

<b>APPLICATION NO.</b>	<a href="#">P16/S3525/FUL</a>
<b>APPLICATION TYPE</b>	FULL APPLICATION
<b>REGISTERED</b>	21.10.2016
<b>PARISH</b>	THAME
<b>WARD MEMBERS</b>	Jeannette Matelot David Dodds Nigel Champken-Woods
<b>APPLICANT</b>	Churchill Retirement Living
<b>SITE</b>	Thames Valley Police Station, Greyhound Lane, Thame, OX9 3ZD
<b>PROPOSAL</b>	Redevelopment to form 41 sheltered apartments for the elderly, including communal facilities, access, car parking and landscaping.
<b>AMENDMENTS</b>	None
<b>GRID REFERENCE</b>	470664/206131
<b>OFFICER</b>	Phil Moule

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This application is referred to the Planning Committee as the officer's recommendation conflicts with the views of Thame Town Council.
- 1.2 This site lies towards the edge of Thame town centre and is located within the Thame Conservation Area close to a building of local note. There are some nearby listed buildings. To the south of the site is a large supermarket. The site contains a purpose built building for the Thames Valley Police Station. The Police counter at this site closed on 1 April 2016. The building is still in use by Thames Valley Police but is surplus to requirements and will be vacated by the end of March 2017.
- 1.3 The existing building on the site was constructed in the 1990's and sits to the north west of the site. There are some outbuildings within the parking courtyard. Around the site is a large boundary wall. There is a small area at the side of the building for visitor parking, the remainder of the parking is provided in the centre of the site.
- 1.4 A plan identifying the site can be found attached at **Appendix 1** to this report.

## 2.0 PROPOSAL

- 2.1 The application is for the demolition of the existing police station and redevelopment to form 41 sheltered apartments for the elderly with communal facilities, access, car parking and landscaping. The application is an amended proposal for a similar scheme (P14/S0880/FUL) that was refused and dismissed at appeal. The current application seeks to address the reasons for refusal supported by the Inspector as part of the appeal. The background to the appeal scheme and the Inspector's conclusion are set out at Section 6.0 of this report. The plans for the proposed development are set out at **Appendix 2** and the plans for the previously refused scheme are set out at **Appendix 3** of this report.
- 2.2 The amendments made to this revised scheme are as follows:
- Reduction in the number of units from 45 to 41 to reduce the size of the overall footprint
  - Reduction of scale, massing and bulk of the proposals, especially to the corner

- of Greyhound Lane and North Street, and adjacent to no.39 North Street
- Widening of the distances between the proposed building and site boundaries to no. 39 North Street
- Omission of the 3-storey feature corner element from the proposals. Introduction of a more domestic-scale of architecture to North Street and Greyhound Lane
- Reduction of the height of the building to 2-storeys facing the corner of Greyhound Lane and North Street.
- Removal of the first floor flat at the north-eastern corner of the proposed building closest to no.39 North Street, obviating direct overlooking into the private garden and conservatory
- Increase the number of separations in the roof form to reduce scale, bulk and massing
- Use of more architectural references from the rural parts of Thame
- Increase the amount of amenity space, and improve views through the site
- Parking ratio to number of flats increased; undercroft car parking removed

### 3.0 SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS

<p>3.1 Thame Town Council</p>	<p><b>Objection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Featureless appearance of the gables</li> <li>• Inadequate size of some of the rooms</li> <li>• Inappropriate design / cladding / roof definition of the link element</li> <li>• Poorly defined entrance</li> <li>• Lack of light into some ground floor flats</li> <li>• Lack of communal areas</li> <li>• Insufficient parking provision</li> <li>• Overdevelopment – too many apartments leading to lack of amenity space</li> <li>• Detrimental effect on Conservation Area with overbearing elevations</li> <li>• Detrimental effect on the vibrancy of the town centre through parking displacement</li> <li>• Insufficient buggy space</li> </ul>
<p>Thame Conservation Area Advisory Committee</p>	<p><b>Comments as follows:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insufficient car parking provision</li> <li>• No provision made for visitor parking, carers, nursing staff, doctors, home helps ambulances, fire engines</li> <li>• Only 1 lift to serve 27 apartments</li> <li>• Poor design of building and out of keeping with this part of the town which overlooks the cricket field and St Mary's Parish Church</li> </ul>
<p>SODC Conservation Officer</p>	<p><b>No objection:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The application is an improvement on the previous scheme in both conservation and design terms</li> <li>• The overall massing of the building responds to the transitional character of the area in a positive way</li> <li>• Better reveals the domestic proportions of the built form in this part of the Conservation Area</li> <li>• Design and detailing succeeds in reflecting the domestic vernacular character and palette of materials.</li> <li>• Design has moved away from the higher status Georgian</li> </ul>

	<p>appearance of the High Street to the more vernacular character of the dwellings in this area, as per the Inspector’s report on the dismissed appeal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The overall bulk and massing of the proposal better responds to the site’s immediate characteristics</li> <li>• To the south, where the ground is higher and the site is bounded by the dominant form of Waitrose, the massing and density is higher and then decreases to respond to the more domestic proportions of the site to the north.</li> <li>• Although the footprint extends across more of the site than the existing police station, the site is capable of accommodating the amount of proposed built form without detriment to the Conservation Area</li> </ul>
Oxfordshire County Council - Highways	<p><b>No objection subject to conditions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OCC initially raised an objection to the application on the grounds of insufficient parking provision and a lack of clarity over the pedestrian access to the site.</li> <li>• The objection on grounds of parking provision has been removed based on the Inspector’s conclusions as part of the appeal scheme</li> <li>• The objection relating to pedestrian access has been removed on receipt of amended plans</li> <li>• No objection to surface water drainage proposals provided this is discharged to highway chamber</li> <li>• Financial contributions sought towards public transport improvements and bus stop infrastructure</li> </ul>
Oxfordshire County Council - Property	<p><b>No objection subject to condition</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The application will place demand on local infrastructure including the Local and Central Library, Museum Resource Centre, Strategic Waste Management and Adult Day Care</li> <li>• Funding from CIL will be required to mitigate this impact</li> <li>• Condition required relating to the provision of fire hydrants</li> </ul>
Oxfordshire County Council - Archaeology	<p><b>No objection subject to conditions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A programme of archaeological investigation will need to be undertaken ahead of any development</li> </ul>
Health & Housing - Contaminated Land	<p><b>No objection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The site is suitable for the intended development with respect to contaminated land</li> </ul>
Health & Housing - Environmental Protection Team	<p><b>No objection subject to conditions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial concerns were raised in relation to noise from road traffic, delivery vehicles and queueing cars</li> <li>• Additional information has been provided to satisfactorily overcome these concerns</li> </ul>
Health & Housing – Air Quality	<p><b>No objection subject to conditions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial concerns raised in relation to the Air Quality Assessment and how this related to nearby diffusion tube data</li> <li>• Additional information has been provided to satisfactorily overcome these concerns</li> </ul>
Drainage Engineer -	<p><b>No objection</b></p>

MONSON	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existing off-site discharge route drains to the highway drainage system. The applicant should therefore confirm the County Council's approval of this.</li> </ul>
Thames Water	<p><b>No objection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No objection on the basis of sewerage infrastructure capacity</li> </ul>
Forestry Officer	<p><b>No objection subject to condition</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proposed development will result in the removal of all existing trees.</li> <li>A detailed landscaping scheme will be required demonstrating how their loss will be mitigated through replacement planting</li> </ul>
Countryside Officer	<p><b>No objection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are unlikely to be any significant ecological impacts if planning permission is granted</li> </ul>
Neighbours (23 responses received)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inadequate car parking provision</li> <li>Will place pressure in nearby parking areas</li> <li>Not appropriate for Thame Conservation Area</li> <li>Excessive height and size of proposed building</li> <li>Overdevelopment of the site</li> <li>Increase in traffic congestion</li> </ul>
Neighbour 39 North Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overdevelopment of the site and unsympathetic to its conservation setting</li> <li>Too little provision made for recreational landscaping outside the building</li> <li>Inadequate parking provision</li> </ul>
Neighbour New House, Bell Lane	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Will be overlooked</li> <li>Too few parking spaces provided</li> <li>Additional traffic will cause problems locally</li> <li>Development too bulky and overpowering</li> </ul>

#### 4.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1 [P14/S0880/FUL](#) - Refused (25/06/2014) - Refused on appeal (20/01/2016)  
Demolition of existing police station. Redevelopment to form 45 sheltered apartments for the elderly with communal facilities, access, car parking and landscaping and police counter. (As amplified by additional information (highways, landscape, bat survey) received 04th June 2014)

[P90/N0893](#) - Approved (19/04/1991)  
New police station. Access

#### 5.0 POLICY & GUIDANCE

##### 5.1 South Oxfordshire Core Strategy policies (SOCS)

- CS1 - Presumption in favour of sustainable development
- CSS1 - The Overall Strategy
- CSH1 - Amount and distribution of housing
- CSH2 - Housing density
- CSH3 - Affordable housing
- CSH4 - Meeting housing needs

CSEN3 – Historic environment  
CSEM2 - The amount and distribution of employment  
CSTHA1 - The strategy for Thames  
CSTHA2 - New allocations at Thames  
CSM1 - Transport  
CSM2 - Transport Assessments and Travel Plans  
CSQ3 - Design  
CSB1 - Conservation and improvement of biodiversity  
CSG1 - Green infrastructure  
CSI1 - Infrastructure provision

**South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 (SOLP)**

C6 - Maintain and enhance biodiversity  
C8 - Adverse affect on protected species  
C9 - Loss of landscape features  
D1 - Principles of good design  
D2 - Safe and secure parking for vehicles and cycles  
D3 - Outdoor amenity area  
D4 - Reasonable level of privacy for occupiers  
D6 - Community safety  
D10 - Waste Management  
E6 - Retention of employment sites  
EP1 - Prevention of polluting emissions  
EP2 - Noise and vibrations  
EP4 - Impact on water resources  
EP6 - Sustainable drainage  
EP7 - Impact on ground water resources  
EP8 - Contaminated land  
G2 - Protect district from adverse development  
G5 - Making the best use of land  
T1 - Safe, convenient and adequate highway network for all users  
T2 - Unloading, turning and parking for all highway users  
CON5 - Setting of listed buildings  
CON6 - Proposals affecting a conservation area  
CON7 - Proposals affecting a conservation area

**Thames Neighbourhood Plan Policies**

H6 - Design of new development to be of high quality  
GA6 - New development to provide parking on site for occupants and visitors  
ESDQ12 - Applications for new development to provide a drainage strategy  
ESDQ15 - Proposal must reinforce Thames's character  
ESDQ16 - Development must relate well to its site and its surroundings  
ESDQ18 - New development must contribute to local character by creating a sense of place appropriate to its location  
ESDQ26 - Design new buildings to reflect the three-dimensional qualities of traditional buildings  
ESDQ27 - Design in the forgotten elements from the start of the design process  
ESDQ28 - Provide good quality private outdoor space  
ESDQ29 - Design car parking so that it fits in with the character of the proposed development.  
WS12 - Retain existing employment land in employment use  
WS13 - Support improvements to existing employment areas

5.2 **National Planning Policy Framework  
National Planning Policy Framework Planning Practice Guidance  
South Oxfordshire Design Guide (2016)**

6.0 **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS  
Background**

- 6.1 An application for the redevelopment of the site for 45 sheltered apartments was submitted by Churchill Retirement Living in March 2014. The principle of the development was not considered acceptable as it would result in a loss of employment land which had not been adequately marketed for a year or a justified case put forward as to why this employment site should be lost.
- 6.2 The scale, massing and design of the proposed building was judged to be detrimental to the character and appearance of the Thame conservation area. The proposal would also be detrimental to the amenity of nearby neighbours by virtue of an overbearing impact and loss of privacy to the rear garden of No. 39 North Street.
- 6.3 The proposal failed to provide adequate vehicle and cycling parking and in addition several car parking spaces which would serve the police counter were considered to be detrimental to highway safety. In addition an agreement had not been reached on the S106 agreement. For these reasons the application was not considered to be acceptable. The application was refused in June 2014.
- 6.4 An appeal was subsequently submitted against this decision and a public inquiry was held in October 2015. As part of the appeal process, several matters were subsequently agreed (in the form of statements of common ground) that overcame a number of the reasons for refusal for the scheme.
- 6.5 The issue of the loss of employment land was addressed. It was agreed that the existing purpose-built police station has a specialist design which presents limitations and the necessary works required to make the building fit for purpose would outweigh anticipated revenues and deter future investors. It was also agreed that the building had been marketed for in excess of one year on an unfettered basis at a reasonable price for sale and for rent. It was agreed that it had been demonstrated that the building was no longer viable and that it was not required for any other suitable employment use. The Council agreed that there was no objection in principle to the loss of the existing police station subject to a suitable replacement building being provided. The issue of the proposed access and car parking arrangements and car parking provision were also addressed.
- 6.6 Following the inquiry, the Inspector commented that although the plot is capable of accommodating a large building, the height and footprint proposed would create one of substantial bulk, mass and scale. The scheme would result in a large block on the corner of the site with the roundabout. Whilst this could be used positively to announce the presence of the building, the height which would rise to three storey plus parapet under the pyramidal roof, would contrast significantly with the remainder of the building and its neighbours on North Street and Bell Lane. Moreover, the design takes reference from the prominent building in the High Street rather than from the more immediate environs.
- 6.7 The Inspector concluded that the proposed height, bulk and design of the building would not create an effective transition between the larger scale development of the town centre and the smaller scale and lower density properties in the more immediate surroundings of the site. The Inspector also concluded that the proposed development would affect the outlook and privacy of the occupiers of No. 39 North Street sufficient to

cause harm to their living conditions.

- 6.8 Agreement was reached prior to the appeal (through a statement of common ground) that the proposed access and car parking provision were acceptable to the Council and overcame the related reasons for refusal. Whilst the issue of car parking provision had been addressed and agreed prior to the inquiry, the Inspector wished to examine this issue given the objections received in relation to it. The appellant provided evidence of demand for parking based on a survey of eight similar developments. From the results of the survey it was established that average parking provision required to meet demand was 0.32 spaces per residential unit. This equated to 14 car parking spaces for the appeal scheme.
- 6.9 Further analysis took account of local parking opportunities and considered the average parking provision if the maximum occupancy rates of the survey sites were used in order to arrive at a worst case assessment. This analysis was accepted by the Council and the County Council. Based on the results, the maximum demand for parking in respect of the appeal scheme was agreed to be 15 vehicles. This would include visits by visitors, medical, social and other support personnel. This level of demand would only occur for a short period and the peak is likely to relate to delivery vehicles. As the appeal scheme would provide 14 spaces, there is potential that at certain times the demand for parking would not be met. However, the Inspector commented that she was satisfied that this would only occur at limited times and there would be suitable alternatives within a distance of the site. The Inspector concluded that there would be sufficient parking provision on site at a ratio 0.32 spaces per apartment. The amended scheme the subject of this application would provide 14 spaces for 41 apartments at a ratio of 0.34 spaces per unit.
- 6.10 The appeal was subsequently recovered by the Secretary of State (in December 2015) as it related to a proposal for over 10 residential units in an area with a made Neighbourhood Plan. The Secretary of State agreed with the findings of the Inspector on all matters relating to the appeal.

**Principle of the development**

- 6.11 The principle of the redevelopment of the site and the loss of the existing employment use has been established through the planning inquiry relating to the previous scheme. The redevelopment of the site accords with Policies E6 of the SOLP and WS12 and H5 of the Thame Neighbourhood Plan.

**The effect on the character and appearance of the conservation area**

- 6.12 Thame Police Station lies within the designated Thame Conservation Area. The application is supported by a Heritage Statement prepared by ECUS Environmental Consultants. The Council's Conservation Officer (CO) has been consulted on the application. The CO has commented as follows:
- 6.13 *The existing building is not of historic or architectural interest and the dominant nature of the police station and Waitrose building behind at best have a neutral impact on the character of the area but make little to no contribution to the character of this part of the conservation area and the whole designated asset, somewhat detracting from the historic pattern of development here which should be more diminished in nature.*
- 6.14 *There are listed buildings in the wider setting of the application site and to the north-west, the area is dominated by the open green spaces of Thame Cricket Ground and St Mary's Churchyard. Elsewhere surrounding the site, the character is of residential properties, typically of 1.5 – 2 storeys although to the north, immediately opposite the application site, the properties are single storey and of considerably reduced*

*proportions following the pattern of the Town's development of the higher density commercial centre giving way to the more spacious, rural fringe and countryside.*

- 6.15 *A previous scheme for redevelopment here was submitted in 2014. The scheme was refused and subsequently dismissed at appeal in 2016. One of the refusal reasons was that the proposal did not preserve or enhance those characteristics of the conservation area which contribute to the area's significance as a result of increased bulk and density of the proposed new building, harming the transitional character of the area. This harm to the conservation area was also judged to harm the adjoining heritage assets to the detriment of the experience of their settings and the conclusion was that the harm was not mitigated by good design or outweighed in the planning balance by public benefit.*
- 6.16 *This application is an improvement on the previous scheme in both conservation and design terms. This site presents an opportunity to improve upon the existing relationship of the north elevation of Waitrose and the Police Station site onto Greyhound Lane and better reveal the more diminished character of this area, rather than that of the commercial High Street.*
- 6.17 *On its own merits:*
- *I consider that the overall massing of the building responds to the transitional character of this area in a positive way, better revealing the domestic proportions of the built form in this part of the conservation area compared with the existing police station on the site.*
  - *I consider that the design and detailing of this submission succeeds in reflecting the domestic vernacular character and palette of materials here. In particular, the design has moved away from the higher status Georgian appearance of the High Street to the more vernacular character of the dwellings in this area, as per the Inspector's report on the dismissed appeal.*
  - *The overall bulk and massing of the proposal better responds to the site's immediate characteristics. To the south, where the ground is higher and the site is bounded by the dominant form of Waitrose, the massing and density is higher and then decreases to respond to the more domestic proportions of the site to the north.*
  - *Although the footprint extends across more of the site than the existing police station, I consider that this site is capable of accommodating the amount of proposed built form without detriment to the Conservation Area.*
- 6.18 *Based on the above, the CO has no in principle objection to the proposal and considers the scheme to be largely acceptable in Conservation terms. The CO is satisfied that the scheme will preserve the more domestic proportions of this part of the conservation area and in some parts will enhance the experience and character of the designated assets in line with the Planning (LB&CA) Act 1990 Section 66 and 72, the NPPF, Core Strategy Policy CSEN3 and Local Plan Policies CON5, 6 and 7. The proposal is also considered to accord with Neighbourhood Plan policies ESDQ16 and ESDQ20. On this basis, I consider that the proposal has successfully overcome the reason for refusal on conservation grounds that related to the appeal scheme.*

**Impact on neighbours**

- 6.19 *As part of the appeal scheme the Inspector acknowledged that a degree of overlooking is to be expected in an urban situation such as this. The appeal scheme proposed windows facing the side and rear boundary of the garden of 39 North Street. The windows facing the rear boundary were proposed in the east facing elevation of the northern tip of the building at ground and first level. The Inspector commented that the*

east facing elevation would be located 2.5 metres from the rear boundary of the garden of 39 North Street. However, the Inspector concluded that the use of obscure glazing, to be secured through a planning condition, would prevent the issue of overlooking.

- 6.20 The amended scheme that is the subject of this application also proposes windows facing the rear boundary of 39 North Street. The east facing elevation has been set back a distance of 8 metres from the rear boundary of the garden of 39 North Street. I consider that in accordance with the view of the Inspector, the use of obscure glazing would prevent the issue of overlooking and loss of privacy to the rear garden of 39 North Street. A condition is therefore required to obscure glaze the secondary window to the living room and kitchen of apartment 29, the window in the communal corridor next to this and the secondary living room window of apartment 30.
- 6.21 The main issue the Inspector raised with the appeal scheme was the presence of second floor windows facing the side boundary of the rear garden on 39 North Street, located in the north facing elevation of the southern limb of the building. Windows at first and second floor levels would allow views towards the rear garden and obscure views towards the house and conservatory. The Inspector commented that a section drawing provided during the appeal demonstrated that the combined effects of the difference in ground levels and the height of the boundary wall restricts views of the conservatory from first floor apartments and that views of the garden are restricted by existing planting in the garden of 39 North Street. However, this did not apply to windows at second floor level.
- 6.22 The amended scheme the subject of this application has removed the first floor apartment located closest to the conservatory and rear elevation of 39 North Street. The closest first floor window would provide an oblique view towards the rear of 39 North Street, but the windows would be separated by a distance of 25 metres. As highlighted above, the difference in ground levels and the height of the boundary wall would restrict views of the conservatory. A section drawing is provided with the application in the Design and Access Statement.
- 6.23 At second floor level, only one apartment is now proposed in the north facing elevation of the southern limb. The location of the second floor windows would not directly face the side boundary of the rear garden of 39 North Street, but would look over the amenity and parking area associated with the proposed development. These windows would be located 40 metres from the conservatory and rear elevation of 39 North Street.
- 6.24 The separation distance between the proposed windows at first and second floor level and the rear windows and conservatory of 39 North Street would accord with the Council's requirements being 25 metres and above. There would be no second floor windows that directly face the side boundary of the rear garden of 39 North Street. Given this, and the reduction in the overall number of windows at first and second floor level, I consider that the issue of overlooking and a loss of privacy and the perception of overlooking to the rear garden of 39 North Street has been overcome.
- 6.25 The Inspector considered the issue of overlooking and a loss of privacy to New House, located on the opposite side of Greyhound Lane to the appeal site. The Inspector commented that the separation distance well in excess of 25 metres would separate proposed first and second floor windows from the garden area of New House and concluded that the extent of overlooking would not cause an unacceptable level of harm to their living conditions. The amended scheme has a very similar arrangement to the appeal scheme. Overall, I consider the amended proposal is compliant with policy D4 of the SOLP.

**Overbearing impact**

- 6.26 As part of the appeal scheme, the Inspector commented that at its closest the two storey element of the proposed building would be 2.5 metres from the western boundary of 39 North Street and the two storey element of the southern limb of the building would be 11 metres from the side boundary of 39 North Street. Given the overall scale of the proposed building and the way it would wrap around two sides of the garden of 39 North Street, the Inspector concluded that there would be an overbearing impact to the detriment of the living conditions of the occupants of the dwelling.
- 6.27 The revised scheme that is the subject of this application has increased the set back of the building to 8 metres from the rear boundary of the garden. This element would now be two storey only as opposed to a mixture of two and three storey as part of the appeal scheme. The roof would also slope away from the rear boundary of 39 North Street, as opposed to the gable end proposed in the appeal scheme, which further reduces any overbearing impact.
- 6.28 The two storey element of the building in the southern limb has been reduced to single storey where it is closest to the side boundary and the main house of 39 North Street. Other parts of the proposed development away from the immediate boundaries with 39 North Street would remain three storey. However, the design of the roof has been altered with the eaves level significantly lowered and windows set within the roof that slopes away from 39 North Street. This gives the impression of a smaller 2.5 storey which would reduce the overall impact of the building on 39 North Street. As a result of these changes, I consider that the overbearing impact of the appeal scheme has been overcome and the current application accords with Policy D4 of the SOLP.

**Air quality**

- 6.29 The application is supported by an air quality assessment. This demonstrates that following the implementation of the proposed development NO<sub>2</sub> and PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub> concentrations will remain below the objectives at all receptors in 2018, taking into account worst case sensitivity test for NO<sub>2</sub>. Initial concerns were raised by the Council's Air Quality Officer in relation to the submitted air quality assessment and how the results related to diffusion tube data from a nearby location on Aylesbury Road. However, further information and clarification submitted by the applicant has been sufficient to address these concerns. A condition is required to ensure the provision of electric vehicle charging points in the on-site car parking area.

**Noise**

- 6.30 The application is supported by a Noise Impact Assessment prepared by Clarke Saunders Acoustics. The Council's Environmental Protection Officer requested further information and clarification regarding noise levels within the external amenity areas for the site and internal noise levels. This information has been provided by the applicant and addresses the issues of noise from road traffic, Waitrose delivery vehicles and cars associated with the car park.
- 6.31 The Environmental Protection Officer has commented that the amended report adequately demonstrates that although the WHO recommended noise level for external amenity areas would be exceeded across part of the site, it would be met in the pergola area near to the residents lounge and the central paved area near to the main entrance. The Environmental Protection Officer is satisfied with this and has raised no objection to the application.
- 6.32 The report demonstrates that mitigation would be required in order to achieve internal

noise levels which would meet those recommended in WHO Guidelines for Community Noise and BS 8233: 2014 Guidance on sound insulation and noise reduction for buildings. The report provides basic details of the mitigation which would be necessary, including minimum sound reduction specifications for glazing and ventilation. However, it is important that an acoustic report is provided to confirm that the trickle vents and glazing system (including panels, windows, frames, seals etc.) to be used in the development are appropriate and that they will meet these minimum sound reduction standards. These details can be secured by condition.

#### **Highways impact**

- 6.33 The County Council, as the local highway authority, has not raised an objection to the application. An objection was initially raised in connection with the level of on-site parking to be provided and the issue of pedestrian access into the site from Greyhound Lane.
- 6.34 As already stated, as part of the appeal inquiry for the previous scheme, the Inspector concluded that a parking ratio of 0.32 spaces per apartment was sufficient. This provided 14 spaces for 45 apartments. The amended scheme which is the subject of this application provides 14 spaces for 41 apartments at a ratio of 0.34. Based on the Inspectors conclusions on this matter, the County Council has subsequently agreed that the proposed parking provision is acceptable.
- 6.35 The County Council was concerned that the plans submitted with the application did not show that a pedestrian access would be provided into the site from Greyhound Lane. However, this was an omission and amended plan 10063TH-P16-01 Rev A now shows how this would be provided
- 6.36 The County Council has commented that significant numbers of residents will be unable to drive and a credible level of bus service nearby will be very important. Accordingly, a financial contribution of £1,032.26 per apartment is sought towards public transport improvements to benefit residents of the new development. A contribution of £27,722 is also sought towards nearby bus stop infrastructure that will serve the site to comprise of bus shelters with real time information displays, new poles, timetable cases and flags at nearby stops on North Street and Aylesbury Road.

#### **Landscaping & forestry**

- 6.37 The application is supported by an Arboricultural Assessment and Method Statement. The Council's Forestry Officer has raised no objection to the application. They have commented that the proposal would result in the removal of all the existing trees on the site with their loss to be mitigated by way of replacement planting. A detailed landscaping scheme will need to be provided for the application and this can be secured and approved via condition.

#### **Ecology**

- 6.38 The application is supported by an updated Bat Assessment Report and an updated Preliminary Ecological Report. The Council's Countryside Officer has assessed these reports and is satisfied that there are unlikely to be any significant ecological impacts if planning permission is granted.

#### **Archaeology**

- 6.39 The County Council has raised no objection to the development on archaeological grounds. The site is located in an area of archaeological interest and conditions will be required to secure an Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation prior to the commencement of development, to be followed by a programme of archaeological mitigation.

**Surface water drainage**

- 6.40 The application is supported by a Drainage Impact Assessment prepared by PBA which includes a surface water drainage strategy. The proposed development would result in a reduction in impermeable areas (roof and hardstanding) from 0.280ha to 0.204ha (from 80% to 58%) over the existing situation. There will therefore be a reduction in the rate of surface water runoff from the proposed development.
- 6.41 The surface water drainage strategy has been developed based on an attenuated discharge to the existing connection point west of the site in Greyhound Lane. This follows the existing drainage arrangement at the site and the proposal is to restrict discharge providing a significant improvement over the existing situation. The Council's Drainage Engineer has raised no objection to the proposed surface water drainage strategy provided the County Council are happy for the site to drain to the highway drainage system. The County Council has confirmed that they have no objection to this and request a condition to ensure the site drains to the highway chamber.

**Foul drainage**

- 6.42 The foul water runoff from the proposed development is to maintain the existing connection point. Thames Water has advised that with regard to sewerage infrastructure capacity, they would not have any objection to the above planning application.

**Affordable housing**

- 6.43 Core Strategy Policy CSH3 is applicable to this application, which seeks a 40% affordable housing contribution. The Council's Housing Officer has advised that under the previous application (P14/S0880/FUL) it was considered that the nature of the proposed development, in combination with the constraints of the site and financial viability, would not lend itself to the on-site provision of affordable housing. A financial contribution was therefore agreed in lieu of on-site affordable housing delivery. The proposals under the current application provide for a similar scheme to 14/S0880/FUL, with a slight reduction in overall apartment numbers and changes to design. It is considered that the principle of a financial contribution in lieu of the on-site delivery of affordable housing remains applicable.
- 6.44 Based on the viability information considered and agreed as part of the appeal inquiry for the refused scheme, and following an update to this to inform the current application, the Council's Housing Officer has requested a commuted sum of £632,305 in lieu of onsite affordable housing provision. This does not take account of the Vacant Building Credit as the Police Station building is not currently vacant. The applicant has agreed to this contribution and this will be secured through the S106 Agreement.

**CIL**

- 6.45 The application is not CIL chargeable as the proposal is for retirement housing. Retirement housing is excluded from the Council's adopted CIL Charging Schedule.

**S106 contributions**

- 6.46 A draft S106 Legal Agreement is being prepared to secure the following:
- a commuted sum of £632,305 in lieu of onsite affordable housing provision
  - a financial contribution of £1,032.26 per apartment is sought towards public transport improvements
  - a contribution of £27,722 towards nearby bus stop infrastructure improvements
  - a contribution of £170 per apartment towards wheeled bins

**7.0 CONCLUSION**

7.1 This application is a resubmission for a previously refused scheme under planning application P14/S0880/FUL. Following an appeal inquiry, the principle of the redevelopment of this site and loss of the existing employment was agreed to be acceptable. On this basis the principle of the development is considered to accord with Policies E6 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 and WS12 of the Thame Neighbourhood Plan.

7.2 The design, bulk and massing of the proposed development have been amended from that of the appeal scheme and the proposal is now acceptable in conservation terms. The scheme will preserve the more domestic proportions of this part of the conservation area and in some parts will enhance the experience and character of the designed assets in line with the Planning (LB&CA) Act 1990 Section 66 and 72, the NPPF, Core Strategy Policy CSEN3, Local Plan Policies CON5, 6 and 7 and Thame Neighbourhood Plan policies ESDQ16 and ESDQ20.

7.3 Previous issues relating to overlooking, loss of privacy and an overbearing impact to the neighbouring property No. 39 North Street have been addressed and the proposal is compliant with Policy D4 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011. The level of parking provision on site is deemed to be acceptable and in accordance with Policy T2 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011. Subject to the signing of a S106 Agreement, a financial contribution will be paid in lieu of the on-site provision of affordable housing. The proposal is therefore compliant with Policy CSH3 of the South Oxfordshire Core Strategy. On the basis of the above, it is your officer's view that the development proposal is acceptable and should be granted planning permission.

**8.0 RECOMMENDATION**

8.1 **To delegate authority to grant planning permission to the Head of Planning subject to:**

i) **The prior completion of a Section 106 agreement to secure the other obligations and financial contributions listed in Para. 6.46 of this report; and**

ii) **The following conditions:**

- 1. Commencement within three years – full planning permission.**
- 2. Approved plans.**
- 3. Sample materials to be approved.**
- 4. Hard and soft landscaping scheme to be approved.**
- 5. Details of boundary treatments to be submitted and approved.**
- 6. No occupants under the age of 60 years unless in the case of a couple where one person is over the age of 60 the second person shall not be under the age of 55.**
- 7. Archaeological written scheme of investigation to be submitted and approved prior to commencement of development.**
- 8. Obscure glazing to secondary windows to the living room and kitchen of apartment 29, the window in the first floor corridor and the secondary living room window of apartment 30.**
- 9. Specified turning areas and car parking spaces to be provided in accordance with approved drawings.**
- 10. Details of the surface water drainage strategy to be submitted and approved prior to commencement of development.**
- 11. Construction traffic management plan to be approved prior to commencement of development.**

12. New vehicular access to be laid out and constructed in accordance local highway authority's specification prior to occupation.
13. Travel information pack to be approved prior to first occupation.
14. Noise mitigation scheme to be approved prior to commencement of development.
15. Details of external lighting to be approved prior to first occupation.
16. Construction management plan to be approved prior to commencement of development.
17. Details of provision of fire hydrants to be approved prior to commencement of development.
18. Electric vehicle charging points to be provided on site.

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