

<b>APPLICATION NO.</b>	<a href="#">P13/V1764/O</a>
<b>APPLICATION TYPE</b>	OUTLINE
<b>REGISTERED</b>	6.8.2013
<b>PARISH</b>	GROVE / WANTAGE / ARDINGTON & LOCKINGE
<b>WARD MEMBER(S)</b>	Bill Jones Charlotte Dickson Fiona Roper John Amys Kate Precious Michael Murray Sue Marchant
<b>APPLICANT</b>	Lands Improvement Holdings Ltd
<b>SITE</b>	Land at Crab Hill Land North of A417 and East of A338 Wantage
<b>PROPOSAL</b>	Outline application for residential development of up to 1500 dwellings including new employment space (use class B1), a neighbourhood centre/community hub (use classes A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, B1, C2, D1 and D2), new primary school, central park, ancillary areas (including allotments and sports pitches) with access off the A338 Grove Road and three accesses off the A417 Reading Road. Provision of a strategic link road between the A417 and the A338 Road to be known as the Wantage Eastern Link Road (WELR). All matters reserved except means of access to the development and the WELR.
<b>AMENDMENTS</b>	Additional information received as amplified by agent's covering letter dated 30th October 2013 and agent's e-mail dated 10th December 2013.
<b>GRID REFERENCE OFFICER</b>	441162/188791 Stuart Walker

---

**1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The outline planning application for the development of 1,500 dwellings with associated infrastructure at Crab Hill was submitted in August 2013. It is an unallocated site within the adopted Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011, but is identified under Core Policy 3 in the emerging Local Plan 2029 Part 1 as a strategic development location suitable for new housing.
- 1.2 The application is in outline with all matters reserved for future consideration with the exception of the proposed means of access to the development and the Wantage Eastern Link Road (WELR), a road required to serve the application site and the strategic allocations at Wantage and Grove under Core Policy 14 of the emerging Local Plan 2029 part 1.
- 1.3 Whilst the detailed design and appearance of the development will be dealt with at the reserved matters stages, the form and scale of the built development is defined at the outline stage by the parameter plans submitted with the application and by the Design and Access Statement which includes illustrative content to inform in detail the design and layout of all three phases of the development.

- 1.4 The scale of development requires an Environmental Impact Assessment under Part 10 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011 and the application is accompanied by a detailed Environmental Statement.
- 1.5 Since its submission, officers have carried out all the appropriate consultations, assessed the scheme and been in negotiations with the applicant around the details of the scheme and what it can afford to deliver in terms of required infrastructure and affordable housing.
- 1.6 This report seeks to assess the planning application details against the national and local planning policy framework and all other material considerations.
- 1.7 The application is presented to Planning Committee with a recommendation to permit the development subject to the Heads of Terms of the Section 106 Agreement and list of conditions set out at the end of this report. The legal agreement will also include detailed phasing and triggers for infrastructure provision and the aim is to complete the agreement for signing by all parties at the end of March 2014. To achieve this, the District and County Councils are proposing to produce one joint agreement and the first draft of this document is currently being prepared by Burges Salmon, solicitors.
- 1.8 The recommended package of infrastructure is set out in appendix 9. The Heads of Terms result in a proposed package of infrastructure for the development in the region of £32 million which equates to approximately £21,000 per dwelling, and in the order of 35% affordable housing.
- 2.0 **INTRODUCTION**
- 2.1 The application site lies approximately 850m to the north east of Wantage town centre, adjacent to the northern fringe of Charlton village. The majority of the site falls within the boundary of Grove parish, but also includes land within the boundaries of Wantage town and Ardington and Lockinge parish. It extends to approximately 94.86 hectares, with the area of proposed built development amounting to some 43.75 hectares. The southern boundary of the site is formed by the existing urban edge of Charlton Village and the south east boundary of the A417 Port Way / Reading Road, beyond which lies the North Wessex Downs AONB. The northern boundary, located on a plateau with extensive views to the north is marked by a private farm track that runs eastwards from Elms Farm. The west boundary is delineated by the A338 Grove Road while the east boundary lies just west of Home Mead Farm.
- 2.2 The site is undeveloped consisting of agricultural fields with limited areas of woodland and grassland and two buildings associated with the site's current farming activity. With the exception of the western extremity of the site which falls steeply down to the A338, the site is predominantly level with low numbers of trees. Hedgerows commonly define field boundaries. The site is bisected north-south by Crab Hill Lane, a byway open to all traffic (BOAT) which links the A338 at Grove in the north with Charlton village in the south. A public right of way that links the A338 at Grove in the north west to West Lockinge in south east runs diagonally across the site.
- 2.3 A location plan is **attached** at appendix 1.
- 3.0 **PROPOSAL**
- 3.1 This is an outline planning application for the erection of up to 1,500 dwellings and associated services and infrastructure including a new primary school, community centre and neighbourhood shopping, sports and open space provision. All matters of detail are reserved for future consideration with the exception of the works proposed to

gain access to the site and the Wantage Eastern Link Road (WELR) which are fully detailed. The application is supported by an Environmental Statement, parameter plans, an illustrative master plan, a Design and Access Statement, a Planning Statement, a Transport Assessment, a Flood Risk Assessment, a Utilities Statement, a Sustainability Statement, a Statement of Community Involvement and a Construction Environmental Management Plan. All documents are available to view online.

- 3.2 The application includes a neighbourhood centre, a two form entry primary school, a country park, sports pitches, children’s play areas and other areas of open space. The neighbourhood centre will contain a mix of opportunities including local retail, nursery care, community facilities, a pub / restaurant, employment space (Class B1) and a care home.
- 3.3 The Environmental Statement (ES) describes the development and includes the parameter plans on which the development has been assessed. It also sets out the policy context for the proposal. In terms of the assessment itself, the following areas of potential impact have been addressed: traffic and transportation; noise and vibration; air quality and dust; landscape and visual impact; archaeology and cultural heritage; ecology and nature conservation; flooding hydrology and water resources; ground conditions, hydrology; agriculture; waste; artificial lighting; socio-economic impacts; cumulative impacts and a non-technical summary.
- 3.4 The Design and Access Statement (DAS) sets out the design principles and parameters for the development. It provides a vision for the development and explains the design process that has led to the development of the parameter plans and proposed character areas within the scheme. The vision for the development is to create a high quality, sustainable mixed use development where people will want to live, with the key objective to deliver a new thriving and inclusive neighbourhood that complements the existing landscape and built context, is integrated, and responds to its environment with a strong identity. The DAS provides details on how the area is intended to be developed; the location of land uses; densities and scale; landscape concepts; sustainability; access and movement; phasing and principles for the appearance and the likely layout of the housing.
- 3.5 A phasing plan has been submitted with the application which shows three main phases of development. Phase 1 will commence on the south eastern side of the site and will include approximately 450 dwellings, the provision of the primary school and the first section of the WELR off the A417. Phase 2 will commence on the western side of the site and will include approximately 400 dwellings, the commencement of the neighbourhood centre and the western section of the WELR. Phase 3 will include the remaining sections of the WELR before the completion of the 851<sup>st</sup> dwelling, the completion of the neighbourhood centre and the remaining 650 dwellings. Within each phase there will be sub-phases and it is these smaller areas that are likely to form the basis of future reserved matters applications.
- 3.6 Copies of the illustrative master plan and parameter plans are **attached** at appendix 2. The detailed plans for the WELR are available to view online.
- 4.0 **SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS**
- 4.1 This section of the report provides a summary of comments received to the application. Copies of all responses are available to view online. Where appropriate, more detailed / full comments are attached as appendices to the report.
- 4.2 **Grove Parish Council** - Objection, summarised as follows:  
- over reliance on Grove airfield development

- sewerage system not fit for purpose
- lack of integration with Charlton village
- inadequate social infrastructure (medical, dental, jobs and leisure)
- substandard road network and additional impact
- delivery of primary school needs to be earlier in development
- risk of pollution to Letcombe brook
- construction traffic should not use Mably Way
- pedestrian / cycle crossing on A338 is required

A full copy of the Parish Council's representation is **attached** at appendix 3.

4.3 **Wantage Town Council** – Objection, summarised as follows:

- over development
- density is too high
- traffic impact on Denchworth Road
- westward link to A417 is required first
- development is premature until schools and medical centre are expanded
- over reliance on Grove airfield development
- impact on Letcombe brook

A full copy of the Town Council's representation is **attached** at Appendix 4.

4.4 **Ardington and Lockinge Parish Council** – Objection for the following reasons:

1. The scheme is far too large for this rural area. This will destroy the feel of a local market town and link up Wantage to the village of Lockinge.
2. Charlton village will disappear and agricultural land will be lost.
3. The development will increase Wantage's population by 25% and further burden the busy A338 and A417 roads infrastructure.
4. Major road improvements, particularly access to the A417 from the villages, are needed and choke points need to be removed to improve access to the strategic sites at Harwell / Chilton campus, Milton Park and Didcot station.

4.5 **West Hendred Parish Council** – Objection, summarised as follows:

- impact on AONB
- not sustainable development
- transport impact
- inappropriate design
- timing

A full copy of the Parish Council's representation is **attached** at Appendix 5.

4.6 **East Hendred Parish Council** – Objection, summarised as follows:

- traffic on A417
- too large for rural area
- loss of agricultural land

A full copy of the Parish Council's representation is **attached** at Appendix 6.

4.7 **Representations from local residents** – A total of 93 third party representations have been received to the application. 91 raise objection. Two support the proposal. The objections are made on the following grounds:

*Highways and access*

- Existing road network will not cope
- Concern on funding on WELR – should not be paid for by taxpayers

- WELR must be completed first
- Impact on Denchworth Road once WELR is built
- Increase in traffic
- Impact on town centre parking
- Lack of foot / cycle links to town centre
- Bus provision needs to be enhanced
- WELR not required, could upgrade Grove Park Drive instead
- The site is not close to employment opportunities so will become an unsustainable commuter development
- Inability to reduce car use
- WELR will take trade away from the town

*Other infrastructure*

- Lack of employment opportunities, school places, retail and amenity facilities
- A railway station is required
- Impact on allotments

*Flooding and drainage*

- Will exacerbate flood risk
- Lack of drainage capacity in existing public sewer network

*Design*

- Scale and height is unacceptable
- Density not in line with existing development
- Any links from the development through Charlton village are not acceptable
- Lack of integration with existing development
- Impact on character of town

*Ecology / landscape*

- Loss of good agricultural land
- Impact on AONB landscape
- Impact on wildlife
- No bungalows proposed
- Impact on Charlton conservation area
- Benefits of development do not outweigh the adverse consequence of development on green field land mostly of good agricultural quality.

*General*

- Overdevelopment of Wantage without sufficient improvements in infrastructure
- Out of proportion with existing community
- Impact on neighbours – scale, overshadowing, privacy, noise and light pollution, security
- Prematurity – should wait outcome of local plan process and until Grove Airfield is completed
- Air quality
- Loss of property value
- Wantage and Grove will coalesce
- Application is not linked to credible assessment of housing need
- Timeline of construction

4.8 **Wantage and Grove Campaign Group** – Objection on grounds of infrastructure capacity, connectivity, scale and density, and prematurity. Their detailed response is **attached** at Appendix 7. The group have also employed a planning consultant to act on their behalf to object on the following issues: five year housing supply calculation, prematurity, inconsistent housing distribution with spatial strategy protection of countryside and high quality agricultural land, transport, traffic and highways.

4.9 **Wantage Deanery of Oxford Diocese** – The parishes of the deanery contains the

proposed major housing developments at Grove Airfield, Monks Farm, Chain Hill, Stockham Farm and Crab Hill. Taken together, these developments are very likely to add a total of 4,500 houses to Wantage and Grove over the next few years. Holy Trinity Church is close by the edge of Crab Hill and there are plans to refurbish the church to provide more open flexible space to cater for an increase in population. In respect of this application, the deanery strongly supports the need for paths and cycle ways between the proposed development and Charlton, and considers these would be beneficial in building community links. They are supportive of a new primary school and wish to see it as a church primary school. They are also supportive of a new pre-school and state it would be really good for this to include a children's centre as Charlton Primary does not currently have a nursery facility. They are supportive of a new multi-use community centre and are interested in the use / running of a hall. The deanery consider there is an essential need for a community worker to ensure integration of new residents with existing communities Wantage and Grove and the developer should fund this for a minimum of five years. The deanery is keen to collaborate with the local authority on successfully building a healthy and sustainable community. The deanery raises concern on the high density of the development and would suggest further and more meaningful involvement by the developer with the local community is undertaken.

- 4.10 **Ed Vaizey MP** – I have been contacted by a number of my constituents who are concerned about the planning application for up to 1,500 dwellings on the Crab Hill site. For an application on this scale, it is absolutely vital that the infrastructure needed to support the new housing is:
- Carefully planned
  - Adequate to meet local needs, both on and off site, which result from the development
  - Organised to meet the cumulative impact of housing and other developments in the area. In this instance, there are a further 2,500 homes planned on the Grove Airfield site, so the impact of both that and Crab Hill need to be assessed.
  - Available as and when it is needed

I am sure your planning committee will have these points in mind when assessing the application and would urge that the application is not approved unless these concerns are met.

- 4.11 **Oxfordshire County Council** – Support subject to conditions, informatives and securing the necessary infrastructure requirements to mitigate the development in respect of: Transport, Rights of Way, Education, Community Infrastructure and Service Delivery. Their officer technical advice is **attached** at Appendix 8.
- 4.12 **Conservation Officer** – The proposed development has an effect on the setting and views of the Charlton conservation area, but this impact does not result in substantial harm in terms of impacts on heritage assets (listed buildings, conservation area, archaeology, or settings of the aforementioned heritage assets) and is not so significant as to preclude the development of the site, with appropriate mitigation and design. This view takes into account the assessment of the statement accompanying the designation of the Charlton conservation area and the LIH, Environmental Statement 2013- evidence base and impact assessment, with which I concur.

The Charlton conservation area was designated on 13<sup>th</sup> February 1984, being a part of Charlton village, centred on the old farmhouses of the settlement- the boundary including Holy Trinity Church, narrow winding Charlton Village Road and historic farmhouses and outbuildings- described as retaining a pleasant rural character, which views outwards to the Downs and open countryside contribute to.

The character and appearance of the conservation area has changed since the designation in 1984. The conservation area is now very much inward looking, focused on views up and down the winding Charlton Village Road and to the sprinkling of historic cottages and farmhouses with C20 infill development in the plots to the side and rear. From the street there are no clear views between buildings outwards to the surrounding hills. Views are only evident from the public footpath running north east/south west across fields to the east of the village, and to the east of properties on the east side of the street. The character and appearance of the area of special architectural and historic interest mentioned in the 1984 designation are no longer the same- the rural character and appearance of cottages interspersed with houses and farmhouses has changed to an area dominated by C20 housing and views outwards have been closed off by the development of housing in plots beyond the street. Charlton conservation area has assumed a developed, built up character on the east fringe of Wantage.

The setting of the Charlton conservation area comprises hedged fields with isolated trees along field boundaries as well as large, mature TPO'd trees in fields to the south and a large agricultural barn on the main road. To the east and north are hedged fields with some belts of mixed woodland. The proposals include the retention of most field trees, tree belts and the TPO'd trees.

The EIA concludes in section 10.6.27 Archaeology and Cultural- the magnitude of change to Charlton Village conservation area would be medium magnitude. It would be likely to be indirect, permanent long term residual effect on the Charlton Village conservation area of moderate negative significance. Potential effects on cultural and built heritage were seen as capable of being reduced through built design and landscape design, to ensure that new development would be integrated with the existing urban grain.

This site is a preferred option in the VOWH LP 2029 Draft expressed in the Wantage and Grove Strategic Sites Study with an allocation for up to 1500 dwellings, which has been subject to public consultation and is progressing through the local plan process.

Over the years a number of technical studies have been commissioned to evaluate the character and significance of the site. This includes the Crab Hill, Wantage and Grove, Environmental Statement, Lands Improvement, July 2013. This incorporates a study by Cobden, 2008, Advice on the Landscape Impact of Further Development at Wantage and Grove. The study identifies Crab Hill LCA 2 as 'a very open, bleak and elevated plateau with panoramic views. The landscape sensitivity and capacity for change was assessed and the report concluded that 'from a landscape character area point of view Elm Farm is robust enough to accept change in LCA2, Crab Hill; LCA 3 Port Way and LCA 4 Charlton Fields, that would occur if moderate or large scale development took place, but not in LCA1 Elms farm Hillside because of the higher landscape quality'.

The issues concerning development and the effects concerning Charlton Village conservation area were considered similar to those considered in relation to the Hendred Plain landscape area of the nationally designated AONB. The issues principally concern setting and the effects on the setting of the conservation area and views into and out of the conservation area. In terms of views the analysis concluded that views that would be affected by development are already affected by the built up areas of Wantage and Grove and that mitigation could be designed into the proposal where it abuts the Charlton conservation area to ensure that it respects the conservation area context through the appropriate siting, scale, height, form and massing, design detailing and the choice and quality of materials and finishes. In

addition housing density would be appropriate and the establishment of considerable garden vegetation between and around houses would aid integration; existing vegetation around the edge of the site would be retained in the Landscape Framework

The proposal would be seen as an enlargement of the urban mass of Wantage, so the effect on the significance of the heritage assets is less than substantial harm. The NPPF guidance, para 134 is that in this case the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including its' optimum viable use.

The EIA has considered impacts of the proposed development including on the cultural, landscape and other resource. This evaluation has been thorough and no further information is required. I therefore have no objection, subject to conditions on:

- Materials
- Details of housing design, including height, scale, form and massing
- details of hard and soft landscaping
- an archaeological watching brief
- an historic building record of the barn on the south of the development site adjacent to the main road

- 4.13 **Countryside Officer (ecology)** – I have read through the various planning documents, particularly the Environmental Statement and the various technical appendices and I have visited the site on a number of occasions. I have had contact with the applicant's ecological advisors during the course of the various surveys and have discussed the scope of the surveys which were required. I am satisfied that the information which has been collected on the site is sufficient to allow an informed judgement to be made about the potential ecological impacts of the proposal.

**Habitats:**

No designated sites will be impacted either directly or indirectly by this proposed development.

The proposed development will result in the loss of arable farmland, improved grassland, a number of hedgerows and small areas of woodland. The majority of woodland areas, existing trees and species rich hedgerows will be retained within the proposed development.

The Vale of White Horse LPP1 Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) was commissioned specifically to assess the likelihood of the strategic site allocations (including Crab Hill) on the European Designated Sites which are within influencing distance. The HRA concluded that none of the proposed strategic site allocations were likely to have a significant effect on the integrity of a European designated site. For further information please refer to the HRA document.

**Species:**

**Great Crested Newts**

None of the ponds found on the site were found to support great crested newts. A section of the former Wilts and Berks Canal to the north west of the site was found to contain a population of GCN and a garden pond to the south was found to have potential to support the species (surveys were not possible). Both of these ponds are sufficiently far from the application site and have significant barriers to movement (the A338 and A417) which would make impacts on GCN highly unlikely.

**Roosting Bats**

The site has been surveyed for bat activity and potential roosting sites. Roosting sites for three species of bats has been found in a barn adjacent to the A417 on the southern

boundary of the application site. The proposals would involve the demolition of this barn and the loss of the roosting sites. Evidence collected during the surveys indicates that the barn provides only low status non breeding roost sites for common species of bat.

There does not seem to have been any consideration given in the EIA to the possibility of retaining the barn within the proposed development and I would have expected this to be the first option considered in mitigation the impacts of the development. However, given the relatively low status of the existing roosting sites it is likely to be possible to mitigate the impacts in an acceptable way. The EIA does contain outline mitigation proposals which will have to be developed in to a full mitigation strategy in due course. In my view whether or not it is possible to retain the existing barn it should be possible to adequately mitigate the impacts of the roost loss within the re-developed site and maintain the status if the local bat population. This will need to be covered under a suitable planning condition.

#### Bat Activity.

Bat activity surveys have been completed across the site which recorded bats using the woodland edges and hedgerows across the site for feeding and commuting. The species recorded were for the most part common and widespread and the numbers recorded were not particularly high as would be expected with this type of mainly arable farmland. The development proposals will change the way bats use the site and in time, as new planting matures some species are likely to benefit from the increased foraging opportunities.

Overall it is unlikely that the proposals for this site would have a significant impact on the local bat population which is likely to adapt to the changed environments once the development is completed.

#### Birds

The site has been subject to breeding and wintering bird surveys. The findings of these surveys indicate that the site is not a significant habitat for breeding or wintering birds at a county level. The proposed development will retain habitats for some species although certain more specialist farmland species are likely to be displaced into habitats surrounding the site. Some species, particularly those well adapted to more suburban environments are likely to increase in numbers on the site.

#### Barn Owls

A barn owl nest was found in the barn adjacent to the A417 on the southern edge of the site. This nesting site would be lost as a result of the proposed development (see comments above under roosting bats) and a detailed mitigation strategy will be required to demonstrate how the impacts on barn owls can be adequately mitigated. This should be secured by condition.

#### Other species

Surveys for reptiles have not found any evidence of the presence of these species on site. Badger surveys have not revealed any badger setts on or near to the site. There is limited evidence of badgers occasionally using the site but it is unlikely that the site forms a significant or important part of a badger group's territory.

Depending on the timescales for the proposed development it is likely that updated surveys for certain more mobile species will be required before development can commence to ensure that the conditions and constraints have not changed significantly in the interim period.

The proposals for this site, provided appropriate mitigation measures are taken will not

have any significant impacts on protected or priority species. The habitats which would be lost are for the most part of relatively low conservation value. I therefore do not have any overriding objections to this application subject to:

1. A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), which shall include details of the measures to be taken to ensure that construction works do not adversely affect biodiversity, to be submitted approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
2. A Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP) to be submitted before each phase.

In response to additional information, the countryside officer commented as follows: I note the developers response to my comments submitted on 16/9/13. In particular they have commented on condition 2 which I recommended in my response which includes a requirement to provide a proportion integrated bird and bat boxes within suitable buildings within the proposed development. I disagree with their suggestion that these boxes would provide limited long term benefit. To the contrary I believe that boxes properly integrated into the buildings provide a much better long term nesting/roosting site than boxes placed on trees which have a limited life span and are subject to interference. I therefore request that the condition I recommended is used if planning permission is to be granted.

- 4.14 **Landscape Architect** – This is a visually prominent site on the north east edge of Wantage. It is visible along the A417, from the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to the south of the site and from the A338 and Grove Park Drive north of the site. Landscape concerns had been raised regarding the Design and Access Statement, July 2013, which was submitted in August. These points included the boundary treatment adjacent to the A417, inconsistency between the Landscape Framework Plan, Figure 5.14 and the Axonometric Sketch, figure 6.56, boundary treatment adjacent to existing properties and space for future cricket and croquet provision. Additional information has been submitted clarifying some of these issues. Design and Access Clarifications IV covers issues relating to the development adjacent to the A417 and it is good to see a 20m minimum woodland block is proposed along this boundary in front of Block 3. All matters are reserved except for the means of access to the development and the WELR. Planning conditions will be crucial to ensure that issues such as site wide strategies for the design of the public realm, SUDS, the green infrastructure, etc are addressed prior to the approval of reserved matters.
- 4.15 **Forestry Officer** – The existing vegetation on the site consists largely of field hedgerows and hedgerow trees, groups of woodland and some individual trees. Most of these are mature or maturing and, when the site is developed, will make a potentially significant contribution to the visual amenity of the area. Some of the trees to the western end of the southern boundary are included within a tree preservation order. The parameter plans prepared by Lands Improvement (drg. 06 Rev 01 Illustrative Framework dated July 2013) show the developer s intention to retain most of the existing vegetation and I welcome the principle of utilising what already exists to provide the structural planting whilst the new landscape is establishing. The WELR bisects a spear of woodland adjacent to the western internal roundabout and consideration will need to be given to the retention of the trees either side. As the road is in a cutting at this point, those trees that form the new woodland edge will be exposed and liable to stability issues. It will be necessary to look at a cross-section through the wood at this point to assist in determining the extent of the remaining compartment. The plan illustrates an edge to the woodland that extends up to the area needed to construct the cutting. It may be that the resulting root severance will require more trees than just those to be felled and the exposure suffered due to the removal of adjacent trees is also likely to increase the area affected. The woodland is important in

that it provides a visual landmark and reference point which will become much more significant when the site is developed. The other areas or woodland appear to be retained intact. Currently they have the benefit of being linked by hedgerows, which increases their importance, and care must be taken to preserve these corridors as much as possible or to provide for links with the establishment of new planting. It would not be appropriate to isolate these areas and with care the links could be maintained. There will be a need to ensure that all of the trees and hedges that are to be retained are included within a tree protection plan that is consistent with BS5837:2012. This is likely to have a greater impact on the SUDS ponds rather than the residential properties or the school. Further elements, such as the treatment of boundaries, the management of the retained trees, woodlands and hedges will all need to be addressed but can be undertaken as the application progresses.

I have considered the design and access clarifications and am able to offer the following comments. I welcome the intention to improve the landscape boundary treatment, particularly to the southeast boundary of the site. The comments in my previous memorandum of 06 September 2013 remain valid and will need to be considered in the context of conditions to be attached to a subsequent permission.

- 4.16 **Urban Design Officer** – Comments are incorporated in the Planning considerations section of the report.
- 4.17 **Health and Housing – Environmental Protection Team** – Volume three of the Environmental Statement deals with noise and vibration impacts. The report highlights several areas where noise will have a significant observable adverse impact, in the absence of any mitigation, on the proposed development. The areas highlighted in the report are those adjacent to the A417 (based on the consultant's measurements) and at various points adjacent to the proposed Wantage Eastern Link Road (based on the consultant's predictions). The developer will therefore need to demonstrate that the proposed number of dwellings applied for can be accommodated on the development site without any dwelling exceeding noise levels detailed in the WHO Guideline Values for Community Noise. The developer will also need to consider factors such as the distance from these noise sources, siting, design and orientation of dwellings within the proposed development as well as the use of acoustic barriers, glazing specifications and, where unavoidable, acoustically attenuated ventilation arrangements. These details can be dealt via condition. More technical information is contained within the full response, available online.
- 4.18 **Health and Housing – Contaminated Land** – The Geo-Environmental Desk Study report has not identified the presence of any potential sources of contamination that would adversely affect the proposed development of the site and has recommended that an intrusive investigation is undertaken to assess the potential risk to end uses. I would therefore recommend that should planning permission be granted a contaminated land condition is applied to ensure that any ground, water and associated gas contamination is identified and adequately addressed to ensure the safety of the proposed development, the environment and to ensure the site is suitable for the proposed use.
- 4.19 **Health and Housing – Air Quality** – I have reviewed the Air Quality Assessment submitted in support of this application. This assessment is comprehensive and follows acceptable practice, sources of information and guidance. Background pollutant levels have been assessed and predictions for future years have been forecast using modelling. NO<sub>2</sub> and PM<sub>10</sub> have been modelled for a variety of relevant receptors both at existing locations and at locations within the site as it is developed. Modelling has taken account of future traffic forecasts including the traffic from committed

development in the area along with predicted traffic from the site under consideration. Modelling has also included the Wantage Eastern Relief Road where predictions have been made for minimum and maximum usage of this new road in order to account for uncertainty in how much traffic will use this road. The modelling has been verified against monitoring in the locality where available and the derived verification factor has been used to calibrate the model. The modelling indicates that there will be small increases in pollution levels at some locations but decreases in pollution levels at other locations, however overall levels of pollution are predicted to remain significantly below the relevant national air quality objective levels for each pollutant assessed and air quality in the operational phase is not forecast to place any constraint on the proposed development. During the construction phase there is the potential for dust to have a significant impact on both existing development and development on the site as it becomes occupied. The assessment has identified this and included measures to mitigate dust impacts. In view of this I propose a Construction Environmental Management Plan condition is imposed should planning permission be granted.

- 4.20 **NHS Property Services** – A contribution of £607,068 is required towards local healthcare infrastructure. Work is being undertaken with the Wantage and Grove practices to see how all three can be accommodated on the Mably Way site and take the additional populations arising from Grove Airfield, Crab Hill and the smaller schemes.
- 4.21 **North Wessex Downs AONB Officer** – This proposal will result in negative impacts on the setting of the AONB. However, we note the site avoids housing being located within the AONB and the council is under pressure to support this scheme solely on the basis of the 5 year housing supply position.

There are two aspects which could be improved in the application. The first relates to the whole southern boundary of the site along the A417. Given that this is an outline planning application, should the council be minded to approve this application, then we would recommend planning conditions to provide a detailed landscaping and management scheme, which should include specific measures along the Southern Linear Corridor to reduce the likely impact on the AONB and to retain where possible some sense of rural character and a transition between the urban and rural environments. Within this the additional native tree and hedge planting to supplement the existing should be shown. Further planning conditions should limit the housing along the southern built edge closest to the AONB to the 9m / 2 storey limit and agree street lighting design to ensure they are of a dark night skies compliant design and contained within the highway corridor (it should be noted that no new street lighting along the A417 is our first preference).

The second potential improvement relates to financial contributions in relation to functional, visual, bio-diversity and heritage asset restoration projects within the AONB landscape impacted by this development. Due to the size of the development, proximity to the AONB boundary and extent the development extends out from the established boundary of Wantage, the level of mitigation offered by this scheme on site can only in part mitigate the level of harm that this development will bring to this nationally protected landscape. It is considered that, particularly with views down into the site from the AONB landscape, on site landscaping can only help in the long term to filter some of the impacts of this development. It is still likely the development, street lights and associated infrastructure will be highly visible from parts of the AONB and it will cause a new harmful negative impact through loss of open countryside, an increased urbanising influence, light pollution, and increased activity and disturbance relating from the development. The impact and threat from the growth of settlements including Wantage are highlighted both in the North Wessex Downs AONB

Management Plan 2009-2014 and the Landscape Character Assessment 2002. If the Council is minded to approve the development, a financial sum of £50,000 is suggested to assist in addressing the level of harm this development will cause on the character and qualities of the AONB.

- 4.22 **Natural England** – do not consider the application would significantly impact on the purposes of the designation of the North Wessex Downs AONB as long as strategic landscaping is extended from the eastern boundary along the south boundary and this is maintained as being rural in character. They support the changes made to the landscaping as shown in the design and access clarifications document (9<sup>th</sup> Dec 2013) as these changes will reduce the likely impact of the development on the AONB. In respect of protected species, subject to conditions ensuring mitigation, the proposals appear sufficient to maintain bat and barn owl populations and would be unlikely to affect great crested newts. Natural England, whilst outside their statutory consultation remit, also highlights soils and land quality as an issue to be assessed.
- 4.23 **CPRE** – CPRE Vale of White Horse District objects to this application on the grounds of its impact on the landscape and lack of appropriate infrastructure.
- 4.24 **Drainage Engineer** – The proposed drainage strategy and the adequacy of the submitted Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) for the proposed development will be subject to comments and conditions received from Thames Water, the Environment Agency and Oxfordshire County Council as Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA). However, in principle, I have no objections to the proposed drainage strategy subject to:
1. A scheme for the drainage (both surface water and sewage) of the development to be submitted for approval.
  2. A sustainable drainage system, implemented in accordance with details which shall have been submitted for approval.
  3. The drainage strategy to be developed and implemented in accordance with the submitted Flood Risk Assessment ref: 50600394 rev 3 dated 25 July 2013 prepared by WSP UK Limited.

I would however highlight the capacity issue of the wastewater infrastructure for which Thames Water has produced impact studies. Phasing of the development and timescales for providing the required upgrades to the existing system will be critical and for phase 1 it is proposed that temporary arrangements will have to be implemented as there is only available capacity to connect 40 properties.

- 4.25 **Environment Agency** – no objection subject to conditions, without which the development poses an unacceptable risk to the environment.
- 4.26 **Thames Water Development Control** – has indicated an incapacity of the existing waste water infrastructure to accommodate additional housing and development within Wantage and requires a drainage strategy detailing any on/off site works before any development commences. A foul water impact study has been completed which has identified a number of potential solutions and following a meeting with the developers for this site Thames Water has agreed to allow a discharge, equivalent to 40 dwellings, as an initial phase whilst additional modelling and optioneering for a strategic solution can be determined. With regard to surface water, Thames Water state that it is the responsibility of the developer to make proper provision for drainage to ground, water courses or a suitable sewer and that storm flows are attenuated or regulated into any receiving public network through on or off site storage.

Further communication from Thames Water confirms that there will need to be an agreed overall site drainage strategy and infrastructure and improvements installed in

line with this. Any temporary arrangements are unlikely to be acceptable.

- 4.27 **Waste Management Team** – requests funding for the provision of litter and recycling bins and facilities at a total cost of £260,000.
- 4.28 **Thames Valley Police Authority (TVP)** – no objection, but TVP requests additional policing infrastructure required to serve the proposed development. The TVP submission sets out the policy context for the request for contributions referring to both national and local policy. It states that policing is essentially a population driven service and the additional population generated by this development will place an extra demand upon the existing level of policing for the area. Contributions have been requested for two automatic number plate recognition cameras (£22,000), a patrol car (42,300), three bicycles (1,800) and the provision of an on site drop in office in the neighbourhood centre of approximately 9sqm. In addition to developer contributions, TVP also requests the development achieves ‘secured by design’ accreditation and provides further detailed guidance on how this could be incorporated in any reserved matters applications.
- 4.29 **Sport England** – The application, submitted in outline, contains minimal information with regard to the provision of sports facilities. However, it is known that the Wantage and Grove Cricket Ground is to be retained as part of the development and that an appropriate buffer zone is to be provided between the pitch and the proposed housing. It is noted that the proposal includes the provision of 6.84ha of parks and gardens (including sports pitches, equipped play areas and activity spaces to meet the requirements of policy H23. Section 6.5.3 of the Design and Access Statement indicates that the sports provision will take the form of a multi-use games area (around 760m<sup>2</sup> (one court)) and grass pitches (around 26,400m<sup>2</sup> (plus changing accommodation)). It is proposed to include these facilities near the centre of the site adjacent to the proposed primary school. Figure 6.42 of the Design and Access Statement illustrates the provision of two full size grass football pitches, a third grass pitch (laid out either as a full sized adult pitch or a junior pitch), a multi-use games area, changing facilities and parking area.
- Sport England welcomes the proposed location of the sports facilities next to the primary school, as this will increase the opportunities available to the school during the day and the potential for community use of the school's facilities during evenings and at weekends. The size and specification of the pitches and the changing pavilion have been left for future applications but, to ensure that the facilities are fit for purpose and sustainable, the applicant should have regard to Sport England's technical Design Guidance Notes and relevant design guidance of the National Governing Bodies for Sport (e.g. Grass pitch quality performance standards from the Football Association).
- 4.30 **Wantage and Grove Cricket Club** – The club is not opposed to development, but seeks to ensure the proposed development safeguards the existing use and operation of its ground for cricket. The club supports the proposal to retain the ground in situ, but takes issue with the ground being used for public open space. It welcomes the provision of a minimum five metre landscape buffer beyond the eastern boundary of the ground but consider a further strip of land on the north boundary needs to be provided to ensure safe play. The existing club house is in need of modernisation and is a facility available for use by the public. Contributions are requested to either improve or replace these existing facilities. The Club also seeks the freehold transfer of the ground to preserve their position with regard to future management and maintenance.
- 4.31 **Leisure Team** – Comments are incorporated in the Planning considerations section of the report.

- 4.32 **Shared Equalities Officer** – No objection, but comments on details of accessibility which can be addressed in reserved matters applications. Her full comments are available online.
- 4.33 **Housing Development Team** – Comments are incorporated in the Planning considerations section of the report.
- 4.34 **Arts Development Officer** – As a large development, it would be good to explore both on and off site possibilities for Public Art work. The calculation (as set out in the SPD) is for £300 per house, depending on management and ownership options. The opportunities for art within the site could be within the public open spaces, street furniture, and signage or welcome features.
- 4.35 **HarBUG (Harwell Oxford Campus Bicycle Users Group)** – represents cyclists who commute to and from the Campus, many from Wantage and Grove. They consider the Crab Hill development will directly affect cycle commuter routes to Harwell Oxford. The group has made the following suggestions:
1. Use latest Department of Transport Guidance Notes for designing cycling infrastructure.
  2. Carriageway cycle lanes on the WELR are not shared use path.
  3. Provide a pedestrian / cycle bridge across WELR at junction with A338.
  4. Ensure Toucan crossing on A338, near the WELR junction, to connect with Mably Way. WELR roundabout with A417 designed with cyclists in mind on all arms.
  5. Safe cycle crossing point west of WELR roundabout with A417.
  6. Improvements and development of cycle routes from Charlton Heights to Wantage town centre and other key destinations.
  7. New crossing on A417 to Tugwell Fields and control of traffic speed on A417 in front of the development.
  8. The design and build of a Wantage / Grove cycle network early in the development of Grove Airfield and Crab Hill projects.
- 4.36 **Stagecoach** – The company operates two of the main bus services in the Wantage area, the X30 and X31 to Oxford and Abingdon and are proactively seeking to develop its services further in the local area. They consider development at Crab Hill offers a crucial and unrepeatable opportunity to re-establish high quality commercial bus services that directly serve the north eastern neighbourhoods of Wantage and strongly support the county council in seeking proportionate and reasonable developer contributions to improving bus services. They also endorse the design and access statement principle that public transport is prioritised to make bus services competitive with car use, but achieving this in practice is not easy and 1500 dwellings is unlikely by itself to generate sufficient trip at proposed phased build out to sustain a commercially viable service. Any bus service to Crab Hill will therefore require upon revenue from other sources. It is therefore essential the new development is integrated with the Charlton estate to maximise connectivity which will better sustain viable services and that a clear and direct bus route through the new development is provided which minimises turns and allows significant bus priority as appropriate. However, the company raises concern that the bus route set out in the design and access statement is not efficient and would undermine the effectiveness of the bus as a good mode choice. Their response sets out examples of good design practice and makes specific suggestions for improving the design of the development along with a request for the location of bus stops to be agreed at the outline consent stage, as part of the master plan approach.

5.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

5.1 [P13/V1581/T28](#) - Other Outcome (31/07/2013)

To replace existing antenna and to install equipment cabinets

[P12/V1982/SCO](#) - Approved (05/12/2012)

Scoping Report.

[P04/V0651](#) - Approved (21/06/2004)

Erection of 15m high telecommunications monopole (17.4m to top of antennae) plus 4 antennae, one transmission dish, two equipment cabinets within secure compound and development ancillary.

6.0 **POLICY & GUIDANCE**

6.1 **Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011 policies**

GS1 - Developments in Existing Settlements

GS2 - Development in the Countryside

DC1 - Design

DC3 - Design against crime

DC4 - Public Art

DC5 - Access

DC6 - Landscaping

DC7 - Waste Collection and Recycling

DC8 - The Provision of Infrastructure and Services

DC9 - The Impact of Development on Neighbouring Uses

H10 - Development in the Five Main Settlements

H13 - Development Elsewhere

H16 - Size of Dwelling and Lifetime Homes

H17 - Affordable Housing

H23 - Open Space in New Housing Development

CF1 - Protection of Existing Services and Facilities

CF2 - Provision of New Community Services and Facilities

HE1 - Preservation and Enhancement: Implications for Development

HE10 - Archaeology

HE11 - Archaeology

NE6 - The North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

NE9 - The Lowland Vale

L10 - Safeguarding and Improving Public Rights of Way

TR1 - Wantage relief road scheme

TR5 - The National Cycle Network

6.2 **Emerging Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2029 part 1 core policies**

1 – Presumption in favour of sustainable development

2 – Settlement Hierarchy

3 – Housing delivery

5 – Providing supporting infrastructure and services

12 – Spatial strategy for the South East Vale Sub-Area

14 – Transport delivery for the South East Vale Sub-Area

15 – Safeguard of land for transport schemes in the South East Vale Sub-Area

18 – Affordable housing

20 – Density

21 – Housing mix

23 – Accommodating current and future needs of the ageing population

29 – Promoting sustainable transport and accessibility

30 – Sustainable design and construction  
32 – Flood risk  
33 – Natural resources  
34 – Landscape  
35 – Green Infrastructure  
37 – Design  
38 – The historic environment  
40 – Delivery and contingency  
Crab Hill Strategic site development template

**6.3 Supplementary Planning Documents/Guidance (SPD/SPG)**

Residential Design Guide – December 2009  
Sustainable Design and Construction – December 2009  
Open space, sport and recreation future provision – July 2008  
Affordable Housing – July 2006  
Planning and Public Art – July 2006  
Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan, April 2012 – Chapter 17. Science Vale UK Area Strategy

**6.4 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – March 2012**

Paragraphs 14 and 49 – presumption in favour of sustainable development  
Paragraphs 34 & 37 – encourage minimised journey length to work, shopping, leisure and education  
Paragraph 47 – five year housing supply requirement  
Paragraph 50 – create sustainable inclusive and mixed communities  
Paragraphs 57, 60 & 61 – promote local distinctiveness and integrate development into the natural, built and historic environment  
Paragraphs 70 and 73 – plan positively for community facilities, open space and opportunities for sport and recreation  
Paragraph 72 – sufficient school places for existing and new communities  
Paragraph 99 – Flood risk assessment  
Paragraph 109 – contribution to and enhancement of the natural environment  
Paragraph 111 – encourage the effective use of land  
Paragraph 112 – economic and other benefits of the best and versatile agricultural land  
Paragraph 115 – Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty  
Paragraph 118 – conserve and enhance biodiversity  
Paragraphs 120, 123 and 124 – risks from pollution  
Paragraph – protection of heritage assets

**7.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

*The principle of development*

- 7.1 This site is an unallocated site within the adopted Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011. Thus, this scheme is contrary to Policies GS2 and H10 of the Local Plan, which restrict development on unallocated greenfield sites and housing developments outside the towns of the district. Section 38(6) of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2008 requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicated otherwise. The key such consideration is the NPPF. Ordinarily and in accordance with the plan led system, the council would first consider the potential development of this land through the local plan process given the site's size and location and its potential to be part of a larger strategic housing land allocation. Such a process necessarily involves strategic environmental assessment and public consultation. However this application is accompanied by an EIA and is itself the subject of public consultation. The plan led system should also ensure the planning

for and management of the necessary combined infrastructure delivery. However, the council must assess this application on its own merits having regard to all material considerations.

- 7.2 At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The NPPF is clear that councils should grant planning permission where the development plan is absent, silent or the relevant policies are out of date, unless any adverse impacts significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposed development when assessed against the policies of the NPPF as a whole (Paragraph 14 refers).
- 7.3 Paragraph 47 of the NPPF confirms the need for a council to have a demonstrable five-year supply of housing land, with a 20% buffer to accommodate a persistent under-supply of housing land. It is documented that this council does not currently have a five-year supply and has persistently under-delivered on housing. This lack of a five-year housing land supply means by definition relevant plan policies are out of date and the presumption in favour of sustainable development applies. The application site does not lie within any areas where specific policies in the NPPF indicate development should be restricted. In essence this requires some flexibility in line with the NPPF when assessing applications that do not accord with local plan policies.
- 7.4 This approach is aimed at identifying planning sites suitable to address the housing shortfall whilst meeting the relevant sustainability and design criteria of the NPPF.
- 7.5 Under policies GS1 and H10 of the adopted local plan, Wantage is identified as one of the most sustainable locations for development within the district. Both policies are considered to be consistent with the NPPF. Wantage also lies within the wider strategic area of economic development known as 'Science Vale' (SV). The emerging Local Plan Part 1 2029 continues a settlement hierarchy which focuses housing growth at the market towns and identifies Wantage as the market town of the South East Vale sub-area. Within this emerging strategy, Core Policy 3 identifies the Crab Hill site as a site suitable for new housing and Core Policy 12 states 9535 houses will be provided by 2029 for the sub-area, of which around 1500 units will be provided for at this site.
- 7.6 The emerging plan further sets out detailed policy requirements for this site in the form of a Development Template which states the council would expect the following key objectives to be achieved:
- To deliver up to 1500 houses with associated services and facilities
  - To provide for a new primary school on site
  - Provision of land for the Wantage Eastern Link Road (WELR) linking the A417 and A338
  - To deliver a high quality, sustainable and mixed use urban extension, providing 40% affordable housing and a suitable mix of housing
  - To ensure the development integrates with Wantage and residents can access existing facilities in the town
  - To contribute to balanced employment and housing growth in SV
  - Subject to viability testing, provide requisite infrastructure to mitigate the impact of growth
- 7.7 At this stage in accordance with the NPPF, the emerging Local Plan only has limited weight, but it is considered to be a material consideration in relation to the proposal. It has been through several stages of consultation and is expected to be submitted to the Secretary of State for examination later this year. Whilst some objections to the proposed development site were identified in response to the draft Vale Local Plan

2029: Part 1 consultation, these mainly relate to the importance of development delivering appropriate infrastructure and being supported by appropriate evidence rather than to the principle of development. A comprehensive suite of evidence documents have been prepared, by both the district council as part of the evidence base and the site promoters, which demonstrate the site is suitable and deliverable. The site is therefore considered to be potentially a highly sustainable location for development, consistent with both the adopted Vale Local Plan 2011, the emerging Vale Local Plan 2029: Part 1 and the NPPF.

*Housing Land Supply*

7.8 As Crab Hill is identified as a strategic housing site in the emerging local plan, it therefore plays a significant role in the provision of a five-year housing land supply for the district. In April 2013, the council calculated its five-year housing land supply as approximately 4.4 years, inclusive of a 20% housing supply buffer. This site will positively contribute to the five year housing land supply. It is therefore considered vital that this site comes forward for development, but only provided it is in a suitable and sustainable manner with all the required infrastructure provision.

7.9 As outlined in section 3 of this report, the application proposes to deliver the development in three phases. It is expected that site preparation, earthworks and construction phases of the proposed development will take approximately 12 years, with construction work anticipated to be complete in 2026. The applicants envisage that the build rate for the development will be approximately 125 units a year with phase 1 commencing in 2015, phase 2 commencing 2019 and phase 3 commencing in 2022. The construction of dwellings at this rate is acceptable and will help to significantly address the current shortfall with approximately 375 homes coming forward by 2017/2018. This construction and occupation of the houses will be tied to the requirements in the Section 106 planning agreement to bring forward the infrastructure at agreed times to support the new residents and the need they generate, for example, for new school places.

*Housing mix*

7.10 It is important, particularly on a major strategic site such as Crab Hill, that a good range of property sizes for both open market sale and affordable provision is provided. Saved local plan policy H16 requires that 50% of the housing provision on the site shall be two bedroom units or less. The 2011 updated Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) also provides guidance for future new build market housing and recommends achieving a balance whereby 50% of the homes are smaller, 1 and 2 bed properties, and 50% have 3 or more bedrooms. This reflects the need for a greater number of smaller properties as the HNA highlighted that just 17% of owner-occupied stock in the Vale comprises one and two bedroom properties.

7.11 The HNA further suggests that the breakdown of unit sizes for open market sale could be:  
15% one bedroom  
35% two bedrooms  
35% three bedrooms  
15% four (or more) bedrooms

7.12 The applicant has agreed in principle to this mix. However, this may be the subject of review in the light of any changes in the HNA over the life of the development.

7.13 The updated HNA acknowledges the need to make provision for specialist accommodation for an ageing population. A class C2 care home use is proposed within the development and 10% of all dwellings will be lifetime homes in accordance

with policy H16. In addition, residents have requested bungalows are provided as part of the housing mix. Whilst the provision of bungalows cannot be insisted upon, officers are mindful of the request and will seek to achieve such provision where possible in any reserved matters applications.

*Affordable housing*

- 7.14 Saved Plan Policy H17 requires 40% on-site provision of affordable housing. This development will therefore need to include up to 600 affordable homes with a tenure delivery of 75% affordable rent and 25% intermediate (shared ownership). In accordance with the 2011 update of the HNA the following mix is suggested with no more than 40% of the affordable housing total being delivered as flats.

	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed
Rent	68	202	113	67
Shared ownership	30	105	15	0

The allocation of the affordable homes will be in accordance with the council's prevailing Allocations Policy.

- 7.15 The 2011 update of the HNA concludes that: "The scale of need continues to strongly justify the affordable housing target of 40%", as had been recommended in the original report. The continuing need for a tenure split of 75% rented accommodation to 25% intermediate housing (such as shared ownership) set out in the council's supplementary planning guidance is also confirmed.

*Viability assessment of the proposed development*

- 7.16 The applicants have undertaken a viability assessment based on their proposed housing mix, the negotiated package of section 106 contributions and affordable housing provision, average construction costs, realistic sales figures and profit. This assessment showed that the schemes viability is significantly affected by the costs of construction of the Wantage Eastern Link Road (WELR) and the percentage of affordable housing. With the support of technical advice the council has interrogated the viability assessment and, accepting the construction costs, sales figures and profit level, it is clear that viability is significantly affected by the cost of the overall infrastructure package, the percentage of affordable housing provision on the site and the phasing of its delivery.
- 7.17 The provision of the WELR is a significant infrastructure cost and, with a 40mph design specification to meet its strategic function its cost is greater than would normally be required to access a residential development. Coupled with the early provision of the primary school, and other contributions required at the beginning of construction, this means it is necessary to consider the overall percentage of affordable housing in the context of the viability of the scheme as a whole.
- 7.18 Following the testing of several scenarios it is clear that the scheme is only viable if it either builds or pays contributions to the WELR in a phased way and contributes a lower level of affordable housing. The applicants have agreed that they can afford to contribute in the order of 35% affordable housing. This is on the basis of the three phased delivery of the WELR set out in section 3.
- 7.19 Outputs from the next phases of working with the applicant on triggers and phases for infrastructure and development delivery may put viability in a more positive position and increase the percentage of affordable housing. However, whatever level of affordable

homes is ultimately deliverable, it will be essential that the tenure mix and range of property types and sizes addresses the needs of the district as closely as possible. It may also be necessary to vary the amount of affordable between phases. The officer recommendation therefore is to permit the scheme based on a cumulative affordable housing provision in the order of around 35% with a minimum of 30% to be delivered as rented units.

*Design and DAS*

- 7.20 The outline application is supported by an illustrative master plan, parameter plans and a Design and Access Statement (DAS). The master plan accompanying the application provides an indication of how the development of the site may come forward. However, it is the submitted parameter plans and the DAS that will be 'fixed' at the determination of this outline application and the future reserved matters application will be expected to be in accordance with the parameter plans. The recommended conditions would ensure that the reserved matters deliver a scheme in line with the DAS.
- 7.21 The plans show the likely location of all built development within the application and all associated open space and facilities. The proposed neighbourhood centre and primary school are located at the heart of the site toward the north east with residential blocks across the rest of the site. There are a number of key spaces within the development with a main central park space adjacent to the primary school and neighbourhood centre and two smaller local park spaces in the east and west of the development. The alignment of the WELR provides a limit to built development with structured landscaping proposed beyond, to provide a long term defensible edge to development. This area will also form a focus for SUDs features which are designed to appear as natural features and offer ecological benefits as well as a drainage function. This exact position of the WELR will be fixed by this full planning application, if approved.
- 7.22 The DAS provides further details on design principles for the appearance and the likely layout of the housing and other elements of the development such as the primary school site. The development will be delivered in three phases and across four character areas. Area 1 is a lower density area adjacent to Charlton village (mainly phase 3). Area 2 is community area including the neighbourhood centre, primary school and central park (phases 1 and 2). Area 3 is to the east (phase 1). Area 4 to the west (mainly phase 2). Each area is accompanied by narrative and visual material to show design principles, character elements, alongside three dimensional sketches and illustrations.
- 7.23 The DAS and parameter plans have been assessed by the Urban Design Officer. Notwithstanding the limited opportunities to connect into, or integrate with adjacent housing, the illustrative information demonstrates a high quality development could be achieved within the site boundaries. Nonetheless, it is not considered robust enough to inform the design, layout and character of the development at the reserved matters stages. It is therefore proposed that a site wide development delivery strategy and masterplan is submitted and approved, prior to any reserved matters applications being lodged. This can be secured by condition.
- 7.24 The NPPF is explicit in seeking a high quality outcome for good design in terms of layout and building form as a key aspect of sustainable development. To ensure the quality of the development, a range of conditions relating to materials, boundary treatments, access and parking, landscaping and its long term management are also considered to be necessary.

*Housing density and scale*

- 7.25 The proposed housing density varies across the site and is shown on the Parameter Plan 2 – Residential Density (Appendix 2), with higher density areas to the north-east around the neighbourhood centre reaching up to 55dph. In these areas, the development will include two and a half and three storey buildings. On the edges of the site and where the development adjoins Charlton village, the density of development reduces to levels up to 40dph, with buildings predominantly two storeys in height. The average density in residential blocks is 32.5dph. A lower density area of up to 25dph is suggested alongside the cricket pitch where the site adjoins the Charlton village conservation area.
- 7.26 Concern has been expressed by the parish councils and local residents about the density and scale of the proposed housing. Officers, however, consider the development densities and heights shown on the parameter plan to be acceptable, especially with regard to the need to make the best use of the developable land.

*Education*

- 7.27 One of the key infrastructure aspects of this scheme is the provision of a two form primary school on the site. Oxfordshire County Council is clear this development would trigger the need for the construction of a new primary school, as existing schools would not be able to expand sufficiently to cope with the new pupils who will live in the new housing development beyond the occupation of 350 dwellings. This scheme will result in new pupils equivalent to one and a half form entry school and the applicants have agreed to build, subject to agreed specification, a two form entry primary school.
- 7.28 The county's policy for secondary school provision is to achieve the demand through a new school proposed on the Grove Airfield development and contributions from this scheme will go towards the provision of this school. However, alternative provision will be needed if the delivery of the school does not occur within the timescale required to provide additional places required for Crab Hill. This issue has been the subject of much local concern about the proposed development with regard to over reliance on Grove Airfield. In the interim, alternative provision is likely to be at King Alfred School which currently has some spare places along with existing and planned new schools in Didcot. Either way, there will be triggers in the S106 to ensure secondary school provision comes forward to meet the need of new young people living at Crab Hill.

*Highways and transport.*

- 7.29 The strategic approach to the growth of the Wantage area is based on detailed traffic impact assessments of the major developments coming forward in the area and the required mitigations. The measures that developments are expected to take include new roads to reduce traffic congestion, additional cycling and walking routes and support to enhance public transport. The cost of key infrastructure has to be shared across the key developments. There are estimated to be in the order of 5000 new homes likely to come forward and accordingly costs are to be shared depending on the impact of the individual scheme. One of the key pieces of highways infrastructure is the Wantage Eastern Link Road (WELR) and there is a long held ambition to build this in advance of development. This scheme will bring part of the road forward early and provide an estate road until such time as the entire WELR can be funded and delivered. Discussions are currently ongoing between applicant, the county and district council to achieve its delivery sooner, but this is inextricably linked to the viability of the scheme and other developer contributions coming forward at the appropriate time.
- 7.30 The application is accompanied by a full transport assessment which forms part of the Environmental Statement. It has assessed the traffic impact arising from the proposed development including cumulative impact with other large development sites in the

locality. Its findings and methodology have been accepted by the county council, as highway authority. The submission addresses the issue of improving local public rights of way, pedestrian and cycle access beyond the boundaries of the site. The application is also accompanied by a Framework Residential Travel Plan with the objective of reducing car based trips and increase walking, cycling and public transport. This sets out how detailed travel plans will be produced with the involvement of future site users.

- 7.31 The main highway access into the development will be achieved from the WELR. The provision of this road is a long standing strategic priority for the Vale of White Horse District Council and Oxfordshire County Council as evidenced by the Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan 2011 – 2030. Its completion will enable traffic, from the proposed development and other new development in the Grove /Wantage area, travelling north towards Oxford and east towards Didcot, to avoid using the junctions within Wantage town centre. It will also remove a significant volume of existing traffic from the town centre with alleviation of known congestion areas which is considered to be a major positive enhancement along with improving connectivity between the major routes of the A417 Reading Road and the A338 Grove Road.
- 7.32 The transport assessment demonstrates that the WELR is required to facilitate the total development at Crab Hill. There will be two junctions each will oversized to eventually be linked by the WELR. Phase 1 includes access to the eastern side of the proposed development will be achieved through the construction of a four arm roundabout on A417 Reading Road, incorporating the existing A417 Reading Road / West Lockinge priority T junction. Phase 2 includes access to the western side will be achieved through the construction of a fourth arm on the A338 Grove Road / A417 Mably Way roundabout. Initially it will be possible to drive between the two access points via an estate road within the new development. The WELR is proposed to be completed prior to the occupation of the 851<sup>st</sup> dwelling which currently is anticipated to be around 2021 on the projected build out rate of 125 units a year.
- 7.33 Highway issues, along with infrastructure, have been the subject of much local concern about the proposed development. This stems from the view that the local highway network will be unable to cope with the extra traffic generated by the proposal, especially before the completion of the WELR. A traffic generation exercise has been undertaken by the applicant and key junctions on the local highway network have been assessed in terms of capacity with appropriate mitigation proposed where necessary. The county council, as highway authority, is satisfied that with the road improvements and interim mitigation measures proposed before the completion of the WELR, the new development can be sustained by the local road network (see detailed comments in appendix 8). The proposal is therefore considered to comply with Policy DC5
- 7.34 It has been requested by Ardington and Lockinge parish council that the WELR access point on the A417 is moved further eastwards to the Grove Park Avenue (Lains Barn) junction. The county council has assessed this suggestion and considers it would not achieve any additional benefit towards the aim of securing a relief road around the north east of Wantage. It would require a longer route and add to the cost of providing the road. Furthermore, the Grove Park Drive/A417 junction is currently a four arm junction and connecting the WELR at this point would require a five-arm roundabout which would result in a larger size of junction increasing the cost of provision.
- 7.35 The parish also requested that all junctions along A417 are improved through contributions from this scheme. Whilst development traffic can be expected to use the A417 between Wantage and Didcot, highway officers do not consider there will be severe impact on all A417 junctions as a result of the Crab Hill development and to require this development to improve these junctions would be unreasonable when

assessed against the tests in the NPPF. However, in the light these concerns the A417 / Featherbed Lane junction and the A417 / A4185 / A4130 junction (Rowstock Roundabout) are being reviewed as part of strategic level work being carried out by the highway authority. Any improvements deemed to be necessary at these junctions will be secured through other funding mechanisms.

- 7.36 A further suggestion has been made by local residents and Wantage Town Council to provide a link road from Grove Park Technology Park to the A417 north of Mellors Garage, the Wantage Western Link Road (WWLR). This road is not required in connection with this proposed development. The county council has confirmed that traffic modelling and assessment work undertaken using the draft Local Plan traffic flows does not trigger the need for this road during the emerging plan period, based on the current housing numbers

*Bus services*

- 7.37 When complete, the proposed development would be served by bus services passing through the site along the spine road. However, it is important that bus provision is established early on in the development of the site to ensure that buses are seen as a viable mode of travel for future residents. As such contributions are sought towards the provision of enhancing existing bus services, along with interim bus stop infrastructure on the A417 and A338 (see appendix 8 for specific details).

- 7.38 The applicant has been made aware of the comments from Stagecoach (detailed in paragraph 4.36) and these issues would be addressed through the proposed development delivery strategy and any subsequent reserved matters applications.

*Footpaths and cycling*

- 7.39 The transport assessment demonstrates there are various local facilities within a reasonable walking distance of the site. The proposed development will provide a comprehensive network of on-site footpaths and cycle ways which will connect with existing off site routes. The county council is working on a Science Vale cycle strategy which will include cycle route provision between Wantage and Harwell Oxford. At the time of writing they are looking at various routes either along or south of the A417 between Wantage and Harwell Oxford, and this work is on-going. The applicant is aware of comments from Harbug (detailed in paragraph 4.37), who have made various suggestions for onsite cycleway improvements, these works would be designed as part of the proposed development strategy to be submitted prior to commencement of the development and any subsequent reserved matters applications.

*Health*

- 7.40 Local concern has been raised in relation to existing health provision and the need for expanded facilities to support the new residents. It is anticipated that new GP facilities will be provided at Mably Way and work by NHS property services to relocate existing surgeries is on-going. A contribution is therefore sought to offset the increase in population impact on health services in the locality.

*Employment*

- 7.41 In respect of employment, the science vale UK strategy is to locate the majority of employment development at Harwell Science and Innovation campus and Milton Park, located to the east. There will be enhanced public transport linking the proposed development to the employment opportunities. There will also be local employment opportunities in the Wantage town centre, in the planned local centre and at the new community facilities including the new schools. The applicant has agreed to contribute to the local labour and training scheme which will aim to provide employment and training from the construction on site and in the new development.

*Sport facilities, playing pitches and open space*

- 7.42 The proposed development will provide new areas of open space for formal and informal sports use. The required level of 15% public open space defined in policy H23 will be achieved including three football pitches, a MUGA and the retention of the existing Wantage Cricket Club grounds. Contributions are sought for enhancement to the cricket club, to croquet, to off-site provision of tennis, rugby and swimming along with funds towards the new Wantage leisure centre. A more detailed list is provided in appendix 9. As part of the planning agreement there will be an undertaking to transfer the land ownership of the cricket club to a trust or similar organisation.

*Heritage assets*

- 7.43 The NPPF requires that account should be taken of the desirability to sustain and enhance the significant heritage assets and to ensure the new development makes a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. The ES has assessed the effect of the proposed development on archaeology and heritage assets.
- 7.44 Whilst there would be no harmful impact on the setting of listed buildings in the locality, the ES identifies the proposed development has an effect on the setting and views of the Wantage, Charlton conservation area.
- 7.45 Following careful assessment of the submitted information and local representations received, the conservation officer raises no objection to the proposal assessing that the impact on the conservation area does not result in substantial harm. The NPPF advises that where harm is less than substantial this harm should be weighed against the benefits of the proposal. Subject to appropriate mitigation and design the proposed development will preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area as required by policy HE1.
- 7.46 In respect of archaeology, the archaeological evaluation has identified features and finds spanning the late Bronze Age to the post-medieval period with two main concentrations of archaeological activity identified within the western part of the site that will require investigation in advance of development. It is recommended that a staged programme of archaeological investigation is undertaken within each phase of the site prior to the commencement of any development. The level and extent of the mitigation required will then be based on the findings of the each evaluation

*Drainage and flooding issues*

- 7.47 The planning application is accompanied by a detailed Flood Risk Assessment (FRA). The site drains to two water courses with surface water from the north part of the site flowing into the disused canal and the remainder flowing into Letcombe brook. The whole site lies within flood zone 1 and is considered large enough to deal with surface water without causing runoff problems to these water courses, public highways or neighbouring properties. The proposed drainage system will include a variety of SUDs features and will be designed to control storm water runoff at a rate which is 30% lower than current rates. Subject to conditions on detailed design, the Environment Agency and drainage engineer raise no objections.
- 7.48 In respect of foul drainage, the new dwellings will be connected to the main sewer, which is acceptable in principle. Thames Water has however identified a capacity issue with the existing foul water system. In response, a sewer impact study has been produced which identifies six connection scenarios to address the issue and identifies on and off site options to cater for the proposed development. Officers are confident the required measures can be delivered within the lifetime of the permission and the drainage engineer raises no objection to the proposal, subject to the detailed design

and a site wide drainage strategy (for both surface and foul water) being approved.

*Air quality, noise and contamination*

- 7.49 The development has the potential to reduce air quality and produce noise, particularly in the construction phase. However the Environmental Health team is content that adherence to the mitigation principles outlined in the draft Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) will control emissions to a suitable level.
- 7.50 With regard to traffic noise, the Environmental Statement highlights several areas where noise will have a significant observable adverse impact, in the absence of any mitigation, on the proposed development. The developer will therefore need to demonstrate that the proposed number of dwellings applied for can be accommodated on the development site without any dwelling exceeding noise levels detailed in the WHO Guideline Values for Community Noise.
- 7.51 It is accepted that there will be no significant impacts on local air quality. Overall levels of pollution are predicted to remain significantly below the relevant national air quality objective levels for each pollutant assessed and air quality in the operational phase is not forecast to place any constraint on the proposed development.
- 7.52 With regard to contamination, the geo-environmental appraisal has not highlighted the presence of significant quantities of contamination that would adversely affect the proposed development of the site. However, given the size of the site there is the risk of localised areas of contamination and thus additional intrusive investigations should be undertaken to investigate specific ground conditions for individual development plots and it is suggested that this is dealt with by condition.

*Ecology*

- 7.53 The applicant has provided comprehensive surveys / reports in relation to protected species within the site. The Countryside Officer has no objection to the proposal. It is considered there is plenty of scope within the development to mitigate impacts on protected species, and proposed mitigation measures are acceptable. The relevant licence tests are, therefore, considered to have been met.
- 7.54 The one exception to this is in respect of barn owls, where an alternative mitigation measure is required should the existing barn be removed. Following discussion with the Countryside Officer, the applicant is now looking at either retaining the existing barn or providing a new purpose built structure for barn owls and bats adjacent to the woodland area. Either option is acceptable and will be controlled by condition.

*Landscape impact*

- 7.55 Crab Hill is considered to be a visually prominent site on the north east edge of Wantage, being visible along the A417, from the North Wessex Downs AONB to the south of the site and from the A338 and Grove Park Drive to the north. Its present day landscape character is predominantly arable farmland with some limited woodland and often patchy, hedgerows. The site is largely open and exposed with a low degree of enclosure and this character will clearly change as a result of the development.
- 7.56 The landscape strategy for the site seeks to mitigate areas of significant impact identified in the landscape and visual assessment submitted as part of the ES and a landscape framework has been formulated as an integral part of the proposed development to both strengthen landscape structure on site and improve the perception of landscape structure from areas around the site. Following comments from the AONB unit and landscape officer, additional information has also been submitted relating to proposed development adjacent to the A417.

- 7.57 Officers consider the suggested landscape framework will aid integration of the proposed development into the wider landscape and, providing structural landscaping along A417 is achieved, it will not have a significant impact on the setting of the North Wessex Downs AONB. Consequently, the natural beauty of the AONB would be conserved. However, a range of planning conditions will be required to ensure issues raised by the landscape officer, forestry officer and AONB officer (see their detailed comments in section 4) are addressed prior to the approval of any reserved matters.

*Loss of agricultural land*

- 7.58 Paragraph 112 of the NPPF states, “Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, local planning authorities should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a high quality.”

- 7.59 The land and soils have been surveyed and assessed to be land predominantly Grade 2, with a large proportion of sub-grade 3a and a smaller area of sub-grade 3b and therefore the site falls within high quality agricultural land. Much local concern has been raised in the loss of this land for agricultural production and the impact has been identified in the Environmental Statement as one of moderate adverse significance.

- 7.60 Whilst there are no effective measures available to mitigate the direct loss of agricultural land through the development of this site, it must be borne in mind that the WELR has been identified as a strategic priority for both the Vale of White Horse District Council and Oxfordshire County Council and the alignment of this road between the A338 and A417 limits its geographical location. Furthermore, officers consider the proposed development site is a logical place for strategic growth, as the WELR would need to be developed in any case and, when assessing growth locations for Wantage as a whole, the site is not located within the North Wessex Downs ANOB, which adjoins Wantage to the south. The loss of this land from agricultural production, therefore, is considered to be acceptable, especially when balanced against the current shortage in the supply of housing and the site’s allocation in the emerging plan as a strategic location for growth.

*Sustainability*

- 7.61 The adopted SPD “ Sustainable Design and Construction” December 2009 requires all developments of 10 or more houses built in the district after 2013 to be Code level 4 plus 10% renewable energy on site. The applicants however propose Code level 3 and 10% renewable energy and have identified that the cost of moving from Code level 3 to Code 4 would make the scheme unviable. It is noted that building regulations will change to require enhanced construction methods over the lifetime of the scheme.
- 7.62 Having regard to this and the policy advice in the NPPF that local planning authorities should “when setting any local requirement for a building’s sustainability, do so in a way consistent with the Government’s zero carbon buildings policy and adopt nationally described standards” it is not considered appropriate to insist on Code 4 but to rely on incremental changes that will be made to building regulation requirements at the development progresses. The applicants’ proposal to build to Code level 3 and 10% renewable energy on site is therefore accepted, but in reality officers expect to achieve code level 3 and a 10% reduction in emissions rather than on site renewable as this is considered to be current best practice in achieving more sustainable construction.

*Phasing*

- 7.63 The proposed phasing of development as set out in paragraph 3.5 is acceptable. It is anticipated these phases will be built out consecutively. However, should the development be brought forward in an alternative manner it will be essential to ensure

infrastructure is still delivered in a timely way. This can be dealt with either by condition or in the S106 by requiring a phasing strategy to be submitted and updated during the lifetime of the development.

*Public art*

- 7.64 Following viability negotiations, officers are seeking a reduced art contribution of £150,000 for the whole development. This lesser sum is still considered appropriate to adequately cover public art provision on a site of this scale.

*Cumulative impact*

- 7.65 Using the latest population data available to the council, which assumes an occupancy rate of 2.409 people per house, this development will increase the population of Wantage and Grove by 3614 people (rounded). This represents an increase in the population of 19.8% and a 19.6% increase in the number of households in the town. These increases are not considered inappropriate for growth of a sustainable market town such as Wantage.
- 7.66 However, it is also important to consider the cumulative impact of this development and other recent schemes at Broadwater (14 houses), Chain Hill (85 houses), Stockham Park (200 houses), land south of Downsview Road (90 houses), Monks Farm (133 houses) and the Grove Airfield site (2500 houses). Building on this data, the overall increase in the population of Wantage and Grove will be 60%; whilst the overall increase in the households will be 59.2% (all figures are rounded).
- 7.67 The ES has assessed cumulative impact in respect of traffic and generation, noise and vibration, and air quality during construction and concludes that cumulative effects are either negligible or can be mitigated through appropriate measures. Officers consider these findings to be acceptable.
- 7.68 Overall, a near 60% increase in the population, with the possibility of further schemes coming forward does represent a significant increase in the population of the town. However, the emerging Local Plan makes clear that Wantage is a strategic growth area for the district up to 2029. When the permissive approach to new housing in Wantage and the current housing shortfall in the district are considered, officers conclude the increase in the population of this location is not so high as to be harmful to the character and vitality of the town, and will improve its long term sustainability.

*Prematurity*

- 7.69 As this application is submitted ahead of the adoption of the emerging Local Plan it would clearly pre-determine decisions that would generally be taken in the context of the Development Plan process. However, there is a need to balance a five year housing land supply against the need for an adopted plan including its strategic sites such as this.
- 7.70 The site was originally identified by the council as a preferred location for strategic development within the emerging Local Plan, in the Preferred Options consultation document, published in January 2009. The identification of this site as the preferred location for strategic growth in Wantage is also set out within the Draft Vale Local Plan 2029: Part 1. This document set out a policy framework for the area confirming the important strategic role of this site, not only to meet the housing need identified for the area in the plan period up-to 2029, but also facilitating the delivery of essential infrastructure necessary to ensure balanced and sustainable development at Wantage including facilitating the delivery of the Wantage Eastern Link Road, identified as a strategic priority and the provision of a two form entry primary school.

- 7.71 The emerging plan further sets out detailed policy requirements for this site. Whilst there are objections to this scheme they are less about the principle of development and more about matters such as transport and infrastructure. Officers consider these are issues dealt with in the Development Template which states the council would expect the following key objectives to be achieved through development on Crab Hill:
- To deliver up to 1500 houses with associated services and facilities
  - To provide for a new primary school on site
  - Provision of land for the Wantage Eastern Link Road (WELR) linking the A417 and A338
  - To deliver a high quality, sustainable and mixed use urban extension, providing 40% affordable housing and a suitable mix of housing
  - To ensure the development integrates with Wantage and residents can access existing facilities in the town
  - To contribute to balanced employment and housing growth in SVUK
  - Subject to viability testing, provide requisite infrastructure to mitigate the impact of growth
- 7.72 At this time, the overriding definition of sustainable development against which this application must be assessed remains that of the NPPF and its associated sustainability tests. However, the Development Template outlined above has been a central factor in the evolution of the submitted scheme and the scheme will facilitate the delivery of a primary school and the WELR. Taking all of the above into account, officers do not consider the scheme is premature.

*CIL compliance*

- 7.73 The Community Infrastructure Regulations 2010 came into force in April 2010. The effect of the regulations is that the tests for the use of S106 obligations now have statutory force and that when they do they can be a reason for the grant of planning permission. Otherwise such offers of payment are disregarded. The three tests are that each S106 contribution is:
- necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;
  - directly related to the development; and
  - fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.
- 7.74 It is considered that all the S106 requirements which form part of the recommended S106 package below meet the three statutory tests and are CIL compliant.

*S106 / infrastructure package*

- 7.75 The District and County Council has put together a package of S106 contributions which they consider CIL compliant under the following broad headings, the planned contributions are as set out below:
- i. Strategic highways and transportation
  - ii. Education
  - iii. Community infrastructure
  - iv. Indoor and outdoor sports and leisure facilities,
  - v. Green infrastructure;
  - vi. Local economic development support
  - vii. Delivery costs

- 7.76 In more detail this includes at the district level, a Section 106 package including:
- Sum towards the completion of a footpath link towards Sainsbury along the Letcombe Brook

- Provision of the community building;
- Funding for a community development officer for up to 5 years;
- Contribution towards local health care;
- Contribution towards local youth facilities, including the Scout building and Sweat Box project in Wantage;
- Sum for Thames Valley Police;
- Sum towards public art;
- Sum to provide refuse and other bins;
- Outdoor sports;
- Provision of a skateboard area on site;
- Contribution towards the new sports and leisure centre in Wantage;
- Green infrastructure, including a community orchard on site;
- Contribution towards the Betjeman Park;
- Ecological mitigation;
- Contribution for additional cemetery provision in Wantage;
- Contribution towards Wantage Town Centre Manager;
- Contribution towards local labour and training;
- Contribution towards Wantage street pastors;
- Contribution towards the Wantage Independent Advice Centre;
- Sum towards a new community bus;
- Contribution towards development monitoring costs

The table attached at appendix 9 sets out all the detailed figures of the sums requested.

7.77 Oxfordshire County Council are seeking contributions and/or the provision of:

- Contribution towards the SUVK strategic transport package including the WELR;
- Contribution towards public transport services, including 11 new bus stops on the site;
- Contribution towards public rights of way in the local vicinity of the site;
- Travel plan monitoring;
- Contribution towards the new secondary school at Grove;
- 1 x 2 Form Entry primary school on a 2.2 ha site;
- Contribution towards special educational needs;
- Contribution towards adult learning, a children's centre, and youth support service, or a space within the community building;
- Contribution towards Wantage Library;
- Adult social care in extra care housing on site or contribution towards off site;
- Contribution to the museum at the Vale and Downland Museum in Wantage;
- Contribution towards development monitoring costs;

7.78 The payment of some of the above contributions will be staged and the triggers for each will be incorporated within the Section 106 agreement.

*Community facilities and governance*

7.79 Within the neighbourhood centre, a community hall is proposed. In negotiations, it has been proposed that contributions should be secured for social and recreational support services to go into a wider 'community hub' which it is hoped will be handed over to and managed by the Town Council. The precise package is subject to further development work, but the hub will be a focal community facility that is likely to include facilities for pre-school children, youth facilities, café and kitchen, meeting rooms, a flexible multi-use hall and related community infrastructure. It is anticipated that there will be a

specification attached to the section 106 agreement.

7.80 Officers consider such a building will play a pivotal role in integrating the new and established communities. To this end, some detailed feasibility work has been carried out to ensure it would be sustainable in the long term. In addition to this, funding is sought for a community development worker, for a five year period once the development begins to be occupied.

7.81 It is further anticipated that the Section 106 will provide flexibility for some if not all of the communal land and outdoor facilities to be taken on by the Town Councils or other nominated organisation with the quality and level of maintenance required for all areas being set out in detailed specifications where relevant.

## 8.0 CONCLUSION

8.1 This site is proposed as a strategic housing allocation in the emerging Vale of White Horse Local Plan Part One 2029. At this stage, this document (and allocation) have only been through an initial public consultation and so have limited weight in the decision making process. Nonetheless, this application has been submitted in anticipation of this strategic allocation and closely follows the template for development within the emerging Local Plan.

8.2 Despite the above, this proposal does not accord with the current development plan and so the council has advertised it as a departure. However, in light of the current shortfall in the council's five year housing supply and the clear guidance in paragraph 14 of the NPPF it is not considered that the adverse impacts so significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. On the contrary the contribution that these proposals would bring to delivering more houses and associated infrastructure is welcome. Crucially an outline approval will provide certainty so that more work discharging the Section 106 agreement and conditions to secure the necessary infrastructure can progress and lead to delivery sooner rather than later. Accordingly the proposal is considered acceptable.

8.3 When assessed against the definition of sustainability in the NPPF, Wantage is one of the most sustainable settlements in the Vale of White Horse and so is seen as a growth area. It has all the necessary facilities to support an increase in the population, and will benefit from further employment allocations in the emerging Local Plan. It is a town that will need to accommodate some of the increased housing demands placed on the district.

8.4 This site is considered the most appropriate for large-scale residential development in Wantage. This proposal will facilitate the early delivery of the WELR and provide all related infrastructure.

8.5 In considering the application, due regard has been given to the representations received from statutory and other consultees and local residents. These have been taken into account in assessing the overall scheme, negotiating amendments and improvements and have informed the S106 requirements listed above.

8.6 There are no technical concerns with the application, subject to the recommended conditions. The ES is considered robust and fit for purpose. Appropriate financial contributions will be sought to offset the impact of this development on the town's infrastructure. The proposal also makes a measurable contribution to help address the current housing land shortfall and the application is, therefore, recommended for approval.

9.0 **RECOMMENDATION:**

9.1 **That outline planning permission be granted subject to**

**1: A section 106 Agreement to deliver the provision of around 35% affordable housing on the site (of which a minimum of 30% shall be affordable rented) and the following infrastructure package of around £32m (more details in appendix 9):**

- Strategic highways and transportation
- Education
- Community infrastructure
- Indoor and outdoor sports and leisure facilities
- Green infrastructure
- Local economic development support
- Delivery costs

**2 : And subject to the following list of conditions**

**Prior to submission of reserved matters**

1. Agreed Development Delivery Strategy that sets out how the development will be delivered including the masterplan, phasing and sub phases, development parcels, housing mix, design code strategy, site wide strategies and development monitoring
2. Submission and approval of a masterplan for the entire site

**Time Limits and General Implementation Conditions**

3. Reserved matters time limits, covering all aspects of development. First parcel submitted within three years and all reserved matters submitted no longer than eight years from date of permission
4. Reserved matters – time limit, development to start within two years of approval
5. No phases of development to be begun without full detailed drawings for all reserved matters in that phase
6. No more than 1500 houses to be built on the site
7. Development to be carried out in accordance with the approved plans and Development Delivery Strategy document
8. Development carried out in line with the mitigation measures in the Environmental Impact Assessment
9. All reserved matters in line with the Development Delivery Strategy and approved parcel or sub-phase plans
10. Parcels of houses to be between 40 and 150 units maximum and to use a panel of different architects throughout the scheme
11. Reserved matters for the neighbourhood centre to be in line with the agreed neighbourhood centre development brief
12. Package of land uses as set out in the original application
13. Housing mix (excluding affordable housing)
14. 10% market homes to be constructed to lifetime homes standard.

**Conditions requiring local planning authority approval before development commences**

15. Distribution of housing and monitoring of delivery across the scheme
16. No development to commence until the plans for the phase or sub phase has been approved

17. Design code for each phase or sub phase including planned monitoring of delivery to be prepared in accordance with the masterplan for the site and the Development Delivery Strategy.
18. Sub phases or parcels to be brought forwards in line with the Development Delivery Strategy and the approved masterplan
19. No development to begin until phasing strategy and rate of delivery agreed
20. Site wide Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP)
21. Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) for each phase / sub phase
22. Hours of construction
23. Energy delivery strategy for each phase or sub phase

**Landscaping and Ecology**

24. Site wide Landscape and Ecological Management Plan
25. Hard and soft landscaping agreed for each phase of sub phase
26. Tree planting and replacement required
27. Tree protection
28. Landscape and woodland management plan(s)
29. Landscape and Ecological Management Plan for each phase or sub phase
30. Bat box / Owl roost or similar to be provided
31. No clearance of site in the nesting season
32. Allotment provision and timing of delivery
33. Play areas

**Environmental management**

34. Considerate contractor scheme.
35. Noise mitigations measures within each phase of sub phase of development
36. Noise impact of non-residential uses assessed and measure taken to mitigate impact
37. Noise emissions and hours of operation of non-residential uses

**Archaeological Investigation**

38. Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation for each phase
39. Staged programme of archaeological mitigation carried out by approved expert

**Soil resources**

40. Strategy for management of soil resources to be submitted and approved

**Contaminated land investigation and remediation**

41. Strategy and remediation of contaminated land to be agreed

**Lighting and light pollution**

42. Lighting strategy for the whole site.
43. Details of all lighting to be included in each phase of sub phase of development

**Waste management**

44. Site wide waste management strategy
45. Waste management plan for each phase or sub phase
46. Recycling facilities in each house
47. Location of local recycling sites

48. Recycled material for highways

**Surface drainage**

49. Site wide surface water drainage strategy  
50. Surface water drainage scheme based on sustainable drainage principles for each phase or sub-phase of development

**Foul sewage**

51. Site wide foul drainage strategy  
52. Drainage strategy for each phase or sub-phase

**Prior to occupation conditions**

53. Boundary treatments.  
54. Aerial and satellite dishes

**Development briefs for**

55. Neighbourhood centre  
56. Primary school  
57. Extra care housing  
58. Community hub

**Affordable housing**

59. Scheme for approval by the Council of range of size, type and delivery of affordable houses and overall management  
60. Extra care housing scheme

**Education delivery**

61. Limit houses for occupation to 349 before primary school constructed  
62. Grampian condition to restrict the number of houses until adequate secondary school places available

**Highways and transport**

63. WELR, fall back measures in Wantage if road does not come forward  
64. Delivery of off site traffic mitigation schemes  
65. Western junction on to A417  
66. Eastern junction to A417  
67. No work to start on construction of WELR until all detailed drawings approved including landscaping  
68. Bus stops  
69. Public rights of way to remain open all through the development  
70. Garage condition not to be used for residential  
71. Section 38 or section 278 agreement required for all road or footway construction  
72. Detailed access design to be submitted for approval  
73. Parking and manoeuvring within the neighbourhood centre to be approved  
74. Not to begin any phase of development until bus access, egress and turning areas been agreed and constructed  
75. All houses to have cycle parking facilities  
76. Cycle parking across the development including at the neighbourhood centre, school and community hub

77. Travel plan to be prepared and monitored for the residential areas, the school neighbourhood centre activities, community hub and extra care housing scheme
78. Sustainable Travel Information Pack prepared and available for each new home

**Sustainable construction**

79. Standards
80. Rainwater harvesting
81. Emission/energy efficiency
82. Materials – samples
83. Boundary treatments
84. Slab levels
85. Broadband
86. Fire hydrants

**3 : The delegation to the Head of Planning the decision to switch between the use of planning condition or clauses within the Section 106 Agreement to achieve the agreed infrastructure package and other outcomes in line with this decision**

**4: And that the Committee agree to set up a Development Delivery Board to support the delivery of the development in the Grove/Wantage Area**

Author: Stuart Walker  
Contact number: 01235 540505  
Email: [stuart.walker@southandvale.gov.uk](mailto:stuart.walker@southandvale.gov.uk)

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Location plan

Appendix 2 – Illustrative Master Plan and Parameter Plans

Appendix 3 – Grove Parish Council response

Appendix 4 – Wantage Town Council response

Appendix 5 – West Hendred Parish Council response

Appendix 6 – East Hendred Parish Council response

Appendix 7 – Wantage and Grove Campaign Group response

Appendix 8 – Oxfordshire County Council response

Appendix 9 – Infrastructure schedule