

HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

‘THE HAVEN’ [PART OF THE FORMER AINSWORTH NURSING HOME], KNOWSLEY ROAD, AINSWORTH, BL2 5PT

This Heritage Assessment supports a full planning application proposing the demolition of the building known as ‘The Haven’ (photograph below), and the erection of a replacement building for use as a private dwellinghouse, with associated garden curtilage and 2 parking spaces in keeping with the existing adjacent buildings.



The Applicant has purchased the plot occupied by the building known as ‘The Haven’, which was used as bedroom spaces for elderly residents as part of the nursing home.

The site is not in a Conservation Area and none of the buildings that comprised the former care home have Statutory Listed Building status.

Whilst the site as a whole has been locally listed by Bury Council as a non-designated heritage asset (it appears on the draft local list as the “Former Isolation Hospital, Broom Field, Knowsley Road, Ainsworth, Radcliffe”), the application property possesses no heritage value or visual appeal whatsoever.

The local list has not been formally adopted. However, Historic England guidance on Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment Good Practice Advice Note 3 (2015) advises that non-designated heritage assets may be identified through the following mechanisms:

“Non-designated heritage assets include those that have been identified in a Historic Environment Record, in a local plan, through local listing or during the process of considering the application.”

National planning policy in respect to the conservation of the historic environment is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (revised 2019) (NPPF) and places the following requirements on applicants:

“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 understanding the potential impact of the proposals 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 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.” (NPPF Paragraph 189)

Significance of the Asset

‘The Haven’ does not live up to its name. It is a nondescript, squat, clumsy, peculiar, utilitarian structure of unprepossessing / ugly appearance, sandwiched between two buildings that do possess a degree of status and heritage calibre (one of which is Knowsley House, the former HQ building for the nursing home). In that regard, the existing building is harmful to its heritage context.

Prior to selling off the site in lots – ‘The Haven’ was attached to Knowsley House via a short corridor on its left hand side (when viewed from the front). That link was removed by the previous owner, such that The Haven now stands alone as a freestanding detached building (as photograph below).



As the aerial image below confirms, The Haven was also connected to the building to the rear, but the previous owner (again intent on sub-dividing the land into discrete plots for sale) 'dis-attached' the buildings, erected new ends of the newly formed buildings, leaving a gap between that building and the rear of The Haven (see photograph on following page).



Such is the poor appearance and quality of The Haven, it is harmful to the overall heritage value and character of the site, and its replacement with a better quality, sympathetically designed building will deliver visual and heritage-related benefits.

THE PROPOSAL

It is proposed to demolish the existing nondescript building, and replace it with a new dwelling of broadly similar scale, but of superior design quality and character.

The Appellant has also had regard to the locally listed heritage context, which has played a part in the design evolution, whilst noting that the existing building is of very poor quality, unsympathetic, and possesses no heritage value whatsoever (refer to heritage matters discussed under NPPF below).

In terms of comparison between 'existing' and 'proposed' :

Area

Existing GEA = 123.63 sqm

Proposed GEA= 92.76 sqm

Volume

A 32.6% increase in volume

Heritage Policy Considerations

The Development Plan

Section 38(6) of the Town and Country Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 places a statutory duty on local planning authorities to determine planning applications in accordance with the development plan, unless material planning considerations indicate otherwise. Section 39 of the Act requires decision makers to exercise their functions with the objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development.

For the purposes of this application, the Development Plan is the Bury UDP (adopted August 1997).

The site is located within both the Green Belt and a Special Landscape Area. It is also within the West Pennine Moors designation.

The UDP clearly pre-dates current national planning policies in reference to non- designated heritage assets. However, Policy EN2 states:

“The Council will seek to preserve the Borough’s built heritage through the control of development, especially that affecting conservation areas, listed buildings and areas of historic local importance.”

Consultations on the Policy Directions of the emerging replacement local plan ended in November 2018. Policy Direction BH6 relates to Local Non-Designated Heritage Assets and states:

“It is proposed that the Local Plan should include a policy that seeks to ensure that, in considering proposals that have the potential to affect non-designated heritage assets contained on the ‘Local List’, the Council should make a balanced judgement taking account of the potential harm and benefits arising from the proposal.”

The justification for the above Policy Direction refers to the provisions for non- designated heritage assets in the NPPF and the need to protect heritage assets that “... *are seen to contribute to the background character, significance and distinctiveness of an area where it is important to protect the best of these assets.*”

In respect of compliance with the heritage policies of the Development Plan, we contend that – through good quality design and materials - no heritage harm will arise.

Indeed, quite the reverse, because a poor quality, unsympathetic building will be replaced by one of better quality and of sympathetic / respectful design and appearance.

We therefore suggest that there will be no conflict with heritage-related policies, as heritage enhancements will arise.

In view of the above assessment, we contend that the proposal is in accordance with the relevant and up to date policies of the development plan when considered in overall terms, and – furthermore - there are no material considerations that suggest that Section 38(6) ought not to be applied.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE NPPF

The NPPF ('Framework') is an important material planning consideration, but it does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making. Paragraph 2 of the Framework confirms :

"Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The National Planning Policy Framework must be taken into account in preparing the development plan and is a material consideration in planning decisions. Planning policies and decisions must also reflect relevant international obligations and statutory requirements"

Further, in determining the weight of relevant policies, the guidance at paragraph 213 of the Framework confirms :

"... due weight should be given (to relevant policies in existing plan) according to their degree of consistency with this Framework (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the framework, the greater the weight that may be given)."

Part 16 of the NPPF seeks to conserve and enhance the historic environment. Paragraph 189 requires :

"an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting".

Paragraph 197 covers **"the effect of an application on the significance of a non- designated heritage assessment"**. This includes weighing the proposed changes against keeping the asset in its current state.

Ainsworth Nursing Home was built at the turn of 19th century. It was purpose built as a smallpox isolation hospital it later became a nursing home and was in that use until 1986. It is considered by the Council as a good example of civic/hospital architecture of that period, and particularly given that it is largely intact and unaltered.

The nursing home site comprises the adjacent Knowsley House, the Gate House to the south-west, The Wash House to the north-west, The Coach House to the north, The Haven itself, Knowsley Manor to the far east, and The Bungalow to the south. The Haven and The Bungalow are much later editions to the other buildings erected in the Edwardian period.

Knowsley House was originally of symmetrical form with bay windowed rooms at the east and west front ends of the building. The west bay window was lost when a conservatory was built. The east entrance door was bricked up at the time the property was split from The Haven.

Like The Haven and all other buildings within the complex, Knowsley House is constructed in red brick, with the windows and doorways having arched brick heads and brick sills. The main building has a hipped roof of slate with red ridge tiles. The rear roof has two dormer windows. The windows, including the dormers, are in a deteriorated state and are a mix of materials and styles.

Application ref 66142 was approved in January 2021 to change of use of Knowsley House to a private dwelling, including various alterations and a garage extension.

That approval followed the approval in June 2020 of application 65412 to convert the Wash House to form a dwelling with single storey extensions and dormer to rear.

This proposal will raise no heritage concerns or harmful impacts. The site is not within a Conservation Area and is some distance from the nearest one, such that its setting will not be affected. Nor is the site close to or perceptible from any listed buildings or structures. While the overall site is draft locally listed, the draft status of that list diminishes the weight that can be attached to it.

Fundamentally, this particular building (The Haven) is unsightly, unsympathetic and out of character, harmful to the setting of those buildings which do possess a degree of merit and heritage significance, and which will be enhanced through the better quality, more sympathetic and sensitive design and appearance of the proposed building.

In light of the above impacts, the proposed development is considered to conserve and enhance the wider heritage asset that is the former nursing home when considered as one complex, in accordance with NPPF paragraph 192. The proposed building will replace an unsympathetic eyesore building, delivering net heritage benefits.

The proposed development is therefore in accordance with the relevant policies of the NPPF, and will serve to enhance the historic local importance of the former nursing home in accordance with Policy EN2 of the Unitary Development Plan.

In overall conclusion, we contend that the proposal is consistent with the relevant heritage-related policies of both the Development Plan and the NPPF as an important material consideration, and that this ought to carry considerable weight in the overall planning balance.