

**WAN/2186/14 - Demolition of existing buildings, conversion of existing buildings (including Listed Buildings). Erection of 230 dwellings with associated parking, landscaping and highway improvements. Change of use of deconsecrated school chapel to B1, A2, A3 and A4 use.**

**WAN/2186/15-CA - Demolition of existing buildings for redevelopment of site.**

**WAN/2186/16-LB - Conversion of existing Listed Buildings, including demolition of extensions and internal alterations. Erection of residential units and redevelopment of site within curtilage of Listed Buildings.**

**Applicant - Berkeley Homes (Oxford And Chiltern) Ltd  
St Marys School, Newbury Street, Wantage, Oxon, OX12 8BZ**

## 1.0 The Proposal

- 1.1 This report relates to three applications submitted at the former St Mary's School site in Wantage:
- (i) A planning application for the residential conversion of the historic listed school buildings and the erection of new flats and dwellings on the site to provide a total of 230 units of accommodation, with associated car parking and the change of use of the Chapel to a Class B1, A2, A3 or A4 use;
  - (ii) Listed Building Consent application for the conversion and alterations of the historic listed school buildings into 20 new residential units, and the demolition of existing later extensions to the school; and
  - (iii) Conservation Area Consent application for the demolition of a number of modern school buildings on the site including the swimming pool, sports hall and the music and drama block.
- 1.2 The former St Mary's School site, which closed in summer 2007, is located close to the centre of Wantage. The site is bisected by Ormond Road and falls into two distinct halves. The northern half of the site, known as Main Site, is bounded by Ormond Road, Newbury Street, Eagles Close and Post Office Lane, the latter two being narrow carriageways that allow only limited vehicular access. All the principal listed school buildings, including the Chapel, are situated on this part of the site, as are the bulk of the former school buildings, in addition to some hard surfaced tennis courts and a car park. The existing boundary walls on both sides of Ormond Road will be retained and rebuilt in part and the high wall forming the boundary of Main Site and Eagles Close will also be retained and improved.
- 1.3 The southern part of the site accommodates St Gabriel's House, a fine but unlisted building, the sports hall and swimming pool buildings, and a number of grass tennis courts surrounded by a small area of informal playing field. This part of the site is known as St Gabriel's Site. Ormond Road, Newbury Street and Chain Hill bound the northern, western and eastern boundaries respectively. The southern boundary is defined by part of Wantage Cemetery and Wantage CE Primary School playing fields.

- 1.4 Together, both parts of the site provide a site area of approximately 3.36 hectares. In addition to the application site, the applicant also controls the former School's Willow Lane Playing Fields, which have an area of 2.26 hectares.
- 1.5 The Main Site lies wholly within the conservation area but only St Gabriel's House and the adjoining cottages fall within this designated area on St Gabriel's Site. There are a number of good trees on the site both within and outside the conservation area. The best of these will be retained as part of the development, with some poorer specimens replaced as part of the proposal.
- 1.6 A site location plan which also shows the boundary of the conservation area is attached at **Appendix 1**.
- 1.7 The proposal involves the demolition of a number of extensions to the listed School buildings and all existing free standing school buildings on the site and its redevelopment to provide 230 new units of accommodation. 30 of these units will be provided through the conversion of the listed school buildings and St Gabriel's House. The remaining new units are to be provided in terraces of houses and blocks of flats with the exception of 4 detached dwellings and 2 semi-detached dwellings located adjacent to the Primary School boundary. Sixty percent of all the units to be provided are 1 and 2 bed units. The density of development on the site equates to approximately 68 dwellings per hectare.
- 1.8 The break down of the units on the site is as follows:
- 20 one bed units (15 new and 5 conversions)
  - 119 two bed units (97 new and 22 conversions)
  - 28 three bed units
  - 16 three/four bed units
  - 43 four bed units
  - 4 four/five bed units
- 1.9 The new build elements are 2, 3 and 4 storeys in height depending on their context. Extracts from the submitted elevation drawings are attached at **Appendix 2**.
- 1.10 It is proposed that the materials for the development will be as follows:
- Walls: red/orange multi-stock brick, grey brick and render
  - Details: contrasting brick details & reconstituted stone heads, cills & features
  - Roofs: Plain tiles, slates, and leaded roofs where appropriate
  - Windows: timber windows within the conservation area, pvcu elsewhere
- 338 on site car parking spaces are proposed in open car parking spaces, carports and garages. One parking space has been provided for each 1 and 2 bed flat, 1.5 spaces for each 3 bed unit and 2 spaces for 4 and 5 bed units, in addition to visitor parking. This breaks down into 139 spaces for the 1 and 2 bed flats; 42 spaces for the three bed units; 126 spaces for the 4/5 bed units and 31 visitor spaces. This level of car parking could allow for 2 spaces per 3 bed unit which is considered to be a more pragmatic approach to car parking provision on the site. This would reduce visitor car parking by 14 spaces to 17 spaces, however, the site is in close proximity to town centre car parks which could provide additional visitor capacity. A condition is therefore recommended to clarify car parking ratios on the site.

Main Site and St Gabriel's site will continue to be accessed from Ormond Road, but from two new road junctions. A new footpath is to be provided from Chain Hill to the CE Primary School. This will cross Town Council land between Winslow Terrace and the cemetery leading to the application site where it will continue along the inner edge of the application site to the Primary School.

- 1.11 The following documents have been submitted with the applications and are available to view with the planning files: Design and Access Statement; Conservation Area Appraisal; Historic Buildings Assessment; Planning Statement; Transport Assessment; Travel Management Plan; Flood Risk Assessment; Drainage Strategy; Tree Report; Ecology Appraisal; Archaeological Evaluations; Site Desk Top Study; Sustainability; Photographic Survey of Existing Buildings, and a Residential Travel Plan.
- 1.12 The scale of the development requires it to be screened by the Council to determine whether an Environmental Impact Assessment is required. This request was made by the applicant prior to the submission of the application and, having regard to the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999 and Circular 2/99 Environmental Impact Assessment, it was determined that the development would not result in significant environmental impacts and, as such, no formal Environmental Impact Assessment was required.
- 1.13 Since submission, the applications have been amended to address issues raised by Officers and consultees.
- 1.14 The applications come to Committee due to the number of objections received and as the Town Council objects.

## 2.0 **Planning History**

- 2.1 The site has a detailed planning history in relation to its former use as a school, but none of this is specifically relevant to the current applications. The School, which had a long association with Wantage, closed in summer last year and has relocated to a new site in Ascot.

## 3.0 **Planning Policies**

- 3.1 The following policies are considered relevant to this proposal:

### Adopted Vale of White Horse Local Plan

Policy H10 – Development on the Five Main Settlements  
Policy H15 – Housing Densities  
Policy H16 – Sizes of Dwellings  
Policy H17 – Affordable Housing  
Policy H23 – Open Space in New Development  
Policy CF1 - Protection of Existing Services and Facilities  
Policy L7 – Small Scale Local Leisure Facilities  
Policy DC1 – High Quality Design  
Policy DC2 – Energy and Resource Conservation  
Policy DC3 – Design Against Crime  
Policy DC4 – Public Art  
Policy DC5 – Provision of Safe and Convenient Access

Policy DC6 – Protect and Enhance Landscaping  
Policy DC7 – Waste Collection and Recycling  
Policy DC8 – Provision of Infrastructure and Services  
Policy DC9 – Impact of Development on Neighbouring Properties

### Oxfordshire Structure Plan

Policy G2 – Improving the Quality and Design of Development  
Policy G3 – Infrastructure and Service Provision  
Policy G6 – Energy and Resource Conservation  
Policy H3 – Design, Quality and Density of Housing Development

3.2 Relevant national planning policies are provided in:

PPS 1 – Delivering Sustainable Development  
PPS 3 – Housing  
PPS 9 – Biodiversity and Geological Conservation  
PPS 25 - Development and Flood Risk  
PPG13 - Transport  
PPG15 – Planning and the Historic Environment  
PPG 16 – Archaeology  
PPG 17 – Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation

### 4.0 **Consultations**

- 4.1 Wantage Town Council has objected to planning application WAN/2186/14 for the following reason: “There is concern at the proposed density of the site. Recommend improved access for emergency vehicles via Eagles Close or Post Office Lane is fully supported and should be accommodated, plus confirmation is required that the pedestrian gate in the boundary wall of Chain Hill and Ormond Road will be closed.”
- 4.2 The Town Council has also objected to the conservation area consent application WAN/2186/15-CA for the following reason: “The Music/Arts block should be retained or some contribution be given towards the Arts by the developer.”
- 4.3 The Town Council raise no objection to the listed building consent application WAN/2186/16-LB.
- 4.4 County Engineer - no objection subject to contributions as part of a Section 106 Agreement, inclusion of the Travel Plan within the Section 106 to include incentives for the developer to ensure a 10% reduction in single occupancy cars within 5 years, and conditions.
- 4.5 County Archaeologist - The site has been the subject of an archaeological field evaluation that has revealed the presence of significant Anglo Saxon and Medieval deposits. There is therefore a requirement for further archaeological excavation and recording of these deposits, and a programme of archaeological investigation has been agreed with the applicant. Recommends PPG16 condition to secure this. His recommendation remains unchanged in light of the reference to the Royal Palace of King Alfred.
- 4.6 Environmental Health - no objection. Applicant has undertaken a desktop contamination report and will undertake an intrusive site investigation to establish

whether soil contamination is present. The applicant has also undertaken an air quality assessment which showed that the development would have no harmful impact on air quality.

- 4.7 Energy Officer – happy with the integrated approach used in the submitted Sustainability Statement and in many areas the proposals are proportional and appropriate. However, the proposed actions relating to energy use and CO2 emissions from the occupied development do not appear to match the importance now attached to the issue now has both locally and nationally.
- 4.8 Arboricultural Officer – No objection to the development itself but trees to be retained need to be protected during construction. However, he objects strongly to the loss of the lime trees on the south eastern boundary of the St Gabriel's site to provide the new footpath to the Primary School.
- 4.9 OCC Development Funding Officer - no objection subject to funding being secured for education, library, highways and transport, waste management, the museum resource centre and social and health care.
- 4.10 Thames Water - requires a "Grampian condition" (i.e. negatively worded condition) to be imposed to ensure that no discharge of foul or surface water drainage will be made into the public system until drainage works, which shall first have been agreed by the District Planning Authority in consultation with Thames Water, have been completed. Thames Water acknowledge that the proposed SUDS scheme will halve the existing surface water flows from the site into the foul sewers.
- 4.11 Environment Agency - no objection subject to conditions.
- 4.12 Consultant Architect - see letter attached at **Appendix 3** dated 29<sup>th</sup> November 2007.
- 4.13 English Heritage - see letters attached at **Appendix 4** dated 24<sup>th</sup> October 2007 in respect of the planning and listed building application. It needs to be noted that these comments were made in respect of the original plans. Comments on the amended plans are awaited and, if received in time, will be reported at the Meeting.
- 4.14 Architects Panel - Comments as follows: Presentation good; layout ok; treatment of listed buildings generally well handled; classic 'stage set' approach - differing opinion as to whether this was appropriate or not; many different styles could benefit from being simplified; model will help to appreciate the 3D relationship.
- 4.15 Thames Valley Police – no objections to the scheme.
- 4.16 The Victorian Society - No objections in principle to the conversion of the school buildings or the demolitions proposed. The hallway chimney in Unit 4 should be retained and the long corridor on the first floor Butterfield dormitory wing, which is a dominant existing feature of this example of his work and every attempt should be made to leave this undivided in its entire length. The change of use of the Chapel should not be granted until thorough plans have been made and the panelling, stained glass and painting in the vault of the apse should be retained.
- 4.17 The Georgian Group - some changes within the 18<sup>th</sup> Century house may be potentially damaging if the exact nature of these works is not controlled.

- 4.18 The Victorian Group of the Oxfordshire Architectural and Historical Society - strongly object to the planning application for change of use to various categories of the listed building. The Chapel should be left in tact and unaltered and used as a communal facility for new residents of the development. Object to the proposed change of use of the Chapel. There are precedents for Chapels being left in tact elsewhere in the country. With regard to the listed building consent application, it is regrettable that the Historic Buildings Assessment is so inadequate in dealing with the 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> Century buildings. Specifically, the hallway wooden chimney piece in Unit 4 should be retained; as many of the iron chimneypieces should be retained as possible; within St Gabriel's, chimneypieces should be retained as should the door to the front elevation of the Caroe wing; regret loss of the ha ha (a landscape feature). Believe that the school hall is by the distinguished firm Seely and Paget and consideration should be given to its retention.
- 4.19 Sport England - no objection subject to the transfer of the Willow Lane playing field to the District Council, the agreed financial contributions towards improvements to the Wantage Leisure Centre and the enhanced provision of tennis at the Memorial Park being secured as part of a S106.
- 4.20 The Letcombe Brook Charitable Trust – requests a developer contribution of £4,025 for the Betjeman Millennium Park.
- 4.21 79 letters of objection and comment have been received (28 specifically related to the loss of the Music and Drama block building). The general comments made regarding the applications can be summarised as follows:
- Travel Plan - does not go far enough to address negative changes introduced by the proposed development; amount of new traffic will negatively affect flow of traffic on Ormond Road and at traffic lights. New cars will add to pollution and congestion. The extra traffic generated from the proposal will lead to highway danger and gridlock. The Plan makes no mention of the school footpath. The roads in the vicinity should be widened to accommodate cycle lanes and the implications of more traffic on the Newbury Street Ormond road junction should be fully explored.
  - Archaeology - the development is at odds with the recommendations of the archaeological evaluation; how will new building foundations be dealt with? Concern that there may be a Royal Palace of King Alfred on the site. Planning permission should not be granted until a detailed archaeological evaluation of the site has been carried out.
  - Open character of the site will be adversely affected by the scale of the development and the height of some of the new buildings will block views of the listed buildings from outside the site.
  - The design of the new buildings is not in keeping with old Wantage and is not reflective of the character of this historic town. It lacks local distinctiveness. Some designs more akin to a “dockside wharf”. Four storey buildings on the site will be too high. Site should be developed for houses not flats.
  - The development fails to preserve the character of the conservation area or the setting of the listed buildings and the Chapel should be protected from commercial

use.

- Impact of loss of trees to rear of Winslow Terrace - concern about removal of the pollarded Limes trees to rear of Winslow Terrace which make a positive contribution to the area and to the local wildlife habitat. Their loss would be contrary to local plan. Loss of privacy with new car park to the rear. Increase light pollution. However, the felling of a beech tree on this boundary is supported. How will the beech hedge be protected?
- Concern about the loss of trees elsewhere on the site. However, the ash trees on the site opposite Post Office Lane should be removed.
- Support for a new footpath to be provided to the Primary School and pedestrian improvements to the Ormond Road, Newbury Street junction. The pedestrian bridge should be kept for public use. The footpath link should be through the St Gabriel's site.
- New School footpath will adversely affect Winslow Terrace and encourage parents to drop their children off at Chain Hill to the detriment of highway safety. It is an inappropriate use next to a cemetery. The security of the footpath is a concern out of school hours. How will this new path be secured? New footpath should be provided prior to work commencing on the development.
- Construction will result in dust and noise.
- The density of the development is too high and will have a negative impact on the AONB. Application results in overdevelopment of the site.
- The Gable end of terrace T2 will be very close to no. 3 Post Office Lane.
- The heights of terraces T8, T9 and T10 will swamp the existing cottages in Chain Hill
- Boundary fencing should be avoided on the boundaries of the development.
- There is a lack of mixed uses within the development and a lack of on-site amenities for the new residents.
- Wantage does not have the infrastructure to absorb a 6% increase in population and all the impacts associated with this.
- Car parking provision is inadequate forcing car onto nearby roads.
- Fear that the development will overload the existing sewers and may cause flooding.
- The loss of the community facilities currently provided by the Music and Drama Block would be contrary to Policy L7 of the Local Plan. The Local Plan states that this type of facility should not be lost unless alternative provision exists. The amount of community use of the school by local groups over the years has been considerable. The school has hosted the Wantage Music Festival for almost 30 years as well as performances by the Wantage Operatic Society, the Wantage Coral Society and The Silver band amongst many others. This type of

infrastructure is required for the future growth of Wantage and Grove and its loss is contrary to South East Plan 2026 para. 2.17, PPS1, PPG3, PPS6 and Policy G1 of the Oxfordshire Structure Plan. The Music and Drama Block should be retained for the community. Demolishing this building would be a wasted opportunity and a waste of resources.

- The Drama Block should be offered for sale to the Wantage community. The Civic Hall does not meet the same needs. Does the District Council not have the power to save this small area of the site? The building would be an cultural asset to a town that has already lost its cinema. South Oxfordshire has allocated money for an arts centre in Didcot, so why not at Wantage. This facility would benefit Wantage's youth. The Wantage Health Check refers to high levels of activity in the Arts in a town not being matched by the facilities on offer.

4.22 One letter of support: the scheme has a pleasant layout with good house styles.

4.23 In addition to the letters of objection regarding the loss of the Music and Drama block, a petition has been received by the Council with 2,460 signatures seeking retention of the building so that it can be operated as a charity for the benefit of local arts groups.

## 5.0 **Officer Comments**

### Principle of Development

5.1 Although the St Mary's School site is not allocated for housing development in the Local Plan, the application site lies within the defined development boundary for Wantage and therefore the principle of residential development on the site is considered acceptable.

5.2 The site's position so close to the centre of Wantage also makes it a very sustainable location for development.

### Design and Layout

5.3 Whilst the application site occupies a central location within Wantage, it is a surprisingly private site with few public views in. Substantial walls, retaining walls and buildings enclose both parts of the site and are important features within the conservation area. This sense of enclosure will be retained as part of the proposed development. However, access to into the site, particularly pedestrian access into and through the Main Site, will be greatly increased.

5.4 The overall scheme has been designed around terraces of houses and blocks of flats surrounding interlinking courtyards, greens and parking areas. However, the character and design of the dwellings on Main Site and St Gabriel's Site differ to take account of the different characteristics and settings of both sites. Each site is to be provided with a single new vehicular access from Ormond Road, beyond which the roads within the site will be unadopted and will comprise predominantly shared surfaces for vehicles and pedestrians.

5.5 Main Site is the closest in proximity to the town centre and is arguably the most sensitive because of the presence of the listed school buildings. The new build elements on this part of the site, whilst not competing with the listed buildings in terms of scale, are generally higher than those on the St Gabriel's Site. However, there is



still a good range of building sizes, heights and designs provided on the site (from 2 to 4 storeys) as well as a good mix of houses and flats. The proposed development will introduce a number of new focal buildings at the approach and new entrance to the site from Ormond Road. The feature walls fronting onto Eagles Close and Post Office Lane will be retained and rebuilt where necessary. This wall also acts as a retaining wall adjacent to the corner with Post Office Lane and ground levels in this area will stay largely unaltered. New quadrangles and open spaces provide a new setting for the rear of the listed buildings, and will allow these elevations to be seen from within the development and by the public using the new pedestrian accesses through Main Site from Newbury Street and Post Office Lane.

- 5.6 St Gabriel's Site continues the general layout theme of Main Site but it accommodates more houses at a slightly lower density. This part of the site will provide the equipped toddlers play area, which is located in the north eastern corner of the site. At present there is an existing pedestrian gate in the boundary wall next to the proposed play area. It has been agreed with the applicant that this access will be closed up. Much of the existing formal garden area to the rear St Gabriel's House will be retained (although the ha ha will be lost) and within the House itself, the conversion scheme retains all of the building's important features, such as the main staircase and fireplaces, and retains or reinstates many of the buildings principal rooms to their original size.
- 5.7 Throughout the site, the scheme has been designed around the more important existing trees and these will be complemented by new tree planting in appropriate areas.
- 5.8 Outside of the site, improvements are proposed to Ormond Road which will include it being widened to allow ghost lanes for access into both parts of the site. It is also proposed to widen the pavement on both sides of the junction of Ormond Road with Newbury Street to improve pedestrian safety at the traffic lights.
- 5.9 The Thames Valley Police Crime Prevention Design Adviser has no objections to the design of the development subject to closing off the pedestrian gate near the play area, which is now proposed.
- 5.10 The Consultant Architect's views are attached at Appendix 3 and are generally supportive. The applicant has sought to address the four specific points raised in respect of some of the specific blocks and terraces and the absence of chimneys in the submission of the amended plans.

#### Housing Density and Mix

- 5.11 The proposed development equates to approximately 68 dwellings per hectare. This is in accordance with Policy H15 of the adopted Local Plan which requires development in the centre of Wantage to be at least 50 dwellings to the hectare. The Town Council has expressed concern over the proposed density of the site, however, Officers are satisfied that the development is well designed and laid out in terms of the balance between built development and open space. Officers do not consider that the proposal represents over-development of the site.
- 5.12 Policy H16 requires the development to provide about 50% of dwellings with two or less bedrooms. The proposal provides 60% one and two bed units.

## Listed Buildings

- 5.13 The scheme includes proposals for the adaptation and refurbishment of the listed buildings on the site including an 18th Century Town House, the Sister Superior's House which dates back to the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Chapel by CE Ponting and the school's Butterfield Wing. All these buildings have been the subject of a comprehensive Historic Buildings Assessment which identifies features of historic or architectural interest. The proposed scheme of conversion has been developed on the basis of this assessment. By far the most challenging part of the listed school to be converted is the Butterfield Wing which has large high ceilinged rooms on the ground floor and small sleeping cells above. Unfortunately, much of the sleeping accommodation has been altered over the years resulting in only one landing of cells retaining most of its original form and historic fabric. This part of the wing is proposed to be sensitively converted into two small flats. However, your Officers consider that some minor amendments to this part of the scheme could still be made to the benefit of the listed building and with this and the imposition of other appropriate conditions to cover the details of the proposed works, the scheme is not considered to detract from the special architectural or historic interest of the listed buildings.
- 5.14 Some concern has been expressed that the applications do not contain formal plans to convert the Chapel building. Your Officers have resisted the submission of detailed plans of the Chapel at this time because no end user has yet been identified for the building. As such, any conversion scheme submitted at this stage would be purely speculative. The granting of planning permission for a range of potential uses for the Chapel will not undermine the Council's ability to control any internal or external alterations to the building which may come forward in the future. The principle of an office, professional services, restaurant or bar use is considered acceptable within the building without causing harm to its historic or architectural fabric.
- 5.15 The comments of the Victorian Society and Victorian Group are noted in respect of the retention of the chimney pieces in the new Unit 4 and it is recommended that a condition be added requiring the retention of these features.
- 5.16 With regard to the school extensions which are proposed to be demolished, these are not considered to be of any special architectural or historic importance and no Officer objections are raised to their removal.

## Impact on Conservation Area and Setting of the Listed Buildings

- 5.17 As described above, much of the school site is generally well hidden from public view. The development of the site will change this because more development on the periphery and within the site will be visible. However, by retaining the boundary walls and maintaining the enclosed character of the site, the proposal is considered to preserve the general character of the conservation area. In addition, there are certain areas in which the development is considered by Officers to enhance the appearance of the conservation area and preserve the setting of the listed buildings. These are (i) the new building (replacing a very unsympathetic school building) next to the Butterfield Wing on Newbury Street which has been carefully designed to complement the listed building and its setting. The design of this building has been amended since the comments of English Heritage (attached at Appendix 4 ) were received and their comments on the revised design are awaited; (ii) the sensitive scale and form of the development at the junction of Eagles Close and Post Office Lane, opposite Eagles Close Almshouses; (iii) the new focal building on the corner of Eagles Close and

Ormond Road; and (iv) the new buildings facing onto Ormond Road on the St Gabriel's Site which replace what is currently a blank frontage.

- 5.18 The school buildings to be demolished under the conservation area consent application are not considered to be of any particular merit and officers have no objection to their demolition.

#### Impact on Neighbours

- 5.19 Unusually for a town centre site, there are only a limited number of residential properties directly adjoining the application site. This includes Torestyn, a bungalow on Post Office Lane. Unlike all the other properties adjacent to Main Site, which are situated on the other side of Post Office Lane and Eagles Close, Torestyn's rear boundary adjoins the school. At present, there is a large flat roof modern school building located 4 metres from the rear boundary of the bungalow. This will be demolished as part of the development and replaced with a terrace of houses. These will be set back further into the site, 8 metres from Torestyn's boundary and will have a lower eaves line than the existing school building. Overall, this relationship is considered to be more sympathetic than the current situation and is further improved by the fact that there are few windows on the rear elevation of Torestyn and that its garden is mainly located to the front of the property.
- 5.20 With regard to the St Gabriel's Site, the closest neighbours are Nos. 43 - 45 Newbury Street whose rear gardens will back on to the blank gable end of proposed terrace T13. Having regard to the existing garden lengths and the orientation of the existing dwellings, the new development should not have a harmful impact on these properties. Winslow Terrace on Chain Hill also adjoins the application site. These properties have 10 metre long rear gardens and will back on to the proposed rear gardens of terrace T9, the closest part of which will be 22.5 metres from the existing terrace, and a small rear car parking court. The application does propose the felling of a row of pollarded Lime trees on the application site boundary with Winslow Terrace. The loss of these trees is of concern to local residents but they are outside the conservation area and the Arboricultural Officer does not consider them to be worthy of a TPO.
- 5.21 It is your Officer's opinion, therefore, that the proposed development will not have an adverse impact on the residential amenities of adjoining residential properties.

#### New Footpath Link to the Primary School

- 5.22 As a result of local concern regarding the current safety of children walking to the Wantage Primary CE School along Newbury Street, the applicant, in association with the Town Council, is proposing to create a new pedestrian footpath link to the school from Chain Hill. The provision of this footpath has been negotiated between the applicant, local Ward Members and the Primary School Head Teacher to address an existing perceived problem of poor pedestrian access to the school for children walking from the north west of the town. The proposed development itself, however, does not justify the provision of such a footpath. For this reason, it is not considered feasible to require the applicant to provide the footpath elsewhere on the site if this route is not considered acceptable by Committee.
- 5.23 The line of the proposed new footpath will run between Winslow Terrace and the local cemetery on Town Council land until it meets the application site where it will continue along the inside boundary of the application site until it meets the school playing fields.

The footpath will be constructed to an adoptable standard (including lighting) and will be adopted by the County Council. The cost of providing the footpath will be borne by the applicant. This will be secured by a Section 278 agreement with the County Council.

- 5.24 However, the provision of the footpath will result in the loss of 6 Lime trees on the application site boundary, which the Arboricultural Officer is opposed to. Unfortunately, there is little flexibility regarding the proposed line of the footpath, as in order to avoid the Limes (particularly those adjacent to Town Council owned land) the realignment of the footpath would unacceptably reduce the length of the rear gardens of some of the units in terrace T11. It is therefore a decision for Committee as to whether it wishes to see the footpath provided or the trees retained.
- 5.25 Some residents in Winslow Terrace have expressed concern about the possible detrimental impact of the footpath on their residential amenities, but the wall of the end terrace which will adjoin the footpath is blank and there is a substantial boundary wall along this dwelling's garden boundary. It is not considered, therefore, that the amenities of this property will be unduly affected. It is also considered that any potential light pollution from the new footpath will not have an unduly harmful impact.

#### Affordable Housing

- 5.26 The proposed development will provide 40% affordable housing on the site in accordance with Local Plan Policy H17. This equates to 92 dwellings, 71% of which will be social rented and 29% shared ownership. These percentages differ slightly from those recommended in the Affordable Housing SPG (i.e. 75% social rented and 25% shared ownership) but have improved through negotiation with the applicant. Officers now consider the proposed package is acceptable particularly as it includes 20 three and four bed houses for rent. This provides a good balance of social rented unit sizes in a development with a high proportion of one and two bed flats.
- 5.27 The breakdown of the proposed affordable housing in unit numbers, sizes and tenures is as follows:
- |             |           |                     |
|-------------|-----------|---------------------|
| 1 bed flat  | 7 rented  | 9 shared ownership  |
| 2 bed flat  | 24 rented | 18 shared ownership |
| 3 bed house | 14 rented | 0 shared ownership  |
| 4 bed house | 6 rented  | 0 shared ownership  |
- 5.28 Policy H17 states that affordable housing should be distributed evenly across sites and should be indistinguishable from the open market housing. The latter requirement is certainly met by this development with the affordable units being truly indistinguishable from the open market housing.
- 5.29 With regard to the distribution of the affordable units across the site, there is considered to be an even distribution on Main Site, but less so on the St Gabriel's site. What is evident from the scheme, however, is that the affordable units are proposed in key locations on the site and not in potentially less desirable areas on the site. It is also important to remember that the site has the added constraint of the converted buildings which contain no affordable units. A plan of the proposed distribution is attached at **Appendix 5**. The applicant has made improvements to the distribution of the affordable housing units since the application was submitted and their reasoning

behind the chosen location of the affordable units is attached at **Appendix 6**. On balance, Officers consider the proposed distribution across the site is acceptable.

### Sustainability

- 5.30 The applicant has submitted a Sustainability Statement to accompany the planning application, which states that the development will be designed to exceed the 2006 Building Regulations standards, in addition to the use of other energy efficient design elements and appliances. The package of measures proposed is attached at **Appendix 7**. However, these initiatives will not bring the private housing up to the Code for Sustainable Homes Code Level 3, a standard required for the affordable housing units on the site. However, in the context of the current Local Plan policies, Officers do not consider that the development can be required to meet Code Level 3 throughout.

### Ecology

- 5.31 The applicant has undertaken a Phase 1 habitat assessment of the site and searched accessible roof voids and basements for evidence of bats. In addition, emergence and dawn surveys have been undertaken to assess bat activity. The habitat survey found the site to be species poor and no part of the site was assessed as having more than low intrinsic ecological value. The bat survey found evidence within seven of the roof voids of pipistrelle bats and a long eared species. These included some roof voids in the existing listed school buildings, St Gabriel's House, and two buildings to be demolished. Works to any building confirmed as being used by bats should only be carried out once a licence has been obtained from Natural England. In addition, the ecological report recommends possible mitigation measures for those bats which may be affected by the proposal and it is recommended that a condition be added to require a full scheme of mitigation to be submitted.

### Air Quality

- 5.32 The applicant has submitted an Air quality Impact Assessment for the proposed development. The report has been considered by Environmental Health and is considered to be comprehensive and well considered. The conclusions are that local air quality will not be significantly affected by this development.

### Music and Drama Block

- 5.33 Over the last 30/40 years, St Mary's School has provided accommodation for local musical and performing groups within the school premises. This has concentrated on the use of the main hall, the Chapel and more recently within the Music and Drama block (which opened in 1999). The nature and extent of this use has varied over the years. A report on the use of the school over this period has been submitted by the Wantage Arts Campaign and it is the Campaign's wish to see the existing Music and Drama block retained on site to provide a new arts centre for the town. Information has also been submitted from the School's Bursar regarding the use of the Music and Drama block by outside organisations. Together, the information suggests an ad hoc use of the school over this period, but with some groups, such as the Wantage Choral Society using the school on a more regular basis. The School was also home to the annual Wantage Music Festival. These uses ceased when the school was closed.

5.34 On the basis of the information available regarding the nature and amount of public use of the school and in particular the Music and Drama block, your Officers do not consider that there is sufficient justification to require the retention of this building for public use or for a contribution to be sought from the developer to mitigate its loss. In taking this view, Officers are mindful of the existing significant capacity available at Wantage Civic Centre for such users and the new facility to be erected at Tugwell Field, particularly with regard to Policies L7 and CF1 of the Local Plan which require consideration to be given to existing sufficient, convenient provision already available elsewhere.

#### Section 106 Agreements

5.35 A draft Section 106 agreement is being drawn up with the District Council which secures the following:

£28,000 towards improvements to Wantage Leisure Centre;

In the region of £71,000 for the refurbishment of the tennis courts at the Memorial Park;

The transfer of the Willow Lane playing fields to the Council with a commuted sum unless the land is managed by another user such as the Wantage Football Club;

40 % affordable Housing;

In the region of £13,000 for Waste Services; and

£57,500 for the % for art contribution.

5.36 The applicant is also offering £10,000 to the Town Council in order to meet some of their costs in respect of future cemetery provision for the town and Market Place improvements. The Town Council originally requested contributions of £8,575 for cemetery provision and £18,450 for Market Place improvements, however, it was considered that these sums failed to meet the S106 tests of necessity or reasonableness.

5.37 The Letcombe Brook Charitable Trust also requested a contribution of £4,025 towards the maintenance costs for the Betjeman Millennium Park. However, this request was not considered to be directly related to the development and therefore failed to meet the necessary S106 tests unlike the other more relevant leisure related contributions outlined above.

5.38 The County Council is seeking a total contribution of £916,346 towards education, highways, libraries, waste management and social and health care. In addition, the applicant is paying for the provision of the footpath off Chain Hill to the Wantage CE Primary School which will cost approximately £30,000.

#### 6.0 **Recommendation**

##### **(i) WAN/2186/14**

6.1 *It is recommended that the decision to grant planning permission is delegated to the Deputy Director (Planning and Community Strategy) in consultation with the Committee Chair, subject to the following conditions:*

1. TL1 Time Limit – Full Application

2. RE2 Restriction on Extensions and Alterations to Dwellings

3. *RE7 Submission of Boundary Details*
4. *RE22 Floor/Slab levels (Dwellings)*
5. *RE14 Garage Accommodation*
6. *The submission of a landscaping scheme and management plan*
7. *LS11 Protection of Trees/Hedges during Building Operations*
8. *CN11 Scheme of Archaeological Investigation*
9. *MC34 Contaminated Land*
10. *MC20 Amended Plans*
11. *MC2 Submission of Materials and Sample Panels*
12. *CN8 Submission of Full Details - all external joinery details*
13. *Details of all external lighting*
14. *No discharge of foul or surface water drainage will be made into the public system until drainage works, which shall first have been agreed by the District Planning Authority in consultation with Thames Water, have been fully completed.*
15. *Submission of a bat mitigation scheme and timetable.*
16. *Agree phasing of the development*
17. *Schedule of all new windows and doors and all external joinery details in St Gabriel's house.*
18. *design of verges and eaves*
19. *recessed door and window frames*
20. *chimney details*
21. *details of the proposed new pedestrian footpath and lighting*
22. *the pedestrian gate adjoining the children's play area will be permanently closed off prior to the laying out and use of the play area*
23. *submission of play area equipment*
24. *details of revised car parking provision*
25. *provision of fire hydrants*

26. *Development shall not being until drainage details, incorporating sustainable drainage principles and an assessment of the hydrological and hydrogeological context of the development, have been submitted to, and approved by the Local Planning Authority, and the scheme shall subsequently be implemented in accordance with the approved details before the development is completed.*
27. *Prior to the commencement of development approved by this planning permission (or such other date or stage in development as may be agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority), a scheme to deal with the risks associated with contamination of the site shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority. That scheme shall include all of the following elements unless specifically excluded, in writing, by the Local Planning Authority:*
  1. *A site investigation scheme, based on the results of the desk study, to provide information for an assessment of the risk to all receptors that may be affected, including those off site.*
  2. *A method statement based on those results of the site investigation and risk assessment giving full details of the remediation measures required and how they are to be undertaken.*
  3. *A verification report on completion of the works set out in the method statement confirming the remediation measures that have been undertaken in accordance with the method statement and setting out measures for maintenance, further monitoring and reporting.*

*Any changes to these agreed elements require the express consent of the Local Planning Authority.*

28. *Upon completion of the remediation detailed in the Method Statement a report shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority that provides verification that the required works regarding contamination have been carried out in accordance with the approved Method Statement(s). Post remediation sampling and monitoring results shall be included in the report to demonstrate that the required remediation has been fully met. Future monitoring proposals and reporting shall also be detailed in the report.*
29. *The construction of the surface and foul drainage system shall be carried out in accordance with details submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority before development is commenced.*
30. *No soakaways shall be constructed such that they penetrate the water table, and they shall not in any event exceed 2 metres in depth below existing ground level.*
31. *No soakaways shall be constructed in contaminated ground.*
32. *The felling of any tree or removal of any vegetation likely to provide a habitat for nesting birds must not be carried out in the birds breeding season, between the months of March and August inclusive.*



33. *The development hereby permitted shall not be commenced until the construction of the site access junctions and ghost right turn lanes has been practically completed (including footways and verges), in accordance with the standard specification of the Highway Authority.*
34. *The development hereby permitted shall not be occupied until the construction of the estate roads serving the development, including footways and verges, has been undertaken in accordance with the standard specification of the Highway Authority.*
35. *The development hereby permitted shall not be occupied until such time as the existing site access has been closed and the footway and verge reinstated to the standard specification of the Highway Authority.*
36. *The development hereby permitted shall not be occupied until a satisfactory level of cycle parking is provided, to the written approval of the District Planning Authority in consultation with the Highway Authority.*
37. *The development hereby permitted shall not be occupied until such time as a highway drainage strategy for the site has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the District Planning Authority in consultation with the Highway Authority.*
38. *The development hereby permitted shall not be occupied until such time as a footway link between Chain Hill and Wantage Primary School has been delivered to the standard specification of the Highway Authority.*
39. *The development hereby permitted shall not be commenced until such time as a Construction Traffic Routing Agreement has been entered into with the Highway Authority.*
40. *The development hereby permitted shall be constructed in accordance with the approved Site Layout Plan.*
41. *The development hereby permitted shall not be occupied until the footway widening along Ormond Road has been completed in accordance with the standard specification of the Highway Authority.*

**(ii) WAN/2186/16-LB**

6.2 *It is recommended that the decision to grant Listed Building Consent is delegated to the Deputy Director (Planning and Community Strategy) in consultation with the Committee Chair, subject to the following conditions:*

1. *TL4 Time Limit – Listed Building/Conservation Area Consent*
2. *retention of chimney pieces in Unit 4*
3. *All new external and internal joinery details to a minimum scale of 1:20 with cross-sections*
4. *sample panels of all external materials*

5. *full schedule of brick bonds and patterning*
6. *details of all tile hanging and patterns*
7. *schedule of all works to interiors of the building including works to existing paneling and the upgrading of sound and heat and service insulation within the building.*
8. *schedule of all internal and external repairs to the listed buildings, including floors, roofs and ceilings.*
9. *minor amendments to first floor units in the Butterworth Wing*
10. *details of all exterior service pipes, boxes, vents and flues.*
11. *Agreement of phasing of works to the listed buildings*
12. *Interim Management plan for Chapel*
13. *Use of timber single glazed joinery only.*
14. *design of verges and eaves*
15. *recessed door and window frames*
16. *sample of repointing*
17. *cast iron or substitute rainwater goods*
18. *firedoors and screen details*
19. *MC20 Amended Plans*

**(iii) WAN/2186/15-CA**

6.3 *It is recommended that the decision to grant Conservation Area Consent is delegated to the Deputy Director (Planning and Community Strategy) in consultation with the Committee Chair, subject to the following conditions:*

1. *TL4 Time Limit – Listed Building/Conservation Area Consent*