

PLANNING STATEMENT



SITE AT 3-5 CRAVEN ROAD, READING, BERKSHIRE



McCarthy and Stone, Bourne Car Park, Station Parade, Virginia Water

Contents

1	Executive Summary
2	Nature and Concept of Retirement Living Accommodation
3	Proposed development
3	Site Description Site History
4	The Need for Specialist Accommodation for Older People
4	• National need • Local need
5	Planning Policy Considerations
5	• National Planning Policy Framework • Core Strategy and DPDs
6	Development Proposal
6	• Council's 5 Year Housing Land Supply
6	• Planning Obligations & Affordable Housing • Design Response
6	• Car Parking • Amenity Space
7	Material Planning and Social Benefits of Retirement Housing
8	Conclusion
9	Appendices

APPENDIX A: *Housing Markets and Independence in Old Age: Expanding the Opportunities* by Professor Michael Ball of

APPENDIX B: *The Top of the Ladder* by Claudia Wood, DEMOS

APPENDIX C: *Creating Housing Choices for an Ageing Population* by Shelter

APPENDIX D: *A Better Life: Private Sheltered Housing and Independent Living for Older People* by The Opinion Research Business

APPENDIX E: *Identifying the Health Gain from Retirement Housing* by the Institute of Public Care



McCarthy & Stone are widely recognised as the market leader in the provision of retirement housing and extra care accommodation for sale to the older section of society. To date more than 45,000 specialised dwellings for the elderly have been built or are in the course of construction at over 1,000 McCarthy and Stone development sites throughout the United Kingdom. McCarthy & Stone schemes consist of 1 and 2 bedroom apartments within a single development with accompanying communal facilities such as residents lounge, laundry room, refuse room, guest suite and house Manager's office.



The Planning Bureau Ltd. are the retained planning and architectural consultancy for McCarthy & Stone.

This Planning Statement has been produced by Ian Hann MA, Senior Planning Associate with the Planning Bureau Ltd.



1. Executive Summary

Proposal

- The application proposes 25 Retirement Living apartments for older persons with associated communal facilities, parking and landscaping. The application is made by McCarthy & Stone the market leaders in the provision of leasehold retirement accommodation for older people.
- In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Paras 188-191) the applicant has actively sought to engage in pre-application discussions with the local planning authority, local community and where relevant statutory consultees (please see **Statement of Community Involvement**).

Need for Older Persons Accommodation

- The National Planning Practice Guidance has identified that the need to provide housing for older people is 'critical' given the projected increase in the number of households aged 65 and over accounts for over half of all new households.
- Paragraph 50 of the NPPF advises that local planning authorities should plan for a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends and the needs of different groups in the community including older people.
- The population aged 60 and over in Reading is forecast to rise by approximately 60% over period 2013 to 2036 with the 85 and over age group raising by approximately 125% over the same period.
- The recent draft Strategic Housing Needs Assessment states that there is a need for 300 elderly person units per annum within the West Berkshire Area, which is 11% of the total of new dwellings that will need to be provided.
- There is a shortage of specialist older persons' housing for sale in RBC. Depending on the methodology used for estimating demand, current demand for sheltered housing for sale or shared equity is estimated to be in a range between 173 and 268 units.
- The Council recognises older people as an important group whose needs should be planned for. Policy DM7: Accommodation for Vulnerable People and supporting text make clear the need for accommodation that enables independent living rather than residential or nursing homes: *"for the most part, accommodation that supports more independent living is required, rather than large new nursing homes. This may include extra-care housing, supported living and sheltered housing."*

Planning Policy

The proposed development complies with national planning policy and policies of the local development plan in the following way:

- The proposed scheme delivers on all three dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental) as set out by Para 7 of the NPPF.
- The site is a previously developed brownfield site in one of the defined settlements in the borough.



1. Executive Summary

- The Council do have a 5 year housing land supply and it is considered that the proposed development accord with the adopted development plan and should be approved without delay.
- The proposal for 25 units of C3 accommodation will count towards the Council's overall housing supply.
- The provision of specialised accommodation for older persons is in accordance with national planning policy and the adopted local planning policy DM7.
- The proposal is a high quality scheme drawing upon the vernacular character of the area and as such complies with the aims and objectives of the NPPF and the Council's Saved Core Strategy Policy CS7 to produce high quality design.
- While the proposal would result in the loss of a locally Listed Building the replacement building is of a high quality vernacular design characteristic of the Redland area and using details that are locally distinctive. Furthermore the benefits of the proposed development in terms of health benefits for the elderly, local economic benefits including to the local housing market with the freeing up of under occupied properties, use of an under utilised brownfield site as well as the change to rationalise and improve NHS services would outweigh the loss of a non-designated heritage asset.

Material Planning Benefits

- Older Persons housing has significant economic benefits as residents rely on local shops and services for their every day needs. A report produced by ORB identifies that a scheme of 55 residents generates a spend in local shops of £610,000 per annum, and when compared to a conventional housing development some £2.3 million more in local spending over the lifetime of the scheme.
- The redevelopment of the site is likely to see local jobs generated through the construction of the scheme. On average McCarthy & Stone employ circa 60 local companies connected with the construction professions in building their proposed schemes, with anticipation that this would create local work for in the region of 120 people.
- Older Persons housing has significant social benefits for residents in terms health and well being which reduces pressures on local health care facilities, and for many can provide companionship in later life.
- The proposal would see the NHS services currently operating from the site relocated into another local location and will provide the opportunity to collocate children and young persons services from across the district to offer a more enhanced and coordinated service.



2. Nature and Concept of Retirement Living Accommodation

- 2.0 Later Living retirement housing is a proven option for older people who wish to move into accommodation that provides comfort, security and the ability to manage independently to a greater extent. It enables older people to remain living in the community and out of institutions whilst enjoying peace of mind and receiving the care and support that they need.
- 2.1 Later Living developments, as per this application, are designed for the more independent older person with a development of one and two bedroom apartments around a central core of communal facilities, which typically includes residents lounge, house managers office, mobility scooter store and refuse room . All apartments have level access and careline facilities, whilst all floors are accessed by lift. The developments are supervised by a house manager and occupation of the apartments is controlled through the lease.



- 2.2 Since 2010 McCarthy and Stone now manage their own developments and a House Manager is based on site, supported by the companies management services team. This allows for the maintenance and management of the development and its grounds in line with best practice and all legal lease management requirements that apply.
- 2.3 While anyone may purchase an apartment, the apartments are sold on the basis of a 125 year lease requiring the accommodation, with the exception of the house manager's office accommodation, to be occupied by persons over 60 years. In the case of a couple, that part of the lease shall be satisfied where one of the occupants is over the age of 60 years and the other is over the age of 55 years.
- 2.4 This is a reasonable and caring approach to the limitation on the occupancy of retirement living housing in that it recognises and allows for those exceptional cases where a spouse, who is in need of special accommodation, may have a younger partner.
- 2.5 Such occurrences are, in any event, found to be extremely rare as between 70-80% of occupants are aged 78 years or over with about 30% aged 80 years or over. The vast majority of McCarthy & Stone residents (some 85-90%) are widowed or single, with 75% of apartments comprising single, female households.



3. Proposed Development

The Proposal

- 3.0 The proposal is for a Retirement Living development of 25 apartments comprising 6 x one bedroom and 19 x two bedroom apartments for older persons and includes communal facilities, parking provision and landscaped gardens. Further details regarding the proposed accommodation is set out in the accompanying Design and Access Statement.

Site Description

- 3.1 The site is an irregularly shaped site of approximately 0.8 acres located in a very prominent position to the south of the junction of Craven and Erleigh Road, opposite the Royal Berkshire Hospital in Reading. The site was previously occupied by a Learning Centre for children with disabilities and other NHS services, which has been relocated to the University of Reading campus. The site contains 2no. two storey buildings, one with rooms in the roof space, which have been extended overtime along with parking for the services which are run from the site. Some temporary buildings are also located on the site. There are some mature trees along the footpath with Erleigh Road and these will be incorporated in any final design and protected for the duration of the works. The building is a non-designated heritage asset by virtue of it being recently locally listed following the pre application enquiry.
- 3.2 The site is in proximity to the Alexandra Road Conservation Area to the north east. The site has one point of access to the north which links to Craven Road. The surrounding area is made up of a mix of uses with Reading School to the south east, a large hospital site with multi storey car park to the west and residential development surrounding the other boundaries to the site. Further analysis of the site and surrounding area is set out in the accompanying **Design and Access Statement** and **Heritage Statement**.
- 3.3 The site is a very suitable location for Retirement Living retirement housing as it is located in close proximity to shops, other local facilities and public transport routes. In selecting sites for elderly persons' accommodation, McCarthy & Stone take full account of the location criteria recommended in the joint Advisory Note of the National House Builders' Federation and the National Housing and Town Planning Council entitled - "Sheltered Housing for Sale" (2nd Edition - 1988). The five location criteria identified are:-
- (i) Topography
 - (ii) Environment (including safety and security)
 - (iii) Mobility
 - (iv) Services
 - (v) Community Facilities



3. Proposed Development

- 3.4 The NHBF/NHTPC Advisory Note acknowledges that the ideal site for Later Living retirement housing is difficult to find. However, the site that is the subject of this application is eminently suited to a use such as retirement living housing and is well situated to serve the needs of the local elderly person who will occupy such a development.

Site History

- 3.5 A previous application for 39 Retirement Living apartments was withdrawn in April 2016. The applicant following this entered a series of pre-application discussions with the local planning authority.
- 3.6 The Council have locally listed No.3 Craven Road in December 2015. No.5 has not been locally listed.
- 3.7 In July 2017 the Council issued an immediate Article 4 direction to remove permitted development rights for the demolition of No.3 Craven Road following submissions of prior approval for its demolition were made by the vendor.



4. The Need for Specialist Accommodation for Older Persons

- 4.0 The proposed redevelopment of the site for housing for older people is a significant opportunity to contribute towards meeting the current and projected need for special needs housing for the elderly within Reading and in the UK generally.

National Need

- 4.1 A House of Lords select committee was set to consider the implications of demographic reform. The Committee's considerations included the following projections:
- There would be 51% more people aged 65 and over in England in 2030 than there were in 2010.
 - There would be 101% more people aged 85 and over in England in 2030 than there were in 2010.
 - The 85 and over cohort are increasing in number more rapidly than other segments of the population. 69% of over 85s currently have a long term illness or disability compared with 34% of 65 to 74s. The ageing of the population will need housing provision that meets their needs and may well include care and support services.
- 4.2 In May 2011, Professor Michael Ball of Reading University produced his report entitled 'Housing Markets and Independence in Old Age: Expanding the Opportunities'. The report provides an analysis of why in this country we face a shortfall in housing for older people and what we can do about providing more private sector housing for older people. The Executive Summary of his report is attached in **Appendix A**.
- 4.3 In summary, the report identifies that there are currently only 105,000 private sector (owner occupied) units of retirement housing in the UK, which is about 2% of the total number of homes for those aged 65 and over. The report identifies that this form of housing has benefits for residents, their families, local communities, the public sector and society in general, but the provision of this accommodation is being constrained by restrictive planning and housing policies.
- 4.4 The report statistically identifies that the need for this form of accommodation is set to increase with the changing demographics of the UK. By 2033, there is expected to be an additional 3.5 million older households in England alone, which is a 60% increase on today's levels. In respect to supply, the report states:

"Build rates are low and need to grow four times from that achieved even before the 2007/8 downturn to cope with just a moderate increase in demand. Forecasts in the research show a potential increase in the use of this accommodation from 2% currently to 5% of housing for those aged over 65 and over the next decade or so. This would generate a build rate of 16,000 OORH units a year, compared to just 4,400 in 2007."



4. The Need for Specialist Accommodation for Older Persons

4.5 In September 2013, Demos published its report “The Top of the Ladder” which looked at what it described the ‘next housing crisis’ - the chronic undersupply of appropriate housing for older people. The report identifies that those at the top of the housing ladder are often trapped in homes that are too big and unmanageable, pointing to a lack of housing choice of suitable homes for older persons to downsize into is having not only a negative effect on older people’s health and wellbeing but also on the rest of the housing chain. The report identified the housing and socio-economic benefits of specialist retirement accommodation which had been identified by a number of reports, such as ‘*Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods*’, and also the lack of progress in implementing the proposals of such reports. The report suggests that if just half of those interested in downsizing were able to do so, 4 million older people would be able to move freeing up 3.5 million homes. A copy of the executive summary has been appended to this report at **Appendix B**.

4.6 Almost simultaneously to the publication of the Demos Report the DCLG published revised national planning guidance on line, in which it states;

“Housing for older people

*The need to provide housing for older people is **critical** given the projected increase in the number of households aged 65 and over accounts for over half of the new households (Department for Communities and Local Government Household Projections 2013). **Plan makers will need to consider the size of dwellings needed in the future in order to free up houses that are under occupied.** The age profile of the population can be drawn from Census data. Projections of population and households by age group should be used. The future need for older persons housing broken down by tenure and type e.g. sheltered, enhanced sheltered, extra care and registered care can be obtained from a number of online tool kits provided by the sector.” [Emphasis added]*

4.7 It is clear from the terminology used that the issue of housing for older persons is recognised by the Government as of an importance where its delivery is ‘critical’ and that local planning authorities should be actively looking to plan to ensure the delivery of both public and private sector forms of older persons accommodation. Accordingly, the delivery of such housing can be considered a material planning benefit and the use of the word ‘critical’ in the planning guidance suggests allowing significant weight to be attached to the proposed scheme.

4.8 Additionally, there has been a growing number of reports published that promote the strategic need to provide more and better housing for those in later life as well as the benefits that specialist accommodation for older persons delivers. These reports have been published by a variety of organisations including; the private sector, academic institutions, charities and numerous Government bodies at national and local level.



4. The Need for Specialist Accommodation for Older Persons

4.9 We do however consider the following reports to be of particular relevance and an executive summary for each is appended to this document:

- *'Creating Housing Choices for an Ageing Populations'*; By Shelter (**Appendix C**)
- *'A Better Life: Private Sheltered Housing and Independent Living for Older People'* by The Opinion Research Business' (ORB) (**Appendix D**); and
- *'Identifying the Health Gain from Retirement Housing'* by the Institute of Public Care (**Appendix E**)

4.10 These reports detail that Later Living retirement housing provides a valuable form of specialised accommodation meeting a specific housing need. In doing so, it gives rise to significant planning and social benefits that realise other planning objectives given national and regional priority. The following table highlights some of the benefits of retirement housing:



Summary:

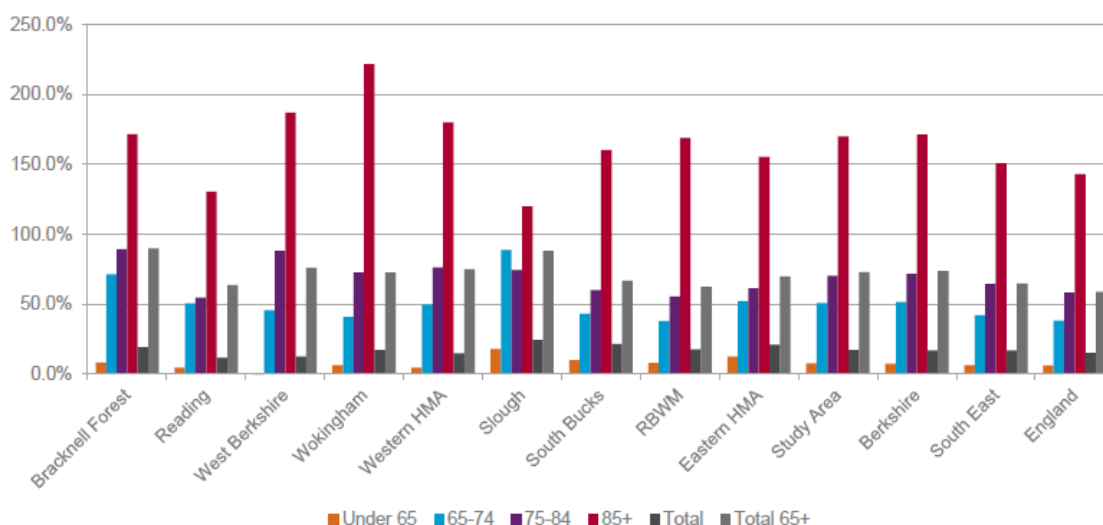
- Government recognises dramatic increase in the older population in the next 20 years.
- National Planning Policy Guidance identifies the need to provide housing for older people as 'critical'.
- National Planning Policy Framework requires Local Planning Authorities to plan their housing supply based on current and future trends including meeting the needs of different groups in the community such as older people.
- Current levels of private sector older persons housing only makes up 2% of the total number of homes for those aged 65 and over.
- Specialist older persons' accommodation assists in recycling the local housing market by releasing family homes back on to the market.
- Specialist older persons' accommodation has economic benefits to the local economy with residents utilising local shops for their everyday needs.
- Specialist older persons' accommodation has social benefits in respect to allowing older people to continue to live within their own community, and health and welfare benefits of living in accommodation designed for their needs thus reducing risk of injury or mobility issues.
- Specialist older persons' accommodation has environmental benefits in respect to energy bills and reduced transport costs.



4. The Need for Specialist Accommodation for Older Persons

Local Need

- 4.11 The proposed redevelopment of the site for retirement housing for older persons provides a significant opportunity to contribute towards meeting the current and projected requirements for special needs accommodation for the elderly in Reading and Berkshire generally.
- 4.12 Reading Borough Council, together with other Berkshire Local Authorities, have produced a Joint Strategic Housing Market Assessment, which the following projections regarding the increase in the 65+ population between 2013-36 have been made:



- 4.13 As can be seen from the above there is expected to be a significant increase in the older person population in Reading especially with the 85+ age group (an approximate 125% increase). The assessment goes further to say that the projections show that just under 80% of people will also experience mobility problems. This will undoubtedly have an impact on housing need with requirements for housing being provided for their needs (eg step free and kitchen surfaces / cupboards being put at appropriate heights).
- 4.14 The study further states that there is a growing older population with the potential for downsizing and the proposed development will further assist in this. Furthermore with the older population being able to downsize this would further assist with overcrowding in the borough which Reading suffers levels of which is in excess of the south east and national average.
- 4.15 The Joint Strategic Housing Market Assessment states that there will be an increased requirement for specialist housing options moving forward. Reading forms part of the West Berkshire Housing Area which has a projected need for 300 specialist housing units per annum which will be approximately 11% of the total housing need, which the proposed development will help to meet.



4. The Need for Specialist Accommodation for Older Persons

- 4.16 The application is accompanied by a bespoke report considering older persons housing need in Reading Borough Council produced by Three Dragons and Celadine Strategic Housing. I would refer to the supporting report for further information on the extent of current and future need for specialised accommodation for sale in Reading Borough Council.

Summary:

- The population aged 60 and over in Reading is forecast to rise by approximately 60% over period 2013 to 2036 with the 85 and over age group raising by approximately 125% over the same period.
- The recent draft Strategic Housing Needs Assessment states that there is a need for 300 elderly person units per annum within the West Berkshire Area which is 11% of the total of new dwellings that will need to be provided.
- There is a demand for 724 units of specialist housing in the private sector between 2013-2033.



5. Planning Policy Considerations

- 5.0 In assessing the acceptability of the proposal in planning terms, it is appropriate to review national, strategic and local planning considerations insofar as they give guidance as to the nature and extent of the development that is appropriate for the site. I briefly highlight some salient points of the national planning policy framework and planning guidance.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- 5.1 The National Planning Policy Framework was published on the 27th March 2012. This document sets out the Government's objectives for the planning system placing "sustainability" at the forefront of national planning policy. **Paragraph 9** explains that *"Pursuing sustainable development involves seeking positive improvements in the quality of the built, natural and historic environment, as well as in people's quality of life."*

Sustainable Development

- 5.2 **Paragraph 14** explains that: *'At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a **presumption in favour of sustainable development**, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking.'* For decision making it means *'approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay.'*
- 5.3 The NPPF goes on to emphasise that Planning Authorities should support enterprise and facilitate housing, economic and other forms of sustainable development and sets out a criteria by which such proposals should be considered.
- 5.4 The NPPF requires the planning system to deliver sustainable development; this is defined as a threefold objective in paragraph 7 terms of:
- Planning for prosperity (an economic role)***
Planning for people (a social role), and
Planning for places (an environmental role)
- 5.5 The three components need to be pursued in an integrated way looking for solutions which deliver multiple goals. It is therefore clear that what the National Planning Policy Framework wishes to see is balanced decision making with all factors considered rather than "development control" decisions made in isolation of the three overriding principles.
- 5.6 In line with the three dimensions of sustainable development identified in the NPPF the proposed development performs the following important roles:



5. Planning Policy Considerations

Economic: the proposed development will provide a range of economic benefits, including direct employment in its own right, supporting the local economy with an increased footfall and local expenditure and revitalising the housing market through the release of under occupied family housing.

Ensuring the vitality of town centres is identified in the NPPF as one of the Core Planning Principles in delivering sustainable development. A report compiled by 'The Opinion Research Business' (ORB) entitled **A Better Life: Private Sheltered Housing and Independent Living for Older People** sets out the economic benefit that a private retirement housing scheme can bring to a town, and identifies that a scheme of 55 residents generates a weekly spend in local shops equivalent to £610,000 per annum. When compared to a conventional housing development, approximately £2.3 million more in local spending would be spent over the lifetime of the scheme.

Social: The NPPF stipulates that the planning system should be *'supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities'* by *'providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations'* (paragraph 7) [emphasis added]. Paragraph 50 of the NPPF highlights the need to *'deliver a wide choice of high quality homes, widen opportunities for home ownership and create sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities. Local planning authorities should plan for a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community...such as...older people'* [emphasis added].

Older people are defined as in Annex 2—Glossary of the NPPF as *"people over retirement age, including the active, newly retired through to the very old frail elderly whose housing needs can encompass accessible, adaptable general needs housing for those looking to down size from family housing and the full range of retirement and specialised housing for the elderly"*

Environmental: The redevelopment of previously developed land is identified as a Core Planning principle with paragraph 11 of the NPPF which states that LPA's should *'encourage the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land) provided that it is not of high environmental value.'*

The development of this site would therefore reduce the pressure to develop greenfield sites in order to meet the Council's housing requirements.

- 5.7 In conclusion, the golden thread running through the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The proposed development is located on an inherently sustainable site, providing a specialist form of accommodation for the elderly that addresses the urgent and increasing need within the district. It is therefore wholly in keeping the concept of sustainable development detailed within the NPPF.



5. Planning Policy Considerations

Summary

- At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- The three dimensions to sustainable development are economic, social and environmental.
- The proposed development is the epitome of sustainable development meeting the three areas in the following way:
 - ✓ Economic - residents increase spend in local shops and services, long and short term employment.
 - ✓ Social - Provides a form of housing that meets current and future housing needs. Supports health, social and cultural well being.
 - ✓ Environmental - makes effective and efficient use of a brownfield site.

Housing Supply

- 5.8 **Paragraph 17** lists the core land use planning principles that should underpin decision-taking. These include a proactive approach and support for *‘sustainable economic development to deliver homes that the country needs’*, to seek high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants, and *‘encourage the effective use of land by re-using land that has been previously developed (brownfield land)’*.
- 5.9 The Coalition Government’s number one priority is stated as getting the economy growing again. In respect to the planning system playing its part in achieving this objective the first significant step was the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework in March 2012. On the 6th September 2012 the Government through the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, announced further changes to the planning system.
- 5.10 In a ministerial statement the Secretary of State identified the need for new housing as acute whilst supply remained constrained. He identified 75,000 new homes were stalled through historic S106 legal agreements that through the imposition of excessive affordable housing contributions had rendered schemes unviable. Measures are to be brought into allow the renegotiation of S106 agreements to bring housing sites forwards. The statement places development viability at the forefront of national planning policy and sends out a clear indication of the importance of making planning decisions based on the benefits they would have for economic development.
- 5.11 Chapter 6 of the document sets out the Government’s objective in delivering a wide choice of high quality homes. Firstly, and notably the guidance in this section is set out against the objective at the start of **Paragraph 47** *‘to boost significantly the supply of housing’*. This is recognition of the level of need for new housing across the country against the recent dwindling trend of housing supply.
- 5.12 **Paragraph 49** states that: *‘Housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development.’*



5. Planning Policy Considerations

This is of relevance when considering the sustainability of the appeal site and its brownfield use. It also advises that *'relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up to date if the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites.'*

- 5.13 The NPPF stipulates that the planning system should be *'supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities'* by *'providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations'* (paragraph 7) [emphasis added]. **Paragraph 50** of the NPPF highlights the need to *'deliver a wide choice of high quality homes, widen opportunities for home ownership and create sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities. Local planning authorities should plan for a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community...such as...older people'* [emphasis added].
- 5.14 The NPPF then goes on to advise in **Paragraph 157** that *'Local planning authorities should have a clear understanding of housing needs in their area'* and that policy should *'identify the scale and mix of housing and the range of tenures that the local population is likely to need over the plan period which meets household and population projections, taking account of migration and demographic change' and 'addresses the need for all types of housing, including...the needs of different groups in the community (such as older people'* [emphasis added]. Furthermore, the Framework stipulates that local policy should cater for *'housing demand and the scale of housing supply necessary to meet this demand'*.
- 5.15 A clear, priority need for private sheltered accommodation for the elderly has been established in 'The Need for Later Living Retirement Housing' chapter of this report and the proposed development will assist the Council in meeting this housing need. Importantly however, the proposed development will enable older people to remain in their local environment and / or close to friends and family, allowing them to continue to play a important role in their local community. The proposed development is therefore considered to be inherently sustainable in social terms.



5. Planning Policy Considerations

Summary

- NPPF objective to boost significantly supply of housing.
- Housing applications should be determined in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- Local Planning Authorities housing policies will not be considered up to date unless they can demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites.
- Local Planning Authorities should plan for a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends including housing for older persons.
- The proposed development meets the housing objectives of the NPPF in the following ways:
 - ✓ Contributes to the Local Planning Authorities 5 year supply of deliverable housing sites.
 - ✓ Makes efficient and effective use of land as a finite resource.
 - ✓ Provides a specialised form of housing that there is an identified national and local need form.
 - ✓ Stimulates the housing market by recycling underused sites so they can better meet a community's housing needs.

Design

5.16 Chapter 7 sets out the Government's objective in achieving good design. In Paragraph 56 it is explained that the Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment:

"Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people."

5.17 The Government requirement is for 'good design' and the following Paragraph 57 talks about planning for, and achieving 'high quality and inclusive design'. Inclusive design is referred to at Paragraphs 57 and 61 in reference to design not being about just architecture but also accessibility.

5.18 Inclusive Design is defined as

"design in the built environment, including buildings and their surrounding spaces, to ensure that they can be accessed and used by everyone"

5.19 Paragraph 61 provides that:-

"although visual appearance and the architecture of individual buildings are very important factors, securing high quality design goes beyond aesthetic considerations. Therefore planning policies and decisions should address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment"



5. Planning Policy Considerations

5.20 Paragraph 59 advises:

“Design policies should avoid using unnecessary prescription or detail and should concentrate on guiding the overall scale, density, massing height, landscape, layout, materials and access of new development in relation to neighbouring buildings and the local area more generally.”

5.21 Paragraph 60 goes on to advise:

Planning policies and decisions should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes and should not stifle innovation, originality or initiative through unsubstantiated requirements to conform to certain development forms or styles. It is however, proper to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness.

5.22 In evolving design solution the NPPF encourages pre-application engagement with the local community, statutory consultees and the local planning authority (Paragraphs 188-191). The applicants in this case have complied with the advice and consulted with the local community and interested bodies. A **Statement of Community Involvement** has been submitted with the application. The application of design policy is considered in further detail in the accompanying design and access statement.

Summary

- Good design goes beyond just visual appearance it is about how successfully connects people and integrates into the natural and built environment.
- Design policies should not attempt to impose architectural style or stifle innovation or originality.
- It is right to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness where that exists.
- The NPPF encourages pre-application engagement with the local community, statutory consultees and local planning authority, which the applicant has carried out with this application submission.

Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

5.23 Paragraph 135 of the NPPF states

“The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that affect directly or indirectly non designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.”

5.24 Significance is defined as the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. Full details of the significance of the building are to be found in the Heritage Statement of David Beardmore, which accompanied this application. It is considered that although the proposals would result in the loss of the building resulting in a significant impact this harm would be overcome with the replacement building being of a very good design and the additional benefits that the proposed scheme would deliver.



5. Planning Policy Considerations

This would be supported by paragraph 133 which says that designated assets (therefore of a higher standard) could be lost if substantial public benefits outweigh any harm. These benefits would include increased health benefits for the elderly, local economic benefits including with regards to the local housing market, use of an under utilised brownfield site as well and change to rationalise and improve NHS services would outweigh the loss of a non-designated heritage asset, as discussed elsewhere in this report.

Summary

- The effect upon the significance of the non-designated heritage asset needs to be taken into account and balanced against the positives of the development when weighing the application.

5.25 National Planning Practice Guidance

5.26 The most recent and relevant document is the online National Planning Practice Guidance published in August 2013 which has had subsequent amendments, the last of which was on the 27th March 2015.

Housing

5.27 The draft planning practice guidance requires local planning authorities to objectively assess housing needs of their jurisdiction. The draft guidance requires an objective assessment of both affordable and market housing needs and is expected to include evidence an assessment of future quantity of housing needed and a breakdown of that need by type, tenure and size. This will mean that local planning authorities will need to better assess and evidence need for older persons accommodation across both public and private sector. In regard to housing for older people the draft planning practice guidance states;

Housing for Older People

The need to provide housing for older people is critical given the projected increase in the number of households aged 65 and over accounts for over half of the new households (Department for Communities and Local Government Household Projections 2013). The age profile of the population can be drawn from Census data. Projection of population and households by age group should also be used. Plan makers will need to consider the size, location and quality of dwellings needed in the future for older people in order to allow them to live independently and safely in their own home for as long as possible, or to move to more suitable accommodation if they so wish. Supporting independent living can help to reduce the costs to health and social services, and providing more options for older people to move could also free up houses that are under occupied. The future need for specialist accommodation for older people broken down by tenure and type (e.g sheltered, enhanced sheltered, extra care, registered care) should be assessed and can be obtained from a number of online tool kits provided by the sector. The assessment should set out the level of need for residential institutions (Use Class C2).” (emphasis added)



5. Planning Policy Considerations

Design

- 5.28 The guidance advises decision takers to seek a high quality design and reiterates the NPPF comment that good planning is indivisible from good design. It advises that local planning authorities should give great weight to design that is outstanding or innovative which help to raise the standard of design more generally in an area.
- 5.29 The guidance attempts to identify the common features or qualities of 'good design'. It is considered that some of those qualities listed are directed more towards larger schemes and place setting but those that are considered appropriate to the proposed scheme are;
- Functional;
 - Adaptable and Resilient;
 - Display a Distinctive Character;
 - Attractive; and,
 - Encourage an Ease of Movement.
- 5.30 The guidance also lists the key points to consider when looking at design. These include character of the area, local context, scale, detailing, accessibility to name a but a few. The full list of design considerations is considered in more detail in the Design and Access Statement.
- 5.31 The role that pre-application discussions with the local planning authority, statutory consultees, local stakeholders and residents is emphasised and encouraged. This is something that has been actively pursued with the propose scheme and I would refer to the accompanying **Statement of Community Involvement**.



5. Planning Policy Considerations

Local Planning Policy

- 5.32 The Local Development Plan is made up of the Reading Borough Local Development Framework Core Strategy with Alteration 2015, Reading Borough Local Development Framework Reading Central Area Action Plan to 2026 (although not relevant to this application) and Reading Borough Local Development Framework Sites and Detailed Policies Document with alteration 2015. The development plan documents need to be read in conjunction with the National Planning Policy Framework and guidance, in particular those that predate national planning policy documents.

Reading Borough Local Development Framework Core Strategy with Alteration 2015		
Policy CS1— Sustainable Construction and Design		
POLICY Proposals for new development will be acceptable where the design of buildings and site layout use energy, water, minerals, materials and other natural materials efficiently, with care and taking into account the effects of climate change. To meet these aims development will need to meet the eco homes very good standard, maximize energy efficiency and conservation measures, incorporate onsite energy generation to off set at least 20% CO2 emissions, reduce mains water use and incorporate sustainable urban drainage facilities .	RESPONSE <i>Achieved</i>	EVIDENTIAL JUSTIFICATION The proposal is for the redevelopment of previously developed land will be undertaken in a sustainable way. For further information please see the energy assessment that accompanies the application.
Policy CS3 – Social Inclusion and Diversity		
POLICY Major developments should demonstrate measures to enhance social inclusion, take into account the social and cultural diversity of the area, and be accessible to health, education and social facilities.	RESPONSE <i>Achieved</i>	EVIDENTIAL JUSTIFICATION The application site is within a sustainable location in close proximity to amenities and facilities and provides accommodation for the growing elderly section of the local population for which there is a need.
Policy CS4 – Accessibility and the Intensity of Development		
POLICY The scale and density of development will be related to its level of accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport.	RESPONSE <i>Addressed</i>	EVIDENTIAL JUSTIFICATION The application site is within a sustainable location in close proximity to amenities and facilities allowing for the increased density of the site.
Policy CS5—Inclusive Access		
POLICY All buildings should be located, sited and designed to provide suitable access for all potential users including disabled people.	RESPONSE <i>Achieved</i> 	EVIDENTIAL JUSTIFICATION Due to the nature of the end user of the proposed building it is designed to be accessible for the disabled and those with mobility problems. Further information on this is contained in the Design and Access Statement which accompanies the application.

5. Planning Policy Considerations

Policy CS6: Settlement Boundary		
POLICY No development will be permitted outside of the settlement boundary.	RESPONSE Achieved	EVIDENTIAL JUSTIFICATION The applications site is located within the defined settlement boundary.
Policy CS7: Design and the Public Realm		
POLICY All development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character of the area in terms of it's layout, landscaping, density and mix, scale, height, massing and architectural detailing. The development shall also make a positive contribution in terms of character, continuity / enclosure, public realm, movement, legibility, adaptability and diversity.	RESPONSE Achieved	EVIDENTIAL JUSTIFICATION It is considered that the proposed application is for a well designed building which responds well to and is in keeping with the surrounding area, as demonstrated in the Design and Access Statement which has been submitted with this application.
Policy CS14: Provision of Housing		
POLICY Provision will be made for the completion of at least 477 dwellings between 2001-2006, 572 dwellings per annum between 2006-2016 and 521 dwellings per annum between 2016-2026.	RESPONSE Addressed	EVIDENTIAL JUSTIFICATION This development provides for new dwellings that will help meet the required number of new dwellings.
Policy CS15: Location, Accessibility, Density and Housing Mix		
POLICY Appropriate density and mix of residential development within the Borough will be informed by an assessment of characteristics of the area, its accessibility, the need for high quality design and the need to minimise environmental impact including impact on neighbouring amenity.	RESPONSE Achieved	EVIDENTIAL JUSTIFICATION The proposed development is in an accessible location and is of a sustainable design that is in keeping with the character of the area and respects neighbouring amenity as demonstrated in the Design and Access Statement which has been submitted with this application.
Policy CS16: Affordable Housing		
POLICY All developments of 15 dwellings and above will provide 30% of the total number of dwellings as affordable housing.	RESPONSE Addressed	EVIDENTIAL JUSTIFICATION These requirements have now been superseded by subsequent supplementary planning documents which should be considered inline with the viability appraisal submitted with the application.
Policy CS22: Transport Assessments		
POLICY Planning proposals need to make appropriate provision for works and contributions to ensure an adequate level of accessibility and safety by all modes of transport in accordance with a submitted transport assessment.	RESPONSE Achieved	EVIDENTIAL JUSTIFICATION Please see the transport statements that accompanied the application.



5. Planning Policy Considerations

Policy CS23: Sustainable Travel and Travel Plans		
POLICY Major development proposals will need to implement measures to promote and improve sustainable transport facilities.	RESPONSE Addressed	EVIDENTIAL JUSTIFICATION Please see the transport statement that accompanies the application.
Policy CS24: Car and Cycle Parking		
POLICY Maximum car parking standards and cycle parking requirements will be applied in relation to accessibility of locations.	RESPONSE Addressed	EVIDENTIAL JUSTIFICATION McCarthy and Stone have vast experience in providing the appropriate levels of parking on their schemes that meets the needs of the end users and full details of which are contained in the Travel Report that accompanies this application.
Policy CS29: Provision of Open Space		
POLICY New development should make provision for the open space needs of the development via on or off site provision.	RESPONSE Addressed	EVIDENTIAL JUSTIFICATION McCarthy and Stone have vast experience in providing the appropriate levels of amenity space on their schemes that meets the needs of the end users and full details of which are contained in the Design and Access Statement and landscaping details that accompanies this application.
Policy CS31: Additional and Existing Community Facilities		
POLICY Proposals involving the redevelopment of existing community facilities for non-community uses will need to demonstrate that there is no longer a need for the facility.	RESPONSE Addressed	EVIDENTIAL JUSTIFICATION The NHS have confirmed that the existing facilities on the site will be relocated to other local areas so that there will be no loss of the actual facilities provided.
Policy CS33: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment		
POLICY Historic features and areas of historic importance, including their settings will be protected and where appropriate enhanced.	RESPONSE Achieved	EVIDENTIAL JUSTIFICATION Full details with regards to the heritage implications of this proposal can be found in the Heritage Statement that accompanies this application.
Policy CS38: Trees, Hedges and Woodland		
POLICY Individual trees, groups of trees, hedges and woodlands will be protected from damage and removal.	RESPONSE Achieved	EVIDENTIAL JUSTIFICATION Please see the tree assessment and landscaping details that accompanied the application.



5. Planning Policy Considerations

Reading Borough Local Development Framework Sites and Detailed Policies Document with Alteration 2015

Policy SD1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

POLICY	RESPONSE	EVIDENTIAL JUSTIFICATION
A positive approach to considering development proposals will be taken which reflects the NPPF and applications will be determined in line with the development plan unless material indications indicate otherwise.	Achieved	The proposal can be considered to be inline with the principles of sustainable development and the development plan, as set out through this document, so that planning permission should be approved without undue delay.

Policy DM1: Adaption to Climate Change

POLICY	RESPONSE	EVIDENTIAL JUSTIFICATION
All development will demonstrate how they have been designed to incorporate measures to adapt to climate change with regards to their orientation for heating and ventilation, energy use, use of trees and surface water run off.	Achieved	These issues can be demonstrated in the energy statement, drainage details and landscaping proposals that accompany this application.

Policy DM4: Safeguarding Amenity

POLICY	RESPONSE	EVIDENTIAL JUSTIFICATION
Development will not cause a significant detrimental impact to the living environment of existing or new residential properties in terms of privacy, sunlight / daylight, visual dominance, artificial lighting, noise or crime / safety.	Achieved	The fact that the proposals will not have an adverse impact upon neighbouring amenity is demonstrated within the Design and Access Statement that accompanies this application.

Policy DM5: Housing Mix

POLICY	RESPONSE	EVIDENTIAL JUSTIFICATION
For new developments of 10 or more dwellings outside of the central area and local centres 50% of dwellings should be of three or more bedrooms and the majority of dwellings be in the form of houses rather than flats.	Addressed	These proposals provide for elderly persons housing, for which there is an unmet need within the Borough and as such the provision of such accommodation within one and two bedroom flats is considered to be appropriate.

Policy DM7: Accommodation for Vulnerable People

POLICY	RESPONSE	EVIDENTIAL JUSTIFICATION
Development providing accommodation for vulnerable people will address identified needs enabling occupants to live as independently as possible. There is a need for frail elderly people. Development for specialist accommodation will be close to facilities, respect the residential character of the surrounding, have appropriate access and have storage for mobility scooters. Such development may count towards affordable housing provision.	Achieved	The proposed development will provide accommodation for elderly people to live as independently as they wish to do so in a sustainable location with appropriate facilities and in a building that respects the character and appearance of the area.



5. Planning Policy Considerations

Policy DM10: Private and Communal Outdoor Space		
POLICY Dwellings will be provided with functional private or communal open space, which for flats can be communal outdoor space or balconies. The size and design of outdoor spaces will be in keeping with similar spaces in the area and related to main entrances, enhance safety and be compromised by the relationship of other buildings.	RESPONSE Achieved	EVIDENTIAL JUSTIFICATION McCarthy and Stone have vast experience in providing the appropriate levels of amenity space on their schemes that meets the needs of the end users and full details of which are contained in the Design and Access Statement and landscaping details that accompanies this application.
Policy DM12: Access, Traffic and Highway Related Matters		
POLICY For proposals including a new or altered access consideration will be given to the effect on safety and the environment. Development will only be permitted where highway access complies with the adopted highway standards, there would be no material detrimental impact upon the transport network or its users, will not generate regular HGV movements and provide off street servicing.	RESPONSE Achieved	EVIDENTIAL JUSTIFICATION Please see the Transport Statement that accompanies this application.
Policy DM18: Tree Planting		
POLICY New development will make provision for tree planting on or off site to improve tree cover around the Borough maintain and enhance the character of the area, provide for biodiversity and help to reduce carbon emissions.	RESPONSE Achieved	EVIDENTIAL JUSTIFICATION Please see the landscaping proposals that accompany this application for planting details.

5.33 In addition to the development plan documents listed above the Council have a number of adopted Supplementary Planning Documents relevant to the application proposal;

- Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011)
- Revised Sustainable Design and Construction (2011)
- CIL Charging Schedule (2013)
- Affordable Housing (2013)
- Planning Obligations Under Section 106 (2015)

These documents are covered further in the Design and Access Statement, Energy Appraisal, Transport Statement and Viability Appraisal which accompany the application.



5. Planning Policy Considerations

Ministerial Housing White Paper: Fixing our broken Housing Market (7th February 2017)

5.34 The White Paper is a material planning consideration as it sets out the future direction of travel of national planning policy and advice to local planning authorities. Amongst its content is included that local planning authorities should have *a clear strategy to maximise the use of suitable land* (**Para 1.22**), that the NPPF will be amended to indicate that *great weight* should be attached to the value of using previously developed land for homes (**Para 1.25**), and make efficient use of land avoiding low densities (**Para 1.53**). **Paragraph 1.52** and **1.53** are of note in respect to this application as it advises local authorities and applicants to be ambitious about what a site can offer, especially in areas where demand is high and land is scarce. **Paragraph 1.53** also advises that whilst density and form need to reflect local character they should also have regard to the nature of local housing needs.

5.35 In respect to this application **Paragraph 1.16** advises that local planning authorities should have clear policies for addressing housing requirements of older people. Under Section 4 entitled 'Helping People Now', Paragraph 4.42 states;

*'Offering older people a better choice of accommodation can help them to live independently for longer and help reduce costs to the social care and health systems. We have already put in place a framework linking planning policy and building regulations to improve delivery of accessible housing. To ensure that there is more consistent delivery of accessible housing, **the Government is introducing a new statutory duty through the Neighbourhood Planning Bill on the Secretary of State to produce guidance for local planning authorities on how their local development documents should meet the housing needs of older and disabled people.** Guidance produced under this duty will place clearer expectations about planning to meet the needs of older people, including supporting the development of such homes near local services.*

*It will also set a clear expectation that all planning authorities should set policies using the Optional Building Regulations to bring forward an adequate supply of accessible housing to meet local need. **In addition, we will explore ways to stimulate the market to deliver new homes for older people.***' (my emphasis)

5.36 In respect to this appeal there is now clear guidance and an expectation that local planning authorities need to actively plan how they are going to meet housing needs for older persons that the PPG has identified as being a 'critical' housing need. I also note that '*great weight*' should be attached to using previously developed land for housing, such as the appeal site, and that there is a strong emphasis on the avoidance of low densities and being ambitious with what a site can deliver in areas of high need and scarce land supply, both of which are applicable to this site.



6. Development Proposal

The Proposal

- 6.0 The proposal is for the erection of a building to accommodate 25 Retirement Living units (C3 use) with communal facilities, parking and associated landscaping.

Five Year Housing Land Supply

- 6.1 Paragraph 47 of the NPPF requires local planning authorities to be able to demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable sites for residential development. In addition a further buffer of 5% provision, or 20% of a persistent record of under delivery, of land is required by the NPPF. A failure to be able to demonstrate such a level of supply will deem the local planning authorities' policies regarding housing supply to be out of date.
- 6.2 According the Council's Monitoring Report of 2016 they have a requirement to provide 2,519 units over the five year period and have a supply of 4,355 units which gives them a 8.64 year supply.
- 6.3 The Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2015, identifies the objectively assessed needs, which sets out a requirement for 3,736 units for the five year period which reduces overall housing land supply to 5.83 years. The SHMA also states that there is a need for 300 elderly person units a year between 2013-2036 in the housing area that includes Reading and there is no commitment as to where these units will come from.
- 6.4 The National Planning Practice Guidance advises the following in its Guidance on Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessments:

How should local planning authorities deal with housing for older people?

Older people have a wide range of different housing needs, ranging from suitable and appropriately located market housing through to residential institutions (Use Class C2). Local planning authorities should count housing provided for older people, including residential institutions in Use Class C2, against their housing requirement. The approach taken, which may include site allocations, should be clearly set out in the Local Plan.

(Paragraph: 037 Reference ID: 3-037-20140306 Revision date: 06 03 2014)

- 6.5 The proposed Retirement Living development will therefore contribute to meeting the Council's housing requirement for elderly persons housing and therefore is a significant material planning consideration that weighs heavy in favour of the proposal.



6. Development Proposal

Principle of Development

- 6.6 The site is currently developed with several buildings, including temporary buildings, that provides a Learning Centre for children and other NHS services. The site is with a mixed use area with residential and commercial (health care) uses and a proposed residential use would be acceptable in this area, in principle.
- 6.7 The site previously housed NHS services which are community services that would be protected under Policy CS31 of the adopted Core Strategy. However the NHS have confirmed that these proposals will allow for investment into a high quality Children's Services hub based on University of Reading campus that will enable an expansion of services for children and young people in a sustainable location with the ability to grow as required that would be unable to be delivered on the application site. The application site does not have the capacity or suitability to provide the range of services now required by the community. Please see the letter supplied by the NHS which accompanies this application for further evidence on this point.
- 6.8 Furthermore due to the condition buildings a high level of investment would be required to make it fit for purpose in terms of the repairs that are required to arrange a suitable layout and such commitments would be unviable considering the resources available and the fact that the site would still struggle to deliver the services that the NHS seeks to deliver for Children and Young Adult Services. Marketing of the site to provide further NHS services on it has been undertaken but failed to register any interest.

Sustainable Development

- 6.9 In the context of the NPPF and its objectives to achieving sustainable development the proposal meets the three identified roles of sustainable development in the following way;
- ☒ **Economic** - the proposed development will provide a range of economic benefits, including direct employment in its own right, supporting the local economy with an increased footfall and local expenditure and revitalising the housing market through the release of under occupied family housing.
 - ☒ **Social**— it provides specialised accommodation for older people which is considered by Government to be 'critical' that the planning system delivers. Providing housing choice for older people to specifically meet their needs has been demonstrated to have beneficial impacts on health, well being, decreasing pressures on adult health and care services. It also provides companionship to many single older persons.
 - ☒ **Environmental**—the proposal looks to make efficient and effective use of a previously developed site whose development will contribute to housing numbers. It would help protect unallocated Greenfield land from the threat of development.



6. Development Proposal

- 6.10 All dwellings on the site will be designed with energy efficient design measures and the incorporation of renewable technologies, this will provide significant reductions in CO2 emissions over current Building Regulations. In addition to this the development will not have any detrimental impact upon flooding or result in any drainage or contaminated land issues as shown in the drainage and contaminated land reports that accompany this application.

Conservation Area and Locally Listed Building

- 6.11 These proposals would see the loss of a non-designated heritage asset in the form of a locally listed building. However when the loss of this building, the significance of which is outlined in the accompanying Heritage Statement, is weighed against the social, environmental and economic benefits it would bring then its loss is not so detrimental to warrant the refusal of the application.
- 6.12 As outlined in sections 5.23 and 5.24 of this statement Paragraph 135 of the NPPF states that the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application with due weight being given to the balance between the scale of any harm loss and the significance of the heritage asset. While the proposal would result in the loss of the non designated heritage asset its significance is considered to be low and its loss would be outweighed by the benefits that the proposed development would bring in terms of the financial and social benefits of retirement housing, the supply of much needed older persons housing for sale for which there is an identified under supply that can be included in Local Authority housing targets, the freeing up of other market housing within the area and to enable the improvement of NHS childcare and young adult services.
- 6.13 The site is not within the Conservation Area but adjoins such a designated area to the north east. The design of the building which picks up features from and compliments the Conservation Area and will not have a detrimental impact upon it's setting. Furthermore this sensitively design building will replace the existing temporary buildings on the site which are harmful to the character of area. Additional details of this are provided within the Design and Access Statement and Heritage Statement which should be considered further in regards to these issues.

Design Response

- 6.14 The proposal is a high quality contemporary scheme drawing upon the vernacular character of the area for influence. The application is accompanied by a detailed **Design and Access Statement** which has carried a through analysis of the site, immediate area and context. I would defer to the design and access statement but would conclude that the proposal meets the aims and objectives of the NPPF and Saved Adopted Local Plan Policy CS7 to produce high quality design in keeping with existing buildings, building lines, street scene, building height / roof treatment, boundary treatment and recreational / amenity open space.



6. Development Proposal

Parking Provision

- 6.15 McCarthy & Stone has unsurpassed experience in providing for the car parking needs of its specialised housing developments. Specialised housing for the elderly, because of its very nature and concept, is invariably located within reasonable walking distance of shops and other essential services and close to public transport facilities. It can therefore be predicted that the level of car parking proposed, given the age of the intended residents, will adequately supply sufficient parking for the residents, house manager and visitors.
- 6.16 It should be noted that the parking provision is supplemented by the provision of a mobility scooter store, suitable for the intended residents, and providing access to alternative forms of transport.
- 6.17 The proposed scheme provides 28 car parking spaces for the 25 Retirement Living apartments. I would refer to the Transport Statement which accompanies this application for further information on car ownership, trip generation from the proposed scheme, and parking requirements. However, this parking level complies with the Council's adopted standard for this form of accommodation.

Amenity Space Provision

- 6.18 From McCarthy & Stone's considerable experience the most important amenity space for elderly residents is not external to the building but includes the residents' lounge, and the other communal facilities contained within the building. The Company employs a professionally qualified Landscape Architect and prides itself on the quality of its landscape treatment, which has become a "hallmark" of all McCarthy and Stone retirement schemes. A landscaping scheme is provided as part of the proposed application which as well as providing a suitable form of amenity will also provide a suitable green setting for the building within the urban area.

Pre-application Engagement

- 6.19 The NPPF actively encourages pre-application engagement between local planning authorities and applicants (Paragraph 188), and applicants and the local community (Paragraph 189). It should be noted in this instance that the Appellant engaged with council officers prior to submission of the application, and with the local community through a series of consultation events. A Statement of Community Involvement has been submitted with the application which sets out the engagement and feedback received to the proposed scheme.

Community Infrastructure Levy

- 6.20 Contributions will be required towards the Council's adopted CIL at a cost of £120 per square metre. The CIL charge is taken into consideration in the viability assessment which accompanies this application.



7. Material Planning and Social Benefits of Assisted Living Housing

- 7.0 In determining this application it is appropriate for the decision maker(s) to not only have regard to compliance with national and local planning policy but to also have regard to material planning benefits to be accrued by the proposed development, in coming to a balanced judgement on the merits of the application proposal. In respect to the development proposal I consider that the planning benefits listed below weigh heavy in favour of the proposed development.

Housing Benefits

- 7.1 The proposed scheme as identified by previous sections of this statement will deliver housing to meet two identified local housing needs—older persons accommodation and contribution towards the provision of housing. In respect to the provision of older persons accommodation the Government have set out that its delivery is 'critical'. Locally there is a projected increase in the older age cohorts of the population and acknowledged that a choice of housing options for older people will need to be provided to meet the housing need. Accordingly, I consider that significant weight can be afforded to the development proposal given its proposed delivery of specialist accommodation for older persons.
- 7.2 A further housing benefit of McCarthy & Stone retirement developments is the propensity of them to free up existing under occupied housing stock in the area and catalyse housing chains. A report carried out by Shelter in 2012 calculated that nationally if the 20% of older households which are currently under-occupied were to downsize, around 840,000 family sized homes would be released, including 760,000 in the owner occupied sector. McCarthy & Stone find on average around 60% of occupants move into a McCarthy & Stone scheme from within a five mile radius of the site.

Economic Benefits

- 7.3 The NPPF identifies the planning system as having a key role in building a strong and competitive economy. The provision of specialised accommodation for the elderly would also provide other benefits to the community and local economy as a whole. A significant benefit to the town from the scheme would however be the intended elderly residents themselves. If approved, the development once fully occupied, is likely to accommodate between 39 - 72 residents who given their age are likely to use the shopping and other facilities of the nearby local shops on a regular basis.
- 7.4 Research undertaken by ORB in respect of private sector sheltered housing confirms the above. In their document "A Better Life" (overview provided at *Appendix D*) published in October 2003, detailed consideration was given to the benefit of developments for the elderly upon local amenities. Chapter 4 of the Report on page 27 identifies the following: -



7. Material Planning and Social Benefits of Assisted Living Housing

“Private sheltered housing schemes play a vital part in the life of local communities. The propensity of older people to spend locally is high, assuming there is access to local shops which ordinary housing cannot guarantee.”

- 7.5 Annexe B of the Report sets out the economic benefit that a private sheltered housing scheme can bring to a town, and identifies that a scheme of 55 residents generates a spend in local shops of £610,000 per annum, and when compared to a conventional housing development some £2.3 million more in local spending over the lifetime of the scheme. The Report also undertook a number of case studies with local traders and on page 27 the owner of a local pharmacy commented: -

“Since the retirement housing scheme opened three years ago, business has definitely increased by ten to twenty percent. Businesses locally do well because elderly people tend to shop locally”

- 7.6 This evidence demonstrates the point made by Paragraph 23 of the NPPF very well, that residential developments ‘*play an important role in ensuring the vitality of centres.*’ The contribution that this form of residential development can play on the local economy should not be underestimated.
- 7.7 The scheme itself would employ a few people in the long term, whilst the redevelopment of the site is likely to see local jobs generated through the construction of the scheme. On average McCarthy & Stone employ circa 60 local companies connected with the construction professions in building their proposed schemes, with anticipation that this would create local work for in the region of 120 people. In a time of economic austerity and planning policies emphasizing the importance of economic issues in decision making this level of employment is a significant planning benefit. It is considered that there are significant local benefits that weigh in favour of the proposed development.

Social Benefits

- 7.8 The provision of specialist residential accommodation designed specifically to meet the needs of older persons is recognised in having benefits for health care and the well being of residents. There are number of independent reports that look at the health and financial benefits of retirement housing.
- 7.9 The Institute of Public Care (IPC) produced a report entitled ‘*Identifying the Health Gain Benefits from Retirement Housing*’, the executive summary of the report has been appended to this statement at **Appendix E**. As the report states it looks at the benefits in terms of health gain from specialised accommodation for older persons compared to the general market housing stock. The report identifies that retirement housing;



7. Material Planning and Social Benefits of Assisted Living 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.

7.10 ORB produced a report entitled '*A Better Life: Private Sheltered Housing and Independent Living for Older People*', the executive summary is appended to this Statement at **Appendix D**. In respect to health care benefits the report identified;

- 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.

7.11 The Homes and Communities Agency carried out a study looking at the '*Financial benefits of investment in specialist accommodation for vulnerable and older people*'. The Report found that the financial benefits largely arise from the reduced reliance on health and social care services and were estimated to be around £219 million for nearly 12,400 older people. At a time of austerity in Government expenditure those levels of financial savings are significant and perhaps underline the Government's reference to the delivery of older persons accommodation as being '*critical*'.

7.12 In addition to the measurable health benefits identified by the referenced reports there is also the immeasurable benefits of companionship and sense of community that retirement housing can provide for older persons. For many single older persons loneliness and isolation can be as debilitating as physical health conditions. Retirement housing can play an important societal role in inclusive neighbourhoods and communities.



8. Conclusion

- 8.0 The proposed development complies fully with the NPPF's objective of a presumption in favour of sustainable development. It fulfils all three dimensions of sustainable development listed by the NPPF. The proposed development will;
- Provide a range of **economic** benefits, including direct employment in its own right, supporting the local economy with an increased footfall and local expenditure and revitalising the housing market through the release of under occupied family housing.
 - Provide **social** benefits through the provision of specialist accommodation for older people, giving older people housing choice to help maintain their independence, remain within an inclusive community, and reduce pressure on health care facilities.
 - Provide **environmental** benefits through making effective and efficient use of a valuable land resource, assisting with the delivery of housing within a short term timeframe which would reduce pressures on other unallocated greenfield land for residential development, and through the promotion of sustainable construction methods and techniques.
- 8.1 There is a growing need for the services provided to Children and Young Adults and in order to meet that growing need the application site has to be renovated and expanded. The funds required to carry out this renovation and/or expansion is not available to the NHS. New accommodation on Reading University campus, which approval of this application would facilitate will allow better integration of a larger number of services and provide option for future expansion. The sale of the application site will effectively enable the NHS to improve the services by making the relocation possible.
- 8.2 The proposed development accords with both national (Para 50, NPPF) and local planning policy (Policy HO3) in respect to the delivery of older persons accommodation, which the recent draft National Planning Practice Guidance has identified its delivery as 'critical'. The Council's draft Strategic Housing Market Assessment identifies the extant need for older persons accommodation within Reading.
- 8.3 I consider that the planning benefits of the proposed development are as follows;
- 25 units of C3 accommodation that will count towards the Council's overall housing supply, which is a significant material consideration ;
 - The provision of 25 specialised units of accommodation for older persons which national policy sets out its delivery as 'critical', and the Council's planning policy DM7 recognises and supports the provision of;
 - The redevelopment of a vacant underutilised site within a defined settlement;



8. Conclusion

- A high quality development that has had regard to the site, its context and local character of the area and would positively enhance the townscape of this part of Reading.
- The proposed development would have economic benefits for the Reading with residents having a propensity to rely upon local shops, services and facilities.
- The proposal would provide a contribution of £198,000 towards community infrastructure.
- The proposal would provide a financial contribution of £168,000 towards affordable housing provision.
- These material planning benefits outweigh the loss of the non designated heritage asset which is considered to be of low significance.

8.4 I therefore respectfully recommend the proposal, and planning permission ought to be granted as being in line with Local Planning Authority adopted Local Plan.

