

Planning support statement for an application at Eccles Street Ramsbottom for the building of 1no. bespoke, self-build and custom-build dwelling designed to Passivhaus standards, access, driveway, parking, landscaping and all other associated works.

This planning application was the subject of a formal pre-application and an earlier iteration of a scheme, on a different part of the site.

This scheme has been constructed so as to demonstrate Very Special Circumstances (VSC) to allow it to be approved in the Green Belt and while there will be impacts, they are not severe and, as such, National Planning Policy Guidance says that it should not be refused.

Apart from the detailed drawings and specifications the application is supported by a Design and Access Statement that covers the issues raised in the pre-application and the earlier scheme, a detailed landscape assessment, a detailed tree report, a comprehensive ecological assessment and plan, a complete heritage statement, a highways assessment, a phase 1 contaminated land report and coal authority report

When read together, these reports clearly show that VSC can be demonstrated based on the sustainability of the design meeting Passivhaus Standards, the slight positive impact the development will have on the conservation area and the positive impact it will have on the ecology of the site.

In terms of the planning appraisal the following policies at local and national level are applicable and these are listed in Appendix A below.

When examining these policies there are a number that are key to the determination of the application.

Principal of residential development

First of all the principle residential development on the site, especially at a national level should be treated as a significant material planning consideration and it emphasises the need for local planning authorities to boost the supply of housing to meet local housing targets in both the short and long term. The Framework maintains the emphasis on identifying a rolling five year supply of deliverable housing land.

As it is understood, Bury's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment sets out the latest housing supply position, which is

made up of sites that have an extant planning permission and sites that have potential to obtain planning permission in the future. This shows that there are a number of sites within the Borough with the potential to deliver a significant amount of housing.

However, not all of these sites will contribute to the five year supply calculations as many sites will take longer than five years to come forward and be fully developed (e.g. some large sites could take up to ten years to be completed). As such, it is understood that the latest monitoring indicates that the Council is unable to demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing land and this needs to be treated as a material factor when determining applications for residential developments.

The National Planning Policy Framework also sets out the Housing Delivery Test, which is an assessment of net additional dwellings provided over the previous three years against the homes required. Where the test indicates that the delivery of housing was substantially below (less than 75%) of the housing requirement over the previous years, this needs to be taken into account in the decision-taking process. The latest results published by the Government show that Bury has a housing delivery test result of less than 75%, and therefore this needs to be treated as a material factor when determining applications for residential development. The site is currently vacant, however appears have been previously used for agriculture use/open fields.

There is a 1970s housing development to the west of the site, and access can be gained from Eccles Street itself.

Subject to the justification for the release of a greenfield site, the principle of a new house on the site could be considered to be acceptable in terms UDP Policy H1/2 Further Housing Development.

Principle (Greenbelt)

Paragraphs 143 and 144 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). 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.

Paragraph 145 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) provision for appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport and recreation;
- c) extension or alteration of a building providing it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;
- d) replacement of a building, providing 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 community needs under policies set out in the development plan (including policies for rural exceptions sites); and
 - 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 with in the area of the local planning authority.

Policy OL1/2 follows the references in the NPPF.

Green Belt - Case for Very Special Circumstances

The planning statement submitted seeks to endorse five very special circumstance (VSC) cases:

- High Quality Design
- Lack of visual harm and landscape enhancements;
- Located on land occupied by 13 derelict and redundant buildings;
- Landscape Provision and Ecological Enhancement;
- Energy and Sustainability Enhancements (Passivhaus House standards);
- Housing Land Supply
- Positive Impact on the Conservation Area

High Quality Design

In addition to the Green Belt policies already highlighted there are additional policies within the UDP and NPPF, and material planning considerations that relate to residential development that need to be applied when assessing design.

Paragraph 79e of the NPPF confirms that isolated homes within the countryside may be acceptable if:
the design is of exceptional quality, in that it:
– is truly outstanding or innovative, reflecting the highest standards in architecture, and
would help to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas; and
– would significantly enhance its immediate setting, and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area.
Whilst the site is not considered to fall under paragraph 79e of the NPPF, as the site is not considered to be isolated, the approach of a house of exceptional design could constitute VSC and the judgement as to whether a proposal is exceptional, should not be solely based on the proposal's location.
The NPPF makes it clear that creating high quality buildings and places is fundamental.

This is further supported by the National Design Guide. The National Design Guide, published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government in 2019 states that well designed new development is influenced by "*an appreciation and understanding of vernacular.....including existing built form, landscape and local architectural precedents.*"

In this case a similar cantilevered modern design for a house has been approved within the Conservation Area at Tanners Street, however, this design pays regard to the scale and massing of the properties on the opposite side of Eccles Street so that it will add to the character of the area, rather than be an alien intrusion.

UDP Policy H2/1- The Form of New Residential Development requires all new residential development to make a positive contribution to the form and quality of the surrounding area.
Policy H2/2 - The Layout of New Residential Development seeks to ensure that new residential development will be acceptable in terms of layout in order to provide a good quality residential environment.
In addition to this, Policy EN1/2 - Townscape and Built Design seeks to ensure that any proposals would not have an adverse impact on the particular character and townscape of an area.

It is contended that the Design and Access Statement has provide full details of the design approach for the proposal and utilised documents to discuss how the proposal has evolved.

The various documents have undertaken a comprehensive site analysis and sought to locate the new self build home within the landscape, noting the topographical context of the site, and, in

particular, how the development will impact on the landscape, ecology and heritage of the site and the surrounding area.

The proposal has been designed to create an energy efficient designs that make for a low energy dwelling with high comfort levels, and meets Passivhaus Standards.

The applicant has also sought to utilise renewables and identified appropriate technologies such as solar photovoltaic panels, battery energy storage systems and air source heat pump. However, the design has focused on meeting the Passivhaus standards as outlined in the formal Design and Access Statement.

Properties that fully meet the Passivhaus standards are rare and there is only one similar property in Bury Councils area that is under construction and while there are other Passivhaus projects in Greater Manchester, there are no other single self build projects.

As such the rarity of single homes being designed to full Passivhaus Standards can be described as a VSC.

Lack of visual harm and landscape enhancements

An design and access statement, ecology report and heritage statements have been undertaken and submitted in support of the planning application. This purpose of these documents is to consider the proposed development with regard to existing landscape resource and visual amenity, and to consider any potential impacts and propose mitigation if required.

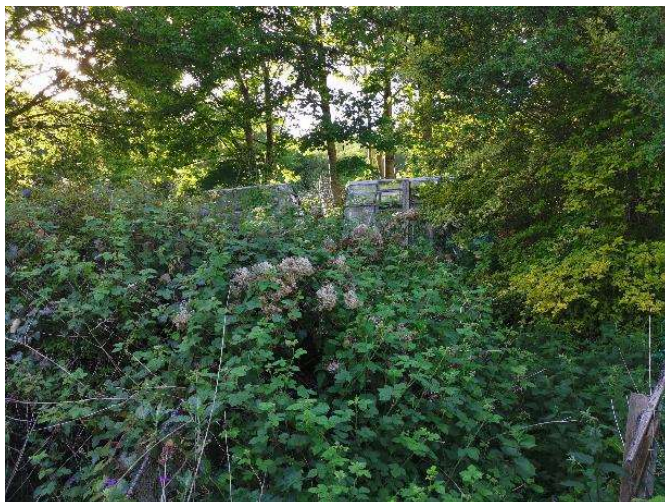
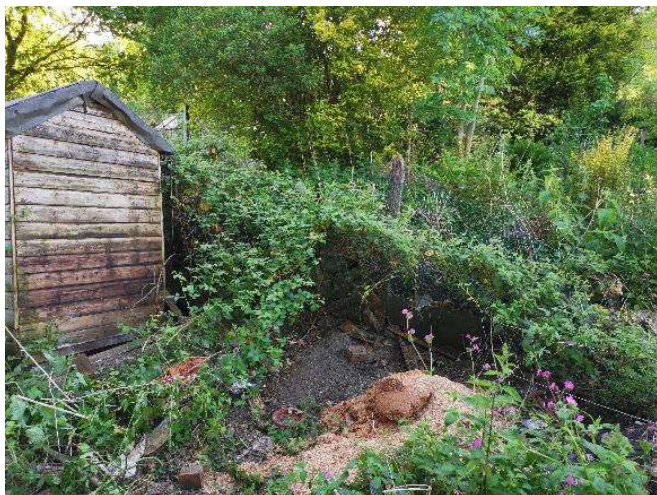
The design and access statement highlights that whilst the site is not located within an area covered by a landscape designation such as a National Park or AONB it is sited within a Green Belt location. The site is flanked by a residential gardens to the east and west with grazed farmland to the north, with a band of woodland along the hillside to the north of the site, Grants Wood.

The appraisals review the potential visual envelopes and views of the site and concludes that existing landscape features such as topography, woodland and the settlement of Ramsbottom would limit the potential visual envelope from publicly accessible locations.

As the dwelling would 'nestled' into the slope of the site and screened by existing trees that are to be retained.

It is contended that the addition of this single dwelling, on the edge of an existing settlement with natural screening provided would not be overly incongruous or prominent.

The area where the new house is proposed is currently occupied by 13 derelict buildings which damage the visual amenity of the area and impacts adversely on the character of the conservation area and photographs of the site viewed from Eccles Street are shown below:



Landscape Provision and Ecological Enhancement

A detailed landscape master plan is included in the application and both the ecological assessment and the heritage statement support the form of the development within the landscape and conservation area.

The comprehensive ecological assessment concludes:

6.1 The construction of the property and associated works, in accordance with the Landscape Masterplan, at land off Eccles Street, Ramsbottom can be achieved in accordance with relevant planning policy, identified ecological considerations, wildlife legislation, best practice and local conservation objectives.

6.2 As demonstrated at **Section 5.4 and Appendices 2 and 3**, the site proposals achieve a net gain for biodiversity in accordance with the Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool and the Biodiversity Net Gain: Good Practice Principles for Development (CIEEM, 2016).

Energy and Sustainability Enhancements

The applicant has engaged a renewable energy firms to advise on the design and implementation of technologies within the proposed dwelling and these have been included in the final Passivhaus design.

The review concluded that the following measures are to be provided at this site:

- Solar photovoltaic panels.
- Air source heat pumps. These use renewable energy taken from ambient air to heat the building and provide a heat source for the domestic hot water system.
- A battery system to store energy outside of the typical occupancy profiles to be consumed later.

In addition to the above further measures such as thermal efficient glazing, EV charging points for vehicles and low energy light fittings are also proposed.

Whilst it is not proposed for the dwelling to be entirely "off-grid" the proposed technologies will lower the proposed dwelling's reliance on the grid. Case law supports that the energy efficiency of a scheme can provide a case for VSC and as such given the technologies proposed above this case is accepted.

Housing Land Supply

Housing land supply has been assessed under residential principle above. The "tilted balance" refers to the presumption in paragraph 11(d) ii of the NPPF that, where the presumption applies, planning permission should be granted unless there are "adverse

impacts which would significantly and demonstrably outweigh its benefits.” Importantly however, this doesn't override Green Belt Policy constraints. As such, whilst delivery of housing was substantially below the housing requirement over the previous three years this is not considered to be an acceptable case for VSC in this instance. Even so one house makes no significant contribution to housing land supply.

Positive impact on the Conservation Area

The comprehensive Heritage Statement concludes:

The demolition of the derelict sheds and garages will have a slight beneficial impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The new dwelling will have a neutral impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The new house and associated development is designed in contextual materials, to an appropriate height, design and materials, which preserves the open character of the site. The landscape proposals will enhance the site and also retain the character of the open space, which is largely retained. The contribution the positive elements make to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area will be retained. Overall, the proposals will have a slight beneficial impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, whilst allowing an optimal viable use for the site.

Other issues

Public Right of Way – this follows the line of Eccles Street, but is not affected by any building works. Any informal paths across the site have no standing in terms of a right of way and none of these impact on the red edge of the application site.

Fire brigade access – Eccles Street already serves 18 properties. The fire station at Ramsbottom has a special fire tender for locations such as this and, as such, the granting of permission for an additional home will not impact on the service the fire brigade can provide. If required, the property can be fitted with a domestic sprinkler system to BS9251 British Standard, for Domestic & Residential Fire Sprinklers.

Conclusion

The applicant and his team of architects, landscape specialists, heritage and ecology consultants have come up with a scheme that is exceptional in terms of its quality and the benefits it will bring to the site.

It is considered that the reports supporting the application give clear evidence of the Very Special Circumstances, as does the fact

that the property will meet full Passivhaus standards, that will allow the harm of the development, in Green Belt terms, to be mitigated and allow consent to be granted.

It should also be remembered that Planning Practice Guidance says applications should only be refused where 'impact is severe'. In this case it is acknowledged that there will be some negative impacts as a matter of principal, but that these impacts cannot be considered to be severe and, as such, the application can be approved.

The applicant engaged with the planning department at the inception of the scheme and is happy to consider any amendments to make the scheme even more acceptable.

Appendix A – Local and National Planning Policies

Unitary Development Plan and Policies

OL1 Green Belt

OL1/2 New Buildings in the Green Belt

EN1/1 Visual Amenity

EN1/2 Townscape and Built Design

EN2/2 Conservation Area

EN5/1 New Development and Flood Risk

EN6/3 Features of Ecological Value

EN7/3 Water Pollution

EN7/5 Waste Water Management

EN8/2 Woodland and Tree Planting

EN9 Landscape

EN9/1 Special Landscape Areas

H1/2 Further Housing Development

H2/1 The Form of New Residential Development

H2/2 The Layout of New Residential Development

HT2/4 Car Parking and New Development

HT6/2 Pedestrian/Vehicular Conflict

SPD11 Parking Standards in Bury

SPD6 Supplementary Planning Document 6: Alterations & Extensions

SPD8 DC Policy Guidance Note 8 - New Buildings in the Green Belt

NPPF National Planning Policy Framework

PPG Planning Practice Guidance