

<b>APPLICATION NO.</b>	P14/V2877/FUL
<b>APPLICATION TYPE</b>	FULL APPLICATION
<b>REGISTERED</b>	23.12.2014
<b>PARISH</b>	WATCHFIELD
<b>WARD MEMBER(S)</b>	Elaine Ware and Simon Howell
<b>APPLICANT</b>	CCS Developments LLP
<b>SITE</b>	Land at Cowans Camp Depot High Street Watchfield, SN6 8TE
<b>PROPOSAL</b>	Planning permission for the erection of 35 new (1, 2, 3 and 4 bed) homes of which 40% are affordable units on brownfield land previously consented for a care facility and learning disability unit (as amended by drawings and Design & Access Statement received 8 April 2015)
<b>GRID REFERENCE</b>	424283/190573
<b>OFFICER</b>	Adrian Butler

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### **SUMMARY**

The application seeks full planning permission for the erection of 35 2-storey dwellings.

This application follows a previous detailed planning approval (ref. P13/V2359/RM) issued on 4 August 2014 for a residential development of 100 dwellings homes, extra care housing comprising 50 apartments for elderly persons and two learning disability homes comprising of 17 bedroom, public open space and new accesses.

The main issues are:

- Whether the principle of development is acceptable with consideration being given to the fall back position with the extant detailed planning permission
- Whether the site is a suitable location for new housing that can contribute to the five-year housing supply shortfall.
- The cumulative impact of this proposal alongside other approved and proposed residential developments in the village, particularly on local services.
- Whether the submitted details take account of site constraints and propose an appropriate design and neighbourly form of development.
- Whether the proposal will impact on highway safety.
- Implications for flood risk, foul and surface water drainage.

This report seeks to assess the planning application details against the national and local planning policy framework where relevant and all other material planning considerations.

An extant planning permission (P13/V2359/RM), permits care facilities on the site. These have yet to be built and this application seeks an alternative form of development on the site. In reporting application no. P13/V2359/RM to planning committee the previous case officer's report advised that in part permission was being recommended for approval because of the benefits of the care facilities.

Previously developed land such as this is the preferred location for new housing in accordance with the NPPF and the proposal, if implemented, will help in part to address the council's current lack of a 5-year housing supply. There is no obligation on a developer to provide the care facilities and the County Council opines that this is not

an appropriate site for care facilities. In principle housing on this site is considered acceptable.

The landscape and visual impact is acceptable in the context of the wider permitted residential development adjacent to the site. The proposal is poorly laid out and does not represent good design which is a key element of sustainable development and an expectation of the NPPF which is reflected in local planning policies and adopted design guidance.

The technical issues relating to noise, drainage and sewage are acceptable subject to conditions. The development will have some impact on the highway network however these impacts are not unacceptable.

Overall, the development is not considered to amount to a sustainable development, owing to its inappropriate design which in turn demonstrates 35 dwellings on the site in this form is an overdevelopment. This harm does not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. Consequently, the application is recommended for refusal.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Watchfield is defined as a large village by policy H11 of the adopted Local Plan. The village provides a range of services including shops, community facilities, a primary school, employment opportunities and access to a regular public transport service serving larger towns.
- 1.2 This application relates to land to the north western edge of Watchfield forming part of the former Cowans Camp site. This part of the site accommodated buildings which have relatively recently been demolished as part of the permission to develop the site and adjacent land. Immediately north west of the site is the A420. To the north east on the opposite side of High Street is the Shrivenham Hundred Business park. To the east is existing housing in Star Lane. Land to the south is presently open but benefits from planning permission for housing. Land to the immediate east of the site being between it and Star Lane also benefits from planning permission for housing. Land between the site and the A420 is to be open space associated with the permitted housing scheme. The site is generally level and contains no specific features.
- 1.3 Access to the current site is from High Street
- 1.4 The application is presented to committee as the Parish Council object and more than four letters of objection have been received from local residents.

## 2.0 PROPOSAL

- 2.1 This is an application for full planning permission seeking approval for 35 two storey dwellings. The majority of the dwellings will be accessed from an approved road associated with application no. P13/V2359/RM which in turn takes access from High Street. Three dwellings will have access via a separate single point of access directly from High Street.
- 2.2 Following queries and design issues raised by officers the scheme has been revised to clarify the red line site area and other land within the applicant's control (blue land). There have also been revisions to the layout including the parking arrangements, positions of garages and some dwellings and in seeking to address the relationship with proposed and permitted adjoining open space. The applicant's agent trusts that the

current plans be considered as the “fixed” scheme and that it can be presented to planning committee.

- 2.3 The proposed layout consists of dwellings fronting a permitted road serving the wider permitted housing scheme with parking between the proposed dwellings and set back behind the house frontages in an attempt to limit its visual impact in the street scene. Two cul-de-sacs are proposed off the main estate road and these will serve the affordable housing associated parking and leading directly to the open space and a proposed attenuation pond between the site and the A420.
- 2.4 The proposal provides a mix of dwellings sizes with 4 x 1-bedroom flats, 15 x 2-bedroom houses, 13 x 3-bedroom houses and 3 x 4-bedroom houses. 40% (14 dwellings) of the dwellings are proposed as affordable dwellings (plots 7 to 9, 21 to 27 and 32 to 35).
- 2.5 Sixty-three parking spaces are allocated to the dwellings with a further 13 being unallocated visitor spaces.
- 2.6 The application is accompanied by a number of supporting documents, which are as follows:-
- Design and Access Statement
  - Planning statement
  - Utility and drainage report
  - Ecology update
  - Noise assessment
  - Air quality assessment
  - Brownfield v greenfield assessment
  - Archaeological desk based assessment
  - Highways technical memo
  - Soakaway and ground monitoring investigations
  - Flood Risk Assessment
  - Ecology & tree survey
  - Landscape & Visual Impact assessment
- 2.7 A site location plan is **attached** at Appendix 1.

### 3.0 SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS

- 3.1 Below is a summary of the responses received to both the original plans and the amendments. A full copy of all the comments made can be viewed online at [www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk](http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk).

Parish Council	<p>Strongly Object</p> <p>The Parish Council’s objections may be summarised as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Previous permission was granted because it included the care facilities and partly because the District has a short fall in such facilities</li> <li>• The reasons given for granting permission were partially due to the amenities to be provided and</li> </ul>
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	<p>the employment opportunities provided by the proposed care facilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The developer has provided no justification for not providing the care facilities now</li> <li>• Results in a significant loss of employment opportunities for local people whereas construction jobs are temporary and may not include local people</li> <li>• Without jobs being created residents will need to commute to work</li> <li>• Not a sustainable development with the reduction in employment opportunities</li> <li>• Inadequate capacity at the primary school</li> <li>• Nursery school places are at capacity</li> <li>• Together with increased population at the Defence Academy the proposal will place increased pressure on schooling, medical facilities and amenities</li> <li>• Increased traffic and strain on parking</li> <li>• Parking at local amenities in Shrivenham and at the Co-op is under strain</li> <li>• Cumulative impacts need to be considered</li> <li>• Increase in housing in the village by some 87% is overdevelopment</li> </ul> <p>Their full comments are <b><u>attached</u></b> at Appendix 2.</p>
<p>Neighbours</p>	<p>Letters of objection have been received from 28 local addresses (some people have written twice or more). The concerns expressed may be summarised as flows:</p> <p>Principle</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Permission was granted in the first place because of the jobs the care facilities would create for local people. This proposal offers nothing in return</li> <li>• It seems the developer never had any intention of providing the care facilities; they should provide the development already permitted</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The number of dwellings now proposed will overwhelm the village</li> <li>• Loss of jobs the care facilities would have brought</li> <li>• The permitted care facilities are needed</li> <li>• Watchfield has sufficient housing</li> </ul> <p>Highway</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased traffic over roads that are narrow due to on street parking; this will result in congestion and be harmful to safety</li> <li>• Inadequate parking space proposed</li> <li>• Site is too far from amenities which will encourage car use</li> <li>• Result in further road damage</li> <li>• A420 is already over stretched</li> </ul> <p>Design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overdevelopment</li> <li>• Proposed buildings are out of character</li> <li>• Should be more recreational space on site</li> </ul> <p>Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spoil the area</li> <li>• Need more open space instead of housing</li> <li>• Unsuitable development on the edge of the village</li> </ul> <p>Infrastructure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inadequate facilities in the village for this 80% increase in housing in the village</li> <li>• Insufficient school places</li> <li>• Nursery places are difficult to find</li> <li>• Doctors surgery is full</li> <li>• Inadequate foul drainage capacity</li> </ul> <p>A letter has been received from a local resident who has no objection to the proposal</p>
<p>Councillor Constance</p>	<p>Councillor Constance has written in her capacity as local member for Shrivenham Division (which includes Cowan's Camp in Watchfield) and as Chairman of</p>

	<p>Oxfordshire's Health and Overview Scrutiny Cttee (HOSC) to object to any relaxation of the requirement to deliver extra-care housing in the development at Cowan's Camp.</p> <p>The need for extra-care housing is a priority in Oxfordshire and that has not changed. Making proper provision for and ageing population is paramount and we at OCC (adult social services) and HOSC are aware that this is an important need to be met. Every opportunity to provide for independent living for the elderly and aged must be realised, and this was carefully assessed as a suitable site at the grant of planning permission, and nothing has changed that need. Far from relaxing the requirements we favour imposing the requirement on all suitable developments in the VWHDC</p>
<p>Oxfordshire County Council One Voice</p>	<p>No overall objection</p> <p><u>Transport</u> No objection subject to conditions relating to access, vision splays, car parking, new estate roads, a travel plan, Construction Traffic Management Plan and SUDs.</p> <p>The development will have a negligible impact on the operation of surrounding road network. Parking is adequate. A Section 106 contribution will be required for the enhancement of bus services. A travel information pack will be required.</p> <p>Financial contributions of £35,000 towards the Swindon – Oxford bus service enhancement is requested</p> <p><u>Archaeology</u> No objection - The application area contains no known archaeological sites or features. There are no archaeological constraints to this application.</p> <p><u>Education</u> No objection subject to contributions as follows:- - £103,891 for necessary expansion of</p>

	<p>permanent primary school capacity in the area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- £117,644 for necessary expansion of permanent secondary school capacity in the area.</li><li>- £5,329 as a proportionate contribution to expansion of Special Educational Needs provision in the area.</li></ul> <p><u>Property</u> No objection. They note that the site plan conflicts with County Council owned Highway. Financial contributions as follows are sought;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Library £6,994.65</li><li>- Central Library £1,411.27</li><li>- Waste Management £5,266.56</li><li>- Museum Resource Centre £411.45</li><li>- Adult Day Care £7,535</li><li>- Monitoring fee £3,750.</li></ul> <p>Suggested an informative relating to sprinkler systems in new dwellings.</p> <p><u>Ecology</u> Should seek advice from the District Council ecology advisor</p> <p><u>Commissioning Manager (Housing ) – Extra Care Accommodation</u> I had previously submitted a general letter of support (to the agent acting for the potential applicant) on the need for extra care housing in the wider locality served by the original application. However, having later visited the actual site I withdrew my support for any affordable extra care housing on the proposed site which I felt to be too remote from necessary community services. In addition, since my original letter of support, the need for extra care housing in the particular locality has been served by an agreed development of 45 units at Southmoor and a planned 60 unit development at Faringdon. Consequently, I have no objection to the change of use in the revised application regarding the removal of extra care housing for the above reasons. However, there is a need generally for other forms of retirement housing in the area which should look to meet the</p>
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Vale of White Horse District Council – Committee Report – 17 June 2015

	<p>needs of more active and independent older people , the majority of who are owner occupiers and may be looking for good quality retirement housing to encourage them to ‘downsize’ and release their under-occupied properties for other purchasers. Therefore I would prefer if the extra care housing use could be substituted for a general retirement housing use as described above.</p> <p>I also had no objection to the proposed care home use for people with learning disabilities in the original application and equally I have no objection to its removal in the revised application.</p>
Thames Water	<p>Waste Comments: Thames Water has identified an inability of the existing waste water infrastructure to accommodate the needs of this application, therefore recommended a Grampian condition for a drainage strategy to be submitted and approved prior to commencement.</p> <p>Water Comments: recommend an informative be attached to any permission stating that Thames Water will aim to provide customers with a minimum pressure of 10m head (approx.. 1 bar) and a flow rate of 9 litres/minute at the point where it leaves Thames Waters pipes.</p> <p>On waste they state permission for 4 units has been agreed prior to understanding the detailed infrastructure improvements needed for the site</p>
Health and Housing Team – contaminated land	No objection subject to conditions requiring a phased contaminated land risk assessment although intrusive investigation will not be necessary
Health & Housing team – environmental protection	No objection
Environmental Protection Team	No objection subject to a condition requiring noise attenuation for the dwellings
Waste Team	Seek a contribution of £170 per dwelling towards waste collection services for this development
Countryside Officer	No objection



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<p>Housing Development team</p>	<p>Has some comments to make on the affordable housing: 2 x 1 bed flats are included for shared ownership however there is little, if any demand in rural areas for one beds as most shared ownership purchasers are looking for two-bedroomed units</p> <p>It does seem that the plots 32 - 35 (which include the 2 x 1 bed S/O flats and 2 x 1 bed flats for rent) have their own street entrances- avoiding a communal entrance - which is much preferable as it reduces service charge and management issues, however there is a single shared amenity space and the two tenures are in the same block. RPs have advised that for housing management/maintenance purposes it is easier if shared ownership can be retained within separate terraces, pairs of semis etc. I would suggest that the two one-bed S/O flats are changed to 2 x 2 bed houses for shared ownership and that the 2 x 1 bed flats for rent are separated from the shared ownership units - but still retain direct street access as flats or even one- bed houses - ideally with a small garden space each. The other two 2 bed houses for shared ownership (currently shown each attached to a rented unit as pairs of semis) should be a pair of semis together with the two rented 2 bed houses as another pair of semis. The affordable units appear to form one side of this piece of land with the market housing down the other side. I can see that on the original application there are a few affordable units that face on to this site so the location of this additional affordable housing may have been to avoid creating too much of a cluster, however there is scope for the AH units to be more evenly distributed on this part of the site if a few of the units were located at the High Street end. This might also take some of the rented units away from such close proximity to the Attenuation Pond.</p>
<p>Planning Policy team</p>	<p>Support the proposal in principle</p>
<p>Landscape Architect</p>	<p>The proposed change from the proposed care facility and learning disability unit to residential development will have little change on the Landscape Character and</p>

	<p>Visual impact of the proposed development.          However, the proposed layout is not acceptable. The build form does not relate to the proposed POS. The change in proposed built form should also mean that the proposed POS and interface should be redesigned to respect these changes.          The proposals are car dominated with parking and turning heads forming the interface with the POS.          This is not helped by the proposed planting and layout of the POS. The attenuation pond in association with the land modelling which runs along the housing boundary effective cuts off the housing area from the wider POS and its associated footpath.          The plans show long lines bollards adjacent to the hard surface which would be visually unattractive. The proposed planting shows the majority of the boundary between the housing area and the POS to be hedged with Prunus lusitanica a very large and quick growing evergreen plant. This will again affect the interface between the housing and POS, restrict visibility and informal supervision of the POS and be a maintenance problem in the future.          The proposals leave very limited space for street tree planting, small species such as Malus are proposed. Although the tree is labelled as Malus Snowmound it is keyed Malus tschonoskii. Could the proposed species be confirmed? Native trees should be used within the POS.          The planting on the site frontage with the High Street should reflect the tree planting opposite and large tree species are required.</p>
Environment Agency	No objection
Drainage Engineer	The revised flood risk assessment is sufficient to remove the previous holding objection. Recommends a condition requiring a detailed drainage scheme.

4.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

4.1 P13/V2359/RM - Approved (04/08/2014)

Reserved Matters application approved following Outline permission P12/V2283/O

4.2 P12/V2283/O - Approved (04/08/2014)

Residential development for up to 100 dwellings; provision of Extra Care Housing comprising 50 No. apartments to meet the needs of the elderly (Class C2); provision of two Learning Disability Homes comprising 17 No. bedrooms in total (Class C2); together with means of access.

5.0 **POLICY & GUIDANCE**

5.1 **Vale of White Horse District Council Local Plan 2011**

The development plan for this area comprises the adopted Vale of White Horse local plan 2011. The following local plan policies relevant to this application were 'saved' by direction on 1 July 2009.

Policy No.	Policy Title
GS1	Developments in Existing Settlements
GS2	Development in the Countryside
DC1	Design
DC3	Design against crime
DC5	Access
DC6	Landscaping
DC7	Waste Collection and Recycling
DC8	The Provision of Infrastructure and Services
DC9	The Impact of Development on Neighbouring Uses
DC12	Water quality and resources
DC13	Flood Risk and Water Run-off
DC14	Flood Risk and Water Run-off
H11	Development in the Larger Villages
H15	Housing Densities
H16	Size of Dwelling and Lifetime Homes
H17	Affordable Housing
H23	Open Space in New Housing Development
HE10	Archaeology
NE9	The Lowland vale

**Emerging Local Plan 2031 – Part 1**

5.2 The draft local plan part 1 is not currently adopted policy. It has not been subject to Examination and policies remain subject to objections. Paragraph 216 of the NPPF allows for weight to be given to relevant policies in emerging plans, unless other material considerations indicate otherwise, and only subject to the stage of preparation of the plan, the extent of unresolved objections and the degree of consistency of the relevant emerging policies with the NPPF. At present it is officers' opinion that the emerging Local Plan housing policies carry limited weight for decision making. The relevant policies are as follows:-

Policy No.	Policy Title
Core Policy 1	Presumption in favour of sustainable development
Core Policy 2	Co-operation on unmet housing need for Oxfordshire
Core Policy 3	Settlement hierarchy
Core Policy 4	Meeting our housing needs
Core Policy 5	Housing supply ring-fence
Core Policy 7	Providing supporting infrastructure and services
Core Policy 20	Spatial strategy for Western Vale Sub-Area
Core Policy 22	Housing mix
Core Policy 23	Housing density
Core Policy 24	Affordable housing

Core Policy 33	Promoting sustainable transport and accessibility
Core Policy 35	Promoting public transport, cycling and walking
Core Policy 36	Electronic communications
Core Policy 37	Design and local distinctiveness
Core Policy 38	Design strategies for strategic and major development sites
Core Policy 39	The historic environment
Core Policy 42	Flood risk
Core Policy 43	Natural resources
Core Policy 44	Landscape
Core Policy 45	Green infrastructure
Core Policy 46	Conservation and improvement of biodiversity

### 5.3 Supplementary Planning Guidance

- Design Guide – March 2015
  - The following sections of the Design Guide are particularly relevant to this application:-
  - Responding to Site and Setting*
    - *Character Study (DG6) and Site appraisal (DG9)*
  - Establishing the Framework*
    - *Existing natural resources, sustainability and heritage(DG10-13, 15, 19)*
    - *Landscape and SUDS (DG14, 16-18, 20)*
    - *Movement Framework and street hierarchy (DG21-24)*
    - *Density (DG26)*
    - *Urban Structure (blocks, frontages, nodes etc) DG27-30*
  - Layout*
    - *Streets and Spaces (DG31-43)*
    - *Parking (DG44-50)*
  - Built Form*
    - *Scale, form, massing and position (DG51-54)*
    - *Boundary treatments (DG55)*
    - *Building Design (DG56-62)*
    - *Amenity, privacy and overlooking (DG63-64)*
    - *Refuse and services (DG67-68)*
- Open space, sport and recreation future provision – July 2008
- Sustainable Design and Construction – December 2009
- Affordable Housing – July 2006
- Flood Maps and Flood Risk – July 2006
- Planning and Public Art – July 2006

### 5.4 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – March 2012

### 5.5 National Planning Practice Guidance 2014 (NPPG)

### 5.6 Other Relevant Legislation

- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act) 1990
- Community & Infrastructure Levy Legislation Human Rights Act 1998
- Equality Act 2010
- Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006
- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010
- Localism Act (including New Homes Bonus)

### 5.7 Human Rights Act

The provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998 have been taken into account in the processing of the application and the preparation of this report.

**5.8 Equalities**

In determining this planning application the Council has regard to its equalities obligations including its obligations under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010.

**6.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

The relevant planning considerations in the determination of this application are:

1. Principle of the development
2. Use of Land
3. Locational Credentials
4. Affordable Housing and Housing Mix
5. Design and Layout
6. Residential Amenity
7. Landscape and Visual Impact
8. Open Space and Landscaping
9. Flood Risk and Surface/Foul Drainage
10. Traffic, Parking and Highway Safety
11. Protected Species and Biodiversity
12. Viability and Developer Contributions

**The Principle of Development**

- 6.1 Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Section 70 (2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 provides that the local planning authority shall have regard to the provisions of the development plan, so far as material to the application, and to any other material considerations. The development plan currently comprises the saved policies of Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011. Paragraph 215 of the NPPF provides that due weight should be given to relevant policies in existing plans according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).
- 6.2 Other material planning considerations include national planning guidance within the NPPF and NPPG and the emerging Vale of White Horse Local Plan: Part 1-Strategic Sites and Policies and its supporting evidence base.
- 6.3 Paragraph 47 of the NPPF expects local planning authorities to *"use their evidence base to ensure that their Local Plan meets the full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the housing market area"*... The authority has undertaken this assessment through the April 2014 SHMA which is the most up to date objectively assessed need for housing. In agreeing to submit the emerging Local Plan for examination, the Council has agreed a housing target of at least 20,560 dwellings for the plan period to 2031. Set against this target the Council does not have a five year housing land supply.
- 6.4 Paragraph 49 of the NPPF states *"Housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up-to-date if the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites"*. This means that the relevant housing policies in the adopted Local Plan are not considered up to date

and the adverse impacts of a development would need to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits if the proposal is refused. In order to judge whether a development is sustainable it must be assessed against the economic, social and environmental roles.

- 6.5 Policy GS1 of the adopted Local Plan provides a strategy for locating development concentrated at the five major towns but with small scale development within the built up areas of villages provided that important areas of open land and their rural character are protected. In terms of a hierarchy for allocating development this strategy is consistent with the NPPF, as is the intention to protect the character of villages. This site benefits from planning permission for a housing development but with care facilities on this particular part of the site. The proposal is within an area permitted for development.
- 6.6 Planning permission exists for a housing development on the wider Cowans Camp site but with that scheme permitting care facilities in the form of elderly persons accommodation and accommodation for disabled persons on this particular part of the site. In presenting application no. P12/V2283/O to planning committee the planning officer's report stated:  
*"in light of the current shortfall in the five year housing land supply, the proposal is considered acceptable on the basis of the following:*
- *Character - the site is adjacent to, and a fill-in site, between the built-up area of the village and the A420. The site is also naturally contained on all sides apart from the south side. As a result, there will only be a limited landscape impact.*
  - *Sustainability – The site is adjacent to the village with good access to roads, public transport, schooling, sports facilities and shops within a reasonable distance.*
  - *Employment – the creation of circa 50 new jobs, potentially for local people is considered to add merit to the application.*
  - *Elderly care provision – it is recognised at a national, county and district level that the provision of additional elderly care facilities is an important strategic aim. The application accords with that aim".*
- 6.7 The current application needs to be considered on its own merits. The Parish Council and local residents concerns regarding loss of employment and care facilities are understandable. The site is currently vacant and employment and or care facilities are not physically being lost as no such opportunities or facilities exist on the site and there is no obligation on a developer to provide them. The site remains an accessible location for housing being acceptably close to local services and facilities including employment opportunities. The site is mostly previously developed land and therefore, a preferred location for housing development in accordance with the NPPF. A developer is under no obligation to provide the care facilities and the County Council advises that for affordable care facilities this site is too remote from services and moreover, need for this area is now met through new developments in Faringdon and Southmoor.
- 6.8 The relevant housing policies of the adopted and emerging local plan hold very limited material planning weight in light of the lack of a 5 year housing supply. Consequently the proposal should be assessed under the NPPF where there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Sustainable development is seen as the golden thread running through the decision making process. Having a deliverable 5 year housing supply is considered sustainable under the 3 strands. Therefore, with the lack of a 5 year housing supply, and this being mostly previously developed land adjoining a permitted scheme of housing, the proposal is acceptable in principle unless any adverse impacts can be identified that would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of meeting this objective.

**Cumulative Impact**

6.9 The NPPF does not suggest that populations of settlements should be limited in some way or not be expanded by any particular figure. It expects housing to be boosted significantly. Some local residents consider the proposal will overwhelm the village. Adding a further 35 dwellings to this site and to the village is considered reasonable in principle. Pressures on infrastructure can be addressed in part through appropriate financial contributions and through planning conditions. The highway authority is not raising any concerns in response to increased traffic movements.

**Use of Land**

6.10 The NPPF encourages the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided that it is not of high environmental value (paragraph 17). This site has limited environmental value and the loss of this land to housing is outweighed by economic, social and environmental benefits.

**Locational Credentials**

6.11 The NPPF requires the need to travel to be minimised and the use of sustainable transport modes to be maximised (paragraph 34).

6.12 The site adjoins the Shrivenham Hundred Business Park and the Defence Academy is approximately 1200m distant and both of these sites could provide employment opportunities. Shops and other services exist in Watchfield including those at the Watchfield roundabout (approximately 950m away), a primary school (approximately 950m away by road). A regular bus service passes through Watchfield providing access to Shrivenham and beyond to Swindon and Faringdon with their wider choice of services and employment opportunities. The walking distances to key facilities in the village are greater than 400m which is a desirable distance according to the Institution of Highways Transportation guidelines for providing for journeys on foot (2000) but which does also advise distances up to 800m are acceptable and up to 1200m are a preferred maximum.

**Affordable housing and housing mix**

6.13 The application makes provision for 40 % affordable housing which accords with Policy H17 of the adopted Local Plan. The proposed affordable housing mix and tenure split is shown in the table below.

	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4+ bed	Total
Rent	2	4	3	1	10
Shared Ownership	2	2			4
Total	4	6	3	1	14
SHMA	27.3%	35.1%	33.6%	3.9%	
SHMA expectation	3.8	4.9	4.7	0.5	

6.14 Policy H16 of the Adopted Local Plan requires 50% of houses to have two beds or less. However, as stipulated at paragraph 47 of the NPPF this policy is out of date as it is not based on recent assessments of housing need. The Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2014 (SHMA) is the most recent assessment and estimates the following open market dwelling requirement by number of bedrooms (2011 to 2031) for the District:

	1 bed	2 beds	3 beds	4+ beds
SHMA	5.9%	21.7%	42.6%	29.8%
Proposal	0	9	10	2
SHMA expectation	1.2	4.5	8.9	6.2

6.15 Affordable housing in terms of mix is close to the expected SHMA expectation. The housing officer's concerns are noted but as this mix is only slightly amiss from the SHMA expectation and is balanced towards smaller units, in this case the mix is considered reasonable.

6.16 In terms of market housing the mix provides a greater number of smaller units which can then permit better use of this previously developed site. The variation from the SHMA mix needs to be considered against the economic, social and environmental benefits which in this case are considered to outweigh the limited conflict with the SHMA.

**Design and Layout**

6.17 The NPPF provides that planning decisions should address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment (paragraph 60). It gives considerable weight to good design and acknowledges it is a key component of sustainable development.

6.18 A number of local plan policies seek to ensure high quality developments and to protect the amenities of neighbouring properties (Policies DC1, DC6, DC9). In March 2015 the council adopted its design guide, which aims to raise the standard of design across the district. The assessment below is set out in logical sections similar to those in the design guide.

*Site, Setting and Framework*

6.19 The design and access statement (DAS) (as updated on 31 March 2015) fails to mention this Council's previous Residential Design Guide or the current adopted Design Guide. Instead it uses Building for Life 12 as a tick box exercise for assessing the proposal. The DAS includes a limited character study, context appraisal and site appraisal and does not explain how the proposal responds to local character or how the house designs respond to the photographs of dwellings used in the DAS.

6.20 In this case the site its setting is heavily influenced by the extant planning permission for 100 dwellings on adjacent land which in effect cocoon this site.

6.21 Principle DG26 of the design guide states that density should be appropriate to the location, and it requires a range of densities for larger development proposals. Policy H15 of the adopted local plan requires densities of at least 30 dwellings per hectare. The application proposes a density of some 31 dwellings per hectare which is reasonable and reflective of the density of development for the permitted adjacent housing scheme. This density is acceptable subject to the layout of the development.

*Spatial Layout*

6.22 As mentioned above the site is influenced by the extant planning permission for housing on adjacent land. That approved scheme has access from High Street and this proposal provides a frontage to this permitted spine road in the form of detached, semi detached and terraced two-storey dwellings with parking spaces between them. This housing pattern reflects that on the opposite side of the permitted spine road. The proposal also provides 3 dwellings fronting High Street which are accessed by their



own drive directly from High Street. Providing an active frontage to High Street is acceptable. The proposal provides dwellings at the corners of the proposed cul-de-sacs with active frontage to the highways and this is acceptable.

- 6.23 The boundary hedge to High Street is to be retained but the verge is to be lost to visitor parking. In this context of a developed area which lacks rural character this is reasonable.
- 6.24 There is a hierarchy of streets through the provision of the permitted spine road into the site from High Street and a lower order of the two cul-de-sacs and the 'private' drive with direct access to High Street. Traffic calming is provided via rumble strips, raised tables and changes in surface treatment.
- 6.25 In terms of the main spine road and houses fronting on to it the proposal accords with design guide principle DG28 in that it creates a sense of enclosure, with buildings close to the street. Fronts generally face fronts along this spine road with parking between dwellings in an effort to hide them. However, in entering the site a visitor would be aware of parking on the High Street frontage, faced with a parking space on entering the site and the parking at plot 5 and the parking between dwellings on the eastern side of the spine road which is part of the permitted scheme. This pattern of visible parking is common through the main spine road and throughout this proposal including alongside the open space and there is limited scope for planting in the streets to soften the effect. This is inappropriate.
- 6.26 The development provides for pedestrians through the provision of footpaths either side of the spine road. Links to the proposed open space to the west are available via the cul-de-sacs although these are not particularly inviting with the cul-de-sacs being dominated by parking areas particularly the southerly cul-de-sac and the link leading to the attenuation pond is not an inviting entrance to the open space.
- 6.27 Opportunities for tree planting and soft landscaping are limited within the site which would result in a hard urban form of development contrary to Design Guide principle DG33.
- 6.28 The proposal does not provide any on site play space. An area of open space is included in the site area but this is dominated by an attenuation pond and would not be appropriate useable open space. The permitted scheme for this site and the wider area of adjacent land includes a large area of open space between the development and the A420. A planning condition could ensure this open space is provided.
- 6.29 The proposal includes dwellings that would overlook and provide surveillance of these open spaces with some limited defensible space in front of them. However, the relationship of the proposed development to this space is particularly poor with the boundary to the open space being dominated by turning heads and parking and back garden fences creating an unattractive environment visible to future users of the open space. This inappropriate treatment of the development edge conflicts with principle DG29 of the Design Guide.
- 6.30 The affordable housing is not dispersed through the site but lined along the western boundary and with the sides and frontages of these properties littered with car parking spaces. Some of the parking spaces such as those adjacent to plots 9 and 27 and in the respective turning head lack surveillance. There is also a 'left over' piece of ground separating parking spaces for plots 24 and 25 and visitor parking close to plot 27. The purpose of this space is unknown and is a further example of the poor design.

- 6.31 The layout suggests this site is inappropriate for 35 dwellings being an over development. This harm needs to be balanced against the benefits of this proposal.

*Built form*

- 6.32 The proposed dwellings in terms of their heights and external appearance are reflective of the house types already permitted in the extant planning permission scheme for adjacent land. They resemble in appearance features and scale of more modern dwellings in the village. This site is outside the conservation area and has no impact on its setting. In this location the external appearance of the dwellings is reasonable.

**Residential Amenity**

- 6.33 Adopted local plan policy DC9 seeks to prevent development that would result in a loss of privacy, daylight or sunlight for neighbouring properties or that would cause dominance or visual intrusion for neighbouring properties and the wider environment. Protecting amenity is a core principle of the NPPF. Design principles DG63-64 of the Design Guide pertain to amenity, privacy and overlooking.
- 6.34 There are no existing residential neighbours to this site, as they will be separated by the permitted housing on adjacent land. Therefore, no unreasonable overlooking of existing neighbours occurs. Even if the permitted housing was not to be built the distances and tree screening on the Star Lane boundary would ensure no unreasonable overlooking or over shadowing would result. Back to back distances between the proposed dwellings is in some cases approximately 20m which is approximately 1m short of the expected standards in the Design Guide.
- 6.35 The proposed flats (plots 32-35) are allocated a communal garden. The external works layout plan includes storage sheds in this space and space for waste bins. A previous edition of the external works plan also showed four rotary clothes driers filling the remaining space. This communal garden arrangement is less than ideal and users would have limited individual privacy in using the space. Overlooking of the space is avoided as the flats have no windows in the rear (west) facing facade. On their own these concerns are insufficient to justify a reason for refusal but together with other concerns it calls in to question the suitability of the layout and whether this site can reasonably accommodate 35 dwellings.

**Landscape and Visual Impact**

- 6.36 The NPPF seeks to enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes (paragraph 109). This is not a valued landscape in NPPF terms. The site is part of the wider Lowland Vale landscape. In this context of an edge of village location with development permitted 'around' the site, the A420 to the west and a business park to the north and limited views across the site, the landscape impact is reasonable and not contrary to policy NE9 of the adopted local plan. However, concern with regard to the design of this scheme remains.

**Open Space, Landscaping and Trees**

- 6.37 Adopted Local Plan Policy H23 of the adopted Local Plan requires a minimum of 15% of the residential area to be laid out as open space. As mentioned already the proposal includes some 'green' space as part of the application site but this is dominated by an attenuation pond. This would not provide adequate open space for the proposal in accordance with policy H23.
- 6.38 There are no trees on site and few landscape features with the main feature being the hedge on the High Street frontage. Scope for planting throughout the site is extremely limited. The proposal will have an urban form with little opportunity for softening landscaping. The only spaces available are areas left as a result of the layout

arrangement rather than planned spaces and where they do occur there is little opportunity for planting that could soften this proposal.

- 6.39 The permitted scheme for 100 dwellings provides a large open space between the A420 and the permitted housing site. This land is within the control of the current applicant. The current proposal is a standalone application and if permitted could be built even if the developer decided not to construct the 100 dwellings. It would be possible to impose a condition requiring a developer to provide open space on land immediately to the west of the site and within the applicants control and this would provide adequate open space in addition to the attenuation pond for drainage.

#### **Flood Risk and Surface/Foul Drainage**

- 6.40 The NPPF provides that development should not increase flood risk elsewhere and should be appropriately flood resilient and resistant (paragraph 103). It states that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by, amongst other things, preventing both new and existing development from contributing to or being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution (Paragraph 109).
- 6.41 Adopted local plan policy DC9 provides that new development will not be permitted if it would unacceptably harm the amenities of neighbouring properties or the wider environment in terms of, amongst other things, pollution and contamination. Policy DC12 provides that development will not be permitted if it would adversely affect the quality of water resources as a result of, amongst other things, waste water discharge. Policies DC13 and 14 are not considered to be consistent with the NPPF, because they do not comply with paragraphs 100 to 104 which require a sequential approach to locating development and provide that flood risk should not be increased elsewhere.
- 6.42 In this case the application is not supported by a contamination survey. The Council has granted permission for care facilities on this site and as there are no changes in circumstances in terms of ground conditions, contamination is not considered an obstacle. Like the outline permission for developing this site soil remediation can be dealt with by condition.
- 6.43 The drainage bodies have no objections and appropriate surface water drainage include SUDS and foul and waste water drainage can be provided and secured by Grampian style condition as is the case with the extant permission for developing this site.

#### **Traffic, Parking and Highway Safety**

- 6.44 Adopted local plan policy DC5 requires safe access for developments and that the road network can accommodate the traffic arising from the development safely. The NPPF (Paragraph 32) requires plans and decision to take account of whether:-
- the opportunities for sustainable transport modes have been taken up depending on the nature and location of the site, to reduce the need for major transport infrastructure;
  - safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all people; and
  - improvements can be undertaken within the transport network that cost effectively limit the significant impacts of the development.
- 6.45 Paragraph 32 goes on to state: *“Development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe.”*
- 6.46 The highway authority has not raised any concerns. Access to High Street has already been permitted through the previous planning approvals for this site. Circumstances

have not changed. The highway authority has not raised any concerns in respect of the modest increase in traffic that this proposal could generate in comparison to the approved scheme or to the cumulative impacts of increased traffic including those that would access the A420.

- 6.47 Part of the application site in the north west corner where the site meets High Street is seemingly controlled by the County Council. This is not a highway safety matter but one of land ownership. The applicant has served notice on the County Council.

#### **Ecology and Biodiversity**

- 6.48 Paragraph 117 of the NPPF refers to the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats, whilst Paragraph 118 sets out the basis for determination of planning applications. Paragraph 118 states that “...*if significant harm resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused...*”
- 6.49 The application is supported by a letter from an ecologist that updates the ecology reports previously submitted for the site. This confirms the development has no unreasonable impact for biodiversity including Great Crested Newt that inhabit a pond on site. The newts are being translocated as part of the planning permission for developing the site and a planning condition can continue to require this. The buildings formerly on site were used by roosting bats but the buildings have now been demolished in accordance with the wider approved scheme for this site and neighbouring land.
- 6.50 The attenuation pond and margins allow an opportunity for biodiversity enhancement which could be secured by condition.

#### **Archaeology**

- 6.51 Policy HE10 of the adopted Local Plan states that development will not be permitted if it would cause damage to the site or setting of nationally important archaeological remains, whether scheduled or not. The County Council archaeologist confirms that the site contains no known archaeological sites or features and that there are no archaeological constraints to this application.

#### **Viability, affordable housing and Section 106 contributions**

- 6.52 The NPPF advises that planning obligations should only be sought where they meet all of the following tests (paragraph 204):
- i) Necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;
  - ii) Directly related to the development; and
  - iii) Fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.
- Policy DC8 of the Adopted Local Plan provides that development will only be permitted where the necessary physical infrastructure and service requirements to support the development can be secured.
- 6.53 As discussed above, the application provides for 40% of the dwellings as affordable housing.
- 6.54 On 6 April 2015 a change in legislation was introduced by the Government which now prevents the pooling of more than five financial contributions to any one infrastructure project. Consequently this rules out requests for contributions towards Faringdon Community College, Special Educational Needs, Wantage library, the central library, waste management, museum resources and adult day care in Wantage and improving the bus service along the A420 route.

- 6.55 Watchfield Parish Council has requested the contributions to village infrastructure improvements that are summarised in their letter dated 1 May 2015 (**Appendix 3**). The applicant is not prepared to provide contributions towards the drainage issues at the sports field, as these have not been caused by this development and consequently are not relevant to this development. Officers agree that this issue is not directly related to this development and a contribution should not therefore be sought. The applicant advises the new Village Hall does not appear to have planning consent nor a site; the contributions made must be necessary, robust and CIL compliant, and therefore the applicant does not accept this item. Officers disagree in that the development could put increased pressure on the village hall requiring its improvement which could include an extension. Should permission be granted a contribution should be sought. The contribution towards a new footpath surface is accepted by the applicant but suggest this must be apportioned with 4% of £2500 being £100 making the total £1060. Officers consider this reasonable. The applicant considers contributions towards sporting infrastructure and other recreational facilities such as multi sports, youth facilities, tennis, green spaces, allotments etc are District matters but are prepared to contribute pro rata figures. Officers consider the Parish is entitled to request reasonable contributions to these infrastructure improvements, as facilities the Parish has responsibility for.
- 6.56 An art contribution is not being requested.
- 6.57 With the above in mind the following developer contributions are considered fair and proportionate and should be subject to a legal agreement to secure them should planning permission be granted:-

<b>Vale of White Horse District Council</b>	<i>Proposed Contributions</i>
Sports and Recreation	To be confirmed
Off Site public open space maintenance	To be confirmed
Waste Collection	£5,950
Street Naming and numbering	To be confirmed
Parish Council:	
• Grass pitch provision in the village	£12,938
• Multi sports court provision in Watchfield	£8,000
• Youth facilities in Watchfield	£6,960
• Tennis courts in the village	£8,640
• Amenity green space	£5,400
• Natural green space	£5,400
• Parks & gardens	£5,400
• Allotments	£2,697.50
• Artificial turf	£1,916
• Formal play space provision	£21,883
• Sports pavilion on the recreation ground	£6,723
• Village hall improvements	£10,466
• Additional benches	£1,120
• Surfacing a footpath beside the churchyard and recreation ground & a barrier to separate cyclists and pedestrians	£2,020

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Additional equipment for children's play groups, the Acorn Club &amp; Friendly club</li> </ul>	£570.82
<b>Total</b>	<b>£114,842.32</b>
<b>Oxfordshire County Council</b>	
	<i>Proposed Contributions</i>
Watchfield Primary School	£103,891
<b>Total</b>	<b>£103,891</b>
<b>Overall Total</b>	<b>£103,891</b>

## 7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 In view of the council's housing land supply shortfall, the presumption in favour of sustainable development applies and permission should be granted unless *“any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole”* (NPPF paragraph 14). Paragraph 7 of NPPF identifies three mutually dependant dimensions to sustainable development; it should fulfil an economic role, a social role and an environmental role.
- 7.2 The proposed development would perform an economic role, at least in the short term, in that it would provide employment during the construction phase. It would also create investment in the local and wider economy through the construction stage and new residents and their spend. Through increasing the housing stock, it would contribute to an expansion of the local housing market and could potentially improve the affordability of open market housing. In the Highworth Road, Faringdon appeal case (proposed up to 94 dwellings) it is noted that the Secretary of State considered that the *“benefits of the scheme would include the provision of much needed market and affordable housing to contribute towards acknowledged substantial shortfalls, and would generate considerable economic benefits of the type arising from housing development”* and that he gave these benefits significant weight (application no. P13/V1366/O, appeal reference APP/V3120/A/13/2210891).
- 7.3 The scheme would have a social role as it will provide in general additional housing that the District needs together with much needed affordable housing units. Whilst the housing mix does not strictly meet the SHMA the emphasis of this proposal is on providing two and three bedroom dwellings and this marginal variation from the SHMA is outweighed by the benefits of providing smaller units and by the economic benefits.
- 7.4 The proposal will have some very limited environmental implications resulting from localised landscape harm and loss of a newt pond. This limited harm has already been accepted by this authority in permitting development on this site and the limited harm is outweighed by the benefits and mitigation for newts can be secured by condition and this has already been accepted in granting the earlier extant planning permission.
- 7.5 Harm has been identified in terms of design, including a number of other elements of the design which are deemed unsatisfactory and which cumulatively result in inappropriate design. In accordance with paragraph 56 of the NPPF great importance is given to the design which is a key aspect of sustainable development. The elements of the design also call in to question the suitability of the site for 35 dwellings and indicate

that the proposal comprises overdevelopment. Lacking a five year land supply and the economic and social benefits of new housing do not mean the Council has to accept poor design. In this case the social benefits of the proposal in terms of providing good living conditions are eroded by the poor design, as are any environmental benefits in design terms. The remaining benefits are not considered to override the disbenefits of the design.

7.6 The proposal fails to represent sustainable development as it lacks key aspects of the social and environmental roles expected by the NPPF. There is no presumption in favour of this proposal. Although the NPPF seeks to boost significantly the supply of housing (paragraph 47) it does not seek to do so at all costs. Officers consider that the social and environmental impacts are adverse and this adverse impact can be given great weight in accordance with the NPPF. The harm significantly and demonstrably outweighs the benefits of this proposal. Therefore it is recommended that planning permission be refused.

## 8.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

**It is recommended to refuse planning permission for the following reasons:**

**1: Policy DC1 of the adopted Vale of White Horse Local Plan (2006) seeks to ensure that new development is of high quality and inclusive design including layout, relationships to adjoining buildings and open space. This is supported by policies H23, DC9 and DC13 of the adopted Local Plan, Core policy 37 of the emerging Local Plan 2031 - Part 1, policies in the 2015 adopted Design Guide, and paragraphs 17, 70 and section 7 of the National Planning Policy Framework which provide specific guidance on design. In this case it is considered the proposal represents overdevelopment of the site as is evident from the following characteristics of the development:**

- **A car dominated layout**
- **Inadequate space for landscaping including a lack of planting of height to visually break up the streets**
- **Inappropriate treatment of the development edge of the site against the open space**
- **Overlooking between proposed dwellings including plots 11 to 17 and 21 to 26**
- **Lack of private amenity space for plots 32 - 35**
- **Inadequate surveillance of parking spaces**

**The proposal thereby fails to demonstrate that 35 dwellings can be appropriately accommodated on this site and that the detriment that would be caused by reason of the development being overdevelopment would be a detraction from the character and appearance of the local area.**

**It is considered that the proposal would fail to comply with policies DC1 and DC9 of the adopted Local Plan, Core policy 37 of the emerging Local Plan 2031 - Part 1, policies in the 2015 adopted Design Guide, and paragraph 17 and section 7 of the National Planning Policy Framework.**

**2: In the absence of a s.106 agreement relating to the provision of affordable housing and financial contributions towards sport and recreation facilities, open space provision and maintenance, footpath improvements, education, street naming and waste collections the proposal would place increased pressure on these facilities and fail to provide the social, recreational, and cultural facilities and services the community needs. This is considered contrary to policies DC8**

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**and DC 17 of the adopted Local Plan, policies CP7 and CP24 of the emerging Local Plan 20131 - Pat 1 and paragraphs 17 and 70 of the National Planning Policy Framework.**

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