



# PLANNING STATEMENT

NEW PASSIVHAUS PLUS HOUSE OF EXCEPTIONAL QUALITY (NPPF PARAGRAPH  
80E) AND ASSOCIATED LANDSCAPING AND BIODIVERSITY ENHANCEMENTS

LAND AT HODDER BRIDGE

MICHAEL AND LIZ BELL

 Rural Solutions

---



# Rural Solutions

## PLANNING STATEMENT

### LOCATION

LAND AT HODDER BRIDGE

### PROPOSAL

NEW PASSIVHAUS PLUS CERTIFIED HOUSE OF EXCEPTIONAL QUALITY (NPPF PARAGRAPH 80E) AND ASSOCIATED LANDSCAPING AND BIODIVERSITY ENHANCEMENTS

### APPLICANT

MICHAEL AND LIZ BELL

### PREPARED BY

JAMES ELLIS  
MRTPI, PLANNING DIRECTOR

### REVIEWED BY

SHELLEY JONES  
MRTPI. ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

CANALSIDE HOUSE  
BREWERY LANE  
SKIPTON  
NORTH YORKSHIRE  
BD23 1DR

01756 797501  
INFO@RURALSOLUTIONS.CO.UK  
WWW.RURALSOLUTIONS.CO.UK  
REGISTERED IN ENGLAND NO. 6839914  
VAT REGISTRATION NO. 972 8082 90



# CONTENTS

SUMMARY	8
1. INTRODUCTION	10
2. THE SITE	13
3. THE POLICY HISTORY OF PARAGRAPH 80E	20
4. THE HODDER GRANGE PROPOSALS	24
5. ASSESSMENT OF NEW HOUSE AGAINST PARAGRAPH 80E POLICY TESTS	32
6. ASSESSMENT OF OTHER LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES OF RELEVANCE	43
7. PROPOSED PLANNING CONDITIONS AND RESTRICTIONS	47
APPENDIX 1 – SELECTED EXAMPLES OF NEW COUNTRY HOUSES APPROVED IN AREAS OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY	50
ANNEXE 1 – ARTICLE RELATING TO DELIVERY OF A NEW COUNTRY HOUSE IN AN AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY	
ANNEXE 2 – TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURE GROUP DESIGN REVIEW PANEL FEEDBACK LETTER (29TH NOVEMBER 2021)	

---

## SUMMARY

The proposals for Hodder Grange are brought forward on behalf of the applicants Michael and Liz Bell. As set out in their Personal Statement the applicants have lived near to the site for 24 years, raising their family in this part of the Ribble Valley, whilst restoring a historic property and enhancing the land around it.

Mr and Mrs Bells vision is set out in their Personal Statement:

*“We laid out our priorities from the beginning. Understanding the local fine houses as precedent studies and drawing on our mutual passion for Georgian architecture, we wanted to create a Georgian family home of manageable proportions. It was important that it blended seamlessly into the surrounding AONB. We have strived to achieve this through adding more sympathetic landscaping whilst simultaneously having the components of being environmentally sound with the use of sustainable materials and ultimately creating a Passivhaus. A house for the future.”*

The application for Hodder Grange reflects the applicants' desire to create a house of exceptional architectural quality which responds to and continues the tradition of country houses in the Ribble Valley and Forest of Bowland.

The application is submitted four years after the applicants first embarked upon the journey of creating something of exceptional quality.

Hodder Grange is of a traditional design style, reflecting both the characteristics of the surrounding area and the continuing tradition of classical and vernacular country house architecture in the U.K. which has been furthered by the new country house policy (now included in paragraph 80e of the NPPF).

Whilst in a traditional design style, Hodder Grange will be a uniquely contemporary building. With the support of an eminent sustainability engineer it is confirmed that the house will represent a **global first**, as the first Passivhaus Plus<sup>1</sup> house built in a traditional design style. Hodder Grange will also represent the **first Passivhaus Plus house** in the Northwest (in any design style). The new house will also be petrochemical free in construction and a true Zero Energy / Zero Carbon House.

Excellence in the architectural design is demonstrated through the support of the national Traditional Architecture Group (TAG) Design Review Panel. The designs for the house have also been developed with the input of a heritage advisor (John Hinchliffe) and based on a thorough study of country houses in the Forest of Bowland, as well as the input of an architectural historian and country house expert (Jeremy Musson).

---

<sup>1</sup> Passivhaus is a world-recognised accreditation of energy efficiency, with Passivhaus Plus being a higher level of accreditation than a standard Passivhaus accreditation.

The designs for the house and wider site also respond to comments received from the Borough Council at the pre-application stage and also the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Team.

The definition of natural beauty, which contributes to the wording - Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty - includes the rich history of human settlement and it is this rich history to which the Hodder Grange proposals will contribute.

New landscaping as part of the proposals has been carefully considered and includes 1.4ha of new woodland planting; 1,120m of new hedgerow planting; and 1.2ha of new species rich grassland margins.

These landscape proposals will deliver a 609.2% biodiversity net gain as confirmed in calculations submitted as part of the application.

The new 1.4ha of tree planting will also deliver wider environmental benefits alongside biodiversity net gain, sequestering 490 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> over a 50-year period (and 630 tonnes over a 100 year period).

The Hodder Grange proposals represent a notable example of the highest standards of architecture and landscape design, linked to the highest standards of sustainable design. They represent a unique example of the way in which traditional design can respond to the challenges of climate change.

The Hodder Grange proposals are brought forward to meet the requirements of paragraph 80e of the NPPF which allows houses of exceptional quality to be developed in rural areas. The designs for Hodder Grange have twice been presented to the national Traditional Architecture Group Design Review Panel, with the panel concluding at the end of the design assessment process that:

*“To reiterate, the Panel feel that the resulting building design and integrated enhancements in landscape, ecology and energy efficiency that are part of the scheme represent a scheme that should be considered of a quality that will fulfil the requirements of NPPF paragraph 80(e).”*

The building process that would be part of this project in itself would be a significant, exceptional and innovative departure from the norm, it would, in the terms of the NPPF policy would be... *truly outstanding, reflecting the highest standards in architecture, and would help to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas and would significantly enhance its immediate setting, and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area”*

## I. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1: On behalf of the applicants, Michael and Liz Bell, this planning statement relates to a planning application to Ribble Valley Borough Council for a new country house (NPPF paragraph 80e) known as Hodder Grange, on land at Higher Hodder Bridge.
- 1.2: The description of development as proposed is:
- Proposed new house of exceptional quality (NPPF Paragraph 80e) of Passivhaus Plus and Zero Energy design with associated landscaping and biodiversity enhancements.
- 1.3: The planning statement has been updated following the conclusion of a Design Review Panel (DRP) process, which confirms that the proposed new house is of exceptional quality in the view of the panel<sup>2</sup>.
- 1.4: We set out below in section one more details of the project team and the suite of the application documents that accompany it.
- 1.5: Section two of this statement includes an assessment of the proposed site of Hodder Grange.
- 1.6: Section three provides a summary of the policy history of paragraph 80e of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which is a key policy for the determination of the application.
- 1.7: Section four of the statement provides details of the proposed development.
- 1.8: At section five an assessment of the Hodder Grange proposals against the policy tests of Paragraph 80e is provided.
- 1.9: Section six includes an assessment of the proposals against other local and national planning policies of relevance.
- 1.10: Section seven includes a list of proposed planning conditions and restrictions which we anticipate will apply, should the council approve the application.
- 1.11: The application documents consist of:
- Full Plans Package (Rural Solutions).
  - Design and Access Statement (Rural Solutions).
  - Landscape Design Statement (Rural Solutions).
  - Landscape Masterplan (Rural Solutions).
  - Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (Rural Solutions).

---

<sup>2</sup> The national, RIBA linked, Traditional Architecture Group

- Ecology Survey (Envirotech).
- Ecological Net Gain Calculations (Rural Solutions).
- Country House Report (Hinchliffe Heritage).
- Highways Note and Speed Survey Calculations (VTC Highways Consultants)
- Hodder Grange: An Applicant's View (Michael and Liz Bell)

I.12: These documents provide a detailed analysis of the site and the design proposals for it, demonstrating how the proposals for the new house are derived from and respond to the characteristics of the local area.

### PROJECT TEAM

I.13: A wide range of specialists are and have been involved in proposals for the new house.

### RURAL SOLUTIONS

I.14: Different specialisms including architects, landscape architects and planners from within Rural Solutions are working on the Hodder Grange proposals. Rural Solutions is a nationwide planning and design consultancy. We have significant experience, from both a planning, architecture and landscape architecture perspective, on working on exceptional new country house proposals with planning consents achieved in the Forest of Dean; Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB); Nidderdale AONB; Chilterns AONB; Babergh District; Durham County; Ryedale District; and Craven District amongst other authorities. We have other schemes at an advanced planning stage elsewhere in the country. Detailed architecture and landscape design documents, as well as an LVIA, from Rural Solutions form part of the application.

### HINCHLIFFE HERITAGE

I.15: John Hinchliffe of Hinchliffe Heritage is a heritage professional and a chartered town planner. He is a founding member of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC) and has been a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) for over 30 years. He has practised on a wide range of planning issues affecting historic buildings and areas in the North West of England and beyond for more than 35 years. For most of that time, he worked in the public sector for three local authorities, latterly for Liverpool City Council 2001 - 12 where he was the World Heritage Officer.

I.16: John presented the case for the significance of the cultural value of Liverpool's heritage to the judges who ultimately awarded the city European Capital of Culture 2008. As a Conservation Officer and World Heritage Officer, he had responsibility for ensuring the proper conservation of some of the North West's most significant heritage assets, including Grade I listed buildings and Liverpool's UNESCO World Heritage Site.

- I.17: He has operated as an independent heritage consultant since October 2012
- I.18: He is a member of the Georgian Group which is clearly important in the context of these proposals, and his advice to the architect on the appropriateness of the design proposed.
- I.19: He is also a member of the Georgian Group, Victorian Society, National Trust and Merseyside Civic Society. He is the Professional Advisor to the Lathom Park Trust which he helped to form and was the secretary of the Liverpool Urban Design and Conservation Advisory Panel.
- I.20: A detailed Country House report from John is submitted, providing a baseline assessment of the local country house tradition that has been submitted.

### JEREMY MUSSON

- I.21: Jeremy Musson is a country house specialist, a former architectural editor of Country Life, and author of a number of books on different aspects of country house history and architecture. Jeremy was involved at an early stage in the design proposals, together with Hinchliffe Heritage to review the emerging designs for the house, prior to them being presented to a Design Review Panel.

### ECOSPHERIC

- I.22: Ecospheric focus on pioneering eco-developments that save carbon and drive technological change. Its team and expertise has grown to support architects and developers in delivering specialist eco projects, such as paragraph 80 applications and certified passive houses.
- I.23: Ecospheric has considerable experience in the field of sustainability and new country houses.
- I.24: To date Ecospheric has led on the innovation clause for two successful applications and currently consulting on three more. Working on behalf of Newark and Sherwood District Council, Ecospheric has successfully defended both Para 55 and 79 application refusals at appeal. In its role as a Passivhaus retrofit developer, Ecospheric has considerable experience in pushing performance boundaries, having just completed the world's highest retrofit performance standard for the first time with a pair of Victorian townhouses. Passive House Plus magazine called it 'The greenest retrofit ever'. Current development programs include what should be the World's First Zero Energy and Zero Waste Foodhall called the Sorting Office.



## 2. THE SITE

### INTRODUCTION

2.1: Information is provided in this section on:

A) Site Location and Designations

B) The Forest of Bowland AONB and the Local Country House Tradition

### A) SITE LOCATION AND DESIGNATIONS

- 2.2: The land which is the subject of this planning application are three fields which sit to the north-east of the River Hodder, approximately 1.8 miles from the western edge of the town of Clitheroe, within Ribble Valley borough.
- 2.3: An assessment of the site and the factors which influence the site selection for a new country house is incorporated within the detailed landscape appraisal and architects' statement submitted with the planning application.
- 2.4: The site is described in detail across these and other documents, including the LVIA, submitted with the planning application.
- 2.5: We have reviewed Magic Maps from Defra and note that the site is not the subject of any site-specific designation.
- 2.6: The bridge over the River Hodder is to the north-west of the site and the bridge is a listed structure, as shown in Fig.1 below. However, the bridge is a considerable distance from the site of the proposed new house and there would be no intervisibility between it and the new house as assessed later in this statement.

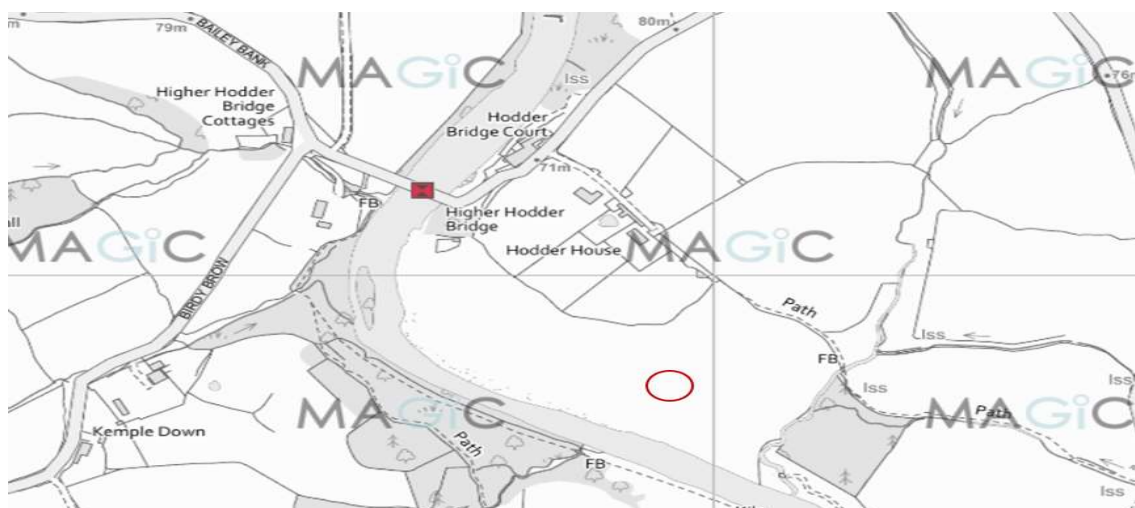


Figure 1: There are no identified habitats covering the land. The listed Hodder Bridge is at a considerable distance from the proposed house site (red circle identifies approximate location) and not visible from it. Source: Defra – Magic Maps

- 2.7: In particular there are no site-specific designations relating to ecology. The site has been heavily grazed and is therefore seen to be of limited ecological value.

- 2.8: An ecological survey has been undertaken. This demonstrates no ecological impediments to the development proposals being carried out. The project ecologist has also demonstrated there are significant opportunities for enhancement of the site's biodiversity as part of a well-considered landscape design scheme.
- 2.9: Highway access to the site is taken off Chipping Road passing the site, as shown in Fig. 2 below.



*Figure 2: Highway access to the site off Chipping Road*

- 2.10: The highway access not only provides access to the field for agricultural purposes but also for fishermen who have a hut located just inside the site.
- 2.11: At an early stage in the process, the applicants commissioned a highway advisor to review the access and undertake speed surveys. These surveys which form part of the application demonstrate that the proposed highways access is safe for a single dwelling.
- 2.12: The site is clearly within the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). A later sub-section addresses this in more detail.
- 2.13: The site is not within a Flood Zone (2 or 3) designation. Early-stage flood risk assessment work was undertaken by JBA Consulting, prior to this project being advanced.
- 2.14: As part of our assessment work on the site, we have reviewed all relevant planning policy maps and other environmental designations. There are no planning or other environmental designations which would restrict the principle of development on the site. As noted in previous sections new houses advanced under paragraph 80e have been approved in all major planning-based designations including a National Park, Green Belt and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Examples of new houses approved under Paragraph 80e are provided throughout this statement.

#### An Isolated Site

2.15: The meaning of the word isolated has been assessed in the courts as part of the 'Braintree cases'. It is clear that of the two decisions (High Court and Court of Appeal), the court of appeal case takes precedence as the later decision of a higher court.

2.16: Justice Lindblom states in that decision that:

*"31. In my view, in its particular context in paragraph 55 of the NPPF, the word "isolated" in the phrase "isolated homes in the countryside" simply connotes a dwelling that is physically separate or remote from a settlement. Whether a proposed new dwelling is, or is not, "isolated" in this sense will be a matter of fact and planning judgment for the decision-maker in the particular circumstances of the case in hand."*

2.17: Justice Lindblom did not repeat or validate any of the definitions as considered in the High Court decision, which is effectively superseded by the Court of Appeal decision.

2.18: The key test for decision-makers, as established by the ruling, is therefore whether a new dwelling under paragraph 80e would be 'physically separate or remote from a settlement'. The final sentence of paragraph 31 and the words 'in this sense' serve to confirm the test of 'separate or remote from a settlement' as the key focus. The use of the word 'or' confirms that a site could either be considered separate from or remote from a settlement (for it to be considered isolated); these descriptions are not entirely analogous and only one description needs to be met.

2.19: This approach was confirmed by the Planning Inspectorate in a recent appeal decision<sup>3</sup> for a new house allowed within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, with the Inspector confirming:

*"4. The meaning of the word 'isolated' in that context was the subject of the 'Braintree' judgments/ which the High Court Judge determined should be given its ordinary objective meaning of 'far away from other places, buildings or people; remote'. The Appeal Court Judge stated that this 'simply connotes a dwelling that is physically separate or remote from a settlement' and observed that there is no definition in the Framework of a 'settlement' and no specified minimum number of dwellings or population. Whether a proposed new dwelling is, or is not, 'isolated' in this sense will be a matter of fact and planning judgment for the decision-maker in the particular circumstances of a particular case."*

2.20: The Bramshill judgement<sup>4</sup> also confirms that the correct test is one of remoteness from a settlement not from other buildings, stating that:

*"33. To adopt remoteness from other dwellings, instead of remoteness from a settlement, as the test for "isolated homes in the countryside"*

---

<sup>3</sup> APP/F1610/W/19/3236430

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWCA/Civ/2021/320.html>

would seem inconsistent with the Government's evident intention in producing the policy in paragraph 79....”

- 2.21: The site of the proposed new house is clearly separate from a settlement and as a result, can be considered to be isolated, based on the court of appeal judgement and its subsequent interpretation. On that basis, paragraph 80e applies to the determination of the application.

## B) FOREST OF BOWLAND AONB AND THE LOCAL COUNTRY HOUSE TRADITION

### PURPOSES OF AONB DESIGNATION

- 2.22: The site as previously noted is within the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- 2.23: Other new country houses have been approved under NPPF Paragraph 80e (and its policy antecedents) in AONBs and cases are highlighted later in this section.
- 2.24: Natural England confirms<sup>5</sup> the purpose of AONB designation as follows:
- “AONBs are designated solely for their landscape qualities, for the purpose of conserving and enhancing their **natural beauty** (which includes landform and geology, **plants and animals**, landscape features and the rich history of human settlement over the centuries).”*
- 2.25: It is important to note from this definition that human settlement within landscapes is considered to be an inherent part of their natural beauty and that the reason for designation relates to the enhancement as well as the conservation of this beauty.
- 2.26: Equally important is the fact that designation also refers to the ecology of an area, which in this case, will be significantly enhanced in terms of the proposed development.
- 2.27: Natural England confirms that 14% of England, a significant proportion, is designated as an AONB.
- 2.28: Landscapes for Life is the National Association of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and they confirm that:
- “Particular regard should be paid to promoting sustainable forms of social and economic development that in themselves conserve and enhance the environment.”*
- 2.29: In principle the development of a new country house of the highest, 21st century, quality and design, can be considered to be sustainable if it accords with the reference above.

### APPLICATION OF NEW COUNTRY HOUSE CLAUSE IN AONBS

---

<sup>5</sup> Landscape: beyond the view, Natural England

2.30: It is very clear from the application of the new country house clause since its introduction by John Gummer in 1997 that such houses are acceptable in designated areas. A number of examples of cases that have been approved or allowed at appeal in designated areas are included at appendix I to this statement.

2.31: In particular, in a recent (March 2020) appeal case<sup>6</sup> from within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Inspector Papworth confirmed both that a house approved under the policy should be visible and that a dwelling of the highest standards of design could also contribute to the beauty of the designated area 'in the way that houses of the past have', stating that:

*"36. The building would be visible as it does not seek to hide away, and the paragraph 79e) exception, as with its antecedents back to Planning Policy Guidance Note 7 'Sustainable development in Rural Areas', does not require such an approach. Built form is a feature of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and the addition of natural oolitic limestone has placed the building firmly within that setting. The quality of the architecture and landscaping combined would be a positive addition to the site and would enhance the stock of built form of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, while conserving the natural features of the designated area. To conclude on this section, the proposal is sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area, and as a result of the foregoing analysis, the overall conclusion is that the proposal satisfies the requirements of paragraph 79e)." (Emphasis added)*

2.32: There are a number of other examples of new country houses that have been approved in AONB designations and are included in Appendix I to this statement.

2.33: Appendix 2 is an article highlighted in the Planning Magazine which is a best practice example of how a local authority, AONB Management Team and applicant have worked together to deliver a new country house within a designated landscape. It is in the spirit of this best practice guidance that the application for Hodder Grange has been developed.

#### THE FOREST OF BOWLAND AONB

2.34: From the outset, the project team has acknowledged not only the site's characteristics but also its location within the Forest of Bowland AONB.

2.35: In the process of advancing the pre-application design proposals for the site, Rural Solutions (architect, landscape architect and planner) met with Elliott Lorimer, Forest of Bowland AONB Manager in mid-February 2020. A follow-up note was sent after the meeting.

2.36: The purpose of the meeting was to explain the emerging design proposals so that we could respond to any initial comments, in finalising the pre-application

---

<sup>6</sup> APP/FI610/W/19/3236430



documents. In our experience of working within AONBs, an early-stage meeting with AONB Management Teams can be very helpful.

- 2.37: There was no in principle objection to the proposals and advice received was considered as the proposals were progressed, with a further iteration of the plans shared prior to the submission of the application.
- 2.38: Consultation also took place with the Management Team to ensure the proposed methodology for a Landscape Visual Impact Assessment, met the team's requirements, so as to allow proper analysis of the proposals.
- 2.39: From the very outset the project team has:
1. Carefully reviewed the AONB Management Plan. Section 2.3 of the Landscape Design Statement confirms how the proposals respond to the plan.
  2. Assessed the country house tradition of the Forest of Bowland and the surrounding area. The extensive Country House report, the Architect's Design Statement and the Landscape Design Statement on the application all assess in some detail the country houses that are an integral part of the historic landscape interest of the AONB.
- 2.40: Fig. 3 below provides relevant images from these studies.
- 2.41: It is considered clear from the application documents that there has been extensive consideration of the site's location within the Forest of Bowland AONB, in order to ensure that the proposals are sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area.

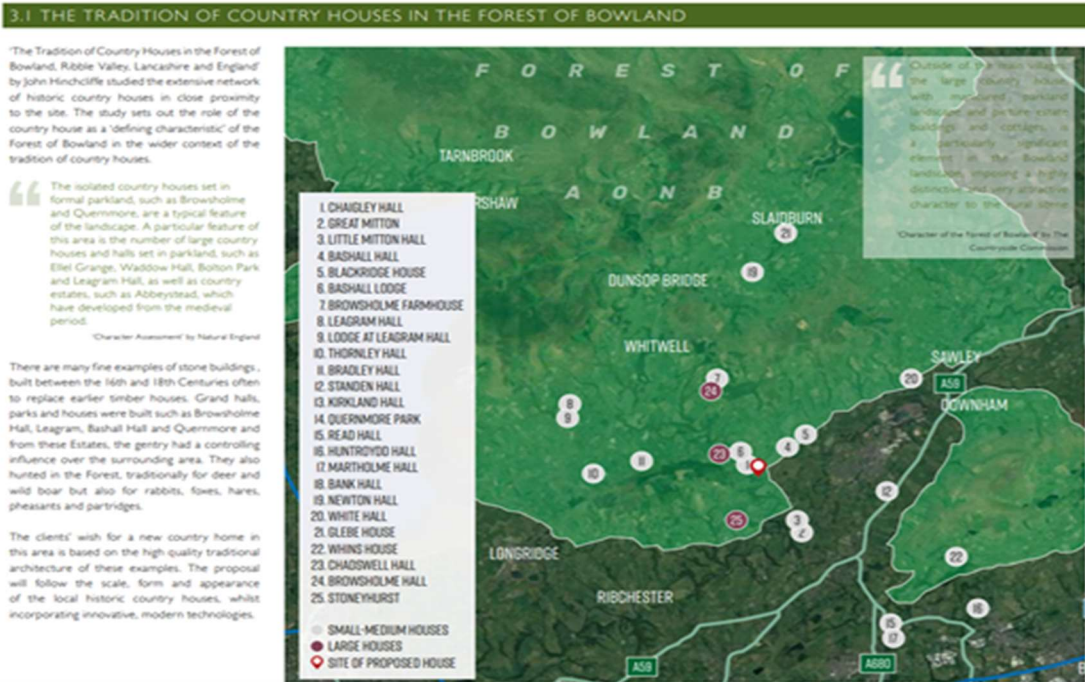
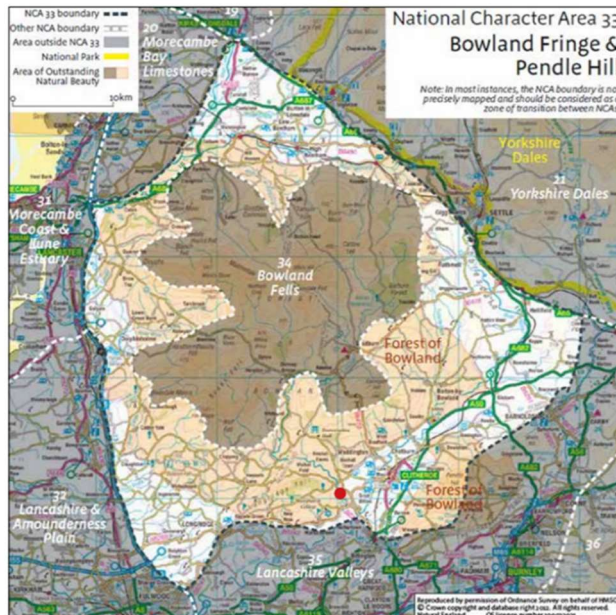
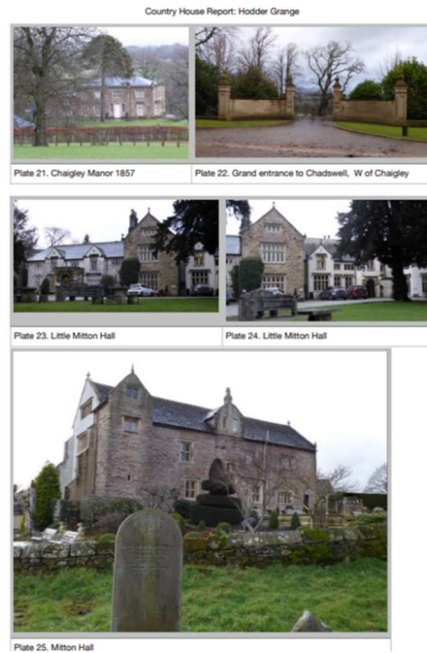


Fig. 3. Detailed appraisals of the Forest of Bowland AONB (and surrounding area) characteristics have been undertaken (clockwise from top: architect design statement; country house report; and landscape design statement)



National Character Area 33: Bowland Fringe and Pendle Hill

● Site Location



### 3. THE POLICY HISTORY OF PARAGRAPH 80E

- 3.1: The principle of this type of development - the exceptional and innovative new country dwelling - is firmly established across the country through the 'new country house' clause (currently included in paragraph 80 of the NPPF) and its implementation across the country since 1997.
- 3.2: New houses have been permitted in all major planning designations, including Green Belt, National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

#### PPG7 (1997)

- 3.3: In terms of the emergence of the 'new country house' clause, which is sometimes also referred to as the 'Gummer Clause' based on the name of the then Planning Minister John Gummer, it was introduced in the Planning Policy Guidance 7 document, introduced in 1997, which stated that:

*"An isolated new house in the countryside may also exceptionally be justified if it is clearly of the highest quality, is truly outstanding in terms of its architecture and landscape design, and would significantly enhance its immediate setting and wider surroundings. Proposals for such development would need to demonstrate that proper account had been taken of the defining characteristics of the local area, including local or regional building traditions and materials. **This means that each generation would have the opportunity to add to the tradition of the Country House which has done so much to enhance the English countryside.** (emphasis added)"*

#### PPS7 (2004)

- 3.4: In 2004 when PPG7 was updated and redrafted to become Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas, it was rumoured that the Gummer Clause would be scrapped by the then Labour Government. However, following lobbying from RIBA, prominent architects and other bodies, the government decided to retain the policy, changing it so that it was more clearly focused on delivering contemporary ('groundbreaking' and 'innovative') development. Paragraph 11 of PPS7 stated:

*"11. Very occasionally the exceptional quality and innovative nature of the design of a proposed, isolated new house may provide this special justification for granting planning permission. Such a design should be truly outstanding and groundbreaking, for example in its use of materials, methods of construction or its contribution to protecting and enhancing the environment, so helping to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas. The value of such a building will be found in its reflection of the highest standards in contemporary architecture, the significant enhancement of its immediate setting and its sensitivity to the defining characteristics of the local area."*

- 3.5: It is important to note that unlike PPG7, PPS7 required that a design must be both truly outstanding and groundbreaking e.g. in its use of materials, methods of construction or contribution to protecting and enhancing the environment, it is also important to note in this iteration of the clause, the qualification that such developments may be appropriate only 'very occasionally'.
- 3.6: The then Planning Minister, Keith Hill, explained<sup>7</sup> the reasons for the retention and rewording of the clause as follows:

*"Not only do we hope that cutting-edge designs for country houses will raise the standards of rural housing more widely, but we also expect them to leave a legacy from today's top architects for the history books of the future."*

- 3.7: The clause's retention was fully supported at the time by the then President of the Royal Institute of British Architects, George Ferguson who stated that:

*"This clause is greatly welcomed and is a brave and vital endorsement by government of the value of excellence in design. The country house through the ages has been one of the defining elements of our architecture and social history. It has embraced all styles and types and should continue to be characterised by its excellence rather than an adherence to any one architectural movement."*

#### NPPF (2012)

- 3.8: When the government introduced the National Planning Policy Framework in March 2012 it retained the 'Gummer clause', albeit in an amended format, at paragraph 55.
- 3.9: The wording in paragraph 55 of the 2012 NPPF was fractionally changed when the revised NPPF was introduced in the 2018 NPPF and in subsequent revisions.
- 3.10: The wording of the policy, now included in paragraph 80 (July 2021 NPPF) states:

*"80. Planning policies and decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside unless one or more of the following circumstances apply:*

*e) the design is of exceptional quality, in that it:*

*- is truly outstanding, reflecting the highest standards in architecture, and would help to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas; and*

---

<sup>7</sup> [http://newsbbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk\\_politics/3531752.stm](http://newsbbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/3531752.stm)

---

*- would significantly enhance its immediate setting, and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area."*

- 3.11: Critically the new policy dropped the requirement to be both of exceptional design and be innovative. The NPPF Impact Assessment (July 2012) does not provide any reference to the reason for this change in policy in either 2012, 2018 or 2019 versions. Also removed is the qualification that this type of development should take place only 'very exceptionally' as well as the requirement for new houses to be 'groundbreaking'.
- 3.12: It is considered that the key reason for the change in policy was that it was proving exceptionally difficult for applicants to demonstrate both exceptional quality and innovation. The key test is now meeting one or the other; the current planning tests at paragraph 80e to the NPPF is therefore significantly easier to meet than the test included in the now-cancelled policy of PPS7 paragraph 11.
- 3.13: In addition, the three examples of what a truly outstanding design could contain have also been removed (use of materials, methods of construction or its contribution to protecting and enhancing the environment). Again, there is no record of the reason for the removal of these specific sections however, it is considered that this may have been intended to avoid prescription and open up the scope and opportunity for new country houses to be delivered.

NPPF (2018, 2019)

- 3.14: The redrafting of the NPPF in 2018 and 2019 raised no substantive changes to the wording of the policy.

NPPF (2021)

- 3.15: The only change to the wording of the policy was the removal of the word innovative from the clause 'truly outstanding or innovative'.
- 3.16: This reflects the recommendation from a government commissioned report<sup>8</sup> into delivering the highest design quality. The report raised concern that a building which was innovative but not truly outstanding in design terms may not be acceptable in the countryside.
- 3.17: The government has clarified<sup>9</sup>, on the change, that it in no way wishes to discourage innovative isolated homes:

*"(the government) is satisfied that the change in wording of paragraph 80(e) does not discourage the development of innovative isolated homes, rather it ensures that these homes are of outstanding design, while still allowing innovation."*

---

<sup>8</sup> Living with beauty: report of the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission (2019)

<sup>9</sup> Government response to the National Planning Policy Framework and National Model Design Code: consultation proposals

Updated 20 July 2021

---



- 3.18: The phrase 'truly outstanding' can clearly cover in design terms many different areas including aesthetic appearance, detailing, construction method and innovation.
- 3.19: As will be confirmed later in this statement the new house at Hodder Grange can be considered to be truly outstanding in design terms (and has been by an expert Design Review Panel) even before its innovative credentials are considered. These credentials however, clearly further the case for the design to be considered 'truly outstanding'.

## CONCLUSION

- 3.20: John Gummer (now Lord Deben) made the following comments in an article<sup>10</sup> from 2013, on the continued relevance of the new country house clause:

*"Today, 16 years, after the 'Gummer clause' was introduced I am delighted that it still exists in the legislation. In some ways, **the principle of outstanding or innovative design** being given privileged treatment in the planning process **has been strengthened in the new National Planning Policy Framework** (introduced by Eric Pickles, Secretary of State for Communities) by an apparently minor, yet significant, changes to the keywording. Previously designs were required to be 'exceptional and innovative', but now the clause calls for 'exceptional or innovative' designs. That little word 'or' promises to give the clause a good deal more scope.*

*...Our need is for planners sufficiently far-sighted to understand the importance of keeping the great tradition of the country house alive. They will have to be strong and principled enough to stand firm against today's egalitarian miseries and gradgrinds who do not see how noble is the desire to build something special and lasting for the family and the future.*

*...I happen to believe that the country house is one of our great contributions to the art of the world. However, it will not continue as a living tradition if people who aspire to build one can't get planning permission..." (emphasis in bold added)*

---

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.redbookagency.com/redbook-news/1505/john\\_gummer\\_on\\_new\\_country\\_houses](http://www.redbookagency.com/redbook-news/1505/john_gummer_on_new_country_houses)

---

## 4. THE HODDER GRANGE PROPOSALS

### INTRODUCTION

4.1: The proposals for an exceptional quality new house under paragraph 80e are put forward to provide a new house for the applicants Michael and Liz Bell and family.

4.2: As confirmed in their Personal Statement accompanying the application:

*"We have been lucky enough to call the Hodder Valley our home for 24 years, having bought Manor Farm in 1997 and since raising our family here. Manor Farm was our first venture together, and over the years we have lovingly restored it to the home it is today. Not only have we refurbished and extended the house, but also manage the 27 acres surrounding the property with great care."*

4.3: Construction of the new house would be taken forward by the Bells and it constitutes a self-build property. A restriction to confirm the self-build status is set out in planning conditions and restrictions section (seven) of the statement. This also attracts weight in the determination process, although clearly paragraph 80e is the principal planning policy of relevance.

4.4: The vision of the Bells for Hodder Grange is also set out in their Personal Statement:

*"We laid out our priorities from the beginning. Understanding the local fine houses as precedent studies and drawing on our mutual passion for Georgian architecture, we wanted to create a Georgian family home of manageable proportions. It was important that it blended seamlessly into the surrounding AONB. We have strived to achieve this through adding more sympathetic landscaping whilst simultaneously having the components of being environmentally sound with the use of sustainable materials and ultimately creating a Passivhaus. A house for the future."*

### DEVELOPMENT OF THE HODDER GRANGE PROPOSALS

4.5: The proposals for Hodder Grange, which have now reached the planning application stage have been brought about following an extensive period of site and area analysis (some of which is confirmed in section two), design development, pre-application engagement and design review, and finalisation.

4.6: This extensive process is set out in the Design and Access Statement which, in relation to the design process, confirms the following stages:

- **Client Commission & Brief | October 2019:** Following the client commission and provision of a brief for a new house and landscape, a significant amount of site assessment and local area research took place.

- **Initial Sketch Schemes | December 2019 - March 2020:** Based on initial research it was possible to provide a number of initial sketches to the applicants.
- **Country Houses Report Received | April 2020:** Initial report of Hinchliffe Heritage who had been commissioned to undertake a thorough review of country houses in the Forest of Bowland. This work was considered important in order to ensure that the proposals for Hodder Grange would be *'sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area'* as required by Paragraph 80e. sketches had been produced iteratively and in consultation with John Hinchliffe.
- **Further Design Development | March - May 2020:** Following receipt of feedback from the applicants and review of the final country house report the design was then developed further given the importance of architectural details to the proposed design.
- **Pre-application Submission | May 2020:** A submission was made to Ribble Valley Borough Council
- **Pre-application Written Feedback | June 2020:** Formal written feedback was received, and further meetings and correspondence then took place. Ribble Valley Borough Council confirmed that it would expect a design review panel
- **Post-Pre-application Design Development for DRP | June 2020 - May 2021:** After the pre-application process an extensive amount of time was spent preparing updated and more detailed plans for a presentation to Traditional Architecture Group (TAG) Design Review Panel (DRP). This period also included the visit noted below.
- **Jeremy Musson Site Visit | April 2021:** Some months before the designs were to be presented to the TAG DRP, the applicants commissioned the input of Jeremy Musson. Mr Musson is an architectural historian and recognised country house expert,
- **First Design Review Panel | June 2021:** A meeting of the TAG DRP took place at Chaigley with a site visit before a presentation on, and discussion of, the plans. An image from the meeting is shown in Fig 4 below.
- **Post-DRP Design Development | June - August 2021:** Following the first Design Review Panel a number of months were spent further developing the plans to respond to the comments received.
- **Finalisation of Planning Application Drawings | September 2021:** The planning application plans were then finalised and at the same time were submitted back to the TAG DRP for a second review.

- Second Design Review Panel – September - November 2021: Additional information was submitted to the Design Review Panel, further suggestions were provided around the detailing of the house and revisions were made to reflect this. The full support of the DRP was confirmed at the end of November and the feedback is included as Annexe I to this statement.

4.7: The TAG DRP final feedback letter confirms the Design Review Panel process followed:

*“This final review follows an engagement with the Applicants and the Design Team over a six-month period which started with the first formal review on 21st June 2021.*

*Since the first review there were additional on-line assessments of progress on the 12th August, 12th October and 23rd November. There were also a number of informal telephone discussions with the scheme architect”*



*Fig. 4 Design Review Panel in June 2020 meeting following site visit*

## PROPOSALS FOR HODDER GRANGE

4.8: The proposals for the site are the result of extensive discussions between the architect, landscape architect, ecologist, heritage specialist and the applicants in order to ensure that it not only meets the tests of paragraph 80e but also meets the applicants' requirements.

4.9: Pre-application feedback was also sought from Ribble Valley Borough Council and the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Beauty Management Team and the final proposals reflect discussions with these organisations.

### ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN STYLE

4.10: The new house is proposed in a traditional design style, to reflect the country house tradition of the local area.

4.11: As confirmed in section two of the statement and the section above, the proposed designs have been developed based on an extensive assessment of the site and local area, including its country house tradition.

4.12: Detailed information on the design style of the house and its historical and architectural influences are included in not only the Architect's Design Statement but also in the Country House report from Hinchliffe Heritage, and the Traditional Architecture Group's Design Review Feedback at Annexe 2 to this statement.

4.13: That commentary need not be replicated here, however Fig.5 below includes extracts from the design statement with further information on the materials and details. The materials palette is largely local millstone grit (sandstone), ashlar stone, Blue/grey slate roof tiles, red/brown brick, painted timber windows & doors and black powder-coated aluminium rainwater goods.



Fig. 5. Extracts from design statement showing materiality and detailing

4.14: As shown in Fig. 6 below Hodder Grange consists of a house with an attached courtyard. Rising topography to the east and tree planting all provide a context for the development.





*Fig. 6. The house and its attached courtyard are seen in the context of rising ground and existing*



### GROUND-BREAKING SUSTAINABLE DESIGN (COMBINED TO TRADITIONAL DESIGN)

- 4.15: The architectural design of the house is clearly bespoke to the local area and its country house tradition.
- 4.16: However, at a project level, one area in which the house is entirely ground-breaking is in its sustainability.
- 4.17: The proposals have been carefully developed by the architect in consultation with the sustainability advisor, Ecospheric, whose Sustainability Statement accompanies the application.
- 4.18: The new house at Hodder Grange will be constructed to Passivhaus Plus certification, a high level of this globally recognised energy efficiency standard. This will make it:
- The first example in the world of a Passivhaus Plus house constructed in a traditional design style anywhere in the world.
  - The first example of a Passivhaus Plus new build property in the North-West.
- 4.19: The house will also be a 'True Zero Energy' and Zero Carbon House.
- 4.20: Hodder Grange will also be petro-chemical free in construction.

- 4.21: The accompanying Sustainability Statement provides detail on the significant modelling work undertaken to be able to confirm the sustainability credentials of the new house.
- 4.22: It is proposed that all of the sustainability credentials mentioned above form part of restrictions placed on any grant of planning approval, as confirmed in section seven of this statement.
- 4.23: The sustainability credentials of the house, in combination with other aspects, have formed part of the Traditional Architecture Group's Design Review Panel's support for the scheme:

*"The Panel feel that the resulting building design and integrated enhancements in landscape, ecology and energy efficiency that are part of the scheme represent a scheme that should be considered of a quality that will fulfil the requirements of NPPF paragraph 80(e) above."*

#### LIGHTING

- 4.24: Consideration has been given to external lighting with a section included in the Design and Access Statement confirming that measures to minimise external lighting impacts are proposed. It is proposed that a condition requiring all external lighting to be agreed with the council is attached to any grant of planning consent, as confirmed in section seven.

#### LANDSCAPE AND ACCESS

- 4.25: The project has been landscape-led as appropriate for a new country house.
- 4.26: This is confirmed in the Traditional Architecture Group DRP's commentary at Annexe 2 which states that:

*"A detailed landscape appraisal has been undertaken and acts as the foundation for the design and subsequent development. Projects such as these should be landscape and contextually led with the proposed scheme informed by and growing from the landscape, visual and contextual (and cultural) analysis. This then sets a clear planning and landscape character context."*

- 4.27: As shown below in Fig 7 the new house will be sited around 300m from Higher Hodder Bridge. There will be no intervisibility between the new house and the bridge.



Fig 7: New house in its landscape setting

4.28: The landscape proposals not only include the extensive field in which the new house would be sited but also two fields to the east of it, which are to receive landscape enhancements, including reinstatement of hedgerows, new grassland margins and buffer planting to create landscape corridors.

4.29: The main field itself is to be the subject of a significant amount of new tree planting to enhance the area, help nestle the house in the site and create biodiversity net gain.

4.30: In total the landscape proposals will include:

- 1.4ha of new woodland planting
- 1,120m of new hedgerow planting
- 1.2ha of new species rich grassland margins
- 0.825ha of buffer planting landscape corridors

4.31: These landscape proposals will deliver a 609.2% biodiversity net gain as confirmed in calculations submitted as part of the application.

4.32: The new 1.4ha of tree planting will also deliver wider environmental benefits alongside biodiversity net gain.

4.33: The Woodland Carbon Code confirms that 'A new native woodland can capture 300-400 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent per hectare (tCO<sub>2</sub>e/ha) by year 50, and 400-500 tCO<sub>2</sub>e/ha by year 100.'

- 4.34: On that basis and using the median numbers, the 1.4ha of new native (semi-deciduous) woodland planting proposed will sequester 490 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> over a 50-year period (and 630 tonnes over a 100 year period).
- 4.35: If the multiplier referenced at page 27 of the Ribble Valley Borough Council Climate Change Strategy 2021- 2030 (August 2021), of 7.1 tonnes of carbon sequestered per hectare of woodland per year, the amounts set about above would be increased.
- 4.36: The site will be accessed from an existing access adjacent to Higher Hodder Bridge. The intention is that the access retains a low-key and understated appearance from the road. There will be significant tree planting around the new access.
- 4.37: There is an existing access track which enters the site field at the most northerly point of it. This secondary access point will be retained for maintenance, agricultural and emergency access only. The secondary access route across the field to the courtyard will then be via a rural track with a central grass margin following the existing contours of the field.

## 5. ASSESSMENT OF NEW HOUSE AGAINST PARAGRAPH 80E POLICY TESTS

5.1: Paragraph 80e of the NPPF sets out the criteria (special circumstances) which must be complied with in order for planning permission to be received for a new country house

e) the design is of exceptional quality, in that it:

- is truly outstanding, reflecting the highest standards in architecture, and would help to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas; and

- would significantly enhance its immediate setting and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area.

5.2: In assessing whether the proposal meets the exceptional quality test within paragraph 80 we address the above points individually in this section of the statement and with reference to case studies from across the country in order to arrive at a conclusion of whether the relevant test is met.

### EXCEPTIONAL QUALITY

5.3: Whether a proposed design is of exceptional quality is dependent upon whether the other (sub) tests of the policy are met (i.e., the extent to which the design is truly outstanding, will raise standards of design in rural areas, will significantly enhance its immediate setting, and is sensitive the defining characteristics of the local area). This is clear from the wording of the policy and the use of the words 'in that it'.

5.4: It is the view of the TAG DRP that exceptional quality design and the sub-tests of the policy are met.

5.5: The relevant sub-tests of the policy are set out and assessed below.

### TRULY OUTSTANDING, REFLECTING THE HIGHEST STANDARDS OF ARCHITECTURE

5.6: Firstly, it is considered to be clear that the site characteristics hold the possibilities for a design of truly outstanding. Not all sites provide the right canvas for a truly outstanding design. The Traditional Architecture Group's second response confirms that:

*"The principal point is that the site is extraordinary both in the possibilities it offers for a great design but also in its context"*

5.7: Secondly, the PROCESS that the design team has undertaken is one that can be considered to be appropriate in order to ensure that a design meets the potential that the site offers.



5.8: Section four of this statement makes it clear how the designs have evolved based on a highly rigorous process of site and area assessment and design development. This has included a number of historic building and design experts who have been introduced to ensure that the design is appropriate to its setting and the country house tradition. This is the type of process which can then lead to a truly outstanding design that can be considered to represent the highest standards in architecture.

5.9: Thirdly, in terms of Design Review Panel feedback, the first Traditional Architecture Group Design Review Panel response<sup>11</sup> on the emerging designs, in July 2021, made it clear that the project had the potential to be considered (in its final form 'truly outstanding').

*"Subject to the production of more detailed information and further evidence to support the ability of the design to achieve the Passivhaus standards (which formed an integral and highly important aspect of the proposal) in association with further development of the design with regard to the impact in the setting this has the potential to be truly outstanding."*

5.10: The final TAG response in November 2021 states that:

*"Since the first review there were additional on-line assessments of progress on the 12th August, 12th October and 23rd November. There were also a number of informal telephone discussions with the scheme architect."*

*To reiterate, the Panel feel that the resulting building design and integrated enhancements in landscape, ecology and energy efficiency that are part of the scheme represent a scheme that should be considered of a quality that will fulfil the requirements of NPPF paragraph 80(e).*

5.11: The final designs for Hodder Grange can be considered to be truly outstanding on the basis of:

1. The extent to which they have developed from a rigorous process of site and area assessment and design development.

2. The artistic and intellectual depth of the design. The design responds to the country house tradition, but in a locally and regionally specific way, with references to George Webster and his work at Downham Hall, amongst others. (TAG Comment: *'They have worked hard to refine the scheme and increase the artistic and intellectual depth necessary for it to be successful.'*)

3. The way in which the design has been landscape led, in order to be appropriate to its setting. (*TAG Comment: 'A detailed landscape appraisal has been undertaken and acts as the foundation for the design and subsequent development. Projects such as these should be landscape and contextually led with the proposed scheme informed by and growing from the landscape, visual and contextual (and cultural) analysis'*)

4. The sustainable design credentials of the new house and the fact that it would represent a global first: the first Passivhaus Premium certified house in a traditional design style anywhere in the world. This together with the way that the traditional design has been married to the technological styles in order to create a cutting-edge house appropriate to its setting:

*'TAG Comment: It is understood by the panel that the building form is driven not just by an historic aesthetic set by precedent but also by the science driving the energy performance of the building. The simple square and rectangular forms of the plan are necessary to maintain a good surface-to-volume ratio of the building and to make the most of efficient orientation. The resulting pavilion form of the house speaks both to its functionality as well as the romantic notion of discovery of the house as an "ideal" country villa nested into the landscape.'*

As confirmed in paragraph 3.17 of the statement, whilst the word innovative is no longer referenced in the policy, the government is clear that it wishes to see innovation as part of the delivery of 'truly outstanding design'.

5. The landscape enhancements delivered by the landscaping scheme, as confirmed in section four, which will result in a 609% ecological net gain.

5.12: On the basis of the above information, as well as the endorsement from TAG, Ribble Valley Borough Council can have clear confidence that the design is truly outstanding, reflecting the highest standards of architecture, in design terms.

### WOULD HELP TO RAISE STANDARDS OF DESIGN MORE GENERALLY IN RURAL AREAS

5.13: The proposals at Hodder Grange would help to raise standards of design (architectural, sustainability, landscape and biodiversity) in multiple ways:

1. The delivery of the first Passivhaus Premium house (in any design style) in the North-West, and the first such house in a traditional design style anywhere in the world, provides a clear opportunity to raise standards of sustainable design. This will help to demonstrate

how designers can respond to the challenges of climate change in an appropriate way.

2. The house would represent a local example of truly outstanding traditional design, which can inspire architects and clients wishing to develop residential and commercial development in various different contexts.

3. The new house will also provide the opportunity for local tradespeople to work on a house designed to the highest standards of architecture. Learning outcomes from working on a house of exceptional quality may also help to raise standards of design by providing the opportunity to transfer skills learned or enhanced to other projects.

4. Finally, as there is increasing focus on ecological net gain and 'rewilding' the landscape and ecological net gain proposals which will deliver a 609% ecological net gain can also serve as an exemplar of how to incorporate enhancements into built development, therefore raising standards locally.

5.14: In terms of the specific mechanisms to ensure that the proposals can help to raise standards of design in a rural area, a number of binding commitments are proposed.

5.15: More information on the specific detail of these commitments are provided in the proposed conditions and restrictions sections of this statement (section eight) however in summary it is proposed that:

1. As a requirement of planning consent being granted visits to the site during the construction process by students of architecture, sustainability, landscape and other disciplines is encouraged.

2. A bespoke website would be set up for the house whereby those interested in the house could view further details. The website would include details of the architectural design, sustainable construction (including technical details), and post-construction energy performance of the building. The website would have a 'construction blog' allowing interested parties to review the construction process. It would also provide details of how anyone wishing to visit the house could do so.

3. One way in which the credentials of a design scheme can be highlighted, thereby helping to raise standards of design in rural areas, is via entry into design award schemes. On that basis it is intended that as a binding commitment the scheme should be entered into the following design awards scheme:

- RIBA Regional Awards – Leading to RIBA House of the Year Awards
- Landscape Institute Awards
- British Association of Landscape Awards
- Society of Garden Designers Awards
- Annual Energy Efficiency Awards
- SIBSI Annual Building Performance Awards
- RTPI Planning Awards

4. A commitment to allowing the Traditional Architecture Design Review Panel, Ribble Valley Borough Council, the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Beauty Management Team and any other organisations involved in the assessment process, to visit the completed scheme.

5.16: In addition to these specific mechanisms, it is also noted that the proposals would be visible from the public right of way network stimulating interest in the design. Whilst the house would not be visible from the entrance to the site from the highway, it would be possible to consider including a small sign providing a link to the project website, in order that those interested in it could review further details.

5.17: For the above reasons, it is considered clear that the Hodder Grange project in terms of both its inherent qualities and the mechanisms proposed to disseminate knowledge of these qualities, has the clear potential to raise standards of design in rural areas, in both the Ribble Valley, wider north-west and beyond.

#### SIGNIFICANTLY ENHANCE ITS IMMEDIATE SETTING

5.18: Firstly, it is important to note that of the over 200 new houses that have been approved under the policy, all have been considered to significantly enhance their immediate setting. This includes a large number of houses in AONBs, reflecting the point raised in section two of this statement, that part of the natural beauty of AONBs is the rich history of human settlement. Some of these examples, are included in Appendix I to this statement.

5.19: The new country house policy has clearly been designed on the basis that a new house of truly outstanding design quality *can* significantly enhance its immediate setting. In addition to the examples in Appendix I, some examples of houses which have been considered to significantly enhance their immediate setting, including in AONBs are provided below, before the extent to which the Hodder Grange proposals will meet this test is considered.



Fig 8. above (clockwise from top left): Examples of approved country houses at Icomb, Cotswold AONB; Mines Park, Cambridgeshire; The Paise, North Pennines AONB; and, The Fossil House, Blackdown Hills AONB

### EXAMPLE 1: ICOMB, COTSWOLD AONB

5.20: In allowing an appeal, which Rural Solutions were the agent of, for a new house in the Cotswold AONB, the Inspector confirmed that the visible building would, in its materiality and design qualities further the qualities of the AONB stating that:

*“36. The building would be visible as it does not seek to hide away, and the paragraph 80e) exception, as with its antecedents back to Planning Policy Guidance Note 7 ‘Sustainable development in Rural Areas’, does not require such an approach. Built form is a feature of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and the addition of natural oolitic limestone has placed the building firmly within that setting. The quality of the architecture and landscaping combined would be a positive addition to the site and would enhance the stock of built form of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, while conserving the natural features of the designated area. To conclude on this section, the proposal is sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area, and as a result of the foregoing analysis, the overall conclusion is that the proposal satisfies the requirements of paragraph 80e)”*



**Relevance to Hodder Grange Proposals:** The proposals would also incorporate traditional materials, and as confirmed in the 'Country Houses' report from Hinchliffe Heritage, reflect the country house tradition of the Forest of Bowland AONB, therefore furthering the local stock of country houses.

#### EXAMPLE 2: MINES PARK CAMBRIDGESHIRE

5.21: The Planning Inspectorate in allowing an appeal into the refusal of planning consent, in this case for a contemporary style house stated that:

*"I do not accept the assumption, implicit in the Council's reason for refusal that because the house would be very prominent it would necessarily be detrimental to the character of the landscape. The building has been designed as a sculptural object and is intended to act as a local landmark...In my view building would make a positive contribution to the landscape in the same way that other buildings, sculptures and other artefacts have done in the past."*

5.22: **Relevance to Hodder Grange Proposals:** Whilst the Hodder Grange proposals are not 'very prominent' being seen only from the public right of way at the opposite side of the river, the decision does confirm that the visibility of a house in a landscape does not equate to harm and in fact can more a positive contribution.

#### EXAMPLE 3: THE PAISE, NORTH PENNINES AONB

5.23: The Paise is another example of where a new dwelling was considered to meet the tests of the new country house clause (PPS7, paragraph 11).

5.24: The site is located within the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and development was approved by Tynedale District Council, which now forms part of Northumberland Council.

5.25: In terms of the extent to which the proposed new house would be compatible with its AONB context and would comply with the tests of the new country house clause, the Officer report on the proposed developments notes as follows:

*"In the current proposal the applicant has adopted a three tiered approach to the landscape using the concepts of a "wider landscape", an "outer core" and an "inner core" which in Officers' opinion has resulted in a scheme which would make a positive addition to the AONB and is sensitive to its defining characteristics. It is considered that the immediate setting to the dwelling would be significantly enhanced in a number of ways, but primarily in that the proposal gives dominance to the landscape, whilst providing a contemporary home for the occupants. Due to the design ethos which underpins the whole development, it is considered that the value of the building and landscape enhancements would achieve significant enhancement in a*

*manner sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area including the AONB....It is considered that this technologically advanced scheme would be totally compatible in visual and landscape terms."*

**Relevance to Hodder Grange Proposals:** The Paise project demonstrates an example of the way in which a project which is landscape-led, as the TAG DRP have acknowledged Hodder Grange to be, can be considered to significantly enhance its immediate setting.

#### EXAMPLE 4: THE FOSSIL HOUSE, BLACKDOWN HILLS AONB

5.26: In May 2014 East Devon District Council resolved to grant planning consent for a new fossil shaped house at North Grays Farm, which is within the Blackdown Hills AONB.

5.27: The application was supported by the Blackdown Hills AONB Team who noted that:

*"the striking structure' will 'sit quietly' in the pastoral landscape; the soft, naturalistic appearance is an approach that appears well suited to a rural building in a rural location;'* and

*'While I would imagine that much of the cutting edge technology and design standards to be employed will be of national and international interest, I do consider that some of the design principles could be applied more generally within the Blackdown Hills..."*

5.28: East Devon District Council accepted that the new house would 'significantly enhance its immediate setting' due to the quality of the design and the major ecological enhancements approved.

5.29: The house was subsequently featured on the Grand Designs TV programme in 2017.

5.30: **Relevance to Hodder Grange Proposals:** The house provides an example of how a new house approved under the policy can be considered by a local authority and AONB Management Team to significantly enhance its immediate setting. The project also demonstrates how a new house can help to raise standards of design by receiving significant wider interest (in that case Grand Designs, leading to numerous press articles).

5.31: The Hodder Grange proposals can be considered to significantly enhance its immediate setting in a number of ways:

I. On the basis of the principle that a new house and landscape setting of exceptional quality can significantly enhance an undeveloped field. It is on the basis of this historic principle that the new country house policy has been developed.

2. On the basis that the new house will provide an enhancement and continuity of the country house tradition of the local area, which is confirmed extensively in the application documents. The natural beauty of an AONB is based in part of the rich history of human settlement; Hodder Grange will further that rich history.

3. On the basis of ecological enhancement of 609% as confirmed in biodiversity net gain calculations.

4. On the basis of landscape enhancement. As confirmed in section four landscape enhancements, include amongst others: 1.4ha of new woodland planting; 1,120m of new hedgerow planting; 1.2ha of new species rich grassland margins; and 0.825ha of buffer planting landscape corridors.

5. As also confirmed in section four the planting of 1.4ha of new trees will sequester 490 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> over a 50-year period (and 630 tonnes over a 100 year period).

6. Water drainage. As confirmed at p.68 of the Landscape Design Statement, the proposals will: *“Integrate wider low-key natural drainage and attenuation measures to manage water runoff from the proposed house and existing landscape with the aspiration of a net reduction and, Reduce runoff into the River Hodder.”*

HODDER GRANGE PARAGRAPH 80e	<b>5.6 HOW ARE WE ACHIEVING SIGNIFICANT LANDSCAPE ENHANCEMENT?</b>
<b>LANDSCAPE DESIGN STATEMENT</b>  MR & MRS M. BELL  MARCH 2020  PREPARED BY RURAL SOLUTIONS LTD	<p>To achieve a significant enhancement a series of landscape interventions are embodied within the Landscape Masterplan which collectively:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build on the inherent positive landscape qualities documented in the Forest of Bowland AONB, national and regional landscape designations,</li> <li>Embrace the positive attributes of the wider land holding by addressing any assets which require enhancement or more effective management, and</li> <li>Promote opportunities to diversify and enhance existing ecological bases whilst providing recommendations which encourage habitat diversification and ecological variety.</li> </ul> <p><b>Character</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creation of a country house landscape to replicate the establish character of NCA33. The wider landscape embraces the introduction of woodland belts, estate railings, parkland trees, a formal house setting, streams, ponds within the context of an isolated country house.</li> <li>Reinstatement and restoration of drystone walls, hedgerows and associated trees.</li> </ul> <p><b>Vernacular</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creation of a country house in a traditional vernacular, reflecting the development of this type of house in the AONB as described in NCA33:</li> <li>A particular feature of this area is the number of large country houses and halls set in parkland, such as Ellet Grange, Waddow Hall, Bolton Park and Leagram Hall, as well as country estates, such as Abbeystead, which have developed from the medieval period</li> <li>Positioning of country house along a valley side reflecting the historic pattern of these houses in their valley setting as referred to in NCA33: the number of large farms and country estates that are scattered along the valley sides.</li> </ul> <p><b>Historical</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reflect the historical and cultural heritage of the large country houses prevalent in this area:</li> <li>SEO 1: Protect and enhance the distinctive landscape character of the Bowland Fringe and Pendle Hill NCA for its sense of place, historical and cultural heritage, tranquility, accessibility and recreational opportunities.</li> <li>Reinstatement of a country house in close vicinity to the lost historic 'Bashall Lodge' country house and gardens which were located within 1km.</li> <li>Draw inspiration from the romantic era paintings of JMW Turner who painted Browsholme Hall and Ecclesford Bridge in the picturesque style.</li> </ul> <p><b>Land Management</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce less intense grazing regimes with a diversification of the sward from agricultural to parkland focus. Reduced grazing numbers and sward diversification would improve character and ecological base.</li> <li>A program of tree and woodland management to ensure long term establishment, habitat creation and diversification.</li> <li>Hedge laying and diversification of species base.</li> </ul> <p><b>Ecology</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Species rich meadow margins with rough grazed zones at higher elevations for ground nesting birds.</li> <li>Reintroduction of species rich hedgerows.</li> <li>Develop additional aquatic and marginal habitats to address existing and proposed water runoff with the aspiration of significantly enhancing the ecological baseline through habitat creation and diversification.</li> <li>Habitats achieved through the creation of multiple layers including, ponds, scrapes, streams, soak-aways and bio retention.</li> <li>Creation of riparian woodland habitats.</li> </ul> <p><b>Woodland</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Additional native woodland planting of oak, alder and ash substitute to reinforce local character and increase quantities of woodland in the AONB.</li> <li>Introduction of a native, scalloped woodland edge adjacent to the south east plantation outside client ownership to ensure a long-term permanent character is promoted.</li> <li>Inclusion of riparian woodland in isolated areas adjacent to the River Hodder to manage riverbank erosion.</li> <li>Management of deadwood and fallen timber to create hibernacula's and a richer, more varied insect base.</li> </ul> <p><b>Water/Drainage</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integrate wider low-key natural drainage and attenuation measures to manage water runoff from the proposed house and existing landscape with the aspiration of a net reduction.</li> <li>Reduce runoff into the River Hodder.</li> </ul>

Fig 9 P.68 of the Landscape Design Statement sets out how significant landscape enhancement is achieved in character; vernacular; historical; land management; ecology; woodland; and water/drainage terms.

5.32: The Traditional Architecture Group's November 2021 comments state that:

*"The proposed design should enhance an already intrinsically beautiful setting. The Panel believes the scheme now does so."*

5.33: It is also noted that emerging proposals have been shared with the Forest of Bowland AONB Management Team which has raised no concerns as to the extent to which the new house can significantly enhance its immediate setting.

5.34: On the basis of the history of the new country house clause and its intentions; the implementation of the policy since 1997 with new houses considered to significantly enhance their setting, including in AONBs on multiple occasions; the specific enhancements as listed above; and the plaudits of the TAG DRP; that the Hodder Grange proposals will significantly enhance their immediate setting.

#### BE SENSITIVE TO THE DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LOCAL AREA

5.35: Sensitivity to the defining characteristics of the local area is in many ways linked to the significant enhancement sub-test.

5.36: As confirmed throughout this statement, the Hodder Grange proposals have been brought forward based on an extensive site and area assessment, including a detailed assessment of the defining country house building characteristics of the Forest of Bowland and its immediate surroundings.

5.37: The comments of the Traditional Architecture Group Design Review Panel confirm this level of assessment:

*"A detailed landscape appraisal has been undertaken and acts as the foundation for the design and subsequent development. Projects such as these should be landscape and contextually led with the proposed scheme informed by and growing from the landscape, visual and contextual (and cultural) analysis. This then sets a clear planning and landscape character context."*

*There are two parts to this appraisal: a) the review of the general siting and proposed landscape treatment and, b) the heritage report of local country houses by Hinchcliffe Heritage which outlines features relevant to the scheme from the local built context."*

*Some further information and research has also been done regarding the designs of George Webster which has also positively informed the scheme; this will be discussed in the later sections."*

5.38: It is considered that in terms of the principle of a new country house on this site, its architectural philosophy, materials, and landscaping, that Hodder

Grange can be considered to be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area.

## CONCLUSION

5.39: On the basis of the above assessment and with reference to other houses approved under the policy, including those referenced in the statement and appendix I, it is considered that the Hodder Grange proposals, represent a truly outstanding proposal that marries extremely high standards of sustainability with the highest standards of architecture and landscape design.

5.40: It is therefore considered that the exceptional quality design test is met.

5.41: In its conclusion, the Traditional Architecture Design Group noted that:

*“To reiterate, the Panel feel that the resulting building design and integrated enhancements in landscape, ecology and energy efficiency that are part of the scheme represent a scheme that should be considered of a quality that will fulfil the requirements of NPPF paragraph 80(e).*

*The building process that would be part of this project in itself would be a significant, exceptional and innovative departure from the norm, it would, in the terms of the NPPF policy would be... truly outstanding, reflecting the highest standards in architecture, and would help to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas and would significantly enhance its immediate setting, and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area”*



## 6. ASSESSMENT OF OTHER LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES OF RELEVANCE

### INTRODUCTION

- 6.1: Whilst paragraph 80e is the principal planning policy that is relevant to the proposal, there are clearly other policies at both a national and local level that are of relevance.
- 6.2: The Hodder Grange proposals are assessed against these policies below.

### LOCAL POLICY

- 6.3: We have reviewed the adopted development plan policies of Ribble Valley Borough Council. We note that there are no policies that directly address this form of development i.e., the new country house.
- 6.4: In relation to local policy, all councils have rural restraint policies relating to the location of new housing. However, it is crucial to note that in every appeal case we have reviewed across the country the Secretary of State has taken the view that a house that meets the exacting test of paragraph 80e (or preceding versions of the policy) should not be resisted because of a local rural restraint policy on the location of new housing.
- 6.5: Paragraph 80e introduces an explicit allowance for an isolated house to be approved if it meets the tests of this national policy and there are no site or designation specific or technical planning reasons which otherwise suggest development should be restricted.
- 6.6: The principle of development on this site is established by the new country house clause in national planning policy and its application across the country in various designations and local plan area contexts. For example, in an allowed appeal<sup>12</sup> in the Cotswolds, the Inspector noted that:

*"2. There is no dispute that the site is in the countryside in policy terms, and that development would be contrary to Local Plan Policy DS4 which states that open market housing will not be permitted outside principal and non-principal settlements unless it is in accordance with other policies that expressly deal with residential development in such locations.*

*3. The scheme was promoted on the basis of meeting the provisions in paragraph 55 of the 2012 National Planning Policy Framework. This provided for an exception to the statement that planning policies and decisions should avoid the development of new isolated homes in the*

---

<sup>12</sup> : APP/F1610/W/19/3236430

*countryside, where the design was of exceptional quality or an innovative nature. That exception is now to be found in paragraph 79e) with altered wording."*

6.7: Whilst the principle of a new house in this location is established if the tests of Paragraph 80e are met, the following development plan policies are of clear relevance:

POLICY	POLICY AREA	COMMENTARY
EN2	Landscape	<p>The Planning application is supported by both a Landscape Appraisal and Landscape Visual Impact Appraisal (LVIA) and great care has been given to landscape design, both directly around the house and across the wider area covered by the proposals and impact.</p> <p>The policy states that <i>'Any development will need to contribute to the conservation of the natural beauty of the area.'</i> however opportunities are also sought for enhancement.</p> <p>The policy also states:</p> <p><i>'As a principle the Council will expect the development to be in keeping with the character of the landscape, reflecting local distinctiveness, vernacular style, scale, style, features and building materials.'</i></p> <p>In this case, great care has been given to reflecting the local distinctiveness of the country house tradition in the area as evidenced by the report from Hinchliffe Heritage. Architect and Landscape Design Statements also confirm how this policy is met.</p>
EN3	Sustainable Development and Climate Change	<p>The proposal is brought forward with an intention to be an exemplar in sustainable design and construction at the local and regional level.</p> <p>It is proposed to be the first house in the North-West to achieve the Passivhaus Plus design standard and the first in a traditional design style anywhere in the world, as well as being zero energy / true zero carbon.</p> <p>The proposed tree planting will deliver carbon</p>

		sequestration as confirmed in this statement.  In terms of sequestration and as a key case study of sustainable building design, the proposals will respond to the challenges and opportunities that are set out in the Ribble Valley Borough Council Climate Change Strategy 2021 – 2030 (August 2021).
EN4	biodiversity and Geodiversity	The policy states that:  <i>'There should, as a principle be a net enhancement of biodiversity.'</i>  This is clearly evidenced, with a 609% increase in the ecological value of the area and the proposal seeks to be a local exemplar in terms of ecological enhancement.

### NATIONAL POLICY

6.8: In addition to Paragraph 80e of the NPPF, the following policies are relevant to the Hodder Grange proposals.

NPPF PARA	POLICY AREA	COMMENTARY
39	Benefits of pre-application enquiries	The application is brought forward following pre-application engagement with Ribble Valley Borough Council and the Forest of Bowland AONB Management Team, with comments from organisations influencing design.
62	Self-Build	Policy guidance indicates that new councils should provide support for people wishing to build their own homes. The proposed new house will be a self-build project.
132	Early engagement with LPAs on design	Early engagement has taken place with the Council on the proposed design, with comments influencing the detailed design and level of design information submitted with the application.
134	Outstanding or innovative design	The policy raises similar issues to paragraph 80e. The Hodder Grange proposals can be considered to be truly outstanding as required and therefore the outstanding test of paragraph 134 is met. The proposals can also be considered to clearly represent innovative design.
174	Natural	As confirmed in this statement and supporting

	Environment	documents, full consideration has been given to policy criteria. The proposal will provide a <u>609% net gain</u> for biodiversity and also contribute to the 'rich history of human settlement' (part of the definition of natural beauty, in the AONBs), whilst at the same time protecting landscape character.
176	AONBs	As set out in this statement the proposals have been designed to enhance the landscape and scenic beauty in the AONB. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife are being enhanced and great consideration has been given to cultural heritage, on the basis that new houses can enhance cultural heritage in AONBs. Please see the AONB section of this statement for more details.

6.9: The Hodder Grange proposals are considered to not be in conflict with, or to receive support from, all relevant local and national planning policies.

## 7. PROPOSED PLANNING CONDITIONS AND RESTRICTIONS

7.1: In order to secure the exceptional design quality arising from development it is expected that Ribble Valley Borough will and should seek to control the quality, integrity and longevity of the new house and its landscaping.

7.2: This is acknowledged by the applicants to be important. It was also acknowledged by the Design Review Panel which stated that:

*“Such an aspirational project will depend on the quality of the detailing, some details are indicated and surety that a high standard of design will be executed can be safeguarded by the authority through condition.”*

7.3: Restrictions on the new house could be via a planning condition. However, the applicants and project team acknowledge that a legal agreement may equally be appropriate for some of the restrictions. The project team has been involved in other cases where a legal agreement has formed a key part of a planning decision.

7.4: The precise method of restricting the property needs to be discussed with the council in due course should it be minded approving the application.

7.5: However, the following list of proposed restrictions is provided from the applicants and project team, in order to assist Ribble Valley Borough Council and give full confidence in the delivery of an exceptional quality project.

### PROPOSED RESTRICTION LIST

- **Self-Build restriction:** The new house shall be restricted to a self-build property. This is in order to ensure that the proposal adds to the delivery of a self-build plots in Ribble Valley.
- **Passive House Plus:** The new house shall be constructed to Passive House Plus standards. Necessary certifications shall be received at the appropriate stage of the construction / occupation process and these certifications to be shared with Ribble Valley Borough Council. No changes shall be made to the project which would diminish its sustainability credentials post-planning.
- **True Zero Energy/Zero Carbon House:** A restriction requiring this method of performance as promoted in the application.
- **Petrochemical Free/Concrete Free Foundations:** A restriction requiring this method of construction as promoted in the application.
- **Detailed Landscape Management and Habitat Creation Plan:** This is appropriate to ensure the detailed delivery and ongoing management of



the landscape and new habitats created. A restriction may read: Prior to the occupation of the new dwelling a detailed landscaping management plan and habitat creation plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the council. The Landscape Management and Habitat Creation Plan shall be implemented and retained as approved. The Plan shall be reviewed on an annual basis for the first five years of occupation and shall thereafter be reviewed on a five-year basis (up to a minimum of a 10 year period) to ensure that the long-term aims and objectives of the plan are being met. Information from the reviews shall be uploaded to the website created for the house and also provided to the Council upon request. The Landscape Management and Habitat Creation Plan will set out how the habitats created to deliver biodiversity net gain will be maintained for a minimum of 30 years.

- **Lighting:** Prior to the commencement of development an external lighting scheme shall be submitted to and approved in writing by Ribble Valley Borough Council. The approved details shall be retained, and no new lighting added to the site, other than with the prior approval of the council.
- **Materials:** Prior to the commencement of development details of all walling, roofing, external areas, door and window frame materials proposed to be submitted to Ribble Valley Borough Council with sample panels produced as required. **Reason:** In order to secure the quality of development
- **Use of the Project as an Educational Resource:** This is appropriate as a requirement in order to ensure that the new house will raise standards of design in rural areas. A restriction may read: Prior to the occupation of the new house a strategy shall be submitted to the Council providing precise details on how the project will be used as an educational resource.

This shall include:

- a) Details of how the house will be publicised and made available by the Owner for visits during the construction process by:
    - (i) Further Education students in the disciplines of architecture, landscape, sustainability/engineering and ecology.
    - (ii) Primary and secondary school children from within the local area.
    - (iii) Local species recorders.
  - b) The manner in which the availability of the project for educational purposes shall be publicised by the owners.
-

- c) Details of a website that shall be set up and maintained in perpetuity. The website will contain as a minimum:
- All design and local area research documents.
  - A construction blog providing information on the construction and detailing of the new house.
  - Information on the passive house construction details and energy performance of the building.
  - Details of ongoing landscape and ecological management.
  - Contact details for anyone wishing to view the property.

## APPENDIX I – SELECTED EXAMPLES OF NEW COUNTRY HOUSES APPROVED IN AREAS OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY

Since the new country house policy there is understood to have been well in excess of 200 houses approved across the countryside.

A large number of houses have been approved in areas designated as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs).

A small number of examples of new houses approved in AONBs across the country are provided in this appendix for reference.

### BUTTERMERE, WILTSHIRE – NORTH WESSEX DOWNS AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY



The proposal for a substantial new classically designed house designed by Francis Terry was granted consent by Wiltshire Council in 2018.

The design of the house emerged from a detailed assessment of the building traditions of the local area.

The proposals involved changes to the landscape through new substantial new planting.

Relevance to proposed new house at Hodder Bridge: The proposals reflect the classical design tradition which has been used to deliver many new country houses under the policy.

## THE 'FOSSIL HOUSE', DEVON – BLACKDOWN HILLS AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY



This proposal was granted consent by East Devon Council in 2013. As with the design proposed here, this scheme takes design references from the local area. The scheme takes reference from an ammonite fossil reflecting the geological history of this part of Devon including a number of fossils found on the site.

Also of significance is the designation of the applicants' land as a County Wildlife Site, a designation which follows years of conservation of the meadows within the care of the applicants, and their subsequent approach to Natural England and entry into a voluntary Higher Level Stewardship agreement. The proposed new house is sensitive to its ecologically rich setting and proposes in perpetuity legal protection of the addition of land to, and the ongoing management and enhancement of the wildlife site as an integral part of the development proposal.

Relevance to proposed new house at Hodder Bridge: The new house delivered substantial ecological enhancement as proposed here.



## 'FALLEN TREE' HOUSE, NIDDERDALE - AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY



This scheme was granted consent in 2015 by Harrogate Borough Council. The site is set within historic woodland within the Nidderdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and is the first house to be approved in this designated area.

The design of the building is based on the idea of a fallen tree which cantilevers over a new lake and the restoration of former Victorian pleasure gardens is part of the planning application. The site was previously an old lead mine and the building will be clad in materials to reflect this including zinc and timber. Locally quarried stone will also be used in the house. The house will be zero carbon and totally efficient in terms of energy and the environment with ground source heating.

**Relevance to proposed new house at Hodder Bridge:** The proposed development was sited within an AONB. The delivery of a landscape masterplan was a requirement of the planning consent to ensure the delivery of the enhancements proposed.

## ICOMB – COTSWOLD AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY



The proposed scheme was granted consent (APP/F1610/W/19/3236430) by the Planning Inspectorate in March 2020

The Inspector stated that the main issue was:

*“10. This is whether the proposal reaches the standard of design sought in Framework paragraph 79e) for an isolated dwelling in the countryside, and this analysis will take account of the location within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the landscape character of the area.”*

The Inspector also noted the role of a Design Review Panel in the process.

*“14. Before embarking on the analysis, it is noted that the scheme was subject to appraisal by the South West Design Review Panel on 3 occasions, in July 2017, February 2018 and lastly in November 2018. The Panel commended the constructive and thoughtful way in which the appellant had responded to their comments and suggestions at each stage....Paragraph 129 of the Framework in the section on achieving well-designed places states that in assessing applications, regard should be had to any recommendations made by Design Review Panels.”*

Whilst the house is of a more contemporary style than that proposed at Hodder Bridge, the role of the landscape architect and the approach to the house was considered to be key by the Inspector:



*"17. The proposal is more than just a building and the role of the landscape architect has been central to the location of the house and other elements within the site and the design of the immediate surroundings to the building. The site slopes west down to east and the building responds to that terrain, and to the fact of the existing vehicular entrance being at the higher level. The approach drive would be long and narrow, terminating visually at a tree, containing views other than down an avenue part-way along towards the pond."*

At paragraph 36 the Inspector noted the extent to which the proposed new country house would be visible in the landscape and also how the building would reinforce the qualities of the AONB:

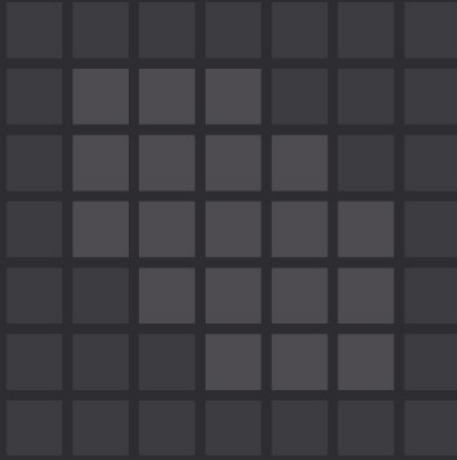
*"36. The building would be visible as it does not seek to hide away, and the paragraph 79e) exception, as with its antecedents back to Planning Policy Guidance Note 7 'Sustainable development in Rural Areas', does not require such an approach. Built form is a feature of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and the addition of natural oolitic limestone has placed the building firmly within that setting. The quality of the architecture and landscaping combined would be a positive addition to the site and would enhance the stock of built form of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, while conserving the natural features of the designated area. To conclude on this section, the proposal is sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area, and as a result of the foregoing analysis, the overall conclusion is that the proposal satisfies the requirements of paragraph 79e)."*

Relevance to proposed new house at Hodder Bridge: The proposal is one of a number of examples of where a decision maker has determined that a new country house proposal will enhance its AONB setting and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of it.

Disclaimer: The information, analysis and recommendations within this document are made by Rural Solutions Limited in good faith and represent our professional judgement on the basis of the information obtained from others. No statement made within this document may be deemed in any circumstance to be a representation, undertaking or warranty and we cannot accept any liability should you rely on such statements or such statements prove to be inaccurate. In particular the achievement of particular goals depends on parties and factors outside our control. Any illustrations and otherwise in this report are only intended to illustrate particular points of argument.

This document and its contents are confidential and will remain confidential until we waive confidentiality or the document is published by a Local Planning Authority.

Copyright © Rural Solutions Limited January 22  
Any unauthorised reproduction or usage is strictly prohibited.



WE ARE RURAL

## How we did it: Winning consent for an 'exceptional' home

1 February 2018 by David Dewar

**Plans for an eco home in Devon had to pass a tough test on exceptional design quality, says David Dewar.**



*Close working: Blackdown Hills AONB's planning officer Lisa Turner, East Devon Council's senior planning officer Charlie McCullough and homeowner and applicant Elizabeth Tetlow.*

**PROJECT:** Spiral Eco House, North Grays Farm, Membury, Devon

**ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED:** Rural Solutions, East Devon District Council, Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, The Ethical Partnership, Sadler Brown Architecture, Alistair W Baldwin Associates, Buro Happold

The test for plans for new isolated homes in the countryside is a notoriously tough one for applicants. Paragraph 55 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) stipulates that such proposals should be of exceptional quality or innovative nature. One scheme in Devon managed not only to overcome this hurdle but also to meet the similarly strict test for achieving planning permission in an area of outstanding natural beauty (AONB).

The Spiral Eco House design, which is sited on a farm in the Blackdown Hills AONB, was inspired by the an ammonite fossil belonging to the applicant, many of which can be found in the area. Following a lengthy period of discussions with officers and two design review panel reports, the scheme won planning permission from East Devon District Council in 2014 and was completed late last year. Last autumn, the building made it onto TV screens when it was showcased in Channel 4's Grand Designs programme. It is one of only a few projects in an AONB to have met the so-called "Gummer's Law" – named after the minister who introduced the policy in 1997 – which set the criteria of exceptional quality or innovative nature.

Planning consultancy Rural Solutions, acting on behalf of home owners Elizabeth and Stephen Tetlow, said it started pre-application discussions with the council in late 2012. "Paragraph 55 goes against the grain of planning rules that don't allow houses outside settlements", says James Ellis, associate director at Rural Solutions. "That general presumption against building in the countryside is a difficult test to overcome and there is a fear of precedent. So we had to present detailed research on how paragraph 55 had been applied across the country and how we were intending to meet the test."

A key aspect of the proposal's design is its curvilinear shape, which aims to allow the house to sit in the hillside valley setting. The applicants further argued that the building's timber panel cladding and roof of solar photovoltaic panels would represent exceptional quality while minimising its impact on the wider landscape. The design had to be adapted after the South West Design Review Panel recommended that it should be scaled down to fit its context. Once the plans were amended, a second review was satisfied that the design was exceptional.

The building also incorporates advanced energy production technology, including an integrated geo-solar energy generation and storage system and a hydrogen gas generator linked to the photovoltaic panels on the roof. This allows the house to go beyond being zero-carbon and to actually produce energy that is fed back into the national grid. This mechanism enabled the scheme to be classed as "truly innovative" by the review panel and local authority, as well being accepted as being of exceptional quality.

In addition to meeting paragraph 55, the scheme also had to overcome the strict hurdle of justifying such a development in an AONB. Under the NPPF, AONBs "have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty". Landscape considerations had to be a key part of the evolving design. "It is very much rolling Devon landscape punctuated by buildings," says Ellis. "It was a conscious decision to put the house in the corner of a field – it's intended to sit within the landscape."

To help progress a design that would achieve this, the project team engaged early on with the Blackdown Hills AONB team. "When we first met them, we outlined the process we were going to follow rather than present them with a detailed concept," says Ellis. "The project team seemed to understand the relevance of the AONB designation," says Lisa Turner, planning officer at the AONB. "The applicants wanted to do the right thing because of their love for the local area." The AONB was satisfied that, subject to detailed aspects of the design and the management of a local nature

reserve at the site, the proposal would respect the essential landscape features of the site, including the defined field pattern and the area's very rural nature.

The planning application won unanimous approval from planning committee members in 2014. East Devon development control officer Charlie McCullough, case officer for the scheme, maintains that the key to this successful outcome was a commitment by both parties to work on the scheme over a long time period during the pre-application process. "It was important for us to engage at an early stage and to work with the applicant over that long period of time to try and overcome myriad of issues, sometimes conflicting," he says.

"Rural Solutions had worked on paragraph 55 sites across the country, so were able to bring that knowledge and examples of case law to the table," adds McCullough. "The applicants were very knowledgeable about the site. Both the applicants and agents were willing to positively address any concerns we had and to demonstrate how that very high benchmark of the policy could be addressed."





# TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURE GROUP

COMMITTED TO THE VALUES ESTABLISHED BY  
TRADITIONAL AND CLASSICAL ARCHITECTURE

WWW.TRADITIONALARCHITECTUREGROUP.ORG

## TAG PEER REVIEW- HODDER BRIDGE, CLITHEROE

### Introduction-

This final review follows an engagement with the Applicants and the Design Team over a six-month period which started with the first formal review on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2021.

Since the first review there were additional on-line assessments of progress on the 12<sup>th</sup> August, 12<sup>th</sup> October and 23<sup>rd</sup> November. There were also a number of informal telephone discussions with the scheme architect.

As previously identified, this is a proposal submitted under the NPPF Paragraph 80(e) clause which states:

*80. Planning policies and decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside unless one or more of the following circumstances apply:*

*(e) the design is of exceptional quality, in that it:*

- is truly outstanding, reflecting the highest standards in architecture, and would help to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas; and*
- would significantly enhance its immediate setting, and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area.*

The Panel feel that the resulting building design and integrated enhancements in landscape, ecology and energy efficiency that are part of the scheme represent a scheme that should be considered of a quality that will fulfil the requirements of NPPF paragraph 80(e) above.

The Panel's reasoning that concludes this is set out further below.

The design team has been through a significant journey and have responded in a positive manner to the Panel's suggestions as to how the scheme might be improved. They have worked hard to refine the scheme and increase the artistic and intellectual depth necessary for it to be successful.

## **Landscape and siting-**

A detailed landscape appraisal has been undertaken and acts as the foundation for the design and subsequent development. Projects such as these should be landscape and contextually led with the proposed scheme informed by and growing from the landscape, visual and contextual (and cultural) analysis. This then sets a clear planning and landscape character context.

There are two parts to this appraisal: a) the review of the general siting and proposed landscape treatment and, b) the heritage report of local country houses by Hinchcliffe Heritage which outlines features relevant to the scheme from the local built context.

Some further information and research has also been done regarding the designs of George Webster which has also positively informed the scheme; this will be discussed in the later sections.

The principal point is that the site is extraordinary both in the possibilities it offers for a great design but also in its context. The architectural response must be observant that the opportunity offered by clause 80(e) is an intensification of design beyond normal /standard considerations and must be understood through the possibilities of the site and landscape and the context both natural and manmade.

The proposed design should enhance an already intrinsically beautiful setting. The Panel believes the scheme now does so.

The Panel were generally in agreement with the choice of position for the new house and the logic of orientation and placement in section and level.

The entrance sequence from the main road is well considered. The drive is to be partly sunken into the field taking advantage of the existing contours, and gently winding to allow a sense of discovery on approaching the house. Both the digging in and curving shape suppress the effect of the drive and heighten the experience of glimpse views to the house.

Strategic trees and pinch point such as that between the central informal grove and new proposed woodland planting work to subtly frame the arrival; the true arrival being signalled by the more formal circular forecourt.

The Panel notes the ground rises steeply to the north and the proposal includes ground works, terracing and planted mounding which will further contain the new structures in the natural bowl within which the overall site sits.

These confining moves to “nest” the structures add to the sense of discovery of the house. The more formal areas of courtyards and small gardens intimate to the structures intensifies the experience. These formal spaces around the house offer a strong relationship with internal house functions whilst taking advantage of the sloping site and views to create a series of small formal terraces. The proposed style and character of proposed materials is fully in keeping with the emerging design concept.

The panel was interested in what might happen with the cut and fill and how that would be managed. It was understood that all materials would be used onsite in the landscaping. Further site sections are provided to show the impact of the contouring between the as existing and as proposed.

The river setting is of interest in that the river itself is more of an acoustic presence than one which is visible, the river set some meters below the edge of the bank. Removal of the formal pond present in the previous landscape scheme is seen as being beneficial and so the presence of the river can be fully appreciated without another less dynamic water feature, it was just not necessary.

### **The Buildings-**

It is understood by the panel that the building form is driven not just by an historic aesthetic set by precedent but also by the science driving the energy performance of the building. The simple square and rectangular forms of the plan are necessary to maintain a good surface-to-volume ratio of the building and to make the most of efficient orientation. The resulting pavilion form of the house speaks both to its functionality as well as the romantic notion of discovery of the house as an “ideal” country villa nested into the landscape.

The square Palladian plan of the main house works well in ordering the formal interior spaces and the principle of a hierarchy of building form, language and material was explained to the Panel. The main house was to be of more refined stuff. As one progresses back to the ancillary buildings and stable courtyard these materials and details would become less dignified (more course) so the nature and status of parts of the building can be read in form and material. The Panel thought this to be an essential component of the breadth and depth of the design that will add to its exceptional qualities.

There was much discussion about aspects of the detailing of the building. The cast of the building as a more formalised farmhouse is understood and a good choice. This is a relatively small house (the design team has provided a very useful area comparison with other estate houses in the area). The design team had done some further research at the request of the Panel find a language that was simple but still had some refined qualities. The exemplar was found in the work of George Webster and his local work at Downham Hall:

- On arrival at the forecourt one is presented with a tidy composition of the entrance facade, a simple and direct piece of architecture (Webster inspired) that is restrained from any move to a grand or more ostentatious gesture;
- The south-east elevation of the house works well. Once again, the simple classical forms create a neat geometric composition. There is a clear progression shown through the diminution of the building forms towards the east service block. This is matched by graduating facing materials from the refined towards the rustic;
- The junction between the main house and kitchen family wing is happily resolved;
- The skills and craft necessary to execute the stonework alone should be a significant consideration in establishing the exceptional qualities of the proposal;

- Emphasis was placed on the axial arrangement running west to east through the building. This is very strong and well defined and the secondary axis north south also well considered. The crossing of the axis rightly taking place in the centre of the house and main circulation space. The spatial journey through the house from front porch to compression in the entrance vestibule then the spectacle of the hall, grand stairs and three storey space will make a dramatic and unique experience that will centre and ground the visitor and act as the orientating element of the house. Around this central space the more formal and historic type of Palladian plan sits.
- To the east one moves into the less formal spaces for family living, the orangery and links to the service court the sequence reflecting the external hierarchy of formal to less formal and subservient spaces.

It should be further appreciated that this project not only speaks to the design quality in the aesthetics of the building but also is designed to be PassivHaus. The construction fabric enhances the traditional classical cast of the building in the use of the thick walls of the clay block Smartwall construction method proposed to be used.

Such an aspirational project will depend on the quality of the detailing, some details are indicated and surety that a high standard of design will be executed can be safeguarded by the authority through condition.

## Conclusion-

To reiterate, the Panel feel that the resulting building design and integrated enhancements in landscape, ecology and energy efficiency that are part of the scheme represent a scheme that should be considered of a quality that will fulfil the requirements of NPPF paragraph 80(e).

The building process that would be part of this project in itself would be a significant, exceptional and innovative departure from the norm, it would, in the terms of the NPPF policy would be... *truly outstanding, reflecting the highest standards in architecture, and would help to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas and would significantly enhance its immediate setting, and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area.*

Issued 29 November 2021.



A Linked Society of the RIBA

*The Traditional Architecture Group is an independent voluntary association of RIBA members. It is a Linked Society of the RIBA but retains no legal or financial call on the RIBA. The aims of the society are to celebrate the highest achievements of the past as a living source for modern inspiration. The group seeks to work within architectural, planning and educational disciplines to promote the value of a traditional approach in architecture and design. The group will provide mutual support, a meeting point and a venue for the exchange of ideas for those individuals interested in or practicing contemporary traditional architecture.*

Its registered and correspondence address is

Unit 6 Ash House, Vale View Business Units, Crown Lane South, Ardleigh, Colchester, CO7 7PL +44(0)1206 580528