

Design & Access Statement

Proposal for the erection of 18 dwellings
following the demolition of the existing buildings

Land off New Road
Ruscombe
Twyford
Berkshire
RG10 9LN

19 October 2026



1.0 INTRODUCTION

This statement has been prepared by Arktec Ltd to accompany a full planning application submission on behalf of our client (the applicant) for the erection of 18 dwellings following the demolition of the existing buildings, on the former garden nursery site, off New Road in Ruscombe.

It is prepared in the context of the Wokingham Borough Local Development Framework Core Strategy Development Plan (adopted 2010), Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (adopted 2014), together with the Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan (2024), and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It explains that the applicant has:

- Had regard to relevant detailed design policies.
- Considered the character of the local area and the application site.
- Carefully analysed the site and its surroundings to identify constraints, opportunities and design themes.
- Produced a design which is complementary to the site and its environment, and delivers a desirable living environment for the future residents.

The application site is located on the western side of New Road and is conveniently located within the existing settlement on the eastern edge of Ruscombe village and sits in an area where public transport and local conveniences can be enjoyed.

2.0 EXISTING USE

The site currently consists of a number of former garden nursery buildings including a residential dwelling (53 New Road), all set within private grounds of 2.31 acres (0.93 hectares), and served by an existing access off New Road.

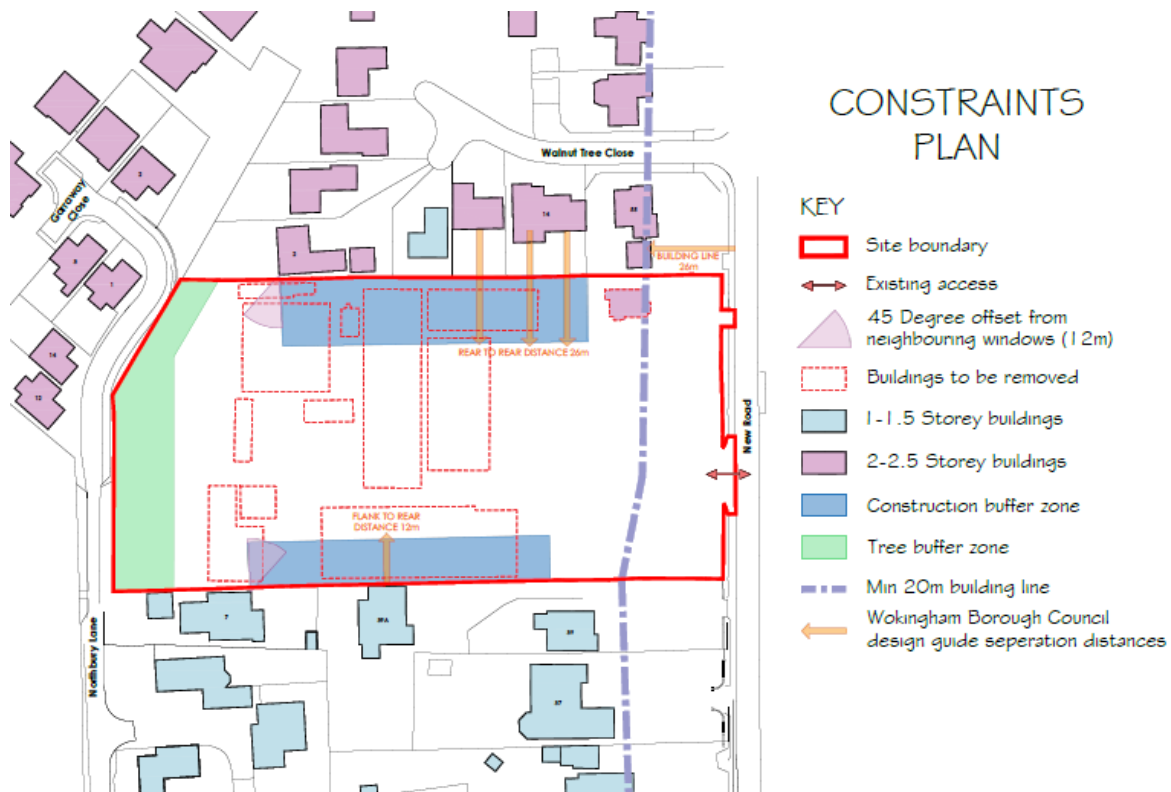
The nursery buildings have been vacant for many years, with the buildings being in a poor state of repair.

The site has been allocated for housing within the Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan (2024) and has been identified as an allocation for 20 dwellings in the new Wokingham Borough Plan, currently being considered.

3.0 CONSTRAINTS & OPPORTUNITIES

As part of the initial design process, much consideration was given to the potential constraints and opportunities that exist on the site which ultimately dictated the design parameters of the proposals. Requirements made within the Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan have also been taken into account.

Figure A below shows the site constraints plan which informed the design process with much consideration being given to the sites constraints and opportunities to ensure that any future development respects such matters.



4.0 PROPOSAL

The applicant proposes to make efficient use of the site and proposes to re-develop accordingly with the erection of 18 dwellings following the demolition of the existing buildings, providing an opportunity for a new comprehensive landscaping scheme.

The application site is generous in scale with a total area of 0.93ha. A development of 18 dwellings equates to a density of approximately 19 units per hectare. This proposed density is directly comparable to the density of neighbouring developments such as Walnut Tree Close at approximately 16 units per hectare. Given the sites allocation for 20 units, the proposed density is considered entirely appropriate balance between the prevailing character of the area, whilst ensuring that the site meets its full potential in terms of housing supply. This mid-level density also allows for suitable separation distances, in excess of Wokingham Borough Design Guide principles to be adhered to.

This arrangement is considered to be a significant improvement on the existing built form on site, where many of the buildings have elevations in excess of 40m less than 1m from the site boundaries.

4.1 DESIGN

The site lies within an area where there is a variety in the age, form, design and detailing of nearby dwellings and buildings.

The building design and architectural style of the proposed dwellings have derived from the character of the surrounding area and is considered to be of a style in fitting with this location, respecting the neighbouring properties and local area.

Local Architecture Examples

Traditional Gable Roofs	Traditional White Painted House
	
Victorian Brick & Timber Porch Detailing	Georgian Style House
	
Traditional Sash Windows & Dormers	Brick Facade with Sash Windows
	

The character of the built form directly surrounding the site has also been taken into account in the proposal. The site is currently a transition between a more recent development at Walnut Tree Close to the north, where the properties are two storey and an older development to the south, where most properties are 1.5 storey chalet bungalow style properties. The proposed houses have therefore been designed to reduce in height from 2.5 storey to the north down to 2 storey houses of approximately 8.2m high to the south. This arrangement respects the transition in house sizes across the site, whilst ensuring that the full opportunity to provide well-proportioned, flexible new family homes, suitable for modern living practices such as working from home can be delivered.

4.2 SCALE

The scale of the proposed dwellings has been carefully considered and designed to be sympathetic in design to ensure that the dwellings are in keeping with the character and appearance of the local area, and adhering to the design requirements set out in the sites neighbourhood allocation.

The proposed dwellings have been designed to;

- Avoid overlooking to sensitive private rooms and gardens.
- Retain separation from boundaries and retain private gardens.
- Be of a scale to reflect local character housing density.
- Achieve a high standard of architectural quality and flexible living accommodation required of modern houses. This includes, where appropriate the use of available loft spaces for additional bedroom and office spaces. Ensuring that this rare opportunity to provide a substantial contribution to the stock of new family homes within the settlement area and in a sustainable location is fully realised, reducing the need to build in less appropriate areas such as the Green Belt.

4.3 LAYOUT

Our design has had careful consideration with regards to its surroundings, in particular eliminating any potential overlooking issues. As required by the Neighbourhood design principles for the site, a no construction buffer zone has been provided off of the rear elevations of the existing neighbourhood houses (see blue hatch in the attached site constraints plan). This buffer zone ensures that the rear-to-rear separation distances are in excess of the requirements of the Wokingham Borough Design Guide.

Where the neighbouring buildings have a flank wall adjacent to the proposed development site, a no build buffer zone has been established for any 2 storey buildings for a distance of 12m at an angle of 45 degrees from the neighbouring windows, ensuring that the proposed development does not cause overlooking or have a perceived overbearing influence on the existing surrounding buildings.

Due to the generous separating distances between the proposed houses and any neighbouring properties, it is apparent that the proposals would cause no adverse impact on the daylight and sunlight to the neighbouring properties in accordance with BRE guidance.

It should be noted that any glazing to the first-floor side flank elevation windows that serve en-suite / bathroom accommodation shall be obscure glazed to eliminate any privacy concerns.

Special attention has been given during the design process to ensure that the layout provides a sense of spaciousness within the site itself, as well as maintaining the generous separation distance away from the protected trees to the rear of the site.

The layout and orientation of the plots have been designed to optimise gardens and privacy, with the house frontages designed to ensure natural surveillance of the public realm, whilst of course also creating visual interest.

The layout has been purposely designed with a gradual transition from 2 ½ storey to 2 storey houses, creating a natural transition in built form from the north to the south of the site, respecting the neighbouring chalet bungalows to the south.

In accordance with the site-specific design principles set out in Neighbourhood Plan the building line has been set to respect the transition between the prevalent building line to the north of the site and the slightly greater set back from the road to the south. This has been achieved by setting plot 17 further back, which also allows for an opportunity to provide a small open green space fronting New Road.

The design ethos of the proposals has very much been dictated by the need to blend in with the character of this location and therefore it is considered that the proposed layout represents a sympathetic flow of built form and grain of development respecting the site and its surroundings.

Figure B below demonstrates how the proposed dwellings would sit in relation to the application site and the character of the surrounding area.



4.4 AMOUNT

It is proposed for the site to consist of 18 dwellings, comprising of 16 houses (detached, semi-detached and terraced) and 2 maisonettes all of which designed to sit sympathetically within this location with subtle roof forms and traditional pitched roofs.

The proposals incorporate a strong mix of accommodation consisting of 2 x 1-bed, 3 x 2-bed, 6 x 3-bed and 7 x 4-bed units.

The proposal of 18 dwellings on this application site which consists of a site area of 0.93ha results in a housing density of 19.3dph (dwellings per hectare). As set out earlier, this is comparable to neighbouring housing development and appropriate for the moderate development location of Ruscombe, whilst ensuring that the opportunity to provide a substantial number of new family homes within the settlement is not underutilised.

The proposal provides a suitable amount of built form in terms of size and number of units with a medium development density in keeping with the surrounding area therefore considered acceptable in planning terms and designed to be built to exceed Nationally Described Space Standards.

Home offices (study) are provided where possible to encourage 'working from home' and subsequently helping to reduce traffic movements.

Accommodation Schedule

Plot No.	House Type	Storeys	Dwelling m ²	Gross Internal Area		Total ft ²
				Garage m ²	m ²	
1	2 Bedroom House	2	97.74	-	97.74	1,052
2	3 Bedroom House	2.5	124.44	-	124.44	1,339
3	3 Bedroom House	2.5	124.44	-	124.44	1,339
4	1 Bedroom Maisonette	1	50.62	-	50.62	545
5	1 Bedroom Maisonette	1	62.82	-	62.82	676
6	3 Bedroom House	2.5	147.23	19.25	166.48	1,792
7	3 Bedroom House	2.5	147.23	19.25	166.48	1,792
8	3 Bedroom House	2.5	147.38	19.25	166.63	1,794
9	3 Bedroom House	2.5	147.38	19.25	166.63	1,794
10	4 Bedroom House	2.5	292.31	37.02	329.33	3,545
11	4 Bedroom House	2.5	222.70	-	222.70	2,397
12	4 Bedroom House	2.5	222.70	-	222.70	2,397
13	4 Bedroom House	2	244.86	37.02	281.88	3,034
14	2 Bedroom House	2	102.57	-	102.57	1,104
15	2 Bedroom House	2	102.57	-	102.57	1,104
16	4 Bedroom House	2	196.16	37.02	233.18	2,510
17	4 Bedroom House	2	219.64	-	219.64	2,364
18	4 Bedroom House	2.5	174.93	-	174.93	1,883
				Total	3,015.78	32,462

Built Form Footprint Comparison

The proposals bring a significant reduction in built form (footprint) of 33%, with the proposed building footprints being circa 1,900m² when compared to the existing buildings which equates to circa 2,845m².

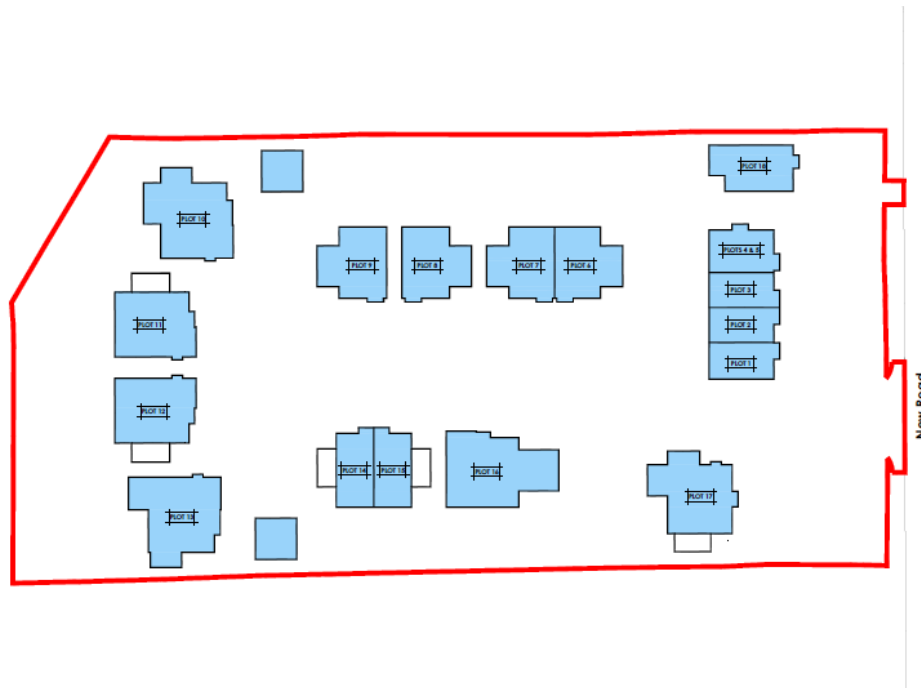
Buildings also have better offset distances to boundaries and improved landscape opportunities than the existing built form on site.

Figure C below shows the comparison in built form (existing v proposed).

Existing Built Form (old nursery buildings)



Proposed Built Form (housing scheme)



As demonstrated by the above, it is evident that the proposed reduction in built form would significantly help open up the site, providing the opportunity for a more pleasant environment, improving the site itself and the wider landscape.

4.5 LANDSCAPING

Careful consideration has been given with regards to the proposed landscaping of the site to ensure that our proposals soften the appearance of the site itself, maintaining the wider landscape and associated views.

Additional mixed native hedges and native tree planting along the street frontage with New Road will ensure that the current green character of this part of New Road is retained and enhanced. This will be helped further by the open green space located directly adjacent to the street frontage in front of plot 17.

The proposed gardens will provide a generous area of private amenity space in excess of the Wokingham design standards and requirements.

It is proposed for the existing landscaped boundaries to be retained and reinforced where ever possible. The existing band of protected trees to the west of the site will be retained in perpetuity and protected throughout the construction of the development.

The proposals include for a significant number of proposed new trees, with new areas of mixed native hedges and new mature mixed scrub planting along the boundaries, and through the public realm in the centre of the site, all of which providing a pleasant landscaped environment.

4.6 CHARACTER APPEARANCE

The appearance has been dominated by the need to blend in with the adjacent properties and the local area.

The external elevations of the proposals will consist of traditional materials to match local vernacular, with the most influential local character taken from some of the more traditional Georgian and Victorian houses and cottages in the area. Features such as ornate timber porches, a combination of sash and flush casement timber windows, and simple brick detailing such as splayed arch window heads will be used to ensure that the proposal sits comfortably within the character of the area.

Our design proposals incorporate the following design aspects to ensure a sympathetic design;

- Maintenance of landscape gaps between the proposals and the neighbouring properties ensuring that suitable gaps are maintained to protect the character of the area, with the addition of landscaping to ensure that there is a soft landscape feel to the site itself.
- Suitable low housing density and size of dwellings in keeping with the character of the area, and respecting the size of the site itself.
- Proposed carports and garages generally 'set back' from the main building lines to ensure that these appear subservient and sympathetic in design.
- Electric vehicle charging points (EVCP's) unobtrusively placed externally on the side elevation of the carports / garages / houses.
- Architectural design theme, typical of the local architecture incorporating the following design features;
 - Traditional facing brickwork and decorative detailing, with areas of weatherboard cladding.
 - Traditional plain clay roof tiles (with bonnet tiles), and slate tiled roofs.

- Traditional gable and hipped roofs with traditional detailing.
- Chimney detailing.
- Traditional 'set back' casement and sash window detailing.
- Mixture of traditional porch styles to reflect local character.

Our design proposals incorporate the characteristics of the local area, with the proposals incorporating 'high quality' external materials providing a soft material palette which is considered to enhance the aesthetics of the site and provide well-presented properties.

Architectural Detailing Examples of Previous Westbourne Homes Developments

Decorative Victorian Timber Porch	Lead Standing Seam Porch
	
Georgian Porch	Decorative Victorian Porch
	

Casement Windows	Traditional Chimney
	

4.7 ACCESS, PARKING & REFUSE STRATEGY

The application site has the benefit of an existing access off New Road, and it is therefore proposed for this access to be retained in the same location to serve the proposed development. The new access will be designed to provide a bell mouth entrance, with tactile paving crossing points to ensure the safety of passing pedestrians.

The site is designed to incorporate sufficient parking (with provision for EVCP's) and vehicular turning within the site itself to serve the proposed dwellings in accordance with Highways advice received and in line with the Councils parking requirements.

All units will have allocated parking spaces in accordance with the Council's parking standards, plus 6 additional visitor spaces.

The provision of cycle storage will be provided within the associated garages or within dedicated cycle storage lockers located within the gardens of each plot as indicated on the site plan.

Waste and recycling bins will be stored on a dedicated area of hard standing within the curtilage of each plot and on collection days brought to the kerbside (ready for collection). *Please refer to the accompanying Transport Statement for further details.*

4.8 NATIONALLY DESCRIBED SPACE STANDARDS

In accordance with the requirements of local policy, the proposed scheme is designed to conform with and exceed the Nationally Described Space Standards as set out by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

Please refer to accompanying architectural planning drawings and accommodation schedule.

4.9 BIODIVERSITY

A full bat emergence survey has been completed on the site. A limited amount of bat activity was recorded within the house only, and a suitable bat licence has been recommended post planning but prior to demolition.

In order to fully utilise the opportunity to provide new family homes within a sustainable settlement area outside of the Green Belt, a small area of self-seeded trees to the rear of the site will need to be removed. These will be partially mitigated for via new tree planting across the site, but in conjunction with this the applicant has agreed an allocation for offsite mitigation via Biofarm.

Please refer to the accompanying Ecology Report and BNG metric for further details.

4.10 ARBORICULTURE

Our proposals have been prepared in strict accordance with specialist arboriculture advice, and therefore it is considered that the proposals put forward would not be detrimental to any retained trees on the site, nor put future pressure on the loss of trees.

The protected trees to the rear of the site will not be affected by the proposal. Two small RPA encroachments to the front of plots 5 and 17 have been mitigated for with the replacement of the proposed garage to plot 17, with a lower impact carport and the use of a no dig construction driveways.

Please refer to the accompanying Tree Report for further details.

4.11 FLOOD RISK & DRAINAGE STRATEGY

The development lies within 'Flood Zone 1' an area that is considered 'low probability' of flooding, and the proposal will incorporate SUDS methodology, by disposing of all surface water on site.

In accordance with the requirements of the Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan, winter ground water monitoring is ongoing to further inform the drainage design.

Please refer to the accompanying Flood and Drainage Strategy for further details.

5.0 SUSTAINABILITY STATEMENT

The application drawings have considered the necessary sustainability measures required both during the design and construction stages of the project, and particular attention has been drawn to the following sustainable aspects:

- Energy consumption.
- On-site renewable energy generation.
- Water management.
- Flood risk management.
- Waste, recycling and composting facilities.
- Air, noise and light pollution.
- Responsibly sourced and recycled materials.
- Site waste management.
- Electric vehicle charging points (EVCP's).
- Orientation of windows.
- Water consumption.

The proposed dwellings have been designed with a Fabric First approach, to maximise the use of well insulated materials within its construction, ensuring that wasted energy is kept to a minimum. It is intended that the development will utilise energy efficient appliances and incorporate water saving devices (where possible), and have been specifically designed to incorporate a number of crown flat roofs to house solar panels out of sight, retaining the traditional character of the proposed design.

In conclusion, the proposal has been designed to ensure that sustainability is maximised throughout the construction of the project and that once complete, the design remains sustainable for future occupiers. Our proposal provides a sustainable development in both design and construction terms. *Please refer to the accompanying Energy Statement prepared by specialists.*

6.0 PLANNING HISTORY

The application site has recently been subject to the following 'refused' planning application (prepared by others) which consisted of proposals to provide a 66 bedroom care home following demolition of the existing buildings;

Reference: **240990**

Location: Land off New Road, Ruscombe, Twyford, Berkshire, RG10 9LN

Description: The development proposed is erection of a two storey building to form a 66 no. bedroom care home for older people with parking, access, landscaping and associated ground works, following demolition of the existing buildings / structures.

Decision: **REFUSED** 10th October 2024

Following an appeal by the previous applicant (appeal reference APP/X0360/W/24/3358120), the Planning Inspectorate subsequently dismissed the appeal on 20th August 2025, on the grounds that the proposal would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the area with particular regard to the effect of the proposal on the street scene.

Particular concern was raised with regard to the proposed bulk and massing, with its largely unbroken built form, with its design not respecting the existing building lines nor the character of the local area.

Whilst our proposal consists of a totally different type of development, much consideration has been made by the design team to the previous concerns raised by both the Council and Planning Inspectorate with regards to the previously refused scheme, and as such it is considered that this new housing scheme proposal takes on board any previous concerns raised on this site, resulting in a sympathetic proposal respecting the character of the area and street scene.

Figure D below shows previously refused care home scheme with its bulky built form.

Previously Refused Planning Layout



Figure E below shows proposed sympathetic housing scheme.

Proposed Planning Layout



The above comparisons, show how the new housing proposals have taken on board the previous concerns of the Council and Planning Inspectorate. The nature of the development as a scheme of detached, semi detached and terraced houses is far more in keeping with the residential character of the area than the single large care home block previously proposed. The rhythm of development down New Road is retained, as is the prevailing building line. In comparison to the refused care home proposal, our clients proposed scheme will provide significant improvements to the relationship to neighbouring properties and be to a sympathetic residential scale.

7.0 PRE-APPLICATION & NEIGHBOURHOOD CONSULTATIONS

The applicant acknowledges the importance of engaging with the local residents and Parish Council early on in the design process to ensure that any concerns can be suitably addressed during the design process.

On 4th February 2026, the applicant (Westbourne Homes) had a meeting with Ruscombe Parish Council at Twyford Village Hall, which benefited from local neighbouring residents attending (circa 20), where the proposed scheme was put forward by the applicant, with any questions answered.

It was considered that the meeting was generally positive, and that the people were supportive of a residential scheme of this nature on this site.

A number of comments on the design were made during the neighbourhood meeting and these have been taken on board and incorporated in the application design where appropriate. These comments included:

- A neighbouring resident felt that the location of the garage to plot 13 would have an adverse impact on their private amenity area. The garage has been moved a further metre away from the boundary in the attached design, as has Plot 10 garage.

- The question of why the buildings were 2.5 storey was raised. It was explained that only the units to north of the site were designed as 2.5 storey, and that this was necessary to ensure that the opportunity to develop a site within the settlement area of Ruscombe was used efficiently. For example, if the same accommodation were to be provided over two floors, this would lead to a reduction of at least two potential new family homes and not achieve the goals of the site's allocation.
- A neighbouring resident highlighted that the OS plan did not reflect their property accurately. Westbourne Home have since visited this property and corrected the surrounding OS plan accordingly.
- Questions were asked as to whether rear dormer windows directly facing towards the rear of existing neighbouring properties would affect their privacy. Following a visit to the neighbouring properties the designs of plots 6 to 9 have been changed to show 8 small dormer windows on the front of the properties and only velux windows to the rear.
- Parish members asked why a site layout more in line with the Neighbourhood Plan draft layout had not been brought forward. It was explained that the draft Neighbourhood Plan sketch did not provide sufficient distance between proposed buildings or neighbouring boundaries, had insufficient provision for parking, and the house sizes indicated wouldn't meet national space standards.

The applicant has taken on board any comments and concerns raised at the meeting, and therefore it is hoped for the scheme to continue to receive local support so that this derelict site can be brought back into use with much needed local housing. A further post application submission neighbourhood consultation is also being organised to provide immediate neighbours and interested parties to comment on the application submission design.

Social Impact

The site has been empty for a number of years. During this time the buildings have been subject to repeated bouts of vandalism. The site also has evidence of antisocial behaviour. The attached proposal will remove this undesirable situation as well as having a positive impact on the local economy and wider community.

8.0 SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

This site provides the opportunity to replace the existing nursery buildings and house with a sympathetic medium density housing development of 18 dwellings, with proposals that are considered in keeping with the character of this local area, respecting its surroundings.

It provides a development opportunity in line with the goals of the sites neighbourhood and pending local plan housing allocations.

The site consists of a generous plot with ample space for the proposed dwellings in keeping with the density and built form of the area that would have no adverse impact on its neighbours, nor the wider landscape.

When viewed from all viewpoints, the proposed dwellings appear a logical form of development that respects and follows the existing building pattern and character of the local area, therefore it is considered that the new homes would make a positive contribution to the character of this residential area, having a high architectural quality and a traditional design which reflects local character in terms of scale, density, layout and access.

The proposed development layout would represent a better built form relationship to neighbouring properties than the existing large glass houses, many of which are built right on the site boundaries. The proposal will provide additional housing and will result in a more efficient and effective use of the land, in keeping with the residential character of New Road.

On conclusion, it is considered that the proposed dwellings would preserve the character and appearance of this area in compliance with both local and national policy, whilst respecting the neighbouring buildings and providing much needed family housing to the area, with no requirement to encroach into the Green Belt.