

PLANNING STATEMENT

Change of Use of Building to Treatment Rooms

Brook Bottom Farm, Bury Old Road, Shuttleworth, Ramsbottom, Bury, BL0 0RZ

Introduction

This statement needs to be read in conjunction with the statement from the applicant. The property was acquired in 2019. It has been renovated and developed to a high standard but much of the work has been carried out without the benefit of planning permission, including an extension to the house and the establishment of holiday let units. Retrospective planning permission has now been granted for these elements of the development.

The issue that still needs to be resolved is the use of a detached building by 3 beauty therapists. The building itself has planning permission (number 65025 dated 18 February 2020).for recreational use associated with the house. Permission (number 71297 dated 16 December 2024) was also granted for changes to the fenestration from the approved plan.

The planning officer's response to a pre application enquiry was dated 5 September 2024. It provided helpful guidance for the applications that have been approved and for this current application.

Brook Bottom Farm is within in the Green Belt and there were concerns about the impact of the development as a whole on its openness. However, the building which is the subject of the current application exists and has planning permission. The only issue to be considered is the appropriateness of the use of a building in this location.

The building is constructed in natural stone with a slate roof to match the rest of the development. There is no signage and no external indication that it is in commercial use. There are three salons and a shared reception area. The three practitioners who work independently combine to offer an exclusive spa day which includes use of the hot tubs and hydrotherapy pool. It is part of the package offered to visitors to the holiday let units; a unique wellness experience in luxury accommodation in a rural setting.

National Planning Policy Framework

The NPPF supports sustainable development in accordance with the development plan and encourages local planning authorities to be positive in their decision making on planning applications.

The NPPF supports a prosperous rural economy. Paragraph 88 is as follows:-

“Planning policies and decisions should enable:

- a) The sustainable growth and expansion of all types of businesses in rural areas both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings:*
- b) The development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based-based rural businesses:*
- c) Sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside.”*

Paragraph 89 states that:-

“Planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that the development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable (for example by improving the scope for access on foot by cycling or by public transport).”

The property is in the Green Belt where, in most cases, the construction of new buildings is considered to be “inappropriate development” (para 153). Exception to this in paragraph 154 include:-

“Other forms of development provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within” such as “the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction.”

Bury Unitary Development Plan

The property is just within the Bury MBC area, with the boundary with Rossendale on the opposite side of Bury Old Road. The UDP was adopted as long ago as 1997 but it is still relevant.

UDP Policy RT4 – Tourism states that *“The Council will promote and facilitate the development of tourism in the Borough”*, particularly in the upper Irwell Valley.

UDP Policy RT4/3 – Visitor Accommodation states that *“The Council will encourage and support proposals for development which would extend the range of visitor accommodation in the Borough. Any development proposals will be assessed and considered against the following factors:*

- a) the appropriateness in terms of the design, scale and setting and the effect on the character, quality and visual amenity of the locality;*
- b) the provision of satisfactory access;*
- c) ability to accommodate the necessary car parking, service areas and landscaping within the site;*
- d) the satisfactory compliance with development control policies for Green Belt areas and other open land policies where appropriate;*

Car Parking

In her response to the pre application enquiry in September 2024 the planning officer's assessment was that *“both proposals would require 12 full spaces. Any provision over this would need to be justified within the planning statement”*.

The applicant's statement now explains why 15 spaces are needed and how they are allocated. The therapists normally work a five day week, 9 to 5. Most treatments last at least an hour limiting the number of appointments. Visitors to the holiday lets must leave by 10am and check in after 3 pm and are usually only in their accommodation over night, either enjoying the local countryside or travelling during the day

The parking, turning and bin storage arrangements, including cycle parking and bin storage were approved as part of planning applications 72026 and 72027 for the holiday let units.

Since then, in June 2025, “SPD11-Parking Standards in Bury” has been adopted. It should not be applied to an existing development where the parking is already in place and working satisfactorily.

The property is in Parking Standard Zone 4. The building has an internal floor area of 70 square metres but the precise use does not appear in the tables for parking requirements. The SPD states in paragraph 3.4 that *“in line with paragraph 9 of the NPPF, it is acknowledged there is a need to reflect local circumstances, context and requirements of individual developments when assessing applications”*.

Places for Everyone

Places For Everyone (PFE) is a Joint Development Plan Document for all Greater Manchester (apart from Stockport). It was adopted in March 2024 long after the development at Broad Bottom Farm was completed. It is of limited relevance to a development that has already occurred.

PFE Policies JP-S1: Sustainable Development and JP-S2: Carbon and Energy set out the vision for Greater Manchester to be carbon neutral by 2038. The building must comply with current Building Regulations for thermal efficiency.

There is a requirement for electric vehicle charging points and one has been provided as required by an earlier planning permission.

PFE Policy JP-C2: Digital Connectivity requires all new developments to have full access to the latest technology. The building has full fibre internet connectivity.

Biodiversity Net Gain

BNG is a requirement for new developments to contribute to biodiversity which was introduced on 14 February 2024. The *“objective is for development to deliver at least a 10% increase in biodiversity value relative to the pre-development value of the site habitat”*. A complicated formula must be applied. As it is a retrospective application it is exempt from BNG. A comprehensive landscaping scheme has been carried out as detailed in the current application for compliance with the condition on application 72027.

Justification

Brookbottom Farm is in the Green Belt where most forms of development are “inappropriate”. Planning permission has been granted for the house extension, holiday let units and associated development. Car parking has been laid out. A comprehensive scheme of landscaping has been carried out.

The use of the approved building as treatment rooms has become an integral part of the tourist related business with some visitors coming specifically to use the facility.

The construction of the building now used as treatment rooms is to the same high standard as the rest of the development, using natural materials. The design and materials are suitable for this rural location. It is not prominently sited. By granting planning permission for its erection and the alteration to the windows the local planning authority accepted that building would not harm the openness of the Green Belt.

There is no indication externally that the building is in commercial use rather than its permitted use. The NPPF and the Bury UDP allow, in principle, the conversion of existing buildings in the Green Belt to other uses. The exterior of the building has not changed. There will be no harm to the openness of the Green Belt.