

73058 – 19 Central Street, Ramsbottom, Bury.

Change of use from veterinary practice (Class E) to 2 no. self-contained commercial units ground floor (Class E) and 1 no. 1 bedroom and 1 no. 2 bedroom apartments first floor (Class C3); External alterations to recover roof, installation of 7 no. rooflights to front elevation, rear dormer, render & cladding.

The application site is within Ramsbottom conservation area and is part of a short row on Central Street to the west of Bolton Street. The row comprises the application site, originally the fire engine station, latterly a veterinary practice and the British Legion Club. The row is two and single storey constructed from local stone with slate roofs and makes a strong positive contribution to the special distinctiveness, character and appearance of the conservation area.

The former fire engine station dates from the late 19th century or early 20th century and is considered to be a Non-Designated Heritage Asset (NDHA). It is a rare building typology in the borough and as such has strong local heritage value.

The external works to the former fire station include the insertion of rooflights, a very large rear box dormer, alterations to an opening on the front elevation and the addition of render and cladding.

Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires Local Planning Authorities in the exercise of their planning functions to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area.

Paragraph 212 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

Paragraph 216 of the NPPF states 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.

Paragraph 215 of the NPPF states where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

Ramsbottom is a good example of a northern mill town in the higher reaches of the River Irwell valley with topographical character and the vernacular materials

and design of its built form born from the underlying geology of the area being in carboniferous sandstone.

The built form in the lower parts of the town centre is predominantly two storey interspersed with single storey development constructed from local stone, in a linear layout with uniform size and scale. It is these features that create the special distinctiveness and character of the conservation area which requires special consideration to its protection when considering development affecting this distinctiveness and its setting.

The short row is largely unaltered and is a good example of the vernacular architecture, simple form and function of a Lancashire mill town, which do not include rooflights as an historic architectural feature. The addition of the rooflights would represent an incongruous architectural feature on the building which would have wider views in that part of the conservation area from Rothwell Street, Central Street and Callender Street. There is no historicism in the addition of rooflights in this part of the conservation area. It is noted that there are rooflights within the conservation area which either pre-date the Ramsbottom Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan and the NPPF or have been inserted without planning permission and are now immune from planning enforcement.

The proposed dormer would cause harm to the architectural significance of the NDHA and be a negative feature within the conservation area. It would represent an alien feature with no historicism in not being an original feature of the architectural grain of the conservation area being a contemporising feature.

The proposed alterations would cause harm to the architectural significance of the NDHA to an unacceptable level.

The proposed alterations would not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area and as such would represent less than substantial harm and although there would be some public benefit in the provision of additional housing it would not outweigh the harm identified to the NDHA or the character and appearance of the conservation area.

The application cannot be supported in heritage conservation terms as it would not comply with or be contrary to paragraphs 212, 215 and 216 of the NPPF and adopted Bury UDP policies EN2/1 – Character of Conservation Areas and EN2/2 – Conservation Area Control.

Conservation Officer

4/6/26