



Former St Mary's Vicarage Site
Spen Lane
Gomersal
BD19 4LS

Design and Access Statement

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1.0 Introduction

This Design and Access Statement (DAS) accompanies a Full Planning Application on behalf of the Anglican diocese of Leeds for a modest development of 10, single-storey flats for people with supported living needs, each of whom has their own front door and each of whom lives independently. The development addresses increasing demand for modern accommodation for people with health and care needs.

It responds to government policy to keep people out of hospital by providing suitably-designed accommodation for recovery and rehabilitation in a 'home for life'.

The site is church land currently occupied by a redundant 1960s vicarage which is surplus to requirements. The building is occupied by short-term licensees. It is proposed to demolish the vicarage, which is of low architectural merit and falls far below modern standards of sustainability, space usage and energy efficiency.

The site is 70m from St Mary's Church, Spen Lane, Gomersal. The site is scarcely visible

from the Church, being screened by mature trees which are within the graveyard. We understand these trees will be retained, subject to specialist arboricultural advice. The site benefits from views across the churchyard, which is a haven for plants and wildlife.

This DAS document sets out the approach that has been taken to design (with associated access) a scheme to replace the redundant vicarage with 10 high quality, secure and attractive flats and associated amenity spaces.

The contemporary design is accessible to everyone, on a single level, without steps. The interiors of the flats are generous in area and ceiling heights. The flats have been designed to be accessible to wheelchair users.

The visual impact of the single storey scheme is negligible. It is arguably an improvement on the view of the taller (two storey), redundant building that is to be demolished.

By virtue of its low level design and roofscape, the development harmonizes with the style of local buildings. Following helpful discussions with the planning officer, stonework wraps

around the elevations, contributing to a pleasing effect that mirrors the church 70 metres distant.

The DAS follows a thorough local community consultation (see Statement of Community Involvement). A special event was held in the Church, to which Ward Councillors were personally invited in writing. Architects' models were shown for discussion. The final design takes account of observations by neighbours on the eastern side (there are no neighbours to the west, where the churchyard lies).

The DAS benefits overall from a rewarding Pre-App discussion and follow-up with Planning Officers, and from careful professional analysis of the site and its surrounding context.

1.1 Advisers

- In respect of conformity to Planning Policy and need for the development, reference should be made to details provided by Peacock and Smith.
- In respect of MEP design, reference should be made to details provided by John Francis consultants.
- In respect of the structural approach, reference should be made to the Alan Wood & Partners' report.
- For details of sustainable drainage, please see Sirius' analysis and for trees and ecological matters, please see Quants' reports.

2.0 The Site

The site is located off Spen Lane in Gomersal situated between Cleakheaton and Birstall. To the east are two well-screened detached dwelling houses (see site location plan). The west of the site overlooks the churchyard of St Mary the Blessed Virgin church. The church is a Grade II listed building.

The landform of the site is broadly flat, lying approximately 150 metres above sea level. The site is bordered to the north by the A643 Spen Lane with residential properties including small to moderately sized gardens; to the east and south by dwelling houses with moderately sized gardens; and to the west by the extensive and secluded churchyard of St. Mary The Blessed Virgin Church, which extends to approximately 0.75 hectares.

Post-war public housing (isolated from the site) sits to the south. These homes sit at the end of very long gardens, well away from the site. To the north is the main road, Spen Lane, running east/west, with bus stops.

The site could be described as 'urban fringe', whose suburban housing interventions (public

and private) still retain scattered rural overtones from a previous epoch of mills around the area. These sprang up haphazardly on agricultural land in the 19th Century.

2.1 The Existing Use

The existing use of the site comprises a vicarage erected in the 1960s. The occupiable space is estimated at around 260m². The building is now redundant for church use. The building is occupied by an AST tenant. The house has 4 bedrooms and a double garage.

The building is architecturally unremarkable. It sits in a large, unkempt and untended garden. It makes poor and inefficient use of the site in terms of scale and housing capacity. The building does not meet modern standards of energy efficiency and sustainability. The landowners regard it as uneconomic to upgrade.



Red line boundary of the site



Existing vicarage to be demolished

2.2 Topography and Character

The site is flat but with a very slight decline
To the west of the site, screening it from the church, there are mature lime trees along the boundary. Whilst they are technically on the Church's land and outside the development site, their canopies extend over it.

2.3 Existing Context

The churchyard is located between the Church and the site boundary (see photographs). The Church itself is 70m distant from the site boundary. The effect of mature trees along the boundary (see above) ensures that there will be very little visual impact on the Church or its setting. Any impact that could be measured will not be negative.

The dwellings to the south of the site are positioned approximately 30m from the rear boundary of the site. This significant distance should ensure that there are no negative effects whatsoever. A new 2m fence boundary will be erected. No windows are planned on the south elevation of the new building, so there is no chance of overlooking.



St Mary's Church



Existing Bus stop on Spen Lane



Detached dwellings to East boundary

2.4 History of the Site

There is no evidence of previously recorded development on the site before a vicarage was constructed in the late 20th C. Historical uses appear to have been confined to agriculture and grazing.

There is nothing of historical note on the site itself.

Surrounding the site the only historic building is the church. The neo-Gothic church of St Mary the Blessed Virgin (1852), designed by John Dobson of Leeds, is 70m from the site and is listed Grade II for architectural reasons. Given the distance from the site and the screening effect of the trees in the churchyard the impact of the development on the church and its setting is minimal. Removing the existing, taller building may actually contribute positively to improving its setting.

The new development will have no visual or other adverse impact on the church or on its setting.

2.5 Site Summary

The Kirklees council householder design guide ordains that any form of Local development *“needs to be sensitive to its location and should not harm the character of the site or the wider setting”*

In preparing the design, these considerations have been uppermost in the minds of the professional team.

The character of the site can be described as sub-urban, on a rural fringe. There are dense residential developments opposite rising to 3 + storeys and lower-rise public housing (2 storeys) nearby. A distinctive feature is a ‘pepperpot’ tower in a residential block on the other side of Spen Lane.

Fortunately, the site is very well screened and has little impact on the adjacent surroundings. The same is true of the proposed development. There are no significant views into and out of the site that need to be protected.

The proposed design makes no alteration at all to this blended local design character.

Although a contemporary building (which reflects modern energy and other standards and requirements), the design is neutral in terms of overall building character and massing. The professional team set out to make it appear as if the new development has always been there. The client has supported this approach by not proposing to overdevelop the site. The approach taken has been one of ‘low impact’ and respecting the interests of neighbours.

As a result, the proposed redevelopment of the site will have no negative effect on neighbouring properties.

3.0 Constraints and Opportunities

3.1 Constraints

In respect of the new design for a residential scheme on the site, there are a number of constraints:

- The design of the scheme will need to ensure that the development provides safe access, and adequate turning for visitors, service and emergency vehicles.
- The design should address the safety of the existing vehicle entrance to the site that does not meet modern standards of safety and visibility.
- The mature lime trees to the west of the site need to be taken into consideration in the proposed site layout.

3.2 Opportunities

Opportunities for the development of the site include:

- Provision of a high quality single storey accessible residential scheme for people with health and care needs who may be entitled by law to care and support but for whom modern, well-designed and purpose-built accommodation is rarely available.
- The provision of residential development on previously developed land, without altering the existing use category (C3).
- Development of a scheme which utilises the whole site more efficiently and effectively than currently.
- The improved vehicular access creates improved visibility splays which will contribute to greater public safety.
- To provide a significant enhancement in terms of landscaping and tree planting. There is also an opportunity to enhance ecological and bio-diversity value.

4.0 Setting Design Parameters / Design Purpose

In developing a scheme for the site the following design principles have been adopted:

- To utilise this previously developed land and to work within the perimeter of the existing developed area.
- Design with the benefit of a thorough landscape analysis including trees and bio-diversity.
- Maintain and enhance the urban fringe setting of the surrounding site by removing the existing poor quality building and by retaining trees so far as practicable and via supplemental planting in line with professional advice.
- To create a development that is appropriate for its location, and one that respects its setting and adjacent land uses.
- To produce a high quality scheme that makes a positive visual addition to the area.
- To ensure a coherent and considered design language is established for not only the proposed dwellings but also the infrastructure of the site.
- To provide a development of an appropriate density to suit the location and surrounding development.
- Minimise impact on the natural landscape and use the topography of the site and new planting to provide natural privacy between adjacent properties.
- To ensure the proposed building is of an appropriate scale, mass and appearance.
- Provide high quality sustainable dwellings.
- To develop dwellings constructed of materials that reference the materials found in the locality
- To develop dwellings that offer a unique type of living that is much required for adult social care.

5.0 Site Layout

Following the pre-application feedback on the 13 dwellings originally proposed, we have now re-designed the scheme to provide 10 dwellings. This reduction means the development can 'breathe' on the site; a slight contraction in total built area also provides more outdoor space and amenity.

5.1 Positioning

The building footprint has been reduced in width and positioned further away from the west boundary in order to leave a greater border between the proposed dwellings and the mature trees in the neighbouring churchyard.

Setting the building back to allow for the car parking to the front has resulted in less visual impact from Spen Lane. The single storey massing, set back from the road and existing dry stone wall - to be rebuilt to allow for a safer access - along with the trees to the frontage, mean that very little of the building is seen from eye level from outside the site.

Whilst the building is close to the rear boundary, around 2m at the pinch point, the nearest dwelling from the rear elevation is over 27m away as the rear gardens to the properties on Shirley Grove have extremely long gardens. There are no windows to the rear of the new development ensuring privacy.



5.2 Landscape / Biodiversity

Reference should be made to the Arboricultural Report/ Tree Survey for details of any trees being required to be removed as part of the development. The building/site plan has been designed to minimise the effect on the existing landscape. A BNG Assessment has been completed to support this application.

Whilst each apartment has its own individual private amenity area, the whole site provides a landscaped area around the border of the site offering a tranquil feel in a semi-rural environment.

New soft landscaping and planting have been recognised from the outset as an integral part of the development, as it will help to soften, improve and screen the buildings/parking areas in the local landscape.

5.3 Pedestrian links

The site offers two pedestrian links from Spen Lane. One is positioned with a winding path round to the car parking area. The other is

positioned directly adjacent to the new access, for safety reasons.

A further pedestrian link is provided via an existing gate present in the dry stone wall along the west boundary for access to the Churchyard. (The scheme therefore reflects the old use as a vicarage to the church in its new design.)

5.4 Parking and Vehicle Charging

Parking has been provided for 12 vehicles including two disabled access spots. This means that each flat will have its own dedicated parking spot plus an additional two for visitors. Ten lockable cycle shelters have also been provided, one for each flat as per the pre-application request.



5.5 Waste Management

A dedicated bin storage area has been provided to the front of the site, easily accessible by residents and the refuse truck vehicles.

The bins are positioned in a timber bin store and located immediately behind the dry stone wall. This means they will not be visible from the road. They do not cause any obstruction to the highway, car parking or be blocked by any cars. 4 x 1100ltrs Eurobins (2x Recycling and 2x residual) have been provided for the ten flats.

5.6 Boundaries and Hard Surfaces

The existing dry stone wall to the front boundary will need to be repositioned in order to provide the new access location. All existing materials will be used to re-build the wall. The existing dry-stone wall situated to the west of the site between the graveyard and the site will be retained in full. A new 1800mm close boarded timber fence will be positioned on the east and south (rear) boundaries for privacy and to prevent any overlooking. The existing scarce hedgerow planting to the east boundary of the site will be retained.

Surfacing to the car parking area will be permeable block paving wherever feasible in order to reduce surface water issues and to care for the trees.

5.7 Drainage and Flooding

The site is situated in Flood Zone 1 and so is at low risk of flooding. Nevertheless, anticipated increase in surface water runoff will mean that attenuation design will be provided as part of construction planning.

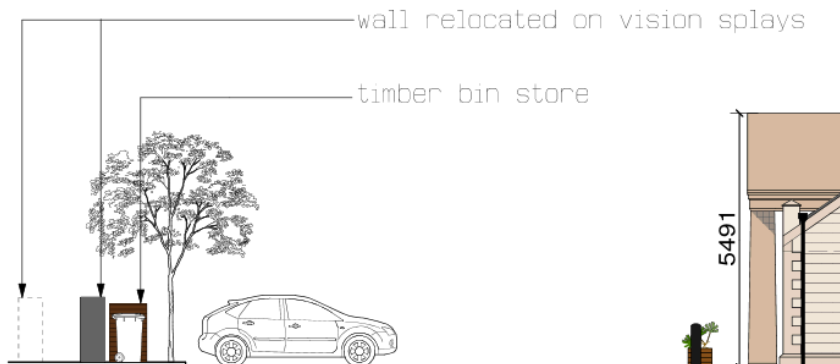
There is a culverted watercourse some distance (175m) north east of the site. However, historical plans show several mill ponds to the north of the site along Spen Lane, the nearest being 45m from the north east corner of the site.

5.8 Crime Prevention

There is a landscaped border around the building and private gardens, which is only accessible to residents. Security fencing with lockable gates separates this from the public zone including vehicular access at the front of the building.

All external routes in to the site lead into the public zone at the front of the building.

All windows and doors to the building are on ground floor level. They will be designed in



accordance with Building Regulations Approved Document Q (Security-Dwellings). External doors and accessible windows will also meet with the physical security requirements of 'Secured by Design', along with the lockable bike shelters.

5.9 Lighting

Bollard lighting is provided to the front of the site around the car parking areas, pedestrian links and to the front of the building.

Lighting will be low-level in order to reduce light pollution and to preserve any 'dark corridors' to benefit birds.

There will be no 'searchlight' security lighting pointing into Spen Lane or adjacent gardens and dwelling-houses.

6.0 Access

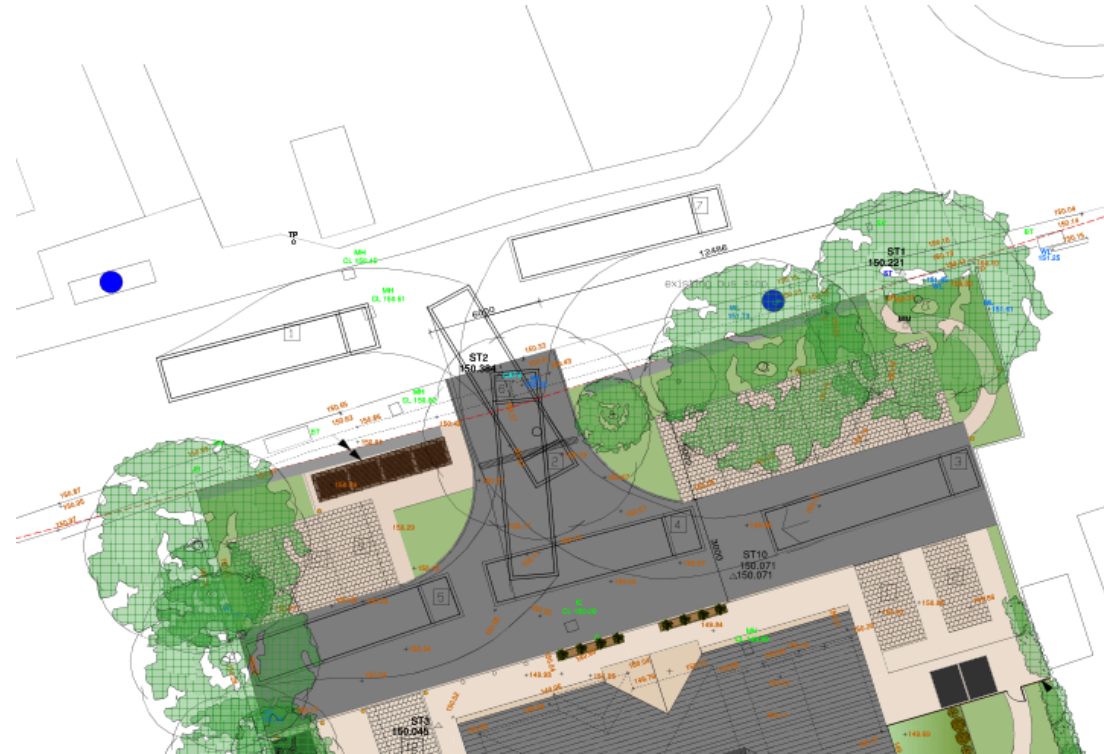
The existing vehicular access for the Vicarage is positioned almost directly opposite Pollard Avenue, which would not be feasible for the new development.

The new access is positioned further west along Spen Lane to allow further separation from Pollard Avenue. The new access allows for a refuse truck to enter and leave the site in a forward gear as per the proposed site plan drawing indicates.



Image of existing access

The proposed access will be further to the right as viewed



The existing dry stone wall to the front boundary will be rebuilt in order to meet vision splays of 2.4mx43m which will improve safety for pedestrians.

The site has good access links to surrounding areas with bus stops immediately outside.

The proposed car parking / paths adjacent to the provided turning head will have flush kerbs for ease of accessibility. Bollards and change in material / colour will provide visual differentiation between the areas.

All the dwellings are designed to be fully compliant with the requirements of Part M of the Building Regulations:

- Each unit will have a level threshold to the principal entrance door.
- Each unit will have a WC suitable for disabled access located at entry level.
- The design of all dwellings provides for appropriate means of escape in the event of fire. (Although not strictly a planning matter, a noteworthy feature of the design sees the interiors of the dwellings possessing two means of egress from front to back or vice versa: one through the bedroom and one through the galley kitchen).
- Access and turning facilities are provided for service and emergency services within the site.

7.0 Architectural Details

The building's design has been influenced by the adjacent church and the historical concept of 'Almhouses' to create a series of gables along each side elevation. The front elevation features parapet walls, a high angled roof and stone feature detailing that is in accordance with the design concept of modern, accessible and affordable dwellings.

7.1 Overall Massing

The single storey element of the design means that the building is not overintrusive to the site and its surroundings. The eaves are low and the pitches to the roofs are steep to mirror that of typical architectural design of churches/almshouses.

The front 'block' of the design has a steep pitched roof, which is subtly reduced on the eye by the presence of a higher parapet wall to the front elevation.

The rear block has glazed high pitched gables joining into the overall pitched roof which is kept low by having a flat roof within the central compartment of the building. This is not visible at eye level. The roof adjacent to the rear boundary has been hipped rather than gabled in order to reduce the visual impact on the dwellings behind.



View from Churchyard



View from Spen Lane

7.2 Material and detailing

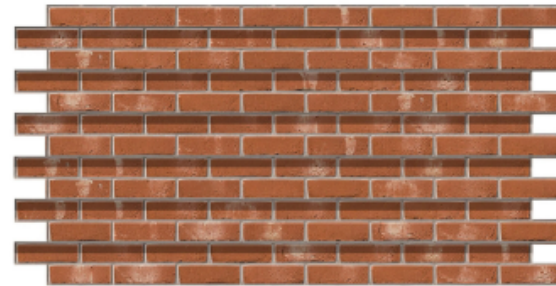
Facing stone is proposed for the front block of the building to be in keeping with the existing surroundings. Detailing consists of artificial stone headers, sills, plinths and quoins to the main facade, which facilitates a simple but effective and aesthetically pleasing design.

The main entrance to the building is signified by using an artificial stone column / gable portico to add an element of grandeur to the entrance. The historic period reference to a classical portico at the main entrance is a suitable device to dignify these simple but technically sophisticated 21st century dwelling houses.

Moving to the side elevations, the rear block's main facade is of a 'buff' brick which adds only a very subtle differentiation between the main facing stone front block and itself. The 2 gables on either side of the rear block are glazed in such a way as to maximise light from the west and east in winter. They will of course be shaded in summer, a process aided by their being slightly recessed in relation to the overhanging roof eaves.

Between the 2 triangular areas of glazing, and also recessed, is an area of brick detailing whereby each course of brickwork alternatively projects/recesses like that shown in the image below. A different multi brick is proposed for this area to add visual contrast to the main facade and add architectural detail and hierarchy to the design.

Plain grey roof tiles are proposed to the building to be in keeping with the surroundings. The flat roof, which is not visible to the eye from ground level, will be of a material that is similar in colour to the roof tiles, the better to blend in visually, especially from a distance.





Side elevation facing East (NTS)

7.3 Special Design Features

- Light switches and controls placed at lower levels.
- Kitchen counter height adjustable for wheelchair users.
- Entry corridor peephole viewers set at 2 heights (standing and wheelchair options).
- Kitchens can be closed with shutters by carers for safety.
- Futureproofing: Shower/ WC rooms and bedrooms have in-built loading for hoists.
- Additional sound insulation for hyper-sensitivity.
- Colour temperature of all lighting set to 3000 Kelvin (warm white).

- Non-slip surfaces throughout flats (no carpets).
- Low velocity air handling systems are silent.
- Underfloor heating throughout the flats – no radiators.
- Utility meters can be read from outside the flats.

7.4 Windows and Doors

All windows and doors are proposed to be powder coated grey aluminium or anthracite grey uPVC. The windows will be designed to be escape compliant to the habitable rooms of the flats.

All windows and doors will be designed in accordance with meeting u-values and Part O (overheating) of the Building Regulations.

7.5 Security Measures

The windows and doors will be designed in accordance with Building Regulations Part Q (security dwellings).

External doors and accessible windows will meet with the physical security requirements of 'Secured by Design'.

8.0 Home Design

8.1 Individual Flat Design

The flats have been designed in accordance with the space standards and Part M of the building regulations and heavily influenced by accessibility and the needs of people who will live there.

The internal net area of the flats is 51sqm. Cupboards have been provided for practical use of accessing meters, heating systems etc but also for meeting the functional requirements of internal storage for occupants.

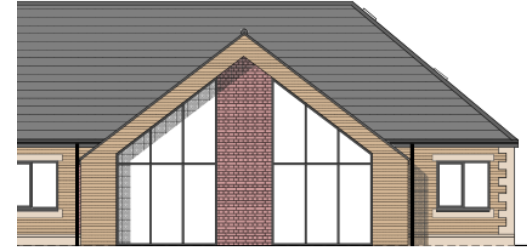
The double entry system to the bedroom allows for complete circulation around the flat whilst providing a sizable bedroom.

The double height space over the living area of the flat adds internal interest to the space and with the large area of glazing overlooking the private amenity space. This creates a feeling of openness that will improve the quality of the living space for the occupants.

Right: Part elevation showing double height space from outside (NTS)

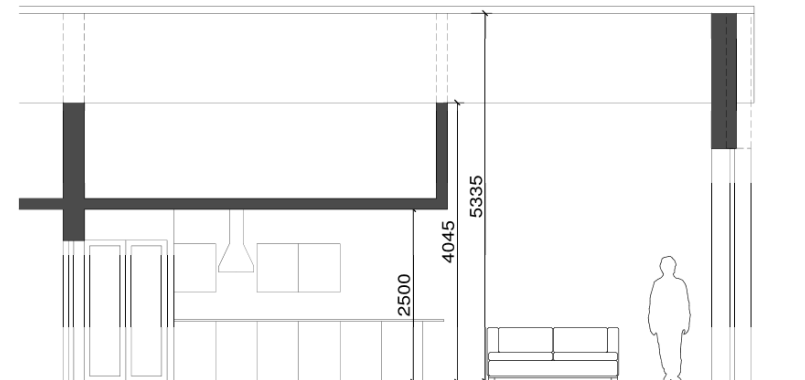
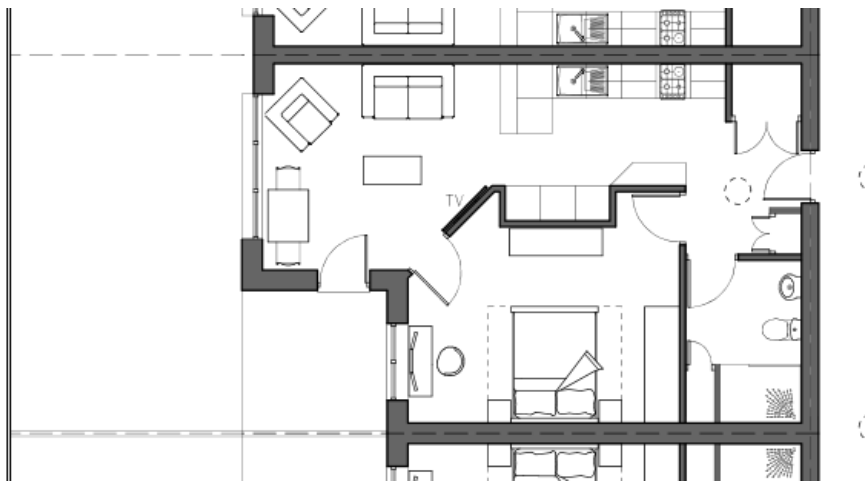
Below left: Flat plan (NTS)

Below right: Section showing double height space (NTS)



Whilst the flat layout provides the desirable 'open plan' living, it also provides some level of differentiation between the lounge area and kitchen area by way of a breakfast bar return.

Differentiation and visual interest also are created internally by means of a tall, vaulted ceiling of the lounge, which shifts to a lower flat ceiling over the kitchens (see section).



Accommodation	Area of flats (sqm)	National Space standard minimum (sqm)
Living/kitchen/Dining	29	N/A
Bedroom	16.2	11.5
Shower Room	5.6	N/A
Cupboard / Storage	1.6	1.5
Total	51	50

Table showing areas for each 1 Bedroom 2 Person Flat

8.2 Outdoor design

Each flat has its own generous, private outdoor amenity space. A small patio area served with a single door out of the lounge /dining area which allows a level of privacy through the arrangement of the gable projections and main building recesses.

Adjacent to the patio area is a 4m long garden/ grassed area providing each individual apartment with a spacious 32sqm of private amenity area. In addition to this there is also the landscaped area surrounding the building. (Some of the garden space could be used for growing food.)

Image showing private amenity area (NTS)



9.0 Conclusion

The development of 10 well-designed, modern, spacious dwellings for people with additional needs who want to live independently is necessary to improve the mix of accommodation and tenure in Kirklees, and to respond to accumulating demand locally, regionally and nationally.

Such bespoke accommodation, designed to meet very high standards of accessibility and functionality, is rare in the English planning system. Generally seen as 'add-ons' to larger housing schemes, supported housing seldom receives the attention it deserves.

This scheme is quite different from others that might more resemble 'care homes' in their design language, and which point to 'institutional' operations. This would be entirely inappropriate for this location.

The scheme described in this Design and Access statement is in marked contrast to such schemes. It is very different from 'C2' institutional uses. It goes the extra mile to create something that Kirklees could point to as a national 'pathfinder' or beacon of excellence in C3 independent living accommodation for other boroughs in England to follow.

The design subtly hints at historical references to almshouses (and to its distant neighbour, the church), without being too literal in its expression.

Above all, the design captures the right scale for supported living, by connecting inside with outside through privacy (your own garden) and sociability (the means to walk outside along the perimeter in a secure setting).

The design team has listened carefully to the local community and paid close attention to the comments of planning officers through the Pre App process.

HB Architectural Services
March 2025