

please ask for: Rachel Horton
direct line: 01200 414501
email: Rachel.Horton@ribblevalley.gov.uk
my ref: RV/2013/ENQ/00109
your ref: cn/jb/13:109:001
date: 14th August 2013

Dear Ms Naessens

REQUEST FOR PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE RELATING TO PROPOSED REPLACEMENT DWELLING AT 72 MELLOR BROW, MELLOR.

I am writing in response to your request for pre-application advice in respect of the above- named proposal. In short, your client wishes to demolish the existing single storey bungalow and replace with a two-storey contemporary dwelling. The proposal was discussed in more detail at a site meeting held with yourself and your client Mrs Cummings on the 24th of June 2013. Whilst the submitted sketches are at an early stage of development I note that the proposed floorplans on drawing no. 13.109 04 do not correspond with the proposed elevations, therefore my comments are based upon the proposed floor plans which provides an indication of overall massing and location of windows.

The property in question is a traditional true bungalow sited to the northern side of Mellor Brow on a prominent roadside frontage within the main settlement of Mellor. House types within the immediate vicinity are a mix of true bungalows, two-storey stone terraces and two-storey detached properties on large plots.

In considering your proposal, I am mindful of policies in the current adopted Districtwide Local Plan (DWLP) as well as those contained within the Core Strategy (the emerging Development Plan for the Borough). Whilst the policies within these two documents are relevant in the determination of applications the Council is currently moving from the Local Plan to the Core Strategy. Therefore in the absence of an up-to date local plan, the principal planning document is the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). In addition, more detailed design guidance is found within the Councils Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) 'Extensions and Alterations to Dwellings'.

With regards to the principle of a replacement dwelling on this plot Policy H14 of the DWLP relates specifically to the rebuilding or replacement of dwellings. This policy states that the residential use of the property should not have been abandoned, which in this instance it has not, and that the impact of the development on the landscape will be assessed in relation to that of a new dwelling.

As advised at our site meeting the general principle of a replacement dwelling on this site is acceptable, provided that the scheme is well considered and responds to its immediate context in terms of massing, use of materials and design, as these aspects will influence the potential impact upon the street scene and neighbouring residential amenity.

With regards to design, scale, massing and assessment of potential visual impact upon the street scene Policy G1 of the DWLP emphasises the importance of good and sustainable design, the principles of which are carried forward in policy DMG1 of the Core Strategy. Development should be sympathetic to existing and proposed land uses in terms of its size, intensity and nature as well as scale, massing, style, features and building materials. Consideration should also be made to the density, layout and relationship between buildings. Particular emphasis will be placed on visual appearance and the relationship to surroundings as well as the effects of development on existing amenities.

The Councils Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) 'Extensions and Alterations to Dwellings' states that development should be appropriate to the plot size and not result in a cramped appearance. It should also reflect the character of the wider locality as poorly designed schemes constructed of materials which do not reflect the original property or those within the locality, will appear as stark and prominent features.

Para. 56/58. of the NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework) states that the Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development and should respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials. It is proper to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness.

Para. 64. of the NPPF states that permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions.

Policy H14 of the DWLP states that excessive increase in the size of the property will not be permitted. As a general guide, the original volume of the dwelling should not be increased by more than 70 cubic metres or 15% (whichever is greater). It is clear that the proposed footprint of the building and its overall size and massing is to be significantly larger than the existing bungalow. Due to the topography of the area, properties to this row currently step down when travelling on Mellor Brow in a westerly direction. The eastern side of the property at first floor level steps down from that of 70 Mellor Brow to the east but then steps up to a height which is significantly higher than the ridge of 74 Mellor Brow to the west. I consider that this design coupled with the horizontal emphasis of the building, cantilevering/projection of the first floor element and flat roof would result in a highly prominent, discordant and disproportionate building within the street scene, which does not reflect in design terms the more modestly sized properties to the east and west, contrary to the design principles of the above policies. You mentioned that the double height feature of the property could be reduced and that a mix of render and cladding would reflect the local vernacular. However I do not consider that these amendments/additions to the property will satisfy my strong concerns regarding the visual impact of the dwelling that is highly prominent on approach in a westerly direction within the public realm, as confirmed by my site visit.

In addition to my concerns regarding the impact of the scheme upon the visual amenity of the area I also have strong concerns regarding impact upon neighbouring residential amenity.

I have serious concern that due to the topography of the site the scale and massing of the two-storey dwelling will have an overbearing and oppressive impact particularly upon the residents of No. 74 Mellor Brow to the west. The dwelling would tower above

the ridge height of No. 74 Mellor Brow, which is currently set-down from No. 72 Mellor Brow. In addition, windows at first floor level to the western side elevation serving a bedroom and dressing area due to their height will have clear and unobstructed views of the whole of the rear elevation and garden area of No. 74 Mellor Brow. In addition, and again due to the height of the property I also have concern regarding loss of privacy to the residents of No. 70 Mellor Brow to the east as a result of overlooking from the bedroom window to the rear of the property at first floor level to the eastern elevation.

To conclude, I acknowledge your client's desire to build a more sustainable and energy efficient property on this plot, however as highlighted above I consider that a proposal in this location of the size, design and scale as proposed is wholly inappropriate and contrary to both national and local policy. An application submitted on the basis of your pre-application enquiry is therefore likely to be refused. The Council is not averse to a contemporary dwelling on this site, however a proposal based upon what has been submitted even with a significant reduction in scale and massing is still likely to be refused. If your client wishes to pursue an application for a replacement dwelling I would advise that an amended design scheme should be considered that significantly reduces the scale and massing of the proposal, possibly incorporating gabled forms with variance in heights/setbacks. Addressing my concerns regarding design, scale, massing and impact upon the street scene should in turn address impacts of the development upon neighbouring residential amenity with regards to loss of privacy and overbearing impact.

I would also highlight at this stage that the current policy situation is subject to rapid change as RVBC progresses from the DWLP to the Core Strategy and as a result, the policy situation highlighted within this letter will need to be re-assessed at application stage, should an application be forthcoming. Whilst not yet adopted, relevant emerging key statements and Development Management policies within the emerging, submitted Core Strategy should therefore be considered at this pre-application stage.

Please be mindful of the fact that the above advice has been given on the basis of the level of information submitted as part of the pre-planning enquiry, which sought guidance on the general principle of a replacement dwelling; the position may be otherwise if there are additional or different material facts.

I trust that you find the above observations of use and stress that they represent officer opinion only, at the time of writing, given without prejudice to the final determination of any application submitted.

Yours sincerely

Rachel Horton
Pre-Planning Advice Officer

Ms Ciara Naessens
Campbell Driver Partnership
Capricorn Park
Blakewater Road
Blackburn
BB1 5QR

