

## COMMITTEE REPORT

BY THE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES  
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL  
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 21<sup>st</sup> July 2021

**Ward:** Church

**App No.:** 201141/FUL

**Address:** 65 Northcourt Avenue, Reading

**Proposal:** Construction of a 15 bedroom building (C2 use) with ancillary accommodation and associated works.

**Applicant:** Northcourt Lodge Nursing Home

**Deadline:** 27<sup>th</sup> October 2020 and an extension of time has been agreed to 30<sup>th</sup> July 2021

### RECOMMENDATION:

**GRANT** full planning permission, subject to conditions, to include:

1. Time limit for implementation
2. Approved plans
3. Materials to be used externally
4. Obscure glazing
5. Hours of construction and demolition
6. Construction Method Statement (to be submitted)
7. No bonfires
8. Bin storage (to be approved)
9. Vehicle Parking (as specified)
10. Cycle parking (to be approved)
11. Car Parking Management Plan
12. EV Charging Points
13. Landscaping including additional planting to the north boundary (to be approved)
14. Arboricultural Method Statement (as specified)

Informatives to include:

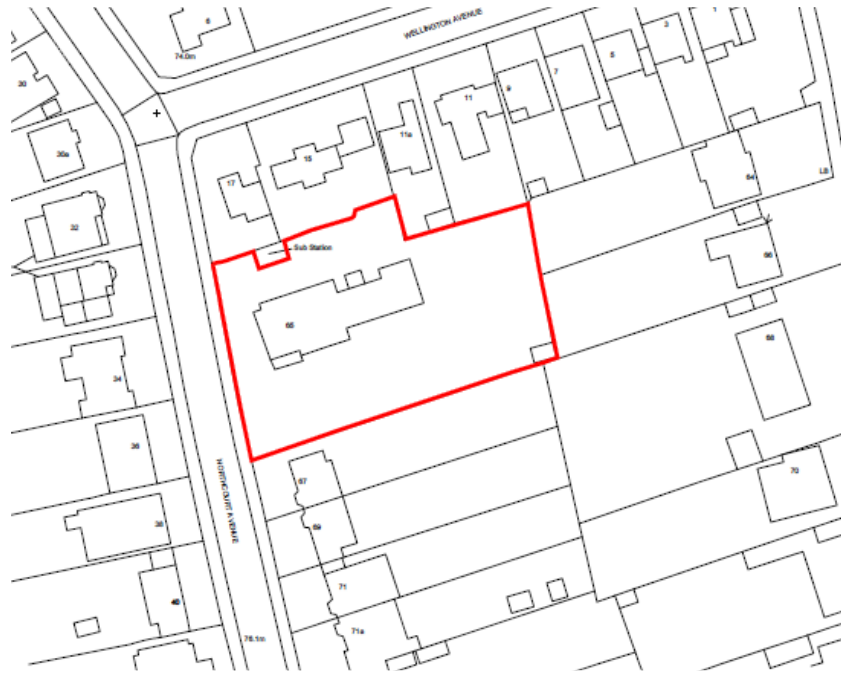
1. Pre-commencement conditions
2. Positive and proactive
3. Terms and conditions
4. Building regulations
5. Complaints about construction
6. Highways
7. Do not damage the verge
8. Thames Water - Groundwater Risk Management Permit
9. Thames Water - Public Sewers
10. Thames Water - minimum pressure

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The application site is Northcourt Lodge Nursing Home which is currently a 22 bedroom care home. The care home accommodates registered care categories such as dementia, Alzheimer's, cancer care, other specialist care for people over the age of 65 and more recently requests for long term COVID beds as well as respite beds. The home is located on a large plot and bound by residential properties on Wellington Avenue, Shinfield Road and Northcourt Avenue.

- 1.2 The care home has been extended in the past and is a two storey rectangular shaped building with some attractive features to the original building. A car park is located to the north of the building.
- 1.3 The application has been called in to Planning Applications Committee by Councillor Pearce following neighbour concerns.

### Site Location Plan



## 2. PROPOSAL

- 2.1 Full planning permission is sought for the construction of a two storey detached building within the grounds of the existing nursing home to provide an additional 15 bedrooms.
- 2.2 The proposal as originally submitted was for a detached building to accommodate 17 bedrooms and a new access from Northcourt Avenue along with 4 additional parking spaces. The proposal was amended which reduced the number of bedrooms to 15, reduced the size of the two storey front and rear projections, increased the parking, removed the proposed new access and included the submission of an Arboricultural Report, Tree Protection Plan and Tree Plan.
- 2.3 The proposal involves a new driveway within the site, additional parking, planting and landscaping. The materials consist of brick (and render to the top of the gables) and tiles.

## 3. SUBMITTED PLANS AND DOCUMENTS:

The following plans and documents were submitted on 13<sup>th</sup> August 2021:  
Drawing No: 0001 - Site Location Plan  
Drawing No: 100 - Existing Site Plan  
Drawing No: 101 - Existing Floor Plans  
Drawing No: 102 - Existing Elevations

Drawing No: 110 - Proposed Site Plan  
Drawing No: 111 - Proposed Northcourt Lodge Elevations  
Drawing No: 112 - Proposed Floor Plans  
Drawing No: 113 - Proposed Elevations  
Drawing No: 114 - Proposed Street Scene & Site Sections  
Drawing No: 115 - Building Sections  
Design & Access Statement

The agent submitted the following amended plans, received on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2020:

Drawing No: 0001 - Site Location Plan  
Drawing No: 100 - Existing Site Plan  
Drawing No: 101 - Existing Floor Plans  
Drawing No: 102 - Existing Elevations  
Drawing No: 110 Rev C - Proposed Site Plan  
Drawing No: 111 - Proposed Northcourt Lodge Elevations  
Drawing No: 112 Rev C - Proposed Floor Plans  
Drawing No: 113 Rev C - Proposed Elevations  
Drawing No: 114 Rev C - Proposed Street Scene & Site Sections  
Drawing No: 115 Rev B - Building Sections

The following documents were submitted on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2021:  
Arboricultural Report  
Tree Protection Plan  
Tree Plan

Amended plans were submitted on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2021:

Drawing No: 0001 - Site Location Plan  
Drawing No: 100 - Existing Site Plan  
Drawing No: 101 - Existing Floor Plans  
Drawing No: 102 - Existing Elevations  
Drawing No: 110 Rev E - Proposed Site Plan  
Drawing No: 111 - Proposed Northcourt Lodge Elevations  
Drawing No: 112 Rev C - Proposed Floor Plans  
Drawing No: 113 Rev C - Proposed Elevations  
Drawing No: 114 Rev E - Proposed Street Scene & Site Sections  
Drawing No: 115 Rev B - Building Sections

#### 4. PLANNING HISTORY

89/00408/FUL (Civica Ref: 891329) - Erection of front and side two storey extension to existing nursing home for the elderly. Refused 27/07/1989.

89/01365/FUL (Civica Ref: 891331) - Erection of rear first floor extension to existing nursing home. Permitted 12/04/1990.

97/00036/FUL (Civica Ref: 960712) - Installation of two storey lift enclosure at the rear of Northcourt Lodge Rest Home to serve the ground and first floor. Permitted 18/02/1997.

00/00249/FUL (Civica Ref: 990783) - New two storey house. Refused 28/04/2000.

01/01138/FUL (Civica Ref: 010126) - Erection of single storey extension forming a garden room on the south side of the elderly care home. Permitted 26/10/2001.

03/00717/FUL (Civica Ref: 030203) - First floor rear extension and two storey side extension to provide store and enclosed staircase to first floor. Permitted 12/09/2003.

05/00927/FUL (Civica Ref: 050070) - Single storey ground floor rear extension to provide 10 additional bedrooms to existing care home. Withdrawn 30/09/2005.

06/00280/FUL (Civica Ref: 060477) - Retrospective application for first floor rear extension to provide 7 additional bedrooms to existing care home. Permitted 18/08/2006.

## 5. CONSULTATIONS

### 5.1 Statutory

None.

### 5.2 Non-statutory

RBC Development Control Transport

#### Original comments

The application site is currently (C2 use) a 22 bedroom residential care home tailored to suit the needs of people over the age of 65. The proposal would seek full planning permission to utilise the site to increase the residential accommodation (C2 use) following the construction of a 17 bedroom building.

Development should provide car parking and cycle parking that is appropriate to the accessibility of locations within the Borough to sustainable transport facilities, particularly public transport. The Council has produced a Parking Standards and Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), which includes different standards in four different zones according to the accessibility of those zones. The site is located within Zone 3, Secondary Core Area, of the Council's adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD. Typically these areas are within 400m of a Reading Buses high frequency 'Premier Route', which provides high quality bus routes to and from Reading town centre and other local centre facilities. The closest bus stops are situated on Shinfield Road (A327), approximately 220 metres from the entrance of the site.

In accordance with the adopted SPD, the development would be required to provide a parking provision of 1 per FTE staff & 1 per 4 residents. No information has been submitted with the application regarding staffing levels or shift patterns to determine the required number of parking spaces for the staff. Given that the proposed development will result in an increase of 17 residents which would equate to 4-5 parking spaces, it does not appear that any additional provision has been made for staff. Therefore, it appears that the scale of the development does not comply with Policy TR5 of the Local Plan.

In terms of access, a new secondary pedestrian and vehicular access will be introduced from Northcourt Avenue. The plans demonstrate that the visibility requirements of 2.4m x 43m can be met. In principle, I have no

objections to the proposed access arrangements, however, the proximity of the proposed access may impact on tree roots. Therefore, it is recommended that the Natural Environment Officer is consulted for comments on this issue.

In accordance with the adopted SPD, the development would be required to provide a parking provision of 1 cycle parking space per FTE staff. The D & A statement indicates that secure, enclosed cycle storage has been provided within the development for staff use. However, we require detailed plans confirming that the cycle parking provision meets the Council's adopted standards in terms of number of spaces and layout. Therefore, further information is required regarding staffing levels.

In view of the above, I am not satisfied that the development complies with policy TR5 of the Reading Local Plan and I object unless this can be adequately addressed.

Updated comments following revised plans - Proposed Site Plan 2685-110 Rev E

I note that the amendments have reduced the number of bedrooms from 17 to 15, and an additional parking space has been provided (7 parking spaces in total). However, provision should also be made for an electric vehicle charging point which should be covered by condition.

The applicant has confirmed that the car parking provision is based upon 3 additional staff members generating a requirement for 3 parking spaces. The 15 resident bedrooms generate a requirement for 4 parking spaces equating 7 parking spaces in total staff & residents.

The applicant has confirmed that the type of care being provided requires the care home to have a 12 hour day shift and a 12 hour night shift. They currently operate and will continue hours of 7am to 7 pm or 8 am to 8pm. The shift changes are outside of peak visiting hours.

The applicant has also indicated that the visiting policy is by appointment only and these will be on a staggered basis which controls the demand for parking spaces. To ensure that the applicant is committed to managing the on-site parking spaces, a car park management plan should be conditioned to ensure that there is no additional overspill onto the surrounding roads.

In terms of access, the new parking spaces will utilize the existing vehicular access from Northcourt Avenue. No additional access will be introduced on Northcourt Avenue.

In accordance with the adopted SPD, the development would be required to provide a parking provision of 1 cycle parking space per FTE staff. The Design & Access statement indicates that secure, enclosed cycle storage has been provided within the development for staff use. However, we require detailed plans confirming that the cycle parking provision meets the Council's adopted standards in terms of number of spaces and layout. To be covered by condition.

In view of the above, I have no objection to the proposal subject to the conditions set out above.

## Natural Environment Trees

### Original comments

The site at 65 Northcourt Avenue is not part of any TPO and it is not part of a conservation area.

However, my current stance on the matter is to object to the application.

(1) the presence on the site of a fairly large broadleaved tree (crown diameter approx. 12 metres) is not mentioned anywhere in the application. Comparing the Design and Access Statement document against the satellite view of Google Maps (2020 imagery data) results in the conclusion that this tree will have to be felled to accommodate the proposed building. There is no tree condition survey of the whole development site which should include the accurate plotting (trunk position, canopy spread and Root Protection Area) of the trees on site and the street trees, as should have been provided.

(2) Northcourt Avenue is a tree lined road and I would expect any development of the size proposed to incorporate landscaping to soften the extensive building and provide screening. No landscape masterplan demonstrating how an adequate level of landscaping can be incorporated into the development.

(3) the lack of an Arboricultural Impact Assessment to demonstrate acceptability of any works required within the Root Protection Area of any retained trees (on and off site).

(4) Quoting from the Application Form "Are there trees or hedges on the proposed site ? Answer No" - I note the lack of taking into consideration important landscape features (eg. Point (1) above) when clearly there are trees present.

I advise a thorough re-examination of the landscaping implications of such an ample project and adoption of equally sound plans for a net improvement of tree numbers or tree cover, with strong regards for the social, environmental and health benefits this brings. A tree condition survey and Arb Impact Assessment are required along with landscape principles. Without these, the development fails to demonstrate that it is acceptable in tree or landscape terms.

Reason: In order to ensure that appropriate protection is given to trees of amenity value within and adjacent to the site in accordance with Policy EN14 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

### Updated comments following the submission of an Arboricultural Report, Tree Protection Plan and Tree Plan

I note the latest indexed 'Proposed Site Plan Drawing no. 110, rev. C' is not consistent with the site plan in the Arboricultural Report: on the former additional site access is provisioned between the street lime trees, while the latter does not use that solution anymore. My comments below will refer to the layout as presented in the Arboricultural Report of January 2021 by Sarah Duckworth.

My previous comments to this application focused on the lack of documentation to demonstrate that sound landscape principles are being considered. The latest submission provides a tree survey, a tree protection plan and the encompassing Arboricultural Report (all with ref: SCD 05500 / 2021).

Overall the Arboricultural Report clearly indicates the retained and to be removed trees, it defines a thorough protection strategy for the retained trees and provisions the appropriate phasing of works and demonstrates the natural environment and landscaping principles are considered and meet the necessary criteria.

Although in terms of quantity and maintenance the principles of tree planting are met, we are not satisfied with the replacement species selection in terms of balanced representation and our biodiversity aims. Prunus are over-represented in the borough, while of the rest, arguably, only the Hawthorn and the Amelanchier have any biodiversity value (most of them non-native species). Therefore, a landscaping condition should be attached in order that we can guide the applicant to a better suited species selection. Furthermore, please attach a condition to secure development in accordance with Arboricultural Method Statement.

If the applicant wishes to avoid a pre-commencement condition, amendments to landscaping (species selection) should be re-submitted prior to a decision. Hard landscape details would still need to be secured, but a condition could be attached for that.

#### RBC Environmental Protection

Environmental Protection concerns - Noise impact on development and bin storage.

#### Construction and demolition phases

We have concerns about potential noise, dust and bonfires associated with the construction (and demolition) of the proposed development and possible adverse impact on nearby residents (and businesses).

Fires during construction and demolition can impact on air quality and cause harm to residential amenity. Burning of waste on site could be considered to be harmful to the aims of environmental sustainability.

#### Bin storage - rats

There is a widespread problem in Reading with rats as the rats are being encouraged by poor waste storage which provides them with a food source. Where developments involve shared bin storage areas e.g. flats and hotels there is a greater risk of rats being able to access the waste due to holes being chewed in the base of the large wheelie bins or due to occupants or passers not putting waste inside bins, or bins being overfilled. It is therefore important for the bin store to be vermin proof to prevent rats accessing the waste.

No objections subject to conditions relating to the submission of a Construction Method Statement, hours of construction, no bonfires and details of bin stores.

### Thames Water

#### *Waste Comments*

With regard to SURFACE WATER drainage, Thames Water would advise that if the developer follows the sequential approach to the disposal of surface water we would have no objection. Where the developer proposes to discharge to a public sewer, prior approval from Thames Water Developer Services will be required. Should you require further information please refer to our website. <https://developers.thameswater.co.uk/Developing-a-large-site/Apply-and-pay-for-services/Wastewater-services>

We would expect the developer to demonstrate what measures will be undertaken to minimise groundwater discharges into the public sewer. Groundwater discharges typically result from construction site dewatering, deep excavations, basement infiltration, borehole installation, testing and site remediation. Any discharge made without a permit is deemed illegal and may result in prosecution under the provisions of the Water Industry Act 1991. Should the Local Planning Authority be minded to approve the planning application, Thames Water would like the following informative attached to the planning permission: "A Groundwater Risk Management Permit from Thames Water will be required for discharging groundwater into a public sewer. Any discharge made without a permit is deemed illegal and may result in prosecution under the provisions of the Water Industry Act 1991. We would expect the developer to demonstrate what measures he will undertake to minimise groundwater discharges into the public sewer. Permit enquiries should be directed to Thames Water's Risk Management Team by telephoning 020 3577 9483 or by emailing [trade.effluent@thameswater.co.uk](mailto:trade.effluent@thameswater.co.uk). Application forms should be completed on line via [www.thameswater.co.uk](http://www.thameswater.co.uk). Please refer to the Wholesale; Business customers; Groundwater discharges section.

There are public sewers crossing or close to your development. If you're planning significant work near our sewers, it's important that you minimize the risk of damage. We'll need to check that your development doesn't limit repair or maintenance activities, or inhibit the services we provide in any other way. The applicant is advised to read our guide working near or diverting our pipes. <https://developers.thameswater.co.uk/Developing-a-large-site/Planning-your-development/Working-near-or-diverting-our-pipes>.

Thames Water would advise that with regard to WASTE WATER NETWORK and SEWAGE TREATMENT WORKS infrastructure capacity, we would not have any objection to the above planning application, based on the information provided.

#### *Water Comments*

If you are planning on using mains water for construction purposes, it's important you let Thames Water know before you start using it, to avoid potential fines for improper usage. More information and how to apply can be found online at [thameswater.co.uk/buildingwater](http://thameswater.co.uk/buildingwater).



On the basis of information provided, Thames Water would advise that with regard to water network and water treatment infrastructure capacity, we would not have any objection to the above planning application. Thames Water recommends the following informative be attached to this planning permission. Thames Water will aim to provide customers with a minimum pressure of 10m head (approx 1 bar) and a flow rate of 9 litres/minute at the point where it leaves Thames Waters pipes. The developer should take account of this minimum pressure in the design of the proposed development.

### 5.3 Publicity

Notification letters were sent to: Wellington Avenue - 9, 11, 11A, 15 and 17. Shinfield Road - 64, 66, 68, 68A and 68B and Northcourt Avenue - 32A, 34, 36, 38, 67, 69.

8 letters of objection were received on the first neighbour consultation with regards to:

1. Loss of sunlight and daylight;
2. Loss of privacy and overlooking;
3. The proposed development by way of loss of light and loss of privacy will make worse an existing personal condition;
4. Not had enough time to consider the application; planning application dated 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020 but neighbouring properties only received written notification on 8<sup>th</sup> October 2020; *Officer Note - the statutory 21 day consultation period was given.*
5. The proposal is too near Wellington Avenue gardens;
6. The density is too high compared to the suburban surrounding area, the maximum density at present is 30 per hectare, this will jump to 190; *Officer Note - Policy H2 (Density and Mix) of the Reading Borough Local Plan refers to appropriate density for residential developments. As the application is for an extension to an existing care home this policy is not applicable in this instance.*
7. Parking is insufficient;
8. Reading Borough Council must implement robust traffic calming/safety/parking measures on Northcourt Avenue and measures to stop uses as a cut through;
9. Plans indicate the rooms will be small and not allow for the equipment that may be needed;
10. Insufficient communal space;
11. Noise and disruption during construction;
12. Northcourt Lodge is a business in a residential area and the proposal to nearly double the size of the business does not commit to how the proposed buildings will be used; *Officer Note - the existing building is a care home and has been for many years in a residential area. The application is for additional accommodation to the care home and no other purpose.*
13. Increase in noise from traffic, visits and nursing home residents;
14. At present the business activities are reasonably discrete but concern that an expansion would result in a general increase in noise especially from service vehicles;
15. Overdevelopment and the size of the development proposed is not compatible with a residential area;
16. Overbearing;

17. Poor design and internal layout that does not allow the residents adequate views or space outside their windows;
18. Location of bin storage/collection points and siting are a concern as a health issue;
19. A similar proposal some years ago was rejected and there is no change in circumstances that would make this application any more acceptable by the local community; *Officer Note: application 05/00927/FUL (Civica Ref: 050070) was submitted for a single storey extension to the rear of the property to provide 10 bedrooms. This proposal filled the majority of the rear part of the site and was considered unacceptable and the application was withdrawn. The current application is different in terms of design and floor area and has to be considered against current policies and guidance.*
20. Little communal space for residents;
21. Amenity space should be preserved and developed for the benefit of the residents;
22. Possibility that other buildings will be added haphazardly; *Officer Note - this is not a matter that affects the current planning application.*
23. The increase in residents in the 'special needs' category will increase hazards on the local roads where complex bends in the road and considerable on-street parking adds to the danger; *Officer Note - the owners of the care home will have their own safety measures in place with regards to protecting existing and future residents.*
24. If this were a residential application it would be automatically refused because of back land development; *Officer Note - this is not an application for residential development but for an extension to an existing care home and it has to be assessed as such.*
25. Building relates poorly to the existing building being separated and unconnected;
26. Being a separate building it could easily be separated off and converted in to flats in the future with little control by the local authority; *Officer Note - planning permission would be required to change the use from a C2 care home to residential use.*
27. New access would result in a very steep driveway, substantial excavations and impact on tree roots;
28. A very modest single storey extension - directly linked to the building might be considered suitable for this site;

Amended plans letters were sent to all neighbours and objectors on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2021 advising them of a reduction in the number of bedrooms from 17 to 15, a reduction in the size of the two storey front and rear projections and the submission of an Arboricultural Report, Tree Protection Plan and Tree Plan. 6 letters of objection have been received some detailing the same concerns as previously raised and others with regards to:

1. Streetview degraded because architecture not in keeping with existing building frontage;
2. Concerns with internal layout for instance no kitchen included; very limited WC facilities for staff and visitors;
3. Disabled access from car park to building entrance via path unsatisfactory;
4. Bin storage now shown but a portacabin has been placed in its location and has a larger footprint than the bins - what is this for?
5. Inconsistencies with Design & Access Statement and amended plans; *Officer Note - the Design & Access Statement was not amended from that originally submitted and this document was not included in the*

*amended plans letter. There will therefore be inconsistencies however Officers are clear on what is being proposed due to ongoing discussions with the applicants agent.*

6. Inconsistencies between the drawings which showed the proposed access and the Tree Protection Plan which removed this access; *Officer Note - this matter was resolved and an amended plans letter sent on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2021 to consult on this.*
7. Construction methods - there is no description in the application as to how this will be managed; *Officer Note - conditions requiring a Construction Method Statement and restricting the hours of construction and demolition will be imposed.*
8. The amended proposal does not comply with Policy H6 of the Reading Borough Local Plan;
9. The proposal is tandem development contrary to Policy H11; *Officer Note - Policy H11 refers to proposals of new residential development in private residential gardens. The existing use is as a care home and the proposed building is for further accommodation associated with the care home. Policy H11 is therefore not relevant in this particular situation.*

Amended plans letters were sent to all neighbours and objectors on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2021 advising them of the removal of the proposed access. 7 letters of objection have been received some detailing the same concerns previously raised and others with regards to:

1. The new single width driveway to the new parking area creates a significant safety hazard as it passes directly in front of the main entrance to the house and crosses pedestrian access;
2. If the application were to be granted then PAC should be encouraged to attach conditions relating to the possible change of use of the proposed new building and controls on construction times, disturbance and waste storage.

## **6. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE**

6.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which states at Paragraph 11 “Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development”.

6.2 The development plan for this Local Planning Authority is the Reading Borough Local Plan (November 2019). The relevant policies are:

- CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction
- CC7: Design and the Public Realm
- CC8: Safeguarding Amenity
- EN14: Trees, Hedges and Woodland
- EN15: Air Quality
- EN16: Pollution and Water Resources
- H5: Standards for New Housing
- H6: Accommodation For Vulnerable People
- TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
- TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging

## OU1: New and Existing Community Facilities

Supplementary planning documents/guidance  
Sustainable Design & Construction SPD (Dec 2019)  
Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (Oct 2011)  
Tree Strategy (2021)

### 7. APPRAISAL

The main matters to be considered are:

- Principle of development
- The effect upon visual amenity and the public realm
- Impact on neighbouring properties and future occupiers
- Traffic generation and parking
- Landscaping
- Other Matters

#### Principle of development

- 7.1 Policy OU1 (New and Existing Community Facilities) states that proposals for new, extended or improved community facilities will be acceptable particularly where this will involve co-location of facilities on a single site. Proposals for on-site intensification of important facilities, such as schools and healthcare uses, will be supported, subject to other policies in the plan. Paragraph 4.7.4 of Policy OU1 continues that *“given the dense, built up nature of Reading and the lack of appropriate new sites, it is inevitable that some of the Borough’s community facility needs will have to be met through intensification of the use of existing sites”*.
- 7.2 Policy H6 (Accommodation for Vulnerable People) states that “provision will be made for at least an additional 253 residential care bedspaces for elderly people between 2013 and 2036”. Although the care provided at 65 Northcourt Avenue is not specifically for elderly people i.e. sheltered housing, it does provide specific care for people over 65 which fall within care categories such as dementia, Alzheimer’s and cancer along with other specialist care and more recently long term COVID beds as well as respite beds. The site is within an existing care home and would provide extended and improved community facilities which would meet an identified need within the Borough. As such it is considered that the general principle of increased care home provision is in accordance with Policies OU1 and H6 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

#### The effect upon visual amenity and the public realm

- 7.3 The proposal is for a two storey detached building with a pitched roof located at the rear of the site. The proposed building is rectangular in shape and has a two storey front and rear projection. The proposal has been amended to reduce the depth of the front and rear projections. The height of the rear projection has also been significantly reduced. The plans as originally submitted and those now proposed are shown at the end of the report.
- 7.4 The proposed building is set back from Northcourt Avenue by approximately 40m and the front of the site is screened by street trees, hedging and

vegetation along the front boundary. The proposed building will be significantly screened from Northcourt Avenue and would not have a significant impact on the appearance of the street scene. There is also dense and mature vegetation along the south and east boundaries as shown on the photograph below.



Photo showing the rear of the site with the southern boundary on the right.

- 7.5 The proposed materials consist of brick with the top section of the gables rendered and tiles to the roof. Although less decorative than the existing building it is an ancillary addition at the rear of the site which does not compete with the attractive frontage of the original building. It is acknowledged that this is a large addition to the site however taking into consideration the benefits of the scheme by providing additional bed spaces which would meet an identified need within the Borough, the significant set back from Northcourt Avenue and the large size of the existing plot, on balance, the proposal is not considered to detract from the character and appearance of the area and is in accordance with Policy CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

#### **Impact on neighbouring properties and future occupants**

- 7.6 Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) of the Reading Borough Local Plan states that development will not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties or unacceptable living conditions for new residential properties, in terms of:

- o Privacy and overlooking;
- o Access to sunlight and daylight;
- o Visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development;
- o Harm to outlook;
- o Noise and disturbance;
- o Artificial lighting;
- o Vibration;
- o Dust and fumes;
- o Smell;
- o Crime and safety; or

- o Wind

Impact on neighbouring properties

- 7.7 The proposed building is approximately 10m from the boundaries of properties on Wellington Avenue and Shinfield Road and the distance between the proposed building and the rear of these properties is approximately 23m and 30m respectively. There is substantial screening in the form of dense and mature vegetation along the boundary with the properties on Shinfield Road as shown on the photograph above. There is less mature dense screening provided along the boundary with properties on Wellington Avenue although there are trees along this boundary as shown on the photograph below. Although there is adequate distance between the proposed building and the rear of properties on Wellington Avenue, Officers consider additional planting to this boundary would be beneficial as there is no planting along this boundary within the application site. This additional planting can be secured by condition. It is likely that the residents of the properties on Wellington Avenue will have clearer views of the proposed building than those on Shinfield Road however the distance of approximately 23m side to rear along with new planting is considered to reduce the impact of the proposal on the residents of these properties. As such the proposal is not considered overbearing or visually dominant on the residents of these neighbouring properties.



Photo showing the boundary with the rear of properties on Wellington Avenue

- 7.8 The proposed building is 1.5m from the boundary with the neighbouring property at 67 Northcourt Avenue however there is a distance of approximately 25m from the front of the proposed building and the rear of this neighbouring property and there is substantial dense and mature vegetation along the boundary as shown on the above photograph. New planting is also proposed along this boundary. 67 Northcourt Avenue has a long rear garden and the proposed building would be located at the rear of it. Although the residents of this neighbouring property will notice the additional height and depth of the proposal the distance between the two buildings means the proposal would not be overbearing and with the existing and proposed planting although visible it is not considered visually dominant.

- 7.9 The proposal will be visible from neighbouring properties but as mentioned above there is sufficient distance between the proposed building and neighbouring properties to ensure there is no harm to outlook and this is further reduced by the dense mature vegetation along the south and east boundaries and proposed planting to the north boundary. Due to the orientation of, and distances between, the properties on Northcourt Avenue, Shinfield Road and Wellington Avenue the proposal is also not considered to have an impact on these neighbouring properties in terms of loss of sunlight and daylight.
- 7.10 The window location in the proposed building has been carefully considered to respect the privacy of neighbouring properties as best it can whilst ensuring each proposed bedroom has the benefit of a window. Windows are proposed to all four elevations. There are front facing first floor windows, with views in to the garden, and one of which is close to the boundary with 67 Northcourt Avenue and there is one side window facing the boundary with 67 Northcourt Avenue. However, taking into consideration the dense vegetation along this boundary and the additional planting proposed it is not considered that this arrangement would be harmful to the residents of this neighbouring property due to the distances afforded and the screening provided.
- 7.11 Two bedroom windows and two landing windows are proposed to the rear elevation facing the properties on Shinfield Road but this elevation is staggered and there is a substantial separation distance between the proposal and these neighbouring properties and as such there is not considered to be any impact on the residents of these properties in terms of overlooking and loss of privacy.
- 7.12 One first floor side window is proposed to bedroom 15 which is located towards the boundary with Wellington Avenue however this is a secondary window to this bedroom and plans indicate that obscure glazing to the bottom of the pane will be used. Taking in to consideration the distances between the proposal and the neighbouring properties, existing and proposed planting and the use of obscure glazing, albeit to the bottom half of the window, this is considered to protect the privacy of the residents of neighbouring properties and the proposal is not considered harmful in terms of loss of privacy and overlooking.
- 7.13 A comment has been received from a neighbouring property stating that the proposal, by reason of loss of light and loss of privacy, would make an existing personal condition worse. Although loss of light and loss of privacy are material considerations when assessing a planning application, as shown above, the proposal is not considered to have a detrimental impact on the living environment of neighbouring properties in terms of loss of light and loss of privacy.
- 7.14 A number of objections have been received relating to noise and disturbance that would be caused by the development from increased traffic, service vehicles, visits and nursing home residents. Although the proposal would result in an intensification of the site, the use of the proposed building would still be in a residential type use and as stated above there is a need for care of this type within the Borough. The applicant has advised that their visiting policy is by appointment only and the agent has confirmed that there will be no change to the deliveries to

the home. No objection has been received from the Council's Environmental Protection section. Therefore, the proposal is not considered to warrant refusal on these grounds.

- 7.15 Concerns have been raised with regards to noise and disruption during construction and conditions will be imposed requiring the submission of a Construction Method Statement and restricting the hours of construction and demolition.
- 7.16 For the reasons given above the proposal is considered in accordance with Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan and is not considered to have a detrimental impact on the living environment of neighbouring properties in terms of privacy and overlooking, access to sunlight and daylight, visual dominance and overbearing effects of the development and harm to outlook.

Impact on future occupants

- 7.17 A number of concerns have been raised with regards to the internal layout of the proposed building including the size of the proposed bedrooms, window locations, limited WC facilities for staff and visitors, lack of communal space and the reduction in outdoor amenity space and the impact of these on the residents of the care home. The applicant has seen all the comments raised through this application and a 'rationale' has been provided in Appendix 1 below. The agent has advised the rooms are "the required size suitable for this facility incorporating all modern functions and the communal area lounge/dining is 27sqm suitable for the amount of people residing at the facility". Although there is no specific policy for bedroom sizes in care homes, as a comparison Policy H5 (Standards for New Housing) states that in order to provide one bedspace, a single bedroom should have a floor area of at least 7.5sqm and be at least 2.15m wide. All the proposed rooms measure between 14-16sqm and are a minimum of 2.5m wide.
- 7.18 It is acknowledged that bedroom 4 on the ground floor and bedroom 15 on the first floor will be opposite the rear elevation of the main building as the proposal slightly overlaps the existing building at the rear. However, both bedrooms have secondary windows to the north elevation, which provides additional light and which could be bigger in size if required, particularly on the ground floor. There is a 2m gap between the proposal and the existing building and views in to the garden will still be possible and due to the orientation will also receive natural light. There will be no overlooking or loss of privacy with bedrooms in the existing building as they do not directly face the proposed windows.
- 7.19 Bedroom 7 on the ground floor and bedroom 10 on the first floor will face the boundary with 67 Northcourt Avenue. As bedroom 10 is at first floor this bedroom will benefit from adequate views and light. This will be more limited for bedroom 7 due to it being at ground floor level and facing the side boundary. However, through the landscaping condition it can be ensured that the planting and existing vegetation is sufficiently away from this window and although views from this window will be limited, on balance, taking the benefits of the scheme as a whole into consideration, this alone is not considered a reason for refusing the application.



- 7.20 Double doors are proposed to three of the ground floor bedrooms and concerns have been raised over loss of privacy to these rooms. However, the main building has a similar arrangement and officers do not consider this to be unsatisfactory.
- 7.21 Comments have been received stating that the proposal does not comply with Policy H6 (Accommodation for Vulnerable People) as it does not give much consideration to the specific needs of patients with special needs such as Alzheimer's or dementia where just having an outdoor green space is not sufficient to prevent them from coming to harm. Policy H6 amongst other things states "*development for specialist accommodation for vulnerable people will fulfil the following criteria....development will incorporate areas of green space, which are particularly important for many groups of vulnerable people*". As mentioned previously the home provides care for a wide range of needs, including more recently COVID related needs. Although the proposed building will occupy a large part of the rear garden there is considered to be sufficient garden space remaining. Officers consider the landscaping scheme proposed is an improvement on the existing garden layout and provides additional planting and seating areas. The care home will have its own safeguarding policies in place to ensure their residents do not come to any harm. As such the proposal is considered in accordance with Policy H6.
- 7.22 The proposal has been carefully assessed and although there may be some minor deficiencies as noted above, on balance, the proposal is considered to provide a scheme that looks after the well being of its residents, existing and proposed, and meets an identified need within the Borough.

#### **Traffic generation and parking**

- 7.23 The proposal provides 3 additional staff parking spaces and 4 visitor spaces to the south of the existing building adjacent to 67 Northcourt Avenue which is in accordance with the Council's adopted standards. The existing access is to be retained and a new driveway introduced to the front of the building.
- 7.24 The applicant has confirmed that the type of care being provided requires the care home to have a 12 hour day shift and a 12 hour night shift. They currently operate and will continue hours of 7am to 7 pm or 8 am to 8pm. The shift changes are outside of peak visiting hours.
- 7.25 The applicant has also indicated that the visiting policy is by appointment only and these will be on a staggered basis which controls the demand for parking spaces. To ensure that the applicant is committed to managing the on-site parking spaces, a car park management plan will be conditioned to ensure that there is no additional overspill onto the surrounding roads.
- 7.26 Concerns have also been raised with regards to the new driveway which it is claimed would be a safety hazard as it crosses in front of the main entrance and the pedestrian access. As mentioned above visiting is by appointment only and it would be expected that cars would be travelling at a low speed when they enter and leave the premises. This matter could be addressed in more detail in the car park management plan condition if required.
- 7.27 Comments have been received with regards to traffic calming measures being introduced on Northcourt Avenue however this is not a matter that

can be addressed through this planning application and would need to be raised with the appropriate department.

- 7.28 Bin storage has been raised as a concern and the location of a portacabin in the bin location. The agent has confirmed that the applicant has a contract with 1<sup>st</sup> Waste who manage the bin management and a condition is also recommended for details of bin storage to be submitted and approved in writing. With regards to the portacabin the applicant has confirmed that this is for the sole purpose for relatives to visit loved ones throughout the COVID period as relatives were not allowed inside the home. This is a temporary measure to address COVID constraints and will be removed when lockdown restrictions are fully lifted.
- 7.29 Subject to the recommended conditions above the proposal is in accordance with the relevant policies and guidance and is considered acceptable.

### **Landscaping**

- 7.30 A Tree Survey, Tree Protection Plan and Arboricultural Report have been submitted which clearly indicates the retained trees and the trees to be removed. The submitted information defines a thorough protection strategy for the retained trees and provisions the appropriate phasing of works and demonstrates the natural environment and landscaping principles considered and which meet the necessary criteria. Although in terms of quantity and maintenance the principles of tree planting are met a landscaping condition will be imposed to ensure the replacement species are more appropriate and have a biodiversity value.
- 7.31 Although there is significant tree and hedge coverage along the south and east boundaries there is less cover along the northern boundary with the rear of properties on Wellington Avenue. Officers consider that there is scope for additional planting along this boundary and this would be required in a submission to discharge the above landscaping condition. Subject to the conditions outlined above the proposal is in accordance with the relevant policies and guidance and is considered acceptable in landscaping terms.

### **Other matters**

#### Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

- 7.32 Although the proposed scheme would be CIL liable development, the development falls into the 'Care Homes' category. As such the development would be CIL liable, but zero rate.

#### Equalities Impact

- 7.33 When determining an application for planning permission the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups as identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this planning application. Therefore, in terms of the key equalities protected characteristics it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the proposed development.

## **8 CONCLUSION**

The proposed building and its use are considered to be acceptable in the context of national and local planning policy, and other material considerations, as set out in this report. The application is recommended for approval on this basis.

Case Officer: Claire Ringwood

As existing



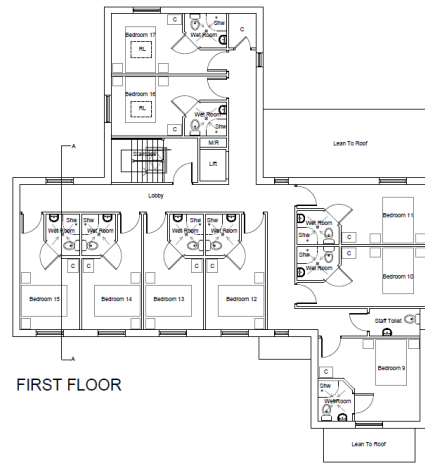
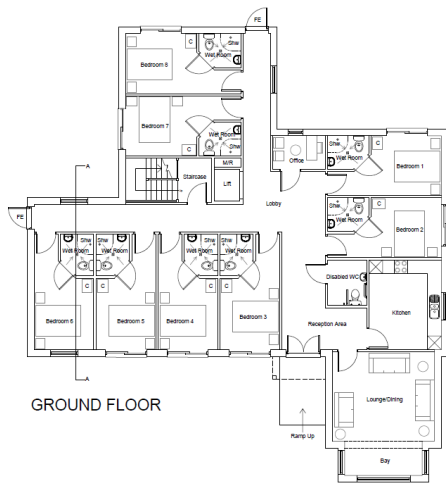
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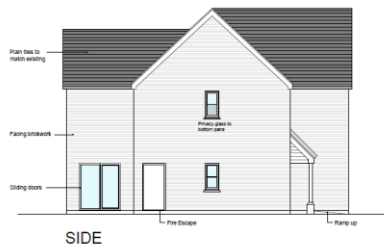
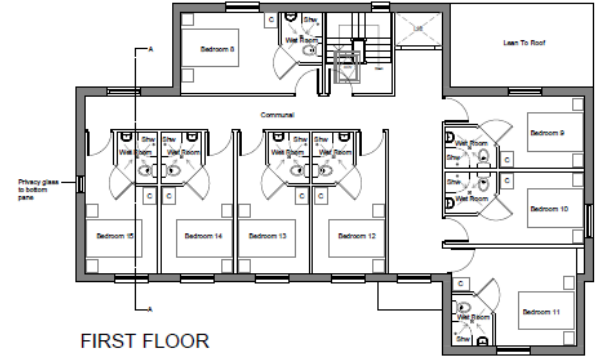
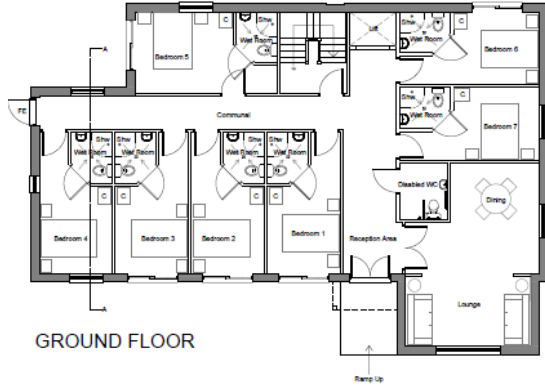
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As originally proposed



As amended



## Appendix 1

(note ABI = Acquired Brain Injury)

### Rehabilitation – The Need Good Rehabilitation and Re-ablement (outside of hospital) after ABI and Post Covid Syndrome

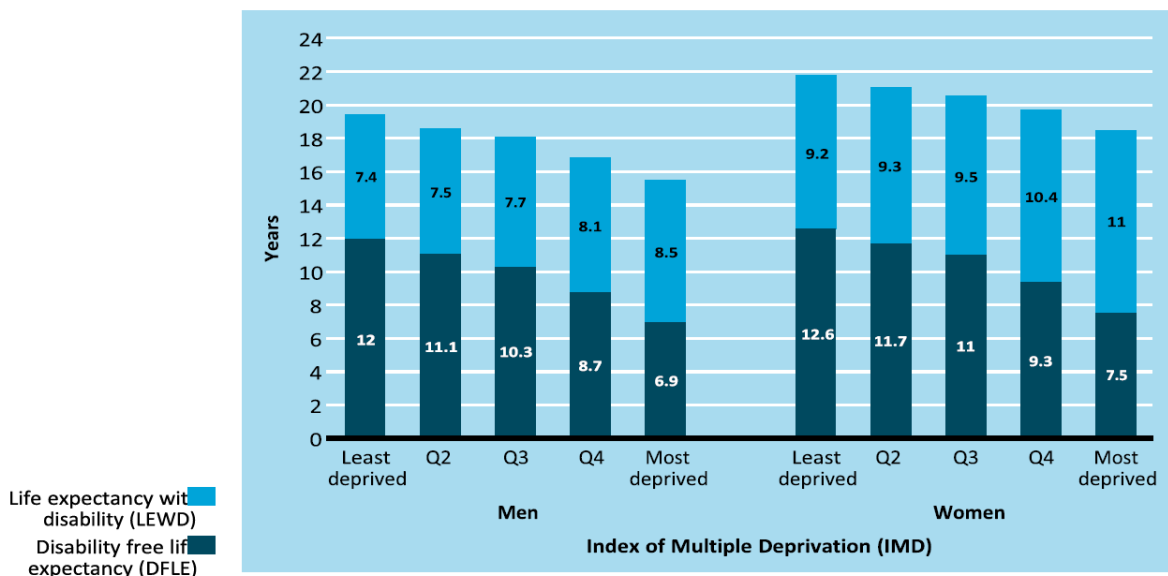
#### **Rationale for 15 bed extension to North court Lodge 65 North court Avenue. Reading RG2 7HF**

##### **Background**

People should receive adequate rehabilitation and re-ablement when needed, to prevent permanent disability, greater reliance on care and support, avoidable admissions to hospital, delayed discharge from hospital, and to provide adequate periods of assessment and recovery before any decision is made to move into long-term care. Acute hospitals must play their part in ensuring adequate inpatient rehabilitation, but most rehabilitation services could be provided outside hospital settings.

Rehabilitation and re-ablement are two services on a continuum of intermediate care. Rehabilitation is primarily a health model that includes physical therapy and occupational therapy to prevent admission to acute care or facilitate a stepped pathway out of hospital. Re-ablement is primarily a social care model that focuses on promoting and optimising independent functioning rather than resolving health issues ([Social Care Institute for Excellence 2013](#)). Despite these formal definitions, the terms are often used interchangeably, and many localities provide several differently named services providing elements of both. Most of the rehabilitation and re-ablement services are step-down services following a hospital stay, but they can also be step-up services, aiming to provide the necessary support to prevent any further deterioration that could lead to a hospital stay (Allen and Glasby 2010).

The Kings Fund Paper 2014 (Making our health care systems fit for an ageing population) states that Local service leaders and services should ensure that there is enough capacity and responsiveness to meet the needs of every older person who might benefit from these services.



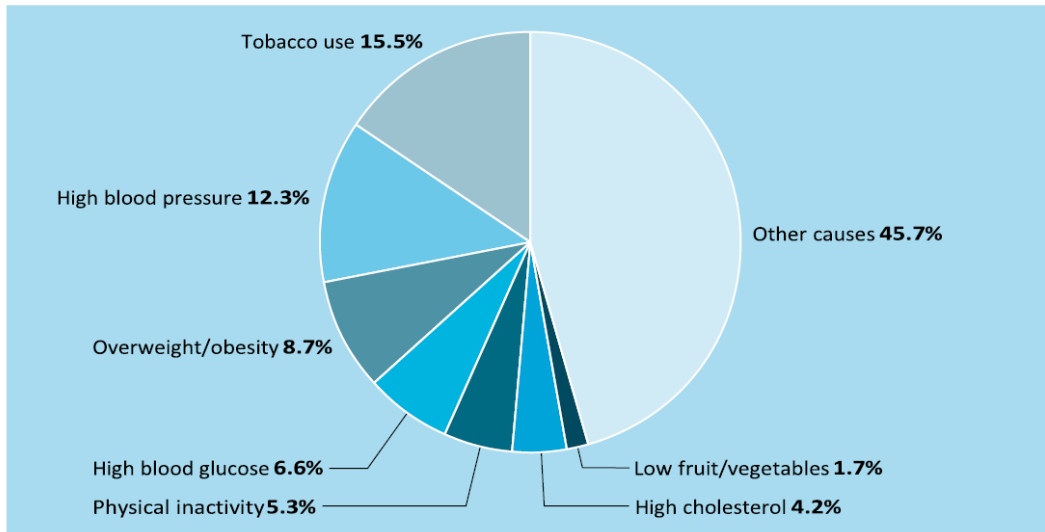
Source: Office for National Statistics 2011

**Fig 1. Life expectancy with and without disability.**

The National office for statistics data reveals that in some cases mostly in women and some cases in men, the life expectancy with disability or illness is now equal or in some cases most than disability free life. This number has only since increased and will be published in the 2021 statistics ten years on.

The NHS white paper , “ Next steps on the NHS Five year forward view , ” clearly highlights that as people live longer lives the NHS needs to adapt to their needs helping frail and older people stay healthily and independent avoiding hospital stays where possible and with the novel coronavirus this cannot be any more appropriate as they are the most vulnerable susceptible to the disease. To improve prevention and care for patients, as well as to place the NHS on a more sustainable footing, the NHS Five Year Forward View called for better integration of GP, community health, mental health, and hospital services, as well as more joined up working with home care and care homes. There is a huge push now to strengthen support to specialist care homes to ensure they have direct access to clinical advice, including appropriate on-site assessment.





Source: [World Health Organization 2011b](#)

Fig 2 . Causes of disability of illness in the over 55 age group.

In the 45.7% other causes ABI constitutes about 21.6% , which is due to falls or other causes such as stroke. Loneliness, social isolation, and social exclusion are important risk factors for ill health and mortality in older people ([Steptoe et al 2012](#); [World Health Organization 2002](#)). Positive and supportive relationships with close family members contribute to older people’s wellbeing, but those aged 75 and over are least likely to have these networks ([Hoban et al 2013](#)). Given the complex factors involved in isolation and loneliness, it is perhaps unsurprising that evidence about successful interventions is relatively limited, although group activities tend to have better outcomes than one-to-one interventions ([Scottish Collaboration for Public Health Research and Policy 2010](#)). If, at the end of the period of rehabilitation and re-ablement, a person is assessed as having ongoing needs for support, it is important that care is planned to provide those services and maintain the progress made. In practice, this can often be most effectively achieved through joint working between the rehabilitation and re-ablement teams and the ongoing care providers in the time leading up to, during and after transition, and specifying this responsibility in contracts ([Social Care Institute for Excellence 2013](#)).

## **The Proposal**

Given the above background and our expertise in rehabilitation, long term care, complex disability and reablement (including those who suffer from Long Covid Syndrome) we believe this extension to be of great value to the local community, council and clinical commissioning groups. The clinical team appointed will draw our comprehensive, clinical pathways and service specification for rehabilitation of ABI, long term conditions and post covid syndrome.

## **The Rationale**

Our collaborators area of expertise is in area where patient demand is currently growing within the UK, and an All-Party Parliamentary Report published in October 2018 concluded that there is a significant shortage of provision across all neuro-rehab care services.

Demand for our specialist services is increasing due to

- More people are surviving traumatic brain injury due to more effective paramedic response and emergency care
- More people are surviving cardiac arrest, but sometimes with hypoxic brain injury
- More people are surviving major strokes
- There is greater usage of drugs and other stimulants by younger people, which can cause medical problems and brain injury

Most of the long-term specialist provision within an hour of Reading is either through NHS-funded charitable organisations (est. 300 beds) or through private hospitals (est. 356 beds from March 2020). The total number of beds provided by other organisations is shown in the competitor analysis table below and will have increased by over 50 beds in the last 18 months.

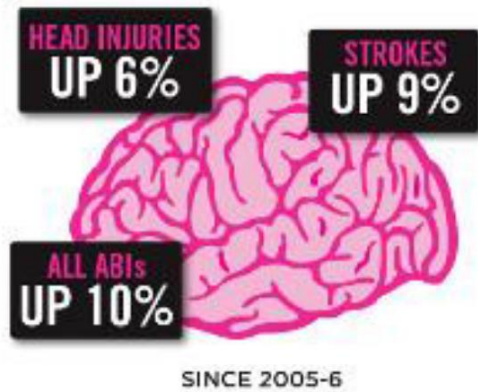
## Regional Competitor Analysis

Competitors	Unit information	Market Entrants
Respiratory (Trache/ Ventilator)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remeo Unit, Redhill – 20 bed</li> <li>• Highfield house</li> <li>• Fairlie House, Purley</li> <li>• RHN, Putney</li> </ul>	New 40-bed unit in Banstead opening in March 2020
Complex neuro disability, Long term care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CHD Bagshot Park Neurorehab – 35 Beds</li> <li>• CHD Kingston – 36 Beds</li> <li>• Fairlie House – 45 Beds</li> <li>• Highfield House – 45 Beds</li> <li>• Glenside, Farnborough – 22 Beds</li> <li>• BUPA Wingham Court, Esher - 73 Beds</li> <li>• Raphael Hospital, Tonbridge – 60 beds</li> <li>• RHN, Putney – 260 beds</li> <li>• Some patients are in other care / nursing homes</li> </ul>	As above
Slow stream rehabilitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As above</li> </ul>	

There are some barriers to market entry for organisations considering neuro-rehab services, including recruitment of skilled staff, specialised training, appropriately designed and equipped clinical areas and expensive specialist equipment such as eye-gaze technology.

NHS commissioning is predominantly through the CCG Continuing Care pathway, and the NHS seem to accept and value the specialised units such as ourselves. This is because we will provide care that allows a patient, who cannot be properly cared for in a standard nursing home, to leave an acute hospital ward. This will thereby ensure that our service fulfils the some of the goals mentioned in the Kings Fund briefing, NHS white paper and the All-Party parliamentary report published in 2018.

There were 348,934 UK admissions to hospital with acquired brain injury in 2013-14. That is 566 admissions per 100,000 of the population.



There were approximately 956 ABI admissions per day to UK hospitals in 2013-14 - or one every 90 seconds. The burden of disease and disability is high and the 9% increase in stroke and head injuries seem to be rising in the over

### **Local ABI numbers 2018(as an example)**

The below data is based on research by Headway looking at numbers to inform the NHS planning.

	All ABI Female	Rate	Male	Rate	Total	Rate
IIRE WEST PRIMARY RUST	780	340	983	426	1,763	383
IIRE EAST PRIMARY RUST	741	375	1,029	525	1,770	450

The above does not consider the following areas however data shows there is also a burden of care in these areas which again rely on the approximate 300 beds to rehabilitate or enable these patients to lead a as independent life as possible

- Windsor, Ascot, and Maidenhead CCG
- Bracknell Forest
- Wokingham

## **The Application**

Given the objections from the local area about the supply and transport issues. We will ensure we follow the "Travel plan good practice Guide". While the care home operates the increased beds, we will minimise the use of staff cars and arrange shuttles from the Reading station and local bus stops to ensure there is minimal travel disruption locally.

The following measures will be taken during any building operations to control noise, pollution, and parking:

- (a) Work that is audible beyond the site boundary will only be carried out between 08:00hrs to 18:00hrs Monday to Friday, 08:00hrs to 13:00hrs Saturday and not at all on Sundays or any Public and/or Bank Holidays.
- (b) The quietest available items of plant and machinery will be used on site. Where permanently sited equipment such as generators are necessary, they will be enclosed to reduce noise levels.
- (c) Deliveries will only be received within the hours detailed in (a) above.
- (d) Adequate steps will be taken to prevent dust-causing nuisance beyond the site boundary. Such uses include the use of hoses to damp down stockpiles of materials, which are likely to generate airborne dust, to damp down during stone/slab cutting, and the use of bowsers and wheel washes.
- (e) There will be no burning on site.
- (f) Only minimal security lighting will be used outside the hours stated above

All other noise pollution and noise measures will be obtained from the Council's Environmental Health Services Unit and will be followed. We will also promote good neighbourliness; we will register with the considerate constructor's scheme.

We understand that the council has difficult decisions to make when such applications are submitted. However, we hope that the presentation of the above data and the need for such a service far outweighs any temporary inconvenience it may cause to the neighbours. More importantly the level of pressure that Long Covid has caused to the community is huge and as a service we will be able to provide holistic rehabilitation to this varied client group which we feel is very important at this stage. We will always maintain the highest standards of consideration for our neighbours and the local community.

We look forward to a favourable consideration to our request.