



**3 OLD ROAD, CHATBURN.
APPLICATION REFERENCE: 3/2019/0622**

GROUNDINGS FOR APPEAL

This statement has been prepared in support of a planning appeal for the above householder application which was refused on 9th January 2020 by Ribble Valley Borough Council.

The principal grounds for appeal are;

- The proposals represent quality design and will improve the character and quality of the area in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 130 and Ribble Valley Core Strategy Policy DMG1.
- The recommendation for refusal relies on two quoted Ribble Valley Core Strategy policies, DMG1 and DMH5. Policy DMH5 is not applicable to this application. The only relevant statement within this policy is that proposals for residential properties must accord with Policy DMG1. Policy DMG1 refers to the quality of design which is highly subjective in nature. As architects we disagree with the assumptions made about the quality of design included within this application. The reasons for which are set out in full later in this statement.
- Ribble Valley Core Strategy Policy DMG1 states that 'all development must be of a high standard of building design which considers the 8 Building in Context Principles' from the Building in Context Toolkit. The proposals contained within this application are in accordance with all 8 of these principals. Principals 7 and 8 are of particular relevance as they are in reference to the quality of chosen materials and creating juxtapositions which add to the variety and texture of the setting.
- Paragraph 130 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that 'where the design of a development accords with clear expectations in plan policies, design should not be used by the decision-maker as a valid reason to object to development.'
- Other applications for large amounts of timber cladding have been recommended and approved in the local area under very similar circumstances. The comments provided by the case officer in those applications are contradictory in nature to those made in reference to this application. This is discussed in more detail later in this statement.

MATERIALS

As noted in the design statement which was submitted with the original application, in order to improve the thermal performance of the building, there is a need to apply insulation to the property externally as cavity fill insulation is not suitable. This would require the property to then be subsequently clad in a new facing material.

The delegated report states that 'there is no evidence to suggest that the proposed use of timber cladding takes account of, or has been informed by, site or street characteristics nor has any regard been given to the defining characteristics of the area'.

We have given careful consideration to the selection of facing materials. The centre of Chatburn village, forming the conservation area, follows a traditional stone architectural



style, however the village has seen significant development over the years and now represents a jigsaw of architectural styles and materials. It cannot be argued that there is a singular local vernacular or character within the wider village, beyond the central conservation area.

The primary facing materials found in the village are natural stone, reconstituted stone, red brick and render of varying types.

Stone and brick were deemed to be inappropriate as cladding materials, it was felt that both of these materials would not be visually acceptable due to their imposing and domineering characteristics.

Natural, pre aged timber and render were selected as the most appropriate choice of materials. Whilst timber is not extensively found as a cladding material within Chatburn it was felt that this was the most appropriate option in this particular case as timber is a natural and sustainable material which is complimentary to the grey natural stone of the adjacent conservation area. It is an inoffensive, high quality and subtle material that will sit well within the immediate vicinity in accordance with Principals 4 and 7 of the Building in Context Toolkit. The use of this material will add variety and texture to the street scene, in accordance with Principal 8 of the Building in Context Toolkit. It is also important to note that timber cladding is a sympathetically scaled material, when compared with the reconstituted stone of the existing and neighbouring properties. Fully rendering the property, would result in a monolithic singular facade that lacks appropriate scale and texture.

As the property is north facing and sits opposite an area of trees, it was felt that areas of render be limited to the more sheltered lower level elements of the building, to avoid problems with staining and the need for regular maintenance at high level.

During the planning process, following a request to significantly reduce the amount of timber cladding used, a meeting was held with the planning officer to discuss the proposals. It was stated during this meeting that should large amounts of timber cladding be proposed anywhere in the borough, the planning authority would be looking to see the amount proposed significantly reduced. No specific or constructive guidelines were offered in relation to the use of timber cladding by the planning officer at any time.

Indeed the Ribble Valley Borough Council do not offer any current supplementary planning documents or design guides to effectively communicate their design expectations in accordance with the adopted Core Strategy. The statement noted above does however suggest an undocumented policy exists to limit the amount of timber cladding used within the borough.

Paragraph 126 of the NPPF states that the 'level of detail and degree of prescription (of plans or supplementary planning documents) should be tailored to the circumstances in each place, and should allow a suitable degree of variety where this would be justified.'

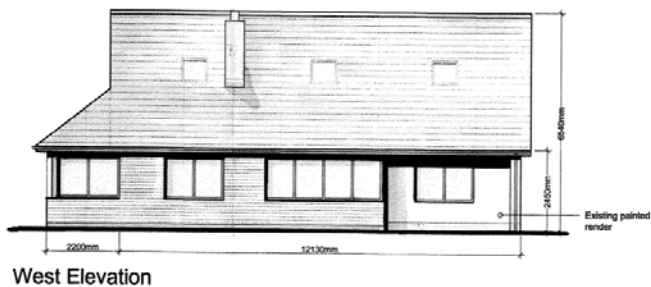
It is our view, and that of the applicant, that the use of timber cladding has been justified in this case; more over, examples of planning approval for large amounts of timber cladding can be found elsewhere in the village and the borough as a whole.

The use of timber cladding has been recently approved elsewhere in Chatburn. Application 3/2018/0026 Chantry Toft, Grindleton View, Chatburn, was granted planning permission within the last 12 months. The application includes large amounts of timber cladding, over 50% of the principal elevations.

There are many similarities between Chantry Toft and this application. The property is of a similar period, is located in Chatburn and sits on the edge of the conservation area. One thing which is not similar is the prominence of the property within the village. Chantry Toft is in a prominent location overlooking Sawley Road, a main thoroughfare through the village. This property arguably has a far greater impact on the amenity of the area than 3 Old Road because of its prominent and significant location. Number 3 Old Road is tucked away on a dead end access only road, set back from the highway and is not directly visible from any thoroughfare. The only properties to have visual access to the application site are direct neighbours. Please see location of Chantry Toft below;



Image no.01 - location of application site in relation to Chantry Toft.



West Elevation

Image no.02 - Chantry Toft Western Elevation



North Elevation

Image no.03 - Chantry Toft Northern Elevation.

In the delegated report for Chantry Toft it was noted that the use of timber cladding is 'in keeping with the area' and will 'look to a high standard'. It was also noted that the choice of materials will 'improve the visual amenity of the surrounding area'. This absolutely contravenes the statement used by the planning authority in reference to this application where the planning officer states that timber cladding is 'out of keeping', only 0.3 miles away, in a less prominent location. This point was put to Rebecca Bowers, as she was the case officer in both applications, however no response has been provided.

Elsewhere in the borough, in the village of Hurst Green, approval was granted in 2016 for the conversion of the former Eagle and Child public house into residential dwellings. Ref 3/2016/0815. The proposals included a substantial side gable end extension which was to be fully clad in vertical timber cladding. Much like the proposed facade treatment in this application.

Hurst Green, like Chatburn, has an historic central core which forms the conservation area. Within it are a number of listed buildings and buildings of traditional stone construction. Hurst Green has not seen the scale of development Chatburn has experienced, however there are a number of buildings dating from the mid to late 20th century in the village, creating a jigsaw of architectural styles similar to that of Chatburn.

There are no other timber clad buildings within Hurst Green; the primary facing materials are stone and render. The Eagle and Child is located within the conservation area, along the main thoroughfare through the village of Hurst Green, the proposed timber clad extension is highly visible in this prominent location. Despite these facts the planning officer has noted in the delegated report that; 'The proposed extension and alterations to the building would share an acceptable visual relationship with the surrounding area'. It is arguable to conclude from these comments that, in the planning authority's opinion, the choice and style of facing material does not need to imitate or replicate the neighbouring properties, in order to have an acceptable relationship with the surrounding area. On the contrary the planning officer commends the design for not being pastiche. Again it is not therefore clear why a differing approach has been taken when considering this

application, which proposes the same facade treatment, under much less significant or contentious circumstances.



Image no.04 - Eagle & Child Proposed Northern Principal Elevation .

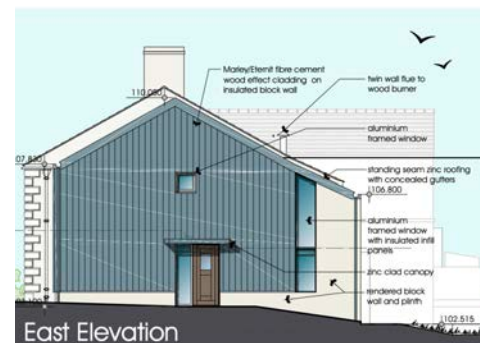


Image no.05 - Eagle & Child Proposed Eastern Elevation.

IMPACT ON THE STREET SCENE

It is noted in the delegated report that the development would fail to be sympathetic to the locality, citing uniform house design as justification of this statement. It is true that 3 Old Road is one of 4 properties built at the same time and in the same style. However they are of little or no architectural merit and do not justify protection, nor slavish preservation.

It is also noted within the delegated report that the proposed external appearance has not been informed by the street characteristics. The defining characteristics of the street scene are the prominent roof scapes, silhouettes and building form of the 4 properties, rather than the choice of facing materials. This defining characteristic is not affected by the proposals. Please see images below;



Image no.06: Taken opposite no.9 Old Road.



Image no.07: Taken on Old Road, on the boundary of the conservation area.



DESIGN

Paragraph 130 of NPPF states that permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunity available for improving the character and quality of the area. This paragraph has also been quoted in the delegated report as justification for the refusal of this application, insinuating the design is of poor quality.

The need to clad the exterior of the building, to improve the thermal performance, offered an opportunity to improve the external appearance of an already undistinguished dwelling of low architectural value. This was an opportunity that was gladly received by the applicants and has formed a key objective of the proposals. It is the reason they appointed qualified chartered architects to produce the design for the proposed alterations and did not simply appoint a draughts person or builder as is often the case with domestic projects. The applicants are committed to producing a dwelling of excellence within the borough.

As it is noted in the delegated report, the planning officer requested that the amount of timber cladding be significantly reduced to within the apex of the gable ends only. This approach would maintain a change of material at this point on the elevation, which is classic of 1970's properties, and is seen on the existing neighbouring dwellings. It is the planning officer's view, by way of their recommendation, that this would represent good quality design. In our view, the requested amendments would in fact represent a pastiche of the 1970's aesthetic of the existing and neighbouring properties and this does not represent good quality design. Replicating poor design, in an attempt to harmoniously sit alongside existing buildings of a low quality of architecture does not represent good quality design. Indeed this approach is not inline with the spirit of the NPPF which seeks to improve design quality where the opportunity arises.

SUMMARY

In summary we are seeking to appeal the decision to refuse the application for 3 Old Road as the arguments put forward by the Ribble Valley Borough Council lack adequate justification and are highly subjective in nature. This is highlighted by applications similar in nature being recommended for approval, which, as demonstrated in this report, contain contradictory comments to those made in reference to this application.

The planning authority have failed to adequately demonstrate or justify what they are seeking to protect or preserve in this building or immediate vicinity, and they have failed to indicate what harm is to be done to the 'visual amenities of the area' should planning approval be granted.