

Your Ref: 01C001071/EV02

14 December 2020

LPR Consultation Policy and Delivery
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Sent by email: psp@solihull.gov.uk



Dear Sirs

**Cinnamon Retirement Living Limited: Wyndley Garden Centre, Warwick Road, Knowle
Solihull Local Plan Review: Representations to Regulation 19 Consultation**

Avison Young provides town planning advice to Cinnamon Retirement Living Limited (“Cinnamon”) in respect of its interests within Solihull Borough. Specifically, we are writing on behalf of Cinnamon to make representations to the Regulation 19 consultation for the Solihull Local Plan Review. In this letter we comment on the draft policies which seek to deliver the Council’s care needs and also promote the release of land from the Green Belt and its allocation for C2 / Extra care development.

Wyndley Garden Centre is located on the eastern side of Warwick Road (A4141). It is situated to the south of Knowle, approximately 0.8km from the village centre. The garden centre is currently trading but is due to close due to financial viability reasons.

The site covers an area of approximately 2.5 ha (6.2 acres) and is roughly rectangular in shape. It is bound to the west by Warwick Road, to the north and east by agricultural fields, and to the south by residential properties. Cinnamon has a live, detailed, planning application under consideration with the Borough Council which seeks the demolition of existing buildings and erection of an extra care facility (Use Class C2). The facility will provide a village care centre, 39no. one and two bedroom care suites, and 46no. one and two bedroom care apartments (ref: PL/2020/01993/PPFL).

The proposed development would provide 24 hour care and accommodation for elderly residents and would provide high quality accommodation alongside ancillary facilities to enhance the health and wellbeing of its residents. The shared services and facilities proposed for the community comprise:

- a reception, which will welcome residents and visitors and offer a range of concierge services such as booking transport / meals and providing information on social activities and events;
- a restaurant, to deliver a nutritious healthy menu which is essential to the well-being of residents and is at the core of all of Cinnamon’s facilities. It will provide an opportunity for residents and their family and friends to enjoy high quality, homestyle food and drink;

- lounges, which provide space for residents to gather and relax and for residents, family and friends to participate in social events and activities;
- a private dining room, to enable residents to host family meals or celebrate with other residents;
- a café bar, for residents and visitors to frequent and enjoy morning coffee, brunch, afternoon tea or snacks, whilst socialising with other residents, friends and family;
- an arts and craft studio, where residents can take part in group activities, learn new skills, enjoy their own hobby or share it with friends;
- a gymnasium and exercise studio, with equipment designed for the client group and exercise designed for older people;
- treatment rooms, providing opportunities for medical and beauty / wellbeing treatments for example from a visiting doctor or physiotherapist;
- a hair and beauty salon, providing a wide range of services and treatments; and
- a library where residents can enjoy a collection of books and magazines or partake in board games.

Our comments on the emerging policy and the Wyndley site are set out as follows. We:

- set out the policy position in respect of amending Green Belt boundaries, and meeting housing needs;
- comment on the suitability of the site for release from the Green Belt and simultaneous allocation for extra care development. As part of this, we consider the site in the context of the purposes of the Green Belt; and
- comment on the shortcomings of the emerging policies for the delivery of care and explain how the site's release from the Green Belt and allocation would help support the delivery of care facilities in the Borough.

Planning Policy Context

This period of consultation is undertaken in accordance with Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, which requires the publication of the local plan prior to its submission to the Secretary of State for Examination.

At Examination, Local Plans are examined to assess whether they have been prepared in accordance with legal and procedural requirements and whether they are sound. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) confirms this at paragraph 35 and sets out that plans are 'sound' if they are:

- a) *"positively prepared – providing a strategy which, as a minimum, seeks to meet the area's objectively assessed needs; and is informed by agreements with other authorities, so that unmet need from neighbouring areas is accommodated where it is practical to do so and is consistent with achieving sustainable development;*
- b) *justified – an appropriate strategy, taking into account the reasonable alternatives, and based on proportionate evidence;*

- c) *effective – deliverable over the plan period, and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic matters that have been dealt with rather than deferred, as evidenced by the statement of common ground; and*
- d) *consistent with national policy – enabling the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies of this framework”*

Green Belt

As set out earlier, these representations seek an amendment to the Green Belt boundary to remove the Wyndley Garden Centre site from the Green Belt. The framework for the protection of the Green Belt is set out under chapter 13 of the NPPF. It explains that the Government attaches great importance to Green Belts and that the fundamental aim is to *“prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence”*.

The Green Belt is defined as serving five purposes:

- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

Once Green Belt boundaries are established, the NPPF is clear, at paragraph 136, that they should only be altered where *“exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified, through the preparation or updating of plans”*. It is for strategic policies to establish the need for any changes to Green Belt boundaries, having regard to their intended permanence in the long term, so that they can endure beyond the plan period.

Paragraph 138 sets out that the need to promote sustainable patterns of development should be taken into account when reviewing Green Belt boundaries. Where Green Belt release is necessary, it requires that *“plans should give first consideration to land which has been previously-developed and/or is well served by public transport”*.

Paragraph 139 sets out a number of measures which plans should achieve when defining Green Belt boundaries. These include:

- ensuring consistency with the development plans strategy for meeting identified requirements for sustainable development;
- not include land which is necessary to keep permanently open;
- be able to demonstrate that Green Belt boundaries can endure beyond the plan period;
- clearly define boundaries using readily recognisable physical features that are likely to be permanent.

Through the preparation of the emerging Local Plan and setting strategic policies, Solihull has determined that exceptional circumstances exist to justify several amendments to existing Green

Belt boundaries. This is primarily to address the housing need. It has been determined that there is insufficient urban land to deliver the Council's housing need over the plan period. In addition, land must be released from the Green Belt to assist in meeting the needs of Birmingham City, which adjoins Solihull.

In accordance with the requirements of the NPPF, the LPA should be focusing its review of the Green Belt on previously developed land and / or land that is well served by public transport. Part of the evidence base informing the review is the Solihull Strategic Green Belt Assessment carried out by Atkins in July 2016. This split the borough into a number of 'broad areas' and 'refined parcels'.

Refined parcels were those areas of the Green Belt adjoining or adjacent to built-up areas, including inset villages. Broad areas were defined as Green Belt land that is not located on the edge of, or adjacent to, large built up areas, or those areas adjoining authorities. Physical features were used to determine the boundaries of areas/parcels. Each parcel was subsequently assessed against the first four purposes of the Green Belt.

It was noted in the assessment that purpose 5 was excluded from the assessment as *"by virtue of its designation, all Green Belt land makes an equal contribution to this purpose and therefore inclusion of this purpose would add no value"*.

Wyndley Garden Centre falls within Refined Parcel 38 ("RP38"). RP38 comprises land to the west of the Grand Union Canal, east and north of the A4141 Warwick Road and south of the B4101 Kenilworth Road. It is predominantly formed of agricultural fields but includes the Garden Centre and a number of residential dwellings and some commercial buildings. The assessment concluded that the area performs well against Green Belt purposes 3 and 4.

Meeting Housing Need

Providing homes for all is a fundamental part of the emerging Local Plan. It recognises that the population is ageing and projects that 65% of household growth in the period to 2036 will be households aged 65 and over and single households. It is also projected that by 2036, 46% of all households will be single people or couples aged 65 and over. The Plan recognises the need for more specialist and supported housing.

Draft policy P4 sets out the approach to meeting housing needs and P4E considers housing for older and disabled people. It sets out that new housing developments will be expected to provide a mix of dwelling size and type to meet identified needs of older people in accordance with current assessments of housing need and evidence. The policy goes on to set out expectations in respect of proposals for specialist housing for older people and proposals for care homes. It also sets out circumstances where flexibility will be applied to determine the suitability of proposals for housing for the elderly.

The policy says that further detail and guidance for delivery of P4E will be set out in a Supplementary Planning Document; Meeting Housing Needs. We understand that an up-to-date version of this document is not yet available.

Notwithstanding this, the evidence base informing housing policies includes the Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA), dated October 2020. The HEDNA considered the housing needs for older and disabled persons and recommended that from 2020-2036, there is a need for Solihull to plan for around:

- 2,000 housing units with support (sheltered/retirement housing);
- 620 additional housing units with care (e.g. extra-care);
- 1,250 additional care bed spaces; and
- 700 dwellings to be for wheelchair users.

The HEDNA concludes that the *“findings suggest that there is a clear need for the supply of both accessible and adaptable dwellings over the plan period”*.

Suitability of Wyndley Garden Centre for Green Belt Release

Wyndley Garden Centre is a visually well contained, previously developed, site located within the Green Belt. As noted above, a full application for the site’s redevelopment to provide an extra care facility is currently under consideration by the Borough Council.

The site is extensively screened by existing mature and well-established trees and hedgerows along all of its boundaries, but particularly along the northern, eastern and southern boundaries. The Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) supporting the application concludes that this screening reduces the extent to which the site itself contributes to the wider ‘openness’ of the Green Belt. The LVA also concludes that there are limited opportunities to view the site from surrounding public locations due to the nature of the landscape and overlapping effects of trees and hedges. This is supported by a series of photomontages from the most visible public vantage points, of which there are few.

The viewpoint photographs show that the existing buildings have a significant effect on visual openness as a result of their very light colour. The photomontages show that some of the proposed development would also be visible in the views from the wider landscape. Whilst the buildings would be taller, their facades and roofs would feature darker, muted, materials including bricks and tiles. This means that the proposed buildings would be much more visually recessive (i.e. more difficult to see) than the existing.

The photomontages also provide a comparative view of the site when viewed in the context of development at year 0, and with the planting of heavy standard trees, and then once the planting has established at year 15. The photomontages demonstrate that the views of the proposed development would largely be limited to roof line views with the bulk of the building being screened by existing and proposed vegetation along the boundaries. By year 15 however once the new vegetation has established, the development will be screened from view almost entirely.

The LVA concludes that overall, development of the scheme would have a neutral effect in the visual openness of the wider Green Belt, arising from the combination of these visual factors. We append to these representations, a copy of the Planning Statement and LVA which support the planning application.

As noted above, exceptional circumstances are required to amend Green Belt boundaries. These have been established through the production of strategic policies and a recognition that there is insufficient urban land within the Borough to meet the housing need. To address this, the local plan review proposes to amend the Green Belt boundaries and remove some land from the Green Belt and allocate for development.

Wyndley Garden Centre formed part of parcel RP38 in the Strategic Green Belt Assessment. This is a refined parcel which scored highly against Green Belt purposes 3 and 4 and therefore relatively highly overall. This is somewhat inevitable considering the area of land it covered. If the area were to be broken down into smaller parcels, different assessment outcomes would have been generated for some areas, in particular if the assessment considered the Garden Centre site in isolation.

We have concerns around the methodology adopted for assessing the Green Belt in general. We think that the Council needs to undertake a more detailed analysis of the Green Belt now, to ensure it has an appropriate evidence base to rely on when it comes to examining the emerging plan. The largest parcels will undoubtedly perform and fulfil at least one or more of the purposes of the Green Belt.

Given that the LPA used the results of this study to identify those parts of the Green Belt which might be capable of being released and allocated for development, it does not seem appropriate to set the analysis at such a broad brush scale. The Council is at risk of missing opportunities to release suitable/more suitable sites from the Green Belt (i.e. ones which make little to no contribution to the purposes of the Green Belt, or less contribution than others) simply because they are located within larger parcels which the Council concludes perform strongly against the purposes. A finer grain approach might yield different outcomes.

Avison Young has undertaken an assessment of the way in which the site performs against the purposes of the Green Belt and concludes that the release of the site would not undermine those purposes. In particular, we observe that:

- The site does not extend into open countryside but is previously developed land. It is well contained with strong, visually defined, defensible boundaries which would check the unrestricted sprawl of development from the site and safeguard the countryside from encroachment. The site therefore makes little contribution to purposes 1 and 3 of the Green Belt.
- The site does not form part of a key gap between neighbouring settlements. Its existing development does not merge towns and so makes no contribution to purpose 2.
- The site does not form part of the setting or special character of an historic town and so makes no contribution to purpose 4.
- As noted in the Strategic Green Belt Assessment, purpose 5 is considered redundant in the assessment of Green Belt where exceptional circumstances exist to justify an amendment to its boundaries.

The above confirms that the site makes no contribution to the purposes of the Green Belt. The release of the developed site from the Green Belt would therefore have no adverse impacts on the integrity of the Green Belt and would align with the requirements of NPPF paragraph 138 which says that where release is necessary, first consideration should be given to previously developed land.

Due to the contained and readily defined nature of the site, the new Green Belt boundaries could be amended in this location in line with the sites existing boundaries which are defined by Warwick Road and mature well-established soft landscaping. In accordance with NPPF paragraph 139 the removal of this site from the Green Belt would:

- ensure consistency with the development plan strategy for meeting identified requirements for sustainable development by releasing a developed site to enable the delivery of specialist housing for the elderly to meet an identified need and support policy P4A;
- not include land which is necessary to keep permanently open, as demonstrated by our assessment of the way in which the site performs against the purposes of the Green Belt;
- enable further extra care development to be delivered on a previously developed site outside of the Green Belt which would help to ensure that the Green Belt boundaries can endure beyond the plan period; and
- follow existing and readily recognisable physical features that are likely to be permanent so that it has clearly defined boundaries.

Notwithstanding the above, the draft Local Plan proposes to remove a large area of land to the south of Knowle from the Green Belt. The site is referred to as “Arden Triangle” and is proposed, under draft policy KN2, for Green Belt removal and allocation to provide 600 dwellings, the redevelopment of the Arden Academy secondary school and a new primary school. The site covers an area of circa 46ha and would bring the urban edge up to Warwick Road. The Garden Centre site would be adjacent to the revisions to Green Belt boundaries that are proposed currently.

Whilst the proposed allocation has not yet progressed through examination, it indicates the direction of travel by the LPA and demonstrates SMBC’s conclusion that the removal of this land from the Green Belt would not significantly harm the purposes of the Green Belt. Upon adoption of the plan and the proposed allocation, the openness of the Green Belt in the immediate area will have fundamentally changed and the site will be viewed as previously developed land adjacent to the urban edge.

We consider that the garden centre site would, in isolation and without consideration of the proposed large Green Belt release adjacent, provide an ideal previously developed site to release from the Green Belt and allocate for extra care development. As we have demonstrated, it makes little contribution to the purposes of the Green Belt and its removal could be undertaken in line with the requirements of the NPPF for redefining Green Belt boundaries. When considered in the context of the adjacent allocation, the site would become a small extension to the built edge and one which can be contained by the site’s defined boundaries.

Supporting the Delivery of Strategic Policies

The emerging local plan review recognises the need to deliver specialist housing for the elderly. This is informed by the evidence base, including the HEDNA, which projects that there will continue to be an aging population throughout the plan and there will be a need for SMBC to plan to deliver circa 4,570 units for older and disabled persons.

The draft local plan seeks to achieve this objective in several ways. The fourth paragraph of emerging policy P4E states that all developments of 300 dwellings or more must provide specialist housing or care bed spaces in accordance with the Council’s most up to date statement of need on older persons accommodation. Furthermore, several of the proposed allocations refer to the suitability of the sites for care development.

Cinnamon is concerned that this approach to the delivery of care needs will not achieve the Council's targets for the provision of specialist accommodation or the best outcomes for the occupiers of such accommodation. The juxtaposition of the following leads Cinnamon to reach this conclusion:

- the absence of any specific allocations for C2 assisted living communities / care villages;
- the Council's intention to seek provision of affordable housing in respect of care schemes; and,
- the provision of ancillary facilities in association with extra care facilities which deliver health and wellbeing benefits over and above the provision of accommodation only.

The above are explained in more detail as follows:

Absence of Specific C2 / Extra Care Allocations

As currently drafted, the emerging local plan includes a general "catch all" policy on the provision of care accommodation on sites delivering over 300 dwellings. It also suggests that some sites could be suitable for care uses.

However, in the absence of any sites that are allocated for C2 / extra care only, landowners / developers will always have to consider the land value generated by C3 housing (including the provision of affordable / social housing) and the land value generated by care development. This is particularly relevant to the following point around affordable housing.

Affordable Housing

At present, C2 uses do not attract the requirement to deliver "affordable housing". However, the Council is seeking to change that through the adoption of its emerging Local Plan. Under the current proposals, any care related development which counts towards the Council's supply of housing would be liable to deliver affordable housing.

Cinnamon has significant concerns about this approach as a matter of principle. In simple terms, there are two elements to the cost of delivering care. One is the capital cost of buying land and building care accommodation. The second is the ongoing cost of providing care within that accommodation.

The requirement to deliver "affordable care" places an ongoing financial burden on care operators which has the potential to render the sector unviable. The Council has not provided any information on how affordable care provision would be delivered or what the obligations on the operators of care villages / extra care facilities would be. We anticipate that this detail will be included in a supplementary planning document published in due course. Cinnamon reserve the right to comment on the details of this document at that time.

What is certain is that the requirement to deliver affordable care will provide a significant additional financial burden on care home developers and operators. This will make land in C2 use less valuable than land in C3 use. Developers and landowners will be financially disadvantaged by the delivery of C2 facilities and consequently will attempt to offer the minimum required to satisfy policy.

Ancillary Facilities in Extra Care Schemes

Cinnamon's extra care schemes include ancillary facilities which are used by all residents. A list of these is provided on the first page of this letter. All of these amenities contribute to creating a community within Cinnamon's sites. This ensures that their facilities go beyond the delivery of accommodation and care. The ancillary facilities deliver very significant health and wellbeing benefits through both engagement in the activities provided and the sense of community created.

The cost providing ancillary community facilities within Cinnamon's schemes is significant. This cost further widens the gap between the land values generated by C3 (including affordable housing) and C2 (including affordable care and ancillary facilities).

The effect of the above is that Cinnamon and similar operators will be "priced out" of the market for land by C3 developers. In order to have any chance of being financially competitive they will not be able to deliver associated facilities. It will also be very difficult for operators to deliver care, because there will not be space in which to do so.

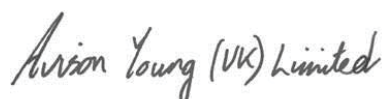
The Council's current approach will create a "bare minimum" approach to the provision of care facilities, the impact of which will be a significant reduction in the amount of amenity space for residents to enjoy on sites and the exclusion of any ancillary facilities. This would be a retrograde step back to old style "age restricted retirement flats" which had no communal facilities and verify little, if any, care. The use of such units is C3. We don't believe the Council intends to create such a situation, but we must point out what is likely to occur.

Cinnamon maintains that this matter can be resolved easily through the allocation of sites specifically for C2 / assisted living uses. Such allocations would remove competition from C3 developers and would provide the financial flexibility needed to deliver exemplar healthcare schemes with associated health and wellbeing benefits. We appreciate that the Council has undertaken to test each scheme against policy on a site by site basis, through viability assessments to see what affordable housing of CIL could be delivered. However, this would be a failure of strategy and a waste of the local authority's time and money when compared with simply allocating sites for C2 use only. Testing each site would slow down the delivery of accommodation with care provision against a background of exponential growth in the need for it. This would jeopardise the policy ambitions the local authority has in encouraging the expansion of provision in this area.

The Wyndley site is a perfect example of a site that could accommodate C2 / assisted living only, hence our request that it be allocated specifically for C2 / assisted living use.

For the reasons set out above we conclude that the site should be removed from the Green Belt and allocated for extra care accommodation in the emerging Solihull Local Plan Review. We would be grateful if you could please confirm receipt of this submission and direct any correspondence to Emily Hill (emily.hill@avisonyoung.com) of this office

Yours faithfully



Avison Young (UK) Limited

Appendix I
Planning Statement Supporting PL/2020/01993/PPFL



Planning Statement

Detailed Planning Application for the Demolition
of Existing Garden Centre and Erection of an Extra
Care Facility

Wyndley Garden Centre, Warwick Road, Knowle, B93 0DX

Knowle Care Ltd

September 2020

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Appendices

Appendix I Copy of Local Engagement Letter

Prepared By: Emily Hill, Associate

Status: Rev 1

Draft Date: September 2020

For and on behalf of Avison Young (UK) Limited

1. Introduction

1.1 Avison Young is instructed by Knowle Care Ltd, part of the Cinnamon Care Group "Cinnamon" to prepare, submit and manage a planning application for the creation of an extra care facility, on land at the Wyndley Garden Centre located on Warwick Road, Knowle, Solihull.

About Cinnamon

1.2 Cinnamon is an experienced and highly regarded provider of care and accommodation for older people. It runs numerous care and retirement facilities around the UK and is in the process of bringing more schemes forward.

1.3 Cinnamon's aim is to help older people to live happier, healthier, more fulfilled lives and give peace of mind to their families by providing expert 24-hour care and support in high-quality built environments. By providing such facilities and support, Cinnamon want to increase availability of quality accommodation for older people to meet the increasing need in the adult health and social care sector.

1.4 The provision of appropriate accommodation, care and support for older people requires the utmost attention to detail, passion and dedication. This is reflected in Cinnamon's senior management team who collectively impart a wealth of experience to the design, build and operation of each individual new purpose-built village.

1.5 The business is notable because it promotes care facilities through the planning and construction process and then runs the facilities once the schemes are complete. This gives it the unique experience of integrating facilities into existing communities during the construction and operational phases.

1.6 Cinnamon provides the very best in care and retirement accommodation and facilities. Its schemes are located in beautifully designed settings with stunning facilities and exceptional service.

1.7 Cinnamon recently obtained planning permission for a new care home and extra care apartments at Barston Lane, Eastcote. The scheme is currently under construction and is due to open in early 2021.

Summary of Proposals

1.8 This application seeks detailed planning permission for the demolition of the existing garden centre buildings and redevelopment of the site to create an extra care facility. The facility would comprise:

- a Village Care Centre ("VCC");
- 39 extra care, one and two bedroom care suites;
- 46 extra care, one and two bedroom care apartments;
- 89 parking spaces;
- Communal facilities; and
- Associated gardens and landscaping.

1.9 The development is described as follows:-

"Detailed planning application for the demolition of the existing garden centre and associated buildings, and the erection of an extra care facility (Use Class C2) comprising: a village care centre; 39no. one and two bedroom care suites; 46no. one and two bedroom care apartments; and associated works, including car parking, access, landscaping and associated engineering works".

Submission Documents

1.10 In addition to this Planning Statement, the application is supported by the following documents and drawings:-

- Detailed Planning Application and CIL Forms;
- Site Location Plan, existing and proposed site layout plans, proposed floor plans and elevations, all prepared by PRC Architects;
- Design and Access Statement, prepared by PRC Architects;
- Care Need Assessment, prepared by Avison Young;
- Alternative Site Assessment, prepared by Avison Young;
- Landscape and Visual Appraisal, prepared by FPCR;
- Ecological Appraisal, prepared by James Johnston Ecology;
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment, prepared by SJ Stephens Associates;
- Archaeological Desk Based Assessment, prepared by TVAS North Midlands;
- Flood Risk Assessment and Outline Drainage Strategy, prepared by Arc Engineers;
- Transport Statement and Framework Travel Plan, prepared by M-EC;
- Phase 1 Desk Study Report, prepared by Solmek Ltd;
- Phase 2 Site Investigation Report, prepared by Solmek Ltd;
- Energy Strategy, prepared by Harniss Consulting; and
- External Lighting layout, prepared by Harniss Consulting.

Report Format

1.11 The remainder of this Statement is structured as follows:-

- **Section 2** considers the site and surrounding area.
- **Section 3** considers the planning history for the site which includes a recent appeal decision within the Borough which is of relevance.

- **Section 4** explains the development proposals.
- **Section 5** explains the engagement with the local community and interested parties that has been undertaken.
- **Section 6** considers development plan policy and other material considerations, including the National Planning Policy Framework.
- **Section 7** provides an overview of the C2 Use Class and the C2 credentials of Cinnamon's operational model.
- **Section 8** considers the planning merits of the scheme, as a matter of principle, by reference to development plan policy; Government guidance, the planning history for the site and the use class proposed.
- **Section 9** considers planning merits in respect of the technical issues raised by the proposals.
- **Section 10** considers economic matters and provides information about why the Garden Centre will cease trading in due course.
- **Section 11** considers planning obligations.
- **Section 12** provides a summary of our conclusions.

2. Site and Surroundings

2.1 The application site comprises the Wyndley Garden centre, located on the eastern side of Warwick Road (A4141). It is situated to the south of Knowle, approximately 0.8km from the village centre. The garden centre is currently trading but is due to close due to financial viability reasons (see section 10).

2.2 The site covers an area of approximately 2.5 ha (6.2 acres) and is roughly rectangular in shape. It is bound to the west by Warwick Road, to the north and east by agricultural fields, and to the south by residential properties.

2.3 The application site currently accommodates the following built development:

- **Indoor sales area** – the main building which is viewed upon entering the site is located centrally within the site and is used for the display of goods. It is a steel framed, glass and composite panel clad building and accommodates the garden centre shop and café. It occupies an area of 1,889 sqm and has a ridge height of 4.96m.
- **Large Greenhouse** – a second steel framed glass clad building is located towards the rear of the site. It is used for growing and displaying plants for sale. The greenhouse has a floor area of approximately 2,961 sqm and a ridge height of 3.93m.
- **Other covered areas** - a number of other covered areas are situated across the site within the hardstanding areas and around the perimeter of the shop and greenhouse. These comprise portacabin and metal shipping container style buildings and are largely used for storage purposes. Plastic polytunnels and tents / marquees are also located within the hardstanding area and numerous sheds and garden buildings are situated across the site, which have been constructed for display purposes. These other covered areas have a combined floorspace of 1,563 sqm.
- **Outside sales area** – to the east and south of the main garden centre building is an area of hardstanding which provides the outdoor sales area for plants and other outdoor goods. This extends to 3,385 sqm.
- **External storage** – to the north of the steel framed buildings is an area of hardstanding which provides an external storage and servicing area. This is accessed via a dedicated route from the car park which runs along the northern boundary of the site. It covers an area of circa 1,027 sqm.
- **Customer car parking** – 125 no. car parking spaces are provided for customer and staff use. The parking area and internal access routes cover an area of circa 4,090 sqm.
- **Hardstanding** – the car parking spaces, outdoor sales area, external storage and servicing are provided within a large area of hardstanding. It covers a combined area of 9,198 sqm.

2.4 Figure 1 below shows the extent of built form across the site. Approximately 15,611 sqm of the site is covered by buildings and hardstanding, which means that the developed area occupies 62% of the site.

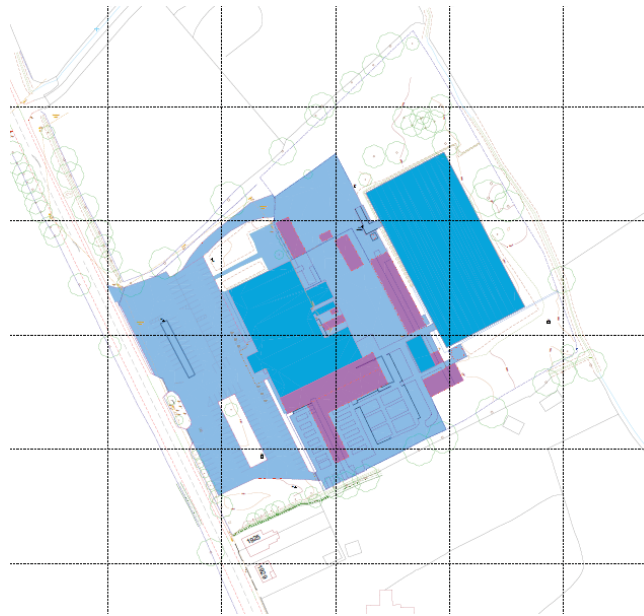


Figure 1: Existing Development on site

- 2.5 The site is heavily screened by existing mature planting along all of its boundaries, but particularly along the northern, eastern and southern boundaries. The existing buildings are most visible from Warwick Road, when passing the site, and there are glimpsed views from Knowle Locks on the Grand Union Canal to the east of the site. The buildings can also be seen from the residential dwellings to the west of the site off Station Road due to the rising topography of the land. Station Road, whilst private, is a public right of way.
- 2.6 In the wider context, the site is located within the West Midlands Green Belt to the south east of Solihull. A small number of residential properties are located within the immediate vicinity of the site, accessed off Warwick Road, with the urban settlements of Knowle and Copt Heath to the north and Bentley Heath and Dorridge to the west and south-west.
- 2.7 The site does not fall within a conservation area and none of the buildings or structures are locally or statutorily listed. There are listed buildings in the surrounding area. Rotton Row Farmhouse, located to the south of the site, adjacent the bend of Warwick Road and its junctions with Grove Road and Norton Green Lane, is Grade II listed (ref. 134288). The Grand Union Locks were previously Grade II listed in 1984 but they were deleted from the list in 1985 and Historic England declined to re-list them in 2009. They have been included in the local list of heritage assets. We consider heritage matters further in Section 9.
- 2.8 The site has good access to the M42 motorway (Junction 5 within a 2.3 miles drive) and Dorridge train station is located approximately 2.6km from the site. The station is operated by West Midlands Trains and provides regular access to Leamington Spa, Birmingham Moor Street and Kidderminster.
- 2.9 There are a number of key facilities for residents and staff within walking distance of the site, including the Knowle Post Office, restaurants and cafes, Tesco Metro and other retail uses along Knowle High Street. These can be accessed on foot via the existing 1.5m wide footway which runs along the eastern side of Warwick Road from the site to Knowle.

- 2.10 The local facilities can also be accessed by public transport. A bus stop is located directly adjacent to the site on Warwick Road, although this runs once weekly and lacks bus stop infrastructure. It is operated as a 'hail and ride' bus service. The next closest bus stop is located at Knowle Green Terminus along Station Road approximately 800m to the north of the site. This provides access to the hourly Solihull Circular bus routes which run to Solihull, Leamington, Kenilworth, Norton Lindsey and Balsall Common.
- 2.11 Notwithstanding the existing provision of public transport and proximity to services and facilities at Knowle, the proposed extra care facility would include a transport service for the residents which would provide trips to medical appointments, supermarkets, the local area and longer distance trips.

3. Planning History

3.1 The planning history for the site is limited to applications relating to its existing use. There have been no redevelopment proposals which are of relevance to the proposed extra care facility or the site's redevelopment. However, the planning history of other sites in the Borough is significant and is considered in the following paragraphs.

Extra Care Proposals at Catherine De Barnes

3.2 Minton Healthcare previously sought detailed planning permission for the demolition of existing buildings and the erection of 50 frail / elderly and dementia care beds (a care home), 49 care suites, 71 care apartments, 7 care cottages, and 4 care bungalows on land at Oak Farm, Hampton Lane in Catherine De Barnes. The scheme also proposed a Village Care Centre and Wellness Centre. Planning permission was refused, on the grounds of harm to the openness of the Green Belt, on 10 September 2019 (application reference PL/2019/01215/PPFL). The application was a resubmission of a similar application (ref: 2018/00781/FUL) which was also refused.

3.3 An appeal was lodged against the refusal of planning permission and an inquiry was held between 14 and 17 January 2020. On 14 February, the Inspector's decision notice dismissed the appeal (ref: APP/Q4625/W/19/3237026).

3.4 The site is of relevance to the proposals for the Wyndley Garden Centre site as it proposed the construction of extra care accommodation, in addition to a care home, within the Green Belt. The appellant referred to its proposals as a Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC). Planning law and practice establishes that each application should be considered on its own merits. There are material and site specific differences between the two applications. Nevertheless, the appeal Inspector's conclusions on the need for extra care provision in Solihull, and on the Green Belt in particular, are of relevance.

3.5 The Catherine De Barnes site is on the edge of a small village on the outskirts of Solihull. It is within the "Meriden Gap" which is part of the West Midlands Green Belt that separates Solihull and Coventry. The Meriden Gap has no special status over and above other Green Belt land and performs the same function as all Green Belt. Nevertheless, the Council makes a distinction between the gap and other parts of the Green Belt in the Borough.

3.6 Part of the site comprises previously developed land which is used for housing, offices, light industrial uses and caravan storage. The majority of the site is undeveloped.

3.7 The main issues considered by the Inspector were:

- The effect of the proposal on the openness and purposes of the Green Belt; and
- Whether the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, would be clearly outweighed by other considerations, so as to amount to the very special circumstances required to justify the proposals.

- 3.8 The Appellant and Council accepted that the proposed development constituted “inappropriate” development in the Green Belt and agreed that very special circumstances, which clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, must be demonstrated in order for the proposals to be considered acceptable.
- 3.9 The Inspector attached substantial weight to the Green Belt harm arising from the inappropriateness of the development, and found the reduction in openness and encroachment into the strategically important Meriden Gap to be “very significant” and “significant” respectively. She concluded these to be three separate and important strands of substantial and permanent harm.
- 3.10 In addition to the main issues, the Inspector identified a number of “other considerations”, which included: need, availability of other sites, provision of housing, employment, and social and wellbeing benefits of the proposals. The Appellant asserted that these constituted very special circumstances. We summarise the conclusions reached in respect of these below.

Need

- 3.11 The Appellant and Council adopted different methodologies to calculate the need for housing or care for older people. However, both concluded that there was a clear need. The parties identified a shortfall of combined extra care and bed spaces of 997 (Appellant’s figure) and 663 (LPAs figure) in 2019 and predicted a continued shortfall of 549 (Appellant’s figure) and 453 (LPAs figure) by 2024; and rising to 913 (Appellant’s figure) and 704 (LPAs figure) by 2029. The Appellant and LPA gave the matter of need substantial and significant weight respectively. Despite the difference in figures, due to the extent of the shortfall and the weight that both parties attached to it, the Inspector saw no need to investigate the areas of disagreement.
- 3.12 The Inspector concluded that there is a clear shortfall in older persons accommodation now and up to 2029 and that the delivery of 50 care beds and 131 extra care units would contribute significantly to the shortfall, even if the proposal caters for a predominantly private leasehold market. Substantial weight was therefore attached to this matter.
- 3.13 There have been no material changes in circumstances (i.e. the grant of permission for additional extra care units) since the Inspector reached her conclusions. Accordingly, need for care provision remains a significant material consideration that weighs in favour of the grant of planning permission.

Availability of Other Sites

- 3.14 The Appellant submitted a sequential test as part of its application. The exercise considered whether there were any other sites within Solihull Borough and outside of the Green Belt which could accommodate the proposed development. The Appellants concluded that there were no other suitable, available or achievable sites, even when applying a flexible approach. The Council did not contest this evidence, nor did its witness point to any other suitable sites during the Inquiry.
- 3.15 The site search considered sites between 0.6 and 0.8 ha for a care home and sites between 1 and 2.4 ha for extra care. The Inspector agreed that whilst care homes and extra care units could be constructed on smaller sites, they would not provide the same level of amenities as the CCRC proposals. She was therefore satisfied

that there are no available alternative sites outside the Green Belt at the time of the inquiry (i.e. at January 2020) and attached significant weight to this matter.

- 3.16 There have been no material changes in circumstances (i.e. suitable, alternative, sites becoming available) since the Inspector reached her conclusions. Accordingly, the absence of sequentially preferable sites, outside the Green Belt, which could deliver the undisputed need for care is a significant material consideration that weighs in favour of the grant of planning permission.

Provision of Housing

- 3.17 It was agreed by both parties at the Inquiry that the Council could not demonstrate a 5 year supply of housing land. The Appellants argued the supply to be 4.12 years and the Council asserted it to be 4.64 years. The Inspector noted that the difference was not substantial and that in any event, the tilted balance would only apply if very special circumstances were considered to exist. Notwithstanding this, the provision of 131 extra care units was considered to be of significant weight and the Inspector considered the consequential effect of freeing up existing and potentially under occupied housing to the market, to also weigh in favour.
- 3.18 We conclude that significant weight should be given to the provision of the extra care units proposed and to the effect of releasing under occupied housing as retired residents move into the new accommodation.

Employment, Social and Wellbeing Benefits

- 3.19 The Inspector concluded that the proposals would be of significant benefit to the economy through the provision of new jobs during the construction and operational phases. This was despite some job loss resulting from the proposed loss of existing small scale units from the site.
- 3.20 The Inspector noted that there was no dispute from the Council that the CCRC proposals would bring social and wellbeing benefits and referenced the ExtraCare Charitable Trust Research Report (dated March 2019), which details significant improvements in the health and wellbeing of residents living in extra care facilities, in addition to lowering levels of depression and loneliness. She also referenced the assertion of the report that extra care provides savings to the NHS. The Inspector did agree with the Council that these benefits are not limited to CCRC developments and that the benefits relate to all types of C2 facilities but nevertheless concluded that the benefits of a CCRC delivered on the site would be similar and potentially greater than other basic C2 facilities, particularly given the supplementary facilities provided. The Inspector found the social and wellbeing benefits to have significant weight.
- 3.21 We conclude that the economic, social and wellbeing benefits of the CCRC proposed are a significant material consideration weighing in favour of the grant of planning permission.

The Green Belt Balance

- 3.22 The Inspector attached substantial weight to the need for the proposal and significant weight to the other considerations. When weighing against the substantial harm to the Green Belt and permanent impacts on openness, the Inspector found the other considerations to result in *"a very finely balanced decision"*. She noted that in order for very special circumstances to exist, the other considerations must clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and must do so decisively, not just marginally. The Inspector did not find this to be the

case and concluded therefore that very special circumstances had not been demonstrated and so the appeal was dismissed.

- 3.23 In Section 7 we consider the differences between the Catherine De Barnes scheme and Cinnamon's proposals and explain why the Green Belt tests that the proposed scheme must satisfy are different, and easier to satisfy.

Relevance to Cinnamon's Proposals

- 3.24 In summary, the appeal was dismissed on the basis that very special circumstances did not exist to clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt. The Appeal Inspector concluded, only five months ago, that there is significant need for extra care proposals in the Borough and that there are no alternative sites (within 0.6 and 2.4ha) outside of the Green Belt which could accommodate CCRC proposals. The Inspector also confirmed that the extra care units would contribute towards addressing the lack of a housing supply, by way of a net increase in the number of units and freeing up existing housing, and found all of these matters to weigh strongly in favour of the grant of permission when applying the (more onerous) Green Belt policy tests.

4. Proposals

4.1 This planning application seeks detailed permission for an extra care facility and development described as:

“Full planning application for the demolition of the existing garden centre and associated buildings, and the erection of an extra care facility (Use Class C2) comprising: a village care centre; 39no. one and two bedroom care suites; 46no. one and two bedroom care apartments; and associated works, including car parking, access, landscaping and associated engineering works”

4.2 The proposals would provide 24 hour care and accommodation for elderly residents. The proposed use of the extra care accommodation and the rest of the site is therefore C2, as defined by the Use Class Order. This is explained in more detail in Section 7.

4.3 As set out in Section 1, the proposals would see the redevelopment of the Wyndley Garden Centre which is currently trading but due to close for viability reasons.

4.4 The application seeks planning permission for the demolition of all existing buildings and structures and the redevelopment of the site to provide extra care accommodation. The proposed site layout plan (ref. 11032_PL_12_105) proposes the construction of nine buildings which are arranged in clusters around the site and forming central courtyards of car parking and landscaping.

4.5 The site layout has been developed with the existing developed nature of the site in mind. The proposed buildings have been confined to the area of the site that currently accommodates buildings and hardstanding, although excluding the area of the site that accommodates the large greenhouse. This defines the developable area, with the remainder of the site to accommodate amenity space and improved ecological and wildlife habitat areas.

Village Care Centre and Care Suites

4.6 The Village Care Centre (VCC) is located in the north-east corner of the developed area of the site. It comprises a single L-shaped building that is three storey in height. Whilst taller than the apartments, it sits at a lower level to the frontage blocks and so will be largely obscured from Warwick Road.

4.7 The shared services and facilities for the community are provided at ground floor level, alongside five care suites. These comprise:

- Reception – residents and visitors will be assured of a warm welcome and on-going support and guidance through the services of the reception team. The reception is located at the main entrance and the reception team offer a range of concierge services such as booking transport and meals, directing visitors and providing general information on, for example, social activities and events.
- Restaurant – the delivery of a nutritious healthy menu is essential to the well-being of residents and is at the core of all of Cinnamon’s facilities. The restaurant provides the opportunity for residents and their family and friends to enjoy high quality, homestyle food and a drink from the bar. The hospitality team are

able to prepare and deliver meals to meet the dietary needs of all residents, including those requiring modified diets or wishing to meet religious or cultural practices.

- Lounges – having space to gather and relax, the lounges enable residents to meet with fellow residents, family and friends and participate in social events and activities.
- Private Dining Room – to enable residents to host family meals or celebrate with residents, the private dining room is available to be booked for special occasions.
- Café Bar – residents and visitors can frequent this area and enjoy morning coffee, brunch, afternoon tea or snacks, which are readily available throughout the day, whilst socialising with other residents and team members.
- Arts & Crafts Studio – where residents can take part in group activities, including arts and crafts, learn new skills, enjoy their own hobby or share it with friends.
- Gymnasium and Exercise studio – with equipment designed for the client group and exercise designed for older people.
- Treatment rooms – providing opportunities for various treatments for the residents for example from a visiting doctor or physiotherapist.
- Hair & beauty salon – with a wide range of services and treatments, providing the opportunity to be pampered.
- Library – residents can enjoy the peace and quiet of the library to enjoy the collection of books and magazines or partake in a game of Scrabble or bridge

4.8 In addition to the above, the staff areas, commercial kitchen, storage and plant areas, and domiciliary care office are also located at ground floor.

4.9 The upper floors of the building accommodate care suites and communal assisted spa bathrooms. The building accommodates 9no. two-bedroom suites, and 30no. one-bedroom suites.

4.10 All of the suites are accessed internally from wide corridors within the VCC building. Upper floors are accessed via three stair cores or by lifts. All of the suites have private outdoor amenity space, by way of patios at ground floor and balconies at upper levels.

4.11 The suites provide an intermediate type of accommodation which do not have fully-functional kitchens (no ovens or hobs). The residents of these suites are fully catered for within the centre. The suites do have their own kitchenette spaces though in addition to a bedroom with en-suite and lounge/dining areas.

4.12 Each care suite has a 24 hour emergency call facility accessed via call units or personal neck/wrist alarms. Equipment is also available to provide additional re-assurance to residents, such as fall monitors, light sensors and wander monitors.

4.13 To the rear of the VCC building is a patio area which provides an outdoor seating and eating space. This provides an external extension to the restaurant and overlooks the large amenity lawn area.

4.14 A total of 37no. car parking spaces are proposed adjacent to the VCC building, with 15no of these adjacent to the main entrance, and 22no. located to the north of the building. A further 20no. spaces are also proposed in this location which will provide for overflow "event" parking to prevent parking on Warwick Road.

Extra Care Apartments

4.15 The main 'village' comprises eight buildings which are proposed in three cluster courtyards. These accommodate the extra care apartments which are designed in 'maisonette' style. The location and orientation of the buildings creates high levels of natural surveillance and resident interaction which are key to the success of the development. All of the buildings are two storey in height and each has a similar floorplate mirrored at ground and first floor.

4.16 The apartments are designed for residents who wish to self-cater and offer more generous and independent accommodation than a care suite. They comprise one or two bedrooms, a kitchen, living and dining area, bathroom, and en-suite to the main bedroom.

4.17 The residents will benefit from the full range of care and support services which are personalised to their changing needs and also will have access to the shared communal facilities within the VCC building.

4.18 **Block A** is located in the north-west corner of the site. It is comprised of three apartment blocks with Blocks A1 and A2 being two of the predominant buildings viewed when first accessing the site.

- Block A1 accommodates 4no. two-bedroom extra care apartments;
- Block A2 accommodates 2no. two-bedroom and 2no. one-bedroom extra care apartments;
- Block A3 accommodates 8no. two-bedroom extra care apartments.

4.19 Parking spaces are proposed adjacent to the buildings, with 20no. parking spaces, including 2no. disabled spaces, provided within cluster block A. All of the parking spaces have level and direct access to the buildings they serve.

4.20 **Block B** is located in the south-west corner of the site. It is formed of two apartment blocks which are accessed off an internal estate road upon entering the site. Block B1 is located adjacent the Warwick Road boundary and therefore forms the third principal building viewed when accessing the site.

- Block B1 accommodates 8no. two-bedroom extra care apartments;
- Block B2 accommodates 6no. two-bedroom and 2no. one-bedroom extra care apartments.

4.21 A total of 16no. parking spaces are proposed within cluster block B, including 2no. disabled spaces. These have level and direct access to the buildings they serve.

4.22 **Block C** is located within the south-east corner of the developed area of the site. It is formed of three separate buildings which are accessed off the main estate road within the site.

- Block C1 accommodates 8no. two-bedroom extra care apartments;

- Block C2, which comprises two separate buildings, accommodates 4no. two-bedroom and 2no. one-bedroom extra care apartments.

4.23 A total of 16no. parking spaces are proposed within cluster block C. These have level and direct access to the buildings they serve.

4.24 All of the apartments have private access at ground floor level. The ground floor apartments have level access directly into the accommodation, and first floor apartments have level access into a private hallway with staircase and lift to the upper level. Each apartment also has its own private amenity outdoor space in the form of external patios at ground floor and balconies at the upper floor.

Connectivity

4.25 All of the buildings are connected through level footpaths which run through the site and connect to the shared amenity spaces. These provide safe pedestrian routes throughout the site and encourage and enable exercise and movement through the landscaped areas.

Landscaping

4.26 To enhance the rural setting of the site and ensure it harmonises with its surroundings, extensive soft landscaping and open space is proposed across the site.

4.27 An illustrative landscaping strategy and vision is set out within the Design and Access Statement (DAS) and landscape masterplan drawing (ref: 11032_PL_12_100). It is also supported by a series of sections which show how the proposed planting will grow and screen the development at: establishment/up to year 5; at year 10; and at year 15.

4.28 The landscaping strategy is based on six landscape character areas:

- The Entrance – which runs along the western boundary of the site and seeks to filter views from the road.
- The Residential Blocks A, B and C – which intends to promote a feeling of inclusiveness, safety and security across the site.
- The Village Care Centre and Lawn – the priority of which is to create an environment that is accessible and interesting throughout the whole year.
- The Community Area – which seeks to improve and strengthen community pride and foster connections through shared involvement in garden activities.
- Ecology – which seeks to retain and enhance existing habitats to provide contact with nature.

4.29 These are described in further detail within the DAS.

4.30 The strategy intends to retain the vast majority of trees along the site boundaries, removing only those that are of very poor quality and require removal as part of site management, or a limited number of low quality trees that require removal to facilitate the development.

- 4.31 The trees to be retained presently filter views into the site and so the proposal intends to supplement and enhance this through the planting of new native trees along the boundaries to further screen views into the site. The strategy proposes to plant predominantly semi-mature, heavy standard, and multi-stem medium trees along the northern, eastern and southern boundaries, and filter views from Warwick Road through the planting of extra heavy standard, multi-stem medium and light standard trees. Extra heavy standard and standard trees are then proposed throughout the site, in addition to hedgerows to provide focal points, structure, define spaces and create visual interest and gathering spaces.

Appearance and Materials

- 4.32 The appearance and materials of the buildings take inspiration from the traditional building methods within the locality, and especially within the village of Knowle, and reflect the character of the surrounding area. The appearance of the buildings are shown within the DAS and the elevations drawings. They show the use of a combination of brick, tile and 'Tudor' style render with wood.
- 4.33 The building materials chosen are purposefully mute in nature to ensure that the buildings better blend with the immediate environment.

Access and Parking

- 4.34 Vehicular and pedestrian access to the site is proposed off Warwick Road via the existing entrance to the site, albeit with some modification to create a single point of access and egress. An internal access road then provides direct access to the central courtyards of the different apartment buildings and VCC building, which have dedicated car parking.
- 4.35 A total of 89 car parking spaces are proposed across the site, including 4no. disabled bays. As referenced above, a further 20no. parking spaces are proposed to the rear of the VCC to provide overflow "event" parking.
- 4.36 The entrances to the buildings and apartments are clearly defined to assist with way-finding by residents and visitors. Clear signage is also proposed at the site access to direct visitors towards the buildings and parking.

Servicing and Refuse Collection

- 4.37 Bin stores are proposed across the site adjacent to the extra care apartment blocks. These will house communal bins which residents of the apartments will dispose of their rubbish into. The maintenance team will then move the bins to designated collection points on the necessary bin days for collection.
- 4.38 The residents of the extra care suites are not anticipated to generate as much waste as the residents of the apartments as they will be catered for. The maintenance and cleaning teams will collect any rubbish from the care suites on a daily basis and dispose of into a large communal bin. This will then be moved to a designated collection point by the maintenance team on collection day.
- 4.39 The location and details of the bin stores are provided on drawing 11032.PL014.
- 4.40 Any commercial, kitchen or medical waste generated by the development will be disposed of through private collection to be arranged by Cinnamon.

5. Local Engagement

5.1 Prior to the submission of the planning application, Cinnamon engaged with members of the local community and interested parties to advise them of the proposals and discuss any questions or queries that they might have.

5.2 A letter was sent to the following on 4 August 2020:

- all properties within the immediate vicinity of the site, including those properties off Warwick Road up to the built edge of Knowle to the north, and down to the bend of Warwick Road and its junctions with Grove Road and Norton Green Lane, to the south;
- Local Ward Councillors for Knowle; and
- The Knowle, Dorridge, and Bentley Heath (KDBH) Neighbourhood Forum.

5.3 A copy of the letter that was sent to the above is attached to this Statement at **Appendix 1**.

5.4 The letter invited discussions by way of telephone call or video conferencing and with Cinnamon and key members of the consultant team so that any specific matters of interest could be addressed.

5.5 In response to the letter, the team was contacted by immediate neighbours to the south of the site at 1925 Warwick Road, and Ward Councillor, Mr A Rebeiro, who wished to discuss the proposals further with us via video conferencing. Calls were held on 18 and 20 August respectively and representatives from Cinnamon, PRC Architects, Meedhurst Project Management and Avison Young attended.

5.6 During both calls, Cinnamon and its consultant team provided further information about the proposals, sharing the proposed site layout, landscape masterplan and elevational plans, and took the neighbours and Councillor through the design and layout rational. The team also provided further information about Cinnamon and discussed how the site would be operated.

5.7 The team then responded to a number of queries which had been put to us in advance of the calls so that we could ensure the appropriate members of the consultant team were on hand. Throughout the two calls, the team discussed a number of matters including:

- proximity of the proposed development to adjacent properties;
- proposed building heights;
- drainage and sewerage proposals;
- visibility along Warwick Road;
- levels of car parking;
- visual impact from views in the area; and

- landscaping.

- 5.8 The calls proved extremely helpful and were generally positive. During the call with the immediate neighbours, we identified a couple of points which the team has taken away to consider further, including some issues around existing trees along the southern boundary which are currently damaging neighbouring property. We propose to discuss this with the Council's arboricultural officer once the application has been submitted.
- 5.9 Councillor Rebeiro was keen to understand how the development might impact on immediate neighbours, what the visual impact might be from views in the wider area and the landscaping strategy and was satisfied the team had taken him through these points. He also enquired on the admissions criteria and the possible beneficial impact of more family size homes released into the local housing supply if qualifying local residents had good opportunity to move into the facility. He noted Cinnamon's intentions to ensure that the residents and the care village become integrated into the existing community.
- 5.10 Councillor Rebeiro was also keen to understand parking levels and whether the proposed level was sufficient to prevent off-site parking from all visitors and staff. The team advised that the levels proposed have been determined based on Cinnamon's experience of the demand witnessed from its operational extra care schemes in similar locations. We noted also that in addition to providing sufficient levels to meet the anticipated demand, that extra overflow provision is also to be provided which would be utilised when demand required
- 5.11 We understand that Councillor Rebeiro will be looking to set up a meeting with planning officers once the planning application has been submitted and validated, to discuss the proposals further.

6. The Development Plan, Evidence Base and Other Material Considerations

6.1 Section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 provides that planning applications must be determined in accordance with the provisions of the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

6.2 The Development Plan comprises the Solihull Local Plan, "Shaping a Sustainable Future", which was adopted by the Council on 3 December 2013, and the Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath Neighbourhood Plan, which was 'made' on 11 April 2019.

Solihull Local Plan "Shaping a Sustainable Future" (2013)

6.3 The Solihull Local Plan covers the period 2011-2028. Following its adoption, a legal challenge to the Council's decision to adopt the Plan was made, jointly, by Lioncourt Homes and Gallagher Estates Ltd. Three grounds of challenge were advanced by the Claimants:

Ground 1: The Council adopted a plan that was not supported by a figure for objectively assessed housing need, contrary to the requirements to (i) have regard to national policies issued by the Secretary of State (Section 19 (2)(a) of the 2004 Act); and (ii) adopt a sound plan (Sections 20 and 23 of the 2004 Act).

Ground 2: The Council adopted a plan without co-operating with other local planning authorities, contrary to the Duty to Co-Operate (Section 33(a) of the 2004 Act).

Ground 3: The Council adopted a plan without regard to the proper test for revising Green Belt boundaries set out in the national policy, again contrary to the requirements to have regard to national policies and adopt a sound plan.

6.1 The case was heard in the High Court in April 2014, and the judgement in respect of the case was issued on 30 April 2014. This resulted in the overall housing requirement being deleted and remitted back to the Council for reconsideration. A review of the Solihull Local Plan will address this, in addition to Phase One of HS2 now that it has Royal Assent and government backing.

6.2 The Council is progressing its review of the Solihull Local Plan and published for consultation a Draft Local Plan Review document in December 2016. A summary of the representations was then published in July 2017.

6.3 Most recently, a supplementary update to the Draft Local Plan was published, for consultation, which ran until 15 March 2019. The consultation sought to:

- provide an update on local housing need;
- assess additional call-for-sites submissions which have been submitted since the adoption of the local plan;

- refine the site selection process for assessing which sites should be included in the plan and reassess all sites to ensure that the preferred sites are appropriate;
 - publish concept masterplans for principal allocations;
 - explore a different approach to calculating how affordable housing provision should be calculated on an individual site; and
 - set out the role of the main settlements in the future and seek views on the existing pressures and future requirements for infrastructure provision.
- 6.4 A revised timetable for the Plan Review was published in January 2020 and set out that the submission draft would be published during Summer 2020. It is unclear whether this timescale has since been affected by Covid-19. Assuming the timetable remains correct, the intention is for the plan to be submitted for examination in Autumn 2020 and adoption in Spring/Summer 2021.

6.5 Whilst the publication version of the Local Plan Review is expected imminently, no draft policies have yet been submitted for examination, and therefore scrutinised. As such, it is considered to hold little weight in the decision-making process and we therefore do not consider it necessary to provide a detailed overview of the consultation material at this stage. We do note however that the consultation material proposes to allocate 46 ha of land to the south of Knowle for housing and potentially the relocation of Arden College. This area is proposed to be removed from the Green Belt to accommodate 600-750 dwellings. It extends south from the built edge of Knowle down to Grove Road and from the built edge off Station Road in the west, up to Warwick Road.

Relevant Development Plan Policies

- 6.6 All remaining policies (not relating to the legal challenge) contained within the Solihull Local Plan (2013) were adopted by the Council and remain so following the High Court judgement. The Local Plan Proposals Map (2013) confirms that the site lies within the designated Green Belt in Solihull Borough.
- 6.7 **Policy P17** of the Local Plan sets out the Council's approach to development within the countryside and the Green Belt. The policy refers to the general presumption against inappropriate development in the Green Belt and the requirement to demonstrate very special circumstances (VSC) to outweigh the inherent harm caused. The policy refers to "national policy" in respect of the Green Belt (the NPPF) in passing but does not refer to any of the exceptions to "inappropriate" development set out at paragraph 145.
- 6.8 In regard to redevelopment of previously developed land within the Green Belt, the policy states that:
- "the new use, and any associated use of land surrounding the building, should not conflict with, nor have a materially greater impact on, the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land in it, and the form, bulk and general design of the buildings shall be in keeping with their surroundings".*
- 6.9 The above is an expansion on paragraph 145 (g) (i) of the NPPF which establishes simply that replacement buildings should have *"no greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development"*. The NPPF does not establish design criteria for replacement buildings and Policy P17 does not comply with the NPPF in this regard.

- 6.10 A key challenge identified within the Local Plan is addressing the imbalance in the housing offer across the Borough. Criterion (iii) of Challenge G states that there is *“a shortage of well designed, affordable homes for older people which encourages both under occupation of larger homes and people moving into care accommodation”*.
- 6.11 The provision of care for the elderly is also identified as a key element of the strategy for the Local Plan. In regard to housing, it states that *“new housing will address the Borough’s local housing needs by providing for the needs of families and children, young persons and first time buyers, the growth in single person households, and in the need for affordable extra care accommodation for the ageing population”* (paragraph 5.4.6).
- 6.12 More generally, Local Plan policies which are relevant to these proposals include those relating to highways and access matters, climate change, the natural environment, water management, amenity, the conservation of heritage assets, health and well-being, and finally developer contributions.
- 6.13 Part (a) of **Policy P7** (Accessibility and Ease of Access) considers location and establishes that all new developments should be focused in the most accessible locations and should seek to enhance existing accessibility levels and promote ease of access. The policy establishes that housing development will be expected to meet accessibility criteria, unless justified by local circumstances.
- 6.14 Part (b) of the policy considers access from core walking, cycling, public transport and road networks and establishes that this will be expected to be:
- safe, attractive, overlooked and direct on foot, by bicycle and public transport;
 - safe for those vehicles that need access to the development;
 - assessed in accordance with Policy P15 - “Securing Design Quality” in the Local Plan.
- 6.15 **Policy P8** (Managing Demand for Travel and Reducing Congestion) establishes that all development proposals should have regard to transport efficiency and highway safety. Development will not be permitted which compromises either the smooth operation of the highway, pedestrian or cycle networks, or leads to a reduction in safety of any users of the highway or transport network. The policy also requires the provision of parking and servicing, which would be secured in accordance with the Supplementary Planning Document.
- 6.16 **Policy P9** (Climate Change) establishes that national and local targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing the generation of energy from renewable and low carbon sources will be taken into consideration when considering the location and design of new development. Developers will be expected to follow a sequential approach to carbon reduction for new development and the purpose of the policy is to ensure that all sections of the community are more resilient to the effects of climate change.
- 6.17 **Policy P10** (Natural Environment) acknowledges the economic and social benefits provided by a healthy natural environment. This will be taken into account when considering all development proposals. Developers will be expected to incorporate measures to protect, enhance and restore landscapes. The policy also seeks to conserve, enhance and restore bio-diversity and geo-diversity, including the creation of new native woodlands and other habitats. Areas of national and local importance for bio-diversity and geo-diversity will be protected where it is reasonable, proportionate and feasible to do so.

- 6.18 The policy establishes that outside designated ecological areas, developers will be expected to take full account of the nature conservation or geological value and existence of any habitats or species included in the local bio-diversity action plan. Developers will be obliged to undertake a full ecological survey and deliver a net gain enhancement to bio-diversity unless it is demonstrated that it is not appropriate or feasible to do so.
- 6.19 **Policy P11** (Water Management) states that all new development should have regard to the actions and objectives of the appropriate River Basin Management Plans in striving to protect and improve the quality of water bodies in and adjacent to the Borough. The policy recognises the need for water efficiency in all new developments. All new development is required to incorporate sustainable drainage systems, unless it is shown to be impractical to do so. Developers are obliged to ensure that adequate space is made for water within the design layout of all new developments to support the full use of SuDS.
- 6.20 On all development sites larger than 1 hectare, surface water discharge rates should be limited to the equivalent site specific greenfield run-off rate. Developers will be expected to demonstrate that the layout and design of the development takes account of the surface water flows in extreme events so as to avoid the flooding of properties both within and outside the site. Developers are encouraged to secure reductions of flood risk by the provision and enhancement of green infrastructure wherever possible.
- 6.21 **Policy P14** (Amenity) seeks to protect and enhance the amenity of existing and potential occupiers of dwellings. The policy establishes that the amenity of existing and proposed occupiers must be respected. Important trees, hedgerows and woodlands should be safeguarded and replacement tree and hedgerow planting will be encouraged. Better air quality will be encouraged and the adverse impact of noise will be minimised.
- 6.22 **Policy P15** (Securing Design Quality) requires that all development must achieve good quality, sustainable design and accord with a variety of key principles. This includes conserving and enhancing local character, achieving the highest possible standards of environmental performance, conserving and enhancing biodiversity/landscape/green infrastructure.
- 6.23 **Policy P16** (conservation of Heritage Assets and Local Distinctiveness) requires development to preserve or enhance heritage assets as appropriate to their significance, conserve local character and distinctiveness and create or sustain a sense of place. Criterion (iii) states that the Council considers the Arden landscape, and the historic villages and hamlets contained therein (including Knowle) make a significant contribution to the local character and distinctiveness of the Borough and where applicable, development proposals will be expected to demonstrate how these characteristics have been conserved.
- 6.24 **Policy P18** (Health and Well Being) sets out the Council's policy on health and well-being. It states that the potential for achieving positive health outcomes will be taken into account when considering all development proposals, and where any adverse health impacts are identified, the development will be expected to demonstrate how these will be addressed or mitigated.
- 6.25 **Policy P21** (Developer Contributions and Infrastructure Provision) sets out that development will be expected to provide or contribute towards provision of measures to mitigate against its impact to make it acceptable in planning terms, and provide or make provision for physical, social and green infrastructure to support the needs associated with the development.

- 6.26 It sets out that contributions in the form of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) will contribute towards strategic infrastructure which would support the overall development identified within the Local Plan.

Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath Neighbourhood Plan (2019)

- 6.27 The application site falls within the Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath (KDBH) Neighbourhood Area which the KDBH Neighbourhood Plan relates to and covers the period 2018-2033. The Plan sets out a number of policies which cover a variety of different topics that address the expressed needs and priorities of those who live, work or run a business in KDBH.
- 6.28 The KDBH Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate the application site for any use and identifies it as falling within the Green Belt.
- 6.29 To inform the policies, the Plan identifies the opportunities and key issues. It includes within this housing growth and housing mix and in respect of the latter notes an issue to be an emerging misalignment between the types and sizes of homes available and the needs of the community. It is recognised that demand is shifting to smaller housing and that the KDBH demographic means that the current and emerging needs of a growing number of older people are a priority, particularly in respect of specialist accommodation for older people. The Plan identifies an opportunity being for policy "*to provide support for a significant increase in affordable market sheltered, extra-care and accessible housing as part and parcel of the delivery of new housing development*".
- 6.30 The KDBH Plan sets out numerous objectives with housing being one of these. Part of the objective is to plan for new homes that are sited in sustainable locations and meet locally identified, changing needs for all life stages, and plan for an ageing population.
- 6.31 Section 8 of the KDBH Plan sets out the policies relating to housing. It explains the policy drivers and target outcomes which include making provision for a mix of housing to meet the needs of the population, including retirement homes. The Housing Policy goal is to deliver new homes on allocated sites and through windfall developments. The Wyndley Garden centre site is not allocated and so any residential development would be considered windfall development.
- 6.32 It is important to note that in the absence of any allocations in the adopted Local Plan or Neighbourhood Plan for extra care housing, that the Borough and neighbourhood area are 100% reliant on windfall sites delivering the need for specialist accommodation for older persons.
- 6.33 **Policy H1** relates to housing on allocated sites or larger windfall sites, i.e. those delivering more than 20 dwellings. It requires proposals to give consideration to a number of matters including, inter alia: setting, topography and design; density; traffic generation effects; capacity of local services and construction practices.
- 6.34 **Policy H3** seeks to deliver an appropriate housing mix. It says that the provision of specialist housing that would fall under Use Class C2 will be supported where it meets an evidenced need and complies with relevant policies within Solihull Local Plan.

The housing policies contained within the Neighbourhood Plan were informed by the KDBH "Housing Needs Assessment". It identifies a need for additional specialist housing to meet the needs of older people, such as extra care housing units.

- 6.35 Turning to other policies, **Policy VC1** is of relevance as it seeks to safeguard the Green Belt and landscape. The policy requires any development to be in harmony with rural character of the villages surroundings and sit well in the landscape.
- 6.36 **Policy NE1** is relevant to sites with mature trees, hedgerow or woodland. It seeks to provide protection of such features. The policy applies not just to protected trees, but all reasonably healthy features that have an amenity or screening value. Proposals which result in the loss of such features would be resisted.
- 6.37 Section 9 of the Plan sets out the policies relating to design and seeks to secure development of a high quality of design and layout, which protects and enhances the character and appearance of the built environment. It also seeks for proposals to harmonise with the rural setting of the area and sit well within the landscape.
- 6.38 **Policy D1** includes these as criteria which development proposals will be assessed against when determining their acceptability. These are in addition to proposals being in keeping with the scale, siting and appearance of nearby buildings, using external finishes that respect local traditions in the use of brick, tile and render with wood for decoration, and featuring green spaces.
- 6.39 **Policy T3** concerns walking infrastructure and requires proposals which involve the creation of new units of residential accommodation to be required to demonstrate that the needs of pedestrians and cyclists have been considered. It goes on to say that development should link to existing public footpaths where possible.

Evidence Base and Other Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2019)

- 6.40 The NPPF was published in February 2019 and sets out the Government's guidance on town planning matters.
- 6.41 Underpinning the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The NPPF confirms that achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways. These are, economic, social and environmental objectives.
- 6.42 **Paragraph 10** states that a "presumption in favour of sustainable development" is at the heart of the Framework. **Paragraph 11** goes on to confirm that plans and decisions should apply the presumption and that for decision taking, this means:
- *approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay;*
or
 - *where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:*

- i) the application of policies in this Framework protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or*
- ii) any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.*

6.43 **Paragraph 213** of the NPPF considers the weight to be afforded to existing development plan policies. It is clear that they should not be considered out-of-date if they pre-date the publication of the Framework. Due weight should be given to them, according to their degree of consistency with the Framework, i.e. the closer the policies in the plan to those in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given.

Protecting Green Belt Land

6.44 **Chapter 13** of the NPPF deals with the protection of the Green Belt. It sets out that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to “prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open” and that the essential characteristics of Green Belts are “their openness and their permanence”.

6.45 **Paragraph 134** identifies the five purposes of the Green Belt, as follows:

- a) “to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;*
- b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;*
- c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;*
- d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and*
- e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.”*

6.46 When considering proposals affecting the Green Belt, the Framework is clear that local authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt and that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances (VSC). It goes on to say that VSC “will not exist unless the potential harm... by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations”.

6.47 **Paragraph 145** sets out that the construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate, with the exception of the following:

- a) buildings for agriculture and forestry;*
- b) the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;*
- c) the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;*

- d) *the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;*
- e) *limited infilling in villages;*
- f) *limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan (including policies for rural exception sites); and*
- g) *limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would:*
 - *not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development; or*
 - *not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, where the development would re-use previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority.*

6.48 **Paragraph 146** also sets out other forms of development that are not inappropriate in the Green Belt, provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. This includes, *"material changes in the use of land"*.

Delivering a Sufficient Supply of Homes

6.49 Chapter 5 of the Framework sets out the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes. **Paragraph 61** sets out that *"the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies (including, but not limited to, those who require affordable housing, families with children, older people, students, people with disabilities, service families, travellers, people who rent their homes and people wishing to commission or build their own homes"*.

Planning Practice Guidance

6.50 The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) provides further guidance on the policies contained within the NPPF. It includes guidance on housing for older people, recognising the importance of needing to plan for their housing needs. The PPG says that *"offering older people a better choice of accommodation to suit their changing needs can help them live independently for longer, feel more connected to their communities and help reduce costs to the social care and health systems"*.

6.51 The PPG provides guidance on what factors decision makers should consider when assessing planning applications for specialist housing for older people. It says that decision makers should consider the location and viability of a development and that where there is an identified unmet need for specialist housing, local authorities should take a positive approach to schemes that propose to address this need.

6.52 In relation to addressing wider housing need, the PPG sets out that plan making authorities will need to count housing provided for older people against its housing requirement.

6.53 The PPG also provides guidance on the role of the Green Belt in the planning system. It sets out the factors that can be taken into account when considering the potential impact of development on the openness of the

Green Belt and explains that it requires a judgment based on the circumstances of the case. It refers to a number of matters which have been recognised by the planning courts that may need to be taken into consideration. These include, but are not limited to:

- Openness being capable of having both spatial (for example, volume) and visual aspects;
- The duration of the development and its remediability; and
- The degree of activity likely to be generated, such as traffic generation.

Solihull Meeting Housing Needs (SPD 2014)

- 6.54 The Council's supplementary planning document on meeting the housing needs of the Borough was adopted in July 2014.
- 6.55 This document states that the Council is committed to development which provides more affordable *"extra care accommodation for people who are vulnerable and have support needs"*, and points to the Independent Living and Extra Care Housing Strategy (2013) which sets out a vision for the provision of accommodation and housing related support, considering the needs of people aged 65 and over.
- 6.56 The document also states that the Strategic Housing Market Assessment demonstrated a growing need for homes that are suitable for the elderly, also evidenced in the Independent Living Strategy 2013.

Independent Living and Extra Care Housing Strategy (2012)

- 6.57 The strategy sets out a vision of how the provision of housing and housing-related support services for vulnerable adults will develop within Solihull. It identifies the Council's current knowledge of unmet need for the vulnerable groups and aims to bring together organisations in all sectors which can combine to improve the range of local services and meet the interests within the scope available.

Draft Extra Care Housing Strategy 2018-2023 (2019)

- 6.58 On 2 January 2019, the Council published for a 3 week consultation, a Draft Extra Care Housing Strategy, in advance of its consideration for adoption by Cabinet at its meeting on 7 February 2019. The recommendation to Cabinet was to approve the strategy, which if adopted, would appear to form a Supplementary Planning Document, or at least hold the same status.
- 6.59 The intention was that this document would replace the Extra Care elements of the 2012 document referenced above and set out the overarching vision for extra care housing for older people in Solihull for the next 5-10 years.
- 6.60 Cinnamon and other local care providers had concern with the draft document and set these out within representations to the consultation by letter dated 23 January 2019. Avison Young, on behalf of Cinnamon also set out the concerns to Cabinet Members at their meeting on 7 February. The issues of concern related to the status of the draft strategy and the methodology used to support it, which we consider to be unsound.

6.61 The report was considered by Cabinet Members, who resolved to defer the item to allow Officers to provide further clarification on the issues raised by the deputations from Avison Young, and another representative of a care provider(s). At the time of writing, it is unknown whether this is still being progressed by the Council.

Community Infrastructure Levy

6.62 The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) schedule for Solihull Borough was approved and adopted by the Council in 2016.

6.63 The CIL Indexation Note for 2020 sets out that for the period 1 January to 31 December 2020, the charge for new Use Class C2 development will be £30.81 per square meters. In accordance with the regulations, this is based on Gross Internal Area.

7. The C2 Use Class

7.1 The uses proposed on site fall within the Use Class C2. The site's C2 credentials are set out in the following paragraphs.

Definition of C2

7.2 C2 uses are defined within the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) ("UCO") as follows:

"C2 – Residential Institutions

Use for the provision of residential accommodation and care to people in need of care (other than the use within Class C3) (dwelling houses).

Use as hospital nursing home

Use as a residential school, college or training centre".

The C2 Credentials of Cinnamon's Operational Model

7.3 Cinnamon is an established provider of care facilities and operates extra care apartments, suites and care home throughout the UK. The following paragraphs describe the elements of Cinnamon's operational model which establish that the use of its facilities is C2.

7.4 The extra care suites and facilities form one distinct planning unit. The extra care apartments will form part of a wider care village, to offer a choice of extra care accommodation that can meet the particular requirements of the individual residents.

7.5 The domiciliary care office and agency based there will be registered with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and care would be available to all occupants of the suites and apartments via a 24 hour domiciliary care service.

7.6 All occupiers must meet qualifying criteria. Prior to occupation, and all prospective residents would have a needs assessment to ensure that they meet the qualifying criteria. Qualifying criteria will include:

- a minimum age restriction; and
- a need for care and support.

Minimum Age Restriction

7.7 The description of C2 uses in the UCO refers to the elderly but also includes care provided to people of all ages. Nevertheless, age occupancy restrictions are, unsurprisingly, common when demonstrating C2 uses. Older people are more likely to have a need for care.

7.8 We propose that the age of occupants of the extra care units would be restricted (to over 55 only) through a condition, which was the approach taken with the care village approved at Barston Lane, Eastcote.

A Need for Care

7.9 It is proposed that the care needs of occupiers would be assessed at the point of entry. This process would establish that prospective occupiers are in need of care, as required in the UCO definition of C2 uses.

7.10 The requirement to assess care needs on entry could be established by condition, as was the case for the care village at Eastcote.

The Availability and Take-up of Care

7.11 The provision of care to residents is fundamental to a C2 use. The extra care apartments and suites would only be available on a leased, Assured Shorthold Tenancy or short stay respite care basis. The lease terms will determine the qualifying criteria for residents. They will also set out the services that will be provided by Cinnamon, which will include the provision of the communal facilities.

7.12 The communal facilities available to all residents in the proposed facility include:

- Main reception;
- Café / restaurant;
- Central domiciliary care office;
- Café / Bar lounge;
- Restaurant;
- Coffee area;
- Craft room;
- Library and private dining room;
- Hair dressing / beauty salon;
- Gym;
- Activities and Fitness Studio; and
- Consultation and treatment rooms (for visiting doctor, physiotherapist etc.).

7.13 These would be located within the Village Care Centre.

7.14 Residents of the extra care accommodation would be required to pay a service charge to cover their use of these facilities and for the core care, support, activity, social, security, transport, concierge, estate and property management services

7.15 In addition to the above facilities and core chargeable services the following additional services would be available to occupiers of the extra care accommodation;

- Personalised support in addition to that included in the service charge.
- Provision of meals, either in care suites, apartments or in the restaurant.
- Chiropody services.
- Hair / beauty services, including hairdressing, nails and beauty treatments.
- Laundry services, including clothing and bedding.
- Housekeeping services, including cleaning and changing beds.
- A range of "handyman" maintenance services.
- Assistance with internet / WIFI systems and related devices.

Emergency Call Service

7.16 The extra care apartments would be monitored by care staff twenty four hours a day. Each apartment and suite would have an alarm system which would allow the occupiers to contact the care staff at any time.

7.17 The alarm service could be used in medical and other emergencies. The care staff would provide first response aid and would call an ambulance if needs be.

7.18 In addition, the care staff would be able to provide 24 hour domiciliary care service.

Care Provider Specifying "Rules" for Apartments

7.19 All extra care apartments and suites would be available to occupiers on a leasehold basis, which will be in excess of 125 years. Some of the suites may however be rented on an Assured Shorthold Tenancy or used for short stay respite care breaks.

7.20 If units are either sold freehold or occupied under the terms of a standard, domestic, tenancy there can be no guarantee to a local planning authority of the creation of a care environment.

7.21 In contrast, if the leasehold / tenancy terms of the property include an acceptance of rules, to be specified by a care provider, this makes a clear distinction between normal residential properties and those with an additional element of care, i.e. the difference between a C2 and C3 use.

7.22 Residents of the extra care apartments would be required to agree to lease terms which specify the rules of occupation and operation of the apartments. This would make a clear distinction from C3 units.

8. Planning Merits – Principle of Development

Green Belt

- 8.1 The site lies within the West Midlands Green Belt and this designation is the most significant issue when considering the acceptability of the proposals as a matter of principle.
- 8.2 The NPPF establishes that “inappropriate” development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. However, Paragraph 145 establishes a series of exceptions to this. Development proposals which accord with one or more of the exceptions in Paragraph 145 are not inappropriate and are therefore not, by definition, harmful.
- 8.3 The effect of the general provisions of the NPPF and Paragraph 145 is to establish a two-tier test, against which the proposals must be assessed i.e.:
- Do the proposals benefit from any of the exceptions outlined in Paragraph 145 and are they “not inappropriate” (and hence acceptable) as a result?; or
 - Assuming that the proposals fail the tests established in Paragraph 145 and are “inappropriate” development, are there “very special circumstances” which outweigh harm to the openness of the Green Belt and any other harm?
- 8.4 The two tests are considered in the following paragraphs.

NPPF Paragraph 145

- 8.5 Part (g) of Paragraph 145 of the NPPF establishes that partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluded temporary buildings) is not inappropriate if one of two tests is satisfied. The most relevant of these tests is when proposals do not include affordable housing, in which case redevelopment (the extra care scheme) must not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development (the Garden Centre).
- 8.6 In the first instance, it is necessary to consider whether the site is previously developed and, if so, whether the scheme proposed would have greater impact than the existing.

Previously Developed Land

- 8.7 The NPPF definition of previously developed land (at Annex 2- Glossary of the NPPF) is as follows:
- “Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. This excludes: ... land that was previously developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape.”*
- 8.8 This definition establishes two routes through which it can be demonstrated that the site is previously developed:
- by demonstrating that the land has been developed previously; and/or

- by demonstrating that all of the site is within the curtilage of the developed land.

8.9 These tests are considered in turn.

Previous Development

8.10 Figure 2, below, shows existing built development on the site, including buildings, covered sales areas and areas of hardstanding. There are some small areas of the site, on which redevelopment is proposed, that are not covered by buildings or hardstanding. These are landscaped areas, including a large planter in the main carpark, and strategic landscaping around the edge of the site. These landscaped areas have been created as part of the development of the Garden Centre over time. The land levels have been altered and engineering operations have been carried out.



Figure 2: Existing Development on Site

8.11 We conclude that all of the site on which development is proposed has been previously developed.

Curtilage

8.12 Notwithstanding our conclusions in the paragraphs above, if the Council does not agree that all of the site has been previously developed, the definition of previously developed land includes land within the curtilage of developed land. There is no formal definition of curtilage within the Planning Acts or guidance. However, it is commonly accepted to be land surrounding buildings which is associated with and complimentary to, the use of those buildings.

8.13 All of the land that surrounds the Garden Centre buildings is used in association with the buildings. Outdoor sales areas are used to store and display bulky goods and plants. Parking areas are for customer and staff vehicles. Service yard and storage areas are used to provide a constant level of stock within the buildings. Landscaping areas add a pleasant environment for the buildings.

8.14 We conclude that all of the land that surrounds the existing buildings on which development is proposed is within the curtilage of the buildings and so falls within the NPPF definition of previously developed land.

Whether the proposals would have a Greater Impact on Openness than Existing Development

- 8.15 It has been demonstrated that the site is previously developed. The following paragraphs consider its compliance with exception (g) (i) of Paragraph 145 of the NPPF, i.e. would the proposals have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing.
- 8.16 The concept of "Openness" is not defined in the NPPF, but has, relatively recently, been referred to in PPG. In the following paragraphs we consider the relevant legal case and the PPG.

The Turner Case

- 8.17 The concept of openness was explored in the Court of Appeal in a case between John Turner (Appellant) and the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and East Dorset Council (Respondents) [2016] EWCACid466 (18 May 2016) **CD9.7**. In this case, the Justices stated the following in their judgement:-

14- *"...the concept of "openness of the green belt" is not narrowly limited to the volumetric approach suggested by Mr Rudd. The word "openness" is open-textured and a number of factors are capable of being relevant when it comes to applying it to the particular facts of a specific case. Prominent among these will be factors relevant to how built-up the Green Belt is now and how built-up it would be if redevelopment occurs (in the context of which, volumetric matters may be a material concern, but are by no means the only one) and factors relevant to the visual impact on the aspect of openness which the Green Belt present.*

15- *... the question of visual amenity is implicitly part of the concept of "openness of the Green Belt" as a matter of the natural meaning of the language used in para 89 of the NPPF. I consider that this interpretation is also reinforced by the general guidance in paras 79-81 of the NPPF, which introduce Section 9 on the protection of Green Belt land. There is an important visual dimension to checking "the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas" and the merging of neighbouring towns, as indeed the name "Green Belt" itself implies. Greenness is a visual quality; part of the idea of the Green Belt is that the eye and the spirit should be relieved from the prospect of unrelenting urban sprawl.*

Openness of aspect is a characteristic quality of the countryside and "safeguarding the countryside from encroachment" includes preservation of that quality of openness. The preservation of the "setting ... historic towns" obviously refers in a material way to their visual setting, for instance when seen from distance across open fields. Again, the reference in para 81 to planning positively "to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity" in the Green Belt makes it clear that the visual dimension of the Green Belt is an important part of the point of designating land as Green Belt.

16- *...the visual dimension of the openness of the Green Belt does not exhaust all relevant planning factors relating to visual impact when a proposal for development in the Green Belt comes up for consideration. For example, there may be harm to visual amenity for neighbouring properties arising from the proposed development which needs to be taken into account as well. But it does not follow from the fact that there maybe other harms with a visual dimension apart from harm to the openness of the Green Belt that the concept of openness with the Green Belt has no visual dimension itself".*

8.18 The Turner case establishes that there is a visual and landscape element to assessing openness as well as a relatively simple spatial (footprint) or volumetric approach.

8.19 The Planning Practice Guidance in respect of this matter was modified in July 2019. The guidance summarises the principles that were previously established in Case Law and states the following:-

“Assessing the impact of a proposal on the openness of the Green Belt, where it is relevant to do so, requires a judgement based on the circumstances of the case. By way of example, the courts have identified a number of matters which may need to be taken into account in making this assessment. These include, but are not limited to:-

- *Openness is capable of having both spatial and visual aspects – in other words, the visual impact of the proposals may be relevant, as could its volume;*
- *The duration of the development, and its remediability – taking into account any provision to return land to its original state or to an equivalent (or improved) state of openness; and*
- *The degree of activity likely to be generated, such as traffic generation”.*

8.20 The application proposes permanent development, so the second bullet point is unlikely to be relevant in this case. The other points are taken in order of significance.

8.21 The issue likely to be of most interest to the Council when determining the application is the spatial and visual aspects of the proposals. These are considered in turn.

Spatial Issues - Footprint

8.22 The existing site is dominated by built development and hardstanding which is visually impermeable and has a significant impact on the ‘openness’ of the site. This is indicated by Figure 1 above. The developed area of the site, which constitutes buildings, car parking and hard landscaping areas, equates to site coverage of 15,611 sqm, which is 62% of the site. The green space is therefore limited to 38% of the total site area at present.

8.23 In contrast, the proposed footprint of built development (including building and all areas of hardstanding) on the redeveloped site would amount to 8,807 sqm. This equates to site coverage of only 35%, constituting a 27% reduction in development footprint, and would increase the area of open space by 27% or 6,688 sq metres. This can be seen at Figure 3 below.



Figure 3: Proposed Development

Spatial Issues – Volumetric Survey

- 8.24 The existing volume on site has been calculated adopting the same methodology that was established and accepted by the Council when calculating volumes for the care proposals at Eastcote. It takes into account the volume of all existing buildings, other covered areas and outdoor sales areas. The areas taken into account are shown on a Building Volumes document prepared by Greenhatch (ref: 36338). It demonstrates that the existing volume amounts to 28,499 cubic meters.
- 8.25 The proposed volume is 35,278 cubic meters.
- 8.26 Whilst the proposed development would have a greater volume than existing, it is considered that it would have no greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing. The increase would not be perceptible. The proposals would significantly reduce the extent to which built development would occupy the site and increase the extent of open areas and soft landscaping. It is considered therefore that the increase in volume is offset by the reduction in spread and footprint of built form.
- 8.27 This would significantly improve the 'openness' of the site by breaking down the overall mass and replace the monolithic structures with a number of smaller, well designed buildings. These are proposed to be arranged in cluster blocks surrounding the village care centre, set in landscaped grounds and amenity areas and broken up by permeable connections through the site.
- 8.28 Without prejudice to the above, volume is only one test. Key to the consideration of the impact on openness is the visual impact.

Visual Issues

- 8.29 From a visual perspective, whilst the proposed buildings would be taller than the existing, the more restricted footprint means they cover less of the site and enable more of the site to be visually "open". The proposed

buildings are also generally more of a domestic scale than the larger bulky warehouse type buildings and are more reflective of the type of development within the wider area, having a more rural vernacular.

- 8.30 The Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) which supports this application concludes that within the site there would be a change to the perception of openness, with some parts feeling more developed, and other parts feeling more open. Whilst some of the buildings would be taller, there would be more open landscape spaces between them, and the land to the east of the site would be more open. Overall, within the site itself, the change to "visual openness" would be neutral.
- 8.31 Within the wider context, the site is currently well screened from views by dense tree planting along the boundaries which reduces the extent to which the site itself contributes to the wider 'openness' of the Green Belt. The dense tree planting would be retained as part of the proposals and enhanced through further planting with semi mature and heavy standard trees. As set out within the LVA, there are limited opportunities to view the site from surrounding public locations due to the nature of the landscape and overlapping effects of trees and hedges. It does however include photomontages from the most visible public vantage points; from Station Road, the public right of way opposite the site, and from Knowle Locks to the northeast.
- 8.32 The viewpoint photographs show that the existing buildings have a significant effect on visual openness as a result of their very light colour. The photomontages show that some of the proposed development would also be visible in the views from the wider landscape. Whilst the buildings would be taller, their facades and roofs would feature darker, muted, materials including bricks and tiles. This means that the proposed buildings would be much more visually recessive (i.e. more difficult to see) than the existing.
- 8.33 The photomontages also provide a comparative view of the site when viewed in the context of development at year 0, and with the planting of heavy standard trees, and then once the planting has established at year 15. The photomontages demonstrate that the views of the proposed development would largely be limited to roof line views with the bulk of the building being screened by existing and proposed vegetation along the boundaries. By year 15 however once the new vegetation has established, the development will be screened from view almost entirely.
- 8.34 The LVA concludes that overall, development of the scheme would have a neutral effect in the visual openness of the wider Green Belt, arising from the combination of these visual factors.

On-Site Activity

- 8.35 Finally, having regard to the degree of activity, we consider that the proposals would deliver betterment, particularly in respect of traffic levels. The proposed extra care facility will not generate large numbers of movements during the weekday AM and PM peak hour periods, due to the varied job roles and shift patters with staff arrivals and departures being spread over a 24 hour period. The proposed development will result in a reduction in daily traffic flows when compared with the existing garden centre use, particularly at weekends when the garden centre will be much busier. Garden centres also have strong seasonal variances in visitor numbers which would be removed as a result of the proposed development.
- 8.36 Applying TRICS trip rates, the garden centre use would generate 580 daily trips over a typical day, whereas the extra care use would generate only 193. This is a significant reduction in traffic levels (66%). Further betterment would also be achieved through the removal of regular HGV movements from the network which

currently arise from stock deliveries to the garden centre. No HGVs would serve the proposed development as any deliveries to the VVC would be by box vans. The only sizeable lorries would be moving companies when new residents move in. However, these would be relatively infrequent. Having regard to the degree of activity, the proposals would enhance openness.

8.37 With all of the above in mind, we conclude that the proposed development would not constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt and that the proposals would satisfy exception criteria g(i) of NPPF 145.

Green Belt and Very Special Circumstances (VSC)

8.38 Without prejudice to the case presented in previous paragraphs, should the LPA not agree with our conclusions, there are "Very Special Circumstances" (VSC) which clearly outweigh any residual harm to the openness to the Green Belt, and any other harm. In the following section, we assess the proposals against **Paragraphs 143 and 144** of the NPPF and, where relevant, **Policy 17** of the Local Plan.

8.39 The NPPF states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in VSC. In addition, it states that local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, and that VSC will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. Local Plan **Policy P17** is consistent with national policies, and states that inappropriate development will only be permitted if VSC are demonstrated.

8.40 The effect of paragraph 144 in this instance differs materially from its effect in the determination of the Catherine De Barnes appeal. In that case, both the Appellant and Council accepted that the development proposed was inappropriate. This was inevitable because the scheme proposed new buildings on large parts of the site that had not been developed previously. The VSC case at Catherine De Barnes had to outweigh the full harm of new buildings in open, undeveloped, Green Belt. The VSC case came close to satisfying the test and the appeal was only dismissed because the Inspector queried whether harm was "clearly" outweighed or whether it was finely balanced or marginal.

8.41 We have demonstrated that all of the Garden Centre site is previously developed. Therefore, in this case it is only necessary for VSC to clearly outweigh any perceived difference in openness between the existing and proposed development. This is on the basis that, as we maintain, there is no difference in harm between existing and the proposed development is not inappropriate and VSC are not required.

8.42 The harm that the VSC test must clearly outweigh in this case is significantly less than it was at Catherine De Barnes, yet the strength of the two cases are equal.

8.43 The VSC relating to these proposals is summarised as follows:

- the grant of planning permissions for care facilities at Balsall Common and Eastcote (PL/2014/00602/FULM; PL/2016/01378/PPFL) set a clear precedent that the need for extra care development in the administrative boundary of SMBC and the absence of sequentially preferable site outside the Green Belt can constitute VSC. This precedent was backed by the Catherine De Barnes appeal Inspector;

- there is a clear and significant need for private extra care facilities in the Borough;
- there are no sequentially preferable sites;
- there is an unmet housing supply within the Borough;
- the development would allow retired people to down size and vacate existing housing stock in the Borough, which would go some way to addressing unmet housing needs;
- the proposals would reduce the traffic levels on the network and would provide sustainable transport options for residents;
- the proposals would bring about the redevelopment of what will become a vacant, previously developed site in the Green Belt;
- the proposals would deliver economic benefits through the creation of 44 new jobs (28.25 full time equivalent jobs) and by bringing an economically unviable site back into a viable and economically sustainable use;
- the proposals would deliver social and wellbeing benefits;
- the proposals would deliver environmental benefits; and
- the openness of the Green Belt in this area of the District is proposed to fundamentally change through the Local Plan Review.

8.44 The above are explained in more detail in the following paragraphs.

Precedent for Extra Care Development in the Green Belt

8.45 Detailed planning applications have been submitted to SMBC for the erection of extra care facilities in the Green Belt. Application PL/2014/00602/FULM was registered in February 2014 for the erection of 78 extra care units on a 3.28 ha site comprising undeveloped land within the Green Belt on the southern edge of Balsall Common.

8.46 The officer report to the Council's Planning Committee stated, with regard to the overall planning balance, that the proposals would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and that there would be harm to its openness which carries significant weight. It noted however that in respect of VSC,

"significant weight is given to the need / demand for the proposal and significant weight to the lack of alternative sites for the development of the site itself".

8.47 Significant weight was also given to the economic benefits of the scheme.

8.48 Members resolved to grant planning permission and the decision notice was issued in October 2014.

8.49 Application PL/2016/01378/PPFL was submitted to SMBC in September 2016 for the erection of a 50 bed care home and 30 extra care units on a 1.4 ha previously developed site within the Green Belt at Eastcote.

8.50 The officer report to the Council's Planning Committee concluded that, in that instance, the development would be inappropriate in the Green Belt and gave substantial weight to that harm. When weighed in the planning balance however, the officer found VSC to outweigh the harm. Most notably, the advantages of the proposals related to:

- the lack of a 5 year housing supply;
- the need for additional C2 accommodation in the Borough;
- the redevelopment of previously developed land in the Borough;
- the provision of a sustainable travel scheme to serve the care home; and
- other economic benefits of the proposals.

8.51 The Inspector for the extra care proposals at Catherine De Barnes, as set out in section 3, also acknowledged the above matters as constituting VSC. In that instance however, it was concluded that the VSC did not clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt. The site at Catherine De Barnes is considerably more open than the Wyndley Garden Centre, and comprises less previously developed land.

8.52 The proposals at Wyndley are very similar to those at Eastcote in so far as they both comprise C2 development on previously developed land within the Green Belt and on sites where they are contained through dense tree planting along the boundaries. Circumstances around housing and extra care need and availability of sites also remain the same now as when the proposals for Eastcote were considered.

8.53 We conclude, based on the previous decisions of the Council that the weight of VSC in this case must be sufficient to clearly outweigh the difference in harm to openness caused by the existing development, when compared with the proposed. The proposals at Knowle comprise a significantly less onerous test for VSC to overcome than at Balsall Common, which was a completely undeveloped site, and are very similar to the test at Eastcote, where the harm was clearly outweighed.

Need for Care Facility

8.54 There is clear and well documented need for extra care housing within the Borough. This is set out in the 'Solihull Meeting Housing Needs SPD' (2014), the 'Independent Living and Extra Care Housing Strategy' (2013), and the 'Housing Needs Assessment' that supports the KDBH Neighbourhood Plan, as detailed in section 6 of this Statement.

8.55 Most recently, need was debated during the planning inquiry earlier this year in respect of the appeal against the refusal of proposals at Catherine De Barnes. At the Inquiry both the Appellant and the local authority concluded that there is a clear need and each party identified a significant shortfall existing now and forecast to continue and grow over the next 10 years, with the shortfall ranging from 704-913 bed spaces in 2029. The Inspector concluded that the delivery of 50 care beds and 131 extra care units would contribute significantly to the shortfall, even if the proposal caters for a higher end predominantly private leasehold market, and therefore attached substantial weight to the matter. This view was reached in February 2020 and since this date, no new care schemes have been granted consent or delivered, other than those which have already been factored into the supply.

- 8.56 Notwithstanding this, Avison Young has been commissioned to prepare a Needs Assessment to assess the current need for additional extra care housing units within Solihull Borough. In the absence of an industry defined methodology for such assessments, the analysis has been based on two commonly used approaches. The analysis identifies that when taking into account the 'need' and discounting existing and planned supply, there is a shortage of at least 439 extra care units within the Borough, rising potentially to as much as a shortage of 2,272 units, depending on the methodology used.
- 8.57 With the above in mind, it is considered that there is a critical and growing undersupply of extra care accommodation within the Borough which is only going to increase in future years given the large predicted increase in the elderly population within the catchment area. The proposed extra care development at Knowle would therefore go some way to addressing a proportion of the need and this ought to be given substantial weight in the planning balance.

Availability of Sites

- 8.58 Owing to the site's Green Belt location, it is considered appropriate to undertake a sequential test to determine whether there are any alternative sites outside of the Green Belt which could accommodate the proposed development. Whilst not required by planning policy, Avison Young has undertaken an alternative site assessment. A copy of the report accompanies this application.
- 8.59 The assessment adopts the same methodology used by Carterwood in the alternative site assessment which supported the proposals at Catherine De Barnes and which was considered by the Inspector at the appeal, in addition to the information produced by Pinders to support the Inquiry. As we set out in Section 3, the Council did not contest the evidence to the appeal and accepted that there were no alternative sites outside of the Green Belt which could accommodate the development, even when applying a flexible approach to the assessment of sites.
- 8.60 The same conclusions have been reached by Avison Young in its sequential assessment. It identified a long list of 264 sites and narrowed it down to 95 sites which required further consideration. Of these 80 are located within the Green Belt and are not therefore considered sequentially preferable to the application site. A further site was also excluded from further assessment as the site was excluded from the SHELAA study due to inadequate information being supplied about the site's boundary.
- 8.61 Having undertaken detailed assessments of the sites outside of the Green Belt, 14 no. sites were considered to be potentially suitable, available or deliverable. However, all of these have been discounted for the reasons set out within the report.
- 8.62 The report concludes that there are no alternative sites outside of the Green Belt which are suitable, available or deliverable. In accordance with the weight attached by the Inspector to this matter at the Catherine De Barnes appeal, we consider that the lack of any other available sites should be given at least significant weight.

Provision of Housing

- 8.63 As accepted by the Council at the Catherine De Barnes appeal, it is not able to demonstrate a five year supply of housing. As such, the tilted balance set out in NPPF Paragraph 11 should apply.

- 8.64 Paragraph 11 is clear that where policies which are most important for determining an application are out of date, which in this case arises from the lack of a five year supply, planning permission should be granted unless (i) the application of policies in the Framework that protect areas provide a clear reason for refusing the development, or (ii) the adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.
- 8.65 We set out above that even if the Council does not accept that the proposals at Knowle are not inappropriate in the context of development in the Green Belt, we consider there to be VSC which clearly outweigh any harm to the Green Belt. With this in mind, the tilted balance ought to be applied and we conclude that all of the matters which we consider to constitute VSC would similarly comprise benefits which we believe would not be significantly and demonstrably outweighed by any harm.
- 8.66 Notwithstanding this, we consider that the provision of 85 extra care units would be of significant weight in helping to address the undersupply and that the consequential effect of freeing up existing and potentially under occupied housing to the market should also be weighed in favour. Indeed, this was the conclusion the Inspector reached in respect of Catherine De Barnes.

Reduced Traffic Generation and Sustainable Travel Options

- 8.67 As set out earlier within this section, the proposed development will significantly reduce the number of trips on the local highway network, generating only a third of the current levels, in addition to removing regular HGV journeys. The planning courts have acknowledged the degree of activity as contributing to openness and so in this instance, the reduced traffic levels must be seen as a benefit that the scheme would deliver.
- 8.68 The proposals would also include sustainable transport options for the residents through the provision of a transport service for the residents. This would provide trips to medical appointments, supermarkets, the local area and longer distance trips. This service would ensure that the reliance on the private car would be reduced.
- 8.69 SMBC noted in the committee report for the proposals at Eastcote that the sustainable travel scheme was one of the benefits which weighed in favour in the planning balance. The same ought to be the case here.

Development of Previously Developed Land

- 8.70 The application site comprises previously developed land which is currently trading as a garden centre. It is however due to close as the business is no longer viable and has not been for some time. If the extra care proposals were not being progressed, and no alternative use was being sought for the site's redevelopment, it would become a plot of vacant previously developed land in the Green Belt.
- 8.71 Notwithstanding this, in considering the suitability of the site, it should be accepted that previously developed land would be considered sequentially preferable to an undeveloped site in the Green Belt. Indeed, the NPPF identifies the redevelopment of previously development land as being not inappropriate development. With this in mind, it is considered that the development of previously developed land should be given some weight in the planning balance, as it was when officers determined the proposals at Eastcote.

Economic Benefits

- 8.72 The proposed development will deliver significant benefits to the economy through the provision of new skilled jobs during both the construction and operational phase. In respect of the latter, the extra care proposals will generate 44 new jobs which equates to 28.25 full time equivalent staff numbers. These will include, amongst numerous others, managerial roles, hospitality, housekeeping, maintenance and of course domiciliary care. The staff will be employed on a full or part time basis with additional bank staff providing cover as required.
- 8.73 Whilst it is noted that the garden centre use currently employs circa 27 staff, these are often transient jobs and would be lost even without the proposals when the garden centre closes.
- 8.74 We provide further commentary on Economic matters at section 10 of this Statement and in particular around the viability of the existing garden centre. The current site owners have decided to close the business and sell the site due to financial viability reasons. This is despite significant investment in the site over the past 5-10 years, including the investment of money from the sale of the owners' former garden centre at Eastcote. The investment and initiatives have failed to bring the business back into economic viability and the building is now considerably past its useful economic life and would need extensive further investments in order to bring the building up to modern standards. For these reasons, the garden centre is going to close regardless of the development proposals and so without the investment in the site from Cinnamon, the site will become vacant previously developed land in the Green Belt and not generate any economic benefits to the local area.
- 8.75 The Inspector for the Catherine De Barnes scheme noted some job loss resulting from the loss of existing development but concluded that the new job creation from the proposals would be of significant benefit. We consider that the same conclusion should be reached here also.

Social and Wellbeing Benefits

- 8.76 It is well documented that retirement communities generate significant social and wellbeing benefits to the residents that live within them, and the wider community. These are referenced in the ExtraCare Charitable Trust Research Report (dated March 2019), and most recently in 'Too Little, Too Late? Housing for an ageing population', which was published by the Think Tank, the Centre for the Study of Financial Innovation, in June 2020. It sets out why retirement communities are crucial to tackling the UKs skewed housing market and the urgent health and social care challenges that we face.
- 8.77 The Think Tank report sets out that by 2040, the UK population will have grown to circa 73m (10% growth) and that it is projected that nearly one in four people will be aged 65+. This represents a 41% increase in that age group to nearly 18m. This projected growth fuels the demographic case for downsizing and the report estimates that the UK has just over 15m 'surplus' bedrooms, which is projected to inflate to 20.3m by 2040. It notes that the surplus is concentrated in the older age group and that *"for the 65+ cohort, the number of surplus bedrooms is on track to almost double from 6.6m in 2000 to 12.8m by 2040, unless behaviour and public policy change"*.
- 8.78 The 2020 report considers retirement housing in the UK and as is the case in the Solihull Borough, it notes that the overall picture is of a dramatic shortfall in retirement or age appropriate accommodation. It recognises the crucial and wide reaching benefits that retirement communities deliver which is keeping older people fit and engaged, reducing hospital admissions, cutting A&E visits, and delaying the time at which older people

might need to go to a nursing home. Extra care facilities will therefore cut unnecessary costs to the NHS and as noted above, free up 'surplus' bedrooms and bring more housing to the market.

8.79 The health benefits for care village residents and the impact on NHS services were also documented by a comprehensive 3 year UK study undertaken by Aston University Research Centre for Healthy Ageing, in 2015. The independent research was commissioned by the ExtraCare Charitable Trust and it studied 195 ExtraCare Village residents and non-ExtraCare Care Village residents at locations across the North and Midlands. The key findings of the research included:

- NHS costs for ExtraCare Care Village residents were cut by 38% over 12 months compared with their costs when they first moved in.
- ExtraCare Care Village residents experienced a significant reduction in the duration of un-planned hospital stays from 8-14 days to 1-2 days.
- Routine GP appointments for ExtraCare Care Village residents fell 46% after a year.
- Numbers of people with clinical levels of depression fell by 64.3% over 18 months
- Measures of depression symptoms were reduced by 14.8% after 8 months for new ExtraCare Care Village residents and those with low mobility showed the greatest improvement in this "mood measure".
- The cost of providing higher level social care was £4,556 less (26%) per person per year than providing the same level of care in the local community.
- In-depth, "auto-biographical" memory improved by 10.1% for ExtraCare Charitable Trust residents after 18 months.

8.80 Dr Carol Holland who led the research said that *"the evidence has shown benefits for the full range of older residents, from active healthy people with few health issues through to the very frail. It is an important stepping-stone to a better understanding of how best health, social care and housing professionals can work together to help people enjoy happier and healthier lives in later years, and an improved quality of life for people at whatever stage they find themselves"*

8.81 The proposals at Knowle would deliver all of the above benefits and more to the residents through the provision of the on-site facilities and services that are set out in sections 4 and 7. Whilst the extra care facility will not only provide much needed extra care accommodation for elderly members of society, which best suits the needs of occupiers and minimises disruption and uncertainty for them in later life, it will also provide choice. For example, residents in the first instance can occupy an extra care apartment and if their care needs change, additional services can be provided to them, or alternatively, they may choose to move into a care suite within the main VCC building.

8.82 We conclude that the care facility will create a vibrant and strong community, perform an important social and wellbeing role, and deliver positive health outcomes as sought by Local Plan Policy P18. Indeed, the Inspector for the Catherine De Barnes scheme noted such benefits and gave significant weight to them. It is considered that the same should also be the case here.

Environmental

8.83 The site is currently covered by warehouse type buildings and large swathes of hard landscaping. Whilst it has some significant trees along the boundaries, the proposals present an opportunity to improve and enhance the soft landscaping on site and increase the extent of open areas. As set out in earlier sections, the proposals will increase the area of open space by 6,688 sqm (27%,) and reduce the amount of hardstanding from 62% site coverage down to 35%. It will also retain many of the existing mature trees and introduce significant additional soft landscaping to diversify the habitats on site. The buildings on site would also be more modern and hence significantly more energy efficient than the existing. We conclude therefore that the proposals will provide environmental improvement and consider that this should also be given significant weight in the planning balance.

Emerging Sustainable Urban Extension

8.84 As noted in Section 6, the emerging Local Plan Review proposes to remove a large area of land to the south of Knowle from the Green Belt. This 46ha area would bring the urban edge up to Warwick Road and so the application site would extend off this incursion.

8.85 Whilst the proposed allocation has not yet progressed through examination and been scrutinised, it indicates the direction of travel by the LPA and demonstrates that SMBC have concluded that the removal of this land from the Green Belt would not significantly harm the purposes of the Green Belt. Upon adoption of the plan and the proposed allocation, the openness of the Green Belt in the immediate area will have fundamentally changed and the site will be viewed as previously developed land adjacent to the urban edge. We consider that this should be given some weight in the planning balance.

8.86 As the Local Plan Review progresses, we intend to promote the application site for removal from the Green Belt and consider that prospects of this appear good as the site is previously developed land adjacent to a sustainable urban extension.

Summary

8.87 In the first instance, we conclude that the proposals do not constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt as the scheme passes exception test (g(i)), set out in paragraph 145 of the NPPF.

8.88 However, if the local planning authority considers that the proposals do not pass the exception test, and therefore constitute 'inappropriate development', it is clear that there are 'very special circumstances' which clearly outweigh the limited harm to the Green Belt, caused by the inappropriateness of the development proposed, and any other harm.

9. Planning Merits – Detailed Considerations

9.1 Within this section we consider matters of detail and focus on the technical and environmental considerations that are of relevance to the proposals.

Design

9.2 Full details of the design of the proposed development are contained within the suite of planning drawings, the Design and Access Statement for this application, as prepared by PRC Architecture, and section 4 of this Statement.

9.3 PRC Architects have been engaged in this project to design the Care Village based on its extensive experience in this sector and the high quality designs that they produce. The accompanying Design and Access Statement sets out the design aspects of the development, including the proposed layout, scale, appearance, materials and landscaping.

9.4 The scheme is designed to be in keeping with the domestic scale of the surrounding residential development and the nearby Knowle village. The materials chosen and the proposed appearance of the development aims to reflect the local traditions; brick, tile and 'Tudor' style render with wood. The existing and proposed soft landscaping, which would enhance the existing boundary landscaping, will act to screen the care facility from the wider Green Belt.

9.5 The proposals will replace steel framed glass and composite panel clad buildings and other buildings which are currently at odds with the character and appearance of the built environment. The new development will be visually much more recessive than the existing light coloured materials due to the application of darker muted bricks and tiles, which are more in keeping with the local character. The proposed buildings would also better harmonise with the rural setting of the site than the existing buildings do and sit well within the landscape, thereby delivering the objective of the KDBH Neighbourhood Plan and complying with KDBH Policy D1, and Local Plan Policy P15.

9.6 In summary, the design of the development intends to provide a valuable contribution to the locality, reflecting local character and being at an appropriate scale, whilst also providing well-designed and much needed accommodation within the area.

Landscaping

9.7 The landscaping strategy for the site has been developed by PRC and is detailed within the Design and Access Statement, and illustrated on the submitted landscaping drawing (ref: 11032_PL_12_100). The design concept for the strategy has evolved around the principle of creating a single identity, linking a series of more intimate spaces, which enhances the legibility and ease of movement within the site.

9.8 The strategy is based on six character areas:

- The Entrance – which runs along the western boundary of the site, seeks to reinforce the medium scale landscape pattern and filter views towards the new development from the road.

- The Residential Blocks A, B and C – the space around the care apartment blocks, which intends to promote a feeling of inclusiveness, safety and security across the site by applying treatments that are appropriate to the scale of the development and to unify the scheme.
 - The Village Care Centre and Lawn – the priority of which is to create an environment that is accessible and interesting throughout the whole year.
 - The Community Area – in the south east corner of the site, which seeks to improve and strengthen community pride and foster connections across differences like age and ability through shared involvement in garden activities.
 - Ecology – located in the north eastern corner of the site and which seeks to retain and enhance existing habitats to provide contact with nature as a means to provide amenity as well as promote biodiversity.
- 9.9 These are explained in further detail in the DAS. The strategy intends to develop a community, engagement and activity.
- 9.10 The masterplan proposes a soft landscape materials palette for the site to create a distinctive character and identity. It recognises opportunities for a varied and diverse planting palette with seasonal interest but for the most part, it is proposed to be controlled to provide a sense of cohesion and scale throughout the scheme.
- 9.11 New tree planting is proposed throughout the site and along the site boundaries to strengthen and enhance the existing tree stock. Key components of the masterplan are to provide specimen trees to create visual focal points and interest, fruiting orchard trees to provide focal points, a gathering space and fresh fruit, hedging to define spaces and boundaries, and smaller trees, shrubs and herbaceous planting, to provide structure and visual interest.
- 9.12 A varied and diverse planting palette is also proposed to create diversity, visual and sensory interest, seasonal variation and legibility within the site.

Highways, Accessibility and Transportation

- 9.13 A Transport Statement (TS) has been prepared by M-EC (Mewies Engineering Consultants Ltd) and supports the application. It comments on the sustainability of the site, access, traffic impact and parking provision.

Sustainability

- 9.14 The development is considered to be sited within a sustainable location having regard to the intended users and occupiers. The site is within a short distance from Knowle high street and village centre which provides a range of local services and facilities. The centre can be accessed on foot via the existing footpath along Warwick Road or by bus, albeit a bus which operates limited service. It can also be accessed by the dedicated transport service which would be provided for the residents. This would offer a timetabled service to provide transport to local shops, medical centres and day trips with servicing provided in line with its demand, in addition to specific trips which can be booked by residents. The proposals have been developed with great consideration to the occupiers and we conclude that it is therefore compliant with policy T3 of the NDP.

Access

- 9.15 It is concluded that the existing access off Warwick Road is appropriate to serve the proposed development and is therefore proposed to be retained, albeit with some modifications. The existing 'in' and 'out' arrangement will be replaced with a new access built in accordance with SMBCs standards. The proposed access is shown on the site layout drawing and in Appendix G of the TS.
- 9.16 The access has been designed with visibility requirements in mind and following the completion of an automatic traffic count and speed survey which ran for 7 days from 13 June 2020. It recorded speeds of 45.2mph northbound and 47.1mph southbound. The access therefore achieves visibility splays of at least 120m. This is also shown at Appendix G of the TS.

Traffic Impact

- 9.17 Local Plan Policy P8 establishes that all development proposals should have regard to transport efficiency and highway safety. Development will not be permitted which compromises either the smooth operation of the highway, pedestrian or cycle networks, or leads to a reduction in safety of any users of the highway or transport network.
- 9.18 The TS derives trip rates from TRICS for both the existing and proposed uses. It calculates that the garden centre would generate 580 daily trips whereas the extra care use would generate 193 daily trips. This equates to one third of the current trip rates. The proposed development would also remove regular HGV trips from the network as any servicing of the VCC would be by way of box vans. Any sizeable vehicles travelling to the site would be only moving lorries when new residents move in, however these would be relatively infrequent and unlikely due to the apartment/suite size of the accommodation.
- 9.19 It is clear from the above that the travel demands that arise from the proposals are less than the demands of the previous use as a garden centre, and therefore we expect that the proposals will reduce the impact, and improve the efficiency of, the highway network.

Parking Provision

- 9.20 Parking provision has been discussed with highway officers through pre-application enquiries. These confirmed that officers would seek for the proposals to provide parking that is in line with the anticipated demand, based on prior experience of Cinnamon's other care facilities, and that the provision should not result in overspill parking occurring on Warwick Road.
- 9.21 The proposed parking levels have been informed by Cinnamon's experience of demand from other similar schemes which include extra care apartments and suites. The site layout plan includes the provision of 89 parking spaces across the site, in addition to a further 20 spaces which would be used for event/overspill parking. The latter are shown on the site layout plan to the north east of the site and edged red and would be managed by staff.
- 9.22 It is anticipated that formal parking spaces are needed based on a 1:1 ratio for the care apartments and an average occupancy rate of 90% (41no.), and a 1:10 ratio for the care suites, with an average occupancy rate of 85% (3no.). Adding to this anticipated parking levels for staff, dedicated vehicles for the sustainable travel scheme, and visitors, it was concluded that a minimum of 85 car parking spaces should be provided. The

proposed 89 spaces, in addition to the overspill, is therefore considered to be sufficient to ensure that no off-site parking takes place.

9.23 The proposed parking spaces are distributed across the site adjacent to the VCC and apartment blocks so that any car parking is broken up to retain an open feel to the site.

9.24 It is concluded that the scheme provides sufficient parking for residents, staff and visitors.

Flood Risk and Drainage

9.25 A Drainage Strategy report has been prepared by Arc Engineers, which describes the surface and foul water proposals and also includes a Flood Risk Assessment.

9.26 The site is at low risk of flooding, falling within Flood Zone 1. It is also at very low risk of surface water flooding, with the exception of a small area of land in the north east corner of the site. This area is however proposed to be kept free from development and the drainage strategy has been designed to mitigate any surface water flood risk.

9.27 The drainage strategy has been designed in line with the drainage hierarchy, as set out in national planning policy. It was determined from soakaway tests that infiltration is not an appropriate form of surface water management for the site. The strategy therefore proposes to discharge surface water into the existing Cuttle Brook via an existing land drainage ditch that runs along the eastern and southern site boundaries.

9.28 In order to restrict flows, an attenuation tank and detention basin are proposed. The detention basin is proposed in the south eastern corner of the site and is designed to accommodate a volume of 200m³. The tank is proposed beneath the amenity lawn to the rear of the VCC building. This is designed to accommodate a volume of 619m³. In addition, permeable paving is proposed to all footpaths and car parking. The tank and basin have been designed to accommodate all surface water flows across the site, including 20% betterment and a climate change allowance of 40%.

9.29 In addition, Severn Trent Water (STW) have advised that a private fire hydrant should be provided for the site. STW has agreed to a fire hydrant being provided from an existing 125mm main but only at a reduced capacity which is somewhat short of the standard requirement. To ensure suitable provision is made for firefighting purposes, a separate 45m³ tank is also proposed within the site and adjacent to Block A3, to provide an alternative source of water supply.

Ecology

9.30 An Ecology and Protected Species Appraisal has been carried out by James Johnston Ecology. A walkover survey was undertaken in April 2020, in addition to a preliminary bat roost appraisal.

9.31 The ecological appraisal concluded that the vast majority of the site area is accommodated by buildings and large areas of concrete and hardstanding which are of negligible ecology value. Greater habitat and botanical diversity is limited to the southern, eastern and northern boundaries as a result of the mature boundary trees and some dense bramble in the north east corner of the site. In considering the impact of the proposals on the existing habitat, the report concludes that the scheme causes no loss of any high-value habitats and notes that the layout has been designed to retain the mature boundary trees and a significant

proportion of the dense bramble. Where some loss of brambles is proposed, it is to allow for additional tree planting and boundary access for planting maintenance and so does not result in any overall biodiversity loss.

9.32 The bat roost appraisal identified no evidence of or potential for roosting across any of the buildings. Moderate potential was identified for some of the boundary oak trees, however these are to be retained as part of the proposals. No further bat surveys were therefore recommended.

9.33 The report concludes that ecology enhancement will accrue from the reduced footprint of the development, from native boundary tree planting, and from a range of bird and bat boxes integrated into the walls of new buildings.

Arboriculture

9.34 An Arboricultural Impact Assessment has been prepared by SJ Stephens Associates, which includes a Tree Survey, Tree Protection Plan (TPP) and preliminary Arboricultural Method Statement.

9.35 The report identifies that 19no. trees and 3no. groups would need to be removed. These comprise a mix of Category U, B and C and are proposed for removal either due to their poor quality, or due to conflict with the proposed development. No trees of any significance are proposed for removal and the proposed development has been designed to sit away from any high quality trees to ensure their future retention and protection.

9.36 The TPP shows the location of the trees to be removed and retained, and indicates some small areas where "no dig construction" measures are recommended in order to protect some trees to be retained. These are located around the root protection areas (RPA) of some trees where works are proposed. The Plan also identifies ground protection areas within RPAs where either hardstanding is proposed to remain as hardstanding, and where hardstanding is to be converted to soft landscaping.

9.37 We conclude that arboricultural matters have been carefully considered during the preparation of the planning application and that whilst the proposals will result in some tree loss, it will concern only poorer quality trees. Any tree loss is limited and will be mitigated by the addition of new planting.

Landscape and Visual Effects

9.38 A Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) has been undertaken by FPCR to consider the likely landscape and visual effects of the proposed development on surrounding receptors. It also includes analysis of the effect on visual openness of the Green Belt, which we described earlier in section 8.

9.39 The LVA concludes that the site and immediate landscape is of medium landscape value. There are no national, local or other landscape designations, the site has little intrinsic landscape value, any value is limited to the boundary vegetation, and the site is of no scenic quality and is considered to make a negative contribution to the immediate area. This is due to the large amount of white roofing that is visible from the surrounding landscape and not in keeping.

9.40 In appraising likely effects, the LVA considers both landscape and visual impacts from receptors during both the construction and operational phases. In order to consider visual effects, eight viewpoints were identified

and considered. It was identified that those receptors that will experience change in visual amenity are largely road users and users of public rights of way.

9.41 The LVA notes the following:

- The site is visually well contained by mature vegetation and to a lesser extent the topography and existing built form.
- Main views of the site are short distant, predominantly from Warwick Road and Station Road footpath.
- Long distant views of the site are limited and primarily to those from the Grand Union Canal Locks to the east of the site.
- Views are generally of roofs of the existing buildings only which are a stark contrast to the existing landscape and properties and noticeable within the context of the viewpoints.

9.42 The appraisal notes that the proposed development is taller in height but that it is smaller in overall footprint and has a material palette that is more sympathetic to that of the existing built form. It therefore provides better assimilation into the existing context and would result in the buildings appearing smaller and being visually less bulky.

9.43 The appraisal notes that there would be visual and landscape effects during the construction period, but acknowledges that this will be short term and temporary. Effects are therefore considered to be minor adverse and it is noted that in the long term, beneficial effects are expected as a result of the development.

9.44 At the operation phase, it is considered likely that the proposed development would improve the landscape character, by restricting development to the existing developed up area of the site, retaining and enhancing boundary landscaping, and the site being brought under more effective management. This will positively contribute to the local character.

9.45 In relation to landscape change, the appraisal concludes that there would be a negligible magnitude of change to the medium sensitivity character area, leading to a negligible landscape effect on the area as a whole. It notes that at year 15, once the proposed planting matures, the effects are considered to be minor beneficial as the site is better assimilated into the landscape than the current development.

9.46 In relation to visual effect during the operational period, the report concludes that there are no properties close to the site that would experience notable visual effect. Whilst the adjacent properties may experience some visual change, it is not anticipated to be greater than minor adverse and the screening of the development leads to a conclusion of negligible effect.

9.47 In order to understand the likely effects from public rights of way, photomontages have been developed to demonstrate the change in view upon completion and at year 15 of the proposed development. The appraisal identified only two locations where the site would be most visible. These are from Station Road (Viewpoint 1) and the Knowle Locks (Viewpoint 2).

9.48 The viewpoints are included within the LVA and show that from viewpoint 1, views are currently disrupted by a large amount of white roofing that forms the garden centre. This would be replaced by the roof line of the

proposed development and whilst by a taller roof line, the material palette of the proposed is more sympathetic to the landscape. It also shows that the apartment blocks will break up the roof line. The LVA concludes that the new development will have a more positive effect on views and assimilate better into the landscape.

- 9.49 From viewpoint 2, the existing development is visible, particularly the white roof of the garden centre. The photomontage shows that views of the proposed development would be limited to the roofline of the buildings and filtered by boundary vegetation. As with viewpoint 1, the proposed would be seen to better assimilate into the landscape than the existing development due to the more muted palette and it will therefore improve views from this location. The LVA concludes that the effects are considered negligible and minor beneficial as landscaping matures.
- 9.50 In considering views from road users, the report notes that these would be limited to users of Warwick Road and that they will only experience a restricted level of change. This is due to the existing vegetation. Whilst the report notes that the view will change from the current access, the nature of the view will not, which is views of built development.
- 9.51 Taking into account the conclusions reached in the LVA in respect of likely landscape and visual effects, it is considered that the proposed development will have only temporary minor adverse effect during the construction phase and once operational and the new vegetation becomes more established, the development will actually create beneficial effects and introduce development that is more in keeping with the local context than the existing development is.

Archaeology, Conservation and Heritage

- 9.52 An Archaeological Desk Based Assessment has been completed by TVAS North Midlands. It identifies that there is modest potential for remains associated with the later medieval and post medieval periods within the site and so concludes that it may be necessary to develop a scheme for evaluation and mitigation, if any potential remains are found. TVAS consider that this could be drawn up in consultation with the Borough's archaeological advisor but that the detail could sufficiently be dealt with by condition. We would agree.
- 9.53 Turning to above ground heritage assets, we noted earlier in this Statement that the site does not fall within a conservation area and none of the buildings or structures are locally or statutorily listed. There is however a Grade II listed building to the south of the site (ref. 134288), and the Grand Union Locks to the east of the site are locally listed.
- 9.54 We conclude that the proposed development would have no direct impact on the character, appearance or setting of the listed buildings. The site already accommodates built development, which we consider to be visually more intrusive in the wider setting than what is proposed. As such, the listed buildings / structures are already viewed in the context of a countryside setting with development on the site. The construction of new buildings, which are visually more recessive and in keeping with the local character, are considered to have as a worst case, neutral impact when compared to the existing.

The DBA prepared by TVAS North Midlands also considers the impact of the proposals on above ground heritage assets and concludes also that the proposal will have no impact on their setting.

10. Economic Statement

10.1 This section of the Planning Statement considers economic matters and focuses on the economic viability of the existing garden centre use. It is included to support the application and justify the loss of the use. Whilst not required by planning policy, it provides a helpful context to the development proposals.

10.2 The garden centre has been trading from the site for over 30 years, however growing competition from online retailers and supermarkets has reduced spending at garden centres as plants and outdoor products can be purchased at wholesale price elsewhere. The garden centre has, as a result of this, witnessed poor profit levels for some time now.

10.3 The owners have made several attempts over the past 10 years to try and turn the business around through both financial investment of circa £2m and other initiatives, these include:

- Cancelling the sub lease of a nursery and constructing the large glass house which is located to the rear of the site to enable the growing of plants on site for sale to the public;
- Improvements to the café and replacing carpets in the garden centre;
- A subsidy to support sales growth and online initiatives;
- Investment of funds from the sale of the Eastcote garden centre;
- Transfer of staff from Eastcote to Wyndley; and
- Investing in promotional events.

10.4 However, the attempts failed to bring the business into profitable position and this has not been helped by the Covid-19 pandemic which has, significantly impacted on the principal customer base for the garden centre, closed the garden centre at what would have been one of the busiest sales periods, and resulted in the significant loss of stock that had been grown for sale.

10.5 In addition to the struggles it has faced over the past decade, the buildings on site are no longer fit for purpose and require further significant investment. Short term investments into repairs and making good the buildings would cost circa £50,000, however this would only bring the buildings to a sub-standard condition and substantially greater investment would be needed to bring the garden centre to modern standards.

10.6 The issues that the garden centre and the industry has faced in general over recent years is detailed further within the economic viability letter that has been drafted by Dobson Grey, who are advisors to the current site owners. This is submitted as part of the application.

10.7 It concludes that the owners have endeavoured to trade the business but due to the scale of losses seen in 2015 and poor margins and losses experienced since, they have been unable to achieve an economically viable business and cannot sustain the level of investment that is required to take it forward. The business is therefore due to close.

11. Planning Obligations

- 11.1 The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) schedule for Solihull Borough was adopted in 2016. The CIL Indexation Note for 2020 sets out that for the period 1 January to 31 December 2020, the charge for new Use Class C2 development will be £30.81 per square meters.
- 11.2 The proposed gross internal area to be developed amounts to 8,502 sqm. Taking into account the existing gross internal area to be demolished (5,541 sqm), the net new increase in building footprint, of which the levy would be based on, equates to 2,961 sqm. These figures are based on gross internal area.
- 11.3 Applying the Council's indexation for 2020, we would expect the levy to be £91,228.41.
- 11.4 No other planning obligations are anticipated to make the proposed development acceptable.

12. Conclusions

12.1 Knowle Care Ltd, is seeking detailed planning permission for the creation of a "Continuing Care Retirement Community" on land at the Wyndley Garden Centre located on Warwick Road, Knowle, Solihull.

12.2 The development is described as follows:-

"Detailed planning application for the demolition of the existing garden centre and associated buildings, and the erection of an extra care facility (Use Class C2) comprising: a village care centre; 39no. one and two bedroom care suites; 46no. one and two bedroom care apartments; and associated works, including car parking, access, landscaping and associated engineering works".

12.3 The proposals would deliver much needed care accommodation for elderly residents throughout the Borough and the scheme has been carefully designed to allow residents to call upon the amount of care needed to meet their needs, and choose their accommodation to suit their requirements. It would also provide high quality services and facilities for the residents and large areas of amenity space to establish and maintain a vibrant community within the site.

12.4 The site is located within the Green Belt and this designation is the most significant issue when considering the acceptability of the proposals as a matter of principle. National planning policy is clear that "inappropriate" development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. NPPF paragraph 145 sets out a series of exceptions to this. Development proposals which accord with one or more of the exceptions are not inappropriate and are therefore not, by definition, harmful, and should therefore be approved without delay.

12.5 We have explained in Section 8 of this Statement that the proposed development complies with exception (g)(ii), which establishes that partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land is not inappropriate, providing the development does not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development.

12.6 We conclude that all of the site on which development is proposed has been previously developed, and that the proposals would have no greater impact on openness. We conclude this by considering the proposals from "spatial", "visual" and "degree of activity" perspectives. These are matters which the planning courts have concluded contribute to openness.

12.7 We go on, without prejudice, to present the very special circumstances case, should the Council not agree with our conclusions. These comprise:

- The grant of planning permissions for care facilities at Balsall Common and Eastcote (PL/2014/00602/FULM; PL/2016/01378/PPFL) set a clear precedent that the need for extra care development in the administrative boundary of SMBC and the absence of sequentially preferable site outside the Green Belt can constitute VSC. This precedent was backed by the Catherine De Barnes appeal Inspector.
- There is a clear and significant need for private extra care facilities in the Borough;

- There are no sequentially preferable sites;
- There are unmet housing needs within the Borough;
- The development would allow retired people to down size and vacate existing housing stock in the Borough, which would go some way to addressing unmet housing needs.
- The proposals would reduce the traffic levels on the network and would provide sustainable transport options for residents;
- The proposals would bring about the redevelopment of what will otherwise become a vacant, previously developed site within the Green Belt;
- The proposals would deliver economic benefits through the creation of 44 new jobs and by bringing what will become a redundant site back into use;
- The proposals would deliver social and wellbeing benefits; and
- The proposals would deliver environmental benefits.

12.8 We conclude that these clearly outweigh any residual harm to the openness to the Green Belt, and any other harm generated by the proposals, of which we consider to be limited.

12.9 In addition to matters of principle, we have considered technical and environmental matters which are of relevance to the proposals. We conclude that none raise any adverse impacts or issues that would prevent a positive recommendation for the determination of the planning application.

12.10 For all of the above reasons, we conclude that the application should be approved without delay.

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Appendix II
LVA Supporting PL/2020/01993/PPFL



Cinnamon Retirement Living

Wyndley, Knowle

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL APPRAISAL

August 2020

FPCR Environment and Design Ltd

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APPENDICES

- Appendix A: LVA Methodology and Appraisal Criteria
- Appendix B: Landscape Effects Table
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) has been carried out for the proposal to construct a Continuing Care Retirement Community on land off Warwick Road (A4141), Knowle, West Midlands. The Site is currently a garden centre with associated buildings and car parking which occupies the majority of the Site. Figure 1 and Figure 2 show the Site's location.
- 1.2 The purpose of the LVA is to review landscape character¹ and visual amenity², and to assess the resulting landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development (i.e. that is presented by this Planning Application) on the receiving landscape receptors³ and visual receptors⁴. An analysis of the effect on the visual openness of the Green Belt will also be covered as part of the report.
- 1.3 FPCR is a multi-disciplinary environmental and design consultancy with over 60 years' experience of architecture, landscape, ecology, urban design, masterplanning and environmental impact assessment. The practice is a member of the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment and is frequently called upon to provide expert evidence on landscape and visual issues at Public and Local Plan Inquiries.

Site Location

- 1.4 Figure 1 and Figure 2 show the location and context of the Site. The Site is located south east of Solihull, south of Knowle in the West Midlands. The main part of the village of Knowle is located north along Warwick Road, the small settlement of Rotten Row lies to the south of the Site. Arable farmland surrounds much of the Site, land is generally interspersed with isolated properties and vegetation. The nearest footpath is located to the west of the Site along Station Road and the Grand Union Canal lies to the east. The Site is generally well contained by existing boundary and surrounding vegetation.

Proposed Development

- 1.5 The proposed development is for the construction of a Continuing Care Retirement Community comprising a Village Care Centre and 8 residential blocks with associated landscaping with access from Warwick Road (A4141), as shown on the application drawings.

1 Landscape Character: A distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse [GLVIA3 definition]

2 Visual Amenity: The overall pleasantness of the views people enjoy of their surroundings, which provides an attractive visual setting or backdrop for the enjoyment of activities of people living, working, recreating, visiting or travelling through an area [GLVIA3 definition]

3 Landscape receptors: Defined aspects of the landscape resource that have the potential to be affected by a proposal [GLVIA definition]

4 Visual receptors: Individuals and/or defined groups of people who have the potential to be affected by a proposal [GLVIA3 definition]

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 The LVA has been prepared using the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition, GLVIA3 (2013)⁵, published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, in 2013.

2.2 In summary, the GLVIA3 states:

“Landscape and Visual impact assessment (LVIA), is a tool used to identify and assess the significance of and the effects of change resulting from development on both landscape as an environmental resource in its own right and on people’s views and visual amenity.” (GLVIA3 paragraph 1.1.)

2.3 There are two components of LVIA:

- *“Assessment of landscape effects; assessing effects on the landscape as a resource in its own right;*
- *Assessment of visual effects: assessing effects on specific views and on the general visual amenity experienced by people.” (GLVIA3 paragraph 2.21.)*

2.4 The GLVIA3 states:

“LVIA can be carried out either as part of a broader EIA, or as a standalone ‘appraisal’ of the likely landscape and visual effects of a proposed development...”

- *As a standalone ‘appraisal’ the process is informal and there is more flexibility, but the essence of the approach – specifying the nature of the proposed change or development; describing the existing landscape and the views and visual amenity of the area that may be affected; predicting the effects, although not their likely significance; and considering how those effects might be mitigated – still applies”. (GLVIA paragraph 3.2)*

2.5 The components of this report include: baseline studies; description and details of the landscape proposals and mitigation measures to be adopted as part of the scheme; and identification and description of likely effects arising from the proposed development.

2.6 In terms of baseline studies, the assessment provides an understanding of the landscape that may be affected, its constituent elements, character, condition and value. For the visual baseline, this includes an understanding of the area in which the development may be visible, the people who may experience views, and the nature of views.

Assessment of Landscape Effects

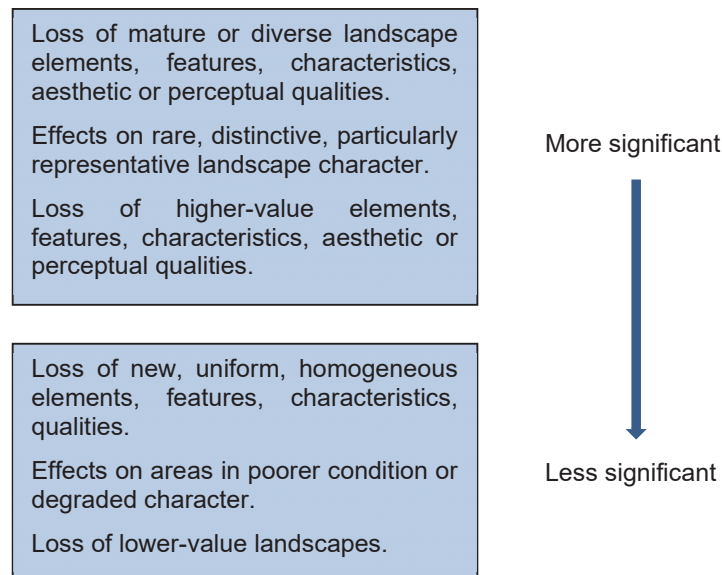
2.7 GLVIA3 states that *“An assessment of landscape effects deals with the effects of change and development on landscape as a resource” (GLVIA3 paragraph 5.1).*

2.8 The baseline landscape is described by reference to existing published Landscape Character Assessments and by a description of the site and its context.

2.9 A range of landscape effects can arise through development. These can include:

⁵ Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition, Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, April 2013

- Change or loss of elements, features, aesthetic or perceptual aspects that contribute to the character and distinctiveness of the landscape;
 - Addition of new elements that influence character and distinctiveness of the landscape;
 - Combined effects of these changes.
- 2.10 The characteristics of the existing landscape resource are considered in respect of the susceptibility of the landscape resource to the change arising from this development. The value of the existing landscape is also considered.
- 2.11 Each effect on landscape receptors is assessed in terms of size or scale, the geographical extent of the area influenced and its duration and reversibility. In terms of size or scale of change, the judgement takes account of the extent of the existing landscape elements that will be lost or changed, and the degree to which the aesthetic or perceptual aspects or key characteristics of the landscape will be altered by removal or addition of new elements.
- 2.12 The level of effect is determined by considering the sensitivity of the landscape receptors and the magnitude of effect on the landscape. Final conclusions on the overall landscape effects are drawn from the assessment components described. This appraisal describes the nature of the landscape effects, and whether these are adverse or beneficial, at the following stages of development; construction, completion (year 1) and longer term (year 15).
- 2.13 GLVIA3 sets out some guidance on the underlying principles, which are used in this appraisal. This includes Figure 5.10, Scale of significance. Whilst this scheme is not EIA development, and judgements on significance are not therefore required, the Figure does provide useful guidance on reaching an overall judgement on the level of effects. This is repeated below (note this includes the correction of a typo, from the published document)



- 2.14 The criteria used in the appraisal are set out in Appendix A.

Assessment of Visual Effects

- 2.15 An assessment of visual effects deals with the effects of change and development on the views available to people and their visual amenity. This appraisal describes the nature of the visual effects and, whether these are adverse or beneficial, at the following stages of development; construction, completion (year 0 Winter) and longer term (year 15 Summer).
- 2.16 The first stage in the assessment is to identify approximate visibility/ visibility mapping. This is done by either a computerised Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)⁶, or by manual methods using map study and field evaluation. A series of viewpoints are included within the assessment that are representative of views towards the site from surrounding visual receptors. Other views of the site are included where it supports the description and understanding of the site's landscape and visual characteristics.
- 2.17 The views also typically represent what can be seen from a variety of distances from the development and different viewing experiences.
- 2.18 It is important to remember that visual receptors are all people. For each affected viewpoint, the assessment considers both the susceptibility to change in views and the value attached to views.

“The visual receptors most susceptible to change are generally likely to include:

- *Residents at home;*
- *People, whether residents or visitors, who are engaged in outdoor recreation, including use of public rights of way, whose attention or interest is likely to be focused on the landscape and on particular views;*
- *Visitors to heritage assets, or to other attractions, where views of the surroundings are an important contributor to the experience;*
- *Communities where views contribute to the landscape setting enjoyed by residents in the area; Travellers on road, rail or other transport routes tend to fall into an intermediate category of moderate susceptibility to change. Where travel involves recognised scenic routes awareness of views is likely to be particularly high.” (GLVIA3 paragraph 6.33.)*

“Visual receptors likely to be less sensitive to change include:

- *People engaged in outdoor sport or recreation which does not involve or depend upon appreciation of views of the landscape;*
 - *People at their place of work whose attention may be focused on their work or activity, not on their surroundings, and where the setting is not important to the quality of working life (although there may on occasion be cases where views are an important contributor to the setting and to the quality of working life).” (GLVIA3 paragraph 6.34.)*
- 2.19 Each of the visual effects is evaluated in terms of its size or scale, the geographical extent of the area influenced and its duration or reversibility.
- 2.20 In terms of size or scale, the magnitude of visual effects takes account of:

⁶ Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV): A map usually digitally produced, showing areas of land within which, a development is theoretically visible. [GLVIA3]

- “The scale of the change in the view with respect to the loss or addition of features in the view and changes in its composition, including proportion of the view occupied by the proposed development;
- The degree of contrast or integration of any new features or changes in the landscape with the existing or remaining landscape elements and characteristics in terms of form, scale and mass, line height, colour and texture;
- The nature of the view of the proposed development, in terms of the relative amount of time over which it will be experienced and whether views will be full, partial or glimpses” (GLVIA3 paragraph 6.39).

2.21 The geographical extent of the visual effect in each viewpoint is likely to reflect:

- The angle of view in relation to the main activity of the receptor;
- The distance of the viewpoint from the proposed development;
- The extent of the area over which the changes would be visible.

2.22 As with landscape effects, the duration of the effect could be short to long term or permanent and the same definitions apply.

2.23 GLVIA3 states that there are no hard and fast rules about what makes a significant effect, and there cannot be a standard approach since circumstances vary with the location and context and with the type of proposal, but the following points should be noted;

- *Effects on people who are particularly sensitive to changes in views and visual amenity are more likely to be significant*
- *Effects on people at recognised and important viewpoints or from recognised scenic routes are more likely to be significant*
- *Large-scale changes which introduce new, non-characteristic or discordant or intrusive elements into the view are more likely to be significant than small changes or changes involving features already present within the view. (GLVIA3 paragraph 6.44)*

2.24 The criteria used in this appraisal are set out in Appendix A.

Overall Landscape and Visual Effects

2.25 The final conclusions on effects, whether adverse or beneficial, are drawn from the separate judgements on the sensitivity of the receptors and the magnitude of the effects. This overall judgement is formed from a reasoned professional overview of the individual judgements against the assessment criteria.

2.26 GLVIA3 notes, at paragraphs 5.56 and 6.44, that there are no hard and fast rules with regard to the level of effects, therefore the following terms have been used for this appraisal:

- **Major**
- **Moderate**
- **Minor**
- **Negligible**

- 2.27 Where it is determined that the assessment falls between or encompasses two of the defined criteria terms, then the judgement may be described as, for example, Major/ Moderate or Moderate/ Minor. This indicates that the effect is assessed to lie between the respective definitions or to encompass aspects of both.

3.0 BASELINE CONDITIONS

Landscape Character

National Character

- 3.1 National Character Area (NCA) profiles have been prepared by Natural England for the 159 NCAs defined across England. These NCA profiles include a description of the natural and cultural features that shape the landscape, how the landscape has changed over time, the current key drivers for ongoing change, and a broad analysis of each area's characteristics. The Site lies within NCA 97 Arden, shown at Figure 3.

NCA 97 Arden

- 3.2 The Site lies in the centre of the NCA 97: Arden. This covers a broad area encompassing the majority of Birmingham to the north and Coventry to the east of the Site. Key characteristics from the NCA profile states;

- *“Well-wooded farmland landscape with rolling landform.*
- *Geologically diverse with rocks ranging from the Precambrian to the Jurassic and overlain by superficial Quaternary deposits.*
- *Mature oaks, mostly found within hedgerows, together with ancient woodlands, and plantation woodlands that often date from the time of enclosure. Woodlands include historic coppice bounded by woodbanks.*
- *Narrow, meandering clay river valleys with long river meadows; the River Blythe SSSI lying between the cities of Coventry and Birmingham is a good example of this.*
- *Numerous areas of former wood-pasture with large, old, oak trees often associated with isolated remnants of more extensive heathlands. Village greens/commons have a strong association with remnant lowland heath. Fragmented heathland persists on poorer soils in central and northern areas.*
- *Diverse field patterns, ranging from well hedged, irregular fields and small woodlands that contrast with larger semi regular fields on former deer park estates, such as, Packington Hall and Stoneleigh Park.*
- *Complex and contrasting settlement pattern with some densely populated where traditional settlements have amalgamated to form the major West Midlands conurbation while some settlements remain distinct and relatively well dispersed.*
- *North-eastern industrial area based around former Warwickshire coalfield, with distinctive colliery settlements. North-western area dominated by urban development and associated urban edge landscapes such as managed greenspace, for example allotments, gardens, parks, golf courses (rough areas) and public open spaces; playing fields, churchyards, cemeteries and institutional grounds (schools, hospitals).*
- *Transport infrastructure, the M42, M40, M6 and M5 are major transport corridors that sit within the landscape of this NCA.*
- *Shakespeare's 'Forest of Arden', featured in 'As You Like It', is still reflected through the woodland cover, mature oaks, small ancient woodlands and former wood pasture.”*

- 3.3 The NCA includes "statements of environmental opportunity" (SEO). Those of relevance include:
- "SEO 1: Manage and enhance the valuable woodlands, hedgerows, heathlands, distinctive field boundaries and enclosure patterns throughout the NCA, retaining the historic contrast between different areas while balancing the needs for timber, biomass production, climate regulation, biodiversity and recreation."*

And

"SEO 2: Create new networks of woodlands, heathlands and green infrastructure, linking urban areas like Birmingham and Coventry with the wider countryside to increase biodiversity, recreation and the potential for biomass and the regulation of climate."

Warwickshire Landscape Guidelines; Arden 1993

- 3.4 The Warwickshire Landscape Guidelines is a county wide Landscape assessment. At a broad scale the Site falls within Arden, which is further subdivided into 7 landscape character areas within which the Site falls under Wooded Estatelands. Key characteristics are detailed below;
- *"A large-scale rolling topography with occasional steep scarp slopes.*
 - *Large woodlands, often associated with rising ground.*
 - *Mature hedgerows and roadside oaks.*
 - *A semi-regular field pattern of medium to large sized fields.*
 - *A varied settlement patten of small villages and scattered farmsteads."*

Solihull Borough Landscape Character Assessment, 2016 (Solihull Borough Local Character Guide, 2016)

- 3.5 The Solihull LCA describes 10 landscape character areas. Several of these landscape character areas are further subdivided in sub-areas. There are a total of 15 landscape character areas and subareas that are covered within this assessment. The Site and immediate context fall within the centre of character area LCA 3 Knowle and Dorridge Fringe. This character area and those that cover the study area are shown at Figure 3. LCA 3 is described below;
- 3.6 LCA 3: Knowle and Dorridge Fringe

"This area covers approximately 5.8km² and includes the urban fringes of Knowle and Dorridge and rural areas to the south and east of the settlement. The LCA is contained by the Grand Union Canal which skirts along the east boundary of the area, Dorridge urban edge and Box Trees Road to the south-west of the area.

The land gently slopes down from west to east eventually falling towards the River Blythe in LCA 4. Purnell Brook, Cuttle Brook and Canal Feeder and their associated springs drain the area. These watercourses are well wooded and provide a distinctive characteristic within the landscape, specifically to the south of the LCA, which is perceived as being more enclosed and intimate.

Small blocks of woodland are scattered across the area, a number of these are ancient woodlands, Local Wildlife Sites and Local Nature Reserves. The woodlands are a valuable asset and combined with the winding lanes, mature hedgerow trees and ditches/watercourses running across the fields they provide a rich complexity and strong structure to the landscape, which is a key characteristic of the area.

This area, being in close proximity to Knowle and Dorridge, shows signs of urban influence especially within the northern extent of the LCA on the approaches to the settlement of Knowle. A large proportion of the character area remains unspoilt and is distinctively rural in character with pastoral fields despite the close proximity of the urban edge...."

- 3.7 This provides a fair description of the wider landscape context. Under the heading "Landscape Character Sensitivity" the study notes;

"The Landscape Character Sensitivity of this LCA is considered to be Medium. This is a landscape with a strong sense of local connection to the place, defining landscape features and a characteristic pattern including the watercourses and associated willow planting, bracken hedgebanks, creating a balanced landscape in a good to fair condition. The single track roads and winding lanes enhance rural character of the area and the pastoral character in some parts add to local distinctiveness. There are a few detracting features within the landscape including poor legibility of the canal and some of the suburban influences. Access to public footpaths and bridleways is limited."

- 3.8 Under the heading "Visual Landscape Sensitivity", the assessment describes;

"The Visual Sensitivity of this LCA is considered to be Low. The general visibility in this LCA is contained, short distance and low level where small scale fields and watercourses add intimacy and close down views across the area. The urban interface with Dorridge is well screened, although some views of the built form play a minor role in terms of visual coalescence in some parts of the character area."

- 3.9 The overall summary for the LCA is described below;

"This LCA being of Medium overall landscape sensitivity and Medium landscape value, suggests that the LCA would typically have an overall Low landscape capacity to accommodate new development."

The LCA is a largely rural landscape with some urban influences and distinct watercourses with pastoral fields. The Grand Union Canal is a natural boundary to the area and provides good recreational value."

Overall, this area is likely to be able to accommodate small areas of new development, which would need to be of an appropriate type, scale and form, in keeping with the existing character and local distinctiveness. Any new development should not result in the loss of the irreplaceable habitats or destroy the setting of the Grand Union Canal and Knowle Conservation Area."

Designations

- 3.10 The Site is not covered by any National or local landscape designations. There are numerous listed buildings within a 1km of the Site and the Site falls within designated Green Belt, see Figure 4.

Green Belt

- 3.11 The Site and the wider landscape to the north, east and south lies within Green Belt land. Whilst the Green Belt is principally a spatial planning matter, the LVA explores the designation from a landscape perspective due to the visual considerations which are relevant to the defined purposes of the Green Belt in particular that of maintaining openness. See section 6.0.

Topography

- 3.12 The following should be read in conjunction with Figure 5. The Site forms part of a broad area of relatively gently sloping land typically between 100-110m AOD. Land generally rises to the west towards Knowle and Dorridge to approximately 140m AOD. Land falls to the east towards the River Blythe to approximately 90m AOD.
- 3.13 The Site itself is generally flat where the garden centre and associated parking is located with an approximate height off 112m AOD, land falls away to the south east corner of the Site to approximately 108m AOD.

Site and Immediate Context

- 3.14 An assessment of landscape character of the Site and its immediate context has been carried out, providing a finer level of assessment than the published landscape studies. The Site itself is currently a garden centre which occupies the majority of the Site and is aligned east-west on the Site. The Site is accessed off Warwick Road to the west, the western portion of the Site is currently occupied by a car park. One large building occupies the central part of the Site and forms the main garden centre facility. There are numerous sheltered walkways and covered areas that also form part of the garden centre. To the east at the rear of the garden centre there is some scrubby vegetation and long grassland. Boundary vegetation varies with tree, scrub and hedgerow planting along the majority of the boundaries.

Landscape Value

- 3.15 In terms of "landscape value" it is appropriate to examine the role of the Site and its immediate context in terms of the range of local factors set out in the GLVIA3 (Box 5.1, page 84), and summarised in the methodology. The section below considers the landscape in terms of a range of factors as set out. As a starting point, landscape designations have been considered.

Landscape Designations:

- 3.16 The Site is not subject to any national, local or other landscape designations. The Site is part of the Green Belt, although this is not a landscape designation. There are also several listed buildings within the vicinity of the Site.

Landscape Quality (Condition):

- 3.17 The Site itself is brownfield with an existing garden centre occupying the Site. Apart from the boundary vegetation there is nothing of intrinsic landscape value. The surrounding farmland is typical working agricultural land interspersed with several isolated houses and farmsteads.

Scenic Quality:

- 3.18 The Site itself is of no scenic quality and currently makes a negative contribution to the immediate area due to the large amount of white roofing that makes up the garden centre. This is visible from the surrounding landscape and is not in keeping. The wider farmland beyond the immediate Site and those views along the Grand Union Canal, predominately east of the Site are more attractive.

Rarity and Representativeness:

- 3.19 The landscape of the Site or the surrounding farmland is not rare and just represents working farmland.

Conservation Interest:

- 3.20 There are no features of conservation value on the Site. There are several listed buildings within a 1km of the Site.

Recreational Value:

- 3.21 The Site is currently a garden centre with public access during opening hours, the Site has no public rights of way crossing it and is used for no other recreational purpose. A public right of way off Station Road is located to the north west of the Site. Most other paths are some distance from the Site including the Grand Union Canal.

Perceptual Aspects

- 3.22 The Site is not notably wild or tranquil. Distance from neighbouring properties, existing roads and the proximity to Knowle reduces any potential tranquillity while on Site.

Associations:

- 3.23 There are no known associations with writers or artists.
- 3.24 In conclusion and having appraised the above factors it is judged that the Site and the immediate landscape is of medium landscape value.

Visual Baseline

- 3.25 A visual appraisal has been undertaken for the Site. This has explored the nature of the existing visual amenity of the area and sought to establish the approximate visibility of the Site from surrounding locations and receptors. A series of photo viewpoints have been selected which support this analysis.
- 3.26 Photographs have been taken to illustrate a view from a specific vantage point, or to demonstrate a representative view for those receptors that are moving through the landscape, e.g. rights of way users. The photographs may demonstrate varying degrees of visibility and include both short and long-range views. The photographs were taken in July 2020, social distancing rules were respected when using public rights of way to avoid being close to properties and members of the public. The photographs were taken respecting the current government guidance. Seasonal differences have been taken into account when determining the visual effects on receptors.
- 3.27 'Photo Viewpoints', as referred to in this report are 'Type 1 Visualisations' or 'Annotated Viewpoint Photographs', as referred to in the Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note on 'Visual Representation of Development Proposals' (TGN 06/19).

Photo Viewpoints

- 3.28 An assessment of the likely visual effects of the proposed development upon surrounding receptors is detailed in the subsequent section. Figure 6 details the location of the Photo Viewpoints and Figures 7 to 10 illustrates the Photo Viewpoints. They are briefly described below;

Viewpoint 1 -Station Road – Figure 6

- 3.29 This viewpoint represents the Site at its most visible for users of Station Road footpath, views of the Site beyond this point along this footpath are quickly curtailed by existing vegetation as the footpath continues south west in the opposite direction to the Site connecting to another footpath and beyond that Knowle Green. From this location the roofs of the buildings currently on the Site are clearly visible. Neighbouring properties along Warwick Road are also visible. Vegetation along Warwick Road and mature field trees do screen elements of the Site at varying points along this footpath.

Viewpoint 2 – Station Road/Warwick Road -Figure 7

- 3.30 Located at the intersection between Station Road and Warwick Road, this view represents user's short distant views approaching the Site from the north along Warwick Road. Mature vegetation largely screens views of the majority of the Site with the Site access point only visible at this location.

Viewpoint 3 –Warwick Road -Figure 8

- 3.31 Viewpoint 3 is located along Warwick Road and represents users of this road travelling north towards the village of Knowle and those residents immediately adjacent to the south of the Site. The Site access is visible from this viewpoint, boundary vegetation screens the rest of the Site from users of this road at this point. Direct views into the Site are possible when passing the entrance to the Site off Warwick Road.

Viewpoint 4 – Kenilworth Road B4101 - Figure 8

- 3.32 This viewpoint is representative of residents off and road users of Kenilworth Road located to the north of the Site. Due to topography, existing vegetation and built form the Site is not visible from this location.

Viewpoint 5, 6 – Grand Union Canal - Figure 9

- 3.33 Both viewpoints are located along the Grand Union Canal at the top and bottom of the Knowle Locks. Both these viewpoints represent users of this footpath and waterway. The roofs of the existing buildings on Site are visible from these long distant views, they stand out against the darker vegetation and surrounding properties. Views along this route largely do not have views of the Site due to existing vegetation, these viewpoints represent the Site at its most visible.

Viewpoint 7 – Watery Lane - Figure 10

- 3.34 Representing users of Watery Lane this viewpoint, taken at a gap between vegetation that largely lines the road, demonstrates no views towards the Site from this location.

Viewpoint 8 – Warwick Road/Rotten Row – Figure 10

- 3.35 This viewpoint, taken along Warwick Road beyond the small conurbation of Rotten Row represents users of this road and residents in this area. This is a typical view along this road and shows no intervisibility towards the Site due to the mature vegetation that lines the road verges.

Summary of Visual Baseline

- 3.36 The baseline analysis results in a number of reasoned conclusions which are summarised below:
- Those receptors who will experience a change in visual amenity are largely road users and users of public rights of way.
 - The Site itself is visually well contained predominantly by the large amount of mature vegetation in the area and to a lesser extent topography and existing built form.
 - The main views of the Site are short distant views predominately from Warwick Road and Station Road Footpath.
 - There are a very limited number of long distant views towards the Site, mainly those from the Grand Union Canal Locks, east of the Site.
 - Views are generally of the roofs of the existing buildings only. These are a stark contrast to the existing landscape and properties and are noticeable within the context of the viewpoints.

4.0 PROPOSALS

- 4.1 The development proposals are described in the planning application and are shown on the application drawings. The scheme is for a retirement village comprising 8 new apartment blocks, a village care centre with associated parking and landscaping. A comparison of the existing and the proposed in terms of built footprint shows that there would be a decrease in footprint with the current proposal compared with the original scheme (4,117sq m compared to 4,961sq m). Additionally, this does not include the large number of canopies and other structures that are also currently on the Site amounting to an approximate 1,462sq m. Although the proposed apartment blocks are greater in number and taller in height (max 3 storey) they are overall smaller in footprint and have a material palette more sympathetic to that of the existing built form, allowing better assimilation into the existing context. The apartment blocks would be smaller and would be visually less bulky.

5.0 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS

- 5.1 The following section outlines the likely landscape and visual effects that would arise from proposed development on the Site.

Landscape Effects

Construction

- 5.2 Through the construction phase there would be the clearance of the existing buildings on the Site and the construction of the new properties. There would be some temporary landscape and visual disruption, but effects would be short term and temporary in nature, effects are considered Minor Adverse at worse on the local landscape character.

Operation (following Completion)

- 5.3 The Site and the wider landscape are located within NCA 97 Arden. This covers a broad area. At this scale, the magnitude of landscape change arising from the proposed development would be negligible, as would the overall landscape effects. There would be no material change to the key characteristics that define the Arden NCA.
- 5.4 At a county level the Site is again located within Arden and at a more detailed level falls under the Wooded Estateland character area. Due to the large area that this LCA covers effects are considered negligible given the comparative scale and the nature of the development; a brownfield Site being redeveloped.
- 5.5 Within the Solihull borough, the Site is located within the LCA 3: Knowle and Dorridge Fringe.
- 5.6 The Site is within close proximity to Knowle and therefore falls under a landscape described as showing;
- "...signs of urban influence especially within the northern extent of the LCA on the approaches to the settlement of Knowle..."*
- 5.7 It is also acknowledged that the landscape;
- "... is likely to be able to accommodate small areas of new development, which would need to be of an appropriate type, scale and form, in keeping with the existing character and local distinctiveness..."*

- 5.8 The scheme would be developed on a brownfield Site, within the existing framework of the boundary vegetation and would not further infringe beyond the area that is already occupied by the garden centre. It is likely to improve the landscape character with a more sympathetic palette of materials that will better assimilate into the exiting landscape. Additional planting and the Site being brought under more effective management will also positively contribute to the local character.
- 5.9 The management and additional planting would be in accordance with the landscape guidance for the character area. Overall, there would therefore be a negligible magnitude of landscape change to this medium sensitivity character area, leading overall to a negligible landscape effect on the area as a whole. At year 15 as the proposed planting matures effects are considered minor beneficial as the Site is better assimilated into the landscape than the current development.
- 5.10 Within the Site and its immediate context, there would be localised changes of effect. The existing brownfield Site would be developed from the current garden centre to a Continuing Care Retirement Community. The boundary planting would be retained and reinforced. There would be a landscape benefit from the removal of unattractive features such as the current architecture of the garden centre that is not in keeping with the surrounding area and the numerous ancillary buildings and canopies that further occupy the Site. Whilst the height of the buildings would be increased, these would be smaller in footprint, with less visual "bulk", as the blocks are smaller in footprint and dispersed across the Site rather than the current large mass that makes up the garden centre. Furthermore, the boundaries would be softened by existing and proposed hedgerow and trees. Overall, there would be a low level of landscape change to the Site and its immediate context as the Site changes from a garden centre to a Continuing Care Retirement Community, planting will be retained where possible and a palette of materials will be chosen more akin to the local area than the current built forms on Site. This will result in negligible landscape effects at completion. Over time as the planting matures, effects are considered minor beneficial as the proposal brings the Site back under management with appropriate landscape mitigation and more positively contributes to the character of the area.

Visual Effects

Construction

- 5.11 Through the construction phase there would be some inevitable visual effects through the demolition of the garden centre and construction of the new apartment blocks and Village Care Centre. It is expected that the short-term visual effects would be greater than the long-term effects upon completion however these will be temporary and beneficial effects are expected at year 15 as a result of the development. Effects during construction are considered no greater than moderate-minor adverse at worse and will affect a limited number of receptors at this level only.

Operation (following Completion)

Residential Properties and Settlement

- 5.12 The Site is located south of the village of Knowle. Views from the main part of the existing village and from the majority of the properties on Warwick Road, Station Road and Kenilworth Road will be screened by vegetation or by existing buildings. There are no properties close to the Site that would experience a notable visual effect. Properties to the north of the Site and immediately south of the Site off Warwick Road may experience a visual change as a result of the proposed

development but this is not anticipated to be greater than minor adverse at worse during the construction phase. On completion the development will be screened in large part by existing and proposed vegetation which will continue to screen views by year 15. Effects are therefore considered negligible. There would be no other material views to the scheme from other residential properties.

Public Rights of Way (PROW)

- 5.13 There are a limited number of public rights of way in the vicinity of the Site. Footpaths and bridleways are shown on Figure 2 and Figure 6. For the assessment, all users of rights of way are considered to have a high susceptibility to visual change and as a result, photomontages have been completed to demonstrate the change in view upon completion and at year 15 the proposed development will have at its most visible from these locations. Photomontages are shown at Figures 11-16.
- 5.14 Users of Station Road footpath which is in closest proximity to the Site will experience a change in visual effect when travelling east in the direction of the Site. As demonstrated by Viewpoint 1 views are currently disrupted by the large amount of white roofing that forms the garden centre. This would be replaced by the roof line of the proposed apartment blocks and Village Care Centre. Although taller in height, the material palette of the proposed development is more sympathetic to the surrounding landscape and apartment blocks will break up the roof line as demonstrated by Figure 12. It is therefore considered that the new development will have a more positive effect on views and assimilate better into the landscape by year 15 when the proposed vegetation matures as shown by Figure 13. At year 15 it is anticipated that the vegetation will screen most of the built form from this location. Effects are therefore negligible on completion and minor beneficial by year 15.
- 5.15 There are a limited number of long distant views across the landscape towards the Site. Parts of the scheme would be visible from the Grand Union Canal but only at limited points along this footpath, mainly at Knowle Locks as demonstrated by Viewpoints 5 and 6. The views would be predominantly the roofline of the apartment blocks, filtered by the boundary vegetation. Current views of the garden centre are possible from these longer distant locations. As demonstrated by Figure 15, the proposed, more muted palette will better assimilate into the landscape than the current white roofs that make up the garden centre and therefore improving the views at these locations. Effects are considered negligible upon completion and minor beneficial as the landscaping matures at year 15 as shown by Figure 16.

Roads & Transport Users

- 5.16 Users of Warwick Road will experience a restricted level of visual change as a result of the development. This is due to existing mature vegetation that lines the majority of the road within close proximity to the Site. Views for users of this road will change upon the immediate approach to the Site and when passing the access to the Site as demonstrated by Viewpoints 2 and 3. Views will change from the current access into the garden centre to the entrance of the CCRC, although views will change the nature of the view will not; views of built development. The more sympathetic materials and improved landscaping will contribute to more positive views from this road. Effects are therefore considered minor beneficial by year 15.

- 5.17 Users of other surrounding roads including Watery Lane to the east and Kenilworth Road to the north are not anticipated to experience any visual change as a result of the development. As demonstrated by Viewpoints 4 and 7.
- 6.0 GREEN BELT
- 6.1 The NPPF sets out National policy for Green Belts. Section 13 of the NPPF covers Protecting Green Belt land. The Site lies within the West Midlands Green Belt. Paragraph 133 notes that the Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The NPPF notes that;
- "The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence."*
- 6.2 Paragraph 134 sets out the 5 purposes of the Green Belt;
- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
 - b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
 - c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
 - d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
 - e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.
- 6.3 Paragraph 141 states that once Green Belts have been defined, local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance their beneficial use, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land.
- 6.4 Paragraph 143 notes that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.
- 6.5 Paragraph 145 notes that new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate in the Green Belt. Exceptions to this are listed and include:
- "g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would:*
- not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development; or*
 - not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, where the development would re-use previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority."*
- 6.6 The Site is previously developed land but does not contribute to an identified affordable housing need. Policy suggests the scheme should have no greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development.
- 6.7 Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) was first published on 6th March 2014 and is a regularly updated online planning resource which provides guidance on the NPPF and the planning system. The NPPF continues to be the primary document for decision making.
- 6.8 The guidance includes a section on the factors to be taken in account, when considering the impact of development on the openness of the Green Belt. This notes that openness is capable of having both spatial and visual aspects - in other words, the visual impact of the proposal may be relevant, as could its volume, and that the duration of the development and its reversibility are factors to

consider along with the degree of activity, such as traffic generation. (Paragraph 001 Reference ID; 64-001-20190722) from 22 July 2019.

- 6.9 “*Visual Openness*” is the matter of greatest relevance to the landscape and visual appraisal.
- 6.10 The spatial /volume aspects of openness are covered in the Planning Statement. The replacement of the garden centre with the Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC) would mean a change in the disposition of buildings within the Site. At present the bulky garden centre buildings, including a warehouse type retail building, and covered external display/retail areas covers a large proportion of the Site (4961 sq meters of building and 1462 sq m of covered areas, or 26% of the Site). In addition to this there are extensive paved areas as car parking and external display/retail areas (8920 sq m).
- 6.11 The proposed buildings have a more restricted footprint (4116 sq m or 17% of the Site) along with parking areas. The buildings are varied in height, with the tallest apartment building having a roof reaching 123m AOD and the roof of the Village Care Centre, which is a 3-storey building reaching 122m AOD. This compares with the garden centre buildings which reach approximately 116 m AOD. Whilst the CCRC buildings are taller, they cover a smaller proportion of the Site. More of the Site is visually “*open*” and the scale of the buildings, whilst taller in places, are generally more of a domestic scale than the larger bulky warehouse type buildings. Within the Site there would be a change to the perception of openness, with some parts feeling more developed, and other parts feeling more open. Whilst some of the buildings would be taller, there would be more open landscape spaces between them, and the land to the east of the Site would be more open. Overall, within the Site itself, the change to “*visual openness*” would be neutral.
- 6.12 The visual aspects of openness, as experienced from the wider landscape, are most helpfully assessed by reference to the visual appraisal. This show that from most of the wider area there would be little visual effect from development of the Site. The nature of the landscape with the overlapping effects of trees and hedges, means that there are few public locations where the Site can be seen. Where the existing Site is visible, the buildings on it do tend to stand out, due to the light-coloured treatment of the existing buildings. These are usually seen against a darker background, which increases their visual prominence. The existing buildings have a greater effect on visual openness arising from their colour, than from the bulk of the buildings themselves. With development of the CCRC, some proposed buildings will also be visible in the views from the wider landscape. The proposed buildings will be taller than the existing garden centre buildings. The treatment of the new buildings, with darker more muted bricks and tiles, will however be visually much more recessive, then the existing light-coloured materials. Overall development of the scheme would have a neutral effect in the visual openness of the wider Green Belt, arising from the combination of these visual factors.

7.0 PLANNING POLICY

National Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2018 February 2019)

- 7.1 The NPPF sets out the Government’s economic, environmental, and social planning policy and in combination these policies give the Government’s vision of sustainable development. The NPPF emphasises the need for well-designed places, promoting healthy and safe communities and conserving and enhancing the natural environment.

- 7.2 Regarding landscape and green infrastructure, the Natural Environment section of the NPPF provides a policy context for the countryside and green infrastructure. The key objectives include protecting and enhancing valued landscapes and, minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.
- 7.3 Paragraph 170 states at part a) that planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance valued landscapes and goes on to clarify that this should be in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan. Part b) states that planning policies and decisions should recognise *“the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside”*.
- 7.4 Paragraph 171 advises that:
“Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries”.
- 7.5 Paragraph 172 goes on to add:
“Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues”.
- 7.6 The Site is within an undesignated landscape with no special protected landscape status. The character of the Site and its immediate context is assessed within this report to help inform decisions regarding *“the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside”*. The potential to enhance green infrastructure networks is also considered.
- 7.7 Section 13 of the NPPF covers Protecting Green Belt land. The effects on Green Belt are covered in section 6.0 of this appraisal.

Local Planning Policy

Solihull Local Plan, 2013

- 7.8 The adopted Local Plan contains the following policies of relevance to the scheme.

P10 Natural Environment

“The Council recognises the importance of a healthy natural environment in its own right, and for the economic and social benefits it provides to the Borough. The full value and benefits of the natural environment will be taken into account in considering all development proposals, including the contribution to the green economy and the health of residents, and the potential for reducing the impacts of climate change. Joint working with neighbouring authorities will be supported, recognising the need for a landscape scale approach to the natural environment and conservation of biodiversity.

The Council will seek to protect, enhance and restore the diverse landscape features of the Borough and to create new woodlands and other characteristic habitats, so as to halt and where possible reverse the degrading of the Arden landscape and promote local distinctiveness. Development should take full account of national and local guidance on protecting and restoring

the landscape and the areas in need of enhancement, including guidance relating to the countryside. Developers will be expected to incorporate measures to protect, enhance and restore the landscape, unless it is demonstrated that it is not feasible, disproportionate or unnecessary.

The Council will seek to conserve, enhance and restore biodiversity and geodiversity, to create new native woodlands and other habitats and to protect, restore and enhance ancient woodland and green infrastructure assets across the Borough. Protection of ancient woodland, designated sites and priority habitats shall include the establishment of buffers to any new development. Development should be informed by the latest information on habitats and species, and take full account of national and local guidance on conserving biodiversity, opportunities for biodiversity enhancement and for improving and restoring the Borough's green infrastructure. When appropriate, development should seek to enhance accessibility to the natural environment, especially for disabled people.

The Council will protect areas of national and local importance for biodiversity and geodiversity, where it is reasonable, proportionate and feasible to do so. Development likely to have an adverse affect on a Site of Special Scientific Interest, whether directly or indirectly, will be subject to special scrutiny and will be permitted only if the reasons for the development clearly outweigh the nature conservation value of the site and the national policy to safeguard such sites. Where development may have an adverse affect on a Site of Special Scientific Interest, developers will be expected to incorporate measures to enhance the condition of the site, unless it is demonstrated that it is not feasible.

Development likely to have an adverse affect on a Local Nature Reserve or a Local Wildlife or Geological Site will be permitted only if the reasons for the development clearly outweigh the nature conservation or geological value of the site and its contribution to wider biodiversity objectives. Where development would have an adverse affect on a site of local value, developers will be expected to incorporate measures to enhance the site or to restore the links between sites in accordance with the Green Infrastructure study, unless it is demonstrated that it is not feasible.

Outside designated sites, developers will be expected to take full account of the nature conservation or geological value, and the existence of any habitats or species included in the Local Biodiversity Action Plan, or sites in the Local Geological Action Plan. Developers will be required to undertake a full ecological survey and to deliver a net gain or enhancement to biodiversity, unless it is demonstrated that it is not appropriate or feasible. In considering the need for green space improvements associated with new development, developers should have regard for the standards and priorities in the Green Spaces Strategy in relation to accessible natural green space.

Where development is likely to have significant harmful effects on the natural environment, as a result of the development itself, or the cumulative impact of developments, developers must demonstrate that all possible alternatives that would result in less harm have been considered. Where development is permitted, appropriate mitigation of the impacts and compensation where relevant will be required to deliver a net gain in biodiversity, habitat creation, landscape character and local distinctiveness. Enhancements should be undertaken either on the site, or in its vicinity, but where it is demonstrated that this is not possible, offsetting in alternative strategic locations within the biodiversity or green infrastructure network, to deliver biodiversity or other objectives may be considered. Where appropriate, developers should demonstrate compliance with this policy through an ecological statement or by relevant information in the West Midlands Sustainability Checklist.

P17 Countryside and Green Belt

“The Council will safeguard the “best and most versatile” agricultural land in the Borough and encourage the use of the remaining land for farming. Development affecting the “best and most versatile” land will be permitted only if there is an overriding need for the development or new use, and there is insufficient lower grade land available, or available lower grade land has an environmental significance that outweighs the agricultural considerations, or the use of lower grade land would be inconsistent with other sustainability considerations. Development involving farm-based diversification will normally be permitted in order to support farm enterprises and the management of land, providing it is in an appropriate location, of a scale appropriate to its location, and does not harm the Green Belt, conservation or enhancement policies. The Council will not permit inappropriate development in the Green Belt, except in very special circumstances. In addition to the national policy, the following provisions shall apply to development in the Borough’s Green Belt:

- *Development involving the replacement, extension or alteration of buildings in the Green Belt will not be permitted if it will harm the need to retain smaller more affordable housing or the purposes of including land within the Green Belt.*
- *Limited infilling will not be considered to be inappropriate development within the Green Belt settlements, providing this would not have an adverse effect on the character of the settlements. Limited infilling shall be interpreted as the filling of a small gap within an otherwise built-up frontage with not more than two dwellings.*
- *The reasonable expansion of established businesses into the Green Belt will be allowed where the proposal would make a significant contribution to the local economy or employment, providing that appropriate mitigation can be secured.*
- *Where the re-use of buildings or land is proposed, the new use, and any associated use of land surrounding the building, should not conflict with, nor have a materially greater impact on, the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land in it, and the form, bulk and general design of the buildings shall be in keeping with their surroundings.*
- *Where waste management operations involving inappropriate development are proposed in the Green Belt, the contribution of new capacity towards the treatment gap identified in the Borough may amount to very special circumstances, providing the development accords with the waste management policy of this Plan.*

The small settlements of Hampton-in-Arden, Hockley Heath, Meriden and Catherine de Barnes are inset in the Green Belt and are not therefore subject to Green Belt policy. Nevertheless, the Council, in considering applications for development in these settlements, will take into account the importance of their rural setting and of their attributes, such as historic buildings, open space, density of development, landscape and townscape that contribute towards their special character. Immediately beyond the inset boundary, strict Green Belt policies will apply.”

Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath Neighbourhood Area (April 2019)

7.9 The adopted Local Plan contains the following policies of relevance to the scheme.

Policy VC1: Green Belt and Landscape

“National and Solihull Local Plan Green Belt policies will apply in the relevant parts of the Plan Area. Any development must be in harmony with the rural character of the villages’ surroundings and sit well in the landscape. All development proposals should demonstrate how they have taken account of the setting of the built up areas within the wider landscape. Proposals shall have regard to the principles set out in: the Warwickshire Landscape Guidelines: Arden; the Solihull Borough Landscape Character Assessment 2016; and the Solihull Borough Local Character Guide 2016.”

Policy NE1: Trees, Hedgerows and Woodland

“On sites with mature or important trees or hedgerows, groups of trees or woodland, the protection of such features shall be promoted in any development scheme. Where such features make a significant contribution to the street scene or landscape but are not protected within the proposed development, such proposals will be resisted.”

8.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 This Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) has been carried out for the proposal of a Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC) on land off Warwick Road, Knowle.
- 8.2 The Site is previously developed land, currently a garden centre, south of the village of Knowle in the West Midlands. The Site is bounded by mature vegetation to the north, south and east, to the west is an existing car park from which access into the Site is attained off Warwick Road. The Site is not covered by any National or local landscape designations, although the land is designated Green Belt land.
- 8.3 The Site lies within National Character Area 97 Arden, Arden Wooded Estatelands according to the Warwickshire Landscape Guidelines, 1993 and within LCA 3: Knowle and Dorridge Fringe, as described in the Solihull Borough Landscape Character Assessment 2016.
- 8.4 A baseline visual analysis has been carried out and this concluded:
- Those receptors who will experience a change in visual amenity are largely road users and users of public rights of way.
 - The Site itself is visually well contained predominantly by the large amount of mature vegetation in the area and to a lesser extent topography and existing built form.
 - The main views of the Site are short distant views predominately from Warwick Road and Station Road Footpath.
 - There are a very limited number of long distant views towards the Site, mainly those from the Grand Union Canal Locks, east of the Site.
 - Views are generally of the roofs of the existing buildings only. These are a stark contrast to the existing landscape and properties and are noticeable within the context of the viewpoints.
- 8.5 In terms of landscape effects, there would be no material change to the key characteristics that define the Arden NCA and Arden Wooded Estatelands.
- 8.6 Within Solihull Borough Assessment, the Site is in the Knowle and Dorridge Fringe character area. The scheme would be developed on a brownfield Site, within the existing framework of vegetation.
- 8.7 Effects are considered greater during the construction phase due to the disruption caused through the demolish of the garden centre and construction of the CCRC, these effects are temporary however and not anticipated to be greater than minor adverse.
- 8.8 The proposed management and additional planting would be in accordance with the landscape guidance for the character area. Overall, there would be a negligible magnitude of landscape change to this medium sensitivity character area, leading overall to a negligible landscape effect on the area as a whole upon completion. At year 15 effects are considered minor beneficial as planting matures.
- 8.9 Within the Site and its immediate context, there would be a local effect. The existing brownfield site would be developed for the new CCRC. There would be a landscape benefit from the removal of unattractive features such as the large canopies and white roofed buildings that currently occupy the Site. Whilst the number of buildings would increase, these would be an overall smaller footprint than the current built form on Site, with a more dispersed massing of built form and more broken roof line. Overall, there would be a low level of landscape change to the Site and its immediate

context resulting in a negligible landscape effect at completion. Over time as the proposed planting matures the effect would reduce further to have a minor beneficial effect.

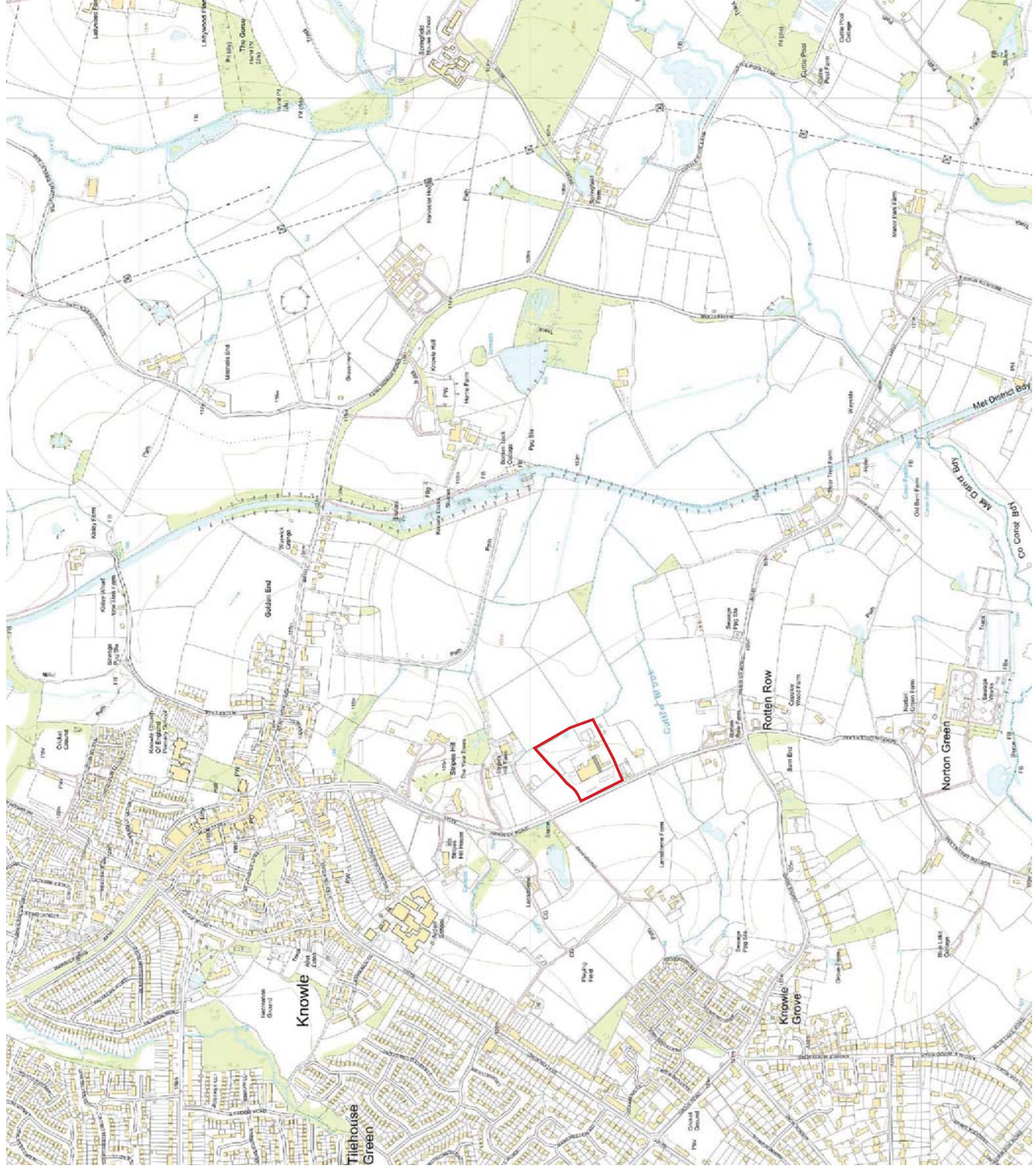
- 8.10 In terms of visual effects, these are generally considered greatest during the construction phase as disruption caused by the demolish of the garden centre and construction of the CCRC causes a greater level of visual change than the proposed development upon completion. These effects are however temporary in nature and considered no greater than moderate-minor adverse at worse for those users passing the Site along Warwick Road. Other roads users will experience little or no visual change as a result of the development. Upon completion effects are considered negligible and as landscaping matures effects at year 15 are minor beneficial.
- 8.11 Views from the main part of the existing village of Knowle are screened by vegetation and by existing buildings. Those properties that are within close proximity to the Site are limited in number and due to orientation and existing boundary vegetation would not experience a notable visual effect.
- 8.12 There are a limited number of rights of way within the vicinity of the Site. Views are anticipated from Station Road footpath to the west and Grand Union canal footpath to the east only. Users of these routes will experience a change in view from the current garden centre buildings to the new CCRC. The materials and massing of the proposed development will contribute to a more assimilated development and as landscaping matures effects are considered minor beneficial by year 15 from both of these footpaths.
- 8.13 In terms of Green Belt, "*Visual Openness*" is the matter of greatest relevance to the landscape and visual appraisal. The courts have identified a number of matters which may need to be taken into account in making an assessment on openness. The first example provided in the NPPG, notes that "*openness is capable of having both spatial and visual aspects - in other words, the visual impact of the proposal may be relevant, as could its volume.*"
- 8.14 The visual aspects of openness are most helpfully assessed by reference to the visual appraisal. This shows that from the wider area there would be little visual effect from development of the Site.
- 8.15 At a much more local level close to the Site, from Station Road footpath or from Warwick Road, there also would be little difference. From the Grand Union Canal there are a limited number of longer distant views within which the Site will be seen. Whilst the new buildings on Site would be taller, the materials would be more recessive than the current light-coloured garden centre buildings. This would reduce the effect on visual openness and over time with planting there would be beneficial visual effects. Overall, there would be a negligible effect on visual openness.
- 8.16 In summary the scheme would have a broadly neutral effect on visual openness. The Site is previously developed land and although an increase in height the proposals are a more sympathetic material palette, a more broken mass of buildings and an overall reduced area of built form occupying the Site. The development would have a positive impact on the landscape and views of the area over time.

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Site Boundary



Scale: 1:10000 @ A3



client Cinnamon Retirement Living
 project CCRC
 Warwick Road, Knowle
 drawing title SITE LOCATION



scale 1:10000 @ A3
 drawing figure number
 issue date 08 July 2020
 rev



drawn by SREMGH
 Figure 1

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Site Boundary

Public Rights of Way



client Cinnamon Retirement Living
 project CCRC
 Warwick Road, Knowle
 drawing title AERIAL

scale NTS @ A3
 drawing / figure number

drawn SREMGH
 issue date 08 July 2020
 rev



Figure 2

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Site Boundary

The site and the full extent of the mapping falls into National Character Area (NCA) 97 - Arden

Warwickshire Landscape Guidelines - Arden, 1993



Wooded Estatelands



Arden Parklands

Solihull Borough Landscape Character Assessment, 2016



LCA 3 - Knowle and Dorridge Fringe



Sub Area 4c - Rural Centre



Sub Area 4b - Rural Centre

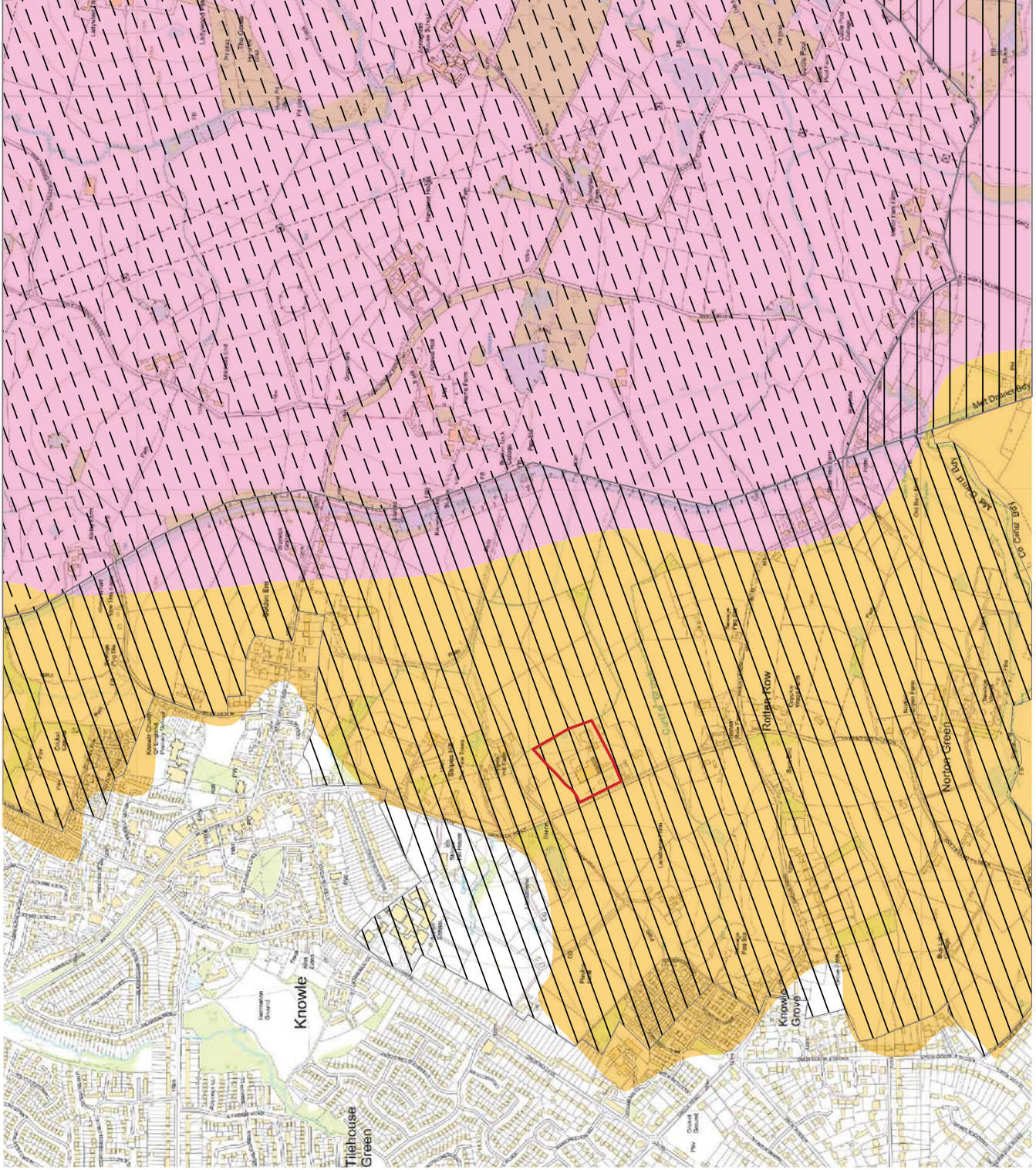


client Cinnamon Retirement Living
 project CCRC
 Warwick Road, Knowle
 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

scale 1:1250 @ A3
 drawing figure number
 issue date 08 July 2020
 drawn SREMGH
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Figure 3

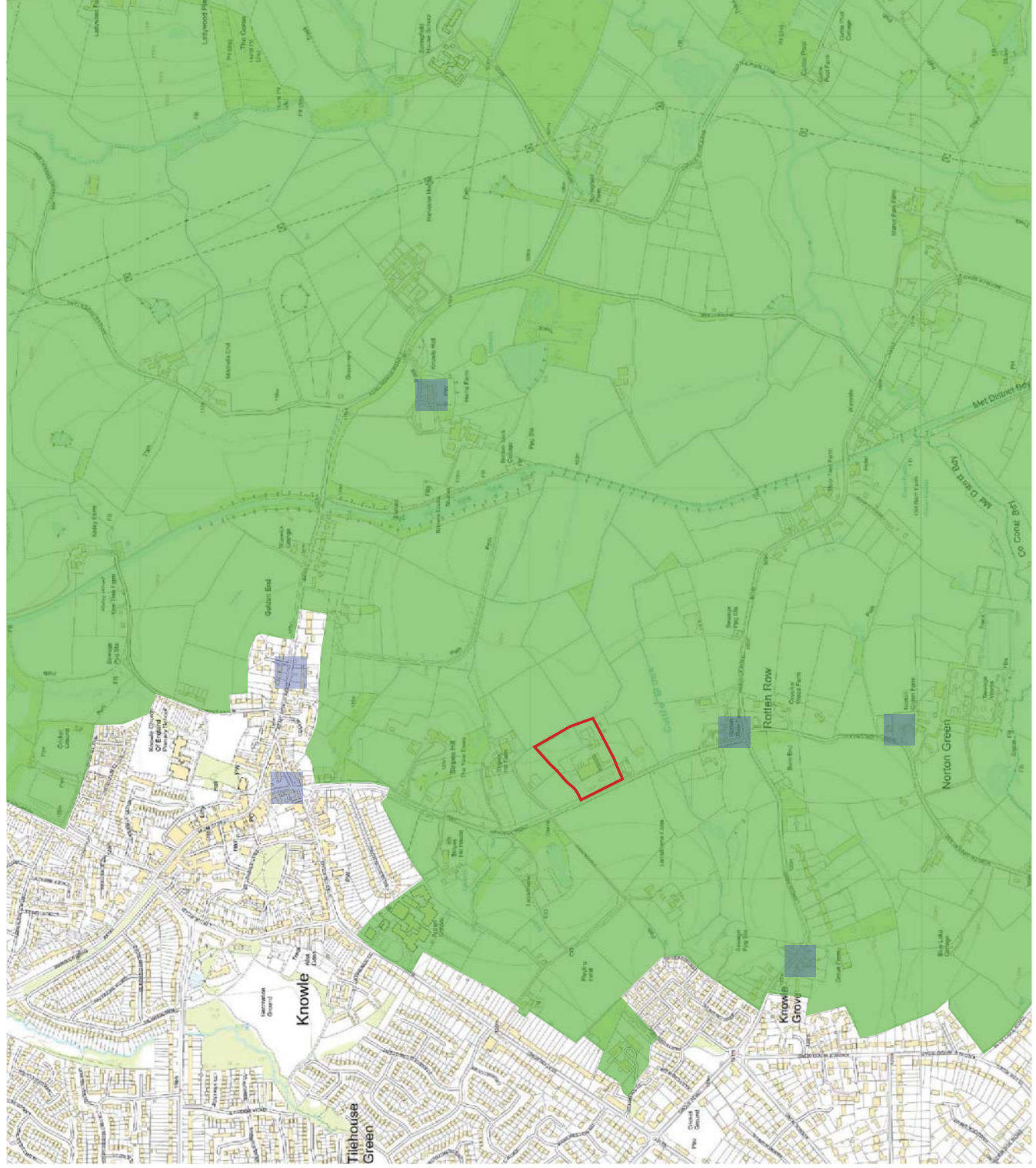
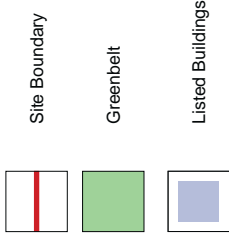


Scale: 1:10000 @ A3



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Scale: 1:10000 @ A3



client
Cinnamon Retirement Living
project
CCRC
Warwick Road, Knowle
DESIGNATIONS



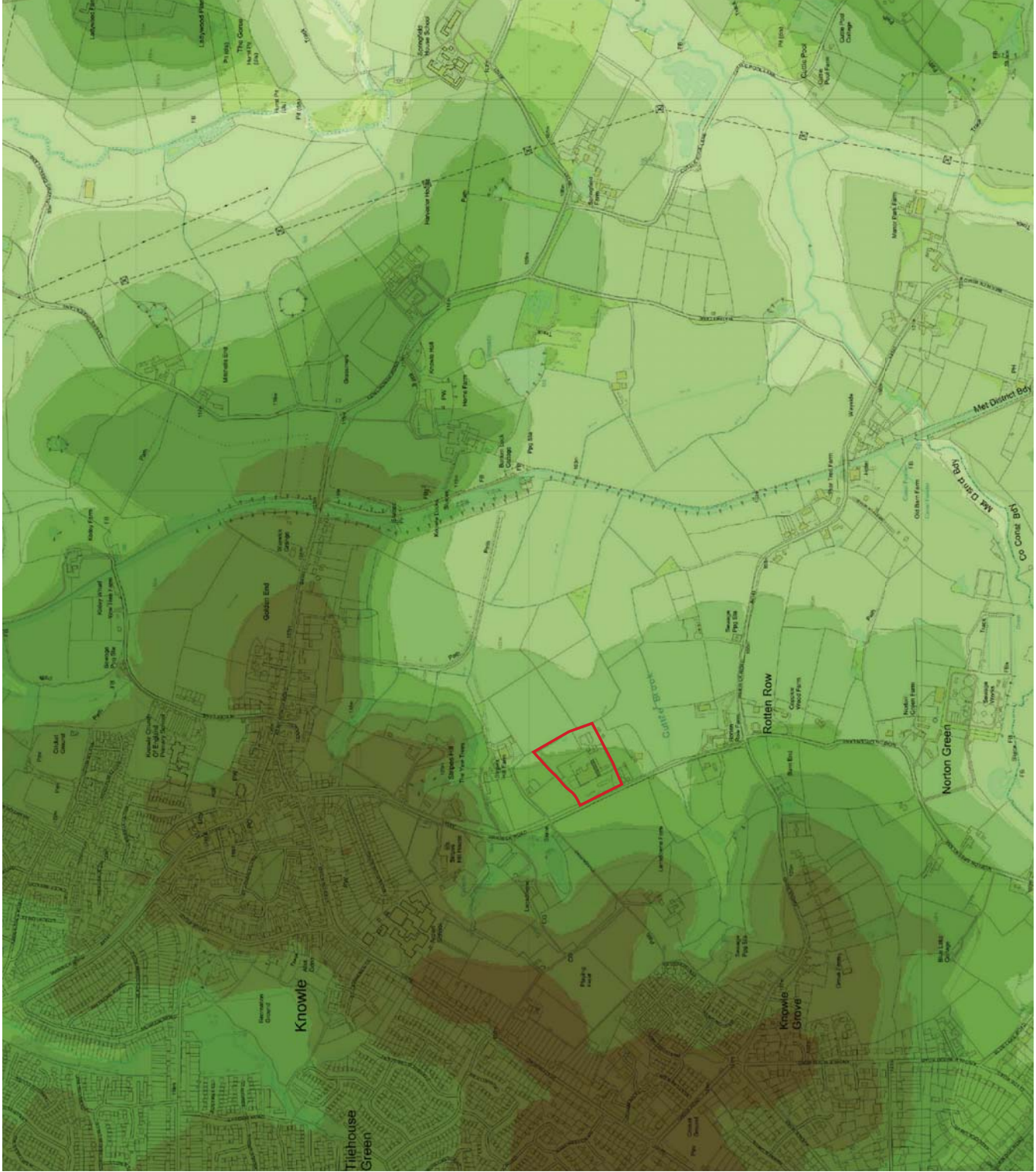
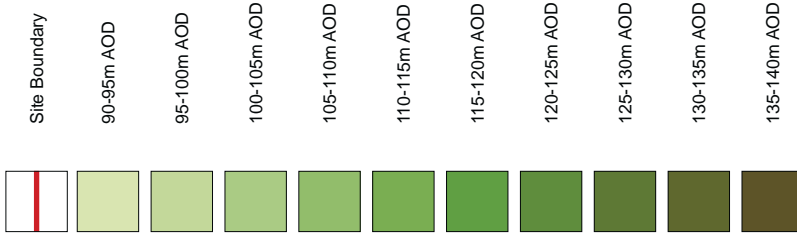
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drawn
SREMGH

issue date
08 July 2020
rev

Figure 4

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client Cinnamon Retirement Living
 project CCRC
 Warwick Road, Knowle
 drawing title TOPOGRAPHY



scale NTS @ A3
 drawn SREMGH
 issue date 08 July 2020
 rev -

Figure 5

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-  Site Boundary
-  Public Rights of Way
-  Photo Viewpoints
-  Receptors
-  Approximate Visual Envelope

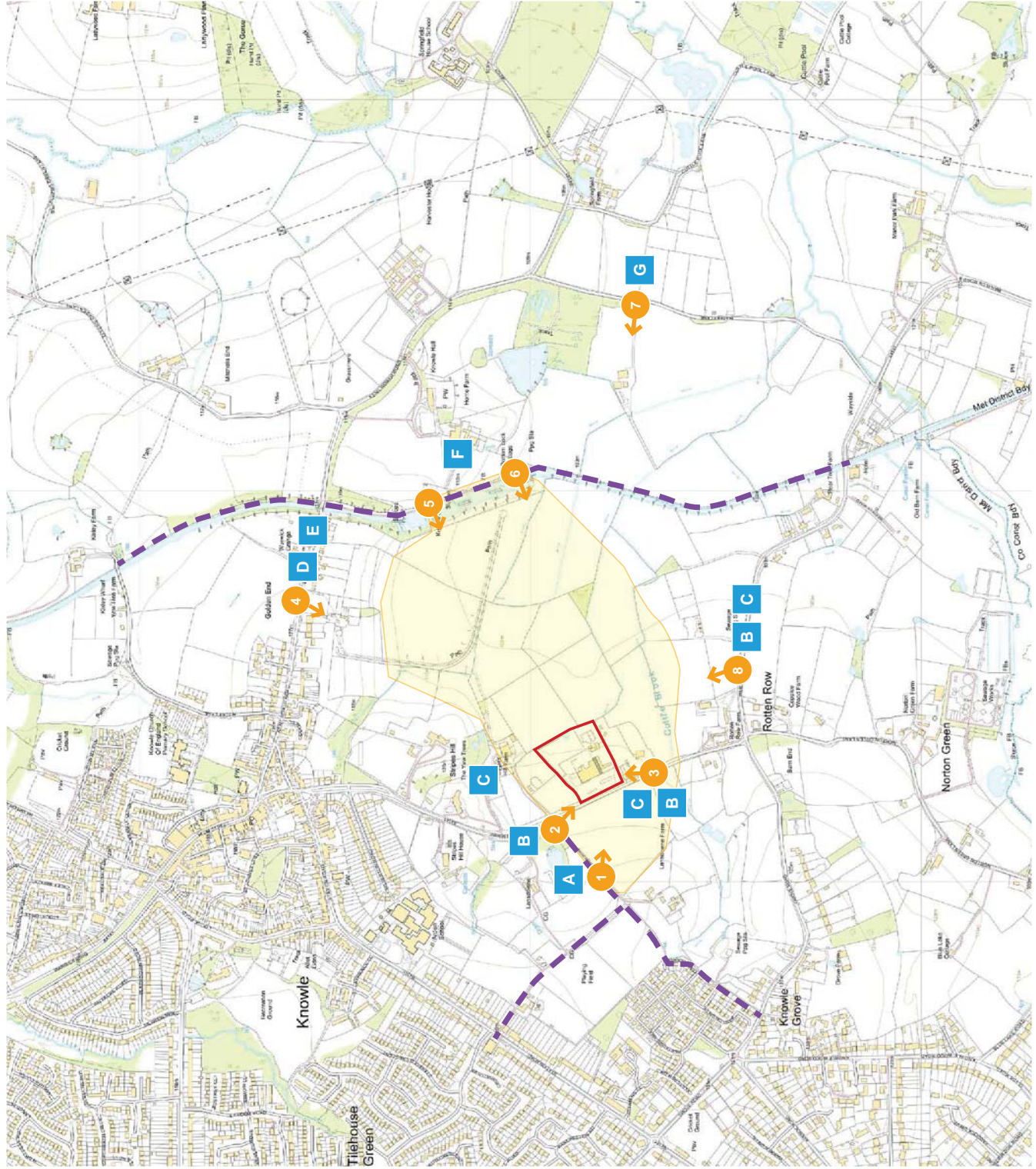
- A. Users of Station Road Footpath
- B. Road users of Warwick Road (A4141)
- C. Residents of Warwick Road (B4101)
- D. Users of Kenilworth Road (B4101)
- E. Residents off Kenilworth Road
- F. Users of Grand Union Canal
- G. Users of Watery Lane

client Cinnamon Retirement Living
 project CCRC
 Warwick Road, Knowle
 drawing title VISUAL APPRAISAL



scale 1:10000 @ A3
 drawing figure number
 issue date 08 July 2020
 rev

Figure 6



Scale: 1:10000 @ A3





Photo Viewpoint 1: View looking east from Station Road Footpath



Photo Viewpoint 2: View looking south east from Warwick Road (A4141)



Photo Viewpoint 1
 Date & time of photo: 14 July 2020, 13:28
 Camera make & model, & sensor format:
 Canon EOS 80D, PFS
 Height of camera above ground: 1.75m
 Direction of View: 90°, bearing from North



Photo Viewpoint 2
 Date & time of photo: 14 July 2020, 13:32
 Camera make & model, & sensor format:
 Canon EOS 80D, PFS
 Height of camera above ground: 1.75m
 Direction of View: 120°, bearing from North

Printing note: To give the correct viewing distance the sheet should be printed at a scale of 1:1 on A1. To be viewed at comfortable arm's length.
 Visualisation Type: Type 1
 Projection: UTM
 Enlargement factor: 100%

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Photo Viewpoint 3: View looking north from Warwick Road (A4141)



Photo Viewpoint 4: View looking south from Kenilworth Road

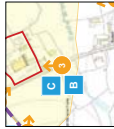


Photo Viewpoint 3
 Date & time of photo: 14 July 2020, 13:32
 Camera make & model, & sensor format:
 Canon EOS 80D, PFS
 Lens make & model: 75mm
 Direction of View: 350°, bearing from North

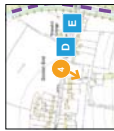


Photo Viewpoint 4
 Date & time of photo: 14 July 2020, 13:34
 Camera make & model, & sensor format:
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 Lens make & model: 75mm
 Direction of View: 200°, bearing from North

Printing note: To give the correct viewing distance the sheet should be printed at a scale of 1:1 on A1. To be viewed at comfortable arm length.
 Visualisation Type: Type 1
 Project Number: 10019958
 Engagement factor: 100%

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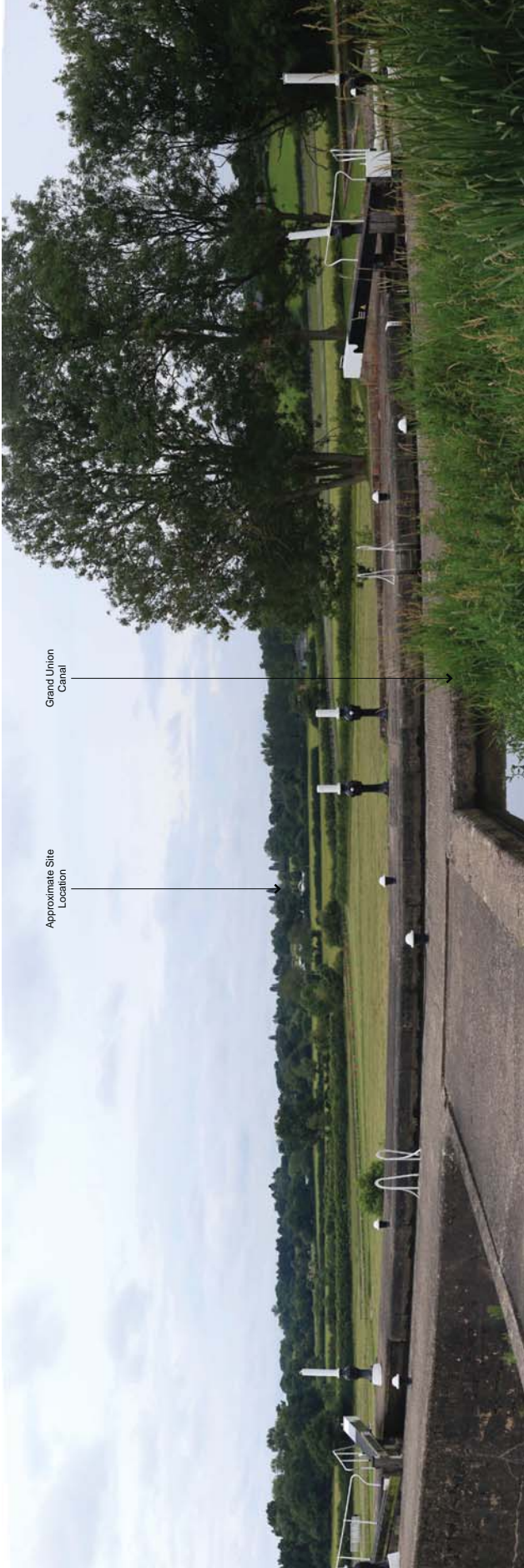


Photo Viewpoint 5: View looking west from Grand Union canal (top of locks)



Photo Viewpoint 6: View looking west from Grand Union canal (bottom of locks)

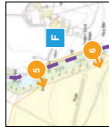


Photo Viewpoint 5a
 Date & time of photo: 14 July 2020, 13:28
 Camera make & model, & sensor format:
 Canon EOS 80D, FFS
 Lens: EF 24mm f/2.8 STM
 Direction of View: 240°, bearing from North

Photo Viewpoint 5b
 Date & time of photo: 14 July 2020, 13:28
 Camera make & model, & sensor format:
 Canon EOS 80D, FFS
 Lens: EF 24mm f/2.8 STM
 Direction of View: 240°, bearing from North

Printing note: To give the correct viewing distance the sheet should be printed at a scale of 1:1 on A1. To be viewed at comfortable arm's length.
 Visualisation Type: Type 1
 Projection: UTM
 Enlargement factor: 100%

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Photo Viewpoint 7: View looking west from Watery Lane



Photo Viewpoint 8: View looking north from Warwick Road (A4141) beyond Robon Row

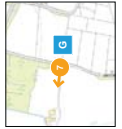


Photo Viewpoint 8
 Date & time of photo: 14 July 2020, 13:28
 Camera make & model, & sensor format:
 Canon EOS 80D, FFS, 75mm lens, sensor size: 759
 Direction of View: 270°; bearing from North



Photo Viewpoint 7
 Date & time of photo: 14 July 2020, 13:30
 Camera make & model, & sensor format:
 Canon EOS 80D, FFS, 75mm lens, sensor size: 759
 Direction of View: 0°; bearing from North

Printing note: To give the correct viewing distance the sheet should be printed at a scale of 1:1 on A1. To be viewed at comfortable arm length.
 Visualisation Type: Type 1
 Enlargement factor: 100%

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Cinnamon Retirement Living
Continuing Care Retirement Community
Warwick Road, Knowle

EXISTING VIEWPOINT 1 - STATION ROAD

NTS@A3
28 July 2020 SRE/JUB / MGH
Figure 11 in A



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SUSTAINABILITY
PLANNING
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE
ARCHITECTURE
INTERIORS
FPCT Environmental and Design Ltd
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F: 020 7672 0088
WWW.FPCT.CO.UK



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Cinnamon Retirement Living
Continuing Care Retirement Community
Warwick Road, Knowle

NTS@A3
28 July 2020 SRE/JUB/AMH
Figure 12 of A



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Cinnamon Retirement Living
Continuing Care Retirement Community
Warwick Road, Knowle

EXISTING VIEWPOINT 5 - GRAND UNION CANAL

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28 July 2020 SRE/JUB /MGH
Figure 14 of A



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Appendix A

Landscape and Visual Appraisal – Methodology and Assessment Criteria

Introduction

- 1.0 The methodology for the Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) undertaken for the proposed development is detailed in the LVA report. The following information should be read in conjunction with this methodology.
- 1.1 As advised in the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (3rd Edition) (GLVIA3), the judgements made in respect of both landscape and visual effects are a combination of an assessment of the sensitivity of the receptor and the magnitude of the landscape or visual effect. The following details the definitions and criteria used in assessing sensitivity and magnitude for landscape and visual receptors.
- 1.2 Where it is determined that the assessment falls between or encompasses two of the defined criteria terms, then the judgement may be described as High/ Medium or Moderate/ Minor etc. This indicates that the assessment lies between the respective definitions or encompasses aspects of both.

Landscape

Landscape Sensitivity

- 1.3 Landscape receptors are assessed in terms of their 'Landscape Sensitivity'. This combines judgements on the value to be attached to the landscape and the susceptibility to change of the landscape from the type of change or development proposed. The definition and criteria adopted for these contributory factors is detailed below.
- 1.4 There can be complex relationships between the value attached to landscape receptors and their susceptibility to change which can be especially important when considering change within or close to designated landscapes. For example, an internationally, nationally or locally valued landscape does not automatically or by definition have a high susceptibility to all types of change. The type of change or development proposed may not compromise the specific basis for the value attached to the landscape.

Landscape Value

- 1.5 Value can apply to a landscape area as a whole, or to the individual elements, features and aesthetic or perceptual dimensions which contribute to the character of the landscape. The following criteria have been used to categorise landscape value. Where there is no clear existing evidence on landscape value, an assessment is made based on the criteria/ factors identified below (based on the guidance in GLVIA3 paragraph 5.28, Box 5.1).

- Landscape quality (condition)
- Scenic quality
- Rarity
- Representativeness
- Conservation interest
- Recreation value
- Perceptual aspects
- Associations

Landscape Value	Definition
High	Landscape receptors of high importance based upon factors of quality, rarity, representativeness, conservation interest, recreational value, perceptual qualities and associations.
Medium	Landscape receptors of medium importance based upon factors of quality, rarity, representativeness, conservation interest, recreational value, perceptual qualities and associations.
Low	Landscape receptors of low importance based upon factors of quality, rarity, representativeness, conservation interest, recreational value, perceptual qualities and associations.

Landscape Susceptibility to Change

- 1.6 This means the ability of the landscape receptor (overall character type/ area or individual element/ feature) to accommodate the change (i.e. the proposed development) without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline position and/ or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies. The definition and criteria for the assessment of Landscape Susceptibility to Change is as follows:

Landscape Susceptibility to Change	Definition
High	A highly distinctive and cohesive landscape receptor, with positive characteristics and features with no or very few detracting or intrusive elements. Landscape features intact and in very good condition and/ or rare. Limited capacity to accept the type of change/ development proposed.
Medium	Distinctive and more commonplace landscape receptor, with some positive characteristics/ features and some detracting or intrusive elements. Landscape features in moderate condition. Capacity to accept well planned and designed change/ development of the type proposed.
Low	Landscape receptor of mixed character with a lack of coherence and including detracting or intrusive elements. Landscape features that may be in poor or improving condition and few that could not be replaced. Greater capacity to accept the type of change/ development proposed.

Magnitude of Landscape Effects

- 1.7 The magnitude of landscape effects is the degree of change to the landscape receptor in terms of its size or scale of change, the geographical extent of the area influenced and its duration and reversibility. The table below sets out the categories and criteria adopted in respect of the separate considerations of Scale or Size of the Degree of Change and Reversibility. The geographical extent and duration of change are described where relevant in the appraisal.

Scale or Size of the Degree of Landscape Change

Scale or Size of the Degree of Landscape Change	Definition
High	Total loss of or substantial alteration to key characteristics / features and the introduction of new elements totally uncharacteristic to the receiving landscape. Overall landscape receptor will be fundamentally changed.
Medium	Partial loss of or alteration to one or more key characteristics / features and the introduction of new elements that would be evident but not necessarily uncharacteristic to the receiving landscape. Overall landscape receptor will be obviously changed.
Low	Limited loss of, or alteration to one or more key characteristics/ features and the introduction of new elements evident and/ or characteristic to the receiving landscape. Overall landscape receptor will be perceptibly changed.
Negligible	Very minor alteration to one or more key characteristics/ features and the introduction of new elements characteristic to the receiving landscape. Overall landscape receptor will be minimally changed.
None	No loss or alteration to the key characteristics/ features, representing 'no change'.

Reversibility

Reversibility	Definition
Irreversible	The development would be permanent and the assessment site could not be returned to its current/ former use.
Reversible	The development could be deconstructed/ demolished and the assessment site could be returned to broadly its current/ historic use (although that may be subject to qualification depending on the nature of the development).

Visual

Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

- 1.8 Visual sensitivity assesses each visual receptor in terms of their susceptibility to change in views and visual amenity and also the value attached to particular views. The definition and criteria adopted for these contributory factors is detailed below.

Visual Susceptibility to Change

- 1.9 The susceptibility of different visual receptors to changes in views and visual amenity is mainly a function of; firstly, the occupation or activity of people experiencing the view at particular locations; and secondly, the extent to which their attention or interest may therefore be focussed on the views and visual amenity they experience.

Visual Susceptibility to Change	Definition
High	Residents at home with primary views from ground floor/garden and upper floors. Public rights of way/ footways where attention is primarily focussed on the landscape and on particular views. Visitors to heritage assets or other attractions whose attention or interest is likely to be focussed on the landscape and/ or on particular views. Communities where views make an important contribution to the landscape setting enjoyed by residents. Travellers on recognised scenic routes.
Medium	Residents at home with secondary views (primarily from first floor level). Public rights of way/ footways where attention is not primarily focussed on the landscape and/ or particular views. Travellers on road, rail or other transport routes.
Low	Users of outdoor recreational facilities where the view is less important to the activities (e.g. sports pitches). Travellers on road, rail or other transport where views are primarily focussed on the transport route. People at their place of work where views of the landscape are not important to the quality of the working life.

Value of Views

- 1.10 The value attached to a view takes account of any recognition attached to a particular view and/ or any indicators of the value attached to views, for example through guidebooks or defined viewpoints or references in literature or art.

Value of Views	Definition
High	A unique or identified view (e.g. shown as such on Ordnance Survey map, guidebook or tourist map) or one noted in literature or art. A view where a heritage asset makes an important contribution to the view.
Medium	A typical and/ or representative view from a particular receptor.
Low	An undistinguished or unremarkable view from a particular receptor.

Magnitude of Visual Effects

- 1.11 Magnitude of Visual Effects evaluates each of the visual effects in terms of its size or scale, the geographical extent of the area influenced and its duration and reversibility. The table below sets out the categories and criteria adopted in respect of the Scale or Size (including the degree of contrast) of Visual Change. The distance and nature of the view and whether the receptor's view will be stationary or moving are also detailed in the Visual Effects Table.

Scale or Size of the Degree of Visual Change	Definition
High	The proposal will result in a large and immediately apparent change in the view, being a dominant and new and/ or incongruous feature in the landscape.
Medium	The proposal will result in an obvious and recognisable change in the view and will be readily noticed by the viewer.
Low	The proposal will constitute a minor component of the wider view or a more recognisable component that reflects those apparent in the existing view. Awareness of the proposals will not have a marked effect on the overall nature of the view.
Negligible/ None	Only a very small part of the proposal will be discernible and it will have very little or no effect on the nature of the view.

Level of Effect

- 1.12 The final conclusions on effects, whether adverse or beneficial, are drawn from the separate judgements on the sensitivity of the receptors and the magnitude of the effects. This overall judgement is formed from a reasoned professional overview of the individual judgements against the assessment criteria.
- 1.13 GLVIA3 notes, at paragraphs 5.56 and 6.44, that there are no hard and fast rules with regard to the level of effects, therefore the following descriptive thresholds have been used for this appraisal:
- **Major**
 - **Moderate**
 - **Minor**
 - **Negligible**
- 1.14 Where it is determined that the assessment falls between or encompasses two of the defined criteria terms, then the judgement may be described as, for example, Major/ Moderate or Moderate/ Minor. This indicates that the effect is assessed to lie between the respective definitions or to encompass aspects of both.

APPENDIX A: LANDSCAPE EFFECTS TABLE (LET)									
Landscape Receptor and Reference	Judged Sensitivity of Landscape			Judged Magnitude of Landscape Effect		Description/ Notes	Overall Effect at Construction Phase	Overall Effect Upon Completion	Overall Effect at 15 Years Post Completion
	Susceptibility to Change	Landscape Value	Overall Sensitivity	Scale or Size of the Degree of Change including degree of contrast/ integration) at Stages of Project	Where applicable, are the Effects Reversible?				
Warwickshire Guidelines, 1993 LCA Arden, Wooded Estatelands	Medium	High Medium Low	High Medium Low	High Medium Low Negligible None	Yes No N/A	<p>The Site falls within the LCA Arden – Wooded Estatelands at a County Level. Key characteristics include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"A large-scale rolling topography with occasional steep scarp slopes.</i> • <i>Large woodlands, often associated with rising ground.</i> • <i>Mature hedgerows and roadside oaks.</i> • <i>A semi-regular field pattern of medium to large sized fields.</i> • <i>A varied settlement pattern of small villages and scattered farmsteads."</i> <p>Development would not lead to the loss of any greenfield land and will be located within the parameters of the current garden centre. Landscape features such as those highlighted above including hedgerows and trees will not be lost as part of the development. Any boundary vegetation will be retained and enhanced with new. Given the comparatively small size of the Site compared to the overall character area effects are considered to be negligible.</p>	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

APPENDIX A: LANDSCAPE EFFECTS TABLE (LET)									
Landscape Receptor and Reference	Judged Sensitivity of Landscape			Judged Magnitude of Landscape Effect		Description/ Notes	Overall Effect at Construction Phase	Overall Effect Upon Completion	Overall Effect at 15 Years Post Completion
	Susceptibility to Change	Landscape Value	Overall Sensitivity	Scale or Size of the Degree of Change including degree of contrast/ integration) at Stages of Project	Where applicable, are the Effects Reversible?				
<p>Soihull Borough Landscape Character Assessment, 2016</p> <p>LCA 3: Knowle and Dorridge Fringe</p>	<p>High</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>Low</p>	<p>High</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>Low</p>	<p>High</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>Low</p>	<p>High</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>Low</p> <p>Negligible</p> <p>None</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>No</p> <p>N/A</p>	<p>At a local level the Site is located within LCA Knowle and Dorridge Fringe. Key characteristics highlighted within the assessment include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"The land gently slopes down from west to east</i> • <i>Small blocks of woodland are scattered across the area... The woodlands are a valuable asset and combined with the winding lanes, mature hedgerow trees and ditches/watercourses running across the fields they provide a rich complexity and strong structure to the landscape, which is a key characteristic of the area.</i> • <i>This area, being in close proximity to Knowle and Dorridge, shows signs of urban influence especially within the northern extent of the LCA on the approaches to the settlement of Knowle."</i> <p>Although the development is located within the Greenbelt, the land is currently a brownfield site, the proposed development will not extend further into the greenbelt than the current garden centre extents.</p> <p>This in addition to the protection and retention of the existing boundary vegetation, results in effects no greater than minor adverse during construction as temporary disruption is caused. Upon completion effects are considered negligible and as the landscape buffer matures and the proposals better assimilate into the landscape than the current built form on the Site, effects are considered minor beneficial as the proposal more positively contributes to the landscape character and surrounding area.</p>	<p>Minor Adverse</p>	<p>Negligible</p>	<p>Minor</p> <p>Beneficial</p>
<p>Landscape Character: Site and Immediate Context</p>	<p>Medium-Low</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Construction: Low adverse</p> <p>Completion: Negligible</p> <p>Year 15: Negligible/Low Beneficial</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>There will be disruption to the Site and immediate context during the construction phase as the existing buildings are demolished and the new proposals are built out. This will be temporary in nature and therefore effects are considered no greater than minor adverse. Upon completion the development has a sympathetic material palette and a smaller overall footprint to that of the existing garden centre, albeit taller the built form will better assimilate into the surrounding landscape due to material and a more broken up massing. As planting matures and the Site is brought under management effects are considered minor beneficial.</p>	<p>Minor Adverse</p>	<p>Negligible</p>	<p>Minor</p> <p>Beneficial</p>
<p>Site and Immediate Context</p>	<p>Medium-Low</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Construction: Low adverse</p> <p>Completion: Negligible</p> <p>Year 15: Negligible / Low beneficial</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>There will be disruption to the Site and immediate context during the construction phase as the existing buildings are demolished and the new proposals are built out. This will be temporary in nature and therefore effects are considered no greater than minor adverse. Upon completion the development has a sympathetic material palette and a smaller overall footprint to that of the existing garden centre, albeit taller the built form will better assimilate into the surrounding landscape due to material and a more broken up massing. As planting matures and the Site is brought under management effects are considered minor beneficial.</p>	<p>Minor Adverse</p>	<p>Negligible</p>	<p>Minor</p> <p>Beneficial</p>

APPENDIX B: VISUAL EFFECTS TABLE (VET)											
Ref	Receptor Type, Location and photographs (including approx no. of dwellings where applicable)	Judged Sensitivity of Visual Receptor			Judged Magnitude of Visual Effects			Description/ Notes	Overall Effect at Construction Phase	Overall Effect Upon Completion (Winter)	Overall Effect at 15 Years Post Completion (Summer)
		Susceptibility to Change	Value	Overall Sensitivity	Distance from Site Boundary (or Built Development where stated) (approx. m/km)	Nature of View	Is the View Temporary or permanent?				
A	Users of Station Road Footpath (Viewpoint 1 & 2)	High	Medium	Medium-High	150m at closest point	Partial at worst	Temporary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction: Low adverse Completion: Negligible Year 15: Low beneficial 	Minor Adverse	Negligible	Minor Beneficial
B	Users of Warwick Road (Viewpoint 2,3 & 8)	Medium	Medium	Medium	Adjacent at closest point	Range from predominantly None to Full at Site Access	Temporary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction: Medium-Low adverse Completion: Negligible Year 15: Low beneficial 	Moderate-Minor Adverse	Negligible	Minor Beneficial

Wyndley, Knowle – Landscape and Visual Appraisal: Visual Effects Table

C	Residents off Warwick Road (Viewpoint 2, 3 & 8)	High	Medium	High/Medium	Adjacent at closest point	Anticipated to vary from None to Partial	Permanent	Construction: Medium-Low adverse Completion: Low/Negligible Year 15: Negligible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is not anticipated that any properties located beyond the immediate vicinity of the Site will experience any visual change. There are several properties located immediately adjacent to the Site to the south and several properties in close proximity to the north, all accessed off Warwick Road. Despite proximity, due to orientation and existing mature vegetation views from these properties will be limited. Effects are therefore considered minor adverse at worst during the construction phase reducing to negligible at year 15. 	Minor Adverse	Negligible	Negligible
D	Users of Kenilworth Road (Viewpoint 4)	Medium	Medium	Medium	Approx. 800m	None	Temporary	Construction: None Completion: None Year 15: None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As demonstrated by Viewpoint 4, there are no anticipated views from Kenilworth Road towards the Site. Intervening vegetation and the rise in topography screen any potential views. 	None	None	None
E	Residents off Kenilworth Road (Viewpoint 4)	High	Medium	Medium-High	Approx. 800m	Anticipated predominantly none with potential glimpses from rear of properties	Permanent	Construction: None Completion: None Year 15: None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Properties along Kenilworth Road are not anticipated to have any visual change as a result of the proposed development this is due to proximity from the Site and intervening mature vegetation and topography screening any potential views. 	None	None	None
F	Users of the Grand Union Canal (Viewpoints 5 & 6)	High	Medium	Medium-High	Approx. 700m	Partial	Temporary	Construction: Low Completion: Negligible Year 15: Low beneficial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The users of the majority of this stretch of footpath will experience little to no visual change due to existing vegetation screening the Site. There are a limited number of long distant views towards the Site, these are predominately located around the Grand Union Locks as shown by Viewpoints 5 & 6. These views would change from the current white roofs of the garden centre to that of the Village Care Centre and Apartment blocks located to the far east of the development. Although the roof height of the proposed buildings will be taller, a more muted material palette has been chosen to reduce the visual impact and the massing of the buildings is smaller than the existing. Effects are therefore considered no greater than minor adverse, reducing to Minor beneficial at year 15 as the proposed planting establishes and matures. 	Minor Adverse	Negligible	Minor Beneficial
G	Users of Watery Lane (Viewpoint 7)	Medium	Medium	Medium	Approx. 1300m	None	Temporary	Construction: None Completion: None Year 15: None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As demonstrated by Viewpoint 7 there are no anticipated views of the Site for users of Watery Lane and therefore no anticipated change in visual amenity. 	None	None	None