

Planning, Design and Access Statement

For the

**PROPOSED ERECTION OF 26 AFFORDABLE
RESIDENTIAL APARTMENTS**

AT

**THE FORMER POPULAR GARAGE SITE,
MILL STREET, LEEK**

Prepared by

Brealey
Associates
Architects Designers

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1. INTRODUCTION

Scope and purpose

- 1.1 This statement is prepared and submitted in support an application seeking Full Planning Consent for the redevelopment of the site occupied by the former Popular Garage, 113, Mill Street, Leek, consisting of a residential development of 26 number apartments specifically for affordable housing needs. The Statement is submitted on behalf of The Lancashire Mortgage Corporation (the Applicant).
- 1.2 The Application follows a submission of an outline application for the erection of 30 affordable apartments, its subsequent rejection and appeal which was dismissed. The current application seeks to address those issues raised by the Local Planning Authority and the Appeal Inspector.
- 1.3 The proposal is submitted with the benefit of having been discussed at pre-application stage with the Local Planning Authority and Housing Strategy and undertaken a design review by the Alliance Design Review Panel. The content of the proposed scheme has evolved from the feedback given at pre-application stage and following further consultation with members of the Alliance Design Panel. The application submitted seeks full approval. The application is described more fully below. This statement has been prepared in the context of planning policies and guidance operative at the national, regional and local levels.
- 1.4 The following statement provides an assessment of the principal design and planning issues arising from the proposals and concludes that - in the light of all material considerations – they would be appropriate and acceptable in planning terms.

2. THE PROPOSAL

- 2.1 This application seeks Full Planning for the redevelopment of the existing Popular Garage site, Mill Street, Leek for a residential scheme. Planning permission is sought for the erection of 26 affordable 2 bedroom apartments of varying sizes, their net floor space, ranging between 57m² and 67m².
- 2.2 There is a change of level of approximately 8.5m from the Mill Street frontage to the Belle Vue frontage the buildings therefore step up the site but remain in context with the surrounding buildings.
- 2.3 The building will be 5 storey in height split level across the site with accommodation located over four floors with an under-croft car park. The upper storey is predominantly located in the roof spaces so as to reduce the mass of the building. It should be noted that car park level is significantly cut into the existing embankment of the site.
- 2.4 The elevation facing onto Bell Vue Road is 3 storey in height with a loft apartment keeping the building domestic scale that would sit comfortably with the terrace housing to the west. Advantage is taken of the existing retaining wall located to the back of footpath to create sunken units with private amenity space and the creation of an enclosed courtyard to the west.
- 2.5 The building forms an L-shape layout to maximise distances and privacy between the proposed building and the Wesleyan Court on the neighbouring site. It is considered that the height of the proposal off Mill Street is in keeping with the street scene.
- 2.6 A total of 26 number car park spaces are proposed which will be located in the partly submerged car park at the lower ground floor level and accessed from Mill Street.
- 2.7 The proposals seek to provide a sustainable design creating a high quality environment for affordable housing needs. As part of these goals the development shall be seeking a Code Level 3 of the "Code for Sustainable Homes" and "Secure by Design" accreditations. Pre-assessments and consultations have been undertaken to show that the development is on target for these awards. In addition the design shall be seeking to achieve high scores in respect of "Housing Quality Indicators" and to integrate "Lifetime Homes" requirements.

3. SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

- 3.1 The application site lies between Mill Street (to the north) and Belle Vue Road (to the south) approximately one mile to the north west of Leek Town Centre. Vehicle access is currently taken from Mill Street which is the main road linking Leek and Macclesfield. The site currently lies within the Town Centre Boundary of the adopted Local Development Framework Plan.
- 3.2 The site is located in an area of the town which has a mix of different uses with both existing commercial and residential uses in close proximity to the application site. To the north of the site on the opposite side of Mill Street are residential flats and retail units. To the south and southwest are existing residential properties with a car repair garage to the northwest.
- 3.3 The site has been vacant for some considerable time and was previously used as car maintenance and repair shop. The site has now fallen into a state of disrepair and only one modest brick built workshop building remains to the south-west of the site with a temporary building directly to the north of the workshop. There is a significant difference in levels across the site rising from the Mill Street frontage to the Belle Vue frontage. In visual terms, the site detracts significantly from the built up environment in the surrounding area.

4. PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1 Planning history for this site is as follows:
- 4.2 Application reference 77/04543/OLDDC. This application was for a change of use from a builder's Yard to a Motor vehicle repair shop in 1977. The application was approved with conditions in March 1978.
- 4.3 Application reference 06/00251/OUT-MJ. This application was submitted in June 2005 and sought planning permission for the redevelopment of the site for residential uses. The application was withdrawn.
- 4.4 Application reference 06/00946/OUT-MJ. The application sought outline planning permission for the redevelopment of the site for commercial and residential use. The Council refused planning permission by notice dated 27 February 2007. The applicant appealed against the decision (Appeal reference 07/00023/REFUSE) which was subsequently dismissed dated 2 October 2007. Partial costs were awarded to the Appellant.
- 4.5 Application reference 07/00781/OUT-MJ. This application was submitted in June 2007 and sought outline planning permission for the redevelopment of the site for commercial and residential use, all matters reserved. The Council approved the application with conditions by notice dated 8 August 2007.
- 4.6 Application reference 09/00899/OUT-MJ. The application dated 11 September 2009 sought outline planning permission for the erection of 30 affordable residential apartments. The application submitted sought approval of access, layout & scale with all other matters reserved for future consideration. The Council refused planning permission by notice dated 12 November 2009. The reasons for refusal were:
- 1) The proposed development, by reason of its scale, massing and design would result in a form of development that would have an overbearing, oppressive impact on the level of residential amenity currently afforded by the occupiers of properties on Belle Vue Road and at Wesleyan Court. The scheme is thus contrary to the provisions of policy B13, H4 and Appendix 3 'Space About Dwellings' of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan as well as policy D1 & D2 of the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Structure Plan and national planning policy in the form of PPS1 'Delivering Sustainable Development' and PPS3 'Housing'.
 - 2) The proposed development, by reason of its design, siting and layout would result in a form of development that would provide insufficient private amenity space and off road car parking for future occupiers of the development. The scheme is thus contrary to the provisions of policy B13, H4(B), T14 and Appendix 3 'Space About Dwellings' of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan as well as policy D1 & D2 of the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Structure Plan and national planning policy in the form of PPS1 'Delivering Sustainable Development' and PPS3 'Housing', PPG13 'Transport'.

4.7 The applicant appealed against the decision (Application reference 09/00899/OUT-MJ). The Appeal (Appeal reference 10/00001/REFUSE) was lodged on 6 January 2010 and was dealt with by way of an informal hearing on 23 March 2010. The Appeal was subsequently dismissed by way of Notice dated 14 April 2010. The main issues in this case were the effect of the proposal on the living conditions of

(a) the occupiers of 120 Belle Vue Road and of Wesleyan Court with particular regard to outlook, overlooking and daylight; and

(b) future occupiers of the development with particular regard to outlook, outdoor garden space and parking.

5. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

- 5.1 Section 38(5) of the Planning and Compensation Act 2004 requires that where regard is to be made to the development plan, for the purpose of any determination under the Planning Acts, the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material concerns indicate otherwise.

This application has been considered against the following policies:

The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the West Midlands

- RR3 Market Towns
- CF2 Housing beyond the Major Urban Areas
- CF4 The re-used of land and buildings for housing
- CF5 Delivering affordable housing and mixed communities
- PA6 Portfolio of Employment Land
- QE3 Creating a high quality built environment for all
- T7 Car Parking Standards and Management

Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Structure Plan (Saved Policies)

- D1 Sustainable Forms of Development
- D2 The Design and Environmental Quality of Development
- D3 Urban Regeneration

Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (Saved Policies)

- B13 Design
- E7 Loss of existing Employment Sites
- E8 Redevelopment of Existing or Disused Employment Sites
- H4 New Housing Development
- H5 Development in Settlement Development Boundaries
- H14 Affordable Housing
- Appendix 3: Space About Dwellings
- Supplementary Planning Guidance: Housing for Local People and Affordable Housing

National Planning Guidance

- PPS1 Delivering Sustainable Development
- PPS3 Housing
- PPG13 Transport
- PPS23 Planning and Pollution Control

The Development Plan

5.2 In this instance, the development plan comprises the following:

- The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the West Midlands, comprising Regional Planning Guidance note 11(2004);
- The Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Structure Plan 1996-2011(2002) Saved Policies.
- Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (1998) Saved Policies.

5.3 The Local Plan predates the policies set out at a county and regional level but the Council has resolved to save some of the policies of the Local Plan beyond September 2007. It is against the policies of the Structure Plan and the Local Plan that the current application is considered.

The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the West Midlands

5.4 Regional Planning Policy complements national guidelines specifically in respect of policy;

- RR3(B) 'Development plans and other plans and programmes should normally prioritise, for each town, policies to: iii) provide additional housing to maintain viable communities and meet local needs, including the provision of affordable housing (CF2,CF5);'
- CF2 (D) 'In rural areas, the provision of new housing should generally be restricted to meeting local housing needs and/or to support local services, with priority being given to the reuse of previously developed land and buildings'.
- CF4 (B) The RPB should, through its overall monitoring, assess the progress being made on achieving the above percentages, and, where necessary, should advise where development plan reviews should seek to increase the scale of achievement in order to support the Spatial Strategy. In giving this advice, the RPB should take particular account of: i) the opportunities for the reuse of redundant employment land and premises in urban areas'. Paragraph 6.24 goes on to say that 'In this area and the more rural areas generally, reliance on relatively small windfall sites makes it difficult to secure affordable housing. In these circumstances local planning authorities should consider whether there is a need to seek affordable housing on smaller sites, and bring forward proposals through the development plan process.'
- CF5 (A) 'Local Authorities, developers and social housing providers should co-operate to create more balanced and mixed communities'.
- PA6(C) 'As part of the review of development plans local planning authorities should review all existing employment sites within their area to establish their continued suitability for employment development.

- PA6(D) 'Where the above review establishes that existing employment sites have no realistic prospect of development under current market conditions in their current physical state within the plan period, careful consideration should be given to:
i) what remedial action/infrastructure works will be required to justify the retention of the site within the portfolio; and
ii) identification/re-allocation of the site for an alternative use or uses.'
- QE1 supports 'regeneration, by restoring degraded areas, conserving existing environmental assets, including the reuse of redundant and under-used buildings of merit, and creating new, high quality, built and natural environments.'
- QE3 Promotes the creation of high quality environments stating that 'Development Plans and other strategies should promote the creation of high quality built environments as part of urban and rural renaissance and the regeneration strategies for the Region's cities, towns and villages.'
- T7 (A) 'Local authorities should work within maximum standards for parking associated with new development in line with those given in PPG13'.

Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Structure Plan

- 5.5 The Structure Plan sets out strategic planning policies for the area. The policies of the Structure Plan seek to promote sustainable patterns of development and to improve the quality of the environment. In particular;
- DI seeks to 'concentrate as much new built development as possible within the fabric of existing urban areas'
 - D2 States that development should generally conserve and, where possible, improve the quality of life and environment.
 - D3 supports initiatives that 'reclaim and reuse derelict, contaminated, degraded or underused land and buildings for new employment uses, in preference to taking Greenfield land; (and) improve the availability, quality and diversify the housing stock' particularly in areas within or close to town centres'.

Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan

- 5.6 Within the Local Plan, the site is shown to lie within the defined settlement development boundary of Leek. There are no site specific land use policies relating to the site in the Local Plan. The principal policies are described below:
- B13 States that proposals will be expected to demonstrate a good quality of design which takes account of scale, character, siting, alignment, mass, design, colour and materials of their surroundings. It also seeks to promote satisfactory standards of amenity for existing and proposed users of buildings through the space between buildings,

their design, interrelationship, window sizes and positions.

- H4 requires new housing developments to be sympathetic with the character of the existing settlement in terms of density as well as scale and environmental quality.
- H5 'The policy confirms a general presumption in favour of new residential development. It advises that 'Within settlement development boundaries planning permission will be granted for residential development unless there is a material planning objection.'
- H14 'The District Council will seek to ensure that affordable housing both for sale and to rent is available to meet the needs of pensioners, single persons, first time buyers, low income groups and those with more specialised housing needs'.

National Planning Policy Statements

- PPS1 is the Government's commitment to sustainable development and this document advises that the Planning System should foster other forms of development that encourage walking, cycling and public transport use. The proposed development proposal respects and promotes the principles of sustainability and is consistent with national and local transport policy objectives.
- PPS3 seeks to 'widen opportunities for home ownership and ensure high quality housing for those who cannot afford market housing' and to 'improve affordability across the housing market, including by increasing the supply of housing'. Encouraging a 'flexible, responsive supply of land – managed in a way that makes efficient and effective use of land, including re-use of previously-developed land, where appropriate'.
- PPS3 defines affordable housing as including social rented and intermediate housing such as shared equity.
- PPS3 paragraph 36. States that 'The priority for development should be previously developed land, in particular vacant and derelict sites and buildings' which is further underpinned in paragraphs 40 and 41.
- PPS3 paragraph 44 states that 'Local Planning Authorities should consider a range of incentives or interventions that could help to ensure previously-developed land is developed in line with trajectory/ies' including 'Considering whether sites that are currently allocated for industry or commercial use could be more appropriately re-allocated for housing development'.
- PPS3 paragraph 68 goes on to say that 'When making planning decisions for housing developments after 1st April 2007, Local Planning Authorities should have regard to the policies in this statement as material considerations which may supersede the policies in existing Development Plans'.
- PPG13 states that 'Car parking also takes up a large amount of space in development, is costly to business and reduces densities. Reducing

the amount of parking in new development (and in the expansion and change of use in existing development) is essential, as part of a package of planning and transport measures, to promote sustainable travel choices.'

- PPG13 goes on to say that 'Policies in development plans should set maximum levels of parking for broad classes of development. Maximum standards should be designed to be used as part of a package of measures to promote sustainable transport choices, reduce the land-take of development, enable schemes to fit into central urban sites'.
- PPS23 states that 'any consideration of the quality of land, air or water and potential impacts arising from development, possibly leading to impacts on health, is capable of being a material planning consideration' and that 'the controls under the planning and pollution control regimes should complement rather than duplicate each other'.

6. KEY ISSUES

Principle of development

- 6.1 The application seeks Full Plans Planning Consent for the erection of 26 affordable residential apartments at the former Popular Garage site at 113 Mill Street, Leek.
- 6.2 The development plan provides positive support for residential development within defined settlement boundaries unless there is material planning objection. In this case, the material considerations are whether development will result in a net loss of employment land, and whether affordable residential development is otherwise appropriate to the site. Also key to the development of this site is the need for a quality environment and the protection against pollution.

Loss of Employment Land

- 6.3 This is a brownfield previously developed site within the settlement boundary of Leek where development is acceptable in principle. However being an employment site this proposal raises issues of the protection given to such sites, which must be balanced against all other relevant factors. In this particular case it is considered that since the site is very closely surrounded by other residential development then residential development on this site could be said to be more compatible with this surrounding development. There is no evidence to suggest that this employment site has or would be a source of disturbance, but the possibility remains that if brought back into employment use at its full capacity there would be a likelihood of intrusion into the residential amenity of those adjacent properties.
- 6.4 This is further underpinned by The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the West Midlands Policy PA6 which states that 'As part of the review of development plans local planning authorities should review all existing employment sites within their area to establish their continued suitability for employment development.' PA6 goes on to state that 'Where the above review establishes that existing employment sites have no realistic prospect of development under current market conditions in their current physical state within the plan period, careful consideration should be given to:
- i) what remedial action/infrastructure works will be required to justify the retention of the site within the portfolio; and
 - ii) identification/re-allocation of the site for an alternative use or uses.
- 6.5 There is no requirement set out elsewhere within a supplementary planning document (SPD) or any other guidance issued by the local planning authority which would seem to support the assertion that market testing is required before any commercial sites can be released for residential use.
- 6.6 PA6 applies a hierarchy to employment sites with the lowest being categorised as 'Other Employment Sites' and states that 'Sites in this category are likely to be either very small (less than 0.4 hectares in size) or only likely to be suitable for marginal or 'bad neighbour'

activities. This category may also include small sites within rural areas. The application site is consistent with the above criteria and in its current format, makes very little contribution in economic terms and comprises a low quality use within a predominately residential/commercial area. The redevelopment proposals would bring a high quality building into a highly prominent location within the context of Leek.

- 6.7 It is considered therefore, on balance, that so long as the applicant can meet the Council's housing policies, particularly the Supplementary Planning Guidance on Affordable Housing for Local People there could be a case for the release of the site from the supply of employment land without undermining the wider aims of the Local Plan.

Affordable housing need

- 6.8 Paragraph 71 of PPS3 which states that where an up-to-date five year supply of deliverable sites for housing cannot be demonstrated, local planning authorities should consider planning applications for housing favourably and the proposal would deliver much needed affordable housing.
- 6.9 The scheme proposes the provision of 100% affordable housing, and this is considered to outweigh the loss of this site for commercial purposes. This principle was considered for the previous application for 30 affordable apartments (Application reference 09/00899/OUT-MJ) and the Council's views documented by the Inspector in the Appeal decision which stated that 'Although Policy E7 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (LP) is generally restrictive of a loss of employment land, the Council considers that the significant housing need in Leek, in particular for affordable housing, justifies the loss of employment land in this case.' And went on to say 'Accordingly I agree with the Council that, in principle, the use of the site for affordable housing is acceptable.'
- 6.10 The applicant shall enter into a unilateral undertaking under Section 106 of the Act which ensures that the units would be affordable housing. The principle of residential development for affordable housing need is therefore considered to be acceptable.

Design & Sustainable development

- 6.11 The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the West Midlands promotes the creation of high quality environments through good design, where people want to live, work and invest. New developments should strive to be distinctive providing a sense of identity to which the local community can relate and take pride in. This should be achieved by use of architecture, urban design and landscape design which respects the regional character.

- 6.12 Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan, Policy B3 makes clear that the Local Authorities expectation of good standards of design and amenity. It has therefore been important to the process that the Local Authority be involved in the development of the design influencing the proposals to ensure that the scale, mass, elevational treatment and amenity all conform to policy requirements. Consultation is discussed in Section 7.4.
- 6.13 The proposal are intended to serve the long term needs of the region, making good use of a brownfield site that has been derelict for many years. The development is to be of a quality that will ensure that it contributes to the region's character ensuring it's long term, sustainable use.
- 6.14 The site currently lies within the Town Centre Boundary of the adopted Local Development Framework Plan and is within walking distance of Leek town centre and benefits from easy access to public transport and local amenities.
- 6.15 The development is committed to achieving Code Level 3 of the Code for Sustainable Homes and has undertaken a Pre-assessment to ensure that the scheme is on target to meet the code level stated.

Amenity

- 6.16 The previous application reference 09/00899/OUT-MJ was refused on the grounds that the proposals "would have an overbearing, oppressive impact on the level of residential amenity currently afforded by the occupiers of properties on Belle Vue Road and at Wesleyan Court" and that the development "would provide insufficient private amenity space". These reasons were upheld at appeal.
- 6.17 The amended design seeks to overcome the reasons for refusal by way of reducing the number and size of the apartments and in doing so reducing the building footprint and mass. The decreased building footprint means that more of the site is given over to outdoor amenity space and although there are no longer any three bedroom apartments in the development a children's playground has been incorporated into the landscape design for family use.
- 6.18 Concerns with the previous proposals in respect of the scale and proximity of the building in relation to the garden of 120 Belle Vue Road and Wesleyan Court have been address by way of increasing the distances from those parts of the building previously considered to have an "overbearing" affect. Aspect and the position of principle windows have been carefully considered to ensure that privacy and amenity of both the neighbouring properties and the future occupiers of the development are protected.

Pollution Control

- 6.19 The applicant has commissioned a Desktop Study by Opus International Consultants Limited, document reference is PJE/J-B0275.00(R01). The purpose of the Desktop Study is to identify potential constraints due to likely ground conditions, historic or current contaminative uses, areas of environmental liability and the scope of future ground investigation works. The report concludes that there are several potential pollutants associated with the site from historic uses and that further intrusive investigation would be required to determine the extent of contamination. Further investigation shall include soil sampling, laboratory testing and appropriate risk assessments. It is therefore considered that further site investigation is required and this should be a condition of any granted approval along with a condition requiring the implementation of any necessary remediation works.
- 6.20 Enquiries with the Environment Agency's Midlands office confirmed that a Flood Risk Assessment was not required for the purposes of a Planning Application.
- 6.21 As part of the Code for Sustainable Homes Accreditation the following are to be implemented:
- Reduced potable water consumption to 90litres per person per day.
 - Recycled rainwater by means of external water butts equivalent to 1 litre per square-metre of landscape up to a maximum of 30 litres per a dwelling.
 - To reduce and delay rainwater run-off from hard surfaces into the public sewer and watercourses. Peak run off rates and annual run off volumes post development must not exceed the previous conditions of the site, with a 30% flood risk reduction.
- 6.22 Prior to development, an air quality impact assessment shall be undertaken to indicate the clearly the level of pollutant concentrations that will be experienced by future residential occupiers of the development. If the results of the air quality impact assessment indicate that the proposed layout of the development may lead to a breach in local air quality objectives, the design of the buildings will incorporate measures to ensure that the levels of pollutants in the dwellings remain at acceptable levels.
- 6.23 The applicant has commissioned a Noise Assessment, document reference ARR/PPN/C/1903.01. A PPG 24 NEC assessment shows that the site falls into NEC B by both day and night. Assessment under BS8233 criteria suggest that reasonable conditions will be achieved with normal thermal double glazing as long as windows are closed. Ventilation is likely to be required to give occupants the realistic option of keeping windows closed. This can be achieved using active or passive ventilation which provides a sound insulation of up 40 to 45 dB Dn,e,w. Passivent Fresh 90dB wall vents shall be installed in all living rooms and bedrooms affected by excessive break-in noise.

7. ASSESSMENT

7.1 Physical

The site is approximately 0.15 hectares in a prominent location on one of the main arterial transport routes into Leek in an area of the town which has a mix of different uses with both existing commercial and residential uses in close proximity. The site is located within the Leek town boundary and is well placed in relation to local amenities and the public transport network. The area is of mixed character.

The site has dual frontages; Belle Vue Road lies to the south (approx. 41m) and Mill Street to the north (approx. 39.8m). The site falls significantly from south to north as is the nature of the locality making it particularly challenging to develop in respect of the placement & height of the built form and the provision of meaningful amenity space on a sloping site.

7.2 Social & Economic

Currently the site is vacant awaiting suitable development and it would be desirable if this gap in the urban landscape were to be regenerated so as to bring it back into use and enhance the image, safety and vitality of the local environment in line with planning policy. The removal of the previous commercial use and its replacement with a Social Housing development should have a positive impact on the locality and be in keeping with its mixed character.

The retention of employment land has been an important consideration in the development of this site due to the site being an existing employment site and local plan policy E7 which affords protection to such sites, resisting their loss so as to meet market requirements for the area. The site has been vacant for many years and been marketed for commercial use without any success, it is considered that affordable housing is a suitable alternative use for the site.

7.3 Planning Authority Involvement

The Planning Authority has been engaged in discussion and consideration of the proposals in outline and in some detail to ensure that the proposals overcome previous concerns in respect of scale and amenity and to ensure that the design met the Authority's expectations in respect of design quality.

A pre-consultation meeting was held on 19th November 2010 with council planners to discuss indicative proposals to seek advice in respect of the scale and proximity in relation to 120 Belle Vue Road and the Wesleyan Chapel. The Planning Authority advised that the alterations to the previously submitted layouts appeared to overcome reasons for refusal.

Whilst accepting that this was informal advice this view was communicated in an email dated 30 November 2010 stating that “the scheme has come a long way in terms of overcoming the previous refusal reasons and the decision by the Planning Inspectorate in dismissing the appeal. The siting and location of the building has been amended and is now considered to have significantly reduced the impact on the habitable room windows and the overall residential amenity of neighbouring properties at Wesleyan Court and no. 120 Belle View Road. In turn the amended footprint proposed allows for the enlargement of provision for outdoor amenity space”. Other matters discussed at the pre-consultation meeting included Sustainable Homes Accreditation, tenure mix, scheme viability / deliverability and design assessment by an external panel.

Detailed design commenced on the basis of positive feedback and all matters discussed were considered further for implementation. Upon completion of a draft detailed scheme, drawings were submitted to the Alliance Design Review Panel for Design Review. The panel consists of members of the Staffordshire Moorlands District Council and High Peaks Borough Council. The Design Review took place on 16th February 2011 with a report subsequently issued high-lighting some areas of improvement. The report was summarized as follows:

In general it was felt that the overall scale and height of the building was acceptable given its wider context. However further consideration should be given to the following points to deliver an acceptable scheme:

1. Better pedestrian access through and into the site from both Mill Street and Bell Vue.
2. The legibility of the building needs to be addressed to provide prominent entrance ways into the building which are easily readable and visible from both frontages.
3. The use of render as a walling material needs to be significantly reduced and have some rationale behind its use.
4. The size and positioning of window openings needs to be rationalised and the use of panelling omitted.
5. The overall composition of the elevations needs to be articulated in a style appropriate for its domestic use rather than appearing as an office development.
6. Further reference from the architectural style and appearance of the adjacent Chapel would improve the projecting section facing Mill Street.
7. The location of the playground needs further consideration.

The scheme was further developed to address matters raised and a meeting held with members of the Alliance Design Review Panel on 25 February 2011 to discuss amendments made to the design in response to the report. The panel members agreed that the improvements made successfully responded to points in the report.

The submitted proposals reflect the consultation process described above and is considered to have developed a sustainable, good quality design consistent with Local Plan Policy B13.

7.4 Evaluation

The site has many constraints that present a challenge to development which may give some insight into why the site has lay vacant for such a long period of time. The first thing that is apparent is the topography of the site and the large level change from north-east to south-west making building placement, aspect, access and massing very important considerations. Secondly the conversion of the Wesleyan Chapel which has inserted into its north-westerly wall a series of principle windows within 2 metres of its own boundary, affectively making large portions of the application site undevelopable.

7.5 Design

The site is in an area of mixed commercial, residential and community uses. There is no overriding design character that defines the area. The proposals demonstrate that a satisfactory design solution can be achieved at the site cognisant of the site's surroundings and to the change in levels across the site.

The proposals set out in application are of an appropriate density, scale, design and arrangement specific to this site, and successfully overcome the design challenges presented by site constraints. The Alliance Design Review states that "It was considered that the scale and height of the proposed flats was similar to adjacent and nearby development and in principle acceptable within its wider setting" and that "The density of the development was considered acceptable".

The design sets out to reflect the society of today whilst respecting and reinforcing the character of the region on a major movement route into Leek town centre.

The overall approach is to utilise modern methods of construction along with traditional materials, being facing brick, render and composite clad finishes. The structure is intended to be that of a concrete transfer slab over the parking level offering an economic platform for a sustainable timber-frame construction supporting a lightweight superstructure which is easily insulated to achieve desired thermal performance. The result is intended to have a dynamic and vital appearance. The residential superstructure, reflective of the Wesleyan Chapel, is of simple, economic forms that in sustainability terms minimise surface area

The following standards were incorporated into the proposals as part of the design development:

- The Housing Corporation Design Quality Standards 2007.
- Housing Corporation Good Practice Guides
- NHF Standards and quality in development: a good practice guide (2nd edition)
- Housing Quality Indicators
- The Current UK Building Regulations.
- Construction Design Management Regulations 2007 (CDM07).
- Code for Sustainable Homes Level 3
- Secured by Design.
- DDA Standards
- CABE Building for Life standards

8. USE

Policy E7 of the Local Plan directs that the loss of existing employment sites will not be permitted except where it can be shown that the location is undesirable in environmental or traffic terms and where no alternative sites are available. The scheme submitted proposes the provision of 100% affordable housing, and this is considered to outweigh the loss of this site for commercial purposes. The principle of residential development for affordable housing is therefore considered to be acceptable.

9. AMOUNT

The net floor areas of Apartments are as follows:

GROUND FLOOR -	
APT. 0.01	67m2 (721 sqft)
APT. 0.02	67m2 (721 sqft)
APT. 0.03	67m2 (721 sqft)
APT. 0.04	67m2 (721 sqft)
APT. 0.05	67m2 (721 sqft)
FIRST FLOOR -	
APT. 1.01	67m2 (721 sqft)
APT. 1.02	67m2 (721 sqft)
APT. 1.03	67m2 (721 sqft)
APT. 1.04	67m2 (721 sqft)
APT. 1.05	67m2 (721 sqft)
APT. 1.06	67m2 (721 sqft)
APT. 1.07	67m2 (721 sqft)
SECOND FLOOR -	
APT. 2.01	67m2 (721 sqft)
APT. 2.02	67m2 (721 sqft)
APT. 2.03	67m2 (721 sqft)
APT. 2.04	67m2 (721 sqft)
APT. 2.05	67m2 (721 sqft)
APT. 2.06	67m2 (721 sqft)
APT. 2.07	67m2 (721 sqft)
THIRD FLOOR -	
APT. 3.01	67m2 (721 sqft)
APT. 3.02	67m2 (721 sqft)
APT. 3.03	67m2 (721 sqft)
APT. 3.04	57m2 (613 sqft)
APT. 3.05	57m2 (613 sqft)
APT. 3.06	67m2 (721 sqft)
FOURTH FLOOR -	
APT. 4.01	67m2 (721 sqft)

10. LAYOUT

10.1 The layout has largely been determined by the following criteria:

- Site topography;
- Density;
- Unit sizes compliant with Housing Quality Indicator(HQI) standards;
- Privacy and;
- Preserve the Council's Space about Dwellings Standards.

The resultant layout of the proposed development is one of an 'L' shaped structure the majority of which being located towards the rear of the site, with an open area for car parking in the north east of the site. The building would be positioned directly off Mill Street, which in turn would provide the access to the lower ground floor car park and extend to a further three floors. However, this is for only a small percentage of the Mill Street Frontage and is consistent in scale and character with the adjacent Wesleyan Chapel, whereas the remainder of the structure is located approximately 17m rear of the highway.

The Belle Vue Road elevation appears as a two storey development from footway level due to a storey being sunken below pavement creating some south-facing private courtyard space that can be landscaped. This is consistent with the adjacent terrace housing which also has a basement level.

On-site car parking for 26 cars is accommodated within the lower ground floor area partly internal and partly external. The lower ground level is cut into the sloping site in order to reduce the scale of the building.

11. SCALE

The general building form is designed to step up the site consistent with the landscape and in context with the wider built environment, being located essentially on a hill. Storey heights therefore vary and the scale of the built form increases as it rises to the south-west. To Mill Street the building height and scale is similar to that of the adjacent Wesleyan Chapel. In view of the change in levels and its position towards the rear of the site it is considered that the 4 storey part of the development would fit well within the surrounding streetscape. The element of the scheme which fronts onto Belle Vue Road would be limited to three storeys with loft apartments would fit comfortably into the street scene that is dominated by 3 storey flats.

12. LANDSCAPING

The landscaping shall contribute significantly to the development's amenity and the success of the outdoor spaces for use by the future residents and therefore need to be carefully considered. The site is currently sloping but the development shall create a series of terraced open spaces in order to make them usable. Retaining walls shall be constructed so as to minimise their impact and allow planting to provide natural coverage. A playground is to be incorporated into the development for the benefit of families occupying the development. The landscaping shown on the drawings is indicative and it is suggested that prior to the commencement of development a hard and soft landscaping scheme is submitted to the Council for approval by way of a planning condition.

13. APPEARANCE

The basic building form is that of duo pitched slate roofs, gables and interfaces that are intended to be reflective of the developments residential use and to echo the forms of the neighbouring and terrace housing.

Aspect has greatly influenced the composition and elevational fenestration. Careful consideration has been given to aspect and the positioning of principle windows so as to best serve internal layouts without compromising the amenity of both the future occupants and the neighbouring properties. Because the development provides accommodation over several storeys the fenestration has been varied to give some visual vitality and prevent the inertia of stacked openings. Windows positions are generally locked into an implied matrix which sometimes takes the form of a render panel used to break up panels of brickwork.

Materials have been selected to reflect the use and character of the region which is predominantly clay brickwork. This has been broken by carefully placed panels of render dispersed amongst the brick facades to provide some relief in the building face. Windows are proposed to be composite aluminium for ease of maintenance and sustainability.

14. ACCESS AND CAR PARKING

The site is accessed from both Mill Street and Bell Vue Road. Access from Bell Vue Road is pedestrian only and consists of a bridge link from the public footway to a defined entrance. Both vehicle and pedestrian access is proposed from Mill Street. There is also direct access to the refuse and recycling area from Mill Street. It should be noted that a drop-off area exists directly adjacent to the site at Mill Street which would benefit the development for refuse collection.

The two pedestrian entrances shall incorporate security measure as required by the Secure by Design Accreditation Scheme.

On-site parking is provided via the mill street vehicle entrance which is set back from the road to allow space for a vehicle to wait for a security shutter to rise. 26 on-site parking spaces are distributed throughout the lower ground floor both externally and internally, below the residential accommodation. 3 number disabled parking bays are located nearest the lift lobby. The number of spaces provided is 100% of the residential accommodation and consistent with the Government's most recent advice, encouraging Local Authorities to accept reduced levels of parking provision particularly when sites are located in highly sustainable town centre sites which are accessible by public transport. The application site complies with both these criteria and it is considered that the level of parking provision is acceptable in this case.

Internal Designed to allow access by disabled users corridors are of a width to allow for wheelchairs users with passing points. The lift is located centrally for ease of access to all but the loft apartment. Access to the loft apartment is via an ambulant disabled staircase.

15. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 15.1 Section 38(5) of the Planning and Compensation Act 2004 requires that where regard is to be made to the development plan, for the purpose of any determination under the Planning Acts, the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material concerns indicate otherwise.
- 15.2 The application seeks outline planning permission for the redevelopment of the site for 26 affordable residential units. The submitted proposal seeks approval of access, layout & scale with all other matters reserved for future consideration.
- 15.3 The development plan provides positive support for residential development within defined settlement boundaries and therefore the principle of development is established.
- 15.4 Clearly the loss of Employment Land needs to be considered against the benefits of an affordable housing development that goes some way to meeting the District's Housing Needs. It is considered that the existing employment site has no realistic prospect of redevelopment under current market conditions and that re-allocation of the site for an alternative use is appropriate without undermining the wider aims of the Local Plan.
- 15.5 This form of affordable residential development, which includes for the enhancement in qualitative terms of previously developed land is wholly consistent with the development plan and with planning policy and guidance at a regional and a national level.
- 15.6 The Council is respectively requested to grant Full Planning Permission.

16. DRAWINGS

This statement should be read in conjunction with the following drawings:

Location Plan	1016-01
Site Plan	1016-02
Proposed Lower Ground Floor Plan	1016-20
Proposed Ground Floor Plan	1016-21
Proposed First Floor Plan	1016-22
Proposed Second Floor Plan	1016-23
Proposed Third Floor Plan	1016-24
Proposed Fourth Floor Plan	1016-25
Proposed Elevations Sheet 1 of 4	1016-26
Proposed Elevations Sheet 2 of 4	1016-27
Proposed Elevations Sheet 3 of 4	1016-28
Proposed Elevations Sheet 4 of 4	1016-29
Topographical survey	2564-2564OGL