

<b>APPLICATION NO.</b>	<b><u>P15/V2560/FUL</u></b>
<b>APPLICATION TYPE</b>	FULL
<b>REGISTERED</b>	30 October 2015
<b>PARISH</b>	EAST HENDRED
<b>WARD MEMBER</b>	Mike Murray
<b>APPLICANT</b>	Mr Graham Flint
<b>SITE</b>	Land to the east of Portway Cottages, Reading Road, East Hendred
<b>PROPOSAL</b>	Proposed residential development of 48 dwellings (As amended by drawings and information accompanying agent's emails of 8 April 2016 and 25 May 2016)
<b>OFFICER</b>	Peter Brampton

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## SUMMARY

This application comes to Committee due to an objection from East Hendred Parish Council and the number of letters received from local objectors. The application seeks full planning permission for the provision of 48 dwellings.

The main issues to consider in determining the application are:

- Whether the principle of development is acceptable
- Whether the proposal is suitable to meet the district's five year housing supply deficit in terms of the sustainability of the site
- The impact of the development on the character of the area and wider landscape, which forms part of the Lowland Vale, and the impact on the setting of the adjacent Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
- Whether the design, layout and materials of the scheme can provide a high quality housing scheme
- Whether the cumulative impact on highway safety is severe
- Whether the scheme will mitigate impacts on flood risk, sewer capacity and water supply
- Whether the scheme will provide an appropriately wide range of affordable and market housing
- Whether the scheme will provide necessary infrastructure contributions

This is a greenfield site beyond the built limits of East Hendred. Whilst the Inspector's Interim Findings into the emerging Local Plan are positive, limited weight is applied to these findings and the principle of housing on this site is considered to be acceptable, in light of the lack of a five year housing land supply. Government advice in the NPPF is also relevant as it is considered more up to date and relevant to the assessment of this scheme than the housing policies of the adopted Local Plan 2011 and the emerging Local Plan Part One 2031.

The negative impact on the Lowland Vale and the setting of the AONB is an important part of the planning balance exercise, but the weight that can be applied to that impact is reduced due to the similarities between these scheme and housing to the west allowed on appeal.

Following the submission of amended plans, the scheme is considered to represent high quality development. Concerns over highway safety can be mitigated through financial contributions and the provision of a pedestrian crossing across the A417 and good quality pedestrian/cycle links within the development.

Minor deviations from the recommended mix of affordable and market housing have slight weight in the planning balancing exercise.

Grampian style conditions can mitigate the impact of this development on flood risk and sewer capacity.

Overall, the proposal is considered sustainable development meeting the three roles (economic, social and environmental) referenced in the NPPF. Although harm will occur from this proposal, this harm is not considered to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, which is the test within the NPPF that must be applied to this proposal.

Accordingly, the application is recommended for approval subject to conditions and a legal agreement to secure the affordable housing and the fully justified developer contributions towards key local infrastructure.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This application relates to a section of a single field totalling 2.3 hectares in size. The site lies on relatively flat ground immediately north of the A417 (Reading Road) and is located northeast of East Hendred.
- 1.2 The entire field is currently used for crop growing. Typical field hedging defines the boundary to the west with a small group of houses known as Portway Cottages and with the A417 to the south. The eastern boundary is shared with Greensands, a mixed use development including a bed and breakfast, and a large conifer hedge within the ownership of Greensands defines this shared boundary. The site is open to the north.
- 1.3 To the west of this application site, wrapping around the eastern side and northern rear of Portway Cottages, lies land that benefits from two separate planning permissions for housing. Both of these permissions were granted on appeal for Pye Homes. Phase One was permitted under reference P12/V1878/FUL and consists of 21 houses. This phase is now virtually complete and occupied. Phase Two was permitted under reference P14/V1964/FUL and consists of 26 houses. This is now under construction.
- 1.4 The site lies within the Lowland Vale landscape designation, with the North Wessex Downs boundary marked by the southern edge of the A417.
- 1.5 East Hendred is one of the districts larger villages, benefitting from two primary schools, a village hall, a recreation ground, public houses and allotments.
- 1.6 A location plan is **attached** as Appendix One.

## 2.0 PROPOSAL

- 2.1 This application represents the third “phase” of the Pye Homes development on the northern side of the A417 and seeks full planning permission for the erection of 48 houses of which 19 (40%) will be affordable units. The application has been amended on two separate occasions to overcome concerns around layout, landscape impact, highway safety, trees and links with adjacent sites.
- 2.2 Access to the site will be taken from the A417 along the southern boundary. The layout consists of perimeter blocks and more loosely knit private drives. There is a central area of public open space and active frontages to the A417 and the open countryside to the north have been secured through amendments.

- 2.3 Parking is generally provided on plot, within garaging, on private driveways or within parking courts. Visitor parking is provided on-street within laybys. A pedestrian/cycle link is provided across the site, culminating in a pedestrian crossing in the southwestern corner across the A417. The intention is that a pavement will be provided on the southern side of the A417 to link the site into White Road, which leads south into the heart of the village.
- 2.4 The affordable housing is provided in two clusters in the southeastern and southwestern corners of the site. Generally, the houses are of 1 ½ and 2 storey construction, save for a three storey apartment block centrally located within the site. Materials are predominantly brick and tile, with areas of render, timber cladding and tile hanging to add visual interest.
- 2.5 The following documents have been submitted in support of the application:
- Planning Statement
  - Design and Access Statement
  - Ecological Appraisal
  - Flood Risk Assessment
  - Drainage Strategy
  - Geo-Environmental Assessment report
  - Transport Statement
  - Utilities and Foul Water Drainage Assessment
  - Archaeology Evaluation
- 2.6 Extracts from the current application drawings are **attached** as Appendix Two.

3.0 **SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS**

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

<p>East Hendred Parish Council</p>	<p>Object. Their concerns may be summarised as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disproportionate extension to the village, changing its character and have an adverse impact on the Lowland Vale</li> <li>• Layout and location would damage the rural locality</li> <li>• Loss of high grade agricultural land</li> <li>• Harm to the setting of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty</li> <li>• Increased traffic on local roads, particularly around local schools</li> <li>• Increased traffic on A417</li> <li>• Potential cumulative impact with adjacent Greensands application (currently at appeal with duplicate application lodged)</li> </ul> <p>The full response of the parish council to the most recent amendment is <b>attached</b> as Appendix Three. Earlier responses can be viewed on our website.</p>
<p>Neighbours</p>	<p>Letter of objection from 27 residents have been received during the determination of the application, some in relation to the original scheme and others in response to the subsequent amendments. The main concerns raised may be</p>

Vale of White Horse District Council – Committee Report – 6 July 2016

	<p>summarised as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contrary to local plan</li> <li>• Unsustainable increase in housing stock</li> <li>• Urbanising effect on character of area adjacent to AONB and harm to wider landscape</li> <li>• Site lies in unsustainable location on northern side of A417</li> <li>• Harm to character of village</li> <li>• Increased pressure on local infrastructure</li> <li>• Insufficient space in local schools</li> <li>• Increase in traffic on local roads, particularly around local schools and on A417</li> <li>• Negative impact on A417 and White Road junction</li> <li>• Lack of coherent plan for development on northern side of A417 and assessment of cumulative impact</li> <li>• Dangerous pedestrian crossing across A417 and concerns over deliverability of footpath on southern side of A417</li> <li>• Increased risk of flooding</li> <li>• Lack of capacity in local sewers</li> <li>• Loss of agricultural land</li> <li>• Overdevelopment of site</li> <li>• Increased traffic pollution</li> <li>• Coalescence with Harwell</li> <li>• Lack of archaeological survey (original scheme only)</li> <li>• Lack of safe area for children’s play</li> <li>• Need to reinforce northern boundary to restrict further development</li> </ul>
<p>West Hendred Parish Council</p>	<p>Objection received. Their concerns may be summarised thus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site is outside built limits of village contrary to Policies GS2 and H11 of the Local Plan</li> <li>• Size of development will material harm the form, structure and character of the village</li> <li>• Harm to character of AONB</li> <li>• Cumulative impact on primary school provision</li> <li>• Concerns over piecemeal approach to development</li> <li>• Increased traffic on A417 and potential conflict with pedestrian crossing</li> </ul>
<p>Oxfordshire County Council Highways</p>	<p>No objection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Section 106 contributions to strategic highway improvements needed – including Featherbed Lane improvement and A417 roundabout, to improved bus services along A417 and to public consultation and maintenance of a signalised pedestrian crossing across A417</li> <li>• Section 278 agreement requested to secure pedestrian crossing, shared footway/cycleway and bus stop infrastructure</li> <li>• Conditions relating to access, visibility splays, construction traffic management plan, residential</li> </ul>

Vale of White Horse District Council – Committee Report – 6 July 2016

	travel plan and information pack, cycle storage, parking and drainage scheme requested
Oxfordshire County Council Archaeology	No objections subject to conditions relating to a Written Scheme of Investigation and an associated Programme of Work
Oxfordshire County Council Education	No objections. Not seeking contributions to local primary school infrastructure as existing capacity is forecast to be sufficient. Not seeking contributions to secondary school and special educational needs accommodation to CIL Regulation 123 around pooling of contributions and need to reserve ability to seek contributions from larger developments in the future.
Oxfordshire County Council Property	Contribution to local library book stock requested
County Councillor Stewart Lilly	No objections subject to creation of new roundabout at A417/White Road junction, financial contributions to local bus services, financial contribution to Featherbed Lane/A417 junction and footpath connectivity
Thames Water	No objections <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requests Grampian style condition relating to foul sewers requiring a drainage strategy to be agreed prior to work commencing and for the agreed strategy to be implemented prior to occupation</li> <li>• No conditions required related to surface water drainage</li> </ul>
Drainage Engineer	Has informally confirmed no objections following submission of amended drainage strategy. An updated response to the most recent amendment will be provided to the committee
Environment Agency	No comments
Waste Management	No objections <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General comments on council waste collection contract provided. £170/property requested to provide each new house with wheeled bins.</li> </ul>
Leisure	No objection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Section 106 contributions in relation to local sport and recreation facilities requested and maintenance of on-site open space if adopted by the Parish.</li> </ul>
Landscape Architect	No objection following submission of amended plans. Key extracts from response summarised below. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposal extends village into open countryside in a similar manner to previous appeal sites. Like those sites, planting between the built form and open countryside will link the development to wider landscape</li> <li>• Proposal will have a negative impact on the local landscape character but this will be seen in the</li> </ul>

Vale of White Horse District Council – Committee Report – 6 July 2016

	<p>context of existing and permitted built form on northern side of A417</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landscape harm considered localised, minor to moderate and comparable to approved schemes</li> <li>• Visual impact of the proposal is restricted by local settlement pattern, landform and vegetation, which all restrict inter-visibility with the AONB</li> <li>• Vegetation on eastern boundary restricts views from the east</li> <li>• Views possible from local footpath network but will be softened by landscape proposals</li> <li>• Visual impact considered to be localised and minor to moderate harm in local vicinity.</li> </ul> <p>The full response of the Landscape Architect to the original proposal and latest amendment is <b>attached</b> as Appendix Four.</p>
North Wessex Downs AONB Board	<p>Objection received. Key points can be summarised thus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disproportionate urban expansion to detriment of AONB and character of existing settlement</li> <li>• Scale of properties would dominate the landscape in this locality</li> <li>• Apartment block is particularly dominant</li> <li>• Over-dominance of steeply pitched roofs</li> <li>• Application is not supported by an LVIA</li> <li>• Development contrary to North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan</li> <li>• Development will cause moderate to adverse harm to the AONB and should be considered unsustainable development</li> </ul>
Forestry Officer	<p>No objections following submission of amended plans, subject to standard tree protection condition with particular reference to trees on southwestern boundary</p>
Countryside Officer	<p>No objections subject to condition requiring submission of biodiversity enhancement measures to ensure a net gain is achieved through the development</p>
Urban Design Officer	<p>No objections following submission of amended plans</p>
CPRE	<p>Objection received. Key points can be summarised thus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site is disjointed from the village</li> <li>• Pedestrian crossing will cause hold ups on the A417</li> <li>• Highway impact should be considered with application on Greensands site immediately adjacent</li> </ul>
Housing Officer	<p>Confirms the requirements for the 19 affordable units to be provided on-site to ensure compliance with council policy, in terms of unit sizes and tenure types.</p>
Environmental Health	<p>Requests pre-commencement condition demonstrating living conditions will not be affected by noise from the A417</p>

4.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

4.1 None

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
HE9	Archaeology
NE6	North Wessex Downs AONB
NE9	Lowland Vale
HE10	Archaeology

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. Whilst the plan has been through Examination the Inspector’s has not been received and the objections to it remain unresolved. 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 Planning Practice Guidance 2014 (PPG)

### 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 An application has been received for a neighbourhood planning designation area but the neighbourhood plan is yet to be submitted to the Council. Consequently no weight can be given to any policies that may be emerging in any draft neighbourhood plan.



**5.8 Environmental Impact**

This proposal does not exceed 150 dwellings, the site area is under 5ha and is not within a 'sensitive area' as defined by the EIA regulations. Consequently the proposal is beneath the thresholds set in Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011 as amended and this proposal is not EIA development and there is no requirement under the Regulations to provide a screening opinion

5.9 This conclusion holds when the consented developments to the west are also considered in terms of cumulative impact. The current proposals for the redevelopment of the Greensands site is not currently included in this assessment as no permission exists for that site. If this scheme were permitted, the council would need to reconsider this issue in respect of the Greensands site.

**5.10 Other Relevant Legislation**

- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act) 1990
- Community & Infrastructure Levy Legislation Human Rights Act 1998
- Countryside and Right of Way Act 2000
- 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)

**5.11 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.

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

**The Principle of Development**

6.1 In line with the requirements of the Town and Country Planning Act, the development plan is the starting point for assessing this proposal. The development plan currently comprises the saved policies of Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011 and the emerging

Local Plan 2031 Part One. The NPPF is also relevant to this proposal as it requires the council to demonstrate a five year housing land supply.

- 6.2 As members are aware, the council has recently received the Inspector's Interim Findings into the emerging Local Plan 2031. His Findings are positive for the Vale, confirming that, subject to certain modifications, the Plan is sound and the Vale will be able to demonstrate a five year supply of housing land when the Plan is adopted. However, these Interim Findings themselves have only limited weight. As such, the council still currently cannot demonstrate a five year housing land supply against the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) housing targets on which the emerging Local Plan is based.
- 6.3 Accordingly, the housing policies of the development plan are not considered up to date and the presumption in favour of sustainable development outlined at Paragraph 14 of the NPPF applies, requiring the council to demonstrate "*significant and demonstrable harm*" if an application is to be refused.
- 6.4 Policy H11 of the adopted Local Plan 2011 and Core Policy 3 of the emerging Local Plan 2031 both identify East Hendred as a larger village. The larger villages of the district are some of the more sustainable locations for new housing development as they benefit from facilities that can support an increase in the local population. Part One of the Local Plan makes some strategic allocations in the larger villages, whilst further housing allocations in the larger villages are likely to be made in Part Two of the Local Plan. Thus, officers consider the principle of this development may be acceptable, subject to a balanced assessment of its impacts, which are considered in the following sections of this report.
- 6.5 **Cumulative Impact**  
As outlined above, this proposal represents Phase Three of a development consisting of 47 houses either built or approved. This new proposal would effectively double this number to 95 houses on the northern side of the A417. If the Greensands development were approved, the total number would increase to 170 dwellings. In total, relative to the 2011 census, where 442 dwellings in the parish of East Hendred were reported, this represents a 38.5% increase in the housing stock. However, the Greensands development does not benefit from planning permission at this time and should be discounted for now. The 95 dwellings offered by Pye Homes' "Phase One – Three" represents a 21.5% increase in the housing stock.
- 6.6 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. East Hendred has a reasonable range of facilities including 3 public houses, two primary schools, and a village shop. In addition the developers are contributing towards improvements to local services and facilities to mitigate the impact of the development. Where appropriate, cumulative impacts are considered later in this report.
- 6.7 **Use of Land**  
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 map, the land around East Hendred ranges from "Good to Moderate" to "Poor". With the limited availability of previously developed land in the district, it is likely that some new development will need to be on greenfield agricultural land.
- 6.8 Paragraph 112 of the NPPF seeks to direct development to poorer quality land where significant development is proposed. This proposal is not considered "significant" in the

NPPF sense of the term, and so officers do not consider there is any conflict with national guidance on this matter. It is also important to note that the council did not receive support from the Planning Inspectorate in two recent appeal decisions in Shrivenham where the loss of agricultural land was a refusal reason. Given this, only very minor weight can be applied to the loss of agricultural land due to this development.

**6.9 Locational Credentials**

The NPPF requires the need to travel to be minimised and the use of sustainable transport modes to be maximised (paragraph 34). As with Phases One and Two, there is local concern about safe pedestrian and cycle movements across the A417 to gain access to the facilities of the village. The safety aspect is considered in detail later in this report but the Highways Authority have confirmed no objections on this point.

6.10 From the pedestrian crossing point in the southwest corner of the site, the allotment gardens are around 450 metres away, the Plough pub is around 550 metres, the Post Office is around 620 metres and the C of E primary school around 1 kilometre. The Institution of Highways Transportation has published guidelines for journeys on foot (published 2000). They indicate that distances up to 800 metres are acceptable and 1,200 metres should be a preferred maximum. All of the above facilities are within that preferred maximum distance from the pedestrian crossing.

6.11 Furthermore, officers are mindful that the distances involved are comparable to those from Phases One and Two. In the appeal decision for Phase One (Refs: P12/V1878/FUL and APP/V3120/A/13/2195492) the Inspector considered this point and concluded, *“The village and its facilities are within a reasonable walking distance from the site. In these circumstances the site is sufficiently close to the existing village to have a reasonable connectivity to it. As a result, and having regard to the proposed highway improvements, future occupants of the development would not be unacceptably segregated from the village by the main road.”*

6.12 Officers consider that substantial weight should be applied to these appeal decisions to the extent the same conclusion should be applied to this site and that, subject to securing the necessary highway improvements, including the signalised pedestrian crossing and related footpaths, that the residents of the site would be able to walk or cycle to local facilities in line with the requirements of Paragraph 34 of the NPPF.

**Landscape and Visual Impact**

6.13 The NPPF seeks to enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes (paragraph 109). The site does not fall within any national landscape designations but lies immediately adjacent to the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. As such, the council has a duty under Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act to have regards to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB. This includes this proposal, given its proximity. Paragraph 115 of the NPPF confirms that AONBs have the highest status of protection.

6.14 Policy NE6 of the Local Plan also covers this point, stating, *“Development which would be visually prominent, would detract from views from public vantage points or would spoil the appreciation of the landscape quality of the North Wessex Downs AONB will not be permitted.”* The site itself benefits from the Lowland Vale landscape designation. Policy NE9 of the Local Plan states, *“Development in the Lowland Vale will not be permitted if it would have an adverse effect on the landscape, particularly on the long open views within or across the area.”*

- 6.15 In assessing the landscape impact of this application, officers have also had regard to the two previous appeal decisions for Phases One and Two. Both of these applications were refused, in part of landscape grounds. Phase One was refused for this reason: *“...the application site, by reason of its location to the north of the A417, does not relate well to the built up area of the village which lies mainly to the south of this main road. The site forms part of a larger open swathe of agricultural land with no natural boundaries to visually contain the proposed development from the wider open countryside. As such the proposal would have an urbanising effect on the rural character of the area and would create an undesirable extension of the village with no natural containment to the detriment of the rural character of the area. Due to this harmful landscape impact and physical separation from the village it is not considered a sustainable form of development...”*
- 6.16 The issue of location was discussed in the above section. In terms of landscape, the Inspector concluded the following... *“At present the land to the north of the A417...is essentially rural in character...However, directly to the east of the site...are some existing houses that provide a visual presence of built development beyond the main area of the village. There is also a further residential property to the west...The proposed development would sit between this existing development...[and] would be set back from the main road frontage behind a proposed deeper landscaped area. As this matures this would help to soften the impact of the development in views from the main road...[The] development would have only a limited effect on [Lowland Vale] views, this being principally from a short adjacent section of the A417. The existing landscape buffer along the southern side of the road effectively prevents long views across the appeal site...Likewise, the existing houses the north of the main road restrict long views across the open countryside...the site forms part of a larger swathe of land with no natural boundary to define its extent...However, the scheme provides for a deep landscape buffer on the northern edge. This would create a clear separation between the developed land and the remaining agricultural land beyond.*
- 6.17 Phase Two was refused on similar grounds and at appeal, the Inspector concluded, *“...the development would bring the urban area closer to the footpaths [to east and north], and that Local Plan policy NE9 seeks to protect the quality of the local landscape, especially long open views across the area. However, the northwards movement of the urban area would have an incremental, rather than decisive effect on the character and appearance of countryside, and the proposal to create a planted buffer zone on the outer boundary would help to soften the impact of the buildings. The land is relatively featureless, without special landscape merit in its own right, and there is no indication that the development of the site would have a significant impact on views to or from the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It would have a limited effect on the perception of the setting of the village, which is largely determined by the nature of the A417 road in this location.”*
- 6.18 The North Wessex Downs AONB board correctly state that each case must be assessed on its own merits, and considers that *“the scale and layout of the proposed development would add an urban expansion to this rural locality and be of detriment to the special qualities of the AONB.”* Officers acknowledge this point but cannot ignore the similarities between this application and those allowed on appeal, particularly as the applicant has designed the scheme to be directly comparable.
- 6.19 There is a set back from the road, allowing for new and replacement planting that, over time, will mature to offer a green corridor along the A417. The current application does not project further north than Phase Two and also includes a landscape buffer zone with the open countryside comparable to that the Inspectors placed weight on at both appeals.

- 6.20 Despite these similarities, officers do accept harm to the landscape will occur from developing this site and this harm weighs in the planning balance against approving this proposal. The AONB Character Assessment discusses this part of the district stating, *“The area is well-settled and includes the attractive springline villages of Letcombe Regis, [the Hendreds] and Ardington...They...have a clustered character, although new development has spread out from the centre...and have a particular unity...”* The Character Assessment identifies a Key Management Requirement is *“to conserve and enhance the quiet rural character of the Hendred Plain, which provides a transition between [the Vale] and the high downs.”*
- 6.21 There can be little argument that this scheme is contrary to the identified character and management requirements. However, those negative impacts are directly comparable to those approved at Phase One and Two, as is the proposed mitigation which would increase the landscape features on the site and link the development into the wider landscape. Overall, officers agree with the council’s Landscape Architect that, in terms of landscape character, this proposal would have a negative impact that would be localised, minor to moderate. Limited weight is given to the AONB Board’s assessment that the harm would be *“moderate to adverse.”*
- 6.22 Turning to visibility, the conclusions reached by the Inspector on Phases One and Two hold here. These include that the local settlement pattern, landform and vegetation are all restricting factors. Crucially, from the south and west, the existing village restricts wider views and intervisibility with the AONB. Localised views along the A417 and the public footpath to the west will be clearly possible and have a negative impact. However, the proposed landscaping scheme along the southern and northern boundaries will, on maturity, greatly soften this impact. Again, officers agree with the Landscape Architect that the visual impact will be minor to moderate and localised.
- 6.23 Overall, officers consider that landscape harm would clearly occur from this development and must be weighed in the planning balance exercise required by the NPPF. Whilst officers acknowledge the concerns of the AONB board, limited weight is applied to those concerns in the planning balance. Officers have given greater weight to the appeal decisions where the Inspector has not supported previous refusal reasons based on landscape harm. Officers have also given substantial weight to the conclusions of the landscape architect that the landscape impacts of this site are comparable to the previous phases of this development.

### **Design and Layout**

- 6.24 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.
- 6.25 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.
- 6.26 *Site, Setting and Framework*  
The site is currently part of an open field, with the most important features being the hedgerows that define the western, eastern and southern boundaries. The northwestern corner of the site wraps around Portway Cottages and adjoins a public right of way that leads due north and eventually joins a network of footpaths that link to Steventon. Beyond this footpath due west is the land that will become Phase Two of

the Pye Homes development. To the east lies Greensands, which is the subject of ongoing planning applications (and an appeal) for residential redevelopment.

- 6.27 As well as the vehicular access and pedestrian crossing on the A417, officers have been keen to ensure that this site links to the public right of way and sites mentioned above. The framework of the site now provides these pedestrian linkages, including to Greensands if this site is ultimately permitted. All pedestrian links have natural surveillance.
- 6.28 Officers note that Phase Two of the Pye Homes development backs onto the open countryside, with a large landscape buffer proposed. However, on this larger site, officers consider that an active north-facing frontage is necessary. This was largely because the northern boundary is the logical place to link this site to Phase Two and the footpath requires natural surveillance. Amended plans have secured this whilst also providing a strong landscape buffer comparable to that permitted at Phase Two. This is consistent with Principles DG16 and DG29 of the Design Guide.
- 6.29 *Spatial Layout*  
The layout consists of a loosely-knit perimeter block structure that ensures active frontages throughout, including over the public open space, the A417, the site footpaths and the open countryside to the north. Consistent with Principle DG24 of the Design Guide, there is a clear hierarchy of streets, with private drives running away from the primary access route. Turning to the east/west pedestrian and cycle link that will also, potentially, serve future development at Greensands, the Design Guide notes, *“While direct routes are most convenient, the design should also balance visual attraction...and safety to optimise the pedestrian’s experience.”*
- 6.30 In terms of density, Policy H15 of the Local Plan seeks at least 30 dwellings to the hectare in rural locations like this subject to character considerations. 48 dwellings on a site of 2.3 hectares represents a density of 21 dwellings to the hectare, well below policy requirements and reflecting the sensitivity of the location. In line with Principle DG26 of the Design Guide the densest part of the site is the apartment block, which is located overlooking the public open space, accessed from the main spinal road.
- 6.31 The public open space is located opposite the main access and this will provide a positive “vista” when entering the site. Its central location is in line with the requirements of Principle DG18 of the Design Guide. The SUDS attenuation pond is integrated as part of the open space, which is welcomed and is consistent with Principle DG14 of the Design Guide.
- 6.32 Allocated parking is provided on-plot in garages or driveways. Visitor spaces are integrated into the street scene as is supported by Principle DG45 of the Design Guide. Recent amendments to the scheme have sought to use buildings to define the street scene and reduce the dominance of car parking across the site. Generally, parking is to the side and rear of each property
- 6.33 Space is provided across the site for street trees and these will help to soften the appearance of the development further as supported by Principle DG33 of the Design Guide.
- 6.34 Boundary treatments will be important, particularly where rear gardens adjoin the public realm. As noted in the Design Guide, *“The use of walls within the district is widespread in defining the boundaries of properties. They contribute hugely to the character of rural and urban street...within more rural villages, walls are often used in combination with buildings to provide enclosure and structure to streets and spaces.”* A condition is

necessary to cover this point.

6.35 *Built form and architectural detailing*

The majority of the dwellings are two-storeys in height. The one notable exception is the three-storey apartment block that is centrally located on the site. Officers note the criticism from the AONB board that this is a much taller and larger building than is found in the village. Principle DG69 of the Design Guide is relevant to this objection as it states, *“Inappropriately located apartment buildings that cannot be justified will be rejected.”*

6.36 Officers accept that it will be seen from outside the site and will affect the rural character of the area as a result. However, officers also consider this is a well-designed building that sits well within the overall context of the development, with its increased height adding some visual interest as suggested by the Design Guide. The design of the apartment is also consistent with Design Guide advice on shared entrances, amenity space and parking. In terms of the justification for apartments on this site, officers consider that the building will provide smaller affordable flats that are likely to be attractive to Registered Providers and local people. The need to provide a range of accommodation types and sizes weigh in the balance alongside the visual impact when assessing the apartment block.

6.37 Officers also note the AONB board concern that the roof pitches are not characteristic of the village. However, this scheme will be more viewed in its immediate context, including Phases One and Two of the Pye Homes scheme, where housing comparable to that proposed here, including roof pitches, has been permitted. Principle DF57 of the Design Guide notes, *“New development should respect the simple double pitched gable ends or hipped roofs prevalent within the District.”* All of the proposed dwellings accord with this advice and officers do not consider the roof pitches cause any particular harm.

6.38 A number of the proposed houses benefit from appropriately positioned and sized dormer windows and accord with Principle DG59 of the Design Guide whilst the use of chimneys is supported by officers as a positive design feature supported by Principle DG58 of the Design Guide.

6.39 The predominant materials proposed are brick and tile. Render, tile hanging and timber boarding are also proposed to add interest and officers support the overall approach which is consistent with the materials found locally. Principle DG62 of the Design Guide states, *“A context-appropriate palette of good quality materials should be used for new residential development.”* A standard pre-commencement condition will secure prior agreement to samples of all materials, whilst a sample panel of those approved materials will be required on site to ensure the quality of the development.

6.40 Overall, officers are satisfied that, following careful negotiation with the applicant on a number of aspects of the scheme, summarised above, that the amended proposals represent a high quality design consistent with national and local policy and guidance.

**Affordable housing and housing mix**

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

	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	Total
Rent	4	7	2	1	14
Shared	0	3	2	0	5

Vale of White Horse District Council – Committee Report – 6 July 2016

Ownership					
Total	4	10	4	1	19

- 6.42 Currently, the applicant proposes a slightly alternative mix of 9 two-bed dwellings and 5 three-bed dwellings that is the subject of further discussions with officers. Furthermore, in light of the Inspector’s Interim Findings into the Local Plan 2031, the council will now only seek 35% affordable housing from this development. The final mix is the subject of on-going negotiation and will be secured through the Section 106 agreement.
- 6.43 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
SHMA %	5.9%	21.7%	42.6%	29.8%	
SHMA Expectation no’s	2	7	12	8	29
Proposed	1	7	12	9	29

- 6.44 Against the SHMA expectations, this scheme under-provides one-bed units by 1, and over-provides four bed units by 1. Officers consider this a minor deviation that only limited weight should be applied to in the planning balance.

**Residential Amenity**

- 6.45 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.
- 6.46 Given the location of the site relative to existing neighbours, there are few concerns over this proposal affecting neighbouring amenity. There is around 20 metres between Plot 1 of this proposal and No.4 Portway Cottages. A dense band of trees sit between the two, within the curtilage of No.4 Portway Cottages. As such, there are no serious concerns about the relationship between the two properties. A condition preventing upper floor windows, except any obscure glazed, in Plots 1 and 11, which both sit immediately adjacent to No.4 Portway Cottages, is necessary to preserve this relationship.
- 6.47 Within the site, there are a few areas where back-to-back (21 metres) and back-to-side distances (12 metres) are less than the recommendations of the Design Guide. Due to the angle at which it sits, the three-storey apartment block is located around 17 metres from the rear of Plot 9. However, the angle of the apartment block also means that its rear elevation faces more towards Plots 7 and 8, where distances increase to around 18-19 metres. Being three-storeys, the level of overlooking and the impression of overlooking will be exacerbated at this close proximity and this does weight negatively against the scheme in the planning balance.
- 6.48 Elsewhere, the flank wall of Plot 35 sits around 11.5 metres from the rear wall of Plots 32 and 33 and this will cause an overbearing impact and some loss of light to the rear



gardens of Plots 32 and 33. Again, whilst the under-provision against Design Guide standards is minor, this must weigh against the scheme in the planning balance.

- 6.49 Turning to the quantum of amenity space, Paragraph 5.10.4 of the Design Guide confirms that a one bed unit should have 35 square metres, a two bedroom unit should have 50 square metres and larger units should benefit from 100 square metres. There are a number of plots that fail to provide the appropriate amount of amenity space. In particular, a number of three bed units provide noticeably under 100 square metres, specifically Plots 23, 34, 35, 36 and 37. Generally, the two and four bed properties do benefit from the appropriate amount of amenity space.
- 6.50 Again, limited weight should be attached to the under-provision of private amenity space for some of the three bed units. However, officers are also mindful that, as outlined in the next section, the scheme over-provides against minimum requirements for public open space. Officers consider this partially counter-acts any harm from the under-provision of small gardens, particularly those three bed units that are to be sold on the open market, where an element of buyer preference would apply.

#### **Open Space, Landscaping and Trees**

- 6.51 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. In this development, the public open space is located centrally and along the northern boundary and measures approximately 4,700 square metres. This is around 20% of the total site area and thus comfortably exceeds the requirements of Policy H23. The applicant will be required to arrange for a management company to be set up to maintain this area and this will be secured through a Section 106 agreement.
- 6.52 The submitted plans show a good deal of retained and additional planting throughout the site. As outlined above, this includes a strong landscape buffer along the northern boundary to limit the wider landscape impact of this scheme. The hedge along the southern boundary is retained and enhanced where possible. Within the site, space is provided for trees within the open space, adjacent to the main spine roads and around housing. Where street trees are provided, a condition is necessary to ensure prior approval is given to the tree pits in which these trees will be planted. This is to ensure that each tree is planted in sufficient amounts of soil to establish itself and make a meaningful contribution to the character of the site. Conditions will also secure the finer details of the landscaping scheme as a whole, and its ongoing maintenance and management once the scheme is occupied.
- 6.53 In terms of tree protection, the most important elements are the trees within the garden of No.4 Portway Cottages and the conifer hedge along the eastern shared boundary with Greensands. Amended plans have increased the separation distances between housing and both these areas to the satisfaction of the council's forestry officer, subject to a pre-commencement condition relating to tree protection measures.

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

- 6.54 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). Local Plan Policies DC9 and DC12 relate to pollution, contamination and waste water discharge. Policies DC13 and DC14 are not consistent with the NPPF requirements for a sequential approach to managing flood risk.

- 6.55 The application has been accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) that was updated in response to concerns raised by the council's drainage engineer. The site falls entirely within Flood Zone One, the area at least risk of flooding from existing water courses. The FRA contends that there is a low risk from groundwater, surface water or fluvial flooding and the council does not contest these findings.
- 6.56 Therefore, the main focus of the FRA, and the drainage engineer's concerns, has been how to discharge surface water from the site. Under sustainable drainage principles, the preference is always for infiltration systems, but these are not possible here due to the geology of the area. Therefore, the applicant proposes to use permeable paving within hardstanding areas to attract and hold surface water and control discharge rates into the public sewer so they are at "greenfield" rates. The pond contained within the public open space will also provide attenuation, linking to a basin from where a connection to a ditch that will be excavated north of the site. The FRA notes, "*The pond, basin and ditches can all be constructed within land controlled by the applicant and thus deliverability is assured.*" The ditch will run northwards along the shared boundary with Greensands before connecting to an existing ditch further north.
- 6.57 Following the submission of further information and drainage calculations in support of this strategy, the council's drainage engineer has been able to remove their holding objection subject to detailed pre-commencement conditions. Thus, there are no objections to this proposal on flood risk grounds.
- 6.58 Turning to foul drainage, Thames Water have identified that there is a lack of capacity within the network to accommodate the additional flows from this development. Thus, a Grampian condition is necessary to secure details of sewer upgrades prior to work commencing on site and for those agreed upgrades to be implemented prior to occupation of the first dwelling.

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

- 6.59 Increased traffic generation on the A417 and local roads is a key local concern. The application is supported by a Transport Statement (TS) that has been updated and amended to correspond to the amendments to the layout. The TS models traffic movements from the site based on all 48 dwellings being market housing to represent the worst-case scenario (affordable dwellings tend to generate less traffic movements). The results show that the development would generate 245 two-way movements daily, with 26 movements in the morning peak period and 31 movements in the afternoon peak period. The applicant contends, "*...in terms of the relevant guidance set out in the NPPF, the development would not result in a severe residential cumulative impact.*" The Highways Authority considers the TS surveys to be sufficiently up to date, and the modelling to be accurate and thus has raised no objections to this development on the basis of traffic generation.
- 6.60 The TS justifies that a priority T junction with the A417 is the most appropriate means of vehicular access to the site, particularly as the same access arrangement has been approved to serve Phases One and Two. Oxfordshire County Council, as Highways Authority, have agreed to the proposed access. The TS incorporates speed surveys that show traffic speeds in excess of the 40mph speed limit. Therefore, the access position has been chosen to allow commensurate visibility splays. Both the access and visibility splays will be secured through condition.
- 6.61 In terms of car parking, the amended application proposes one allocated space for each 1-bed unit, two allocated spaces for each 2 and 3-bed unit and four allocated spaces for each 4-bed unit. Fourteen visitor spaces are also proposed, resulting in total

## Vale of White Horse District Council – Committee Report – 6 July 2016

provision of 126 spaces. The Highways Authority has confirmed this provision is acceptable.

- 6.62 The amended layout has responded to previous concerns from the Highways Authority over the swept path analysis for larger vehicles, where previously manoeuvrability had been found to be difficult. This is now considered acceptable.
- 6.63 The A417 is a key route in this part of the district and the Highways Authority are seeking to deliver strategic improvements in the local area. This includes improvements to Featherbed Lane and the provision of a roundabout to the east of this site at the A417/Featherbed Lane junction. A proportionate contribution to that roundabout is sought from this development and is considered necessary, related and proportionate to the impacts of the proposal.
- 6.64 The A417 is also a key public transport corridor, linking Wantage to Harwell. The Highways Authority have requested a proportionate contribution to the improvement of bus services along the A417 and this is again considered necessary as part of the mitigation of this scheme. Furthermore, bus stops on the A417 serving the site will be needed.
- 6.65 In terms of pedestrian and cycle provision, there is an agreed need for a signalised crossing on the A417 to serve this development. Following negotiations between the applicant and the Highways Authority, the position for this crossing is the southwestern corner of the site. Locally, there is some concern that there is insufficient space on the southern, opposite, side of the A417 for a footpath to link the crossing to White Road. Officers have raised this with both the applicant and the Highways Authority who have not expressed any concerns over the deliverability of the footpath.
- 6.66 Officers are mindful that the Greensands application, currently at appeal and with a duplicate application lodged with the council, also proposes a signalised crossing across the A417. There is already a pedestrian crossing serving Phases One and Two of the Pye Homes development. If both schemes were ultimately permitted, having three signalised crossings in such a short stretch of the A417 would obviously be unnecessary and would impede traffic flows. Consequently, a pedestrian/cycle path runs from west to east across this site, right up to the shared boundary with Greensands. Thus, should development on the Greensands site be permitted, it will be required to join up with this existing footpath to allow residents of both sites to access the village across the pedestrian crossing proposed here. Section 106 contributions relating to public consultation on the crossing and its future maintenance have been requested and are considered necessary to ensure this vital mitigation is delivered.
- 6.67 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.

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.”*

- 6.68 Overall, given the above policy stance, there are now no objections to this proposal relating to highway safety. Conditions relating to the access, visibility splays, parking, estate roads, construction traffic management, residential travel plans and information packs and cycle storage are all necessary. A Grampian condition is also necessary to secure the pedestrian crossing and associated infrastructure.
- 6.69 Officers note the local County Councillor considers the provision of a roundabout at the White Road/A417 junction to be essential mitigation from this proposal and would object to the scheme if one were not offered. Officers also understand a working group exists, with County Council and parish council representation, looking at a number of junctions along the A417 where roundabouts or other mitigation is being considered and that this junction is one of them. However, in their response, the Highways Authority has made no reference to this roundabout being necessary mitigation for this development and so officers have no valid grounds for requesting it.

#### **Ecology and Biodiversity**

- 6.70 Paragraph 117 of the NPPF refers to the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats, whilst Paragraph 118 sets out the basis for determination of planning applications. Paragraph 118 states that any significant biodiversity harm must be mitigated or compensated for, otherwise an application should be refused.
- 6.71 The application has been supported by an Ecological Appraisal. This identifies that the vast majority of the site is arable land offering very little ecological potential. The ecological value of the site is limited to the hedgerows around the site boundaries that can support nesting birds.
- 6.72 In consultation, the council's countryside officer has confirmed no objections to the proposal. The provision of the pond and the new planting across the site will easily allow for the scheme to provide a net gain in biodiversity.

#### **Archaeology**

- 6.73 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. During the determination of this application, local enthusiasts uncovered evidence of archaeological interest on the site. At the request of the County Archaeologist and in response to these finds, the applicant has undertaken an archaeological field evaluation.
- 6.74 This field evaluation has revealed two pits and a number of linear ditches that date to the Romano British period. The County Archaeologist considers that conditions relating to a Written Scheme of Investigation and a programme of archaeological investigation are necessary to ensure any further discoveries are properly recorded.

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

- 6.75 The NPPF advises that planning obligations should only be sought where they meet all of the following tests (paragraph 204):
- Necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;
  - Directly related to the development; and
  - Fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development. 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.
- 6.76 The NPPG provides further guidance on how to apply the tests mentioned above and notes the following:

Vale of White Horse District Council – Committee Report – 6 July 2016

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.

With this guidance in mind, officers are of the opinion that the requested contribution to library book stock is not a justified contribution. In officers' opinion, this contribution is not necessary to make the scheme acceptable in planning terms.

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

<b>Vale of White Horse District Council</b>	<i>Proposed Contributions</i>
Artificial Grass Pitch in East Hendred parish	£3,210
Football pitches at East Hendred recreation ground	£8,674
Improvements to football pavilion at East Hendred recreation ground	£10,979
Cricket pitch provision in East Hendred parish	£3,743
Rugby pitch provision in East Hendred parish	£1,911
Indoor bowls provision in East Hendred parish	£2,686
Resurfacing of courts at Harwell tennis club	£2,325
MUGA in East Hendred parish	£2,684
Wheeled bins for each property	£8,160
Public Art	£14,400
Street Naming	£864.74
Improvements to access road at East Hendred recreation ground	£501.60
Improvements to Snell's Hall car park	£826
<b>Total</b>	<b>£60,964.34</b>
<b>Oxfordshire County Council</b>	<i>Proposed Contributions</i>
Featherbed Land/A417 roundabout and associated improvements	£131,376
Improved bus services along A417	£40,680
Public consultation on signalised crossing	£5,000
Maintenance of signalised crossing	£36,305.66
<b>Total</b>	<b>£213,361.66</b>

<b>Overall Total</b>	<b>£274,326</b>
<b>Total contribution per unit</b>	<b>£5,715.13</b>

## 7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 This application has been assessed on its merits, in light of the Inspector’s Interim Findings into the emerging Local Plan 2041, the current housing land supply shortfall and the NPPF presumption in favour of sustainable development. 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.
- 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. There are slight deviations from the desired mix of affordable and market housing, but these are minor and so officers have only applied very limited weight to them.
- 7.4 Officers consider that the main debate with this application relates to the environmental strand of sustainable development. This proposal will cause harm to the landscape through further urbanising the currently rural character found to the north of the A417 when passing through the village. This impacts negatively on the Lowland Vale in which the site falls and on the setting of the North Wessex Downs AONB to the south. However, officers attach material weight to the manner in which this proposal takes a comparable approach to mitigating that harm as has been supported by the Planning Inspectorate when permitted development to the west. Weight should be applied to the appeal decisions into Phases One and Two. Furthermore, the proposed mitigation, along with the existing settlement pattern, landform and vegetation outside the site, limits the harm to the setting of the AONB. Through balancing this harm against the benefits of the scheme, officers have had due regard to the Council’s duties under the CRoW Act 2000.
- 7.5 Some limited weight can be given to the harm can also be attached to the manner in which some of the plots fail to provide adequate amenity space (although the site over-provides on public open space against policy) or separation with neighbours, which will impact negatively on the amenity of future occupants of these plots.
- 7.6 Overall, and in view of the emphasis in the NPPF to boost significantly the supply of housing, the 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. 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. Conditions as follows:
  1. Commencement 18 months.
  2. Approved plans.
  3. Slab levels for all dwellings to be agreed.
  4. Samples of all materials to be agreed.
  5. Boundary details to be agreed.
  6. Landscaping scheme to be agreed.
  7. Tree protection to be agreed.
  8. Off-site highway works to be agreed.
  9. Travel plan and travel information pack to be agreed.
  10. Construction traffic management plan to be agreed.
  11. Sustainable urban drainage scheme to be agreed.
  12. Bicycle parking and bin storage to be agreed.
  13. Archaeology written scheme of investigation to be agreed.
  14. Programme of archaeology mitigation to be agreed.
  15. Landscaping scheme implementation as specified.
  16. Access and visibility splays as approved.
  17. Parking as approved.
  18. Roads and footpaths provided prior to occupation.
  19. Hours of work as specified.
  20. No drainage to highway.
  21. No first floor windows in western elevation of plots 1 and 11.

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