

# **Planning statement to accompany the proposal for two self build bungalows for the over 55's at The Warren Hurst Green.**

## **1. Proposal**

Outline application for 2 self build bungalows for over 55's

## **2. Site/Location**

The application site relates to an area of land that is adjacent to the defined settlement boundary of Hurst Green, which is a Tier 2 settlement. The site is also located in the Forest of Bowland area of outstanding natural beauty.

The area of land lies to the north of the dwelling known as the Warren and has dwellings located on the eastern and western part of the site boundary.

The existing land is woodland or shrub land and is of limited agricultural value.

## **3. Recent Planning history**

An outline planning application ( 3/2022/0469) was refused planning permission on the 9th of September 2022 for the following reasons:

i) The proposal is considered to be in direct conflict with policies DMG2 and DMH3 of the adopted Ribble Valley Core strategy in so far that approval would lead to the creation of new residential dwellings, located outside of a defined settlement boundary, without sufficient justification. It has not been adequately demonstrated that the proposal is for that of local needs housing that meets a current identified and evidenced outstanding need or not. The proposal would meet any of the exception criteria inherently contained with either policy.

ii) The proposal is considered to be in direct conflict with Key statement EN2 and Policy DMG1 of the adopted Ribble Valley Core strategy in so far that the introduction of built form and resultant quantum of development in this location would result in a level of development that would appear both anomalous and incongruous, undermine the character of the visual amenities of the immediate area and that of the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Members will be aware that this decision was made following the initial committee resolution to be reminded to approve the scheme in the August meeting. Whilst it is accepted that this is committee's prerogative it is clear that there is no material change in circumstances between the meetings. It is noted that the case officer added some additional information that the substance of the case but is it is considered that most of this information would have been previously available to Members.

## **4. Issues**

In an attempt to resolve the reasons for refusal, the proposal has been significantly amended in the following ways as confirmed by submitted plan:

i)The proposal has been reduced from 3 self build bungalows to 2 self build bungalows comprising a mix of one 2 bed and one 3 Bed unit. This is a reduction in numbers, a mix of housing type and ultimately a reduction in the built form and thereby reducing the visual impact.

ii) Land to the north of the site will remain open shrubland and accommodate wider ecological benefits such as additional bird and bird boxes on the existing tree cover.  
iii) The reduced site area for residential purposes is approximately 40% and the built form would project no further than the existing dwellings on either side of the proposal.

iv) The applicant is willing to enter into a legal agreement to ensure that the land to the north would not be developed and remain as open shrubland as well as an agreement to ensure ensure that the units would be for self build parts and an over 55 age restriction. Draft agreement accompanying the application.

## 5. Other material considerations

It is noted that since imposition of the Self build, and Customs House build at 2015 (as amended) the council has not made any significant progress and delivered at the most one unit. Although the numbers of the unit has dropped from 40 (2019 to 2021) there are 12 individual and two Association (part one) and one individual (part two) on the Register at time of writing this statement. It is evident that the Government remains clearly committed to the development of self build units and this can be seen in part as demonstrated by the fact that they remain exempt from the need to provide biodiversity net gain. Government report on the 21st of February 2023 stated:

“ Small sites will be subject to a longer transition until April 2024, and exemptions have been made to ensure implementation is targeted for development, such as self build houses “

Approval of this development for 2 self build units on the edge of Tier 2 settlement will go a significant way of meeting the councils requirement. It would also provide for over 55s which is also a recognised planning benefit.

It is noted that only previously approved self build unit was on the edge of Tier 1 settlement. It is opined that this is considered unlikely to be replicated in Tier 1 settlements and so there is a need to explore the edge of main settlements as it is not realistic to find suitable locations within main settlements on the basis that any such plots could normally be developed with an unrestricted planning use and would often have a higher development value based on an open market value without any planning restrictions relating to self self build or an age occupancy condition. This site which is on edge of a tier 2 settlement with limited visual impact and good sustainability credentials is an obvious solution to meet both the Councils requirement and the Central Government's commitment to provide for Self Build sites. To ensure it is restricted it is suggested a clause in a Unilateral undertaking similar to the agreement in the Treetop approval dated 4 /03/22 and application reference 3/2021/0998 would be sufficient to control the development and obviously previously accepted as a suitable controlling mechanism to ensure development of self build units when the Tree top application was considered.

In relation to landscape impacts which was previously referred to in the recently refused application as having a harmful impact on the area outstanding natural beauty it is noted that in that application there was no comment from the Forest of Bowland advisory committee or its officers. It is considered that any impact is localised and any long distant views of the site are effectively screened by the existing developments on either side of the proposed site as well as the main settlement of Hurst Green. Views of the site would be seen from the adjacent footpath but as the footpath is also adjacent to existing developments on the eastern side it is opined that any users of the footpath would not be adversely affected in relation to the visual impact.

It is submitted that this proposal is not contrary to policies DMG1 And EN2 of the Ribble Valley core strategy, and that the quantum of the development is not significant. The resultant perceived harm would not be anomalous, nor incongruous nor undermine the visual amenities of the wider area sharing all the wider area of outstanding natural beauty by virtue of its limited visual impact and its close relationship to the existing settlement boundary.

The proposed materials and design could effectively controlled to be sympathetic to the locality, and in fact contribute to the area by side with use of natural materials that would be traditional to the area of outstanding natural beauty. Even if there is any perceived harm the benefits of 2 Self build units specifically for over 55s occupation would be a material consideration sufficient to outweigh any perceived harm.

It is noted in the previous committee reports the officer referred to various planning appeals. Should these still be considered to be relevant it is important to emphasise that each application should be considered on its own merits. Notwithstanding this point, one appeal relates to a much larger quantum of development and whereas another which does relate to this current site it is materially different as this proposal is for self build units and on a reduced site area and no longer an unrestricted residential proposal. It is also worth noting that the appeal decision is nearly 9 years old.

In relation to highway considerations it is noted that Lancashire County Council as a highway authority raised no objections to the previous scheme and given that the current proposal is a reduction in numbers this would further reduce any highway impact resulting from additional vehicular activity.

In support of this application the previous ecological assessment has been submitted which although relates to survey work carried out over a year ago it is submitted that given the reduction in built form and the willingness to add additional bird / bat boxes on the site would result in further benefits to the local wildlife.

## Executive summary of the differences.

- i) A reduction in the built site area including residential curtilage of approximately 40%.
- ii) Additional planting and biodiversity measures on land to the north of the proposal.
- iii) Reduced number of units from 3 to 2.
- iv) Proven demand for self build units with 2 groups of persons on the self build register who reside in Hurst Green.
- v) A mixture of 2 bed and 3 bed self build units thereby ensuring a range of housing mix.
- vi) Minimisation of visual impact by reducing the number of units and site area which has effectively ensured that the development does not projects beyond the existing built form.
- vii) A commitment to a section one 106 agreement to ensure that the units are self build and for the over 55s.
- viii) Confirmation that the conditions suggested by the case officer in relation to the previous application 3/2022/0469 are acceptable and would not be contested.

## Conclusion

It is considered that any perceived harm as a result of this proposal is minimal and should be outweighed by the benefits of providing for 2 self build units, specifically for over 55 to residents of the local community and it will be the first type of this development in the Borough.