

Application No: 25/2053/FUL

Application Type: Full Planning

Location: Land Of The Former Knowle House, Sagars Road, Handforth, SK9 3EA

Proposal: Erection of care home facility to provide 76no. bedspaces including new parking, landscaping and other works to facilitate the development.

Applicant: Wrightcare Developments Ltd and Deansgate M5 Ltd

Summary

The proposal is for erection of a new residential care home with associated parking, landscape and access. The development would include 76 bedrooms providing residential and dementia care. There has previously been a residential home on the site which was demolished following a fire.

The proposal is inappropriate development in the Green Belt. There are no other exceptions under Green Belt policy that would apply in this case. As a major housing proposal, the 'Golden Rules' under NPPF paragraph 155/156 apply. There are not considered to be very special circumstances that outweigh Green Belt harm.

The Council has a 'Home First' strategy of care aimed at keeping people living independently for as long as possible. The Council is in the process of updating an Accommodation Strategy with regard to housing with specialist care, however at present there is not sufficient date to formally object to the planning application with regard to identified need. The delivery of 76 bed care units would help relieve an identified unmet need including the provision of residential care and specialist dementia care and would contribute to housing land supply. Parking and impact on highways is on balance acceptable. Developer's contributions would be required for the NHS.

The height and elevational treatment of the building and relationship with nearby buildings is considered acceptable and due to separation distances, there are no significant residential amenity concerns.

However the design appears to be a standard design that has been applied to the site which raises a number of issues with the layout and legibility. There are a number of matters highlighted, relating to the relationship with the Local Wildlife Site / Priority woodland, surface water drainage and the Dobbin Brook, tree root protection areas and social relationship with trees to the south.

There is outstanding information required in relation to Biodiversity Net Gain.

Summary recommendation

Refuse

1. REASON FOR REFERRAL

1.1. The application relates to a 'Small-Scale Major Development', and under the terms of the Constitution it is required to be determined by the Northern Planning Committee.

2. DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT

2.1. The site comprises an area of land, some of which was previously occupied by a private nursing care facility which was demolished (following a fire) in 1996. The site covers an area of approximately 1.07 hectares. It is located within the Green Belt and the Bollin Valley locally designated landscape. The site is bounded to the west by Dobbin Brook which is located in a woodland corridor, to the south by an area of woodland and to the east by existing residential development. The site is accessed from Sagars Road to the north, with an access driveway to the south where the site opens out to a cleared area of land.

3. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL

3.1. The proposal is for the construction of a new build 76 bed care home to provide nursing and residential care for a range of needs including dementia care within a specialist unit.

3.2. The Council offers a pre-application advice service for major development. No pre application advice was provided for the current care home proposal. An informal enquiry was made, and the applicant's agent was directed to the formal pre-application service, but this was not taken up.

4. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

20/3562M - Erection of 26 dwellings of which 13 affordable with improvement to existing access. Refused 09-04-2021 APP/R0660/W/21/3284310 Appeal Dismissed

13/3883M - Residential development of 20 dwellings and associated works. Refused 31-01-2014

02/1131P - Replacement dwellinghouse – Withdrawn 12.08.2002

01/0507P - Residential development of footprint of Knowle House (outline) – Refused 25.04.2001

96/0564P - Two 48 bedroomeed nursing homes – Refused 03.03.1996

96/1725P - Rebuilding of Knowle House to provide nursing care unit (outline application) – Withdrawn 13.01.1997

71134P - Health care facility to include 24 bed acute care unit 12 bed nursing care unit 12 no. Low dependency units administrative unit and 16 no. Garages

5. NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

5.1. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was first published by the Government in March 2012 and has since been through several revisions. It sets out the planning policies for England and how these should be applied in the determination of planning applications and the preparation of development plans. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The NPPF is a material consideration which should be taken into account for the purposes of decision making.

5.2. The latest version of the NPPF was released in December 2024, with further amendments in February 2025. Of particular relevance are chapters in relation to: Achieving sustainable

development, Decision making, Promoting healthy and safe communities, Making effective use of land, Achieving well designed places and Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

6. DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICY

6.1. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires decisions on planning applications to be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy (2010 – 2030) was adopted in July 2017. The Site Allocations and Development Policies Document was adopted in December 2022. The policies of the Development Plan relevant to this application are set out below, including relevant Neighbourhood Plan policies where applicable to the application site.

6.2. Relevant policies of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy (CELPS) and Cheshire East Site Allocations and Development Plan Policies Document (SADPD)

Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy (LPS)

MP1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

PG1 Overall Development Strategy

PG 3 Green Belt

PG 6 Open Countryside

SC3 Health and Wellbeing

SC4 Residential Mix

SD1 Sustainable development in Cheshire East

SD2 Sustainable development principles

SE 1 Design

SE 3 Biodiversity and Geodiversity

SE 4 The Landscape

SE 6 Green Infrastructure

SE 8 Renewable and Low Carbon Energy

SE12 Pollution Land Contamination and Land Instability

CO 1 Sustainable Travel and Transport

CO 4 Enabling Business Growth Through Transport Infrastructure

Appendix C Parking Standards

Site Allocations and Development Policies Document (SADPD)

PG 9 Settlement boundaries

GEN 1 Design Principles

GEN 5 Aerodrome safeguarding

ENV 3 Landscape Character

ENV 5 Landscaping

ENV 6 Trees, hedgerows and woodland implementation

ENV 7 Climate Change

ENV 12 Air Quality

ENV 14 Light Pollution

ENV 15 New development and existing uses

ENV 16 Surface water management and flood risk

HOU 1 Housing Mix

HOU 2 Specialist Housing Provision

HOU 8 Space, accessibility and wheelchair housing standards

HOU 12 Amenity

HOU 13 Residential standards
INF 3 Highway safety and access
INF 9 Utilities

6.3. Handforth Neighbourhood Plan

Policies of the Neighbourhood Plan relevant to the consideration of this application are:

H1 New Housing in Handforth
H2 Providing appropriate House Types, Tenures and Sizes to meet Local Needs
H8 Landscape and Biodiversity
H9 Trees and Hedgerows
H11 Encouraging High Quality Design
H12 Surface water management
H13 Supporting the Local Economy
H16 Congestion and Highway Safety
H18 Promoting sustainable transport
H19 Improving access to the countryside in Handforth and the surrounding area

7. RELEVANT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENTS OR GUIDANCE

7.1. Supplementary Planning Documents and Guidance do not form part of the Development Plan but may be a material consideration in decision making. The following documents are considered relevant to this application:

7.2. SuDS SPD

Ecology and Biodiversity Net Gain SPD
Developer Contributions SPD
Cheshire East Design Guide SPD
Cheshire East Local Landscape Designation Review 2018
Housing SPD
Housing Strategy 2013-2023
Council's Housing Monitoring Update April 2025
Vulnerable and Older Persons' Housing Strategy 2020-2024
Cheshire East Local Landscape Designation Review 2018
Green Belt Assessment Update 2015

8. CONSULTATIONS (External to Planning)

United Utilities: Condition requested for drainage scheme. Advice provided.

Environmental Protection: Noise impact assessment accepted, to be conditioned. Informatives/ conditions provided in relation to hours of construction, dust management, piling, air quality, light pollution.

Contaminated Land: Comments made regarding submitted Geotechnical report. No formal objection raised, conditions and informatives requested in the case of an approval.

Highways: Further information requested regarding parking provision initially. No objections on receipt of additional information.

Adult Social Care: The Council promotes a 'Home First' strategy to optimise independence as long as possible. The Council is in the process of updating the Market Position Statement

and developing an Accommodation Strategy which will provide a clearer view of future commissioning intentions and systems capacity. The Head of Service does not actively support the application at this stage, however at present there is not sufficient date to formally object to the planning application with regard to identified need.

Strategic Housing: No objection – does not trigger Council's affordable housing policy.

NHS – concerns raised over Primary Care and community services capacity and impact on existing service provision in the area. The NHS has provided a number of responses, including requesting a developer contribution. The final response has raised an objection.

Manchester Airport – conditions requested relating to exterior lighting, solar panels, birdstrike control and landscaping. Informatives are requested in relation to drones, dust, cranes and tall equipment. On reconsultation a query was raised over the BNG statement.

LLFA – Following receipt of additional information – no objections.

Handforth Town Council – Strongly recommends refusal

- 20/3562M for 26 dwellings appeal upheld – Green Belt harm, urban sprawl in gap between Handforth and Wilmslow. Since then Fairways estate surely means development of Knowle House site would not now cause substantial harm to openness.

Green belt land in Dean valley ensures separation between Handforth and Wilmslow. Therefore site's contribution to Green belt is now minimal. Other reasons for objection:

- Care home not needed. – other carehomes nearby listed, a number include respite/dementia care. Home First strategy. Closure of homes in Stockport. Does not demonstrate a need.
- Additional pressure on GP and related health services.
- Access to site - narrow in poor state of repair. Parking concerns on Sagars Road.
- May contradict with HNP H1 para 4 – new housing supported provided appropriate and safe access can be achieved.
- Lack of surface water drainage information.
- Outside of settlement boundary – subject to policies including CELPS PG6.
- Adjacent to SSSI Dobbin Brook Clough – impact on flora and fauna and tranquillity of the woodland walk (APP/R0660/W/21/3284310)
- Site not recommended for development in HNP. Concern over design, conflict with H11 para.1.
- Possible Japanese knotweed on site.

Following amendments (December 2025) - Town Council object raising the same issues above, with the exception of drainage matters.

9. REPRESENTATIONS

32 representations raising concerns/objections received in response to the initial proposals, from 26 addresses

- Access unsuitable for construction or increased traffic
- Impact on local infrastructure – roads, healthcare. Recent 250 house development already significant impact.
- Congestion, cars often parked along Sagars Rd reducing it to single lane for most of its length.
- Gateway is used as a turning area as road beyond not fit for vehicles.
- Noise, dust and vibration impact from traffic and construction
- Noise from bike/motorbike parking close to neighbours
- Noise from mechanical plant – concerned that this relies on a future review.
- Roads damaged by construction traffic. Request for financial contribution.

- Funding request for improving pedestrian and cycle networks
- Invest in local green space
- Safety concerns.
- 7.5T weight limit on Sagars Rd – access via Meriton Rd/ Hampson Cres has had continuous site traffic for over a number of years with Fairways development.
- Wheel washing mitigation not carried out on other development, likely again.
- Low pressure water supply – will be exacerbated by increased demand
- Loss of green space. Impact on adjacent area used for recreation and wellbeing
- No material change since previous refusal/appeal.
- Green Belt objections
- Site adjacent to SSSI, impact on wildlife, hedgehogs , bats, owls
- Insufficient parking on site.
- Flooding concerns off site, poor drainage.
- Bus service timings unsuitable for shift workers
- No off site parking for operatives vehicles.
- Request for all residents of Sagars Rd and Queens Terrace are notified.
- Other carehomes nearby, no need for another carehome.
- Impact on property value
- Imposing design not welcoming or homely.
- Too large for the site
- Land contamination concerns
- Handforths requirements covered mainly by Growth village. Queries over housing requirement methodology.
- Disappointing loss of onsite biodiversity in BNG metric (off site compensation)
- Concern over management of invasive plant species on the site.
- Overlooking concerns
- Concern over changes post permission
- Land contamination concerns
- Handforths requirements covered mainly by Growth village. Queries over housing requirement methodology.

Representations received following amendments and reconsultation (December 2025):

- 13 objections from interested parties including Patients Participation Group (PPG)
- Concerns over disruption and vibration from construction traffic and additional traffic, following other recent development in the area.
- No significant changes to satisfy loss of Green Belt land and other previous objections.
- Impact on health services
- No definitive demonstration of need for another carehome in the area
- There is a need for affordable housing
- Insufficient parking
- Noise concerns
- Negative impact on woodland, ecology, Dobbin Brook.
- Overlooking of neighbours
- Drainage concerns
- Patients Participation Group (PPG) for Handforth Health Centre - Objection.
- 2 care homes in the immediate vicinity with vacancies, no further need.
- Attracts people from outside CE
- Residents initially self funded but then CE are expected to pay
- Impact on GP practices, less appointments for Handforth residents
- Input needed from other health services as well.

Procedural Matters

9.1. Neighbours have been consulted and a site notice was erected by the site boundary. The application site has been reduced in scale during the application process to remove small areas along the eastern boundary from the site edged red, in line with the applicant's ownership.

10. OFFICER APPRAISAL

Principle of the development

10.1. The application site is located within the Green Belt. The current application site has previously been occupied by Knowle House, a care home destroyed by fire and subsequently demolished.

10.2. Paragraph 154 of the NPPF states that development in the Green Belt is inappropriate. A number of exceptions are given within paragraph 154 which are broadly consistent with CELPS policy PG 3. This includes (g) *limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land (including a material change of use to residential or mixed use including residential), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt.*

10.3. The NPPF definition for previously developed land includes the following: *Land which has been lawfully developed and is or was occupied by a permanent structure and any fixed surface infrastructure associated with it, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed). It also includes land comprising large areas of fixed surface infrastructure such as large areas of hardstanding which have been lawfully developed.*

10.4. The NPPF definition excludes land that was previously developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface have blended into the landscape.

10.5. Application 20/3562M for 26 dwellings and associated works on the site was refused due to conflict with Green Belt policy. A second reason for refusal was due to no details of how it would protect, restore and enhance the character and appearance of the Bollin Valley Local Landscape Designation Area. The application was dismissed at appeal (ref: APP/T3725/W/18/3218529).

10.6. The inspector's decision considered the site as previously developed land, although noting that it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage of previously developed land should be developed, in accordance with the NPPF definition of previously developed land. The proposal was found to amount to substantial harm to Green Belt openness, and therefore inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Additional Green Belt harm was considered in terms of conflict with Green Belt purposes (a), (b) and (c).

10.7. The current proposal likewise would introduce a substantial amount of built form to the site, resulting in an impact on openness. Given that the existing site is currently vacant with the exception of some remains of the former development at ground level there would be harm to openness as a result of the proposals. It is considered that the current proposal would result in substantial harm to Green Belt openness and as such would not meet the exception within the NPPF for previously developed land.

10.8. Since determination of application 20/3562M there have been changes in planning policy both at national and local level. Most significant for this application is the amendments to the

NPPF in December 2024, introducing the concept of ‘Grey Belt’, with subsequent minor update to the NPPF and also associated National Planning Practice Guidance notes to assist in interpretation of the NPPF changes, in February 2025.

10.9. Although the current application proposals do not fall into any of the exceptions to inappropriate development in the Green Belt within paragraph 154 of the NPPF and Policy PG3 of the CELPS, consideration needs to be given to Paragraph 155 of the NPPF, which introduces a new exception to inappropriate development.

10.10. Paragraph 155 states that *‘The development of homes, commercial and other development in the Green Belt should also not be regarded as inappropriate where all the following apply:*

- a. *The development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan.*
- b. *There is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed.*
- c. *The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of this Framework; and*
- d. *Where applicable the development proposed meets the ‘Golden Rules’ requirements set out in paragraphs 156-157 below.’*

10.11. The Planning Statement asserts that the proposed development meets the new ‘grey belt’ exception. The following considers whether the site would be classed as ‘Grey Belt’:

Identifying Grey Belt – Purposes a,b and d (NPPF par 155 (a))

10.12. Grey Belt is defined within Annex 2: Glossary of the NPPF as:

‘For the purposes of plan-making and decision-making, ‘grey belt’ is defined as land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143. ‘Grey belt’ excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development.’

10.13. The question in relation to whether the site should be classed as ‘grey belt’ is initially whether the site does not strongly contribute to either purpose (a), (b) or (d) of the Green Belt as defined by paragraph 143 of the NPPF.

- Purpose (a) is – ‘to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas’.
- Purpose (b) is – ‘to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another’
- Purpose (d) is – ‘to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns’

10.14. The Green Belt Assessment Update 2015 for Cheshire East considered a number of parcels of land under the Green Belt purposes within the NPPF. This includes a larger parcel of land which the current application forms a part, listed within the Assessment as HF01. HF01 was found to have a significant contribution to the Green Belt under an assessment of Green Belt purposes.

10.15. It is necessary to consider the contribution of the wider parcel of land as well as the site’s contribution to this wider parcel of land. The following assessment considers the above purposes in relation to the application site, also referencing the considerations within the 2015 Assessment.

10.16. The Green Belt assessment 2015 considered the larger parcel of land, extending to the south east, to the south of Knowle Park and Valley Drive, to the west of Manchester Road. Site HF01 was considered to make a major contribution to the green belt. It was considered to have a strong contribution to Purpose (a), having a role in preventing southward sprawl of Handforth as well as ribbon development along Manchester Road. The assessment notes the parcel HF01 as having strong boundaries including from wooded area to the north and River Dean to the south. The current application site is a small part, to the north west of parcel HF01.

10.17. The inspector's decision in relation to application 20/3562M considered as follows in relation to that proposal: *The current physical boundary along the edge of the Knowle Park estate provides a clear distinction between the built-up area and surrounding Green Belt. In my opinion, the spread of built development of this size across an open site which has no buildings on it would amount to urbanisation and sprawl. The fact that it would be contained by existing landscape features is not a sound basis for me to conclude that the development would not conflict with purpose (a).*

10.18. The subsequent PPG guidance provides additional steps in assessment since the issue of the updated NPPF.

Purpose (a) (Sprawl)

10.19. Under assessment for Purpose (a) (Sprawl) using paragraph 005 of the PPG, an area that contributes strongly is likely to be free of existing development, and lack physical feature(s) in reasonable proximity that could restrict and contain development. Also likely to include all of the following features:

- be adjacent or near to a large built up area
- if developed, result in an incongruous pattern of development (such as an extended "finger" of development into the Green Belt)

10.20. With regard to Purpose (a) (Sprawl) it is considered that the contribution that the land subject to the proposed residential development is 'Moderate'.

10.21. Whilst there are no existing buildings on the site, the site does contain remains of development. The site is largely enclosed on all sides, with residential development to the east, woodland to the west and south, and the narrow access strip between these two off Sagars Road to the north. These physical features do provide restriction and containment for development within the site. However, it is noted that there is some proposed incursion into the edges of the woodland.

10.22. The site is adjacent to the settlement boundary of Handforth, and around 250 metres north of the edge of the Stanneylands development extension to Wilmslow. Both of these are identified as Key Service Centres in policy PG 2 of the CELPS. As such it would be considered to be adjacent or near to a built up area.

10.23. Part of the consideration for Purpose (a) (Sprawl) relates to whether the site would result in a "an incongruous pattern of development (such as an extended "finger" of development into the Green Belt)".

10.24. The site is to the west of the Knowle Park area. The site is wider at the south, where the main development would be a relatively consolidated block rather than spread across the entire site. It would be a wedge shape of development alongside a built up area and on balance would not be considered an incongruous pattern of development.

10.25. The site contributes to the role of the larger parcel referenced above as HF01 in preventing sprawl. However in consideration of the remaining gap to the south this would remain largely consistent in separation from development to the south, as that which exists further to the east towards Manchester Road.

10.26. In accordance with the PPG guidance the land subject to the application proposals is on balance not deemed to 'strongly contribute' to the purposes of the Green Belt in relation to Purpose (a) (Sprawl).

Purpose (b) (preventing towns merging).

10.27. Purpose (b) relates to the merging of towns, not villages. Under planning practice guidance relating to an assessment under purpose (b) a strong contribution would have the following features:

Assessment areas that contribute strongly are likely to be free of existing development and include all of the following features:

- forming a substantial part of a gap between towns*
- the development of which would be likely to result in the loss of visual separation of towns*

10.28. A moderate contribution would be areas that are *likely to be located in a gap between towns, but include one or more features that weaken their contribution to this purpose, such as (but not limited to):*

- forming a small part of the gap between towns*
- being able to be developed without the loss of visual separation between towns. This could be (but is not limited to) due to the presence or the close proximity of structures, natural landscape elements or topography that preserve visual separation*

10.29. With regards to Purpose (b) (towns merging), it is considered that the application site's contribution that the land subject to the development with regards to the merging of towns would be 'Moderate'. This is because the site lies adjacent to or near a large built-up area and includes features that weaken its contribution, in the form of landscape elements and existing boundary edges as described above. The 2015 assessment likewise found that HF01, along with HF02 played a major contribution to preventing Handforth and Wilmslow merging. It is noted that Wilmslow and Handforth have merged in places and these parcels were considered vital to maintain the gap. This site however is a relatively small part of a gap.

Purpose (d) (Setting and character of historic towns)

10.30. The 2015 Green Belt update considered parcel HF01 not to contribute to purpose (d) as Handforth is not an historic town. This remains the case and the site would not contribute strongly to purpose (d).

Identifying grey belt – Footnote 7

10.31. Footnote 7 states the following:

The policies referred to are those in this Framework (rather than those in development plans) relating to: habitats sites (and those sites listed in paragraph 194) and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest; land designated as Green Belt, Local Green Space, a National Landscape, a National Park (or within the Broads Authority) or defined as Heritage Coast; irreplaceable habitats; designated heritage assets (and other heritage assets of archaeological interest referred to in footnote 75); and areas at risk of flooding or coastal change.

10.32. The woodlands surrounding the site are a Local Wildlife Site. It is not a Site of Special Scientific Interest nor a habitat site as defined under paragraph 194. The site is within Flood Zone 1 where there is not a high risk of flooding. There are no designated heritage assets or other constraints within the paragraph above other than that of designated Green Belt.

10.33. Based on the assessment above under the relevant Green Belt purposes, there is no strong reason for refusing or restricting development purely within Green Belt considerations.

Identifying grey belt – Conclusions

10.34. Given that the site is not considered to strongly contribute to purposes (a), (b) and (d) of the Green Belt and there is no other strong reason under footnote 7 for refusing or restricting development, the site can be considered as 'grey belt'.

Grey belt and fundamentally undermining purposes of Green Belt (155a)

10.35. The second part of paragraph 155a requires consideration as to whether the development would fundamentally undermine the purposes taken together of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan.

10.36. The inspector's decision to the previous application on the site found conflict with purpose (c), which sought permission for 26 dwellings spread across the site. The current application does introduce further activity to the site but with built form within a more consolidated block. Even if it is considered that there is some level of encroachment under the current proposal, this would be limited in the context of the parameters of 155a. With regard to (d) the site is not urban land, although it is partially derelict land. Therefore its reuse in principle would not undermine purpose (d).

10.37. Given the scale of the proposals in relation to the whole Green Belt across Cheshire East, it is not considered in this case that the proposal would fundamentally undermine the purposes (a, b, c, d and e taken together) of the remaining Green Belt area across the plan.

Unmet Need (155b)

Housing Land Supply

10.38. The Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy was adopted on the 27th July 2017 and forms part of the statutory development plan. The plan sets out the overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development, and makes sufficient provision for housing (36,000 new dwellings over the plan period, equating to 1,800 dwellings per annum) in order to meet the objectively assessed needs of the area.

10.39. As the plan is more than five years old, deliverable housing land supply is measured using the local housing need figure (plus 5% buffer), which is currently 2,603 dwellings per year rather than the LPS figure of 1,800 dwellings per year.

10.40. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) identifies the circumstances in which relevant development plan policies should be considered out-of-date. These include:

- Where a local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites (with appropriate buffer) or;
- Where the Housing Delivery Test Measurement indicates that the delivery of housing was substantially below (less than 75% of) the housing required over the previous three years.

10.41. In accordance with the NPPF, the council produces an annual update of housing delivery and housing land supply. The council's most recent Housing Monitoring Update (base date 31 March 2024) was published in April 2025. The published report identifies a deliverable five year housing land supply of 10,011 dwellings which equates to a 3.8 year supply measured against the five year local housing need figure of 13,015 dwellings.

10.42. The 2023 Housing Delivery Test Result was published by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities on the 12 December 2024 and this confirms a Housing Delivery Test Result of 262%. Housing delivery over the past three years (7,392 dwellings) has exceeded the number of homes required (2,820). The publication of the HDT result affirms that the appropriate buffer to be applied to the calculation of housing land supply in Cheshire East is 5%.

10.43. In the context of five-year housing land supply, relevant policies concerning the supply of housing should be considered out-of-date and consequently the 'tilted balance' at paragraph 11 of the NPPF is engaged.

Need for Care Home

10.44. Policy HOU2 of the SADPD advises that the delivery, retention and refurbishment of supported and specialist housing, which meets an identified need, will be supported. Supported and specialist housing should be designed to satisfy the requirements of the specific use or group it is intended for, whilst being adaptable and responsive to changing needs over the lifetime of the development and meet the requirements of other relevant local plan policies. Policy SC 4 of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy states the following : Development proposals for accommodation designed specifically for the elderly and people who require specialist accommodation will be supported where there is a proven need; they are located within settlements; accessible by public transport; and within a reasonable walking distance of community facilities such as shops, medical services and public open space.

10.45. The submitted Needs Assessment includes at appendix 2, the following table shows a breakdown of existing registered care for the elderly within a residential nursing environment in the borough.

	Home	Registered Beds	Dementia Beds	Total Rooms	Ensuite Rooms
Residential Care	33	1,351	1,055	1,320	922
Nursing Care	47	2,805	2,524	2,807	2,405
Total	80	4,156	3,579	4,127	3,327

10.46. This is followed by an assessment of demand, identifying an undersupply of 569 ensuite bedrooms for the elderly across the borough by 2030.

	Current Total Elderly	2030 Total Elderly
Demand		
Statistical demand (incl. forecasts)	3,426	3,896
Supply		
Current supply of en suite bedrooms	3,327	3,327
Outstanding Need		
Under supply in terms of en suite bedrooms	99	569

10.47. Cheshire East Council's strategy is 'Home First' to optimise independence for as long as possible, supporting people to remain in their own home.

10.48. The Head of service for Urgent & Emergency Care and New Models of Care has acknowledged the robustness of the assessment of need submitted by the agent and does not dispute the identified need. Anecdotally there are increased vacancies across existing homes and there is an estimated approximately 414 new beds across the borough within 'a significant pipeline of planning applications' plus a further potential 71 beds in extension applications.

10.49. Closures referenced by the applicant's documents include locations outside of the borough, which would not demonstrate a need for additional care home provision in Cheshire East. It should also be considered that there is a wider impact of additional care home developments, which may place further strain on primary care, community services and workforce availability.

10.50. The Council is in the process of updating the Market Position Statement and developing an Accommodation Strategy which will provide a clearer view of future commissioning intentions and systems capacity. The Head of Service does not actively support the application at this stage, however at present there is not sufficient data to formally object to the planning application with regard to identified need.

10.51. The needs assessment considers other recent applications for care home beds to take into account other provision, with a need for beds outstanding. The current proposal would relieve some of this unmet need having regard for the unmet need including provision of specialist dementia care and as such it is considered to comply with policy HOU 1. In accordance with the Council's Housing Monitoring Update April 2025, housing completions include older person's bed spaces, where each residential bedspace is counted as a single gain, counting towards housing delivery targets. This is a significant benefit of the proposal.

10.52. Matters such as staff recruitment and retention policies and demonstration of viability issues would not be determinative in the planning assessment. The applicant is advised that the financial model should not rely on the local authority funding places and would have no obligation if a service user can no longer cover the weekly care fees. The proposal is to include dementia care within the development as well as more general residential and nursing care.

10.53. Overall, there is a clear and demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed.

Sustainable location (155c)

10.54. Paragraph 155 (c) sets out that the development should be in a sustainable location. It states that particular reference should be made to paragraphs 110 and 115 of the NPPF. 10.1.32 Paragraph 110 of the NPPF states that significant development should be focused in locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes.

10.55. Paragraph 115 of the NPPF states that a) sustainable transport modes are prioritised, b) safe and suitable access can be achieved c) the design of the scheme should meet national guidance and d) any highways impact mitigated.

10.56. The site is at the edge of a built up area where there are existing services. The Paddock local shopping area is located around 0.7 km from the site, with shops, a bus stop, and adjacent to a play area. Handforth Health Centre is located at the east end of Sagars Road, approximately 600m from the site entrance. The planning statement notes public transport links with a bus stop 600m to the east along Sagars Road, with the 130 and 132 bus routes between Handforth, Manchester Airport, Handforth Dean Macclesfield and Wilmslow. Handforth railway station is approximately 750m east of the site. It is noted also that these distances are taken from the entrance to the site which has a relatively long driveway to the building itself.

10.57. Sagars Road from the west side of the site entrance has pavements and street lighting. The site is clearly within an area that has walkable access to key services. The site is considered to be in a sustainable location.

Golden Rules (155 d)

10.58. 'Golden Rules' under paragraphs 156 and 157 relate to contributions and affordable housing requirements for housing development in the Green Belt. The proposals are not use class C3 dwellings of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) and Strategic Housing have commented that it would not trigger requirements for affordable housing under CELPS policy SC 5. Whilst the council's policy under SC 5 does not specify requirement for affordable housing for this type of development, in accordance with the revised NPPF, Golden Rules apply under paragraph 155-156 for major housing proposals. As a major housing proposal, these rules would therefore apply. No affordable housing contributions have been offered, as such the proposal does not meet the Golden Rules of the NPPF and fails to comply with the requirements of the NPPF.

Grey Belt conclusion

10.59. The proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Concerns raised in representations with respect to the location have been taken into consideration. Following the above assessment it is considered whilst other Grey Belt considerations are met, the proposals would not meet the requirements of Golden Rules as a major housing proposal.

Design and impact on the character of the area, and impact of design on future residents.

10.60. New development should respect and enhance the existing architectural design themes, materials and scale within the immediate area and also not to detrimentally impact built heritage assets without clear and convincing justification given to outweigh any defined harm. The most applicable policies for consideration are SD1, SD2, SE1 and SE7 of the CELPS and GEN 1, HER 1, HER 4 of the SADPD, as well as chapters 12 and 16 of the NPPF.

10.61. GEN 1 of the SADPD seeks for development to create high quality beautiful and sustainable buildings and places, avoiding the imposition of standardised and /or generic design solutions where they do not establish and/or maintain a strong sense of quality and place. Handforth Neighbourhood Plan Policy H11 (Encouraging High Quality Design) requires that proposals should not feature designs specific to a generic scheme and must display how they take account of the locally distinctive character of the surrounding environment.

10.62. SE 1 seeks for development proposals to achieve a sense of place through a number of means including encouraging innovative and creative design solutions that are appropriate to the local context.

10.63. The design officer has applied an assessment under the Building For a Healthy Life (BFHL) template, although noting as it is not a standard housing proposal it is not a perfect fit for this model.

10.64. Natural Connections - lack of clarity has been raised over pedestrian connection to Sagars Road. It is understood that the access road would have a pedestrian walkway alongside which would provide this access

10.65. Walking, cycling and public transport - subject to a footway access the development is within walking distance of Handforth Station and local bus services. This is also discussed above within the sustainability considerations for the Green Belt assessment.

10.66. Facilities and Services – A number of facilities are proposed within the development (eg hairdressers, cinema room) and the site is within reasonable proximity to other facilities within Handforth and a wider selection in Wilmslow. There is open space within the enclosed front communal garden and the woodland walk, considered as appropriate in initial design comments. However comments from the landscape team noted that the security fence to the northern side is close to residents windows. The Open Space officer has provided informal comment raising concerns of enclosure by a 1.8m high fence. As elsewhere it is noted that there is no secure shared garden area – the central one being also the main access, and the rear woodland walk being access through the carpark and around the plant area.

10.67. Homes for everyone – the specialist housing would not normally trigger affordable housing policy, but as noted in order to qualify as an exception to inappropriate development affordable housing in accordance with the Golden Rules should be provided. There is no affordable provision within the scheme.

10.68. Making the most of what's there – Mature trees border the south are noted as retained within the design officers response, however further consideration by the arboricultural officer raised concerns elsewhere in terms of social proximity and extent of pruning required. The building is noted as being of a similar scale to neighbouring properties, with regard to being two story in height although with a larger footprint.

10.69. A memorable character – The Design consultee has commented that the area does not have an overriding architectural style, consisting of varied of two storey post war brick and tile semi-detached and detached houses . The low key design approach is supported, subject to materials palettes for the building and hard surfaces, in line with the CE Design Guide. The scale and massing is a relatively large floorplate building in the area, but with a precedent of a larger building on the site with the former home destroyed by fire understood to have been larger than the buildings typically nearby. Limiting the building to two-storeys, along with the use of a relatively shallow pitch has reduced the potential overlarge roof issues created by the deep plan, and this coupled with the articulation of the two wings helps to reduce the bulk. This is further assisted by the addition of the cladding to the protruding balcony terrace elements and some textured brick detailing creating a clean and contemporary building.

Following further discussion, the elevational treatment has been further amended to remove stone cills and include further articulation with textured brick. Proposed elevations include only one of the two inner faces of the wing, it is assumed the northern side would be a mirror image of the southern side. A condition can be included in the case of an approval, for a 100mm reveal to windows to create a shadow line for visual interest and rather than flush windows. Amendments have provided greater attention to detail on the rear elevation, with a more prominent gable and brick detailing which is positive in terms of the external appearance of the building, given that there is a rear entrance which would serve as access for staff, ambulance parking and overflow visitor parking.

10.70. Well defined streets and spaces - This is not directly relevant to a development of this type. It is noted that the building encloses a shared garden area, surrounded by private patios. However, this area also serves as the main entrance to the building.

10.71. Easy to find your way around – Although considered easy to navigate in the initial design consultee response, later comments by the landscape consultee raised concerns about reliance on signage and about the access by ambulance. Ambulance parking has now been provided at the back, and a canopy over the rear entrance has been provided on the revised elevations, in response to comments from the landscape officer. Following informal comments from Open Space regarding wearability and accessibility for wheelchair users, the woodland walkway has been amended from loose gravel to a bound gravel surface. The internal layout has been amended, but it remains the case that there are effectively two entrances, the front entrance from the limited number of visited parking spaces, including one accessible parking space, would lead through the central garden area to the front entrance inside the V shaped plan. The overflow parking however would lead to a small lobby then a series of 3 further internal doors before leading to the main reception area. Whilst this may be acceptable for staff arrivals it is less coherent for visitors accessing the area via the overflow parking or for ambulance staff.

10.72. Cycle and car parking – as a higher need care home for people in receipt of daily care car parking is focussed on the needs of staff and visitors. The carparks are separated with some limited visitor parking at the front and with overflow and staff parking at the rear. Cycle storage is also provided at the frontage. Amendments have provided ambulance parking at the rear adjacent to the rear entrance in response to queries by the landscape officer in terms of layout.

10.73. Green and blue infrastructure - Concerns were raised initially regarding water management. SuDs features have been included in the drainage strategy although not shown on plans and would need to be conditioned.

10.74. Back of pavement, front of home – Ground floor rooms have provided outside space with raised planters to separate from public areas which is positive. It is noted however that those on the northern elevation are relatively close looking out onto the entrance driveway. Waste storage has been shown to be at the rear of the building, design comments requested enclosure for these and concerns were raised by the landscape team requesting the clustering of plant away from the busy parking area, to enhance the user experience of the rear landscape. Amendments show the bin storage area adjacent to the rear wall of the building. However the amendments also show a large plant area central to the parking area, separating the building visually and functionally from the woodland walk, and is now more prominent and visually intrusive than the original site plan. A query was raised by officers as to whether the plan could be altered to have the kitchen at the southern end, effectively mirroring the proposed layout, to enable access to bin store further from the carpark and access. The applicants team advised that the kitchen layout had already been designed and did not want to consider alternatives.

10.75. It is noted that the proposal is very similar to a recent development, Castlewood carehome for 68 beds in Clitheroe by the same provider. It is understood that an important driver in the design was for no bedroom windows to overlook a carpark. This is achieved by the siting of bedroom windows either side of the two 'wings' of the V shaped plan, with services at the centre facing towards the carpark at the rear, and a smaller parking area at the end of one of the 'wings'. Whilst this is a positive aspect in the design, it is noted that the current proposal differs in being for a larger number of rooms but on a site with constraints of the surrounding woodland. The Clitheroe site differs in directly fronting the road to the south, with a greater number of parking spaces at the front than at the Handforth site. The Clitheroe site includes a resident's garden area adjacent to the west side of the site, separate from the central courtyard and access area and parking areas. Key differences are for example approximately 12 metre separation at Clitheroe from ground floor windows to the side access road around to the rear, with additional buffering from a hedge in between. There is also a more compact arrangement of external services, at the far end of the carpark, compared to the current proposal where the carparking wraps around a large plant area, separating the building visually and functionally from the woodland walk. Generally whilst there have been attempts to address concerns raised by officers, it would appear that a standard design approach has been taken that was used elsewhere and reapplied to this application site, rather than a genuine approach to allow the constraints of the surroundings to inform and shape a site specific design.

10.76. In comparison whilst the overall site area is larger for the current site this includes the extended driveway and the tree constraints around the edges of the site, overall resulting in a more cramped situation at Handforth than appears to be the case from the approved plans for the Clitheroe site. The access driveway along the northern side of the site is from 8.6 metres from the road edge, to around 4.3 metres at the western end of this elevation, resulting in a restricted arrangement of patio areas for some of these rooms, and close relationship to the access road.

10.77. As noted above the woodland walk would be separated from the building by a rear carpark and large external plant enclosure. The woodland walk offers seating areas, but it appears that it would need to be accessed through or around the edge of the carpark rather than easily accessible from the building. The Golden Rules seek to secure good quality greenspaces within a short walk, on site or off site. The success of the woodland walk is heavily compromised by its positioning. The allotment space in the south west corner would likely be heavily shaded by the trees immediately to the south. The windows to the southern elevation would also have potential to be impacted by the close proximity of tree canopies which are shown to be significantly cut back to accommodate the development, considered in more detail in the Arboricultural section of the report.

10.78. The proposals have been amended following initial comments from officers. Officers have been advised that dementia patients would be accompanied whilst outside in the central landscaped gardens, such that the access through this area to the main front entrance would not be a concern for vulnerable residents. However it has not been demonstrated if an alternative layout would be possible, with provision of separate private amenity spaces, away from busy access points. Again as with the design section above it is considered that the standardised design has resulted in issues which could potentially have been considered at an earlier design stage.

10.79. Overall to summarise whilst there are a number of matters which have not been raised as objections in the design response, with further consideration and assessment by the landscape officer it appears that there are a number of matters relating fundamentally to the design and layout of the site. The design appears to be a standardised layout which does not adequately respond to the constraints of the site, resulting in a cramped development with

issues in the layout which conflict with Policies HNP policy H11, SADPD GEN 1, CELPS SD 2 and SE 1.

Landscaping

10.80. CELPS policy SE 4 seeks for development to conserve landscape character and to incorporate appropriate landscaping. In Local Landscape designation areas, the council will seek to conserve and enhance the quality of the landscape to protect it from development which is likely to have an adverse effect on its character and appearance and setting. Here development is considered to be acceptable in principle, measures will be sought to integrate it into the landscape character. SADPD policy ENV 5 seeks for landscaping schemes to meet criteria including responding to topography, landscape features and existing green and blue infrastructure. ENV 3 relates specifically to Landscape character and Local Landscape Designations.

10.81. The site is within the Bollin Valley Local Landscape Designation (LLD) area. The LVA as initially submitted was reviewed and found lacking in detail in terms of local character assessment and receptor weight to the Bollin LLD. The site was previously built on and in an area of enclosure through an urbanised side and wooded boundaries. The proposals are overall modest in height in respect to the surrounding mature wooded landscape. The site does not deliver characteristics which would typically closely associate it with the Bollin LLD, even though it is within it. These features mean it is for the most part associated with the adjacent built development, and is considered not to have major adverse visual impacts overall within the Bollin Valley LLD due to the mature woodland screening, and height and scale. There is a discretionary footpath around the western and southern boundary of the site, within the edge of the woodland, which is marked on maps on the Handforth Parish Council. There may be some local negative visual effects which could be overcome with planting buffer zones. Revisions have included buffer planting in response to these comments, details and specifications of which can be secured by condition. Overall, the proposals are acceptable under the above policy, with regards to the Local Landscape Designation (LLD) area.

10.82. Landscaping has also been considered above within the overall design section, relating to internal to the site itself.

Amenity

10.83. SADPD Policies HOU 12 and HOU 13 between them require that development proposals must not cause unacceptable harm to the amenities of adjoining or nearby occupiers of residential properties, sensitive uses, or future occupiers of the proposed development due to 1. loss of privacy; 2. loss of sunlight and daylight; 3. the overbearing and dominating effect of new buildings; 4. Environmental disturbance or pollution; or 5. traffic generation, access and parking. Policy HOU13 provides standards for housing allowing light and privacy between buildings, with reference to Table 8.2 in the SADPD. Policy SE1 of the CELPS states that development should ensure an appropriate level of privacy for new and existing residential properties. Handforth Neighbourhood Plan Policy H11 (Encouraging High Quality Design) is also relevant.

10.84. The built form has been designed not to encroach within a 22-metre distance of existing dwellings. Taking into consideration the separation distances within table 8.2 of policy HOU13 these distances are acceptable back to back between 2 storey buildings. The closest distance from the building to the boundary to the east side, understood to also be the boundary to residents gardens, is around 14 metres, with the proposed building at an angle such that the elevations would not directly face towards these neighbouring properties, and there is the benefit of screening from planting to much of these boundaries. Whilst there would be a

significant built form, taking into consideration that the proposal follows the surrounding pattern of two storey buildings, and the separation distances it is considered on balance that there would not be a substantial harm to neighbouring properties in terms of overbearing impact, loss of light or privacy and is acceptable under relevant policies above.

Parking, Highways safety and Traffic Generation

10.85. Policy H11 of the HNP seeks for provision of on site parking in accordance with Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy Standards.

10.86. The site is proposed for a 76 bed care home where most vehicle trips would typically be for staff and visitors. The existing access and private access driveway would be retained. Details of space for turning of refuse / delivery vehicles has been submitted and is considered acceptable. 34 parking spaces are proposed on the revised site plan, including one accessible EV parking space plus 2 other accessible spaces. 20% are proposed as cable -enabled bays. Ambulance parking space and turning space for large vehicles is provided on the revised plans in addition. CELPS appendix C standards are for 1 space per three beds, plus 1 per resident staff and 1 per non resident staff. The Transport statement indicated unknown staff numbers at this stage. Subsequent information provided by the agent indicates 15 residential and 8 non residential. As such the proposal would be significantly below that of the CELPS standard.

10.87. The submitted Transport Statement includes TRICS data to estimate vehicle trips to and from the site in peak hours, estimating 13 trips (0800-0900) and 10 trips (1600-1700). The Highways consultee requested further information and is now satisfied with the parking provision, turning areas and bin storage provision. Figure 6.1 in the statement makes an assumption of 10 vehicles for overnight staff and peak occupancy is expected not to exceed 20 vehicles across a typical day. It is not clear how this is calculated in terms of the ratio of staff to visitors within this, particularly taking into account the staffing levels provided above.

10.88. The parking provision equates to 0.43 spaces per bed. Whilst there are some other care homes with comparable or lower ratios it is noted that there are concerns raised locally about on street parking. The Highways consultee has commented that the site is large enough to accommodate further parking if required, but provision of unused hard standing is not good practice. Overall however on balance there are no objections with regard to parking provision on the basis of the information provided in terms of staffing.

10.89. The access driveway would remain an unadopted road. The Highway consultee has considered the predicted level of traffic within the submitted information, anticipating this to have a minor traffic impact and not to cause any capacity issues on the local road network. As noted above in consideration of sustainability of the location, there are bus services within walking distance of the site. A travel plan can be requested by condition.

10.90. Details are included for a covered cycle storage facility for 10 cycles. The requirement under Appendix C for C 2 uses is 1 space per 10 units for sheltered residential accommodation or 1 space per 10 staff for hospitals. The care homes use would not fall within either of these categories but taking into account the anticipated number of staff at any one time this would be considered acceptable. However given that there are concerns over the cramped layout on the site it is considered that there is a knock on effect on the parking provision which could be addressed in a reconsideration of the design overall at an early stage.

Trees

10.91. CELPS policy SE 5 requires that all developments should ensure the sustainable management of trees, woodlands and hedgerows including the provision of new planting within new development to retain and improve canopy cover, enable climate adaptation resilience and support biodiversity. SADPD ENV 6 seeks for development proposals to seek to retain and protect trees, woodlands and hedgerows. The site is within the Bollin Valley Locally Designated Landscape Area.

10.92. Under HNP policy H9, trees which are identified as making a significant contribution to the amenity, biodiversity and landscape character of the surrounding area must be preserved and development which would adversely impact upon them will not normally be supported unless substantial public benefits can be demonstrated, and their loss adequately demonstrated. Furthermore new developments should be designed to protect existing health mature trees either through the provision of TPOs or a permanent arboriculture management programme for the site.

10.93. HNP Policy H8 requires that new development will be expected to protect and / or conserve the historical and ecological qualities of the area. The policies specifically includes Woodland in the Dobbin Brook Clough, the area immediately adjacent to the site. H9 seeks for protection of Trees and Hedgerows.

10.94. Following initial feedback an updated Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) and associated drawings has been submitted. This includes mitigation for loss of copper beech tree (T6). Having regard to Policy SE 5 of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy (CELPS), the proposed level and type of planting is considered sufficient to mitigate the impact of the Beech tree removal and maintain the site's landscape character.

10.95. The AIA indicates that proposed hard surfaces, new buildings, and landscaping works will encroach into the Root Protection Areas (RPAs) of several trees and states that calculated RPA incursions are provided in Table 4. Table 4 does not include any calculated RPA incursion data. As a result, it is not possible to verify the extent of encroachment or assess whether the proposals comply with the requirements of BS5837. The requirement to define the extent of new hard standing proposed within RPA's was referred to in previous consultation comments. The absence of data identifying the extent of RPA encroachment in respect of trees T3, T5, T8 and W1 where no existing hard surfacing is present and requirement of a justification for construction is contrary to the design requirements of BS5837:2012.

10.96. The building footprint extends into RPAs of the retained woodland (W1) and it is noted that the revised AIA relies on 'specialist foundations' provided by the project architect and structural engineer. Any reliance on special engineering foundations must be justified with robust, site-specific evidence demonstrating that the proposed solution is technically feasible within the constraints of the site and compatible with the structural design of the building which was highlighted in previous consultation responses. An Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS) has been provided but does not provide detailed information/methodology of how foundations are to be constructed within the area affected. Details of proposed special engineering foundation is required to demonstrate the methodology is technically feasible and minimises impact on the RPA of trees and sensitivity of the woodland edge. In this case it is not considered there is enough information to give confidence that this can be dealt with by condition.

10.97. The revised AIA states that the southern elevation of the proposed build will have adequate clearance from tree stems (Para 4.1) with only minor lateral pruning required. The matter of relationship between proposed building and retained trees was highlighted in the

previous consultation comment, having regard to social proximity, shading and availability of daylight with a request for a shading diagram and daylight/sunlight assessment. This information has not been provided. A comprehensive assessment is required to evaluate the impact of woodland W1 on the living conditions within the care home. This should include shading diagrams and a sunlight/daylight analysis addressing potential reductions in daylight, increased shading, and the visual dominance of trees, which may lead to requests for significant pruning or felling. The absence of such an assessment is inconsistent with the design principles set out in BS5837:2012 and is contrary to Policy SE 5 of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy (CELPS).

10.98. In response to the previous consultation, a revised site section (Revision P1) has been submitted showing the relationship between the Care Home building and woodland area W1. The section includes a feature labelled as a 'retaining wall'; however, it appears to depict a free-standing wall without any retaining function. The drawing suggests that existing ground levels and woodland will remain unchanged, but it does not provide details regarding the extent of root protection areas or whether these may be impacted. Clarification is required on the retaining wall design and function. If it has a retaining function, then engineering details are required to demonstrate that the construction will not impact on Root Protection Areas (RPA's).

10.99. A revised drainage strategy has been submitted, which appears to indicate proposed surface water drainage extending into the woodland areas to the north and south of the site. This raises potential conflicts with root protection areas (RPAs) and the need to safeguard the integrity of the woodland.

10.100. Paragraph 4.3 of the Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) currently states that no proposed drainage works are under consideration. However, in light of the submitted drainage strategy, the AIA must be updated to assess the potential impacts of the proposed drainage layout on trees and woodland and follow mitigation hierarchy.

10.101. To conclude in relation to impact on trees, the updated Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) and supporting documents have addressed some previous concerns, including clarification on the removal of Beech (T6) and mitigation for its loss. However, significant arboricultural issues remain unresolved.

- Absence of quantified Root Protection Area (RPA) incursion data for several retained trees (T3, T5, T8, W1), in compliance with BS5837:2012
- Lack of detailed methodology for proposed specialist foundations for the care home within RPAs of Woodland W1
- No shading diagram or daylight/sunlight assessment to address social proximity and living conditions, contrary to previous consultation requests.
- Clarification on the retaining wall design and its potential effect on RPAs.
- Revised drainage strategy not assessed within the AIA, which raises concerns around potential conflicts with RPAs and the integrity of Woodland W1.

10.102. Whilst mitigation planting is proposed, this does not overcome the lack of technical detail and assessment required to ensure the development can be delivered without unacceptable harm to retained trees and woodland. As such the proposals conflict with CELPS SE 5, ENV 6, HNP H8 and H9.

Ecology

10.103. The application site is located adjacent to and partly within the boundary of the Dobbin Brook Clough Local Wildlife Site (LWS). The LWS Supports priority woodland habitats. Sites such as this receive protection through CELPS policy SE 3.

Impact on LWS / Priority Woodland.

10.104. The submitted ecological assessment records priority woodland within the red line of the application towards the south of the site, indicating that the red line of the application extends into the boundary of the LWS in this location. The ecologist has advised that provided that the woodland edge trees can be satisfactorily retained the proposed development would not result in a significant direct impact upon the Local Wildlife Site / Priority Woodland. Conversely if it is not possible to satisfactorily retain all the trees on the woodland edge the proposals would result in a significant direct adverse impact on the LWS/ priority woodland. As noted above there is a lack of information to assess the impact on the root protection areas of trees in the woodland area W1. Consequently there is insufficient information to demonstrate that there would be no adverse impact on the LWS/ priority woodland. This relates to not only to the area of proposed build, but also to the potential impact of the proposed drainage connection through the woodland to discharge into the Dobbin Brook. This drainage connection may have an adverse effect on protected species associated with Dobbin Brook.

Biodiversity Net Gain

10.105. The application is subject to mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain. The Council's Ecologist has advised that whilst the BNG report advises that previous comments have been addressed, a copy of the Metric spreadsheet has not been submitted. This is a statutory requirement, required prior to determination so that calculations can be validated.

10.106. Assuming that the figures quoted within the BNG statement reflect metric calculations, it is considered that the proposed development is unlikely to deliver the required net gains on site. Additional off site habitat creation will be needed to achieve the required net gain which can be dealt with by condition.

CEC Ecological Network

10.107. The application site falls within a Core Area of the CEC ecological network. SADPD Policy ENV1 therefore applies to the determination of this application. This policy requires developments within core area to lead to an increase in Priority Habitat. This policy obligation would be fulfilled through the creation of the mixed native species hedgerows on site as part of the landscaping scheme (as shown on Rev F of the submitted landscape proposals). This planning application provides an opportunity to incorporate features to increase the biodiversity value of the development in accordance with Local Plan Policy SE 3. An ecological enhancement strategy can be submitted by condition.

Watercourse Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP)

10.108. In order to safeguard the adjacent watercourses a condition is recommended to ensure that the proposed development proceeds in accordance with the submitted CEMP prepared by EW dated 24th April 2025.

Bats

10.109. The submitted preliminary Ecological Appraisal advises that the site supports moderate quality habitats for foraging and commuting bats. No bat activity surveys have been undertaken so the importance of the site for bats is not fully known. Two trees are to be removed as part of the development as indicated by the arboricultural impact assessment. These trees have been subject to a detailed bat survey and found to have no potential to support roosting bats. Therefore, roosting bats are not reasonably likely to be directly affected by the removal of these trees.

Lighting

10.110. The close proximity of the proposed access road and the siting of the building extending adjacent to the priority/LWS woodland means that there may be an adverse impact upon foraging and commuting bats and other wildlife through the installation of additional lighting. In the absence of a bat activity survey the severity of this effect is unknown. Based upon the submitted lighting scheme there is no light spill onto the woodland to the south. The lighting of the access road is however likely to result in light spill of greater than 1 lux on the adjacent woodland, although this is difficult to discern from the submitted plan. Consequently the lighting of the access road is likely to have an adverse impact upon foraging and commuting bats and other wildlife associated with the woodland edge adjacent to the access road. It is noted that back shutters are proposed for the lighting columns. It is not clear whether the benefits of the back shutters have been included in the lighting model or which way the lighting columns are orientated so that the back shutters will in fact reduce light spill onto the woodland. Clarification of these points is required, which can be by condition.

Badger

10.111. Two potential badger setts are present just offsite. No evidence of badgers using these setts was recorded during the detailed surveys of the site. Badgers are however active on this site. Based on the current status of badgers on site. The council's ecologist has advised that the proposed development will result in a minor impact on badgers as a result of the loss of potentially suitable foraging habitat. As the status of badger on a site can change in a short time scale, it is recommended that if consent is granted a condition be attached which required an updated badger survey to be undertaken and submitted prior to the commencement of development.

Hedgehog

10.112. There are records of this priority species in the broad locality of the application site, this species may therefore occur on the application site on at least a transitory basis. In order to minimise the risk of hedgehogs being harmed during site clearance and construction works, it is recommended that a condition be attached in the event that planning consent is granted.

Nesting Birds

10.113. If planning consent is granted the following condition will be required to safeguard nesting birds

Japanese Knotweed

10.114. The applicant should be aware that Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) is present on the proposed development site. Under the terms of the Wildlife and Countryside act 1981 it is an offence to cause Japanese Knotweed to grow in the wild. Japanese knotweed may be spread simply by means of disturbance of its rhizome system, which extends for several

meters around the visible parts of the plant and new growth can arise from even the smallest fragment of rhizome left in the soil as well as from cutting taken from the plant. Disturbance of soil on the site may result in increased growth of Japanese Knotweed on the site. If the applicant intends to move any soil or waste off site, under the terms of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 any part of the plant or any material contaminated with Japanese Knotweed must be disposed of at a landfill site licensed to accept it and the operator should be made aware of the nature of the waste.

Ecology Conclusion

10.115. The updated BNG Metric is required prior to determination. Currently this results in conflicts under SE3 of the CELPS and ENV 2 of the SADPD. Should this information be satisfactorily be provided prior to determination it would remove a reason for refusal.

10.116. In the event that the application is approved, conditions are recommended for a Biodiversity Gain Plan, habitat creation method statement, ecological enhancements and implementation, compliance with the submitted CEMP, external lighting details, further badger survey, hedgehog reasonable avoidance and nesting bird protection.

10.117. There is currently insufficient information to assess the impact on the LWS/Priority Woodland from the proposed drainage channel through the woodland, and any potential impact on protected species associated with Dobbin Brook. As such it is not currently demonstrate that the proposals would fully comply with Policy SE3 of the CELPS, H8 of the HNP.

Environmental Protection

10.118. Policy ENV15 relates to new development and existing uses. New development must effectively integrate with existing uses and existing uses must not have unreasonable restrictions placed on them as a result of it. A principal consideration in this instance would be possible environmental disturbance.

Noise mitigation

10.119. The proposal includes construction of a new care home. The site is located in close proximity existing residential premises as well as the new residents of the development. The building would have new mechanical plant fitted.

10.120. A noise impact assessment (NIA) has been submitted which corresponded to the proposed layout as initially shown. Environmental Protection officers have commented that any amendments to the layout must comply with the NIA or the NIA may need to be reviewed accordingly. There have been some minor changes to the layout which are unlikely to change the findings of the report. The impact of the noise from road traffic, aircraft and installed mechanical plant on the proposed development has been assessed in accordance with BS8233:2014 Guidance on Sound Insulation and Noise Reduction for Buildings and BS4142:2014 Methods for rating and assessing industrial and commercial sound.

10.121. The report includes noise mitigation measures to ensure occupants on nearby properties are not adversely affected by noise from mechanical plant noise. The report's methodology, conclusion and recommendations are accepted. Conditions are requested for implementation of the recommendations of the report prior to occupation, and for the mitigation to be maintained for the purpose originally intended throughout the use of the development.

Light pollution

10.122. The Environmental Protection team have requested lighting to be in accordance with the External Lighting Plan submitted. However as noted above further information is requested on lighting by the ecologist. As such further assessment would be necessary before any condition wording can be confirmed in the event of an approval.

Environmental disturbance during construction.

10.123. Informatics are requested for hours of construction, demolition and grounds works and associated deliveries to and from the site. Pile foundations should be undertaken using a system which will cause the least possible degree of noise and vibration to the occupiers of nearby dwellings. Recommendations are provided including notification of the Regulatory and Health services of the commencement and times of piling work. A site-specific dust management plan is required to be retained at the development site. Details of what the plan should include can be found within the Environmental Protection consultation response on the application file and to form part of an informative to a decision in the case of an approval.

Air Quality

10.124. The scheme is considered not to be of a scale that would require an air quality impact assessment, however there is a need for consideration of the cumulative impact of a larger number of developments in a particular area. An informative is requested in relation to electric vehicle infrastructure.

10.125. A travel plan condition is requested prior to first occupation with a means of promoting low carbon transport options for staff. Transport options are also considered within the Highways section of the report.

Contaminated Land

10.126. The proposed end use is a sensitive use and could be affected by contamination present or brought to the site. The building previously on the site was destroyed by fire and therefore the land may be contaminated.

10.127. A Geoenvironmental Site Assessment has been submitted in support of the application. The Environmental Protection team have raised a number of comments on the statement, although no objections raised. Conditions are requested for Phase I and Phase II investigations and reports to be completed and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. If the Phase II investigations indicate that remediation is necessary, a Remediation Strategy and Verification Report would be required to be submitted and approved in writing. This would be required prior to commencement of development, other than agreed demolition and site clearance works.

10.128. Condition are also requested for testing of soil or soil forming materials to be brought to site, with evidence and verification report, prior to occupation. If further contamination not previously identified is found, further assessment would also be required by condition.

10.129. An informative is provided, advising the applicant of a duty to adhere to relevant legislation with regard to contaminated land, and for purchasers, where applicable to satisfy themselves that land contamination issues, if present have been satisfactorily discharged.

Other matters

10.130. An energy report is included setting out proposals to incorporate sustainable energy solutions within the scheme. Details of such measures would be subject to separate assessment under building regulations.

Drainage and flood risk

10.131. The site is within floodzone 1 where there is generally a low probability of flooding. A flood risk assessment has been submitted, concluding that there would be a minimal risk of flooding to the development, and of increased flood risk elsewhere.

10.132. The LLFA have provided advice and drainage information has been amended. A condition has been requested for drainage design in accordance with the proposed layout, and land drainage consent application is required. United Utilities provided comment accepting the drainage scheme layout which includes surface water drainage into the Dobbin Brook watercourse, and no surface water permitted to drain into the public sewer. SuDs features are mentioned in the drainage strategy, as permeable surfaces and planters to downspouts to slow water flow. These features are not although not specified in the hard landscape plan or other drawings and would need to be conditioned. The LLFA have also advised that as Dobbin Brook is classed as a Main River, the applicant should apply to the Environment Agency for permission to discharge into the watercourse.

10.133. The proposed surface water drainage discharge into the Dobbin Brook, has however raised concerns in impact on the Local Wildlife site and any species within the watercourse as well as potential impact on trees in the woodland area. Currently there is insufficient information to alleviate these concerns and demonstrate a suitable drainage strategy.

Planning Obligations

10.134. NPPF chapter 8 and policy SC3 of the CELPS seek to support health and well-being through the planning process. Under Policy IN2 of the CELPS, developer contributions will be sought to make sure that the necessary physical, social, public realm, economic and green infrastructure is in place to deliver development, and to mitigate adverse impacts of development. The Council's Developers Contribution SPD seeks for mitigation to be sought on a case-by-case basis in consultation with relevant NHS partners. NHS services and infrastructure will be under evermore pressure due to population growth. In order to mitigate the impacts of the development on local healthcare, the NHS requested a financial contribution. However, they have subsequently, raised an objection. Given the policy position it is not considered reasonable to refuse the proposal on these grounds, and a contribution is likely to be recommended. Further details of this contribution will be provided as an update.

Aerodrome safeguarding

10.135. Manchester Airports Group (MAG) have requested a number of conditions and informatics for airport safety reasons. In the interest of birdstrike avoidance, conditions are recommended for measures to prevent the site being an attractant for birds hazardous to aircraft, and for any off site BNG measures. A query has been raised on reconsultation, with regard to BNG data. It is considered that this can be dealt with by condition in consultation with MAG given that the fundamental design and layout has not significantly changed since the first consultation response was received.

10.136. Conditions are requested in relation to exterior lighting and a glint and glare assessment is required for an installation of solar photovoltaic roof panels. Informatics are requested in regarding dust, drones and cranes.

11.PLANNING BALANCE / CONCLUSION

11.1. The proposal would provide employment on a site which has partially been previously developed. Although staff numbers do sound to be relatively low for a care home of this scale. This is a benefit that can be afforded moderate weight.

11.2. The 76 bed care home would provide residential care for older persons including nursing and dementia care. The proposed development would deliver 76 x 1-bedroom spaces in an acceptably sustainable location. The Council is in the process of updating the Market Position Statement and developing an Accommodation Strategy, however at present there is not sufficient data to formally object to the planning application with regard to identified need. The delivery of a 76 bed care unit would help relieve an identified unmet need including the provision of specialist dementia care and would also add to the Council's housing land supply. This attracts significant weight in favour of the development.

11.3. The proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. As a major housing proposal, the 'Golden Rules' under NPPF paragraph 155/156 apply. There are no other exceptions under Green Belt policy that would apply in this case. There are not considered to be very special circumstances that outweigh Green Belt harm. This results in substantial weight against the development.

11.4. Developer contributions would be required for the NHS. Subject to a S106 agreement, this matter is neutral in the planning balance given that it is required to mitigate for the impact of the development.

11.5. There is harm arising from the matters raised in relation to the proposed layout on the site, but this is tempered by relatively limited visibility from public vantage points and is attributed limited to moderate weight. The height and elevational treatment of the building and relationship with nearby buildings is considered acceptable. Taking into consideration the separation distances, no significant impact on neighbouring amenity is anticipated. However the design appears to be a standard design that has been applied to the site which arises in a number of issues with the layout in the useability/legibility of the development. This also results in an impact on parking provision which although broadly acceptable, could be increased in line with standards if the layout was less cramped, by designing out the need for ad hoc parking within the site.

11.6. There are a number of matters highlighted, relating to the relationship with the Local Wildlife Site / Priority woodland, Dobbin Brook, tree root protection areas and social relationship with trees to the south. These matters are given significant weight against the proposal.

11.7. There is outstanding information in relation to BNG. It may be that this matter can be addressed with further information, however at the current time this is given significant weight against the proposal.

11.8. Overall whilst there are identifiable benefits with the proposal in terms of housing provision and job creation, these matters do not clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and the other identified harm relating to the layout, trees/woodland and biodiversity. As such very special circumstances have not been demonstrated. The application is therefore recommended for refusal.

12. RECOMMENDATION

REFUSE for the following reasons:

1. Green Belt

The proposed care home is inappropriate development in the Green Belt, as it does not meet any of the identified exceptions to inappropriate development set out in local or national policy. Although not a C3 use, the application is for a major housing proposal to which the Golden Rules apply under paragraph 156 of the NPPF. No affordable housing provision has been provided, as such the proposal does not meet the Golden Rules and fails to comply with the requirements of the NPPF. Very special circumstances have not been demonstrated that would clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and the other identified harm. The proposal is therefore contrary to policy PG3 of the CELPS and paragraphs 154 and 155 of the NPPF.

2. Layout

The design is a standardised layout which does not adequately respond to the constraints of the site, resulting in a cramped development with issues in the layout and legibility of the site, which has a knock-on effect on parking layout and provision. The proposals conflict with HNP policy H11, SADPD GEN 1, CELPS SD 2 and SE 1.

3. Insufficient Information – impact on RPAs, LWS/Priority Woodland and protected species.

The application fails to provide quantified Root Protection Area (RPA) incursion data where the proposed care home building extends into woodland W1 which relies on specialist engineering foundations. No detailed methodology or evidence has been provided to demonstrate that these foundations will be technically feasible and minimise harm to tree roots contrary to the requirements of BS5837:2012. Without this information, the Local Planning Authority cannot determine the extent of encroachment or assess whether the development can be delivered without unacceptable harm to retained trees. The revised drainage strategy indicates encroachment into woodland areas and RPAs, yet the Arboricultural Impact Assessment does not quantify or evaluate the extent of encroachment or propose mitigation. The absence of an assessment of drainage and tree rooting zones raises concerns about potential harm to retained trees and woodland contrary to Policy SE 5 of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy and BS5837:2012. The absence of this information results in insufficient information to be able to fully assess the impact on the Local Wildlife Site / Priority Woodland, and also any impact on protected species associated with Dobbin Brook where the drainage is proposed to discharge results in conflicts also with CELPS policy SE 3. The submitted site section shows a retaining wall adjacent to woodland W1, but its design and function are unclear. No engineering details have been provided to demonstrate that its construction will avoid harm to RPAs. The absence of this information is contrary to Policy SE 5 and BS5837:2012 and HNP H8 and H9.

4. Relationship to Woodland W1

No shading diagram or daylight/sunlight assessment has been submitted to evaluate the impact of retained woodland W1 on the proposed care home. The absence of this assessment means the Local Planning Authority cannot determine whether the development would provide acceptable living conditions for future occupants, having regard to potential overshadowing, reduced daylight, and pressure for significant pruning or future tree removal. The absence of this information is contrary to Policy SE 5, ENV 6, HNP H8 and H9.

5. BNG

The application is subject to mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain. The application is not supported by a BNG metric calculation and does not fulfil the statutory BNG validation requirements set out in Article 7 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure Order 2015). Planning permission cannot therefore be granted due to a lack of information in respect of mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain. The lack of a

Biodiversity metric also means that the application fails to meet the requirements of SADPD Policy ENV2.

In the event of any changes being needed to the wording of the Committee's decision (such as to delete, vary or add Conditions / Informatives / Planning Obligations or reasons for approval/refusal) prior to the decision being issued, the Head of Planning has delegated authority to do so in consultation with the Chairman of the Northern Planning Committee, provided that the changes do not exceed the substantive nature of the Committee's decision.

