



CASE STUDY – PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

in respect of
Land at Maxstoke Lane, Meriden
on behalf of
Stonewater

14 October 2024

Executive Summary

- 1.1. RCA Regeneration gained planning consent for 75 affordable dwellings at the land at Maxstoke Lane, Meriden, on behalf of Stonewater Housing Association.

The scheme located on the edge of Meriden village in Solihull, gained consent for 22x Social Rented, 23x Affordable Rent, 24x Shared Ownership and 6x Rent-to-Buy homes. The fully affordable development will also provide generous public open spaces, footpaths, green infrastructure and tree planting.

In support of the planning application, RCA also submitted a Financial Viability Assessment (FVA) and negotiated the removal of any unviable financial contributions that would jeopardize delivery of much needed affordable housing. A significant contribution towards surrounding highway upgrades and Biodiversity Net Gain funds, was agreed, securing long-term sustainability for future residents and the surrounding area.

Planning Application

- 1.2. The site was allocated within the draft Solihull Local Plan (now withdrawn), for up to 100 dwellings. RCA submitted a planning application for the erection of 75 affordable homes. Despite the draft allocation, the site was still located within the Green Belt. Given this, RCA had to demonstrate that Very Special Circumstances existed to clearly outweigh any harm caused to the Green Belt.

The proposed development did not accord with the current Development Plan and was deemed inappropriate development in the Green Belt in accordance with the Framework.

RCA worked collaboratively with the Council's Urban Design Officer amending the proposals where necessary to ensure that they were acceptable and aligned to the concept masterplan for the site. RCA were able to demonstrate that the overall layout, scale, character and appearance of the new dwellings were acceptable.

RCA were also able to demonstrate that the proposed development, would assist in addressing the acute and persistent housing supply shortfall in the Borough and would deliver affordable housing in an area of exceptionally high need, both locally within the village and the wider Borough.

The proposed development provided a range of benefits that, when combined, were able to clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt.



Financial Viability Assessment

1.3. At a late stage within the planning application, a significant financial sum was requested by the local authority, which would have made the scheme completely financially unviable to deliver the 75 affordable homes. RCA undertook a detailed assessment of the site's Benchmark Land Value (BLV), based on Solihull's evidence base contained within their 2020 Plan Viability Study. An assessment of comparable greenfield land transactions, with an appropriate multiplier for residential uplift was also considered. From here, a Residual Land Value based on the development's Gross Development Value (GDV) and Gross Development Costs (GDC) was assessed against the established BLV, to determine the level of contributions that were viable. It was agreed with the local authority that none of the late requested contributions would be financially viable for such a development and were removed.

1.4. As the site could well have gained consent for a policy compliant (40% affordable, 60% market housing) scheme and would be instead delivering 100% affordable housing, some £5.2m worth of affordable housing contribution was proposed as "additionality". Balancing the development's positive social benefit, with significant contributions of over £200,000 that had already been agreed towards highway upgrades and Biodiversity Net Gain funds, the case made by RCA removed any and all contributions deemed financially unviable.



Result

1.5. The proposal was recommended for approval by officers, with full support from statutory consultees and no objections from members of the public. Planning committee members unanimously voted in favour of the scheme and a resolution to grant, subject to a S106 Agreement, was secured. Full planning consent was received 4th October 2024.



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