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OPTIONS GROUP

Planning Application for Development of Residential Service for Young People with Autism and Associated Learning and Physical Difficulties

DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

OCTOBER 2008

**SITE OF FORMER NEEDLEWOOD CHILDREN'S HOME,
KERESFORTH HILL ROAD, BARNLEY,
SOUTH YORKSHIRE**

Prepared by:

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i) BACKGROUND.

This Design and Access Statement is submitted in support of the above mentioned application. The submission is made as part of the adopted requirements under the provisions of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and advice in DCLG Circular 01/2006 which sets out the requirement for a planning application to be supported by a Design and Access Statement.

This is a detailed application for the replacement of the existing residential care home, known as Needlewood with a residential service for young people with autism and associated learning and physical disabilities. The following documentation/plans are submitted in support of the proposal:-

1. Full plans and details by A C Craig Associates.
2. Planning Supporting Statement by Townsend Planning Consultants
3. Design & Access Statement by Townsend Planning Consultants
4. Bat and Barn owl Survey by Eric Bennett
5. Full Tree Survey by Coppice Landscapes
6. Japanese Knotweed Survey by M J Clough
7. Landscaping Scheme/Statement provided by C F Landscape Design.

8. Contamination Report produced by Haigh Huddleston Associates
9. Highways report by Paul Howarth Highway Consultants.
10. Background Report from the Options Group.

This Design and Access Statement should be read in conjunction with the above information. Of particular importance is the Planning Supporting Statement which deals with issues of policy in detail.

a) Site Assessment.

The subject site extends to some 1.25 hectares (3 acres) or thereabouts and is located off Keresforth Hill Road (B6099). The site is situated in close proximity to the southern edge of the main urban area of Barnsley, in close proximity to built up areas such as Dodworth, Shawlands and Kingstone.

The site comprises of a large detached 2½ storey property which sits within extensive landscape gardens and woodland. There are a number of very mature trees within the grounds and on the external boundaries of the site. These large trees combined with high hedges around the perimeter of the site effectively screen the building from view.

Access to the site is taken from a single tarmac road and there are parking facilities within the site at the moment for up to eight or nine vehicles.

The property is centrally placed within the site and is surrounded by an area of hardstanding at the rear and lawned areas to the sides and front of the property. The building has been extended a number of times over the years. There are single storey

outbuildings to the rear of the property which appear to have been used for storage purposes. The property is constructed of red brick with render and pebbledashing. The rear elevation of the Needlewood building in particular is unsightly due to a combination of stainless steel ventilation shafts, painted steel staircases, wire mesh fencing and metal grates fixed on the ground floor windows. Overall it is apparent that the building is one that has been neglected over the years and would be in need of substantial renovation.

Full details of the site assessment are provided in the Planning Supporting Document.

b) Involvement.

Initial discussions in respect of the principles of development have been held with the Council's Development Control, Planning Policy and Development Agency officers.

It is understood that officers from Barnsley Development Agency are supportive of the proposal in light of the range and quality of jobs that will be provided, the synergies between this and the Shortwood Development and the economic benefits that the development will bring to the District.

The scheme was discussed with the Council's Planning Officers, J Jenkinson (Development Control) and E Coveney (Policy) at its initial stage. The officers indicated that it would be necessary for any application to:-

- (a) demonstrate that special circumstances exist sufficient to warrant the support of the scheme;
- (b) demonstrate need for the facility;

- (c) explain why the location suits the needs of the facility;
- (d) give careful consideration to the design, materials, scale and siting in order to ensure minimal impact on the openness and character of the Green Belt; and
- (e) give particular attention to landscape character and tree cover within the site.

The proposal subject to this application has evolved with these comments in mind. It is considered that the supporting documentation fully demonstrates that the site can be developed in a manner which complies with the relevant planning policies and guidelines.

As the site does not adjoin any other property and on the basis that it is not proposed to change the use of the site, it was determined that neighbour consultation would not be required in this instance.

c) Evaluation.

A detailed evaluation of the site and the proposal was undertaken. The starting point for the consideration of the site is to examine whether the site could accommodate the proposal and meet with the requirements of the company in terms of the functioning of the site as a residential service for the proposed client group. Those issues are fully addressed in the supporting documentation.

Having identified that the site is well located and suited in terms of size and its extensive grounds to meet the needs of the proposed client group, consideration was given to the ways in which the site could be best developed to accommodate the

proposal without any greater impact on the Green Belt than that of the existing building.

Consideration was first given to the re-use of the existing building, being the option with the minimal impact. This was quickly ruled out with the building clearly not meeting the requirements of the type of service that the applicant proposes to develop. Drawing from experience in the design and development of services of this nature, the applicant concluded that the only realistic alternative was for a new build development. Following this conclusion, it was clear that the main issues were to ensure that the development had no detrimental visual impact on the area and would not have any significant impact on tree growth across the site. It was recognised that there was a need to minimise areas of hard standing in the interests of the openness of the Green Belt.

It was concluded that the most logical location for the building was on the site of the existing property, thus utilising an existing clearing within the woodland. Similarly, the areas for parking have been designed around the gaps in the trees. Whilst there would be some tree loss, the design and layout has taken on board the need to keep impact to a minimum.

The need to ensure that the building was no more visible from the site than that which it replaces was also identified. The height of the replacement building is substantially lower than the existing and, therefore, it will be less visible in the landscape than that which it replaces, albeit that the existing building is screened from public view. The proposed materials –timber cladding, glass and a 'green' roof – will also ensure that the building blends into the landscape, which is further aided by the use of soft curves for the external appearance.

d) Planning Policies.

A full analysis of the planning policies is set out in the Core Document.

ii) THE SCHEME

The application is submitted in detail and seeks approval for a new purpose built service replacing the previous Children's Home with a home for life for 8 young people with autism and other disabilities.

The new service will have the same capacity as the former Needlewood Home that it replaces but will be built to 21st Century standards with state of the art design and facilities to meet the long term needs of young people with autism.

The structure will be located centrally within the site over the footprint of the existing building and will take an 'H' shaped form.

The design is for two ground floor units. Both units incorporate four flats for individual occupancy. Each individual flat comprises a bedroom with en-suite, with access to a shared day room, dining room and kitchen. The two units are linked by staff facilities. The small first floor area in the roof accommodates ancillary offices, meeting rooms and facilities.

iii) DESIGN AND ACCESS JUSTIFICATION

(a) Use, Amount and Layout of Development

The proposals subject to this application will continue the existing use of the site as a C2 use (residential institution). The replacement development of the existing building will enable the

use to continue but with 21st Century standards of accommodation, developed in a manner that is sympathetic to its location, and both visually and environmentally beneficial to the area.

The form and layout of the development has been dictated by:-

- (a) the function of the service;
- (b) the policy constraints,
- (c) the desire to preserve the "woodland" setting; and
- (d) the need to ensure that the building is not prominent in the landscape.

The building is to be located in place of the existing building and hard surfaced areas, making use of the existing clearing within the site. Parking areas are laid out such that impact on the trees is minimised.

The applicant advises that the Needlewood design had been developed by balancing the requirements of the service against the planning constraints and opportunities. The layout allows for the needs of the individuals providing adequate levels of personal and communal space to allow the individuals to practice skills and routines they will need to improve in independence and provide the appropriate balance between solitude and socialisation. At the same time, the layout ensures that the overall floor area is only marginally greater than that which it replaces. The floor area of the existing buildings amount to 613.50 sq m or thereabouts, whilst the proposed building has a floor area of 648.74 sq m – an increase of just 5%.

The amount of accommodation that is provided has been calculated using experience from elsewhere in the Options Group of providing for

similar specialist groups. The applicant has found that a capacity of 8 will ensure the viability of the scheme which will provide ready access to specialist professional staff. It will also allow for the development of a supportive small community within which the young people can enjoy the maximum possible choice and freedom with appropriate support to develop their independent living skills.

iv) **SCALE, APPEARANCE AND LANDSCAPING**

It is proposed that the site be developed with building that is unique in design based around an 'H' plan form. The building is predominantly single storey, but with accommodation within the curving roof space. Again the size and scale of the building has been driven by the need to provide a supportive community environment whilst minimising impact and is based on the experience of the applicants in the development of successful facilities of this nature. The building has been designed to ensure minimal visual impact, using curves to soften its external appearance, along with natural materials such as timber, 'green' roofing and glass. As such, the building will blend more naturally within its environment than the existing building and its scale and design is a significant improvement on the existing. The scale is considered to be appropriate in terms of the context of the site and its setting. The height of the building is lower than that which it replaces by 4 metres (the existing building being 10.5 metres in height and proposed 6.5 metres). This ensures that the built form remains discrete and screened from views outside the site.

A detailed landscaping scheme is submitted with the application which is considered to be a key part of the proposal. The existing landscaping within the site provides an effective natural screen to the built form and ensures that little of the property will be seen from the boundaries of the site. The proposed landscaping scheme and future

management of the site will ensure that the existing character of the site is both enhanced and maintained.

v) **ACCESS**

A fully detailed highways statement is submitted with this application.

vi) **OTHER ISSUES.**

The proposal will have major social benefits for Barnsley and the South Yorkshire area, in providing a facility for which there is currently an identified need. It is considered that the proposal will have a major impact on economic regeneration by the provision of jobs for the district. It is also considered that the proposal will address the need for development in the area.