

APPLICATION NO.	P15/V0729/FUL
APPLICATION TYPE	Full Application
REGISTERED	14.4.2015
PARISH	WANTAGE
WARD MEMBER(S)	Charlotte Dickson, St John Dickson
APPLICANT	Renaissance Retirement Group
SITE	Magistrates Court and Thames Valley Police Station Church Street Wantage Oxfordshire, OX12 8BW
PROPOSAL	Demolition of existing buildings and erection of 32 retirement apartments with associated landscaping and car parking (Drawing Nos: ASP.14.047.001, 002 Rev A, 100 Rev A, 101 Rev A, 102 Rev A, 103 Rev B, 200 Rev B, 201 Rev B, 2020 Rev B, 203 Rev B, 204 Rev B, 205 Rev B, 206, 300, 400 Rev A, 401 Rev A, ASP.BR.047.002, 003 and 004)
AMENDMENTS	As above
GRID REFERENCE	439764/187793
OFFICER	Simon Dunn-Lwin MRTPI

SUMMARY

This application is referred to planning committee as Wantage Town Council objects, and letters of objection from six residents have been received at the time of writing this report.

The proposal is for full planning permission for the development of 32 retirement apartments on the site of the existing magistrates court and police station, following demolition of the existing buildings on site.

The main issues are:

- Whether the site is a suitable location for new retirement housing.
- The impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the conservation area and listed buildings.
- Whether the proposal takes account of site constraints and proposes an appropriate and neighbourly form of development.
- Whether the proposal will impact on highway safety.

This report considers the proposal and evaluates its merits in the context of national and local planning policy framework and all other material planning considerations.

The application proposes the redevelopment of previously developed land, and will help to address special housing needs in the district. The scale and design impact is acceptable in the context of the Wantage Town Centre Conservation Area. The layout and elevations presents a satisfactory scale and design, addressing the issues from the recent appeal decision for a similar scheme, and there are no unreasonably undue impacts on neighbouring properties. The technical issues relating to impacts on the highway, drainage, land contamination, sewage, waste and trees are acceptable subject to conditions.

The report concludes that the proposal is considered to amount to sustainable development and compliant with policy and guidance. Whilst there will be some minor and temporary adverse effects through demolition and construction, on balance the proposal is acceptable in planning terms. Consequently, the application is recommended for approval subject to conditions and a S106 legal agreement to mitigate the impact on local infrastructure.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.2 The application site is approximately 0.3 hectares in total area. It is located on the south side of Church Street backing on to the public car park and The Beacon. The site contains the former magistrate's court and police station, which lie vacant. Vehicular and pedestrian access is provided from existing access points on the northern boundary from Church Street.
- 1.3 The existing buildings on site are a mix of single and two-storey brick structures, with both flat and pitched roofs. The magistrate's court sits at the front of the site and is a two-storey flat roofed building. The front portion of the site (approximately 20m deep) falls within the Wantage Town Centre Conservation Area.
- 1.4 The site slopes upwards from Church Street, with all the buildings appearing elevated. Many buildings adjacent to the application site are listed and play a positive role in establishing the character of the conservation area. On the northern side of the street, the buildings are generally part of the historic core of Wantage. Again, a number of these buildings are listed, with many having active frontages onto the street, despite being secondary elements of the main building, which faces onto the Market Place and town centre to the rear.
- 1.5 The eastern boundary forms the access point to the public car park situated mainly to the rear of the site that primarily serves the town centre and The Beacon civic hall leading out to Portway further south. To the west lie a public house and a school, which currently has a right of way over the application site. The site is almost completely covered by hardstanding or buildings. There are a few trees along the southern boundary of the site, clearly seen from the car park. There are also a few trees on the eastern side of the site, within the car park boundaries.
- 1.6 Generally, this part of the conservation area is dominated by red brick buildings and pitched tiled roofs. A number of the buildings have contrasting brick detail, whilst there is evidence of render on some properties. The scale of buildings is predominantly two-storeys with pitched roofs with occasional higher buildings. Moreover, the plot widths and variations in roofscape amongst the traditional buildings produce a rhythm that contributes positively to the visual quality of the area.

2.1 PROPOSAL

- 2.2 The application proposes to demolish the existing buildings and redevelop the site for sheltered flats. The flats will be in a single building principally two-storeys high with loft space within the pitched roof. The proposal has been amended to alter the design detailing and quality layout to address design issues raised by the conservation officer and the Architects Advisory Panel. They comprise minor amendments, which are listed above.
- 2.3 The scale and massing comprise two main blocks forming a T-shaped frontage comprised of a terrace on Church Street responding to the linear shape of the site with an enclosed link walk-way between the front and rear blocks. The housing mix comprise 14 x 1 bed and 18 x 2 bed flats, with a communal lounge on the ground floor with a concierge office occupied during the day with emergency out of hours service as part of the management of the retirement accommodation. A guest suite is also included for visitors.
- 2.4 The building will face onto Church Street, with an active frontage onto the road. The front portion of the building will span much of the northern boundary, with the existing vehicular access in the north-eastern corner

Vale of White Horse District Council – Committee Report – 1 July 2015
retained. The building then runs backwards in two sections, stepping up with the land.

- 2.5 The building is predominantly in colour contrasting red and yellow brick under red clay tiles and dark grey slates and incorporates a significant number of gable end dormer windows for loft space. The brickwork employs brick facing with limited chequered brickwork and brick banding drawing upon a palette of materials used in the local area, with stone and brick sills and headers, sliding sash windows to emulate the local vernacular. The amended drawings have toned down the aesthetic to simplify the appearance from the original detailing at the behest of the conservation officer.
- 2.6 The landscaping and boundary treatment includes a front, side and rear boundary wall with railings to the public domain with timber fencing along the western boundary with the school, maintaining the existing access point from Church Street. Landscaped borders and communal landscaped areas are situated on the eastern side, with small private patios to the ground floor flats provide outdoor amenity space. A number of mature trees exist to the rear, which will be retained with new trees proposed along the eastern and southern boundary with the public car park. Details relating to landscaping and boundary treatment are subject to further approval.

3.1 SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS

1. Consultation letters sent on 29th April 2015 together with a site notice and press advert:

3.2 Consultations

Neighbours:	<p>22 letters of objection received. The objections can be summarized as follows: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient facilities and amenities in town centre to support additional population • The area should be reserved for commercial facilities for residents • Density high • Insufficient parking • Question need and demand for retirement homes • Unsuitable use for site. Should be used for benefit of residents and visitors to Wantage. i.e. Visitor Centre or Citizen Advice Bureau. • Need more car parking in town centre. • No infrastructure for more homes. • Extend Beacon Car Park for shoppers and visitors. • Need more retail provision close to town centre. • Design will dominate street and whole length of site. Higher than existing buildings. • Too many retirement homes. • Should provide town centre infrastructure. • Increase in traffic generation and congestion • Stagnate town and undermine vibrancy • Site should provide public transport facilities
Wantage Town Council:	<p>'Strongly object. The Town Council would prefer to see the site developed to provide additional car parking for the community on a mixed use basis. There is not enough parking within the proposed development, which could adversely affect the availability of public parking space.</p>

	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group is currently considering whether the area south of Church Street is to be deemed suitable for retail development. The need for retirement homes within the town is questioned. The viability and desirability of the site could be adversely affected by the proposal of King Alfred's Academy to build a tall science block immediately adjacent to the development. The plans give no indication of how these two developments will relate to each other. There is a need for the developments to be considered together and consideration be given to the overall impact on the adjoining conservation area.</p>
<p>Wantage and Grove Campaign</p>	<p>Object on the following summarized grounds: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over development of the site • Insufficient parking provision • Exacerbate parking demand in public car park • Support neighbourhood plan for expansion of car park •
<p>Wantage Chamber of Commerce</p>	<p>'Register it's strong objection on the following summarised grounds:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site should be put to a more appropriate town centre use including retail, commercial or a use contributing to the night time economy. • Not necessary to locate a retirement home so close to the town centre. • Insufficient car parking detrimental to neighbouring parking facilities already close to or at capacity • Expansion of housing in Wantage and Grove renders the site ideal for expansion of town centre facilities identified in draft Neighbourhood Plan.
<p>Oxfordshire County Council One Voice</p>	<p>No Objection</p> <p><u>Transport</u> Holding objection subject to clarification. Recommends conditions and informatives as follows:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S106 agreement to secure financial contributions towards enhancement of the Wantage bus service of £27,120. • Conditions to secure visibility splays, vehicular access, car parking and turning areas as proposed, , construction method statement and standard highways conditions on drainage. <p><i>Officer comment: Further information submitted for consideration and response to be updated within addendum note.</i></p> <p><u>Archaeology</u> No objection, subject to standard conditions on site investigations.</p> <p><u>Property</u> Objection because of access issues with adjacent school. Recommends condition regarding fire hydrants.</p> <p><i>Officer comment: Access to the adjacent school is</i></p>

	<p><i>maintained. Update comments to be reported in addendum note.</i></p>
Drainage Engineer	<p>Holding objection on drainage grounds.</p> <p><i>Officer comment: Further details on drainage submitted for consideration and response to be reported in addendum note.</i></p>
Environmental Protection Team – Contaminated Land	<p>No objection raised.</p> <p>Recommends submission of preliminary investigation (desktop study and site reconnaissance).</p> <p><i>Officer comment: Further information has been submitted for consideration. Update comments to be reported in addendum note.</i></p>
Countryside Officer	<p>No objection raised.</p> <p>Recommends condition mitigation strategy for bats and alternative roosts to be provided.</p>
Conservation Officer	<p>No objection raised. Comments on initial scheme summarized below: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous refused scheme and appeal decision (see history below), based on detrimental impact on character and appearance of conservation area by means of extensive footprint, height, bulk and points of detail has been largely addressed. • Generally more sympathetic to local historic buildings forms, although link in the centre appears weak and unrelated to adjacent housing stock. • Great efforts have been made to address issue of size and poor design in previous scheme competing with significance of listed buildings in Church Street. Height reduced and improvements made in design terms, although local references in building types overworked in detailing, i.e. brick banding, chequerwork brick, window heads need simplifying and toned down. • Views -Reduction in height and amendment to roof forms address issue of views to Church Tower and important views to town centre. • High quality design – this part not totally achieved but redesign of the link could do so. • Scheme incorporates efficient sustainable design. Boundary treatment would bring enhancements. Landscaping, bin storage and parking carefully thought out. <p>Further comments on amendments to design detailing summarized below:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definite improvement. Toned down to fit in with townscape. • Still seek a few more changes to detailing of lintols, brick detailing and window heads. • Brick ink building variation of casement and sash windows works better.

	<i>Officer comment: Any further update to be reported in addendum note.</i>
Architect Advisory Panel	<p>Comments as follows:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall proposal does not relate very well to site. • Large bulk of building sitting centrally on site. • Rooms with limited outlook. • Form of buildings hiding behind arbitrary elevations. • More thought needed on outside spaces and orientation of owners lounges need some sunshine. • Elevations should relate to well thought out layout, which is lacking at present. <p><i>Officer comments: Design issues addressed in assessment below.</i></p>
Thames Water	No objection subject to standing advice on network connections.
Environment Agency	No objection subject to standard conditions on contamination risk assessment and remediation/verification of works.
Waste Management	No objection subject to S106 contribution of £5440. Comments provided on technical requirements for bin storage provision and maintenance.

4.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1 P13/V1049/FUL and P13/V1050/CA - Refused (13/08/2013).
Demolition of existing buildings and development to form 44 sheltered apartments for the elderly including communal facilities (Category II type accommodation), access, car parking and landscaping.
- 4.2 Appeal into P13/V1049 and P13/V1050/CA – Dismissed (12/03/2014)
Main issues were:-
- The effect on the character and appearance of the Wantage Town Centre Conservation Area.
 - The effect on the setting of nearby listed buildings.
- 4.3 P13/V1044/LB – Approved (5/09/2013)
Demolition and rebuild of boundary wall on new alignment in matching materials.

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 local plan policies relevant to this application as listed below were 'saved' by direction on 1 July 2009.
GS1: Developments in Existing Settlements
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

DC10: The Effect of Neighbouring or Previous Uses on New Development

DC12: Water quality and resources

DC13: Flood Risk

DC14: Flood Risk and Water Run-Off

H10: Development in the Five Main Settlements

H15: Housing densities

H16: Size of dwelling and lifetime homes

H17 : Affordable Housing

H19: Special Housing Needs

H23: Open Space in New Housing Development

HE1: Conservation Areas

HE4: Development and setting of listed buildings

HE10: Archaeology

TR2: Integrated Transport and Land Use

TR5: Cycle Network

5.2 Emerging Local Plan 2031 – Part 1

The draft local plan part 1 is not currently adopted policy. The relevant policies are as follows:-

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 15: Spatial strategy for South East 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 39: The historic environment

Core Policy 42: Flood risk

Core Policy 43: Natural

resources
Core Policy 44:

Landscape

Core Policy 46: Conservation and improvement of biodiversity

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.

5.3 Neighbourhood plans

The draft Wantage neighbourhood plan is not yet on deposit and legal advice obtained regarding the weight to be given to emerging plans in planning decisions is clear that limited weight is to be given to draft plans. In this instance, and at the time of writing, there is no draft plan on deposit to consider, although it is acknowledged that it is currently under preparation.

5.4 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)*

Sustainable Design and Construction – December

2009 Flood maps and flood risk – July 2006

5.5 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – March

2012 Paragraphs 6 – 10 – Achieving sustainable development

Paragraphs 11- 14 and 29 – presumption in favour of sustainable development

Paragraph 17 – Core Principles

Paragraphs 34 & 37 – encourage minimised journey length to work, shopping, leisure and education

Paragraph 47 - 50 – housing

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

Paragraph 99 – Flood risk assessment

Paragraph 103 – Ensure flood risk is not increased

Section 12 – Conserving & enhancing the historic environment

Paragraph 156 – Local Plans to set strategic priorities for infrastructure, including waste Paragraphs 203, 204, 205 – Planning obligations and conditions

Paragraph 216 – prematurity of neighbourhood plans

5.6 National Planning Practise Guidance 2014 (NPPG)

In particular guidance on:

‘Determining a planning application’

‘Design’

‘Housing for older people’

‘Conserving and enhancing the historic environment’

‘Transport assessments in decision taking’

‘Planning obligations’

‘Water supply, waste water and water

quality’ ‘Use of planning conditions’

‘Neighbourhood plans’

5.7 Other Relevant Legislation

- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act) 1990.
- Community & Infrastructure Levy Legislation Human Rights Act 1998.

Vale of White Horse District Council – Committee Report – 1 July 2015

- 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).

5.8 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.

5.9 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

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

- Principle of the development.
- Use of land.
- Design and Impact on heritage assets.
- Affordable housing and housing mix.
- Residential amenity.
- Open Space and Landscaping.
- Highway safety and parking
- Energy and Sustainability.
- Surface / foul drainage.
- Contamination.
- Viability and S106 developer Contributions

The Principle of Development

- 6.2 Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires applications for planning permission to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless materials 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 the 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).
- 6.3 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.
- 6.4 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 that 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.
- 6.5 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

Vale of White Horse District Council – Committee Report – 1 July 2015
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.

- 6.6 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. 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, 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. In conclusion, the principle of development and in particular residential development on this site is considered acceptable.
- 6.7 Wantage Town Council has objected to the scheme on the grounds that they would prefer to see the site developed for additional car parking for the town centre, and that the Neighbourhood Plan is looking at the possibility of retail in the south part of Church Street. The Neighbourhood Plan is still being prepared. Therefore, as set out in paragraph 216 of the NPPF, very little weight can be afforded to the emerging Neighbourhood Plan. The applicant has also provided minutes from a meeting with the landowners and the Town Council. The agents marketing the site have also provided a letter to confirm there was no offer made by the Town Council to acquire the site. In light of this, the strong objection to the application on the grounds that it should be used for a car park, whilst noted, cannot be given any weight given the consideration of the application on its own planning merits for the proposal and in the absence of a neighbourhood plan affecting the site.

Use of land

- 6.8 Paragraph 17 of 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. The site has the redundant Court and Police Station buildings, which are to be demolished to make way for the new housing. It should be noted that the principle of the development of retirement housing has been considered by the Council under the same policy parameters in the refused applications in 2013, listed above, which was confined to design issues and the impact on listed buildings and the conservation area. The proposed use is compliant with policy H19.

Design and Impact on Heritage Assets

- 6.9 Approximately 20m depth of the front part of the site sits within the Wantage Town Centre Conservation Area. Policy HE1 of the Local Plan seeks to ensure that developments preserve and enhance the character and appearance of conservation areas, including the setting. Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area. Officers have given significant importance and weight to this requirement, particularly because the previous refusal and appeal decision was confined to this issue.
- 6.10 The existing buildings hold no architectural merit in the Conservation Area and their demolition is of no issue. The proposal, fully described above under chapter 2, has been vetted by officers, both at the formal pre-application inquiry stage in November 2014, and throughout the course of this application. The conservation officer has acknowledged the proposal largely address the issue of scale and design which

Vale of White Horse District Council – Committee Report – 1 July 2015
formed the basis of the previously refused scheme. The current scheme which has been amended to reflect the detailing suggested by the Conservation officer address further the correct aesthetic in architectural treatment, to ensure the impact on the character and appearance of the conservation and surrounding listed buildings are sympathetic and acceptable and addressed further below.

6.11 In essence, the Planning Inspector referred to the following design issues in the appeal decision

- The detrimental effect on the character and appearance of the conservation area;
- Size and poorly considered detailing conflicts with the significance of listed buildings on Church street and diminishes their standing in the street scene;
- Proposal would harm views to church tower and important views to town centre;

- Proposal would cause harm to historic area, and;
- Proposal does not achieve high quality design

6.12 Taking each of the above points in turn, Officers have considered whether the issues outlined by the Inspector in the previous scheme have been addressed:

1. The revised scheme is acceptable, breaking up the monolithic block referred to by the Inspector, with variations in heights and massing.
2. The rear view of the building presented to the car park as well as the public domain and adjacent school, sits comfortably with its immediate neighbours and the conservation area. The frontage of the building is also sympathetic in terms of scale, height, width and detailing with the listed buildings in Church Street, particularly No 16 Church Street.
3. The views of the church tower and of the rear of the listed buildings surrounding the site can still be seen from various vantage points.
4. The reduction in the number of materials has also met concerns over the pastiche that was present previously.

6.13 Overall, the design approach, with the reduction in height, footprint, scale and massing seeks to sit and blend in positively with the conservation area within Church Street, and respect the setting of the adjacent historical listed buildings.

6.14 Whilst it is noted that the Architectural Advisory Panel has raised concerns regarding the layout and amenities, as well as coordination of elevations/plans has been reviewed and the minor non-material minor amendments submitted address these issues. It should also be noted that the layout of the buildings have been informed by the shape of the site and existing access, as well as the footprint of the existing buildings. The existing trees on the western and southern boundary are also a constraint informing the location of the new building and neighbouring buildings.

Affordable housing and housing mix, and density

6.15 The applicant has agreed to make a contribution of £214,403 towards affordable housing in lieu of on-site provision. The off-site provision was agreed in the previous application and this has been confirmed agreeable to the applicant in the pre-application feedback from Officers, in November 2014.

6.16 Adopted local plan policy H16 sets out 50% of new units should be 2 bed above the 10 unit threshold. The scheme would provide 18 x 2 beds which is 56%. This meets the policy criteria

- 6.17 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.
- 6.18 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 128 dph. Whilst this exceeds the policy benchmark, the site is in a sustainable location and would not appear out of character with the density of residential developments nearby to the rear.

Residential Amenity

- 6.19 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. The distances between the proposal and neighbouring buildings also ensure that no overlooking or loss of privacy occurs, or adversely impact on daylight / sunlight to the scheme.
- 6.20 Wantage Town council have commented on the potential impact of the current application (P15/V0621/FUL) at the adjacent King Alfred's School site for a two storey science block close to the boundary with the application site. Officers have reviewed the two schemes in tandem, and consider the school proposal would provide sufficient distances to mitigate against any detrimental impact in terms of overdominance or loss of outlook.
- 6.21 The west facing residential units in the rear block within this scheme facing the school site should retain a reasonable level of daylight/sunlight and outlook to provide good living conditions where separation distance are approximately 13 to 14m between building faces. Additional mitigation is being negotiated with the school proposal to ensure any potential for loss of privacy is addressed via obscure glazing to the east facing windows at first floor level to the proposed science block which overlook the application site, noting that the school class rooms would only be occupied for part of the day during the week in term time, and the minimum distance of 21m between habitable room facing windows would not apply in this instance. Relative amenity impacts are therefore considered acceptable.

Open Space and Landscaping

- 6.22 The Adopted Local Plan Policy H23 requires a minimum of 15% of the residential area to be laid out as open space. Landscaped communal gardens are provided totalling 2476.3sqm, which is in excess of the 15% requirement. In addition, there are no steps within the grounds to allow wheelchair users access to all of the gardens. An access ramp is also included within the main communal area located to the east of the site. The ground floor units are provided with private patio areas.
- 6.23 All of the mature trees on the southern and western boundary are to be preserved which provide a good level of screening and greenery to the area. The landscaping scheme submitted shows that there will be a dining area in front of the owners lounge. There are also hedgerows and soft landscaping that would provide a good outlook for the occupiers of the flats together with enhancements to the boundary treatments on all elevations. In appropriate materials and design to

Highway safety and parking

6.24 The 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 decisions 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 limits the significant impacts of the development.

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.”

6.25 The NPPF requires the need to travel to be minimised and the use of sustainable transport modes to be maximised (paragraph 34). In terms of facilities, Wantage is a large town, which is well served in terms of services and public transport links. Therefore, both the adopted and emerging local plan identifies Wantage as a sustainable location for further development.

6.26 The site is located adjacent to and approximately 100 metres from the town centre with access to local bus stops in close proximity. The County Transport advisor has commented that the scheme would provide 15 on-site parking spaces, which is greater than the average demand for parking spaces and considers the parking provision to be acceptable in this sustainable location. This is on the condition that a Travel Information Pack is provided to each occupier, and a condition is required to ensure the County is satisfied with the Travel Plan.

Energy and Sustainability

6.27 The applicant has included an Energy Report, which confirms a 10% reduction in CO2 emissions. This is achieved by photovoltaic cells on the roof and other energy saving consumption measures set out. The scheme will also be built to meet Level 3 of the Code for Sustainable Homes.

6.28 In terms of the site's central location and its relationship to shops and services the proposal is considered a sustainable form of development under the terms of the NPPF.

Drainage and Contamination

6.29 The applicant has provided a drainage survey for further consideration by the Drainage officer a waiting further comment to be updated in the committee addendum note. It is considered this aspect of the proposal can be treated by appropriate conditions. In addition it is noted that Thames Water have not raised any concerns with sewerage connections and water infrastructure capacity.

6.30 Following comments by the Contamination officer regarding a desk top study, the applicant has provided further assessment of potential contamination of the site and soil investigation report which at the time of writing is being considered. An update will be provided within the addendum note to committee. It is considered that these are issues, which can be treated by way of appropriate conditions.

Viability and Developer Contributions

6.31 The NPPF advises that planning obligations should only be sought where they meet all of the following tests (paragraph 204):-

- 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

6.32 In addition, recent legislative changes to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulations 2010, introduced in April 2015, places pooling restrictions on S106 contributions. As a result the original developer contributions agreed at the public inquiry into the previous refusal have been reviewed together with the requests made by the County. The following table sets out the contributions agreed, which is compliant with meet the NPPF and CIL Regulations.

Public Transport: Bus Service Enhancement Serving Wantage (£847.50 per unit)	County Public Transport	£27,120.00
Admin/Monitoring Fee (1% of total)	County	£271.20
Affordable Housing Commuted Payment - Agreed Pro-Rata payment in Public Inquiry on previous refusal	Vale	£214,403.00
Waste Management	Vale	£5,440.00
Admin/Monitoring	Vale	£535.00
Total		£247,769.20

7.0 CONCLUSION

7.1 This application has been assessed against the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), relevant saved policies in the local plan and all other material planning considerations. The NPPF states that sustainable development should be permitted unless the adverse effects significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. The NPPF also states that there are social, economic and environmental dimensions to sustainability and that conclusions must be reached taking into account the NPPF as a whole.

7.2 The application proposes the redevelopment of previously developed land, and will also help address the council’s current lack of a 5-year housing supply. The conservation area and listed building impact, which was key to the previous refused scheme is acceptable. The scale and layout is satisfactory in design terms, and impacts on neighbours are not unreasonable. Officers consider the technical issues relating to parking and highway impact, sustainability, drainage, sewage, and contamination are acceptable subject to conditions. Mitigation via developer contribution for affordable housing is also acceptable.

7.3 Overall, the proposal is considered to amount to sustainable development, and whilst there will be some minor and temporary adverse effects, these do not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. Consequently, the application is recommended for approval subject to conditions.

8.0 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that authority to grant planning permission is delegated to the head of planning in consultation with the chairman, subject to conditions as follows:

- 1. Time limit.**
- 2. Details of external materials and architectural treatment to window and door openings to be agreed.**
- 3. Approved plans.**
- 4. Details of hard and soft landscaping, boundary treatment, and bin store to be agreed.**
- 5. Details of mitigation strategy for bats to be agreed.**
- 6. No surface water to be discharged onto the adjacent highway.**
- 7. Environment Agency conditions to be agreed.**
- 8. Highway conditions requested by County to be agreed.**

Author: Simon Dunn-Lwin MRTPI

Contact no. 07717 271916

Email: simon.dunn-lwin@southandvale.gov.uk