Former Monyhull Ambulance Station, Monyhull Hall Road, Kings Norton, Birmingham, B30 3QJ

Demolition of existing ambulance station and erection of 14 no. 1 bed apartments and on-site communal resource/support unit for supported housing with associated parking and landscape

Applicant: Bromford Housing Group  
Unit 1 Exchange Court, Wolverhampton Business Park, Brabourne Avenue, Wolverhampton, WV10 6AU

Agent: Walker Troup Architects  
52 Lyndon Road, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands, B73 6BS

Recommendation
Approve Subject To Conditions

1. **Proposal**

1.1. The application is for the erection of 14, one bedroom apartments for adults with learning disabilities, with an associated communal resource/support unit, along with parking and landscaping.

1.2. Contained within a two storey block and accessed via central corridors, each one bedroom flat would be approximately 36 sq m, with the exception of two corner flats (38 sq m and 41 sq m respectively). Flats would contain a combined kitchen/living area, bathroom, store and a single bedroom ranging from 10.3 sq m to 11.8m (the two larger units). Internal layouts have been provided to show how furniture could be accommodated, especially as all bedroom sizes are under guidelines within Places for Living. Associated with the flats would be a 74 sq m support unit, encompassing an office, bathroom, bedroom, kitchen and lounge/meeting room. It would enable residents to socialise, meet with support workers and would also allow a carer to stay over on a 24 hour basis if required.

1.3. Externally, the proposed design takes cues from the existing three storey sheltered housing block to the south of the site, also owned by the applicant. Windows would be regularly spaced along a central pitched roof block with projecting gable elements. Proposed materials would be either orange brick with contrasting elements of brickwork or render or alternatively render and cladding panels depending on the availability of bricks. The block would be positioned roughly in the same position as the single storey former ambulance station due to a number of Tree Preservation Order (TPO) trees on the northern, eastern and south eastern edges of the site.
1.4. In terms of separation distances, the proposal would partly be under guidelines within Places for Living. The eastern elevation, facing towards the rear of bungalows on Premier Court, would be between 16.5m and 17m away from their rear elevations, between 4.5m and 4m under separation distance guidelines within Places for Living. This elevation would be fenestrated with a secondary living room window and a kitchen window within the combined kitchen/living room area of four apartments (two on each level). To the south, windows on one of the corner apartments (units 6 & 13), have been omitted to prevent direct overlooking with the three storey sheltered housing block. This blank elevation would be a minimum of 11.6m away from kitchen windows within three of the sheltered housing units and 11.2m away from a secondary lounge/dining room window into the three neighbouring units on the same elevation. This would be between 0.9m and 1.3m under Places for Living Guidelines. The bedroom windows of units 12 and 5 on the proposed apartments would be approximately 12.2m away from the existing secondary lounge windows, but would be positioned obliquely from these secondary windows.

1.5. A major factor in the development of the layout proposed are the existing TPO trees on site. Fronting Monyhull Hall Road are 5 horse chestnut and 7 oak trees, with a group of 4 horse chestnut trees to the east on the boundary with No.1 Premier Court and a turkey oak and oak in the south eastern corner of the site. There are further trees on the western edge of the site which are not subject to a TPO. The arboricultural report submitted recommends the removal of two horse chestnut and an oak in the north eastern corner of the site (all category U and not subject to a TPO), a category U oak fronting Monyhull Hall Road which is subject to a TPO and two category U ash, again not subject to a TPO, on the western edge of the site.

1.6. With access, car parking and landscaping, the existing single access drive towards the western end of the Monyhull Hall Road frontage would be retained. Currently this loops around the site and forms an in/out access off the main road. The vehicular exit to the site would be removed, leaving a single access/egress point. Eight car parking spaces (57%) would be provided in the south western corner of the site, adjacent to a side access door. Around the site, the rear amenity space (circa 400sqm) would be grassed with an outdoor seating area drying area and cycle storage facilities.

Site area- 0.23 hectares  
Density- 61 dwellings per hectare.

1.7. In support of the application the agent has provided a design and access statement, tree survey, habitat and bat surveys and a detailed landscaping scheme. Concerning the actual use of the site, Bromford Housing, the applicant, have stated that they intend to operate a ‘My Place’ model of supported housing from the development. This would enable adults with learning disabilities to have good quality, independent accommodation in close proximity to local facilities. The support unit within the development would allow residents to socialise and provide training and employment advice, along with 24 hour care on site if required. In addition, Bromford would provide a housing specialist on the site for up to 18 hours a week to assist tenants.

Proposed site plan

Proposed elevations
2. Site & Surroundings

2.1. The former Ambulance Station is a functional single storey, orange brick, flat roof building on a roughly flat site and has been vacant following the reorganisation of WM Ambulance Station bases, including construction of a new base near Great Park (2012/03657/PA). The building is set well back from Monyhull Hall Road to the front, with a group of TPO trees set within a grassed area between the road and the building. An access loop providing an in/out route runs around the building, with associated hard surfacing for vehicle parking.

2.2. Surrounding the site to both the east and south is Premier Court, a 1980’s buff brick sheltered housing scheme also owned by the applicant. It consists of bungalows (to the east) and a three storey apartment block (to the south). To the west is The Cottage, a two storey health centre, with a number of inter-war detached properties, characterised by very long frontages, on the opposite side of Monyhull Hall Road to the north. Three regular bus services (No’s 18, 35 and AH6) serve a bus stop some 20m to the west of the site entrance.

3. Planning History

3.1. None.

4. Consultation/PP Responses

4.1. Transportation Development- No objections subject to access widened to 5.2m to allow two way access, with associated pedestrian visibility spays, removal of yellow box hatching on Monyhull Hall Road at applicants expense and redundant footway crossings reinstated.

4.2. Regulatory Services- No objections subject to contaminated land assessment and potential remediation measures if required, along with the prior submission a noise study to establish residential acoustic protection, so that windows/doors to habitable rooms to Monyhull Hall Road achieve a weighted sound reduction index of 35 dB and ventilation is via acoustic vents achieving a weighted element normalised level difference of at least 41 dB.

4.3. Severn Trent Water- No objections subject to drainage details for foul and surface water.

4.4. WM Police- Fully support the application.

4.5. WM Fire Service- Awaiting comments.

4.6. 2 statutory site notices displayed, application advertised in press, ward councillors, MP, residents associations and surrounding occupiers notified- Three comments received.

-Two local residents living on the opposite side of Monyhull Hall Road have stated that they are either supportive or have no objections to the proposal.
-A further resident on the opposite side of Monyhell Hall Road, following an explanation in writing over who the development would be for, has maintained their objection to the proposal. They state that they still oppose the development as there is a school for ‘these people’ further down the road and the objector would not want this spreading closer to their property.

5. **Policy Context**


6. **Planning Considerations**

6.1. **Policy**

   **National**

   Within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraph 17 supports sustainable economic development to deliver new homes and encourages the use of brownfield land. Paragraph 19 states that significant weight is placed on economic growth within the planning system, with paragraph 50 highlighting that residential development should reflect local demand and create mixed and balanced communities. On design, paragraph 56 attaches great importance to the design of the built environment as this is a key aspect of sustainable development. Paragraph 60 notes that policies and decisions should not impose architectural styles or tastes, should not stifle innovation or originality, but should reinforce local distinctiveness.

6.2. **On environmental concerns**, the NPPF is unequivocal in its view that local planning authorities should focus on whether the development itself is an acceptable use of the land, and the impact of the proposed use (paragraph 122), with paragraph 123 stating that developments should mitigate and reduce other adverse impacts on health and quality of life, including through the use of conditions.

6.3. **Local**

   The adopted UDP seeks in paragraph 5.30 to support localised special needs housing on smaller sites which enables such developments to be integrated within existing communities. The UDP requires that that new housing developments should provide an appropriate environment (paragraphs 5.20-5.20A) and encourages a full range of housing types and sizes. Paragraphs 3.14D and 3.14E of the UDP identify that new housing development should be designed in accordance with good urban design principles.

6.4. **Within the emerging Birmingham Development Plan** policy TP26 promotes a wide choice of house types and tenures to provide a balanced, sustainable community with policy TP27 stating that the location of new housing should be accessible to jobs, shops and services by other modes of transport.

6.5. **Places for Living** supports the creation of safe places, with clear definition between public and private spaces, active frontages, convenient routes, balance the needs of cars and pedestrians and provide schemes which reflect local context.

6.6. **Use**

   Given that surrounding properties to the east, south and north are in residential use, the construction of 14 apartments, with an associated communal resource/support unit is considered appropriate. The proposed apartment block would achieve a satisfactory density of dwellings, whilst retaining TPO trees to the frontage and following the predominant building line.
6.7. Layout, design and impact on surrounding properties
The layout of the proposed apartments addresses site specific factors such as TPOs, whilst still providing an active frontage with large windows to Monyhull Hall Road, with well overlooked and clear defensible rear amenity space on the remainder of the site. The two entrances to the block are set on the frontage and at the car parking area, giving clear, legible access points to the block.

6.8. In terms of design, the use of a single pitched roof running east to west, punctuated by projecting gables, enables the building to be successfully broken up, whilst following a similar but contemporary version of the three storey sheltered housing block to the rear. A variety of material palettes have been suggested by the applicant and agent and a suitable materials sample condition would secure an acceptable finish to the building in keeping with the surrounding area. My City Design Officer supports this view.

6.9. Internally, all bedroom sizes would be under your Committee’s guidelines for main double bedrooms by between 0.8m and 2.3m. However, satisfactory internal furniture layouts have been provided, which combined with the ground floor communal resource/meeting space, means that the scheme is considered to deliver a suitable living environment for future occupants. A condition is attached so that the apartments are restricted to supported/sheltered housing only though, given the overall size of the units and the reliance on the resource unit for additional internal communal space. Private rear communal amenity space, at 29 sq m per occupant is also slightly under your Committee’s guidelines of 30 sq m. This is offset though by the landscaped frontage to Monyhull Hall Road, containing the majority of TPO trees, which will be available for use by residents.

6.10. Concerning impact on neighbouring properties, the position of the proposed apartment block would be under your Committee’s separation distance guidelines vis-à-vis the two bungalows on the east of the application site (No’s 1 and 3 Premier Court) and three flats within the sheltered housing scheme to the south. However, I consider that there are mitigating factors which means that the proposed positioning of the apartment block is acceptable. Any built form proposed for the site is effectively constrained by the TPO trees to the north and east, which along with the prominent recessed building line, renders a development at the back of pavement unacceptable. Allied to this, the proposed windows for apartments facing east towards the rear of the bungalows would be secondary lounge and kitchen windows, with the main fenestration facing Monyhull Hall Road to the north or a car park for the sheltered housing scheme to the south. An obscure glazing or high level window condition for the first floor side windows, coupled with screening from existing trees on the site, means that the scheme would not harm the amenity of bungalows to the east on Premier Court.

6.11. With the juxtaposition of the two proposed bedroom windows for apartments 6 & 13 and the windows within three of the sheltered housing flats, this is offset by the partly blank elevation at the end of the apartment, combined with the windows being positioned diagonally away from the sheltered flats and the nearest window in the sheltered housing flats being a secondary lounge/dining room window. Therefore, this element of the scheme is not considered to have an adverse impact on existing or future residential occupiers by way of overlooking or overshadowing. No objections have been received from adjacent occupiers to the east and south.
6.12. Trees & Ecology
The scheme has been designed in such a way to ensure that all TPO trees can be accommodated on the site and only one TPO tree, a category U oak, is proposed to be removed due to its condition. The remainder of the non-TPO trees proposed to be removed are all also category U, in a poor condition and unsuitable for retention. My Tree Officer fully supports the findings of the arboricultural assessment submitted and recommends a condition for tree protection measure details for retained trees prior to construction works on site. This is seen as reasonable and necessary to retain important trees which have a positive impact on the amenity of the area.

6.13. Concerning ecology, both bat and habitat surveys have been submitted. The bat survey recorded no evidence of bats within the building or on the wider site and the ecology survey found that the semi-mature trees on the site are of intrinsic value, but the wider habitats on the site have low-species diversity. Consequently, especially with the retention of all trees with are not category U, the proposed development is not considered to have any wider implications for protected species of loss of habitat. My Ecologist has raised no objections to the scheme subject to the introduction of nest boxes, which is considered to enhance the overall ecological value of the site and a condition is attached to secure such works.

6.14. Transportation
Transportation Development have raised no objections subject to conditions regarding an increase access width (to 5.2m), pedestrian visibility splays, removal of the yellow box hatching on Monyhull Hall Road associated with the previous use and reinstatement of redundant footway crossings. All conditions are deemed reasonable and necessary to maintain highway safety and freeflow of traffic. The increased width of the access point, to a minimum of two car lengths, would not impact on the root protection area of any TPO trees to the east and can easily accommodated on site.

6.15. Regulatory Services and Statutory Undertakers
Severn Trent Water have raised no objections subject to a foul and surface water drainage condition which is seen as relevant to a new development for 14 apartments. Regulatory Services have raised no objections subject to a contaminated land assessment and potential remediation scheme, along with a noise study to establish if acoustic measures are required for fenestration to habitable rooms. A contaminated land condition is attached, however given that the majority of properties surrounding the site are in residential use and the proposal would be set well back from Monyhull Hall Road, behind a number of large retained trees, an acoustic glazing condition is considered over-onerous in this instance.

6.16. Other comments
Comments made by a local resident concerning the occupants of the proposed apartments are not considered to be a planning issue. Nevertheless, the development would be over 60m away from the frontages of houses on the opposite side of Monyhull Hall Road and would not harm the amenity of nearby residential properties by way of noise or disturbance.

7. Conclusion
7.1. The redevelopment of the site for apartments accords with both national and local policy and constitutes a sustainable form of development. The development would enable independent living for people with learning disabilities and provide a degree of localised regeneration. The proposed layout and design is appropriate for the area, retains TPO trees and can be accommodated without any significant adverse impact on existing residential amenities.
8. **Recommendation**

8.1. Approve subject to conditions

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<td>Requires the prior submission of a contamination remediation scheme</td>
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<td>Requires the prior submission details obscure glazing/high level windows for specific areas of the approved building</td>
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<td>Requires the prior submission of hard surfacing materials</td>
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<td>Requires the implementation of tree protection</td>
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<td>Requires the prior submission of details of bird boxes</td>
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<td>Requires the prior approval of the siting/design of a widened access point</td>
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<td>Requires pedestrian visibility splays to be provided</td>
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<td>Requires the prior submission and completion of highway works</td>
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<td>Requires the scheme to be in accordance with the listed approved plans</td>
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<td>No consent for retained tree layout shown on landscaping plan</td>
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<td>Requires that the apartments are used for supported/sheltered housing only</td>
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<td>Limits the approval to 3 years (Full)</td>
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Case Officer: Neal Allcock