

# Riva Homes

## **Design & access statement – Former Westfields Assessment Centre**

### **1. Summary**

#### **2. Description of site**

The development site is located at the former Westfields Assessment Centre in Mirfield, located off Westfields Road and adjacent to Knowle Park. It is approximately 5.5 miles North East of Huddersfield centre.

The site is currently vacant and was purchased by Riva Homes at auction in February 2015. Prior to this, the site was owned by Kirklees Council and was used by Social Services, Community Care Services, Children & Family Centre. Orchard View Care Home is still operational and situated to the north of the site and has a right of way to grant access through the application site.

The site formally contained two buildings (the Assessment centre and its extension together with a more modern office type building). These have all recently been demolished either by Kirklees Council or ourselves over the past 18 months and as such, the site is a cleared brownfield site.

The surrounding area to the north, east and south is predominantly residential with a mix of house types. To the west is Knowle Park and its associated parkland infrastructure.

#### **Planning History**

The site benefits from an outline planning consent (all matters reserved) under reference 2014/92673 which grants consent for the erection of 11 detached dwellings which is extant until February 2018.

Applications 2016/91486 & 2016/93517 related to the erection of 22 dwellings and the formation of access respectively and were withdrawn on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2016 following discussions with the case officer, Louise Bearcroft.

### **3. Proposal**

Our application seeks permission for the erection of 14 dwellings with the site effectively split into three distinct sections.

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**Section 1** – This would be the front part of the site from the entrance at Westfields Road extending into the approximately half of the site. This area would contain 7 large detached dwellings, each set within large grounds and has been dictated by a large extent by the presence of protected trees. These dwellings would be two storeys in height with each dwelling having a garage. Plots 1 & 4 would have a detached garage which would have ancillary accommodation/storage above.

**Section 2** – This area of land is roughly central within the plot and contains several large, mature trees central within the plot. This area of land would be used for Public Open Space associated with the development.

**Section 3** – The final area of land the rear of the POS area would contain seven dwellings in three blocks of semi-detached and one detached dwelling. The dwellings within this section would be 2 ½ storeys in height with either an integral garage or a garage block for each plot. This area would also provide the vehicular and pedestrian access for Orchard View as well as a turning area for all vehicles.

The road associated with the development would effectively split the site in half, though it would join Westfields Road at the same point as existing and provide access for Orchard View.

## Use

The development will create 14 new dwelling houses which will be between 2 & 2 ½ storeys in height and will form 3, 4 & 5 bedrooms. All dwellings will include garages.

## Density

At 14 dwellings, this would equate to a density figure of 14.7 dwellings per hectare which is significantly lower than the recommended figure of between 30-50 DPH. That said, the site contains a significant amount of constraints which effect the number of dwellings which could be accommodated on site.

These include many protected trees, levels differences and the need to provide a through access for Orchard View. Furthermore, the Outline approval related to 11 dwellings which equates to 10 DPH.

## Space About Buildings

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The position of the dwellings has been done in accordance with Policy BE12 of the Kirklees UDP. In all cases, these minimum distances have been achieved and in most cases, significantly exceeded.

## **Pre-application**

Following on from the withdrawal of our previous applications, a meeting was held in December 2016 with Louise Bearcroft (planner) and Nick Goddard (Trees officer) to discuss our amended scheme. This was received positively and appeared to address the previous concerns raised.

Comments were raised as to the accompanying reports which would be required for the application. As such, the application is submitted with these discussed reports. Prior to submitting the application, e-mails were sent to the 3 local Ward Councillors on 8<sup>th</sup> Feb 2017 to advise them of the application and inviting any comments they may have on our proposal. None were received.

No neighbour consultation has been undertaken regarding this amended scheme as it is considered that this proposal has taken into account the objections received as part of the previous application.

## **4. Planning Policy**

The site is unallocated on the Unitary Development Plan Proposals Map.

### **Unitary Development Plan:**

- D2 – Unallocated Land
- BE1 – Design principles
- BE2 – Quality of design
- BE12 – Space about buildings
- BE23 – Crime prevention
- NE9 – Retention of mature trees
- T10 – Highway safety
- H10 – Affordable housing
- H12 – Arrangements for securing affordable housing
- G6 – Land contamination
- H18 – Provision of open space
- EP11 – Ecological landscaping

### **National Planning Policy Framework:**

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Part 1 – Building a strong, competitive economy

Part 6 – Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes

Part 7 – Requiring Good Design

Part 10 – Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change

Part 11 – Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment

## **Other documents**

Interim Affordable Housing Document

## **5. Access and Parking**

Access to the development would be taken using the existing access from Westfields Lane, though some improvements are proposed including improved visibility splays and the widening of the entrance. This would be sufficient to ensure that two vehicles to pass without creating any highway safety issues.

It is proposed to erect gates close to the site entrance with Westfields Road. These gates would be set back by a significant distance to allow for vehicles (including larger vehicles) to be off the main highway whilst waiting for the gates to open.

Due to constraints, both within our site and the adjacent Orchard View, the access to serve Orchard View cannot be altered or moved without creating significant issues in relation to trees and other constraints. It is therefore our intention to retain the access in its current position with no alterations proposed. For indicative purposes, the vehicular access for Orchard View is shown on our proposed block plan.

Because of this fixed access point for Orchard View and the protected trees within the site, the road would effectively split the site in half. This application would not alter any parking or access arrangements associated with Orchard View.

It is acknowledged that turning within Orchard View for larger vehicles is not ideal but it is an existing situation. This application seeks to provide a turning area for vehicles associated with both our development as well as for Orchard View.

So as not to reduce parking for Orchard View, this turning area would be to the rear of our site but within close proximity to the entrance for Orchard View. A bin collection point can be provided for the care home. This is an improvement for the adjacent development.

We have provided an indicative access/parking layout for Orchard View which shows several parking spaces together with turning facilities for smaller vehicles. As stated above, larger vehicles would turn within the turning head associated with this

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development. **This plan is for indicative purposes only as Orchard View is outside of the red line plan and not within our ownership. It does however, show how vehicles will gain access through to Orchard View and how these vehicles would turn to leave the site in a forward gear.**

It is our intention to construct the access from Westfields Road up to the entrance with Orchard View up to an adoptable standard but for it to remain private. This approach was used on the previous application for 22 dwellings. Whilst this application was withdrawn, highways did accept the principle of a non-standard approach to the highways design as it provided sufficient parking, access and turning. This application would ensure that this remains the case. The only difference between the previous scheme and this application is the access for Orchard View which is now proposed to use the same access as the development.

We therefore consider that the principle of an un-adopted access is acceptable provided it is constructed to the required specification.

Whilst it was recommended (as part of the outline application) to introduce traffic calming measures, we consider that our proposed highways layout provides sufficient traffic calming. In this case, the road isn't naturally straight and provides some bends which would naturally slow traffic down. Furthermore, when driving through the POS section, this would be a raised section which would slow down vehicles. Given the circumstances, there would be no point along the access road where a vehicle could gather enough speed to create any highway safety concern.

## 6. Design

This amended scheme has taken on board the comments raised by the officer on the previous application where the scheme was considered not to relate well to its surroundings. This mainly related to the overall Georgian appearance of the development.

We agree with officers that there is no predominant house types, materials, or design within the locality with the closest development being to the east on Westfields Court. This street contains a mix of detached, semi-detached, two storey and bungalow dwellings. There is a varied range in terms of their designs too with the prevailing character been chalet style dormer bungalows. Recent constructions are mainly two storey dwellings of brick or stone.

In respect of this application, our design approach is to simplify the appearance of the dwellings (when compared to the previous application) whilst still ensuring that the development promotes local distinctiveness. We are proposing some Juliet

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balconies for a small number of plots toward the front of the development. This not only provides a functional element for these dwellings but also ensures that there is design interest within the development. There are numerous examples of Juliet balconies within the Mirfield area, many of which are in far more prominent positions than this development. We therefore consider that this feature provides local distinctiveness which is a requirement of the NPPF.

The materials proposed for the development would be natural stone for the walls and blue roof slate. We consider that this is acceptable as it would help to improve and raise standards to the overall character and appearance of the wider area.

Whilst not an adopted Kirklees policy, our development complies with the Government document relating to internal space standards.

## **7. Public Open Space**

Due to the size of the site, areas of Public Open Space are required in accordance with Policy H18 of the UDP. This policy requires a minimum provision of 30 SQ.M per dwelling which would equate to 420 SQ.M for our development of 14 dwellings.

Two areas of POS are proposed approximately halfway within the site which would measure 1207 SQ.M. This would far exceed policy H18 requirements. These areas are largely dictated by the positions of large, mature trees which are central within the site. We consider that these areas would offer a unique open space environment for the local community, set against the backdrop of these trees.

Pre-application comments were sought from the Councils Landscape Architect as to what would be required within these areas but unfortunately, no comments have been received. We therefore propose to retain these areas as open spaces where people can relax within the woodland setting.

It is our intention that a management company would maintain these areas.

Furthermore, the adjacent park, Knowl park, provides excellent park facilities for residents of the development.

## **8. Trees**

The site is characterised by large, mature, protected trees. These are predominantly around the boundaries of the site though there are some trees within the centre of the site.

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The Outline application from 2014 proposed a number of these trees to be removed either due to their condition or to allow for a suitable residential development. These trees have been marked on our proposed block plan.

A total of 13 protected trees are proposed to be removed as part of the development. 12 have already been approved as part of the previous outline application with another tree proposed to be removed due to it suffering storm damage recently. The Council are aware of this tree due to it causing damage to a third-party fence.

In early February 2017 works were undertaken to clear the undergrowth toward the front of the site, close to the entrance. One of the main reasons for this was for us to be able to accurately survey this area and pinpoint the correct locations of the protected trees.

A full tree survey has been undertaken and submitted with this application using this updated survey. The proposed development considers these remaining protected trees and ensures that the position of the dwellings do not impact upon them or their associated root systems.

The tree survey indicates a total of 17 trees to be removed however, these include four trees not covered under the Tree Protection Orders which are in place for the site. As stated above, the only protected trees to be removed are ones which have been approved as part of the original Outline application.

The accompanying Method Statement covers how these trees will be protected during the construction phase of the development and the long-term management of the trees not within private gardens.

## **9. Ecological Matters**

Submitted as part of this application is an Ecological Impact Assessment which was requested as part of the previously withdrawn proposal. The report covers all ecological aspects of the site.

As part of this assessment, bat surveys were undertaken on the trees within the site. Given the time of year that the surveys were carried out, a full bat survey couldn't be undertaken. The initial assessment of these trees for bats has found some high or moderate bat roost potential in 13 trees which are to be removed as part of the development.

Outline planning for the site has already been granted (Planning Reference 2014/49/92673, accepted with conditions January 2015). As part of the outline planning supporting documentation six trees (and two small leylandii) were marked

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for 'removal ASAP', four of which had already been removed prior to Riva homes purchasing the site. A further 11 trees were marked as 'trees which can be removed to allow development' (Planning Document Reference Proposed Site/Block Layout [id 52950] 12/02/2015). Of these 13 trees, the current proposal highlights 12 of the same trees for removal plus one additional tree which has been damaged in recent storms (with limited bat roost potential in any event). No other tree loss is proposed.

Given that these trees have already been approved to be removed as part of the Outline application, it is expected that the Council would take a pragmatic approach in its assessment of this proposal. Tree roost loss is generally easily mitigated with the use of bat boxes on the development and within the retained trees which would significantly reduce any long-term impact with regard to ecological matters.

Matters relating to further surveys and mitigation could (in our opinion) be conditioned to any approval (if required). We would therefore hope that the Council assess this application considering the previous Outline scheme (which is still extant) & the ecological comments associated with that proposal.

## **10. Drainage**

The application is accompanied with a full and detailed drainage strategy which demonstrates how the development will be drained (when taking into account the existing uses within the site) and the required reduction in run off rates.

The drainage consultants have been in pre-application discussions with both the Council (Paul Farndale) and Yorkshire Water to ensure that the proposed drainage scheme would be acceptable to both.

This proposed drainage strategy has taken on board comments from both interested parties.

## **11. Contaminated Land & Historic Coal Mining**

The Coal Mining Risk Assessment and Phase 1 & 2 Contaminated land reports submitted with this application have previously been assessed by the Councils Environmental Health officer and The Coal Authority. Both raised no objections to the scheme and agreed with the findings within the reports.

It is acknowledged that validation reports will be required and secured by condition to ensure that the works recommended within the reports are carried out.

Subject to this, it is considered that there are no outstanding matters in relation to land contamination and coal mining.

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## **12. Affordable housing/MetroCard's/off-site POS contribution**

Due to the size of the site and number of dwellings proposed, we are aware that the development would attract an affordable housing contribution which would be 20% of the total number of dwellings (in line with the Kirklees interim affordable housing policy). This would equate to 3 on site dwellings being classed as affordable (with a mix between social and intermediate rented).

A Metrocard scheme would also be required as this was a condition attached to the Outline application.

Given our intention to provide a Public Open Space on site above policy requirements, there should be no requirement for any off-site contribution for POS.

## **13. Conclusion**

We feel that this application successfully addresses the previous concerns raised by officers and consultees on the last application. These concerns/comments have shaped our revised scheme which, we feel, is now acceptable and is policy compliant.