

Agenda Item 66.

Application Number	Expiry Date	Parish	Ward
230881	15 February 2024	Wokingham	Wescott;

Applicant	Devonshire Metro Limited
Site Address	19-21 Market Place, Wokingham, RG40 1AP
Proposal	Full application for the proposed erection of new mixed used development of 60no. dwellings plus Class E commercial floorspace, associated public and private amenity space, new pedestrian route, 36 car parking spaces, 1 loading bay and cycle space for 115 bikes with 101 for residential in storage spaces. Following demolition of 19 & 20 Market Place and partial retention of 21 Market Place.
Type	Full
Officer	Emy Circuit
Reason for determination by committee	Major application

FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Planning Committee on Wednesday, 14 February 2024
REPORT PREPARED BY	Assistant Director – Place and Growth
RECOMMENDATION	<p>That the Planning Committee authorise the GRANT of PLANNING Permission subject to:</p> <p>A) conditions & informatives as set out in Appendix 1; and</p> <p>B) a S106 agreement to secure the infrastructure set out in Section 16.1 of the appraisal.</p> <p>Should the S106 legal agreement not be completed within three months of the date of this resolution the Planning Committee authorise the Head of Development Management to refuse planning permission due to failure to secure the necessary infrastructure impact mitigation (unless a longer period is agreed by officers on behalf of the Assistant Director – Place and Growth and confirmed in writing by the Local Planning Authority)</p>

SUMMARY

The application site is situated on the north side of the Market Place, in the heart of the Wokingham Town Centre Conservation Area and the Primary Shopping Area. The ground-floor is currently occupied by Edinburgh Woolen Mill, Rober Dyas and Lloyds Bank, with offices on the upper floors. Due to this location the site plays a vital role in both the character and the vitality and viability of the town centre and these are the key planning considerations when assessing proposals for the site.

The existing buildings were constructed during the 1970's, with later extensions - although No 21 retains many features of the building it replaced - and there is a large surface car park to the rear. The Wokingham Town Centre Masterplan SPD assesses the site as

being negative or neutral element within the town centre, in large part due to the 'dead frontage' and surface car park at the rear: it is identified as a long-term opportunity site that has the potential to make a positive contribution to the growth and renaissance of the town centre, which is one of the key aims of the Core Strategy.

It is proposed to retain the front portion of No 21 and demolish the remaining structures, in order to construct a series of interconnected buildings to the rear extending over the existing surface car park. The development would provide four smaller commercial units for town centre uses on the ground-floor, along the Market Place frontage and 60 residential apartments. An arcade (reminiscent of Bush Walk) would lead from the Market Place to a new public square, fronted by the commercial units on two sides and a new access, referred to as "Howard Close" in the application documentation, would continue the pedestrian and cycle connection through the square to Cockpit Path and beyond, as well as providing a secondary access to the site. The primary access would remain through the Cockpit Path car park. The frontage buildings would be three storey and those at the rear of the site would be predominantly three and four-storey, forming a quadrangle, wrapping undercroft car parking on the ground-floor and a private courtyard on the first floor.

The proposals evolved as a result of constructive pre-application discussions (notably the partial retention of 21 Market Place) and have been further revised during the course of the application in response to representations from members of the public and council officers. The main revisions since submission are the relocation of the residential servicing bay to reduce additional movements on Howard Road and improvements to the design of the new access and relationship with the community garden.

There are concerns about specific aspects of the scheme (most significantly the reduction in the floorspace in town centre uses in the primary shopping area, the relationship with the listed building at 2 Denmark Street, the height of one of the buildings and – of concern to residents - increased used of Howard Road) and a viability assessment has been submitted demonstrating that the scheme could not support affordable housing. However, overall it would deliver a high quality, well designed development that would contribute positively to and enhance the character, vitality and viability of Wokingham Town centre providing four new retail units (of a size for which there is most demand) a new civic space and pedestrian connection (enhancing the network of routes and public spaces in the town centre) and a net gain of 60 new homes in a highly sustainable, town centre location (particularly relevant given that council's housing land supply statement shows a material shortfall). The fallback position is for the applicant to implement a prior approval for conversion of the first and second floors from office to residential use. This prior approval scheme does not add any value to the town centre and would result in relatively poor quality accommodation. If implemented, the opportunity would be lost to improve and enhance this part of the town centre for the long term.

The application is before the Planning Committee because it is a new proposal for a major development and recommended for conditional approval.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

Following a series of applications between 1964-1971 the site was redeveloped in the early 1970's, with the upper floors of No 21 replicating - and incorporating some elements of - the façade of the earlier building (B/R/16/71). Various extensions and alterations to

the 1970's buildings have been approved since, including the substantial single-storey, double hipped extension at the rear of 19-20 (95/63008/F, 950136).

During the early 1990's a series of applications for redevelopment of the site for town centre uses of up to four-storeys culminated in an unimplemented planning permission (34409, 35398, 36092 and 38382/38383(F)).

Between 2004-2006 three applications for retention of the ground-floor retail units, with conversion of the offices on the upper floors plus either extensions or a separate building, to provide a total of 36 flats were refused or withdrawn (F/2004/2385 or 041332, F/2005/5304 or 050563 and F/2006/8330 or 060513). The reasons for refusal included the impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area (due to the siting, bulk/mass, scale, roof form, lack of space for structural landscaping and extent of hard surfacing), the impact on trees, highway impact, parking management and failure to secure affordable housing or adequate impact mitigation including the impact upon the SPA.

The most recent application for this site is 212526: prior approval of proposed conversion of first and second floor office accommodation (Use Class E(i)) to 17 no. residential units (Use Class C3), approved 14 September 2021.

223030 Screening Opinion for a mixed-use development of 4 no. commercial and 60 no. residential units with associated landscaping, parking and a new public footpath, following demolition of nos. 19-20 Market Place and partial demolition of no. 21 Market Place, issued 1 November 2022, the proposed development does not constitute Environmental Impact Assessment Development.

Also relevant is application F/2012/0140 for formation of an access and 14 parking spaces, to the rear of 4 and 6 Denmark Street (part retrospective) refused due to the impact on vehicle and pedestrian safety arising from increased use of Howard Road which is substandard in width. Also potential impact on trees.

DEVELOPMENT INFORMATION			
Site area		0.55 hectares	
Proposed dwellings	One-bedroom flat	21	60
	Two-bedroom flat	35	
	Three-bedroom flat	4	
Number of affordable units proposed		None (see sections 2.3 & 16.1)	
Use Class E commercial, business and Service Previous commercial floorspace (GIA)	Previous commercial floorspace (GIA)	Ground-floor retail & financial services	1,469.6m ²
		First-floor office	1,170.6m ²
		Total	2,640.2m ²
Proposed commercial land use (GIA)	Proposed commercial land use (GIA)	513.9m ² ¹	
	Net change	-2,126.3m ²	
Existing parking spaces		74	
Proposed parking spaces		36	
CONSTRAINTS		Major Development Location	

¹ From Drawing No MPW-AI-ZZ-ZZ-SH-A-00 401 Rev P7 *Gross Internal Areas* (revised)

	<p>Wokingham Town Centre Primary Shopping Area Primary Shopping Frontage A Horse Chestnut and group of trees in the community garden to the west of the site are protected under TPO 1661/2018 Wokingham Town Centre Conservation Area Area of Archaeological Potential Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area 5 & 7 km linear mitigation zones Emm Brook Nitrate Vulnerable Zone Wokingham Town Centre Air Quality Management Area</p>
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CONSULTATION RESPONSES	
Berkshire Archaeology	No objection subject to conditions. Section 5 & condition 15 refer.
Fulcrum Pipelines	Note it is highly likely that Fulcrum Pipelines have assets in the vicinity but made no further comments.
Historic England	No objection raised and no advice offered.
Linesearch	Advise that Fulcrum Pipelines, SSEN & SGN have assets in the vicinity.
Natural England	No objection subject to appropriate mitigation of the impact on the SPA and confirmation that the site should be treated as being in the 400 metre-5km mitigation zone. Section 6 refers.
Ramblers Association	No comments received.
Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks	No objections and no conditions recommended. Advise of assets in the vicinity.
SGN	No objections and no conditions recommended. Advise of assets in the vicinity and the need for safe working practices.
South East Water	No comments received.
Thames Water	No objection with regard to waste water network and sewage treatment works infrastructure capacity. Recommend informatives 16-19.
WBC Built Heritage	Built Heritage Officer welcomes the retention of 21 Market Place and the set-back adjacent to 2 Denmark Street but objects to the height and mass adjacent to No 2, which amounts to less than substantial harm, to be weighed against the

	public benefits of the proposals. Other aspects of the proposals are supported from a heritage perspective, subject to conditions. (<i>Officer Note: conditions 8, 9, 6 & 4 and informatives 5 & 6 refer.</i>)
WBC Ecologist	No objection subject to conditions to ensure ecological improvements. Sections 6, 7 & 8 and conditions 10, 14 & 23 refer.
WBC Environmental Health Officer	No objections subject to conditions to secure implementation of noise mitigation measures including hours of work (condition 22), a Construction Environmental Management Plan including an asbestos survey/removal plan (CEMP) (condition 23), lighting design (condition 24) and remediation of unexpected contamination (condition 21).
WBC Estates	Estates are aware of this planning application, which includes land owned by Wokingham Borough Council, but have no comments at this stage
WBC Flooding & Drainage	No objection subject to a condition securing further detail of the drainage system (Condition 25).
WBC Growth & Delivery (policy)	No comments received
WBC Highways Development Management	No objection subject to conditions relating to hours of work (22), parking and turning (30), cycle storage (28), a Demolition and Construction Environmental Management Plan (23), highway construction details (33), access (27), lighting (24), a parking management strategy (31) and a delivery servicing plan (32).
WBC Landscape Officer	Concerns regarding the height of Block C are considered in section 3.5. Otherwise no objection subject to conditions to secure landscaping (condition 10) and tree protection (conditions 12 & 13).
Public Right of Way	Additional information requested about the detail of the proposal would be addressed by condition 26 (Public Right of Way improvements), together with the details of landscaping and boundary treatment (condition 10) and access (condition 27) and servicing and refuse storage (conditions 32 & 29). NB the PRow officer questioned the width of Cockpit path as illustrated on the proposed drawings. Comparison with the

WBC Sustainability	<p>Ordnance Survey base maps suggests that it is in fact that the hedge significantly overhangs the path currently.</p> <p>No objection subject to conditions. Section 14 and conditions 34-37 refer.</p>
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REPRESENTATIONS

Wokingham Town Council: full comments attached. In summary:

The four-storey building is not in keeping with character of area.

Inappropriate access through Howard Road which has safety issues due to the shared surface with pedestrians.

Impact on the Community Garden and residents of Sale Garden Cottages.

Lack of affordable housing.

Local Members:

Current ward member Jane Ainslie objects to the proposal. Full comments are attached. In summary her concerns, which have not been addressed by the revised plans, are:

Reduction in commercial space including loss of Robert Dyas and Lloyds bank

Lack of affordable housing

The imposing impact of a four-storey building, overlooking Sale Garden Cottages and Howard Road

The impact of the building and traffic on the community garden/wildlife

Likelihood of anti-social behaviour in Denmark Place.

The suitability of Howard Road for increased use and the safety implications of this plus the impact on the surface of the road and sewers beneath (the number of deliveries has been underestimated);

Access by emergency vehicles

Use of Cockpit Path car park by visitors to the flats (vans)

Increased risk of damage walls and fences in Howard Road

The suitability of Denton Road, Langborough Road and Murdoch Road for construction traffic

Insufficient parking (poor provision for disabled parking) leading to increased on-street parking, poor provision for disabled parking and insufficient electric charging points.

The assumption that 19-21 Marketplace residents will have access to Howard Road permit places

The revised parking layout at the southern end of Howard Road would result in loss of the space reserved for emergency vehicles by Sale Garden Cottages and compromise access to the two BT boxes.

The proposal for a car club is innovative but where is there evidence that this has been successful in other developments.

Loss or rear servicing/delays caused on on-street servicing

Lack of supporting Infrastructure e.g., Wokingham Medical Centre already struggles.

Lack of community consultation at pre-planning stage

Former ward member Maria Gee considers the proposal – to redevelop an unloved car park - has potential but there are too many objections for it to proceed in this form. Full comments are attached. In summary:

Supports the building design which reflects the design used in Elms Field and makes Market Place more coherent and the provision of an outside square, but has concerns about the height in relation to 2 Denmark Street

The loss of Robert Dyas and the bank are regrettable. While the loss of individual traders is not a planning consideration, the overall loss of commercial floorspace is, although the number of empty retail properties around town is noted. Provision should reflect needs.

The impact on Swift House (access to light) needs careful consideration.

Most of the apartments are spacious but some are barely above minimum space standards and will be dark due to the aspect and overhanging balconies (eg b.01.01, b.03.01, a.01.05 & b.01.05)

No affordable housing is proposed, although the town centre is an optimal place for it

Parking on Howard Road is currently restricted to residents from 8am to 8pm. Consideration should be given to consulting on extending the restriction to 24-hours.

A condition should be imposed preventing residents of 19/21 Market Place from applying for parking permits for Howard Road.

The additional link between Market Place and Cockpit Path is welcomed, particular given the importance of providing safe pedestrian routes for elderly and/or disabled residents of Sale Garden Cottages.

EV provision should be within the development and “Howard Close” made pedestrian only, for safety reasons (and to improve the amenity of the flats facing onto it).

The proposed facilities for cyclists are welcomed. Expectations about car ownership need to change of towns are to become more pedestrian-friendly/effects on climate change are to be reduced and car ownership is lowest among the under 30's (who would be attracted to this development)

The drop off point for personal deliveries should be at the Cockpit Path end of “Howard Close” or preferably in the Cockpit Path car park to reduce disturbance to residents.

The proposed arrangements for disabled car parking (none provided unless required), would be a barrier for disabled people purchasing an apartment in an otherwise accessible location.

There are concerns about the proposed construction routes in particular the Overhangs in Peach Street, the tight corner at the Ship, two-way traffic along Denton Road which has two blind bends; disruption arising from access via Denmark Street (the effect on amenity, the historic town hall and Market Place, trade and pedestrian safety) ; width restrictions on Langborough Road/Murdoch Road; conflict with construction traffic crossing Cockpit Path.

60 objections were received in response to the **original consultation**, including representations from the Wokingham Society & Great Langborough Road Residents' Association. Some do not object to the principle of development but to specific aspects of it.

A **further 20 objections** were received in response to the **consultation on revised and additional information**, three of whom had not commented before.

Consultation on revised and additional information

Some respondents acknowledged the amendments to the application, noting the slight reduction in traffic using Howard Road, but these are not sufficient to address previous objections, in particular in relation to the increased use of Howard Road, the safety of the residents parking space adjacent to Sale Garden Cottages and the additional vehicles crossing Cockpit Path. In addition to reiterating points made in response to the original consultation and summarised below, the following new points were raised:

Although the proposed delivery bay has been relocated from "Howard Close", this would not prevent use of Howard Road as an informal loading bay and refuse collections are still proposed to use this route. *(Officer Note: officers agree, the use of Howard Road cannot be prevented as it is a public highway however it is likely that servicing of shops will occur from the Market Place and most residential deliveries are also unlikely to use Howard Road, instead accessing the site from Denton Road or Sturges Road onto Cockpit Path.)*

The introduction of a loading bay at the entrance to the site would make it narrower and less safe. *(Officer Note: see paragraph 163)*

Bin stores and the refuse presentation point will exacerbate issues with vermin. *(Officer Note: details of the refuse management strategy are set out in section 10.5. There is no reason why this development should generate more issues than the existing site or any other site.)*

It seems unlikely that the occupants of the dwellings on "Howard Close" will all be EV owners. *(Officer Note: The proposed parking strategy is explained in section 11.2.)*

There appears to be no transport report, assessing additional traffic on surrounding roads. The transport statement overestimates the traffic generated by the existing use because the car park is rarely fully occupied. *(Officer Note: the impact on the network is considered in section 10.3.)*

There is no consideration of Public Art *(Officer Note: paragraphs 1.68 & 1.68, plus condition 10 k) refer.)*

There is a request for a public consultation or meeting to discuss these concerns relating to the revised proposals. *(Officer Note: consultation has taken place in accordance with the council's Statement of Community Involvement.)*

The design of the small square is pleasant as is the small alleyway.

Initial consultation

Principle/Need

Some consider the location appropriate but object to the scale of development. Suggestions include implementing the extant prior approval with limited development behind, limiting development to three storey, omission of car parking other than for the disabled and alternative accesses to "Howard Close". *(Officer Note: the application must*

be assessed on its own merits. A preference for an alternative scheme is not a reason to withhold planning permission for an otherwise acceptable proposal.)

There has been enough building/there is no need for additional housing in the town centre (in addition to that built as part of the regeneration, at Elms Field and Wellington Road etc) unless it is affordable for first time buyers. The town centre location will make housing more expensive and out of reach for the majority, especially first time buyers. Nobody wants to live in a town centre and the flats will fall into the rental market as unaffordable properties adding to the already existing problem. The centre of a market town is not an appropriate location for a large residential development of this kind, without provision to support residents. (*Officer Note: planning policy establishes town centre locations as the most sustainable locations for residential development because they provide good access to services and facilities. The acceptability of residential development in this location is considered in section 1 of the appraisal.*)

Some object to the significant reduction in retail floorspace/frontage/loss of existing successful/useful, retail units from a prime location (attractive to high value retail occupants) to make way for unproven, smaller units and consider it would be unacceptable/detrimental to retail provision & employment in the town. Others consider that there are already too many empty retail units and the new commercial units are not needed.

There are excess small/medium size commercial properties: larger scale outlets are required to attract shoppers.

Robert Dyas is the only shop of its type in Wokingham/unlikely to take a much smaller outlet/would be missed.

Loss of one of the major UK banks would be a significant inconvenience to residents, particularly older members of the community who are less able to bank online.

The existing occupiers (Edinburgh Woollen Mill, Robert Dyas and Lloyds Bank) are unlikely to return/are understood to have been offered space in the new development.

The Retail Impact Assessment does not give weight or value to Lloyds Bank as it does not generate revenue.

The Retail Impact Assessment incorrectly states that Peach Street is the new prime location (which discredits the report). It relies on vacancies to demonstrate lack of demand for large units rather than occupational intelligence (what do Robert Dyas say/what interest is being shown in the M&Co unit /Sweaty Betty's preferred location was Market Place).

There is no need for another public amenity space: Howard Palmer Gardens, the Community Garden, Langborough Recreation ground, Peach Place and Elms Field are all nearby.

Squares of the type proposed produce poor retail environments eg at Denmark Street and the entrances to Alexandra Court.

Preferable outdoor dining is already available at other locations (Peach Place or Howard Palmer Gardens)/there are empty units around existing open spaces such as Peach Place and Elms Field/there is no need for more open spaces with cafes/bars/backwater squares with small premises are generally poor retail performers.

Wokingham has no shops of interest, just coffee shops, curry restaurants & charity shops and the town is losing custom because the choice of shops/access is not as good as Bracknell and Reading. The proposal would be another nail in the coffin of the high street/kill what's left of the ghost town of Wokingham. The regeneration killed trade in Denmark Street. A department store would be preferred.

(Officer Note: the impact in terms of town centre policies is considered in section 1 of the appraisal. Preference for an alternative proposal is not a reason to withhold an otherwise acceptable proposal. The Local Planning Authority has no control the use within Use Class E commercial, business and Service - unless specifically restricted by condition and this is only appropriate where dictated by material planning considerations – or over which businesses occupy premisses. The applicant and council have committed to working with the retail occupiers to try and retain them within Wokingham. Informative 4 refers.)

73-100 weeks of disruption to the existing retail outlets (including small businesses), the town and traffic during construction would have a major impact on the town which trying to maximise its potential following major regeneration/is struggling to revitalise after covid restrictions. In the current economic climate this would deter people from visiting, lowering use of the town centre interest in the new completed retail outlets. *(Officer Note: condition 23 would manage disruption to during construction.)*

Character

The proposal is not in keeping with the Market Place/market town character of Wokingham due to:

- Demolition of attractive historic buildings. Whilst not listed and rated by the Town Centre Masterplan SDP as having neutral/negative impact on the townscape, the existing buildings contribute to the traditional, historic character of the Market Place/Wokingham and their loss would be detrimental. The purpose of the Conservation Area is to protect and preserve and the existing buildings should be retained for their heritage, cultural significance and contribution to the Market Place street-scene. *(Officer Note: the contribution that the existing buildings make to the character of the conservation area is considered in section 3.2. No 21 Market Places is identified as making a positive contribution to the character of the area and is proposed to be retained.)*
- The scale, bulk/massing and height of the proposed buildings (four-storey to the boundary, unlike Swift House which uses rooflights/higher than the regeneration/higher than the other historic, frontage buildings and dwarfing 2 Denmark Street) and unattractive intrusive façade represent poor quality design (and construction)/overdevelopment of the site/would be disproportionate to the location and fail to show respect for/understanding of the surrounding buildings or be sympathetic to the existing Market Town character of Wokingham, resulting in an imposing/dominating/ overbearing impact on properties to the rear/Howard Road/Howard Palmer Gardens/Cockpit Car Park/the single-storey Sale Garden Cottages/the community garden. *(Officer Note: these matters are assessed in sections 3.4, 3.5& 9.3 .)*
- Lower heights (maximum three-storey) in keeping with the historic setting and height of surrounding properties and a more modest mass would be more fitting/sympathetic to the historic conservation area. The utilitarian rear extension, car park and access would benefit from re-designing. A smaller scale development that preserved the existing businesses, included affordable housing and better matched parking provision to the number of residents would be a welcome addition to the town centre. *(Officer Note: Preference for an alternative proposal is not a reason to withhold an otherwise acceptable proposal.)*
- The views from Howard Palmer Park and Howard Road are not attractive and there is a precedent of four-storeys on the South side of the town but these factors do not overcome the objections to the proposals.

- Development of this size would be better located elsewhere eg near the station, the council buildings, London Road, Molly Millars Lane) (*Officer Note: each application must be assessed on its own merit and sections 1 & 10.1 establish that the amount of development is appropriate in this location.*);

An illustration in the Design and Access Statement suggests light-coloured brick is intended. (*Officer Note: materials are considered in section 3.5 and condition 6 refers.*)

Wokingham has become overrun with grey windowed properties. These modern overbearing facades, already dominate Elms Field and will change the centre of Wokingham to another non-descript town centre.

Bringing the retail frontages forward to the building lines is welcomed.

The ecology and amenity of the Cockpit Path Community Garden

The size of the building and the increase in traffic movements would be detrimental to the Cockpit Path Community Garden and the mature trees in it, which are valued as an amenity and as a habitat for wildlife including plants, birds, bees and insects. (Also Gipsy Lane Community Garden). (*Officer Note: The impact on ecology and trees considered in sections 7, 8 & 4.1.*)

The impact on the mature, historic hedge that runs adjacent to the proposed development, providing a wildlife corridor should be considered and a preservation order applied to the hedge. (*Officer Note: there would be no direct impact on adjacent hedges, which lie outside the application site .*)

Crime and anti-social behaviour

Crime has increased since the Police Station closed and this would continue with an increase in the number of residences in the town. (*Officer Note: additional dwellings would increase levels of activity and natural surveillance, which would reduce rather than increasing crime.*)

Although the square is proposed to have residential entrance lobbies, overlooking balconies and retail outlets opening onto it, these will not be being used at night time which will encourage night-time congregation and anti-social behaviour/drug & alcohol use (which has been an issue in Howard Palmer Gardens), illustrated by the need for gates. (*Officer Note: the 24 hour presence and surveillance resulting from a mixed use development including flats would reduce the risk of anti-social behaviour. The gates are not proposed to be frequently closed. Paragraph 235 vi) refers.*)

The enclosed car parking could attract unlawful activity. (*Officer Note: as explained in paragraph 181 access to the car park would be restricted to residents with parking in the undercroft area.*)

Residential amenity

The height of the buildings would overshadow/impact on light/the outlook from nearby properties and their gardens including Swift House, 6 Howard Road and Sale Garden Cottages (which are single storey). (*Officer Note: section 9.3 refers.*)

Noise and pollution during construction. (*Officer Note: noise and pollution during construction could be adequately mitigated through a Construction Environmental Management Plan. Section 13 and condition 23 refers.*)

Additional traffic movements on Howard Road and Al fresco dining in the new square could create disturbance (noise from the Red Lion already impacts town centre residents). (*Officer Note: noise is considered in Section 13.1.*)

The proposed flats would be too small/not suitable for family use. (*Officer Note: the proposed housing mix and compliance with internal space standards are considered in sections 2.2 & 9.7.*)

Disturbance during construction

Demolition, earth removal, construction works and associated traffic will cause disturbance (noise and dust) disruption in surrounding roads/for residents of Swift House during the two years build. (*Officer Note: condition 23 would manage disturbance.*)

There is a possibility of telephone lines and electricity supplies being interrupted during construction as happened with the town centre regeneration. (*Officer Note: this is not something that can be controlled through planning.*)

Affordable housing

No affordable homes are proposed and the application is not supported by a case for exemption, which should be resisted in any case as it is contrary to current Government consultations on the

Levelling Up Bill and the National Planning Policy Framework/would give a green light to developers. (*Officer Note: planning policy requirements for affordable housing and viability are considered in sections 2.3 & 16.1 of the appraisal.*)

Infrastructure

The development would strain already overstretched local public services, including medical/GP services (Wokingham Medical Centre) dentists, pharmacies and schools. (*Officer Note: infrastructure impacts are considered in section 16.*)

There are ongoing issues with water pressure. (*Officer Note: South East Water were consulted but have not commented on the application.*)

Parking

Some object to the loss of car parking, others to the creation of more parking in the town centre which is already gridlocked resulting in poor air quality. (*Officer Note: parking is considered in section 11.*)

Too little parking is proposed (36 spaces for 60 dwellings), which would increase demand for town centre parking/on-street parking and therefore disruption in neighbouring streets (Sturges Road, Langborough Road, Crescent Road) where parking is already difficult even with a permit system in place. Many households (particularly young professional couples and families) are likely own more than one vehicle. Every flat should be provided with a parking space. If not needed, they could be loaned to neighbours. The suggestion that residents may park in carparks elsewhere suggests insufficient on-site provision. Transport Statement and the Outline Parking Management Plan identify local public parking spaces, without distinguishing between use by residents and use by visitors. (*Officer Note: proposed residents parking and existing residents' permit spaces are considered in section 11.2.*)

Correspondents are not convinced that low levels of parking would motivate people to use public transport/cycle/walk, particularly as bus and train services would not meet the needs

of anyone working weekends/shifts/unsociable hours/who needs to transport tools for work. The lack of parking would make the flats less adaptable to changes in occupant's circumstances. People would not be willing to pay for a season ticket. It would put people off buying property in the development. *(Officer Note: the sustainability of the location and level of parking and its management are considered in sections 10.1, 10.2 & 11.2 Prospective residents would be aware of the parking provision available and make an informed decision. For some, the benefits of town centre would outweigh the need to own a car.)*

Due to poor cycling infrastructure (lack of cycle lanes in the town centre and traffic flow) and the weather, cycling is primarily a leisure activity and for most residents a car would be essential. The amount of cycle storage proposed is not necessary the size of development. *(Officer Note: cycle provision is considered in section 11.3.)*

Object to the loss of an existing residents permit parking place (which residents have to pay for) and to the possibility of residents of the new development being able to apply for permits, reducing supply for existing residents . Surveys were done on 29 & 30 June so may be affected by summer holidays. *(Officer Note: these issues are considered in section 11.2.)*

The existing permit spaces should not be included in the provision for the new development. *(Officer Note: these spaces are only available to residents of Howard Road and, therefore, the assessment in section 11.2 does not consider them as part of the proposed provision for residents of the new development.)*

Reconfiguration of the residents parking at the southern end of Howard Road would make access to Cockpit Path car park more difficult, compromise access to the two BT boxes, obstruct access to Sale Garden Cottages (including emergency vehicles) and make turning more difficult. *(Officer Note: circulation in this area is considered in section 11.2. The Road Safety Audit did not identify any potential pedestrian collisions in this area.)*

The proposal for a car club is innovative but where is the evidence that this has proved successful in other developments? *(Officer Note: car clubs are widely acknowledged as contributing towards a shift to more sustainable travel patterns, particularly in accessible areas such as town centres. The Council are investigating the possibility of establishing a number of car club spaces within Wokingham town centre to help reduce reliance on private car ownership and provide households with alternatives to car ownership and travel.)*

Concern that there would be a reduction in (on-street) parking for disabled drivers who already have trouble parking. *(Officer Note: Other than the net loss of one residents parking space referred to in section 11.2 there would be no change in on street parking provision.)*

Although it is unlikely to discourage people from purchasing a property, the assessments should be updated to reflect the approved increase in parking charges & extended hours. *(Officer Note: these changes have been noted in assessing the proposals.)*

At Outfield Crescent many cars park on the pavements. *(Officer Note: each application must be assessed on its own merits, against policy at the time, including parking standards. While the development at Outfield Crescent is also a town centre site and has a higher parking ratio (1.3 per dwelling) it has a more suburban character with 30% 3 & 4 bedroom houses and streets within the site provide opportunities for informal, on-street parking, which is not the case with 19-21 Market Place.)*

The number of electric charging points proposed would be insufficient to meet the requirement for all-electric vehicles by 2040. Greater on-site provision should be made together with details of how they would be managed. *(Officer Note: provision of electric vehicle charging is now controlled through building regulations as discussed in section .)*

Access

Access to would be through the surrounding roads – Howard Road plus Murdoch Road (which has a width restriction), Langborough Road (effectively one-way due to parked cars) and Denton Road – which are not designed to accommodate the additional traffic that would be generated by the proposed development, during construction (estimated to be two years) or when occupied. This would exacerbate existing congestion (in Denmark Street etc), particularly at rush hour (and if it coincided with the SWDR/Finchampstead Road works) and may result in additional traffic passing schools. (*Officer Note: traffic generation and access to the site are considered in sections 10.3 & 10.4.*)

The increase in traffic using Howard Road (1-3 deliveries/hour in addition to existing traffic) would be significant and has been underestimated: existing households in Howard Road receive 3.5 deliveries/week and occupants of the proposed development are likely to be younger people who are more likely to use Amazon, online shopping and food delivery companies. It is a narrow, single-lane, urban street/peaceful cul-de-sac (originally a footpath) with no pavement over much of its length (and no space for one), on-street parking, limited passing places and in need of resurfacing (it is Victorian and was constructed as a walkway). It is used as a pedestrian route to the town centre by families with children and older people including residents of retirement homes in Sale Garden Cottages and Murdoch Road (it is preferable to the secluded path behind Howard Road). It can only just cope with existing traffic and the additional traffic generated (large articulated lorries and electric vehicles that cannot be heard) would cause chaos/result in safety issues/compromise access for residents and emergency vehicles (which have sometimes stopped in the street blocking access) and increase the risk of vehicles reversing into Langborough Road where there is a known blind-spot. (*Officer Note: trip generation is considered in section 10.3 and servicing arrangements in 10.5.*)

Increased use of Howard Road would result in more frequent damage to parked cars, walls, fences (especially at the junction with Langborough Road), driveways and to utilities under the road surface (gas and drainage). (*Officer Note: the level of use of Howard Road is considered in section 10.4.*)

Loss of unobtrusive, rear commercial servicing would result in increased loading in Denmark Street/Market Place, adding to congestion/pollution on one of the main routes through the town centre. (*Officer Note: the increase in activity would be insignificant in the context of the Market Place.*)

Use of “Howard Close” for commercial and residential deliveries and refuse collection would result in disruption to local residents (particularly as delivery times in Denmark Square would be restricted, to allow pedestrian use of the square during the day) and it is likely that it would be used as a drop-off for a wider area. (*Officer Note: the increase in activity would not be so significant as to result in a noticeable increase in disturbance. “Howard Close” could only be accessed via Langborough Road/Murdoch Road and Howard Road so would only be attractive to vehicles that were already in the vicinity.*)

Some think access to the commercial premises should be through the Cockpit Car Park, as is currently the case, and traffic should be barred from the proposed “Howard Close”. Others think access through Cockpit Car Park poses risks both to those accessing the site and to those using the car park.

The access from Howard Road would create an additional vehicular crossing over Cockpit Path, reducing the safety of the pedestrian walkway (used by school children, young families, the elderly and less able). There have been a number of accidents in the vicinity. (*Officer Note: There have been no casualty accidents reported here. While there would be*

an additional crossing point the number of moments would be low and section 10.4 explains that appropriate visibility splays would be provided.)

Maintenance vehicles are expected to park in nearby town centre car parks which would not be attractive. Use of Cockpit Path is already difficult/unsafe as the path is blocked by parked vehicles.

The shared space in "Howard Close" would not provide safe pedestrian access. (*Officer Note: section 10.4 refers.*)

Formation of an access to "Howard Close" from Howard Road could create a shortcut along Howard Road, particularly when Langborough Road is busy. Flat dwellers would use Howard Road as a shortcut. (*Officer Note: "Howard Close" would be a cul-de-sac for vehicular traffic and would not provide an alternative route for through traffic.*)

The Emergency Services have not been invited to comment on the proposals. (*Officer Note: access by vehicles of all types, including emergency vehicles is considered by the Highway Officer as part of their assessment of the proposals and is considered in section 10.6.*)

A previous attempt to build a car park in the space now occupied by Cockpit Path Community Garden was rejected for the same reasons (access) (*Officer Note: see the summary planning history.*)

Traffic modelling and management is needed. (*Officer Note: traffic impact is considered in section 10.3.*)

There are already several connections between Cockpit Path/Howard Road and the Market Place, including Red Lion Walk and these could be upgraded. The proposed new connection doesn't add any value. (*Officer Note: see sections 4.2 & 10.2.*)

These plans are ableist and exclusionary because Wokingham does not have a comprehensive 24hr affordable and joined up transport system. (*Officer Note: as explained in sections 10.1 & 11.2 this is one of the most accessible locations in the borough and prospective residents will make an informed decision depending on their circumstances.*)

The planning application makes reference to issues with current layout of the residents parking bays at the end of Howard Road upon domestic refuse collection. There are no issues currently. (*Officer Note: see paragraph 187 .*)

Access to pedestrians will be limited as one of the foot paths will be removed by the community garden. (*Officer Note: it is unclear which footpath is being referred to. No existing routes are proposed to be closed and condition 23 would ensure that pedestrian connectivity would be maintained during construction.*)

Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP)

It is proposed that construction traffic from the A329(M) should approach the site via Denton Road, (a narrow residential street with parked cars and two 90-degree bends) and leave via Denmark Street, Langborough Road (mostly single lane due to residents' parking) and Murdoch Road (where there is a width restriction!). These shortcomings need addressing and raise doubts about the reliability of the rest of the document. (*Officer Note: see paragraph 173 and condition 23.*)

Any construction work (not just noisy work) should be restricted on Saturday afternoons and Sundays. (*Officer Note: see condition 22.*)

Sustainability

In the context of the Council's declared Climate Emergency, the existing buildings should be retained (with their frontages conserved) and adapted for new commercial and residential use rather than being demolished, which is not carbon neutral. (*Officer Note: the application must be assessed on its own merits and there is no planning policy basis for requiring retention of existing buildings for sustainability reasons. Many aspects of the report touch on sustainability, section 14 in particular.*)

Other

The value of properties in Howard Road would decrease. (*Officer Note: property prices are not a planning issue, although the impact upon residential amenity is, and is considered in section 9.3.*)

The Wokingham Society expressed appreciation for the pre-application engagement but others (residents of Howard Road) consider it was inadequate because they (and Sale Garden Cottages) were not directly informed of the public meetings and missed the opportunity to participate. (*Officer Note: the applicant's Statement of Community Involvement sets out the engagement that took place.*)

No public toilets are proposed in Denmark Square. Wokingham is already badly served for public facilities. (*Officer Note: there are public toilets available in Peach Place and through the Local Loo scheme. It would be unusual to provide a public toilet for a commercial development of this size, although depending on the use of the individual units, provision may be made for customers.*)

PLANNING POLICY

National Planning Policy Framework
National Design Guide
National Planning Practice Guidance

Core Strategy (CS)

- CP1 - Sustainable Development
- CP2 - Inclusive Communities
- CP3 - General Principles for Development
- CP4 - Infrastructure Requirements
- CP5 - Housing Mix, Density and Affordability
- CP6 - Managing Travel Demand
- CP7 - Biodiversity
- CP8 - Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area
- CP9 - Scale and Location of Development Proposals
- CP10 - Improvements to the Strategic Transport Network.
- CP13 - Town Centres and Shopping
- CP14 - Growth and Renaissance of Wokingham Town Centre
- CP15 - Employment Development
- CP17 - Housing Delivery

MDD Local Plan (MDD Managing Development Delivery Local Plan)

- CC01 - Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

- CC02 - Development Limits
- CC03 - Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping
- CC04 - Sustainable Design and Construction
- CC05 - Renewable Energy and Decentralised Energy Networks
- CC06 - Noise
- CC07 - Parking
- CC08 - Safeguarding alignments of the Strategic Transport Network & Road Infrastructure
- CC09 - Development and Flood Risk
- CC10 - Sustainable Drainage
- TB05 - Housing Mix
- TB07 - Internal Space Standards
- TB08 - Open Space, Sport and Recreational Facilities Standards
- TB12 - Employment Skills Plan
- TB15 - Major Town, and Small Town/District Centre development
- TB16 - Development for Town Centre Uses
- TB19 - Outdoor Advertising
- TB20 - Service Arrangements and Deliveries for Employment and Retail Use
- TB21 - Landscape Character
- TB23 - Biodiversity and Development
- TB24 - Designated Heritage Assets
- TB25 - Archaeology
- TB26 - Buildings of Traditional Local Character and Areas of Special Character

Other

- Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document
- CIL Guidance + 123 List
- Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document
- Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document
- Wokingham Town Centre SPD

PLANNING ISSUES

1. The principle of development

1.1. *Development proposals*

1. 19-21 Market Place occupy a 0.55 hectare site in the centre of the major development location Wokingham, within the designated town centre, the Market Place primary shopping frontage and primary shopping area, a location that is recognised by the Masterplan SDP as forming part of the town's retail quarter.
2. The site is currently occupied by two shops and a bank with office accommodation above, all of which fall within Class E Commercial, Business and Service use since the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2020. The ground-floor units have a combined Gross Internal Area (GIA) of 1,469.6m² and the offices 1,170.6m², 2,640.2m² in total, although the extant prior approval for conversion of the office space to 17 Class C3, residential flats it is a material consideration. The proposed redevelopment would deliver four class E units with a combined GIA area of 513.9m² and 60 dwellings. This represents a significant reduction of -2,126.3m² compared to the existing situation, reducing to 955.7m² if the fallback of implementing the office-residential conversion is taken into consideration.

1.2. *Housing land supply and the tilted balance*

3. Paragraph 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Development proposals should be approved where they accord with an up-to-date development plan or – where the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date – there is no conflict with NPPF policies protecting areas or assets of particular importance or other adverse impacts that would demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposal when assessed against the NPPF as a whole.
4. On 31 March 2023 the council could demonstrate a deliverable supply of 2,545 dwellings over a five year period housing against Local Housing Need of 795 per annum. This equates to 3.2 years housing land supply. Accordingly the presumption in favour of sustainable development as outlined in NPPF paragraph 11, applies: policies which are considered most important to the determination of planning applications should be considered out of date for decision making and the NPPF tilted balance in the presumption of sustainable development is engaged unless any adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. However, past over delivery should be taken into account when deciding the weight that should be applied to policies under the tilted balance. WBC's position is that policies should be afforded significant weight in light of the strong housing performance, thus tempering the effect of the tilted balance.

1.3. *Appropriateness of the proposed commercial use in this location*

5. The general thrust of current Government policy is to support the diversification of town centres, reducing the reliance on retail and encouraging the introduction of other uses to support their long term vitality and vitality.

6. Consistent with NPPF paragraph 90, the Development Plan establishes a hierarchy of town centres, defines the extent of town centres and primary shopping areas and identifies sites for town centre uses.
7. Core Strategy policy CP9 *Scale and Location of Development Proposals* identifies Wokingham as a Major Development Location: one that offers a good range of facilities and services, accessible by a choice of modes of transport and are capable of accommodating major development. Furthermore, Core Strategy policy CP13 *Town Centres and Shopping*) identifies it as the only major town centre in the borough, the role of which is to serve the convenience needs of its catchment.
8. To fulfil this role, reduce leakage of comparison expenditure to other centres, maintain the town's position in the Berkshire retail hierarchy and to meet the needs of local people, including residents of the new SDLS, Core Strategy policy CP14 *Growth and Renaissance of Wokingham Town Centre*, amplified by the Wokingham Town Centre Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), identify the town centre as suitable for growth. Proposals should strengthen shopping in the retail core to reduce leakage of expenditure, conserve and enhance historic quality and interest; improve existing public space; and cumulatively provide and maintains a wide range of services and facilities, complimenting existing provision and contributing to daytime and evening uses. These could include housing, office accommodation, public open space (providing for a range of activities) and leisure and entertainment.
9. The limited retail core (centred around Market Place and including 19-21, and Denmark Street) is recognised as a constraint. To achieve the aim of a thriving town centre, it should be strengthened and extended. The Masterplan establishes a town centre retail strategy based on a coherent retail circuit: Market Place and Denmark Street form a 'high street' connecting anchor developments at Peach Place and Elms Field. A number of opportunity sites are identified, development of which will contribute to the renaissance of the town centre: these include the key sites at Peach Place and Elms Field, both of which have already been delivered along with improvements to the Market Place (identified in the *Wokingham Public Realm Design & Delivery Strategy*, July 2013), the redevelopment of the railway station and the redevelopment of the Carnival Pool site which is also largely complete. 19-21 Market Place form part of a "Denmark Street Backland" long-term opportunity site.
10. Consistent with NPPF paragraphs 91 & 94, MDDL policy TB16 *Development for Town Centre Uses* is concerned with directing new commercial floorspace to the most appropriate locations and - since the site lies within the primary shopping area - there is no requirement for a sequential test or retail impact test.
11. Development of this long-term opportunity site for a mix of Class E, town centre and residential uses, incorporating a new public space, is very much in line with the aim of rejuvenating the town centre as set out in the preceding paragraphs. However, the proposal would result in a significant reduction in the area of class E uses (see paragraph 2) from a primary shopping frontage within the primary shopping area, contrary to the objectives of Core Strategy policy CP13 & MDDL policy TB15 *Major Town, and Small Town/District Centre Development*, to maintain or increase the amount of retail provision in primary shopping frontages.

12. The application is accompanied by a retail impact assessment which seeks to demonstrate that, in this case, the reduction in class E floorspace would not be detrimental to the vitality and viability of the town centre. The retail impact assessment has been reviewed by an independent retail specialist on behalf of the council. Both reports refer to the council's 2017 retail assessment (the Western Berkshire Retail & Commercial Leisure Study) and the council's advisor has also been able to draw on their knowledge derived from preparation of the council's, soon to be published, 2023 retail update. The council's advisor is broadly satisfied that the justification that has been submitted is robust and the proposal would not harm the vitality and viability of the town centre.
- 1.4. *Loss of class E floorspace and the impact on town centre vitality and viability*
13. Retail and town centres in general remain fragile as a result of the current cost of living crisis and the continued shift towards online shopping (which is above UK average levels in the Wokingham area). The 'health' of Wokingham town centre is strong and has benefited from the recent improvements which have introduced additional, modern class E floorspace into the town centre, attracted new retail and leisure operators and diversified the overall offer of the centre. Wokingham town centre is attracting higher levels of comparison goods spending as a result and now captures a greater proportion of spend from its catchment.
14. The loss of 955.7m² floorspace from the primary shopping frontage, is significant in the context of a relatively small, compact town centre such as Wokingham. However, to understand the impact of this loss on the vitality and viability of the town centre, it is necessary to consider the impact on turnover and on the variety of premises available.
- 1.5. *Comparison floorspace & turnover*
15. At the time of the 2017 study, there was a small requirement for additional comparison goods floorspace in Wokingham by 2036.
16. Since adoption of the Core Strategy and the council's 2017 retail study the regeneration has enhanced the quality of the environment of the town centre and - as is common across town centres nationally - there has been retailer 'churn', often driven by retailers reducing the number of stores as online shopping increased. Despite the new floorspace delivered in the opportunity sites, the overall amount of comparison goods floorspace in the town centre has decreased, reflecting national trends of diversification away from comparison goods retail and towards a broader town centre commercial offer. While Wokingham town centre continues to have a significant retail function, and that this remains a key reason why residents are visiting the centre, it also has a significant leisure function.
17. The 2023 retail study shows there is no requirement for additional comparison goods floorspace in Wokingham over the period to 2031 (and also indicatively no requirement over the longer term to 2041).
18. The proposal would result in 1.5% reduction in amount of comparison goods space in the town centre compared to 2017 or 2.0% compared to existing comparison floorspace (which has decreased since 2017). However, following the introduction of class E, it is somewhat academic to consider floorspace in any particular category, as this will fluctuate in line with occupier 'churn'.

19. The proposal would still provide 'shopfronts' onto the Market Place and additional commercial frontages onto the proposed new square.
20. Notwithstanding the reduction in comparison floorspace, comparison goods turnover has increased significantly. The retail impact assessment considers the turnover of the existing and proposed units and the contribution this makes to the turnover of the town centre as a whole. In percentage terms, the impact of the proposed development would have a maximum potential impact against the town centre retail turnover of -0.5%, which would not cause concern and is therefore considered acceptable.

1.6. *The size of commercial units*

21. Given the increased flexibility provided by class E, the council's retail advisor considers it more useful to consider the range of unit sizes across the town centre. A range of unit sizes will support as broad a range of town centre uses, in line with the trend for diversification of town centres.
22. A review of current stock (based on 2022 data) shows that the majority (83.4%) of the floorspace in Wokingham town centre is below 300m² (based on 2022 data). The existing units are in the 400-500m² floorspace bracket which represents 2.8% of the current stock. The proposed units would fall in the under 100m² bracket (38% of existing stock falls in this bracket) or 100-199m² (35% of current stock), adding to what is already the dominant form of commercial premises. This would result the range of unit sizes available in the town centre. However, occupancy levels of smaller units are high, indicating that demand for them is strong.
23. The applicant has also suggested that the existing units are too large for modern retailing, with significant back of house areas resulting in relatively high rental costs and business rates compared to useable retail space. Due to the store sizes, quality and condition, they consider the potential for re-letting these units should they become vacant is poor. The council's advisor agrees that recent increases in operational efficiency have reduced storage requirements for some retailers but they do not consider the units excessively large for a centre of Wokingham's role and function. They have not investigated internal constraints and given the considerations in paragraph 22 it is not necessary to consider this further.

1.7. *Conclusion regarding the commercial elements of the proposal*

24. The reason that Core Strategy policy CP13 and MDDL policy TB15 resist the loss of retail floorspace from primary shopping frontages is to maintain vitality and viability.
25. While retail remains a significant contributor to overall town centre vitality and viability, a centre's 'health' is supported by a broader variety of other uses than has historically been the case, as reflected in the recent introduction of Use Class E. The health of the town centre is good and, while the proposal would result in a reduction in class E floorspace it has been demonstrated that comparison goods turnover has increased recently, despite a reduction in comparison floorspace (the office space on the upper floors would be lost if the prior approval were implemented in any case). The proposal would also reduce the range of unit sizes available but provide smaller units for which there is strongest demand. The

council's retail advisor is satisfied that the loss of retail from the primary retail frontage would not compromise the vitality and viability of the town centre. Since the publication of the Local Plan and the 2017 retail study, the trend is away from larger units both locally and nationally. The proposals, which would offer flexible modern units, are more robust and more likely to endure in challenging economic environments and as such are considered acceptable.

1.8. Residential use

26. While the majority of the borough's housing needs for the plan period will be met within four Strategic Development Locations (Core Strategy policy CP17 *Housing Delivery*) a proportion is to be met on sites in Major Development Locations. Although the site is not allocated, Core Strategy policies CP14 and MDDL policy TB15 *Major Town, and Small Town/District Centre Development* are supportive self-contained dwellings (including live-work units) in town centre locations, where appropriate amenity can be provided because of the contribution this makes to town centre vitality. This is consistent with NPPF paragraph 90 which recognises the role of residential development in ensuring the vitality of centres and encourages residential development on appropriate sites. Accordingly the residential element of the proposal is acceptable in principle.

1.9. The fallback position

27. The fallback position is also relevant. Implementation of the prior approval for conversion of the first-and second floor office accommodation to 17 residential units would not deliver the significant improvements to the character of the town centre offered by the application currently under consideration, as set out in section 3 nor the new pedestrian route and public square. The contribution towards housing delivery would be less than one third of that currently proposed, also without affordable housing and it is unlikely that any CIL would be payable (although the new dwellings would be CIL liable, this would be off set against the existing floorspace). If implemented, the prior approval would increase value of the site making redevelopment less viable and therefore, reducing the probability of the site coming forward for redevelopment and preventing any opportunity to improve the character and appearance of the town centre in this location.

2. Housing density, mix and tenure

28. Core Strategy policy CP5 Housing mix, density and affordability requires a mix and balance of densities, dwelling types, tenures and sizes.

2.1. Making efficient use of land

29. NPPF paragraphs 128 & 129 establish that development should make efficient use of land, delivering an uplift in density (particularly in sustainable, urban locations) and make optimal use of the potential of each site (especially where there is a shortfall of land to meet housing needs, as is currently the case in Wokingham) while creating beautiful and sustainable places.
30. The density of development should be design led (Borough Design Guide principle R10), incorporating a mix of densities (Core Strategy policy CP5 *Housing mix, density and affordability*) and utilising the potential of the site to incorporate complementary uses (Core Strategy policy CP3 *General Principles for Development*). In this case the primary considerations are achieving a mix of uses

that support the vitality and viability of the town centre (sections 1.3-1.7 1 of the appraisal) and character, given the sensitive location, within the Wokingham Town Centre Conservation Area and the setting of a number of listed buildings (see section 3). Since these sections of the appraisal conclude that the proposal would overall be beneficial to the town centre and future residents would be provided with a good standard of amenity (section 9) in a highly sustainable location (section 10.1) the proposal can be considered to achieve an appropriate mix of uses and density of development.

2.2. Dwelling mix

31. Core Strategy Policy CP5 *Housing mix, density and affordability* and MDDL Policy TB05 *Housing Mix*, seek a mix and balance of dwelling types and sizes, having regard to both the underlying character of the area and the current and projected needs of households. The most up-to-date information on market housing mix is in the *Wokingham Borough Local Housing Needs Assessment 2019 Report of Findings* (January 2020), which recommends the market housing mix below. The proposal includes a significantly larger proportion of smaller dwellings compared to the target mix. However, the provision of smaller homes is consistent with the aim of making efficient use of land in a sustainable location and town centre locations and is likely to be balanced by a bigger proportion of larger, family homes being delivered in more suburban locations.

Dwelling size	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4+ Bed
Proportion of market housing	5 – 10%	5-10%	40 – 50%	35-40%
proposed mix	35% (21 flats)	58 % (35 flats)	7% (4 flats)	0%

2.3. Affordable and specialist housing

32. Core Strategy policy CP5 *Housing mix, density and affordability* requires residential development include a proportion of affordable housing, subject to viability.
33. The proportion varies depending on the size of the development, location and whether the land was previously developed: in this case more than 15 or more dwellings (net) are proposed on a previously developed site of more than 0.5 hectares, within a major development location and the policy requirement would be for 30% affordable homes. However, the application is accompanied by a viability assessment, which demonstrates that affordable housing cannot be supported in this case due to the high costs of redevelopment of this site (see section 16.1). Although unfortunate, in this instance, the absence of affordable housing is outweighed by the considerable benefits to the vitality and viability of the town centre and the contribution towards overall housing delivery in a highly sustainable location.

2.4. Specialist housing

34. In accordance with Core Strategy Policy CP2 *Inclusive Communities* new development should meet the needs of the aging population and people with special needs, among others, and MDDL policy TB05 *Housing Mix* requires a proportion of housing (determined on a site-by-site basis) to be built to Lifetime Homes standards (now Building Regulations M4(2) standard, Accessible and Adaptable

Dwellings). It is proposed that all the proposed dwellings would be built to this standard and this would be secured by the S106 agreement (see section 16).

3. Character & built heritage

35. The NPPF establishes “*the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places*” as a fundamental aim of the planning process. Good design is essential to this. Development should function well and add to the overall quality of the area; be visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and landscaping; be sympathetic to local character and history (while not preventing appropriate change such as increased densities); establish or maintain a strong sense of place; optimise the potential of the site to accommodate an appropriate amount and mix of development (including public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.
36. There is also a National Design Guide: Planning practice guidance for beautiful, enduring and successful places (October 2019).
37. Core Strategy policies CP1 *Sustainable Development* and CP3 *General Principles for Development* establish an overarching requirement for high quality design that maintains or enhances the high quality of the environment. Development should be appropriate in scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area; protect amenity; and provide an attractive, functional, accessible, safe, secure and adaptable environment. Buildings and spaces should contribute to a sense of place in themselves and in the way they integrate with their surroundings including the use of appropriate landscaping.
38. The NPPF (paragraphs 133-134) promotes the use of Design Codes as a local framework for creating beautiful and distinctive places with a consistent and high quality standard of design. Although the council does not yet have Design Codes in place, the Borough Design Guide provides guidance on general principles for good design (section 4 in particular) and Core Strategy policy CP14 *Growth and Renaissance of Wokingham Town Centre* seeks, amplified by the Wokingham Town Centre Masterplan SPD provide specific guidance to achieve enhanced environmental and design quality in the town centre.
39. In addition to general character considerations, the impact on heritage assets must be assessed. The application site is situated in the Wokingham Town Centre Conservation Area and while the buildings on the site are not themselves listed, about half the buildings around the Market Place, including the neighbouring properties – 22 Market Place and 2 Denmark Street – are. The relationship with these is considered in sections 3.1-3.4.

3.1. Character of the Market Place

40. While neither of the buildings on the application site is listed, they are situated in the Wokingham Town Centre Conservation Area. The *Wokingham Town Centre and Langborough Road Conservation Areas Study* and the Masterplan SPD place them in the Market Place character area, which is focussed on the grade II* Town Hall, an important landmark in the town centre and the wider area with its spire being visible

in longer views from around the town. Roughly half of the buildings around the Market Place – including the neighbouring properties, 22 Market Place and 2 Denmark Street - are listed and a predominantly fine grain of development survives, characterised by narrow frontages and long, deep plots. Building heights are predominantly two or three-storey - consistent with the town centre as a whole - with some localised variation in scale and varied roof forms creating variation and animation in the local roofscape.

41. The twentieth century redevelopment to the north and southeast of Market Place – including the application site - has failed to respect this historic pattern and the Masterplan SPD identifies the site as a whole as a negative or neutral element with a ‘dead frontage’ at the rear. However, not all parts of the site are of equal merit and the Market Place frontage - No 21 in particular - exhibits greater quality than the rear of the site and makes a positive contribution to the conservation area.

3.2. *The contribution made by the existing development*

42. The existing buildings date from the 1970’s and exhibit two markedly different architectural forms.
43. **21 Market Place** is a three-storey building with a recessed colonnade at ground floor level. While not itself historic or listed, it closely replicated the Georgian frontage of the building it replaced, incorporating elements of the original building including historic entrance door with its pillared door surround and ornate, decorative fanlight detail. The building contributes positively to the setting of the adjoining listed building, 22 Market Place and to the traditional character and appearance of the wider Market Place and conservation area. In a constructive response to the advice of the built heritage officer, it is proposed to retain and incorporate the front portion of the building in the development.
44. **19-20 Market Place** is a three-storey, flat-roofed building with a deeply set-back upper floor, which reduces the impact in the street scene, particularly in acute views from Peach Street and Denmark Street. The first floor comprises a series of concave projecting bays set between recessed, V-shaped panels that extend down to ground level, forming columns that divide the retail frontages. This distinctive frontage has a degree of architectural interest and, having been in place for half a century, has become established within its Market Place setting. The articulation of its front elevation, the recessed second floor and the rebate which allows the north-eastern flank of 2 Denmark Street to remain exposed (and visible in short views), respect the adjoining listed building, which is a relatively small scale, three-storey structure.
45. In common with many of the adjacent building plots on the south-western side of Market Place, the application site extends well back from the frontage buildings reflecting historic burgage plots, although these have been combined. The existing structures (functionally the backs of the buildings) do not have any historic value and the open views of them, across the car park are a negative aspect of the conservation area. The applicant has also mentioned that parking area is prone to regular antisocial behaviour.

3.3. *The proposed development*

46. It is proposed to retain the front portion of No 21 but redevelop the rear of the building and 19-20, as well as building on the existing surface car park, to provide three interconnected buildings. Block A would be a three-storey building, extending across the Market Place frontage with four, flexible units for town centre uses on the ground floor and flats above. An arcade (reminiscent of Bush Walk) would lead to a new public square, fronted by the commercial units on two sides. A new access, referred to as “Howard Close” in the application documentation, would continue the pedestrian and cycle connection through the square to Cockpit Path and beyond. There would also be limited vehicular access along this route, via Howard Road, which is considered in section 3.4.
47. Blocks B and C would be a mix of three and four-storey, located towards the rear of the site on the existing surface car park. On the ground-floor secure undercroft parking would be wrapped in residential development, providing active frontages on all sides. On the first floor an internal, landscaped courtyard (on the podium over the car park) would provide a private amenity space for residents.



48. There would be three distinct elements to the Market Place elevation of Block A, reflecting the historic grain and rhythm of the Market Place, mentioned in paragraph 40.



3.4. *The impact on the Market Place frontage and the setting of the adjacent listed buildings*

49. In addition to the requirement for high quality design outlined in paragraphs 35-38, Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 establishes a statutory duty to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings or their setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess.
50. Consistent with this, section 16 of the NPPF requires consideration to be given to the particular significance of any heritage assets, including any contribution made by their setting. Similarly, Core Strategy Policy CP3 *General Principles for Development* and MDDL policy TB24 *Designated Heritage Assets* establish that development should not have a detrimental impact on important heritage features and works affecting heritage assets or their setting should conserve and, where possible, enhance their character and special architectural or historic interest.
51. From a heritage perspective, the most important aspect of the scheme is the Market Place component, in terms of the effect on the setting of the adjoining listed buildings (22 Market Place and 2 Denmark Street) and the character and appearance of the conservation area.
52. The proposed Market Place elevation comprises of three distinct elements, all three-storey. The elegant 'Georgian' front portion of 21 Market Place would be retained, with the ground-floor colonnade filled in to more closely reflect the historic form of the building. The central section would have a parapet and shallow hipped roof behind with regularly spaced, vertically oriented windows, reflecting the design and proportions of the many Georgian facades in the town centre. The section adjacent to 2 Denmark Street would have a double-gable fronting the street, also echoing historic roof forms found in the town centre.
53. The overall composition of the Market Place frontage reflects the rhythm and variety of the traditional buildings in Market Place and is a positive aspect of the proposals overall.
54. Due to the retention of No 21 there would be little change to the immediate setting of **22 Market Place** (grade II listed). However, the Built Heritage Officer has raised concern about the relationship with **2 Denmark Street**. No 2 is a three-storey building but small scale (8.6 metres to the ridge), with the second-floor accommodation largely contained within the roof. The increase in height proposed, in particular the significantly taller gabled roof (9 metres to the eaves and 12.3

metres to the apex), would be somewhat overbearing, to the detriment of the setting of the designated heritage asset. This reflects a trend for new development to be taller and of greater massing than the buildings they replace, incrementally having an impact on the traditional form and character of locations such as Market Place. However, the harm caused would be less than substantial and NPPF paragraph 208 advises that “*where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.*” Variation in height and roof form is a common characteristic of the town centre and significant juxtapositions in height are found elsewhere. It is not uncommon for the ridge of one building to be similar in height to the eaves of an adjacent building. While the proposed difference would be slightly more marked than is generally the case, the separation between the building frontages (1.5 metres) would assist and the harm would be outweighed by the significant improvements in the quality of development across the site as a whole.

55. The existing building appears to adjoin 2 Denmark Street, as would its proposed replacement. The application is accompanied by a structural engineering statement which identifies the need for more detailed investigation to establish what measures may be necessary to ensure the stability of 2 Denmark Street and avoid harm during demolition and construction. Depending on the scope of such measures, separate listed building consent may be required. Condition 8 and informative 5 refer.
56. The residential development proposed to the rear of the Market Place clearly ties in with the architectural language and materials of the recently completed developments at Elms Field and Peach Place, which were themselves grounded in a detailed assessment of the character of the town centre. There is potential for the taller elements to be visible above the roofline of the frontage elements in long views across Market Place. However, the applicant’s Heritage Statement evidences that there were historically substantial ancillary buildings to the rear, of greater height than those on the frontage and, in heritage terms, there are no issues with respect to the conservation area setting of the site (or that of the setting of the neighbouring Murdock Road Conservation Area).

3.5. *The character of the southern part of the site*

57. As explained in paragraph 45, the southern part of the site is very much a negative element within the Conservation Area, with views of the unsightly backs of the commercial units across the expanse of the surface car park and no landscaping to soften its appearance.
58. Section 4 of the Borough Design Guide establishes that development should achieve an interconnected network of streets and spaces, with clear distinction between public and private areas, best achieved through layouts based on perimeter blocks (Design principles R3, R4 & R5). The proposals follow this approach with the buildings defining the two courtyards, one public and the other private, contained within the centre of Blocks B & C. In line with Borough Design Guide Design Principle R6 there would be active frontages onto ‘Denmark Court’, ‘Howard Close’ and Cockpit Pat, providing natural surveillance and generating activity, which would contribute to safety and attractiveness of the public realm.

59. The buildings on the rear of the site would be a combination of three and four-storey, with the three-storey elements being about 12.5 metres to the ridge line and the taller, four-storey elements extending to a maximum of 15.5 metres to the ridgeline. As can be seen below, this is approximately the same as Swift House, which extends to 15 metres to the ridge.
60. While generally supportive of the proposals, the landscape officer has raised concern about one aspect of the design: development would extend further back into the site than is currently the case and this, combined with the height of the eastern corner of Block C, would cause that part of the building to be visually dominant from the footpath and not in keeping with the character of the existing domestic scale of the existing development to the south.
61. While development of a currently open area would inevitably change the character, the site is within the town centre and the proposal has an urban character, appropriate to the town centre location. The four storey element would be 34 metres from 6 Howard Road and 28 metres from Howard Palmer Gardens (itself within the town centre boundary), separated from them by the Cockpit Path car park. This separation would be sufficient to prevent the relatively large scale of the development on the application site contrasting unduly with the more domestic, suburban scale of the development outside the town centre boundary to the south. The impact that the loss of five units would have on the viability of the scheme (see section 16.1) is also a consideration.

Existing rear elevation



Proposed rear elevation.



62. The design of the buildings has been informed by an assessment of the character of the town centre, with variation in height, repeating gables and modern interpretation of bay windows reflecting the grain and varied roof forms of the town centre, as well as breaking up the mass of the buildings. The section below shows sunken, flat roof areas where plant (including that required to meet sustainability targets) could be discreetly located without an adverse impact on the conservation area.



63. The proposed palette of materials would also reflect the historic character of the town, helping the new development assimilate to its surroundings. Conditions 3, 4, 6 & 7 would require submission of further detail including brickwork detailing, joinery details and materials.
64. Car parking, refuse and cycle storage would all be integrated within the buildings, avoiding the clutter that can often detract from the quality of development.
65. Overall the proposal represents a high quality design that would enhance the character of conservation area and the area more generally.

3.6. Shopfronts and signage

66. MDDL policy TB19 *Outdoor advertising* and Section 7.8 of the Borough Design Guide provide guidance on shopfronts and signage. Shop fronts should respond positively to the design of the building as a whole, using high quality, sustainable materials compatible with the character of the building and surrounding area, fitting well in the street scene, including adjacent buildings. Signage should generally be positioned on the fascia.
67. The proposed elevations are supplemented by a Commercial Shop Front Study and a commercial arcade study, which demonstrate how features of traditional shopfronts can be successfully incorporated into contemporary buildings in a way that is appropriate to the Market Town character of Wokingham. Condition 4 would ensure high quality detailing of joinery.

3.7. Public art

68. There is no planning policy requirement to deliver public art in conjunction with new development (outside the SDLs). However, the Town Centre Masterplan (paragraph 8.7.1) acknowledges the potential for art to enhance wayfinding, provide a sense of identity and strengthen key routes. Consistent with this, the landscaping

proposals identify opportunities for public art to be integrated in the paving in the arcade and on the boundary wall with 2 Denmark Street. Condition 10 k) refers.

3.8. *Integration of commercial plant*

69. Given the sensitive setting described in section 3.1, it is important to give early consideration to how equipment such as air conditioning, extraction and other services and associated with the commercial uses and that required to meet energy use and carbon reduction targets (see section 14.1 can be discreetly and effectively integrated into the development (without harm to visual or residential amenity). The section in section below shows how the roof design would achieve this and condition 17 would limit plant to these zones unless otherwise agreed.



4. **Landscape**

70. Core Strategy policy CP1 *Sustainable Development* and CP3 *General Principles for Development* established a requirement for high quality of design that respects its context and maintains or enhances the quality of the environment. This includes the way development integrates with its surroundings and the use of appropriate landscaping.

4.1. *Trees and landscaping*

71. The NPPF (paragraphs 135-136) recognise the important contribution trees make to the character and quality of urban environments and encourages incorporation of trees in appropriate and effective landscaping.
72. Consistent with the aims of Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP3, MDDL policy CC03 *Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping*, supported by Borough Design Guide Design Principle R14, require new development to retain and protect existing trees, hedges and other landscape features as well as incorporating high quality, ideally, native planting and landscaping.
73. Although there are no trees within the site, there are a number growing adjacent to the northern-eastern boundary and south-western boundary including those growing within the community garden some of which are protected by TPO 1661/2018. A 1.1 metre high wall is proposed on the boundary with the community garden, which would provide a robust, high quality boundary treatment separating the community garden from the thoroughfare while providing intervisibility, allowing the garden to be appreciated by passers by providing natural surveillance. Sections of the wall in the root protection area of the TPO trees are proposed to be bridged by a concrete lintel. The parking bays along 'Howard Close' would be interspersed with street trees, breaking up the expanse of hard surfacing and helping the relationship with

the community garden. Narrow planting beds are proposed in front of the apartments along “Howard Close” and Cockpit Path which would have amenity value and help protect the privacy of occupants. The planting proposals include trees in these beds and the choice of tree species would need to be carefully considered to ensure any trees survive in the long term and avoid conflict with the building as they mature.

74. ‘Denmark Square’ would be enclosed by buildings on three sides and a two metre wall on the fourth side consistent with its courtyard character. High quality paving is proposed around a central tree, an approach that would work well given the proposed use of this space. (NB the swept path analysis mentioned in paragraph 157 takes the tree into account).
75. Similar to “Howard Close”, a 1.1 metre wall is proposed on the north-eastern boundary, rising to two metres further into the site (adjacent to the Red Lion car park) completing the enclosure of the undercroft car park and balancing privacy, security and surveillance.
76. The landscaping of the podium would consist of low-level native wildflowers and occasional trees.
77. An Arboricultural Survey and Arboricultural Impact Assessment have been submitted, which include construction demonstrate that the existing trees could be successfully retained. Conditions 12 & 13 would secure protection of existing trees and condition 10 would secure further detail the landscaping including suitable rooting systems for new trees and the planting on the podium.

4.2. Civic space

78. NPPF paragraph 135 requires an appropriate mix of development including public space and the Development Plan (Core Strategy policy CP3 g) *General Principles for Development* and MDDL policy TB08 *Open Space, sport and recreational facilities standards for residential development*) establish requirements for new development, including 0.01 hectares/1,000 population of civic space. Generally only large, strategic sites generate sufficient demand for a meaningful civic space to be provided on site and the provision is met through CIL. However, in this case, a new, 487m² courtyard (including the arcade) forms part of the proposals (compared to a policy requirement of only 14m²).
79. The proposed provision of an arcade and small town courtyard is consistent with the public realm appraisal in the Masterplan SPD, which identifies a clear hierarchy of streets and spaces – with the Market Place as the primary focus - reflecting the historic pattern: incidental spaces, alleys and cut-throughs are distinctive element of the town’s historic character (3.3.13 & 8.3.5) and paragraph 8.5.10 proposes a series of urban courtyards to strengthen the town centre’s historic network of backland routes and spaces. *“These spaces will provide intimate public spaces, with active frontages such as shop windows, entrances and doorways designed to encourage activity and natural surveillance; a focus for pedestrian routes through the town centre improving legibility and permeability for the pedestrian; and a high quality setting for eating and drinking and local shopping within the town centre.”*
80. The proposed provision of a new arcade and courtyard, together with the connection between the Market Place and Cockpit Path accords with the SPD

guidance: the courtyard would complement the commercial units within the development - providing scope for activity to spill outside in a quiet, traffic free environment – and the larger public squares nearby at Market Place, Peach Place and the green space at Howard Palmer Park. The quality of the architecture and the natural surveillance afforded by the commercial and residential properties within the development (there would be active frontages along the arcade, around the square and along “Howard Close”) would provide a safe and attractive environment. It would make a positive contribution to the vitality of the town centre and to the package of benefits offered by the proposals (see section 16 vi)).

5. Archaeology

81. Core Strategy Policy CP3 *General Principles for Development* establishes that development should not have a detrimental impact upon heritage assets. This is amplified by MDDL Policy TB25 *Archaeology* which, consistent with NPPF paragraph 200, requires developments in areas of high archaeological potential to provide an assessment of the impact of the development upon archaeological remains and to secure preservation in situ or - where this is not practical - excavation, recording and archiving of remains. This is in accordance with Paragraph 205 of the NPPF(2021).
82. The site is located in the medieval core of Wokingham and is identified by Berkshire Archaeology’s Historic Environment Record as having archaeological potential, in particular for Medieval remains. This is confirmed by the Archaeological Desk Based Assessment submitted with the application.
83. Well preserved archaeological remains have been found at the rear of other properties facing onto the Market Place and the application site includes areas which do not appear to have been subjected to development, other than hard standing, over the last 150 years. Therefore, any Medieval or earlier remains, including possible burgage plot and backland activity in the south of the site, may be well preserved. Areas with previous basements may have removed any archaeological evidence, however the rest of the plot has significant potential.
84. In view of the nature and scale of the development and the low likelihood of the potential archaeology, should it exist, meriting preservation in situ, an archaeological Scheme of Works, to include trial trenching, would represent an appropriate initial phase of investigation in order to determine the archaeological potential, levels of previous truncation, and the need for any further phases of work. Given that the site falls within an area of archaeological significance and archaeological remains may be damaged by ground disturbance for the proposed development, condition 15 would secure a programme of archaeological work.

6. Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area

85. The Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area was designated under European Directive due to its importance for heathland bird species. Southeast Plan Policy NRM6 Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area and Core Strategy policy CP8 Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area establish that – alone or in combination – new residential development within a 7km zone of influence is likely to contribute to a significant impact upon the integrity of the Special Protection Area and is, therefore, required to provide avoidance and

mitigation measures in the form of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and Strategic Access Monitoring and Management (SAMM).

86. The whole site is within the 7km zone of influence and the southern half (roughly) is within the 5km zone of influence, so there is a requirement to secure both SANG and SAMM.
87. As the site is not part of a designated Strategic Development Location, the impact could be mitigated through a contribution to strategic SANGs (likely to be at Rooks Nest Wood SANG, subject to SANG capacity). The SANG contribution would be met through the CIL payments for the site, with the relevant proportion ring-fenced through a S106 agreement, together with an occupancy restriction preventing first occupation until the payment has been made.
88. For sites within the 5km zone of influence, the ringfenced amounts would be: £1,567.98 per one-bedroom dwelling; £2,049.59 per two-bedroom dwelling; and £2,690.93 per three-bedroom dwelling.
89. SAMM is also required to mitigate the impact upon the SPA but is not considered to constitute infrastructure, so remains to be secured by S106. For sites within the 5km zone of influence, this would be at a rate of: £490.11 per one-bedroom dwelling; £682.53 per two-bedroom dwelling; and £907.62 per three-bedroom dwelling.

7. Ecology

90. Core Strategy polices CP3 *General Principles for Development* and CP7 *Biodiversity* establish that proposals should not have a detrimental impact on ecological features. Species and habitats of conservation value should be protected and the ability of a site to support fauna and flora, including protected species, should be maintained and enhanced. In addition, MDDL policy TB23 *Biodiversity and Development* and paragraph 174(d) of the NPPF require proposals to enhance and incorporate new biodiversity features, provide appropriate buffer zones between development and designated sites as well as habitats and species of principle importance for nature conservation and ensure ecological permeability.
91. The application is accompanied by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) (Arbtech, issue 2.1, April 2023) which considers the impact of the proposed development on protected species and species of principal importance and provides advice on potential biodiversity enhancements that could be delivered within the proposed development.
92. Other than the SPA, which is considered in section 6, there are no **designated sites** in the vicinity.
93. The site falls partly within the amber risk zone, where the potential for the presence of **Great Crested Newt** must be considered. However, the site is dominated by hardstanding and the nearest pond is 390 metres from the site, separated from it by urban habitats which provide a barrier to dispersal. Hence, it is unlikely that Great Crested Newts are present on site or that the development would have an adverse impact on their conservation status.

94. Other protected species and species of principle importance considered in the PEA are **bats, reptiles, Badgers, Hazel Dormouse, Riparian Mammals** and **Invertebrates** which are unlikely to be present of the site or adversely affected by the proposal.
95. Whilst no evidence of use of the site by **Hedgehogs** or any **breeding bird species** was observed during surveys, there are records of Hedgehogs and breeding birds within the local area and there is still a risk that these species could be encountered during construction. This risk can be adequately mitigated through measures such as demolition outside of the breeding bird season, pre-commencement checks, safe storage of materials and inclusion of briefing notes to site induction, which would be secured by condition 23.
96. The PEA identifies potential biodiversity enhancements, including providing ecological permeability for Hedgehogs and provision of bird boxes, which would be secured by condition 14. Informative 7 also refers.

8. Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

97. The application is supported by a Biodiversity File Note (Arbtech, November 2022) including an assessment of the baseline habitats on site, calculated using DEFRA's Biodiversity Metric 3.1.
98. The assessment does not take account of the value of urban trees (the Arboricultural Impact Assessment identifies three trees - T1, T2 and T14 – the canopies and root protection areas of which extend into the site) or include an assessment of the post-development scenario. Nevertheless, it does demonstrate that the baseline unit value is low (0.04 units allowing for the value of the trees) and the council's ecologist is satisfied that, with retention of the existing trees plus the proposed landscaping (which includes eleven new trees and a small quantum of hedgerow and wildflower planting around the upper courtyard) a Biodiversity Net Gain would be delivered. Conditions 10, 13 and 14 would secure its delivery.

9. Residential amenity

99. In addition to the overarching requirement for good design, NPPF paragraph 135 and Core Strategy Policy CP3 *General Principles for Development* require development to deliver a high standard of amenity for existing and future users. There are a number of aspects of residential amenity to consider: privacy, overbearing impacts and light; internal space standards; external amenity space; noise and odours.

9.1. Guidance on separation distances between dwellings

100. The Borough Design Guide SPD establishes that buildings should be designed to provide reasonable levels of privacy in habitable rooms (design principle R15) and appropriate levels of daylight and sunlight to new and existing properties (design principle R18).
101. Paragraph 4.7 provides guidance on the separation distances generally necessary to achieve appropriate levels of privacy, avoid unacceptable loss of light or overshadowing and overbearing impacts. It recommends minimum separation distances of 10 metres front-to-front, 12 metres back-to-flank and 22 metres back-to-back, whilst acknowledging that greater separation may be desirable between

higher buildings: up to 15 metres front-to-front or back-to-flank and 30 metres back-to-back for apartment buildings with three or more storeys. However, it is acknowledged that, in more urban settings or areas with a more intimate character, a tighter, more compact layout may be appropriate.

102. These separation distances should generally be met without reliance on land outside the application site and proposals should demonstrate that they do not prejudice adjoining sites coming forward for (re)development.

9.2. *Guidance on daylight and sunlight*

103. The Borough Design Guide (Design Principle R18) establishes that development should achieve appropriate levels of daylight and sunlight to both new and existing properties and refers to BRE Guidance on . However, this must be balanced with other considerations and the NPPF makes clear that authorities should take a flexible approach in applying guidance on daylight and sunlight, where they would otherwise inhibit making efficient use of a site (as long as the resulting scheme would provide acceptable living standards).

9.3. *The impact on neighbouring properties*

104. **22 -25 Market Place** are all three-storey (No 22 has second-floor accommodation at the rear only). There is an array of two-storey and single-storey ancillary extensions at the rear of these buildings, which are all in commercial use. The land at the rear provides ancillary car parking. The existing, flat roofed extension at the rear of No 21 is around 7.6 metres in height and extends some 22 metres beyond these extensions. It's scale and mass cause it to be quite dominant.
105. **Swift House** is a four-storey building, originally offices but now converted to residential use. It is separated from the application site by Red Lion Walk and the parking at the rear of 22-25 Market Place.
106. The three-storey, rear wing of Block A would be around 9.2 metres to the eaves and 11.4 metres to the ridge. The ground-floor would be single-storey (about 3.3 metres in height) and extend to the boundary but the upper floors would be on a similar alignment to the existing structure, extending approximately 7.8 metres beyond the neighbouring properties. There would be a three metre gap between the upper floors of Blocks A and C. There would be 30 metres separation from Block A to Swift House.
107. The northern corner of Block B would be four-storey (around 12.2 metres to the eaves and 14.5 metres to the ridge). The building would extend 9-28 metres beyond the rear of 22-25 Market Place and there would be 26 metres separation from Swift House.
108. Block C would be four-storey (13 metres to the eaves and 15.3 metres to the ridge). There would be 31 metres separation from the rear of 22-25 Market Place and 11.2 metres from Swift House.
109. While the adjacent buildings would feel more enclosed than previously due to the siting and height of the proposed development, the separation distances are sufficient to prevent an overbearing impact, particularly in a town centre setting.

110. No ground-floor windows are proposed in the north-eastern elevation of Block A. On the first and second floors windows lighting communal corridors (3.7 metres from the boundary and 7.3 metres from the extensions on the neighbouring site) would look out onto a yard at the rear of No 22 and the flank of the extensions. Hall and bedroom window in flats A.01.07 and A.02.07 (5.5 metres from the boundary), would look out on the parking areas at the rear of the neighbouring properties. Given the commercial use of the neighbouring sites the proposal would not result in loss of privacy and would improve the security of the neighbouring sites by providing natural surveillance. The 30 metre front-to-front separation would be ample to maintain privacy for occupants of Swift House and future residents.
111. In Block B, windows would be located in the north-eastern elevation providing oblique views towards the rear of the neighbouring commercial properties and direct views over their rear parking areas, thereby improving natural surveillance. There would be 26 metres front-to-front which would maintain privacy for occupants of Swift House and future residents.
112. The separation between Block C and Swift House would be 11 metres, which meets the minimum standard for front-to-front separation but is slightly below the 15 metres recommended for taller buildings. However, a more compact layout can be appropriate in urban locations, such as the town centre (see paragraph 101) and the two buildings are offset so they are only directly opposite for eight metres which means that the kitchen/living rooms and bedrooms rooms on the first, second and third floors of Swift House (there is parking and cycle parking on the ground-floor) would retain a longer oblique outlook towards the rear of the Market Place, preventing them feeling unduly enclosed.
113. While Block A would be taller than the existing structure this would be balanced by the reduced depth and the gap between Blocks A & B. Together the three proposed buildings would make the rear of 22-25 Market Place more enclosed, partially screening some functional, 'back-of-house' areas. Swift House would also be more enclosed but not the extent that the proposed development would be overbearing.
114. The applicant's Daylight and Sunlight report shows that there would be some impact on 11 of the 42 windows in the south-west and south-eastern elevations of Swift House. The affected rooms would all be bedrooms (which are deemed less important for daylight) and the impact would be in acceptable tolerances; imperceptible in the case of five of the windows.
115. **6 Howard Road** is a two-storey semi-detached house with one first-floor window in the flank elevation, separated from the application site by Cockpit Path Car Park and Cockpit Path. The southern wing of Block B would be three-storey (approximately 10.5 meters to the eaves and 12.7 metres to the ridge. The proposed building would be 18 metres from the boundary of No 6 and 23 metres from the flank of the neighbouring property, comfortably meeting the 15 metre front-to-front and back-to-flank separation recommended to protect the amenity of neighbouring properties where the proposed development of three-storeys or more.
116. **Sale Garden Cottages** is a complex of retirement bungalows (predominantly single-storey, rising to two-storey on the corner nearest the application site). The southern corner of Block B would be 21 metres from the boundary of Sale Garden

Cottages and about 36 metres from the building, comfortably exceed in the 15 metre front-to-front and back-to-flank separation recommended to protect the amenity of neighbouring properties where the proposed development of three-storeys or more.

117. The south-western elevation of Block B would be at least nine metres from the boundary with the **Cockpit Path Community Garden and Orchard**. This is more than half the recommended, 15 metre front-to-front separation between buildings of three-storey or more, so would not be considered to prejudice future development of the adjacent land (although given the existing use and tree cover this may not be a likely prospect).
118. **2 Denmark Street** is a two-storey property, rising to three at the front. It is in commercial use with residential above. **No 4** is three-storey, also in commercial use. The closest part of Block B would be three-storey (9.7 metres to the eaves and 12 metres to the ridge). There would be a minimum of 7.7 metres to the boundary and 23 metres between the corner of Block B and No 2. Views from the nearest windows in the north-west elevation would be slightly longer and slightly oblique. The separation distances exceed the minimum back-to-back requirement and – while it is short of the 30 metres recommended between flats of three-storeys or more – views would not be direct and the separation is acceptable in the context of this town centre development.
119. The applicant's Daylight and Sunlight report shows that there would not be an adverse impact on 2 or 4 Denmark Street.

9.4. The amenity of properties within the development

120. Separation between Blocks A & B , across 'Denmark Square' would be 22 metres. Across the private courtyard, between Blocks B & C there would be 16 metres separation south-west to north-east and 22 metres northwest to southeast. These distances are exceed the recommended 15 metres front-to-front separation distances for taller buildings and meet the minimum back-to-back separation that would be expected between houses in a more suburban layout. Inevitably the courtyard layout would result in shorter, oblique views between perpendicularly adjacent dwellings but the layout reduces the potential for inter-looking between habitable rooms as far as possible and the level of privacy achieved would be acceptable in this town centre location.
121. The ground-floor properties would have a landscaped area of 1.5-2 metres separating them from the public realm (Cockpit Path, 'Howard Close' and 'Denmark Square') and similarly, the landscaping of the first-floor private courtyard would provide a landscaped strip, providing a degree of separation and therefore privacy from passers-by.

9.5. Proximity to neighbouring sites and efficient use of the opportunity site

122. Separation distances should generally be achieved without reliance on land outside the application site and proposals should not prejudice adjacent sites coming forward for (re)development. This is particularly relevant due to the situation of the site, within a wider opportunity site (section 1.3).

123. Due to the proximity of Blocks A and C to the north-eastern boundary several of the flats would be reliant on the land at the rear of 23-25 Market Place for their outlook and to achieve acceptable light levels. This siting would also make it unlikely that any significant development could take place on the land rear of Nos 23-25 without detriment to the amenity of occupants of the proposed development. However, it is unlikely that any significant development could take place at the rear of Nos 23-25 in any case, due to the proximity to Swift House. Nor would a more comprehensive proposal encompassing the application site and the land rear of Nos 23-25 achieve a significantly more efficient use of land.
124. To the west, the community site falls within the opportunity area but would be unlikely to come forward for development due to its use and the protected trees within it and the garden and 'Howard Close' together provide sufficient separation not to prejudice future development within the Denmark Street Car park.

9.6. *Daylight and sunlight within the proposed dwellings*

125. 34 of the proposed flats would be dual-aspect and 26 single-aspect; a proportion of them would have a predominantly northerly aspect; others would have a deep floorplan, reducing light penetration; and the courtyard layout also has potential to reduce internal lighting levels. Hence, the application is accompanied by a Daylight and Sunlight Analysis report, in line with BRE guidance.
126. 158 of 165 (96%) rooms meet or surpassing the BRE recommended daylight level: 50% meeting a target of 150lux for living rooms and 100 lux for bedrooms. Of the seven rooms that do not (all kitchen/living/dining rooms), four achieve over 40% and achieve high levels of illuminance in the first third of the room, which is considered most important: the layout of the flats is such that functional areas such as kitchens, which can be artificially lit with task lighting, and bathrooms are located in the darker parts of the flats. All of the rooms meet BRE Guidelines for sunlight exposure and the report concludes that this is a good level of compliance for an urban scheme.
127. Given that the majority of rooms meet recommended lighting standards and the proposals make efficient use of the site, an appropriate standard of amenity would be achieved.

9.7. *Internal space standards*

128. MDDL policy TB07 *Internal space standards* and Borough Design Guide design principle R17 establish new homes should meet minimum space standards, although the areas set out in them have now been superseded by the DCLG *Technical housing standards – nationally described space standard* (March 2015). All of the flats would meet and in many cases significantly exceed the minimum requirements for single storey dwellings, set out in the table.

Bedrooms	occupants	Minimum floor area
one	two	50m ²
two	three	61m ²
	four	70 m ²
three	four	74m ²
	five	86m ²

9.8. *Private amenity space*

129. The Borough Design Guide design principle R16 establishes that dwellings should have access to some form of amenity space, preferably in the form of a private or

communal garden and the pandemic has highlighted the importance of this. While occupants of upper-floor flats rarely have access to a garden, they should be provided with useable private outdoor space in the form of a balcony, roof terrace or winter garden.

130. Fifty of the sixty flats are proposed to have a useable private patio or balcony of at least 3m². Of the remaining ten, six would be single aspect units, facing onto the Market Place, where balconies would be difficult to integrate while respecting the historic character; three are on the northern corner of Block C, closest to Swift House, where privacy is a consideration; and one is located on the internal corner of Block B (B.02.04) and has limited external wall space. In addition there would be a 231m² private residential courtyard on the podium, between Blocks B & C (accessible only through the buildings) and a 100m² roof terrace over Block B.
131. In accordance with the BRE Report guidelines, the applicant's Daylight and Sunlight report also considered the percentage of each outdoor amenity area that receives at least two hours direct sunlight: it is recommended that at least 50% of any amenity space should receive at least two hours of direct sunlight. The assessment shows that on March 21st, 96% of Denmark Square and 72% of the residents' courtyard would receive at least two hours of direct sunlight, well in excess of BRE guidelines.

10. Access and movement

132. Core Strategy Policies CP1 *Sustainable Development* and CP6 *Managing Travel Demand* require consideration of the travel impacts of development, emphasising the importance of reducing the need to travel, particularly by private car. This overarching aim can only be achieved by providing for alternative, sustainable forms of transport and, accordingly these policies (plus CP10 *Improvements to the Strategic Transport Network*) require development to be located to minimise the need to travel and to make provision for a choice of sustainable forms of transport. A well as delivering improvements to existing transport infrastructure (road, rail, public transport and facilities for pedestrians and cyclists, including those with reduced mobility) development should mitigate impacts on the transport network, enhance road safety and avoid highway related environmental problems.
133. The application is accompanied by a Transport Statement, a Delivery and Servicing Plan, Outline Parking Management Plan, Framework Travel Plan and Framework Demolition and Construction Environmental Management Plan.

10.1. Accessibility of the site: location

134. Consistent with NPPF paragraph 109, Core Strategy Policy CP6 b) directs development to locations which minimise the distance people need to travel and where there are choices of mode of transport available (or will be by the time of development). Wokingham is identified by Core Strategy policy CP9 *Scale and Location of Development Proposals* as a Major Development Location (one of the settlements which offer the greatest range of facilities and services as well as allowing residents the greatest choice of modes to access them) and the site is located within the primary shopping area, so satisfies the requirements of minimising the need to travel and providing a choice of modes of transport. Furthermore, the proposal has the potential to enhance the town's offering (see sections 1 & 3) making it a more attractive destination and thereby better able to fulfil its function as a Major Development Location.

10.2. Sustainable travel

135. The requirement to make provision for a choice of sustainable forms of transport (see paragraph 132) is reinforced by Core Strategy policy CP14 *Growth and Renaissance of Wokingham Town Centre* which seeks to improve the pedestrian and cycle network around the town.
136. Consistent with this objective, a new pedestrian link is proposed through the site connecting Market Place and Cockpit Path (Wokingham Footpath 20) via a new arcade, public courtyard and “Howard Close”. Similar to Bush Walk and Peach Place, there would be a mix of commercial and residential development fronting onto the route, providing natural surveillance. It would be a safe and attractive route improving permeability by providing an alternative to Red Lion Walk to the east (Wokingham Footpath 19) and the courtyard (to the west).
137. Objectors have questioned the need for an additional route and its safety, issues that are considered in section 4.2 of the appraisal.
138. The proposed development - Block C in particular - will be dependent on Cockpit Path & Red Lion Walk (Wokingham Footpaths 20 and 19) for pedestrian access, with some of the dwellings having direct access onto Cockpit Path. Cockpit path is narrow, often bordered with overhanging hedges and fences, making it feel very enclosed; fragmented by vehicle crossings; and bollards make it inaccessible for people using wheelchairs, prams and mobility scooters. Red Lion Walk forms part of Greenway Route D (Arborfield SDL-Barkham-South Wokingham SDL-Wokingham), so will become increasingly important as a pedestrian and cycle link between the town centre and surrounding countryside. These PRoW are very much integral to the access strategy for the site and condition 26 would secure improvements to them.
139. Other measures that would support sustainable patterns of travel are above standard cycle parking provision (see paragraphs 191-195) and a contribution of £42,000.00 toward the council’s emerging proposals for a town centre based car club.
140. The application is accompanied by a Framework Travel Plan that sets out these and other measures that could be implemented to promote sustainable travel. The S106 would secure either submission, approval and implementation of a Travel Plan or alternatively a contribution of £540.00 per dwelling towards the council’s sustainable travel initiative, MyJourney.

10.3. Traffic Generation

141. As discussed in section 1, the proposal would result in a significant reduction in the amount of commercial floorspace on the site and, therefore, in associated vehicle movements but an increase in movements associated with the proposed residential use.
142. The Transport Statement provides an assessment of existing and proposed trip generation based on the existing first-floor office use and the proposed residential use. It uses standard methodologies including trip rates from the nationally accepted TRICS database. TRICS uses survey data to establish the number of

movements generated by different uses, including deliveries as well as trips made by occupants.

143. The existing office use would generate 20 two-way trips in the morning peak and 17 two-way trips in the afternoon peak. The assessment does not include 2 Denmark Street because the proposal would not alter the overall number of movements generated by No 2. Nor does it allow for trips related to the existing or proposed town centre uses (staff, customers and deliveries). Customers will generally be visiting as part of a multi-purpose trip to the town centre. The omission of staff and deliveries from the existing units would result in an underestimate of existing movements. The reduced floorspace is likely to equate to fewer staff and deliveries and the absence of on-site staff parking means they would use town centre car parks or travel by other means. Hence, the comparison is considered to provide a reasonable assessment of overall trip generation.
144. The proposed dwellings would generate 35 two-way trips in the morning peak and 32 two-way trips in the afternoon peak, based on the number of dwellings. Furthermore, this represents the worst case scenario: It is likely that actual trip generation would be lower: given the level of on-site parking provision (see section 11.2) it is likely that levels of car ownership and therefore actual trip generation would be lower than average.
145. These trip generation figures include deliveries to residential properties but not those to the commercial premises. The reduction in floorspace referred to in paragraph 2, would be likely to result in a smaller number of deliveries and also reduce the probability of deliveries by Large Goods Vehicles.
146. The Delivery and Servicing Plan includes an assessment of all proposed servicing trip generation, including refuse collections, mail deliveries, deliveries to the commercial units, maintenance vehicles and removal vans. It estimates that the development as a whole would generate 8-19 delivery and servicing trips per day. This equates to 1-3 deliveries an hour, if spread evenly core delivery hours (09:00-17:00). There would be up to four commercial deliveries a day and, in practice, these would mostly be from Market Place which would be more convenient, and 8/day or 1/hour residential deliveries, a proportion of which have already been accounted for in the overall residential trip generation. However, in reality the number of service deliveries is likely to be less.
147. Objectors have criticised the assessment for underestimating the number of deliveries to residential properties, which they consider would be higher based on their own surveys of residents of Howard Road and because they think town centre flats are likely to be occupied by younger people who are more likely to receive deliveries. Officers need to consider traffic movements against established national standards. TRICS data considers overall traffic generation, including deliveries, and the data used in the Delivery and Servicing Plan is considered to be well tested, robust and sound.
148. The proposal would generate less traffic than the existing use (if the existing on-site parking were fully utilised) and there would not be a material increase in the number of vehicle movements, or therefore the amount of traffic on the network or congestion in the town centre generally compared to existing levels of activity. However, this does not take into account the distribution of traffic, which would

result in localised impacts, notably in Howard Road. This is considered in the following section.

10.4. *Vehicular access to the site*

149. Core Strategy policy CP6 Managing *Travel Demand* establishes that development should not cause highway or traffic related environmental problems: any adverse effects upon the local and strategic transport network arising from development should be mitigated, road safety should be enhanced and development should not lead to highway problems or traffic related environmental problems.
150. Vehicular access to the application site and 2 Denmark Street is currently from Sturges Road, via the Cockpit Path Car Park. This provides access to the 74 on-site parking spaces and for servicing of the commercial premises on the site, plus a ground-floor commercial unit and two flats at No 2.
151. Use of the Cockpit Path Car Park access would continue, providing access to a drop-off bay for deliveries to the residential properties and a gated access to 31 undercroft car parking spaces.
152. An additional vehicular access is proposed along the western boundary of the site, extending Howard Road to form a new shared surface street - referred to in the application as "Howard Close" - leading to a new public square referred to as "Denmark Square" and providing access to 2 Denmark Street (No 2 has a legal right of access which would need to be maintained during construction as well as following redevelopment).
153. Currently there is no access to the site via Howard Road and concerns were raised in representations about the suitability of this route for additional traffic.
154. Howard Road is a narrow, shared surface street, ranging in width from around 3.5 metres at its southern end to about 5.5 metres at the northern end. However, on-street parallel parking bays reduce width at the northern end to a to a 2.5 metre wide single carriageway for about 77 metres (approximately 40% of the length of the road). It is effectively a cul-de-sac, providing access to the 45 houses on the street plus 31 sheltered dwellings at Sale Garden Cottages (which also have an access from Langborough Road) and 10-12 Denmark Street. There are no size or weight restrictions on its use.
155. As proposed, there would be five residential parking spaces on "Howard Close" and "Denmark Square" would be available for limited servicing (with retractable bollards limiting access to emergency and refuse vehicles or pre-arranged deliveries such as removal vans). Servicing is considered further in section 10.5.
156. The guidance in Manual for Streets is that shared streets are likely to work well where the volume of motor traffic is below 100 vehicles per hour 10.4(vph) (peak). While the proposal would indisputably increase use of Howard Road, the number of movements on Howard Road and the new "Howard Close" would be well within the level of use that is acceptable on a street of this type.
157. Swept path drawings have been provided demonstrating acceptable access and turning for emergency vehicles (fire tenders and ambulances), refuse vehicles and panel vans at the southern end of Howard Road (where residents parking bays

would be reconfigured; see section 11.2), at the southern end of “Howard Close”, within “Denmark Square”, at 2 Denmark Street and in Cockpit Path Car Park. Due to the size of the commercial premises HGV deliveries would be unlikely and if they did occur, they could use the loading bays in the Market Place, similar to the other commercial premises in the town centre. Accordingly it has been demonstrated that satisfactory access can be achieved for emergency services (see section 10.6) and routine servicing of the site (see section 10.5) and 2 Denmark Street.

158. It has also been demonstrated that acceptable visibility can be provided at the site accesses, including where traffic entering and leaving the site crosses Cockpit Path. Condition 10 i) would ensure that boundary treatments would not obstruct visibility.

10.5. Servicing & refuse collection

159. TB20 *Service Arrangements and Deliveries for Employment and Retail Use* requires development to demonstrate that servicing arrangements would not result in harm to amenity (noise, fumes & disturbance), highway safety, or the character and quality of the environment.
160. The Delivery and Servicing Plan anticipates that most deliveries and collections (to both the commercial and residential premises) would be undertaken by small vans (Light Goods Vehicles (LGVs) such as transit vans and 3.5 tonne box vans used by supermarkets) with a short dwell time. This is reasonable given the small size of the commercial units.
161. The application has been revised directly in response to concerns raised by local residents and it is now proposed that these short-duration servicing activities would be split between an existing, public loading-bay on the southeast side of the Market Place, immediately to the front of the site, and a proposed drop-off bay at the entrance to the undercroft car park (accessed via the Cockpit Path Car Park).
162. Use of the bay in the Market Place is restricted to loading (with no time restrictions) during the day (07:00-19:00). Outside these times it is a taxi rank. Existing parking restrictions would control activity outside the designated bays and prevent delivery vehicles obstructing the flow of traffic.
163. The proposed drop-off bay would be available through the day. Tracking details have been provided to demonstrate that the location of the bay would not restrict movements in and out of the car park.
164. Denmark Square would also be available for limited servicing (with retractable bollards limiting access to emergency and refuse vehicles or pre-arranged deliveries such as removal vans). This arrangement would allow servicing activities to be managed to avoid conflict with the use of the square. Condition 20 refers.
165. Other vehicles with a longer dwell time, such as maintenance vehicles, would be expected to park in nearby town centre car parks, which is typical of many town centre properties.
166. The proposed provision would provide acceptable provision for servicing of the proposed mixed use development, balancing the need to provide sufficient,

convenient capacity for servicing with the impact on the character of the town centre and amenity.

167. Objectors have raised concerns about the loss of the existing on-site servicing provision, the potential congestion arising from increased on-street servicing and the practicality of visiting tradesmen using public carparks.
168. Reserving land solely for servicing purposes generally represents inefficient use of town centre land, as it is unoccupied for much of the time. In this case the existing parking and servicing area also contributes to the negative or neutral contribution that the site makes to the town centre (section 3.1). Furthermore, due to the significant reduction in the overall commercial floorspace and in the size of individual units (see section 1) the site is less likely to be serviced by HGVs. The amount of servicing proposed would be sufficient for the proposed use and the existing parking restrictions in Market Place and adjacent streets would control activity outside the designated bays and prevent delivery vehicles obstructing the flow of traffic. The need for visitors to use nearby carparks is not uncommon in town centre locations where many properties do not have parking in the immediate vicinity. In this instance, there are two public carparks located directly adjacent the site.

10.6. *Emergency Access*

169. Emergency access is controlled under Building Regulations 2010 Approved Document B, which requires access for a pumping appliance to within 45m of all points within any dwelling house. Although this is controlled under separate legislation, it is reasonable to consider whether the layout would be capable of meeting this requirement.
170. Emergency fire tender access is proposed to be from Market Place for commercial units, from “Howard Close” for residential Blocks A and B and from Cockpit Car Park for block C, achieving the required 45 metre hose distance. A fire tender is the largest emergency vehicle and, therefore, it follows that other emergency vehicles could also access the site.
171. It has also been demonstrated that the revised layout of the residents parking bays would not prevent an ambulance could gaining access to Sale Garden Cottages via Howard Road, addressing a concern raised in representations . See paragraph 157

10.7. *Demolition and Construction Environmental Management Plan*

172. While the planning process is primarily concerned with the impact of the development once operational, it is also reasonable to ensure that disruption during construction is managed.
173. Due to the size and location of the development, the application was accompanied by a framework demolition and construction management plan which demonstrates that the site is capable of being developed without unacceptable disturbance to local residents or disruption to the town centre. Some aspects, such as the use of Denton Road require further consideration. Condition 23 would secure approval and implementation of a detailed Demolition and Construction Environmental Plan,

including routing of construction traffic (although it is not possible to prevent any vehicle using an adopted highway).

11. Car and cycle parking

174. Notwithstanding the town centre location and relatively good access to public transport, it is necessary to make appropriate provision for car parking and cycle storage.
175. Core Strategy policies CP6 *Managing Travel Demand* and CP14 *Growth and Renaissance of Wokingham Town Centre* establish that development should cumulatively provide appropriate car parking to facilitate a viable and sustainable town centre. Further advice on what is appropriate is provided by MDDL policy CC07 *Parking* and Appendix 2 and the Town Centre Masterplan, which establishes a broad parking strategy whereby long-stay parking located around the periphery of the town, with short-stay parking in more central locations.

11.1. Commercial Car parking

176. There are currently 74 car parking spaces on the site. This is private parking, used by the businesses that occupy the site (for staff rather than customers), and does not contribute to the supply of public parking (including disabled parking) in the town centre.
177. The proposals do not include any parking provision for the commercial uses, which would result in a slight increase in demand for town centre parking. It is consistent with Policy CP14 that both staff and visitors to premises in the town centre should rely on town centre parking provision and the parking assessment in the Outline Parking Management Plan demonstrates that there is sufficient capacity.

11.2. Residential car parking (including electric vehicles)

178. Core Strategy Policy CP6, amplified by MDDL policy CC07 and Appendix 2, establish a methodology for calculating parking demand for the residential element of the development: demand for unallocated car parking is calculated, depending on the location (the parish of Wokingham is categorised as 'urban'), size and tenure of property and the amount of allocated parking.
179. Based on the proposed dwelling mix (see sections 1.9 & 2.3) the residential element of the development would generate demand for 57 spaces if none were allocated (this equates to 0.95 spaces per dwelling).
180. 36 car parking spaces are proposed: 31 in the undercroft car park and five on "Howard Close" (this equates to 0.6 spaces per dwelling). The undercroft parking area would have approximately 2.9 metres headroom, comfortably above the minimum requirement of 2.6 metres. The parking spaces in the undercroft parking area would be 5 x 2.5 metres and those on "Howard Close" (adjacent to the boundary would be 6 x 3 metres), meeting standards. Swept paths have been provided to demonstrate that the spaces would all be accessible to a large car.
181. The Outline Parking Management Plan indicates that the proposed residential parking would be unallocated. Spaces would be leased to residents, in a separate arrangement. This is a common approach to parking in town centre locations. A gate with fob entry would restricting access to the under croft car park to those with

a leased parking space. Use of the five EV charging spaces would be restricted to residents with an electric vehicle. This approach would be efficient in that only those residents with a car would be likely to apply for a parking space and day-to-day competition for spaces would be avoided. Condition 31 would secure implementation of a Parking Management Plan.

182. It is not proposed to allocate any disabled parking bays (which would preclude use of those bays by others, reducing the already relatively limited supply of on-site parking) but four of the spaces within the undercroft area would have sufficient space around them to be converted to a disabled bay (to be allocated to the specific resident) if required.
183. While the amount of parking proposed is less than the parking demand calculation suggests, the calculation would be the same for any site within the parish of Wokingham, including more suburban locations, whereas the application site is in the heart of the town centre and one of the most accessible locations in the borough, where the feasibility of not owning a car would be greater than elsewhere (albeit not possible for all). This is acknowledged in the Wokingham Town Centre Masterplan which provision of parking at less than maximum standards in sustainable locations.
184. The Outline Parking Management Plan includes an assessment of the availability of parking in the vicinity (in pay-and-display car parks and on-street) based on survey data and an industry standard methodology. The Plan demonstrates that there is sufficient capacity in car parks in the vicinity of the site to accommodate any residents without access to a space within the development (either on an occasional basis or as season ticket holders) and carborne visitors without a significant impact on supply. Opportunities to park on-street are also limited because the streets within 200 metres of the site are subject to parking restrictions in the form of no loading or waiting restrictions, disabled parking bays or resident permit parking.
185. Objectors have criticised the applicant's assessment for undertaking parking surveys on 29 & 30 June, when demand may be reduced due to holidays. However, the surveys were undertaken before the start of the school holidays, in late July and provide a robust assessment.
186. There are also objections relating the use and reconfiguration of the eight existing residents parking bays at the southern end of Howard Road.
187. The existing parking bays are substandard in size (4.8 x 2.4 metres rather than 5m x 2.5 metres) there is less than six metres space behind the four eastern spaces, making them awkward to access given the size of most modern vehicles.
188. It is proposed to reconfigure these to facilitate access to the site from Howard Road and provide seven parking spaces, to current standards, a net loss of one space. Based on the assessment of parking availability the loss of one space would not have an adverse impact on supply and it has been demonstrated that the layout would allow a refuse vehicle to turn and would not impede ambulance access to Sale Garden Cottages.
189. The existing residents' parking space are restricted to residents parking permit holders from 08:00 to 20:00 (although some residents are under the impression that

the restriction applies 24 hours). Only residents of Howard Road are entitled to permits within this zone: residents from the proposed development would not be eligible.

190. Overall, this is a highly sustainable location with good access to the facilities available in the town centre, including public transport, and it is probable that some residents would choose not to own a car. The measures to support sustainable travel (section 10.2) include a contribution towards establishing a town centre car club, which residents could access should they require a car for a short period. Finally, this approach to reduced parking in the town centre has already been found to be acceptable on other town centre developments. Condition 25 would secure implementation of a Parking Management Plan.

11.3. *Cycle parking*

191. CP6 *Managing Travel Demand* establishes a requirement to provide facilities for pedestrians and cyclists and Appendix 2 of the MDDLDP establishes cycle parking standards for commercial and residential uses. Cycle storage should be secure, conveniently located and integrated into the development (Borough Design Guide Design principle R20).
192. The standards for **commercial premises** differentiate between long-term spaces for staff (which should be secure and covered) and short-term spaces for visiting members of the public. Given the changes in the Use Class Order since the standards were adopted one cycle parking space per 125m² commercial floorspace is recommended, 20% of which would be for long-term storage and the remaining 80% short-term. For the proposed development, this equates to one long-term and three short-term spaces.
193. A store with capacity for four cycles is proposed on the ground-floor of Block A, exceeding the requirement for one secure, convenient, long-term cycle space. Four Sheffield stands at the entrance to Block B would provide eight short-term spaces for visitors to the commercial premises and visitors to the flats, also exceeding minimum requirements. These would be conveniently located and overlooked by the retail units and flats.
194. The amount of **residential cycle parking** depends on the size of dwelling: a minimum of one space is required for flats with between one and three habitable rooms and at least two spaces for flats with four or more habitable rooms. However, given the sustainable location and the relatively low level of parking proposed, provision above these minimum standards would be expected.
195. A total of 101 cycle storage spaces are proposed, exceeding the minimum requirement of 65 spaces by 36. There would be a secure, internal store for each block, conveniently located on the ground floor, with direct external access. The number of spaces would be well distributed and there would be a variety of stands to meet different needs, including oversized cycle parking spaces suitable for adapted cycles or cargo bikes. In addition, visitors would be able to use the Sheffield stands located within the new square (see paragraph 193) or a Sheffield stand at the entrance to Block C. Condition 28 would confirm details of the fit-out of these stores.

196. As explained in section 10.1, this is an accessible location and many of the journeys made by residents will be short. The level of provision proposed would support shifts in travel behaviour now and in future when improvements to cycle infrastructure are likely to make it a more attractive prospect.

11.4. *Electric vehicle charging*

197. The guidance in Living Streets: a Highways Guide for Developers in Wokingham (2019) has been superseded by the mandatory requirements in Building Control Approved Document S, which imposes a higher requirement: in this case all car parking spaces would need to have charging capability. The proposals include charging provision for the spaces in "Howard Close" and cabling for the undercroft spaces, so would be capable of complying with Building Regulations. Since electric vehicle charging is now controlled under other legislation it would not be appropriate to impose a planning condition on the provision and performance but the siting and integration with the surroundings would be controlled by condition 10 j) .

12. **Flooding and drainage**

198. The NPPF and National Planning Practice Guidance establish a framework for assessing the probability of flooding and the suitability of land for different uses, depending on their vulnerability to flooding. Core Strategy Policy CP1 *Sustainable Development* and MDDL Policy CC09 *Development and Flood Risk (from all sources)* follow the sequential approach established by the NPPF, directing development away from the areas at highest risk of flooding (from any source).
199. The site is within Flood Zone 1 where the probability of flooding is low (less than 0.1% annual probability/1 in 1,000) and all forms of development - including more vulnerable residential and 'less vulnerable' commercial, business and service uses - are appropriate.
200. Development should avoid increasing (and where possible reduce) risks from all forms of flooding (including groundwater) and limit any adverse effects on water quality (including ground water) (Core Strategy policy CP1). MDDL Policy CC10 *Sustainable Drainage* requires surface water to be managed in a sustainable manner, incorporating Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and following the hierarchy for surface water disposal established by Part H of the Building Regulations: discharge should first be into the ground, then a surface water body, followed by a surface water drainage system or finally a combined sewer.
201. The site area is less than one hectare so there is no requirement for a Flood Risk Assessment a Drainage Strategy has been submitted to demonstrate compliance with these policies.
202. Surface water runoff from the site is currently drained through a series of rainwater pipes and gullies into a soakaway system at the rear of 19-21 Market Place.
203. The proposed surface water drainage system comprises a blue-green roof attenuation system located under the first-floor residential courtyard, draining into an underground tank/box culvert (located below the proposed "Howard Close"), which would discharge at a restricted rate into the surface water sewer in Market

Place. (Separate consent would be required from the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) for this connection).

204. The tank/box culvert would have capacity for high volumes of water during extreme storm events and the hydro-brake would limit peak discharge to greenfield rates or below for all return periods. Peak flow rate would be restricted to 2.7 l/s for the 1 in 100-year event plus 40% allowance for future climate change, which represents a 51.8% reduction in the peak flow rate compared to Greenfield Rates.
205. The tank/box culvert structure is proposed because it would be capable of withstanding the loading of vehicles using "Howard Close", with limited cover over the structure. However, there may be other products, such as a geocellular crate system, that may be more suitable and this can be further investigated during the detailed design stage. If a box culvert is chosen over a geocellular crate system then it is proposed to use a twin box culvert system rather than a single larger culvert, to reduce the risk of flooding from blockages, easier access for maintenance and repair works and improved hydraulic performance. Condition 25 requires approval of the detailed design of the drainage system.
206. The Strategy also considered opportunities for rainwater harvesting, infiltration techniques and runoff to a watercourse but concluded these were not appropriate for this site: the Drainage Officer concurs with this conclusion.

13. Environmental Health

13.1. Noise

207. Core Strategy Policy CP1 *Sustainable Development* seeks to avoid development in areas where noise may impact on the amenity of future occupants and MDDL Policy CC06 *Noise* reinforces this, requiring proposals to demonstrate how noise impacts on sensitive receptors (both existing and proposed) have been addressed. Where there is no adverse impact noise would not be a material consideration. Where a significant effect could arise, a sequential approach should be taken first reviewing the layout of the site, then the internal layout of buildings and finally physical mitigation measures such as barriers and mechanical ventilation.
208. The application is accompanied by a Noise assessment incorporating a noise survey, to establish existing noise levels, and an assessment of the impact of activity within the proposed development and in the surrounding area. The assessment covers the impact of servicing (lorries unloading in the bays in the Market Place and smaller vehicles within the site) and activity such as outdoor dining in the Market Place and within the development.
209. To achieve acceptable internal noise levels in the dwellings facing the Market Place, window sets would need to be specified to achieve appropriate ventilation with the windows closed (condition 19 refers). Elsewhere within the site, noise levels would be low enough that open windows or non-acoustic trickle vents would be suitable. Private amenity areas would be to the rear of the site where acceptable external noise levels could be achieved without mitigation.
210. The report also recommends controls over the use of the outdoor areas, limiting activity after 22:00 (conditions 20 refers). Condition 18 would control noise from air

source heat pumps or other equipment associated with either the residential or commercial uses.

211. With the recommended measures in place, the proposed scheme is not expected to experience a significant adverse noise impact and the site is considered acceptable for the proposed residential use. Nor would the use of the site result in undue disturbance to existing dwellings in the vicinity.
212. Potential disturbance during construction could be managed by a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP). Condition 23 refers.

13.2. *Air quality*

213. Core Strategy policy CP1 *Sustainable Development* establishes that development should minimise the emission of pollutants into the wider environment and avoid areas where pollution may impact upon the amenity of future occupiers.
214. The application site adjoins the Wokingham Town Centre Air Quality Management Area (AQMA), which was declared due to exceedances of the annual mean Air Quality Objective (AQO) for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂). Air quality is mainly influenced by road traffic emissions from the local road network particularly along the A321 Market Place/Denmark Street. As such, elevated pollutant concentrations may be experienced at this location.
215. The application is supported by an Air Quality Assessment which establishes baseline conditions and considers the suitability of the site for the proposed end-use as well as the potential impacts of the proposed development during construction (primarily dust) and once operational (primarily road vehicle exhaust emissions). Concentrations of NO₂ and particulate matter (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}) are assessed.
216. The report concludes that construction phase impacts could be controlled through good site practice and the implementation of suitable mitigation measures (secured by condition 23). The proposal would have a negligible impact on traffic or, therefore, on air quality in the vicinity. Nor would future occupants be exposed to poor air quality. The EHO is satisfied with these conclusions and has not recommended conditions relating to air quality.

13.3. *Contamination*

217. Core Strategy policy CP1 *Sustainable Development* requires development requires development to minimise the emission of pollutants, limit any adverse effects on water quality (including ground water) and avoid areas where pollution may impact upon the amenity of future occupants.
218. The application is supported by a Preliminary Investigation Report which assessed the potential risk of contamination and the impact on current and future sensitive receptors such as human health, controlled waters, ecological features, building structures and services. The Report did not identify a significant risk or contamination and the Environmental Health Officer is satisfied that there is no need for an intrusive investigation but has recommended a condition to secure appropriate reporting and mitigation of any unexpected contamination (condition 21) and an update to the CEMP to include an asbestos survey and removal plan as necessary (condition 23 viii).

14. Sustainable design and construction

14.1. Energy use and carbon reduction

219. Sustainable development is the overarching aim of Core Strategy policy CP1 *Sustainable Development* and the council's Climate Change Interim Policy Position Statement (CCIPPS) (December 2022) confirms that climate change is a material consideration. Where proposals go beyond current requirements to be more aligned with emerging local and national policy requirements it will weigh in their favour.
220. CP1 *Sustainable Development* amplified by MDDL policy CC05 *Renewable energy and decentralised energy networks* requires development to contribute towards the goal of zero-carbon development by minimising energy consumption and incorporating on-site renewable energy features: for residential schemes of ten or more dwellings or non-residential proposals of 1,000m² or more at least a 10% reduction in carbon emissions should be achieved through renewable energy or low carbon technology. The CCIPPS explains that the 10% reduction refers to an improvement over the current Building Regulations at the time of the application.
221. CC04 *Sustainable Design and Construction* established minimum sustainability standards for new development. The standards cited for new homes have since been superseded and the CCIPPS confirms that new dwellings must now meet the mandatory interim Future Homes Standard (as required by Building Regulations Part L) of a minimum 31% reduction in emissions and are encouraged to work towards the full Future Homes Standard of 75-80% less carbon emissions.
222. CP04 required new non-residential development of more than 100m² to achieve mandatory BREEAM requirements or any future national equivalent. In the event, the interim Future Buildings Standard (as required by Building Regulations) requires a minimum 27% reduction in emissions (this equates to meeting BREEAM 'Excellent' standard or higher).
223. Further guidance is provided by the Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document (2010).
224. The applicant's Energy and Sustainability Statement indicates an intention to reduce operational energy use and carbon dioxide emissions through performance of the building fabric and demonstrates that the requirements of Part L would be met, although the fabric performance would not approach best practice.
225. Heating requirements would be met through a combination of air source heat pumps (ASHP) with mechanical ventilation with heat recovery (MVHR) and roof-mounted photovoltaic panels (PVs). This approach is supported and, if correctly specified and maintained, would contribute to reducing the carbon emissions arising from the operation of the development. The Energy and Sustainability Statement demonstrates that a 10% reduction in carbon emissions can be achieved.
226. It has been demonstrated that the proposals could meet the mandatory interim Future Homes Standard and achieve a 10% reduction in carbon emissions through use of renewable/low carbon technologies. While it would not go beyond this, as

encouraged by the CCIPPS, the proposal would deliver other benefits and, given the viability constraint, what is proposed is acceptable in this instance.

14.2. *Water consumption*

227. Core Strategy policy CP1 *Sustainable Development* requires development to reduce water consumption and, since the borough is a classified area of serious water stress, MDDL policy CC04 *Sustainable Design and Construction* established a minimum consumption target for residential development, now superseded by the optional building regulations target of 110 litres/person/day. It is proposed to achieve 105 litres/person/day which exceeds this target and weighs in favour of the proposal. Condition 37 refers.

14.3. *Recycling and refuse storage*

228. Core Strategy policy CP1 *Sustainable Development* and MDDL policy CC04 *Sustainable Design and Construction*, amplified by the Sustainable Design and construction SPD and Borough Design Guide design principal R20 require consideration of how provision for waste sorting storage (internal and external), including on-site recycling and collection can be incorporated in new development.
229. Five separate bin stores are proposed on the ground-floor of the building – one commercial, one each for the flats within blocks A & C and two for the flats within block B. The stores would all have external access, allowing bins to be moved to the presentation point for collection, within an acceptable distance of the collection vehicle. Condition 29 would secure this provision. Collection is considered in section 10.5

15. **Employment Skills Plan**

230. MDDL Policy TB12 *Employment Skills Plan* indicates that proposals for major development should be accompanied by an Employment and Skills Plan to show how the proposal accords opportunities for training, apprenticeship or other vocational initiatives to develop local employability skills required by developers, contractors or end users of the proposal.
231. The S106 would secure an Employment Skills Plan or alternatively a financial contribution of £26,250.00 to enable equivalent delivery by the council.

16. **Infrastructure impact mitigation & viability**

232. NPPF paragraphs 7 & 34 explain the need for supporting infrastructure (including affordable housing) to be delivered alongside new development but make clear that it should not undermine deliverability.
233. Affordable housing is assessed in section 2.3 of this appraisal.
234. In line with the NPPF, Core Strategy policy CP4 *Infrastructure Requirements* establishes that infrastructure, services, community and other facilities should be improved to meet the requirements of new development. In April 2015 the council adopted a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) charging schedule, allowing it to collect a contribution towards infrastructure delivery for each new market house built: £365/m² for residential development outside the Strategic Development Locations. The council's Infrastructure Funding Statement and Capital Programme set out the infrastructure that CIL is expected to cover (to be delivered by the

council according to its priorities and overall funding availability). However, there is some, development specific mitigation not covered by CIL that remains to be secured through a S106 legal agreement.

235. S106 Heads of Terms are set out below. Although, in this case the application is supported by a viability assessment (see section 16.1), which demonstrates that affordable housing cannot be supported,
- i) Ringfencing of £116,068.29 from CIL to secure capacity in the council's Strategic Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) (paragraph 88);
 - ii) £41,903.00 contribution towards Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) (paragraph 89);
 - iii) Approval and delivery of a Travel Plan or alternatively a contribution of £32,400.00 contributions MyJourney (paragraph 140);
 - iv) £42,000.00 toward the council's emerging proposals Wokingham town centre based car club (paragraph 139);
 - v) Delivery of an Employment Skills Plan or alternatively a contribution of £26,250.00 (paragraph 231);
 - vi) Permissive rights to allow public access through the arcade, square and "Howard Close" at all times (other than for when necessary for maintenance purposes or to prevent a Public Right of Way becoming established) (section 4.2);
 - vii) all new dwellings to confirm to Building Regulations M4(2) Accessible and Adaptable Dwellings, or any standard that supersedes it (paragraph 34);
 - viii) A review of the financial viability of the scheme prior to completion of the development together with a mechanism for calculation of an affordable housing contribution, should circumstances change and the development become viable at the point of delivery (paragraph 239);

16.1. Viability

236. The applicant's viability assessment has been the subject of independent review, by a financial consultant instructed by the Local Planning Authority. The council's consultant is satisfied that – due to the costs of redevelopment in this town centre location - no affordable housing can be supported in this instance.
237. In assessing the viability of the scheme, one consideration is whether the proposals represent optimal development i.e. make the most efficient use of the site to get the best financial return. In this case, the constraints of partial redevelopment and the town centre location result in a less efficient building design than could be delivered elsewhere. Factors include the proximity of adjacent buildings, including heritage assets and the need to tie in with the grain of the historic town centre; the partial retention of 21 Market Place; incorporation of bin and cycle storage within the building envelope; creation a new road ("Howard Close") and public square; providing concealed carparking and defining a new street frontage along Cockpit Path.
238. The council's independent advisor is satisfied that it is these unique characteristics of this site that result in some of the proposed flats being significantly above minimum floorspace standards and what would normally be considered optimum.

Also the relatively low habitable areas compared to the overall floorspace. These factors are also important to achieving a high quality, contextual scheme that benefits Wokingham and meets the regeneration objectives for the site and the advisor is satisfied that the proposed scheme is the most optimal new build development for this site.

239. There is, consequently, a balance to be made between delivery of affordable housing and the other planning benefits offered by the development (including payment of CIL and the package of S106 obligations summarised in section 16) and – for the reasons explained in the appraisal - in this instance, the benefits of the scheme are considered to outweigh the inability to deliver affordable housing. It is however, recommended that the S106 include a review mechanism to confirm that the situation has not changed at the point of delivery/completion.
240. It is worth noting that the council's own schemes for Peach Place, Elms Field and the Carnival site were subject to similar constraints and were also unable to support provision of affordable housing, despite the council accepting a much lower than usual rate of profit on the site and minimal S106 commitments.

17. Conclusion

241. The proposed redevelopment of this identified opportunity site for town centre and residential uses is acceptable in principle.
242. While the reduction in Class E Commercial, Business and Service uses within the primary shopping area, is contrary to Core Strategy policy CP13 and MDDLDP policy TB15, it has been demonstrated that it would not have a negative impact on comparison good turnover (which is the reason for protecting retail floorspace). It would also reduce the range of unit sizes available in the town centre but provide smaller units, for which there is most demand. The flexible class E floorspace is consistent with the aim of diversifying town centres and the scheme would provide 60 new homes in a highly sustainable location, contributing positively to the vitality and viability of the town centre and assisting with the shortfall in housing delivery.
243. The application would deliver a high quality redevelopment of a site that is identified by the Town Centre Masterplan SPD as making a neutral or negative contribution to the town centre, whilst incorporating 19 Market Place, which is of historic interest and does make a positive contribution. The new residential buildings would replacing unsightly surface car parking at the rear of the commercial premises (identified by the SPD as a negative element), providing active frontages around the site, improving natural surveillance and, therefore, the safety of the area including Cockpit Path and the community garden. While consultees have raised concerns about specific aspects of the scheme - the height of the gables adjacent to the grade II listed 2 Denmark Street and the height of Block C – they acknowledge that the scheme as a whole would deliver significant benefits and it can be concluded that these benefits outweigh the harm caused.
244. The new arcade, public courtyard and pedestrian connection through the site would also be benefits, improving the network of pedestrian routes around the town centre and a creating a new public space, complimenting the larger spaces in the Market Place and at Peach Place, in a way that is characteristic of the town.

245. It has been demonstrated that development could not support affordable housing due to the high costs of redeveloping the town centre site but it would be CIL liable and the S106 agreement would secure mitigation of other impacts.
246. The proposal is complex in terms of the built form and the material planning considerations to be balanced. However, is clear that overall it would deliver a high quality development in line with the aims of the NPPF and Development Plan policy - in particularly the aim of securing the growth and Renaissance of Wokingham Town Centre - and can be supported.

Appendix 1 Conditions & Informatives

Timescale

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of five years from the date of this permission.

Reason: In pursuance of s.91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by s.51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004) and to allow for the additional complexities associated with the detailed design and delivery of development on this constrained town centre site.

Approved drawings

2. This permission is in respect of the submitted application plans and drawings numbered:

MPW-AI-ZZ-00-DR-A-00 100 Rev P12 GA Plan Level 00
MPW-AI-ZZ-00-DR-A-00 110 Rev P4 Landscape Plan level 00
MPW-AI-ZZ-00-DR-A-00 112 Rev P4 Hard_Soft Landscaping Level 00
MPW-AI-ZZ-00-DR-A-00 113 Rev P2 Hard_Soft Landscaping – Roofs
MPW-AI-ZZ-01-DR-A-00 101 Rev P10 GA Plan Level 01
MPW-AI-ZZ-02-DR-A-00 102 Rev P10 GA Plan Level 02
MPW-AI-ZZ-03-DR-A-00 103 Rev P11 GA Plan Level 03
MPW-AI-ZZ-04-DR-A-00 104 Rev P10 GA Plan Roof
MPW-AI-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-00 001 Rev P6 Existing Location Plan
MPW-AI-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-00 002 Rev P6 Existing Site Plan
MPW-AI-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-00 003 Rev P5 Existing Building Plans
MPW-AI-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-00 004 Rev P5 Existing North Elevation
MPW-AI-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-00 005 Rev P5 Existing South Elevation
MPW-AI-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-00 006 Rev P5 Existing East Elevation
MPW-AI-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-00 007 Rev P5 Existing West Elevation
MPW-AI-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-00 009 Rev P6 Demolition Plan (sheet 1 of 2)
MPW-AI-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-00 010 Rev P5 Demolition Plan (sheet 2 of 2)
MPW-AI-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-00 011 Rev P8 Proposed Site Plan
MPW-AI-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-00 11 Rev P2 Landscape Plan Level 01 & Roofs
MPW-AI-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-00 113 Rev P2 Hard_Soft Landscaping Roofs
MPW-AI-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-00 200 Rev P8 Proposed Elevations with Context
MPW-AI-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-00 201 Rev P4 GA Elevations Block A (Sheet 1 of 2)
MPW-AI-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-00 202 Rev P4 GA Elevations Block A (Sheet 2 of 2)
MPW-AI-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-00 203 Rev P3 GA Elevations Block B (Sheet 1 of 2)
MPW-AI-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-00 203 Rev P5 GA Elevations Block B (Sheet 2 of 2)
MPW-AI-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-00 204 Rev P4 GA Elevations Block B (Sheet 2 of 2)
MPW-AI-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-00 205 Rev P4 GA Elevations Block C (Sheet 1 of 2)
MPW-AI-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-00 206 Rev P6 GA Elevations Block C (Sheet 2 of 2)
MPW-AI-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-00 300 Rev P7 Proposed Sections with Context
MPW-AI-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-00 500 Rev P4 Commercial Arcade Study
MPW-AI-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-00 501 Rev P5 21 Market Place Study
MPW-AI-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-00 502 Rev P4 Commercial Shop Front Study
MPW-AI-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-00 503 Rev P2 Market Place No 19 Bay Study
MPW-AI-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-00 504 Rev P2 Howard Close Bay Study
MPW-AI-ZZ-ZZ-SH-A-00 400 P11 Accommodation Schedule
MPW-AI-ZZ-ZZ-SH-A-00 401 Rev P7 Gross Internal Areas

The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details unless other minor variations are agreed in writing after the date of this permission and before implementation with the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the application form and associated details hereby approved.

Detailed elevations

3. Prior to commencement of development above ground level other than demolition detailed drawings (at scale 1:100 or greater) showing all elevations of the development including materials, detailing of the elevations and reveal depths shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority . Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: in the interests of visual amenity and to safeguard the character of the conservation area in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework Section 12 (Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment), Core Strategy policies CP1, CP3 & CP14; and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy TB 24.

Joinery details (Windows/External doors)

4. No new joinery (windows, frames, exterior doors, door surrounds and shopfronts) shall be installed except in accordance with details that have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The details shall include 1:10 or 1:20 scaled drawings of the new window(s)/exterior door(s), along with vertical and horizontal cross-sections and glazing bar and frame moulding profiles to be shown at 1:1 or 1:2 scale; materials, external finish and means of securing glazing i.e., (linseed oil) putty, beading etc.

Reason: To ensure that the external appearance of the building is satisfactory in accordance with Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP3, MDDL policy TB24 and the Wokingham Town Centre Masterplan SPD.

Security shutters

5. No security shutters shall be fitted except in accordance with details that have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: To ensure that the external appearance of the building is satisfactory and that natural surveillance is maintained in accordance with Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP3, MDDL policy TB24 and the Wokingham Town Centre Masterplan SPD.

External materials

6. Prior to commencement of development above ground level other than demolition samples and details of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the building/s shall have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Development shall not be carried out other than in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that the external appearance of the building is satisfactory in accordance with Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP3, MDDL policy TB24 and the Wokingham Town Centre Masterplan SPD.

7. Prior to commencement of development above ground level other than demolition sample panel(s) of brickwork showing the proposed brick, method of bonding, colour of mortar and type of pointing to be used shall be prepared on site and approved in writing by the local planning authority and work shall be undertaken in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In order to safeguard the special character of the Conservation Area in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework Section 16 (Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment); Core Strategy policies CP1, CP3 & CP14; Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy TB24 and the Wokingham Town Centre Masterplan SPD.

2 Denmark Street

8. Notwithstanding the submitted details, no works of demolition shall be undertaken, except in accordance with a method statement has first been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The method statement shall set out the procedure for the removal of the existing structure (Nos. 19-20 Market Place) abutting the side elevational walling of No. 2 Denmark Street (listed building) and the measures to ensure the structural support and protection of No.2 Denmark Street during works of demolition and construction of the development hereby approved.

Reason: In order to safeguard the special architectural or historic interest of the building in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework Section 16 (Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment) and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy TB24.

21 Market Place

9. Before demolition of any part of 21 Market Place commences details of the elements of the existing structure that are to be retained together with a methodology for their retention, restoration as necessary and incorporation in the new structure shall be submitted to and approved in writing and works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In order to safeguard the special architectural or historic interest of the building in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework Section 16 (Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment) and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy TB24.

Landscaping

- 10.
- i) No development shall take place until full details of both hard and soft landscape works have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority and these works shall be carried out as approved. The details shall include, as appropriate:
 - a) Landscape drawings;
 - b) proposed finished floor levels and contours in accordance with the details pursuant to condition 16;

- c) detailed design of SuDS features, demonstrating how they will be integrated into the landscape, by using rain gardens for example, allowing them to fulfil amenity, ecological and drainage functions;
 - d) soft landscaping details including planting plans, schedules of plants, noting species, planting sizes and proposed numbers/densities where appropriate;
 - e) a Landscape Specification document covering soft landscaping (including site preparation, cultivation, plant handling and other operations associated with plant and grass establishment) and hard landscaping including all construction works such as paths, bridges and retaining walls;
 - f) details of the tree planting pits in combination with raingardens demonstrating that the trees have sufficient rooting volume to enable their successful retention long term health. Where rooting volumes are limited structural soils under paving will need to be specified and details provided;
 - g) hard landscaping materials including samples;
 - h) minor artefacts and structures (e.g. street furniture, refuse or other storage units, signs, external services) including specifications for the product and its installation;
 - i) all boundary treatments and other means of enclosure or controlling access such as gates and bollards, which shall include consideration of visibility splays and ecological permeability;
 - j) the siting and appearance of electric vehicle charging infrastructure required to comply with Building Control Approved Document S or any document that supersedes it;
 - k) public art to enhance wayfinding and provide a sense of identity;
 - l) measures required for ecological mitigation or Biodiversity Net Gain;
- ii) The landscaping details shall include a Landscape Phasing Plan demonstrating timely delivery of hard and soft landscaping in relation to adjacent built development and the approved landscaping for each "Landscape Phase" shall be carried out in accordance with the approved phasing. The scheme shall be maintained in the approved form for so long as the development remains on the site.
 - iii) No development shall take place until details of quality control measures, including supervision of landscape contract(s) by a suitably qualified landscape specialist and annual landscape audits for the five-year period from completion of the landscaping for the Landscape Phase or until adoption (whichever is longer) have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The annual Landscape Audit shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for information prior to the next planting season and replacement planting undertaken in accordance with the landscape audit and iv) below.
 - iv) Any trees or plants which, within a period of five years after planting, are removed, die or become seriously damaged or defective, shall be replaced in

the next planting season with others of species, size and number as originally approved and permanently retained.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity, ecology and the setting of heritage assets in accordance with Core Strategy policies CP1, CP3, CP7 & CP21; Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03, TB21, TB23 & TB24; the South Wokingham SDL SPD; and National Planning Policy Framework Section 16 (Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment) and paragraphs 4. Details are required prior to commencement to ensure that landscaping and ecological mitigation and enhancement can be satisfactorily integrated in the development.

Gates

11. Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (or any Order revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification), no gates or barriers shall be erected across the pedestrian route between Market Place and Cockpit Path other than any approved pursuant to condition 10.

Reason: to assist in the integration of the development into the town centre and deliver the proposed benefits in terms of the pedestrian movement around the town centre in accordance with Core Strategy policies CP1, CP3 & CP6; the Wokingham Town Centre Masterplan SPD & the Wokingham Borough Design Guide SPD.

Boundary wall construction details

12. The wall on the boundary with Cockpit Path Community Garden shall be constructed in accordance with details that have first been submitted and approved in writing with the Local Planning Authority and provide for root bridge foundations to avoid any detrimental impact on the adjacent protected trees.

Reason: to ensure the adjacent trees can be successfully retained in accordance with Core Strategy policies CP1 & CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21.

Tree Protection

13.
 - a) No development or other operation shall commence until an Arboricultural Method Statement and Scheme of Works which provides for the retention and protection of trees, shrubs and hedges growing on or adjacent to the site in accordance with BS5837: 2012 has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. No development or other operations shall take place except in accordance with the approved details (hereinafter referred to as the Approved Scheme).
 - b) No operations shall commence on site in connection with development hereby approved (including any tree felling, tree pruning, demolition works, soil moving, temporary access construction and or widening or any other operation involving use of motorised vehicles or construction machinery) until the tree protection works required by the Approved Scheme are in place on site.
 - c) No excavations for services, storage of materials or machinery, parking of vehicles, deposit or excavation of soil or rubble, lighting of fires or disposal of

liquids shall take place within an area designated as being fenced off or otherwise protected in the Approved Scheme.

- d) The fencing or other works which are part of the Approved Scheme shall not be moved or removed, temporarily or otherwise, until all works including external works have been completed and all equipment, machinery and surplus materials removed from the site, unless the prior approval in writing of the local planning authority has first been sought and obtained.

Reason: To secure the protection throughout the time that the development is being carried out of trees shrubs or hedges growing within or adjacent to the site which are of amenity value to the area, and to allow for verification by the local planning authority that the necessary measures are in place before development and other works commence in accordance with Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21.

Ecology

14. Prior to commencement of development beyond slab level a detailed strategy for ecological permeability and species specific biodiversity enhancements to the site - in particular for breeding birds and Hedgehogs - prepared by a suitably qualified ecologist and appropriate to the local ecological context, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The strategy shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: to ensure that potential biodiversity gains are secured in accordance with Core Strategy policies CP3 & CP7, Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy TB23 and paragraph 174(d) of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Archaeology

15. No development shall take place until a programme of archaeological work including a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The WSI shall include an assessment of significance and research questions; and:
 - i) The programme and methodology of site investigation and recording;
 - ii) The programme for post investigation assessment;
 - iii) Provision to be made for analysis of the site investigation and recording;
 - iv) Provision to be made for publication and dissemination of the analysis and records of the site investigation;
 - v) Provision to be made for archive deposition of the analysis and records of the site investigation;
 - vi) Nomination of a competent person or persons/organisation to undertake the works set out within the WSI.

Development shall take place in accordance with the approved WSI and shall not be occupied until the site investigation and post investigation assessment has been completed in accordance with the programme set out in the approved WSI and the provision made for analysis, publication and dissemination of results and archive deposition has been secured.

Reason: The site lies in an area of archaeological potential, particularly for, but not limited to, Medieval remains. The potential impacts of the development can be mitigated through a programme of archaeological work in accordance with Core Strategy policy CP7, MDDL policy TB25 and NPPF Section 16 (Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment).

Levels

16. Development shall be built in accordance with the finished ground levels, floor levels and finished roof levels shown on drawing Nos:

MPW-AI-ZZ-00-DR-A-00 100 Rev P12 GA Plan Level 00
MPW-AI-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-00 201 Rev P4 GA Elevations Block A (Sheet 1 of 2)
MPW-AI-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-00 202 Rev P4 GA Elevations Block A (Sheet 2 of 2)
MPW-AI-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-00 203 Rev P3 GA Elevations Block B (Sheet 1 of 2)
MPW-AI-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-00 203 Rev P5 GA Elevations Block B (Sheet 2 of 2)
MPW-AI-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-00 204 Rev P4 GA Elevations Block B (Sheet 2 of 2)
MPW-AI-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-00 205 Rev P4 GA Elevations Block C (Sheet 1 of 2)
MPW-AI-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-00 206 Rev P6 GA Elevations Block C (Sheet 2 of 2)

Reason: In order to ensure a satisfactory form of development relative to surrounding buildings and landscape in accordance with Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy TB21.

Siting of plant and equipment

17. Notwithstanding the provisions the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (as amended) (or any Order revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification) no plant or equipment (required to meet energy use and carbon reduction targets, in association with the commercial uses on the site or for any other purpose) shall be installed other than in the flat roof zones identified for this purpose on Drawing No MPW-AI-ZZ-04-DR-A-00 104 Rev P10 GA Plan Roof Markup without the prior written consent of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity and to safeguard the character of the area in which it is located in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework Section 16 (Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment), Core Strategy policies CP1, CP3 and CP14, Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy TB24 and the Wokingham Town Centre Masterplan SPD.

Plant/Machinery to be attenuated.

18. All plant, machinery and equipment installed or operated in connection with the carrying out of this permission shall be so enclosed and/or attenuated that noise therefrom does not exceed at any time a level of 5dB[A] below the existing background noise level when measured at a point one metre external to the nearest residential or noise sensitive property. Any recommended noise mitigation measures should be retained and maintained thereafter.

Reason: To ensure that no nuisance or disturbance is caused to the occupiers of properties in accordance with NPPF Section 15 (Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment), Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC06.

Noise Insulation for Dwellings.

19. No dwelling hereby approved shall be occupied until it has been provided with attenuation against externally generated noise in accordance with details that have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The design should ensure that all noise implications are mitigated so that internal ambient noise levels for dwellings meet the BS8233/1999 sound insulation and noise reduction for buildings design range 'good' for living accommodation.

Reason: to protect the amenity of the area and to ensure that premises are protected from noise nuisance and disturbance, in accordance with Wokingham Borough Core Strategy Policy CP1, the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy CC06.

Hours of operation

20. No customer shall be permitted on the Class E premises hereby permitted outside the hours of 07:00 and 24:00. No customer shall be permitted to use outside areas ancillary to the use of the premises and doors and windows shall be kept shut outside the hours of 07:00 and 22:00.

Reason: To safeguard residential amenities in accordance with Core Strategy policies CP1, CP3 and CP14 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC06.

Contamination

21. In the event that contamination is found when carrying out the approved development – including site clearance, groundwork and construction - it must be reported immediately, in writing to the local planning authority. An investigation and full contamination risk assessment shall be carried out and a report of the findings, together with a 'Remediation Method Statement' as necessary shall be submitted to and approved in writing the local planning authority. Works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved Remediation Method Statement' and a final validation report shall be submitted to the local planning authority before any part of the development is first occupied.

Reason: To ensure that any contamination of the site is identified to allow remediation to protect existing/proposed occupants of property on the site and/or adjacent land in accordance with NPPF Section 15 (Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment) and Core Strategy policies CP1 & CP3.

Hours of construction

22. No work relating to the development hereby approved, including works of demolition or preparation prior to building operations or deliveries to the site, shall take place other than:
- i) between the hours of 08:00 to 18:00 Monday to Friday; and
 - ii) 08:00-13:00 on Saturdays; and
 - iii) at no time on Sundays or Bank or National Holidays; except for

- iv) individual operations which cannot reasonably be undertaken within the construction working hours defined above and have been notified to the Local Planning Authority (including details of the nature extent and timetable for the works) at least two weeks in advance and agreed in writing (by exchange of letter).

Where works are agreed by the LPA under iv) above, residential properties within an identified zone that has first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority shall be given written notice at least one week in advance of the works taking place. The notification shall include details of the nature, extent and timetable for the works and telephone number that the party responsible the works can be contacted on for the duration of the works.

Reason: To protect the occupiers of neighbouring properties from noise and disturbance outside the permitted hours during the construction period in accordance with Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC06 whilst providing the flexibility to avoid excessive disruption to the functioning of the town centre.

Strategy Policies CP1 and CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy CC06.

Demolition and Construction Environmental Management Plan

- 23. No development, including any works of demolition, shall take place except in accordance with a Demolition and Construction Environmental Management Plan which has first been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The Plan shall provide for:
 - i) Routing of construction traffic to minimise disturbance to local residents and disruption to the functioning and amenity of the town centre, avoiding use of Denton Road and access through the Market Place;
 - ii) loading and unloading of plant and materials, with deliveries taking place during operational hours and wherever possible outside peak hours;
 - iii) storage of plant and materials used in constructing the development;
 - iv) vehicle parking for site operatives and visitors;
 - v) wheel washing facilities and monitoring deposit of mud in Cockpit Path Car Park or at any other construction access, together with use of street sweepers if required;
 - vi) the erection and maintenance of security hoarding including decorative displays and facilities for public viewing, where appropriate;
 - vii) measures to control the emission of dust and dirt during construction;
 - viii) an asbestos survey and removal plan;
 - ix) a scheme for recycling/disposing of waste resulting from demolition and construction works;
 - x) tree protection in accordance with condition 13;
 - xi) Measures to prevent harm to protected species, in particular Hedgehogs and breeding birds.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety & convenience , neighbour amenities and to secure protection of trees and wildlife in accordance with Core Strategy policies CP3, CP6 & CP7; Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03, TB21 & TB23; and paragraph 174(d) of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Lighting design.

24. No part of the development hereby approved shall be occupied until lighting has been provided in accordance with scheme for lighting of public areas including access, parking and footpaths that has first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall include details of the location, height, type and direction of light sources and intensity of illumination for all external lighting and measures to protect nearby properties from light overspill or nuisance.

Reason: in the interests of the safety of the public realm and the amenity of residents of the site and the occupants of nearby residential properties in accordance with

Drainage

25. No part of the development hereby permitted shall be occupied until surface water drainage works have been implemented in accordance with details that have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The detailed drainage design should include an assessment of the most suitable surface water drainage system for the development based on a comparison of the viability, efficiency and sustainability of a box culvert versus a geocellular crate system for managing surface water runoff, as well as the structural integrity, hydraulic performance, maintenance requirements and a risk assessment to identify potential challenges associated with each drainage system. The submitted details shall also:

- i) provide information about the design storm period and intensity, the method employed to delay and control the surface water discharged from the site and the measures taken to prevent pollution of the receiving groundwater and/or surface waters;
- ii) include a timetable for its implementation; and
- iii) provide a management and maintenance plan for the lifetime of the development which shall include the arrangements for adoption by any public authority or statutory undertaker and any other arrangements to secure the operation of the scheme throughout its lifetime.

Reason: To prevent increased flood risk from surface water run-off in accordance with NPPF Section 14 (Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change), Core Strategy policy CP1 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC09 and CC10.

Public Right of Way improvements

26. Before first occupation of any part of the development a scheme of improvements to Cockpit Path and Red Lion Walk (Wokingham Footpaths 20 and 19) shall be completed in accordance with a walking audit and detailed proposals that have first

been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The proposals should have regard to movement by people with restricted mobility and may include widening of narrow sections, maintenance of hedgerows (subject to landscape and ecological input), repairs to surfacing and removal of bollards and other width restrictions and obstacles.

Reason: To provide safe, attractive pedestrian access to the development and support active travel around the town centre in accordance with Core Strategy policies CP1, CP3, CP6 & CP14 and the Wokingham Town Centre Masterplan SPD.

Access

27. Prior to commencement of development above ground level other than demolition, details of the proposed vehicular accesses on to Howard Road and Cockpit Path carpark to prioritise pedestrian movement along the Public Right of Way shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The details shall include pedestrian visibility plays of 2m by 2m as shown on Drawing No R-21-0074/HY01 Pedestrian Visibility Splays (Appendix D of the Transport Statement 29 March 2023) and the accesses shall be formed as so approved, and the visibility splays shall be cleared of any obstruction exceeding 0.6 metres in height prior to the occupation of the development. The accesses shall be retained in accordance with the approved details and used for no other purpose and the land within the visibility splays shall be maintained clear of any visual obstruction exceeding 0.6 metres in height at all times.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety and convenience in accordance with Core Strategy policies CP3 & CP6.

Cycle storage

28. Before occupation of any part of the development hereby permitted the approved cycle stores shall be provided in accordance with drawing No MPW-AI-ZZ-00-DR-A-00 100 Rev P12 GA Plan Level 00 and fitted out in accordance with details that have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The cycle storage shall be permanently retained in the approved form for the parking of bicycles and used for no other purpose.

Reason: In order to ensure that secure weather-proof bicycle parking facilities are provided so as to encourage the use of sustainable modes of travel in accordance with NPPF Section 9 (Sustainable Transport) and Core Strategy policies CP1, CP3 & CP6 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC07.

Refuse storage

29. No dwelling or commercial unit shall be occupied until the refuse storage to serve it has been provided in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: to ensure adequate provision of refuse storage and support recycling in accordance with Core Strategy policy CP1, MDDL policy CC04, the Sustainable Design and construction SPD and Borough Design Guide design principal R20.

Parking and turning as approved.

30. No part of any of the buildings hereby approved shall be occupied or used until the vehicle parking and turning space has been provided in accordance with the approved plans. The vehicle parking and turning space shall be retained and maintained in accordance with the approved details and the parking space shall remain available for the parking of vehicles at all times and the turning space shall not be used for any other purpose other than vehicle turning.

Reason: To provide adequate off-street vehicle parking and turning space and to allow vehicles to enter and leave the site in a forward gear in the interests of road safety and convenience and providing a functional, accessible and safe development and in the interests of amenity. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP3 & CP6 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC07.

Parking Management Plan

31. Prior to the first occupation of the development hereby approved a Parking Management Plan covering allocation and management of parking spaces and a methodology for providing additional EVC and disabled spaces, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The Parking Management Strategy shall be implemented as approved for the lifetime of the development.

Reason: To ensure provision of appropriate car parking the interests of highway safety and convenience in accordance with Wokingham Borough Core Strategy Policies CP1, CP6, CP14 and MDDLDP policies CC07.

Delivery Servicing Plan

32. No part of the development hereby permitted shall be occupied until a Delivery and Servicing Management Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Delivery and Servicing Management Plan shall include details of both physical and management measures for controlling deliveries in order to avoid disturbance to residents within and near to the development and conflict between delivery/service vehicles and pedestrians using the square or pedestrian routes through the site. In any case no vehicle movements shall take place within and no deliveries shall be taken in or dispatched from "Denmark Square" as identified on Drawing No MPW-AI-ZZ-00-DR-A-00 100 Rev P12 GA Plan Level 00 outside the hours of 07:00-10:00 Monday to Saturdays nor at any time on Sundays, Bank or Public Holidays; and

Reason: in the interests of residential amenity, pedestrian safety, highway safety and convenience and the character and amenity of the town centre generally. Relevant Policies: Core Strategy Policies CP1, CP3, CP6, CP14; Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policies CC06 and TB20; and the Wokingham Town Centre Masterplan SPD.

Highway Construction Details

33. Prior to the commencement of development, full details of the construction of roads and footways, including levels, widths, construction materials, depths of construction, surface water drainage and lighting shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The roads and footways shall be

constructed in accordance with the approved details to road base level before the development is occupied and the final wearing course will be provided within 3 months of occupation, unless other minor variations are agreed in writing after the date of this permission and before implementation with the Local Planning Authority.

To ensure that roads and footpaths are constructed to a standard that would be suitable for adoption as publicly maintainable highway, in the interests of providing a functional, accessible and safe development in accordance with Core Strategy policies CP3 & CP6.

Sustainability

34. Prior to commencement of development above ground level other than demolition, a scheme for achieving a 10% reduction in the predicted carbon emissions arising from operation of the development through the use of decentralised renewable and/or low carbon sources (as defined in the glossary of Planning Policy Statement: Planning and Climate Change (December 2007) or any subsequent version) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The minimum 10% reduction shall be achieved on top of the levels of reduction in carbon emissions required through the Building Regulations in force at the time of the submission of planning application. The approved scheme shall be implemented before the development is first occupied and shall remain operational for the lifetime of the development.

Reason: To ensure developments contribute to sustainable development in accordance with NPPF Section 14 (Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change), WBC Climate Emergency Action Plan, Core Strategy policy CP1, MDDL policy CC05 & the Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document.

35. Prior to works proceeding beyond the slab level, a Design Stage Certificate for each building comprised in the development, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Design Stage Certificate shall be prepared by a suitably qualified assessor and shall demonstrate that that the building(s) will achieve a minimum BREEAM (or equivalent) rating of 'Excellent'.

Within three months of first occupation of the development, a Post-Construction Certificate in respect of that building shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Post-Development Certificate shall be prepared by an accredited assessor and shall demonstrate compliance with BREEAM rating of 'Excellent' as a minimum.

Reason: To ensure developments contribute to sustainable development in accordance with NPPF Section 14 (Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change), Core Strategy policy CP1 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC04 and CC05.

36. Prior to the first occupation of any dwelling or commercial unit within the development hereby approved, future occupants shall be provided with occupant information for the operation of any systems that serve it.

Reason: to ensure that occupants are informed about the correct operation of the buildings and systems perform as intended in order to achieve the standards

required to comply with Core Strategy policy CP01, MDDL P policies CC04 and CC05 and the CCIPPS.

37. No dwelling shall be occupied until fittings have been installed that are designed to achieve a water consumption target of 105 litres/person/day or less in accordance with details that have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: in order to reduce consumption of water in a classified area of serious water stress in accordance with the NPPF, Wokingham Borough Core Strategy Policy CP1; Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy CC04; and the Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document (2010).

Informatives

Reason for approval

1. The development accords with the policies contained within the adopted / development plan and there are no material considerations that warrant a different decision being taken.

Relevant policies

2. You are advised, in compliance with The Town and Country Planning [Development Management Procedure] [England] Order 2010 that the following policies and/or proposals in the development plan are relevant to this decision:

National Planning Policy Framework

National Design Guide

National Planning Practice Guidance

Core Strategy (CS)

- CP1 - Sustainable Development
- CP2 - Inclusive Communities
- CP3 - General Principles for Development
- CP4 - Infrastructure Requirements
- CP5 - Housing Mix, Density and Affordability
- CP6 - Managing Travel Demand
- CP7 - Biodiversity
- CP8 - Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area
- CP9 - Scale and Location of Development Proposals
- CP10 - Improvements to the Strategic Transport Network.
- CP13 - Town Centres and Shopping
- CP14 - Growth and Renaissance of Wokingham Town Centre
- CP15 - Employment Development
- CP17 - Housing Delivery

MDD Local Plan (MDD Managing Development Delivery Local Plan)

- CC01 - Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- CC02 - Development Limits
- CC03 - Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping
- CC04 - Sustainable Design and Construction
- CC05 - Renewable Energy and Decentralised Energy Networks

- CC06 - Noise
- CC07 - Parking
- CC08 - Safeguarding alignments of the Strategic Transport Network & Road Infrastructure
- CC09 - Development and Flood Risk
- CC10 - Sustainable Drainage
- TB05 - Housing Mix
- TB07 - Internal Space Standards
- TB08 - Open Space, Sport and Recreational Facilities Standards
- TB12 - Employment Skills Plan
- TB15 - Major Town, and Small Town/District Centre development
- TB16 - Development for Town Centre Uses
- TB19 - Outdoor Advertising
- TB20 - Service Arrangements and Deliveries for Employment and Retail Use
- TB21 - Landscape Character
- TB23 - Biodiversity and Development
- TB24 - Designated Heritage Assets
- TB25 - Archaeology
- TB26 - Buildings of Traditional Local Character and Areas of Special Character

Other

Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document
 CIL Guidance + 123 List
 Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document
 Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document
 Wokingham Town Centre SPD

3. The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by assessing the proposal against all material considerations, including planning policies and representations. This planning application has been the subject of positive and proactive discussions with the applicant in terms of: pre-application discussions; submission of additional information and revised plans to address issues raised by consultees and in representations; and extending the period for determination to allow issues to be addressed. The decision to grant planning permission in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development as set out in the NPPF is considered to be a positive outcome of these discussions.

Existing and future tenants

4. The applicant and council will work proactively together to identify suitable premises for tenants of the site, should they wish to remain in the town, and find tenants for the new development.

2 Denmark Street

5. Depending on the measures necessary to protect and stabilise 2 Denmark Street (condition 8 refers) it may be necessary to obtain listed building consent prior to actioning the works.

Materials

6. Due to the sensitive conservation area location, the Materials pursuant to condition 6 should preferably include natural slate for the roof of 21 Market Place Market or

failing that a sympathetic synthetic slate like material that is indiscernible from natural slate.

Strategy for ecological permeability and species specific biodiversity enhancements

7. The strategy for ecological permeability and species specific biodiversity enhancements to comply with condition 14 should include, among other things, measures to provide ecological permeability for Hedgehogs and birdboxes integrated into the fabric of the buildings where they have greater likelihood of uptake.
8. The proposal to provide bat boxes on mature boundary trees is not achievable because there are no mature trees on site (although there are some just outside the red line) and it is questionable as to whether it is appropriate to provide bat boxes given the location and bat survey results reported.

S106

9. This permission should be read in conjunction with the legal agreement under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act dated [INSERT], the obligations in which relate to this development.

CIL

10. The development hereby permitted is liable to pay the Community Infrastructure Levy. The Liability Notice issued by Wokingham Borough Council will state the current chargeable amount. A revised Liability Notice will be issued if this amount changes. Anyone can formally assume liability to pay, but if no one does so then liability will rest with the landowner. There are certain legal requirements that must be complied with. For instance, whoever will pay the levy must submit an Assumption of Liability form and a Commencement Notice to Wokingham Borough Council prior to commencement of development, failure to do this will result in penalty surcharges being added. For more information see - [Community Infrastructure Levy advice - Wokingham Borough Council](#). Please submit all CIL forms and enquiries to developer.contributions@wokingham.gov.uk.

Party wall act

11. The applicant should note that this permission does not give any property rights to building on or encroach over or under the adjoining properties. The applicant may be required to serve notice under the Party Wall etc Act 1996.

Demolition notice

12. The applicant is reminded that a Demolition Notice may be required to be served on the Council in accordance with current Building Regulations and it is recommended that the Building Control Section be contacted for further advice.

Pre-commencement conditions

13. The applicant is reminded that this approval is granted subject to conditions which must be complied with prior to the development starting on site. Commencement of the development without complying with the pre-commencement requirements may be outside the terms of this permission and liable to enforcement action. The information required should be formally submitted to the Council for consideration

with the relevant fee. Once the details have been approved in writing the development should be carried out only in accordance with those details. If this is not clear please contact the case officer to discuss.

14. Where this permission requires further details to be submitted for approval, the information must formally be submitted to the Council for consideration with the relevant fee. Once details have been approved in writing the development should be carried out only in accordance with those details. If this is not clear please contact the case officer to discuss.

Advertisement Consent

15. This permission does not convey or imply any approval or consent that may be required for the display of advertisements on the site for which a separate Advertisement Consent application may be required. You should be aware that the display of advertisements without the necessary consent is a criminal offence liable to criminal prosecution proceedings through the courts.

Thames water

16. A Groundwater Risk Management Permit from Thames Water will be required for discharging groundwater into a public sewer. Any discharge made without a permit is deemed illegal and may result in prosecution under the provisions of the Water Industry Act 1991. We would expect the developer to demonstrate what measures he will undertake to minimise groundwater discharges into the public sewer. Permit enquiries should be directed to Thames Water's Risk Management Team by telephoning 020 3577 9483 or by emailing trade.effluent@thameswater.co.uk . Application forms should be completed on line via [this link](#). Please refer to the Wholesale; Business customers; Groundwater discharges section.
17. Where the developer proposes to discharge to a public sewer, prior approval from Thames Water Developer Services will be required. Should you require further information please refer to their [website](#).
18. There are public sewers crossing or close to your development. If you're planning significant work near our sewers, it's important that you minimize the risk of damage. We'll need to check that your development doesn't limit repair or maintenance activities, or inhibit the services we provide in any other way. The applicant is advised to [read our guide working near or diverting our pipes](#).
19. Thames Water recommend that petrol / oil interceptors be fitted in all car parking/washing/repair facilities. Failure to enforce the effective use of petrol / oil interceptors could result in oil-polluted discharges entering local watercourses.

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