Supported Living Housing Scheme - Billing Brook Road, Thorplands, Northampton

Design & Access Statement
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1.1 Application Statement

This design and access statement has been prepared by maber on behalf of Northampton Partnership Homes (NPH) and Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) who are seeking to initiate the development of 8 one bed bungalows for persons with learning difficulties and autistic spectrum conditions, located off Billing Brook Road, Thorplands, Northampton. The intention is to provide safe, affordable, supported living accommodation in Northampton for people who might otherwise require support in residential care or be at risk of in-patient admission because of the complexities of their behaviours. Please refer also to separate supporting document provided by Northampton Partnership Homes submitted with this Application.

The proposals have been developed through Pre-Application consultation with the Planning Department at Northamptonshire County Council.

1.2 Reason for Development

The proposed development is for adults with complex needs and autism, working in partnership with Northamptonshire County Council and the NHS. Costs can be up to £6k per week under current placements. This is obviously an issue for NCC due to current financial constraints and placements are often long distances from the family home. The site belongs to Northampton Borough Council (NBC) and the other partners are supportive of the site due to its location – near to public transport and local amenities. There is a work force ratio of 2:1 staff to residents. Nomination rights – Northampton Borough Council will continue to own the land, NPH will be the managing agent and NCC responsible for care and support packages.

1.3 Statement of Need by Northampton Partnership Homes

Transforming Care published in December 2012, and further reports, have set out the national drive to make improvements in the care and services available for people with learning disabilities and/or autism spectrum disorders. The focus of these reports has been on the reduced use of institutional care and increased community based provision.

The Transforming Care accommodation plan recognises that more specialist and designated housing needs to be developed for people with learning disabilities and/or autism spectrum disorders, either as purpose built accommodation or through acquiring or remodelling existing accommodation.

There is no suitable accommodation on the market which can meet the specification needed for complex needs, Northamptonshire Adult Social Services (NASS) currently have a number of existing customers who live in high cost supported living placements.

The proposed units meet the needs of the client group as they are small in number (only 8), each having their own front door to ensure everyone feeling they have the opportunity to meet others and not feel isolated, with outdoor facilities to exercise and socialise. This project aims to reduce the number of clients who are placed out of county away from their family and other support networks.

1.4 Design Brief

The client brief is to create 8 individual residential bungalow units plus one additional larger single storey Management/Staff building comprising staff office, meeting room, occasional overnight accommodation, lounge area with kitchenette and laundry. Externally, each bungalow will have a private garden, a communal landscaped courtyard and varied external use activity spaces and gardens plus secure parking for cycles, cars and minibus. The Management building forms the secure entry to the site, whether through the building itself or the secure gated access to the side.

1.5 Involvement

A informal pre-application discussion took place between Peter Moor, Principal Development Control Officer at Northamptonshire County Council and Helen Town of NPH. Maber undertook an informal discussion on 23 May at NCC offices with Peter Moor. NPH carried out public consultations in March 2019 and have also received positive feedback from the Community as follows: Northants County Councillor – Cllr Dennis Meredith; Northampton Borough Councillor – Cllr Janice Duffy, Thorplands Residents Association Chair – Sarah Balkham, NBC Neighbourhood Warden, Growing Together Northampton and the NPH Housing Officer. Jason Conway at Northamptonshire Highways was also consulted on the new access road. All of the above have informed these Planning Application proposals.
2.1 Site Location

The site is located in Thorplands on the north east fringe of Northampton. The site has been chosen by NCC and Northampton Partnership Homes as it's considered to be well-situated with regard to local amenities and road and public transport connections for staff who will be working at the development. The site application area is 7,700m² / 1.9 Acres / 0.77 Hectares. It comprises grassland, trees to the site perimeter and arisings or bunds from previous construction on the site. It is elevated to the north and east grading down approximately 6 metres in elevation towards the south and west and Billing Brook Road.

The site is bounded to the north by a public footpath leading west onto a pedestrian footbridge over Billing Brook Road, accessing Thorplands Primary School and further housing areas. Directly to the north of this footpath is a public green open space with a centrally situated children’s playground and MUGA (Multi Use Games Area). A scattering of established trees separates the footpath from the south of the site.

To the east of the site, the public footpath continues along the site perimeter, which is fairly flat but elevated. A small collection of 2/3 storey domestic dwellings constructed in the 1970's back onto the eastern site boundary, their rear garden fences back onto the footpath. The site is fairly level in this area.

The south-west of the site is bounded by established trees and a continuation of the perimeter public footpath which drops down towards Billing Brook Road. The 1970's domestic dwellings sit off the south west boundary.

The west boundary is level with Billing Brook Road to the south and raises up towards the footbridge to the north. Established trees of various grades are retained in this area. An existing zig-zag public footpath allows access from the footbridge to Billing Brook Road. This sits just outside the site.

2.2 Site Investigations

The existing site has been subject to a 3d and 2d Topographical survey. Waterman's have also provided a GeoEnvironmental Assessment Report, Transport Statement and Travel Plan which are submitted with this application. A Flood Risk and Drainage Report is provided, although the site is in Flood Zone 1 and as the site area is less than 1 Hectare and flood mitigation measures are required. Flood-map-EA flood map planning-2019-04-01T13 40 47.777Z has been submitted with this Application. A Tree Survey has been completed and is attached.
2.3 Site Access

The site is currently inaccessible to vehicles. A public footpath runs around three sides of the site perimeter to the north, east and south. To the west the public footpath is part of the carriageway of Billing Brook Road.

The site has excellent transport links, 1 minute walk from the nearest Bus Stop (Hillfields Community Centre NSG1).

Due to the restriction of the site’s existing steep gradients, the proposed vehicular access point will be from the level south boundary of Billing Brook Road. Section 278 works to provide a new site access and alteration to the highway and a Swept Path Analysis for fire tender and refuse vehicle is included in the Planning Application within Watermans WIE15311-R-2-1-3-Transport Statement and Traffic Management Plan document.

2.4 Site History

Satellite imagery obtained from NCC Maps website shows a ‘pavilion’ and children’s adventure playground previously occupying the level area at the top of the site in a similar location to where it is proposed to locate the bungalow units. Date of construction and demolition of these structures is unknown, but likely in excess of 10 years. Access to this building appeared to be pedestrian only from the north.

As mitigation for loss of grassland amenity, NPH are installing new play areas to the grassland north of the site in June 2019. The three individual play zones comprise a Toddler Area, Junior Area and Urbanix & Street Fitness Area. This work is separate from this Application.

Advice has been sought from NCC County Archaeological Advisor who has consulted the County Historic Environment Record but no there is no evidence of activity on the site itself. However there is a requirement for trial trenching to be undertaken post consent.
2.5 Site Context

There is minimal site context from which to draw on. The site is bounded to the east and south-east by 2 storey domestic dwellings, materially limited to 1970's buff facing brickwork, white external render and concrete interlocking tiles with some areas in timber cladding.

The proposals describe a single storey ‘cottage’ feel with red facing brickwork, artificial slate roof tiling to double-pitched roofs, overhanging exposed eaves and pitched artificial slate roof entrance canopies. The development will therefore have minimum impact on the surrounding housing.

The scheme design has a strong emphasis on landscape and specific garden design for the residents and seeks to enhance the existing sylvan surroundings by way of contrasting external areas for the enjoyment of both the residents and the surrounding neighbourhood. New planting, including an orchard to the north boundary and screen planting to the perimeter secure fence will also benefit the existing surrounding housing areas.

2.6 Site Photographs

A variety of recent site photographs are included in this Statement to show the context of the site surroundings.
2.7 Topography

There is roughly 6 metres ground level difference between the south corner adjacent to Billing Brook Road and the high plateau to the north and central areas of the site. A cut and fill exercise has been carried out on the 3-D Topographical survey to establish the most economical and least invasive way to distribute any ground and subsoil without removing from site and to minimise impact on the existing trees. This has informed the location of the building clusters on the plateau and providing a gentle rise of the access road into the site.

Some existing bunds to the north east of the site are likely to be remnants from the construction of the surrounding housing developments in the 1970’s. These areas will be flattened out through a cut and fill process, retaining all the existing subsoil within the site. New perimeter landscaped gardens, orchard and trees introduced.

The location of the new building clusters on the plateau provides wheelchair accessible movement between bungalows and within the central courtyard garden. The building clusters are also remote from the road and as they are low bungalows will have minimal impact on the surrounding housing, the new landscaping enhancing the area.
3.1 Planning Status
Pre-Application discussions have taken place between Northampton Partnership Homes and Northamptonshire County Council Planning department.

3.2 Planning History
No planning history is available for the site. The site has been open grassland for at least 10 years. Historically there is evidence of a former children’s adventure playground but nothing remains with the exception of a floodlight.

3.3 Planning Policy
As well as a Planning Statement by White Young Green forming part of the submission, Planning Policy Statements have been referenced within various documents submitted with this application in accordance with the relevant County Council Regulation 3 Local list Requirements:

9. Flood Risk Assessment: PPS 25. Not required as the development is in Flood Zone 1 and less than 1 hectare in area.
   However, Document flood-map planning-2019-04-01T13 40 47.777Z included in Application and Waterman’s WIE15311-100-R-4-1-3 Billing Brook GeoEnvironmental Report and WIE15311-Flood Risk Assessment-1-1-1 Billing Brook Road provides drainage solutions.


15. Land Contamination Assessment / Risk Assessment: PPS 23. Refer to attached document by Watermans WIE15311-100-R-4-1-3 Billing Brook GeoEnvironmental Report concludes this as a low risk site.

20. Noise Impact Assessment: PPG 24. Refer to attached document by Watermans WIE15311-100-BN-1.1.1 Planning Noise concludes that noise is unlikely to be a material planning consideration.

24. Playing Fields and Recreational Facilities: PPG 17. Refer item 2.3 within this document.


4.1 Use

The site is owned by Northampton Borough Council. It is not designated public land and the site is currently vacant grassland.

4.2 Amount

No planning history is available for the site which has had no previous significant structures. The proposed development falls into the C2 Use Class Residential Institutions. The 4 semi-detached bungalows and Management/Staff Accommodation building form a small building:landscape ratio, the emphasis on the development being low-level ‘cottages’ within well-considered and diverse landscaped grounds.

4.3 Secured by Design

SBD Consultant, Sharon Henley from Northants PNN has given advice on all aspects of the following security:

Site Entrance
Direct views are afforded from the Management/Staff Accommodation building towards the site entrance off Billing Brook Road. A vehicle barrier, operated from the Management building via video and fob/keycode access is provided to deter casual entrance to the site by unwanted visitors. CCTV will be installed to manage this area and will also be strategically placed around the site. Street lighting from the access off Billing Brook Road and up the access drive to the Management building will provide additional deterrent.

Unit Mix
The development contains an enclosed group of 4 semi-detached bungalow units, facing inwards into a courtyard space which can be visually monitored from the Management/Staff Accommodation building. Back gardens face outwards towards a secure perimeter fence which surrounds the 8 bungalows, for both safety of the residents and securing the site from neighbouring properties. Each Bungalow unit will have a hedge max 1 metre high as specified by SBD. During the day there is community interaction, CCTV and casual surveillance.

The Management building provides the main secure daily access into the site; via the building itself or through the side gate which will be fob/keycode controlled. Through this gate, access for bikes, waste disposal and lawn mowers will pass. Post and deliveries will be via the Management building - no access into the site.

Car Parking
The car parking areas are split into two areas - the first at the site entrance which is staff parking. This is accessed via steps directly up to the upper car park which is provided for residents visitors. Both areas are well-lit and enhanced by CCTV and the vehicle barrier at the entrance.

Planting
The landscape design has been carefully considered and falls into various categories. 1) perimeter planting particularly to provide privacy for residents in conjunction with the secure fencing. 2) areas of garden which provide social gathering spaces, 3) sensory garden, all are detailed in 5.4 Landscaping.

Fencing
The secure perimeter fencing will be a 2 metre high weld mesh paladin type in dark green. SBD has recommended fast growing planting or established pre-grown hedging set against the fence to prevent unwelcome interaction between residents and the local neighbours. Gates within perimeter secure fence to be locked with override linked to the fire alarm.
5.0 Layout and Scale

5.1 Massing

Due to the development being single storey, the massing will be low key. The 4 blocks of semi-detached bungalows and the management building will sit on the plateau at the north/mid part of the site at a similar elevation to the surrounding domestic dwellings. Their impact will be minimal due to being interspersed with additional perimeter planting as part of a larger landscape strategy. The small, low double pitched roofs providing a ‘cottage’ feel. The view of the development from Billing Brook Road will be restricted due to its elevation and augmented existing tree-line.

5.2 Plans

The layout of the four semi-detached bungalows around a central open courtyard garden affords an inward-looking activity garden space. There are 4no. blocks containing 8no. semi-detached units in total, identified as 1&2, 3&4, 5&6 and 7&8 and all identical in layout, grouped around a central courtyard. The front door to each bungalow is accessed off this courtyard garden. Internally each bungalow has an entrance hall, Kitchen, Living-Dining area and Bedroom with Wetroom. Two doors are provided to each room for Staff safety. The residents rear gardens are private but gated into the adjacent garden to allow staff to escape easily if their safety is compromised.

5.3 Height

The development is single storey and the pitched roofs are kept low at 5.5 metres to the ridge. As the buildings are grouped on the plateau at the top of the site they are all close in height. Visibility of the buildings from Billing Brook Road will be minimised due to the surrounding landscape and trees.
5.4 Landscape Design

The landscape design strategy for the Billing Brook Road Supported Living facility aims to provide a nurturing and safe environment for the residents while presenting a naturalistic and aesthetically pleasing landscape to the community.

The existing site is dominated by mature trees and open grassland, and accommodates 10 metres of level change from north to south. The proposed landscape masterplan aims to maintain the open park-like feel by siting the buildings on a plateau at the top of the site. This arrangement preserves existing grade A trees and maintains landscaped views up to the site from Billing Brook Road and the adjacent neighbourhood.

The care facility comprises 8 bungalows (4no. blocks) and a Management building. These buildings are arranged so as to frame out a central communal courtyard/activity space. This courtyard will create a powerful sense of enclosure and provide varied opportunities for social interaction and activities at differing scales. Quieter garden spaces with a focus on retreat and sensory design will be located outside this central communal space. A walking trail punctuated by exercise stations loops through the complex connecting these varied spaces together and providing physical activity opportunities for the residents. Individual gardens to Bungalows have patio and turfed areas, dividing timber fences and medium height hedging.

An Exercise Trail just inside the secure perimeter fence line provides essential running space. The facility is made secure by a weld mesh paladin perimeter fence. This fence will be set back from the red line boundary so as to allow shrub and tree plantings to form visual buffers at the perimeter. This visual buffer will provide an aesthetically pleasing, community facing green space while creating privacy for the residents.
5.4 Landscape Design (continued)

Plant species will be selected for their suitability to the woodland park setting. Wherever possible native and adaptive species will be used in order to create a low maintenance sustainable landscape that provides a habitat for local insect and bird ecologies. Landscapes within the residential component will be designed specific to the needs of autistic residents and will incorporate plants that provide rich sensory and seasonal experiences.

The Management building interrupts the secure fence line and provides the controlled access point into the residential area. To the front, outside the secure fence line a 1.8m high hit-and-miss timber Bin enclosure with timber gates is provided, sized to accommodate the 3no 1,100 litre Euro bins - 2 waste, 1 recycling. To the other side of the fence line a covered Cycle store is provided.

The Bin enclosure has been located adjacent to the car park, and is a particular requirement of the brief to be sited away from the Bungalows to minimise disturbance / anxiety to residents by avoiding bins being wheeled past dwellings on collection day; the reason why they are not stored within residents rear gardens. The residents will be assisted by staff carers when removing their refuse to the Bin Store. The weekly refuse/recycling collection trucks will collect outside the Management building and secure fence line and a turning head is provided halfway up the access road to allow such vehicles to reverse.
6.0 Environment

6.1 Principles

CJR M&E Consultants have provided P3019 NPH Billing Brook Road Supported Living Energy Statement to describe passive and active design measures and renewable energy proposals, enhanced building fabric, lower u-values aiming to achieve 25% betterment on current recommended levels. Heat recovery ventilation plant will be used to heat water saving money and energy.

7.0 Access

7.1 Vehicular Access - staff and visitors

A new access road will be formed from Billing Brook Road - Section 278 drawings have been submitted with this Application. The road starts at the southerly lowest part of the site and forms a gentle rise with the site gradients snaking through the site, running with the existing contours and around a retained Class A Oak tree. The vehicular access gate sits off the road by approximately 18 metres allowing a pull-in for both cars and trucks. Audio/Video link with the Management building is provided at this point. Staff and regular visitors/family will have fob/key pad access. A stepped access is provided from the lower car park to the upper car park, primarily for use by Staff who will park in the Lower Car Park. The Upper Car Park will be for visitors and two Accessible parking spaces have been provided.

7.2 Vehicular Access - fire tender and refuse vehicles

There will be permitted access for refuse vehicles - the regular refuse and recycling collection services will have a key fob or hold the access code number of the main entrance gate, whichever is applicable. A fire alarm override of the main entrance gate will provide access for the fire tender. The gate barrier will automatically open when the alarm is activated. A turning head is provided halfway up the access road for trucks to turn. A separate Section 278 Works drawing by Watermans has been submitted with this application.
8.0 Conclusion

8.1 Conclusion

The site and project have been carefully considered. The development proposed is for adults with complex needs and autism, working in partnership with Northamptonshire County Council and the NHS. Current costs for housing such residents are up to £6k per week under current placements, this is obviously an issue for NCC due to current financial constraints, placements are often long distances from the family home.

The site is under Northampton Borough Council ownership and although not ideal due to its topography, the organisations involved with the project are happy with the site due to its location – near to public transport and local amenities. Similar projects by maber in Banbury and Bicester have proved highly successful - the Billing Brook Road project is based on these user profiles.
Great to work with.
Great to work for.

architecture / interiors / landscape / masterplanning
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