



JAMES CAMPBELL ASSOCIATES LTD

CHARTERED ARCHITECTURAL SERVICES



**Campbell House
173 Rochdale Road
Firgrove
Rochdale
OL16 3BN**

Tel: 01706 354888

Mob: 07817 623183

Email: admin@jamescampbellassociates.co.uk

Web: www.jamescampbellassociates.co.uk

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HERITAGE STATEMENT

PROPOSED REPLACEMENT OF EXISTING WINDOWS WITH TIMBER WINDOWS

**45 Bury New Road
Ramsbottom
Bury
BL0 0AR**

1.0 Introduction

This Heritage Statement has been prepared in support of proposals for the sensitive replacement of the existing windows at 45 Bury New Road, Ramsbottom.

The property is a substantial mid-19th-century dwelling occupying a prominent and attractive position within the Ramsbottom Conservation Area. The proposal is limited in nature and involves the replacement of the existing ageing and increasingly difficult-to-maintain windows with high-quality painted timber windows finished in an appropriate off-white colour.

The fundamental objective of the works is conservation-led renewal. The proposal does not seek to alter the architectural composition of the building or introduce an incongruous contemporary window system. Rather, it seeks to retain the traditional character and appearance of the property through the continued use of timber whilst providing windows which are functional, weather-tight, secure and capable of meeting the reasonable expectations of a dwelling in continued residential use.

The significance of the building, the historical development of Bury New Road and the wider Ramsbottom Conservation Area have therefore informed the proposed approach.

2.0 Historical Development of Ramsbottom

Ramsbottom possesses a particularly strong historic identity derived from the dramatic relationship between its Pennine landscape, the River Irwell, transport routes and the rapid expansion of the textile industry during the nineteenth century.

Although settlement existed in the wider valley considerably earlier, the Ramsbottom recognised today is principally a product of the Industrial Revolution. The availability of water power, followed by the development of steam-powered manufacturing and improved transport connections, transformed what had been a dispersed rural landscape into an important industrial settlement.

Cotton spinning, weaving, bleaching, dyeing, engineering and associated trades generated both employment and considerable private wealth. Mills became concentrated around the Irwell valley and were accompanied by extensive areas of workers' housing, commercial premises, churches, chapels and civic buildings.

The arrival of the railway during the 1840s was particularly important to this transformation. The Conservation Area Appraisal records the Railway Hotel as having been built in 1848, shortly after the railway arrived in 1846, illustrating the pace at which the developing transport network became integrated into the social and commercial fabric of the town.

By the later nineteenth century Ramsbottom had become a mature industrial settlement. The 1893 Ordnance Survey records a remarkable concentration of textile industry including Ramsbottom Mills, Garden Mill, Waterside Mill, Irwell Bridge Mill, Rose Mill, Railway Mill and Meadow Mill together with a large paper mill. The town reached its maximum recorded number of textile spindles in 1889.

The physical character of Ramsbottom consequently reflects not merely industrial production but the social structure which accompanied it. Dense terraces accommodated the industrial workforce whilst manufacturers, managers, merchants and members of the growing professional classes established larger and more architecturally ambitious houses away from the most intensely industrial parts of the town.

It is within this latter historical development that Bury New Road, and particularly No. 45, should be understood.

3.0 Development of Bury New Road

The eastern side of Ramsbottom developed significantly during the middle decades of the nineteenth century and acquired a noticeably different character from the tightly packed workers' terraces and industrial complexes elsewhere within the town.

Bury Council's Ramsbottom Conservation Area Appraisal specifically identifies development east of the town centre during the latter half of the nineteenth century as an area associated with the town's social and economic elite.

The Appraisal links the development of this part of Ramsbottom with Park Chapel on Walmersley Road and with the prosperous Porritt family, who possessed significant landholdings at Stubbins.

This association is particularly important because it illustrates how the growth of Ramsbottom's textile economy influenced not only its mills but its residential geography. Successful industrialists and professionals were able to establish substantial houses with larger gardens and a more spacious suburban character away from the tightly developed industrial core.

The Council records that in 1846 land was leased to the trustees of Park Chapel for the construction of Park Cottage as a residence for a minister. That building survives as 43 Bury New Road.

More importantly for the present application, the Council's historical research identifies local authority valuation records dating from **1864** which refer to substantial three-storey houses in this immediate area, including properties known as **Irwell Mount**, owned by William Porritt.

The Appraisal considers these properties to correspond with houses within the group at Nos. 23–41a Bury New Road and then specifically records:

“Number 45 Bury New Road also appears to be contemporary with these.”

Accordingly, there is strong documentary evidence placing the origins of 45 Bury New Road within the important period of approximately the mid-1860s when this part of Ramsbottom was developing as a prestigious residential quarter.

The building can therefore reasonably be understood as approximately **160 years old**, subject to more precise documentary evidence becoming available.

4.0 45 Bury New Road – Architectural and Historic Significance

No. 45 forms part of an important surviving group of mid-nineteenth-century residential development along Bury New Road.

Its significance is not simply attributable to its age. The building assists in illustrating an important chapter in Ramsbottom's social history: the emergence of substantial Victorian residential development alongside the extraordinary industrial expansion occurring within the Irwell valley.

Indeed, Bury Council's work identifying buildings of local architectural and historic interest specifically records:

“23 to 45 (odd), Bury New Road, Ramsbottom. Mid 19thC villas.”

No. 45 was subsequently specifically identified within the Council's local heritage work alongside Nos. 23–33, 37 and 39–41a Bury New Road.

The building therefore possesses architectural, historical and townscape significance and makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Ramsbottom Conservation Area.

Its architectural significance derives principally from its substantial Victorian domestic form, traditional proportions, use of local materials and relationship with the other nineteenth-century villas along this part of Bury New Road.

Its historical significance derives from its relationship with the development of Ramsbottom during one of the most important periods in the town's history.

Its townscape significance arises from the contribution which the building, its garden setting and the wider group of substantial properties make to the distinctive lower-density character of this part of the Conservation Area.

5.0 The Particular Character of Bury New Road

Bury New Road possesses a character which is deliberately different from the commercial and industrial heart of Ramsbottom.

The Conservation Area Appraisal recognises the importance of the larger private gardens associated with properties along Bury New Road. Mature trees, evergreen hedges and shrubs soften the architecture and contribute significantly to the attractive suburban character of the street.

The relationship between substantial Victorian houses and landscaped gardens is therefore itself part of the significance of this part of the Conservation Area.

Boundary treatments are similarly important. The Appraisal specifically identifies good examples of traditional stone walls and gate piers serving the larger houses on Bury New Road, with some gate piers carved from single pieces of stone and historically inscribed with house names.

Together these features create a distinctive nineteenth-century residential environment comprising stone-built houses, traditional joinery, mature planting, stone walls, gates and substantial plots.

The proposed works should therefore be viewed within this wider historic composition rather than considering the windows as isolated components.

6.0 Windows and Joinery within the Conservation Area

Traditional window joinery forms an important component of Ramsbottom's architectural character.

The Conservation Area Appraisal specifically recognises that surviving historic window and door joinery has become increasingly rare. It identifies the survival of timber sash windows and original doors on some of the larger properties on Bury New Road and Bolton Road as important elements of historic character.

The Appraisal is particularly critical of inappropriate replacement windows where traditional timber sliding sash windows have been removed and replaced with windows of differing proportions, materials and opening configurations.

The important heritage principle arising from the Appraisal is therefore clear: **window replacement should not result in the erosion of traditional architectural character.**

That principle has directly informed the current proposal.

The applicants have specifically avoided the use of standard uPVC or aluminium replacement windows which could introduce materially different frame sections, surface finishes and visual characteristics.

Instead, replacement windows are proposed in **timber**, thereby retaining the traditional materiality associated with Victorian domestic architecture and specifically recognised by the Conservation Area Appraisal as characteristic of the larger houses on Bury New Road.

7.0 Existing Windows and Need for Replacement

The existing windows are ageing installations which are increasingly difficult to operate and maintain.

Several windows have become stiff and difficult to open satisfactorily. This presents an obvious practical disadvantage to the continued occupation of the dwelling and inhibits effective natural ventilation.

The windows are also predominantly single glazed. Their thermal performance is consequently poor when assessed against reasonable contemporary expectations, resulting in significant heat loss through the glazing and frames, cold internal surface temperatures, draughts and an increased likelihood of condensation during colder weather.

Ageing timber windows can additionally experience progressive movement, distortion of opening sections, deterioration of putties and seals and wear to operating mechanisms and ironmongery. These effects can eventually make routine opening and closing increasingly difficult.

There is a point at which repeated localised repairs cease to represent an effective long-term conservation strategy, particularly where windows need to continue functioning as part of an occupied family dwelling.

The objective of conservation should not be to prevent all change. Historic buildings have survived precisely because they have been maintained, repaired and periodically renewed to enable them to remain useful.

In this instance, wholesale replacement using an inappropriate modern material would represent a poor heritage response. Equally, requiring defective and increasingly impractical windows to remain indefinitely simply because they are old would fail to recognise the need for historic buildings to remain comfortable, functional and viable places in which to live.

The appropriate solution is therefore careful renewal using a material and appearance sympathetic to the building.

8.0 Proposed Replacement Windows

The proposed replacement windows will be constructed in **timber** and finished in an **off-white painted finish**.

The off-white finish has deliberately been selected rather than a brilliant modern white. A softer off-white colour provides a more traditional appearance appropriate to nineteenth-century painted joinery and complements the natural colour and texture of the property's masonry.

The proposed windows will respect the established architectural hierarchy of the elevations and the proportions of the existing openings.

Particular care will be taken with frame dimensions, glazing divisions, opening arrangements and external appearance so that the replacement windows read as an integral component of the historic elevation rather than as visually intrusive modern insertions.

No enlargement or material alteration of the historic masonry window openings is proposed.

The existing relationship between window and surrounding masonry will consequently remain legible.

The use of timber is especially significant. Unlike uPVC, timber provides the depth, texture, jointing and painted surface traditionally associated with nineteenth-century joinery. It also permits comparatively slender sections and traditional detailing.

The proposal consequently represents a materially more sympathetic solution than could be achieved through the installation of mass-produced plastic replacement windows.

9.0 Heritage Impact

The significance of 45 Bury New Road has been carefully considered.

The principal heritage values of the building derive from its mid-nineteenth-century origins, architectural form, masonry elevations, traditional proportions, landscaped setting and contribution to the group of substantial Victorian villas along Bury New Road.

The proposed development will not affect the fundamental form, scale, massing or architectural composition of the building.

The proposed windows will continue to be timber.

Their off-white painted finish will retain the visual character traditionally associated with painted external joinery.

Accordingly, the development will preserve the established architectural rhythm and appearance of the building.

Importantly, the proposal does not introduce the principal characteristics which commonly cause harm through replacement windows in conservation areas: bulky plastic frames, brilliant-white finishes, altered glazing proportions or substantial changes to historic window openings.

Instead, the proposal seeks continuity of traditional material and appearance.

The works should therefore be regarded as **sensitive renewal rather than architectural alteration**.

10.0 Sustainability and Continued Use

There is also an important relationship between heritage conservation and environmental sustainability.

Keeping historic buildings in active and viable use is fundamental to their long-term conservation.

The existing single-glazed windows contribute substantially to heat loss and draughts within the dwelling. Their replacement with appropriately detailed timber windows incorporating improved glazing will reduce unnecessary energy loss and improve internal comfort.

Improved window operation will additionally restore effective natural ventilation.

The proposal therefore allows the environmental performance of the dwelling to be improved without sacrificing the traditional timber character of its fenestration.

This represents a balanced conservation approach: maintaining the visual qualities which contribute to heritage significance while allowing the building to respond sensitively to modern requirements.

11.0 Ramsbottom Conservation Area

The importance of the wider Conservation Area has also been considered.

The present Ramsbottom Conservation Area resulted from the amalgamation and extension of the former Ramsbottom, Tanners and Bury New Road Conservation Areas, authorised by Bury Council in March 2007.

The very existence of the former **Bury New Road Conservation Area** demonstrates the longstanding recognition of the special architectural and historic qualities of this particular part of the town.

The Conservation Area contains an unusually rich mixture of Ramsbottom's history: industrial buildings, mills, commercial streets, churches and chapels, railway structures, workers' terraces, substantial villas, landscaped grounds and surviving historic street surfaces.

Bury New Road contributes a particularly important residential layer to that history.

No. 45 therefore forms part of the story of Ramsbottom's transformation from a comparatively dispersed settlement into a prosperous Victorian industrial town.

The proposal has been deliberately designed to preserve that contribution.

12.0 Planning and Heritage Policy

Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires special attention to be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

The National Planning Policy Framework similarly requires applicants to describe the significance of heritage assets affected by development, including the contribution made by their setting, to a level proportionate to the importance of the asset.

National policy places great weight upon the conservation of heritage assets but also recognises the importance of their continued viable use.

The Ramsbottom Conservation Area Management Plan requires development to respond appropriately to surrounding scale, height, massing, detail and materials and specifically seeks to protect the traditional character of the Conservation Area.

The proposed works respond positively to these principles.

The replacement windows use an inherently traditional material; retain the established window openings and architectural composition; employ a sympathetic painted finish; improve the practical usability of the dwelling; and avoid the visually harmful introduction of inappropriate modern window materials.

13.0 Heritage Balance

There is a clear distinction between the **loss of heritage significance** and the **renewal of a building component in an appropriate traditional material**.

Windows are working elements of buildings. They are exposed continually to rainfall, sunlight, frost, temperature variation and repeated mechanical operation and inevitably require repair and eventual renewal.

The significance of 45 Bury New Road does not depend upon preventing the replacement of every individual component irrespective of condition. Rather, significance is sustained by retaining the characteristics which allow the building's architectural and historic identity to be understood.

Those characteristics include its Victorian proportions, masonry construction, fenestration pattern, traditional materials, architectural rhythm and landscaped setting.

The present proposals retain all of these fundamental characteristics.

Indeed, the decision to invest in purpose-made timber windows rather than cheaper contemporary alternatives demonstrates a positive commitment by the owners to the long-term conservation of the building.

The replacement windows will enable the property to continue functioning as a comfortable and sustainable home whilst maintaining the traditional visual qualities which make it an important component of Bury New Road.

The proposal therefore represents an appropriate balance between **conservation, sustainability and continued beneficial use**.

14.0 Conclusion

45 Bury New Road is an attractive and historically important component of the Ramsbottom Conservation Area.

Documentary research undertaken by Bury Council identifies the property as a **mid-nineteenth-century villa**, apparently contemporary with neighbouring substantial houses referred to in valuation records dating from **1864**.

The building consequently survives as tangible evidence of an important period in Ramsbottom's development, when prosperity generated by nineteenth-century industrialisation resulted in the construction of substantial residential properties for the town's emerging professional and prosperous classes.

The special character of Bury New Road derives from the combination of these substantial Victorian houses, local sandstone, traditional architectural detailing, timber joinery, mature gardens, stone boundary walls, gates and gate piers.

The proposed works have been specifically formulated to respect those characteristics.

The existing windows have become increasingly difficult to operate and maintain and their predominantly single-glazed construction provides poor thermal performance, increased draughts and limited comfort.

Their replacement is therefore reasonably required to secure the continued practical and sustainable occupation of the dwelling.

Crucially, the applicants have chosen **timber replacement windows**, rather than introducing visually inappropriate uPVC or other modern alternatives.

The proposed off-white painted finish, retention of the existing masonry openings and sympathetic window proportions will maintain the traditional character of the building.

The proposals therefore amount to careful conservation-led renewal of a working building component rather than an alteration which undermines the architectural identity of the property.

It is consequently concluded that the development will **preserve the special architectural and historic interest of 45 Bury New Road and preserve the character and appearance of the Ramsbottom Conservation Area**.

The works provide an opportunity to secure the continued use, maintenance and enjoyment of an approximately 160-year-old Ramsbottom dwelling while ensuring that its external appearance remains recognisably rooted in the architectural traditions of the town.

For these reasons, the proposals represent an appropriate and sensitive response to the significance of the heritage asset and the Local Planning Authority is respectfully invited to support the application.