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Ref; 21/1242/302 – Planning Statement

Planning Statement

Erection of two detached dwellings and associated access, parking and landscaping, provision of a landscaping buffer, and change of use and refurbishment of gate house as guest accommodation (ancillary to plot 1) within the developed curtilage of the former Ainsworth Nursing Home, Knowsley Road, Ainsworth, Bolton.

Section 1.0 - Introduction

- 1.1 JPE Consultancy Limited has prepared this Planning Statement on behalf of PEL Electrical Ltd in support of a planning application for the erection of two detached dwellings with associated access, parking and landscaping, provision of a landscaping buffer at the site perimeter, and change of use as guest accommodation and refurbishment of the Gate House (ancillary to plot 1).
- 1.2 The planning application follows formal pre-application enquires undertaken with the Council.
- 1.3 The following drawings and documents are submitted in support of the application:

Drawings

- 21/1242/100 – Location plan
- 21/1242/101 – Existing site plan
- 21/1242/201 – Proposed site plan
- 21/1242/202 – Proposed floor plans
- 21/1242/203 – Proposed elevations
- 21/1242/204 – Gate house – Plans and elevations
- 21/1242/205 – Street scene
- 879A-10 – Landscape Proposals
- TRI 3419-01- Topographic survey
- TRI 3419-02- Topographic survey
- TRI 3419-03- Topographic survey
- TRI 3419-04- Topographic survey

Reports

- 21/1242/301 – Design & Access Statement
- 21/1242/302 – Planning Statement
- Ainsworth Care Home – Heritage Assessment
- ERAP Ltd 2021-117 Ainsworth Care Home Ecology Report V2 21.07.21
- Ainsworth LVA 160721

- Ainsworth LVA 160721 – Appendix A
- Ainsworth LVA 160721 – Appendix B
- LKC 211335 Ainsworth Nursing Home PRA
- Arb Impact Assessment
- Arb Method Statement

Supporting technical information

- Geoweb TP Brochure
- GW Installation – Tree Root Brochure
- EVCP – Rolek Wallpod EV

1.4 Photographs of the existing site are included at appendix 1.

Section 2.0 – Site context

- 2.1 The subject site is within the long established curtilage of the former Ainsworth Nursing Home, which operated as a 33 bed residential care home from 1986 and closed to residents in November 2018 (Rosalyn Roden, Bury Times 2019).
- 2.2 The property was original used as an isolation hospital for smallpox patients from 1906, used for tuberculosis patients between 1913 and 1921, and continuing as an isolation hospital between 1948-1978 with limited use in the later years, before finally ceasing to be used as an isolation hospital in 1982 (nationalarchives.gov.uk 2020)
- 2.3 There is a collection of single storey and two storey buildings spread across the site originally utilised as a main pavilion block with two wards, a central duty ward, an isolation ward, administration block, discharge building, laundry, disinfecting rooms, mortuary, etc. (manchestervictorianarchitects.org.uk 2020).
- 2.4 The property is included in Bury MBC's draft local list of buildings of architectural or historical interest.
- 2.5 The subject site is within the established curtilage of the nursing home site located directly adjacent to the site access and contains the Gate House building. Historical mapping shows that the site formed part of the gardens/amenity area for the hospital buildings with pathways, hardstanding and planting areas formally laid out.
- 2.6 At the site perimeter there are mature trees and shrubs providing robust screening to the boundaries. The trees are subject to Tree Preservation Order (No. 346) 2019.
- 2.7 The property is located in Ainsworth, approximately 680metres to the north of the village centre and is accessed from the village centre by Knowsley Road.
- 2.8 Since the closure of the nursing home the site has been sold and subsequently split into a number of separate parcels, and sold on to different purchasers. We understand that the nursing home premises had a C2 use class (residential institution) and that the majority of new owners will be seeking a C3a use class (private dwelling houses).

2.9 The following applications have been submitted/determined recently:

- 65412: Conversion of wash house to 1 no. dwelling with single storey extensions and dormer to rear. Approved June 2020.
- 65626: Conversion to property to 1 no. residential building; increase to the roof height, two storey extension and associated parking and landscaping, change of use of land to residential garden (The Bungalow). Approved September 2020.
- 66142: Change of use from nursing home to private dwelling including alterations and garage extension (Knowsley House).
- 66467: Variation of conditions following approval of 65626 – Amendment to approved plans with the addition of a porch (The Bungalow). Approved March 2021.
- 66836: Demolition of the building known as 'The Haven', and the erection of a replacement building for use as a private dwelling house, with associated garden curtilage and parking. Pending determination.

Section 3.0 – Proposed development

- 3.1 The proposal is to construct two detached dwellings to land to the west of the site. The dwellings are of the same design but with the plots handed to present a lower height of development adjacent to the south and north development boundaries.
- 3.2 The dwellings would have a modest footprint in relation to the overall plot (the proposed building footprint is 8% of the available land area).
- 3.3 Two storeys of accommodation are proposed but the dwellings are designed to reflect the form and design features of the existing buildings with a two storey height to the frontage, and the roofs pitching down to a single storey height at the rear.
- 3.4 Landscaped gardens and a terrace are provided to the rear of each dwelling. To the south and west boundaries there are mature trees and shrubs that provide robust and effective screening of views in and out of the site. The existing trees and shrubs are to be retained and further supplemented with a deep landscaping buffer.
- 3.5 The landscape buffer will perform an important function in;
 - further strengthening and re-inforcing the boundary screening.
 - Providing an opportunity to improve biodiversity.
 - Providing a clear distinction between the extent of formal residential garden areas, and a substantial buffer at the perimeter that is to be maintained as undeveloped green space.
- 3.6 Secure cycle storage is provided to each dwelling to promote sustainable forms of transport. An Electric Vehicle Charging Point (EVCH) is also provided.
- 3.7 It is proposed that the Gate House building is retained with repair and complete refurbishment, and a change of use to guest accommodation ancillary to plot 1.

- 3.8 The site is in a sustainable location, with existing infrastructure available on site to facilitate development and local shops and services available in Ainsworth village centre (680metres to the south).

Pre-application enquiry

- 3.9 A pre-application enquiry was submitted to Bury MBC in May 2020 for a development of three detached dwellings. Due to restrictions in place as a result of Covid-19 it was not possible to meet with the LPA to discuss the proposal and so a discussion was held remotely and the formal pre-application response was issued in September 2020.
- 3.10 In the pre-app response officers refer to the site being in a rural area but close to a row of cottages- 200m away – which are located to the south of the site and adjacent to the head of Knowsley Road and in a similar location to other dwellings which are found scattered in the area. It is acknowledged that there is existing infrastructure in place to facilitate the development. Guidance was provided that the principle of residential development on the site would be acceptable if the development can comply with the relevant Green Belt policies, and policies of the Bury UDP and the NPPF.
- 3.11 The proposal and design details were amended in response to the discussions and the formal pre-application response with a reduction in development to two dwellings, allowing the buildings to be spaced apart to promote openness. As a result of officer comments the floor plans and elevations were developed to respect the form and scale of the existing buildings and to reference existing materials and features.
- 3.12 Further emails were exchanged with the LPA to clarify points of the pre-application response and to provide further site layout designs, and floor plans and elevations for the proposed dwellings.

Section 4.0 – Planning policy

Bury MBC Unitary Development Plan (1997)

- 4.1 The Development Plan for Bury comprises the Bury Unitary Development Plan (UDP) 1997 and the Planning and Compulsory Purchases Act (2004) identifies that applications for planning permission should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 4.2 Ainsworth Nursing Home is a previously developed site washed over with a Green Belt designation in the Bury UDP (1997) and is also located within the West Pennine Moors and in a Special Landscape Area.
- 4.3 UDP Policy OL1 (Green Belt) seeks to maintain the Green Belt, ensuring that it fulfils the following strategic purposes;
- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
 - to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another;
 - to assist in safeguarding the countryside from further encroachment;
 - to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns;

- to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.
- 4.4 Saved policy OL1/2 states that *“The construction of new buildings in the Green Belt is inappropriate development unless it is for one or more of the following purposes:*
One of the purposes listed is;
- *“limited infilling in existing villages as set out under Policy OL1/3”.*
- 4.5 “Policy OL1/3 – Infilling in Existing Villages in the Green Belt’ states that;
“In all named villages which lie within the Green Belt, limited infill development may be permitted, provided that it is in scale with the village and would not adversely affect its character and surroundings”.
- 4.6 Policy OL7/2 West Pennine Moors states that throughout the area of the West Pennine Moors the Council will control development so as to reduce any possible detrimental effects on the important character of the area.
- 4.7 UDP policy EN1/1 states that the Council will seek to protect, preserve and enhance the character, appearance and amenity of the Borough's built environment. Policy EN1/1 states that development will not be permitted where proposals would have a detrimental effect on visual amenity both within, or viewed from, areas of environmental interest such as the Green Belt, Special Landscape Areas.
- 4.8 UDP policy EN8 Woodland and Trees states that the Council will support the retention of trees, woods, copses and hedgerows and encourage natural regeneration and new and replacement tree planting throughout the Borough.
- 4.9 Policy EN9 Landscape states that the Council will seek to protect, conserve and improve the landscape quality of the Borough, and will encourage the enhancement of landscapes, where appropriate.
- 4.10 UDP policy EN9/1 – Special Landscape Areas states that any development will be strictly controlled and required to be sympathetic to its surroundings in terms of visual impact. High standards of design, siting and landscaping will be expected. Unduly obtrusive development will not be permitted in such areas.

Development Control Policy Guidance Note 8 ‘ New Buildings and Associated Development in the Green Belt’

- 4.11 Whilst this policy guidance note does not have development plan status it is a material consideration.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- 4.12 The NPPF is an important material consideration in determining planning applications emphasising a presumption in favour of sustainable development, and requiring that development proposals that accord with the development plan should be approved without delay (paragraph 11).
- 4.13 Paragraph 60 confirms the Government’s objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes and identifies the importance of a sufficient amount and variety of land coming forward where it is needed.

- 4.14 Chapter 12 of the NPPF focusses on 'Achieving Well Designed Places'.
- 4.15 Paragraph 130 states that planning decisions should ensure that developments will function well and add to the quality of the area; are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping; and are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting.
- 4.16 Chapter 13 sets out policies for 'Protecting Green Belt land' (Paragraphs 137 – 151).
- 4.17 Paragraph 147 states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.
- 4.18 Paragraph 149 states that a Local Planning Authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt, exceptions to this include;
- e) limited infilling in villages;
 - g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land; whether redundant or in continuing use, and which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development.
- 4.19 Paragraph 174 requires planning decisions to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by, a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, and d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity.
- 4.20 Part 16 of the NPPF seeks to conserve and enhance the historic environment.

Section 5.0 - Planning Assessment

- 5.1 In this section the development proposals are assessed against the relevant policies of local and national planning policy.

Principle of development

- 5.2 Both the Development plan (UDP 1997) and the NPPF state that the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt should be regarded as inappropriate development. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt.
- 5.3 The application site and former Ainsworth Care Home development provides a unique set of circumstances where development could be considered to not be inappropriate development under several aspects of existing planning policy.

Green Belt (OL1)

- 5.4 The proposed development would not result in harm to any of these purposes, and there is no conflict with Policy OL1. **Clearly no unrestricted sprawl would occur, the development is within the well-defined boundaries of the developed site and there would be no encroachment into the countryside.** This development would not result in the merging of towns, or have any impact of the setting and special character of historic towns. The development assists

in the recycling of derelict land and will be of benefit through the provision of two family homes, and an improvement in biodiversity through the management of the mature trees and provision of a landscape buffer at the site perimeter.

Infill in existing villages

- 5.5 UDP Policy OL1/3 allows limited infilling in existing villages in the Green Belt (Ainsworth is a named village) providing that it is in scale with the village and would not adversely affect its character or surroundings.
- 5.6 Para 149 of the NPPF sets out exceptions to inappropriate development in the Green Belt which includes exception “e) limited infilling in villages”.
- 5.7 The proposal is for two detached dwellings that would infill a gap between the Gate House and The Bungalow to the south of the site and the Wash House to the north. The dwellings are located close to the existing access road and to the main cluster of buildings to the central part of the nursing home site.
- 5.8 The proposed layout continues the linear form of development to this site and provides a consistent approach. The application site can accommodate the two dwellings comfortably whilst retaining adequate provision of landscaped gardens, and a deep landscape buffer to the external perimeter of the site. Two dwellings is considered to be an appropriate number to constitute limited infilling whilst maintaining a wide spacing between the dwellings, the retained Gate House and the north and south boundaries.
- 5.9 Ainsworth is one of the named villages where the policy recognises the need to accept limited infilling. The proposed dwellings would be designed to be of a similar form to the existing buildings and would include the use of materials and design features to reference the existing buildings and would be in keeping.
- 5.10 During the pre-application enquiry undertaken Bury MBC provided their view that the application site is not within Ainsworth Village but is considered to be on the outskirts of the village. Whilst we agree that the Nursing home site is not located within the main centre of the village it has clearly been associated with Ainsworth Village since construction in the early 1900’s, and is part of the wider village setting/extents.
- 5.11 Policy OL1/3 states that *“A particular difficulty exists in relation to “ribbon” development which strings out along a number of roads, from villages within the Green Belt. Where such ribbon developments present a significant and generally unbroken frontage, small gaps may be capable of successful development without prejudicing Green Belt objectives. **This will usually be a case of looking at each proposal on its merits: the planning authority will wish to take into account the character of the site; and, generally, development which would involve the felling of the trees, or the spoiling of a fine view, would be prevented**”*.
- 5.12 Ribbon development extends to the north of the village centre along Knowsley Road with development of dwellings along this road, further dwellings at Ainsworth Cottages, and Barrack Fold Farm to the west of the nursing home site. The road from the nursing home site extends directly to the Village centre and it is not possible to access the Ainsworth Care Home premises by any other route.

Example of limited infilling in a village with a Green Belt designation in Bury Authority



Image 1) - View towards 456, 454 and 452 Whalley Road, Ramsbottom, Bury

454 Whalley Road (consent ref; 52233)

- 5.13 In image 1), 454 Whalley Road is the detached property to the centre. The rendered property to the left hand side of the image is 456 Whalley Road. To the right hand side of the image is 452 Whalley Road.

- 5.14 Planning consent was granted (52233) as infill development for 'Demolition of two garages, erection of new dwelling in garden of 454 Whalley Road and replacement garage for no. 454 Whalley Road'

- 5.15 This site is a significant distance away from the centre of Shuttleworth village. The area where the dwelling was approved was open garden with no existing buildings and there was a frontage gap of approximately 27 metres between 454 and 456 Whalley Road. The site does not benefit from significant natural screening at the boundaries and is prominent from the open Green Belt to the east and west.

452 Whalley Road (consent ref; 53307)

- 5.16 Planning consent was granted as infill development for a 'detached dwelling incorporating existing garage'.
- 5.17 Again this site is a significant distance north of the named village of Shuttleworth and comprised an open garden to the existing property with a frontage gap of approximately 32metres. The site does not benefit from significant natural screening at the boundaries and is prominent from the open Green Belt to the east and west.
- 5.18 Both planning consents allowed for the construction of a detached dwelling to a location that is well outside the named settlement of Shuttleworth and clearly separated from the main concentration of buildings to the village centre. The Council considered that the infill exception policy could be applied to these sites. These infill plots do sit between existing dwellings to a small grouping of dwellings located along Whalley Road, but these dwellings are clearly separate to the main village centre of Shuttleworth, and with significant undeveloped gaps between this location and Shuttleworth. This suggests that the Council will consider the wider context of a village setting and consider infill to a wider area where that location still has an association with the named village.
- 5.19 In the pre-application enquiry officers commented that the subject site is not bounded by residential development but there are the former nursing home buildings in close proximity to the north, south and east. Since the time of the

pre-application enquiry applications for the private residential use of these buildings have been approved. We expect that further applications will be submitted for change of use of the remaining buildings for private residential use and completing the transition from the former nursing home use to a collection of private dwellings. The subject land is bounded by residential use to the north (Wash House), to the east (Knowsley House), and to the south (The Bungalow).

- 5.20 We reserve our position that the subject site can be considered as an infill plot within the village of Ainsworth and therefore can be considered as appropriate development under policy OL1/2 as set out under Policy OL1/3, and under para.149 of the NPPF.

Limited infilling or partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land

- 5.21 The application site forms part of the established curtilage of what was originally the isolation hospital and subsequently Ainsworth Care Home.
- 5.22 This is clearly evidenced by Ordnance Survey mapping. By 1910 OS mapping shows the subject land being part of the defined curtilage of the nursing home site and the Gate House is evident.
- 5.23 The 1937-1939 OS mapping shows further development to the subject land with paths extending from the Gate House and Wash House to a substantial hardstanding to the centre of the site.
- 5.24 By 1955 the OS mapping shows the Gate House, a network of paths to a central hardstanding and further paths around the westerly site perimeter, and the subject land formally laid out perhaps as gardens or growing areas. Possibly this area may have been utilised for amenity and to aid the recovery of patients with the network of paths providing an opportunity to take exercise within the confines of the site. These features continue to be referenced through to the current OS mapping.
- 5.25 The whole Ainsworth Nursing Home site has evolved as one entity which is clearly evident to the layout of the site and mature landscaping at the boundaries of the site. The subject land is an integral part of the Ainsworth Care Home site and development of the subject land should be considered within the overall context of this previously developed site.
- 5.26 The Ainsworth Nursing Home site including the application site is previously developed land as defined in appendix 2 of the NPPF. Para. 149 (g) allows for limited infilling or partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land where development would not have a greater impact on openness of the Green Belt than the existing development: or would not cause substantial harm to openness of the Green Belt.
- 5.27 Two dwellings are proposed that are spaced apart to promote openness, are located close to the existing site access and grouping of buildings, and are of a form and scale that is in keeping with the existing buildings.
- 5.28 Planning applications relating to three properties at the nursing home site have been submitted within the last 12month period for a change of use to private residential dwellings. This has also included applications to extend or demolish

the existing structures. There is a likelihood that further applications to regularise private residential use will be brought forward as the individual owners redevelop the existing buildings.

- 5.29 In the pre-application enquiry the LPA make reference that ideally the entire nursing home site should have come forward as one development under exception g) of paragraph 145 (now para. 149). This has not been possible due to a previous owner having split the site and sold it as individual lots but this does not need prevent the consideration of the overall site.
- 5.30 Multiple applications are being brought forward to regularise the use of the site for private residential dwellings. We consider it is beneficial to consider development of the application site and that it is appropriate that this be done in the context of the change of use applications, and redevelopment that is taking place to the overall site, albeit in a separate and piecemeal basis.
- 5.31 The proposed dwellings would comprise a building footprint of 254m² of development. By contrast the footprint of the existing buildings is 1,351m². This equates to an 18% increase in building footprint to the nursing homes site.
- 5.32 It is noted that in granting approval for demolition of existing bungalow and erection of 4 dwellings (63388/Full) Bury MBC allowed a significant increase in building footprint (259%). We appreciate that this consent was granted as infill in a named village but consider it relevant that in assessing the impact on the character of the village the LPA were prepared to support a significant increase in building footprint and volume.
- 5.33 In this decision (63388/Full) officer's commented that in the context of infilling in villages (paragraph 145(e) of the NPPF, **the primary factor is the impact the development would have on the character of the village within the wider Green Belt rather than the loss of openness per se**. It was noted by officers that the trees are a particularly important mitigating factor in the assessment, both reducing views across the existing site and partly screening the new build from Bolton Road. It was assessed by officers that **"The development would be viewed through the retained tree line which would significantly reduce its visual impact and reinforce the semi rural and village setting"**.
- 5.34 The application site is an integral part of the former Ainsworth Nursing Home site and is previously developed land. The proposed dwelling would result in a small increase in built development compared to the existing buildings.
- 5.35 Considering the subject proposal on its merits the proposed dwellings would be sited within the established curtilage of Ainsworth Nursing Home, would be of a form and scale that is sympathetic to the existing buildings, and would have a small footprint in relation to the available land (proposed building footprint covers 8% of the available land area).
- 5.36 The proposed infill development would respect existing development lines with the buildings located close to the existing access and cluster of buildings, and having a similar alignment to the Wash House to the north.
- 5.37 The character of the site is a collection of traditional single and two storey buildings, with gardens and mature landscaping to the perimeter. The subject site forms part of an established residential curtilage. Any views into the site would be very limited due to the dense screening providing at the boundaries

by the mature trees and shrubs. Where it is considered that there could be even a restricted view into the site the new dwellings would be viewed against the backdrop of the existing cluster of buildings. The proposed dwellings would not be readily discernible from the existing grouping of buildings and there certainly would be no significant change in character.

- 5.38 The views to and beyond the site are limited due to the extensive natural screening to the boundaries, the existing mature trees can be retained and further protected with a landscape buffer and there is no basis for a fine view to be spoiled.
- 5.39 The site benefits from dense natural screening, with mature trees and shrubs to the south and west boundaries. Robust and effective screening is provided to limit views in to and out of this developed site. The proposed dwellings are located close to the existing grouping of buildings and will be viewed within the site against this substantial backdrop of existing development.

Example of infill development to a previously developed site with a Green Belt designation in Bury Authority



Image 2) – View towards 249-251 Bury and Bolton Road, Bury

- 5.40 Planning consent was granted by Bury MBC for the erection of two dwellings at 249-251 Bury and Bolton Road (consent ref;56899). This site has a Green belt designation in the Development Plan and we understand that approval was granted as limited infilling and/or redevelopment of previously developed land (exception g) of paragraph 149 of the NPPF).
- 5.41 This was an open and highly prominent site that had previously been used as a petrol filling station. No buildings of any significant scale had existed to the site (the main petrol filling station being to the south side of Bury and Bolton Road), and any above ground development had been cleared for a significant period of years. This site did not benefit from significant screening at the boundaries and there were unrestricted views into the site from the Green Belt to the north.

- 5.42 This decision (56899) suggests that The Council considered that this proposal would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development, and that a significant increase in development scale and volume could be supported to a previously developed site in the Green Belt.

Section 6.0 –Benefits of development and Very Special Circumstances

Very Special Circumstances

- 6.1 It is considered that the proposed development can qualify as appropriate development under exceptions e) and g) of paragraph 149.
- 6.2 Should the LPA consider that they will not apply these exceptions to support the proposed development we consider **Very Special Circumstances exist** that would outweigh any potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, or any other perceived harm resulting from the proposal.
- 6.3 The Very Special Circumstances
- It is proposed to refurbish the Gate House building to provide guest accommodation ancillary to the use of plot 1. This will enable **significant investment in this Heritage Asset**, providing a new function and ensuring the long term use and protection of the building.
 - Whilst subject to TPO's the existing trees to the site are unmanaged and several trees are diseased and require felling. The proposals in the submitted tree survey, ecological report and landscape design would allow for the **long term management of the trees and an improvement in biodiversity**.
 - The submitted Landscape and Visual Appraisal identifies that the proposals would not affect the openness of the Green Belt, and that an **improvement in the landscape and visual appearance of the Ainsworth nursing home site can be achieved through the development proposals**.
 - **Ecological benefits** can be achieved through the landscaping proposals, the provision of the landscape buffer and the ecological enhancements that are proposed.
 - **Vacant and derelict land that is part of a previously developed site would be put to an efficient use**. This would provide long term certainty over the development of the overall nursing home site and would avoid the possibility of having an area of vacant and unmaintained land detracting from the amenity of the adjoining homes.
 - **Two family homes would be provided** in an area where there is strong demand for this, and very little opportunity to build new homes. The Council are unable to demonstrate a 5 year supply of housing land and the provision of two family homes would **contribute to supply where there is high demand**. This helps to relieve the pressure for development of other less suitable Green Belt sites in the Ainsworth area to provide the new housing that is needed.
- 6.4 In granting consent for a single dwelling in a Green Belt designation in Ramsbottom (66308/Full) the case for VSC's was accepted. Officers considered that the addition of this single dwelling, on the edge of an existing

settlement with natural screening **provided would not be overly incongruous or prominent within the identified visual envelope and would not materially alter the view of the Green Belt location.** It was accepted that the potential change to public and private views would be negligible.

- 6.5 In accepting a lack of visual harm and landscape enhancements officers commented that the dwelling would be located behind a group of existing trees, a good proportion of the building would be screened. **It was considered that that the addition of a single dwelling, that is partially screened by tree planting would not be readily discernible and the potential impacts on the landscape would be negligible.**

Visual Impact

- 6.6 A Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) has been prepared by Randall Thorp to assess the anticipated effects resulting from the development on the character and features of the landscape and on people's views and visual amenity.
- 6.7 The LVA notes that views from some footpaths are enclosed or substantially screened by vegetation and in some cases the undulating topography prevents views of the site (para. 2.19).
- 6.8 The study area is defined as relatively small because the site is small scale and quite low-lying therefore discreet within the landscape (para. 2.20).
- 6.9 The entire former nursing home site, including the application site, is well enclosed by peripheral existing trees which are protected by a group TPO (346/2019) (para. 4.25).
- 6.10 Observation as a pleasant landscape but one which is heavily influenced by its close proximity to the settlement of Ainsworth. Views are restricted by vegetation and include built form within the site of the former nursing home and on the fringes of Ainsworth. The landscape is not considered to be wild or tranquil due to its proximity to the urban edge (Table 2 : Landscape value of the site and immediate locality).
- 6.11 Observation on the landscape value of the features within the site includes that **the site makes little or no contribution to the scenic quality of the wider area as it is well enclosed by existing vegetation. The existing buildings within the wider nursing home site are partially visible and urbanise the views. It is considered that the site comprises land associated with the former care homes and does not perform a valuable landscape function** (Table 3).
- 6.12 It is assessed that the scale of development is appropriate to the scale of the landscape and it is considered that the susceptibility to change of Landscape Character Area 54/3 West Pennine Foothills is low (para. 4.34).
- 6.13 Susceptibility to change of the landscape character within the immediate locality is assessed as low.
- 6.14 The trees provide enclosure and visual screening. A landscape buffer is included along the southern and western boundaries where the site interfaces with the Green Belt. The planting of trees within the buffer, as well as native understory planting, would strengthen the buffer and enhance its screening

capacity. A native hedgerow is proposed around the extents of the tree belt to provide further low-level visual screening (para. 6.12).

- 6.15 **The LVA assesses that the entire former nursing home site is well enclosed by existing tree belts which limits the visibility of the existing buildings within the site in views from the wider landscape** (para. 7.8).
- 6.16 The site is small, low-lying, well contained, and discreet in the landscape. It is closely associated with the former nursing home, the buildings of which are partially visible from the settlement edge but are well screened in longer distance views from the higher land to the north. In any case, these longer distance views include the settlement of Ainsworth, and any filtered views of buildings are seen in this context (7.9).
- 6.17 **The scale of the development is small and is appropriate to the scale of the landscape. The design and materials proposed for the dwellings aligns with the existing buildings within the former nursing home site and is in keeping with the local vernacular.**
- 6.18 The LVA considers that there is **opportunity to manage the existing trees within the site and introduce new trees, understory planting and hedgerow to reinforce the existing landscape character. This would enhance the appearance of the landscape as well as providing ecological interest, habitat connectivity and biodiversity gain** (para. 7.11).
- 6.19 The size and scale of effect on the Landscape Character Area within the study area upon completion and at year 15 would be negligible (para. 7.13 & 7.14).
- 6.20 **The proposed dwellings are well associated with existing built form within the former nursing home.** Local materials and styles are incorporated, and the buildings assimilate well into their setting in terms of siting, scale and design (para. 7.16).
- 6.21 The site is well screened by existing boundary trees which enclose the entire former nursing home site. The proposals include the management of the existing trees and native planting which would re-inforce the landscape buffers around the boundaries of the site. **Proposed planting would be entirely appropriate to the setting, would enhance the visual appearance of the local area and provide ecological benefits** (para. 7.16).
- 6.22 **The LVA discusses that there is a perception that the site is already developed, due to the close proximity of the existing former nursing home buildings.** Strengthening the tree belts with further planting would be beneficial in the longer term. **The proposals would be in keeping with the existing character of the locality with little or no perceptible change** (para. 7.17).
- 6.23 The size and scale of effect on the landscape character within the immediate locality upon completion as a result of the proposals would be negligible, and upon maturity of the proposals would be low beneficial-negligible (para 7.22 & 7.23).
- 6.24 Upon completion the size and scale of effect on the landscape features within the site would be low beneficial-negligible, and upon maturity of the proposals would be low beneficial (para. 7.22 & 7.23).

- 6.25 In assessing effects on the Green Belt the LVA assesses that **there are very few locations close to the edge of the settlement from which the wider nursing home site is visible. This is largely due to the level of enclosure provided by existing buildings and vegetation** (para. 9.2).
- 6.26 In views from PRoWs which lie within the immediate vicinity of the site, the existing mature boundary tree belts filter views of the former nursing home buildings. The extended bungalow and taller administration block are partially visible resulting in an urban edge character. As such, when walking on the PRoWs within the vicinity of the site, the experience is one of being on the edge of settlement rather than a wholly rural context (para. 9.3).
- 6.27 The site is perceived as part of the former nursing home due to its close association with the existing buildings and because of the block of woodland which envelops the wider site. **There is a clear distinction between the former nursing home site, which includes the application site, and the surrounding countryside.** The site therefore makes no contribution to a sense of openness when viewed from the PRoWs close to the settlement edge (para. 9.4).
- 6.28 **The scale of the proposed development is small, and the buildings would assimilate well into their setting in terms of siting, scale and design. The proposals would be in keeping with their surroundings, with negligible change to the character or appearance of the area. In views from the settlement, there would be no effect on the perceived openness of the Green Belt as a result of the proposals** (para. 9.5).
- 6.29 In assessing the effects on the perceived encroachment into the Green Belt the LVA assesses that **the site is closely associated with the former nursing home and is surrounded by woodland. Its character is distinct from the countryside which surrounds it.** The proposals would be confined within the extents of the former nursing home site and would be well screened by the existing and proposed boundary vegetation. **The development would not encroach into the surrounding countryside and the function and purpose of the Green Belt would remain** (para. 9.8).
- 6.30 In terms of planning policy the LVA concludes that the site would not meet the criteria of 'Valued Landscape' in terms of NPPF. The site lies within the West Pennine Moors (Policy OL7/2) where the LPA control development to reduce any possible detrimental effects on the important character of the area. **The LVA concludes that there would be no disturbance to the wider landscape character area and the proposals would therefore not conflict with the West Pennine Moors designation** (para 10.2 & 10.3).
- 6.31 **The site is within Green Belt but is closely associated with the existing development at the former nursing home. The proposals would not affect the openness of the Green Belt and would not encroach into the countryside which surround the former care homes site.** (para. 10.6).

Housing Land Supply

- 6.32 Bury's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment sets out the latest housing supply position. Bury MBC acknowledge that the latest monitoring indicates that the Council is unable to demonstrate a 5 year supply of

deliverable housing land and this needs to be treated as a material factor when determining applications for residential developments.

- 6.33 The NPPF sets out the Housing Delivery Test, which is an assessment of net additional dwellings provided over the previous three years against the homes required. Where the test indicates that delivery of housing was substantially below (less than 75%) of the housing requirement over the previous years, this needs to be taken into account in the decision-taking process. The latest results published by the Government show that Bury has a housing delivery test of less than 75%, and therefore this needs to be treated as a material factor when determining applications for residential development.
- 6.34 There is great demand for 4/5 bedroom family homes in Ainsworth and there is very limited suitable land available to provide new homes. This proposal provides the **opportunity to supply two new family homes within the established curtilage of a previously developed site** without resulting in the pressure to seek development or encroachment of other areas of open Green Belt.
- 6.35 **The subject site is available for immediate development and could be delivered within a 5 year period.** The NPPF emphasises the need for Local Planning Authorities to boost the supply of housing to meet local needs and the proposed development would assist in contributing to the shortfall of available housing land in the Borough to provide family accommodation.

Section 7.0 – Other considerations

Design

- 7.1 **The proposed dwellings are designed to reference the existing buildings in terms of form and scale, and the use of materials.**
- 7.2 Design features from the existing buildings that have been drawn upon include;
- Pitched and hipped roofs with varying heights of roofs similar to the existing buildings.
 - Proposed dwellings reduce down to a single storey height at the rear and incorporate dormer windows similar in style to the Administration Block and Wash House.
 - Red brick facings, slate roofs with red clay ridge and hip tiles.
 - Detailing to brick heads and sills, brick arch at main door entrance.
 - Tall window to landing as a reference to tall windows to the Pavilion Block.
- 7.3 Following pre-application discussions the proposal has been reduced in size from three dwellings to two and this allows a wide spacing between the dwellings and the site boundaries, and this promotes openness.
- 7.4 The height of the adjacent buildings has been considered and the proposed dwellings are designed to be a similar, or lessor height (6.8 metres from finished floor level to ridge), as follows;
- The Bungalow = 6.35metres FFL to ridge (0.45metres lower than proposal).
 - The Wash House = 6.77metres FFL to ridge (0.03metres lower than proposal).
 - Administration Block = 9.23 metres FFL to ridge (2.43 metres higher than proposal).
 - Pavilion Block = 7.18metres FFL to ridge (0.38metres higher than proposal).

- 7.5 The siting, scale and orientation of the dwellings has been carefully considered in order to ensure that the dwellings sit comfortably with the development plot, and to achieve satisfactory separation distances and amenity for the neighbouring buildings (now private residential use).
- 7.6 Boundary treatments have been kept at a low level (1.2metre high post and rail fencing), and are of a type found in rural and countryside areas to maintain openness.

Parking

- 7.7 In accordance with Bury MBC's parking standards three parking bays are provided to each dwelling. The drives and parking areas are constructed with permeable resin bound gravel and providing sustainable drainage.

Lighting

- 7.8 Paragraph 180 (bullet point c) of the NPPF states that development should: 'limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation'.
- 7.9 During the construction phase any lighting to be used should be directional and screened where possible, and this specification is to be included in the Construction Management Plan (CMP).
- 7.10 The development lighting scheme will include the use of appropriate products and screening, to ensure no excessive artificial lighting shines over the boundary trees, retained hedgerow and any landscape planting, as lighting overspill may deter use by wildlife such as foraging bats.

Sustainable urban drainage design

- 7.11 Foul drainage connection is proposed to existing drains. Surface water discharge is proposed to soakaways provided through a network of filter drains and catchpits that will provide a sustainable urban drainage scheme.

Heritage Assessment

- 7.12 A Heritage Assessment has been provided by Townscape Chartered Town Planner & Heritage Consultants.
- 7.13 This assesses that due to the properties age, scale, and architectural expression, it may be suggested that the nursing home buildings be considered as a non-designated heritage asset (NDHA) and therefore holds a degree of significance.
- 7.14 In accordance with the NPPF guidance, the former hospital is considered to be of medium interest.
- 7.15 The HA advises that taking account of the building's consideration as a NDHA, it is concluded that on heritage grounds, the buildings as a group have a low to medium significance and meet the minimum criteria to be considered as a NDHA.
- 7.16 The HA notes that the proposed development doesn't directly impact on the NDHA's themselves only their setting. It is advised that additional development in a spatial form that respects the existing layout with a degree of uniformity and grid layout, respects the settings of the existing site and if additional

buildings are set with generous separation distances, similar construction materials, **new development can help to improve the setting of the existing site without causing harm to the basic significance of the site.**

7.17 **With respect to the level of harm in relation to this proposed development the HA considers the buildings to be NDHA's and low/medium significance.** The significance is modulated between building to building due to their degree of originality and alteration. The impact of the proposed development is generally upon the spatial layout of the site and given the new development is adding to the layout with a similar form of development and retaining and reusing the former gatehouse **the overall level of harm of the works proposed are positive.**

7.18 The HA concludes that the crucial test contained within the NPPF is whether there is any harm to a heritage asset that is outweighed by the public interest and benefits of a proposal. **It is concluded that the proposed works will result in a positive impact in that new development, which is spatially correct and if constructed in similar materials to existing forms, will enhance the site in addition to retaining the existing gatehouse.** It will put the building to a viable use without harming its modest aesthetic. The proposals strike a balance between this gain and very limited architectural and historic loss.

7.19 **It is concluded that the proposals will not present any detrimental impact or harm upon the building in accordance with national planning policy.**

Ecology

7.20 An Ecological Survey and Assessment has been undertaken by ERAP (Consultant Ecologists).

7.21 The site is described as comprising a unit of unmanaged grassland with edges of scrub and tall herb vegetation, an ornamental hedgerow and boundary trees, and a dilapidated Gate House building.

7.22 It is assessed that the proposals will have no adverse effect on statutory or non-statutory designated sites for nature conservation.

7.23 No Priority Habitats are present at the site. The Gate House is assessed as having moderate suitability for use by roosting bats and further surveys are required to determine their presence/absence.

7.24 It is assessed that the **proposals will secure an opportunity to implement beneficial measures such as habitat enhancement and creation that will safeguard habitats for wildlife such as birds and bats, with the aim of providing a net gain in biodiversity in accordance with the principles of the NPPF.**

7.25 It is concluded that the proposals are feasible and acceptable in accordance with the ecological considerations and relevant planning policy. **The proposals present an opportunity to secure ecological enhancement for wildlife associated with residential development.**

7.26 It is recommended that the development incorporates the installation of two bat access panels at the new buildings, and two bat boxes are to be installed onto suitable retained mature trees within the subject site.

- 7.27 An existing bird box is to be retained to a tree adjacent to the site boundary. Two house sparrow terrace nest boxes are recommended to be installed to the new houses, and one bird box for woodland bird species is to be installed at a retained mature tree.

Landscaping proposals

- 7.28 A landscaping design has been prepared by Randall Thorpe that illustrates the hard and soft landscaping details.

Landscape buffer

- 7.29 **A wide landscape buffer is proposed to the south and west boundaries and this provides good opportunity for biodiversity and landscaping improvements.** There are a number of mature trees to the site boundaries and where these are in a healthy condition they are to be retained and compensatory tree planting is proposed for the trees that are required to be felled due to disease.
- 7.30 Planting is proposed with woodland wildflower mix and native bulb planting. New hedge planting is proposed around the site perimeter and between the plots with native hedge species. Habitat log piles are proposed for colonisation by invertebrates, fungi and small mammals. Native evergreen shade tolerant understorey planting (Holly and Yew) is proposed in the landscape buffer.

Private gardens

- 7.31 The amenity areas will be formed with a shade tolerant lawn mix. Planting is proposed to be native species, and species known to be of value to wildlife. Trees are specified that will support blossom and fruit that will attract insects. Shade tolerant understorey and ground cover planting is proposed to attract invertebrates, and flowering species to maximise the opportunities for feeding invertebrates and for the attraction of foraging bats and birds.

- 7.32 The landscaping proposals will provide a visual improvement to the landscape and will increase biodiversity and support ecological enhancement.**

Contaminated Land

- 7.33 A phase 1 Preliminary Risk Assessment of the subject site has been undertaken and this recommends that sufficient information on the potential contaminative status of the site is provided to allow issue of conditional planning approval.

Access

- 7.34 There is a private access that extends from the end of Knowsley Road upto the subject site (200 metres length of access) and has a tarmac surface that is well maintained. This access is generally 4.5metres wide including the verge. There is a passing bay at mid length where the road width increases to 6.0metres with the verge.
- 7.35 As there is a single point of vehicular access to the nursing home site the Fire Service have advised that either a secondary means of access should be provided, or the dwellings should have sprinkler systems installed. Both properties will have sprinkler systems installed (designed to BS9251) and will meet the requirements of Approved Document B of the building regulations, for provision of access for the Fire Service.

- 7.36 In consideration of an application for residential change of use and extensions to form a single dwelling at this site (65626 – The Bungalow) the LPA assessed that in terms of traffic generation, the proposed development would be of such a relatively small scale, that it is considered there would not be significant traffic levels to the site. Taking a wider view, and should the other plots come forward for re-development, given the scale of the site and numbers of potential plots available for development, it is considered that there would not be significant levels of traffic generation created, particularly when compared to the traffic which could be generated by a nursing home from employees, visitors and medical/support.
- 7.37 The Highways consultation response to the same application (65626) was that for a development of a single plot, the standard of the access is considered to be acceptable for the amount of traffic which would be generated, and that given the number of plots which could come forward in the future, which is likely to be no more than 6 or 7, the existing access would be of a standard to suitably serve the whole of the site.
- 7.38 Two dwellings are proposed that will represent a minimal increase in traffic. The access has a straight alignment allowing good visibility from one end to the other. This access has been utilised over a long period to serve the original use as an isolation hospital and subsequently for the care home use. Both of these uses would have generated commercial vehicles for servicing and deliveries along with cars for staff and visitors. The former use resulted in a more intensive use of the subject access than is now likely with the change to private residential use for 8 dwellings (six existing dwellings plus the two proposed).
- 7.39 The LPA have previously assessed that the existing access is suitable to serve the residential use of this site. The addition of two dwellings will not result in a significant increase in traffic generation to this site and will not dramatically alter the number of dwellings that the LPA had assessed could be served by the existing access (the LPA's assessment 6-7 dwellings, our proposal takes the number of dwellings to 8).
- 7.40 It is considered that the existing access is adequate to serve two additional dwellings.

Trees

- 7.41 A tree survey has been undertaken by Mulberry TMC. This confirms the location of the existing trees along with identifying the species size and condition. Tree canopy and Tree Root Protection Areas are confirmed.
- 7.42 Five individual trees and a tree group G are proposed to be felled due to their condition. Compensatory tree planting is proposed to replace the trees that require removal and to provide an improvement in biodiversity. The location and species of the proposed trees are shown to the landscaping proposals.
- 7.43 The drive and parking areas to plots 1 and 2 will pass through the RPA's of the retained trees. To minimise any impact on the tree roots a cellular confinement system is to be installed within the affected areas with a permeable bonded gravel wearing course. Mulberry TMC have assessed that the proposed drives are acceptable due to there being no significant excavation within the RPA's,

and the extents of the cellular confinement system being under 20% of the area of the RPA's.

Flood risk

- 7.44 The Environment Agency Flood Risk Map shows that the subject site is within Flood Zone 1 with a low probability of flooding. The proposed site area is less than 1.0 hectare and a Flood Risk Assessment is not required.

Section 8.0 – Conclusion

- 8.1 The former Ainsworth Nursing Home site is unique in terms of its original use, characteristics and setting, and is a previously developed site with substantial buildings within a developed and clearly defined curtilage.
- 8.2 We have explained why the proposed development is compliant with local and national planning policy, and why granting of consent would be consistent with other planning consents granted in the Authority.
- 8.3 We have identified that the development would be an exception to inappropriate development in the Green Belt as defined in paragraph 149, through exceptions;
 - e) limited infilling in villages,
 - g) limited infilling of previously developed land where development would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt.
- 8.4 A Landscape and Visual Assessment has been provided to assess effects resulting from the development on the character and features of the landscape, and on people's views and amenity.
- 8.5 The LVA assesses that the site is within the Green Belt but is closely associated with the existing development at the former nursing home. It is concluded that the proposals would not affect the openness of the Green Belt and would not encroach into the countryside which surround the former care home site.
- 8.6 The proposed dwellings are sited close to the existing access and cluster of buildings. The dwellings would be viewed against the backdrop of the existing buildings that are significantly more substantial in terms of height, massing and footprint. Any view of the dwellings will be against the backdrop of the existing buildings and as a result the proposal will not materially change or therefore harm the openness or visual appearance of the Green Belt setting.
- 8.7 This modest and well screened development of two dwellings would not have any adverse impact on the five purposes of Green Belt set out in paragraph 138 of the NPPF.
- 8.8 It is concluded that the development can be considered as infilling in a village, and would also be limited infilling of previously developed land. The openness of the Green Belt would be preserved, and the development would not conflict with any of the purposes of including land within the Green Belt.
- 8.9 The proposed development offers a number of Economic, Social and Environmental benefits, including;
 - Economic benefits
 - Benefits during and after construction by providing employment and support for local services and the generation of additional revenue in the local economy.
 - Increased income for the Council through new homes bonus and Council Tax revenues.

Social benefits

- Contribution of two family homes to the Authorities housing supply in an area where there is great demand for this type of housing.
- Social benefits to an existing residential location by allowing future occupants to form part of the local community.
- Natural surveillance and occupation of previously developed land to help address crime and anti-social behaviour issues.

Environmental benefits

- The recycling and regeneration of previously developed land within an established residential setting.
- Securing the long term management of the woodland that surrounds this site, and the opportunity to further re-inforce this habitat through the provision of a landscape buffer.
- Improvements to the biodiversity and ecology of the site through the provision of the landscape buffer.

8.10 Should the LPA not agree that the proposals are limited in filling in a village, or limited infilling to a previously developed site then we consider that **Very Special Circumstances** exist that would outweigh any potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, or any other perceived harm resulting from the proposal.

VSC 1

- It is proposed to refurbish the Gate House building to provide guest accommodation ancillary to the use of plot 1. This will enable **significant investment in this Heritage Asset**, providing a new function and ensuring the long term use and protection of the building.

VSC 2

- Whilst subject to TPO's the existing trees to the site are unmanaged and several trees are diseased and require felling. The proposals in the submitted tree survey, ecological report and landscape design would allow for the **long term management of the trees and an improvement in biodiversity**.

VSC 3

- The Landscape and Visual Appraisal identifies that the proposals would not affect the openness of the Green Belt, and that an **improvement in the landscape and visual appearance of the Ainsworth nursing home site can be achieved through the development proposals**.

VSC 4

- **Ecological benefits** can be achieved through the landscaping proposals, the provision of the landscape buffer and the ecological enhancements that are proposed.

VSC 5

- **Vacant and derelict land that is part of a previously developed site would be put to an efficient use**. This would provide long term certainty over the development of the overall nursing home site and would avoid the possibility of having an area of vacant and unmaintained land detracting from the amenity of the adjoining homes.

VSC 6

- **Two family homes would be provided** in an area where there is strong demand for this, and very little opportunity to build new homes. The LPA are unable to demonstrate a 5 year supply of housing land and the provision of two family homes would **contribute to supply where there is high demand**.

8.11 The application is in compliance with the NPPF and in the planning balance the demonstrated benefits clearly outweigh any perceived harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness.

Issued 22nd July 2021

References:

<https://www.burytimes.co.uk/news/17408094.former-ainsworth-nursing-home-put-on-market-for-development/>

<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/hospitalrecords/details.asp?id=1756>

<https://manchestervictorianarchitects.org.uk/buildings/isolation-hospital-ainsworth-bury>

APPENDIX 1 – PHOTOGRAPHIC SURVEY



Plate 1 – Front elevation of Administration Block



Plate 2 – Rear elevation of Administration Block



Plate 3 - View towards subject land to west of site



Plate 4 – View of buildings to central area



Plate 5 - View of Pavilion Block extending to east of site



Plate 6 – View to rear of administration block from the Wash House



Plate 7 - View to rear of existing buildings adjacent north boundary



Plate 8 – View along access to the south of the site



Plate 9 – Existing Gate House and southerly boundary to subject land



Plate 10 – View along access road and the Wash House to north of site.



Plate 11 – View from access road across subject land



Plate 12 – View of the Wash House adjacent to north boundary of subject site.