



HODDER GRANGE, HODDER VALLEY

THE APPLICANTS VIEW

MICHAEL AND LIZ BELL

2021

We have been lucky enough to call the Hodder Valley our home for 24 years, having bought Manor Farm in [REDACTED] 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. This includes stock proofing the boundary fencing, maintaining drainage on the land, mowing the land and the tree management. Alongside this, we have a good working relationship with the local farming community who use parts of our land to graze cows and sheep.

The ability to create our home has been possible because we are a team, a team that is 32 years strong and one that complements each other perfectly. Michael is avidly interested in restoration, building and land management, with extensive knowledge on these subjects. Liz is highly creative, and has a passion for Interior Design. [REDACTED] This gives us all a collective interest in design and renovation. Both being from farming families, we have a lifelong affinity and respect for the countryside and are actively involved in country pursuits. We take pride, have attention to detail and a quiet determination in everything we do.

The public footpath adjacent to the land has been our longstanding family walk. At a young age, our daughter captured the magic of the area when she fondly named it 'The Fairy Walk'. We had noticed the land opposite, and always commented on what a beautiful spot it was. When it came up for auction in 2015, it felt the perfect addition to Manor Farm. We were thrilled when we were the successful bidders.

After spending time working and regenerating the 16 acres of land, we were inspired. Together, we started to talk about the possibility of creating an exceptional family home. One that sits sympathetically within its surroundings with a feeling that it has been there forever. We both knew that this was a big undertaking, however we were compelled to explore the possibility. We wanted to contribute to the rich history of the area, creating a home for our family and future generations.

We knew we needed professional advice. In 2017, we were introduced to the Rural Solutions team by a friend. After the initial meeting, we immediately knew we could work with them. They shared our vision and have a wealth of experience in Para80 applications. Coupled with this, they also work alongside highly experienced professionals in ecological; environmental and landscaping fields. They have all been invaluable in guiding us along this four-year journey.

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 passiv haus. A house for the future.

In 2021, after a pre-application to the RVBC, we followed their advice to hold a design review panel in order to ensure that we had fulfilled all the requirements for a Para80 house. The panel was led by Scot Masker: with three architects; a landscape designer; a heritage advisor and a sustainability consultant in attendance alongside the Rural Solutions team and ourselves. Around this time, Rural Solutions also engaged with Jeremy Musson, one of the UK's leading architectural historians and consultants, to impart his expert knowledge on Georgian properties. He researched and visited local country houses to cross reference them with our existing design, and his comments were taken onboard.

Additionally, for us, this process has been an educational journey, a privilege to be learning from some of the UK's finest professionals in their individual fields. We feel passionate about sharing this project: it would be an invaluable case study, lending itself to architecture; design and sustainability students alike and we would welcome them on site. We wholeheartedly believe that we have achieved the requirements for a Para80 house, a truly exceptional design in all aspects.

We would like to thank the Rural Solutions team for all their dedication, commitment and hard work on this application.