

# Agenda Item 60.

Application Number	Expiry Date	Parish	Ward
211777	10/02/2022	Wokingham Town	Emmbrook;

<b>Applicant</b>	Wokingham Borough Council		
<b>Site Address</b>	Toutley East, land adjacent to Toutley Depot, West of Twyford Road Wokingham RG41 1XA		
<b>Proposal</b>	Outline application for up to 130 residential units and a 70 bed care home (all matters reserved except access to the site).		
<b>Type</b>	Outline		
<b>Officer</b>	Stefan Fludger		
<b>Reason for determination by committee</b>	Major application Applicant is Wokingham Borough Council		
<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	Planning Committee on Wednesday, 8th December 2021		
<b>REPORT PREPARED BY</b>	Assistant Director – Place		

<b>SUMMARY</b>
<p>This is an outline planning application for the provision of up to 120 residential units and a 70 bed aged care home. The indicative scheme also includes a noise bund and barrier, landscaping and an emergency access through the neighbouring Toutley depot. 35% of the dwellings proposed would be affordable housing. It should be noted all matters are reserved except for access, therefore detailed layout and design will be considered under subsequent reserved matters applications. Only the principle of development is being considered at this stage.</p> <p>The application site consists of an open field, within settlement limits and the North Wokingham SDL. The site is allocated for employment development under the current Local Plan. However, the site is no longer considered appropriate for employment due to its location, its setting adjacent to residential development and the school constructed as part of the Matthewsgreen development. As such it is allocated under the emerging Local Plan for residential development and the proposed residential use is acceptable in principle. The location of the scheme next to the Matthewsgreen development which contains shops, a primary school, community building and access to bus services means that the site is considered sustainable and would provide residents with access to good local facilities. The development would provide a high-quality modern housing scheme together with landscaped public open space, while retaining the existing hedgerows.</p> <p>The scheme is considered acceptable at outline stage, subject to the conditions recommended.</p>

<b>PLANNING STATUS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major development location</li> <li>• North Wokingham SDL</li> <li>• Site allocation – Toutley Industrial Estate extension</li> <li>• Core Employment Area</li> <li>• WBC owned land</li> <li>• Wind turbine safeguarding zone</li> <li>• Farnborough Aerodrome consultation zone</li> <li>• Sand and gravel extraction</li> <li>• Special Protection Area – 7 km</li> </ul>

- Groundwater protection zone
- Landfill consultation zone
- Minerals consultation zone
- Nuclear consultation zone
- Contaminated land consultation zone
- Green Route Enhancement Area
- Flood Zones 2 and 3
- TPO Trees.
- Archaeological Sites.

## RECOMMENDATION

**That the committee authorise the GRANT OF PLANNING PERMISSION subject to the following:**

### **A. Completion of an agreement to**

- Affordable Housing Provision – Minimum 35% on site provision with a tenure split of 70:30 social rented to shared ownership dwellings
- Strategic Access Management and Maintenance (SAMM) Contribution for the Thames Basin Heaths SPA;
- Open Space delivery and maintenance thereafter, including a contribution towards maintenance of the sound bund and barrier if adopted by the Council.
- Allotments onsite delivery or offsite contribution, depending on method of delivery.
- Local Bus service contribution;
- My Journey Travel Plan contribution;
- Highways inspection fees.
- Highway commuted sums.
- Legal agreement monitoring contribution;
- Employment Skills plan or contribution;
- Upgrading of cycle / footpath to the southern development, Primary School and Local Centre
- Costs of the Traffic Regulation Order along Twyford Road;
- Children’s play area maintenance sum – waiting for Green Infrastructure.
- Highways bond
- Provision of 10% biodiversity net gain in line with DEFRA metric calculator, on-site provision, in accordance with landscaping and ecology details. If on-site provision not possible, off-site provision to be secured.
- Provision of compensation for three Skylark territories to be provided for a minimum period of 30 years.

- Highway maintenance.
- Highway agreements.

**B. Conditions and informatives:**

*To follow*

<b>PLANNING HISTORY</b>		
<b>Application Number</b>	<b>Proposal</b>	<b>Decision</b>
F/2003/8635	Proposed change of use of land to Quad bike track and erection of 5 temporary units, 3 for storage, 1 for Office/Reception, 1 for Cafeteria.	Withdrawn – 19/05/2021
172876	Full application for the proposed continued operation of a concrete batching plant with ancillary development, sale of concrete products and skip hire service whilst retaining the existing waste transfer station and depot uses.	Refused – 10/01/2018
193206	Full planning application for the demolition of all existing structures at Toutley Depot to permit the phased construction of a replacement depot including works buildings, storage, a new office accommodation block, ancillary drainage, landscaping, security fencing, surface parking and associated works.	Approved – 13/02/2020
210359	Screening Opinion application for an Environmental Impact Assessment for the proposed development of the site comprising around 130 dwellings and a 70 bed dementia care home, plus creation of new access.	Replied – 13/05/2021 (Not EIA Development)

<b>SUMMARY INFORMATION</b>	
<b>For Residential</b>	
Site Area	8.1ha
Existing units	0
Proposed units	Up to 130
Existing density – dwellings/hectare	0
Proposed density - dwellings/hectare	16
Number of affordable units proposed	35%
Previous land use	Agricultural
Proposed Public Open Space	3.57 ha

## CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Crime Prevention Design Officer	Considers there to be a lack of surveillance and there to be exposed elevations. (detail will be picked up at Reserved Matters stage)
National Grid	No comments received
Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue	There are excessive distances for fire vehicles to reverse.
Southern Gas Networks	Refer to standing advice.
SEE Power Distribution	Refer to standing advice.
Thames Water	No objection, subject to condition.
NHS Wokingham Clinical Commissioning Group	No response received.
Environment Agency	Awaiting response however as all matters reserved (e.g. layout), it is considered that in principle approval can be provided.
South East Water	No response received.
WBC Biodiversity	No objection, subject to conditions.
WBC Economic Prosperity and Place (Community Infrastructure)	Support the provision of a care home as opposed to extra care. Recommend a higher proportion of 3 bed houses and a reduction in the number of 2 bed flats. The location will lead to greater demand for houses than flats.
WBC Drainage	No objection.
WBC Education (School Place Planning)	The Toutley East development will fully mitigate education requirements through CIL payments. Currently there is sufficient local capacity for any additional children likely to be generated by the development in Key Stages one and two (primary school age) and while current projections indicate there will be insufficient capacity for children and young people in Key Stages 3 to 5 (aged 11 to 18) over the next decade, CIL payments will mitigate the impact of this development.
WBC Environmental Health	No objection, subject to conditions.
WBC Highways	No objections, subject to conditions.
WBC Tree & Landscape	Request additional information.
WBC Cleaner & Greener (Waste Services)	No response received.
WBC Property Services	No comments received
WBC Public Rights of Way	Request provision for east-west route across the site in line with Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan.
WBC Planning Policy	No Objection.
WBC Affordable Housing	A minimum of 35% affordable housing is required. This should be provided on-site, with a 70:30 rent: shared ownership split. 45.5 units are required, split as follows:

- 20% 1 bedroom flats

- 15% 2 bedroom flats
- 30% 2 bedroom houses
- 20% 3 bed houses
- 15% 4 bed houses

## REPRESENTATIONS

### Town/Parish Council:

- The proposal is within the flood plain.
- There is only one access point, the junction is unsafe.
- There is no pedestrian footpath along Twyford Road or pedestrian crossing.
- There may be health implications for residents of housing and care home due to noise of being surrounded by main roads with heavy traffic and joining onto an industrial site.

*Officer Note: The applicant's flood modelling demonstrates that the actual extent of flooding on site would be significantly less than that shown on Environment Agency flood mapping. Therefore, all built parts of the development would be within flood zone 1. There will be a secondary emergency access in place following the occupation of the 100<sup>th</sup> dwelling/care home bedroom. The scheme now includes a pedestrian crossing and improvement/extension of the footpath along the eastern side of Twyford Road. The council's Highways Officer has no objection to an access onto Twyford Road – see paragraphs 58-63. The Environmental Health officer has no objections to the scheme in terms of noise and the adjacent industrial use, this is addressed in paragraphs 69-76.*

### Local Members:

*Cllr Rachel Bishop-Firth:*

- The scheme will result in an increase in social housing and expansion of dementia accommodation on a site which is fundamentally unsuitable for housing.
- The site is at risk of flooding and this may affect the entranceway onto Twyford Road.
- The access is dangerous, especially due to the speed of traffic on Twyford Road.
- The site is not sustainable, there is a significant distance to the nearest bus stop. Cycle paths are not direct to Wokingham town centre.
- How will care home staff and visitors get home if they don't drive?
- How will residents access the SANG?
- The site is noisy and polluted by virtue of being adjacent the motorway.
- Undue pressure will be placed on outdoor space/SANG because of offices being converted to flats in the adjacent industrial estate.

*Officer Note: Regarding flooding, Highway and pollution/environmental health Issues, see above officer note for Town Council comments. The proposal requires a financial contribution towards local bus services and improvements in access to the south of the site,*

across the Matthewsgreen development. The Old Forest Meadows open space will be accessed across the bridge and through the Matthewsgreen development. A crossing is provided for access to the SANG to the east of Twyford Road. Offices being converted to flats in the Toutley depot is not related to this scheme, which will provide ample open space.

*Cllr Imogen Shepherd-Dubey*

- This application causes significant concern in terms of road safety. The single exit onto the Twyford Road is just before the brow of the bridge and vehicles coming over the bridge would not be able to see vehicles turning right out of the exit until the last minute. This is effectively a 60Mph road at this point.
- There are no pavements or cycling provisions along the Twyford Road at this point, making it difficult to access the site other than by car. The nearest bus stop is quite some distance away, outside of the Dog & Duck on Matthewsgreen Road. There is no provision for pedestrians crossing this busy road to get to the SANG on the other side of Twyford Road.
- There is a mention of an 'emergency access' but no explanation of how easy that would be to open if the main exit from the site became unavailable. The emergency exit needs to be available at all times.
- The entrance road is likely to flood. The care home will be subject to noise and pollution.

*Officer Note: Regarding flooding and Highway issues, see above officer note for Town Council comments. Details of how the emergency access will function will be required by condition.*

**Neighbours:** 36 objections received. 0 comments in support received.

*Objections:*

- There is no footway from Twyford Road and no safe route for cyclists.

*Officer Note: a footway will be installed on the eastern side of Twyford Road, along with a pedestrian crossing. A safe route for cyclists will be provided over the bridge on the southern side of the development.*

- The junction will be dangerous. Changing the speed limit will not change this and Twyford Road is fast and busy. The proposed visibility splays are a departure from the norm. Drivers will not expect people to be turning out of the junction at this point. There would be poor visibility. Children will need to cross the road. Other traffic calming measures will be required, such as speed bumps and/or cameras.
- The traffic surveys were carried out in June 2020 when the traffic was likely to be lower than normal and a site visit was carried out in February 2021 when the conditions were described as 'light'. There is a pedestrian refuge in the plans to cross the main road, this is dangerous.
- There are poor public transport links. There will be an increase in the number of car journeys. There would be no alternative but to travel to the care home by car.
- The care home will lead to commercial vehicle movements.

- All dwellings should have electric vehicle parking provision.
- The proposal is on the preferred route of the NDR.

*Officer Note: The Highway's Officer has no objection to this scheme or to the traffic surveys, subject to the provision of the agreed wider access. A pedestrian and cycle link will be provided to the south and a contribution will be provided for bus service improvements. An electric vehicle parking strategy will be required by condition. This site was a potential option for the location of the Northern Distributor Road, but it was not selected.*

- There are drainage problems in this area. The proposal could lead to increased flood problems.

*Officer Note: The applicant's flood modelling demonstrates that the actual extent of flooding on site would be significantly less than that shown on Environment Agency flood mapping. Therefore, all built parts of the development would be located outside of the flood zone.*

- The area has already been subject to significant development and needs to be protected from continued construction activity. Is there demand for the homes proposed?
- There will be a loss of green space.
- The existing infrastructure will not support further development. There are congestion, noise and pollution issues.
- Noise from ambulances and sirens to the care home will bother residents.
- Land such as this should be used for leisure purposes.
- The proposal will cause construction noise, which will be on top of the construction noise already experienced by local residents as a result of the existing buildings works.

*Officer Note: This site is within settlement limits and is already allocated for development. Given the residential and school development associated with the SDL to south, it is considered that residential use is appropriate. The site forms part of the SDL and ample open space would be provided. The Environmental Health officer has no objections to the scheme in terms of noise, the adjacent industrial use or pollution of the site. Working hours and construction noise will be controlled by condition. Ample open space is provided.*

- The site hosts valued wildlife.
- The total number of dwellings should be reduced with more tree planting to assist air quality.

*Officer Note: The development will be required to provide a 10% biodiversity net gain and conditions will require appropriate wildlife mitigation. The proposal includes ample open space and will require the submission of detailed landscaping at reserved matters stage.*

- The affordable housing must be predominantly social housing and not affordable rent or shared ownership.
- The Covid 19 pandemic has changed living and working habits. There are a large number of flats proposed with little outside space which will no longer be wanted.

- The proposal should include affordable homes and homes for young people to get on the housing ladder.

*Officer Note: The indicative scheme provides more two bedroom homes that required and less three bedroom homes. However, it is noted that this is an indicative scheme and the deviation is not particularly significant. Affordable housing will be provided in line with policy.*

- The document on energy has typo's and appears to have been carried over from another development. The development should include air source heating and battery storage and orientations should be as to make the most of the available insolation. Other electric devices should be considered.
- There will be a loss of views from residents of Potter crescent over the existing field.

*Officer Note: The Energy Statement is sufficient to inform the scheme, the proposal will provide a 10% carbon reduction. Loss of views by neighbours are not a material planning consideration.*

#### *Emmbrook Residents Association:*

- The road traffic noise assessments were carried out at the peak of the summer holiday season and therefore traffic and noise would be at a minimum. This will have had an impact on the noise modelling. Holiday periods should be avoided.
- The footway on the eastern side of Twyford Road is narrow and poor quality. It is not acceptable to serve the new footway as shown on the plans.
- In the discussion of vehicle sight lines the Transport Assessment raises the possibility of extending the existing 40mph limit on the southern section of the Twyford Road northwards to beyond the development's access. As the development will introduce vehicle movements turning at the site entrance as well pedestrian activity in this area this reduction should, without question, be introduced.

*Officer Note: The Highway's Officer has no objection to this scheme or to the traffic surveys, subject to the provision of the agreed wider access. An improved footway will be provided.*

- The majority of the dwellings are 2.5 storeys high, which would be higher than the heights at which noise was measured in the survey. Therefore the upper floors haven't been adequately assessed. The care home building will be higher than the proposed noise bund.
- The front façade of seven of the dwellings in the north western section of the site will experience noise levels between 60dB and 65dB which means that opening a window in any of these facades would result in the noise level in the internal space being significantly higher than the 35dB deemed to be acceptable.
- The external living spaces of six of the dwellings also exceed the 55dB limit, with the limit being exceeded in a part of the external space of a further 10 dwellings.
- The ground level external spaces of the terraced properties facing the Twyford Road would all exceed the 55dB limit. The first floor external spaces achieve the 55dB limit only by having their open ends blocked in with 1.8 high acoustic barriers, reducing them to windowless enclosed yards.

- The western façade of the care home is in a 55+dB zone as is the majority of the northern façade, with the remainder of northern façade and the whole of the eastern one subjected to 60+dB. As daytime modelling figures are for ground floor level, the question is how much higher are the figures for the first and second floor levels, where it is likely that there will be day rooms as well as bedrooms.
- All of the properties in the northern and western sections and those facing the Twyford Road have facades that would experience noise levels from 55+dB to 70+dB. Similarly, the care home would be surrounded by excessive noise, with the northern and eastern facades most affected. As mentioned above, the windows in the roofs of the 2.5 storey dwellings and the third storey of the care home will in all probability be subjected to higher levels of noise.

*Officer Note: The lower levels of traffic due to Covid 19 have been taken into account in the acoustic survey. In accordance with guidance provided by the Institute of Acoustics (Joint Guidance on the Impact of Covid 19 on the practicality and reliability of baseline sound level surveying and the provision of sound and noise impact assessments) previous noise data has been used from a survey carried out by Hydrock in 2019. Noise modelling has also been used using traffic flow data derived from the Wokingham Strategic Transport Model. According to paragraph 4.3.3 WSP predictions from the modelling fall within 2dB of the measured noise levels of the 2019 Hydrock survey which is considered to be within acceptable tolerances. The noise levels on site are discussed in paragraphs 73-76. The Environmental Health Officer has acknowledged that a detailed scheme will be required by condition to prevent harmful noise impacts on residents.*

#### *Wokingham Society:*

- The site is allocated for an industrial use.
- North Wokingham would be completely infilled. There have been more dwellings approved than the 1500 envisaged to the north of Wokingham. This application offers no planning gain but adds more development. Other options should be explored.

*Officer Note: The development is acceptable in principle and this is discussed in paragraphs 4-14.*

- There is no need to build this close to the motorway. It will be very noisy, including for the dementia care home.

*Officer Note: See Officer note above for Emmbrook Residents Association.*

- There appears to be no outside amenity space for the dementia care home residents. A footpath is required on the western side of Twyford Road.

*Officer Note: The scheme is indicative and outside space can be provided at reserved matters stage. In any case, courtyards are provided. This however are considered poor quality.*

- The North Wokingham SDL does not include any public art. Art should be included in this scheme.

*Officer Note: It is noted that this issue can be resolved at reserved matters stage.*

*Shinfield Parish Council:*

- The care home should not be adjacent the motorway, it will be too noisy.
- Pollution would likely exceed relevant limits.

<b>APPLICANTS POINTS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The application site is within the settlement boundary as part of the North Wokingham SDL. Development is acceptable in principle.</li> <li>• The site is no longer required to provide employment land and will provide much needed housing in the borough.</li> <li>• The housing will include specialist elderly accommodation to meet the needs of an ageing population.</li> <li>• The proposal will include a high proportion of affordable housing – with an aspiration to exceed policy standards. Overall, the delivery of housing in a variety of types, tenures and sizes is a significant benefit of the development.</li> <li>• The proposal will enhance the biodiversity performance of the site and increase the number of trees compared to the existing agricultural land. The scheme also commits to delivering a highly sustainable development that will push to exceed policy standards in regards to energy efficiency and carbon consumption.</li> </ul>

<b>PLANNING POLICY</b>		
National Policy	<b>NPPF</b>	National Planning Policy Framework
Adopted Core Strategy DPD 2010	<b>CP1</b>	Sustainable Development
	<b>CP2</b>	Inclusive Communities
	<b>CP3</b>	General Principles for Development
	<b>CP4</b>	Infrastructure Requirements
	<b>CP5</b>	Housing mix, density and affordability
	<b>CP6</b>	Managing Travel Demand
	<b>CP7</b>	Biodiversity
	<b>CP8</b>	Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area
	<b>CP9</b>	Scale and Location of Development Proposals
	<b>CP10</b>	Improvements to the Strategic Transport Network
	<b>CP15</b>	Employment Development
	<b>CP20</b>	North Wokingham Strategic Development Location
Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan 2014	<b>CC01</b>	Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
	<b>CC02</b>	Development Limits
	<b>CC03</b>	Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping
	<b>CC04</b>	Sustainable Design and Construction

	<b>CC05</b>	Renewable energy and decentralised energy networks
	<b>CC06</b>	Noise
	<b>CC07</b>	Parking
	<b>CC08</b>	Safeguarding alignments of the Strategic Transport Network & Road Infrastructure
	<b>CC09</b>	Development and Flood Risk (from all sources)
	<b>CC10</b>	Sustainable Drainage
	<b>TB05</b>	Housing Mix
	<b>TB06</b>	Development of private residential gardens
	<b>TB07</b>	Internal Space standards
	<b>TB11</b>	Core Employment Areas
	<b>TB12</b>	Employment Skills Plan
	<b>TB21</b>	Landscape Character
	<b>TB23</b>	Biodiversity and Development
	<b>TB24</b>	Designated Heritage Assets
	<b>SAL07</b>	Sites within Development Limits allocated for employment/commercial development.
Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)	<b>BDG</b>	Borough Design Guide – Section 4
		DCLG – National Internal Space Standards

<b>PLANNING ISSUES</b>
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**Description of Development:**

1. The application site comprises an undeveloped field, located immediately to the south of the A329(M) in North Wokingham. The site is bounded to the north by the A329(M), to the south by a watercourse, to the west by Toutley Depot and to the east by an area of wooded vegetation along the A321 Twyford Road.
2. Outline planning permission is sought for the erection of up to 130 dwellings and a 70 bed care home. All matters are reserved apart from access. The detailed design for the site would come forward as part of future reserved matters applications. The role of the outline scheme therefore, is to establish the key principles for bringing forward development on the site within the parameters sought, but not to agree the final or detailed elements, aside from access to the site.
3. The following parameters are proposed to be secured via the outline application:
  - Up to 130 new residential dwellings (exact number of dwellings will be determined as part of the detailed reserved matters applications).
  - An aged care home to provide up to 70 bed spaces.

- Access from Twyford Road and construction of a new internal road.

### **Principle of Development:**

4. The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (MDD) Policy CC01 states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
5. The Wokingham Borough Core Strategy establishes the spatial vision for the Borough for the period 2006-2026, including a requirement to provide at least 13,487 new dwellings, with associated infrastructure (Core Strategy policy CP17 *Housing Delivery*). The majority of this new residential development is to be in four Strategic Development Locations (SDLs). The site lies within the North Wokingham Strategic Development Location. CP20 of the Core Strategy anticipates the delivery of around 1500 dwellings in the form of a planned urban extension.
6. As well as being within the SDL, the site is also within settlement limits. The principle of development in this location is therefore already established. However, the site is allocated under the adopted Core Strategy and Managing Development Delivery (MDD) local plans for employment (Policy SAL07 and CP20) and forms part of the wider Toutley Industrial Estate Core Employment Area (Policy CP15, Policy TB11). Therefore, with the site being located within a Major Development Location, where development is generally acceptable, the principal issue guiding the acceptability of the proposal is the impact on the availability of land for employment.
7. Policy CP15 states that *“any proposed changes of use from B1, B2 or B8 should not lead to an overall net loss of floorspace in B Use within the borough”*. In particular, the supporting text to this policy, at paragraph 4.71 supports the re-use of existing employment sites for other uses in locations where there is a demand for other uses and/or lack of demand for business uses without a net loss in employment floor space. The site is allocated under the current local plan for employment space, in association with Toutley Depot. With this in mind, it is clear that the proposed development of the site as housing and a care home would lead to a loss of land designated for employment. The majority of the site is not currently used for employment space and therefore the impact would be a loss of opportunity rather than actual floorspace, the proposal is contrary to the adopted allocation. Consideration therefore needs to be given as to whether material circumstances exist which outweigh a decision in line with the development plan.
8. The applicant has provided information seeking to justify the loss of the employment opportunity. This includes reference to the Council's Employment Land Needs (ELN) Study (January 2020). The ELN Study states (in paragraph 5.90) that *‘demand for industrial space at Toutley Industrial Estate is minimal with the majority coming from automobile-related companies servicing the local markets’*. Given the ELN Study found that industrial demand at Toutley Industrial Estate was limited, the adopted allocation to extend the Core Employment Area is no longer considered by the Council's Planning Policy Officer to represent the best use of the land.

9. This above view is expressed in emerging policy where the re-allocation of the land for residential is proposed through Local Plan Update. This is at an early stage of preparation and therefore has only limited weight in the decision-making process. This being said, policy SS6 (North Wokingham Strategic Development Location) proposes to allocated the site for 100 dwellings. The current scheme proposes 130 dwellings and a 70 bed care home. Therefore provided that the dwellings can be accommodated on site, the principle of residential development is consistent with emerging policy. It is also consistent with section 11 of the NPPF, which requires the efficient use of land (paragraph 124). It is considered that the development is acceptable in principle. Moreover, given the residential and school development associated with the SDL to south, it is considered employment uses are no longer the most appropriate neighbour in this instance.
10. A small part of the existing depot would be lost to accommodate the noise bund, however this was excluded from the developed area under application 193206 for redevelopment of the depot site. That scheme was designed with the potential for future development of the current site in mind. A change of use would only occur if that permission was implemented. As such it is not considered that the small loss of employment land would make this scheme unacceptable in principle. The current operation of the depot site has also been considered should the depot redevelopment not come forward and it has been found that the operation of the depot would not be significantly impacted by this proposal.

*Care Home:*

11. Paragraphs 59 and 61 of the NPPF recognise that planning decisions should consider the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community (including older people).
12. Policy CP2a (Inclusive Communities) of the Core Strategy 2010 supports proposals that address the requirements of an ageing population, particularly in terms of housing, health and well-being. The policy ensures that new development contributes to the provision of sustainable and inclusive communities to meet long-term needs.
13. TB09 of the MDD Local Plan relates to residential accommodation for vulnerable groups. It indicates that the Council will support proposals which provide for the following types of accommodation to provide for people's needs over a lifetime:
  - a) Extra care homes.
  - b) Dementia extra care units.
  - c) Enhanced sheltered schemes.
  - d) Proposals that allow the elderly and those with disabilities to remain in their own homes or purpose-built accommodation.
14. This application proposes an aged care home, as opposed to extra care. Extra care housing differs from a traditional care home in the fact that it allows people to live more independently, without being part of a residential institution. However, the Council's Planning Policy favours this type of aged care. It is noted that the Economic Prosperity and Place team have identified that there is currently a greater need for a traditional care home facility, as opposed to an extra care scheme. With this in mind, it is considered that the proposed care home is acceptable in this instance, as opposed to providing additional extra care facilities. The scheme is therefore considered

acceptable in this regard, even though it deviates from the preferred schemes as outlined in policy TB09.

### **Character of the Area:**

15. Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that development must be appropriate in terms of its scale, mass, layout, built form, height and character of the area and must be of high quality design. R1 of the Borough Design Guide SPD requires that development contribute positively towards and be compatible with the historic or underlying character and quality of the local area. R2 states that development should respond to context, including incorporating existing features, taking advantage of landform and orientation, relating to neighbours and minimising amenity, ecological and drainage impacts. As the application is an outline proposal with all matters reserved, issues such as layout, design, noise bund and landscaping are not included within this application for determination at this time. However the applicant has provided an illustrative masterplan and the Design and Access Statement.

### *Layout - General:*

16. The proposed scheme forms a cul-de-sac, with one access plus an emergency access into the neighbouring Toutley industrial estate. As has been stated, the site is bounded on the southern side by Ashridge Stream, on the western side by Toutley Industrial Estate, on the northern side by the A329M and on the eastern side by Twyford Road. The A329M is at generally at grade with the site in terms of levels and therefore noise mitigation is required. This and the large landscape buffer to the south lends the site a degree of visual separation from neighbouring developments and in this context, the cul-de-sac is acceptable. It should be noted that the proposals, although one application, are likely to be constructed by two different operators, that is the care home and residential elements. As such, it is considered appropriate to phase the scheme into these two different operations, which is reflected in conditions where this is considered appropriate to do so.
17. Generally there is no objection to the proposed layout and contemporary design proposed. The indicative scheme generally maintains appropriate separation distances between dwellings, in accordance with the recommendations of the Borough Design Guide. However, there are some areas where such distances are not maintained and the relationship between houses could prove problematic. The applicant has been advised regarding these concerns and this detail will need to be addressed as part of the reserved matters submissions. The dwellings shown below have separate buildings (studios or work spaces) at the end of the gardens which is considered especially appropriate following the pandemic.



18. However the buildings which form the bookends to at either end of the row of terraces will need to be considered in more detail as part of the reserved matters. The current indicative scheme is not likely to be considered acceptable due to impacts on the amenity of occupiers of the dwellings (see neighbouring amenity and external amenity space sections later in this report) however it is also considered that the appearance of the buildings clustered together would be potentially out of character and excessively urban in appearance for this area on the outskirts of Wokingham.
19. The courtyards for the care home need further detailed consideration, as they are also likely to be excessively small and overshadowed, meaning that they would not be inviting places to use (see external amenity section of this report). However again this detail will be picked up at reserved matters. It should be noted these design issues do not impact the acceptability of the principle of the development.



20. Finally, some of the houses are arranged in a back to back formation:



While there is no objection to this in principle and adequate separation distances are maintained from other dwellings, officers have concerns over the useability of these spaces. Again this is explored in more detail in the relevant section of this report.

*Trees and landscapes:*

21. TB21 indicates that development proposals should demonstrate how they have addressed the key characteristics of the Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment. The Council's Trees and Landscapes Officer considers that the details submitted with this application do not amount to a full Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment and the requirements of TB21 has not been met.

22. The site falls into landscape character area J1 – Wokingham-Winnersh Settled and Farmed Clay. It is characterised by arable farmland on shelving landforms. The key characteristics of this area include an agricultural landscape which is greatly influenced by urban development and a sloping landform with subtle valleys. Hedgerows have been lost. There is an overriding sense of urbanity due to the presence of the A329m, M4 and development to the south and west and the rural landscape is fragmented. The topography of the site falls from north to south.
23. It is noted that the site consists of a parcel of land which demonstrates a number of the key characteristics of character area J1. It is surrounded by hedgerows/tree belts and is heavily influenced by the presence of the adjacent motorway and housing developments. It is noted that the indicative proposal would be well contained within the existing landscape features and the proposed landscaping would tie in well with the landscaping associated with the new development to the south. Views of the site are partially constricted by the motorway to the north and the industrial estate to the west. Perhaps the most prominent views of the site would be from the east (should the vegetative screening be lost), the south – from the elevated new estate at Matthewsgreen and from the A329 itself. While the Trees and Landscape Officer's comments are taken into consideration, it is considered that the proposal sits within a discrete parcel of land which would be read against the existing developments which surround the site. Good landscape buffers have been maintained between the hedgerows and stream, which are distinctive of the landscape. For this reason, it is considered that the proposal does address the key characteristics of the landscape character assessment and no additional impact assessment is required.
24. The Trees and Landscapes Officer has also indicated that it would be helpful at this stage to see a landscape strategy and vignettes based on the illustrative masterplan to show how the open space would relate to housing layout and how parking would be dealt with. While this is taken into consideration, it is considered that this can be adequately dealt with at reserved matters stage and/or by condition. This also applies to details pertaining to home zone/shared street principles and how this forms an integral part of the green infrastructure.
25. CIRIA guidance and the Wokingham SuDS Strategy (January 2017) advocate that a SuDS train should start within the development parcels themselves with on plot or very locally based treatments (site control), such as rain gardens, filter strips or swales for example which then lead to regional control features. The Design and Access Statement indicates that bio-retention basins, rain gardens and swales combined with rainwater harvesting and would be incorporated into the public realm. However, this is not shown on the indicative masterplan, which simply shows detention basins of approximately 1m deep, which are fed by a piped gravity system. The Council's Trees and Landscapes Officer is of the view that it has not been demonstrated where the locally based treatments could be incorporated into the scheme and that the landscape buffer is not large enough on the south eastern side. The detention basins will not form part of the useable landscaped areas. While this view is acknowledged, it is considered that these issues could be addressed at reserved matters stage. The landscape buffer is adequate and allows for some useable space between the dwellings and Ashridge Stream.
26. An Arboricultural Report has been submitted with the application. The majority of vegetation on and adjacent to the site boundaries can be effectively retained and

protected as part of the proposed development including the 3 TPO trees growing on the southern boundary adjacent to the existing stream. A small number of tree removals will need to take place to allow access into the site, provide necessary sightlines and access into the western part of the site. The Council's Trees and Landscapes Officer has no concerns regarding the extent of the proposed development as shown on the Illustrative Masterplan in relation to the existing trees and vegetation to be retained.

*Scale:*

27. It is again noted that the scheme is indicative. However, the indicative plans need to be assessed and commented upon at this stage to help provide clear guidance for the reserved matters. The proposals would consist largely of semi-detached and terraced housing at two storeys in height. However, there would also be a three-storey apartment block to the south of the site and other apartment blocks. The care home would be on raised ground to the north of the site and would also be up to three storeys in height. The height in itself may not be an issue but will need consideration against the visual impact locally. The single apartment block on the site is not considered excessive, but will serve to provide a good overall mix of dwelling types. Additionally, it will be set at the least elevated part of the site. The scheme largely reflects the scale of adjacent new estates. The indicative plans have a density of 16 dwellings per hectare, plus the 70 bed care home. With care home beds in mind the density would be 24 dwellings/bed per hectare.

*Design and Appearance:*

28. Although this is a reserved matter, again comment on the proposed indicative design is helpful guide for the reserved matters. A variety of housing typologies are proposed within the site including terraces, semi-detached and detached houses and apartment buildings. The scheme would be somewhat contemporary in appearance which would add an additional layer of character and identity to the local area. There is no objection to this in principle so long as it can be demonstrated that the appearance would be acceptable and generally in keeping with the prevailing character of the area. As has been mentioned, there are some concerns relating to the design of the dwellings in terms of their potential for lack of privacy and overbearing impact on one another. This extends to the potential appearance of the apartments at the end of the rows of terraces, which could appear cramped in appearance as a whole. This being said, the details submitted show a development constructed with a variety of different complementary external materials such as brick, cladding and render. Buildings are arranged in different densities in different areas, with a variety of appearances. Key to good design outcome will be assessing the detail as part of the subsequent reserved matters.
29. The range of housing types and styles will ensure that there is diversity in the built form and a range of housing for future occupants. The diversity in terms of the style of the dwellings is achieved through the detailing such as heights, materials/design and roof form. This will help to provide a clear and legible neighbourhood.
30. Overall, this is an outline proposal and it is considered that an appropriate and in keeping scheme could be achieved at reserved matters stage. The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in this regard.

## **Residential Amenities:**

### *Neighbouring Amenity:*

31. Core Strategy Policy CP3 requires that new development should be of a high quality of design, it should not cause detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users. Separation standards for new residential developments are set out in section 4.7 of the Borough Design Guide.
32. As has been discussed, there are concerns relating to the terraced properties which are flanked by apartments. It is not clear from the submitted details how the outlook from both the terraced properties and flats will be protected. The gardens of the terraced houses may be significantly overlooked and may suffer an overbearing impact. This also applies to windows and habitable rooms which are likely to be present in the houses and the flats. It is not clear how flats could be accommodated in these blocks without overlooking one another, the adjacent properties or the gardens. It appears that appropriate separation distances are not maintained. This being said, the proposal is at outline stage and appropriate separation distances would be maintained between the blocks themselves and all other units – including between the care home and the closest units. It is considered that there is adequate space on the site to address these issues at reserved matters stage. The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in this regard but it is important to flag these issues to the applicant at this stage.

### *Internal Amenity:*

33. All of the dwellings are designed to meet or exceed the minimum size standards set out in the National Space Standards. As this application is in outline, this has not been demonstrated on a plan. However the Local Planning Authority sees no reason that this cannot be achieved on the site.

### *External Amenity:*

34. The Borough Design Guide indicates that all dwellings should have access to some form of amenity space, preferably in the form of private or communal garden space. However, it does also acknowledge that in practice, upper floor flats rarely have access to gardens and therefore it is important to provide balconies, upper level terraces or wintergardens. Also easy access to communal amenity areas is important.
35. The houses all have access to gardens of adequate length. However, it is not considered that a number of them would provide high quality amenity space. The terraces with apartments at the end of them have gardens which would be overshadowed, potentially overlooked and would likely suffer from overbearing impacts. This is unlikely to be considered acceptable. The back to back housing may also likely suffer this problem, but for opposite reasons, the gardens would unlikely be particularly private, leading to residents having low quality and overlooked amenity space. The potential boundary treatments have not been made clear and should they be insufficient, residents may attempt to remedy this with poor quality design solutions such as fences. A condition is recommended which removes permitted development rights of the properties. This is to ensure that any future proposals to extend the properties, including into the garden spaces, can be assessed through the submission

of a planning application. This will help to restrict unacceptable encroachment into these important garden spaces which might otherwise benefit from permitted development rights.

36. The outside amenity space available to the occupants of the flats is not clear, although the details submitted with the application make reference to balconies. It is considered that there is sufficient scope for this to be designed into the proposal at reserved matters stage. One important consideration is the access of public amenity space to the dwellings. This is especially evidenced by the pandemic. The public open space provided by the neighbouring existing developments and local SANG's means that residents will have good access to communal public spaces. An important aspect of this proposal is the pedestrian / cycle bridge to the south which links this site to the public open space, local shops and school on the Matthewsgreen development. Details of which will be agreed by condition.

**Dwelling Mix, Affordable Housing and Standard of Accommodation**

37. MDD policy TB05 (Housing Mix) requires that residential development should provide an appropriate density and mix of accommodation reflecting the character of the area. It is considered that the development would provide a good mix and balance of dwelling types, tenures and sizes. While this is indicative at this stage, the scheme proposes:

<b>Number of Bedrooms</b>	<b>Number of units</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1 bed	17	13
2 bed	62	48
3 bed	29	22
4 bed	22	17

The Berkshire (including South Bucks) Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2016) identified the following housing mix requirements in Wokingham:

- 7.2% One bedroom
- 27.1% two bedrooms
- 43.5% three bedrooms
- 22.2% four bedrooms

38. The indicative scheme provides more two bedrooms homes that required and less three bedroom homes. However, it is noted that this is an indicative scheme and the deviation is not particularly significant. Taking into account the housing team's advice, it is still considered that the site will be able to accommodate a range of dwellings and the scheme will be acceptable in this regard and officers are also mindful that needs change over time. The mix will be agreed as part of the reserved matters.

*Affordable Housing:*

39. MDD policy TB05 (Housing Mix) requires that residential development should provide an appropriate density and mix of accommodation reflecting the character of the area. Core Strategy Policies and the Infrastructure and Contributions SPD indicate that

development within the SDLs should secure 35% affordable housing. This equates to 45.5 units here. The Housing officer have recommended the provision of onsite affordable homes in this location, with a 70% - 30% housing tenure split, broken down as follows:

- 20% 1 bedroom flats
- 15% 2 bedroom flats
- 30% 2 bedroom houses
- 20% 3 bed houses
- 15% 4 bed houses

40. The exact mix of market dwellings would be determined at the reserved matters stage paying due regard to relevant policies concerning housing mix and need. All of the dwellings will be required to meet or exceed the minimum size standards set out in the National Space Standards.

#### **Open space and green infrastructure:**

41. Policy TB08 of the MDD DPD lays out the required standards for development in terms of Public Open Space (POS) provision. The submitted proposals would be policy compliant with regards to the provision of the typologies of open space required by Policy TB08. It is noted that part of the open space consists of detention basins. The Trees and Landscapes Officer has indicated that this should not be considered open space and that this would not be useable. The Green Infrastructure Officer has not raised such an objection, however they have indicated that this space would only be useable when it is not flooded under extreme flood events. The Council's Drainage Officer has confirmed that this is the case and, as the ponds are only 1m in depth, it is considered that they could reasonably form part of the open space. In any case, the proposal is currently at outline stage and this can be reasonably secured and the site also benefits from open space directly to the south which can be used by residents in times of flooding.

42. The Green Infrastructure Officer has indicated that there is a requirement for 0.4ha of allotments within the site. The applicant has agreed that this can be provided and this can be secured by condition to ensure that it is included at reserved matters stage. Should it not be possible to include this within the site, then a contribution should be provided for offsite provision. The proposed play area is close to the road and site access and does not form an integral part of any of the open space within the site. The location is therefore not considered suitable, however this can (and will need to be) considered at reserved matters stage. As the proposal is in the SDL, a contribution towards their ongoing maintenance will also be required. It should also be noted that there will be a larger Neighbourhood Area of Play provided adjacent to the north of the school.

## Ecology:

43. Paragraphs 170 and 175 of the National Planning Policy Framework recognise that the planning system should conserve and enhance the environment by minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity. If significant harm resulting from a development cannot be avoided, adequately mitigated, or as a last resort compensated for, planning permission should be refused. Opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged. CP7 of the Core Strategy and TB23 of the MDD Local Plan relate to ecology, biodiversity and development. CP7 states:

*Sites designated as of importance for nature conservation at an international or national level will be conserved and enhanced and inappropriate development will be resisted. The degree of protection given will be appropriate to the status of the site in terms of its international or national importance. Development:*

*A) Which may harm county designated sites (Local Wildlife Sites in Berkshire), whether directly or indirectly, or*

*B) Which may harm habitats or, species of principle importance in England for nature conservation, veteran trees or features of the landscape that are of major importance for wild flora and fauna (including wildlife and river corridors), whether directly or indirectly, or*

*C) That compromises the implementation of the national, regional, county and local biodiversity action plans will be only permitted if it has been clearly demonstrated that the need for the proposal outweighs the need to safeguard the nature conservation importance, that no alternative site that would result in less or no harm is available which will meet the need, and:*

- i) Mitigation measures can be put in place to prevent damaging impacts;*
- ii) Appropriate compensation measures to offset the scale and kind of losses are provided.*

44. TB23 states:

*Sites of national or international importance are shown and sites of local importance are defined on the Policies Map.*

*Planning permission for development proposals will only be granted where they comply with policy CP7 – Biodiversity of the Core Strategy and also demonstrate how they:*

- a) Provide opportunities, including through design, layout and landscaping to incorporate new biodiversity features or enhance existing*
- b) Provide appropriate buffer zones between development proposals and designated sites as well as habitats and species of principle importance for nature conservation*
- c) Ensure that all existing and new developments are ecologically permeable through the protection of existing and the provision of new continuous wildlife corridors, which shall be integrated and linked to the wider green infrastructure network.*

This application is supported by an Ecological Impact Assessment (WSP, ref: 70069935, May 2021) with accompanying ecological survey reports supplied in the appendices and a Baseline Biodiversity Net Gain Technical Note (WSP, ref: not given, March 2021).

*Bats:*

45. Surveys to consider the potential presence of a bat roost in a tree along the line of the watercourse on the southern border of the application site noted continual foraging and commuting activity for extended periods along the watercourse. It is clear that this is an important feature for bats locally. The Council's Ecologist considers it important that the final layout provides sufficient buffer to the watercourse to allow this key commuting corridor to be retained. They have raised concerns that the indicative layout does not provide appropriate buffer between the development and the watercourse however they are of the view that a more appropriate buffer could be incorporated at reserved matters stage, then the development should be acceptable. It is considered that an appropriate solution could be found at reserved matters stage.
46. The Ecological Impact Assessment has recommended that artificial lighting will require mitigation to protect key dark corridors for light sensitive biodiversity. The Council's Ecologist has recommended that the detail for external lighting mitigation is secured by condition based on the British Standard 42020:2013 model wording. This is acceptable.

*Badgers:*

47. The Ecological Impact Assessment includes target notes of potential badger foraging on site. The Council's Ecologist considered it reasonable to conclude that the surveys have not found evidence of a badger sett within the zone of influence of the site. The Council's Ecologist is of the view that the potential impact on badgers in terms of loss of foraging habitat could be resolved within the soft landscaping detail of the green space provided. It can therefore be a matter resolved in reserved matters and conditions discharge.
48. It is also possible for the potential for harm to badgers during construction to be adequately mitigated. The Council's Ecologist proposes that badger mitigation (based on up-to-date survey effort) is an item to be covered within a condition requiring a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).

*Other protected Species:*

49. The Council's Ecologist is of the view that it is reasonable that a Dormouse survey has not been undertaken for this site and no further need for mitigation or compensation measures is required.
50. The Council's Ecologist is satisfied that the site is unlikely to support an Otter holt or resting up place for this species although the watercourses on site may provide foraging and commuting habitat within an extended territory. It is therefore appropriate to seek security of mitigation measures for the species during construction through the CEMP condition and external lighting mitigation during the operational stage of the development through a lighting for light sensitive species condition.
51. A breeding bird survey has not been undertaken despite it being a grassland field and Skylarks (a species of principal importance) being recorded locally several times according to the desktop survey. The justification given is that the site value for

breeding birds could be adequately considered without recourse to further survey. As the long-term impact on ground nesting birds is not considered to be adequately considered, the local planning authority intends to take a precautionary approach in terms of ground nesting bird species of principal importance. A field the size of the application site could reasonably contain three Skylark territories. These are unlikely to be retained within the development proposal whatever the layout due to habitat fragmentation and increased anthropogenic disturbance. The Council's Ecologist recommends that a species-specific compensation and enhancement condition is applied to directly secure compensation measures for loss of Skylark habitat and maintain local favourable conservation status.

52. The assessment also notes the presence of Black Redstarts has been recorded within close proximity of the application site. This is a Schedule 1 bird species on the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). It is vital that the CEMP consider mitigation measures for this species that may be necessary during construction. This species is also a high priority for seeking long-term habitat provision and enhancement. The ecologist also recommends that habitat enhancement is secured. The CEMP must also cover mitigation measures for Great Crested Newts, and slow worms (the latter of which have been found on the site). The Council's Ecologist is of the view that, provided a 10% habitat biodiversity net gain is delivered by the development proposal, it is likely that the favourable conservation status of the slow worm will be maintained.

*Biodiversity Net Gain:*

53. The Council's Ecologist at present is not convinced that the proposal would provide for a biodiversity net gain and are concerned that the baseline figures given in the submitted technical note may not be reflective of the site. The indicative layout also falls within the riparian zone, which could lead to harm. However, this could be addressed and resolved at reserved matters stage.
54. As this is an outline application, it is necessary to consider biodiversity net gain in an iterative way at the point of further detail as to layout and landscaping. Whilst this should follow the mitigation hierarchy and seek as much of a net gain on-site in the first instance, the Council's Ecologist is of the view that the local planning authority can be confident that the applicant can provide an off-site compensation/enhancement measure such to provide an overall 10% minimum biodiversity net gain, if required. This can be ensured by condition. A condition can also be used to secure species specific enhancements at reserved matters stage.

**Special Protection Area:**

55. The Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) was designated under European Directive due to its importance for heathland bird species. Core Strategy policy CP8 establishes that new residential development within a 7km zone of influence is likely to contribute to a significant impact upon the integrity of the SPA. The site lies between 5 and 7km of the SPA boundary and thus under Core Strategy Policy CP8, there is an expectation that development which is likely to have a significant effect on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area will be required to demonstrate that adequate measures to avoid and mitigate any potential adverse effects are delivered.
56. In accordance with Core Strategy policy CP20, mitigation in the form of Suitable

Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) is being provided. An appropriate assessment has been undertaken. The applicant (Wokingham Borough Council) has constructed 7ha of open space in association with the North Wokingham Distributor Road construction adjacent Old Forest Road. It is envisaged that this will provide the SANG capacity to accommodate the new dwellings, to which Natural England have no objection. It is noted that this space does not have a car park and is therefore slightly sub-standard. It is considered that this can be overcome by overproviding SANG capacity at this location however is well served by footpaths and easily access via the new Northern Distributor Road and proposed footbridge. On this basis, the requirement is 8ha per 1000 people. Including the requirements for the care home, this amounts to a requirement for 3.056 ha of SANG, which falls well below the amount of capacity available. The public open space is already constructed and does not need qualitative improvements, however it will need to be open for public use prior to the occupation of any of the dwellings.

*Water:*

57. Insufficient information has been submitted for Thames Water to determine that there is adequate wastewater infrastructure to deal with the needs of the scheme. However this is normal at this early stage and they have recommended a condition to deal with this and to ensure that adequate infrastructure is in place prior to occupation of the dwellings.

**Access and Movement:**

*Transport, Highways and Parking*

58. The NPPF seeks to encourage sustainable means of transport and a move away from the reliance of the private motor car. Core Strategy policies CP1, CP4, CP6 and CP10 broadly echo these principles and indicate that new residential development should mitigate any adverse effects on the existing highway network.
59. The application is accompanied by a Transport Assessment (TA) which assesses the impact of development, both in terms of the traffic generated by the development itself and in the context of the cumulative impact of additional residential development within the neighbouring SDL. The submitted TA has been reviewed and the Council's Highways Officer is satisfied that the surrounding road network would be able to acceptably accommodate the travel demands of the site. The access has been widened throughout the course of this application to address Highway Officer concerns. A pedestrian crossing and footpath would also be installed on and to the eastern side of Twyford Road.

*Public Transport & Travel Planning*

60. In order to encourage use of non-car modes, a contribution is being sought towards implementation of the North Wokingham Bus Strategy as well as to the Council's 'My Journey' initiative, both of which would be secured through the associated S106 agreement. Such contributions are necessary to help encourage the use of alternative modes of transport other than by private car. The nearest bus stops will be located on Queens Road (which will be delivered as part of the Matthews Green development) to the south of the site accessed by the proposed pedestrian and cycle footbridge. It

should also be noted that the proposals include a new footpath of the western side of Twyford Road to the roundabout.

### *Parking and Cycle Parking*

61. In line with Core Strategy Policy CP6 and MDD DPD Policy CC07, and the Council's standards, as currently set out in MDDL Appendix 2, the reserved matters will need to demonstrate that the development will incorporate parking and cycle parking in line with the Council's standards. Notwithstanding that this is an application for outline planning permission, details have been submitted which indicate that the illustrative layout could accommodate the parking requirements of the illustrative housing mix and care home in line with policy. This will need to be further demonstrated and detailed at the reserved matters stage to reflect the final proposed mix.

### *Illustrative Layout*

62. The only vehicular access into the development would be from an existing gated access on Twyford Road. The proposals show adequate sight lines can be provided and the Highway officer has not raised issues or objection in respect to the safety on the access. In addition, there will be an emergency access to the west via Toutley Depot, which can be secured by condition. Details for these have been reviewed as part of the application and considered acceptable.
63. The proposed illustrative layout is considered acceptable in highways terms, both for vehicles, but also for pedestrians and cyclists alike. The development will also provide for improved permeability within and from/to site including a pedestrian/cycle bridge to Matthewsgreen development as well as providing wider links to the rest of the Borough and to bus services. The design of this bridge can be secured by condition. A further condition can provide details of all walking/cycling routes connecting the site with the North Wokingham SDL and the wider area.

### **Flooding and Drainage:**

64. The south of the application site falls into flood zones 2 and 3, this is associated with the Ashridge Stream which borders the site. Policy CC09 of the MDD Local Plan indicates that all sources of flood risk should be taken into consideration and that inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided. Development proposals in flood zones 2 or 3 should take into account the vulnerability of the proposed development. In exceptional circumstances, new development in areas of flood risk will be supported where it can be demonstrated that:

*i. The development provides wider sustainability benefits for the community that outweigh the flood risk.*

*ii. The development would not increase flood risk in any form elsewhere...*

*iii. The development would incorporate flood resilient and resistant measures...*

65. Policy CC10 discusses sustainable drainage and surface water. It states that:

All development proposals must ensure surface water arising from the proposed development including taking into account climate change is managed in a sustainable manner. This must be demonstrated through:

- a) A Flood Risk Assessment, or
- b) Through a Surface Water Drainage Strategy.

All development proposals must

a) *Reproduce greenfield runoff characteristics and return run-off rates and volumes back to the original greenfield levels, for greenfield sites and for brownfield sites both run-off rates and volumes be reduced to as near greenfield as practicably possible.*

b) *Incorporate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), where practicable, which must be of an appropriate design to meet the long term needs of the development and which achieve wider social and environmental benefits*

c) *Provide clear details of proposed SuDS including the adoption arrangements and how they will be maintained to the satisfaction of the Council [as the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA)]* d) *Not cause adverse impacts to the public sewerage network serving the development where discharging surface water to a public sewer.*

- 66. The NPPF indicates that development should be located sequentially and that development should not be permitted if there are reasonably available sites appropriate for the proposed development in areas which are at lower risk of flooding. It is noted that there would not be any development located within the areas shown to flood within the submitted models apart from the footbridge over the stream, which would link the scheme with the developments to the south. As advised details of the bridge structure are conditioned. While the dwellings are not within the flood zones, some supporting infrastructure is. Therefore the sequential test still applies. This being said, the amount of built infrastructure within the actual flood zones is minimal and as long as this can be constructed in a way which does not increase flood risk elsewhere, it is considered that the sequential test has been passed. Again this consideration will need to be taken as part of the detailed design stage.
- 67. The proposal is at outline stage. However, a flood risk assessment has been submitted. The scheme involves the use of SuDS features, in the form of attenuation ponds, which discharge into Ashridge Stream. While this is likely to be subject to change at reserved matters stage, the flood risk assessment successfully demonstrates that there would not be an increase in surface water runoff. It is therefore considered that an acceptable scheme to deal with surface water can be secured by condition and can be provided at reserved matters stage.
- 68. A number of comments have been received from neighbours and members regarding the potential for the entrance road to flood. The applicant's modelling demonstrates that this would not occur. Although it is noted that the Environment Agency have not yet finalised their response to this scheme, however as this is an outline scheme, it is considered any issues can be overcome at reserved matters stage.

#### **Environmental Health:**

- 69. Core Strategy Policy CP3 requires that new development should be of a high quality of design that does not cause significant detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users and their quality of life.

*Contamination:*

70. A generic quantitative contamination risk has been submitted with the application. Ground investigations have found no significant contamination on the site. Ground gas monitoring has also taken place and the report concludes that the majority of the site is at very low risk. Further monitoring is required adjacent to the boundary with Toutley Depot, where some gas protection measures will be required to comply with building regulations. The Environmental Health Officer has recommended a condition to deal with any un-expected contamination.

*Air Quality:*

71. An Air Quality assessment has been submitted with the application. The report predicts that the concentrations of NO<sub>2</sub>, PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub> on the site will meet the air quality objectives in 2026, the year when the development is due to be built so future residents will not be exposed to poor air quality. It is noted that this air quality has been raised in the representations and these comments have been considered as part of the assessment. Importantly the Environmental health officer agrees with this recommendation.
72. The report suggests mitigation measures to minimise levels of fugitive dust during the construction phase which should be included in a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) or similar document to be submitted for approval before work commences on the site. This can be secured by condition.

*Noise:*

73. The site is located adjacent to the A329(M) which runs along the northern boundary of the site, is close to the A321 Twyford Road to the east and Toutley depot lies to the west. The site is subject to high levels of road traffic noise and there may be some noise arising from the depot. The current proposal is to provide a stand-off zone of 50m between future sensitive receptors and the A329(M), the A321 and Toutley Depot. A 5 metre high noise barrier, consisting of a 3m bund and two metre fence is proposed along the northern and western boundaries. A noise impact assessment has been submitted with this application.
74. The assessment takes into account the proposed acoustic screening mentioned above and considers the screening provided by the location and orientation of buildings on the site. Properties to the west of the site will require 2.5m fences around the perimeter boundaries of each plot and the terraced properties along the A321 Twyford Road will have outside living areas that will not be fully screened on the ground floor.
75. Even with mitigation in place there will be some external living areas where the upper guideline value may be exceeded. It is noted that this issue has been highlighted in the representations received. For example in the NW of the site levels will be up to 58dB and the ground floor living areas for the terraced properties along the A321 will range from 51 – 59dB. The report points out that this is an outline application and therefore there is some flexibility in the proposed scheme layout and additional acoustic design features could therefore be implemented. The Environmental Health Officer has recommended that a pre-commencement condition is imposed requiring submission of details of how external living areas will be protected from noise and to ensure, as far

as is reasonably practical to achieve an acceptable level of noise for the external living areas.

76. The noise assessment considers internal noise following recommendations made in BS8233 and WHO guidance. Triple glazing and ventilation will be required in the most exposed parts of the site, however this will rely on closed windows and alternative ventilation. The report suggests that an overheating assessment and noise mitigation design should be considered further at the reserved matters stage. As the proposed scheme is in outline, these are detail matters which will need to be addressed and considered as part of subsequent submissions.

### **Archaeology:**

77. The application site is in an area of high archaeological potential. Policy TB25 of the MDD Local Plan relates to Archaeology. It states:

*Where development is likely to affect an area of high archaeological potential or an area which is likely to contain archaeological remains, the presumption is that appropriate measures shall be taken to protect remains by preservation in situ. Where this is not practical, applicants shall provide for excavation, recording and archiving of the remains.*

78. An archaeological desk based assessment has been submitted with this planning application and this notes that there is potential for archaeological deposits from multiple periods of low, medium and high significance to be present on site.
79. This potential has been evaluated based on the known archaeological deposits from the vicinity, as recorded in the Berkshire Archaeology HER. In particular, finds from field-walking in this area, and discoveries made as part of archaeological evaluation in advance of development of land (known as Matthewsgreen Farm) immediately south west of the proposed site, have shown the potential of prehistoric, Roman, and (early) medieval archaeology of some significance to be preserved below ground in this landscape. The proposed development would have a number of negative impacts on the potential buried archaeological assets, truncating or destroying them completely, resulting in substantial harm to the assets' significance.
80. Berkshire Archaeology have agreed that, given this application is at outline stage, a scheme of Archaeological works by condition, with at least the archaeological evaluation phase to take place prior to any reserved matters applications would be satisfactory.

### **Sustainable Design/Construction:**

81. Core Strategy Policy CP1 requires development to contribute towards the goal of achieving zero carbon development by including on-site renewable energy features and minimising energy and water consumption. This is amplified by MDDL policies CC04: Sustainable design and construction and CC05: Renewable energy and decentralised energy networks and the Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document (May 2010). As the proposal is for residential development of over 1000sqm, Policy CC05 also advises that planning permission will

only be granted for such proposals that deliver a minimum 10% reduction in carbon emissions through renewable energy or low carbon technology.

82. An energy statement has been submitted in support of the application, which sets out the various renewable and low energy technology measures proposed to be used in the design of the development in order to reduce energy demand on site, and as such, reduce CO2 emissions. The potential measures identified include photovoltaics (PV) solar panels, air source heat pumps and an improvement in building fabric efficiency.
83. The submitted sustainability report sets out various potential measures which could be used to achieve a reduction in CO2 emissions in accordance with policy CC05. However, as the submitted layout is indicative, a condition can be used to ensure the submission for approval of an updated sustainability and energy efficiency report which demonstrates that the revised layout would comply with Policy CC05.

#### **Employment Skills:**

84. Policy TB12 of the Wokingham Borough Council MDD, requires planning applications for all major development (both commercial and residential) in Wokingham Borough to submit an employment skills plan (ESP) with a supporting method statement. However, in this instance, the applicant has elected to pay a contribution in lieu of the provision of an Employment Skills Plan and as such, this would be secured within the S106 agreement.

## **CONCLUSION**

### **The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010)**

*In determining this application the Council is required to have due regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application and there would be no significant adverse impacts upon protected groups as a result of the development.*