.18. There will however be movements generated by support staff and visitors, but these should still be no greater than potential movements associated with the stable use. Over the course of a week, there may well be reduced usage with very little use at weekends as distinct from a leisure use for stables which could be particularly busy at weekends.
- 6.19. Although bus services do not pass directly past the site, there are bus stops at Cherry Tree Cottages and Ainsworth Turning Circle on Bury Old Road circa 140 metres away or a short walk to the south. Service 511 connects Bury and Bolton running in each direction at approximately hourly intervals. There is a footpath along the east side of Arthur Lane which passes directly past the entrance to the site. The site is also accessible for bicycles and is therefore sustainable.
- 6.20. Adequate visibility splays that accord with the standards in Manual for Streets will be provided at the junction of the site access with Arthur Lane. As a result, 2.4m x 59m splays

are provided for. Existing hedgerows will need to be realigned, but this can readily be achieved on land within the applicant's ownership.

- 6.21. A drawing is also provided showing six parking spaces with adequate turning areas. Given that the applicant resides close by with his own parking facilities and there are public bus services close by, this should be more than adequate for the size of the premises.
- 6.22. The existing outward opening gate will be changed to a sliding one with a 5.0m set back from the back of footway line.
- 6.23. A segregated pedestrian access is also provided for as part of the rearrangement of the access.
- 6.24. The proposed uses should generate relatively little refuse, but refuse collection arrangements can be agreed with Waste Management.
- 6.25. Air Quality
- 6.26. The site is not located within an Air Quality Management Area and the pre-application advised that an air quality assessment is not required.
- 6.27. The applicant is happy to accept a condition that requires the installation of an EV charging point.
- 6.28. Coal Authority
- 6.29. It is understood that the subject site falls partly within the defined Development High Risk Area where historic unrecorded coal mining may have taken place beneath the site at shallow depth. A coal mining report is enclosed which finds no evidence of coal mining activity on the site.
- 6.30. In accordance with The Coal Authority's general approach a Coal Mining Risk Assessment has been prepared by Earth Environmental and Technical which is enclosed to support the planning application. This further concludes that there is no evidence of mining activity and planning permission can be granted with appropriate conditions.
- 6.31. There is no indication of any previous on the site which would have caused any of the land to be contaminated. On that basis a contaminated land survey has not been undertaken at this stage although given the part basement extension proposed, the applicant would be happy to agree to a condition requiring such a survey if it is deemed necessary.

6.32. Ecology

6.33. The application site is not within or adjacent to any statutory (SSSI or European sites - SAC, SPA, Ramsar) or non-statutory sites (Site of Biological Importance - SBI).

6.34. A survey undertaken in October 2019 by a recognised consultancy (Tyrer Partnership) indicated that the site is of limited value. This has been updated in September 2022 and a copy is enclosed with the application. This concluded as follows:

- No botanical species of conservation interest or invasive species were identified.
- There is negligible bat roost potential and no further surveys are required. A bat sensitive lighting plan may be appropriate however.
- Enhancement for nesting birds is recommended and an appropriate condition would be accepted.
- No evidence of foraging animals was found but a Working Method Statement detailing Reasonable Avoidance Measures was recommended along with one new hedgehog home.
- Biodiversity enhancement is recommended and the applicant would be prepared to enter into negotiation over what measures would be appropriate in accordance with suggestions included in the appendix to the Tyrer Partnership report.

6.35. Heritage

6.36. It is understood that the proposed development has the potential to indirectly affect the significance of the Grade II listed Davenport Farm approximately 150m north on the same side of Arthur Lane.

6.37. A heritage assessment has therefore been undertaken by Eden Heritage which assesses the potential impact of the proposal on the setting of the listed building. It concludes that given the hedges on the west and south boundaries which restrict views into and out of the site there will be no impact upon the nearby designated heritage asset or Ainsworth Conservation Area. Additional planting is also proposed which will further restrict any views.

6.38. The Very Special Circumstances of the Application

6.39. The suitability of the location

6.39.1. It is important that employment opportunities exist in rural areas firstly, to enable local people to access employment close to where they live, secondly, to help avoid excessive

levels of commuting to urban areas and thirdly to ensure that local communities remain vibrant and sustainable.

- 6.39.2. It is understood that in assessing proposals, the Council will seek to ensure that the scale and nature of the development would not lead to a dispersal of activity likely to increase reliance on the private car, compromise sustainability objectives or affect the vitality of nearby towns. The scale of the revised scheme should achieve that.
- 6.39.3. There are economic benefits deriving from the proposal. There is a benefit in the retention of local jobs and an important local business which outweigh the harm perceived from the limited visual impact of the development on the rural setting and surrounding countryside.
- 6.39.4. The additional use for leisure purposes is also consistent with the location and is ancillary to Mr Brown's home. In part, it simply replaces one leisure use with another that may be less onerous as there would be no need for example to accommodate horse boxes and manure for example.

6.40. The effect of the proposal on the character of the area

- 6.40.1. The design of the converted building should maintain the character and amenity of the rural area and should be appropriate to the locality. The expansion of an existing local business will be carefully managed to ensure that the scale of the operation is sensitive to the rural location and the leisure use is of low intensity and personal to the applicant.
- 6.40.2. The proposal is for a building that will change the use of one existing building previously used as a stable. The intention is to maintain the overall appearance and general character of the original livestock buildings whilst repurposing and providing energy efficient office and leisure accommodation.
- 6.40.3. As the proposed building will incorporate a basement area, the profile of the proposed building will remain single storey in appearance. This limits the visual impact of the proposed building.
- 6.40.4. The proposed office/gym is only slightly larger in terms of footprint than the building it replaces (an increase of 20.5 square metres) and incorporates footings that were previously put in by a previous owner, resulting in a development that is not inappropriate and therefore acceptable in principle. Analysis is as follows:

- a). The NPPF and ELP lack a definition of materially larger.
- b). The footprint, floor area and volume of the proposed dwelling are shown in Table 1. The floor area at ground floor is only 25% larger than the existing building . Although there are no specific extended areas listed within the existing or emerging local plan, in previous applications planning officers reports have indicated that this is an additional amount that may be considered not materially larger (not disproportionate). There are also appeal cases that agree with this view.



Existing stables with footings shown

- 6.40.5. Although the proposal is considered consistent with replacement building policy, the proposal also falls under a further exemption to inappropriate development in the Green Belt as outlined in section 3.2.1.2. The proposal is conversion of a previously developed building. It is considered that even though the volume and external area of the proposed is greater, the site layout and visual aspects ensure the proposal will not have a significantly greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing buildings on site.
- 6.40.6. The materials will be locally sourced. The proposed finishes with larch cladding to the walls will enhance the existing bare blockwork and will be more appropriate to the location.

- 6.40.7. The fenestration generally reflects the former equestrian openings in size and position. In order to improve light in the extended part of the repurposed building larger windows have been proposed for the eastern end of the building in the less prominent elevations.

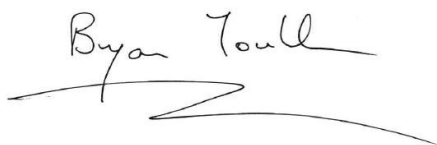


7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1. Section 38(b) of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that where in making any determination under the Planning Acts, regard is to be had to the development plan, *'the determination must be made in accordance with the plans unless material considerations dictate otherwise'*.
- 7.2. The proposed development does comply with relevant development plan policies as has been indicated at pre-application stage and is a form of sustainable development. Furthermore, there are economic benefits deriving from the proposal which will help to retain local jobs and an important local business which outweigh any perceived harm from the visual impact of the development on the rural setting and surrounding countryside. Equally, the leisure use is wholly appropriate.
- 7.3. The proposal addresses each of the three overarching objectives in the NPPF in assisting a local business to grow in an appropriate way without impacting significantly upon the open countryside. It assists the applicant to continue to grow his thriving business in Bury without

impacting unduly on the environment, improves his quality of life and reduces his need to travel whilst at the same time adding a useful leisure facility for his whole family.

- 7.4. The scale and nature of the development would not lead to a dispersal of activity likely to increase reliance on the private car, compromise sustainability objectives or affect the vitality of nearby towns and would not impact upon local residents.
- 7.5. The design of the adapted combined home office/leisure building has been carefully considered to maintain the character and amenity of the rural area and should be appropriate to the locality. There being no material considerations which would dictate otherwise, we conclude that a grant of planning permission would be appropriate.



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