
APPLICATION NO.	P15/V1504/FUL
APPLICATION TYPE	FULL APPLICATION
REGISTERED	26.6.2015
PARISH	HARWELL
WARD MEMBER(S)	Janet Shelley Reg Waite
APPLICANT	Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd
SITE	Land North of Grove Road, Harwell
PROPOSAL	Residential development to provide 213 dwellings with associated highway works, open space and infrastructure improvements.
Amendments	Increase in number of dwellings from 203 to 213. Revised layout and revised access arrangements
Grid Reference	448984/189648
Officer	Adrian Butler

SUMMARY

This is a detailed (full) application for planning permission. The original proposal comprised 203 dwellings before being amended to 204 dwellings and then to 213 dwellings. The changes attempt to address matters regarding layout design and a housing mix to more closely match the SHMA.

The application is presented to planning committee as there is an objection from the parish Council and more than four objections from local residents.

This report seeks to assess the proposal against the development plan and other material considerations.

Key considerations in this case are:

- The principle of development
- Landscape and visual impacts
- Design of the scheme
- Residential amenity
- Highway safety

The site is allocated as a strategic housing site in the draft local plan 2031 although limited weight is given to this bearing in mind the status of the draft local plan. As a 5 year land supply site on the edge of a large, accessible village with a reasonable range of facilities the site is considered acceptable as a housing development site subject to the detailed impacts.

The detail of the scheme is considered reasonable and technical matters (subject to the highway authority response) can be addressed by condition or planning obligation. Localised landscape and visual harm and loss of grade 2 agricultural land are outweighed by the benefits.

The applicant has submitted a viability report seeking to justify the provision of 37% affordable housing. This is being tested independently for the Council. The highway authority has objected to the original proposal and its comments are awaited in respect of the revisions and expected prior to the committee meeting. An update will

be provided and the recommendation is subject to the highway authority not objecting.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The site is located to the north of Grove Road and west of The Croft. The land is open agricultural land forming part of the open countryside at the western edge of the village. The land is given over to grass pasture partly grazed by sheep.
- 1.2 To the north is further open countryside mainly separated from the application site by a line of trees although the north eastern boundary is open and defined by a wire fence. To the east is residential development fronting Barrow Road and dwellings (mostly bungalows) in The Croft. Dwellings in The Croft back on to the site and there is a public footpath behind these gardens and separating them from the application site. A sporadic hedge forms the boundary to the site to The Croft although the dwellings have more substantial boundaries to the footpath formed by hedge and fencing. There are trees at the boundary with Barrow Road. Grove Road is to the south and beyond this is new housing at Greenwood Meadows. The southern boundary to the site is defined by a line of tall poplar trees. The western boundary is continuous with the open fields beyond.
- 1.3 There are rows of tall poplar trees within the site with one row being east/west relatively central to the site and the other row in the north eastern part of the site runs south/north. Other than the rows of trees forming the field edges the site is open with a gentle fall in levels from east to west. A site plan is **attached** at Appendix 1.

2.0 PROPOSAL

- 2.1 This is a full application for 213 dwellings with vehicular access proposed from Grove Road. Initially the proposal was for 203 dwellings, with a right hand turn lane proposed at the Grove Road/A4130 junction, a footway leading from the site along the northern edge of Grove Road towards the village centre and a shared pedestrian/vehicle surface at the point that Grove Road narrows at and towards its junction with High Street. The increase in dwellings is to provide a housing mix closer to SHMA expectations and to address layout concerns. The Grove Road/A4130 right hand turn lane is no longer proposed. Instead the applicant is proposing to improve visibility splays to the north. A 30mph speed limit is proposed extending from the village past the proposed site access before rising to 40mph to the A4130 (it is presently a national speed limit). The footway and shared surface alterations east of the site towards High Street are no longer proposed. At Drewitts Corner a mini roundabout is now proposed, with some double yellow lines at Drewitts Corner and a single yellow line parking restriction on Burr Street. Changes to road markings are suggested by the applicant at the High Street/Townsend Road junction.
- 2.2 A single vehicular access is proposed into the site from Grove Road. This access road provides a central avenue with the focal point being a centrally located area of open space with play area (LEAP). The road circles this open space before leading further north into the site. The secondary roads lead off and circulate round back to this main avenue. Dwellings face on to the roads and seek to turn the corners. In addition dwellings face out of the site to the open areas to the north and west. Other areas of open space are provided on the site boundaries. Trees are retained with the exception of the points that vehicular access breaches the rows of trees. Pedestrian links are provided to Grove Road and across the road to Manor Green and a pedestrian/cycle link to Barrow Road. The public footpath behind The Croft is retained (it is outside the site). A second footpath from Grove Road and across the site to the west would need to be diverted through part of the proposal.

- 2.3 The house types are two and 2½ storeys. Two storey dwellings adjoin the boundaries with existing dwellings and Barrow Road. Dwelling sizes consist of 1-bedroom to 5-bedroom units. Car parking is provided either on plot in the form of garages and open spaces, frontage parking and some spaces parallel with the roads including visitor spaces.
- 2.4 A balancing pond is proposed in the north west corner of the site with a swale beside it. A pumping station is also proposed towards the north west corner of the site. According to the application submission 46 dwellings could drain to the existing sewer in Grove Road with the remainder discharging to the pumping station.
- 2.5 The applicant has proposed 37% affordable housing with 75% for rent and 25% shared ownership. A confidential viability report has been submitted seeking to justify the 37% affordable housing, as it falls short of the 40% this authority normally expects. This viability report is being independently reviewed and an update will be provided at the meeting.

The application is supported by:

- Relevant plans
- A geophysical survey
- Archaeological desk-based assessment
- Arboricultural report
- Design and access statement
- Ecological appraisal
- Flood risk assessment and drainage strategy
- Landscape and visual appraisal
- Planning statement
- Statement of community involvement
- Travel plan
- Transport assessment
- Road safety audit

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.

Parish/Town Council	<p>Object.</p> <p>A copy of the Parish Council comments are attached at Appendix 2. Their concerns may be summarised as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• It's premature, being submitted before the Vale Local Plan is approved. The local plan has not been examined and there are objections to this allocating this land for housing• Housing numbers and density are out of proportion with the rest of the village• Proposed traffic solutions are not acceptable• Layout adjacent to existing houses in the Croft is un-neighbourly• Loss of best and most versatile land contrary to paragraph 112 of the NPPF• Traffic analysis may be representative of the day it was undertaken but it is highly likely that the sample traffic levels are not representative and are not matched by observed
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	<p>data from the Taylor Wimpey Alder View/Grove Road South/Greenwood Meadows planning application, and observed data from OCC counts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The forecast traffic applies a growth factor, with no clarity about how far ahead it is forecasting. • The forecast traffic does not take into account any additional traffic from committed and proposed developments – e.g. GWP, Blenheim Hill, Valley Park, and Harwell Campus east and north. When these were factored in by OCC, they provided a forecast 350% greater than that forecast by this application. • Whilst the incremental traffic from this application might be “imperceptible” (Transport Assessment 5.3.2) any solutions proposed for Grove Road must be assessed against the feared future traffic levels for Harwell, and add weight to the opinion that the solutions proposed in the application are not viable • A ghost right turn lane on the A4130 is unsatisfactory, and probably unsafe. • It is essential that the junction is designed in a way to enable westbound traffic to exit safely from the Grove Road onto the A4130. Currently this is not safe, and with the extra housing it will be less so • Grove Road must be safe for its users. • Pinch points where the road narrows, with poor visibility (e.g. on the hill just west of King's Piece) should be removed. • Rather than white lines along the edge of the road, all pot holes and drainage grates must be sorted out so that traffic, including cyclists, can use the full width of the road at all places without risk of tyre and wheel damage. • A 2m footpath down the north of Grove Road from the site to the High Street is probably unnecessarily wide & could be narrower • No objection in principle to a shared surface solution on Grove Road where it narrows towards the High Street junction, but is highly sceptical that the proposed solution will work. PC representatives have reviewed the operation of the scheme in Hensington Road, Woodstock, cited as an example of why the proposal would work, and observed that the Woodstock scheme is like a funnel, with the wide end at the main road junction, such that traffic can turn easily into Hensington Road, only getting to a constriction at the other end of the scheme, where a simple give way priority system, with clear sightlines and visibility provide for an orderly movement of traffic through the narrow section. (An appraisal of this is provided by the PC) • Ask that consideration is given to making Grove Road one-way east bound on Grove Rd from the Croft to the High Street or one way east bound for the whole length of Grove Road from the A4130 to the High Street • Layout maximises the number of car movements past houses • No cycleways provided on site • How will parking be prevented on Barrow Road?
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Folly to place play area and LEAP in the central roundabout. • Although the total public open space area at 20% may exceed the requirement for 15%, the layout is unsatisfactory, and intersected by trees, so percentage usable is very small • Overdevelopment. Increases housing in the village by 20% but only a 11% expansion of the village by area – hence a disproportionately dense development which threatens to change the total character of the village • Heights of dwellings next to The Croft need checking – support the concerns expressed by the occupant of 17 The Croft • A footpath to the A4130 is requested • Diversion of a footpath needs to be agreed and properly signposted • Additional pedestrian crossing point needed at Talbot Close to allow safe crossing towards the school • Pedestrian crossing proposed at the High Street is dangerous with the pedestrian surface stopping almost in the middle of the road, before even getting to the new kerbed island • Need to be vigilant that drainage schemes work • Real concern at the capacity at the school to ensure all village children can attend • Request a construction traffic management plan with a condition that construction access is not through village, with penalties to be imposed by the developer on any construction traffic that does not follow the traffic management plan. <p>The Parish Council has also requested financial contributions should planning permission be granted. This letter is also <u>attached</u> at Appendix 2.</p> <p>In summary the contributions requested are as follows: Community Centre – Village Hall redevelopment £260,000 plus any additional contributions which the developer sees fit to make. Sports facilities: Facilities enhancement and community storage £40,000 St Mathews Church: Capital improvements £20,000 Royal British Legion: Village Club enhancement project £20,000 Minor Parish Council contributions: Bins, notice boards, admin etc £10,000 Total £350,000</p>
Neighbours	<p>Letters of objection have been received from 34 local addressed. Some local residents have written twice or more. The concerns raised may be summarised as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous objections remain despite the amendments to the scheme • Application is premature as the draft local plan is yet to be examined • Dispute the housing need in the SHMA & should an Inspector find housing is over estimated then this development may not be needed. It is therefore, premature

	<p>to decide the application</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate space at the village school and pre-school which could prevent village children obtaining place • Inadequate facilities and infrastructure in the village and also in Didcot • Increased use of Grove Road which is too narrow and unsafe and needs upgrading with better visibility at the Milton junction • A right hand turn lane at the Grove Road/A4130 junction would be more dangerous than at present. Vision from Grove Road is inadequate and this would not be improved • Traffic lights or a roundabout should be provided at the Grove Road/A4130 junction • Increased traffic on to the High Street crossroads which is already confusing and dangerous • Increased traffic onto the B4493 with an increased risk of accidents • Pedestrian arrangement proposed at the Grove Road/High Street junction is dangerous for pedestrians and traffic, as it would further narrow Grove Road push traffic onto the same side of Grove Road • Grove Road should be made one- way • Grove Road is too narrow for the additional traffic • A 2m wide pavement on Grove Road is too wide. Some of the south side of Grove Road bounding Manor Green could be used reducing the cut from the bank on the north side • Increased traffic onto the A34 which is already at or over capacity • Unlikely to reduce commuting by car as most people tend to work outside the village and on business parks outside town or city centres • Loss of village identity • More in keeping if bungalows were built behind The Croft • In conjunction with other permitted housing schemes in Harwell it will increase the village by some 50% • Insufficient sewer capacity • Increase drainage problems. Grove Road floods • Loss of best and most versatile land • Land at the former Didcot A power station should be used for housing and could accommodate twice as many dwellings as this site (Didcot A site is not included in the housing numbers for the draft Local Plan). If there is a need for housing in the area then Didcot a should be developed rather than this site • House types are biased towards larger dwellings rather than smaller dwelling as expected by adopted policy H16 of the local plan – Harwell is a mixture of dwelling sizes • House types are standard designs and not reflective of the village • Increased highway safety risks with additional traffic using Grove Road • Inappropriate access location close to a dip in the road • Overshadowing, loss of light and overbearing impact on 17
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	<p>The Croft. Also potential for increased noise nuisance. If permitted the hedge on the development side of the footpath should be allowed to grow and be maintained at 4m height and suitable trees provided on the proposed verge beside plot 13</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased pressure on local facilities including the village shops and health centres in Didcot. The infrastructure is not in place to serve this development • Play area behind the Croft is inappropriately located and will result in noise and disturbance • Loss of grade 2 agricultural land and reduction in food production • Overlooking of 2 Barrow Road • Could increase on street parking in Barrow Road and potential vehicular access to the site via the emergency access proposed • Pedestrians using the footpath via Barrow Lane to access High Street will compound road crossing issues with no visibility and no pavement at this end of The Barrow • Too close to existing dwellings in The Croft • Unreasonable to put extra traffic on to Grove Road which cannot be widened due to listed walls • Shared road, cycle and pedestrian space is not recommended by the Department of Transport • Traffic surveys should be undertaken to test what effect increased traffic in from other permitted housing schemes in the village would have • A link road should be provided before any more housing is permitted and traffic calming provided in the village • Pointless providing a pavement beside part of Grove Road when it cannot be continued to High Street • Potential damage to listed buildings with the road widening or expected accidents • Urban proposal unsuited to a village • The LAP should be more overlooked and integrated into the development. It conflicts with the design guide • More green space should be provided at the site edge against existing dwellings • No need to remove the tree depicted as T11 in the submission • Affordable housing tends to be concentrated and this and green space seems to be trying to split the market housing from the village • An appeal against 20 dwellings on the site was dismissed by the High Court in 1974 • Lack of cycle lanes in the area. Unless these are provided residents are unlikely to commute by bicycle • A silver birch tree behind 1 and 3 The Croft should be retained to help maintain privacy – a TPO should be placed on it • Better shopping should be provided in the village • Changes to Grove Road may not be sufficient to address traffic volumes
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved cycling infrastructure required between Harwell and Didcot • With the need for Grampian type conditions development is unlikely to occur in the short term and unlikely to satisfy the 5-year land shortage • Need to consider cumulative impacts of Great Western Park, Blenheim Hill, Grove Road (south) and future potential of Valley Park developments • Suggestion that residents of Burr Street park in Townsend are ridiculous • A roundabout at Drewitts Corner is inappropriate and will restrict access to parking for the shops. It will also cause more driver confusion, congestion, be unsafe, not meet guidelines • Modification to the bend at junction of High Street with Burr Street is unimaginable and impossible bearing in mind the listed buildings on this corner • Encouraging parking in front of other people's houses is inappropriate • Harwell cannot accommodate more traffic • People will continue to use Grove Road to access the village facilities regardless of any alternatives that may be encouraged as it is the shortest route. Pedestrian access via Grove Road is dangerous with its narrowness and limited vision at High Street • Proposed double yellow lines on High Street will prevent access to properties and remove parking for existing residents and businesses • Parking restrictions in Burr Street and High Street will inconvenience existing residents; proposals lack consideration for existing residents • Yellow lines on local roads are not in the scope of the proposal and are irrelevant • Inadequate on-site parking
Oxfordshire County Council One Voice	<p><u>Highways</u></p> <p><u>Object</u></p> <p>The Transport Assessment, concludes that any requirement for a roundabout or a right turn lane on the A4130 is not justified. The authority recognises that the traffic impact at the Grove Road/A4130 junction has been shown to be not severe. The visibility southwards on the approach to the junction and northwards along A4130 from the junction with Grove Road must be improved. Vision splays of 2.4m x 215m would be agreeable to the highway authority.</p> <p>The highway authority has detailed its requirements in respect of the works along Grove Road and at the site access. These include a new 40mph limit, a new 30mph limit, cushions near to the speed limit interface, a raised table access junction and pedestrian crossing facility at the existing build out feature.</p> <p>The highway authority has confirmed that a continuous footway with a minimum width of 1.5m would be required from the site access eastwards along the north side of Grove Road to a point approximately 80m to the west of the junction with High Street. To the east of that point, Grove Road is very narrow and could not</p>

	<p>accommodate a separate footway and carriageway. A shared surface scheme for this narrow section of Grove Road has been proposed, and has been found to be acceptable in principle. However, serious concern remains about the safety aspects of the scheme at its eastern end where Grove Road has a junction with High Street. The scheme has been subject to Road Safety Audit (Stage 1) and the Audit Team has identified the same safety related problems, which reinforces the highway authority's concerns. The highway authority will maintain an objection to the proposals until these safety concerns have been adequately addressed.</p> <p>A pedestrian/cyclist link could be created across the Public Footway 243/11 at Barrow Road, the applicant has now proposed that this link would be a pedestrian only link. However, the concern of misuse by cyclists along the footpath is acknowledged. No alternative provision for cyclists has been proposed.</p> <p>The requirement for cyclists to use Grove Road along the narrow section towards High Street contributes to the safety concerns. The Applicant claims to have agreed with the highway authority that the Grove Road/High Street solution (shared surface scheme) should not be progressed given the findings of the road safety audit. The highway authority makes it clear that no such agreement has been made. The correspondence further states that as an alternative, OCC have suggested an additional cycle link within the site between plots 13 and 165 which should be separate from the footpath. The highway authority makes it clear that no such suggestion has been made.</p> <p>No evidence has been provided to demonstrate that pedestrians would not seek to use Grove Road as their route to the village. No pedestrian surveys have been conducted and no evidence has been provided to demonstrate that alternative pedestrian routes would be compatible with walking desire lines. The highway authority considers that pedestrians would be likely to view Grove Road as being the most direct and desirable route to the village.</p> <p><u>Archaeology</u></p> <p>No objection subject to conditions requiring a watching brief and scheme of investigation</p> <p><u>Education</u></p> <p>No objection subject to securing financial contributions towards Harwell primary school, new secondary school at north east Didcot and special needs education planned for Didcot.</p> <p><u>Property</u></p> <p>No objection. Request a financial contribution towards library book stocks.</p> <p><u>County Councillor Lilly</u></p> <p>Will only support the application if highway issues for Grove Road are properly addressed. This includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The existing axle width restriction is retained for HGV's. 2. A weight limit is imposed for vehicles above 5 tons except school buses 3. The existing chicane at the village end of Grove Road is retained.
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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Two additional chicanes are constructed. The first some 50 metres from the junction of A4130 in Grove Road; a second to be also in Grove Road in line with the Western end of the development area. 5. An appropriate roundabout at the junction of Grove Road & the A4130. 6. Developer to resurface the entire length of Grove Road 7. White edging lines to be painted at the edges of the highway of Grove Road over its entire length 8. The Shared Highway proposal from High Street Junction to a location approx. 100 metres to the West to be bold in colour & design to assist in pedestrians/vehicle mix 9. A full length footpath from the A4130 to the High Street to be created. 10. "Countdown" 300/200/100 metre chevrons on signs in both directions to the new junction on A4130. 11. Trees replanted on the A4130 boundary on the new line of the vision splay. 12. A commuted sum for OCC to maintain and keep trees/hedgerow of overgrowing foliage to be sought for up to 10 years. 13. Speed limit to be a statutory 40 mph 14. New sign posts required at the junction of A4130/Grove Road <p>Councillor Lilly also supports the comments of OCC officers, especially with regard to the highway safety and inadequate provisions by the developers to negotiate a realistic solution for the existing highways. Future development expected from The Vale as a result of their emerging local plan requires a solution for the anticipated growth. Development is respected, but it has to be accompanied by fair and realistic infrastructure contributions from the developer.</p>
Environmental Protection Team	No objection
Vale drainage engineer	No objection subject to the County Council drainage engineer having no objection and subject to conditions requiring surface water and foul water drainage schemes to be implemented
Environment agency	No objection subject to a condition requiring a foul drainage scheme being submitted to and approved by the planning authority and implemented prior to occupation
Vale leisure team	No objection but request financial contributions towards improved leisure and recreation facilities
Vale Housing	40% affordable housing should be provided in accordance with the adopted local plan. This would equate to 81 dwellings. Affordable housing is to be split as 75% rented to 25% shared ownership (S/O). The affordable housing should be reasonably integrated across the development and should be indistinguishable from the market housing. The development does not propose any 1 bed affordable, therefore the need for some as per the requirement in the SHMA and the Housing Needs Assessment. Flats should have their own entrances to avoid communal charges. In order to avoid large densities on a row of terraces, it is proposed the 3 and 4 beds be attached to 2 beds and be evenly distributed further across

	the site. The market housing seems to provide a range of unit types which will address the need for first time buyers as well as people seeking to downsize.
Forestry officer	No objection. The application is accompanied by an arboricultural constraints report but it does not address the impact of the Grove Road/Abingdon Road junction. The roadside boundary on the northern side is tree-lined and the extent of the tree loss needs to be confirmed so that necessary mitigation measures can be defined. This can be controlled by condition and will be best achieved with the presentation of a tree retention/removal plan. A retention plan, a tree protection plan and a site-specific method statement for the construction of hard surfaces within the proximity of retained trees will also be required by condition
Countryside officer	No objection The proposed development would not result in any significant impacts on any designated sites or priority habitats. Overall this proposal has the potential to enhance the biodiversity value of the area in the longer term by creating new peripheral habitats around the site which are of higher value than the intensively managed fields that currently exist. Recommends conditions for a lighting strategy and biodiversity enhancements.
Thames Water	No objection Unable to determine the waste water infrastructure needs of this application. Should the LPA approve the application, they recommend the following condition: "Development shall not commence until a drainage strategy detailing any on and/or off site drainage works, has been submitted to and approved by, the local planning authority in consultation with the sewerage undertaker. No discharge of foul or surface water from the site shall be accepted into the public system until the drainage works referred to in the strategy have been completed". The existing water supply infrastructure has insufficient capacity to meet the additional demands for the proposed development. Recommend a condition be imposed: "Development should not be commenced until: Impact studies of the existing water supply infrastructure have been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority (in consultation with Thames Water)".
Vale landscape officer	No objection Design of the POS, amenity areas, and play areas will need to be dealt with by condition. While the layout is now proposing to front onto the northern boundary, there is limited space allowed for the planting of vegetation such as a hedge with hedgerow trees to soften the interface between built form and the adjacent countryside. This is also the case with the PRow along the eastern boundary of the site, while there has been some improvement, again sufficient space should be allowed to integrate the footpath into the scheme layout, such as line of street trees along its route where it abuts the built scheme, plots 8 to 13.
Vale Urban design officer	No objection The revised scheme addresses the development site and its context far more positively than the initial scheme. The parking solutions throughout the scheme have been greatly improved. There are some parts of the scheme that consist of large areas of parking located in front of properties. The space given to front gardens in

	these areas is minimal and the landscaping is limited e.g. plots 175-192. The proposed parking solutions also allow a distinction to be made between the affordable and market units. Where parking is positioned to the front of properties the amount of enclosed, landscaped front garden could be increased. The housing mix provided by the site still doesn't conform to Policy H16 of the Local Plan or reflect the evidence set out in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment. The size of the dormer windows on house types B, H & G dominate the roofscape and property facade. These should be reduced. Greater amenity space could be provided for some of the affordable units. The parking issues and limited private amenity space potentially indicate overdevelopment of the site. These two issues could be easily addressed by removing a small number of units.
Vale waste management team	No objection Request a £170 per dwelling financial contribution towards bin provision
Thames Valley Police	No objection Seek £30,104 towards police infrastructure costs

4.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1 P15/V0195/SCR - a screening request was made to this authority under the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Regulations) 2011 relating to a residential development to provide approximately 200 dwellings and associated infrastructure. This authority opined in March 2015 that the proposal was not EIA development.

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
H13	Development Elsewhere
H15	Housing Densities
H16	Size of Dwelling and Lifetime Homes
H17	Affordable Housing
H23	Open Space in New Housing Development
HE10	Archaeology

NE9	Lowland Vale
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5.2 Emerging Local Plan 2031 – Part 1

The draft local plan part 1 is not currently adopted policy. 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 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 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 Neighbourhood Plan

There is no neighbourhood plan for Harwell.

5.7 Environmental Impact

This proposal is for more than 150 dwellings and is therefore, above the thresholds set in Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2015. A screening opinion provided in March 2015 opined a development on this site for approximately 200 dwellings was not EIA development. This opinion remains applicable.

5.8 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)

5.9 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.

5.10 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. Cumulative Impact
3. Use of Land
4. Locational Credentials
5. Affordable Housing and Housing Mix
6. Design and Layout
7. Residential Amenity
8. Landscape and Visual Impact
9. Open Space and Landscaping
10. Flood Risk and Surface/Foul Drainage
11. Traffic, Parking and Highway Safety
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.
- 6.6 The draft local plan 2031 continues a settlement hierarchy which focuses housing growth at the market towns and larger villages and identifies Harwell as a larger village in the South East sub-area. Within this emerging strategy, Core Policy 15 identifies the application site as suitable for new housing; it being a strategic housing allocation site.
- 6.7 Some local residents and the parish council consider determination of this application ahead of the plan being adopted is premature. The NPPG is clear however that in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development *"arguments that an application is premature are unlikely to justify a refusal of planning permission other than where it is clear that the adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, taking the policies in the Framework and any other material considerations into account."*

- 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, 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 Planning permissions for major housing developments have been granted at Blenheim Hill (80 dwellings) and on land south of Grove Road (65 dwellings). Some concerns have been expressed that this development could expand the village by some 50% if permitted.
- 6.10 According to the Parish Council web site there are some 1,000 dwellings in Harwell and the population amounts to approximately 2,400 people. Should this scheme be permitted and added to the Blenheim Hill and south of Grove Road proposals the housing stock and the population would expand by some by approximately 35% (the proposal alone would expand the housing stock and village population by some 21%).
- 6.11 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. Cumulative impacts with regard to traffic is addressed later in this report.

Use of Land

- 6.12 The NPPF identifies the need to protect the best and most versatile agricultural land from development (paragraph 112). According to Natural England's agricultural land classification maps the site is grade 2 (very good). The loss of 8.56ha of very good agricultural quality land needs to be balanced against the economic, social and environmental benefits of the proposal. It also has to be taken into account that this authority has sought to allocate this site for housing development in its draft local plan 2031. The benefits of the proposal are summarised in the conclusion section of this report and are considered to outweigh the harm.

Locational Credentials

- 6.13 The NPPF requires the need to travel to be minimised and the use of sustainable transport modes to be maximised (paragraph 34).
- 6.14 The centre of the application site is some 4km by road from the centre of Didcot. A regular bus services passes through Harwell linking it with Didcot and further afield to Oxford and Wantage. The western entrance to Milton Park is approximately 4km by road and the Harwell Campus is about 4.5km away by road. The facilities and employment opportunities offered in Didcot, Milton Park and Harwell Campus are reasonably accessible by bus (a change of bus is needed in Didcot to access Milton Park). Local bus stops are approximately 500m from the centre of the site. Some people may choose to cycle these relatively short distances to employment and other services although it is noted the main roads are extremely busy at peak hours.
- 6.15 As mentioned above Harwell is defined as a large village as it has a reasonable amount of local services including a primary school, shops, pub, church, community facilities and some limited employment opportunities. The shops are around 450m from the centre of the site. The school is a walk of some 500m from the centre of the site using

footpaths via Manor Green. The proposal seeks to demonstrate pedestrian connections to the village (drawing no. 8150734/6000 Rev P1) other than using Grove Road. These connections include pedestrian access via Manor Green and Talbot Close which lead towards the primary school and also via Gaveston Road to High Street and its facilities including bus stops. Alternatively pedestrian access can be achieved along Barrow Road and Barrow Lane to High Street. These routes mean future residents are not reliant on Grove Road to access the village facilities. (It is acknowledged that some future residents will use Grove Road, as it will be the shortest route to High Street for some residents). This is a reasonably accessible site.

Affordable housing and housing mix

- 6.16 The application makes provision for 37% affordable housing. This is a proposed strategic housing site and policy H17 of the draft local plan 2031 seeks 35% affordable housing. In contrast Policy H17 of the adopted local plan seeks 40% affordable housing. As mentioned earlier in this report limited weight is given to the draft local plan policies. As an adopted plan greater weight is given to the adopted local plan affordable housing policy and therefore, 40% affordable housing should be provided unless the applicant can demonstrate the scheme would be unviable. The applicant has explained through a confidential viability report that the proposal cannot support 40% affordable housing. The NPPG advises *“In making decisions, the local planning authority will need to understand the impact of planning obligations on the proposal. Where an applicant is able to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the local planning authority that the planning obligation would cause the development to be unviable, the local planning authority should be flexible in seeking planning obligations.”*

This is particularly relevant for affordable housing contributions which are often the largest single item sought on housing developments. These contributions should not be sought without regard to individual scheme viability”.

- 6.17 The applicant’s viability report is being reviewed independently and an update will be given at the meeting.
- 6.18 The proposed affordable housing tenure split is 75% rented and 25% shared ownership and the housing mix (based on 37%) is considered to be reasonably follow the SHMA – see the table below:

	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4+ bed	Total
Proposed	24	23	28	4	79
SHMA expectation	22	28	26	3	79

- 6.19 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 bed	3 bed	4+ bed	Total
Proposed	4	21	59	50	134
SHMA Expectation	8	29	57	40	134

- 6.20 Whilst not slavishly matching the SHMA this mix is reasonably close and provides a good mix of dwelling sizes.

Design and Layout

- 6.21 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.
- 6.22 A number of local plan policies seek to ensure high quality developments and to protect the amenities of neighbouring properties (Policies DC1, DC6, and 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

- 6.23 The design and access statement contains a character study, context appraisal and site appraisal and seeks to explain how the proposal responds to local character.
- 6.24 There is a range of layout and building styles in Harwell with no one particular character dominating. The Croft is a through road with a cul-de-sac leading off it. The Croft contains some two-storey houses but is mostly detached bungalows with open plan frontages although some front gardens do have hedges. Materials include red and light brown bricks, some render and timber boarding. Barrow Road leads from High Street and is a no through road with a cul-de-sac of mobile homes leading off it. There is a mix of houses fronting it with frontages defined by low walls, fences and hedges. Barrow Road comprises house, dormer bungalows and bungalows and also contains some mobile homes. Materials are a mix of red/brown bricks and some render. Manor Green consists of detached houses in cul-de-sacs with open plan frontages plus an area of open space. Materials are red or brown facing bricks. Greenwood Meadows is a mix of houses in terraced, semi-detached and detached form. Dwellings are close to the roads, have a mixture of parking arrangements and mix of open plan and hedges to frontages. There are also a small number of bungalows. Materials consist of artificial stone and red/brown brick. Dwellings on the north side of Grove Road are predominantly bungalows with some converted to have rooms in the roof. There is one house. Materials are red/brown brick or render. Most dwellings in the locality of the site have brown coloured roof tiles of differing profile. There is therefore, no strong lead in terms of house types or layout.
- 6.25 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 (dph). Some concerns have been expressed that the density of development is too high and out of keeping with density of development in the village. The application proposes a density of some 25dph. In comparison dwellings in The Croft, Grove Road and Barrow Road have a density of 15dph; Manor Green is 20dph and Greenwood Meadows is 23dph. The density proposed is much higher than The Croft and more consistent with new development permitted to the south of the site.

Spatial Layout

- 6.26 The proposal takes vehicular access from Grove Road. Within the site is a hierarchy of connected roads being the main access avenue, secondary roads circling housing and back to the main avenue; and some short private drives. There is good connectivity internally. The roads allow a choice of routes through the development although there is the one main entrance to the site. The proposal also includes retaining the existing

public footpath against the eastern boundary of the site with an existing public footpath from Grove Road to the west needing to be diverted via the pavements before crossing the open space and continuing to the west. A footway/cycleway is proposed to Barrow Road. The proposal is considered compliant with principle DG23 of the Design Guide. Traffic calming is formed by the change in road direction including curvature of the roads which should reduce traffic speeds, different materials for roads surfaces, focal points and rumble strips. This should keep traffic speeds low making the development reasonably safe for pedestrians and cyclists. This accords with principle DG34 of the design guide. The proposal creates active frontages with houses fronting the roads with corner dwellings designed to 'turn' the corner by incorporating windows and doors on side elevations. A few dwellings are tight to pavements of parking spaces with limited space for frontage planting. Tree planting can break the parking spaces and this element of the proposal is not untypical of older housing in the village fronting the pavement with no front garden. The layout creates reasonable enclosure and accords with design guide principle DG28 and addresses.

- 6.27 Open spaces are provided at the edges of the development with a centrally located open space. Trees forming existing field boundaries are retained (except for providing vehicular access), and these visually break the layout. With their high canopies the spaces beneath the trees provide further potential for open space. Open space provision is some 20% of the site being in excess of the 15% expected by adopted policy H23. The central open space has a road around its sides. This is a reasonable situation. A low fence could be erected around the space to secure its edges. Dwellings overlook the open spaces providing passive surveillance. A detailed landscaping scheme can be secured by condition and this can provide woodland planting to the western edge of the site and further tree planting to visually break parking areas and views between existing and proposed dwellings. It can also seek retention of vegetation on the eastern site boundary.
- 6.28 The proposal responds to its rural edges by turning dwellings to face the fields. In accordance with principle DG29 of the Design Guide. Dwellings mainly front the public footpath behind The Croft creating a reasonable safe environment for pedestrians, this being an improvement on the present enclosure of this path.
- 6.29 The layout provides focal points with visual stops along most of the roads and vistas along the roads to the focal points which include the central open space and 2½ storey buildings. Views out to the countryside to the west and north are provided. This accords with principle DG30 of the design guide.

Built form

- 6.30 As mentioned above there is no distinctive pattern or design to dwellings in the area. Proposed dwellings are 2 and 2½ storeys which is at odds with most dwellings in The Croft but typical of the village as a whole and of newer development at Greenwood Meadow which is seen in the context of this development. Ridge heights vary from 8m to 10m. This is inconsistent with the height of bungalows in The Croft and consistent with new dwellings at Greenwood Meadow. The proposal is considered to accord with principle DG51 of the design guide.
- 6.31 House sizes and designs in the village are an eclectic mix. The house types proposed are simple in form being rectangular with vertical emphasis, well-proportioned and balanced elevations. Variation is provided by different house sizes and a mix of detached, semi-detached dwellings and terraced dwellings and a mix of gabled and flat fronted buildings. Some house types include chimneys although these seem to be decorative rather than functional; nonetheless, they add further character to the houses. Materials will be dealt with by conditions with the plans suggesting use of brick

and elements of render or timber boarding on some dwellings. The designs follow those in Greenwood Meadow. The proposal is considered compliant with principles DG 51 – DG54 of the design guide.

Residential Amenity

- 6.32 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.
- 6.33 Trees lining Grove Road and the distance to Greenwood Meadows which at a minimum of 36m is in excess of 21m recommended by the design guide ensures no overlooking. Bungalows in The Croft have good screening in the form of existing hedges and fences on their rear boundaries. Where rear windows in The Croft bungalows face main windows in proposed dwellings the distances between them are a minimum of 24m being in excess of 21 m expected by the design guide. Site boundary hedges could be retained and enhanced by the landscaping scheme and tree planting provided to break views. For existing dwellings in Barrow Road the distances are in excess of 30m from the proposed dwellings. Therefore, no unreasonable overlooking or over bearing impact would result. Proposed plot 1 is set back in comparison to the adjacent existing dwelling called Cobwebs. This ensures no unreasonable loss of light to a side window in Cobwebs. A garage at the side of plot 1 and hedge on the site boundary which can be retained also ensures no unreasonable overbearing impact. The distance between the rear elevation of 25 The Croft and the side elevation of plots 3 and 4 is some 19m being in excess of the 12m recommended by the design guide and sufficient to avoid an unreasonable overbearing impact.
- 6.34 Implications for neighbours are reasonable.

Landscape and Visual Impact

- 6.35 The NPPF seeks to enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes (paragraph109). Policy NE9 of the adopted local plan seeks to protect the landscape quality of the Lowland Vale, particularly the long open views within or across the area.
- 6.36 Distant views of the site are constrained by tall poplar trees on the field boundaries not only of this site but also adjacent fields. Landscape impact for the Lowland Vale landscape is limited and the limited harm that results as a loss of this site to housing has to be balanced against this authority presenting this site for housing as part of its draft local plan 2031. The main perception of change will be from Grove Road and the footpaths adjacent the site and across it. In terms of views from Grove Road these will be in the context of Greenwood Meadows extending on the south side of Grove Road, with this proposed development enclosing the north side. This impact will be noticeable being the loss of open land beyond the poplar trees screening the north side of Grove Road. The footpath adjacent to The Croft and crossing the site will be enclosed by development and the change will be highly perceptible for users.
- 6.37 In a district such as this which has limited previously developed sites, it is inevitable that in meeting housing need some greenfield sites will need to be used. This local harm to views needs to be balanced against the economic, social and environmental benefits of the proposal including the need to provide more housing including affordable housing and a 5-year land supply. As explained in the conclusion of this report it is considered the benefits outweigh this local harm.

Flood Risk and Surface/Foul Drainage

- 6.38 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).
- 6.39 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.
- 6.40 The site is flood zone 1 being the preferred areas for housing development in flood risk terms. The applicant's drainage strategy includes a sustainable drainage scheme including an attenuation basin in the north west corner of the site and conveyance swale. The aim is to attenuate surface water run-off to existing green field run-off rates thereby reducing risks of flooding on site and elsewhere. A condition can secure a sustainable drainage scheme and its implementation.
- 6.41 The foul drainage strategy presented by the applicant is a new foul sewer connecting directly to the existing Thames Water foul public sewer located beyond the south eastern boundary of the site in Grove Road. This will provide a direct gravity connection for 46 properties whilst an additional sewer network will convey flows from the remaining properties to a pumping station located at the north western low point of the site. This station will pump flows via a rising main connecting to the nearest available manhole on the direct gravity network via a separate discharge chamber.
- 6.42 It is noted that Thames Water does not object and seeks a condition securing a foul drainage scheme. A condition can require approval of this scheme before development commences and implementation prior to occupation.

Traffic, Parking and Highway Safety

- 6.43 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.
- 6.44 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."*
- 6.45 Vehicular access is from Grove Road. It is proposed to extend the 30mph speed limit out from the village westwards beyond the site access. From close to the A4130 junction with Grove Road to the new 30mph speed limit a new speed limit of 40mph would be introduced. Other proposed alterations in Grove Road include removal of existing road narrowing just west of Manor Green and a new pedestrian crossing at this

point and new road narrowing in Grove Road west of the proposed site access. Proposed vision splays at the proposed site access are 2.4m x 43m considered sufficient in this case for a 30mph speed restriction.

- 6.46 The applicant argues that traffic surveys indicate a right hand turn lane or roundabout at the Grove Road/A4130 junction is unnecessary. The County Council agrees. It is proposed to improve vision at this junction with visibility splays of 2.4m x 215m. To the north this means removing trees on the field edge. A preservation order covers trees on the northern side of Grove Road at this junction which remain. The trees beside the A4130 affected by the vision splays are not protected. A condition can require new planting behind the vision splay.
- 6.47 The original submission included a footway from the site eastwards on the north side of Grove Road towards the village centre. It also included a shared vehicle and pedestrian surface through the narrow part of Grove Road close to its junction with High Street. Concern has been expressed that Grove Road and its junction with High Street is unsuited to pedestrian and cyclist movement due to the narrowness of the road and pedestrians and vehicles sharing this short stretch of road there being no pavement or space to provide a pavement. The proposed footway and shared surface scheme have now been removed from the proposal. The applicant argues that with pedestrian movements encouraged via Manor Green and Barrow Road and Barrow Lane and cyclist movements via Barrow Road to the village centre there are alternatives to pedestrians using Grove Road. Local residents suggest residents will still use Grove Road to access village amenities as it is the shortest route.
- 6.48 To access the school pedestrians are likely to use the footpath behind Manor Green. Future residents of the northern parts of the site may use Barrow Road/Lane as it will be a shorter route than Grove Road. Some residents will use Grove Road, as it is a short route to High Street and in doing so they will be aware of the lack of pavement and narrowness of Grove Road. The highway authority comments are awaited.
- 6.49 To improve visibility and provide traffic calming at the Grove Road/High Street junction the applicant proposes a mini roundabout together with uncontrolled pedestrian crossing points on various roads junctions at this confluence of roads. The applicant suggests this will also help pedestrians crossing the roads. At the High Street/Townsend Road junction new road markings are proposed and an uncontrolled pedestrian crossing point. Double yellow parking lines are proposed by the applicant at the Drewitts Corner, in Westfield close to the school. Single yellow line parking restrictions (no waiting between 7am and 10am and 4pm and 7pm Monday to Friday) are proposed by the applicant in Burr Street (B4493). The aim is to prevent on street parking which occurs at present and which presently interrupts the free flow of traffic. (The uncontrolled crossing points would be dropped kerbs and tactile paving).
- 6.50 Double yellow lines at Drewitts Corner would still allow parking off road in front of the shops and in a layby fronting dwellings on the eastern side of High Street. A dwelling on the west side of High Street has on-site parking and is not reliant on on-road parking. Most dwellings in Burr Street appear to have off-street parking. Road marking changes at Townsend Road/High Street junction have no unreasonable implications for residents or listed buildings. All these works appear to be on the highway.
- 6.51 Peak traffic flows from the proposal (213 dwellings) are calculated by the applicant to be some 119 two-way movements in the 8am – 9am peak and some 130 two-way movements in the 5pm-6pm peak. The applicant suggests that the road network and local road junctions have sufficient capacity to accommodate the anticipated traffic movements.

- 6.52 These changes to the scheme and the transport assessment addendum are subject to consultation including with the highway authority and their response is awaited. An update will be given at the meeting and the recommendation is subject to the highway authority response being positive.
- 6.53 466 allocated parking spaces are proposed these being a mixture of garages and open parking spaces which are either beside dwellings, in front of dwellings or beside roads. In addition, 38 unallocated parking spaces are proposed. This level of parking is considered satisfactory and in accordance with parking standards.

Viability, affordable housing and Section 106 contributions

- 6.54 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.
- 6.55 The NPPG provides further guidance on how to apply the tests mentioned above and notes the following:
- 1. Planning obligations assist in mitigating the impact of development which benefits local communities and supports the provision of local infrastructure.
 - 2. Planning obligations should not be sought where they are clearly not necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms.
 - 3. Planning obligations must be fully justified and evidenced. Where affordable housing contributions are being sought, planning obligations should not prevent development from going forward.
- 6.56 Legal advice to this authority is that *“viability is clearly capable of being a key factor in applying particularly the third test to any given set of circumstances where a planning obligation is being considered; also that the implications of a proposed development being deemed unviable in the face of the level of contributions being demanded (and how this should best be addressed/resolved by the respective local authorities) will inevitably vary according to the specific circumstances of the site and its development context.”*
- 6.57 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.
- 6.58 The application provides for 37% affordable dwellings these being plot numbers 4-18, 24-30, 68-71, 72-75, 126-134, 138-155, 166-171 and 188-201.
- Recreation/Sports Provision*
- 6.59 Additional population will increase pressure on existing facilities in the village and at Wantage/Grove. It is reasonable to request contributions towards their improvement as no on site provision is being made as part of this proposal. The sums requested are set against planned schemes. The amounts sought are proportionate to a 204 dwelling development and therefore the amounts will be slightly higher for a 213 dwelling development. The amounts are calculated on the percentage increase in village population against Sport England calculations or playing field standards in the case of football pitches.
- 6.60 Contributions are sought towards swimming pool, sports hall, and health and fitness

at Grove/Wantage which is in the same sub-area as Harwell and it is reasonable to seek a contribution towards these new facilities.

- 6.61 Other sporting contributions requested include those towards improving football pitches in Harwell village, tennis and the village sports pavilion. Additional residents in the village will put pressure on these facilities, as explained by the Parish Council and the requests are considered reasonable and would be towards improving pitches and/or new football pitches in the village, new netting for the tennis courts or court improvements and improving or rebuilding the sports pavilion providing better changing facilities. There is a deficit in cricket and rugby facilities in the area and this proposal is likely to increase pressure on existing facilities. It is justifiable that the proposal should contribute towards increased and improved facilities in Harwell or at Harwell Campus. These requests are considered reasonable (the figures are in the table below).

Parish Council Requests

- 6.62 The Parish Council has requested contributions towards an improved community centre as explained in their representations. New facilities have been costed at £1.3m. The proposal is a 21% increase in population of the village and is likely to increase pressure on the existing facility. It is reasonable that this proposal should contribute towards the improved community centre at a proportionate costs of 21%.
- 6.63 The Parish Council draws attention to planned improvements at the St Matthews Church which are estimated at £100,000. The church is approximately 1.2km from the centre of the site and could be reasonably reached on foot. It is not considered that the proposal should contribute towards parking or access improvements at the church. Heating and new seating are planned with according to the Parish Council part of the motivation for such improvements to broaden access for wider community use, including for disabled people. The proposal will generate increased population of the village. The church improvements appear to be planned regardless of the increase in population and it is not considered a contribution of £20,000 is justified or necessary as a consequence of this development.
- 6.64 The Parish Council advise that Royal British Legion ambitions are for increased community and village use of their hall and this is crucial for the increasing number of village inhabitants. This contribution is considered reasonable and justified. The figure sought should be £21,000 based on 21% of the £100,000 cost.
- 6.65 Other Parish Council requests are not considered justified (administration costs). Benches and a notice board and dog litter bins can be sought by condition and through the waste bin contribution sought below which is a direct consequence of this development.

Police

- 6.66 Thames Valley police has requested £30,104 towards staff set up, vehicles, ANPR cameras, and premises. Very limited detail has been provided as to how this requests relates directly to this proposal and it appears the contribution would be pooled towards policing costs and not directly relevant to this proposal. In addition, pooling restrictions affect ANPR, vehicles, and mobile IT. The request is not considered justified in planning terms.

Education

- 6.67 A primary school request is reasonable to mitigate for increased pupils from this development and expansion of Harwell primary school to 1.5 form entry.
- 6.68 A contribution towards secondary school education at north east Didcot is requested as

the scale of planned and proposed housing growth in the Didcot area requires significant strategic growth in secondary school capacity. One new school is due to open on the Great Western Park development in 2017, co-located with a University Technical College due to open 2015. A second new secondary school will be needed, and is planned for the North East Didcot development site. It is anticipated that a 600 place school will be built here initially. The cost of a 600 place secondary school is estimated as £14,995,700 or £24,993 per pupil. This development is therefore required to contribute toward the provision of the new secondary school in order to mitigate the impact of the development on local education infrastructure.

- 6.69 Since this response from the County Council revised contributions towards secondary education have been agreed between officers of the District and County Council with these figures being £21,000 per pupil for secondary schools. This revised cost is therefore, sought. Based on 53 pupils (204) dwelling proposal this would be £1,113,000 but will increase with the latest proposal.

- 6.70 The SEN request is towards a new school in Didcot and is reasonable.

Transport

- 6.71 The public transport request of £795/dwelling is sought towards improved bus services through Harwell village and is considered reasonable.
- 6.72 The County Council has also sought financial contributions of £13,713 towards increased book stock at Didcot library. It is advised book stock would need to be increased by 2 volumes per resident based on £20 per resident at 2012 prices. No plan has been put in place to deliver this expectation, timescales and intent. No evidence has been provided to justify this figure. I am not convinced the request is reasonable or necessary to make this development acceptable.
- 6.73 The following developer contributions are considered fair and proportionate:

Vale of White Horse District Council	<i>Proposed Contributions</i>
AGP at Valley Park or Harwell Campus	£13,623
Swimming pool at Grove/Wantage	£82,114
Sports hall at Grove/Wantage	£106,287
Health and fitness in Harwell or Grove/Wantage	£45,097
Tennis in Harwell	£840
Indoor Bowls in Harwell	£10,226
MUGA/youth activities in Harwell	£11,409
Harwell football pitch	£32,526
Cricket pitches at Harwell or Harwell Campus	£17,856
Rugby pitches at Harwell or Harwell Campus	£8,122
Pavilion in Harwell	£39,956
Cricket pavilion in Harwell or at Harwell Campus	£17,856
Rugby pavilion in Harwell or at Harwell campus	£9,984
Waste bin provision for this site	£36,210
Monitoring	£4,965
Total	£437,071
Oxfordshire County Council	<i>Proposed Contributions</i>
Travel plan monitoring	£1,240
Improved bus service for Harwell	£169,335

Harwell primary school	£833,904
New secondary school at north east Didcot	£1,113,000
New SEN school in Didcot	£101,500
Monitoring	£10,013
Total	£2,228,992
Parish Council	<i>Proposed contributions</i>
Harwell community centre	£273,000
Harwell British Legion clubhouse	£21,000
Total	£294,000
Overall Total	£3,103,765

(Applying the Council's draft CIL the figure would be £2,705,063 based on 35% affordable housing).

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 spending. This could help secure local facilities or make them more robust. 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.
- 7.4 The proposal will have some environmental implications resulting from localised landscape harm and limited ecology impacts but mitigation can be put in place to address these. Environmental benefits include an acceptably designed scheme in an accessible location and provision of open spaces.
- 7.5 Harm has been identified in terms of limited landscape and visual impacts and loss of grade 2 agricultural land. In this case the wider benefits of the proposal including the contribution towards the Council's five-year land supply and provision of affordable housing are considered to outweigh the limited harm.
- 7.6 The further comments of the highway authority are awaited particularly in respect of

proposals to introduce road markings in High Street e.g. the mini roundabout and yellow lines. An update will be given at the meeting

- 7.7 There is an emphasis in the NPPF to boost significantly the supply of housing and this development is considered to amount to sustainable development, and whilst there will be some adverse effects, these do not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. The application is recommended for approval subject to the highway authority having no objection, subject to conditions and a legal agreement to secure affordable housing and developer contributions the extent of which may depend on the outcome of the review of the applicant's viability assessment.

8.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that subject to the highway authority having no objection to the revised plans that authority to grant planning permission is delegated to the head of planning subject to:

1: A S106 agreement being entered into with the district council in order to secure contributions towards local infrastructure and to secure affordable housing; and

2: Conditions as follows:

- 1. Development to commence within three years.**
- 2. Approved plans.**
- 3. Materials to be agreed.**
- 4. Permitted development removal – Classes A and B.**
- 5. Garage accommodation to be retained.**
- 6. Landscaping scheme required.**
- 7. Landscaping implementation.**
- 8. Tree protection to be provided.**
- 9. Boundary treatments.**
- 10. On site open space provision including provision of benches and notice board.**
- 11. On site open space management.**
- 12. Sustainable drainage scheme to be agreed and implemented.**
- 13. Foul drainage strategy to be agreed before development commences and implemented prior to occupation.**
- 14. Water supply implemented prior to occupation.**
- 15. Vehicular access details to be implemented.**
- 16. Visibility splays at Grove Road/A4130 junction.**
- 17. Parking provision.**
- 18. Archaeological watching brief.**
- 19. Implementation of a programme of archaeological work.**
- 20. Construction method statement & traffic management plan to be agreed.**
- 21. Bat box provision.**
- 22. Slab levels to be agreed.**

Informative

- 1. Bird nesting**

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