

APPLICATION NO.	P15/V2560/FUL
APPLICATION TYPE	FULL APPLICATION
REGISTERED	30.10.2015
PARISH	EAST HENDRED
WARD MEMBER	Michael Murray
APPLICANT	Mr Graham Flint
SITE	Land to the east of Portway Cottages, Reading Road, East Hendred, Wantage, OX12 8JD
PROPOSAL	Proposed residential development of 46 dwellings (As amended by drawings and information accompanying agent's emails of 8 April 2016, 25 May 2016 and 12 August)
AMENDMENTS	Three – As above
GRID REFERENCE	446165/189388
OFFICER	Peter Brampton

SUMMARY

This application was originally considered by the Committee at the meeting on 6 July and deferred for further negotiations on amended plans. That amendment was received in August and has been the subject of public consultation. The application was originally referred to committee due to an objection from East Hendred Parish Council. Full planning permission for the erection of 46 homes is sought.

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 location
- 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, officers continue to apply limited weight to them and the principle of housing on this site is considered to be acceptable, in light of the current 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 clear similarities exist between this scheme and housing

to the west allowed on appeal. The most recent amendment further improves the relationship with the character of the area and the adjacent AONB.

The scheme is considered to represent high quality development. Amended plans have sought to address committee concerns over highway safety, and these can now be mitigated through financial contributions, the provision of a pedestrian crossing across the A417, good quality pedestrian/cycle links and a reduction in the speed limit on the A417.

Amended plans have ensured adequate private gardens for all units and 15% public open space, not including a SuDS attenuation pond.

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, on balance 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, opposite the site.
- 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. Following the submission of amended plans in August aimed at addressing the concerns included in the July 6 committee motion to defer the

application for negotiation, full planning permission for 46 houses on the site is sought. 35% of the units will be provided as affordable housing in line with council policy.

2.2 The most recent changes to the scheme are as follows:

- Removal of two units within the central apartment block to reduce this building from three to two storeys
- Alterations to layout to ensure all garden sizes are in line with the Design Guide recommendations and that back-to-back and back-to-side distances also meet Design Guide recommendations.
- The site plan demonstrates 15% of the site will be provided as open space, not including the SuDS attenuation pond.
- The realignment of the A417 has been altered to ensure visibility at the access to the properties of Portway Cottages is not affected
- The developer has agreed to fund a reduction in the speed limit along the relevant stretch of the A417 from 40MPH to 30MPH, to increase the safety of the pedestrian crossing.

2.3 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. 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 following documents have been submitted in support of the application and its amendments:

- Planning Statement
- Design and Access Statement
- Ecological Appraisal
- Flood Risk Assessment
- Drainage Strategy
- Geo-Environmental Assessment report
- Transport Statement and Addendum Transport Statement
- Utilities and Foul Water Drainage Assessment
- Archaeology Evaluation
- Landscape Assessment

2.5 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 which were submitted and consulted on following the deferral of the original proposal by Planning Committee. A full copy of all the comments made can be viewed online at www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk.

3.2 East Hendred Parish Council	Object. Their concerns may be summarised as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Disproportionate extension to the village, changing its character and have an adverse impact on the Lowland Vale• Layout and location would damage the rural locality• Harm to the setting of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased traffic on local roads, particularly around local schools • Increased traffic on A417 • Proposed pedestrian crossing remains unsafe due to reduced width on southern side of A417 • Vale can now demonstrate a five year housing land supply • Potential cumulative impact with adjacent Greensands application (currently at appeal with duplicate application lodged) • Loss of high grade agricultural land <p>The full response of the parish council to the most recent amendment is attached as Appendix Three. Earlier responses can be viewed on our website.</p>
Neighbours	<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 summarised as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contrary to local plan • Unsustainable increase in housing stock • Urbanising effect on character of area adjacent to AONB and harm to wider landscape • Site lies in unsustainable location on northern side of A417 • Harm to character of village • Increased pressure on local infrastructure • Insufficient space in local schools • Increase in traffic on local roads, particularly around local schools and on A417 • Negative impact on A417 and White Road junction • Lack of coherent plan for development on northern side of A417 and assessment of cumulative impact • Dangerous pedestrian crossing across A417 and concerns over deliverability of footpath on southern side of A417 • Increased risk of flooding • Lack of capacity in local sewers • Loss of agricultural land • Overdevelopment of site • Increased traffic pollution • Coalescence with Harwell • Lack of archaeological survey (original scheme only) • Lack of safe area for children's play • Need to reinforce northern boundary to restrict further development <p>Specific comments from 2 objectors to the August amendment can be summarised thus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full weight should be applied to the Interim Findings of the Inspector into the Local Plan, thereby allowing

	<p>the Vale to demonstrate a five year housing land supply</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns remain over sightlines for pedestrian crossing and reduction in road width to achieve A417 realignment • Parked cars on White Road cause additional danger to motorists that will be exacerbated by increased traffic from this proposal • Design and materials of new houses are not tailored to the local area
<p>West Hendred Parish Council</p>	<p>Objection received previously. Their concerns may be summarised thus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site is outside built limits of village contrary to Policies GS2 and H11 of the Local Plan • Size of development will material harm the form, structure and character of the village • Harm to character of AONB • Cumulative impact on primary school provision • Concerns over piecemeal approach to development • Increased traffic on A417 and potential conflict with pedestrian crossing <p>West Hendred Parish Council will provide a further response to the application that will be included in the Addendum Report for members' information.</p>
<p>Oxfordshire County Council Highways</p>	<p>No objection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 • Section 278 agreement requested to secure pedestrian crossing, shared footway/cycleway and bus stop infrastructure • Conditions relating to access, visibility splays, construction traffic management plan, residential travel plan and information pack, cycle storage, parking and drainage scheme requested <p>Following submission of August amendment, the Highways Authority have raised the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional Section 106 contribution of £2,500 towards implementing change to speed limit to 30MPH • Additional items to request to Section 278 agreement including traffic signs and road markings related to change to speed limit • Reiterates need for pedestrian/cycle links between this site and adjacent Greensands site if that application is approved • Where new 30MPH zone starts and ends will need to be agreed with the Highways Authority and funded by

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	<p>the applicant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposed realignment of A417 will not have any detrimental impact of visibility splays for existing properties at Portway Cottages Proposed realignment of A417 and new 30MPH zone will ensure appropriate stopping sight distances for the pedestrian crossing Proposed foot/cycle way on southern side of A417 is marginally below standards but is acceptable given its relatively short length and anticipated use Amended parking provision is acceptable
Oxfordshire County Council Archaeology	<p>No objections subject to conditions relating to a Written Scheme of Investigation and an associated Programme of Work.</p> <p>No further comments received to August amendment.</p>
Oxfordshire County Council Education	<p>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 due to CIL Regulation 123 around pooling of contributions and need to reserve ability to seek contributions from larger developments in the future.</p> <p>No further comments received to August amendment</p>
Oxfordshire County Council Property	<p>Not seeking due to CIL Regulation 123 around pooling of contributions and need to reserve ability to seek contributions from larger developments in the future.</p> <p>No further comments received to August amendment</p>
County Councillor Stewart Lilly	<p>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</p> <p>No further comments received to August amendment</p>
Thames Water	<p>No objections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 No conditions required related to surface water drainage <p>No further comments received to August amendment</p>
Drainage Engineer	<p>No objections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requests condition requiring prior agreement to

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	<p>surface water SuDS compliant surface water drainage strategy</p> <p>No further comments received to August amendment</p>
Environment Agency	No comments
Waste Management	<p>No objections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General comments on council waste collection contract provided. £170/property requested to provide each new house with wheeled bins. <p>Plans submitted in August showing bin storage for reduced apartment block are acceptable.</p>
Leisure	<p>No objection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 106 contributions in relation to local sport and recreation facilities requested and maintenance of on-site open space if adopted by the Parish. <p>No further comments received to August amendment</p>
Landscape Architect	<p>No objection following submission of amended plans. Key extracts from response summarised below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 • Proposal will have a negative impact on the local landscape character but this will be seen in the context of existing and permitted built form on northern side of A417 • Landscape harm considered localised, minor to moderate and comparable to approved schemes • Visual impact of the proposal is restricted by local settlement pattern, landform and vegetation, which all restrict inter-visibility with the AONB • Vegetation on eastern boundary restricts views from the east • Views possible from local footpath network but will be softened by landscape proposals • Visual impact considered to be localised and minor to moderate harm in local vicinity. <p>The full response of the Landscape Architect to the original proposal and the May amendment is attached as Appendix Four.</p> <p>Confirms August amendment to reduce the height of the apartment block reflects the edge of village location and original comments are still valid.</p>
North Wessex Downs AONB Board	Objection received to previous iterations of scheme. Key points from previous objections can be summarised thus

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disproportionate urban expansion to detriment of AONB and character of existing settlement • Scale of properties would dominate the landscape in this locality • Over-dominance of steeply pitched roofs • Development contrary to North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan • Development will cause moderate to adverse harm to the AONB and should be considered unsustainable development <p>In response to the August amendment, the AONB board consider the revised apartment block to be of a more appropriate scale. However, the above concerns over the scale of the development and its impact on the character of the AONB remain. The AONB board also considers that the Vale of White Horse can now demonstrate a five year supply of housing land.</p>
Forestry Officer	<p>No objections following submission of amended plans in May, subject to standard tree protection condition with particular reference to trees on southwestern boundary</p> <p>No further comments received to August amendment</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> <p>No further comments received to August amendment</p>
Urban Design Officer	<p>No objections following submission of amended plans in May and August. Highlights need for windows in western flank wall of Plot 17 to increase surveillance of footpath. Conditions requested covering boundary treatments and surfacing materials.</p>
CPRE	<p>Objection received. Key points can be summarised thus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site is disjointed from the village • Pedestrian crossing will cause hold ups on the A417 • Highway impact should be considered with application on Greensands site immediately adjacent <p>No further comments received to August amendment</p>
Housing Officer	<p>Confirms the requirements for the 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, and a further consultation on modification in light of the Inspector’s Interim Findings, the Inspector’s Final Report has not been received. 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 Impact
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 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. Where there is no objection or challenge to a policy and no modifications are proposed, slightly more weight can be given to these policies. However, contrary to the views of the Parish Council, a local resident and the North Wessex Downs AONB Board, officers consider these Interim Findings themselves have limited weight. As such, it is officer's view that 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 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.
- 6.4 **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. The 95 dwellings offered by Pye Homes' "Phase One – Three" represents a 21.5% increase in the housing stock, relative to data from the 2011 census.
- 6.5 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. Whilst acknowledging local concern about how facilities in the village will be accessed, East Hendred has a reasonable range of facilities including three 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.
- Use of Land**
- 6.6 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 broadly 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.
- 6.7 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 the district 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.

Locational Credentials

- 6.8 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, particularly following the submission of amended plans in August.
- 6.9 From the agreed 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.
- 6.10 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.”*
- 6.11 Officers consider that 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

- 6.12 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.
- 6.13 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.”*
- 6.14 At the committee meeting on the 6 July, a number of members expressed concern about the landscape impact of this proposal, particularly in light of the proximity of the AONB directly opposite. The reduction in the scale of the apartment block is the response from the applicant to this concern, to the satisfaction of both the council’s

landscape architect and the North Wessex Downs AONB board. Nonetheless, clearly this relatively small amendment does not significantly change the overall impact of developing this field for housing on the local landscape.

- 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 to 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 Of course, officers are mindful that every application must be assessed on its own merits and the North Wessex Downs AONB Board consider 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 and it is clear that this “Phase Three” of the development is roughly the same size as Phase One and Two combined. This naturally increases the size of any impact on character and landscape. Officers also acknowledge the point that, as you move further east away from the main village, the amount of existing housing/building decreases and the

character is more rural. For example, Phases One and Two are opposite White Road and when passing along the A417, you are aware of existing housing to the south in the same view as the new housing to the north. In contrast, when you pass this site, the strong boundary planting of Mather House leaves the impression of still entering the village from the countryside. There is a distinction between the Phases in this respect.

- 6.19 However, officers cannot ignore the similarities between this application and those allowed on appeal, particularly as the applicant has designed the scheme to be comparable. 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 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 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.”* There can be little argument that this scheme is contrary to the identified character and management requirements. However, those negative impacts are 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.
- 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. The Landscape Assessment provided in support of the August amendment supports this conclusion, showing that public views from the AONB looking back to the site are extremely limited. 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, only 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 and to the conclusions of the landscape architect that the landscape, character and AONB setting impacts of this proposal 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 an ongoing planning application (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 any development on 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 submitted in May 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.
- Spatial Layout*
- 6.29 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 a net density of at least 30 dwellings to the hectare in rural locations like this subject to character considerations. 46 dwellings on a site of 2.3 hectares represents a gross density of 20 dwellings to the hectare. Removing the public open space leaves a net developable area of around 1.7 hectares, which means a net density of around 27 dwellings to the hectare. This is below policy requirements, reflecting the sensitivity of the location and is acceptable.
- 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, and has been requested by the Urban Design officer.
- Built form and architectural detailing*
- 6.35 Within the amendment submitted in response to the committee deferral, it is the reduction in height of the apartment block from three storeys to two-storey that has the greatest impact on the overall design of the scheme. The previous ridge height of the apartment block was approximately 12 metres and the amended design reduces this to around 9 metres. This leaves it consistent with many of the other two-storey dwellings proposed elsewhere on the site and approved on Phases One and Two.
- 6.36 Previously the North Wessex Downs AONB board had objected to the three-storey apartment block but they are supportive of this amendment stating, *“The revised central apartment building is of a more appropriate scale and the subtle 1930s design would fit comfortably with the mix of dwellings proposed.”* Whilst officers note the AONB board still have reservations about the impact of this scheme as a whole, the improvement to this aspect of the scheme is clear and has their support. Officers agree with this assessment.
- 6.37 Officers also note the previous 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 proposed roof pitches will 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 Officers note the neighbour objection that the proposed housetypes are generic in terms of design and materials and thus do not reflect the character of East Hendred. Principle DG62 of the Design Guide requires a context-appropriate palette of good quality materials in new development. Officers accept that East Hendred has a range

of older buildings, particularly within its conservation area that covers a large part of the existing village to the south of the A417. However, to try to match those designs and materials on a modern development here could result in a pastiche character that would not be appropriate. In contrast, officers consider that the use of good quality brick and tile, with some use of render, tile hanging and timber boarding, is an acceptable way forward. On the site visit previous to the 6 July committee meeting, members will have noted the housetypes used by the applicant on the existing development to the west. This application represents a further phase of that development and a consistent approach to design and materials is taken.

- 6.40 Other minor changes to some of the units are proposed in the August amendment. Plots 23 and 36 have reduced from 3 bed dwellings to 2 bed dwellings to overcome previous concerns about the amount of amenity space provided for each unit. In turn, Plots 25 and 26 benefit from larger gardens and have increased from 2 to 3 bed units. The dwellings provided on these plots are consistent in appearance with those seen elsewhere on the site.
- 6.41 Overall, officers consider that the submitted amendments improve the quality of this scheme further in line with the relevant national and local guidance.

Affordable housing and housing mix

- 6.42 In line with emerging Core Policy 24, the council will seek 35% of the 46 units as affordable housing. This equates to 16.1 units, with 16 units being provided on site and a commuted sum equivalent to 0.1 of a unit being taken as part of the Section 106 agreement. The requested affordable housing mix and tenure split is shown in the table below:

	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	Total
Rent	4	5	2	1	12
Shared Ownership	0	2	2	0	4
Total	4	7	4	1	16

- 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 (rounded)	2	6	13	9	30
Proposed	1	7	13	9	30

- 6.44 Against the SHMA expectations, this scheme under-provides one-bed units by 1, and over-provides two bed units by 1. Officers consider this a minor but acceptable deviation.

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 At the previous meeting of the planning committee, members expressed concern that some of the properties did not provide private amenity space in line with the guidelines of the Design Guide. 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. The amended plans demonstrate that all forty-six properties benefit from amenity space in line with the Design Guide, including the communal garden for the apartment block, with many properties benefitting from garden sizes comfortably in excess of those requirements.
- 6.47 The amendment also ensures that all back-to-back and back-to-side distances are in line with the recommendations of the Design Guide (21 metres and 12 metres respectively).
- 6.48 The council's environmental health officer had raised concerns about the traffic noise impact from the A417 and recommended a condition requiring prior agreement to a noise survey and associated mitigation measures. Whilst officers are mindful that the noise experienced will be similar to existing housing and the previously approved "Phase One" of this development, the condition is considered necessary to ensure residential amenity is of an acceptably high standard.
- 6.49 Given the location of the site relative to existing neighbours, this proposal is not considered to be harmful to the amenity of nearby neighbours. 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.

Open Space, Landscaping and Trees

- 6.50 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. The applicant has confirmed with the August amendment that 3,622 square metres of the site will be provided as public open space. This equates to 15.6% of the total site area and does not include the pond that will be primarily for flood attenuation but will also be a feature of the public open space.
- 6.51 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.

- 6.52 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 submitted in May 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.
- 6.53 **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). 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.
- 6.54 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 with Flood Zone One, the area at least risk of flooding from existing water courses. The FRA contends that there are is a low risk from groundwater, surface water or fluvial flooding and the council does not contest these findings.
- 6.55 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 uses 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 construction 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.
- 6.56 Following the submission of further information and drainage calculations in support of this strategy, the council's drainage engineer confirmed no objections subject to detailed pre-commencement conditions. Thus, there is no objections to this proposal on flood risk grounds.
- 6.57 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**
- 6.58 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 May amendments to the layout. The TS models traffic movements from the site based on the original provision of 48 dwellings, with all units being market housing to represent the worst-case scenario (affordable dwellings tend to generate less traffic movements). The results shown 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.

- 6.59 As noted by the Addendum to the Transport Statement submitted in support of the August amendment, the reduction in unit numbers to 46 will have a further minor improvement in terms of traffic generation, which further supports the Highways Authority view that no objection should be raised to this proposal on traffic.
- 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. Furthermore, the August amendment includes a proposal to reduce the speed limit to 30MPH, further improving the safety of the proposed access point. Both the access and visibility splays will be secured through condition.
- 6.61 In terms of car parking, the August amendment to the 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. Thirteen visitor spaces are also proposed, resulting in total provision of 123 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 an important 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. At the previous committee meeting, members agreed with local concerns about the safety of the pedestrian crossing across the A417 and that it was unclear if the proposed road realignment would impact on the visibility at the access to the nearby Portway Cottages. Whilst Oxfordshire County Council as Highways Authority did not object to the previous scheme, a meeting between the Parish Council, the applicant and the Highways Authority took place in July to address these concerns and the August amendment includes further alterations as a result.

- 6.66 As mentioned above, at the request of the Parish Council, with the support of the Highways Authority, the applicant has agreed to fund a reduction in the speed limit along this part of the A417 from 40MPH to 30MPH. Officers agree this is sensible, given the increase in housing facing the A417 on its northern side if this scheme were approved, and the plans for the roundabout at the Featherbed Lane junction to the east.
- 6.67 As before, the applicant proposes a realignment of the A417 to ensure adequate visibility for the site access. Members were concerned that this would limit visibility for No.4 Portway Cottages in particular, the house immediately west of the application site. In response, the applicant has adjusted the proposed realignment. This will now improve visibility to the east from this access from 26 metres to around 125 metres for the driveway serving No.4. This is by virtue of the realignment as well as the opening-up of the application site frontage, the dedication of additional land to the public highway and the reduction in the speed limit.
- 6.68 The proposed alteration to the realignment also improves forward visibility associated with eastbound vehicles for the pedestrian crossing to around 50 metres. The Highways Authority requested this visibility for a 40MPH road so this is now more than adequate given the associated reduction in speed limit. Officers note that one neighbour has disputed whether 50 metres can be achieved here. However, this objection appears to be based on the current situation, not on the improvements this scheme offers for visibility outlined above. There are no concerns over visibility for westbound traffic, which remains acceptable for a 30MPH stretch of road.
- 6.69 The realignment still allows for a foot/cycle way on the southern side of the A417 to link the pedestrian crossing to White Road, provided the hedge that defines the boundary of Mather House is cut back to the highway boundary. This cutting back is within the gift of the Highways Authority to do to ensure the pedestrian crossing can be safely used. Both the Parish Council and a neighbour has raised concerns about a narrowing of the A417 at this point, believing the road width to be less than 6 metres whereas the plan accompanying the Addendum Transport Statement shows it to be 6.34 metres. The Parish Council also have concern about the width of the foot/cycle way on the southern side of the A417. The Addendum to the Transport Statement shows this path to be between 1.98 – 2.1 metres. Whilst narrower than a typical shared facility, the Highways Authority have no objection, given the relatively short stretch of pathway in question. Further details of the final realignment of the A417, the resultant road width, the pedestrian crossing and its associated footpaths will be secured through condition 3 of the recommendation and agreed prior to commencement of development.
- 6.70 In consultation, the Highways Authority have confirmed no objection to the amended proposal and are in agreement that the above alterations will improve the highway safety of the proposal and that the overall level of parking is acceptable. An additional Section 106 contribution relating to the cost of implementing the new speed limit is requested.
- 6.71 Paragraph 32 of the NPPF states: *“Development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe.”* Overall, officers are satisfied that the August amendments further improve the impact of this proposal on highway safety, through a small reduction in overall traffic and through the improvements to safety on the A417 through a new 30MPH zone and the realignment of the road to improve visibility splays.

Ecology and Biodiversity

- 6.72 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.

- 6.73 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.
- 6.74 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

- 6.75 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.
- 6.76 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

- 6.77 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.
- 6.78 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.

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

	<i>Proposed Contributions</i>
Artificial Grass Pitch in East Hendred parish	£3,076
Football pitches at East Hendred recreation ground	£8,313
Improvements to football pavilion at East Hendred recreation ground	£10,522
Cricket pitch provision in East Hendred parish	£3,587
Rugby pitch provision in East Hendred parish	£1,831
Indoor bowls provision in East Hendred parish	£2,574
Resurfacing of courts at Harwell tennis club	£2,228
MUGA in East Hendred parish	£2,572
Wheeled bins for each property	£7,820
Public Art	£13,800
Street Naming	£864.74
Improvements to access road at East Hendred recreation ground	£501.60
Improvements to Snell's Hall car park	£826
Total	£58,515.34
Oxfordshire County Council	
	<i>Proposed Contributions</i>
Featherbed Land/A417 roundabout and associated improvements	£125,902
Improved bus services along A417	£38,985
Public consultation on signalised crossing	£5,000
Maintenance of signalised crossing	£36,305.66
Consultation and administration costs for new 30MH speed zone	£2,500
Total	£208,692.66
Overall Total	£267,208
Total contribution per unit	£5,808.87

7.0 **CONCLUSION**

7.1 Overall, this application has been assessed on its merits, in light of the Inspector's Interim Findings into the emerging Local Plan 2031, the current housing land supply shortfall in the district and the NPPF presumption in favour of sustainable development. Officers consider that the scheme would provide an economic and social role through employment through construction, increased investing in the local economy and providing additional market and affordable housing.

7.2 In terms of the environmental role, officers acknowledge that the proposal will cause harm to the character of the area through further urbanisation of the currently rural character north of the A417. This impacts negatively on the Lowland Vale landscape in which the site falls and on the setting of the North Wessex Downs AONB to the south. However, officers continue to attach material weight to the manner in which this proposal takes a comparable approach to mitigating that harm to that supported by the Planning Inspectorate when permitting development to the west. Officers consider

weight must be applied to those decisions. Furthermore, the proposed mitigation, along with the existing settlement pattern, landform and vegetation outside the site limits the harm to the setting and character of the AONB, as demonstrated by the applicant's annotated photographic viewpoints showing how limited views of the site from within the AONB actually are.

- 7.3 The August amendment is considered to represent a further improvement to the proposed scheme, which was recommended for approval at the planning committee meeting on 6th July. The reduction in scale for the apartment block from three to two-storeys has reduced the impact of the proposal, in terms of the character of the immediate area, the wider landscape and the setting of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The amendment also addresses previous concerns about residential amenity and public open space, whilst the associated introduction of a new 30MPH speed limit past the site and associated realignment of the A417 will improve highway safety.
- 7.4 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 in order to secure contributions towards local infrastructure and to secure affordable housing; and**
- 2. Conditions as follows:**
 - 1. Commencement three years.**
 - 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 information pack to be agreed.**
 - 10. Construction traffic management.**
 - 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. Noise assessment and mitigation to be agreed.**
 - 16. Windows in western elevation of Plot 17 to be agreed.**
 - 17. Landscaping scheme implementation.**
 - 18. Access and visibility splays as approved.**
 - 19. Parking as approved.**
 - 20. Roads and footpaths prior to occupation.**
 - 21. Hours of work.**
 - 22. No drainage to highway.**
 - 23. No first floor windows in western elevation of Plots 1 & 11.**

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