
APPLICATION NO.	P17/V0813/FUL
SITE	Land at Grove Road, Wantage
PARISH	GROVE
PROPOSAL	Erection of a 65 bed care home and 50 extra care units (both within Use Class C2), parking, landscaping, access and other associated works (As amended by Drawings and information accompanying letter from agent of 11 June 2017 and clarified by Biodiversity Assessment Calculator accompanying email from agent of 26 June 2017)
WARD MEMBERS	Charlotte Dickson St John Dickson
APPLICANT	Frontier Estate (Berks) Limited
OFFICER	Peter Brampton

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 Oxfordshire County Council in order to secure financial contributions to local bus services and the monitoring of the required Travel Plan
2. Conditions as follows:

General Conditions

1. Commencement three years.
2. Approved plans.

Prior to Commencement

3. Slab and ridge levels to be agreed.
4. Materials to be agreed.
5. Hard and soft landscaping scheme to be agreed (including planting, details of the mound at the site frontage and provision for mobility impaired).
6. Construction method statement to be agreed.
7. Refuse storage to be agreed.
8. Surface water drainage scheme to be agreed.
9. Noise mitigation, including mechanical plant equipment, to be agreed.
10. Tree protection to be agreed.
11. Tree pits within areas of hardstanding to be agreed.
12. Biodiversity enhancement plan to be agreed.
13. Contaminated land investigation to be agreed.

Prior to Occupation

14. Travel plan to be agreed.

15. Cycle parking provision to be agreed.

Compliance

16. Boundary details as agreed.

17. Landscaping implementation as specified.

18. Use class restriction – C2 only – extra care and care home.

19. Hours of work – Monday to Friday and Saturday mornings only.

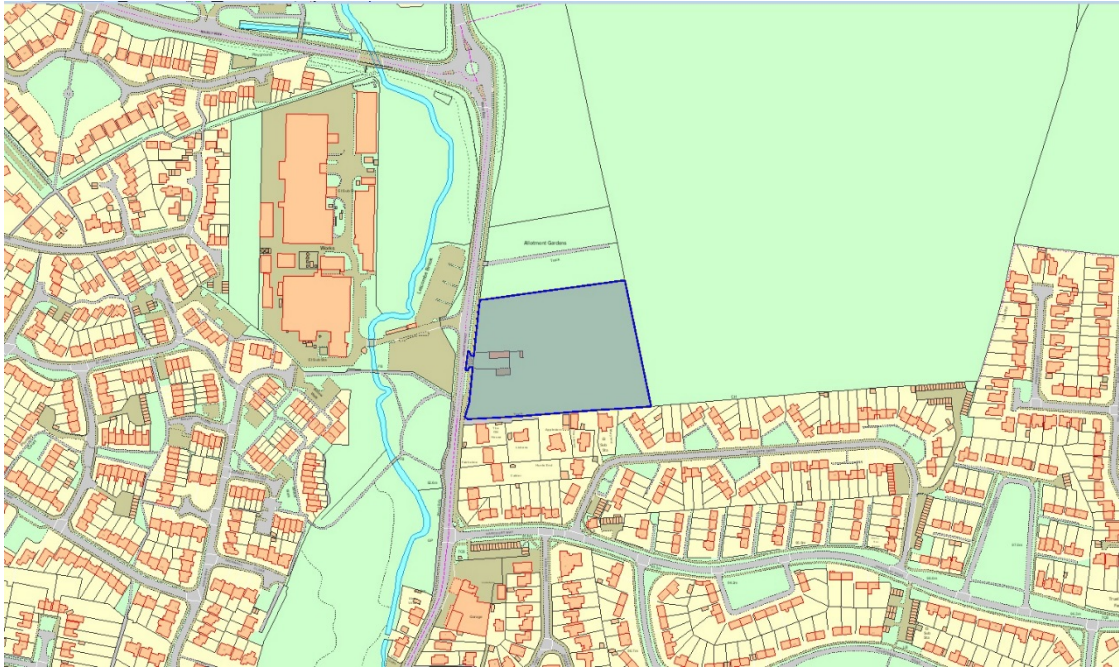
20. Access, parking and turning as agreed.

21. No drainage to highway.

22. Existing access to be closed.

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND PROPOSAL

- 1.1 This application is referred to planning committee due to the officer recommendation differing from that of Grove Parish Council.
- 1.2 This application relates to a site of about 1.62 hectares and it is located immediately beyond the current built limits of Wantage on its northeastern edge. The A338 between Grove and Wantage lies to the western boundary. The site is undeveloped paddock land with a field access from the A338 across an existing cyclepath. The site slopes consistently from its eastern boundary, with an approximate total fall of 9.1 metres. A large timber shed is the only building currently on the site.
- 1.3 To the immediate north of the site lie allotments. Beyond that is the route of an approved access road into “Crab Hill”, a site benefitting from an outline planning permission for 1,500 houses. The Crab Hill application site surrounds the eastern boundary of this site, although approved parameter plans for this development show housing lies some distance away. The immediate rear of this site is part of the indicative landscaping and SuDS areas for Crab Hill.
- 1.4 To the south of the site lies existing residential development within Wantage, which is a mixture of single and two storey dwellings. The Old House (two storey sitting side onto site), Pear Tree Cottage (a bungalow facing the site, shown as “Lichens” on Ordnance Survey maps) and Appledorn (a bungalow sitting side onto the site) are all accessed from a track immediately beyond the southern boundary. Other properties that back onto the site are accessed from Upthorpe Drive.
- 1.5 A plan showing the location of the site in its local context is provided overleaf:



- 1.6 This application seeks full planning permission for the erection of 50 extra care units in a single building and a 65 bed care home. Both buildings will offer accommodation across two to three storeys but will be set into the slope of the site allowing their ground floor level to be set below the properties to the south.
- 1.7 The extra care accommodation comprises 37 two-bed bedrooms and 13 one-bed bedrooms. It is located on the northern half of the site, arranged loosely in an “H” shape plan form. Communal areas are located in the southwestern corner of the ground floor, with the second floor areas benefitting from large terraces overlooking the allotments north of the site.
- 1.8 The care home will sit in the southern part of the site, again in a loose “H” shape plan form with communal areas on all floors. 65 ensuite bedrooms will be provided.
- 1.9 The two buildings are located partway up the site, with the car parking areas at the front of the site, immediately adjacent to the new access onto the A338. A central courtyard between the two buildings provides the main amenity space for the residents, with landscaped grounds to the eastern rear of the site. All landscaped areas will use retaining walls to create level areas designed to be accessible by residents.
- 1.10 In response to the concerns of officers and local residents, the applicant has amended the application. The amendments predominantly relate to the care home, which has been moved away from neighbouring properties, terraces on the southern elevation have been removed and the bin store has been relocated away from neighbouring boundaries.
- 1.11 The extra care home has also been amended to improve the relationship with the allotments to the north and elevational changes to improve the public face of the building, in response to comments from the council's Urban Design

Officer and the Architects Panel.

- 1.12 Reduced copies of application plans are **attached** as Appendix One. All plans and supporting documentation for the application are available to view on our website www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk.

2.0 **SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS**

- 2.1 A summary of the responses received to the proposal is below. A full copy of all the comments made can be seen online at www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk

2.2 Grove Parish Council	<p>Recommends refusal of original proposal for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient parking for residents, staff and visitors • Potential obstruction of cycleway • Bus stop in wrong place • No private access for ambulances <p>No comments on amended plans received at time of writing. These will be reported to the committee in the Addendum Report published on the afternoon of the committee meeting.</p>
Wantage Town Council	<p>No objection following receipt of amended plans.</p> <p><i>Comments:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“We consider that emergency planning needs to be considered due to the proximity of the site to Autotype and that appropriate measures for any evacuation be put in place”</i>
Local residents	<p>32 letters of objection were received to the original proposal. At the time of writing, 3 letters reiterating objections have been received following the submission of amended plans. The main reasons for objection can be summarised thus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harm to amenity of neighbours to the south of the application site through loss of light, outlook and privacy and overlooking from south facing windows and terraces • Noise and smell disturbance from kitchen and bin store and from deliveries at unsocial hours • Building is too large at three storeys, out of keeping with the character of the area • Overdevelopment of the site • Increased flood risk • Traffic generation • Insufficient car parking • Conflict with cycle path running past site • Overshadowing of allotments

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contamination on existing site • Site previously designated as Local Green Space in emerging Wantage Neighbourhood Plan • Harm to property values
Oxfordshire County Council	<p><u>Highways</u> No objections</p> <p><i>Section 106 contributions requested:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £48,731.25 to improvement of public transport services in the area • £2,040 to monitoring costs of Travel Plan <p><i>Conditions requested:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction Method Statement to be agreed • Drainage Scheme to be agreed • Access, parking and turning as agreed • Existing access to be closed • Bicycle parking to be agreed • Travel Plan to be agreed <p><i>Comments:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traffic impact on local highway network would be “negligible” • Access position acceptable, allowing visibility well above standard • Parking provision and layout is acceptable <p><u>Archaeology</u> No objections</p>
Countryside Officer	<p>No objections following submission of Biodiversity Impact Calculator</p> <p><i>Condition requested:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biodiversity Enhancement Plan
Air Quality Officer	No objection
Contaminated Land Officer	<p>No objection</p> <p><i>Comments:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ground Investigation Report indicates presence of lead contamination <p><i>Condition requested:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phased risk assessment • Remediation works completed
Environmental	No objection

Health Officers	<p><i>Comments:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main source of noise is road traffic on A338 • No details of external plant provided <p><i>Condition requested:</i> Details of noise mitigation and external plant to be agreed</p>
Drainage Engineer	<p>No objection</p> <p><i>Comments:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 700 metre square attenuation tank could prohibit planting in western part of the site, with no structures able to built over – design needs refinement • Division of site into permeable and non-permeable area due to groundwater levels requires further evidence • Details of pumping station and rising main needed • Details of retaining wall in eastern part of site needed <p><i>Condition requested</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surface Water Drainage scheme to be agreed covering: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Scheme informed by ground permeability tests and groundwater flooding issues 2. Design calculations behind scheme related to greenfield and developed site run off with climate change allowances 3. Scheme to include appropriately sized storage/attenuation areas and suitable off-site drainage outfalls 4. Exceedance flood flow routing 5. Timescales and phasing of works 6. Management and maintenance plan for SuDS features, including off-site watercourses
Thames Water	No objections
Urban design officer	<p>No objections following submission of amended plans:</p> <p><i>Conditions requested:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard and soft landscaping • Bin Storage • Boundary details
Architects Panel	Comments on original submission:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and materials acceptable • Need for more visual interest in northern elevation of Extra Care building • Design and materials generally acceptable • Large mass of building handled well • Move patio in courtyard to gain evening sun • Are glass balustrades ok for residents?
Landscape Architect	<p>No objection</p> <p><i>Comments:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocated sites to north will change landscape character of area considerably and has been taken into account assessing impacts of proposal • Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment is an appropriate assessment of the area • Proposed design keeps built form off higher sections of the site to the east to reduce landscape and visual impact, comparable to the design principles of Crab Hill • Limited space to north of Extra Care for significant planting to break up the mass of the building whilst not overshadowing the allotments • Concerned about number of staircases needed to allow full access to gardens – need for outdoor lifts for example to allow access to circular walk • Frontage mounding, if 0.5 metres high as per level plan, would be acceptable <p><i>Conditions requested:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard and soft landscaping details, including planting along the northern boundary • Accessibility measures for mobility impaired to all residents
Forestry Officer	<p>No objections</p> <p><i>Comments:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tree survey is an accurate representation of the vegetation on the site • Layout has accommodated existing trees and hedges although consideration over access road and parking areas needed • Tree pit details needed for trees to be planted adjacent to car parking areas <p><i>Conditions requested:</i></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tree protection and arboricultural method statement • Tree pit details
Housing Team	<p>Objection received</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considers Extra Care accommodation to be within a C3 use class that would trigger the need for affordable housing. • 50 bed Extra Care building should provide 17.5 affordable units
Leisure	<p>Requests financial contributions to local recreation facilities as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £33,189 for upgrades to the sports hall facility at The Beacon • £2,000 for an open fronted gazebo and store shed at Wantage bowls club • £9,000 for Old Mill Hall in Grove which offers short-mat bowls and aerobics classes
Waste management team	<p>No objection in principle to amended scheme</p> <p><i>Comments:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirms necessary size and arrangement of bin stores • Plans show insufficient space within proposed bin stores for necessary provision • Bin stores on each floor need to be large enough for proposed use

3.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

3.1 None

3.2 Pre-application History

[P16/V1340/PEJ](#) - (30/10/2016)

50 Extra Care apartments in a 2/3 storey building to the north of the site, a 2/3 storey 60 bed Care Home to the south of the site and 12 Extra Care bungalows to the east of the site

Advice offered on:

- Principle of development
- Urban design principles
- Landscape impact
- Highway Safety
- Archaeology
- Ecology
- Drainage
- Air Quality

3.3 Screening Opinion requests

None

4.0 **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

4.1 The site area is less than 5ha, fewer than 150 dwellings are proposed and the site is not in a 'sensitive area'. The proposal is not EIA development.

5.0 **MAIN ISSUES**

5.1 The main planning considerations relevant to the assessment of this application are:

- Current housing policy
- Use Class, affordable housing and Section 106 contributions
- Design and layout
- Residential amenity – existing neighbours and future residents
- Landscape impact
- Flood risk and drainage
- Traffic, parking and highway safety, including Section 106 contributions
- Biodiversity
- Bin Storage

5.2 **Current Housing Policy**

National legislation confirms that the starting point for assessing this application is the Development Plan. For the Vale of White Horse, the Development Plan consists of the Local Plan 2031 Part One and the Saved Policies of the Local Plan 2011. The Local Plan 2031 Part Two remains at a relatively early stage of adoption and has limited weight in the assessment of this proposal.

5.3 This site lies outside, but immediately adjacent to, the current built limits of Wantage. However, as outlined in Section 1, the Crab Hill development, which is an allocated site in the Local Plan as well as benefitting from outline planning permission, will surround the site to the east and north. Accordingly, the Proposals Map accompanying the Local Plan expands the development boundary of Wantage to include Crab Hill and so now also includes this site. The Local Plan takes a permissive approach to sustainable development within the development boundaries of the towns of the district.

5.4 There is a regular bus service along the A338 with a bus stop close to the site entrance. The Limborough Road retail estate is around 550 metres walk to the south, with the town centre lying beyond. Furthermore, both the extra care and the care home have on-site facilities such as a hair dresser, cinema, gym, library and dining facilities

5.5 Given the nature of the proposal, Core Policy 26 of the Local Plan 2031 is most directly relevant as it adopts a permissive approach to the provision of, *"residential dwellings designed for older people...within close proximity to public transport routes, retail and other local facilities, including for health care."*

5.6 It is noted that the Wantage Neighbourhood Plan proposed to designate this site as Local Green Space. However, at examination, the Neighbourhood

Plan was found “unsound” in draft form and officers understand that it is currently being redrafted to address the concerns of the Inspector, which included a recommendation to delete the Local Green Space policy for the Plan as the policy did not meet the basic conditions for Neighbourhood Plan policies. Accordingly, the Neighbourhood Plan has little weight in officers’ assessment of this proposal.

- 5.7 Given the above, officers are satisfied that the principle of this proposal is supported by the Development Plan. Core Policy 26 states that where standards that would apply to “general” housing have been relaxed in response to the needs of the occupiers, restrictions will be placed on any planning permission to reflect this. Often this can be achieved through a restriction on the age of occupants, but in this instance a restriction on the use of the building is considered more appropriate, which is discussed in the next section.
- 5.8 **Use Class, affordable housing and Section 106 contributions**
The care home falls within the C2 use class (residential institutions – hospitals and nursing homes are also C2 uses). However, extra care accommodation can, depending on how it is operated, fall within the C2 or C3 use class. The C3 use class is predominantly “general” residential dwellings, and can include retirement accommodation. Whether the extra care housing proposed here falls within the C2 or C3 use class is an important distinction. If it were C3, the proposal would trigger the need for affordable housing (as per Core Policy 24 of the Local Plan 2031 Part One) and financial contributions towards local infrastructure.
- 5.9 It is officers opinion that the extra care accommodation can be considered to fall within the C2 use class. As explained by the applicant in the planning statement, all future residents of this extra care building must commit to a care plan that is suitable for their particular needs following a detailed health assessment covering areas such as physical and mental wellbeing, mobility, medication and ability to communicate. The care plan is flexible to the resident’s needs, but is always required, and covers areas such as frequency of visits, personal care, meal preparation and administration of medication.
- 5.10 Furthermore, the estate manager has access to all of the apartments in the extra care building and the staffing is much higher than would be expected in a “general” retirement apartment block (estate manager, care manager, reception staff, care staff, housekeepers etc.). The layout of the building also varies from a more traditional retirement apartment block, particularly given the level of communal facilities on each floor to reflect the reduced mobility of residents.
- 5.11 Overall, officers are satisfied that the extra care accommodation can be considered a C2 use. The Vale do not require C2 proposals to provide affordable housing nor Section 106 contributions and so the requests made by the council’s housing team and leisure team cannot be agreed. However, Oxfordshire County Council as Highways Authority have made financial contribution requests, which are summarised above and discussed later in

this report. Condition 18 of the recommendation will require both buildings to remain in a C2 use.

5.12 Design and Layout

A number of Local Plan policies and guidelines within the adopted Design Guide seek to ensure high quality developments and to protect the amenities of neighbouring properties (Core Policies 37 and 38 and Saved Policies DC6 and DC9.) The Design Guide contains the following advice on apartment buildings:

- The height and location of apartment buildings should respond to its context and aid legibility within the settlement
- Care should be taken to avoid the building appearing bulky – larger buildings should be broken down in simple elements, each with its own pitched roof
- Apartments should incorporate active frontage onto the public realm
- Entrances to the building should be directly from the street
- Apartments should comply with council standards in relation to provision of adequate amenity space
- Parking for apartments should comply with relevant standards

5.13 Currently, the application site is part of a green space between Grove and Wantage. Opposite the site lies Autotype, an industrial complex largely hidden from view by mature planting. To the south of the site lies housing that largely turns its back on the open countryside beyond. As such, officers consider there is an opportunity for a gateway building on this prominent site at this entrance into Wantage, aiding legibility as proposed by the Design Guide. Officers welcome the active frontages provided throughout the scheme, particularly to Grove Road and to the allotments. The terraces in the extra care building will allow residents to look out over the allotments and this creates activity on the public façade of the building, which is desirable in urban design terms.

5.14 As the site rises upwards from the front boundary with Grove Road, the applicant has used the site levels to set both buildings into the slope to reduce the height and bulk of the scheme when viewed from the public realm. Officers welcome this approach, given the three storey nature of the proposal and the scale of the residential development to the south. By means of illustration, the Grove Road elevation of the extra care accommodation will be 10.5 metres high at the closest point facing the road, a typical height for a 2 ½ storey building. At the rear, the highest part of the site, the care home will be a two storey 9.5 metres high building. It is also noteworthy that the entirety of the ground floor of the extra care building sits below the level of the allotments to the north, whilst the ground floor level of the care home is noticeably below that of adjacent properties such as Pear Tree Cottage and Appledorn.

5.15 Furthermore, both buildings consist of a series of distinct elements to break up the overall bulk. The applicant has used a limited range of materials such as brick, hanging tiles and render to further visually break up the bulk, whilst variation in architectural features such as dormer windows, gable widths and

terraces add interest. The Architect's Panel state in consultation that the massing of the buildings is articulated well and officers agree with this. However, officers do acknowledge the Landscape Architect's concerns about the lack of space for meaningful planting along the northern boundary, due to both of the proximity of the building and the need to avoid overshadowing of the allotments next to the site. This planting would serve to break up the mass of the buildings when approaching from the north. Officers do not consider that the building necessarily requires large trees in front of it to mitigate the visual impact, as the proposals are considered to be of a suitably high quality and the mass of the building is articulated well. Nonetheless, some amendments to the new planting along the site boundary will be required by the landscaping scheme required by condition 5 of the recommendation.

- 5.16 Officers generally welcome the landscaping scheme for the site, which is considered comprehensive and important in assimilating the building into its surroundings. A post and rail fence with a native hedgerow and large trees are proposed for the front boundary onto Grove Road, which will give the site early maturity that will help to soften the appearance of the building and screen the car parking areas to the front of the site. As noted by the Landscape Architect, the landscaping scheme includes a mound at the front of the site of around 0.5 metres in height and details of this mound will need to be refined through the landscaping scheme required by condition.
- 5.17 The gardens for each building are well thought out, using "sensory" planting within the care home garden such as rosemary and lavender for their smell and brightly coloured plants for visual interest. The central courtyard will be accessible by residents of both buildings and link the site as one entity. To the rear of the site, a more informal wildflower and orchard arrangement is proposed, providing seating areas and a timber shelter. As noted by the council's landscape officer, the slope of the site requires the use of retaining walls to create level areas for the gardens and planting. It is unclear how mobility-impaired residents will be able to access some higher parts of the gardens and this will need to be covered as part of the landscaping scheme for the site. It is likely additional ramps at a suitably shallow gradient or external lifts will be needed.
- 5.18 Finally, a new hedgerow and specimen trees are proposed to the south of the care home to ease the relationship with the neighbouring housing beyond.
- 5.19 As well as the post and rail fence to Grove Road, a metal weld-mesh fence will be provided to the boundary with the allotments and to Crab Hill. Close-boarded fencing along these boundaries would not have been acceptable. However close-boarded fencing along the southern boundary, behind the new hedge, is needed for security purposes with the existing neighbours.
- 5.20 Overall, officers are satisfied that this proposal has been well-thought out and has improved through negotiations with officers during the determination of this application. It represents a high quality building that will act as a gateway into Wantage and it is consistent with Core Policy 37 of the Local Plan and

the Design Guide in particular.

5.21 Residential Amenity

Saved Policy DC9 of the Local Plan 2011 confirms that development will not be permitted if it would unacceptably harm the amenities of neighbouring properties in terms of loss of privacy, daylight, sunlight or outlook, or through noise disturbance. The council's Design Guide recommends that back-to-back distances between properties are at least 21 metres, whilst back-to-side distances are at least 12 metres. This recommendation assumes two storey properties.

- 5.22 A number of neighbours in the existing housing to the south have objected to the scale of the proposed care home and the associated impact it will have on their properties in terms of loss of light, privacy and outlook. The applicant has submitted amended plans primarily to address these concerns and officers are now satisfied that the impact of this proposal on neighbouring amenity accords with Saved Policy DC9 and relevant advice in the Design Guide.

- 5.23 There are three properties that sit directly alongside the proposed care home, Pear Tree Cottage, Appledorn and The Laurels. Maryland sits southeast of the proposal and faces across the rear garden area of the proposed site. The impact of the proposal on each of these properties is considered below.

- 5.24 Pear Tree Cottage is a bungalow property accessed from the track immediately south of the application site and its front elevation faces across the application site. Pear Tree Cottage is arranged in an "L" shape plan form and has a front gable projection providing a bedroom that, at the closest point, will be 28.3 metres from the south wall of the proposed care home. The remainder of the property will be set slightly further back, around 30.7 metres from the care home. Furthermore, the application plans indicate that the ground floor of the care home will be set around 0.6 metres below the ground floor of Pear Tree Cottage. The applicants propose a 2.1 metres fence along the boundary of Pear Tree Cottage with ample space for the hedgerow and large trees between the two buildings in the southern part of the application site as discussed above.

- 5.25 It is important to note that Pear Tree Cottage faces the application site, meaning that the private rear garden of this neighbour will not be affected. In addition, being positioned almost due south of the care home means there can be no concerns about a loss of sunlight or overshadowing. There will be some loss of outlook but officers are mindful there is no right to view over private land and that Pear Tree Cottage would continue to benefit from a reasonable outlook given the distance between the two buildings. Whilst windows in the southern elevation of the care home will look towards Pear Tree Cottage, the distances involved are significantly above the 21 metres recommended by the Design Guide, which is the most relevant applicable standard, and any overlooking would be of the front garden, not the private rear garden. Accordingly, officers are satisfied that, whilst the outlook from Pear Tree Cottage will change, the impact of this proposal on the amenity of

the occupants of Pear Tree Cottage is not materially harmful.

- 5.26 Appledorn is also a bungalow sitting side onto the application site to the east of Pear Tree Cottage. Appledorn benefits from landscaped grounds, giving the swimming pool and amenity areas some privacy. The driveway and detached garage serving the property sit along the shared boundary with the application site. The proposed care home will sit around 1.8 metres lower at ground floor than the ground floor of Appledorn, at a distance of nearly 38 metres. Officers consider that the conclusions about the impact on Pear Tree Cottage apply similarly here. Namely that there will be no loss of light, a limited change to outlook and what overlooking is possible of the main private amenity areas will be from a distance of nearly 40 metres. Officers are satisfied that whilst there will be a change in outlook from Appledorn, this would not be materially harmful to the amenity of the occupiers.
- 5.27 The Laurels is another bungalow property set side onto the application site in heavily landscaped grounds. It is separated from the application site by the parking court and detached garage serving Maryland. It is around 34 metres from the care home at the closest point and officers are satisfied that the impact on this amenity of the occupants of this property will be limited.
- 5.28 Maryland itself is a chalet bungalow set side onto the application site, looking across the rear garden of the proposals. Given this positioning, there is no concern about a loss of light or outlook from the limited side facing windows in this property, despite the two buildings being around 20 metres apart. Any overlooking from the care home will be at an oblique angle limiting the impact on the amenity of the occupants of Maryland.
- 5.29 The Old House is a two storey property sitting forward of the care home, facing onto Grove Road. Again, only oblique overlooking from the care home will be possible and there are no concerns about a loss of light or outlook.
- 5.30 Amended plans have relocated the bin store away from the neighbouring properties to address concerns about noise and smell disturbance. Officers accept that the car parking areas will lead to some noise disturbance to The Old House and Pear Tree Cottage in particular, but consider this will not be significant. In consultation the council's Environmental Health officer notes that there is no information on any mechanical plant or extraction equipment that may be needed to serve the proposed buildings. It is likely some mechanical ventilation of the kitchen will be needed and it will be necessary to ensure the noise and odours are appropriately mitigated. This point is covered by condition 9 of the recommendation.
- 5.31 Overall, officers are satisfied that the amended plans have improved the relationship with the most affected neighbours to an extent that a refusal of planning permission could not be justified.
- 5.32 In terms of the amenity of the future occupants of the proposed buildings, the A338 is a potential source of noise. In consultation, the council's Environmental Health officer has requested details of noise mitigation to

ensure internal noise levels within the apartments are within accepted limits and this is also covered by condition 9 of the recommendation. As discussed, a good amount of amenity space is provided for the residents. This garden may not meet the size standards applied to “general” apartment buildings but officers consider this can be relaxed given the C2 use restriction applied to the proposal and the reduced mobility of the elderly residents. Officers note the concerns over fire safety from Wantage Town Council but are satisfied this aspect of the scheme will be covered by building regulations at a later stage.

5.33 Landscape and Visual Impact

Core Policy 44 of the Local Plan 2031 Part One states, *“The key features that contribute to the nature and quality of the Vale of White Horse District’s landscape will be protected from harmful development and where possible enhanced...”* Saved Policy NE9 of the Local Plan seeks to protect the Lowland Vale, a local landscape designation within which this site falls, from development that will harm the long, open views that characterise this part of the Vale. This area of land is assessed in the Vale of White Horse Landscape Assessment (Martin Cobden, December 2008), which concluded this site formed part of a Local Character Area (LCA) that had a high sensitivity to change, with the hill forming a dominant feature. This separation between Grove and Wantage is a key contributor to the landscape character between the two settlements and was a central factor in the evolution of the design process of Crab Hill. It is important to note this assessment of the landscape character predates the permission for Crab Hill and the associated link road which will impact significantly on the character of the area.

5.34 The application is supported by a full Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal (LVIA). This builds on the above district Landscape Assessment and identifies that the site falls within, or close to, four distinct LCAs that could be affected by development on this site. The LVIA considers these areas have a “moderate” landscape value and that the sensitivity to change for this site is not as great as the Vale’s 2008 assessment for the LCA as a whole. The LVIA considers that the more sensitive parts of the character area can be found to the north (beyond the allotments) and on the higher ground to the east within Crab Hill. The LVIA also states, *“the application site does not contribute to the visual separation of the land between Grove and Wantage due to the distance from Grove, lack of visual relationship and the adjacent land uses.”*

5.35 The LVIA indicates that the site will only be clearly visible from the immediate area, particularly Grove Road, the allotments to the north and Autotype opposite. Intervening trees along Mably Way to the north mean only partial/glimpsed views beyond the Grove Road/Mably Way roundabout are possible. Generally, from the east and west, mature vegetation in the area will only allow glimpsed views from residential properties. In these views, the proposed building will be seen against the context of existing housing beyond. Where the land rises into the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) to the south of Wantage, distant glimpsed views of the site will be possible, again seen in the context of the

existing townscape.

- 5.36 Officers have negotiated through the pre-application and application stage with the applicants to create a scheme that does not appear unduly prominent in the landscape and preserves the gap between Grove and Wantage. In this regard, it is helpful that the site lies immediately beyond the existing built limits of Wantage. It is noteworthy that housing on the western side of the A338 goes much further north than on this eastern side of the road. Therefore, officers agree with the conclusions of the applicants LVIA that it is difficult to argue the coalescence proposed here would cause landscape harm due to the lack of a clear visual relationship between this site and Grove.
- 5.37 As discussed above, the proposed buildings are being set into the slope to reduce their visual dominance which will improve the impact of the proposals on the landscape. This is a response to the findings of the LVIA that highlighted the need to keep the higher, eastern, part of the site free from development.
- 5.38 The proposed landscaping scheme for this site is discussed at Paras. 5.17-5.20 of this report and is considered acceptable. Again, this is, in part, influenced by the findings of the LVIA, through the retention and enhancement of existing boundary planting, particularly along the eastern boundary.
- 5.39 The LVIA concludes, *“the overall effect of the Scheme Proposal [to the local character area] will be local, direct, permanent, **moderate to minor** magnitude and **adverse** effect due to the introduction of built form in the rural landscape”* (their emphasis). The impact on neighbouring character areas around Wantage is considered negligible adverse. The council’s Landscape Architect agrees with the methodology and conclusions of the LVIA.
- 5.40 Overall, officers consider that the proposal will have an acceptable impact on the landscape character of the area and can be considered to accord with the requirements of Core Policy 44 and will not cause material harm to the Lowland Vale. This conclusion is, in part, dependent, on the amendments to the proposed landscaping scheme discussed in Paras 5.15-5.17.
- 5.41 **Flood Risk and drainage**
Core Policy 42 of the Local Plan states the risk and impact of flooding will be minimised through:
- Directing new development to areas with the lowest probability of flooding
 - Effectively managing all sources of flood risk
 - Ensuring development does not increase flood risk elsewhere
 - Ensuring wider environmental benefits
- 5.42 A number of local objectors have raised concerns that this proposal will increase the risk of flooding in the area and provided anecdotal evidence of recent flood events along this part of Grove Road. Officers note that part of

the indicative drainage strategy for Crab Hill includes a large SuDS attenuation area to the eastern rear of this site, as that represents a low point of that site. This site sits below that area and so the need for a comprehensive drainage strategy has been discussed at pre-application and application stage.

- 5.43 Accordingly, the application is supported by a full Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) and Drainage Strategy that has been updated to reflect the amendments to the proposal. The FRA confirms that the site falls within Flood Zone One, the area at least risk of fluvial flooding so residential use of the site is appropriate, as per the requirements of Core Policy 42. The FRA also confirms that the site has recorded a “low” risk of flooding from surface water, groundwater or public sewers. This is contrary to the objections from residents. Nonetheless, the FRA recognises the need to adequately manage surface water run-off from the proposed development.
- 5.44 Under SuDS guidance, infiltration is considered the most sustainable manner of draining the site and the FRA identifies that the upper part of the site has soil suitable for this method. However, the slope of the site leads to shallow groundwater close to the A338 and so infiltration techniques will need to be coupled with attenuation features in the western parts of the site to ensure an adequate drainage scheme is proposed. The FRA identifies the need for the drainage scheme to provide sufficient capacity to manage a 1 in 100 year storm event, with a 40% allowance for climate change. This is line with national guidance and best practice.
- 5.45 The proposed drainage scheme involves infiltration at the eastern part of the site, with run-off water being collected from the buildings and terraced areas and piped to a soakaway under the garden at the rear of the site. This will infiltrate into the ground.
- 5.46 In the western part of the site, a large attenuation tank is proposed beneath the car park, with a volume of 475 cubic metres. This is large enough to accommodate a 1 in 100 year storm event (plus climate change allowance) for a period of 24 hours. This time period is necessary as a pump will be needed to push the water into an existing surface water sewer via a rising main and an allowance for storage during a pump failure is necessary. The pump will control the rate at which water is fed into the public sewer to existing greenfield run off rates so there will be no increase in run off rates over the existing situation. In consultation, Thames Water have offered no objections to the proposal to pump water into the off-site public sewer, which they are responsible, so a good deal of confidence can be placed in the principles of the proposed drainage scheme.
- 5.47 The drainage engineer considers that the design of the drainage scheme requires further refinement so the council can be clear how the infiltration and attenuation aspects of the scheme will work together. Further details of the design of the attenuation tank will be necessary to ensure it will work with the proposed car parking arrangements and adjacent planting proposals whilst details of its management and maintenance are also needed. Finally, details

of the pumping station and rising main, and the retaining walls in the eastern part of the site, are also all necessary. Officers are satisfied that these are technical matters that can be covered by a comprehensive pre-commencement condition, as per condition 8 of the recommendation.

- 5.48 In consultation, Thames Water have confirmed they have no objections to this proposal in respect of foul sewer capacity. Given this, and the above, officers are satisfied this proposal will not cause increased flood risk in line with the requirements of the Local Plan.
- 5.49 **Traffic, parking & highway safety, including Section 106 contributions**
The NPPF (Paragraph 32) states: *“Development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe.”* Saved Policy DC5 of the Local Plan 2011 requires safe access for developments and that the surrounding road network can accommodate the traffic arising from the development safely. Both Grove Parish Council and Wantage Town Council have objected to this proposal, in part, on highway safety grounds with parking levels being a particular concern. Some neighbours have also raised this objection and others in relation to highway safety.
- 5.50 In relation to traffic generation, Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) as Highways Authority have confirmed their view is that the proposals would have a “negligible” impact on congestion on local roads and have raised no objections on this point. Officers agree with this conclusion given that car ownership amongst residents will be much lower than with “general” housing. OCC also confirm that the proposed access is safe and note that it will form a junction with the A338 on a noticeably straight stretch of road so that visibility in both directions is well above standard. For this reason, OCC have also not raised any objection to potential conflicts with the cycle path passing the site, which is a concern of Grove Parish Council.
- 5.51 The Local Plan 2031 Part 1 confirms that parking standards provided by OCC should be applied across the district. Currently, the County Council has adopted “Parking Standards for New Residential Developments” which dates from December 2011. However, this document does not provide guidance for parking standards for elderly peoples or sheltered accommodation and officers agree it would be inappropriate to apply the standards for “general” housing to this proposal as car ownership rates amongst these residents will be much lower.
- 5.52 The amended scheme confirms 50 car parking spaces will be provided on site. Of these, 25 are provided for the extra care home at a ratio of 1 space per 2 apartments. The remaining 25 spaces are provided for the care home at a ratio of 1 space per 3.8 apartments. The applicant anticipates these care home spaces will be used primarily by staff and visitors, not residents.
- 5.53 In consultation, OCC consider that the Transport Statement over-estimates the number of non-car trips to the site but conclude, *“...the proportion of non-car travel may be optimistic and therefore demand for parking would be higher but [OCC are] satisfied there would be sufficient capacity to prevent*

any over-spill to the surrounding highway network.” In light of the lack of objection from the Highways Authority, a statutory consultee, officers are satisfied that a refusal of planning permission on parking provision grounds would not be justified.

- 5.54 To encourage staff and visitors to travel to the site sustainably, and reduce the pressure on parking, the applicant proposes the provision of cycle storage within the site that can be secured through condition. Furthermore, OCC have requested a financial contribution of £48,731.25 from this development towards the improvements of bus services in the area. The applicant has agreed to this contribution.
- 5.55 Furthermore, OCC have requested a full Travel Plan be provided in respect of this application that will require the applicant to work pro-actively to encourage residents, staff and visitors to travel sustainably and monitor travel patterns. The Travel Plan will be required by condition 14 of the recommendation, whilst a £2,040 monitoring fee will also be secured as part of the Section 106 agreement.
- 5.56 Given the above, and subject to the financial contributions being secured, officers are satisfied that the impact of this proposal on highway safety will fall some way short of the “severe cumulative” harm that would have to be demonstrated for a recommendation of refusal on highway safety grounds to be justified.
- 5.57 **Biodiversity**
Core Policy 45 of the Local Plan confirms that a new gain in Green Infrastructure will be sought from all new development. Core Policy 46 requires development to conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity
- 5.58 The application has been supported by a number of ecological surveys that confirm that the habitats within the site are common and widespread and that there is no evidence of any populations of protected species being impacted by the proposed scheme.
- 5.59 As part of the amendment to the application, a Biodiversity Impact Calculator was submitted to show the existing and proposed ecological value of the site, in response to the requirements of Core Policy 45. This Calculator showed that the development of the site would lead to a small net loss that would be partially offset by the gains that the proposed new planting of hedges and trees would offer.
- 5.60 In consultation, the council’s countryside officer has considered the Calculator results and proposes further mitigation that would allow further gains and ensure the no net loss required by Core Policy 45 is achieved. Specifically, officers have proposed a Biodiversity Enhancement Plan that will capture all of the proposed biodiversity enhancements and also will secure 10 bat roosting opportunities and 15 bird boxes. The Countryside Officer is satisfied, *“This would then allow all possible enhancement opportunities to be integrated into the proposed scheme and allow the proposals to comply with*

the policy.”

- 5.61 Condition 12 of the recommendation secures the Biodiversity Enhancement Plan and officers are satisfied that the proposal now accords with Core Policy 45.

5.62 **Bin Storage**

Saved Policy DC7 of the Local Plan 2011 requires new development to make adequate provision for the sorting, storage and collection of waste arising from the site. In consultation, the council's waste management officer notes that the external bin store shown on the plans is not of sufficient size for the development. Furthermore, it is also unclear if the internal bin stores are large enough to accommodate sufficient storage for use by all residents.

- 5.63 Officers note these concerns, but are satisfied this is a matter of detail that can be covered by condition. Accordingly, condition 7 of the recommendation requires bin storage to be agreed prior to work commencing on site.

6.0 **CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 This application has been assessed on its merits, against the Development Plan and the NPPF in relation to sustainable development. It is considered that the principle of redeveloping this site for extra care and care home accommodation can be supported. The application will play a social role through delivering 115 specialist units for the elderly sustainable location within the built limits of Wantage. This is in line with the permissive stance of the Local Plan 2031 Part One.

- 6.2 The scheme will provide an economic role through employment through construction and increased investment in the local economy.

- 6.3 In terms of the environmental role, amended plans have been secured that improve the relationship of the building with its local context, ensuring a high quality design that is in keeping with the character of the area and has an acceptable impact the local landscape. The amended plans also improve the relationship with neighbouring properties to the south.

- 6.4 As required by the NPPF, officers have undertaken a planning balancing exercise to determine whether any harm identified outweighs the benefits of the scheme. Officers conclude that it does not, for the reasons outlined in this report.

- 6.5 There are no technical objections to the proposal following the submission of amended and additional information. Overall, officers consider that the proposal accords sufficiently with the Development Plan to be sustainable development and is recommended for approval.

The following planning policies have been taken into account:

Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part One policies

CP01 - Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

CP02 - Cooperation on Unmet Housing Need for Oxfordshire
CP03 - Settlement Hierarchy
CP04 - Meeting Our Housing Needs
CP07 - Providing Supporting Infrastructure and Services
CP15 - Spatial Strategy for Abingdon-on-Thames and Oxford Fringe
CP22 - Housing Mix
CP23 - Housing Density
CP24 - Affordable Housing
CP26 - Accommodating Current and Future Needs of the Ageing Population
CP33 - Promoting Sustainable Transport and Accessibility
CP35 - Promoting Public Transport, Cycling and Walking
CP36 - Electronic communications
CP37 - Design and Local Distinctiveness
CP38 - Design Strategies for Strategic and Major Development Sites
CP39 - The Historic Environment
CP42 - Flood Risk
CP43 - Natural Resources
CP44 - Landscape
CP45 - Green Infrastructure
CP46 - Conservation and Improvement of Biodiversity
CP47 - Delivery and Contingency

Saved Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011 policies;

DC3 - Design against crime
DC5 - Access
DC6 - Landscaping
DC7 - Waste Collection and Recycling
DC9 - The Impact of Development on Neighbouring Uses
DC10 - Effect of Neighbouring or Previous Uses on New Development
DC12 - Water Quality and Resources
H23 - Open Space in New Housing Development
NE9 - The Lowland Vale

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- Design Guide – March 2015
- Flood Maps and Flood Risk – July 2006

Neighbourhood Plans

As discussed in the report, the Wantage Neighbourhood Plan remains in draft form. In line with national guidance, only limited weight has been applied to the policies of the Neighbourhood Plan in the assessment of this application.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – March 2012

Planning Practice Guidance 2014 (PPG)

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.

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

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