



# RIDGE

**PLANNING STATEMENT  
IN SUPPORT OF A FULL  
PLANNING APPLICATION FOR AN  
80-BED CARE HOME  
PARCEL L, LAND AT BLYTHE  
VALLEY PARK, SOLIHULL  
OCTOPUS HEALTHCARE**  
April 2019

**PLANNING STATEMENT  
LAND AT BLYTHE VALLEY PARK, SOLIHULL**

April 2019

**Prepared for**

Octopus Healthcare

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### **APPENDIX 1: APPROVED LAND USE PLAN 9600 REV L**

# 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This Planning Statement has been prepared on behalf of Octopus Healthcare to support a full planning application for the erection of an 80-bed residential care home (use class C2) at 'Parcel L', Blythe Valley Park, Solihull.
- 1.2. This statement provides a contextual analysis of the site and the surrounding area, including a summary of relevant planning history. In accordance with section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, it appraises the proposed development against the relevant policies contained within the development plan for the area as well as other material considerations relevant to the development proposed, including the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- 1.3. This Statement should be read in conjunction with the accompanying plans and drawings prepared by Gaunt Francis Architects, as well as the following technical reports:
  - Design and Access Statement prepared by Gaunt Francis Architects
  - Ecological Appraisal and Arboricultural Assessment<sup>1</sup> by FCPR Environment and Design
  - Biodiversity Offsetting Matrix completed by FCPR Environment and Design
  - Transport Statement prepared by RAC-E Engineers
  - Drainage Strategy prepared by RAC-E Engineers

## Statement Background

- 1.4. The application site forms 'Parcel L' of a wider site that benefits from a hybrid planning permission for mixed use development granted on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2017 under application reference: PL/2016/00863/MAOOT. The full description of development as shown on the decision notice is as follows:

*"Hybrid planning application for a mixed use development of land at Blythe Valley Park to comprise: in outline with all matters reserved (save for the new access, internal spine road and elements of landscaping – as described below), up to 750 residential dwellings, up to 98,850sqm of Use Class B1, B2 and B8 floor space, up to 250 unit housing with care facility (Use Class C2/C3) up to 2,500sqm of ancillary town centre uses (Use Class A1-A5), up to 1000sqm of ancillary leisure and community uses (Use Class D2), up to 200 bed hotel (Use Class C1) associated car parking (including shared car parking which could be decked) public open space, public realm and highways works; in full, new vehicular access, internal spine road, soft and hard landscaping (in part) SUDs and balancing ponds."*
- 1.5. As part of that permission, the approved land use plan (Ref: 9600 Rev L) shows that the application site is identified along with land to the east of the site for a mix of uses, including development falling within a C2 use class<sup>2</sup>. The decision notice also identifies that up to 250 units of housing with

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<sup>1</sup> Including Biodiversity Offsetting Matrix at Appendix B

<sup>2</sup> Approved Land Use Plan 9600 Rev L enclosed at Appendix 1 of this Statement

care (use class C2/C3) will form part of the approved Blythe Valley development. These facts form an important material consideration in the determination of this application. It is a well-established matter of planning law that an Applicant's ability to implement a fall-back position is material in determining any planning application and the consideration of this planning application must have regard to this.

- 1.6. In addition to the above, the wider Blythe Valley site is allocated for mixed-use development in the adopted Solihull Local Plan (2013). The aim is for the allocation to deliver a mixed and sustainable community with exemplar development and supporting facilities.
- 1.7. The submission of this application is therefore advanced to help facilitate the aims of the Local Plan to deliver a mixed and sustainable community at Blythe Valley. It also follows pre-application meetings and advice from the Local Planning Authority (LPA) as set out in further detail in section 3.0 of this Statement.

## 2. SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

### Location

- 2.1. The site is located to the west of Blythe Gate road within Blythe Valley Park, Solihull. A red line site location plan accompanies the application.
- 2.2. Blythe Valley Park is located within the Parish of Cheswick Green and the village of Cheswick Green is located approximately 3.5km to the north west of the site. The M42 runs along the southern and eastern boundaries of the Park.

### Description

- 2.3. The site constitutes approximately 0.6 hectares of former semi-improved grassland. The area has recently been cleared following the grant of planning permission in order to facilitate wider site drainage and other engineering works for adjacent plots. The site therefore now comprises bare ground.
- 2.4. As above, the site forms a small part of a wider strategic allocation for mixed use development. Reserved matters approval for 'Parcel H' was granted in October 2018 for the erection of 125 dwellings directly to the east of the application site<sup>3</sup>. To the south, the site adjoins one of the main landscape focal points of the development; Marl Pool. Further south of the site reserved matters approval was granted in July 2018 for the erection of 170 dwellings<sup>4</sup>. To the north, the site is bound by a significant landscape buffer with agricultural land further beyond that.

### Accessibility

- 2.5. Cheswick Green is located approximately 3.5km to the north west of the site and Solihull Town Centre is located approximately 7km to the north east. Birmingham City Centre is also located approximately 17km north west.
- 2.6. Birmingham International Airport and Birmingham International train station are approximately 14km north east of the site.

### Designations

- 2.7. There are no national or local landscape designations of relevance to the application site.
- 2.8. The nearest designated heritage asset is the Grade II Listed Winterton Farmhouse which is located some 500m west of the application site. Cottage Farmhouse (also Grade II Listed) is located some 700m south west of the site.

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<sup>3</sup> Application reference: PL/2018/01163/PPRM

<sup>4</sup> Application reference: PL/2018/01057/PPRM

2.9. The River Blythe Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is located approximately 425m north of the site boundary. In addition, a new Local Wildlife Site (Blythe Valley Country Park LWS) has been designated adjacent to the northern boundary of Plot L.

## Relevant Planning History

2.10. The planning history of the site provides important context in relation to the current application proposal. As highlighted above, the principle of residential care units (C2 use class) is already established on site as a result of extant planning permission (PL/2016/00863/MAOOT).

2.11. A summary of the planning history of most relevance to this application is set out below:

Reference	Description	Decision
PL/2016/00863/MAOOT	Hybrid planning application for a mixed use development of land at Blythe Valley Park to comprise: in outline with all matters reserved (save for the new access, internal spine road and elements of landscaping – as described below), up to 750 residential dwellings, up to 98,850sqm of Use Class B1, B2 and B8 floor space, up to 250 unit housing with care facility (Use Class C2/C3) up to 2,500sqm of ancillary town centre uses (Use Class A1-A5), up to 1000sqm of ancillary leisure and community uses (Use Class D2), up to 200 bed hotel (Use Class C1) associated car parking (including shared car parking which could be decked) public open space, public realm and highways works; in full, new vehicular access, internal spine road, soft and hard landscaping (in part) SUDs and balancing ponds	Approved March 2017
PL/2018/01057/PPRM	Reserved matters approval for 'Parcels T, U and V' for the erection of 170 dwellings with parking, internal access roads, landscaping and all other details required by condition No. 3 relating to the reserved matters of layout, scale, appearance and landscaping	Approved July 2018
PL/2018/01163/PPRM	Reserved matters approval for 'Parcel H' for 125 dwellings (comprised of houses and apartments), internal estate roads, car parking, landscaping, SuDS and associated ancillary infrastructure	Approved October 2018
PL/2019/00316/PPRM	Reserved matters for Parcels J, K and M1 for 169 dwellings (Comprised of houses and apartments), internal estate roads, car parking, landscaping, SUDS and associated ancillary infrastructure.	Submitted February 2019 - Pending consideration
PL/2019/00592/PPFL	Construction of a new road off Blythe Gate to provide access into development Plots J and L PL/2016/00863/MAOOT at Blythe Valley Park	Submitted March 2019 - Pending consideration
PL/2019/00933/NONMC	Non-material amendment relating to the strategic landscaping proposals specific to Land Parcel L and Marl Pool.	Submitted April 2019 – Pending consideration



### 3. THE PROPOSAL

- 3.1. The full details of the application proposal can be found within the accompanying application drawing package and Design and Access Statement prepared by Gaunt Francis Architects. Nevertheless, a brief description of the proposed development is set out below, along with an explanation of the design and access considerations which have helped formulate the proposals.

#### Form and layout

- 3.2. The application proposal is for the erection of an 80-bed care home. All bedrooms are designed as standard or enhanced standard care home accommodation with en-suites.
- 3.3. The proposed building is designed in a “T” shape to provide the most efficient mix of room clusters with a variety of outlooks, either to the south towards the Marl Pool and open space, or the more rural landscape to the north.
- 3.4. A café space is proposed within the building entrance, providing the potential for public amenity close to the Marl Pool recreation area, although controlled access will be a necessary to ensure the security of residents. Two lounge and dining areas are also proposed on the ground floor along with a hair/beauty salon.
- 3.5. Pedestrian access to the building via the Marl Pool is possible from the south. Service functions, such as catering kitchen, laundry and bin stores are all located at the west end of the plan, for ease of access to the main road and servicing.
- 3.6. The proposed design of the building and site layout has also sought to address the gradients across the site with the building itself which has been designed to ensure level access from all directions within the building. The upper ground floor level will be accessible from the Marl Pool side, and the lower ground floor will be accessible from the parking side. They will be interconnected via a double height space to aid wayfinding and a lift.

#### Appearance

- 3.7. As above the building has been designed in a ‘T’ shape with a pitched roof form and gable ends. The north side (rear) of the proposed building has a less formal arrangement of grouped windows and dormers at high level.
- 3.8. The south and east sides (front) have a more formal, brick screen pulled away from the basic form of the building to provide additional space, keep the roof pitch as low as possible and add formality and public scale to the primary façade.
- 3.9. As identified in the accompanying Design and Access Statement, high quality materials have been selected to complement the requirements of the Blythe Valley Design Guide including:
- Buff or light facing brick elevations with areas of render



- Vertical timber boarding elevation detailing
- PPC aluminium window and doors
- Standing seam metal roof cladding

## Scale

- 3.10. The proposed care home is 3 storeys in height. An undercroft parking area is also proposed which also houses the plant rooms.
- 3.11. It is identified in the Blythe Valley Design Guide that this area of the allocation should be characterised by landmark buildings, key spaces and the retained Marl Pool. It is also identified that increased densities and increased building heights help to define the character area in terms of scale and massing. Therefore, the scale of the proposed building is considered to be appropriate in this context.

## Landscape

- 3.12. A landscape general arrangement plan and planting plan form part of the application package. The strategy seeks to strengthen and restore the landscape, where necessary, so that the setting can be enhanced as an opportunity arising from the development.
- 3.13. The proposals include the planting of new shrubs and boundary hedgerows, and the retention of existing trees and hedgerows. Naturalistic planting is proposed on the eastern edge which is designed to help grade the boundary between Healthcare and the ecology corridor.
- 3.14. Originally part of the application site was to provide a Local Area of Play (LAP). This is now subject of a separate amendment application to relocate the LAP at the site to enable greater space at the application site for an improved layout design.
- 3.15. The landscaping for the Marl Pool is also currently the subject of a non-material amendment application<sup>5</sup> and the revised details for this area are shown on the drawings which accompany that application.

## Access and Parking

- 3.16. Vehicle access to Blythe Valley Park can be obtained directly off the M42 Junction 4 roundabout and egress is via a bridge over the M42 and onto the A3400. An emergency access is also provided at the south of Blythe Valley Park onto Kineton Lane (this is also used as a bus gate).
- 3.17. In respect of vehicle access to the application site specifically, a separate application has recently been submitted to Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council by IM properties for the construction of a

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<sup>5</sup> Application reference: PL/2019/00933/NONMC

new road off Blythe Gate to provide access to the application site as well as 'Parcel J'<sup>6</sup> of the wider permission. That application is currently pending consideration.

- 3.18. Within the site itself, the access road to the rear of the proposed building ramps down from the end of the adopted highway. The end of the adopted section of road is configured as a turning head for service vehicles and refuse lorries. A space adjacent to the turning head is dedicated for service vehicles to park, allowing the turning head to continue to operate unobstructed.
- 3.19. A total of 32 car parking spaces are proposed for residents, staff and visitors including 5 disabled spaces. Storage for up to 10 cycles has been provided in the undercroft area, sheltered from inclement weather. The proposed car parking is hidden from the Marl Pool and the parking a storey lower than the Marl Pool access, with some parking available in the undercroft of the building which also contains plant and storage space. Standard parking spaces are 2.5m wide by 5m in depth and accessible parking spaces have an additional 1.2m wide safe zone. Provision has also been made for service vehicle deliveries and refuse vehicles from the south.

## Pre-application Discussions

- 3.20. Initial informal pre-application meetings were held with planning officer Matt Preece (Senior Development Officer) on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2018 and 12<sup>th</sup> December 2018.
- 3.21. A further pre-application meeting was held with the planning officer and landscape officer on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2019. Copies of the initial plans and drawings, including landscape proposals were provided in advance of the meetings.
- 3.22. In general, the key points of discussion during the pre-application meetings were as follows:
- Officers generally supported the principle of development for an 80-bed care home at the site
  - It was agreed that the proposals would fall under use class C2 and therefore no affordable housing contribution is required
  - The building location needed to be reviewed to ensure the ecology trail to the west was protected from new development
  - The landscape proposals and provision of the required LAP needed to be carefully reviewed.
  - Boundaries of the care home are a sensitive issue. The use of planting to blur the edges of the country park, newt area and boundary of the site has the potential to enhance the amenity value of the area. Ensure no impact on the adjacent newt area.
  - Ensure that sufficient, private and defensible space is proposed for the care home

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<sup>6</sup> Application reference: PL/2019/00592/PPFL

- It was considered that the proposed design to contain the vehicle access to the northern aspect of the building and taking advantage of the change in level and the southerly aspect was good.

3.23. As a result of the above comments, changes were proposed to the design of the building including the repositioning of the building some 6m north of the initial location to ensure no impacts on the adjacent newt area and ecology corridor. Amendments to the LAP were also discussed and agreed in order to enable sufficient space for a care home to be successfully delivered within the parcel. However, this alteration of the wider hybrid planning permission is the subject of a separate non-material amendment application<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Application reference: PL/2019/00933/NONMC

## 4. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

- 4.1. In assessing whether planning permission should be granted for the above development, this statement will have regard to Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 which states:

*“If regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise”.*

- 4.2. In this case, the Development Plan comprises the Solihull Local Plan (2011-2028), adopted in December 2013, and other Supplementary Planning Documents. Other Material Considerations include the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).
- 4.3. It is worth noting that the Local Plan was subject of a legal challenge which resulted in the overall housing requirement being deleted and remitted back to the Council for reconsideration. The Council is therefore now undertaking a Local Plan review and a Draft Plan Supplementary Consultation ran until March 2019. However, the Local Plan Review is at an early stage of preparation and can therefore be attributed limited weight in decision making.
- 4.4. Cheswick Green is also in the early stages of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan for the area. The Neighbourhood Area was designated in July 2014 and an initial Neighbourhood Plan survey was undertaken in April 2018. However, there is no draft plan at present and therefore it cannot be attributed any weight in decision making.

### Solihull Local Plan (2013)

- 4.5. Whilst there is no specific policy relating to the principle of the provision of accommodation for older people in the Local Plan, it is identified throughout the Plan that there is a lack of suitable housing for older people in the Borough. One of the objectives of the Plan is to therefore widen the range of options for older people and those with disabilities through provision of accommodation which is designed to meet these diverse needs.
- 4.6. Paragraph 8.1.5 of the Plan identifies that the number of households represented by the over 75s is projected to increase by 7,000 between 2008 and 2023m, comprising 21% of all the Borough's households. It is therefore acknowledged that there is a market demand for specialist and supported housing together with homes which can provide opportunities for households to 'downsize', thereby releasing family housing for resale and re-letting.

#### Policy P1 – Support Economic Success

- 4.7. Policy P1 relates to supporting the economic success of the Borough. It identifies the important contribution that the Blythe Valley Park and other areas along the M42 corridor make to the Borough's economy and therefore looks to support and enhance further growth in these areas.

- 4.8. Part C of policy P1 identifies support for business development but also support for a broad range of supporting ancillary or complementary uses to enhance the attraction of the business park to occupiers. It further establishes that the Council will support well-planned residential development at the Park to help create and overall sense of place and a more sustainable location. It requires that new residential development is developed within the context of a masterplan which demonstrates how integration would be achieved between existing and planned facilities and with the network of villages that lie nearby.
- 4.9. The supporting text to the policy identifies that a substantial residential element (circa 600 dwellings) would help to reinvigorate the park by helping to support a broader range of on-site facilities, supporting the vitality of the park and accelerating job delivery. It also recognises the opportunity for new residential development to create a real sense of place and improved public transport facilities to villages in the Hockley Heath area, better links to the main urban area of Solihull, improved pedestrian and cycle links and increased accessibility for local communities.

#### Policy P4 – Meeting Housing Needs

- 4.10. Policy P4 relates to the provision of affordable housing on allocated and unidentified sites of 0.2 hectares or more. However, as the proposals at the site are for a residential care home (use class C2) the provision of affordable housing is not relevant to the proposals as confirmed during pre-application discussions.

#### Policy P5 - Provision of Land for Housing

- 4.11. Policy P5 was quashed as part of the Solihull Local Plan Court of Appeal Judgement. The policy set the Council's overall housing target for the plan period and where that housing would be delivered. Figure 15 within the supporting text established that the Council anticipated that 350 homes would be delivered at Blythe Valley Park in 'Phase 1' of the plan period (before 2018) and 250 homes would be delivered in 'Phase 2' (after 2018).

#### Policy P7 – Accessibility and Ease of Access

- 4.12. Policy P7 requires new development to be focused in the most accessible locations and seek to enhance existing accessibility levels and promote ease of access. It requires new development to meet a set of accessibility criteria, unless justified by local circumstances. The policy generally focusses on new residential development and therefore is not wholly applicable to the application proposals.

#### Policy P8 – Managing Demand for Travel and Reducing Congestion

- 4.13. Policy P8 states that development will not be permitted which results in a significant increase in delay to vehicles, pedestrians or cyclists or a reduction in safety for any users of the highway or other transport network. It requires travel demands associated with development to be managed to minimise detrimental impact to the efficiency of the highway network and seeks to ensure that new development reduces the need to travel e.g. by promoting linked trips and encouraging mixed use

development where appropriate. It also looks to ensure that the design and management of new development enables and encourages the use of sustainable modes of transport.

#### Policy P9 – Climate Change

- 4.14. Policy P9 requires developers to follow a sequential approach to carbon reduction for all new development. Where feasible and viable, new development should incorporate decentralised energy and heating networks. Where it is demonstrated that decentralised networks are not feasible or viable, development should achieve the necessary carbon reduction through on-site measures incorporating design, energy efficiency and renewable energy generation, taking account of the contribution from the Building Regulations and achievement of the Code for Sustainable Homes where relevant. It identifies that where carbon reduction through on-site measures is not feasible or viable, a financial contribution toward off-site carbon reduction will be required, in the form of allowable solutions.

#### Policy P10 – Natural Environment

- 4.15. Policy P10 generally identifies the importance of a healthy natural environment, and the economic and social benefits it provides to the Borough. It requires developments to incorporate measures to protect, enhance and restore the landscape.
- 4.16. It identifies that the Council will protect areas of national and local importance for biodiversity and geodiversity, where it is reasonable, proportionate and feasible to do so. Development likely to have an adverse affect on a Site of Special Scientific Interest, whether directly or indirectly, will be permitted only if the reasons for the development clearly outweigh the nature conservation value of the site and the national policy to safeguard such sites. Where development may have an adverse affect on a Site of Special Scientific Interest, developers will be expected to incorporate measures to enhance the condition of the site, unless it is demonstrated that it is not feasible
- 4.17. It also identifies that development likely to have an adverse affect on a Local Nature Reserve or a Local Wildlife or Geological Site will be permitted only if the reasons for the development clearly outweigh the nature conservation or geological value of the site and its contribution to wider biodiversity objectives. Where development would have an adverse affect on a site of local value, developers will be expected to incorporate measures to enhance the site or to restore the links between sites in accordance with the Green Infrastructure study, unless it is demonstrated that it is not feasible.

#### Policy P11 – Water Management

- 4.18. Policy P11 requires all new development to incorporate sustainable drainage systems, unless it is shown it is impracticable to do so. It also requires developers to demonstrate the highest possible standards of water efficiency through the use of water efficient fittings and appliances, and where appropriate, recycling of potable, grey water and rainwater in order to minimise consumption.
- 4.19. It is also required to be demonstrated that the proposed development will be served by appropriate sewerage infrastructure and that there is sufficient sewage treatment capacity to ensure that there

is no deterioration of water quality, or that the delivery of any development will not be delayed by the need for additional water treatment provision.

#### Policy P14 - Amenity

- 4.20. Policy P14 generally seeks to protect and enhance the amenity of existing and potential occupiers of houses, businesses and other uses when considering proposals for new development. It also looks, inter alia, to safeguard important trees, hedgerows and woodlands, encourage new and replacement tree and hedgerow planting and identify areas that may be suitable for the creation of new woodlands. It identifies that priority will be given to locations that enhance or restore the green infrastructure network and to the planting of species characteristic of the Arden Warwickshire landscape.

#### Policy P15 – Securing Design Quality

- 4.21. Policy P15 essentially seeks to ensure that all new development achieves good quality, inclusive and sustainable design that contributes to or creates a sense of place. It further states that development at key economic assets such as the M42 Economic Gateway will be expected to be of the highest quality to reflect their strategic importance.

#### Policy P16 – Conservation of Heritage Assets and Local Distinctiveness

- 4.22. Policy P16 looks to ensure that new development preserves or enhances heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance as well as conserving local character and distinctiveness and creating or sustaining a sense of place.

#### Policy P18 – Health and Wellbeing

- 4.23. Policy P18 identifies that the Council will expect new development proposals to promote, support and enhance physical and mental health and wellbeing.

## Other Material Considerations

#### National Planning Policy Framework (2019)

- 4.24. The presumption in favour of sustainable development remains at the heart of the NPPF. Sustainable development is defined at paragraph 8 and includes three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways; these being economic, social and environmental factors.
- 4.25. In that vein, paragraph 11 of the NPPF identifies that plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision-taking this means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:
- i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or



- ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

- 4.26. Paragraph 38 states that LPAs should approach decision making in a positive and creative way and should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.
- 4.27. Chapter 5 encourages the delivery of a wide choice of high quality homes. A key principle of the planning system is to ensure a flexible and responsive supply of housing land is readily available. To achieve this paragraph 59 indicates that to support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, a sufficient amount and variety of land must come forwards where it is needed and specific housing requirements for certain societal groups are met.
- 4.28. Paragraph 61 states that the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies.
- 4.29. Chapter 9 is generally concerned with promoting sustainable transport. Paragraph 103 that significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes.
- 4.30. Paragraph 108 looks to ensure that appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes can be – or have been – taken up, given the type of development and its location. It also looks to ensure that safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users and that any significant impacts from the development on the transport network (in terms of capacity and congestion), or on highway safety, can be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree.
- 4.31. Paragraph 109 identifies that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.
- 4.32. Chapter 12 relates to achieving well-designed places and highlights that the creation of high-quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.
- 4.33. Paragraph 122 relates to achieving appropriate densities and states that in supporting development that makes efficient use of land, it should take into account the importance of the identified need for different housing types and other forms of development, and the availability of land suitable for accommodating it.
- 4.34. Paragraph 127 sets out that it is important to ensure that development is sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment whilst not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change.
- 4.35. Paragraph 130 states that permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, taking into account any local design standards or style guides in plans or supplementary planning documents. Conversely, where the design of a development accords with clear

expectations in plan policies, it states that design should not be used by the decision-maker as a valid reason to object to development.

4.36. Chapter 15 is concerned with the natural environment. Paragraph 175 states that when determining planning applications, LPAs should apply the following principles:

- a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;
- b) development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;
- c) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and
- d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to incorporate biodiversity improvements in and around developments should be encouraged, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity.

4.37. Chapter 16 relates to the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment. Paragraph 189 requires applicants to describe the significance of any heritage asset affected by a proposal, including any contribution made by its setting. This should be proportionate to the assets importance. Paragraph 192 states that in determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

4.38. Paragraph 193 highlights that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be).

4.39. Paragraph 196 states that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

#### Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

- 4.40. The PPG identifies at paragraph 017 that the need to provide housing for older people is critical as the proportion of older people in the population is increasing and identifies how LPAs can determine the need for different types of housing and specialist accommodation.

#### Solihull Strategic Housing Market Assessment

- 4.41. It is evident that nationally the UK's population is ageing, as people aged 60 and over become a greater proportion of the population. The Council's SHMA prepared as part of the evidence to the adopted Local Plan identifies that in terms of volume the housing needs of older people are the most significant specific group in Solihull.
- 4.42. It states that older households will increasingly make up a higher proportion of future households in Solihull and identifies that Solihull has also seen older people, defined as people aged 60 years and over, increase as a proportion of the population from 15.7% in 1981 to 21.7% in 2001. More markedly, the proportion of people aged over 75 years has increased from 3.84% in 1981 to 7.65% in 2001. The ONS mid-year population estimates the proportion of the Borough's population aged 85 years and over at 4.27%. This is over double the 2001 Census figure of 1.8%.

#### Solihull Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2016-2019)

- 4.43. The updated Solihull Health and Wellbeing Strategy forms part of the evidence base to the Local Plan Review it identifies a number of key points that are of relevance to the proposals including:
- Solihull has a relatively old and rapidly ageing population with 21 % over the age of 65
  - Solihull 85+ population has increased by 75% since 2004 and it is estimated that the 85+ population in Solihull will increase by around 300 individuals per year over the medium term
  - 24% of Solihull residents aged 65+ say that their day to day activities are limited a lot by a long term health problem or disability, with this rising to 52% of those aged over 85 years of age.
  - The percentage of people aged 65 years and older with dementia will rise by 32% between now and 2025 to an estimated 4,240 people.
  - The number of people unable to manage at least one self care task will be up to 18,300 by 2025 and the number unable to complete at least one mobility task up to 10,280.

#### Blythe Valley Park Design Guide

- 4.44. The Design Guide was formulated to provide a framework for the detailed design of Reserved Matters Applications at Blythe Valley Park. It breaks down the site into character areas and sets out how each area should respond to the approved parameter plans.
- 4.45. The application site is identified as part of the "Blended Core", situated between new residential development and the existing business park. The Blended Core is to be characterised by landmark buildings, key spaces and the retention of Marl Pool. It identifies that increased densities and building

heights will help to define the character area in terms of scale and massing. It is also noted that the architecture should be of a more contemporary character, and the Marl Pool green space should be a focal element, accommodating recreation, relaxation and formal play.

Supplementary Planning Document - Vehicle Parking Standards and Green Travel Plans

- 4.46. The SPD states that for use class C2 - Residential Institutions, "Each case to be decided on its merits by agreement with the LPA".

Supplementary Planning Document – Meeting Housing Needs

- 4.47. Paragraph 5.2 of the Meeting Housing Needs SPD states that 'Affordable housing obligations under Policy P4 (a) [of the Solihull Local Plan] only arise from planning applications for dwelling houses (Use Class C3)'. The application proposals are for a C2 use class and therefore affordable housing provision is not required.

## 5. PLANNING POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1. This section of the Statement undertakes an analysis of the application proposals with regard to all relevant planning policies as identified in section 4.0 such that a balancing exercise can be undertaken of those considerations; weighing up the possible adverse impacts of the scheme versus the benefits.
- 5.2. As set out earlier in this Statement, the site and land to the east benefits from outline planning permission for up to 250 care units (use class C2/C3) which is an important material consideration in the determination of this application to which significant weight should be applied. It is a well-established matter of planning law that an Applicant's ability to implement a fall-back position is material in determining future planning applications. As such, the consideration of this planning application, particularly in terms of the impacts of development, such as landscape, heritage, transport and ecological matters, must also have regard to the Applicant's ability to develop the application site for the use previously granted planning permission.
- 5.3. Notwithstanding consideration of the extant permission at the site, the proposed development comprises a new full planning application and as such it is important to assess the scheme against the up-to-date circumstances surrounding the application.
- 5.4. Therefore, it is considered that the principal planning considerations relate to:
- Principle of Development
  - Design and Layout
  - Landscape
  - Biodiversity
  - Transport and Highways
  - Flood Risk and Drainage
  - Heritage Impact
  - Sustainability

### Principle of Development

- 5.5. It is considered that the principle of development has already been established at this site with the hybrid planning permission enabling the provision of up to 250 housing with care units (use class C2 and C3) at the site and the land to the east.
- 5.6. The approved land use plan (Ref: 9600 Rev L) shows that the application site ('Parcel L') was identified along with land to the east of the site ('Parcel H') for a mix of uses including development falling within a C2 use class. Approval of reserved matters for 'Parcel H' to the east was granted in October 2018

for the erection of 125 residential dwellings<sup>8</sup> therefore the application site remains able to deliver a C2 Care Home to ensure a vibrant and mixed community is created in this location.

- 5.7. The site forms part of the Blythe Valley Park which is allocated for mixed-use development in the adopted Solihull Local Plan (2013). The aim is for the allocation to deliver a mixed and sustainable community with exemplar development and supporting facilities. Local Plan Policy P1 essentially supports and encourages a range of supporting residential uses at the Park in order to ensure that its vitality is enhanced and to help accelerate job delivery. It is worth noting that proposals for a care home will also require the employment of full and part time staff once in operation, thereby also helping to generate new employment in the area.
- 5.8. Given the above context, it is considered that the proposals are in full accordance with the requirements of Local Plan Policy P1 and that the principle of a C2 residential care home at the site is acceptable. Officers were also supportive of the principle of development during pre-application discussions.
- 5.9. Furthermore, it is important to highlight that nationally the UK's population is ageing with people aged 60 and over become a greater proportion of the population. The Council's SHMA, prepared as part of the evidence to the adopted Local Plan, identifies that in terms of volume the housing needs of older people are the most significant specific group in Solihull. The more recent Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2016-2019) also identifies that Solihull has a relatively old and rapidly ageing population with 21% over the age of 65. The application proposals will therefore help contribute to meeting the needs of an ageing population in the Borough which is also an important material consideration.

## Design and Layout

- 5.10. The application is supported by a Design and Access Statement which identifies how the Blythe Valley Design Guide has informed the design formulation of the proposals from the outset. The proposals are of a contemporary design to act as a landmark building with a palette of materials that will help to successfully create a sense of place. The scale of the building accords with the framework set by the Design Guide. It is therefore considered that the proposals comply with Policy P15 of the Local Plan, the Blythe Valley Design Guide and section 12 of the NPPF.

## Landscape

- 5.11. The site is not subject of any national or local landscape designations. At present the site consists of bare ground following vegetation clearance undertaken in summer/autumn 2018.
- 5.12. It is also important to highlight the surrounding context of the site. The development of 'Parcel H' to the east is underway for new residential development and further parcels surrounding the site are

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<sup>8</sup> Application reference: PL/2018/01163/PPRM

proposed for residential development which also benefit from planning permission. The site will therefore sit within a series of new developments that have already been approved and which will alter the character and appearance of the area in the landscape. The application site also benefits from extant planning permission for a mix of uses as identified earlier and this is a material consideration that needs to be taken into account when determining this application and any landscape harm it might cause.

- 5.13. The application is supported by a landscape general arrangement plan and planting plan for the development which shows the retention of existing trees and hedgerows as well as the planting of new trees and shrubs.
- 5.14. Overall, it can be said that the site will have a well contained nature and will have a limited impact on the local landscape when considered in combination with the approved development at Blythe Valley Park. The additional planting and landscaping proposed will provide effective mitigation to reduce the impact of the development from more distant views. The proposal, therefore, accords with Policy P10 of the Solihull Local Plan and Chapter 15 of the NPPF.

## Biodiversity and Arboriculture

- 5.15. As identified above, the site currently comprises bare ground following vegetation clearance undertaken in summer/autumn 2018. As such, the site is considered to currently be of negligible ecological value.
- 5.16. An Ecological Appraisal and Arboricultural Assessment has been prepared by FPCR Environment and Design in support of this application. The report provides details of a Phase 1 Habitat survey and includes the Biodiversity Offsetting Score as required by Condition 27 of the approved hybrid planning application for the site and wider area. The site was also subject to previous ecology survey in 2006 and 2015 (FPCR, Environmental Statement, Chapter 9 March 2015); the accompanying report therefore serves to update the results of those assessments. Overall, the report identifies the following:
  - The disturbed bare earth habitat associated with Plot L and the surrounding area was found to be of limited suitability for protected and notable species.
  - No evidence of badger occupation (setts) was observed in the survey area or within 30m of the survey area. The survey area is considered to provide limited foraging habitat to badgers in the form of bare ground. It is considered there are negligible risks to this species due to the strong connective corridor provided by the Countryside Park.
  - No ponds or areas of standing water suitable for breeding GCN are located within the site boundary. The survey area was considered to be of low value for GCN due to the lack of suitable foraging and commuting habitat.



- The site is of negligible value to reptile species and it is therefore extremely unlikely that these species are present on-site and are consequently not considered to provide a constraint to the proposals.
- Habitats within the site boundary were considered to provide negligible suitability for foraging and commuting bats due to the absence of vegetation. Hedgerows and mature treelines associated with the wider survey area are of greater value. Bat activity surveys (transects and static detectors) undertaken in 2014 identified generally low levels of bat activity largely in association with the surrounding hedgerows.
- The site comprised disturbed bare ground and consequently is considered to be of negligible value for nesting birds.

5.17. A Biodiversity Offsetting Assessment has also been prepared which identifies the site will provide +0.42 biodiversity units. Therefore, overall in respect of biodiversity it is clear that the proposals accord with Local Plan Policy P10 and chapter 15 of the NPPF and will provide a net gain in biodiversity.

5.18. An Arboricultural Assessment has previously been carried out in February 2016 and was updated in October 2017. The latest report submitted with this application concludes that no impacts are anticipated on the existing tree cover as a result of the proposals as the building footprint and associated infrastructure falls outside the calculated root protection areas. The proposals therefore accord with criterion iv) of Local Plan Policy P14 which seeks to safeguard important trees, hedgerows and woodlands.

## Historic Environment

5.19. As identified earlier, the nearest designated heritage asset to application site is approximately 500m west. However, as a result of the wider hybrid planning permission new residential development has been approved in between the site and designated heritage assets.

5.20. As part of the wider extant permission at the site, it was concluded that the proposals (as a whole) would result in 'less than substantial harm'. No objection to the proposals were raised, subject to conditions to secure details to ensure that the 'less than substantial harm' that the wider scheme may cause to heritage assets is minimised and mitigated for.

5.21. As such, mitigation included conditions to secure the agreement of retained trees and new tree and hedge planting, ecological mitigation where it benefits heritage too (e.g. hedgerow restoration); appropriate hard landscaping near heritage assets including historic landscape features (future reserved matters submissions); sensitive street and other lighting (No. 26); and suitable materials and finishes for all buildings.

5.22. The design and landscaping of the proposals for the proposed care home have therefore taken these constraints and conditions into account and the proposals include for the retention of significant trees

and hedgerows at the site as well as the use of a suitable palette of materials that accords with the Blythe Valley Design Guide. Suitable lighting can also be secured by way of condition. Overall, it is therefore considered that the application proposals will not result in harm to designated heritage assets.

- 5.23. Bearing in mind the above, and the extant planning permission at the site for a larger quantum of development, it is considered that the application proposals are in accordance with Local Plan Policy P16 and chapter 16 of the NPPF.

## Transport and Highways

The application is supported by a Transport Statement prepared by RAC-E which concludes that the impacts of development will **\*\*\*Complete/update upon receipt of Transport Statement\*\*\***

- 5.24. It is also worth noting that in order to deem the wider hybrid development acceptable in sustainable transport terms, funding to deliver cycling and walking improvements along corridors linking the site with the A34/A3400 cycle route, Monkspath local centre and Dorridge Village Centre was secured by way of a Section 106 contribution in relation to the wider site.

## Flood Risk and Drainage

- 5.25. The application site is located in Flood Zone 1 (lowest risk) and the application pack includes a Drainage Statement prepared by RAC-E Engineers. The application proposals incorporate the uses of SUDS and therefore the proposals are in full accordance Policy P11 of the Local Plan which advises that all new developments shall incorporate sustainable drainage systems, unless it is shown to be impractical to do so.
- 5.26. **\*\*\*Complete/update upon receipt of Drainage Statement\*\*\***

## Sustainability

- 5.27. The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development which lies at the heart of the NPPF. Paragraph 9 confirms that the planning system should play an active role in guiding development to sustainable locations. The sustainability of the proposals in the context of paragraph 8 of the NPPF is therefore considered below.

### Economic

- 5.28. The application proposals will also contribute towards the economic and social needs of the Borough including the generation of full and part time jobs during construction. The proposals may also contribute to the potential freeing up of open market housing stock which will assist with housing supply levels in the Borough and would contribute towards the provision of a wider housing choice.

## Social

- 5.29. The proposals will assist in improving the choice of specialist accommodation and care for people in the locality, ensuring that they do not have to seek this elsewhere and potentially relocate from a familiar location that is close to their friends and family. The proposals will also add to the mix of development at Blythe Valley Park helping to create a mixed and balanced community.

## Environmental

- 5.30. As set out in the accompanying Design and Access Statement, the proposals have been designed taking a “fabric first” approach to the envelope of the building with levels of thermal performance and air leakage that seek to improve on the minimum standards set by Approved Document L 2013. The sustainable design measures include:

- Careful specification of glazing, and design of windows to allow good levels of daylighting without inducing overheating.
- Large glazing areas to be protected by balcony overhangs or brick screening wall acting as solar shading.
- Heating and domestic hot water provided by highly efficient central plant, insulated ductwork with zonal, programmable and thermostatic controls.
- 100% of light fittings to be “A” rated (or equivalent) lamps with a minimum efficacy of 80lm/W.
- A building management system (BMS) to monitor energy use. A key aspect of this approach is the reduction of emissions by minimising demand for energy at source and through good design, rather than promoting energy generation.
- It is therefore considered that the development provides suitable on-site measures incorporating design, energy efficiency and renewable energy generation in line with Local Plan Policy P9 and the aims of the NPPF in respect of climate change.

- 5.31. Whilst it is acknowledged that the site is currently greenfield and would result in a degree of change in this regard, the proposal includes new landscaping and biodiversity enhancements to mitigate against this.

- 5.32. Overall, the above demonstrates how the proposal constitutes sustainable development and will equally contribute to meeting the needs of the Borough.

## Planning Balance

- 5.33. It has been identified above that the extant planning permission identifies the provision of up to 250 housing with care units at Blythe Valley Park. The approved land use plan (Ref: 9600 Rev L) shows that the application site (Parcel L) is identified along with land to the east of the site for a mix of uses, including development falling within a C2 use class. The wider Blythe Valley site is also allocated for mixed use development under Local Plan Policy P1. Therefore, the principle of development for a C2 use class at the application site is considered acceptable which can be attributed significant positive weight in the determination of this application.
- 5.34. It has also been demonstrated that the design of the proposals will add to the character and appearance of the area with a landmark style building that seeks to respond to the local context and the recommendations of the Blythe Valley Design Guide. It will not harm the landscape and the retention of existing trees and hedgerows of significance and the proposed landscaping scheme will help to reinforce and enhance local landscape characteristics in this location.
- 5.35. In respect of other more detailed technical matters it has also been demonstrated that the application proposal does not result in conflict with any relevant policies of the development plan and evidently represents a sustainable form of development.
- 5.36. In terms of socio-economic issues, the development of the care home will also generate new employment opportunities during the construction phase but also once the building is in operation and will contribute to meeting the needs of the Borough which has an ageing population. Overall, it is considered that the proposals evidently represent sustainable development.
- 5.37. On balance, it is therefore considered that the proposals accord with the policies of the development plan and there are no adverse impacts of the proposal that outweigh the benefits.
- 5.38. As such, in line with paragraph 11 of the NPPF it is considered that this planning application should be approved without delay.

## 6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1. This Planning Statement supports a full planning permission for the erection of an 80-bed Care Home (Use Class C2) at 'Parcel L', Blythe Valley Park, Solihull.
- 6.2. The site forms part of a wider site that benefits from hybrid planning permission for mixed use development (application reference: PL/2016/00863/MAOOT). As part of that permission, the approved land use plan (Ref: 9600 Rev L) shows that the application site is identified (along with land to the east) for a mix of uses, including development falling within a C2 use class. The decision notice also identifies that up to 250 units of housing with care (use class C2/C3) will form part of the development. Therefore, it can be said that the principle of development is already established at the site which forms an important material consideration in the determination of this application.
- 6.3. Blythe Valley Park is allocated for strategic, mixed-use development in the adopted Solihull Local Plan (2013). The aim is for the allocation to deliver a mixed and sustainable community with exemplar development and supporting facilities. The proposals for a C2 residential care home will therefore help contribute to meeting this Local Plan objective. The proposals will also help to meet the needs of an ageing population in the Borough.
- 6.4. It has been demonstrated that the design of the proposals has been carefully considered to ensure compliance with the Blythe Valley Park Design Guide. A "fabric first" approach to the envelope of the building has been taken and sustainable design measures incorporated. Existing trees and hedgerows of significance are also to be retained at the site and the proposed landscaping scheme will help to reinforce and enhance local landscape characteristics in this location.
- 6.5. Overall, it is concluded that the proposals accord with all relevant tiers of planning policy and guidance and the adverse impacts of the scheme do not outweigh the benefits of the proposal. Therefore, in line with paragraph 11 of the NPPF, it is respectfully requested that planning permission be granted.