

Bury Metropolitan Borough Council
Development Control
The Planning Service
3 Knowsley Place
Bury
BL9 0EJ

27th June 2023

Dear Sir or Madam,

RE: Application for Full Planning Permission for external works including replacement and new windows and doors

Nos. 44-48 Bolton Street, Ramsbottom, BL0 9HX

Firmount Ltd (the Applicant) seeks full planning permission from Bury Council for external works including replacement and new windows and doors at nos. 44-48 Bolton Street, Ramsbottom.

The Site

The site is located within Ramsbottom Town Centre and includes a 2-storey building with pitched roof. The building was extended in the past with a two-storey rear extension. The pitched roof has been fitted out and utilised as a storage area. The site also includes a small basement.

The premises have been occupied by a furniture shop with ancillary storage, office and back of house provided on the upper floors. The furniture shop has been closing down since early 2023 and will be vacating the premises imminently. The upper floors are already vacant and there is a final 'close down' sale happening on the ground floor.

The main access to the premise is along Bolton Street, with level access provided along Markland Street. There is also a separate access along the rear elevation onto Central Street and along the southern elevation into a small external gated area (see existing plans). The windows and doors along the rear façade have been infilled and boarded up.



View of property from the corner of Bolton Street and Markland Street (Source: Google Maps)



View of the rear along Central Street (Source: google Maps)

The site is located along Bolton Street which is one of the main shopping frontages in the town. The site is surrounded by typical town centre uses, such as commercial, business and mixed uses with active uses on the ground floor and residential on the upper floors.

The site is also located in the Ramsbottom Conservation Area.

The Applicant is proposing to undertake internal and external refurbishment works to improve the building layout and envelop to be able to attract new occupiers for the building and safeguard the long-term future of the building.

Planning History

The site has the following planning history:

- 04/42483 - New shop front. Approved in 2004
- 93/28788 - Ground floor and first floor extension. Approved in 1993
- 93/28789 - Conservation Area Consent for the demolition of outbuilding to facilitate the construction of two-storey rear extension. Approved in 1993.

Proposed Development

The proposed development involves the following external works, which are required to refurbish the building and bring it up to current standards:

- Replacement of existing painted timber frame windows with double-glazed, painted timber frame windows;
- Creation of a limited number of new window and door openings along the side and rear elevations to facilitate the internal refurbishment of the building. The new windows will be double glazed, painted timber frame windows;
- Reinstating the infilled/boarded up existing openings along the rear elevation with new double glazed, painted timber frame windows;
- New roof windows in a dark colour to match roof tiles;
- Infill existing side door along southern elevation and raise levels to create small external courtyard – please refer to proposed side elevation.

The proposed double glazed windows are required to improve the thermal and acoustic performance of the building and to achieve compliance with current Building Regulations.

Please refer to existing and proposed elevation plans submitted with this planning application where all external works have been annotated on the plan.

The building is also proposed to be refurbished internally, however internal works to a building do not constitute development and therefore do not require planning permission under the Act.

Planning Assessment

Section 38(6) requires the local planning authority to determine planning applications in accordance with the development plan, unless there are material circumstances which

'indicate otherwise'. The Development Plan consists of the adopted Bury Unitary Development Plan (UDP). Other material considerations include the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG).

The site is located within the Ramsbottom Town Centre Conservation Area. However, the buildings are not statutorily or locally listed.

Principle of Development

The building has been in decay over time and its internal layout is convoluted and inefficient, with the upper floors being redundant / underutilised space which present an inefficient use of land. The building has been occupied by a furniture shop in the past which has been closing down since early 2023 and will be vacating the premises imminently.

It is proposed to refurbish the building internally and externally to bring it up to current standards to be able to attract new occupiers and safeguard the long-term future of the building.

The proposed development will improve the overall appearance of the buildings and will enhance the environmental quality and streetscape of the Town Centre, which accords with local and national planning policy. The principle of the proposed development is therefore considered acceptable.

Heritage Impact

The site is located in the Ramsbottom Conservation Area, but it does not contain any statutory or locally listed buildings. However, nos. 44 to 72 Bolton Street, Ramsbottom are identified on the Council's 'draft local list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest' which was subject to public consultation in 2019.

UDP policies 'EN2/1 - Character of Conservation Areas' and 'EN2/2 - Conservation Area Control' seek to preserve or enhance the special character or appearance of the Conservation Area.

Character and Significance of the Conservation Area

The main source of information on the Ramsbottom Conservation Area is the Ramsbottom Conservation Area Appraisal & Management Plan (produced in November 2011), which provides detail of the area's historical background, historic character and significance. The Character Appraisal assesses and defines the special interest of the Conservation Area and action needed to protect and enhance its special qualities.

Ramsbottom Conservation Area was originally designated in 1977 and extended in 1988 and 2004, and later amalgamated with the adjacent Tanners and Bury New Road Conservation Areas in 2007.

Bury Council's website also provides a short summary of the Conservation Area's historical development and established character and notes the historical development of Ramsbottom, which lies at a point where routes along and across the Irwell Valley converge. The development of the town dates from the industrial expansion around the 1820s and the wealth generated by the spread of industrial development, which financed a programme of rebuilding which created the present-day town.

The Conservation Area is centred on the town's axial point at the Market Place and reaches out along Bolton and Bridge Streets, primarily focused on the 19th Century commercial, retail and civic development of the town.

The Conservation Area exemplifies the best of the stone architecture which dominates the valley area to the north of Bury and includes a significant number of listed buildings.

The Character Appraisal & Management Plan expands upon this summary and describes the historical development of the area in more detail, including specific reference to Bolton Street and surrounding streets. The Ramsbottom area remained rural until the late 18th century. In the area now occupied by the town centre there were several farmsteads, including Crow Trees Farm in the area of St Paul's Church, a corn mill near the present Market Place and a tannery. Ramsbottom's rapid growth began in 1783 when the Bury firm of Peel and Yates, headed by Robert Peel, the father of the future Prime Minister, took a lease on the Old Ground, in the area of the present Smithy Street, Square Street, Bolton Street, and Bridge Street.

The arrival of the turnpike on the west of the River Irwell created Bolton Street in circa 1815. The 1842 Tithe Map above shows terraced cottages extending from the Market Place along both sides of Bolton Street. Ramsbottom's 'West End' (the quality housing which lay windward of town centre chimneys), actually grew up from the 1860s, south westwards along Bolton Street. Significant development also came to the east of the Ramsbottom town centre in the latter half of the 19th century. By the early 1890s a dense pattern of terraced housing on streets to the north and south of Bridge Street, to the west and above Bolton Street and along Peel Brow had taken shape. Bolton Street had been substantially developed to the junction of Dundee Lane and Nuttall Lane, with a low-density suburb towards its south end.

The Character Appraisal & Management Plan also identifies the existing character of the area. The town centre is characterised by its dense development. The commercial buildings on Bridge Street, and towards the north end of Bolton Street are generally built up to the back of the pavement. Narrow streets and alleyways add to the tight and intimate feel of the conservation area in the town centre. The dense grain of development is also the result of building plots being mostly short and narrow, resulting in a high building to space ratio, to narrow frontages and a generally vertical emphasis in the street scene.

The Character Appraisal & Management Plan also details specific character areas within the Conservation Area. The application site is situated within the Market Place and Bolton Street North Character Area. This section of the Character Appraisal highlights the open space of Market Place as the focus of the conservation area and, at a busy crossroads, the historic centre of Ramsbottom.

In respect of Bolton Street, the Character Appraisal notes that much of the north section of Bolton Street (south to Lever Street) was developed by individual tradesmen and by the Grant family in the mid-1820s and 1830s. Like Bridge Street, it is now lined with small, local businesses, many still using 19th century shop fronts, which contribute to the distinctiveness of the town (although the application site and many of the directly adjacent properties have more modern shop fronts in place).

Bolton Street is identified within the Character Appraisal as having a lively atmosphere and functions as a busy through road; highways signage is intrusive close to the junction. The street's special interest derives particularly from the completeness of the groups of two-storey 19th century buildings and shopfronts, and the uneven roofline, indicative of piecemeal construction. The most prominent individual buildings are the former Baptist

chapel, the Catholic church, and the tall former Co-operative buildings. It also notes that Central Street still functions as a back lane, providing service access to commercial properties.

The Character Appraisal & Management Plan also notes other significant buildings, both listed buildings, and others that make a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area. This list however does not include 44-48 Bolton Street, or any of the adjacent commercial premises close by.

Impact on the Significance of Heritage Assets

Having regard to the historical background of the area, the context of the site within its historic setting, the guidelines for development within the Conservation Area, and the local and national planning policy context, it is considered that the proposals would preserve the character and significance of the Ramsbottom Conservation Area and heritage assets within it.

The Council's Character Appraisal & Management Plan identifies the significance of the Conservation Area as a whole and the specific key features of the wider Conservation Area and the character area in which the application site itself is located.

The proposals involve new and replacement timber frame windows across all elevations and re-instating previously infilled openings along the rear. No change is proposed to the ground floor elevations of the existing primary shop frontage along Bolton Street.

There are a limited number of new window and door openings proposed along the side and the rear elevation, however these are proposed to be sympathetically designed alterations and would have a neutral effect on the character of the existing building and would ensure that the character and quality of the building and its immediate environs would be preserved.

These minor external changes have been designed to provide the necessary alterations to enable the building to be brought back into viable use, whilst ensuring that the character and appearance of the building and the Ramsbottom Conservation Area are not adversely impacted.

It is considered that the proposed design will be sympathetic to the site and surroundings. The limited degree of change proposed, and the detail and location of these proposals, will ensure that the development will safeguard important features which contribute to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

On this basis, the proposed external works are considered to have a neutral effect on the character, appearance, and the ability to understand the historic significance of the Ramsbottom Conservation Area and would not be materially harmful to this designated heritage asset.

Due to the very minor scale and nature of the proposals, it is also considered that the development would not impact upon the setting of other designated heritage assets or key views within the Conservation Area.

Overall, the development would not unacceptably impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area or heritage assets within it. The application is considered acceptable in terms of its effects on the historic environment, in line with UDP policies EN2/1 and EN2/2, and national planning policy.

Justification

As it has been demonstrated that the proposed development would have a neutral effect upon the character and significance of the Ramsbottom Conservation Area, and its setting, and the character and setting of the individual heritage assets within the conservation area, it is not considered that any additional justification for the development is necessary in this case, as no harm is being caused by development.

Notwithstanding this, the proposal is also acceptable in principle and has positive public benefits by improving on the decaying condition of the building and safeguarding its long-term future by being able to attract new occupiers, which will in turn help preserve the historic character of the area and contribute to the vitality and viability of the town centre. These are considered to be material public benefits that weigh in favour of the proposals.

Conclusion

The proposed external works comply with local and national planning policy and should be granted planning permission.

Should you require any further information in relation to the above application, please do not hesitate to contact me at atwproperty@outlook.com.

Yours Sincerely,

Timothy Witt

(Agent, ATW Property Group)