

PLANNING STATEMENT

Two Dwellings

Land Adjacent to 391, Whalley Road, Shuttleworth, Ramsbottom

Planning permission is sought for a pair of semi detached houses on land fronting Whalley Road. A pre application enquiry has established the issues that need to be addressed if planning permission is to be achieved. Detailed plans and a Design and Access Statement have been prepared by Peel Design Partnership.

The Site and Its Situation

The site is bounded by Whalley Road (A56) to the east, a private road to the north and a public footpath (110RAM) to the south. The land is approximately one metre lower than Whalley Road with a gentle slope away from the road.

The land is unmaintained but used informally by local residents for car parking. There are six old lock up garages. Historically, the land has been a refuse tip.

There are stone terraced houses to the south of the public footpath and on the opposite side of Whalley Road .but otherwise the surrounding land is undeveloped.

The Proposal

The submitted plans and the Design and Access Statement provide details of the scheme.

A pair of semi detached houses is proposed. The houses would be set down from Whalley Road. Vehicular access will be from the private road to the north. Five car spaces will be provided for residents' parking. The scale, proportion, design and materials of the new houses reflect that of the adjacent dwellings. The houses will be highly energy efficient with electric vehicle charging points for each house and for the residents' parking.

Planning Policy

The pre application enquiry and the planning officer's response have detailed the relevant planning policies. It is not necessary to quote them all at length again.

Briefly, Bury's old *Unitary Development Plan* is still relevant. The land is within the Green Belt (Policy OL1/2), a River Valley (OL5/2) and a Special Landscape Area (EN9/1). Policy EHN1/1 – Visual Amenity states that development will not be permitted where it would have a detrimental effect on the visual amenity of Green Belt, special Landscape Areas or River Valleys.

UDP Green Belt Policy points out that new buildings in the Green Belt are “inappropriate development” but with limited exceptions.

The *National Planning Policy Framework* contains up to date Government guidance including changes to Green Belt Policy in Section 13. New buildings in the Green Belt continue to be “inappropriate” but exceptions (paragraph 149) now include:-

- g) limited infilling or 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.

The plot does fall within the NPPF's definition of “previously developed land” .and the development would constitute “limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment” of such land. In addition, there is a need for additional housing within the Borough.

The Planning Officer advised that “*the principle of development would not be inappropriate if the new development would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development*”. He referred to case law that concluded that “*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*”.

The development may be appropriate in principle but it is still essential to prove either that the development would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing or to prove that “Very Special Circumstances” exist.

It is helpful to know that the Planning Officer is aware that the “volumetric approach” should not be rigidly applied to all new development in the Green Belt.

The UDP has still not been replaced with an up to date Local Plan. However, progress has been made on the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework to try and identify sites to meet the acknowledged shortage of land for new housing. Bury has been delivering only 60% of its housing requirement over the last three years. The proposed dwellings will make a small contribution to this deficiency

The Planning Officer’s opinion was that “It may be difficult to justify the development in terms of “appropriateness” and as such VSC would need to be demonstrated”. This advice is accepted. The new houses would have a greater volume than the existing garages. They would also have a greater height making them more visually prominent. However, there are Very Special Circumstances which justify the granting of planning permission.

Justification

- There is a clear and obvious precedent for allowing the development with approval for a larger development of 16 houses at Woodhill Farm to the south, application number 62081, decision 11 July 2018. The houses would replace existing farm buildings on a site that was allocated as Green Belt in the Unitary Development Plan. There would be a lengthy new access road from Whalley Road and a residents’ car park on current Green Belt land. In my opinion, the layout and the design of the houses do not respect their setting, unlike my client’s proposal.
- The size, scale and proportion of my client’s houses reflect that of the existing houses on either side of Whalley Road. Similarly, the design and materials are appropriate. The houses will not be out of place in their Green Belt setting.
- The ground floor level of the houses will be lower than the neighbouring properties lessening any visual impact. The effect will be softened even further by the retention and repair of stone walls and new landscape planting.

- The houses will be seen from Whalley Road, from open land to the north and long views across the valley from the west. Even though it is not an infill site the houses will be contiguous with existing houses and seen next to them. There will be little or no visual impact.
- The existing ugly and utilitarian garages will be replaced by houses of a similar footprint but a much improved appearance.
- Each house has two parking spaces and, like Woodhill Farm, a residents' parking area is proposed.
- The land is currently unsightly and not maintained. Its appearance will be much improved with appropriate hard and soft landscaping.
- As a former refuse tip, the land is contaminated. Approval of the planning application will ensure that this is dealt with in accordance with the submitted contamination study.
- Unlike the Woodhill Farm development there is an existing access road to the site.
- The site is in a sustainable location on a main bus route with essential facilities nearby and close to a motorway access. The houses will be thermally efficient and include electric vehicle charging points and cycle storage.

As a previously developed site, it has been accepted by the Planning Officer that the development is acceptable in principle. The houses may have an increased volume and a greater height than the existing garages, but the appearance of the site will be considerably improved and there will not be a significant effect on the openness of the Green Belt, quite the contrary. Very Special Circumstances justify the granting of planning permission.

John Hodgkinson, BA, MSc, MRTPI