

## **Conservation Area Developer Case Study - Creation of Housing in Beverley: Development by P J Livesey**

At Westwood Hospital, P J Livesey proved that not only is it possible to deliver over fifty new homes in a conservation area, it can be done in a way that is sensitive to the local character, reuses old buildings and proves very popular with house buyers.

P J Livesey was founded in 1979, and has built a reputation based on painstaking restoration of beautiful period properties across the country. Their portfolio stretches from Kent to Yorkshire. They have always had period properties at the heart of their developments but also now include new build. They consider sites holistically to deliver a single solution for the challenges of converting old buildings and creating new buildings alongside old. With this as their vision, it is not surprising that PJ Livesey has a wealth of experience working with conservation areas and listed buildings.

One such site is the Westwood Hospital site in Beverley, East Yorkshire. The development focused on two grade II listed buildings - the main hospital (formerly a Workhouse) and an archway. The scheme was able to convert the listed buildings and a further old building into 20 apartments. Alongside this 33 new build homes were built, each one built to the high standards of PJ Livesey.



Westwood Hospital, Beverley. © Historic England

Westwood Hospital is in the heart of Beverley Conservation Area. The conservation area was designated in 1969 and covers most of the historic core of the town (about 11 hectares). Beverley is a market town, 8 miles north-west of Hull. The town has medieval origins, and is full of stunning Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian architecture, dominated by the Gothic Minster, which has and continues to play a major role in life in Beverley.



Beverley Minster. © Terry Dawson LRPS

For PJ Livesey, developing in a conservation area is not daunting to them. Their experience with working with listed buildings and older properties means that they are well versed in working in conservation areas, and so the challenges that may be associated with this kind of development do not faze the company, nor do they see it as a barrier to development. In many ways, their experience has coloured the sites that they do take on. Not all developers would be keen to have worked on the site at Beverley with its narrow access street and even narrower listed archway. But for Livesey, this was all part of the challenge of the site, and helped to make the end product unique.

The company does find that the challenge of working in a conservation area often comes from surprising sources. Whilst working on buildings within a conservation area means that as a developer you need to consider the aesthetics of the surrounding area, it is often the natural environment that can cause the most challenges. Often a large part of the character of a conservation area comes from trees, landscaping and open spaces. This means dealing with trees with Tree Preservation Orders and considering how to build new homes that blend seamlessly into the background. Whilst this is a challenge, it is not one that would deter PJ Livesey as they are keen to enhance the natural environment and ensure that all of their developments harmonise with their settings.

Working within the Beverley conservation area, Livesey had to ensure that the new build houses did not jar with the other buildings around them. That is not to say that development within Beverley is stifled by the conservation area. On the contrary as Livesey has demonstrated there is a local appetite for well-constructed, sympathetically designed housing.

It is also apparent, from talking to residents, that developing in a conservation area is a good selling point for a development. In many ways it gives residents certainty as they feel that there is not the potential for change that would not suit the special character and appearance of the area. Often, Livesey finds that developing in a conservation area only helps to further enhance and improve the area as the designs are carefully considered as is the impact of the development on the landscape.



New housing at the Westwood Hospital site. © Historic England

Local planning documents often form the basis for any potential development. These documents allow planning consultants, architects and designers a starting point for considering the special character of the conservation area. This was certainly true in Beverley, as although the conservation area is not large, it is made up of nine distinct character areas. Understanding the hospital site and how it fitted into Beverley's history was crucial to the success of the development.

For PJ Livesey, developing within a conservation area is not a challenge and is in fact part of their vision for their business. It allows them to breathe new life into communities and provide not just houses, but homes with a sense of community and shared history.

If you require an alternative accessible version of this document (for instance in audio, Braille or large print) please contact our Customer Services Department:

Telephone: 0370 333 0607

Fax: 01793 414926

Textphone: 0800 015 0516

E-mail: [customers@HistoricEngland.org.uk](mailto:customers@HistoricEngland.org.uk)