

Proposed 'Homes for Later Life' Apartments & Open Market Housing Design & Access Statement



Former Hemdean House School
Hemdean Road, Caversham
RG4 7SD
January 2026

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1 INTRODUCTION

“The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.”

National Planning Policy Framework Paragraph 131



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope and Purpose

“The underlying purpose for design quality and the quality of new development at all scales is to create well-designed and well-built places that benefit people and communities. This includes older people, both able-bodied and disabled.”

National Design Guide Paragraph 8

Proposal

The proposal is for the comprehensive redevelopment of the vacant buildings and land that comprises the Former Hemdean House School (The Site) with construction of a retirement housing development of 51 flats with one and two bedroom apartments and associated communal facilities housed in a single building with vehicular access, car parking and landscaping, and the refurbishment of the former School House and Lodge into 10 open market starter flats and 1 cottage.

Vision

Churchill Living’s vision for the site is to deliver a development that meets our customers’ needs and the local need for retirement apartments whilst also contributing to the character of Caversham, and making a positive contribution locally in terms of socio, economic and environmental benefits.

Our aim is to create a high quality development that embraces sustainable design, enhances the setting of the area and maintains the local vernacular.

Scope

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared by Planning Issues Ltd. on behalf of the applicant, Churchill Living, in support of a detailed planning application. **Matters relating to planning policies and other material considerations will be covered in a separate Planning Statement included with the application.**

This statement concentrates solely on the rationale for the proposed design. The purpose of this document is to explain the context, character and identity of the Site and its surroundings; factors that have influenced the design evolution; and the component parts of the development proposals and how they relate to the prevailing planning policy framework.



1 INTRODUCTION

1.2 Requirements of an Ageing Population

The fact that we are all living longer should be a cause for celebration, as more people are able to enjoy a long and fulfilling retirement. Current average life expectancy in the UK is 83 for women and 79 for men. In 1901 it was 49 and 45 respectively¹. The number of UK citizens expected to be 65 or over is projected to rise to 15 million by 2030².

We would all wish to live well as we live longer. We want to remain active, useful members of a community and retain as much control over our lives as possible.

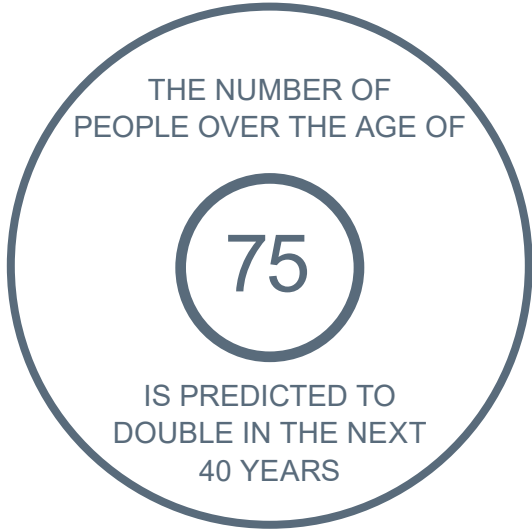
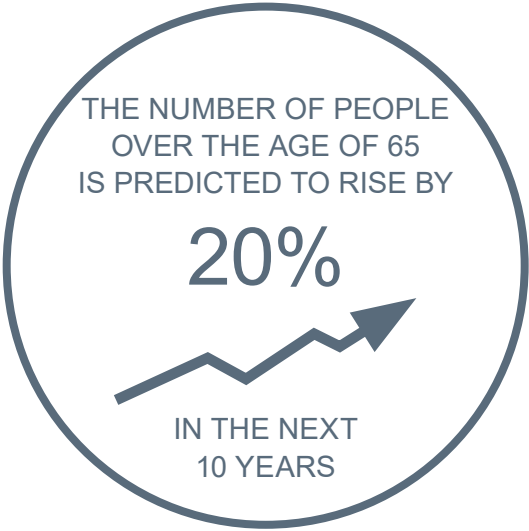
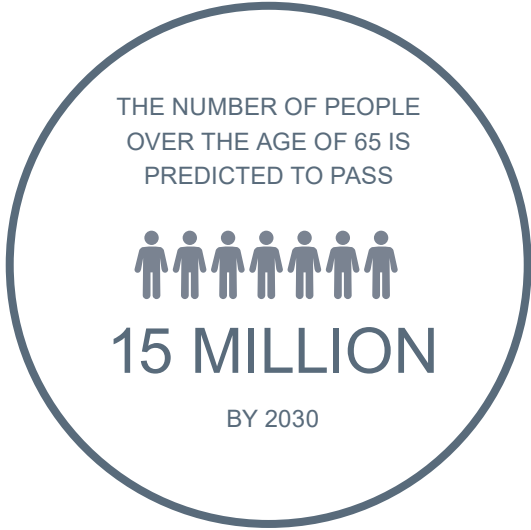
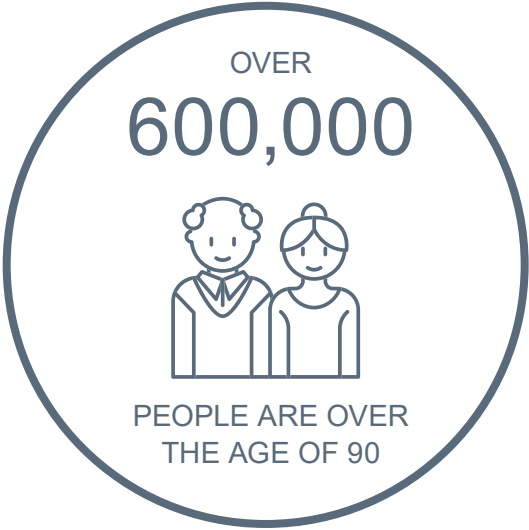
However the vast majority of our housing stock is not built with the needs of older people in mind. There are still far too few suitable new homes being delivered, and many older people are living in homes which are unable to meet their changing needs.

It is estimated that there will be a shortfall of 400,000 purpose-built homes for older people by 2035³.

With insufficient supply and choice most people remain in their existing unsuitable homes for too long, often struggling with maintenance, upkeep and loneliness. Building more specialist homes to meet their needs works better for them but also frees housing stock for younger people; building more retirement homes benefits all age groups.

For far too many people the decision to move home in later life is precipitated by a crisis in their existing home. This is the case despite strong evidence that those who are able to think proactively about the type of home that will meet their changing needs, and who move before they are too frail to play an active part in their new community, have better outcomes than those who move later.

Housing has a fundamental role to play in helping us live well for longer. Given that for most people mobility, sociability and income decrease in old age, it is not just about the home we occupy, but also about the place in which we live, who we live with and who we live close to. The right kind of housing can help people to stay healthy and support them to live independently for longer.



¹ The King's Fund, 'Demography: Future Trends', part of the Time to Think Differently programme, 2018

² Age UK, Older People as Volunteers Evidence Review, 2011

³ Ian Copeman and Jeremy Porteus, Housing Our Ageing Population: Learning from councils meeting the needs of our Ageing Population Local Government Association, 2017

1 INTRODUCTION

1.3 Owner Occupied Retirement Living Typology

“Well-designed places include a variety of homes to meet the needs of older people, including retirement villages, care homes, extra-care housing, sheltered housing, independent living and age-restricted general market housing. They are integrated into new settlements with good access to public transport and local facilities.”

National Design Guide Paragraph 117

‘Homes for Later Living’ means specially designed housing suitable for older people who want to maintain the independence and privacy that comes with having a home of their own but no longer want or need a family sized house.

This proposal is for age-restricted one and two bedroom apartments designed to help people remain independent, safe, secure and sociable for as long as possible. In planning terms these are C3 (Dwellings) developments and not care homes, nursing homes, extra-care or other needs based accommodation. Owner’s homes are their own and they can furnish and decorate as they wish.

Key differences to mainstream housing are -

- The provision of extensive communal areas where neighbours can socialise, host visitors and be part of a friendly, like-minded community. This is centred on the ‘Owner’s Lounge’ which is the heart of the community and where owners often organise social events. There is usually a coffee or tea bar associated with the Owner’s Lounge.
- The presence of a Lodge Manager to look out for people’s welfare, be a point of call if help is needed, make sure the communal areas are well maintained and to be a reassuring, friendly presence. Lodge Managers also create the community; organising events and trips.
- A limited number of entrances, usually one, that is close to the Lodge Manager. This keeps the community secure and allows passive surveillance of the entrance area.
- A lift to all floors with level access throughout.
- Each apartment with its own front door giving privacy, whenever desired.
- A guest room which can be booked by residents for visitors.
- A digital ‘Careline’ support system in all apartments for emergency support 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.
- Communal grounds with well landscaped external space available to all.
- Communal upkeep and maintenance including the exterior of the building landscaping.
- Reduced reliance on cars due to sustainable locations close to amenities.
- Buggy store.
- Communal areas usually amount to 30% of the internal area.



1 Homes for Later Living, Healthier and Happier, September 2019



1 INTRODUCTION

1.4 Benefits of Homes for Later Living

Older peoples housing produces a large number of significant Social, Economic and Environmental benefits.

Social

Retirement housing gives rise to many social benefits -

- Churchill Lodges offer significant opportunities to enable residents to be as independent as possible in a safe and warm environment.
- Retirement housing helps to reduce anxieties and worries experienced by many older people living in housing which does not best suit their needs by providing safety, security and reducing management and maintenance concerns.
- The Housing for Later Living Report (2019) shows that on a selection of 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 into housing specifically designed for later living.

Economic

Retirement housing gives rise to many economic benefits -

- Each person living in a home for later living enjoys a reduced risk of health challenges, contributing fiscal savings to the NHS and social care services of approximately £3,500 per year (Homes for Later Living September 2019).
- With 51 retirement units proposed, at a ratio of 1.3 people per apartment, there will be around 67 occupants. At a saving of £3,500 each per year, this equates to a saving of £234,500 per year in local NHS and social care costs, in comparison to mainstream housing. This is a significant economic benefit.
- A recent report entitled Silver Saviours for the High Street (February 2021) found that retirement properties create more local economic value and more local jobs than any other type of residential development. For an average 45 unit retirement scheme, the residents generate £550,000 of spending a year, £347,000 of which is spent on the high street, directly contributing to keeping local shops open.
- An average retirement scheme will support the following new jobs -
 - 85 construction jobs.
 - 1 permanent job in repairs and renovations.
 - 2.3 permanent jobs in management and care.
 - 3.2 permanent jobs on the local high street (residents are basket shoppers and will do their shopping locally).

Environmental

The proposal provides a number of key environmental benefits by -

- Making more efficient use of land thereby reducing the need to use limited land resources for housing.
- Providing housing in close proximity to services and shops which can be easily accessed on foot thereby reducing the need for travel by means which consume energy and create emissions.
- Providing shared facilities for a large number of residents in a single building which makes more efficient use of material and energy resources.
- The proposal includes renewable technology through the use of solar panels to assist in the reduction of CO2 emissions.
- All areas of the building will be lit using low energy lighting and where applicable utilise daylight and movement sensor controls.



Our schemes free up family housing by older people looking to downsize - a typical 41 unit retirement development generates approx 92 moves in the chain



A development that maximises the use of previously developed land reducing pressure on greenfield sites



£3,500 P/A

Our developments bring health and social care savings - each person living in a Home for Later Life saves the NHS & Social Services approx £3,500 per year



Economic and social benefits of older people using local shops, services and facilities. Our Owners shop locally, supporting businesses and communities



Due to its sustainable location, retirement living housing reduces the need to own a car. Owners often shop locally on foot or by public transport



Our developments allow for independent, secure living and provide companionship which helps to reduce isolation and loneliness

1 INTRODUCTION

1.5 Who are Churchill Living Ltd?

Churchill Living (CL) is a privately-owned British Company, highly trusted and respected within the housing industry. Churchill prides itself on building beautiful purpose-built one and two bedroom retirement apartments in desirable locations across the UK, for those looking for an active, independent, safe and secure lifestyle. Our developments can be found in 23 counties throughout the UK.

Throughout our history we have undertaken over 200 developments and sold over 10,000 units. Through our group company, Churchill Estates Management (CEM) we retain the ongoing operation, management, care and responsibility for every apartment within our completed developments.

“With first class Customer satisfaction at the heart of the business, we’ve been changing retirement living for the better for over 20 years. We continually strive to be the retirement housebuilder of choice for those looking to enjoy independence, security and peace of mind.”

Our developments not only provide well documented benefits to our customers but also to the wider community. Our customers tend to shop locally providing much needed ‘daily shoppers’ for local shops and businesses.

“People living in specialist retirement homes typically experience reduced health risks, contributing to fiscal savings to the NHS and social care services of c. £3,500 per person per year.”

Healthier and Happier – Homes for later Living, September 2019.



Spencer & Clinton McCarthy



Typically, our customers downsize from a 3 or 4 bedroom family home. Therefore, for each retirement apartment occupied, a family home is released for sale into the wider housing market.

CL is an award-winning business having recently won a number of prestigious industry and wider business awards including;

- **The WhatHouse Awards:** Churchill has won the **GOLD Award in the ‘Best Retirement Home Developer’** category at the WhatHouse? Awards, 2023, 2024 and 2025. Before this category has been created, Churchill was the only retirement housebuilder ever to have been awarded ‘Housebuilder of the Year’.
- **The HBF Customer Satisfaction Survey:** Churchill retains the top **‘5 star’ status** having been recommended by more than 90% of our customers for a 9th consecutive year in 2025.

Summarised below are some of CL’s key statistics;

- Over **10,000 apartments** under management.
- **Three** divisional offices around the country.

CL has a full complement of in-house professionally qualified Architects, Technologists, Surveyors and Engineers employed in the seamless delivery of projects through every stage of the process from site identification to construction completion and home sales. The business benefits from a wholly owned town planning consultancy, Planning Issues, which advises on planning related and public consultation matters.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.6 Applicant Brief

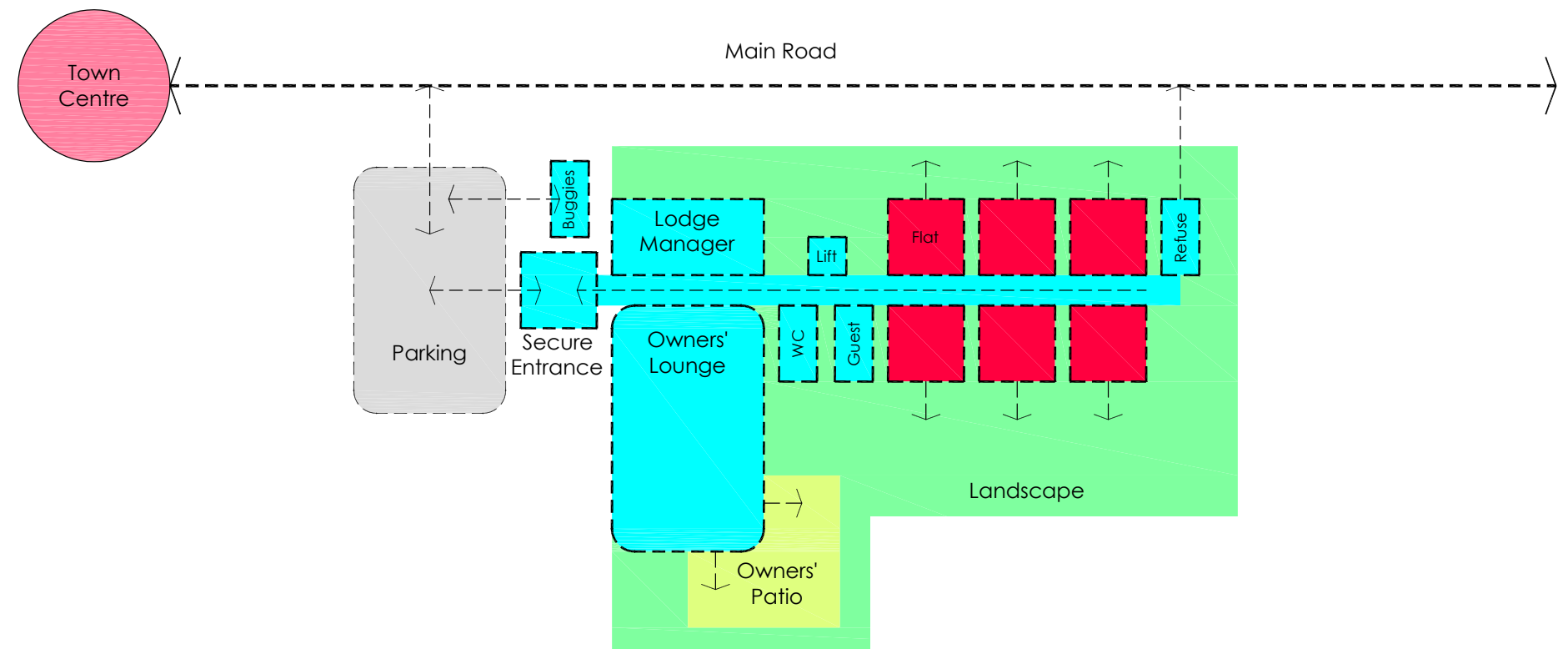
Site selection close to amenities and in an area with identified need is key in the first instance. In designing the development the subject of this planning application, Planning Issues have had a clear brief on the specific requirements of Churchill Living in order for the design to be successful.

Key client requirements for the architectural design are -

- A **single building**, allowing secure access to all communal facilities, which necessitates a large footprint.
- **Apartment numbers** - a minimum of 25 apartments so that the shared service charge for future owners remains affordable.
- Internal **level access** throughout.
- Single **secure entrance** from the car park area to maintain passive security from the Lodge Manager over the parking area and ease of entrance for residents. There needs to be 'progressive privacy' from the public realm to one's apartment. A video link from the entrance intercom to owner's apartments allows owners to see who is requesting entry, responding to the particular need for safety and security for this demographic.
- Concierge **reception** (staffed by a Lodge Manager with their own office).
- **Owners' Lounge** (communal), coffee bar.
- Accessible toilet.
- **Guest suite** (for use by friends and family).
- A central **lift** serving all floors.

- Apartments, double **aspect** where possible but single aspect typically due to the requirement for double loaded corridors necessitated by the need to optimise the development potential of sites and to ensure efficiencies in design and build costs. Churchill's experience shows that there is a wide variety of preferences from customers in terms of aspect, with some preferring sunny aspects and others shaded positions, some busy streets and others more private locations. Therefore a range of choice of aspect for apartments is desirable.
- Apartments with external doors to living spaces, with balconies where possible and external access at ground floor, typically providing a very '**active frontage**'.
- Landscaped communal **gardens** where visual amenity and biodiversity are more important than usable area. Large flat areas for recreational use are not required.

- **Waste** management store appropriately sized and located based on previous experience of operating these type of developments.
- **Parking** with an appropriate ratio of 1 space per 3 apartments, based on extensive experience of operating these type of developments, research and appeal decisions, as well as how accessible the site specific location is. This is because the sustainable location and average age of purchasers at 79 years old means a lower average car ownership requirement than mainstream housing.
- Provision for **mobility scooters** within a 'Buggy Store' at a ratio of 1 per 7 to 8 apartments.
- Low maintenance, long lasting **materials** and detailing which respond to the local context.



Diagrammatic layout of a typical retirement living development

1 INTRODUCTION

1.7 Brief Requirement Examples

All Lodges come with a suite of communal features that residents will enjoy and benefit from, as part of their new retirement living lifestyle.



Secure Main Entrance from Parking



Owners' Lounge



Owners' Patio



Concierge Reception Lodge Manager



Typical Guest Suite



Typical Coffee Bar

1 INTRODUCTION

1.8 Precedent Developments

The images below demonstrate that Churchill Living have designed and delivered 'context-led' developments across the south of England.



Fitzford Lodge, Tavistock



Harrington Lodge, Chichester



Abbey Lodge, Romsey



St. Andrew's Lodge, Chippenham



Hubert Lodge, Hythe



Sarum Lodge, Salisbury

2 CONTEXT

“An understanding of the context, history and the cultural characteristics of a site, neighbourhood and region influences the location, siting and design of new developments. It means they are well grounded in their locality and more likely to be acceptable to existing communities.”

National Design Guide Paragraph 39



2 CONTEXT

Images courtesy of the Francis Frith collection

2.1 History of Caversham

Caversham is a village and a suburb of Reading in Berkshire, England, located directly north of Reading town centre across the River Thames. Caversham rises from the River Thames, lying on the lowest reaches of the Chiltern Hills is one of the few places in Berkshire to be considered part of the Chilterns.

Two road bridges, including Caversham Bridge, and two footbridges join Caversham to the rest of Reading. Named areas within the suburb include Emmer Green, Lower Caversham, Caversham Heights and Caversham Park Village.

Notable landmarks include Caversham Court, a public park and former country house; Caversham Lakes; and part of the Thames Path national trail, and Caversham Library.

History

Recorded as early as 1086, Caversham was part of the Henley district of Oxfordshire (it is located around 6 miles (9.7 km) south west of Henley).

The first written description of Caversham appeared in the Domesday Book within the 'hundred of Binfield'. Prior to 1106, a shrine to the Virgin Mary was established in Caversham. In the Middle Ages Caversham Manor was one of the demesnes of William Marshal, Earl of Pembroke and regent during King Henry III's reign.

With the exception of the centre of Caversham and Emmer Green, which were traditional villages, much of the development occurred during the 20th century. In 1911, it was transferred to Berkshire and became part of the county borough of Reading.

Current

Today, Caversham is home to nearly 24,000 residents. The town has a small shopping area clustered around Church Street. The town has three supermarkets, a public library and a broad array of shops. The town hosts Caversham AFC, one of the largest youth football clubs in the area.

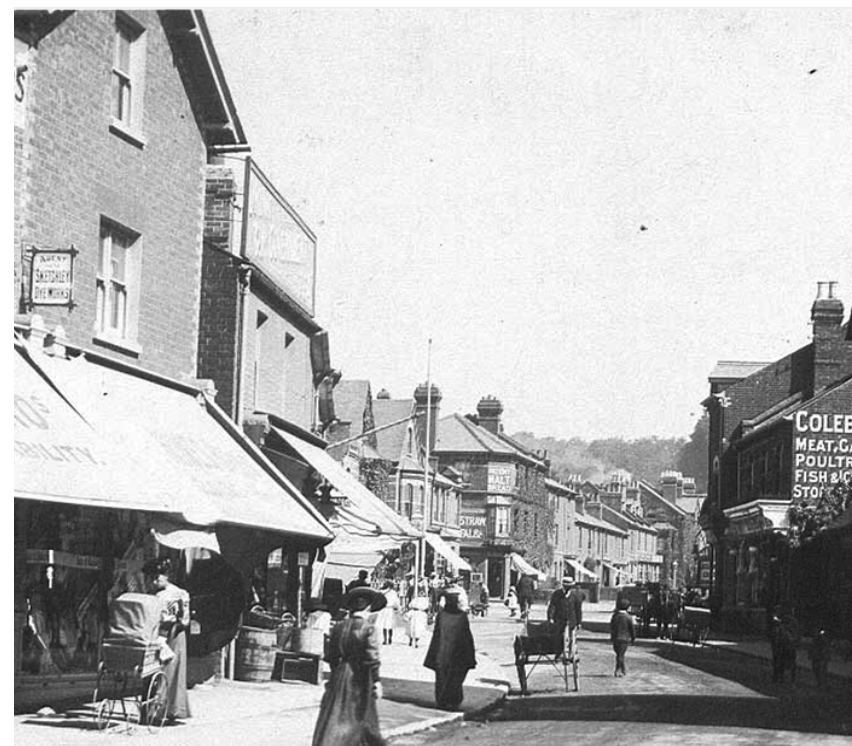
Notable Caversham residents (present and former) include William Marshal (first Earl of Pembroke) Fran Kirby (Chelsea Women's and England midfielder), Elizabeth Pemberton-Mitchell (Singer, Boney M) and John Wicks (Singer songwriter).



Caversham Bridge, c.1900



Caversham Library, c.1900



Church Street, c.1900



Hemdean School House, c.1960

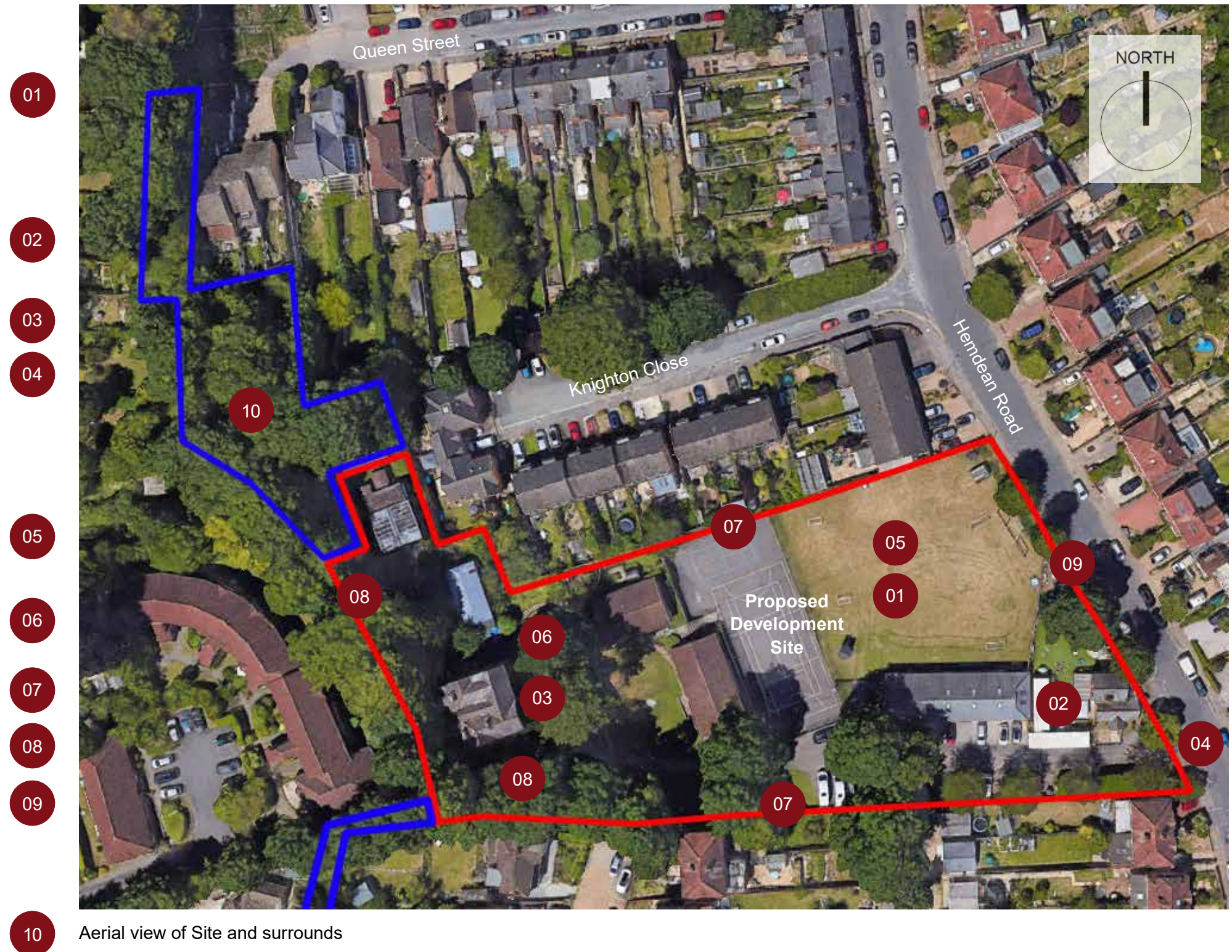
2 CONTEXT

Image courtesy of Google Maps

2.2 Site Description

The site comprises of the following features -

- The site currently comprises of the vacant former Hemdean House School site (shown within the red and blue lines).
- Site area approximately 2.66 acres / 1.08 hectares in area.
- The former school comprises of nine buildings, all different appearances, heights and ages.
- The former Lodge (now PlayDay Nursery) sits at the bottom (eastern) side of the site, is 1.5-storeys tall, and is locally listed.
- The School House sits at the top (western) side of the site, is 4-storeys tall, and is also locally listed.
- The site lies within a residential area with direct and existing access point into the site from Hemdean Road.
- With the exception of the School House and the former Lodge, the existing buildings on site are all single-storey with pitched roofs. Most are modular in nature and many are beyond their design life.
- The site is generally flat to the eastern side of the site, rising east-to-west by approximately one metre from Hemdean Road towards the hard play area.
- The site rises by approximately six metres from the hard play area up to the School House. The western boundary is a further five meters higher.
- The northern and southern site boundaries comprise of a 1.8m tall close board timber fence
- The western boundary comprises of a heavily vegetated steep 45-degree banking.
- The eastern boundary comprises of a 2.4m metal security fence with several mature trees.
- The site does not lie in a Conservation Area and there is no relevant planning history on the site, other than works connected to the School.
- An area of steeply sloping dense woodland lies to the north of the site,



2 CONTEXT

Image courtesy of Google Maps

2.3 Contextual Analysis

The site's surrounds comprises of the following features -

- Directly opposite the site sits a row of 2-storey former almshouses with driveways and gardens in front. Materials comprise of cream painted rough cast render with a clay tile pitched roof over. Windows are mostly uPVC.
 - To the north east and south east, Hemdean Road comprises of mostly 2-storey inter-War semi-detached houses with driveways and front gardens. Materials comprise of a cream-painted render first floor over a red brick ground floor, with a clay tiled pitched roofs and chimneys. Windows are mostly white uPVC. Some of these properties have accommodation in the roof.
 - To the north, Knighton Close comprises of mostly 3-storey terraced properties with driveways and no front gardens. Materials comprise of buff brick with a grey concrete tile pitched mansard roof over. Windows are white uPVC.
 - Beyond Knighton Close lies a more traditional Victorian row of 2-storey terraced properties with painted stone bays with more embellishments with pitched slate / slate-effect roof over with chimneys. Windows are white uPVC.
 - Hemdean Hill comprises of more traditional Victorian rows of 2-storey terraced properties with painted stone bays and brick decorations, with pitched slate / slate-effect roof over with chimneys. Windows are white uPVC.
 - Caversham Primary School is a collection of tall single-storey red brick pitched roof buildings in a fan arrangement.
 - Caversham Pharmacy is a modern single-storey and 2-storey red brick building with buff brick decorations, and a red concrete tile roof over.
 - Beyond these areas lies a large quantum of 2-storey brick post War housing stock of various forms.
 - The building typology is traditional, and the scale is domestic.
- Refer to the photographic analysis in sections 2.6 - 2.10.**
- There is no relevant planning history on this site and there are no relevant previous planning applications.

01

02

03

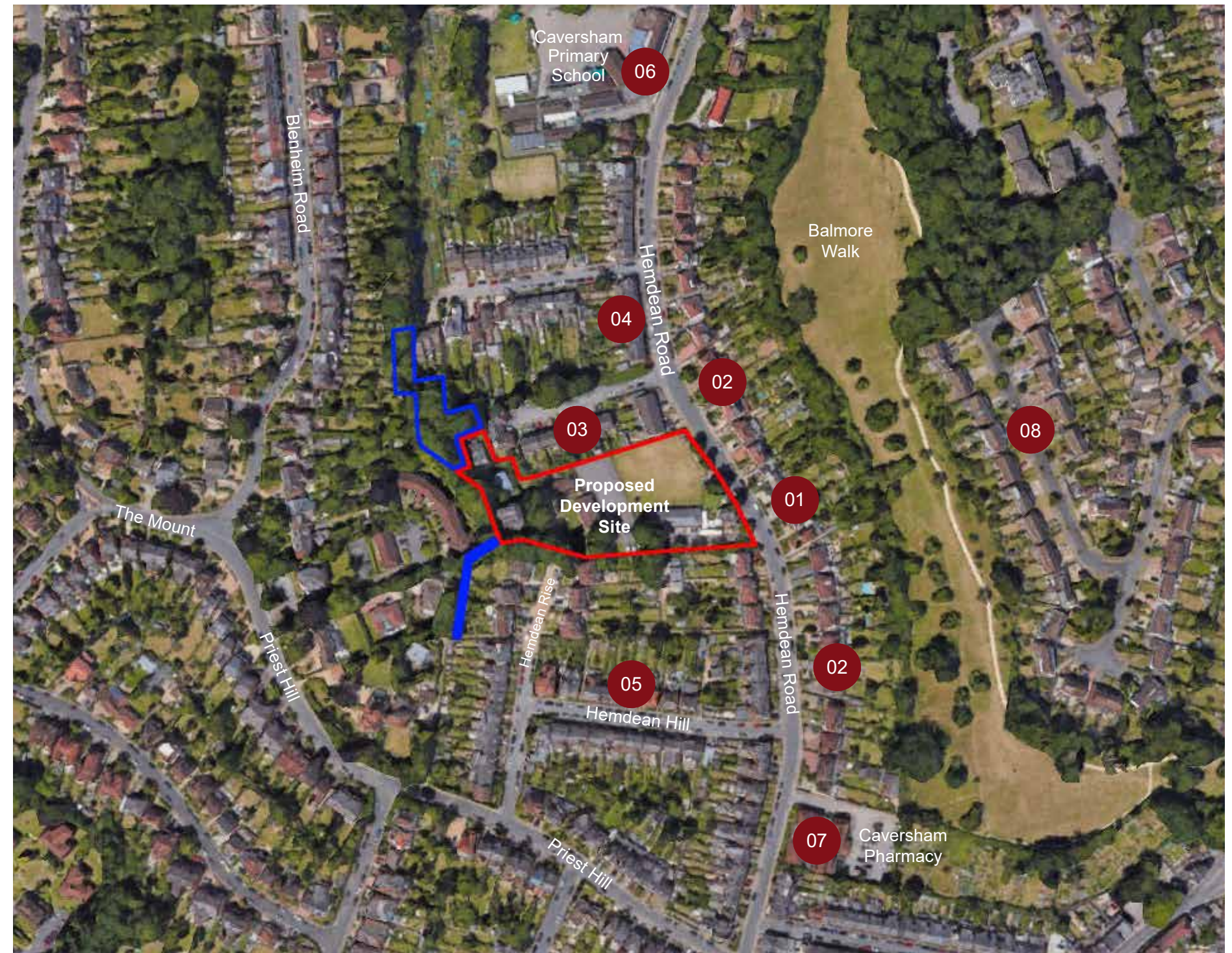
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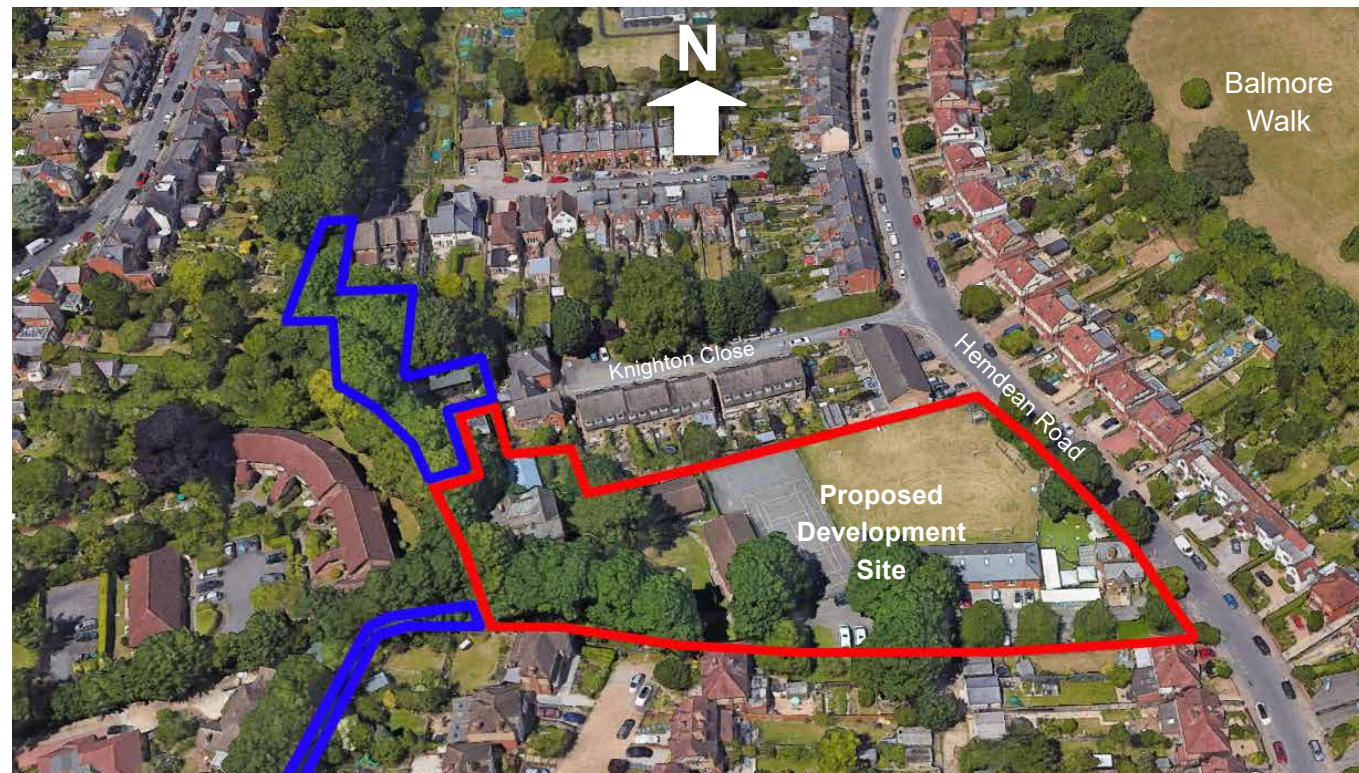


Aerial view of Context and surrounds

2 CONTEXT

Image courtesy of Google Maps

2.4 Aerial Views of the Site



Aerial view of Site looking North



Aerial of view Site looking East



Aerial view of Site looking South



Aerial view of Site looking West

2 CONTEXT

Images courtesy of the Francis Frith collection

2.5 Site History, Use and Ownership

The site historically was set at the foot of the western side of the grounds of the Balmore Estate (refer to Section 3.3 of the Heritage Statement).

Development was predominately to the western side of Hemdean Road; development to the east of the site was light and scattered.

Hemdean House School was founded in 1859 by Francis Knighton. The new building, named Hemdean House, was completed in 1862. The school was an Independent school until closing on 12th July 2024.

HAPRO Ltd, on behalf of the applicant, have undertaken a Heritage Statement that will accompany this application.



1910 map

2 CONTEXT

2.6 Hemdean Road Context Photographs



2 CONTEXT

2.7 Access Road Context Photographs



2 CONTEXT

2.8 School House Context Photographs



2 CONTEXT

2.9 Playing Field Context Photographs



2 CONTEXT

2.10 Western Corner Context Photographs



2 CONTEXT

2.11 Urban Grain Analysis

“The identity or character of a place comes from the way that buildings, streets and spaces, landscape and infrastructure combine together and how people experience them. It is not just about the buildings or how a place looks, but how it engages with all of the senses. Local character makes places distinctive and memorable and helps people to find their way around. Well-designed, sustainable places with a strong identity give their users, occupiers and owners a sense of pride, helping to create and sustain communities and neighbourhoods.”

National Design Guide Paragraph 50

The Site sits within an area of mixed urban grain.

Zone 1 - Former Hemdean House School Site (Yellow)

- Large footprint buildings unequally distributed on the site

Zone 2 - Knighton Close (Light Blue)

- Single-sided row of mansarded terraced properties set back from the footway with rear gardens

Zone 3 - Queen Street and Hemdean Road upper (Green)

- Rows of terraces facing each other with short set backs from the back of the footway.

Zone 4 - The Cloisters (Orange)

- Sprawling terraced flatted housing development.

Zone 5 - Hemdean Road lower and Hemdean Rise (Blue)

- Semi-detached inter-war properties set back from the footway with generous rear gardens.

The site is a gap within the established urban grain of Hemdean Road.



Map showing Urban Grain

2 CONTEXT

2.12 Access and Movement

“In well designed places, people should not need to rely on the car for everyday journeys including getting to workplaces, shops, schools and other facilities, open spaces or the natural environment”

National Design Guide Paragraph 83

The site is located in Caversham, Berkshire on the opposite side of the River Thames to Reading.

The site is located 400m from Caversham Town Centre and shopping precinct.

Road

Caversham is located approximately 4.5 miles from the Three Mile Cross Interchange (junction 11) of the M4. This is accessed from the A33 Basingstoke Road. The adjacent road network allows easy access by car to Pangbourne, Henley-on-Thames, Wokingham and Reading.

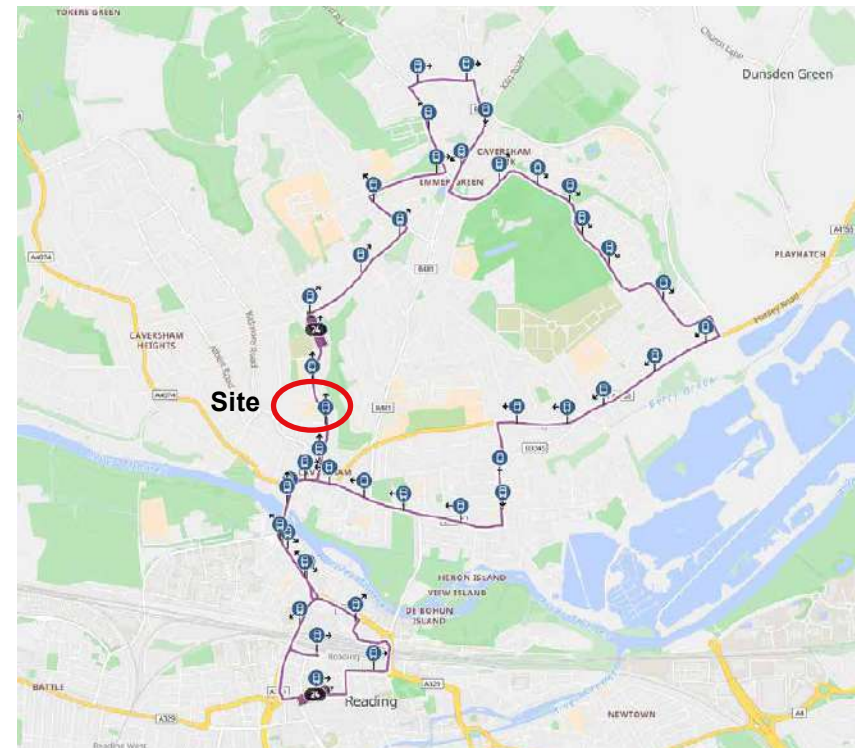
Bus

The local bus network is quite extensive, linking all the districts of Caversham to Reading within a single bus journey. Reading Buses provide these services (bus routes berry24, 80, F12 and 145C).

The nearest bus stop to the proposed development is ‘Hemdean Hill’ bus stop which is approximately 50m south of the site, on Hemdean Road.

Train

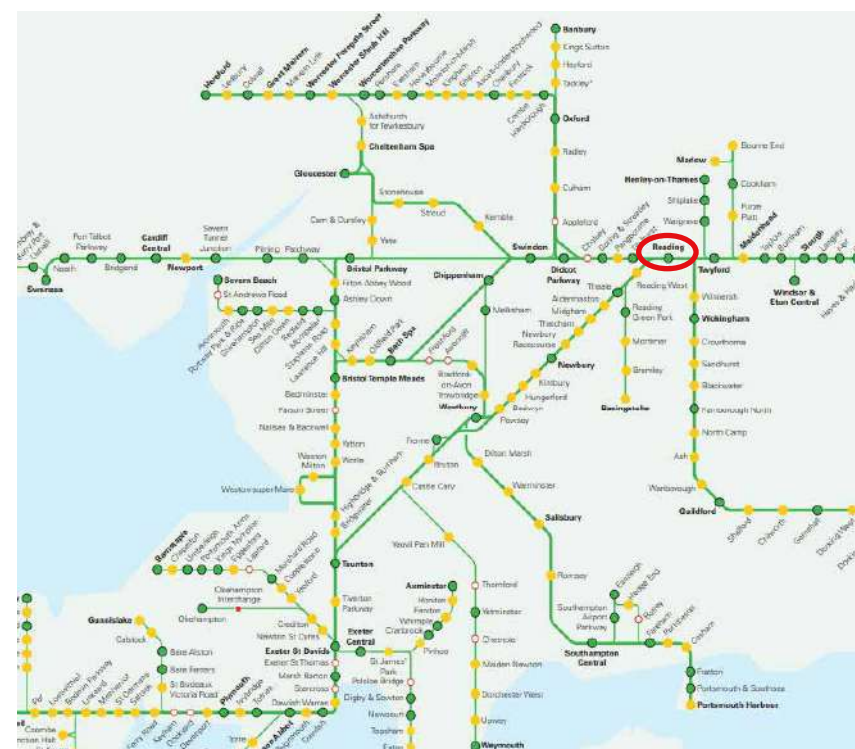
Caversham is not connected to the railway network however both South Western Railway and Great Western Railway run services to Reading, connecting Reading with Penzance and London Paddington stations.



Berry24 Bus Route (web image courtesy of ReadingBuses)



Route80 Bus Route (web image courtesy of ReadingBuses)



Great Western Trains Map



South West Trains Map

2 CONTEXT

2.13 Design Precedents

There have been many flatted residential developments of a similar size and scale that have been constructed around Caversham in previous years.

All have the same characteristics regardless of where in Caversham they are situated. These are as follows -

- 2.5-3 storeys in height
- Predominantly red brick, some with some render
- Domestic scale features and regular shaped windows
- Pitched roof
- Juliet balconies
- Contrasting brick or cast stone heads and cills
- Terraced aesthetic



Priory Avenue



Abbotsmead Place



Church Road



North Street



Wolsey Road

2 CONTEXT

2.14 Site Constraints



Existing poor quality buildings

04

Areas of open playing fields

05

Areas of open tarmac hardstanding

06

Noise / traffic pollution

07

Existing trees within the site

08

Existing high quality buildings

09

Narrow internal access road

10

Steep slope in site

11

Discontinuation in the urban building line

2 CONTEXT

2.15 Site Opportunities



2 CONTEXT

2.16 Existing Topographical Survey

As noted in Section 2.2, one of the constraints to the site is the way it slopes on the western side of the site.

Churchill Living instructed a topographical survey to understand the levels across the site. The orange lines indicate a 0.5m difference in height.

As can be seen from the survey, the eastern side of the site comprises of playing fields and a hard play area, both of which are relatively flat.

Beyond the hard play and towards the western side of the site, the site slopes up steeply towards and beyond the School House. Additionally, the western site is heavily tree-lined.

Both of these heavily restrict existing development and confine any potential new development to the flatter areas to the eastern side of the site.

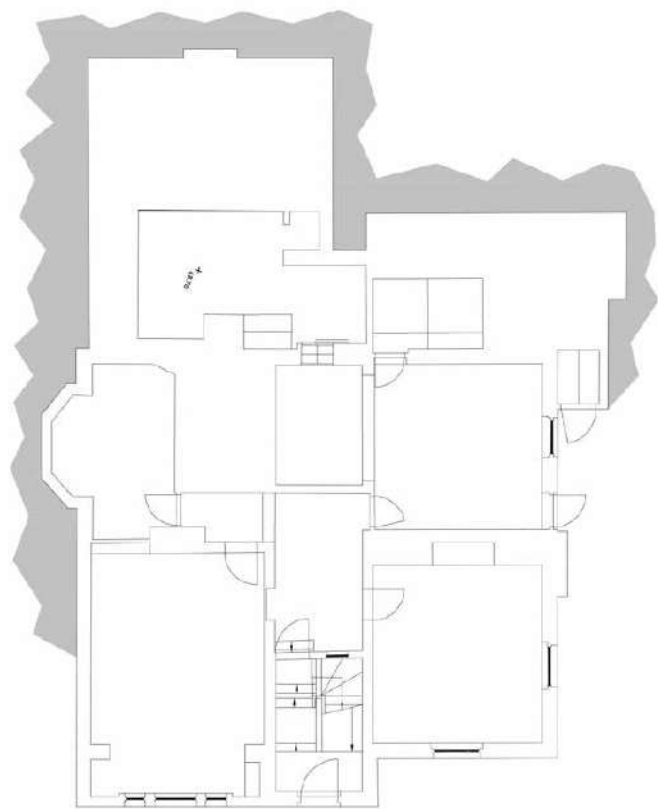


Topographical Survey (not to scale)

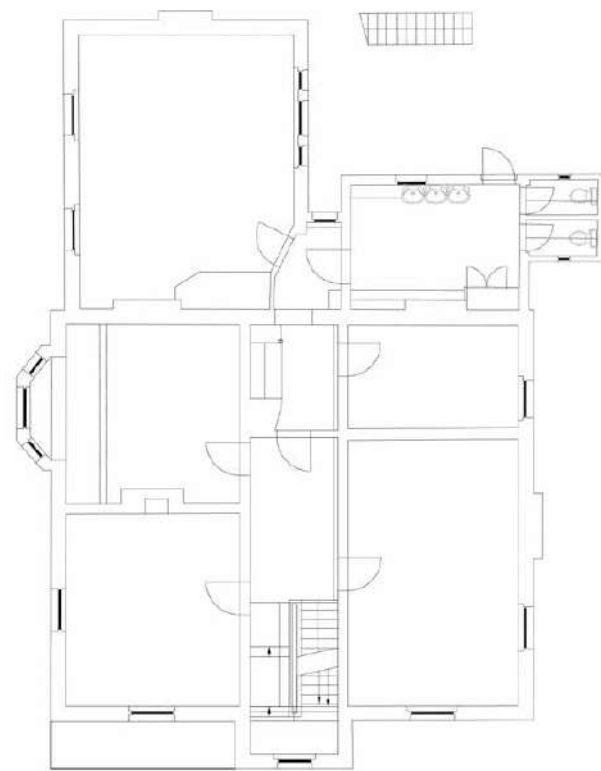
2 CONTEXT

2.17 Existing School House Plans and Elevations

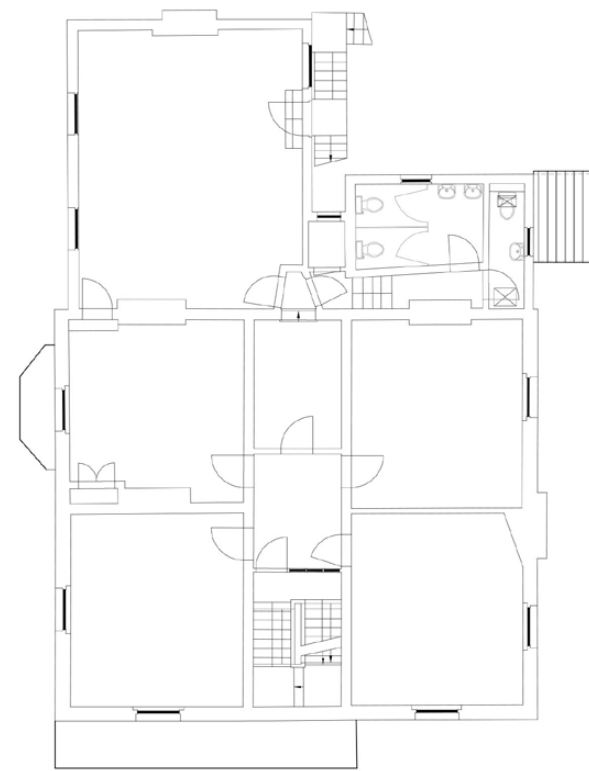
As the School House forms part of the project, Churchill Living has had the building surveyed to understand how the interior it works. The building is 4-storeys and comprises of classrooms and store rooms, with associated WC provision, accessed via a single stair.



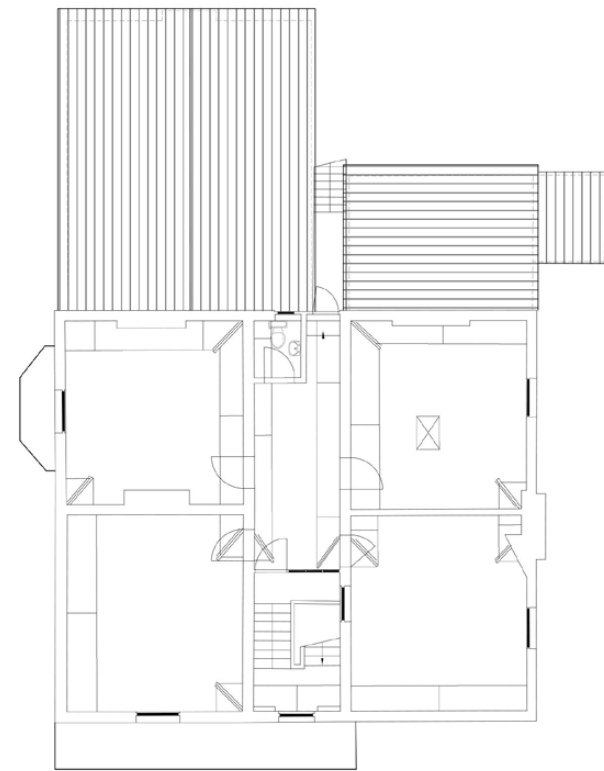
Lower Ground Floor Plan



Ground Floor Plan



First Floor Plan



Second Floor Plan



South Elevation



West Elevation

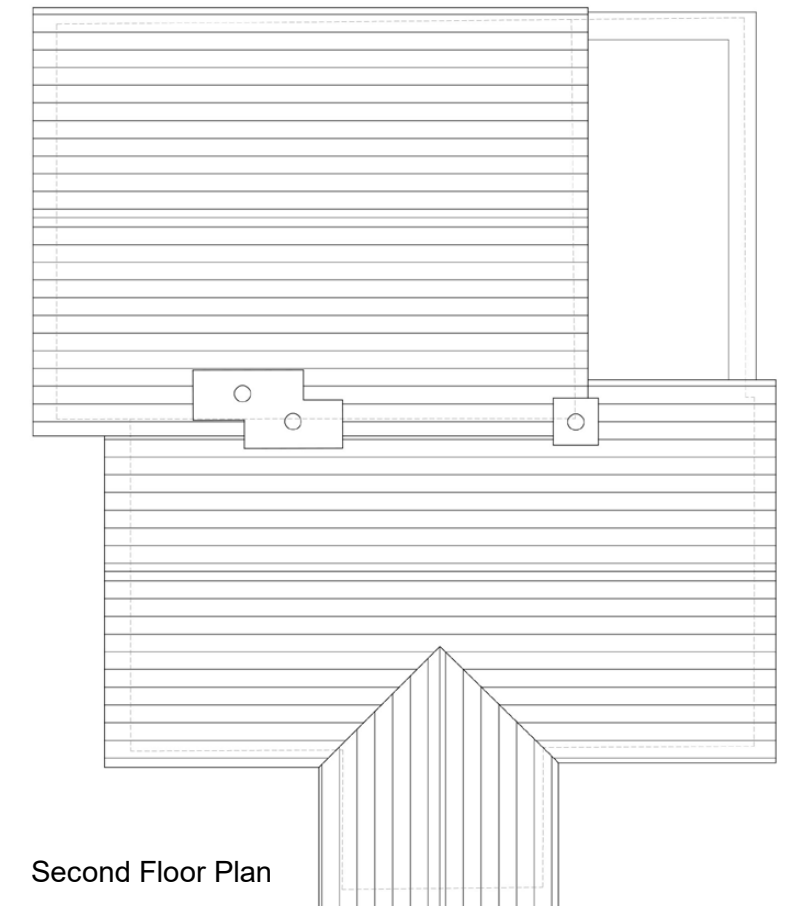
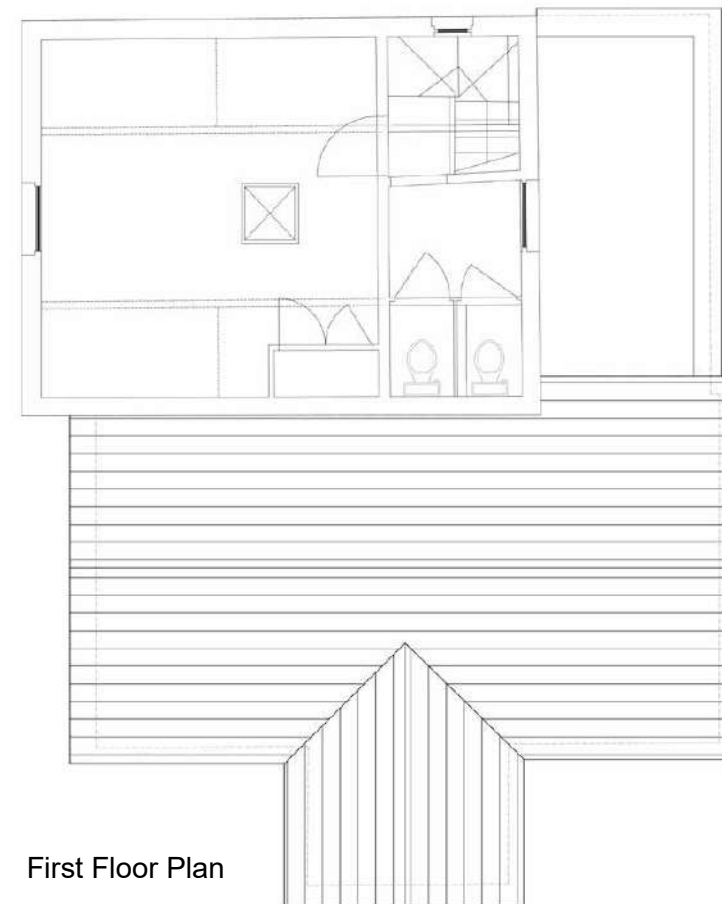
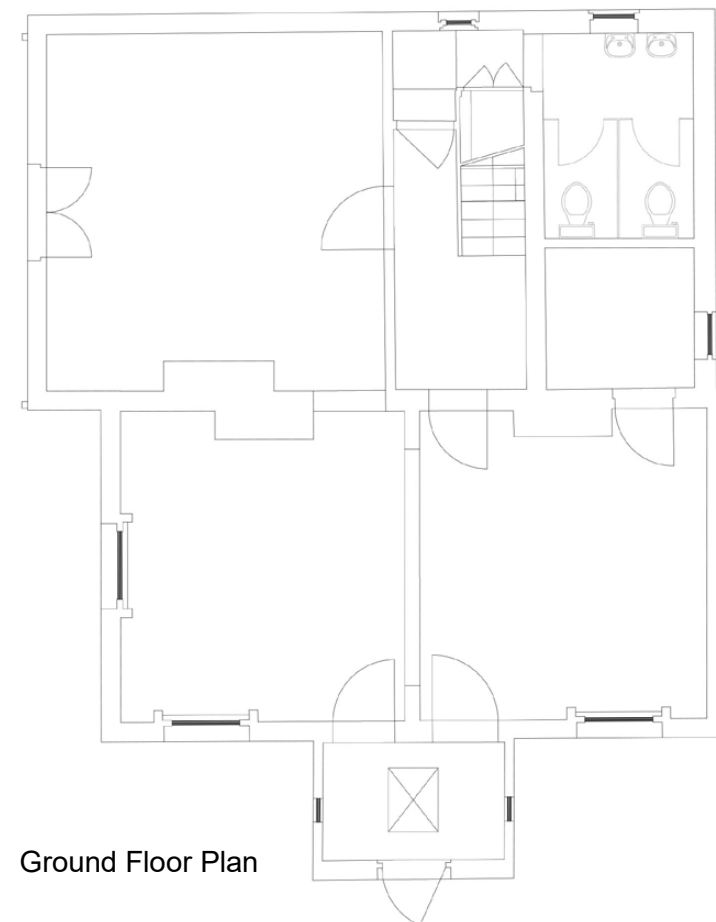


North Elevation

2 CONTEXT

2.18 Existing Lodge Plans and Elevations

As the former Lodge forms part of the project, Churchill Living has had the building surveyed to understand how the interior of it works. The building is 2-storeys and comprises of classrooms and store rooms, with associated WC provision, accessed via a single stair.



3 PLANNING

“.....significant weight should be given to development which reflects local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents.....”

National Planning Policy Framework Paragraph 139



3 PLANNING

3.1 Planning Policy

Reading Borough Local Plan (Adopted 2019 and Reviewed 2023)

The Council's development plan consists of the Reading Local Plan (adopted in 2019), as well as the Local Plan Review which was undertaken in March 2023. The relevant policies are as follows -

- CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- CC3: Adaption to Climate Change
- CC7: Design and the Public Realm
- EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
- EN4: Locally Important Heritage Assets
- H1: Housing provision
- H2: Density and Mix
- H3: Affordable Housing
- H5: Standards for new Housing
- H6: Accommodation for Vulnerable People
- OU1: New and Existing Community Facilities

Housing Land Supply

The Council's Housing Implementation Strategy (April 2025) highlights that the LPA are able to demonstrate a 5.15-year housing land supply which has reduced from 6.11-years in 2024.

The Redevelopment Principle

The principle of residential development on the site is considered acceptable given it will reuse a vacant brownfield site. The development will make efficient use of land in a sustainable location. It will provide much needed 1- and 2-bed apartments and cottages and help free up family housing elsewhere.

The principle is considered acceptable.

Emerging Reading Local Plan

The Council submitted the Local Plan Partial Update to the Secretary of State on 9th May 2025 and is currently going through examination.

The emerging plan includes the site as a future residential allocation if no education or community use came forward. The policy (CA1h) states that -

The site will be "Continued education and community use of the site, or, if no longer required for education, change of use and development for residential. Development should -

- Contribute to providing enhanced bus priority on Vastern Road exiting the northern station interchange;
- Retain those buildings that make the most significant contribution of the character of the surrounding area;
- Avoid adverse effects on important trees including those protected by TPO; and
- Ensure appropriate back-to-back separation from existing residential.

It is considered that the proposed development will meet and accord with the criteria set out in the policy.



3 PLANNING

3.2 Existing Tree RPAs

The site contains many existing mature trees, 6 of which have Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) on them. We acknowledge that they all contribute to the skyline and verdancy that is the character of this part of Caversham.

Barrell Tree Care, on behalf of the applicant, has undertaken a condition survey of the existing trees and an estimation of the root protection areas (RPAs).

When the RPA plan is overlaid over the proposed development it can be demonstrated that does not interfere with the majority of these RPAs.

On this basis the proposed development will protect and maintain the health of these mature trees.

T11, T12 & T15

The footprints of the Sports Hall and the Science building adjacent to the tennis courts and adjacent retaining structures sit over the RPAs of T11, T12 and T15. The development will still sit over the RPA of T11 and T15 however the situation will be improved.

T3

The current access point to the site has been deemed deficient by Paul Basham Associates in terms of width, distance of visibility splay and traffic numbers for both the School House redevelopment and the retirement living development. On this basis we seek to remove tree T3 and create a new vehicular entrance off Hemdean Road to more evenly distribute the traffic numbers for the development. Refer to Section 4.4 for more clarification.

T25 & T28

The roots of these trees would be carefully managed to create the retaining wall and School House parking spaces 1-5.



Existing Root Protection Areas Survey (purple) (not to scale)



Proposed development with RPA's overlaid (purple) (not to scale)

3 PLANNING

3.3 Public Consultation

“Design quality should be considered throughout the evolution and assessment of individual proposals. Applicants should work closely with those affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community. Applications that can demonstrate early, proactive and effective engagement with the community should be looked on more favourably than those that cannot.”

National Planning Policy Framework Paragraph 137

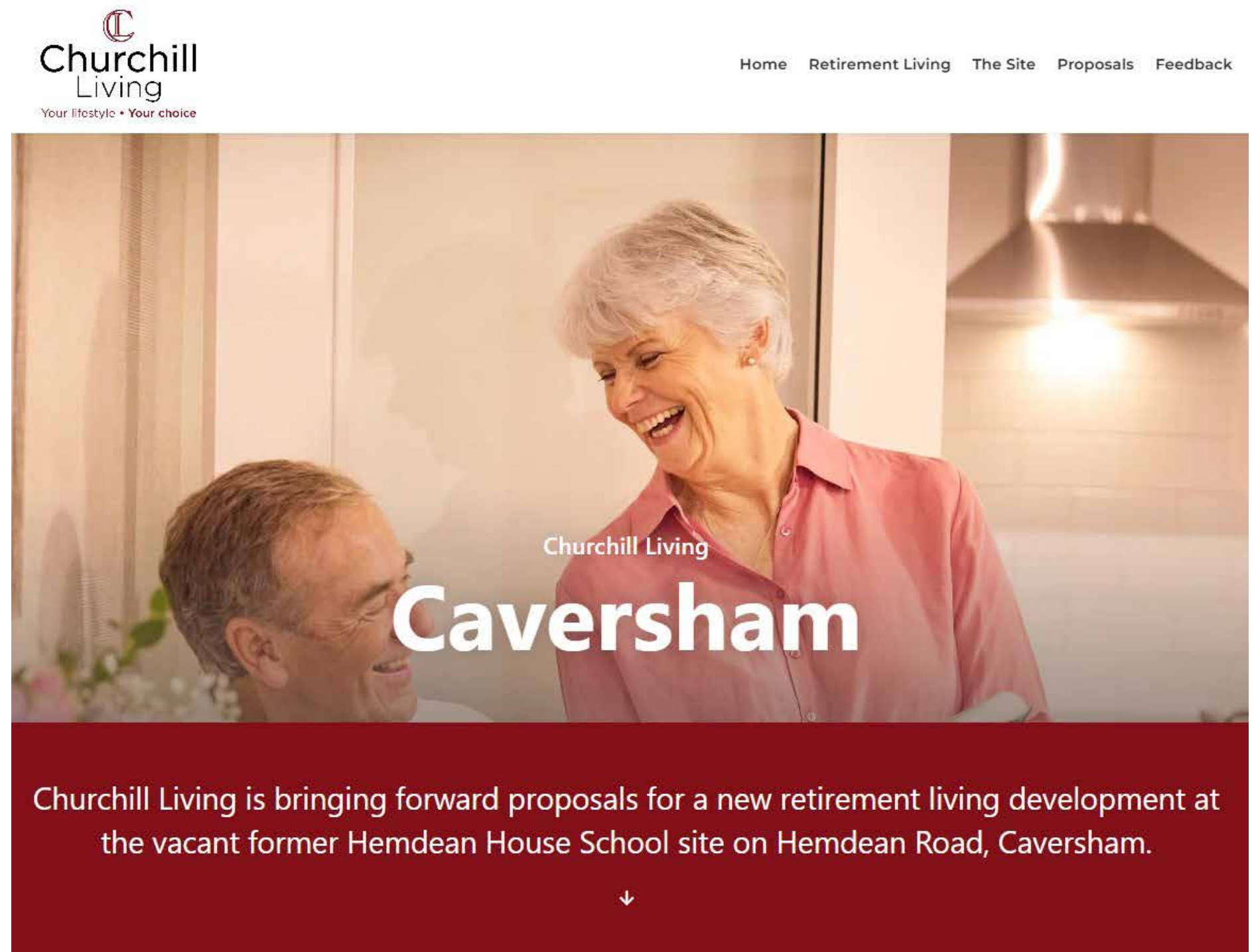
On on-line public consultation was held between 12th - 19th January 2026.

The consultation website received 2,074 views from 837 individual active users during the consultation period. 64 feedback forms were received by the end of the period. Regarding the ‘design’ of the building, 30% supported or were undecided, 70% opposed.

Overall, the feedback showed that issues the respondents were concerned with were -

- The retirement building was too tall and bulky and not in keeping with the surrounding context.
- Potential for sunlight / daylight impacts to gardens and homes to Knighton Close; potential loss of privacy.
- Desire for retention and protection of trees / woodland buffer, including long-term management and safeguards.
- Lack of parking provision leading to overspill onto streets, and general traffic congestion.
- The design does not respond well to local character / heritage context and feels “standardised”.
- Query regarding heritage impacts and the need for a heritage assessment.
- Suggestions that the nursery should be retained or that alternative provision should be secured.
- Concern that additional development will increase pressure on local services, including GP capacity.
- Support expressed for reuse / conversion of existing buildings, with concern about loss of existing community buildings.

Refer to the Statement of Community Involvement for more information.



Screen shot of the Virtual Exhibition webpage