
APPLICATION NO.	P15/V1722/O
APPLICATION TYPE	OUTLINE
REGISTERED	20.7.2015
PARISH	GROVE
WARD MEMBER(S)	Ben Mabbett Chris McCarthy
APPLICANT	Williams Grand Prix Engineering Limited
SITE	Land west of Station Road (A338) South of Williams Grand Prix Engineering Grove Wantage
PROPOSAL	Residential development for up to 160 dwellings (use class C3) together with direct access off Station Road (A338); landscaping and public open space; drainage infrastructure inclusive of flood compensation works; and biodiversity enhancements(as amended by submitted documentation 9 November 2015 and 8 January 2016).
GRID REFERENCE	440583/190978
OFFICER	Stuart Walker

SUMMARY

This application is referred to committee in light of an objection from Grove Parish Council.

The application is seeking outline planning permission for the erection of up to 160 dwellings (including up to 64 affordable units). The applicants seek consent for means of access only at this stage, with appearance, landscaping, layout and scale being reserved for future consideration. The site lies in the open countryside and is located within the Lowland Vale landscape.

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

The main planning issues that have been considered are:

- The principle of the proposed development in this location in relation to planning policy context.
- Whether the proposal is suitable to meet the five year housing supply deficit in terms of the sustainability of the site.
- The cumulative impact of this proposal alongside other approved and proposed residential developments in the locality.
- The proposed illustrative layout and design of the development within its context.
- The impact of the proposal on the Lowland Vale landscape.
- The impact on highway safety.
- Implications for flood risk, foul and surface water drainage, ecology, heritage assets and archaeology.

The principle of the development to help to address the council's current shortfall in housing supply is acceptable. The site is sustainably located in relation to local facilities in Grove. The provision of additional housing is acceptable and contributions are sought to offset cumulative impact on physical and social infrastructure. Evidence accompanying the application demonstrates an acceptably designed development can be achieved on site that

mitigates landscape and visual impact of the proposal. Technical issues relating to highway impact, drainage / flood risk, ecology, heritage assets and archaeology are acceptable subject to conditions.

Overall the development is considered to amount to sustainable development, and is recommended for approval subject to conditions and a S106 agreement.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The 9.24 hectare site lies to the north of Bellinger's Garage (a car sales garage and filling station) on the north side of Grove. The application site is part of a wider strategic site known as 'Monks Farm, Grove' which is identified in the emerging local plan 2031, part 1 for up to 750 dwellings. 75 of these dwellings were permitted under application P14/V0576/O in April 2015, on land immediately to the south of the application site.
- 1.2 The site comprises a grassland field, split into two paddocks. There is also a derelict bungalow and a small cluster of metal barn buildings on the site. The topography of the site is broadly flat and rural in character, with a scattering of trees and hedgerows on boundaries. The site lies within the Lowland Vale landscape (policy NE9).
- 1.3 The site has an open frontage along the A338 for some 180 metres between Bellinger's Garage to the south, and the Williams F1 headquarters and conference centre entrance to the north. To the west lies the Letcombe Brook, a historic waterway contiguous with an ancient Public Right of Way (PROW). A private farm track runs alongside the north boundary, between the site and the Williams F1 campus. Land to the south of the site currently comprises open fields with outline planning permission for housing.
- 1.4 The site is accessed directly off the A338. A location plan is **attached** at appendix 1.

2.0 PROPOSAL

- 2.1 The application seeks outline planning permission for the erection of up to 160 dwellings with the associated provision of a new access off the A338, amenity space and landscaping. The detailed matter to be considered at this stage is access. Landscaping, appearance, layout and scale are reserved matters that will be subject of a further detailed application should outline permission be granted.
- 2.2 The proposal achieves an average density of 36 dwellings per hectare with a mix of dwellings typically two storey in height. A minimum of 15% of the site area will be used as public open space. The design and access statement that accompanies the application indicates different types of open space including a Local Equipped Area of Play (LEAP). In addition, new and enhanced wildlife habitats around the Letcombe Brook are proposed.
- 2.3 A full suite of surveys and assessments have been undertaken to support the application, including the submission of an illustrative layout plan. All plans and supporting technical documents accompanying the application are available to view online at www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk. Extracts from the plan drawings are **attached** at Appendix 2 and the application has been amended to take account of technical officer comments.

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.

3.2

Grove Parish Council	<p>Object.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The site is not part of the existing local plan or the emerging plan and should not be determined until the local plan process has been completed. This is isolated development with no links to the existing settlement. Access should be via the existing A338 roundabout. Impact on the Letcombe Brook.
Neighbours / local residents	<p>One letter of objection has been received. The objections expressed may be summarised as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no space for connection to Grove airfield development. There is no co-ordination between applications. Issues of infrastructure are being ignored. A direct link road access across the north of Grove should be provided.
Ramblers Association	<p>No objection.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The character of FP3 must be protected. Access to FP3 should be improved.
Oxfordshire County Council	<p>No objection. Their full response is available to view online.</p> <p><i>Highways</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No objection, subject to conditions and contributions towards the Grove Northern link road, improvements to the A338, and provision of two bus stops. <p><i>Archaeology</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No objection, subject to conditions to require and implement a written scheme of investigation. <p><i>Education</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No objection, subject to contributions for primary, secondary and special education needs. <p><i>Property</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No objection, subject to contributions towards library book stock at Grove library. <p><i>Ecology</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defer to council's in-house ecologist's advice.
County Councillor Zoe Patrick	No objection, but raises concern over lack of bus service provision for the site and no access for future residents.
Thames Water	<p>No objection, subject to conditions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identified an inability of the existing waste water infrastructure to accommodate the development. Propose a Grampian condition requiring a drainage strategy to be approved detailing any on and/or off site drainage works prior to development commencing.
Environment Agency	No objection, subject to conditions.
Drainage Engineer	No objection, subject to conditions.
Countryside Officer	No objection, subject to conditions.
Tree Officer	No objection, subject to conditions.
Landscape Officer	No objection, subject to conditions.
Urban Design Officer	No overall objection, but raises several issues with illustrative layout plan.

Vale of White Horse District Council – Committee Report – 3 February 2016

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>My main concern is the scheme's lack of vehicle permeability and legibility.</i> <p>The officer's full comments are available to view online.</p>
Leisure Team	No objection, subject to contributions.
Thames Valley Police	<p>No objection.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek contributions towards increased policing for the area.
Housing Development Team	<p>No objection.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The number of affordable units meets the requirement of Vale of White Horse Local Plan Policy H17, which seeks a 40% affordable housing contribution. The tenure mix of the affordable units should comprise 75% rented and 25% shared ownership.</i>
Environmental Health – Protection Team	No objection, subject to mitigation measures identified in acoustic report being implemented (by condition).
Waste Management Team	No objection, subject to contributions for provision of new bins for each property.
Letcombe Brook Project	<p>Objection in principle but should permission be granted with the following to be taken into account:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No new housing should be developed until the basic water infrastructure is identified and supplied i.e.: New sources of water to supply housing are developed and Thames Water expands Wantage Sewage Treatment Works. The cumulative effect of developments on the ecology and landscape of the Letcombe brook and corridor must be taken into consideration when developments are put forward. The brook at this site requires restoration and long term management for local residents to enjoy and appreciate the brook whilst not disturbing the banks and watercourse. Funding should be provided for interpretative material and maintenance. Request for a detailed and costed Landscape and Ecological Management Plan with habitat creation and long term management for the site (20 years).
Network Rail	<p>Objection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>We have a level crossing in the area which will be impacted upon by the development should it go ahead, the crossing is Wantage Road Footpath Level Crossing, which will have safety implications due to the envisaged increase in the usage. The increased use of the crossings cannot be looked upon favourably by Network Rail and some form of mitigation may be justified to reduce any safety concerns.</i> <i>The crossing is on a 4 track railway with a line speed in this location of 125mph and a very frequent train service. The line speed is likely to increase when the railway is electrified in 2016.</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Due to the impact upon the crossing, some form of mitigation will be required which may potentially include a footbridge at Wantage Road, although a further safety appraisal of the level crossing would need to be completed before concluding a footbridge is required.
--	--

4.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

4.1 [P14/V0576/O](#) - Approved (02/04/2015)

Residential development comprising the erection of up to 75 dwellings including access.(as amplified by Drainage Strategy, Flood Risk Assessment & Illustrative Layout received 22 August 2014)

[P08/V1223](#) - Refused (18/12/2008) - Refused on appeal (13/01/2009)

Change of use to sports playing fields with car parking, changing facilities and ancillary development.

[P08/V0527/O](#) - Refused (14/07/2008) - Refused on appeal (15/04/2009)

Outline application for mixed-use Class B1 development, open space and playing fields with associated changing and car parking facilities.

[P00/V1196](#) - Approved (24/05/2001)

Proposed roundabout and access road, A338 to Grove Park Drive.

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.

- GS1 - Developments in existing settlements
- GS2 - Development in the countryside
- H11 - Development in the larger villages
- H13 - Development elsewhere
- H16 - Size of dwelling and Lifetime Homes
- H17 - Affordable housing
- H23 - Open space in new housing development
- 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 - Effect of neighbouring uses on new development
- DC12 - Water quality and resources
- HE1 - Preservation and enhancement: implications for development
- HE4 - Historic buildings; setting
- HE9 - Archaeology
- HE10 - Archaeology
- HE11 - Archaeology
- NE3 - Geologically important sites
- NE4 - Other sites of nature conservation value
- NE9 - The Lowland Vale
- TR1 - Wantage relief road scheme

TR5 - National cycle network

5.2 The emerging Local Plan 2031, Part 1, Core Policies

The draft local plan part 1 is not currently adopted policy. As per paragraph 216 of 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:-

- 1 – Presumption in favour of sustainable development
- 3 – Settlement hierarchy
- 4 – Meeting our housing needs
- 7 – Providing supporting infrastructure and services
- 15 – Spatial strategy for the South East Vale Sub-Area
- 17 – Deliver of strategic highway improvements within the South East Vale Sub-Area
- 22 – Housing mix
- 23 – Housing density
- 24 – Affordable housing
- 26 – Accommodating current and future needs of the ageing population
- 33 – Promoting sustainable transport and accessibility
- 35 – Promoting public transport, cycling and walking
- 36 – Electronic communications
- 37 – Design and local distinctiveness
- 38 – Design strategies for strategic and major development sites
- 39 – The historic environment
- 40 – Sustainable design and construction
- 41 – Renewable energy
- 42 – Flood risk
- 43 – Natural resources
- 44 – Landscape
- 45 – Green Infrastructure
- 46 – Conservation and improvement of biodiversity
- 47 – Delivery and contingency

5.3 Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)

- Design Guide – March 2015

The following sections of the Design Guide are 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
- Affordable Housing – July 2006
- Flood Maps and Flood Risk – July 2006
- Planning and Public Art – July 2006
- Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan, April 2014
- S106 interim guidance 2014

5.4 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – March 2012

5.5 Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) – March 2014

5.6 Neighbourhood Plan

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.

5.7 There is currently no neighbourhood plan for Grove.

5.8 Environmental Impact

This proposal is for more than 150 dwellings and the site area exceeds 5ha in size and is therefore, above the thresholds set in Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2015. As required by the above Regulations officers have undertaken a screening opinion. Taking into account government guidance on thresholds in paragraph 58 of the NPPG and having considered the potential for significant effects of the proposal in accordance with Schedule 3 of the Regulations, it has been decided that in this case this proposal is not EIA development. A screening opinion has been issued to that effect.

5.9 Other Relevant Legislation

- Written statement by Secretary of State on sustainable drainage systems (18 Dec 2014)
- Written statement by the Secretary of State on car parking (25 March 2015)
- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act) 1990
- Community & Infrastructure Levy Legislation
- 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)

5.10 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.

5.11 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:

1. Principle of the development
2. Use of land
3. Locational credentials
4. Affordable housing and housing mix
5. Design and layout
6. Residential amenity
7. Neighbouring uses
8. Landscape and visual Impact
9. Open space, landscaping and trees
10. Flood risk and surface / foul drainage
11. Traffic and highway safety
12. Public footpaths
13. Ecology and biodiversity
14. Archaeology
15. Delivery and developer contributions

6.2 **The principle of development**

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 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.

6.3 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).

6.4 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.

6.5 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.

6.6 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.

- 6.7 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.
- 6.8 The emerging Local Plan 2031 Part 1 continues a settlement hierarchy which focuses housing growth at the market towns and larger villages and identifies Grove as a local service centre for the South East Vale sub-area. Within this emerging strategy, Core Policy 4 identifies the site as suitable for new housing and Core Policy 15 states 12,450 houses will be provided by 2031 for the sub-area, of which around 750 units will be provided for at the Monks Farm (North Grove) site.
- 6.9 The parish council have raised objection to the site's allocation under the emerging local plan and consider the determination of this application ahead of the plan being made 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."* Appeal decisions have gone further on this issue where they have consistently noted that to define a development as premature requires clear identification with evidence that allowing this development will prejudice other planned development coming forward.
- 6.10 The emerging Local Plan 2031 Part 1 was submitted to the Secretary of State on 18th March 2015. Stage 1 of the hearing sessions took place in September 2015 and the Council have been instructed that Stage 2 will take place in February 2016. Although the Plan has been submitted and has progressed through some of the hearing sessions, in accordance with the NPPF (para 216), only limited weight can only be given to the emerging policies and proposals within the Local Plan 2031 Part 1 at this time.
- 6.11 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 has to 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.
- 6.12 **Use of land**
The NPPF identifies the need to protect the best and most versatile agricultural land from development (paragraph 112). This site comprising of grassland and arable fields is in agricultural use. According to Natural England's agricultural land classification map it is grade 3, good to moderate land. The proposal will result in the loss of this agricultural land. There will also be or potential for loss of other agricultural land with other housing proposals permitted and applications pending consideration. In an area such as this district where it has a limited supply of previously developed sites and a housing need, it is inevitable that some greenfield sites and agricultural land will be lost. Whilst there is some limited harm in taking this grade 3 land and other land out of agricultural production, this needs to be balanced against the benefits of the proposal,

and officers consider the loss of this land to housing from agricultural production is outweighed by economic, social and environmental benefits.

6.13 Locational Credentials

Grove is identified in the adopted local plan as a main settlement and is situated immediately to the north of Wantage, 9.7km south west of Abingdon and approximately 18km south west of Oxford. The site is well connected to each settlement via the A338, A420, A415 and A34. Grove is also identified as a local service centre in the emerging Local Plan and as such is considered to be a sustainable settlement that possesses a number of services and facilities and has good accessibility to public transport. The nearest bus stop to the site is located approximately 150m to the north east on Station Road. Further bus stops are located in Grove, less than 1km to the south of the site, on Mayfield Avenue, Oxford Lane, Denchworth Road and Main Street.

- 6.14 The village centre is located approximately 800 metres from the site. The primary school is approximately 400 metres, all distances which are acceptable walking distances, according to the Institution of Highways Transportation guidelines for providing journeys on foot (2000). A regular bus service also passes through the village providing access to Oxford, Wantage and beyond, and the county council has sought contributions from other developments towards improving this route and new services. The proposal is thus considered to be sustainably located in terms of the NPPF.

6.15 Affordable housing and housing mix

The applicant has based their initial affordable housing provision on this site on the draft Local Plan Core Policy 24, at 35% with a 75:25 split of rented (either social or affordable) and intermediate housing respectively. This emerging policy has limited weight due to the local plan process and officers consider policy H17 still applies. Through negotiation, the applicant has agreed to make provision for 40% affordable housing to accord with Policy H17 of the adopted Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011.

- 6.16 As this is an outline application, the actual number of dwellings and precise mix that might be accommodated on site is not known at this stage. Notwithstanding, officers will expect any reserved matters applications to closely comply with the April 2014 Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) mix which is the most recent objective assessment of housing need, with an affordable housing mix to complement the expectations of the housing team as follows:

	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4+ bed	Total
Rent	12	20	14	2	48
Shared Ownership	-	12	4	-	16
Total	12	32	18	2	64

6.17 Design and Layout

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

- 6.18 A number of local plan policies seek to ensure high quality developments and to protect the amenities of neighbouring properties (Policies DC1, DC6, and DC9). In March 2015 the council adopted its design guide, which aims to raise the standard of design across the district.
- 6.19 This is an outline application with only access to be considered. The details of layout, scale and external appearance of dwellings and landscaping are reserved matters. It is

therefore not intended to address design and layout in any detail in this report. The application is, however, supported by an illustrative master plan and a Design and Access Statement (DAS).

- 6.20 The DAS includes a character study, context appraisal and site appraisal as required by principles DG6-DG9 of the design guide. The applicant has considered the physical aspects of the site, including topography, drainage, existing natural features, and access points in order to identify the key constraints and opportunities.
- 6.21 The illustrative master plan provides an indication of how the development of the site may come forward, but is considered by officers to poorly translate the design principles identified in the DAS, particularly in relation to permeability and legibility. As such, this plan will not form part of any planning approval sought under this application and thus should not be used as a basis for a reserved matters application.
- 6.22 There is some concern locally that the allocation is being brought forward in a piecemeal fashion. One of the main areas of concern relates to the lack of a master plan for the whole site allocation, to demonstrate that smaller parcels of development do not prejudice the delivery of the wider proposed allocation.
- 6.23 Following negotiation by officers, the applicant and the other promotion partners have been working together to coordinate a joined up approach to the delivery of the wider site allocation within which a sustainable planning and delivery strategy for the allocation can be established. This has resulted in the preparation of a Strategic Framework Plan (attached at appendix 2) which has now been submitted for the Local Plan examination. In the context of this application the Framework Plan shows that the application site forms a discrete parcel of land to the east of the Letcombe Brook where residential development would not prejudice the future delivery of the wider proposed allocation to the west. As such, no substantive planning harm would be caused by the early release of the application site.
- 6.24 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.
- 6.25 The proposed housing density is approximately 36 dwellings per hectare. When taking into account the expectations of NPPF to boost the supply of housing and to make effective use of land and respective densities of previously approved housing schemes to the south, this is acceptable.
- 6.26 Overall, the DAS sets out a constructive framework to help ensure that the design and layout of the proposal will result in a high quality scheme as required by the NPPF. Therefore, the details at outline stage are acceptable in design terms with every opportunity to achieve a high quality scheme.
- 6.27 **Residential Amenity**
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.
- 6.28 It is not possible to consider the amenity impact of the proposal in detail at this stage as no firm details on layout or house types accompany this outline application. Should

outline permission be granted, it would be more appropriate to assess amenity when considering any reserved matters applications.

- 6.29 The NPPF 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 noise pollution (paragraph 109).

6.30 Neighbouring uses

The site is located adjacent to Williams F1 factory complex, the A338 and the Great Western Mainline where noise could potentially affect residents of the proposed development. The applicant has provided an acoustic report which recommends mitigation and the environmental health protection team raise no objection to the proposal, subject to the full implementation of the mitigation measures. It is considered this can be secured by condition. The proposal is thus acceptable in terms of residential amenity of future occupiers and complies with policy DC9 and the NPPF.

- 6.31 Williams is the largest employer within the Vale of White Horse and the factory complex is a key employment site protected by policy E10 of the adopted local plan. Officers have therefore sought assurance that the release of this site for residential use would not compromise any future business needs to grow the business in the years ahead.

- 6.32 The applicant has stated that they are committed to a future at Grove, the application site is surplus to their operational needs, and its release for residential development is directly linked to Williams' need to invest in its existing business and campus. They consider their current campus configuration is not "fit for purpose" and have exciting aspirations and plans for a complete reconfiguration of their operational site to enable it to be better utilised in terms of its layout and space. They consider the application site can be brought forward for development to provide the investment required without compromising the operation of the campus. Officers have no evidence to disagree with this.

6.33 Landscape and Visual Impact

The NPPF seeks to enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes (paragraph 109). In NPPF terms this is not a valued landscape, nor statutorily protected. Policy NE9 of the adopted Local Plan designates the site as part of the wider Lowland Vale which is a distinctive landscape and valued for its own quality. Paragraphs 7.67 and 7.68 of the adopted local plan explains that *"the long views over the patchwork quilt of fields, farms and villages in the Vale are an essential part of the landscape quality of the District"* and that *"insensitively located or designed proposals could have an adverse impact on these open vistas and on the intrinsic qualities of the Lowland Vale"*.

- 6.34 In considering the site as part of a possible strategic housing site this authority commissioned a landscape and visual impact appraisal. In "Advice on the Landscape Impact of Further Development at Wantage and Grove, by Martin Cobden 2008" the site was assessed to be Low Sensitivity, High Capacity and High Robustness able to accept large scale development.

- 6.35 The applicant has produced a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment. It considers the landscape sensitivity of the site to be medium to low and the significance of effect upon the landscape character to be moderate to minor. The assessment concludes that the visual Impact of the development to be moderate to minor, with majority of the effects limited to the immediate setting of the site with the greatest impact from the east.

- 6.36 Overall, it is considered landscape and visual harm arising from this development would be low and not substantial to warrant refusal when balanced against the benefits of the proposal, including the lack of a five year land supply. This view is supported by the evidence submitted and the assessment made by the Landscape Officer. The proposal is thus considered to accord with policy NE9 and the NPPF.
- 6.37 **Open Space, landscaping and trees**
Adopted Local Plan Policy H23 of the adopted Local Plan requires a minimum of 15% of the residential area to be laid out as open space and the application accords with this. The DAS indicates a concept landscape strategy with the retention and reinforcement of existing landscape features, such as boundary hedgerows and mature hedgerow trees, new structural buffers along the site boundaries and the provision of a green infrastructure incorporating public open space, recreational green space, comprehensive street and garden tree planting and amenity landscaped areas.
- 6.38 In respect of trees, the application is accompanied by an arboricultural impact assessment prepared by SJ Stephens Associates (ref: 299 and dated 12 August 2015) that includes a tree survey, tree protection plan and method statement. The tree officer is broadly in agreement with the assessment of trees contained within the report and considers the proposed removal of several trees to facilitate the development could be satisfactorily mitigated within a landscape scheme. As such, the tree officer raises no objection to the proposal, subject to tree protection measures during construction. This can be secured by condition.
- 6.39 **Flood Risk and Surface/Foul Drainage**
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).
- 6.40 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.
- 6.41 The Environment Agency Flood Map shows the majority of the site is located within Flood Zone 1 which is the least susceptible to flooding and preferred in flood risk terms for housing development. However the western part of the site is in Flood Zone 2, with a small patch in Flood Zone 3 and is at risk to fluvial flooding from the Letcombe Brook.
- 6.42 The applicant has submitted a flood risk assessment (FRA) as expected by the NPPF. In addition the development area has been tested through local policy as part of the allocation procedure. A Sequential Test exercise has been undertaken highlighting that there are no other suitable locations for this development and that therefore the sequential test has been satisfied. This evidence has been assessed by the Environment Agency who subsequently raise no objection to the proposal.
- 6.43 The applicant's FRA provides a list of flood risk mitigation and management measures

to be implemented. It confirms that flood plain compensation in the form of floodplain rationalisation is proposed in order to remove all areas proposed for residential development into Flood Zone 1 without increasing the risk of flooding from the Letcombe Brook to the site or elsewhere. It is also proposed that all surface water runoff from impermeable areas on the proposed development will be attenuated on site via the use of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) with a controlled discharge into the Letcombe Brook.

- 6.44 The council's drainage engineer has reviewed the applicant's FRA and has no objection subject to a condition requiring a fully detailed scheme to be submitted and approved. A sustainable drainage scheme can be agreed and secured by planning condition thereby minimising the risks of flooding from this development.
- 6.45 Thames Water has identified a network capacity issue with the foul sewer network and has advised that a Drainage Impact Study is required to confirm if any off site reinforcement works are required and to identify where a connection could be made.
- 6.46 Notwithstanding, Thames Water have a legal obligation under Section 94 of the Water Industries Act 1991 (WIA 1991) to provide developers with the right to connect to a public sewer, regardless of capacity issues. This, when read in conjunction with Section 91(1) of the Act in effect makes it impossible for the Council to refuse to grant planning permission for development on the grounds that no improvement works are planned or as yet are identified for a particular area. Paragraph 20 Reference ID: 34-020-20140306 of the NPPG states:

"If there are concerns arising from a planning application about the capacity of wastewater infrastructure, applicants will be asked to provide information about how the proposed development will be drained and wastewater dealt with... The timescales for works to be carried out by the sewerage company do not always fit with development needs. In such cases, local planning authorities will want to consider how new development can be phased, for example so it is not occupied until any necessary improvements to public sewage treatment works have been carried out."

- 6.47 A Grampian condition is therefore required to ensure that development does not commence until a detailed drainage strategy for on and off site infrastructure (identifying exactly what is required, where and when) is submitted to and approved by the planning authority and implemented before any discharge to the public system is accepted. Officers consider this is a reasonable condition.
- 6.48 Subject to the suggested drainage conditions, the proposal is acceptable in respect of flood risk and drainage.
- 6.49 **Traffic and Highway Safety**
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.

- 6.50 Paragraph 32 of the NPPF goes on to state: *"Development should only be prevented or*

refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe.”

- 6.51 The application is supported by a transport assessment (TA) which considers, amongst other things, the impacts of the proposed development upon the local highway network together with the means of a safe and suitable site access. It is proposed that site access will be taken from Station Road (A338) via the formation of a new ghost island right turn lane located to the south of the existing Williams roundabout and to the north of the existing points of access serving Bellinger's Garage. In addition, a two metre wide footway will be provided along the southern side of the proposed access road so that a connection into the existing footway can be achieved. On the northern side of the proposed access, a three metre wide combined footway and cycleway will be provided to connect into the existing short section of off-road cycleway which runs north up to the Williams roundabout. Overall, the proposed access point is acceptable.
- 6.52 The development is expected to generate 67 two-way movements in the morning peak hour, and 74 two-way movements in the evening peak hour. The County Highways Engineer has raised no objections to the proposal on highway safety or traffic generation grounds, subject to conditions and contributions to strategic highway improvements. Furthermore, this site is not required for any part of the proposed Northern Link Road, as this is located to the south of the site. Subject to conditions and contributions to strategic highway improvements, the proposal is considered to accord with policy DC5 and the NPPF.
- 6.53 **Public Footpaths**
Network Rail has raised an objection to the application, in relation to the potential increase in pedestrian traffic using the existing level crossing on the mainline to the north of the site. In separate correspondence to the applicant, Network Rail has also confirmed there is potential to cross the railway by using the bridge westwards (Hanney Road Bridge) and in consultation with OCC, a potential diversionary route has been identified which would take the public footpath over that bridge and thereby remove the risk associated with the crossing. The applicant has confirmed they would be supportive of this diversion, and this can be secured by condition to address the initial objection from Network Rail as the land required is within the applicant's control. It will also enable better access to the footpath network as requested by the ramblers association.
- 6.54 **Ecology and Biodiversity**
The NPPF seeks to conserve and enhance the natural and local environment by minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible (paragraph 109). Paragraph 117 of the NPPF promotes the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats, whilst paragraph 118 sets out the basis for determination of planning applications. Paragraph 118 states that “...*if significant harm resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused...*”
- 6.55 The application is accompanied by an Ecological Assessment. The main habitats comprise an area of improved grassland with hedgerow, woodland and fence boundaries. The Letcombe Brook, a chalk stream waterway, abuts the site's western boundary.
- 6.56 The site is of limited ecological value, comprising species and habitats typical of an agricultural setting. The habitats of greater ecological importance are the southern

hedgerow, the woodland beyond the southern boundary and Letcombe Brook on the western site boundary.

- 6.57 Letcombe Brook is a priority habitat under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and as such should be protected from the damaging impacts of development proposals. The brook also provides habitats for a number of protected and priority species including otter, water vole and the brown trout. All three species have been recorded either within or close to the application site. The stretch of the Brook that is included within the application red line has been particularly degraded with the deposition of various agricultural rubbish and heavy shading from surrounding trees and scrub.
- 6.58 The application has been assessed by the countryside officer who acknowledges the proposal would lead to indirect impacts on the Letcombe Brook and the protected species associated with it. The Letcombe Brook project also raises an in principle objection. Notwithstanding, both confirm the brook at this location is neglected and requires restoration and long term management and the application provides an opportunity to positively manage it in the long term with a management plan.
- 6.59 The applicant has been in discussions with the environment agency, countryside officer and the Letcombe Brook Project which has resulted in the submission of an Outline Habitat Restoration and Long Term Management Plan for assessment. The countryside officer considers *"Discussions are ongoing and I am confident that a final version can be agreed soon."*
- 6.60 Officers consider the proposed restoration and management plan can achieve a net gain in biodiversity benefit on this site and the restoration of brook and management of the site for the next 20 years and can be secured by condition prior to the commencement of development. The proposal is thus considered to accord with the NPPF, subject to the conditions specified.
- 6.61 **Archaeology**
Policy HE10 of the adopted Local Plan states that development will not be permitted if it would cause damage to the site or setting of nationally important archaeological remains, whether scheduled or not.
- 6.62 The applicant has undertaken an archaeological assessment survey of the site. The evaluation revealed evidence of activity from the middle Bronze Age to the later Roman period with a small Roman settlement or farmstead within the application area. The county archaeologist recommends, should consent be granted, that conditions are attached to require further archaeological investigation and recording in advance of the development. Subject to these conditions, the proposal accords with adopted local plan policy HE10 and the NPPF.
- 6.63 **Delivery and Contributions**
The NPPF advises that planning obligations should only be sought where they meet all of the following tests (paragraph 204):
- i) Necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;
 - ii) Directly related to the development; and
 - iii) Fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.

Policy DC8 of the Adopted Local Plan provides that development will only be permitted where the necessary physical infrastructure and service requirements to support the development can be secured.

6.64 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.

6.65 *Recreation/sports Provision*

Additional population will increase pressure on existing facilities at Wantage/Grove. It is reasonable to request contributions towards their improvement as no provision is being made as part of this proposal. The sums requested are set against planned and costed schemes. The amounts sought are proportionate to this development based on up to 160 dwellings.

6.66 *Parish Council Requests*

The Parish Council has requested contributions to bus shelters, litter bins, benches and a notice board. They have also requested for the public open space land to be transferred to them. At the time of writing all public open space land will be managed by the developer, and litter bins, benches and a notice board can be provided by the developer in relation to reserved matters. The parish have also requested contributions towards the continuation of the footpath going South of the OCC A338 lay-by towards Wantage to provide a safe pedestrian/cycle route from the proposed development to the Secondary School in Wantage. A cycle route to Grove is not identified and the highway authority has not requested its provision. These requests are not evidenced and could not be justified.

6.67 *Thames Valley Police*

Thames Valley police has requested £23,969 towards staff set up, vehicles, ANPR cameras, and premises. Very limited detail has been provided as to how this request 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 therefore not considered justifiable in planning terms.

6.68 *Education*

The County Council has confirmed expansion of Grove CE primary school is planned, and has sought a financial contribution of £840,000 for 42 pupil places. The county council's request is justified in increasing pressure for new primary school places, reasonable and proportionate.

6.69 The secondary school request is to provide additional school space at the Grove airfield site and a financial contribution of £714,000 for 34 pupil places. The request is justified in increasing pressure for new secondary school places, reasonable and proportionate.

6.70 The SEN request of £28,861 is towards Fitzwaryn school in Wantage. It is noted that there have been some 56 previous contributions agreed towards SEN improvements in the district. The 2015 CIL Regulations only allow 5 contributions to be pooled towards an infrastructure project. In response to application no. P15/V2222/O which is another housing application under consideration, OCC advises a contribution towards Fitzwaryn school is not requested due to pooling restrictions. Therefore, this request is not supported by officers.

6.71 *Transport*

The transport request is justified in seeking to provide the new Grove Northern link road (GNLR). It is also reasonable to provide two new bus stops on Oxford Lane and to expect these to be sheltered and maintained. In relation to public transport, the county council has not requested contributions to bus services as monies have been collected from other applications, despite the concerns of the county councillor regarding the potential withdrawal of existing services.

6.72 *Property*

The County Council has also sought financial contributions of £7,900 towards increased book stock at Grove 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 evidence has been provided to justify this figure. Officers do not consider either request is reasonable or necessary to make this development acceptable.

6.73 The following developer contributions have been requested. These contributions are considered fair and proportionate:-

Vale of White Horse District Council	<i>Proposed Contributions</i>
AGP facilities at Mably Way, Wantage	£10,687
Cricket facilities	£12,477
Sports pavilion	£53,176
New rugby facilities at Grove RFU	£6,370
Youth sport in Grove	£37,781
Tennis	£33,651
New sports hall at Mably Way, Wantage	£74,074
Health & Fitness at Mably Way, Wantage	£41,366
New swimming pool facility at Mably Way, Wantage	£64,660
Bin collection and provision on site	£27,200
Public art on site	£48,000
Street naming on site	£2,199
Letcombe Brook Project interpretation boards on site	£4,805
Public open space maintenance (if not management company)	£368,260
Play equipment maintenance (if not management company)	£52,800
Monitoring	£6,100
Total	£843,606
Oxfordshire County Council	<i>Proposed Contributions</i>
New primary school expansion at Grove	£840,000
New secondary school expansion at Grove airfield site	£714,000
Grove Northern Link Road contribution	£379,425.60
Bus stop provision including shelters and on-going maintenance	£36,500
Monitoring	£5,884
Total	£1,975,809
Overall Total	£2,819,145 (approx. 17,621 per unit)

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 proposed development would perform an economic role through increasing housing stock, it would contribute to an expansion of the local housing market and could potentially improve the affordability of open market housing. In addition, the additional houses would help maintain existing infrastructure, creating investment in the local and wider economy. These economic benefits outweigh the limited economic benefits this site has in being agricultural land.
- 7.3 The scheme would have a social role as it will provide housing and affordable housing to meet the needs of present and future generations through the provision of a range of housing types and sizes and would meet the social dimension of sustainable development which should be affordable significant weight. Other social benefits will arise through the contributions to local infrastructure identified including towards local recreation and sport facilities which in turn could benefit existing residents of Grove.
- 7.4 The proposal has an environmental role including providing housing in a reasonably accessible location, biodiversity enhancements, new highway infrastructure, provision of public open spaces and new tree planting.
- 7.5 The proposal will have some adverse environmental implications given the change in landscape as a result of the development. However, in view of the emphasis in the NPPF to boost significantly the supply of housing (paragraph 47) officers consider that the environmental impacts would not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the wider social and economic benefits of the development, which include a contribution to the council's five year housing land supply.
- 7.6 In conclusion, it is considered that this proposal meets the three strands of sustainable development. The impacts of the proposal are not considered unreasonably adverse and it is considered the harm identified does not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the NPPF as a whole. Consequently, the application is recommended for approval subject to conditions and a legal agreement to secure affordable housing and developer contributions.

8.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended 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. The following conditions:**
 - 1. Time limit – three years.**
 - 2. Reserved matters to be submitted – two years.**
 - 3. Approved plans.**
 - 4. Sample materials to be agreed.**
 - 5. Building details to be agreed.**
 - 6. Slab level details to be agreed.**

7. Boundary details to be agreed.
8. Access in accordance with approved plans.
9. Garage accommodation to be retained.
10. Carriageway works prior to work on any dwelling.
11. Construction traffic management plan.
12. Sustainable drainage scheme in accordance with approved flood risk assessment.
13. Sustainable drainage scheme to be agreed and implemented prior to occupation.
14. Foul drainage strategy / details to be agreed and implemented prior to occupation.
15. Archaeology written scheme of investigation.
16. Archaeology staged programme of investigation.
17. Hard and soft landscaping details to be submitted.
18. Landscape implementation and management plan to be submitted with planting in first season following commencement.
19. Tree protection.
20. Noise mitigation measures, in accordance with noise report.
21. Habitat restoration method statement for the Letcombe Brook to be submitted, approved and implemented within 18 months following first occupation.
22. Ecological management plan for the Letcombe Brook to be submitted, approved and implemented.
23. Construction environmental management plan to be submitted and approved which shall include details of the measures to be taken to ensure that construction works do not adversely affect biodiversity.

Informatives

1. Market housing mix to complement the SHMA
2. Affordable housing mix to accord with housing team requirements

Author: Stuart Walker
Contact number: 01235 540546
Email: stuart.walker@southandvale.gov.uk