
PLANNING, DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

**THE COACH HOUSE
FORMER AINSWORTH NURSING HOME
KNOWSLEY ROAD
AINS WORTH
BURY**

**DEMOLITION OF EXISTING BUILDING
AND ERECTION OF TWO DWELLINGS**

FOR

KARL AND VANESSA STOPFORTH



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PRDS

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 We are instructed by our clients Mr. K.J. and Mrs. V. Stopforth to apply for planning permission for a proposed development at The Coach House, former Ainsworth Nursing Homes, Knowsley Road, Ainsworth, Bury. This Planning Design and Access Statement is submitted in support of the planning application and it should be read in conjunction with the application form and plans and the other supporting documents.
- 1.2 This planning application relates to a disused single storey building known as The Coach House which is situated in the northern part of a former nursing home complex known as Ainsworth Nursing Home. The entire site is approximately 1.4 hectares in area and it is located approx. 1km north of Ainsworth village. The site was originally known as Ainsworth Isolation Hospital and it was used primarily for the treatment of patients with smallpox. The hospital closed in 1982 and it was opened as a nursing home in 1986 and remained in that use until 2018.
- 1.3 The site of the former nursing home was sold off in individual parcels and our clients acquired the building known as The Coach House with a curtilage of approx. 0.14 hectares. The Coach House is a substantial building constructed from brick and slate and it is believed that the building was used as one of the wards when the isolation hospital was operational.
- 1.4 After a great deal of consideration, our clients have concluded that the building does not readily lend itself to conversion for residential use either in terms of size, configuration, project viability or feasibility from a construction point of view. Our clients' proposal therefore is to demolish the existing building and to redevelop the site with two new dwellings designed entirely in keeping with the design and character of the buildings remaining on site of which some are to be converted for residential use. The design also takes reference from the design of the new build property for which planning permission has been granted and which is to be built on the adjacent site.
- 1.5 This application is a re-submission following an earlier refusal of planning permission (ref: 67368) on 30th November 2021. A subsequent appeal (ref: APP/T4210/W/22/3298500 was dismissed on 15th November 2022.
- 1.6 The previous planning application was refused for the following reasons:
 - 1 *The proposed development by virtue of its design, appearance and scale would introduce discordant, disproportionate and inharmonious features and would have a significantly harmful impact on the historic significance of the Non-Designated Heritage Asset and openness and character of the Green Belt and would therefore be inappropriate development. There are no Very Special Circumstances demonstrated which would outweigh the harm which would be caused to the openness of the Green Belt, Area of Special Landscape and the NDHA and as such the proposed development would in principles be inappropriate within the Green Belt and would be contrary to the principles in chapters 13 - Protecting Green Belt land and chapter 16 - Conserving and enhancing the historic environment of the*

NPPF and Bury UDP Policies EN1/1 - Visual Amenity and OL1/2 - New Buildings in the Green Belt.

- 2 The demolition of the existing building and the proposed development for two new dwellings would cause a substantial harm to the significance of the Non-Designated Heritage Asset (NDHA). No evidence has been submitted to outweigh the significant harm which would be caused to the NDHA by the demolition of the existing building. As such, the proposed development would therefore be contrary to the principles of chapter 16 of the NPPF.*
 - 3 The proposed development would result in an unacceptable reduction in the level of privacy currently enjoyed by the occupiers of The Wash House by reason of the sub-standard distances between habitable windows on the proposed side elevation of House 1 and existing habitable room windows on that property. The proposed development therefore conflicts with Unitary Development Plan Policy H2/1 – The Form of New Residential Development and associated Supplementary Planning Document 6: Alterations and Extensions to Residential Properties.*
 - 4 The proposed development, by virtue of the extent of hardstanding, would have a significant and detrimental impact on the openness and character of the Green Belt and the special and historical character of the Non-Designated Heritage Asset. The proposed development would therefore be contrary to chapters 13 – Protecting Green Belt land and chapter 16 - Conserving and enhancing the historic environment of the NPPF.*
- 1.7 In dismissing the subsequent appeal, the Inspector was satisfied that the proposed development would not constitute inappropriate development in the green belt and therefore very special circumstances were not required to justify the development. However, his fundamental concern was that the proposed replacement buildings were not of sufficient design quality to mitigate against the loss of a building that would have a limited impact on the Non Designated Heritage Asset comprising the wider group of buildings on the former nursing home site. The Inspector also concluded that the proposed development would not harm the character or appearance of the Special Landscape Area in which the appeal site lies. However, he concluded that the character and appearance of the localised area would be adversely affected due to the detrimental impact on the Non Designated Heritage Asset which he had previously identified.
- 1.7 The current application therefore intends to address the concerns of the Inspector in relation to the design quality of the proposed new dwellings and the impact of the new buildings on the character and appearance and the heritage significance of the Non Designated Heritage Asset.

2. SITE DESCRIPTION AND SURROUNDING CONTEXT

- 2.1 The Coach House is a single storey detached building situated to the north of Knowsley House which was formally the main hospital building. Until fairly recently the Coach House was connected by a link to the building known as The Haven which is directly adjacent to Knowsley House. However, the link was removed when the various parcels of land were sold off and The Coach House is now a stand-alone building.
- 2.2 The wider site of the former nursing home is located some 700 metres to the north of Ainsworth village and is accessed via Knowsley Road and a privately owned access road. There are a number of buildings on the site including Knowsley House, The Bungalow and The Wash House all of which have been or are being renovated or extended to provide residential accommodation. In July 2021, planning permission was granted for a replacement dwelling to be erected on the site of the building known as The Haven. This is immediately to the south of the application site. In November 2022, planning permission was granted for a completely new dwelling to be erected on a previously open and unbuilt on site to the south-west of the application site. This permission related to the construction of a substantial five bedroom house and also included the conversion of an existing building known as The Gate House into residential accommodation.
- 2.3 The former nursing home site is rectangular in shape and it is surrounded by open fields. There are a significant number of trees both within the site and on its boundaries and these are protected by a tree preservation order.

3. THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 3.1 The application proposes the demolition of building known as The Coach House and the re-development of the site with two detached dwellings.

4. DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

- 4.1 The proposed development comprises the erection of two detached dwellings which have been designed to reflect the design of the existing building and also to complement the external features proposed in the conversion of the adjacent buildings known as Knowsley House and The Wash House. The design of the proposed dwellings has been informed having regard to the comments of the Inspector in the recent appeal decision and also by the design of the recently approved new dwelling to be build on the adjacent land. Both of the proposed dwellings would effectively be single storey in design although the roof spaces would be utilised and facilitated by the inclusion of both dormer and Velux type windows.
- 4.2 The larger of the two dwellings would be sited on the western plot adjacent to The Wash House. It would be a four bedroom property with two dormer

- windows with hipped roofs on the north elevation. This would be the principal elevation and would include a feature projecting glazed hall and landing. Three Velux type windows will be provided in the south facing roof. A porch with a hipped roof would be provided over the south facing entrance door.
- 4.3 The dwelling proposed on the eastern plot would be a three bedroom property. Two dormer windows with hipped roofs and a Velux type window would be provided on the north elevation with three Velux type rooflights incorporated on the south facing roof. A porch with a hipped roof would be provided over the south facing entrance door.
- 4.4 Both properties would be constructed with red brick to be approved by the local planning authority and would have slate roofs. Brick cills and headers would be provided to all of the ground floor windows. The hipped roofs reflect the design of other buildings on the site. The window openings now have a more vertical emphasis and both dwellings would have tall brick chimneys to provide additional vertical emphasis. Both dwellings would have brick arches to the entrance doors which is in character with similar features on Knowsley House and The Gate House. As the Inspector commented, these types of features give the collection of buildings a distinctive character and appearance that retains legibility. The re-design of the proposed dwellings has also taken into account and had regard to the design features of the new build dwelling that was approved by the Council in November 2022.
- 4.4 The site will be accessed via Knowsley Road which leads on to the private access road to the entire former nursing home site. Within the site, access to the two properties will be gained via the existing internal access road. The section of the access road on the north side of the existing building will be removed and the existing retaining wall will be moved back so that it coincided with edge of the canopy of the trees on the northern boundary of the site.
- 4.5 Two in-curtilage parking spaces will be provided for each of the two properties. The Inspector raised no issues in relation to the proposed access, turning and parking arrangements other than to make the point that the impact of the proposed areas of hard standing would be mitigated by the soft landscaping of other hard surfaced areas to the north of the proposed dwellings.
- 4.6 As far as the applicant is aware, the Council's Highway Engineers have no objection in principle to the proposed access and parking / turning arrangements.
- 4.7 The applicants are of course mindful of the Council's concern about construction vehicles entering and leaving the site and the potential for conflict with other occupiers of the site. In recognition of this, the applicants fully intend to prepare and submit a Construction Traffic Management Plan for approval by the local planning authority.
- 4.9 In order to address the concerns of the Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service, a sprinkler/misting system to meet the requirements of BS 9251:2014 will be provided in each property.

5. AREA VOLUME AND HEIGHT COMPARISONS

5.1 Footprint, volume and height comparisons are as follows:

Footprint

Existing - 251 sq.m
Proposed - 253 sq.m
= **0.79% increase**

Volume

Existing - 1191 cu.m
Proposed - 1294 cu.m
= **8.65% increase**

Height

Existing - 7.4 metres
Proposed - 7.8 metres.
= **9.5% increase.**

The proposed increases in footprint and volume are minimal and are a reduction compared to the previously refused scheme. With the re-designed buildings now proposed, the increases in footprint and volume are significantly less than those proposed in the refused application which, in any event, the Inspector considered to be acceptable in terms of any impact on the spatial openness of the green belt.

6. PLANNING POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 The development plan for the area is the Bury Unitary Plan which was adopted in 1997. Other planning considerations to be taken into account are government policy and guidance contained in The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021. While the development plan is arguably out of date, many of its policies are considered to be broadly consistent with the NPPF.
- 6.2 Of particular relevance are policies relating to development in the green belt and policies relating to heritage assets.

National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021)

- 6.2 In respect of developments in Green Belt the Framework states;

148. When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances 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.'

149. A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. Exceptions to this are (inter alia):

- *(b) the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;*
- *(d) the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;*
- *(g) 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 within the area of the local planning authority.*

6.3 In relation to heritage assets the Framework states:

194. In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.

203. The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

Bury Unitary Development Plan

- 6.4 Unitary Development Plan policies considered to be relevant to the proposed development are as follows:

H1/2 Further Housing Development
H2/1 The Form of New Residential Development
H2/2 The Layout of New Residential Development
EN1/1 Visual Amenity
EN1/2 Townscape and Built Design
EN1/3 Landscaping Provision
EN8/1 Tree Preservation Orders
EN9/1 Special Landscape Areas
OL1 Green Belt
OL1/2 New Buildings in the Green Belt
OL7/2 West Pennine Moors
HT2/4 Car Parking and New Development
SPD6 Supplementary Planning Document 6: Alterations & Extensions
SPD8 DC Policy Guidance Note 8 - New Buildings in the Green Belt

7. PLANNING APPRAISAL

- 7.1 The whole of the former nursing home site lies within the Green Belt where development is very strictly controlled. The development plan for the area on which planning decisions are made is the Bury Unitary Development Plan (UDP) which was adopted in August 1997. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was originally published in 2012 and was most recently updated in July 2021. Given the age of the UDP, it is considered that policies in the NPPF should generally take precedence over UDP policies where there is an element of inconsistency.

Green Belt policies

- 7.2 Policies affecting development in the Green Belt are of particular relevance in the consideration of whether our clients' proposals are acceptable in principle. UDP Policy OL1/2 – New Buildings in the Green Belt states that construction of new buildings in the Green Belt is inappropriate development subject to a number of exceptions including the extension, alteration or replacement of an existing dwelling provided it is not disproportionate in the case of an extension or materially larger when a replacement is proposed.
- 7.3. The Council's Development Control Policy Guidance Note No. 8 was published in January 2007 and this deals with new buildings in the Green Belt. The note states that new residential development is not permitted in the Green Belt subject to certain exceptions and where a replacement dwelling is proposed. The note further advises that where a replacement dwelling is proposed it should

- not be materially larger than the one it replaces. It is also advised that the Council may allow the original volume to be increased by up to a third although this may not be appropriate in all locations e.g., in particularly sensitive areas or where there are other amenity issues.
- 7.4 Advice in the current version of the NPPF also makes it clear that inappropriate development in the Green Belt should not be approved except in very special circumstances. The construction of new buildings in the Green Belt is considered to be inappropriate development but with certain exceptions. One of the exceptions is set out at Paragraph 149 (g) which identifies 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. This exception is considered to be of particular relevance to the proposed development.
- 7.5 The proposed development would involve the demolition of the existing building and the complete redevelopment of this part of the wider nursing home site with two detached dwellings. This proposal would therefore constitute a partial redevelopment of previously developed land and in principle would clearly fall under the exception set out at paragraph 149 of the NPPF. That being the case, further consideration as to the acceptability of the proposals would turn on whether the two new dwellings proposed would have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development i.e. the existing building which arguably should also include the part which has already been demolished.
- 7.6 The NPPF does not provide any criteria for how impact on the openness of the Green Belt should be measured. However, the proposed new dwellings will be built largely on the footprint of the existing building. The increase in footprint relative to the building as currently standing would be 2 sq.m which equates to a 0.79% increase. The volume of the proposed dwellings would be 1294 cu.m which equates to an 8.65% increase over the volume of the existing building. Finally, the height of the new buildings would be 0.4m higher than the existing building, an increase of 9.5%.
- 7.7 While recognising that the concept of openness is not narrowly limited to volumetric comparison, it is clear that the increase in volume proposed in this application is well within the third which is generally considered to be acceptable in SPD 8.
- 7.8 The assessment of whether or not a development has a greater, lesser or equal impact on openness is a largely subjective judgement. The comparison of volume and footprint measurements can be a helpful as a starting point for such an assessment but such comparisons cannot be considered to be definitive. This was confirmed in the recent Supreme Court judgement in *Samuel Smith Old Brewery (Tadcaster) v North Yorkshire County Council*. This judgement essentially confirmed that there are no rigid or formulaic approaches to the question of openness. Furthermore, the judgement also confirms that openness

is not necessarily about the visual qualities of land and the fundamental purpose of keeping land open is to prevent urban sprawl. As such we consider that the current proposal would not involve further sprawl of the urban area and as such the impact on openness is neutral.

- 7.9 It is our clients' submission therefore that the proposed development would not have any greater impact on the Green Belt than the existing development. Indeed, it is their view that the proposals would represent a substantial visual improvement while also being compatible and in sympathy with the design and character of other buildings on the site. It is noted that the appeal Inspector agreed with our position as he commented, at para. 13 of the decision letter, that the proposal would not have a greater impact on the visual openness of the green belt than the existing. He went on to say, at para. 14, that the proposal would not constitute inappropriate development in the green belt and that it accords with the most up to date and relevant policies in the Framework.

Housing policies

- 7.10 In relation to the housing policies contained in the UDP, it is considered that the proposed development is compliant with Policies H1/2, H2/1 and H2/2. The proposed new dwellings will be located on a brownfield site in a sustainable location close to the village of Ainsworth. There is existing infrastructure in place and the development will not conflict with the character of the surrounding area. The proposed development is appropriate in scale taking into account the size and location of the plot and its relationship with the other existing buildings within the wider site. In curtilage parking spaces will be provided for both plots together with extensive external amenity space.

Heritage

- 7.11 It is recognised that Ainsworth Nursing Home is considered to be a Non - Designated Heritage Asset. Paragraph 194 of the NPPF advises local planning authorities to require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage asset. Paragraph 203 of the NPPF requires that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. It further advises that a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.
- 7.12 A revised Heritage Assessment has been prepared by The Archaeology Company and is submitted with this application.
- 7.13 The main heritage value of the site comes from its evidential value, which is low to medium. It represents the isolation ward, where patients whose diagnosis was at first unknown were located. The building layout still retains features relating to this time as well as evidence of later alterations. The historical and aesthetic values are considered low, as although it was designed by a well-known architect, it does not have the same aesthetic value as the larger buildings on the site. The communal value is considered to be low to medium due to it being

away from the general public and not visible from outside of the former hospital site. As such, a level 2/3 building recording will be provided, if required, to mitigate the demolition and record the building putting it into the context of the site.

- 7.14 In considering the appeal, the Inspector concluded that the loss of The Coach House would have a limited impact on the HDHA but nevertheless an impact that would erode the heritage significance of the NDHA as a whole. Nevertheless, the Inspector was clearly of the opinion that the loss of the building could be mitigated against although not with the scheme that he was considering as he did not consider it to be of sufficient design quality. The applicants have taken these comments on board and have duly produced a re-designed proposal that address the Inspector's comments in relation to design issues.

Ecology

- 7.14 A Bat Survey has been prepared by Verity Webster who is a licensed bat surveyor. The report is submitted with this application.
- 7.15 The Coach House was considered to have low suitability for bats and further survey work was recommended to determine the presence or absence of a bat roost. The further survey work was carried out and no evidence of bats was found either within the building or externally. No bats were seen or heard emerging from, or entering the building. The survey work is considered sufficient to give confidence in a negative result (likely absence of a roost within the building). Nevertheless, precautionary methods of work are recommended during the removal of the roof structure as part of the demolition works.
- 7.16 The applicants are willing to install bat or bird boxes as recommended by Miss Webster in order to contribute to and enhance biodiversity.

8. CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 This proposed development constitutes a partial redevelopment of previously developed land and in principle clearly falls under the exception set out at paragraph 149 of the NPPF.
- 8.2 The proposed new dwellings will be built largely on the footprint of the existing building. The increase in footprint relative to the building as currently standing would equate to a 0.79% increase. The volume of the proposed dwellings would equate to an 8.65% increase over the volume of the existing building. It is clear that the increase in volume proposed in this application is well within the third which is generally considered to be acceptable in SPD 8. It is our clients' submission therefore that the proposed development would not have any greater impact on the Green Belt than the existing development. This view was completely endorsed by the Inspector in his consideration of the recent appeal.

- 8.3 The proposed development is in a sustainable location and is compliant with Policies H1/2, H2/1 and H2/2 of the Bury Unitary Development Plan.
- 8.4 A bat survey has been carried out and no evidence of any bats was found either within the building or externally.
- 8.5 Ainsworth Nursing Home is considered to be a Non-Designated Heritage Asset. A Heritage Statement is submitted with the application and this concludes that the main heritage value of The Coach House is its evidential value and communal value which are considered to be low to medium. The historical and aesthetic values are considered to be low. As such the scale of the harm of the loss of this building is considered to be low and therefore only very limited weight should be given to this in overall planning balance. The applicants have taken on board the specific and detailed comments of the appeal Inspector and re-designed the proposed dwellings in the light of his critical comments. The applicants consider that they have satisfactorily address this issue and, in the absence of any conflicts with adopted planning policy, it is respectfully requested that favourable consideration is given to this revised planning application.

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