

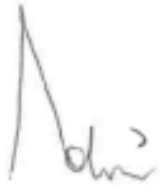


CHURCHILL LIVING, CAVERSHAM

STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Prepared for Churchill Living

January 2026

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	Name	Signature/Initials	Date
Prepared by:	Adam Oliver		30 th January 2026
Checked/approved by:	James Mallinson		30 th January 2026

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A	COPY OF THE CONSULTATION INVITE LETTER AND THE CONSULTATION AREA
B	COPY OF THE WEBSITE

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This report has been prepared by DevComms in relation to the public engagement undertaken in support of a planning application by Churchill Living (CL) for the proposed redevelopment of the vacant former Hemdean House School site on Hemdean Road, Caversham.

Churchill's proposed development would provide a high-quality independent retirement living accommodation comprising 34 one and 17x two bedroom apartments with separate vehicular access from Hemdean Road. As well as the conversion of the School House to form 10 one bedroom apartments and the conversion of the Gate House Lodge to a single dwelling. Both conversions will be for general open market housing.

Given the nature of the proposals and the location of the site, Churchill Living are committed to undertaking widespread engagement with all key stakeholders prior to submitting a planning application.

A comprehensive engagement programme was developed by DevComms, which utilised a range of methods to engage with community stakeholders, in particular the local residents who live within close proximity to the development site.

DevComms is a dedicated property communications consultancy which specialises in public engagement on new development proposals. DevComms has undertaken community and stakeholder engagement on behalf of Churchill Living.

2.0 POLICY BACKGROUND AND CONSULTATION

2.1 National Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) recommends that developers engage with local communities during the pre-application stage, referred to as 'frontloading'. Paragraph 39 of the NPPF states: "Early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality preapplication discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community".

Local Planning Authorities are to encourage developers to engage with the local community, even when not required by law, before submitting applications (NPPF paragraph 40). Early pre-application consultation with statutory consultees is also supported in the NPPF (paragraph 41).

2.2 Local Policy

Reading Borough Council's Statement of Community Involvement was adopted in June 2025. It sets out the ways in which the council will consult with local stakeholders surrounding development. It also states the ways in which the Council itself would like to be consulted by developers.

7.2 "The Council agrees with this emphasis on engaging the community from the outset. It can result in an improved scheme which takes the needs of the existing community into account, and a better relationship between the developer and the community that carries through the application process and beyond."

2.3 Best Practice

In addition to the requirements and advice in the NPPF and the Council's SCI, DevComms and Churchill have sought to ensure all materials prepared to reflect the following best practice principles:

- Prepare 'plain English' clear, concise, and understandable briefing material.
- Make information and material accessible to the local community.
- Publicise the proposals and online consultation.
- Contact the local community and individuals likely to have most interest in the proposals - to explain the approach to consultation, provide a briefing on the proposals and seek their feedback.

2.4 Data Protection

A privacy statement was included on the online feedback forms which detailed how collected data would be used. This detailed that in undertaking public engagement with the local community, Development Communications Limited is a registered Data Controller under the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

At all times, processing of personal data is carried out in accordance with GDPR regulations, with the feedback form providing an 'opt-in' and 'opt-out' option and information on respondents' rights under GDPR.

Only data required for the purposes of the consultation was requested on the feedback form.

The feedback collated during the engagement exercise is held by DevComms and will only be used for the purposes of consultation and research on the proposals. The feedback received is detailed in this Report on Community Engagement submitted to Bristol City Council and has been anonymised.

Consultation respondents will only be contacted again in the future in relation to the application proposals if they have explicitly stated that they would like to be kept updated.

3.0 OVERVIEW OF ENGAGEMENT

3.1 Political Representatives

Local political representatives were sent email briefings on the 8th of January 2026. Emails detailed the site plans as well as offering politicians a meeting with the Churchill team.

The below political representatives received emails:

- Matt Roda MP(Labour) for Reading Central
- Councillor Micky Leng (Labour) Deputy Leader of the Council and Lead Councillor for Planning & Assets
- Councillor Liz Terry (Labour) Leader of the Council
- Councillor Rachel Eden (Labour) , Lead Councillor for Education & Public Health
- Councillor Matt Yeo (Labour), Caversham Ward Member and Lead Councillor for Housing
- Councillor Jan Gavin (Labour), Caversham Ward Member
- Councillor Jacopo Lanzoni (Labour), Caversham Ward Member
- Councillor Sam Juthani (Labour), Caversham Heights Ward Member
- Councillor Isobel Ballsdon (Conservative) Caversham Heights Ward Member
- Councillor Jenny McGrother (Labour) Caversham Heights Ward Member

3.2 Meeting with Councillors on the 15th January

After an initial email briefing of councillors on the 8th January. The three Caversham Ward representatives took the opportunity to have a meeting with Churchill's team. Which was held on the 15th January.

3.3 Local Residents

A two-page A4 letter was circulated by Royal Mail postage to approximately 304 addresses on 5th January. The letter informed local residents of the proposals and provided background on Churchill Living.

The letter was sent with in an envelope with the tagline "*Information about consultation on Churchill Living Development in Caversham*". To inform recipients of the nature of the letter.

The letter invited residents to provide feedback via an online feedback form which could be found on the dedicated website.

A full copy of the A4 letter and the consultation area can be found in Appendix A

3.4 Website

A dedicated website was launched on 12th January 2026 to provide information on the project, the website also contained an online feedback form which was live during the consultation period from the 12th January 2026 to 18th January 2026 and continues to be available.

A copy of the website can be found in Appendix B.

3.5 Information Office

As part of the consultation period, residents were able to provide feedback via a dedicated freephone at 0800 080 3266. Residents could also email the team at churchill@devcomms.co.uk.

For those without access to the internet or with additional needs, hard copies and accessible versions of all material were available on request. The use of a dedicated phone line and Freepost address ensured the consultation was open to people who may not have access to the internet. Our consultation website was also accessible, including ScreenReader compatible.

4.0 FEEDBACK AND COMMENTS RECEIVED

The consultation period, which ran from Monday 12th January to Sunday 18th January 2026, informed residents of the proposals as well as offering opportunities to provide feedback. Opportunities to provide feedback were provided within the dedicated project website, a freephone and dedicated project email address,

The project website gained a total of 2,074 views throughout the 7-day consultation period, with 837 individual active users. The majority of users viewed the home pages, proposal page and the design page with fewer users navigating to the feedback section of the website.

The consultation was directly advertised to 304 addresses near to the site via a letter delivered in an envelope with the tagline "Information about Churchill Living development proposals".

There was a total of 64 feedback forms received.

A detailed examination of the response to the consultation feedback form can be found below.

- Purpose-built homes for older people are shown to significantly reduce the risk of health challenges and contribute savings to the NHS of approximately £3,500 pa. How important a consideration is this?**

Comment		Combined
Not Important at all	10	20
Not Important	10	
Undecided	21	21
Important	16	17
Very Important	1	
Total 58		

2. Research published by Homes For Later Living has shown that retirement communities can generate £550,000 of local spending per year, £347,000 of which is spent on the local high street, directly contributing to local shops and jobs. How important a consideration is this?

Comment		Combined
Not Important at all	9	12
Not Important	3	
Undecided	23	23
Important	16	17
Very Important	1	
Total 52		

3. To what extent do you support the principle of developing brownfield sites for housing?

Comment		Combined
Oppose	15	17
Tend to Oppose	2	
Undecided	15	15
Tend to Support	16	20
Support	4	
Total 52		

4. To what extent do you support the design of the proposed retirement living building?

Comment		Combined
Oppose	38	45
Tend to Oppose	7	
Undecided	12	12
Tend to Support	3	7
Support	4	
Total 64		

5. Do you have any comments on the design of the scheme?

Residents provided comments in open form boxes and took the opportunity to provide a range of comments surrounding the comments. Below are the answers to both question 5 and question 8 which provided an opportunity for residents to provide comments around the entirety of the scheme.

Overlooking & Residential Amenity, Landscaping and Outdoor Space

Issues overlooking and loss of privacy to neighbouring homes and gardens

Individuals raised that the proposed buildings are too tall / bulky and out of keeping with the surrounding context.

Queries raised over screening/trees will not provide effective privacy year-round (particularly in winter.)

Some raised potential daylight/sunlight impacts, particularly to gardens and homes in Knighton Close

Desire for retention and protection of trees / woodland buffer, including long-term management and safeguards.

Query regarding overall provision and usability of green / amenity space for residents.

Query regarding biodiversity net gain and how landscape proposals will be delivered in practice.

Parking, Access & Servicing

Some comments regarding parking provision and comment regarding possible overspill into nearby streets.

Some comments regarding elevated car park levels and associated amenity impacts (e.g. overlooking, headlight glare)

Query regarding access arrangements and traffic circulation, including construction access and disruption.

Some feel that parking shortfall will lead to overspill parking on surrounding streets, worsening existing pressure.

Some raised queries regarding traffic congestion and road safety impacts (including peak-time pressures and local pinch points)

Design Quality & Local Character

Comments that 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 (3–4 mentions).

Support expressed for reuse / conversion of existing buildings, with concern about loss of existing community buildings.

Nursery Impact

Numerous queries over loss of nursery/community use and concern that the site is not “vacant” in practice.

Suggestions that the nursery should be retained or that alternative provision should be secured.

Economic and Local Services

Concern that additional development will increase pressure on local services, including GP capacity.

Need/ Principle of Development

Some support for redevelopment and/or retirement living in principle, but with concern that the scheme needs redesign and mitigation.

Query regarding whether there is a proven local need for retirement living and comment regarding existing retirement provision nearby.

Construction

Concern regarding disruption during demolition and construction (noise, dust, access impacts).

5.0 RESPONSE TO COMMENTS RAISED

Responses covering the key planning-related and most frequently raised issues are provided below.

Parking & Access

The proposal includes 16x unallocated parking spaces for the retirement living apartments and undercover parking for electric mobility buggies is also proposed. Ten parking spaces as well as an additional visitor parking space, will be provided for the ten apartments within the old school house building. The converted cottage within the Lodge will have two dedicated parking spaces, with seven further visitor spaces provided.

Residents of Churchill communities tend to move to a sustainable location such as this in order to give up their car. It is also generally found that those who do initially have cars tend to give them up soon after moving into a lodge as they no longer need it given the sustainable town centre location and neighbourly living environment.

Churchill has over 200 lodges nationwide and has developed an evidence base across several existing Churchill developments. Parking surveys have shown a demand for 0.28 spaces per apartment. As such, the parking demand forecast for the 51 apartments proposed will be approximately 14.28 parking spaces. Churchill is proposing 16 parking spaces to cater for the 51 apartments, at a ratio of 0.32 spaces per apartment, which is likely to exceed the parking demand. In addition 3 retirement visitor spaces are provided.

The converted School House will provide 10 spaces and a visit space. The Gate House Lodge dwelling will have 2 spaces. In addition there are 7 general additional spaces shown along the access road.

Need for retirement living

The Census 2021 data shows that the population of Reading has increased by 11.9% since 2011 to 174,000 people and is the 4th most densely populated area in the South East. There has been an increase of 17.2% in people aged 65 years and over.

A Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) was undertaken in 2016 for Berkshire (including Reading). The SHMA stated the area was expected to see a notable increase in the older person population, with the total number of people aged 65 and over expected to increase by 73% over the 23 years from 2013; this compares with overall population growth of 17% and growth in the under 65 population of just 7%. The projected growth in the population aged 65 and over is higher than that projected for both the region and England as a whole.

The SHMA finds there were about 8,300 units of specialist housing for older persons in Berkshire. Based principally on the expected growth in population of older persons, the SHMA estimated a need for an additional 10,900 specialist dwellings for older persons over the 2013-36 period. The modelling showed an indicative split of specialist housing provision for older persons of 13% affordable, 87% market housing is recommended.

In Reading, the need equates to 1,189 specialist housing units for older people across the plan period.

Design, Scale & Townscape

The proposed redevelopment of the former Hemdean House School site offers an opportunity to significantly enhance the character of this part of Hemdean Road by replacing a vacant group of aging buildings with a high-quality residential scheme.

The surrounding area is characterised by traditional domestic-scale homes finished in red or buff brick and white render, with pitched roofs of red clay or grey concrete tile. Churchill has therefore developed a design approach that draws on these locally prevalent materials to ensure the new retirement homes and converted buildings sit comfortably within their setting.

The design incorporates a palette of red brick, lighter brick banding and detailing, white rendered elements and pitched tiled roofs, with the use of metal Juliette balconies and considered window proportions to reflect the character of the surrounding residential streets. The scale of the new buildings has been carefully arranged to respect the topography and neighbouring homes, with the converted Nursery and School House retaining their established form while being sensitively adapted for modern residential use.

New planting and landscaping will be introduced throughout the site, with retained mature trees helping to soften views and reinforce the green, suburban character of Hemdean Road.

Overlooking & Residential Amenity

Policy CC8 (Safeguarding of amenity) identifies that a back-to-back distance of 20 metres between dwellings is usually appropriate, although the circumstances on individual sites may enable dwellings to be closer without a detrimental effect on privacy.

The new proposed development will result in a separation distance of 24.5m has been proposed between the rear projection leg of the building to the back wall of the properties on Knighton Crescent. There is 24.5m between the rear of 18 Hemdean Rise and the southern side of the rear leg and 31m between the rear leg and 82 Hemdead Road. All of which is considered to be at least 20% over the recommended separation distance within policy CC8.

In terms of the adjacent relationship with no.126 Hemdean Road, this is a 7.8m separation distance. There are 6 windows proposed on the second and third floors of the building that would face onto no.126. There are 2 kitchen windows proposed and 2 secondary windows servicing the apartments lounges, the final 2 are end of corridor windows. It is considered that given the used of these windows and not being primary windows that the separation of 7.8m is acceptable.

It is therefore concluded that the proposed development will not cause detrimental effects to neighbouring properties access to sunlight and daylight.

Impact on Health Services

Independent research, undertaken by Homes for Later Living, shows that retirement living can significantly improve the wellbeing of older people. Living in shared communities enables residents to build new connections, enjoy social activities and spend amenity time in communal spaces, providing social interaction, support and encouraging independence

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.

Those in later living are around half as likely to feel lonely compared to older people in other housing types. On a selection of national well-being criteria such as happiness and life satisfaction, an average person aged 80 feels as good as someone 10 years younger after moving from mainstream housing to housing specially designed for later living, such as that provided by Churchill Living.

Landscaping and Gardens

All developments by Churchill Living provide high quality landscape amenity gardens, designed for passive exercise and the visual enjoyment of residents over 60 years of age, rather than active recreational uses. Planting is considered for longevity, colour all year, seasonal change, maintenance and local native biodiversity. Churchill Living have won awards for excellence for their landscaped gardens.

Nursery

The nursery operates from the lodge building on a lease with the landowner. We understood that their lease was due to expire in January 2026 and has been renewed until October 2026.

Vehicle Access and Safety

The location of the proposed development site presents an excellent opportunity to produce sustainable development when considering the pedestrian infrastructure in place throughout the local neighbourhood in the form of wide footways and convenient and clearly marked crossings. This provides a continuous path to public transport networks such as bus stops and train stations, which also have excellent links to more facilities and the wider transport network.

Personal Injury Accident (PIA) data covering a 300m radius from the site for the period from 2020 to 2024 has identified that there has been a total of 5 incidents, which were classified as 'slight'. No 'serious' or 'fatal' incidents have occurred. No incidents have occurred in the direct vicinity of the proposed access to the site.

Analysis of vehicle movements at the school has been assessed against the proposed development. This shows that the proposed development will result in fewer daily vehicle movements than the historic school use.

It should also be taken into account that the vehicles visiting the proposed development would likely all enter the site, whereas with the historic school use only staff were permitted to park on site, and therefore most vehicles stopped on Hemdean Road.

School use

An assessment has been undertaken using an approximation of the previous number of students at the school, which, at its peak had capacity for 140 students. The secondary school closed prior to the primary school and therefore a figure of 70 students has been used for the purpose of this assessment.

A school with a total of 70 pupils would generate approximately 51 two-way vehicular trips in the AM peak, 5 two-way vehicular trips in the PM peak period, and a total of 143 two-way vehicular trips across a 12-hour daily period (0700 – 1900). This equates to one vehicle trip every 5 minutes during the peak periods and an average of 12 vehicle trips per hour across a single day (0700 – 1900).

Proposed use

The proposed open market residential use would generate 1 two-way vehicular trip in the AM peak and 3 two-way vehicular trips in the PM peak, and a total of 20 two-way vehicular trips across a 12-hour daily period (0700 – 1900).

The proposed 51 retirement living units would generate 6 two-way vehicular trips in each peak, and a total of 99 two-way vehicular trips across a 12-hour daily period (0700 – 1900).

Adding the proposed elements together, it is clear that the development would still generate fewer daily vehicle movements than the historic school use. On this basis it is concluded that the impact of the development on the operation of the local road network would be positive.

6.0 CONCLUSION

In order to ensure that the local community was fully briefed and provided with an opportunity to comment on the plans, a detailed public engagement was carried out.

The consultation included a consultation invite mailing to local residents and a project-specific website, accessible 24/7 were made available to local residents and stakeholders to provide comments.

The consultation was directly advertised to 304 addresses adjacent to the site via a letter delivered in an envelope with the tagline “Information about Churchill Living development proposals”.

The project website gained a total of 2,074 views throughout the 7-day consultation period, with 837 of which being active users. The majority of users viewed the home pages, proposal page and the design page with fewer users navigating to the feedback section of the website.

Over the consultation period a total of 64 feedback forms were received via the online website and through email.

Going forward Churchill Living is committed to continuing to engage with the local community and to work together to resolve concerns as far as possible.

APPENDIX A

COPY OF THE A4 LETTER
AND THE
CONSULTATION AREA

APPENDIX B

COPY OF THE WEBSITE

Development Communications Limited,
Chestnut Barns, Moreton, Thame, Oxfordshire, OX9 2HU

Switchboard: 01296 678 320 info@devcomms.co.uk www.devcomms.co.uk

Registered in England and Wales No. 10620906.

Registered Office: As above

Office Locations: East | Midlands | South East | South West