

THE PLANNING BUREAU LTD



HEARING STATEMENT

FLORINGHAM LODGE, OLD BRACKNELL LANE EAST,
BRACKNELL. RG12 7AJ

THE PLANNING BUREAU LTD

SECTION 78 APPEAL
TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

HEARING STATEMENT

APPEAL BY MCCARTHY & STONE RETIREMENT LIFESTYLES LTD AGAINST THE REFUSAL BY
BRACKNELL FOREST BOROUGH COUNCIL OF A PLANNING APPLICATION FOR:

REDEVELOPMENT OF THE SITE TO PROVIDE 46 ONE AND TWO BEDROOM RETIREMENT LIVING
UNITS FOR OLDER PEOPLE WITH ASSOCIATED PARKING, LANDSCAPING AND COMMUNAL
FACILITIES (C3 USE CLASS), FOLLOWING THE DEMOLITION OF THE EXISTING BUILDING.

SITE AT:
FLORINGHAM LODGE,
OLD BRACKNELL LANE EAST,
BRACKNELL,
BERKSHIRE, RG12 7AJ

LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY REFERENCE: 25/00456/FUL

PLANNING INSPECTORATE REFERENCE: 6009377

HEARING: 18th August 2026 – 19th August 2026

JULY 2026

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CONTEXT – LOCAL AND NATIONAL NEEDS

1. This Statement and its supporting appendices demonstrate that:

- (i) There is a very significant need for specialist accommodation for older people nationally. This need is characterised as “critical” in the NPPG based on the ONS national population projections, which graphically illustrate the “demographic timebomb”, especially amongst those aged 85 and older;
- (ii) This critical national need has a local expression. Bracknell Forest Borough Council published a Housing Needs Assessment in March 2021 and this demonstrates that there is a very significant need for 1,619 housing for older people units to 2037;
- (iii) Given this “critical need”, it is the role and function of the planning system to ensure it is actually delivered (see NPPF 15, 17, 20(a), 60 and 63).
- (iv) Substantial weight should therefore attach to the need for this form of development to be constructed and to the benefits arising from its delivery;
- (v) McCarthy & Stone Retirement Lifestyles Ltd (“the Appellant”) is widely recognised as the market leader in the provision of specialist accommodation for older people and continue to win awards for their developments and customer satisfaction, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic in which older occupiers of retirement living developments fared much better than the general older population.
- (vi) Such specialist accommodation delivers a number of benefits to which significant weight should attach in the planning balance inter alia:
 - (a) Safety, security, and companionship reduce anxieties and maintain health and general well-being amongst older people.
 - (b) Older persons specialist care and retirement housing brings considerable benefits to the occupants and to health and social services, resulting in a significant saving to the public purse.
 - (c) There will be a significant release of under-occupied housing back into the market, helping meet the needs of families.
- (vii) The development will deliver a number of economic benefits, to which significant weight should attach in the planning balance (applying NPPF 85). In particular, older people have a very positive economic impact on their local High Street. This is a particular benefit when the growth of internet shopping has had a dramatic effect on retail and leisure spending on the High Street.

FUNCTIONAL AND LOCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

2. Retirement Living developments require larger footprint buildings in residential areas, which will have to sit adjacent to existing domestic development (whether houses, flats etc). In this case the site replaces an existing house, where a previous application considered that a larger development was acceptable in principle.
3. Further, the Local Plan Policy LP3 directs that efficient use is made of previously developed land in urban areas while Policy LP17 requires the provision of housing for the elderly.
4. This site is ideally suited for this proposal. Indeed, it is common ground that:
 - The Appeal Site lies within the Bracknell settlement boundary where development proposals that are in line with the development plan for the settlement and are consistent with Local Plan, will be supported.
 - The principle of a 100% Retirement Living development is acceptable.
 - The proposal will contribute to the existing and growing need for specialised housing for the ageing population of Bracknell
 - The site does not lie in a Conservation Area, nor does it materially affect the setting of any Listed Building.
 - The demolition of the existing buildings is acceptable.
 - The proposal would help the Council to deliver its housing targets and provide social benefits through the provision of specialised housing for older people and economic benefits, both during the construction period and following its completion through support for local shops and services.
 - The necessary infrastructure associated with the site is provided through the s106 legal agreement. All parties will endeavour to have a final signed agreement before the Inspector prior to commencement of the Hearing (the co-operation of the LPA is required).
5. This is a site which can meet the functional and locational requirements of older persons' accommodation. Since the principle of redevelopment for specialist accommodation for older people is acceptable, the inevitable consequences of such a development must also be acceptable i.e. buildings with a large footprint in a flatted form.
6. Moreover, NPPF 124 requires the Appellant to make an "effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses and improving the environment and ensuring a safe and healthy living conditions". This is a valuable site on which development must be "optimised" taking account the identified critical need"; local market conditions and viability; the promotion of sustainable modes of transport and movement and the desirability of maintaining an area's prevailing character and setting. Also "... the importance of securing well-designed and beautiful, attractive and healthy places" (see NPPF 128).

7. Furthermore, paragraph 125C of the NPPF states that substantial weight should be given to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and other identified needs, proposals for which should be approved unless substantial harm would be caused.

ALLEGED HARM

8. The following issues arise from the Council's reasons for refusal (RfR):
 - i. The effect of the scheme on highway safety. RfR 1 and 2
 - ii. The effect of the appeal scheme on the living conditions of future occupiers, RfR 3 and 5
 - iii. The effect of the appeal scheme on character and appearance of the surrounding area, RfR 4
 - iv. Whether or not the scheme includes sufficient amount of affordable housing, RfR6
 - v. Whether or not the scheme includes appropriate mitigation for the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area, RfR7, and
 - vi. Whether or not the scheme includes sufficient infrastructure to support the proposal, RfR8.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

9. In relation to RfR1 discussions were held between the relevant transport consultants for both parties and it was agreed that this refusal could be overcome by changing the proposed radius on the western side of the site access junction to be the same as that proposed on the eastern side and that there is sufficient space to widen the pedestrian route and provide kerbing to protect pedestrians from vehicles. These changes have been incorporated on amended plans and it is common ground between the parties that these plans can be dealt with via condition imposed on the grant of planning permission. On this basis, the Council no longer pursues RFR1.
10. RFR 2 was also discussed between the parties as the LPA adopted new parking standards on 23rd June 2026 so that the site is now within the newly introduced 'flexibility zone' (within 800m walking distance of Bracknell railway station) for residential parking. This will change the required parking for the site from 55 spaces under the current (adopted 2016) parking standards, to 41 spaces which can be met through provision of physical parking but also through a range of measures to reduce or offset parking demand. The Appellant has agreed to include measures to reduce the demand for parking, including travel plans, travel information packs and agreement that future residents would not be permitted to

obtain on-street parking permits. These details will be secured via conditions and the Section 106 Agreement. On this basis the Council no longer pursues RFR2

LIVING CONDITIONS FOR FUTURE OCCUPIERS

11. In terms of outlook the Appellant demonstrates in the evidence of Mr. Brunt that sufficient outlook is provided through the main window to the relevant bedrooms in the western elevations and is fully clear glazed, providing views over the courtyard and landscaping beyond. The secondary south-facing window, which will be obscure glazed, supplements the room's light and ventilation. The rooms have entirely adequate outlook.
12. RfR 5 relates to wheelchair accessible units and the requirement of Local Plan policy LP38 which states that where a scheme includes specialist housing for older people 100% of all self contained units will meet the PartM4(3)(2)(a) standard for wheelchair adaptable dwellings.
13. The Appellant's evidence demonstrates that whilst the scheme does not meet this requirement in full, this departure from policy should only be given limited weight as large parts of M4(3) is complied with, there is no real justification for the policy to be set at 100% and would result in additional works that would make the scheme unviable. This is set out in this statement as well as the evidence of Mr. Brunt and Mr. Carson.

IMPACT UPON CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE

14. The Appellant's evidence shows that in broadly following the line of the existing building the proposed layout takes into account the neighbouring properties, taking into considerations the separation distances from existing properties there is no adverse overlooking or overbearing impacts on neighbouring dwellings. This is set out in the evidence of Mr Brunt.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

15. A Financial Viability Assessment was submitted with the planning application. At the core of any viability discussion will be discussion around any sum sought by the Council in respect of affordable housing as well as any additional contributions being sought.
16. The appellant's position, at application stage, was that the development produced a deficit of -£52,272. The Appellant has provided an updated assessment prior to the appeal which sees that grow slightly to -£78,473. Discussions will continue with the Council advisors in order to reach agreement / narrow the issues so far as possible. Full details are provided within the evidence of Mr. Carson.

THAMES BASIN HEATH SPECIAL PROTECTION AREA / INFRASTRUCTURE

17. Reasons 7 and 8 relate to the Thames Basin Special Protection Area (TBHSPA) and other additional infrastructure, which is considered to be necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms, namely public open space and community facilities.
18. As the application site sits within the zone of influence for the TBHSPA and as such contributions are required towards SANGS and SAMMS to mitigate against the impacts of development on the TBHSPA. Infrastructure allowances have been calculated using an adopted formula. These sums are provided under the Section 106 Agreement to be submitted to the Inspector and will ensure compliance with relevant policies

CONCLUSION

19. In conclusion, it is clear that the proposals comply with the development plan read as a whole. The Council cannot demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply, and so even if the Inspector was to conclude that the scheme did not comply with the development plan permission should still be granted on the basis of the approach set out in NPPF paragraph, as this is clearly a case where the multitude of benefits the scheme would deliver would heavily outweigh any adverse impacts the scheme would cause.
20. Accordingly in applying paragraph 11 (d) (ii) of the NPPF, planning permission should be granted because any adverse impacts of granting planning permission do not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the scheme (as set out in section 13 of my POE), when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole.
21. The Appellant therefore submits that planning permission should be granted, subject to conditions and s.106.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Hearing Statement is submitted on behalf of the Appellant, McCarthy & Stone Retirement Lifestyles Ltd, and sets out the Appellant's case in respect of the Appeal.

1.2 The Appellant is the UK's largest provider of market retirement and extra care housing. This Statement is prepared by Ian Hann MA, a Principal Planning Associate at the Planning Bureau Ltd, the Planning Agents for the scheme, supported by the Hearing Statements from:

- Daniel Brunt: Design / Living Conditions (Enclosure 1)
- Samuel Carson: Development Viability (Enclosure 2)

1.3 The Appeal Scheme comprises the erection of 46 retirement living apartments with communal facilities, car parking, landscaping and associated works.

1.4 A Planning Statement and a Design and Access Statement were submitted with the application (amongst other documents). To avoid duplication of evidence, reference will be made to these documents where appropriate.

1.5 Attention is drawn to the Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) which narrows down the areas of dispute.

1.6 The Council's Decision Notice cites eight reasons for refusal relating to the proposal's alleged impact upon highway safety, reduced parking, residents living conditions, overdevelopment, wheelchair accessibility, affordable housing, impact upon the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area and infrastructure contributions. There is also a need to consider planning balance and the material planning benefits of the proposal. Accordingly, the following specific issues need to be addressed:

- Highways and Parking – whether the proposed development would have an impact upon highway safety and has the appropriate levels of parking.
- Residential amenity – whether the development would provide a high quality living environment to apartments 14 and 28 in terms of outlook.
- Neighbouring amenity / overdevelopment– whether the development would have a harmful overbearing and overlooking impact on neighbouring dwellings.
- Wheelchair accessibility – whether the scheme would provide adequate wheelchair accessible housing.

- Affordable Housing – whether the appeal scheme makes appropriate provision for off-site affordable housing.
- Natural environment mitigation measures and infrastructure contributions – whether the appeal scheme makes appropriate provision for natural environment mitigation measures and infrastructure contributions.
- Planning Balance and Material Planning Benefits of the proposals - including the need for and benefits of retirement housing nationally and locally and whether these would outweigh any identified harm.

2.0 McCARTHY & STONE

- 2.1 McCarthy Stone was established in 1963. Since 1977 and thus for the past 49 years, the Company has specialised in the design, construction and management of Retirement Living housing (also known as sheltered housing accommodation) for sale, and more latterly market rent along with part rent / part buy, to older people. They have developed a wealth of experience in this sector of the housing market. Extensive research at both pre-occupation and post-occupation stages has been, and continues to be, carried out by the Company, which has informed the product and service development.
- 2.2 This background has resulted in McCarthy Stone being widely recognised as the market leader in the provision of Retirement Living housing. To date, more than 58,000 specialised dwellings for older people have been built or are in the course of construction at over 1,300 McCarthy Stone development sites throughout the United Kingdom. As a result McCarthy Stone has considerable experience of successfully developing a wide variety of sites including town centre locations, infill sites, and sites within locations where there has been a need to sensitively respond to site specific constraints and/or respect local townscape characteristics, including heritage assets.
- 2.3 McCarthy Stone's ethos is that later life can be more fulfilling. Through its developments and services, it helps older people enjoy their lives in peace, comfort and security ensuring a continuing relationship and commitment to all of its residents. Specialist accommodation for older people is strongly supported by social, health and planning policy because of the substantial benefits it brings in improving the quality of life of older people, as discussed in sections 3 and 15 of this statement.
- 2.4 McCarthy Stone continues to win the highest awards possible for customer satisfaction. They are the only house builder to achieve the Home Builders Federation five-star rating for customer service for eighteen consecutive years.
- 2.5 Since 2010 McCarthy Stone has managed its own developments through McCarthy Stone Management Services Limited (MSMS) with a House Manager based on-site who is supported by the Company's management services team. This allows for the maintenance and management of the development and its grounds to be kept in line with best practice and all legal lease management requirements that apply. House Managers also work closely with residents to maintain well being and to organise events to build a community for homeowners to be a part of, further benefiting their mental and physical well being. MSMS currently manages 543 developments that accommodate more than 20,600 apartments.

3.0 CONCEPT, NATURE OF AND NEED FOR RETIREMENT LIVING HOUSING

3.1 The appeal proposal comprises a 46 unit Retirement Living development of 24 no. one-bedroom apartments and 22 no. two-bedroom apartments contained within a single-footprint building. The residential element will provide purpose-built, self-contained accommodation in a safe and secure environment with age-proof facilities built in.

3.2 The individual Retirement Living apartments are specially designed to accommodate the needs of the residents.

3.3 Furthermore, within the wider accommodation there are a range of communal facilities that are also tailored to meet the needs of its elderly residents, including:

- residents' lounge; this represents the vibrant heart of the community and is centrally located. It is decorated to the highest standards and is designed to have the atmosphere of a high quality hotel lobby;
- landscaped communal gardens / terrace; an important element in the design of Retirement Living accommodation and will comprise well-landscaped gardens and sitting out areas for the residents' enjoyment, as well as planting areas for home owners to use assisting them in physical and mental wellbeing;
- guest suite; comprising an en-suite twin bedroom for family and friends to sleep over;
- internal refuse room; this allows residents to dispose of waste without leaving the building, and avoids the need for unsightly bin stores outside the property;
- lift; between floors facilitating ease of movement;
- an office; for the House Manager who will manage the development on behalf of McCarthy Stone Management Services Limited;
- mobility buggy store; integral to the building;
- secure entrance lobby; with CCTV link to individual apartments; and
- 24-hour emergency help line; available within each apartment and in the communal areas to summon assistance in the event of an emergency.

3.4 Retirement Living housing enables the maintenance of an independent lifestyle in older age but safe in the knowledge that a dedicated House Manager is present during normal working hours together with 24-hour careline link to provide a point of contact in case of emergencies. This is a social alarm system within the apartments and throughout the development. Each apartment is provided with a speech module with an integrated emergency call button, which will open a speech channel with either the house manager, if available, or the alarm receiving centre. The resident is also able to signal distress or an

emergency by using their pendant trigger. As the triggers are connected to a network of receivers it is possible to identify the zone of the alarm. The fire alarm and detection system within the apartments is also linked to the social alarm system enabling false alarms to be filtered but most importantly allowing the early alert of the fire and rescue service. The house manager monitors the system while on site and is directed to the alarm receiving centre once the house manager leaves the development at the end of their working day. The alarm receiving service is briefed on the appropriate party to call for a number of emergency situations (for example accidents, falls or sudden illness) and are also able to hold next of kin contacts for homeowners.

- 3.5 While the development is built around people in their later years this is not a development that offers care as you would find in Extra Care developments or Care Homes. Retirement Living creates safe and secure environments for homeowners to continue to live an active, independent life and caters for downsizers who are typically selling or vacating their former family home and moving to a smaller apartment. Homeowners are generally the more active elderly rather than those who are in need of care or have more significant issues around mobility. Within the Retirement Housing market, schemes classified as age restricted and Retirement Living are the most basic type of specialist housing, with the main difference from mainstream housing being that the provision of communal spaces for socialising and building a community, onsite management and age restrictions. The following image shows where Retirement Living fits in with other types of development:



- 3.6 Retirement Living developments are a popular option for those people looking to maintain their independence and privacy while also having a network of friends and neighbours on the doorstep, with help available should they require it. Retirement Living is ideal for people who want to improve their social life and meet new people with the opportunity to get to know neighbours on the development through the shared social spaces - like the

communal lounges or gardens. House managers work closely with residents in order to put on a calendar of activities, clubs and social events, such as coffee mornings, fish and chip suppers, quiz nights, seasonal parties, local interest talks, school visits, musical events, exercise classes, arts and crafts groups, birthday / anniversary celebrations and cocktail evenings. With neighbours close by, and a communal lounge and gardens there are plenty of opportunities to mix and socialise and this builds a community which cares and looks out for each other as the homeowners form friendship bonds rather than just being neighbours.

3.7 The house manager will also be on hand to ensure the safe and functional running of the development and ensure that the maintenance of the building is being upheld to the homeowners exacting standards. They are also a reassuring presence in case of an emergency. They work extremely closely with, and form bonds with, the homeowners from the moment they move in to ensure that they are also safe and secure. House Managers would consider the wellbeing of homeowners and maintain family contact details and if they feel the homeowner may need further assistance or help will try to assist wherever possible.

3.8 Hotel-style guest suites make it simple to have family and friends for overnight stays with the additional benefit to homeowners where they can book guest suites in other developments across the country for a fantastically priced holiday or short break.

3.9 The way in which the development is run and managed allows homeowners to build vibrant, fun-filled communities within a development of specialist housing allowing homeowners to live independently, with the assistance of on site companionship. This differs from open market housing where there is no form of community built around residents and generally no onsite presence which looks after not just the building itself but also the safety and wellbeing of the people in it.

3.10 A service charge is levied to cover the cost of the House Manager, Careline and other communal facilities such as the lift, residents' lounge, guest suite and mobility buggy / refuse store together with the maintenance of the building, gardens and parking areas. Whilst the service charge is kept to a reasonable minimum, it is nonetheless likely to be higher than those encountered in open market flatted developments, such that prospective purchasers who do not need such services are likely to be dissuaded from purchasing an apartment in this sort of development. From McCarthy Stone's substantial experience of this type of development, the accommodation will be attractive to people who are much older than the minimum age requirement of 60. Typical purchasers of this type of development are in their mid to late 70's (on average around 78 years of age) on entry and in need of the facilities offered by this type of housing. The vast majority (some

85-90%) are widowed or single, with 75% of apartments comprising single, female households.

- 3.11 Safety, security and companionship reduces anxieties and maintains health and general well-being amongst older people. Specialist accommodation of this nature provides a form of housing better suited to meeting the onset and increasing problems of older age whilst also maintaining an independent lifestyle. Research undertaken by Professor Michael Ball in his report entitled 'Housing Markets and Independence In Old Age: Expanding The Opportunities' (this is attached at Enclosure 3) has proven that it significantly improves the quality of life of older people (chapter 6). This report finds a higher quality of life for residents and their families with 92% of residents being very happy or contented , greater security and convenience, reduced feelings of isolation and vulnerability and improved independence, well-being and health.
- 3.12 Likewise a report by WPI Strategy and Homes for Later Living entitled "Healthier and Happier: An analysis of the fiscal and wellbeing benefits of building more homes for later living" (Enclosure 4) finds issues of improved safety, security, health and well being for older people associated with a move to retirement housing such as:
- Those in specialist housing are half as likely to have falls with resulting fractures, injuries and costly inpatient bed stays.
 - Building 30,000 more later living dwellings every year for the next 10 years, which is the estimated demand, would generate fiscal savings across the NHS and social services of £2.1 billion annually.
 - Based on a selection of established national well-being criteria such as happiness and life satisfaction, an average person aged 80 feels as good as someone 10 years younger after moving from mainstream housing to housing specially designed for later living
- 3.13 This has also been evidenced at times of crisis, such as the Covid-19 pandemic where, occupiers of Retirement Living developments managed much better than the wider older population at large and for the over 85's in particular. In April 2020, McCarthy & Stone's Chief Executive Officer confirmed that *"since the start of the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, the independent Retirement Living sector has played a vital role in keeping people safe and secure. Infection rates have been very low among our c.20,000 homeowners who live in our 441 communities across the UK and stood at 27% and 75% lower per 1,000 people compared to the UK population of over 65s and over 85s respectively. This is broadly typical across our sector due to the unique benefits of independent living which enables older people to remain in a private apartment with their own front door supported by a range of on-site services. Our latest customer satisfaction survey conducted during the outbreak showed that 93% of our homeowners feel safe or extremely safe in their apartments and 88% are very happy with the support they have*

received during the pandemic. The Covid-19 backdrop has illustrated the unique benefits of independent Retirement Living as a safe, happy and effective 'Third Way' to the current options of remaining in a family home that has often become unsuitable or moving into residential care”.

3.14 In December 2020 McCarthy & Stone was awarded a Housebuilder Special Recognition Award for protecting its homeowners during the pandemic. It also offered more than 300 newly completed apartments in unoccupied developments to help government and local authority care providers address the acute shortage of beds for older people during the coronavirus crisis.

3.15 The occupancy of the development can be restricted by planning condition. Such conditions have been imposed on numerous comparable developments by Local Planning Authorities and the Planning Inspectorate. Each residential unit within the approved purpose-built Retirement Living housing development shall be occupied only by:

- a single person not less than 60 years of age;
- joint residents of whom the head of the household is not less than 60 years of age and the spouse, partner or cohabitee not less than 55 years of age;
- persons who were living as part of a single household with such a person or persons who have since died.

3.16 Based upon the Appellant’s extensive experience of providing specialised accommodation for older people, it is anticipated around half the prospective purchasers are likely to currently under-occupy a family dwelling within a 10km radius of the site. The Professor Ball research confirmed that in terms of distance moved, “most people only move a relatively short distance when they move into OORH. Sales data from McCarthy and Stone on over 5000 moves across Great Britain between 2007 and 2010 showed a high proportion of short distance moves, measured as straight line distances between the centres of the previous and the new postcode areas:

- 25% in same postcode area;
- 40% within 5km;
- 50% within 10km;
- 60% within 20km;
- 71% within 50km”.

3.17 There is a range of reasons behind why people would want to move into retirement developments from their existing house / garden being too large to financial reasons and a need to be near families. A survey of 345 people who recently moved into retirement

developments was also undertaken for the above mentioned report and this stated that 20% of people moved to smaller accommodation to be nearer to their family.

4.0 APPEAL PROPOSAL

Appeal Site

- 4.1. The site is located within a residential area within the settlement boundary of Bracknell.
- 4.2. The site is located to the south of Bracknell Town Centre and Railway Station and contains a single large detached property within generous grounds. The site is accessed from Old Bracknell Lane East and has a parking court to the front and expansive grounds to the rear. Mature trees substantially screen the property from the road, and mature planting encloses the site on all boundaries.
- 4.3. The site is bordered to the east by Downshire Way (A322). This is a primary main road and there is no access from the site to this road. A heavily planted buffer slopes down from the site towards the road. The site is well connected within Bracknell, with excellent links to local amenities in the town centre. The central location allows easy access to local amenities without the need to travel by car, with the rail and bus station within a 10 minute walk. The sustainable location of the site is discussed further in the Transport Statement which accompanied the application and also demonstrated in the amenities plan below.



- 4.4. Floringham Lodge was built in the mid-20th century in an arts and crafts style. The large site is underutilised for a single detached residential property; this is evident not only from the on-site ratio of built development to open space, but also from the surrounding sites having already been redeveloped as multi-residential.
- 4.5. The site is privately owned and is not publicly accessible.
- 4.6. The context of the surrounding area is residential in its nature and made up of post war detached and semi-detached housing. Considering the proximity to the town centre and the bypass the area is very green and leafy with mature trees along both sides of Old Bracknell Lane East. As the road terminates at a bell mouth it is particularly quiet and only used by local residents and service vehicles.
- 4.7. The character of the immediate site vicinity reveals an eclectic mix of 20th century with developer led multi-residential developments showing a range of materials from red to buff brick, slates to tiled roofs, gable dormers to hipped dormers. The conclusion is that there is no predominant style or vernacular beyond what is commonly regarded as 'traditional'.
- 4.8. The ideal site for sheltered housing is difficult to find. Specialised developments of the nature proposed here need to be located in a sustainable settlement on an accessible site with good access to facilities. It is often the case that such developments are located in established residential areas, where it is inevitable that townscape issues will need to be considered (such as increasing density and impact upon local character).
- 4.9. Please see the Design and Access Statement submitted with the application for further details on the appeal site and its context.

The Appeal Scheme

- 4.10. The proposed development would provide a part 3 / part 4 storey 46 unit Retirement Living development with a mix of one and two bedroom units. The proposal also includes a communal homeowners' lounge, communal gardens, CCTV controlled secure entry system, a guest suite, reception area, refuse store, mobility scooter storeroom with charging points, a House Manager office and car parking area. The appeal proposal would provide 24 x one bed and 22 x two bed units.
- 4.11. The scheme has been designed to meet the needs of independent retired people and provides self-contained apartments, within a single level access block. A new community

will be formed through the development so that the residents support each other through social interaction, which is enhanced by communal facilities including a communal lounge and communal garden. Further details are contained in the evidence of Mr.Brunt.

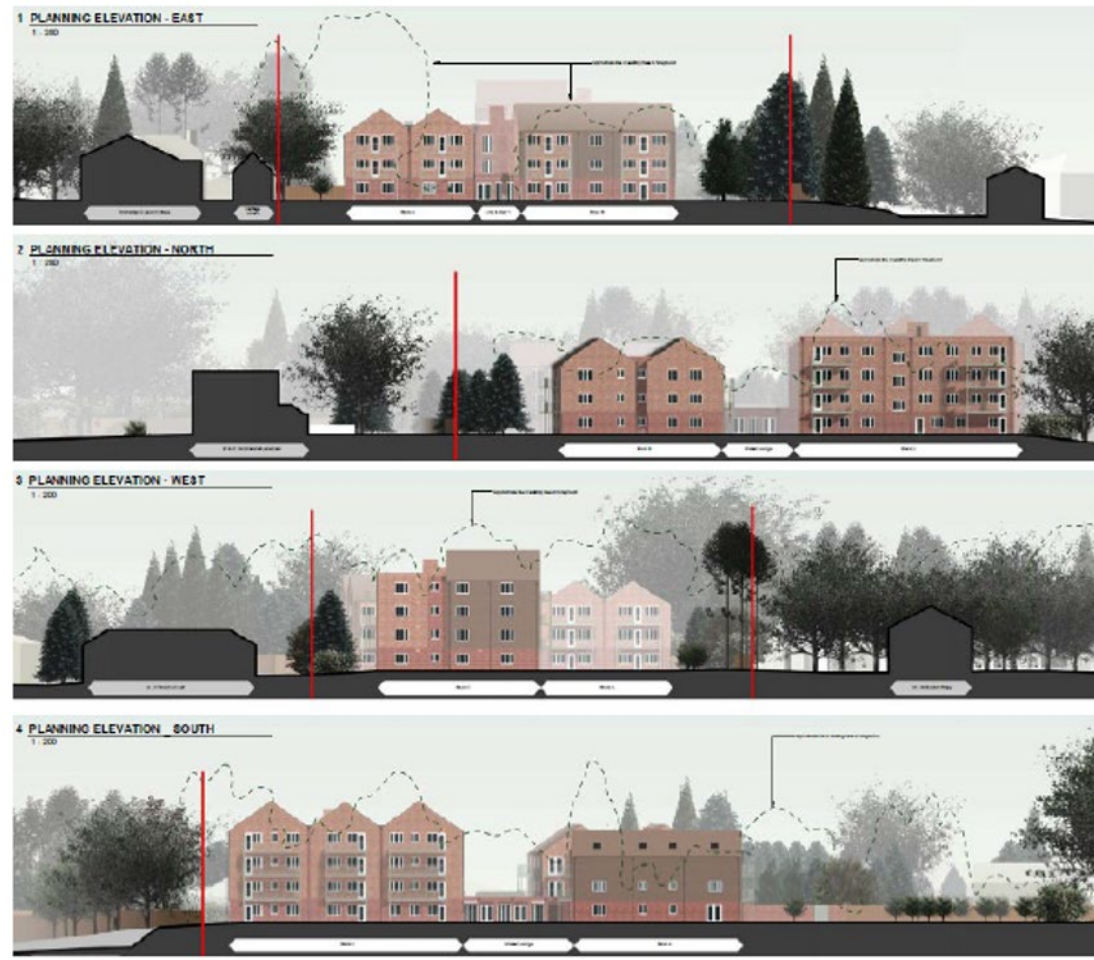
- 4.12. There will be step free access to the apartments, communal spaces, parking and amenity areas, lift access to all floors and all communal corridors are a minimum of 1.5m wide to make them easily traversable by a wheelchair user.
- 4.13. The proposals represent a considered response to the opportunities and constraints identified on the site. The proposals have been carefully developed and evolved through contextual analysis, with careful consideration of scale, appearance and materials that relate to the surrounding character and has provided a sensitively designed development.
- 4.14. The proposals are fully acceptable in design terms and will contribute positively towards the character of the area through a thorough, thoughtful and considered proposal. The design and landscaping are proposed to a high quality and suitability to the area for existing and future residents alike.
- 4.15. Access will be taken from Old Bracknell Lane East using the existing access point. There will be 38 car parking spaces, providing an appropriate response to the sustainable location of the site and the operational needs of the development.
- 4.16. The footprint of the building fits well on the site responding well to its constraints and opportunities. Presenting the principal elevation towards Old Bracknell Lane East allows gardens to surround an apartment wing to the rear.
- 4.17. The main entrance will be clearly identified on the principal elevation and will lead to a reception area, which all residents and visitors will use. Once inside, the apartments will be accessed from a central circulation route. Internal amenities will include the residents' lounge, mobility scooter store, refuse store and guest suite, all of which will be accessible from within the building.
- 4.18. The ground floor is orientated to allow each apartment access to a private patio, which spills out into communal landscaped gardens. The dual aspect residents' lounge has direct access to a south facing patio and large landscaped courtyard to the north with areas of hard and soft landscaping.
- 4.19. The development would be contained within a part 3 / part 4 storey building which steps with the topography of the site and respects the neighbouring properties. The massing and

appearance of the proposal has been rigorously considered within the parameters of the site and the proximity to the neighbouring properties.

- 4.20. The principal elevation is heavily screened by mature tree planting along the boundary of Old Bracknell Road East. The mass of the building is purposefully set back from the northern and southern boundaries, a gap with of almost 20m between Villa A and B providing a clear view over the single storey link building accommodating the residents' lounge.
- 4.21. The elevational treatment is of a traditional building with modern interventions, with a stylized modern 'Arts and Crafts' approach. The brick banding to the ground floor adds interest and texture, with alternating solid course and 3 courses of running bond from ground level to terminate with a solid course detail above the ground floor windows. The gables and double gables provide detail and interest to the roof and eaves line. The detail is found locally within and around Bracknell.
- 4.22. The design and landscaping are proposed to the highest quality and suitability to the area. The scheme will comprise high quality design and will be attractively landscaped, making a clear improvement to the appearance of the area compared to the existing disused buildings on site.
- 4.23. The proper optimisation of this previously developed brown field site provides development for which there is an unmet need against a backdrop of a Local Planning Authority which is unable to provide a five year housing land supply. In line with the imperatives set out within NPPF paragraphs 69 (ensuring the needs of specific groups are addressed), 124 (in making use of previously developed land) and 125 (substantial weight to be given to the use of brownfield land to fully meet identified needs for housing).
- 4.24. The Design and Access Statement provides further details and analysis of the design approach for the proposed scheme along with the evidence of Mr. Brunt.

Relevant Planning History

- 4.25 A planning application was submitted by a previous applicant in January 2023 and registered under reference 23/00043/FUL for the demolition of Floringham Lodge and the development of a later living residential complex of 42 apartments. The application was withdrawn prior to determination in October 2024. The feedback available from that application shows that a larger form of development was considered acceptable in principle as was the twin villa approach, which was also advocated by a Design Review Panel. The current application is similar in terms of use and volume of the previous application, however the design approach differs, full details of which are set out in the Design and Access Statement which accompanies this application.



- 4.26 The design team for the current scheme have considered the points raised by the consultees and design review panel. The team present a carefully considered design response for an age restricted residential development on the site.

5.0 PLANNING APPLICATION PROCESS AND REASONS FOR REFUSAL

- 5.1 In accordance with the advice set out in paragraphs 40 – 43 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the Appellant entered pre-application discussions with residents and stakeholders who were given the opportunity to view and provide feedback regarding the appeal proposals via a number of different channels including an in-person drop in event, online feedback forms on the virtual consultation website and via postage paid feedback cards issued with the project newsletter. A freephone information line, a feedback email address and a dedicated website were also made available throughout the course of the pre-application planning stages for interested parties to receive further information and to provide feedback. Hard copies of the consultation materials were available by post on request. Individual online meetings were offered to local stakeholders and site neighbours. A virtual public consultation was held from 27th March 2025 until 9th April 2025 and an in-person event was held at Bracknell Open Learning Centre, on 27th March 2025. Approximately 1,042 addresses close to the site were invited to view the public consultation. The in-person event was attended by 15 individuals and the virtual exhibition website was viewed by a total of 80 individuals during the consultation period. This ensured that the local community had an opportunity to understand the proposals, discuss them with members of the project team and provide their feedback before the submission of a planning application.
- 5.2 The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), submitted with the planning application, documents a full record of consultation exercises.
- 5.3 A pre-application submission was made to Bracknell Forrest Council on 22nd February 2025 and a pre application discussion meeting was held with the Local Planning Authority on 26th March 2025.
- 5.4 The meeting with the LPA considered a proposed scheme for circa 44 units with communal areas and car parking, consisting of a part 3/part 4 storey “T shaped” building. Written advice was subsequently received from the LPA on the 16th April 2025. The principle of redevelopment of the site for residential apartments was considered acceptable, however Officers had concerns over the design which included the layout, massing and parking numbers.
- 5.5 The application subject of this appeal was submitted and validated on the 22nd July 2025 under LPA reference 25/00456/FULL1. The proposed development was duly assessed by the Case Officer and relevant consultees. The application was not EIA development, and sufficient information was provided to enable the proposals to be properly assessed by the Council.

5.6 A Statement of Common Ground has been produced alongside the evidence which includes a list of the plans considered by the Council in its determination.

5.7 The application was refused under delegated powers on 26th February 2026 for the following reasons:

Reason for refusal 1:

It has not been demonstrated that the proposed vehicular and pedestrian access would provide safe and suitable access for all users nor prioritise sustainable modes of transport without an unacceptable impact on highway safety contrary to BFLP policies LP 25 and LP 26.

Reason for refusal 2:

A robust evidence base for reduced parking compared with the Council's parking standards has not been submitted nor has it been demonstrated that the sufficient parking would be provided on site to avoid displacement of vehicles onto surrounding roads, increasing the risk of illegal, inconsiderate or obstructive parking, which would in turn worsen highway safety and have an adverse effect on the safe and efficient operation of the public highway network contrary to BFLP policies LP 25 and LP62.

Reason for refusal 3:

The proposed development does not create a high quality living environment by reason of habitable rooms in apartments 14 and 28 not receiving suitable outlook due to the inclusion of obscure glazed windows which are required to reduce opportunities for overlooking adjacent properties and gardens. This is contrary to BFLP Policy LP 50, the Design SPD and the NPPF.

Reason for refusal 4:

The proposed development would result in an overdevelopment of the site, which is evidenced by the proximity of the proposed building to existing residential properties including gardens south of the site which will result in overshadowing and overbearing. This is contrary to BFLP Policy LP 50, the Design SPD and the NPPF.

Reason for refusal 5:

The proposed development fails to provide adequate wheelchair accessible housing to meet the Part M4(3)(2)(a) standard for wheelchair adaptable dwellings as required for specialist housing for older people. This is contrary to policy LP 18 of the BFLP.

Reason for refusal 6:

In the absence of a planning obligation to secure affordable housing and a late -stage review in relation to an affordable housing contribution in terms that are satisfactory to the Local Planning Authority, the development would be provided with inadequate

affordable housing and the proposal would be contrary to Policy LP 16 Bracknell Forest Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Reason for refusal 7:

In the absence of a planning obligation to secure suitable avoidance and mitigation measures and access management monitoring arrangements, in terms that are satisfactory to the Local Planning Authority, the proposal would be contrary to Regulation 63(5) of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), Policy NRM6 of the South East Plan, Policies LP 31 and LP 32 of the Bracknell Forest Local Plan, and the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Supplementary Planning Document (2018).

Reason for refusal 8:

The proposed development would unacceptably increase the pressure on open space of public value and off-site community facilities. In the absence of planning obligations in terms that are satisfactory to the Local Planning Authority, and which secure contributions towards open space of public value and off-site community facilities, the proposal would be contrary to Policies LP 3, 24, LP 44 and LP 45 of the Bracknell Forest Local Plan, the Planning Obligations SPD and the National Planning Policy Framework.

6.0 PLANNING POLICIES

Development Plan Policy

6.1 The statutory development plan covering Bracknell comprises the following relevant adopted Development Plan Documents (DPDs):

- Bracknell Forest Local Plan (2024)
- Joint Minerals and Waste Plan to 2036 (2023)
- Policy NRM6 of the South East Plan (2009)
- Site Allocations Local Plan (2013) (SALP);
- Bracknell Forest policies map (2024).

The development plan documents need to be read in conjunction with the National Planning Policy Framework and guidance.

6.2 The relevant policies of the Bracknell Forest Local Plan are set out below (those policies referred to in the reasons for refusal are indicated by RFR and the relevant number):

- LP1 Spatial strategy
- LP2 Settlement Hierarchy
- LP3 Sustainable Development Principles RFR8
- LP4 Provision of Housing
- LP16 Affordable Housing RFR6
- LP17 Provision of Specialist Housing for Older People
- LP18 Definition and Protection of Designated Employment Areas (this appears an error as this RFR actually relates to policy LP 38)
- LP24 Infrastructure RFR8
- LP25 Transport Principles RFR1,2
- LP26 Transport and Infrastructure provision RFR1
- LP27 Climate Change
- LP28 Design Principles
- LP30 Green Infrastructure
- LP31 Designated Nature Conservation and Geological Sites RFR7
- LP32 Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area RFR7
- LP33 Flood Risk
- LP37 Protection of Existing Housing Stock and Land
- LP38 Accessible and Adaptable Dwellings (the correct policy for RFR5)
- LP39 Specialist Housing
- LP40 Housing Mix
- LP44 Protection of Community Facilities and Services RFR8
- LP45 Play, open space and sports provision RFR8

- LP50 Design RFR3, 4
- LP53 Biodiversity
- LP54 Protection and Enhancement of Trees and Hedgerows
- LP55 Sustainable construction
- LP58 Pollution and Hazards
- LP62 Parking RFR2

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024)

6.3 The following chapters of the NPPF are relevant:

- Paragraph 11 – presumption in favour of sustainable development
- Section 2- Achieving sustainable development
- Section 4 – Decision-making
- Section 5 – Delivering a sufficient supply of homes
- Section 8 – Promoting healthy and safe communities
- Section 9 – Promoting sustainable transport
- Section 11 – Making effective use of land
- Section 12 – Achieving well-designed places
- Section 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) (DCLG, as updated).

6.4 The following chapters from the NPPG are relevant:

- Achieving healthy and inclusive communities
- Housing needs of different groups
- Housing for older and disabled people
- Design: process and tools
- Natural Environment
- Viability

Other relevant documents

6.5 The following documents are also relevant considerations in this appeal:

- Design SPD (2017)
- Housing SPD (2025)
- Parking Standards (2016)
- Planning Obligations SPD (2015)
- Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (2018)

- RICS Professional Standard, Assessing viability in planning under the National Planning Policy Framework 2019 for England, England, 1st edition, March 2021, Effective from July 2021
- RICS Professional Standard, Financial viability in planning: conduct and reporting, England, 1st edition, May 2019, Effective from 1 September 2019
- National Design Guide

6.6 Other documents which are relevant include the following:

- The Community Infrastructure Levy (Amendment) Regulations 2012
- Our Future Homes. Housing that promotes wellbeing and community for an ageing population (Government Taskforce Report November 2024)
- Four recent reports produced by WPI Strategy for Homes for Later Living:
- “Healthier and Happier”. An analysis of the fiscal and wellbeing benefits of building more homes for later living (Sept 2019)
- “Chain Reaction”. The positive impact of specialist retirement housing on the generational divide and first-time buyers (Aug 2020)
- “Silver Saviours for the High Street”. How new Retirement properties create more local economic value and more local jobs than any other type of residential housing (Feb 2021)
- “Sustainable Living”. How the ‘downsizing dividend’ can deliver a greener housing future (April 2022)

7.0 APPELLANT'S CASE

7.1 Section 38(6) of the 2004 Act requires that applications and appeals must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This section sets out the Appellant's case and addresses the reasons for refusal (RfR).

7.2 These issues arising from the RfRs can be summarised as follows:

- i. The effect of the scheme on highway safety. RfR 1 and 2
- ii. The effect of the appeal scheme on the living conditions of future occupiers, RfR 3 and 5
- iii. The effect of the appeal scheme on character and appearance of the surrounding area, RfR 4
- iv. Whether or not the scheme includes sufficient amount of affordable housing, RfR6
- v. Whether or not the scheme includes appropriate mitigation for the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area, RfR7, and
- vi. Whether or not the scheme includes sufficient infrastructure to support the proposal, R4R8.

There then of course remains the issue of Planning Balance and Material Planning considerations, including need for and benefits of the Retirement Accommodation proposed.

i. Highway Safety

7.3 As set out above, the Council no longer pursues RFR1, subject to the formal acceptance into evidence of plan numbers LSE-3045-03-AC-0120 P10 and LSE-3045-03-LA-MCS792-Drg 01 P6.

Living Conditions

7.4 The Council alleges in RfR 3 that the development does not create a high quality living environment by reason of habitable rooms in apartments 14 and 28 not receiving suitable outlook due to the inclusion of obscure glazed windows, which are required to reduce opportunities for overlooking adjacent properties and garden

7.5 RfR5 states that proposed development fails to provide adequate wheelchair accessible housing to meet the Part M4(3)(2)(a) standard for wheelchair adaptable dwellings as required for specialist housing for older people. While the decision notice states that RfR5 would be contrary to policy LP19 this is the incorrect policy and should be policy LP38

7.6 Policy LP50 relates to design and requires full consideration of design matters including insuring layouts make efficient use of land, having regard to the character of the area/location and other factors affecting good design, relate well to their location and surroundings through their siting, scale, form, roofscape, design and materials and do not adversely affect the amenity of surrounding properties.

7.7 Policy LP38 states that housing proposals will be expected to meet high standards of accessibility and where a scheme includes specialist housing for older people 100% of all

self contained units will meet the Part M4(3)(2)(a) standard for wheelchair adaptable dwellings.

Outlook

- 7.8 Mr Brunt's evidence shows that the outlook from units 14 and 28 will be entirely acceptable.
- 7.9 The units have a very attractive outlook through their main windows. The use of obscure glazing to secondary or subsidiary windows is a well-established and widely accepted technique in residential design where a window serves a useful function in terms of light or ventilation but faces in a direction where clear glazing could cause overlooking of a neighbouring property.

Wheelchair Access

- 7.10 RfR 5 states that the proposals do not abide with planning policy as it fails to provide accessible housing to meet M4(3)(2)(a).
- 7.11 The matter is also considered further in the evidence of Mr. Brunt and Mr. Carson but there are also some relevant points which shall be referred to below.
- 7.12 Building regulations establish minimum construction standards to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of people in and around buildings. They mandate structural integrity, fire protection, energy efficiency, and accessibility, applying when structures are built, extended, or altered. These are approved by the Secretary of State who also approves a series of documents giving practical guidance about how to meet the requirements of Building Regulations, setting out what, in ordinary circumstances, may be accepted as reasonable compliance for the relevant requirements of the Building Regulations. The Access to and Use of Buildings Approved Document gives guidance about how to comply with the following requirements:
- Category 1 – Visitable Dwellings
 - Category 2 – Accessible and adaptable Dwellings
 - Category 1 – Wheelchair User Dwellings
- 7.13 A brief summary of M4(3) is provided in enclosure 5, with the full version of Approved Document M provided in enclosure 6 (2015 with 2016 updates) for reference.
- 7.14 The relevant policy of the Bracknell Forest Local Plan is policy LP38:

Policy LP 38

Accessible and adaptable dwellings

Housing proposals will be expected to meet high standards of accessibility and, to this end:

- 1. All new build dwellings will, as a minimum, be constructed in accordance with the requirements of Part M4 Category 2 – Accessible and adaptable dwellings of the Building Regulations 2010 (Approved Document 'M' – Access to and use of Buildings – dwellings 2015) (As Amended) and any subsequent updates.**
- 2. On developments of 10 (gross) or more new build dwellings:**
 - i. at least 5% of all dwellings will meet the Part M4(3)(2)(a) standard for wheelchair adaptable dwellings, and,**
 - ii. where evidence from the Council's Housing Register points to a current local need, affordable schemes will include provision for Part M(4)(3)(2)(b) wheelchair accessible dwellings, and,**
 - iii. where a scheme includes specialist housing for older people and adults with disabilities, 100% of all self contained units will meet the Part M4(3)(2)(a) standard for wheelchair adaptable dwellings.**

7.15 Point 1 of this policy states that as a minimum, all new build dwellings be constructed in accordance with the requirements of Part M Category 2 ('M4 (2)') of the Building regulations and for schemes of 10 or more dwellings point 2i) says that 5% of all of these are to meet Part M (3)(2)(a) wheelchair adaptable dwellings. Point 2 iii) goes further to say that all self-contained units delivering specialist housing for older people and adults with disabilities to meet the M (3)(2)(a) standard. The evidence provided below, together with the evidence of Mr. Brunt and Mr. Carson shows that

- The appeal scheme is designed to meet M4(2) and meets the requirement of point 1 of policy LP38.
- 4 apartments (8.7% of the total) meet the M (3)(2)(a) standards and meet the requirements of point 2i of policy LP38.
- Communal areas of the appeal scheme largely meet the M4(3)(2)(a) standards so this element meets 2iii of policy LP38.
- Although the scheme does not deliver 100% M (3)(2)(a) apartments, limited weight should be given to this, given the lack of need and viability evidence used through the Local Plan production to justify the requirement.
- The council's latest Housing Needs Assessment does not identify a need for such schemes to deliver 100% M (3)(2)(a) – it is the Appellant's view that such an onerous requirement will hinder developments coming forward to meet the current large shortfall of retirement living housing and substantial need identified.

- McCarthy & Stone's recent survey of over 8,000 occupied apartments identifies that just 2.7% of occupiers use a wheelchair in the home. 8.7% M (3)(2)(a) units would more than meet that need. 100% provision is entirely unjustified.
- There was no specific viability testing of M4(2) or M4(3) to support the Local Plan requirement
- Evidence to show that units built to M4(3)(2)(a) must be bigger than units built to M4(2) to accommodate the same number of bedspaces. This has an impact on viability and is therefore inconsistent with the Housing Optional Technical Standards (HOTS)
- An overlay of the scheme using M4(3)(2)(a) apartments results in:
 - A significant reduction in units of at least 7 units due to the addition size of apartments.
 - A substantial change in unit mix.
 - An increase in sales price for larger units, while some overall greater value may be secured for larger units, this is generally at a lower value per sq. m and is unlikely to compensate for the overall loss of units across the proposal as a result of the requirement.
 - An increase in service charges as the costs have to be shared amongst less apartments.
- The scheme would overall be at a lower density and not make such an efficient use of and therefore would directly conflict with para 124 and 125 of the NPPF especially given the central location of the appeal site. The council currently cannot demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply so a reduced density would not assist the council in delivering this. Given the lack of demonstrable 5 year housing supply the presumption in favour of sustainable development should apply.

Justification for M4(3)(2)(a)

- 7.16 Planning Practice Guidance on Housing for Older and Disabled People identifies at Paragraph: 009 Reference ID: 63-009-20190626 that:

*"Should plan-making bodies set minimum requirements for accessible housing?
Where an identified need exists, plans are expected to make use of the optional technical housing standards (footnote 46 of the National Planning Policy Framework) to help bring forward an adequate supply of accessible housing. In doing so planning policies for housing can set out the proportion of new housing that will be delivered to the following standards:*

M4(1) Category 1: Visitable dwellings (the minimum standard that applies where no planning condition is given unless a plan sets a higher minimum requirement)

M4(2) Category 2: Accessible and adaptable dwellings

M4(3) Category 3: Wheelchair user dwellings

Planning policies for accessible housing need to be based on evidence of need, viability and a consideration of site specific factors.”

- 7.17 The Housing: Optional Technical Standards (‘HOTS’) section of the NPG reconfirms the position with respect to viability at Paragraph: 003 Reference ID: 56-003-20150327 that states *‘Local planning authorities should consider the impact of using these standards as part of their Local Plan viability assessment.* Paragraph: 007 Reference ID: 56-007-20150327 of the HOTS then sets out the factors that Local Planning Authority’s can consider when setting standards. This includes *‘the overall impact on viability’.*
- 7.18 Paragraph 12.9 of the Bracknell Forest Local Plan, which forms part of the explanatory text around policy LP38 confirms that *‘The optional standards may be applied where a local planning authority has a policy in place, based on evidence, that a higher level of accessibility and adaptability in new residential development is viable and necessary to meet the current and future housing needs’.*
- 7.19 Paragraph 12.12 then seeks to identify this need and states:
- “The Bracknell Forest Housing Needs Assessment (July 2020) (65) provides evidence of the need for accessible and adaptable housing in view of the projected change in the age profile of the Borough. It demonstrates that there will be a growth in the number of people aged over 65 and a corresponding increase in the number of people with a limiting long-term health problem or disability. The Housing Needs Assessment also concludes that the need for wheelchair user dwellings equates to about 5% of the total housing need after applying national data to the demographic projections.”*
- 7.20 Paragraph 12.14 states that the above evidence supports the delivery of both accessible and adaptable dwellings M4(2) and wheelchair users’ dwellings M4(3).
- 7.21 Paragraph 12.15 of the Local Plan then provides some flexibility by suggesting that:
- “New housing development will be expected to comply with requirements of this policy unless it has been demonstrated that specific site factors such as the vulnerability to flooding, site topography or other site circumstances make the site less suitable for complying with the optional standards in M4(2) and M4(3). Compliance with the policy should be demonstrated in the Design and Access Statement submitted with the planning application.”*(emphasis added).
- 7.22 The Local Plan supporting text therefore clearly states that there is a need for 5% of dwellings to be for wheelchair user dwellings, whilst the policy requires 100% from older persons housing which is not supported by the findings of the evidence base or detailed in the supporting text.

7.23 Consideration has been given to the Bracknell Forest Housing Needs Assessment (March 2021) as this is quoted as the relevant evidence base to support the requirement in the Local Plan. (see extract at enclosure 7). The need for Older Persons Housing and housing for those with disabilities is discussed in section 6 of the assessment. This identifies a large need for housing with support, which the appeal scheme would deliver, and concludes specifically at paragraph 10.21, 10.22 and 10.29 that;

“The analysis in this report has shown a notable growth in the population of older persons aged 65+ in Bracknell Forest over the period to 2036, with the number of people expected to grow by almost 10,400 persons to 2036. Within this, the number of people with a limiting long-term health problem or disability is projected to increase by 5,549 in the Borough. The specific projections undertaken show an expected increase of those with dementia by 700 and with mobility problems by 2,413 to 2036”(10.21)

“The latter equates to 23% of the overall housing need as assessed using the standard method. Many older households will continue to live in mainstream housing but given the substantial growth in the population of older persons and associated increases in those with a disability, it is appropriate for new housing to be delivered to meet Part M4(2) accessible and adaptable home standards, subject to viability testing.

R6: Iceni therefore recommend that new housing should be delivered to Part M4(2) ‘accessible and adaptable’ standards where this is possible to achieve on the site in question. The Council’s viability evidence should assess that this can be viably accommodated.”(10.22)

“In addition, a need for 481 dwellings from wheelchair users in Bracknell Forest, equivalent to 5% of the total housing need. Iceni consider that it would be appropriate to seek provision as part of major new-build schemes, subject to support from viability evidence studies and evaluation on a site-by site basis.

R9: Planning policies should require 5% of dwellings on major development schemes to be delivered to wheelchair adaptable standards. This should be reviewed on a site-by-site basis“.(10.29)

7.24 Paragraph 6.65 to 6.70 of the Housing Needs Assessment looks at Wheelchair user dwellings specifically and concludes that ‘the need for wheelchair user dwelling equate to about 5% of the total housing need’ (para 6.68).

7.25 It should also be noted that although a resident may have a long term health problem or disability it should not automatically be assumed that this long term health problem would equal the need for a wheelchair user dwelling, which is dealt with separately in the Housing Needs Assessment as detailed above. A long term health problem for example would include conditions such as high, blood pressure, asthma, heart conditions, epilepsy, hyperthyroidism or diabetes that involve daily medication but would not requirement the need for a wheelchair adaptable home.

7.26 There is no evidence with regard to specialist housing for older people needing to deliver 100% M4(3)(2)(a) standards only 5%, which the appeal scheme meets.

7.27 Beyond the Local Plan and Housing Needs Assessment, further consideration has been given to the council's statement to Matter 14 of the examination in public to the Local Plan as this deals with Part M of the building regulations (relevant extract within Enclosure 8). This confirms that the Housing Needs Assessment suggests that 5% of total housing should be a wheelchair user home at para 3.1, and simply distinguishes the difference between M4 (3) (2) (a) and M4 (3) (2) (b) at para 3.2 and then discusses the council's Special Needs Register at para 3.4 which confirms that at the time of the Local Plan Examination there were 12 households in need of accessible housing. This data does not distinguish between ages.

7.28 The Council's Local Plan hearing statement then introduces the proposed modification of the following with no justification:

"iii) where a scheme includes specialist housing for older people and adults with disabilities, 100% of all self contained units will meet the Part M4(3)(2)(a) standard for wheelchair adaptable dwellings".

7.29 The requirement was also not tested within the Local Plan viability study as required by the HOTS and as confirmed via the House Builders Federation statement to Matter 14 where they objected to the introduction of the M4(3) requirement on the basis of no viability testing through the Local Plan examination (See Enclosure 9). HBF's statement stated at page one:

"...Our main concern regarding the evidence relates to the viability as there is no specific viability testing of M4(2) or M4(3). ...The additional costs of such homes are high, in the region of £25-30,000 per house and £10-£15,000 per flat these costs must be specifically

tested alongside other costs to ensure the cumulative impact does not make development unviable and without it the requirement to provide wheelchair adaptable homes cannot be adopted”.

- 7.30 Therefore, whilst there is needs evidence to request 5% of housing to be built to M4(3)(2)(a) which the appeal scheme meets, there appears to be no needs based evidence that 100% M4(3)(2)(a) housing is needed from specialist housing for older people and adults with disabilities. There is then no viability evidence either to support such a request.
- 7.31 The Local Plan requirement for 100% M4(3)(2)(a) has not been justified in the supporting text to the Local Plan or the Local Plan evidence and the requirement therefore is not justified or consistent with national policy.
- 7.32 McCarthy & Stone has specialised knowledge in the design, construction and management of Retirement Living housing and has developed a wealth of experience in this particular sector of the housing market. This background has resulted in McCarthy & Stone being widely recognised as the market leader in the provision of Retirement Living housing suitable for older people for sale and rent. Extensive research both at pre and post-occupation has been carried out by the Company, which has led to product development to ensure that they remain competitive in this sector. To date none of the constructed schemes have a 100% M4(3) provision. Full details of the offering are set out in sections 2 and 3 of this statement.
- 7.34 While retirement housing residents may have specific requirements to enter such a development, some of which may be age-related mobility considerations, the majority do not require full wheelchair-accessible accommodation (equivalent to M4(3) standards). Instead, the predominant need is for homes that are accessible and adaptable over time, supported by the operational model of retirement housing, which includes staff presence, communal facilities, and building management arrangements that assist residents in maintaining independence and being part of an encompassing community.
- 7.35 McCarthy & Stone has recently undertaken a Wheelchair user survey of all of its developments to understand the proportion of residents that use a wheelchair (full details at enclosure 10). This identified that only 2.7% of residents of Retirement Living developments use a wheelchair in their apartments whilst 3.2% of residents use a wheelchair in communal areas. This is out of a total of 8,159 occupied apartments. This clearly identifies that there is not a need for older persons housing schemes to be built to 100% M4(3) (2)(a) standards and the proposed scheme that is delivering 8.7% M4(3) (2)(a) apartments and M4(3) communal areas (as discussed later) is sufficient to meet needs. It is important to note that some wheelchair or other mobility aid users, whilst using such aids outside of their homes, will only use limited adaptations as can be provided within an

M4(2) dwelling inside of the home. An M4(2) home is often sufficient and preferable to full M4(3) standard adaptation that institutionalises a home.

- 7.36 In addition, The Planning Bureau submitted a Freedom of Information request to understand the current need for accessible and adaptable housing on the Housing Register. The response (see Enclosure 11) confirmed that there are currently 10 active applications on the Housing Register across all age groups, a similar number to when the Local Plan Examination took place and confirming a very small need for such housing and not at the level required under policy LP 38.
- 7.37 Paragraph 67-69 of the appeal decision Stanford Hill, Lymington APP/B1740/W/20/3265937 (attached as Enclosure 12) is also of significant consideration. This appeal was made by Renaissance Retirement Living against a decision of New Forest District Council. The appeal considered the Optional Technical Standards at para 67 to 69. The New Forest District Council Local Plan has a similar policy at IMPL2 to Bracknell Forest with respect to older persons housing and states:
- “New development will meet or exceed the following standards and requirements to help minimise their environmental impact and/or to be adaptable to the future needs of occupiers over their lifetime:*
- i) Visitable dwellings standards of Part M4(1) of the Building Regulations except for Sheltered and Extra Care homes which should be built to the Wheelchair Adaptable Dwelling standard of Part M4(3)(2)(a) of the Building Regulations”.*
- 7.38 This is in effect the same requirement as the Bracknell Forest local plan. The inspector concludes in this appeal that:
- “I am mindful also that the design of the appeal scheme seeks to achieve the M4(2) Optional Building Regulations standard for accessible and adaptable dwellings – albeit that without a condition specifying this, I accept that the Council could not enforce this standard. In any event, the proposed development would cater for a range of occupants, and not only those with impaired mobility. Consequently, I am not persuaded that a requirement for the higher optional standards to be deployed in all of the proposed dwellings would be either reasonable or necessary in this case”.*
- 7.39 It is clear from this decision that, despite having an adopted policy, the Inspector considered the provision of M4(2) sufficient to cater for a range of occupants and that this technical breach of the policy was not so significant to outweigh the very significant benefits of the scheme, as laid out later in this section for this current appeal.
- 7.40 It is considered that the appeal scheme provides sufficient accessibility and adaptability for all future users and is very much in keeping with McCarthy & Stones aim of providing an

independent retirement living lifestyle for those aged 60 and over as well as meeting the identified needs within the Bracknell Forest Housing Needs Assessment.

Compliance with Building Regulation accessibility standards

- 7.41 The Design and Access Statement that was submitted with the planning application states on page 35 and 37 that the proposed development is designed to Part M4(2) standards, “accessible and adaptable dwellings”, to allow for ease of access and movement for people with disabilities.’. This includes all communal area and apartments. In addition to the whole scheme being designed to M4(2) standards which is the minimum standard required by policy LP38 point 1, four of the apartments are designed with a layout that meets the M4(3)(2)(a) space standard of the building regulations and would thereby be easily adaptable for wheelchair use, representing 8.7% of the total units (see page 24 of the Design and Access Statement). The proposed scheme also meets the Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS).
- 7.42 The Appellant’s have undertaken a spatial analysis of the proposed scheme to identify where the scheme design goes beyond M4(2). This analysis is provided within appendix A of the evidence of Mr Brunt with 2 tables. Table 1 shows that all communal areas meet the M4(3)(2)(a) adaptable standard. Table 2 identifies that whilst the apartments themselves (excluding the 4 units designed to(3)(2)(a)) may not meet the M4(3)(2)(a) adaptable standards, they do however, in a number of areas go beyond the M4(2) requirement.
- 7.43 The detail shows that the scheme fully meets the minimum standards required by Local Plan policy LP 38 as the proposed scheme meets the M4(2) requirements as well as providing 4 units or 8.7 % of units to the M4(3)(2)(a) standard. It also shows that communal areas are largely M4(3)(2)(a) compliant going beyond the M4(2) requirements. This is discussed further in the evidence of Mr. Brunt where he will also discuss what layout and space requirements are needed to meet the M4(3) requirement and how this would impact the development would be impacted, including upon the quantum of development which would be available. This concludes that were all apartments required to meet the full M4(3)(2)(a) standard, the development would result in the loss of approximately 7 units and a revised unit mix, notwithstanding an increase in overall net internal floor area.
- 7.44 The change in quantum of development and additional costs in providing M4(3) units are discussed in the evidence of Mr. Carson. This concludes that the provision of a 100% M4(3) development would make the scheme even more unviable to an extent that it would be unlikely to come forward for development, concluding that XXXXX

Wheelchair accessible housing to meet local needs

- 7.45 It is for the decision maker to determine the scheme the subject of this appeal, but whilst an alternative scheme could be designed to meet the M4(3)(2)(a) requirement, as stated above the large increase in floorspace and corresponding reduction in unit numbers to meet the M4(3)(2)(a) standards would mean that the scheme would become even less viable. Such a requirement is also not shown to be needed through evidence outlined above.
- 7.46 In addition, seeking M4(3)(2)(a) compliance from Retirement Living schemes will also have wider and longer-term implications over the ability to deliver much needed older persons housing schemes in the Bracknell Forest area, as set out later in this section of this statement. The implications of restricting Retirement Living development in Bracknell via an onerous policy needs to be considered against the extent of need for such accommodation.
- 7.47 Operators of Retirement Living schemes tend to look for centrally located brownfield sites that are located in sustainable locations close to services, facilities and public transport, such as the appeal site, to ensure that residents can remain in their home even if they have given up driving. Retirement Living developments need a critical mass of units because of the economies in scale associated with service charges in requiring M4(3)(2)(a) units a Retirement Living developer would achieve less units from suitable brownfield sites and hence higher unsustainable service charges, resulting in some sites in the Borough for retirement living being no longer suitable.
- 7.48 This together with a need to find a site large enough to accommodate a viable Retirement Living development puts operators of retirement living schemes in direct competition with the likes of small supermarkets, care homes, student accommodation, and other residential developers. Reducing the density on a site will remove the ability for McCarthy & Stone to compete in the land market.
- 7.49 Para 12.9 of the Bracknell Forest Local Plan confirms when the optional standards of which Part M4(3) can be applied. This confirms that 'The optional standards may be applied where a local planning authority has a policy in place, based on evidence, that a higher level of accessibility and adaptability in new residential development is viable and necessary to meet current and future housing needs'.
- 7.50 The Housing: Optional Technical Standards ('HOTS') reconfirm the position with respect to viability and need at Paragraph: 003 Reference ID: 56-003-20150327 and para Paragraph: 007 Reference ID: 56-007-20150327 This is reconfirmed in the PPG for housing for older and disabled people at para: 009 Reference ID: 63-009-20190626.
- 7.51 This statement and appendices are presented with evidence, including the council's own evidence, that there is no need, and it is not viable to meet the requirement of delivering M4(3)(2)(a) housing at a rate of 100% for specialist housing for older people. There is a

need however to deliver 5% of housing to M4(3)(2)(a) , as shown through the council's LHNA with the remainder being delivered to M4(2) standards both of which the scheme provides.

- 7.52 The appeal scheme more than meets this need and therefore significant weight should be applied to this element given the significant and numerous planning benefits of the proposed scheme, particularly the delivery of Retirement Living housing, when there is such a large need and shortfall.
- 7.53 The scheme meets the minimum standards required by policy LP38 and although the scheme is technically in breach of policy LP38 2iii, given the level of accessibility the scheme does provide, the proven lack of need for wheelchair adaptable homes and impact on viability shown balanced alongside the benefits that the whole scheme would provide including delivering much needed older persons housing it is the appellants view that this breach should be given very limited weight.

Character and Appearance / Overdevelopment

- 7.54 RfR 5 states that the proposed development would result in over development by virtue of the proximity of the proposed building to existing residential properties, including gardens to the south of the site which will result in overshadowing and overbearing.
- 7.55 Policy LP 50 relates to design and requires full consideration of design matters including insuring layouts make efficient use of land, having regard to the character of the area/location and other factors affecting good design, relate well to their location and surroundings through their siting, scale, form, roofscape, design and materials and do not adversely affect the amenity of surrounding properties.
- 7.56 There is no Local Plan policy which sets out quantitative standards for separation distances between existing and new development.
- 7.57 The statement by Mr Brunt addresses these issues directly explaining how the scheme has evolved, including the responses made to the Council comments during the course of the application. He also considers directly the criticisms made relating to impacts on neighbouring properties and assesses the proposals against local and national policy on design.
- 7.58 Mr. Brunt's evidence considers the separation distances between the buildings, with reference to the fact that the buildings are orientated side to back rather than back to back. Any issues of overlooking are further mitigated by the use of obscure glazing to the side windows of the nearest apartments.

- 7.59 The issue of overbearingness is also considered where it is shown that the proposed building would follow a similar line to the existing situation on the site and step down where appropriate. The technical report from a daylight / sunlight surveyor also demonstrates that all neighbouring amenity spaces meet the BRE Sun-on-Ground standard
- 7.60 Mr Brunt concludes by stating that the scheme does not constitute overdevelopment. The separation distances are appropriate, the building steps down to two-storey eaves at the most sensitive southern relationship, and the visual impact on neighbouring properties is acceptable when assessed against the existing baseline and the mitigation provided by retained vegetation and building design. The allegation of overshadowing is not made out on the technical evidence. The independent Daylight and Sunlight Report prepared by Point 2 Surveyors Limited demonstrates that all neighbouring amenity spaces meet the BRE Sun-on-Ground standard in the proposed scenario, with no assessed garden failing the test or falling below 80% of its former value. This element of RfR 4 cannot therefore be sustained.

Affordable Housing and Viability

- 7.61 Reason for Refusal 6 relates to securing an appropriate affordable housing provision.
- 7.62 The Council's affordable Housing Policy Lp16 seeks 35% affordable housing for developments providing 10 or more homes. Policy DES6 goes on to that applicants may bring forward a viability assessment which is to be accompanied by an independently produced, open book financial appraisal to justify any relaxation of the requirement. Any relaxation will require compelling reasons.
- 7.63 However, this policy does not require a review mechanism to be included in any Section 106 Agreement. Paragraph: 009 Reference ID: 10-009-20190509 of National Planning Policy Guidance states that "Plans should set out circumstances where review mechanisms may be appropriate". With no appropriate policy requirement in place the Local Planning Authority have no basis to require a viability review mechanism. This is further considered below.
- 7.64 Paragraph 63 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) indicates that where a need for affordable housing is identified planning policies should specify the type of affordable housing required and expect it to be met on site unless (a) off site provision or an appropriate financial contribution in lieu can be robustly justified and (b) the approach contributes to the objective of creating mixed and balanced communities.
- 7.65 It is accepted through the Statement of Common Ground that due to the practicalities of securing and managing affordable units within such a scheme, a financial contribution that is equivalent to the cost of onsite delivery of affordable housing is appropriate although, the amount of such in-lieu contribution has not been agreed.

- 7.66 The above mentioned policies also reference the importance of maintaining development viability. Given the nature of this form of accommodation with its additional levels of non saleable floorspace, development viability is always a consideration if this much needed form of accommodation is to be delivered.
- 7.67 Mr Carson prepared for the Application a Financial Viability Assessment (FVA) dated August 2024, which was submitted on behalf of the applicant, which was fully in line with “National Planning Guidance principles” as detailed in the Viability PPG. This concluded at the time that the proposed scheme could not support s.106 contributions showing a deficit of -£52,272.
- 7.68 The LPA required this submission to be independently reviewed at the Appellants cost and a report dated 18th June 2025 was prepared by D J C Housing Consultants Ltd on behalf of the Council, concluded that the scheme would provide a surplus of £470,938.
- 7.69 The main issues between the parties were contingency allowances and developer profit allowances. A further rebuttal was provided by Mr. Carson on 3rd February 2026 which concede the earlier issue and provided further evidence on the second point. This resulted in a surplus of £113,418 for all section 106 items including affordable housing.
- 7.70 Following the submission of the appeal Mr Carson has produced an updated FVA which found the following:
- Market revenues remain consistent with the July 2025 assessment. The House Price Index (HPI) and RHG methodology demonstrate no house price growth from July 2025 to present.
 - BCIS costs are updated in-line with the latest figures. The methodology was previously agreed, this is simply an update of rates.
 - Abnormal costs are updated (increased) in-line with the Applicant’s latest estimations (these were previously agreed).
 - EPCs updated in-line with the latest council tax rates and estimated service charges from the Applicant. The sales rate (agreed) remains unchanged. EPCs have risen by c. £87k although this is due to service charge and council tax increases.
- 7.71 When updating the appraisal in-line with the above the deficit has gained slightly to - £78,473 when allowing for the agreed BLV of £1.32m. In summary, costs have moved on but revenues haven’t grown. Full details of the updated viability appraisal are provided within Mr Carson’s evidence to which I defer.
- 7.72 Full details of the updated viability appraisal are provided within Mr Carson’s evidence to which I defer.

7.73 The Appellant seeks to continue to discuss this issue with the Council in order to reach agreement / narrow the issues so far as possible.

7.74 A late stage review has been requested by the Council, but any such request needs to be in line with adopted policy.

7.75 Policy LP16 deals with affordable housing. It is silent on the issue of late stage reviews, and so plainly cannot be used to require an applicant to sign up to one in any particular circumstance.

7.76 Paragraph 6.190 of the supporting text to Policy LP16 does refer to the potential for a late stage review. It reads as follows:

“Where any concessions are agreed for viability reasons, the section 106 Agreement will be expected to include claw-back provisions, and an independent assessor appointed at the developer’s expense to monitor the scheme on an open-book basis against the claw-back provisions”.

7.77 However, supporting text is not policy and cannot override it: see the Court of Appeal’s decision in R (Cherkley Campaign Limited) v Mole Valley District Council [2014] EWCA Civ 567. In that case the issue was whether the applicant had to demonstrate a need for their proposed development (a golf course). The relevant policy did not require this; but the supporting text did. In the High Court the Judge had held that the applicant had to show that there was a need for the course. In the Court of Appeal Richards LJ rejected that view, stating as follows at paragraph 21:

“It should already be clear why I disagree with that reasoning. The policy is what is contained in the box. The supporting text is an aid to the interpretation of the policy but is not itself policy. To treat as part of the policy what is said in the supporting text about a requirement to demonstrate need is to read too much into the policy. I do not accept that such a requirement is implicit in the policy or, therefore, that paragraph 12.71 makes explicit what is implicit. In my judgment paragraph 12.71 goes further than the policy and has no independent force when considering whether a development conforms with the Local Plan. There is no requirement to demonstrate need in order to conform with the Local Plan either in its original form or as saved”.

7.78 As set out above the policy box for policy LP16 says nothing about late stage reviews and it would be to read too much into the policy (to use Richards LJ’s wording) to read any such requirement into Policy LP16 by reference to the supporting text. Paragraph 6.190 goes further than Policy LP16, stating that the Council reserves the right to require a late stage review. But that “right” is not established by Policy LP16. It, therefore, follows that, applying the law as established by the Court of Appeal in Cherkley, paragraph 3.190 does

not provide the Council with a development plan policy basis on which to require a late stage review.

- 7.79 In considering matters further the Appellant has inserted a “blue pencil clause” in the Section 106 Agreement so that on this occasion if the works commence to a certain level, usually above ground level within 18 months from the decision date, then the requirement for a late stage review falls away. The time limit of 18 months is generally considered as being reasonable as there is unlikely to be a change in the costs of building the development or the market itself in this time. If it takes longer than that for the development to come into fruition then the change in circumstances can be accompanied through the late stage review, which would be activated. This gives the Council the security that the development will come forward in a timely manner and assist in much needed elderly persons housing being provided, with the fall back that the viability of the scheme will be revisited if this is not the case and the site does not come forward with the first 18 months of consent. This gives the developer the confidence to undertake the development. The introduction of a late stage review without such a clause would simply introduce another element of uncertainty which would could lead to delays in the development coming forward, if indeed it does.
- 7.80 The use of review mechanisms are predominantly for when a large scale development comes forward in phases. This is because the scheme will come forward over a longer period of time and over this time the wider national economic situation is likely to change as well as the more local economic situation so that the viability of a multi phase scheme will change over this time. Indeed, the last few phases on such schemes are only likely to come forward if the economic situation allows.
- 7.81 With the appeal proposal being a single footprint building it will be brought forward in one phase over a time where the economic circumstances should not alter too materially so that the viability of the scheme will be vastly different, especially with regards to build costs and property values. The use of a review mechanism would be more suitable if this was a larger multi phased development.

Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area and Infrastructure

- 7.82 Reasons 7 and 8 relate to the Thames Basin Special Protection Area (TBHSPA) and other additional infrastructure, which is considered to be necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms, namely public open space and community facilities.
- 7.83 Policy LP31 considers designated nature conservation and geological sites by stating that any planning application affecting a designated nature conservation site must ensure that these sites are safeguarded and enhanced having regard to the national or local status and designation. Policy LP32 covers the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area (TBHSPA) where new development which is likely to have a significant adverse effect on the integrity

of the TBHSPA without appropriate avoidance and mitigation measures will be refused. As the application site sits within the zone of influence for the TBHSPA and as such contributions are required towards SANGS and SAMMS to mitigate against the impacts of development on the TBHSPA and are provided under the Section 106 Agreement to be submitted to the Inspector and will ensure compliance with this policy.

- 7.84 Polices LP44 and LP45 protect community facilities / services and play / open space and sports provision respectively and allows for contributions towards this infrastructure where appropriate. Allowances have been calculated using an adopted formula and are provided under the Section 106 Agreement to be submitted to the Inspector and will ensure compliance with these policies.

Planning Balance

- 7.85 There is of course the duty under Section 38(6) of the 2004 Act to determine applications in accordance with the Development Plan *unless material considerations indicate otherwise*. By reference to the approach mandated via this act and as per the evidence set out elsewhere in this statement, it is clear that the proposed development accords with the Development Plan as a whole as well as the NPPF, and should be approved. However, should it be found that this is not the case then, the Appellant, would submit that any identified harm would be outweighed by the benefits of the appeal scheme.

Benefits and Material Considerations

- 7.86 In assessing benefits, it is of course highly relevant to consider the 3 overarching sustainability benefits of the NPPF - social, economic and environmental. For the exercise as it relates to the provision of older persons housing and although each application has to be judged on its merits, attached at **Enclosures 13 and 14** are two appeal decisions relating to very similar types of development by Churchill Retirement Living, namely:

- Appeal Ref: APP/N1730/W/20/3261194 Former Fleet Police Station, 13 Crookham Road, Fleet
- Appeal Ref: APP/H1840/W/22/3291830 Land off Swan Lane, Evesham

The Inspectors give weight to the various issues to be considered in respect of “the planning balance/benefits” which given the similarity in type are useful to refer to in this case. Invariably, there is an overlap between various material considerations but in essence they fall into three principal groups as set out in the NPPF. I will refer to these two appeal decisions as they provide a valuable insight as to the benefits of schemes such as this.

- 7.87 Similarly, in terminology of how one grades and applies weight is not an exact science, but I have used the following scale in grading: limited, moderate, significant, very significant and substantial.

Social Benefits: Introduction

- 7.88 The social benefits includes the need for the provision of specialist accommodation for older people, giving older people housing choice to help maintain their independence, and remain within an inclusive community and reduce pressure on health care facilities.

Meeting an Identified Need

- 7.89 The NPPG: housing for older people at paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 63-001-20190626 - Revision date: 26 June 2019 asks:

“Why is it important to plan for the housing needs of older people?”

And guides that:

*The need to provide housing for older people is **critical**. People are living longer lives and the proportion of older people in the population is increasing. In mid-2016 there were 1.6 million people aged 85 and over; by mid-2041 this is projected to double to 3.2 million. **Offering older people a better choice of accommodation to suit their changing needs can help them live independently for longer, feel more connected to their communities and help reduce costs to the social care and health systems.** Therefore, an understanding of how the ageing population affects housing needs is something to be considered from the early stages of plan-making through to decision-taking.”* (Emphasis added)

- 7.90 This need is characterised as “critical” in the NPPG based on the 2018-based ONS national projections, which graphically illustrate the “demographic timebomb”. Given this critical need, it is the role and function of the planning system to ensure it is actually delivered (see NPPF 6, 15, 17, 20(a) and 63).
- 7.91 The Mayhew Review: ‘Future-proofing retirement living – easing the care and housing crisis’ (2022) estimated a need for between 30,000 and 50,000 specialist retirement homes per annum. However, an average of only 7,300 later living homes are built annually, out of a total of around 124,000 newly built homes.
- 7.92 The stark findings of the Mayhew Review led the Government to commission the Older People’s Housing Taskforce in 2023 to explore ways to increase ‘choice, quality and security’ in housing for older people’.

7.93 'Our Future Homes' was published by the Taskforce in November 2024 and Dame Julienne Meyer, the chair of the Taskforce, wrote the following in her forward to the report:

"As I have spoken to senior citizens in the course of this work, it has struck me that no one wants to see themselves as old and few plan for their futures. However, those people I've met who have moved into Older Persons Housing/Later Living Homes –perhaps when their partner has died or when they no longer feel able to cope with maintaining a large home – always say the same thing: they wish they had moved in earlier.

Whilst most senior citizens want to live in their own home for as long as possible, they also fear having to move into a care home too soon, so we urgently need to widen the range of options for them. **They want to live independently and feel safe in an environment that enables them to enjoy life, engage with others, feel culturally connected and be appreciated for their contributions – they also want to be in a familiar area near to their family and friends.**" (Emphasis added)

7.94 The report adds that when older people were specifically asked what they look for in a home they found that they often come up with similar emotive words – community, belonging, safety, security – and in practical terms they responded that they seek homes that are on one level, cheaper to run, easier to maintain and close to local amenities. A home which enables independence is cited as key, as is being in a familiar area near to family and friends.

7.95 The report's findings echo those of previous reports in highlighting the unsuitability of much of the UK's housing stock to meet the needs of older people, as well as its chronic undersupply. The Taskforce calls for 'radical and ambitious action' to provide the variety, volume and choice that is needed to meet the needs of senior citizens today and in future years, saying that the status quo is not sustainable. Amongst the issues identified are:

- Many senior citizens are living alone, in under-occupied housing. Nearly 9 in 10 people aged 65-79 live in under-occupied housing, with over 50% living in homes with two or more excess bedrooms.
- Senior citizens, especially those in poorer health, can find maintaining a larger home more difficult while at the same time there is a shortage of homes for younger, working families.
- Suitable age-appropriate housing can prevent ill-health, improve well-being and quality of life, and reduce the chance of entering long-term care.
- Senior citizens living alone have lower wellbeing compared with those who live with others, and higher rates of loneliness, which is associated with poorer physical and mental health.

- Increased travel time to senior citizens living dispersed and isolated lives means more social care staff are needed to provide care, at a time when the social care workforce is stretched.

- 7.96 The report makes a number of recommendations for government, local systems leaders and industry partners that are currently under consideration by the Government as it develops its long-term housing strategy.
- 7.97 The need for this type of accommodation is recognised in the Local Plan. Policy LP17 of the Bracknell Forest Local Plan “provision of specialist housing for older people” which states that to meet the needs of the growing ageing population, older persons accommodation will be encouraged within the settlement boundaries consistent with Policy LP 39 'Specialist housing'.
- 7.98 The explanatory text to policy further states that demographic projections set out in the Bracknell Forest Housing Needs Assessment (July 2020) indicates that the population of Bracknell Forest is likely to increase by 18,800 over the period 2019 – 2036. Within this total, the number of people aged 65 and over is estimated to increase by 10,400 people or 55% of the total projected population change. This sets out a need for older persons housing.
- 7.99 Further details on local need are also set out in pages 9 to 14 and 35 to 37 of the Planning Statement. The proposal accords with the adopted policies of the Development Plan. The Policy therefore supports developments providing specialist older persons accommodation in a range of forms to meet this substantial need.
- 7.100 **I consider that meeting the specific need of this sector of the population by providing specialist accommodation has substantial weight in favour of the appeal. In both the Fleet and Evesham appeal, the Inspector affords substantial weight to this matter.**

Social Benefits: Meeting Local Needs

- 7.101 Bracknell Forest Borough Council published a Housing Needs Assessment in March 2021, as prepared by Icen. This assessment provides evidence regarding the overall need for housing in Bracknell Forest, and the need for different types of homes including specialist housing for older people. This also forms part of the evidence base which the Council used for the new Local Plan. The following sets out the need for older persons housing, as evidenced in this document.
- 7.102 The Housing Needs Assessment states that *“the population of older persons is increasing, driven by demographic changes including increasing life expectancy. This is a key driver of the need for housing which is capable of meeting the needs of older persons”*.

- 7.103 Population projections are used to provide an indication of how the number of older persons might change in the future. This shows that Bracknell Forest is projected to see a notable increase in the older person population with the 65+ population projected to increase by around 58% and the 75+ population looking to increase by around 76% from 2019 to 2036. This contrasts quite starkly to the population aged Under 65 which is projected to see a more modest increase of approximately 8%.
- 7.104 Health conditions are an important component to consider in order to fully understand the need for housing to support an older population and the number of older people with long term health problems from 2019 to 2036 increases by 34% with a 79% change in people experiencing increased mobility problems. This will result in some people needing to move into supported housing to assist in meeting their needs.
- 7.105 The Given the ageing population and higher levels of disability and health problems amongst older people, there is an increased requirement for specialist housing options. The SHOP toolkit (as provided by the Housing Learning and Information Network) suggests a demographic model for estimating the need for different types of older persons' accommodation and has been used in the Housing Needs Assessment but has been adjusted to some judgements, including Census data, as applied to Bracknell Forest. The assessment also uses the 2015 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) data, which suggests a slightly higher need for market homes for older people in Bracknell Forest when compared with national figures. The Table below shows estimated needs for different types of housing linked to the standard method projections. The analysis shows a potentially high need for leasehold (market) accommodation and suggests a need for 1,193 additional units by 2036 (equivalent to 70 per annum).
- 7.106 The report confirms the following:
- "The provision of a choice of attractive housing options to older households is a component of achieving good housing mix. The availability of such housing options for the growing older population may enable some older households to downsize from homes which no longer meet their housing needs or are expensive to run. The availability of housing options which are accessible to older people will also provide the opportunity for older households to 'right size' which can help improve their quality of life."*
- 7.107 A further report entitled "Review and assessment of need for specialised housing and accommodation for older people in Bracknell Forest to 2037" was undertaken by the Housing Learning and Improvement Network (Housing LIN) in June 2021 to assist in compiling the Local Plan. This report considered the change in the over 65 household population for Bracknell Forest, comparing it to other regions and found that the 50% increase to 2037 is larger than the comparator average or the average of England. This

figure goes up to 65% for 75+ households which is again larger than the comparator average or the average of England.

7.108 Furthermore, Bracknell Forest's average life expectancy at birth is 83.4 years, which is higher than the regional average life expectancy of 82.4 years, and the average life expectancy for England of 81.5 years. It further states that the 2011 UK census data shows that, in Bracknell Forest, amongst the older population, the majority of people over 65 are in 'very good or good health' - and for over 75s, the category of 'very good or good health' represents 44.6.% of that population.

7.109 The report concludes that the estimated housing/accommodation for older people net need requirements for Bracknell Forest to 2037 are as follows:

Table 18. Estimated total need (units/bedspaces) for specialised older people's housing and accommodation to 2037.

Housing / accommodation type	2025	2030	2037
Housing for Older People (units)	1,209	1,399	1,619
Housing with Care (units)	63	141	255
Residential care (bedspaces)	322	340	382
Nursing care (bedspaces)	231	289	382

7.110 The above clearly shows that there is a need for older persons housing within the Borough. This in turn led to the adoption of policy LP17 in the recently adopted Local Plan supporting the provision of specialist housing for older people to meet the needs of the growing ageing population.

Social Benefits: Health and Wellbeing

7.111 The proposed development would provide a safe, secure and caring living environment for the older occupants, maintaining independence in later life, and thereby avoiding higher end care. The companionship and "look out" provided by such accommodation optimises independence and well-being. Such development also directly addresses issues of loneliness and social isolation, generally acknowledged as the key well being issue affecting older people, which is particularly an issue for older people living as single person households.

7.112 The health and wellbeing benefits of the proposed development are discussed in detail in the Planning Statement cross referencing to supporting information in the Appendices including '*Identifying the Health Gain Benefits from Retirement Living* by the Institute of

Public Care (IPC) (the executive summary of which is included at Enclosure 15) showing that:

- Specialist housing is associated with a reduced level of expected nights spent in hospital. This is estimated as producing an annual cost saving to the NHS of £2,598 per resident per annum.
- On average, residents of retirement living schemes experience a 35% improvement in mobility and 20% in functions of daily living. There is also a 25% reduction in the use of medication by residents.
- Over 50% of residents believe that private sheltered housing helps to promote good health. More than half of all residents (55%) consider their health to be good or very good.

7.113 The Planning Statement also refers to a report entitled '**A Better Life: private Sheltered Housing and Independent Living for Older People**' which supports the earlier findings of the IPC report (*the executive summary of which is included at Enclosure 16*) and additionally identifies:

- The average number of visits per annum to a GP from current residents of retirement housing is 4.2 compared to 6 visits amongst the national population aged 75+.
- 41% of residents of retirement housing felt that their health had improved from making the move into retirement housing.

7.114 The Planning Statement also refers to "*Healthier and Happier. An analysis of the fiscal and wellbeing benefits of building more homes for later living*" (which is included at Enclosure 4). This report shows that:

- People living in homes for later living typically experience reduced health risks, contributing to fiscal savings to the NHS and social care services of c. £3,500 per person per year;
- Those in specialist housing are half as likely to have falls with resulting fractures, injuries and costly inpatient bed stays.
- Building 30,000 more retirement dwellings every year for the next 10 years could generate fiscal savings across the NHS and social services worth £2.1bn per year:
- On a selection of national well-being criteria such as happiness and life satisfaction, an average person aged 80 feels as good as someone 10 years younger after moving from mainstream housing to housing specially designed for later living.

7.115 The Government's Taskforce identified that some Local Planning Authorities and Integrated Care System stakeholders fear that new older persons housing would lead to an influx of senior citizens, putting stress on local health and care provision. In response,

the Taskforce referred to the fiscal savings to the NHS and that it is well evidenced that most occupiers of new older persons housing tend to be local and already registered with a local GP. Indeed, McCarthy and Stone's own experience is that the great majority of prospective purchasers come from within a 5-mile radius of the development.

- 7.116 Older people are especially vulnerable to loneliness and social isolation. According to Age UK, more than 2 million people in England over the age of 75 live alone, and more than a million older people say they can go over a month without speaking to a friend, neighbour or family member. Feeling alone and vulnerable can lead to depression and a serious decline in physical health and wellbeing. Specialist retirement housing is designed to offer opportunities for social interaction and to facilitate a reduction in loneliness. Loneliness is one of the key issues affecting the well-being of the population at large and older people in particular who may well have experienced the loss of those closest to them.
- 7.117 The very well located attributes of this site given its attractive surroundings and its location relative to attractive shops and open spaces as well as service will only serve to enhance the well being of residents further.
- 7.118 **I consider that improving the health and well-being of older people should be afforded substantial weight in favour of the appeal proposal. In the Fleet appeal decision, the Inspector gives this matter substantial weight.**

Social Benefits: Benefits to the Wider Housing Market

- 7.119 As referred to in the application's Planning Statement, a report 'Housing Markets and Independence in Old Age: Expanding the Opportunities by University of Reading' concludes that policy makers must act now if they are to avoid a growing crisis in the provision of housing for older people. The executive summary can be found at Enclosure 3 and the key findings of this report are detailed within the Planning Statement.
- 7.120 Another report "Chain Reaction – The positive impact of specialist retirement housing on the generational divide and first-time buyers' considers the blockages older people face in moving to specialist accommodation and the benefits to the housing chain of this move taking place. The report can be found at Enclosure 17 and has several powerful findings:
- Approximately three million people in the UK over the age of 65 (or 25%) want to downsize.
 - 90 per cent of projected household growth in the coming decades is set to be amongst those aged 65 and over, taking the total number of homes owned by those aged 65 and over from 3.9 million today to at least five million by 2030.

- If all the homeowners over the age of 65 in England who wanted to move were able to do so, they would directly release one million properties back onto the market and free up two million spare bedrooms.
- A typical Homes for Later Living development which consists of 40 apartments therefore results in 80 additional moves further down the chain. If 30,000 later living properties were built per year (10% of the Government's overall housing target) this would mean 60,000 or more additional house moves are facilitated each year. Roughly two in every three retirement properties built, releases a home suitable for a first-time buyer resulting in at least 27 first time buyer properties being released onto the market from a typical scheme. If 30,000 Homes for Later Living properties were built per year this would be 20,000 first time buyer properties being released each year.

7.121 This impact on the local housing market was given substantial weight by the Inspector in relation to the Fleet appeal but only moderate weight in relation to the appeal at Evesham. It is accepted that each case must be judged on its own merits, and given the scale of the specialist units of accommodation proposed, in my view the benefits should be given moderate weight in this case.

Housing Land Supply

- 7.122 Social benefits accrue in the context of Housing Land Supply.
- 7.123 Local Plan Policy LP4 includes a requirement to deliver at least 10,438 dwellings between 1st April 2012 and 31st March 2027. The Council's most recent demonstrable Housing Land Supply position, from July 2026 equates to 4.03 years. Therefore, the Council are unable to display a five year housing land supply in accordance with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework and triggers the engagement of Paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF.
- 7.124 Allowance of the appeal scheme would help to contribute 46 dwellings to the Council's housing land supply and make efficient use of a vacant brownfield site in a highly sustainable location within Bracknell, reducing **pressure** on other areas including the release of greenfield and green belt sites. Protecting the natural environment and maximising the use of previously developed land provided it is not of high environmental value are both listed as a key part of the sustainable development principles as per policy LP3.
- 7.125 As outlined above Bracknell have a pressing requirement for older persons housing, with a particular need for an additional 649 market sheltered units by 2036.

- 7.126 The appeal scheme would therefore make a meaningful contribution to the Council's identified of specialist housing for older people through the delivery of 46 specialist Retirement Living dwellings.
- 7.127 It should also be noted that paragraph 125c of the NPPF states that substantial weight should be given to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and other identified needs, proposals for which should be approved unless substantial harm would be caused, and support appropriate opportunities to remediate despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated or unstable land. This part of the NPPF is engaged with the large appeal site containing just one building.
- 7.128 **The proposed provision of 46 residential units on a vacant brownfield site would make a valuable contribution towards Bracknell Forrest's housing requirement over the plan period and this should be afforded limited weight. The Contribution towards meeting older persons housing needs should however be attributed substantial weight.**

Economic Benefits:

- 7.129 The proposals meet the principles of the NPPF towards providing economic benefits which include the release of housing stock, increased local spending, savings to health and social care, investment and the creation of temporary and permanent jobs during and post construction.
- 7.130 'Silver Saviours for the High Street' (Enclosure 18) identifies:
- Retirement housing creates more local economic value and more local jobs than any other type of residential development.
 - People living in each retirement development generate £550,000 of spending per year, £347,000 of which is spent on the local high street. Some £225,000 of this is new spending in the local authority, directly contributing to keeping local shops open. From these figures, it is estimated that a typical retirement housing development has the potential to support more than three local retail jobs over the lifetime of the development, and would typically contribute £2.25m of Gross Value added to the high street.
 - For just one retirement development of roughly 45 units, a local authority could expect to see benefits of 85 construction jobs for the duration of the build, as well as six permanent jobs and £13m in GVA over the lifetime of the development, as opposed to not developing a site.
- 7.131 The Taskforce report 'Our Future Homes' states that when senior citizens are more active and engaged in their community, they are more likely to bring custom to shopping centres and local markets than conventional high density housing schemes. This increased footfall

creates multiplier effects in the local economy and is known as the power of the 'grey pound' to revitalise local high streets.

- 7.132 In addition to the benefits the Silver Saviours report identify, the Council will also benefit from the New Homes Bonus Government initiative. It is estimated that each Local Authority will receive around £378,000 per every 45 new homes (McCarthy Stone's typical development size) that are built in the local area for to be allocated to whatever the Council deem fit.
- 7.133 During the construction phase, the development will also directly employ contractors and feed the supply chain. Many construction jobs will be located on the site itself, others will be based in the Borough, with some further afield within the construction supply chain. The jobs will also vary in type, from elementary occupations (e.g. site labourers) to professional and higher skilled technical occupations (e.g. project managers and site surveyors). The development of this scheme has the potential to draw upon local labour and help the effort to reduce unemployment.
- 7.134 Alongside its role in supporting employment creation, the construction industry is a good source of training and skills development, including apprenticeships. This is important at a time when young people face particularly acute barriers to entering the workforce.
- 7.135 McCarthy Stone offer construction apprenticeships, which are available to both new and existing colleagues. The aim is to create a pipeline of talent in the UK that can help to fill key skill shortages, and roles across business, such as site managers, quantity surveyors and development managers. Fair access is ensured to the apprenticeship schemes and aim to recruit from a wide talent pool in terms of gender, ethnicity and diversity. This apprenticeship initiative ties in with wider work in the construction and building industry to attract a wider and more diverse pool of young people and help them to build a successful career. McCarthy Stone offer a two-year apprenticeship to new employees, which includes on-the-job experience alongside studying for a Level 4 HNC in Construction and the Built Environment. A bespoke apprenticeship programme provides individuals with a rounded introduction into housebuilding. Gaining valuable qualifications whilst developing skills across a range of careers from project management, surveying and site management, before specialising in the chosen path in year 2. This ensures that apprentices have clearly articulated career pathways and focus on providing progression opportunities so that they can build a successful career in the construction industry. In addition McCarthy Stone offer Level 4 and Level 6 construction apprentices to existing employees, taking account of their experience and expertise and enabling them to flourish in their developing role, creating opportunities for their future career.
- 7.136 In the Fleet appeal decision, the Inspector gave the matter of economic benefits substantial weight and in the case of the Evesham appeal, the Inspector gave it significant

weight. I consider that the economic benefits which would flow from the scheme carry significant weight.

Environmental Benefits:

- 7.137 The proposals meet the principles of the NPPF towards providing environmental benefits which include the provision of new specialist retirement homes in a highly sustainable location, re-use of a vacant brownfield site, a highly energy efficient building which utilises various methods to reduce carbon emissions and use low carbon technologies, and the creation of a high quality landscape setting to enhance the natural environment and support biodiversity through the delivery of a biodiversity net gain.

Environmental benefits: sustainable location

- 7.138 The appeal site is located in a highly accessible location within the built-up area of Bracknell, having excellent access to local services and amenities within the town as well as sustainable travel options, reducing residents' reliance on private vehicles. This aligns with the aims of paragraph 105 of the NPPF for development to be focussed on locations which are, or can be made, sustainable through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes.
- 7.139 The consistent thread of this Statement and the Appellants' approach to the site has been to balance competing objectives and requirements in order to deliver a development that is both needed and is highly sustainable – which of course accords with the central thrusts of sustainable planning policy at both national and local levels of the NPPF and the Local Plan. In doing so, the optimisation of this centrally located, brownfield site also reduces pressure on development of out of town locations that are less sustainable and may involve the loss of greenbelt and greenfield land.
- 7.140 Turning to the environmental credentials of the scheme itself, Attached at **Enclosure 19** is a further report "Sustainable Living. How the downsizing dividends can deliver a greener housing future (April 2022)". The report identifies that:
- As well as saving more than one tonne through reduced energy use per year compared to a new build house, with a 'home improvement dividend' of between 0.3 and 0.5 tonnes less CO2 a year caused by younger homeowners who move into the vacated properties and make energy efficient improvements to that home.
 - Due to the central location of retirement properties, a carbon saving of around 0.35 tonnes per year as a result of reduced driving, with retirement developments typically well-located on central, town centre sites.

- Taken together, retirement housing could remove up to 60,000 tonnes of carbon from the atmosphere per year if 30,000 new properties, or 10% of the Government's 300,000 new home target, was retirement housing.
- Residents are less likely to drive, and it is estimated that building a typical retirement development could take up to 15 cars off the roads. Collectively these cars would have driven 1,800 miles a week.
- With around 9 in every 10 McCarthy Stone apartments developed on brownfield land rather than greenfield land, in comparison to an average of 6 in 10 new-build houses, retirement housing brings previously developed land back into use, saves green fields, and frequently requires the tidying up of contaminated land which would have posed a threat to biodiversity.

Environmental benefits: energy efficient building

7.141 The report also finds:

"Moving from an existing home to a McCarthy Stone apartment, which are already heated 100% through electricity, would significantly reduce a homeowners' monthly energy bill, with energy consumption in a McCarthy Stone retirement property found to be roughly half of a normal house".

7.142 Pages 65 – 66 of the Design and Access Statement and the submitted Sustainability Statement (prepared by Focus Consultants) reinforces many of these points but also consider building fabric and the Energy Statement demonstrates how the scheme will adopt a robust fabric first approach to the build specification to exceed the requirements of Part L 2022 Building Regulations. The building specification will be fossil fuel free and will include:

- Efficient heating and lighting systems, which will drive energy efficiency in the building;
- Use of air source heat pump hot water cylinder as a low carbon technology
- Utilisation of mechanical ventilation with heat recovery (MVHR) which reduces the need to use the main heating system by providing background heating;
- Installation of PV panels;
- A sanitaryware specification achieving 108.8 litres/person/day, a reduction on Optional Building Regulations Target of 110 litres/person/day
- Provision of 1 No EV charging space per parking space provided.

Environmental benefits: landscape and planting

7.143 The appeal proposals are supported by a comprehensive landscaping layout and detailed planting plans which ensure that a high-quality landscape setting is created for the benefit

of the future residents on site. The newly created landscape setting of the proposed development will be a significant improvement compared to the existing site conditions.

7.144 Additionally, whilst achieving a highly sustainable and optimised development on site it also additionally will of course deliver Biodiversity Net Gain off site via off site credits.

7.145 In the Fleet appeal decision, the Inspector gave the sustainable location of matter substantial weight and the scheme's environmental benefits moderate weight. In the Evesham appeal, the Inspector attached moderate weight to the general environmental benefits of the scheme and significant weight to the sustainable location of development. Likewise, I give the matter of development in a highly sustainable location significant weight and the always improving environmental benefits significant weight in favour of the appeal proposals.

Overall Conclusion

7.146 The proposed development would deliver a range of public benefits which satisfy the three overarching objectives of the planning system (economic, social, environmental) to ensure that sustainable development is achieved. The planning benefits and the weight to be attributed to them are set out in summary in the following table:

<u>Planning Benefits</u>	<u>Weight</u>
Provision of 46 retirement living units	Substantial – Complies with NPPF Paragraphs 60 and 63; PPG 63 ; and Local Plan policies LP2, LP3, LP4, LP17 and LP39.
Redevelopment of a Previously Developed Site	Substantial - Complies with Paragraphs 8, 11, 76, 123, 124,125,129 of NPPF and Local Plan policy LP3.
Redeveloping a Sustainable Site	Significant - Complies with Paragraphs 8, 11, 76 of NPPF and Local Plan policies LP2, LP3, and LP28.
Effective and Efficient use of Land	Substantial - Complies with Paragraphs 123, 124, 125c, and 129 and 130 of NPPF and Local Plan policy LP3.
Freeing up under occupied local housing stock	Moderate Complies with NPPF paragraph 60 and 63.

Economic Benefits of the Proposed Scheme	Significant
Social Benefits of the Proposed Scheme	Substantial
Environmental Benefits of the Proposed Scheme	Significant

7.147 In conclusion, it is clear that the proposals comply with the development plan read as a whole. The Council cannot demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply, and so even if the Inspector was to conclude that the scheme did not comply with the development plan permission should still be granted on the basis of the approach set out in NPPF paragraph, as this is clearly a case where the multitude of benefits the scheme would deliver would heavily outweigh any adverse impacts the scheme would cause.

8.0 OTHER 3RD PARTY COMMENTS

8.1 Third party objections raise the following issues:

- Overlooking
- Out of keeping with the local pattern of development
- Bin storage location
- Increase in traffic and congestion
- Comments on company practices

8.2 The application was accompanied by various reports including a Planning Statement, Design and Access Statement and Transport Statement. The submitted reports justify and demonstrate why the proposed development is appropriate. The comments around company practices are not a material planning consideration.

9.0 CONCLUSION

9.1 The Appeal scheme represents an opportunity to secure a highly sustainable and beneficial development of the Appeal site with the provision of a high standard of specialised housing for local older people in a very good location for it. It complies with the development plan read as a whole.

9.2 Should it be considered that the proposal has any harmful impacts, such as in terms of impact upon the character of the area, neighbouring amenity, and /or the lack of 100% M4 units, the Appellant's position is that these harms are hugely outweighed by the benefits the scheme would deliver.

9.3 The proposed development meets the housing objectives of the NPPF in the following ways:

- Contributes to the Local Planning Authority's supply of deliverable housing particularly.
- Makes efficient and effective use of previously developed land within the settlement boundary and existing built-up area of Bracknell
- Provides retirement housing specifically for older people, for which there is an identified critical need nationally and an unmet need locally.
- Stimulates the housing market by introducing underused properties to the local housing market, so they can better meet a community's housing need.

9.4 The Appeal proposal would also:

- Result in the development of land in a manner which optimises the use of the site, making best use of the site's existing constraints.
- Result in the development of land in a manner which optimises the use of this vacant site, making best use of the site's existing constraints.
- Achieve an economic, efficient, and effective use of land within the built-up area of Bracknell whilst respecting environmental planning aims and objectives and contributing to the challenges of climate change and air quality whilst contributing to meeting housing needs, including reducing pressure to release less sustainable and greenfield sites.
- In achieving all these, provides a high-quality design which responds sympathetically to the site and its surroundings and respects neighbouring properties.

- Aid in the renewal of housing stock in the locality thus aiding the achievement of mixed and balanced communities, meeting the objectives of the NPPF.
- Provide a safe and secure living environment for the intended elderly occupants without prejudice to the amenities of neighbours.
- Provide much needed specialist housing for the residents of Bracknell and beyond.

9.5 The proposed scheme has been carefully designed to have regard to the local characteristics of the area and the elements of details and materials that express local distinctiveness.

9.6 As stated above, if the Council is to meet its objectives of providing housing for all groups in society (as required by paragraph 63 of the NPPF) different forms and types of accommodation should be provided in existing built-up areas. The Appellant's view is that the proposed appeal scheme is not contrary to any Development Plan policies and permission should therefore be granted without delay in accordance with paragraph 11(c) of the NPPF. Even if the site were considered to harmful in some respects as the Council allege, the public benefits of the scheme would clearly and demonstrably outweigh these in accordance with the Development Plan policies, and permission should still be granted without delay.