

Application Number:	2014/0334	Application Type:	Full
Proposal:	Erection of stone building to provide 19no. rooms for short stay / overnight accommodation, and associated car parking and landscaping	Location:	The Fisherman's Retreat Riding Head Lane Bury BL0 0HH
Report of:	Planning Unit Manager	Status:	For publication
Report to:	Development Control Committee	Date:	16 December 2014
Applicant:	Mr H. Magnall	Determination Expiry Date:	12 November 2014
Agent:	N/A		

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REASON FOR REPORTING	
Outside Officer Scheme of Delegation	
Member Call-In Name of Member: Reason for Call-In:	Yes – Members considered a ‘call-in’ from Cllr Anne Cheetham and considered that the proposals raised significant planning policy issues that required debate at Committee.
3 or more objections received	
Other (please state):	Departure from the Local Plan

HUMAN RIGHTS

The relevant provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998 and the European Convention on Human Rights have been taken into account in the preparation of this report, particularly the implications arising from the following rights:-

Article 8

The right to respect for private and family life, home and correspondence.

Article 1 of Protocol 1

The right of peaceful enjoyment of possessions and protection of property.

1. RECOMMENDATION

That Committee Refuse planning permission for the reasons set out in Section 10.

Section 77 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 allows the Secretary of State to give directions requiring applications for planning permission to be referred to them instead of being dealt with by local planning authorities.

The Town and Country Planning (Consultation) (England) Direction 2009 provides the criteria for referral. For the purposes of the Direction:

“Green Belt development” means development which consists of or includes inappropriate development on land allocated as Green Belt in an adopted local plan, unitary development plan or development plan document and which consists of or includes-

- (a) the provision of a building or buildings where the floor space to be created by the development is 1,000 square metres or more; or
- (b) any other development which, by reason of its scale or nature or location, would have a significant impact on the openness of the Green Belt.

Whilst the applicant considers the gross external floorspace of the development to be 992sqm, this appears to exclude a proposed first floor link. Using the applicant’s calculations and including the floor space of the first floor link the gross external floorspace would be 1011sqm.

It is therefore considered that in accordance with The Town and Country Planning (Consultation) (England) Direction 2009 should it be resolved to approve planning permission the application would need to be referred to the National Casework Unit.

2. SITE

The Fisherman’s Retreat is located in a countryside area designated as Green Belt to the south west of the settlement of Edenfield. Originally constructed as a small anglers clubhouse within what is known as Twine Valley, it has expanded significantly over the years through numerous incremental extensions and alterations, and is now a substantial stone and slate building comprising a function room, restaurant and bar, with associated kitchens, preparation areas, toilets etc and has most recently expanded its business operating as a wedding venue. The building was originally single storey and built into the hillside which slopes upwards to the east; the building as extended now projects outwards to the west over 2/3 storeys (the function room/restaurant).

The site has its main car parking areas to its eastern side, accessed from the south and a further car park to the north of the building. Between the access road to the main car park and the south side of the building is a row of trees, a brook, and a rectangular parcel of land where implementation had begun on the construction of a meat refrigeration unit, however, it is understood construction stopped as the building is no longer required. To the side of the access is a row of mature conifers. Beyond the conifers are two unauthorised static caravans and associated paraphernalia.

The Retreat is located immediately off Riding Head Lane which connects to Bury Old Road. It can be accessed via Whalley Road (A56) and Bye Road which are within the jurisdiction of Bury MBC and located to its western side. Bye Road is characterised by heavy on street parking by residents as they have no alternative parking provision. Accordingly it forms a narrow, single lane access to the site and other properties off it.

Access can also be taken from Rochdale Road and Bury Old Road to its north. Bury Old Road is an unadopted road which also serves Bleakholt Animal Sanctuary and other isolated properties.

There are a number of public footpaths and bridleways in the area and the existing building can be seen from a number of both public and private vantage points, including public footpath No 185 (Riding Head Lane), Turn Village, Bury old Road, Bleakholt Road and associated properties, and Bridleway No 183, in addition to various scattered farm houses in/around the valley.

The site has an extensive planning history as can be seen below.

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3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

1990/130	<u>Erection of Anglers Clubhouse (190sqm)</u> Approved
1992/053	<u>Retention of Partially Constructed Angler's Retreat with Reduced Floor Space (171 sqm and elevation changes)</u> Approved
1992/216	<u>Extension and window alterations (Retrospective)</u>
1995/0384	<u>Erection of Extension to Form Kitchen with Food Store Under</u> Refused
1997/266	<u>Retention of Patio and Construction of First Floor Balcony</u> Refused
1997/453	<u>Retention of Ground Floor Patio (230 sq m)</u> Approved
1999/239	<u>Erection of building to accommodate fish hatchery and generator housing</u> Approved
2000/335	<u>Erection of 40 Bed Hotel/150 person conference suit/leisure facilities/visitor centre and erection of 6 self-catering units (Outline)</u> Refused by GONW following call-in.

The Secretary of State agreed with the Inspector that:

- Whilst there may be a need for tourist facilities and jobs in the Rossendale area, no functional need has been demonstrated for this development to be located in the Twine Valley;
- The presence of the pub/restaurant does not justify the development proposed. It must be looked at on its own merits;
- Unless the proposed development can also be justified as meeting the needs of recreational users of the Twine Valley, the existence of The Retreat does not represent a very special circumstance justifying the proposed development in the Green Belt;
- The proposed development would detract from the visual amenities of the Green Belt and even when the landscaping had fully matured the buildings would still constitute inappropriate development and impact on the openness of the Green Belt, and;
- The remoteness of the site relative to public transport is contrary to national planning policy for transport.

2004/849	<u>Replacement of Marquee Extension with 1-Storey Function Room</u> Approved
2005/26	<u>Change of Use of Part of Building from Fish Hatchery to Shop (Class A1) with associated Storage and Offices</u> Refused

2005/375	<u>Extension to form Staff Room and Farm Shop</u> Refused
2006/023	<u>Erection of 1-Storey Extension to Contain Shop & Staff Facilities</u> Approved
2006/439	<u>Erection of 2 Storey Restaurant/Function Suite Extension</u> Withdrawn
2007/166	<u>Two Storey Restaurant and Function Suite</u> Refused
2008/538	<u>Erection of One and Half Storey Extension to Create New Restaurant Area and Function Suite</u> Approved
2008/815	<u>Erection of a detached meat refrigeration unit</u> Approved
2010/612	<u>Erection of a Two Storey Extension to Provide Function Room and Restaurant Accommodation (Retrospective)</u> Approved
2011/0590	<u>Construction of timber framed managers dwelling and 3 bedroomed bed & breakfast, 10 bay stables, menage and altered access road.</u>

The site in respect of the above application is located along Bury Old Road to the west of the Fisherman's Retreat and within the Twine Valley. At the time of the application (November 2011), the land was within the ownership of the applicant.

Members voted to approve the application contrary to Officers recommendation. The buildings are now almost complete.

4. PROPOSAL

Planning permission is sought for the construction of a nineteen bedroomed building with a first floor glazed link to the existing building. It would be sited to the south elevation of the existing building with the existing road leading to the car park to be shifted further south. The building would be constructed in materials to match the existing.

The building would be rectangular in shape with a central courtyard. It would have a width of 22m and a depth of 27.8m. Constructed over two storeys its eaves height would be 5.25m and its ridge height 9.1m. The ridge line would be approximately 0.1m lower than the ridge of the existing building; the eaves height would be approximately 1m lower than the eaves of the existing.

The main roof of the building would be hipped but would have two pitched roof projections to its south facing elevation. It is the south elevation that would form the main entrance to it. In front there would be a dedicated drop-off and accessible parking area. The existing access road to the main restaurant car parks would be re-routed further south to accommodate the new development. A raised platform at first floor level would link the building from its east elevation to the car park.

The applicant considers that the scheme would provide overnight/short stay accommodation for existing customers and visitors to the Fisherman's Retreat and the wider Rossendale Valley.

They consider the number of bedrooms is sufficient to cater for the needs of a wedding function or event taking place at the Retreat, whilst also being flexible to accommodate overnight/short stay visitors to the Rossendale Valley.

They also consider that the accommodation would directly reduce the number of vehicle movements into and out of the site, particularly during functions and events and specifically at unsociable hours. This is due to a large number of guests attending the functions not having to travel off site after a function to seek accommodation.

The applicant agrees that the proposed development constitutes inappropriate development within the Green Belt and have advanced what they consider to be very special circumstances to outweigh inappropriateness, as summarised below:

Impact on Openness of Green Belt

Overall, while recognising that there will be some impact on the openness of the Green Belt by virtue of introducing built development, the proposals are considered to be well contained and maximise the opportunities to limit the impact upon the openness of the Green Belt. The distant views into and out of the site and the overall integrity of the Green Belt would not be unduly harmed.

Meeting a Demonstrated Need

The proposed accommodation building is required to meet the needs of the existing / future customers of the Fisherman's Retreat, to ensure the continued development and improvement of this thriving local business.

The Rossendale Tourism Study identifies a need to improve the quality of Rossendale's tourism offer, and there is a shortage of overnight accommodation.

The proposed development of nineteen (19) rooms would provide high quality serviced accommodation to meet the identified need of tourist and business visitors both to the Fisherman's Retreat and within the wider Rossendale valley, in accordance with the aims and objectives of the local Tourism Study and Policies.

Absence of Alternative Sites

A detailed search of the surrounding area has indicated that there are no suitable alternative sites which would meet the identified need for overnight visitor accommodation in the Rossendale Borough.

The proposed site at the Fisherman's Retreat is already developed, has adequate site area to accommodate the required extension and is in a suitable location, which is accessible to both the motorway network and local transport links. Therefore, the proposed development would directly contribute towards meeting the great demand for accommodation outlined in the Rossendale Tourism Study.

Existing Business / Contribution to Local Economy

The Fisherman's Retreat has evolved from a place intended only for fishermen in 1992 to an award winning bar and restaurant, with the more recent addition of function suites and wedding venue in 2011. The Fisherman's Retreat is a local employer, with approximately 50% of staff coming from the Rossendale Valley itself.

These current development proposals to take the next logical step to expand the business into a facility offering full 'hotel' services would involve further substantial investment, showing the

owner's commitment to providing a much-needed, premier leisure and recreational facility within the Borough.

Since the opening of the function suites, the Fisherman's Retreat has hosted 120 weddings and functions since 2011. The number of weddings is increasing year on year and bookings are continually being taken for functions in 2014, 2015 and 2016, which clearly shows the popularity of the venue.

Whilst the business has a strong local customer following, the Fisherman's Retreat also has a country-wide catchment and draws many visitors into the area. Events hosted at the Fisherman's Retreat, such as whisky tastings and weddings bring people into the valley in large numbers, only for them to be re-directed back out of the Borough to source accommodation.

For the past three years, the guests of weddings and functions at the Fisherman's Retreat have stayed at the following hotels:

- Red Hall Hotel, Walmersley*
- The Old Mill Hotel, Ramsbottom*
- The Village Hotel, Bury*
- Premier Inn, Bury*

All of these hotels are located within the Borough of Bury so all of the prospective spend associated with an overnight stay is being spent in Bury and not in Rossendale. Directing visitors back out of the Rossendale valley also reduces the possibility of these people going on to enjoy other leisure / recreation and tourist attractions within the Rossendale valley.

The proposed development represents a substantial investment in the extension of an existing and well-established facility within the Rossendale Valley, which provides a service to both the local community and visitors to the Borough, either for business or recreation purposes. As well as providing excellent local employment opportunities with the potential creation of an additional 30 positions, the proposed development would involve the expansion of a tourist and visitor facility in an area where the identified needs are not being met by the existing facilities.

Tourism Policy

The proposal for on-site overnight / short stay accommodation is the next step in the development of an established wedding venue, such as the Fisherman's Retreat. Whilst the review of alternative sites has established that there is not a suitable site within the urban boundary, it is acknowledged there would always be a need for immediate on-site accommodation in any case.

As well as complimenting the existing tourism facilities of the restaurant and function suites at the Fisherman's Retreat, the high-quality accommodation would provide a gateway to many other tourist / recreation / leisure attractions in Rossendale and the locality, including the East Lancashire Railway, numerous museums and historic mills and the Irwell Sculpture Trail. The site is well connected to public footpaths and bridleways and the Rossendale Visitors Guide promotes a 'wind turbine and whisky trail', which starts and ends at the Fisherman's Retreat, further demonstrating its strategic location as a gateway to the countryside. Providing appropriate scale and quality accommodation in this location within the Rossendale Valley would enable many more visitors to stay in the local area and spend longer enjoying the many leisure and recreation activities available, in accordance with the Tourism Policy objectives.

The provision of on-site accommodation at the Fisherman's Retreat would complement the existing facilities, resulting in an exclusive countryside facility with all the offerings of a top-quality boutique hotel, and providing a true focal destination within the Borough.

There is clear support within the Policies of the Core Strategy for tourism related development and new overnight accommodation within the Borough, as well as proposals to enhance and support the rural economy, which the proposed development would directly address. The proposed development would attract more visitors from a significantly wider catchment to the Fisherman's Retreat, who will spend and invest directly in this business and also in the wider Rossendale valley. The provision of high-quality overnight accommodation through this proposed development would promote tourism in accordance with the Policies in the Core Strategy and the NPPF, create additional jobs to support the local economy and further secure the long term employment of the 30 existing staff at the Fisherman's Retreat.

Traffic Generation

As the primary demand for overnight accommodation is from future visitors to the Fisherman's Retreat for a wedding / function, it is considered that the proposed development would considerably reduce traffic generation to and from the site during these events. For example, a typical wedding guest arrives at the venue during the day in their own private vehicle, before leaving at the end of the evening in a taxi to travel to their off-site accommodation. These same people then have to return the following morning in another taxi to collect their car, thus averaging at four vehicle movements into and out of the site per couple / small group. The provision of on-site accommodation would negate the need for many guests to leave the site at the end of the evening, effectively halving the number of vehicle movements into and out of the site, particular at unsociable hours. The use of pre-organised group mini-buses and coaches is still recommended for people travelling to a similar destination in the interests of green travel.

In response to objections received by LCC and Bury MBC highways departments the applicant has provide further information in respect of the proposal, as summarised below:

“Since the restaurant opened in 1992 we have increased in size and now serve approximately 1000 to 1500 covers per week, with our busiest restaurant day being Sunday. Since opening our wedding suites in late 2011 the number of weddings have steadily increased year on year. We currently have 75 weddings booked for 2015 and expect to reach our yearly target of 100 weddings for next year. This has been achieved without on-site accommodation being available and clearly indicates that the business is already ‘popular’ for weddings. Whilst the addition of accommodation would result in a more attractive wedding ‘package’ it will not necessarily generate additional weddings over and above the targets we have already achieved.

It is the future vision of the business to operate approximately 100 weddings per year (on target for 2014), as this is the number of weddings that can be comfortably carried out to the high standards we set. Having on-site accommodation would enable us to offer a more exclusive and attractive package to the customer, which would generate ‘higher-spend’ weddings that often want exclusive use of the grounds. Exclusive use of the building results in the restaurant being closed to other customers on these days, cancelling up to 300 covers on a Saturday night for example.

It is on this basis we confidently state that the proposed accommodation would therefore reduce vehicular movements to and from the site. Taxi journeys to and from the site would be significantly reduced in the evenings / mornings if guests of weddings / restaurant are able to stay in on-site accommodation overnight, and more ‘exclusive’ weddings would potentially result in reduced restaurant operation overall.

Furthermore, the staff numbers referred to (30 existing and 30 proposed) covers both full and part time staff. Should the development be approved, we consider there would only be the full time equivalent of 30 jobs.”

5. POLICY CONTEXT

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National

National Planning Policy Framework (2012)

Section 1	Building a Strong Competitive Economy
Section 3	Supporting a Prosperous Rural Economy
Section 4	Promoting Sustainable Transport
Section 7	Requiring Good Design
Section 8	Promoting Healthy Communities
Section 9	Protecting Green Belt Land
Section 10	Meeting the Challenges of Climate Change, Flooding, etc
Section 11	Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment

Development Plan Policies

Rossendale Core Strategy DPD (2011)

AVP 5	South West
Policy 1	General Development Locations and Principles
Policy 8	Transport
Policy 9	Accessibility
Policy 10	Provision for Employment
Policy 14	Tourism
Policy 15	Overnight Visitor Accommodation
Policy 17	Rossendale's Green Infrastructure
Policy 18	Biodiversity and Landscape Conservation
Policy 21	Supporting the Rural Economy and its Communities
Policy 22	Planning Contributions
Policy 23	Promoting High Quality Design & Spaces
Policy 24	Planning Application Requirements

6. CONSULTATION RESPONSES

LCC (Highways)

I would raise an objection to the development on the grounds that it is an intensification of a development that is in an isolated countryside location far removed from the highway network and public transport services.

The applicant has suggested no improvements to the network to mitigate the effects of the increased level of traffic on the surrounding residents, particularly those on Bye Road.

Contrary to the information contained within the transport statement, I do believe that the proposed accommodation will make the venue more popular for wedding parties which will lead to an increase in traffic movements.

There will be an overall increase in the number of vehicles attending the site during Friday, Saturday and Sundays to the wedding parties and during the weekdays for other customers staying at the hotel whilst visiting the area. It is anticipated that the large majority of the visitors would use the access point off Whalley Road A56 and Bye Road which are within the jurisdiction of Bury MBC. The access point off Whalley Road A56 is the most accessible to visitors from outside the area as it is easily accessible from the M66 to the south and M56 bypass to the M65 to the north. This access point would also be used by construction traffic due to its access to the wider strategic network.

The proposed accommodation would increase the number of vehicle movements along the highway network and along long sections of unmade and unlit access lanes. There is a

reliance on the private car due to the remote location of development which is significant for the proposed 30+ staff which will be employed if the development is approved.

It is anticipated that the secondary access point off Rochdale Road A680 would be utilised by a small number of visitors who are visiting from the local areas of Edenfield and Norden.

Bye Road is an adopted highway that has heavy on street parking due to the terraced properties that it serves having no alternative place to park. The residents double park upon the footways due to the narrow width of the road. There is an option to widen Bye Road which would alleviate some of the concerns and this could be investigated by the applicant.

If the application is approved we would ask as a condition that:-

- No development shall take place, including any works of demolition, until a construction method statement has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved statement shall be adhered to throughout the construction period. It shall provide for:
 - i) Details of working hours
 - ii) Routing of delivery vehicles to the site
 - iii) Condition survey of Bye Road, Bury Old Road and the unnamed access roads leading to the site prior to the commencement of the development and once the construction period has ceased.

- Directional signage which conforms to TSRGD 2002 should be provided on Rochdale Road to better direct customers to the development. Lancashire County Council must provide and erect the signage and the cost should be borne by the client.

If the application is approved we would look to secure a contribution of £25,000 for the upgrade of public footpath 185 which runs along Riding Head Lane. This would form part of a wider strategic bridleway network connecting Ramsbottom to Scout Moor.

It is anticipated that 2600 trips will be generated annually by the hotel customers during the weekdays for walking / cycling and visiting the local area for tourism. This figure has been generated by a national database which compares real surveyed trips at a range of other hotels at similar locations.

In the statement provided by the applicant, it is stated that a reduction of 7600 trips is proposed should the accommodation be provided.

This figure is based upon the absolute worst case scenario that 19 couples staying in the accommodation would each generate 6 trips and that 4 trips would be eliminated should they stay overnight. The figures do not take into account shared trips in cars or minibuses or a designated driver driving the car home.

If the applicant's figures were taken for the purposes of demonstrating the potential increase in trips, they would read as follows. The 75 weddings booked for 2015 would generate 27,000 car trips and the 100 weddings anticipated for 2016 would generate 36,000 car trips (120 wedding guests, 60 couples).

This equates to a potential increase of 9000 movements from 2015 to 2016.

In summary the applicant proposes a reduction of 7600 trips in 2016 however this is offset by the additional 11600 (2600 Hotel standalone trips and 9000 wedding trips) trips which

equates to an overall increase of 4000 trips. Please note the numbers are not significant and crucially the percentage increase is 14.8%.

Regarding the request for a contribution, should the application be approved, I would add that the site is directly adjacent to an existing footpath that could become part of a wider route for cyclists and horse riders to access the surrounding network of bridleways.

RBC (Environmental Health)

No objection

Bury MBC

I would ask that you give every consideration to any representations you have received from residents of Bury when you assess the acceptability or not of the scheme.

Bury MBC (Highways)

The potential impact of the traffic generated by the proposed 19 bed visitor accommodation on Bury's highways has not been properly considered and mitigation measures have not been proposed (as were agreed at Appeal some years ago when a similar development albeit of a larger scale was proposed but refused by the Inspector). There is also no mention of the established (and signed) access to the site via Bye Road in the D&A, which is of primary concern in view of the parking problems on this length of highway or the use of all routes at times other than when a function is occurring as I presume people will be able to stay at any time throughout the week (like all other hotels) and not just when a function, wedding reception, etc is being held.

At this stage the council does not agree with the conclusion reached in the D&A that:

It is considered the proposed accommodation would directly reduce the number of vehicle movements into and out of the site, particularly during functions and events and specifically at unsociable hours. This is due to a large number of guests attending the functions not having to travel off site after a function to seek accommodation. A reduction in vehicle movements at unsociable hours would be beneficial to all residents located adjacent to the access routes into the Fisherman's Retreat.

as the impact of the proposal at all times has not been fully considered.

Further to the applicant's response to the above Bury's traffic team remain of the view that the traffic impacts have not been adequately assessed.

United Utilities

No objection

7. NOTIFICATION RESPONSES

To accord with the General Development Procedure Order six notices were posted and 71 letters were sent to residents.

One hundred and thirteen letters of support have been received, and fifteen letters of objection, as summarised below:

Letters of support

The development would:

- Complement and add to the existing business
- Contribute to the local economy and create jobs

- Encourage tourism; and
- such accommodation is much needed in the area

Letters of objection

- The scheme contributes inappropriate development within the Green belt & no very special circumstances have been demonstrated
- Limited and access and narrow roads with considerable on street parking
- No evidence of need and demand has been provided
- Excessive noise which will increase as a result of the development
- The access roads are poor and narrow and have no pedestrian provision. They are regularly used by walkers, horse riders, and is well used by the volunteers who walk dogs for Bleakholt Animal Sanctuary.
- The original permission was for an anglers retreat and not a licensed property. The building was not to be used for any other purpose other than as a clubhouse for the sole use of anglers. The long history of applications shows that it is the owners intention to develop the site irrespective of the Green belt status.
- The history is a material consideration and demonstrates that it is 'creeping development',

Cllr Ian Bevan (Councillor for Shuttleworth and Ramsbottom) – Bye Road is a very busy road and traffic volume has increased recently, there has been a number of planning permissions granted by RBC in the area by they have not taken into account the additional traffic and damage to the road surface on Bye Road. It is much easier for this type of traffic to leave the M66 and travel up Bye Road as opposed to accessing the area from Bury Old Road in Turn Village. The Cllr suggests further liaison between RBC and MBC or conditions requiring vehicles to access from Bury Old Road, particularly for developments at Fisherman's Retreat and whether any S.106 monies can find their way to local residents on the Bury side of the boundary for highway repairs etc.

8. ASSESSMENT

The main considerations of the application are:

- 1) Principle; 2) Openness & Visual Amenity; 3) Neighbour Amenity; & 4) Highway Safety; 5) Ecological Impacts; 6) Very Special Circumstances

Principle

Policy 1 of the Council's Core Strategy states that development should take place within the urban boundary unless it has to be located in the countryside, and should be a size and nature appropriate to the size and role of the settlement.

Paragraph 79 of the NPPF states:

“The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.”

Subject to the exceptions listed in paragraph 89, the construction of buildings in the Green Belt should be considered inappropriate development.

The exceptions are:

- buildings for agriculture and forestry;
- provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation

and for cemeteries, as long as it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;

- the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;
- the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;
- limited infilling in villages, and limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the Local Plan; or
- limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed sites (brownfield land), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it than the existing development.

The applicant and the case officer both agree that the development would not meet any of the exceptions and the scheme does constitute inappropriate development.

Paragraphs 87 & 88 state:

“As with previous Green Belt policy, inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.”

“When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. ‘Very special circumstances’ will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.”

The application is therefore unacceptable in principle.

Impact on Openness and Visual Amenity

The proposed building would result in an increase in floor space of approximately 1000sqm, which represents close to an 80% increase in floorspace over the existing building.

The percentage increase in floor area over the building originally constructed would be in the region of 1300%.

Calculations in respect of volumetric increases have recently been provided. Those figures are currently being assessed and will be provided in an Update Report. However, it is clear that the volumetric increase will be substantial also.

Even when only considering the percentage increase over the existing building I consider that there would be a significant impact on the openness of the Green Belt arising from this proposal. The impact taking into account all the previous additions would clearly be far greater.

In addition to the building the development includes associated parking and a re-siting of the car park access road. The new building, new car park and access road would project southwards from the side of the existing building by in the region of 50m and the development would extend southwards from outside of the footprint of the existing development (which I have taken to be the outside edge of the existing car park access road) by in the region of 30m.

As previously noted the building is significant in terms of its size. Visually it would not appear as subordinate to the existing building and would further alter and depart from the original character of the original and unimposing building that was permitted on the site. Other than in respect of the proposed materials it does not appear to harmonise with the area.

It is acknowledged that due to the position of the Fisherman's Retreat within the Valley that the building is not and would not be exposed such that it would be unduly prominent from all elevations. The applicant has provided photographs taken from the surrounding area to demonstrate impact; however, there is no specific landscape/visual impact assessment.

There are a number of public vantage points where the new building would be viewed, for example on approach along Riding Head Lane, Bury Old Road, Turn Village and Bleakholt Road, in addition to other public rights of ways and bridleways.

Whilst landscaping is proposed which would in time soften and to some degree reduce the visual impact of the extension the degree to which the development is screened and the extent to which it can be viewed from public vantage points do not lessen the impact on the openness of the Green Belt.

In conclusion, the proposal would have a materially harmful effect upon the openness and the visual amenity of the Green Belt.

Neighbour Amenity

There has been no objection from the Council's Environmental Health department. However, until it can more firmly be established what the traffic impacts of the development would be it is not considered appropriate to conclude that there would not be a materially harmful increase in traffic noise resulting from the proposed development.

Highway Safety

Whilst the applicant considers the scheme would lead to a reduction in trips to and from the site, both Bury MBC and LCC Highways consider that it would lead to an increase.

Officers have been provided with calculations to demonstrate why the above conclusions have been reached.

Additionally concerns have been raised regarding the use of Bye Road as the main access to the site. Bye Road is narrow, has significant on street parking and has access constraints at its junction. Due to a large increase in traffic movements over the years its condition is also deteriorating. The applicant disagrees that Bye Road is used as the main access, and they state that the Rochdale Road/Bury Old Road access is promoted. They point to other users of the road, in particular Twine Farm that has recently intensified its activities that has been the main contributor to the deterioration of the Road.

The applicant has completed a simple transport assessment form and has subsequently provided further information on what they consider to be existing and future vehicle movements associated with the site. In addition they have provided comments on other developments and factors which contribute to traffic along existing access routes. However, in the absence of a full transport assessment I do not consider it would be possible to adequately reach a conclusion that the scheme would result in a decrease in traffic associated with the business as the applicant purports.

Furthermore, it is not considered that the site is in a sustainable location where visitors would be expected to access the site via non car modes, not only by reason of its proximity away from bus routes, but also due to its elevated position from Whalley Road which would make it unsuitable for some to travel on foot. It is noted also that the roads leading to the site do not benefit from any footpaths and are narrow.

Ecological Impacts

It is considered unlikely that the scheme would result in any significant ecological impacts. Subject to an appropriate planting scheme and provision of bat boxes within the building there would likely be a net gain in biodiversity resulting from the proposal.

The applicant's 'very special circumstances'

It has already been included that the development would have a significant impact on the openness of the Green Belt.

Whilst acknowledging that there is a need for overnight accommodation within Rossendale and that the promotion of tourism is necessary, it is considered that Policies 14 (Tourism) and 15 (Overnight Visitor Accommodation) do not support the scheme, contrary to the applicant's submission.

Policy 14 states that new development outside of the Urban Boundary will be considered acceptable where it is essential for the proposed facility, no sites within the urban boundary are suitable and there are no unacceptable impacts affecting:

- landscape character
- visual quality (including light pollution), or
- Amenity to neighbours, or
- Nature conservation assets

It has already been concluded that there are harmful impacts in terms of landscape character and visual quality.

In addition Paragraph 24 of the NPPF states that:

“Local planning authorities should apply a sequential test to planning applications for main town centre uses that are not in an existing centre and are not in accordance with an up-to-date Local Plan. They should require applications for main town centre uses to be located in town centres, then in edge of centre locations and only if suitable sites are not available should out of centre sites be considered. When considering edge of centre and out of centre proposals, preference should be given to accessible sites that are well connected to the town centre.”

Paragraph 25 states: “This sequential approach should not be applied to applications for small scale rural offices or other small scale rural development.”

Paragraph 26 states that where an application does not satisfy the sequential test it should be refused.

Firstly, it is not considered that the scheme represents 'small scale rural development'. The provision of a 19 bedroom hotel which is on the cusp of a major planning application would represent a significant level of accommodation within any town centre in Rossendale.

Secondly, the applicant considers that they have undertaken a detailed search of the surrounding area which has indicated that there are no suitable alternative sites which would meet the identified need for overnight visitor accommodation. This detailed search has not been included within their submission. It would be expected that such a search would include sites within Bury also, due to its proximity.

Finally, given the site's location it is not considered that this is an accessible site well connected to a town centre.

Accordingly the application fails to comply with the sequential approach.

Policy 15 of the Council's Core Strategy states:

"Proposals will be supported particularly where use is made of existing buildings. Proposals will be supported at locations both within and outside of the urban boundary where:

- they are appropriate to their locality (including in terms of size, amenity to neighbouring uses), and
- they are complementary to existing tourism facilities, and
- access is good by a variety of modes (with no adverse effects on the local road network), and
- the capacity of existing infrastructure is adequate, and
- there are no harmful effects on visual amenity, landscape, or nature conservation assets, and
- the development will not reduce the amount of land in use for the purposes of open space or recreation, and
- where need can be demonstrated.

"In addition for areas outside the urban boundary it will be expected that, where it is appropriate to the type of establishment (for example, a hotel), use will be made of existing buildings."

It is not considered that the proposed accommodation is a size appropriate to its locality, that a 19 bedroomed hotel is required to meet the needs of Twine Valley, or that access is good by a variety of modes.

LCC and Bury MBC has objected to the scheme as they considered it will have an adverse effect on the local road network and is unsustainably located, and it has previously been concluded that the development would have a harmful effect on visual amenity/landscape impact.

The applicant's completed transport assessment form has stated that they consider the majority of overnight guests utilising the proposed accommodation at weekends would come from within current visitor numbers attending functions and parties, and that during weekdays the majority of guests utilising the new accommodation would be existing business / leisure users of the existing restaurant/conference/ function room. It states that the primary demand for overnight accommodation is from future visitors to the Fisherman's Retreat for a wedding /function.

This would indicate the building is being constructed to improve the services offered by the existing business, rather than meeting a direct need/demand for tourism within the area. This is significant particularly given the size of the building proposed and the harm to the

openness of the Green Belt as previously identified, and does not constitute a very special circumstance.

Whilst there is a need for schemes that enhance tourism and provide overnight visitor accommodation within Rossendale, it has not been demonstrated that this building is justified to meet that need in this location.

With the information provided demonstrating continued and projected growth of the existing business, most particularly in relation to wedding functions it is not considered that there is an essential need for the expansion of the business in the manner proposed. The applicant's submission indicates that the existing business is performing well, and there is no reason to consider that it will not continue to do so without such accommodation. The success or otherwise of the existing business cannot be considered a very special circumstance in this instance.

Furthermore, that an existing business exists is not considered to constitute a very special circumstance. Such an approach could be applied to any such application. This also applies in respect of job creation. Whilst the creation of jobs weighs positively in favour of the proposal, the creation of jobs in this instance is not considered to outweigh the harms identified, and does not constitute very special circumstances.

Part of the applicant's case is that the development would directly contribute to the local economy, creating jobs, and spending within Rossendale. This will be true to a degree, however, this would be the case for any expanding business. It is not considered a very special circumstance.

In addition, contrary to the submission statements, due to the site's location on the border with Bury it does not follow that Rossendale will derive all of the economic benefits from the proposal.

Conclusion

The scheme constitutes inappropriate development with the Green Belt. It has been found that there is significant harm to the openness and visual amenities of the green belt. Contrary to the applicant's submission it is not considered that the proposal accords with the Council's tourism and overnight visitor accommodation policies.

It is considered that a facility of the size proposed is not required in that location, and that the existence of the business itself and its continuing success does not represent a very special circumstance.

It is considered that the applicant has not adequately satisfied the sequential test for what is a main town centre use.

It has also been found that there is insufficient information to conclude that there will not be a significant increase in vehicle trips arising from the proposal and that a transport assessment would be the appropriate means to conclude this matter.

Therefore having regards to the information submitted there are considered to be no very special circumstances to outweigh the finding of inappropriateness, and the other harms identified.

9. RECOMMENDATION
Refuse

10. REASON

The proposed scheme constitutes inappropriate development within the Green Belt. It is considered that by reason of its size, increasing the footprint of the existing building by in the region of 80% and the footprint of the original building by in the region of 1300% it would significantly detract from the openness of the Greenbelt, and by reason of its size, design and appearance would unduly detract from the visual amenities of the area and the character of the existing building. In addition it is not considered that a facility of the size proposed is required in that location and that the resulting transport impacts have been adequately addressed. Accordingly the case put forward by the applicant in favour of the proposal does not amount to the very special circumstances needed to outweigh the finding of inappropriateness. The scheme is considered contrary to the NPPF and Policies 1, 9, 11, 14, 15, 21, 23 and 24 of the Council's adopted Core Strategy DPD.