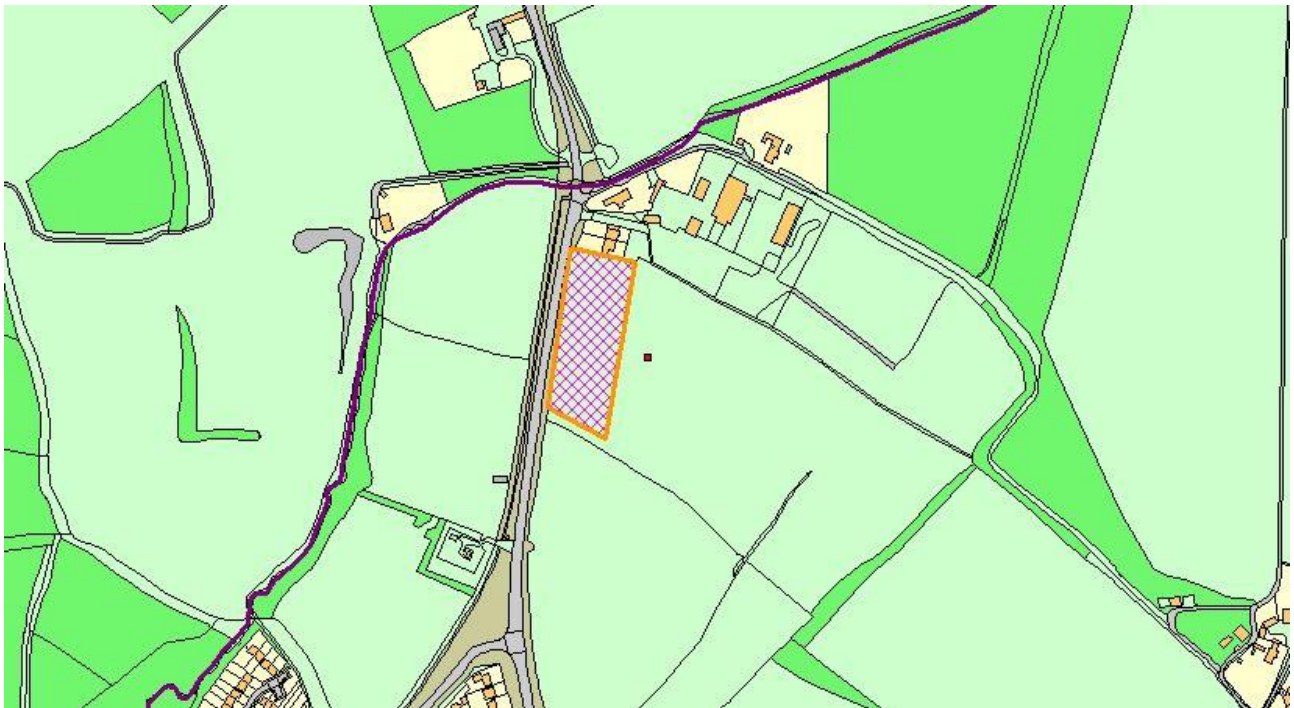


COMMITTEE REPORT

APPLICATION NO.	21/00608/FUL
LOCATION	Land East of Reading Road Hook Hampshire
PROPOSAL	Erection of a 72 bedroom care home (Use Class C2) with associated access, parking, landscaping and site infrastructure
APPLICANT	Care UK
CONSULTATIONS EXPIRY	20 August 2021
APPLICATION EXPIRY	9 June 2021
WARD	Hook
RECOMMENDATION	Refuse



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BACKGROUND

This application is brought before the Planning Committee at the discretion of the Head of Place. This is in line with Appendix A (1b) of the Council's Constitution relating to the Scheme of Delegation as The Head of Place considers that the application should be considered by Planning Committee.

THE SITE

The subject site comprises an agricultural field to the east of Reading Road (B3349), to the north of Hook. It has a stated area of 0.78 hectares and is roughly rectangular in shape. The site is currently open grassland, there is significant soft landscaping to the south and landscaping on the northern and part of the western boundaries. Part of the western boundary and that to the east are open such that views of countryside around the site are widely available in a west-east direction.

Adjacent to the site immediately to the north there is a small cluster of buildings with a pair of semi-detached dwellings known as Orchard Cottages. Further north there is an area containing lodges/guest houses and barn-like buildings associated with a garden centre. To the south and south-east is a residential development. To the east and west is largely open countryside.

PROPOSAL

The application seeks full planning permission for the erection of a 72-bedroom care home (Use Class C2) with associated access, parking, landscaping and site infrastructure.

The applicant is Care UK, a care home provider operating 122 care homes (Planning Statement, para. 12). The proposed care home would be a Class C2 planning use.

The proposed application is described in more detail in the relevant sections of this report.

PLANNING HISTORY

There is limited planning history directly related to the application site.

Of most relevance is the pre-application advice request 20/00286/PREAPP for 72-bed care home and associated parking and landscaping. The Council's opinion was issued on 8th June 2020. The pre-application request was made by the same applicant for a similar scheme to that currently proposed.

The application site is included within the boundary line of various previous applications relating to the garden centre to the north.

88/16249/FUL was granted for a crossover for agricultural purposes on the east side of Reading Road on 24th May 1988.

To the west of Reading Road opposite the north part of the site, application 21/01958/FUL has been submitted for: “20 affordable dwellings on an entry-level exception site with vehicular access from Reading Road alongside landscaping, public open space, internal roads, parking and associated drainage infrastructure.” This application was validated on 6th August 2021 and is currently pending determination.

PLANNING POLICY

The Development Plan for the site and relevant policies are as follows:

South East Plan (SEP)

Saved Policy NRM6 Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area

Hart Local Plan (Strategy and Sites) 2016-2032 (HLP32)

SD1 Sustainable Development
SS1 Spatial Strategy and Distribution of Growth
H4 Specialist and Supported Accommodation
NBE1 Development in the Countryside
NBE2 Landscape
NBE3 Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area
NBE4 Biodiversity
NBE5 Managing Flood Risk
NBE7 Sustainable Water Use
NBE9 Design
NBE11 Pollution
INF3 Transport

Saved Policies from the Hart Local Plan (Replacement) 1996-2006 (HLP06)

GEN1 General Policy for Development
CON8 Trees, Woodland & Hedgerows: Amenity Value

Hook Neighbourhood Plan 2020 (HNP20)

HK1 Spatial Policy
HK4 Protecting and Enhancing the Biodiversity of Hook
HK5 Landscape
HK8 Control of Light and Noise Pollution
HK9 Pedestrian and Cycle Paths
HK10 Parking
HK11 Residential and Mixed-use Windfall Development
HK12 Design

The site is adjacent to, but outside of, the Hook Settlement Boundary as identified in the HLP32 and HNP. The site is within the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area 5km Zone of Influence.

The following policy and guidance have also informed this assessment:

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, July 2021)

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

Hart, Rushmoor and Surrey Heath Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2014-2032 (SHMA, 2016)

Advice on the need for specialised accommodation for older people within Hart District as set out in the 2016 SHMA (NSAOP, June 2021)

Report on the Examination of the Hart District Local Plan – Strategy and Sites (HLPiR, Feb 2020)

National Design Guide (NDG, Jan 2021)

Building for a Healthy Life (BfHL, June 2020)

Hart District Landscape Assessment (HLA, 1997)

Hart Landscape Capacity Study (HLCS, 2016)

Hart District Council Parking Provision Interim Guidance (PPIG, 2008)

CONSULTATION COMMENTS

CONSULTEE COMMENTS (summary)

Hook Parish Council

Objection

- Proposed location is on a greenfield site, isolated from the village;
- Travel Plan is not reflective of the true site conditions;
- The application provides an inaccurate assessment of need and an inadequate assessment of alternative sites;
- Lack of details relating to foul water and surface water drainage are of concern;
- Site is in an unsustainable location in terms of access to facilities and services, and makes no provision for necessary infrastructure;
- SANG issue is unclear as the mobility of residents has not been detailed;
- Proposal is contrary to development plan policy H4 (of the HLP32) (Specialist and Supported Accommodation) and policies HK1 (Spatial Policy), HK5 (Landscape), HK8 (Control of Light and Noise Pollution) and HK9 (Pedestrian and Cycle Paths) of the Hook Neighbourhood Plan;
- Overall, the proposal would have significant adverse impacts on the character and appearance of the countryside which would not be justified by the limited social and economic benefits that may be provided to the village.

Natural England:

No objection, subject to appropriate mitigation measures being secured either by condition or through a legal agreement to restrict the use of the development and to ensure that residents would not result in any adverse impact on the nature conservation value of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area.

Local Highway Authority:

Have requested further information in relation to the proposed access and visibility splays, tree removal, footway links, parking provision and vehicle tracking in order to provide detailed comments.

Environment Agency:

No comments or objection raised.

Local Lead Flood Authority:

Further information required.

We note that the applicant has revised the drainage proposals at the application site and a direct connection with the River Whitewater has been proposed for surface water management.

The outfall pipe is still crossing the road, agreement from the relevant highway authority is required at this stage. The new outfall pipe is quite long and will need to go through land owned by a third party. Therefore, at this stage we request written agreement from all the relevant landowners authorising the passage of any drainage asset through their land.

Considering that this is an application for full planning permission, at this stage we request detailed network hydraulic calculations for all rainfall events.

The EA should be consulted on the re-designed drainage strategy as an environmental permit may now be required.

Thames Water:

No objection subject to condition.

No objection in respect of surface water drainage. Unable to determine wastewater needs with the information provided. Condition requested to require that all wastewater networks required to accommodate the development are completed or an infrastructure phasing plan is agreed and adhered to.

HCC Archaeology:

No objection.

Farnborough Airport Safeguarding:

No objection.

Planning Policy:

Objection

Using new work on the need for specialist accommodation for the elderly, and factoring in new planning permissions, the updated need for residential and nursing care in Hart to 2035 is 160 bedspaces.

The new work also confirms that in meeting these needs, delivery should aim to match needs over the plan period rather than frontloading supply. Using this latest evidence, the need to 2025 is just 19 bedspaces, and to 2030 is 85 bedspaces.

The policy preference is for the district's needs to be met within settlements without encroaching into countryside unless it is necessary to do so to meet needs. Sites within settlements have been coming forward in recent months/years as illustrated by the planning permissions set out in the position statement.

Therefore, in light of the updated information on the need for care homes and supply, it is considered that there is insufficient need within the district to justify the release of a greenfield site in the countryside at this time.

Under Policy H4 the applicant must also show that there are no alternative sites within settlements. The site search does not appear convincing in that sites over 0.8 hectares have not been considered. It is apparent that the Geffery's House site within Hook is on the market and would appear to be of a size that would accommodate a care home.

Landscape:

Objection.

With regard to the sites existing context, the existing roadside hedgerow is not robust but does provide rural features on the northerly approach into the settlement of Hook. In recent times, due to the development of housing in northeast Hook, the settlement boundary on the east side of Griffins Way North has shifted north from the A30 London Road by 0.65km, so a significant amount.

Part of the boundary has no hedgerow, and this allows views from the road to the east of a mosaic of rural landscape features; broad expansive, open fields bounded by tree lines and

woodlands. This results in a crisp transition from urban to rural when leaving Hook and vis versa entering Hook from the north. The effect of this has been partly reduced by the residential development on the west side of Reading Road that also extends the settlement boundary north but not substantially past the southern extent of this site.

The details show 80m+ of 9m high continuous built form set back approx. 6m from the highway boundary on a greenfield site on the approach. These proposals would not enhance the character, visual amenity and scenic quality of the landscape and are therefore contrary to a) and b) of Policy NBE2 Landscape.

Housing:

No comments or objection raised.

Conservation:

No comments or objection raised.

Drainage:

No objection.

Joint Waste Team:

Request clarification whether this is a domestic or commercial site.

Environmental Health:

No objection subject to conditions and an informative.

Recommended conditions in respect of construction hours, a construction environmental management plan, detailed acoustic design schemes and detailed design of cooking extract system and informative in relation to the reporting of any unexpected, contaminated land.

Biodiversity:

No objection subject to conditions.

The recommendations given in the Ecological Impact Assessment (Table 4.1 and Drawing 3) with regards to protected species (bats, nesting birds and hedgehogs), hedgerow protection, planting compensation and biodiversity enhancement should be followed.

Following the provision of further information in respect of reptiles and dormouse, no outstanding objection in relation to these species.

Trees:

No objection subject to condition.

None of the trees on or adjacent to the site is currently protected with a tree preservation order. The site currently offers moderate arboricultural interest, and the trees shown to be retained are predominantly located on the northwestern and southern perimeters. Encouraged to see native tree planting proposed.

If the recommendations in the supporting arboricultural documents are followed, it is unlikely that the proposed development will cause unreasonable harm to the local arboricultural amenity. Recommended that the development is implemented in accordance with the Tree Survey Report and Arboricultural Development Statement.

NEIGHBOUR REPRESENTATIONS

A total of 190 letters of objection to the application have been received over the two consultation periods. This includes representations from 'Hook Action Against Overdevelopment'. The following material planning considerations are raised in the objections:

- Contrary to development plan
- Absence of need
- Insufficient infrastructure
- Impact on countryside and landscape
- Transport implications
- Impact on climate change
- Lack of accessibility
- Impact on ecology

Eight letters of support have been received. These refer to the need for accommodation for older persons and the suitability of the site for such development.

Hampshire Swifts have recommended that swift bricks are incorporated within the development.

ASSESSMENT

The main planning considerations for the application comprise:

- Principle of development
- Landscape and design
- Sustainability and climate change
- Residential amenity
- Highways, servicing and parking
- Flood risk and drainage

- Ecology
- Trees
- Other planning considerations
- Planning balance

Principle of Development

The Proposed Development

The application proposes a 72-bed care home falling within Use Class C2. It would contain 72 no. individual en-suite bedrooms. There would be 2 no. nursing stations on each floor. No staff accommodation (bedrooms) would be provided however on-site staff facilities would include offices, changing areas and meeting and staff rooms. The care home would comprise two floors with a total area of 3,568sqm GIA.

The Hart Local Plan 2016-2032 (HLP32) defines a care home as a residential setting where a number of people live, usually in single rooms, and have access to on-site care services. The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) at paragraph 10 (ref ID. 63-010-20190626) defines residential care homes and nursing homes as:

“These have individual rooms within a residential building and provide a high level of care meeting all activities of daily living. They do not usually include support services for independent living. This type of housing can also include dementia care homes.”

The advice on the need for specialised accommodation for older people within Hart District as set out in the 2016 SHMA (NSAOP, June 2021) provides guidance on categories of specialised housing and accommodation for older people, including:

“Residential care. Provides live-in accommodation, typically in en-suite rooms, with 24 hour-a-day supervised staffing for residents, who may need extra help and support with their personal care. For example, help with things such as washing, dressing, personal hygiene, medication, toileting, communication, feeding and mobility.

Nursing care. These provide 24-hour care and support, as with residential care, but with added nursing care and assistance for residents who require input from and supervision by a registered nurse, who is in situ to devise and monitor care plans and provide and administer treatment.” (NSAOP para. 1.04).

The applicant has advised that they intend for the proposed care home to be registered by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) as a 'Care home with nursing' to include beds of nursing, dedicated dementia and residential care. The applicant considers that the proposed facility will primarily fall into the nursing care category set out within the NSAOP.

With due regard to the application submission and above definitions, the proposal is a care home/nursing home as defined in the PPG and a residential care and nursing care home as

identified in the NSAOP. A planning condition could be used to secure the proposed care home in the nursing care use.

Key Policies to the Principle of the Development

Policy SD1 of the HLP32 states that the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Policy SS1 states that development will be focused within defined settlements, on previously developed land in sustainable locations and on allocated sites. Policy HK1 of the Hook Neighbourhood Plan (HNP20) states that the focus for growth will be within the existing settlement boundary of Hook Village. The application site does not fall within any of these categories and is therefore situated within the countryside.

Policy NBE1 of the HLP32 relates to development in the countryside and includes for development that provides specialist housing (category f), cross referencing Policy H4. Paragraph 223 of the HLP32 in the supporting text to Policy NBE1 which indicates that to meet identified specialist accommodation needs, it may be appropriate to permit such development within the countryside in line with Policy H4.

Policy H4 is therefore a key policy to the determination of this application and relates to specialist and supported accommodation, including Class C2 uses that meet the needs of older persons or others requiring specialist care, such as that proposed in the application. Supporting text (paragraph 156) to Policy H4 is clear that sites within settlements are the preferred choice for meeting these needs particularly at locations close to services and facilities. However, H4(b) allows for such development in the countryside subject to meeting all identified criteria at i-iii:

*“i. there is a demonstrated need for the development; and
ii. there are no available and viable alternatives within settlement boundaries; and
iii. the site is well related to an existing settlement with appropriate access to services and facilities either on or off site.”*

The Council's Planning Policy Team have provided a consultation response (the 'Planning Policy Response') which includes a 'Position Statement' on the need for specialist and supported accommodation for older persons in Hart District. It is not repeated in full in this Report, but the below assessment is informed by this response.

Need

Supporting text (para. 156) to Policy H4 states that where there is proven unmet need, particularly for C2 accommodation, specialist accommodation may, where justified, be permitted on suitable sites outside settlement boundaries.

The need for older persons housing in Hart District is derived from the SHMA, this document forms part of the evidence base for the HLP32. The SHMA analyses the estimated requirement for older persons housing. The SHMA uses data from the Housing LIN Strategic

Housing for Older People (SHOP) toolkit to estimate the requirement for specialist housing for older people in the period 2014-35. A number of these figures are referenced in the HLP32 (para. 152). The estimates for residential care and nursing care in Hart District are 685 residential care bedspaces and 472 nursing care bedspaces.

The Council has sought updated advice from Housing LIN on the HLP32 older persons housing need figures and this is provided in the NSAOP. The base date for this is March 2020. This identifies a residual net need of 58 residential care bedspaces and 232 nursing care bedspaces in the period 2020-2035 (290 in combination).

The Planning Policy Response identifies new supply between March 2020 and 8 September 2021. Due to challenges distinguishing between residential care and nursing care for new developments, these figures have been combined. This identifies a new supply of 130 residential/nursing care bedspaces. Of this supply, 70 are committed residential/nursing care bedspaces with planning permission and 60 are from an allocated site where a resolution to grant planning permission has been reached.

The resultant District wide net residual need for residential/nursing care bedspaces to 2035 is therefore 160 bedspaces.

The Planning Policy Response concludes:

“..in light of the updated information on the need for care homes and supply, it is considered that there is insufficient need within the district to justify the release of a greenfield site in the countryside at this time.”

The following should also be noted in respect of the need for older persons housing:

- There is no requirement to ‘frontload’ the provision of older persons housing within the plan period.
- There are other applications coming forward for older persons housing, including on sites within settlement boundaries.
- HLP32 Policy H1 (a ‘general’ housing policy) supports a mix of dwelling types and sizes, accessible and adaptable homes and specialist/supported accommodation. Part of the reasoned justification to H1 specifically identifies how the Policy has considered accommodation for older people (paras. 128-131). Such an approach is recognised in the PPG which states (para. 012, ref ID. 63-012-20190626): *“Many older people may not want or need specialist accommodation or care and may wish to stay or move to general housing that is already suitable, such as bungalows, or homes which can be adapted to meet a change in their needs.”*

A Planning Need Assessment (PNA) and Addendum (PNAA) have been submitted by the applicant. This is based on: market catchment of six miles and Hart District area, estimated demand based on population projections, existing care home provision (including a reduced figure to account for ‘market standard’ accommodation), supply and residual need. This (the July 2021 Addendum) identifies a need for 198 care beds in the market area and 79 in the

Hart District area at 2023. This is stated as the earliest the proposed care home could be operational.

The PNA (Sections 5-12) provides descriptive contextual information that is not directly used as part of the assessment of need. It is acknowledged in the PNAA (para. 6.5) that the care home bed need will not tally with the Council's evidence base, and the assessments do not directly use the Council's evidence base in the need assessments. The total demand for care home beds is calculated based upon LaingBuisson's Age Standardised Demand rates for determining the risk of entering a residential care establishment. No supporting detail is provided in relation to *how* this demand has been calculated.

Importantly, there is no clear justification for departing from the plan-led approach. In this respect, the Hart Local Plan Inspectors Report (para. 137) was clear in stating:

"I appreciate that the use of other data sources may result in differing or higher levels of need. However, the SHMA has followed the approach suggested by national policy. Whilst the Plan is being examined under transitional arrangements, it is also worth noting that the new PPG guidance (Paragraph: 004 Reference ID: 63-004-20190626), now specifically refers to the SHOP analysis tool kit as being an appropriate toolkit. Given all of the above, I consider the assessment of need for housing for older people to be in accordance with national policy and is therefore sound."

And (para. 145): *"I accept that need is best established on a district level, as identified in the SHMA ..."*

Overall, in relation to the need for the proposed development, there is an identified need for older persons accommodation in the plan period, including for the residential and nursing care proposed in the application. As set out in the NSAOP this need is for 290 residential/nursing care beds in Hart District in the period March 2020 to 2035. The residual need allowing for commitments (planning permissions) and allocations is 160 beds.

The HLP32 provides an up to date and robust strategy for delivering this accommodation and the NSAOP and Planning Policy Response confirm that accommodation is being delivered. There is no demonstrated local need for a development of the scale proposed in the application at this time or justification for a departure from the plan-led approach. As such, HLP32 Policy H4(b)(i) is not satisfied.

Alternative Sites

An Alternative Site Assessment (ASA) has been submitted. Supporting text (para. 156) to HLP32 Policy H4 advises:

"A proportionate level of evidence should demonstrate that there are no suitable sites within defined settlements, that are in the vicinity of the application site (it will not be necessary to investigate all settlements in the district)."

The search area in the ASA (Section 7) covers Hart District and the applicant's identified market catchment. This area goes beyond that required in the HLP32 and on this basis there is no objection to its geographic scope.

The ASA considers sites of between 0.4-0.8ha. The application site is 0.78ha and whilst it is noted (para. 8.4) that sites of over 0.8ha are not suitable it is not clear why this would be the case.

The Planning Policy Response advises:

"The site search does not appear convincing in that sites over 0.8 hectares have not been considered." And: "In addition, it is apparent that the Geffery's House site within Hook is on the market and would appear to be of a size that would accommodate a care home."

Geffrey's House is a 1.86ha site currently on the market. It is located on London Road, within the Hook Settlement Boundary approximately 675m south of the application site. It is approximately 350m from Hook District Centre.

Consequently, concerns are raised regarding the size of site searched for and the availability of an alternative site within Hook.

However, notwithstanding the above, the ASA and its parameters is predicated on the need for the proposed development been demonstrated. As set out in the previous section this is not the case and HLP32 Policy H4(b)(ii) is not therefore satisfied.

Relationship to Hook

Supporting text to HLP32 Policy H4 (para. 156) states:

"... developments would need appropriate access to the necessary services (for residents and staff) and be well related to an existing settlement, for example in terms of impact on landscape, heritage assets, and the setting of the settlement. The nature of the care to be provided and the level of facilities proposed on the site will be important considerations in determining whether a proposed development will have suitable access to appropriate services."

The impact upon the landscape and its relation to the settlement is assessed below in the 'Landscape and Design' section of this report. However, this concludes that the proposal conflicts with relevant development plan landscape policies.

In terms of appropriate access to services and facilities either on or off site, the proposed development would provide a number of on-site facilities for both residents and staff. Communal facilities would include gardens, communal lounges and dining areas, activity rooms and a café, cinema, hairdresser and quiet room. There would be a staff room. Residents would receive care on-site.

The submitted Planning Statement (paras. 81-85) provides limited commentary in respect of the accessibility of the site, referring to large planning permissions to the south and accessibility to the 'town centre'. The Transport Assessment (para. 4.2.2) makes reference to walkable neighbourhoods being characterised by a range of facilities being up to 800m away with reference to the 'Manual for Streets'.

The site is located close to the Hook Settlement Boundary to the south but approximately 1.1km to Hook District Centre to the south via Reading Road. The nearest bus stops are approximately 0.8km to the south on London Road and Hook Railway Station is approximately 1.5km to the southwest. It is also material that the entrance to the proposed care home would be on its northern elevation, further from these facilities.

The site is not in an isolated location and is close to the Hook Settlement Boundary. A new shared 3m foot/cycle way is proposed on the east side of Reading Road adjacent to the application site. On-site facilities would also be provided for residents and staff, reducing the need for journeys off-site. However, the proposed care home would be outside of typical 'walkable neighbourhood' distances as acknowledged by the applicant. Access to local services is therefore limited by the distances to them. Furthermore, the proposed development would not be well related to Hook in terms of the impact on landscape and the setting of the settlement and would conflict with HLP32 Policy H4(b)(iii).

Conclusion on the Principle of Development

The site does not comply with the spatial strategy in the HLP32 or HNP and has been assessed against HLP32 Policy H4 which specifically relates to specialist and supported accommodation. The relevant criteria in respect of need, alternative sites and relationship to an existing settlement have not been satisfied. The proposal would not be sustainable development and the principle of the development is not supported in this instance. Accordingly, the proposal conflicts with HLP32 Policies SD1, SS1, NBE1(f) and H4(b) and HNP Policy HK1.

Landscape and Design

The application proposes a Class C2 use care home in a large building on the centre/ south part of the site. It would have a total floorspace of 3,568sqm over two floors. The care home would provide 72 resident bedrooms with 24-hour care. The only vehicular access to the site would be from Reading Road to the north of the site. Internal circulation, parking (35 spaces), cycle, refuse and recycling storage, open space and hard and soft landscaping would be provided within the development.

At pre-application stage, design feedback was provided to the applicant on an earlier iteration of the scheme (LPA reference 19/01093/PREAPP). This advice is not repeated in full but in summary:

- As a result of the sheer scale of the building, it would cause a significant detrimental impact to the countryside, its landscape setting and visual amenity. The proposals would

inevitably remove rural qualities of this landscape character area and replace them with a strong urban character in conflict with HLP32 NBE1(a and b).

- It would also represent a strong conflict with the objectives and essence of HNP Policy HK5, which seeks to protect and enhance the positive characteristics of the landscape area, as the proposal seeks to strongly resemble an urban character without seeking to blend or integrate it to the positive characteristics of this landscape character area.
- The resulting approach is a development with a strong urban feel that would provide a radical change to the existing character of the area.
- Whilst the design/appearance of the development, when considered in isolation, is not regarded as a poorly designed building; it is the nature and open character of the location chosen to accommodate this development that renders it unsuitable/inappropriate.
- Despite the break in height the development depicts, the manner in which the whole shape, footprint and wide frontage has been resolved, would not appear to minimise the monolithic scale of the development.
- The significant massing and quantum of development proposed would not only radically contrast with the surrounding rural context, but it would also do so with adjoining development (within/outside the settlement boundary) which generally display modest footprints and small scale.

The DAS (para. 3.1) advises that the design has evolved in response to pre-application feedback. The design evolution is shown at Figures 15 and 16 of the DAS. In summary:

- Reduction in building mass through the use of single ground level plane
- A more muted material colour palette and use of glazed links
- Re-shaping of the roof and reduction of ridge height
- The access and parking are now proposed at the north end of the site

The Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) assessment of the landscape impacts and design is as follows:

Landscape Impacts

The greenfield site is located in the open countryside. The HLCS identifies the site to fall within area HO-02 'adj. NE of Hook to Mattingley' which has a low/medium overall landscape capacity. Such capacity is characterised as:

"Thresholds for development are low and development can be accommodated only in limited situations, providing it has regard to the setting and form of existing settlements and the character and sensitivity of the adjacent landscape character areas."

The summary of characteristics for HO-02 include: *"A mosaic of grazing fields and reasonably intense arable cultivation throughout, medium to large scale in places"; "high levels of tranquility, especially on the valley floor close to the river, although OH power lines and pylons (overhead) dominate the sky"; and "new settlement edge to be formed in southwest corner of this area due to major site planning consent."*

The site is within the Tylney Landscape Character Area in the HLA. The HLA summarises this area and enhancement priorities:

“Landscape quality and condition within this Character Area is generally good, with a strong structure of hedgerows, trees and blocks of woodland, much of which form remnants of formerly extensive parklands and grounds of country estates (eg. Tylney Hall). The overall priority is for conservation of these characteristics, while the need for intervention centres mostly upon localised restoration of weakened landscape structure and strengthening of particular landscape character that is in decline (eg. parkland).”

The site and its environs feature positive characteristics noted by the landscape character assessments. The site and immediate land around display a more level ground, with Public Rights of Way (PRoW) in proximity to the site with a combination of mixed farmland and scattered blocks of woodland in the vicinity. There is generally a good level of landscape structure.

Landscape qualities are also identified by the Landscape Officer who identifies that part of the boundary has no hedgerow, and this allows views from the road to the east of a mosaic of rural landscape features; broad expansive, open fields bounded by tree lines and woodlands. This results in crisp transition from urban to rural when leaving Hook and vice versa entering Hook from the north. The effect of this has been partly reduced by the residential development on the west side of Reading Road that also extends the settlement boundary north but not substantially past the southern extent of this site.

A public footpath (PRoW5) runs to and from Reading Road north of Orchard Cottages towards Searl's Farm to the northeast of the site.

The Landscape Officer objects to the development, stating:

“The details show 80m+ of 9m high continuous built form set back approx. 6m from the highway boundary on a greenfield site on the approach. These proposals would not enhance the character, visual amenity and scenic quality of the landscape and are therefore contrary to a) and b) of Policy NBE2 Landscape.”

Whilst there have been some design amendments to the scheme from the pre-application stage, it has not fundamentally changed and the LPAs landscape concerns that were clearly communicated to the applicant have not been addressed.

The proposed built form would take up a significant portion of frontage along Reading Road (80m of 130m). The crisp urban/rural transition would be lost. This would be materially damaging to the character of the undeveloped land that surrounds the settlement of Hook, which contributes to its setting and serves to clearly denote the edge of the settlement.

Due to the scale and massing of the proposed building and presence of associated development, the proposal would remove rural qualities of the landscape and replace them

with an urban character. This erosion of character would be highly visible to public and private receptors, in particular from Reading Road and PRoW5.

A good proportion of trees and hedgerows on the site would be retained and additional tree planting is proposed. Landscaping would be provided within the development but located primarily to the rear of the proposed development and comprise of more formal domestic gardens.

For the reasons identified above, the proposed development would fail to respect or enhance the special characteristics, value and visual amenity of the District's landscape and would adversely impact upon the qualities of the landscape and visual amenity and scenic quality of the landscape. It would therefore conflict with HLP32 Policies NBE2(a and b) and NBE9(d), HLP06 Saved Policy GEN1(iv and v) and HNP Policy HK5. The NPPF (para. 174b) also states that planning decisions should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

Whilst the proposal would detract from the amenity of users of PRoW5 and suburbanise part of its surroundings, in this instance there would be a degree of physical separation such that it would not seriously detract nor therefore conflict with HLP06 Saved Policy CON23.

Design

The site analysis in the DAS (para. 2.4) states that views into the site are predominantly from Reading Road therefore consideration should be given to the building orientation to enhance the street frontage to correspond to the character of the road. A number of bedrooms and communal areas would face Reading Road. However, the main entrance would be on the north elevation facing the car park, and this would be the furthest part of the building from the Hook Settlement Boundary, existing development and the facilities within Hook. There is no recognition of pedestrian movement in the site analysis. To reach the main entrance on foot from the nearby settlement of Hook would involve walking nearly the length of the site past railings and hedgerows and passing a bin store and delivery entrance. The design of the south elevation would not assist in terms of the legibility of the site and locating the main entrance. As such, in urban design terms the orientation and the arrangement of the building has been approached in a way that is not responsive to the site and its context.

The DAS claims that the glazed links would break up the mass of the care home frontage to resemble a row of detached houses. Whilst the glazed elements would add some variation and break-up of this elevation, the roof would continue at the same eaves height over these partly glazed elevations and it would not be read as, or resemble, detached houses. This is evident from submitted visuals. This elevation would present 80m of unbroken two-storey elevation to Reading Road at a height of between 7.5m-9.5m.

The large mass of the building, which would have a footprint of 1,784sqm and floorspace of 3,568sqm, would to some extent be visually broken-up through the use of gables, varied eaves heights and materials. However, whilst reduced from the pre-application proposal, this significant massing and quantum of development proposed would not only contrast with the

surrounding rural context, but it would also contrast with adjoining development (within and outside the settlement boundary) which generally display modest footprints and small-scale domestic buildings. This urban scale would be imposed on the countryside and would not positively respond to this context. Again, concerns were raised at pre-application stage by the LPA in this respect.

The LPA recognises that the proposed care home would require a level of critical mass to operate effectively, however this does not in itself provide justification for the size of the building proposed in the countryside.

Proposed materials would comprise buff bricks and matching mortar, light brown and grey/black cladding and grey concrete roof tiles. Grey window frames and black rainwater goods are proposed. There is no in principle objection to these materials.

The use of native planting and tree planting in the proposed soft landscaping scheme is supported and full details of these, and hard landscaping features, could be secured by condition.

For the reasons identified above, the development would not achieve a high-quality design or positively contribute to the overall appearance of the area as required by HLP32 Policy NBE9 and HNP Policy HK12. The development would not promote, reflect or incorporate the qualities of its surroundings in terms of the proposed scale, density, mass and height nor would the layout enhance permeability and is therefore in conflict with HLP32 Policy NBE9(a and c) and HLP06 Saved Policy GEN1(i).

Sustainability and Climate Change

The Council has declared a Climate Emergency. The proposal is likely to have some impact on delivery of carbon reduction targets through the additional energy demand and emissions.

The applicant has sought to address the development's impact on climate change through the following measures:

- Incorporation of photovoltaic (PV) panels within the development on the roof of the proposed care home building totaling 343sqm.
- Proposed exceedance of building regulation standards through thermal efficiency of walls, windows and roof and reducing air permeability.
- Planting of 70 new trees which would aid carbon absorption.
- Ecological enhancements including provision of habitats.
- Provision of six electric vehicle charging points (EVCP, four active and two passive)
- A new shared use path to the west of the site adjacent to Reading Road.
- A Travel Plan to promote sustainable transport modes and reduce journeys by car.

The proposed measures to reduce the development's potential impact on climate change are in some cases policy requirements and expectations for a development of this scale and nature. However, some measures such as the provision of PV panels and EVCP would go

beyond development plan requirements and play a part in addressing the climate emergency. Full details of the above measures could be secured by condition to ensure a meaningful contribution. Subject to such conditions, the proposal would reduce energy consumption through its design and incorporate renewable energy such that it would comply with HLP32 Policy NBE9(i and j) and be acceptable in terms of sustainability and climate change.

Residential Amenity

The nearest existing residential properties to the site would be those on Woodgate to the south and Orchard Cottages to the north. These would be approximately 40m and 45m respectively away from the nearest elevation of the proposed two-storey care home. There is some existing soft landscaping between the site and these properties and additional soft landscaping is proposed as part of the development. Given the nature of the proposed development, these features and separation distances, the proposal would not result in a material loss of amenity to neighbouring residential properties.

Reading Road to the west of the site has the potential to impact upon the residential amenity of residents of the proposed care home, particular those bedrooms or communal areas on the west elevation.

The Council's Environmental Health Officer (EHO) has raised no objection to the proposal subject to conditions relating to; construction hours, a construction environmental management plan, detailed acoustic design schemes and detailed design of cooking extract system. An informative in relation to the reporting of any unexpected, contaminated land is also recommended.

All bedrooms would have an en-suite. Supporting facilities within the building would include communal lounges and dining areas, activity rooms and a café, cinema, hairdresser and quiet room.

Externally, patios and outdoor areas would be provided with direct access from ground floor bedrooms and lounge/dining areas. A communal garden of approximately 365sqm would be provided to the rear of the building with the care home wrapping around it on three sides. This area would be the external focal point of the development, be overlooked and provide refuge from Reading Road. A further garden of approximately 300sqm would be provided to the south of the building.

In combination, the proposed internal and external areas would provide a variety of private and semi-private spaces for residents.

If all other matters were acceptable, a demolition and construction management plan could be secured by condition to minimise temporary adverse impacts on residential amenity or the wider area during these periods. These has also been requested by the EHO.

Overall, there would be no material loss of amenity to any existing residents or other uses and the location of the main external communal areas have responded to the site constraints

(Reading Road) and care home requirements. The development would provide a good standard of amenity for future users. Potential sources of pollution that could impact upon the development, such as noise and air quality, would be mitigated subject to the conditions recommended by the EHO. External lighting could also be minimised and controlled by condition. Accordingly, Policy NBE11 of the HLP32, Policy GEN1(ii and iii) of the HLP06, Policy HK8 of the HNP and Paragraph 130(f) of the NPPF 2021 have been satisfied and there is no objection to the application on the grounds of residential amenity.

Highways, Servicing and Parking

The proposed development would be accessed from a new priority junction to Reading Road on the north part of the site. Entry would be from a new 'ghost lane' when approaching from the south. Within the site, the internal access road perpendicular to Reading Road would provide access to a 35-space car park to the north of the proposed care home building. Cycle and bin stores are indicated between the car park and building. A new shared use route 3m in width is indicated to the Reading Road frontage but this would fall outside of the application boundary.

The LHA have confirmed that based on the 50mph speed limit on Reading Road, a visibility splay of 4.5m x 160m is required. The proposed visibility splay looking northward indicates trees within the inside bend of the road would obstruct visibility to oncoming traffic, and this was supported by on-site observations. In addition, the visibility splays provided do not demonstrate the entire length of the splay. Left visibility splays are intersected by trees adjacent to the proposed access. It has been recommended that the visibility splay drawings should be re-drawn to show the entire visibility splays to the edge of the carriageway and to demonstrate the impact that the trees will have on the envelope of visibility.

It is also noted that the applicant would need to confirm ownership of the trees that obstruct the visibility splays and of the trees that will be removed to the left of the access to accommodate the proposed footpath.

If deliverable, the proposed footpath would support the principles of HNP Policy HK9 which seeks the creation of new footpaths and cycle paths, although it would not be in a location identified for such opportunities.

In the absence of appropriate visibility splays that satisfy the LHA, or demonstration that required off-site works would be achievable, it has not been demonstrated that safe, suitable and convenient access would be provided for all users as required by HLP32 Policy INF3(b) or that adequate arrangements on site for access would be provided as required by HLP06 Saved Policy GEN1(vii). For the above reasons it has not been demonstrated that the proposal would not have an unacceptable impact on highway safety as required by the NPPF (para. 111)

The site is outside of the settlement boundary and in a Zone 3 parking zone location as identified in the PPIG (notwithstanding the comments of the LHA or those by the applicant in the Planning and Transport Statements). The PPIG requires one vehicular space per four

residents plus 0.75 spaces per full time equivalent (FTE) staff for nursing and rest homes. Cycle parking is required at one space per six staff. The proposed 72-bed care home would therefore generate a need for 18 resident spaces. The applicant has stated (Application Form Q18 and Planning Statement para. 150) that the proposed care home would have a total of 80 FTE employees, resulting in a requirement for 60 vehicular spaces and 14 (13.3) cycle spaces for staff.

A total of 35 vehicular parking spaces would be provided on site. However, one would be a delivery space and one an ambulance space. Of the remaining 33 for residents, staff and visitors, two would be accessible spaces. These 33 spaces would be well below and less than half the 78 sought in the PPIG.

Notwithstanding, it is recognised that the standards should not necessarily be applied inflexibly, and each application should be considered on its own merits. HLP32 Policies NBE9(f) and INF3(d) require sufficient well-designed and appropriate parking respectively.

It is stated that the applicant will use management measures to ensure that the car park is used only by staff and visitors. In this instance, the staff would work on a rotation system over 24 hours. The Transport Assessment (TA, para. 6.4) advises that there would be a maximum total of 48 staff at any one time. Using the 0.75 standard in the PPIG, this would equate to a benchmark parking requirement of 36 spaces for staff. However, the TA Parking Assessment refers to 60 FTE staff, thereby conflicting with the other application documents and likely underestimating staff parking requirements.

The applicant has provided evidence from other care homes operated by the applicant. This demonstrated that the average requirement for parking is 0.31 spaces per bed and that 0.4 spaces per bed would cover peak demand at all care homes. These figures would equate to 22 and 29 spaces respectively.

A Draft Travel Plan (DTP) has been provided that proposes a number of measures to encourage more sustainable transport patterns. These proposals include pedestrian, cycle and public transport initiatives as well as car sharing. The provision of six electric vehicle charging bays (four active and two passive) is supported.

Overall, the proposed parking quantum is below standard but justification for this has been provided. The proposed development would provide sufficient and appropriate parking as required by HLP32 Policies NBE9(f) and INF3(d). This is subject to the proposed pedestrian improvements being provided and planning conditions requiring a car park management plan (that restricts parking for the use of staff and visitors) and a final Travel Plan.

Cycle parking would be provided in the form of a dedicated covered cycle shelter close to the building entrance. This would provide eight cycle spaces at a ratio of one per six staff based on a maximum of 48 staff being at the site at any one time. Changing facilities would be provided within the building. The proposed cycle spaces would be located in a convenient location and accord with the above policies and guidance. The proposed cycle parking is therefore acceptable, and its provision and retention could be secured by condition.

The proposal would contain large bins for general (3), recyclable (2), clinical (1) and food (2) waste. These would be provided in a dedicated bin store area to the north of the building and vehicle tracking has been provided to show refuse vehicle access in a forward gear. A dedicated delivery space would also be provided to the north of the building adjacent to a staff/service entrance which is separate from the main entrance. The Council's Joint Waste Client Team (JWCT) have raised no objection to the application but requested clarification on who would be reasonable for waste and recycling collections. Full details could reasonably be secured by condition(s) in this instance.

On this basis, the proposal has considered future servicing requirements and would provide appropriate waste and recycling storage areas as required by HLP32 Policies NBE9(h) and INF3(e) and is acceptable in this regard.

Flood Risk and Drainage

The site is 'greenfield' and the majority is within Flood Zone 1 which has the lowest risk from flooding. However, the River Whitewater and Dorchester Stream are Main Rivers to the north (50m) and east (150m) of the site respectively and a very small portion of the site is within Flood Zone 3 which has the highest flood risk, to the north. This area also falls within a Surface Water Indicative Flood Problem Area as designated within the HLP32.

A Flood Risk Assessment has been provided and supplemented by a Surface Water Drainage Technical Note and Proposed Drainage layout. Surface water is proposed to be discharged to the River Whitewater via a piped connection beneath Reading Road to the northwest of the site. Within the proposed development site permeable paving and attenuation crates are proposed. Foul water would be disposed of through the public sewer system.

The LLFA have noted that the long outfall pipe would cross the road and agreement from the owners of any third-party land is required at this stage. Written agreement from all the relevant landowners authorising the passage of any drainage asset through their land is sought. Detailed network hydraulic calculations for all rainfall events are also sought.

During discussion on the application, the applicant has made reference to an appeal decision relating to the former Fleet Police Station within the District (19/02659/FUL) where detailed surface water drainage details were secured via condition. That site is a brownfield site with existing infrastructure as recognised by the LLFA in their response which recommended conditions. It is not comparable to the subject site or development which has been considered on its own merits.

Thames Water have been unable to determine wastewater needs with the information provided. They recommend a condition to ensure that foul water network infrastructure is provided to meet the requirements of the development.

The Environment Agency and the Council's Flood Risk Engineer have not raised any objection.

It is important that the proposed surface water and foul water strategies are attainable and feasible as these are fundamental to the proposal. With due regard to the comments of the LLFA and Thames Water, this has not been demonstrated at this time. The proposal is for a major development and in the absence of a level of detail in respect of surface water drainage that satisfies the LLFA, the LPA is unable to conclude that the proposed development complies with HLP32 Policy NBE5 which requires that flood risk is managed such that over its lifetime development would not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere and will be safe from flooding. The NPPF (para. 167) also requires that local planning authorities should ensure that development does not increase flood risk elsewhere.

Ecology

The site comprises of a largely open grassed field with some broken hedgerow on the site boundary. It is greenfield land. There are no formal ecological designations, but the site is located within a Site of Special Scientific Interest Risk Zone. Hook Wooded Hedgerows Site of Importance for Nature Conservation is approximately 225m to the southeast of the site.

An Ecological Impact Assessment and Addendum have been provided and their findings accepted by the Council's Biodiversity Officer. The Biodiversity Officer raises no objection to the proposal subject to the proposed mitigation and enhancement measures in the Assessment being followed. These measures include: checks and controls at construction stage, provision of habitat features (hedgehog boxes, bird bath, tables and boxes, log piles and bat tube) and planting (wildflower grassland and native hedgerows).

No objection has been raised by Natural England on ecological grounds (see separate section in respect of the TBHSPA).

If all other matters were acceptable then the above measures could be secured by condition and subject to that, there would be no conflict with HLP32 Policy NBE4, HNP Policy HK4 or the NPPF (para. 180) which seek to conserve and enhance biodiversity and deliver biodiversity net gain.

Trees

There are no Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) on or adjacent to the site. A Tree Survey Report and Arboricultural Development Statement (ADS) have been submitted. These indicate that the development will require the removal of one group of trees, one single tree (category U) and a section of hedge. Twelve trees would be retained, two groups of trees and a section of hedgerow would be retained. It is stated that 70 new trees would be planted. Details of tree protection and planting methods have been provided.

The Council's Tree Officer has raised no objection to the application subject to the recommendations in the ADS being followed. Full details of replacement tree planting could form part of a detailed landscaping condition.

The planting of native trees is supported in principle by the LPA and the NPPG (para. 131) supports the incorporation of trees in development as proposed.

Subject to the above conditions, the proposal would incorporate existing trees and provide new trees as sought by HLP32 Policy NBE9(d) and HNP Policies HK4 and HK12(1)(e) and would not adversely affect trees of amenity value as required by HLP06 Saved Policy CON8. The application is therefore acceptable in terms of arboriculture.

Other Planning Considerations

Heritage

The site is not within or adjacent to a conservation area. The nearest designated heritage assets are the Milestone located some 67 metres to the southwest of the site boundary and Hadley Dene House and Kilns located around 200 metres from the site to the northwest. These are all Grade II listed.

The Council's Conservation Team have been consulted and have raised no objection nor identified any heritage harm. Accordingly, no heritage impacts have been identified and the application does not engage the heritage tests in the NPPF (para. 200).

Impact on the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area

The site is within the 400m – 5km Thames Basin Heath Special Protection (TBHSPA) zone of influence. Policy NBE3 of the HLP32 states that proposals for Class C2 uses will be assessed on a case-by-case basis in consultation with Natural England (NE).

NE have requested a number of mitigation measures. As identified in this report, the proposed care home is proposed as a residential care and nursing home, and this could be secured by planning condition. No staff accommodation is proposed, and parking would be for staff and visitors.

Given the above, the proposed development would not have an adverse effect on the TBHSPA in accordance with Saved Policy NRM6 of the South East Plan and Policies NBE3 and NBE4 of the HLP32.

Equality Impact

The Council has a responsibility to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not. The Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010 identifies 'age' as a 'protected characteristic'.

The proposed care home would provide accommodation for older persons and the application raises no adverse equality impact issues.

Planning Balance

The provision of a 72-bed residential/ nursing care home providing specialist C2 accommodation for the needs of groups with specific housing requirements is supported by the NPPF (para. 62). The HLP32 recognises that there is likely to be a substantial increase in the number of older people residing within the District over the plan period. This planning benefit is therefore given significant weight in the planning balance.

The operational phase would deliver economic benefits in the form of employment within the care home (80 FTE jobs) and spending in the local economy. There would also be temporary economic benefits to the local economy during the construction phase in the form of jobs and spending. Collectively, these economic benefits are also given moderate weight in the planning balance.

Other planning benefits would include a new cycle/pedestrian path along the development frontage, tree planting and ecological enhancements. The weight attributed to these is reduced by the fact the path is proposed on land outside the applicant's control, that it is largely required to serve the proposed development itself, the site for the path being greenfield land and that it would result in further harm to the landscape. These benefits are therefore given limited to moderate weight in the planning balance.

Notwithstanding the benefits identified above, the proposed development is in clear conflict with the development plan as a whole for the reasons identified in this report. Specifically in relation to the principle of the development, landscape impacts, design, access and flood risk and drainage. The application is also contrary to the aims of the NPPF in these respects.

The above material considerations comprising planning benefits are limited and are not of sufficient weight to indicate that a departure from the development plan should be taken in this instance.

CONCLUSION

Applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise (Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 38(6) and NPPF paras. 2 and 47).

The application has been assessed against the development plan and relevant material considerations and it is recognised that it would bring some planning benefits, most notably in respect of the delivery of specialist housing for older persons and job creation.

However, a number of conflicts with the development plan have been identified as set out in this report relating to the principle of development, impact on the landscape, design, access

and flood risk and drainage. The development is therefore in conflict with HLP32 Policies SD1, SS1, H4, NBE1, NBE2, NBE5 and INF3, HLP06 Saved Policy GEN1 and HNP Policies HK1, HK5 and HK12 and the NPPF.

RECOMMENDATION - Refuse

REASONS FOR REFUSAL

1. The proposed development does not comply with the spatial strategy of the development plan. The application has failed to satisfy the relevant criteria for specialist and supported accommodation to meet the needs of older persons within the countryside in respect of; demonstrated need, alternative sites and relationship to an existing settlement. As such, the proposal is contrary Policies SD1, SS1, NBE1(f) and H4(b) of the Hart Local Plan (Strategy and Sites) 2016-2032 and Policy HK1 of the Hook Neighbourhood Plan 2018-2032.
2. By virtue of the proposed siting, scale and massing, the proposed development would erode the rural qualities of the landscape and introduce a harmful urban character. It would fail to respect or enhance the special characteristics, value and visual amenity of the District's landscape and would adversely impact upon it. As such, the proposal is contrary Policies NBE2(a and b) and NBE9(d) of the Hart Local Plan (Strategy and Sites) 2016-2032, Saved Policy GEN1(iv and v) of the Hart Local Plan (Replacement) 1996-2006, Policy HK5 of the Hook Neighbourhood Plan 2018-2032 and Section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021.
3. By virtue of the proposed layout, scale and massing, the proposed development would not achieve a high-quality design, positively contribute to the overall appearance of the area or be in keeping with local character. As such, the proposal is contrary Policy NBE9(a and c) of the Hart Local Plan (Strategy and Sites) 2016-2032, Saved Policy GEN1(i) of the Hart Local Plan (Replacement) 1996-2006, Policy HK12 of the Hook Neighbourhood Plan 2018-2032 and Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021.
4. In the absence of satisfactory visibility splays or demonstration that required off-site works would be achievable, it has not been demonstrated that safe, suitable and convenient access would be provided for all users. As such, the proposal is contrary to Policies NBE9(b) and INF3(b) of the Hart Local Plan (Strategy and Sites) 2016-2032, Saved Policy GEN1(vii) of the Hart Local Plan (Replacement) 1996-2006 and Section 9 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021.
5. In the absence of sufficient information, justification or mitigation in relation to flood risk and drainage, it has not been demonstrated that the proposal would be safe from flooding for its lifetime and that it would not increase the risk of flooding off-site. As such, the proposal is contrary to Policy NBE5 of the Hart Local Plan (Strategy and Sites) 2016-2032 and Section 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021.

INFORMATIVES

1. The Council works positively and proactively on development proposals to deliver sustainable development in accordance with the NPPF. In this instance, the proposed development was deemed to be unacceptable for a number of reasons as listed above. The development was therefore determined on the basis of the information provided.