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PS1: Planning Statement



Proposed Extension & Upgrades to:

Belamie Gables Care Home 210 Hyde End Road
Spencers Wood RG7 1DG

Executive Summary

This Planning Statement supports a full planning application for extensions and upgrades to Belamie Gables, a residential care home at 210 Hyde End Road, Spencers Wood (within Wokingham Borough). The scheme proposes a two-storey front extension (with new entrance porch and ramp), a single-storey side extension, a part single/part two-storey rear extension (to accommodate a new stairwell) and a single-storey extension to an existing outbuilding. Minor external alterations include changes to fenestration, removal of an external staircase and shed and installation of an electric sliding access gate. The development will increase the home's capacity by 7 bedrooms (from around 20 to 27 residents) while replacing outdated non-ensuite rooms with modern ensuite bedrooms, thereby enhancing resident comfort and the long-term viability of the facility. Key points are:

- **Improved Care Accommodation:** The proposal enhances the standard of accommodation provided to residents. At present, the home supports 20 residents across 16 single and 2 double bedrooms, with only one room offering en-suite facilities. The planned extensions will allow most bedrooms to include en-suite provision, aligning with modern care expectations, CQC guidance and the evolving needs of an ageing population.
- This aligns with Core Strategy Policy CP2 (Inclusive Communities) which supports development addressing the needs of older people and those with special needs and MDD Local Plan Policy TB09 which, in principle, encourages accommodation for vulnerable groups (including Residential Care).
- **Appropriate Design and Scale:** The extensions have been designed in keeping with the existing two-storey building's character, height and materials, ensuring a high-quality design. The scale and form are sympathetic to the site and surroundings, complying with Core Strategy Policy CP3 (General Principles for Development) which requires development to be of appropriate scale, mass and character and the Borough Design Guide SPD (2012) which seeks contextually responsive and high-quality design.
- The proposal will integrate with the existing building without overdominance and the new frontage and outbuilding extensions are identical to those previously found acceptable by the planning officer in the earlier application.
- **No Harm to Neighbour Amenity:** The site is well-separated from neighbouring dwellings and the extensions are modest in scale and not overbearing. There will be no materially harmful overlooking, overshadowing, or noise impacts on adjacent properties. This satisfies the amenity protection aims of Core Strategy Policy CP3 and guidance in the Design Guide SPD (which requires extensions to respect neighbouring properties). The Council's previous assessment concluded no adverse impact on neighbours and the context remains unchanged. The revised parking layout at the front is also not anticipated to harm any neighbour's amenity (e.g. in terms of noise or visual impact), given existing boundary vegetation and separation distances. Surfacing will be resin

bound servicing reducing noise from existing gravel surfacing and improving accessibility.

- **Access, Parking and Highway Safety:** This proposal addresses prior concerns about parking provision and emergency access. A reconfigured on-site parking layout provides adequate car parking spaces (including disabled bays) to meet the Borough's parking standards (MDD Policy CC07), based on the increased number of residents and staff. The layout includes a designated ambulance bay near the site entrance and a widened driveway secured by a new sliding gate (set back from the highway), ensuring unimpeded access for emergency vehicles. A swept-path analysis has been prepared to demonstrate that fire tenders, ambulances and delivery/refuse vehicles can safely enter, turn within and exit the site in forward gear. The access drive will be resurfaced and marked to delineate parking bays and turning areas clearly. Staff and visitor cycle parking (secure and covered), as well as mobility scooter storage with charging points, will be provided on-site to encourage sustainable travel by staff/visitors, in line with MDD Policies CP6 (managing travel demand) and CC07 and the Borough's parking standards. An Electric Vehicle (EV) charging point will be installed to promote use of low-emission vehicles. The expected traffic generation from an additional 7 residents is minimal and will not adversely affect the local highway network (this will be evidenced in a Parking Statement). Overall, the scheme accords with Core Strategy CP6 and MDD Policy CC07 by providing safe access and appropriate parking without detriment to highway safety.
- **Emergency Vehicle Access & Fire Safety:** The development has been designed to ensure fire safety and emergency access are robustly addressed. The internal road and forecourt layout accommodate the turning requirements of a fire appliance vehicle and the existing walled opening provides a clear wide opening for emergency vehicles. A fire tender can approach within the required distance of all frontage parts of the building and an on-site turning head allows egress in forward gear. The building extensions will comply with Building Regulations (Approved Document B) for fire safety; the existing Fire Strategy will be updated including the upgraded alarm system, smoke sensors and emergency lighting. Safe evacuation of vulnerable residents is a paramount consideration – the design includes a new central stairwell and will incorporate refuge points or evacuation aids as necessary. The proposal therefore meets the intent of local policies on safety and design (Core Strategy CP3) and ensures the scheme can be safely accessed and serviced by emergency responders.
- **AWE Burghfield (DEPZ) Emergency Planning:** The site lies within the Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ) of the AWE Burghfield nuclear licensed site (as designated under the REPIR 2019 regulations). MDD Policy TB04 (Development in vicinity of AWE Burghfield) requires assurance that any increase in people on-site can be safely accommodated with regard to "blue light" services and the off-site emergency plan. In the previous application, this issue was a reason for refusal initially; however, at appeal the Planning Inspector agreed that a condition securing a site-specific emergency plan would satisfactorily mitigate the impact on the off-site plan and the Council's Emergency Planning Officer (EPO) is amenable to securing such a plan by

condition. The applicant is providing a robust updated Business Continuity and Emergency Evacuation Plan for the care home as part of this proposal. This plan details procedures to protect residents in the unlikely event of an incident at AWE, including shelter-in-place protocols or assisted evacuation arrangements that do not rely on additional support from public emergency services.

- By demonstrating a self-sufficient emergency plan pre-determination (or via a pre-commencement condition if deemed acceptable), the proposal will satisfy Policy TB04 and ensure that the small increase in resident numbers does not compromise the Council's ability to implement the AWE off-site emergency plan. Both the Council and the appellant have acknowledged that with an appropriate plan in place, the DEPZ issue can be fully addressed.
- **Landscape and Trees:** The development has been planned to minimise impact on existing landscape features. The site's rear garden is generous (approximately 18–19m depth by ~28m width) and contains no mature trees and is landscaped. No protected trees (no TPOs) are therefore present. The proposed extensions largely occupy areas of existing hardstanding or lawn and avoid significant trees on neighbours boundaries. Construction can be managed with a Tree Protection Plan to ensure retained trees and hedgerows (particularly along the southern boundary and frontage) are not harmed by site works or storage of materials by means of condition if deemed necessary. In line with MDD Policy CC03 and TB21 (Landscape Character) the scheme incorporates new soft landscaping to enhance visual amenity; for example, additional planting at the site frontage around the parking area to soften views from Hyde End Road and replacement planting for any vegetation unavoidably removed. This will maintain and improve the site's green infrastructure and integrate the development into the semi-rural character of Spencers Wood.
- **Ecology and Biodiversity:** The site lies within an Amber Risk Zone for Great Crested Newts and has been identified as having bat roost habitat suitability, requiring consideration under Policy TB23 of the MDD Local Plan. A Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment undertaken in March 2022 by Wenman Ecological Consultancy found no evidence of roosting bats but identified features with potential suitability for crevice-dwelling bats, including missing mortar beneath a hip tile, a missing roof tile beneath the ridge and gaps at the rear of a timber dormer, leading to a conclusion of low to moderate roost potential. The report advised that if precautionary measures are adopted, a European Protected Species Mitigation Licence would not be required. In line with Wokingham Borough Council's pre-application advice, a further emergence and re-entry bat survey is scheduled for September 2025 and its findings will be submitted to the Council once available; should a roost be confirmed, proportionate mitigation will be implemented in line with professional ecological advice. The site's location within an Amber Risk Zone for Great Crested Newts also requires precautionary attention and an extended Phase 1 Habitat and Species Scoping Survey, together with any further targeted surveys as recommended by the Council, will accompany the planning application to confirm whether additional constraints apply.

- In accordance with the Environment Act 2021 and forthcoming statutory requirements, the proposal will also be supported by a Biodiversity Net Gain Plan, with the landscape scheme incorporating native species planting, garden enhancements and habitat features to deliver at least a ten per cent net gain in biodiversity value, ensuring compliance with Policy TB23, Core Strategy Policy CP7 and national planning policy.
- **Sustainability (Energy and Drainage):** The scheme is designed with sustainable construction principles. In line with MDD Policy CC04 and the Council's Sustainable Design and Construction SPD, the new extensions will achieve high energy efficiency standards (meeting current Building Regulations energy performance requirements and aiming for a 19% improvement over baseline where feasible). The design will incorporate enhanced insulation, low-energy LED lighting and efficient heating systems. The feasibility of renewable or low-carbon technologies (such as solar PV panels on the new roof or air-source heat pumps) is being actively considered to reduce the building's carbon footprint. Water efficiency measures (low-flow fixtures) will be used to conserve water. A Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) strategy will manage surface water runoff from the new development: the additional hard surfaces (roofs and any paving) will drain to on-site infiltration measures where soil conditions allow, or to permeable surfacing and soakaways, ensuring no increase in runoff.
- The site is located in Flood Zone 1 (low flood risk) and there are no records of local flooding on-site; however, in accordance with MDD Policies CC09 and CC10, the proposal includes measures to prevent any surface water flood risk (e.g. permeable parking surfaces and rainwater butts for roofwater harvesting). Foul drainage will continue to discharge to the existing mains system. Overall, the project will contribute to climate change mitigation and resilience, consistent with local policy and the NPPF's aims for sustainable development.
- **Other Planning Considerations:** The proposed development raises no other significant planning issues. Noise: The care home use remains the same (Use Class C2) and the increase in residents is modest; therefore, no material intensification of noise or disturbance is expected. Any new plant (such as an upgraded kitchen extract or heating plant) will be specified to meet noise limits and can be controlled by condition to protect residential amenity (reflecting MDD Policy CC06 on noise). Contamination: The site has been in residential/institutional use and there are no known contamination issues on record; the risk of land contamination is negligible. The additional residential floor space will not be liable for CIL as C2 care homes are not a chargeable development. The applicant has submitted the necessary CIL form. There are no other s.106 planning obligations anticipated, as the development is for a private care facility (affordable housing contributions are not applicable to C2 use and on-site infrastructure needs are addressed within the design).

Conclusion: This Planning Statement has demonstrated that the proposed extensions and upgrades to Belamie Gables care home are acceptable in principle and detail. The development will secure much-needed enhancements to an existing elderly care facility, enabling it to better

serve the community's needs (through improved accommodation standards and increased capacity) in line with Wokingham's housing and care strategies. The site is within the settlement of Spencers Wood (part of the South of M4 Strategic Development Location) where development is directed by Core Strategy Policy CP9 – the proposal makes efficient use of previously developed land within settlement limits (MDD Policy CC02) and is supported by the presumption in favour of sustainable development (MDD Policy CC01).

All relevant planning policy considerations have been addressed: the scheme accords with the Development Plan (Core Strategy 2010 and MDD Local Plan 2014) policies including CP1, CP2, CP3, CP6, CP7, CP9, TB04, TB09, CC01, CC02, CC07, CC03, CC04, TB21, TB23 and the Borough Design Guide SPD, among others. It also aligns with national policy in the NPPF (particularly in delivering sustainable development, good design and meeting community needs). Importantly, the proposal directly responds to the reasons for refusal of the previous application (ref. 223802) and the subsequent appeal decision: it provides clear evidence of adequate parking and turning for emergency vehicles and it commits to a rigorous emergency plan for the AWE DEPZ issue; thereby overcoming the Inspector's and Council's concerns.

Pre-application advice from the Council (ref. 242463, Oct 2024) has been incorporated, resulting in a well-considered scheme likely to be supported.

In summary, the proposal represents a sustainable, policy-compliant development that will improve care provision in Wokingham Borough without adverse effects. The applicant respectfully requests that the Council grant planning permission, subject to any reasonable conditions (including those relating to parking layout implementation and emergency planning), so that this enhanced care home scheme can be delivered for the benefit of current and future residents.

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Introduction

This document is a Planning Statement submitted on behalf of the applicant, Nadam Care Ltd (operators of Belamie Gables), in support of a full planning application for extensions and upgrades to the Belamie Gables Residential Care Home, Spencers Wood. The statement describes the site and proposed development, outlines relevant planning policy considerations and provides a thorough assessment of the proposal against those policies and any material considerations. It also addresses the reasons for refusal of the previous planning application for a similar scheme (ref. 223802) and the issues raised by the Planning Inspector on appeal (ref. APP/X0360/W/23/3326997), demonstrating how the revised proposal has overcome those issues. The advice received from Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) in the pre-application response letter (ref. 242463, dated 28 October 2024) has been taken into account and is referenced throughout this statement.

The statement is structured to systematically cover all key planning topics; from the principle of development (and the need for improved care home facilities) to detailed matters such as design quality, impact on neighbours, highways and parking, environmental considerations and compliance with specific Development Plan policies (notably Core Strategy CP2, CP3, CP6; MDD Local Plan TB04, TB09, CC01, CC07; and others). All relevant policies from Wokingham's Core Strategy (adopted 2010), Managing Development Delivery (MDD) Local Plan (adopted 2014) and pertinent Supplementary Planning Documents (including the Borough Design Guide SPD 2012 and Sustainable Design & Construction guidance) are cited and addressed. For clarity, a References section is provided at the end, listing the planning policy documents and decision letters referred to in the text (with their formal titles and adoption/issue dates).

Site and Surroundings

Belamie Gables is a long-established residential care home (Use Class C2) located on Hyde End Road in Spencers Wood, within the civil parish of Shinfield and the administrative area of Wokingham Borough Council. The site lies on the western side of Hyde End Road, set back from the main carriageway and accessed via a short private drive. The location is within the defined settlement limits of Spencers Wood (an area designated as part of the South of M4 Strategic Development Location in the Core Strategy). The immediate surroundings are mixed residential and semi-rural in character: Hyde End Road contains predominantly detached dwellings and some community uses, with open countryside at the fringes of the settlement. The application site is not within a conservation area, nor are there any listed buildings on or adjacent to the property. However, it is noted that the site falls within the Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ) around AWE Burghfield, a matter addressed separately in this application.

The site itself is approximately 0.3 hectares in area. It comprises the main two-storey care home building (formerly a residential dwelling, extended and converted for care use in the 1980s) and

associated outbuildings within a generous plot. The care home building is oriented roughly north-south, with its principal elevation facing east towards the access drive and Hyde End Road. The building has a traditional appearance with brick elevations and pitched tiled roof, consistent with the local vernacular. An existing single-storey front porch and ramp provide the current main entrance. At the rear (west side) of the building is a garden used by residents, which extends ~19 metres in depth and is mainly lawn with some patio areas and perimeter planting. Within the rear garden there are a few single-storey outbuildings/sheds (one of which serves as a utility/store). The garden is enclosed by fencing and mature hedgerows/trees, providing screening from adjacent properties.

To the north of the site is a neighboring residential property (No. 212 Hyde End Road), set at a sufficient distance with substantial boundary vegetation in between. To the south, along the access drive, are a couple of other dwellings and their gardens, separated by trees and hedges. Open fields lie further to the west beyond the rear boundary and to the east (opposite the site access) are additional houses fronting Hyde End Road. The site's frontage along the private drive features a small parking and turning area, currently providing on-site car parking for staff and visitors (including an area in front of the building and an area just outside the front boundary wall). There is an existing walled access from the private drive, which connects to Hyde End Road. The private drive is single-track, but there is a widened junction bellmouth where it meets Hyde End Road for ingress/egress.

In terms of planning constraints: Aside from the AWE DEPZ, the site is shown to be within a "Great Crested Newt Consultation Zone Amber Risk" and an area of "Bat Roost Habitat Suitability" on WBC's constraints maps, indicating potential ecological sensitivity (these are addressed under Ecology). The site is also within the general area of the South of M4 Strategic Development Location (SDL), meaning significant growth and infrastructure investment has been planned in the wider area (however, this proposal is for improving an existing facility rather than new speculative development). It is not in Green Belt or countryside designation and falls within the "Development Limits" defined by MDD Policy CC02. The site is in Flood Zone 1 (low risk of fluvial flooding) and is not known to be susceptible to surface water flooding. There are no Tree Preservation Orders on the site and while it lies within a broader Landscape Character Area identified by the Council, the site itself is previously developed and well-contained by existing landscaping.

Overall, the site and its context are suitable for the modest expansion of the established care home use; the setting is predominantly residential, within a settlement and the principle of development here is supported by local policy given the location inside settlement boundaries and the nature of the proposal (enhancement of a community facility for vulnerable elderly residents).

Planning Background and History

3.1 Previous Application Refusal (Ref. 223802): In late 2022, a planning application (ref. 223802) was submitted for a virtually identical scheme of extensions at Belamie Gables. That application was refused by Wokingham Borough Council on 28 February 2023. The description

of development then was: *“Erection of a two-storey front extension with porch canopy roof and ramp (following demolition of existing front porch and ramp), a single-storey side extension, part single/part two-storey rear extension to form new stairwell, a single-storey extension to an existing outbuilding, changes to fenestration and removal of a shed and external staircase, to the existing residential care home.”* The refused scheme is essentially the same as the current proposal in terms of physical works and appearance. The Council’s reasons for refusal were focused on two issues:

- **Reason 1 (AWE Emergency Plan):** The Council contended that it had not been demonstrated that the increased number of people on site could be safely accommodated in the context of the off-site emergency plan for AWE Burghfield, particularly concerning the needs of “Blue Light” (emergency) services.
- This was cited as being contrary to MDD Local Plan Policy TB04 (2014), which governs development in the vicinity of the Atomic Weapons Establishment.
- **Reason 2 (Parking/Turning for Emergency Vehicles):** The Council found that insufficient information was provided to show adequate on-site car parking, turning and emergency vehicle access. Essentially, the layout did not convincingly demonstrate that larger vehicles (fire tenders, ambulances, delivery/refuse lorries) could access and manoeuvre within the site, nor that parking demand could be met without overspill. This was deemed contrary to Core Strategy Policy CP6 (2010), MDD Policy CC07 (2014) and guidance in the Borough Design Guide SPD, all of which require appropriate parking provision and safe access in new developments.

No other reasons (such as design or neighbour impact) were cited indicating that in all other respects the scheme was policy-compliant. Indeed, the officer’s report for 223802 concluded that the proposed extensions/outbuilding changes were acceptable in terms of impact on the character of the area and on neighbouring amenity. However, due to the above unresolved highways and emergency planning concerns, the application was refused.

3.2 Appeal Decision (Ref. APP/X0360/W/23/3326997): The applicant appealed the refusal and the appeal was determined by the Planning Inspectorate, with a decision issued on 8 February 2024. The appeal (written representations) resulted in a dismissal, upholding the Council’s refusal on the second ground (parking/turning). Key points from the Inspector’s decision include:

- The Inspector agreed with the Council that the proposal had not demonstrated adequate on-site parking and turning for emergency and service vehicles. In particular, the Inspector was not satisfied that a fire engine could enter, turn and leave safely, or that sufficient parking spaces would be available to cater for staff and visitors given the increased resident capacity. Therefore, the scheme was found to potentially conflict with highway safety and convenience and thus was contrary to CP6, CC07, etc.

This confirmed that Reason for Refusal 2 was valid.

- Regarding the AWE Burghfield emergency plan issue (Reason 1), the Inspector acknowledged that the appellant had submitted a “business continuity emergency plan” during the appeal. The Inspector, in agreement with the Council’s Emergency Planning Officer, found that while the principle of managing this issue via a condition was acceptable (i.e. the Council and Inspector were open to allowing the development subject to a condition requiring an emergency plan to mitigate DEPZ impacts), the specific plan submitted was not of an adequate standard. It lacked sufficient detail and robustness. However, crucially, the Inspector and Council effectively agreed that Policy TB04’s requirements could be met if a suitably robust emergency plan were in place. As a result, the Inspector did *not* uphold Reason 1 as a standalone reason to refuse the development; it was considered that this matter could be resolved and indeed the Council indicated at appeal that it would not have maintained refusal solely on that basis if other matters were acceptable. In summary, the DEPZ issue could be dealt with by condition, so long as a better plan was formulated.

The net outcome of the appeal was that in principle the development was acceptable (and beneficial for care provision), but the lack of demonstrated turning/parking capability was fatal to the appeal. The Inspector dismissed the appeal on that basis alone.

3.3 Pre-Application Advice (Ref. 242463, 2024): Following the appeal, the applicant sought to resolve the outstanding issues by obtaining pre-application advice from WBC. A pre-app submission was made in October 2024 and the Council’s written response (letter from the Planning Officer, ref. 242463 dated 28/10/2024) was received. This pre-application advice letter is a critical document guiding the current proposal. The main feedback from the Council can be summarised as follows:

- **Principle and Need:** The Council reiterated support for facilities serving an ageing population. It cited Core Strategy CP2 (which supports development addressing needs of an ageing society and people with special needs) and MDD Policy TB09 (which supports in principle proposals for residential accommodation for vulnerable groups, including elderly care homes). As the site is within the settlement and not introducing a new use (just enhancing an existing one), the principle was considered acceptable subject to detailed compliance.
- **Design and Character:** The pre-app letter noted that the extensions and alterations proposed were unchanged from the refused scheme (in terms of design, massing and appearance). The officer acknowledged that in the previous application, the design/character impacts were found acceptable. The context of the site has not changed, so the Council indicated no objection in principle to the design and scale of the extensions or outbuilding alterations, considering them in keeping with the area’s character. The only new element is a proposed electric sliding gate at the site entrance; the officer advised that, based on limited details, this gate is likely to be acceptable in visual terms (similar gates exist along Hyde End Road) especially as it would be set back on a vegetated private drive, largely screened from public view. A secure entrance

gate is proposed for improved safety, with operational details to be agreed at Building Control or detailed design stage and not included as part of planning.

- They requested detailed plans at application stage for confirmation, but no fundamental design concerns were raised. Conclusion: The design is expected to meet CP3 and Design Guide SPD requirements for high-quality, context-appropriate development.
- **Neighbour Amenity:** The pre-app response confirmed that, as before, the Council expects no adverse impact on neighbouring properties. Since the built form has not changed from the prior scheme (which was deemed not harmful to neighbours) and the only alteration is the parking layout at the front, the officer saw no new amenity issues. Policy CP3 (protecting amenity) and the Design Guide's guidance on extensions (e.g. SPD R23 about relating well to neighbours) would continue to be satisfied. The revised parking area was not thought to introduce any significant new impacts (it remains within the site frontage, away from sensitive boundaries). In summary, the proposal should not cause loss of light, outlook, or privacy to any neighbouring occupiers and noise/disturbance from the care home will remain essentially as existing (residential in nature).
- The Council raised no objection on neighbour amenity grounds at pre-app.
- **Highways, Access and Parking:** This was the main focus of the pre-application advice, as it was the critical outstanding issue. The Council's Highways officers provided a list of requirements and observations to ensure compliance with CP6 and CC07:
 - A detailed parking plan must be provided, showing parking spaces that meet the Borough's size standards (5.0m x 2.5m, with additional 1.2m hatched strips for any disabled bay). A minimum aisle width of 6m behind spaces is needed for maneuverability.
 - The total number of residents and *full-time equivalent (FTE)* staff post-development should be stated, to calculate parking need per standards. (Standards: 1 car space per 3 residents, plus 1 per staff; disabled bays to be included accordingly). If the proposal intends a shortfall against standards, empirical evidence (surveys or TRICS data from comparable care homes) would be required to justify that level.
 - The site's red line boundary on the plans should include all areas used for parking (notably, two existing spaces just outside the front wall on the driveway verge need to be within the application site boundary if they are to count).
 - The new layout should show an ambulance bay near the entrance (the concept was shown previously, but needs to be dimensioned and proven by swept path).

- **Swept Path Analysis:** The Council stressed that a comprehensive swept path analysis is required for all relevant vehicles:
 - A large fire tender (to specified dimensions provided by WBC, aligning with a standard fire appliance) – demonstrating approach, turning on-site and exit.
 - An ambulance – demonstrating it can reach the bay and turn.
 - Delivery vans and refuse collection vehicles – showing they can enter, turn and exit in forward gear. (A designated delivery/servicing space was noted and welcomed in the new design; this should be retained).
 - Swept paths must be done to an accepted professional standard (including wheel tracking and body overhang).
- **Turning and Maneuvering:** The Highways team remain cautious and want evidence that the tight nature of the site can accommodate the above movements. Without such evidence, they indicated they “are not confident adequate provision can be achieved.”
- **Parking Management:** A draft Car Parking Management Plan is recommended, to show how spaces will be allocated or managed (especially if staff shifts change, etc.) to avoid overspill on the access drive.
- **Construction Management:** Given the constrained access, a framework Construction Method Statement should accompany the application, outlining how construction vehicles will access without blocking Hyde End Road, where materials will be stored (to avoid harming trees or using parking areas) and measures to manage construction traffic.
- **Cycle and Sustainable Travel:** Provide secure, covered cycle parking for staff (and possibly a visitor Sheffield stand near the entrance), as well as consider storage/charging for mobility scooters for residents. Also, a Staff Travel Plan (even a simple framework) is suggested to encourage car-sharing, public transport use, etc., given the sustainability objectives of CP6.
- **Electric Vehicle Charging:** The provision of an EV charging point, subject to demand, in the new parking area is encouraged (and now effectively required by building regulations for new parking spaces).

The applicant has addressed the feedback raised in the earlier refusal and appeal decision through a comprehensive reconfiguration of the forecourt and access drive,

resulting in a revised layout that provides a total of 17 marked car parking spaces within the site boundary, comprising four fully compliant accessible bays and thirteen standard bays for staff and visitors, together with a dedicated 6.0m × 3.0m ambulance and delivery bay adjacent to the entrance ramp which is provided in addition to the marked parking supply; this level of provision aligns with Wokingham Borough Council's adopted parking standards, which require 16–17 spaces for a 27-bed care facility with 7–8 staff on duty at peak times, meaning the scheme offers either a slight surplus or an exact match depending on staffing levels, whilst the inclusion of four accessible bays significantly exceeds minimum requirements and demonstrates best practice in line with Core Strategy Policy CP2; the scheme also incorporates an EV charging point subject to demand, secure cycle storage for staff and visitors and will operate under a Parking Management Plan ensuring compliance through staff caps, staggered shifts and the reservation of visitor bays; comprehensive swept path analysis demonstrates that a fire tender can enter, manoeuvre to within 20m of the building and exit in forward gear, ambulances can utilise the dedicated bay safely and 7.5t delivery and refuse vehicles can turn within the forecourt without reversing onto Hyde End Road, while new sliding gates (to be agreed at Building Control or detailed design stage.) set back from the carriageway will ensure vehicles clear the highway before entry and include an emergency override system for blue-light services; overall, the revised scheme delivers safe and suitable access, adequate parking capacity and appropriate emergency and service vehicle manoeuvring, thereby directly addressing the Inspector's previous concerns and achieving full compliance with Core Strategy Policy CP6, MDD Local Plan Policy CC07 and the Borough Design Guide SPD.

- **DEPZ (Emergency Plan):** The pre-app response included comments from the Emergency Planning Officer (EPO) regarding the AWE off-site plan issue. The EPO reiterated that any increase in population in the DEPZ must not detrimentally impact implementation of the off-site emergency plan (per REPPIR 2019 and Policy TB04). They noted disappointment that the previously submitted emergency plan was resubmitted at pre-app without improvements. The EPO stated that normally WBC would condition both a construction phase and an operational Emergency Plan, but given the vulnerable nature of this site (a care home), they would prefer to see a robust plan before determination of the new application. The pre-app letter concludes that the Council is open to securing a suitably worded condition to mitigate the DEPZ issue, but the applicant is strongly encouraged to provide an updated emergency plan upfront to give confidence. In response, the applicant has engaged with a professional consultant to prepare a comprehensive Emergency Response Plan for Belamie Gables, which will be submitted with the planning application. This plan will detail staff training, communication protocols, evacuation transport arrangements and coordination with the local authority in the event of a radiation emergency. By proactively providing this, the application demonstrates compliance with Policy TB04 and addresses the EPO's concerns, allowing the LPA to attach a condition for ongoing compliance with the plan.

- **Other Technical Matters:**

- **Amenity Space:** The pre-app advice noted that the internal room sizes and layouts will provide adequate amenity for residents (all new rooms meet or exceed internal space standards, complying with MDD Policy TB07 on internal space). Externally, the retained rear garden (~18m depth) was considered sufficient to serve the increased number of residents and staff for outdoor amenity and recreation. No issues were raised on amenity space provision.
- **Landscaping/Trees:** It was noted that previous assessment found minimal conflict with existing vegetation. The Council advised ensuring a Tree Protection Plan during construction and suggested exploring opportunities for additional soft landscaping at the site frontage in line with Policies CC03 and TB21 – which the current proposal includes (new shrub beds and a small ornamental tree near the entrance).
- **Ecology:** The Council highlighted the need for an Ecological Assessment due to the bat and newt constraints. As discussed, the applicant has undertaken initial ecology surveys and will provide a report with the application. All recommendations (such as further surveys or mitigation measures) will be adhered to. The proposal will also incorporate biodiversity enhancements to meet TB23 and forthcoming Biodiversity Net Gain duties.
- **Sustainability:** The pre-app letter referenced Policy CC04 and the Sustainable Design & Construction SPD, requiring that new development demonstrate energy-efficient design and climate change mitigation. The supporting documents (Design & Access Statement or this Statement) should outline how the build will meet modern sustainability standards (e.g. insulation, low-carbon technologies). The applicant confirms that the extensions will meet at least a 19% improvement over 2013 Building Regs Part L baseline (equivalent to former Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4 energy credit), with consideration of on-site renewables as feasible.
- **Drainage:** Although not a major focus at pre-app (site is not in flood zone), policies CC09 (minimise flood risk) and CC10 (sustainable drainage) were noted. A simple Drainage Strategy accompanies the application, confirming that soakaways will cater for roof runoff and permeable surfaces (or gravel margins) will handle new hardstanding runoff, thus maintaining greenfield runoff rates.
- **Fire Strategy:** While not explicitly a planning validation requirement outside London, the unique circumstances (care home with vulnerable elderly residents) mean the applicant has also considered fire safety from the outset. A section on Fire Safety is included in the Design & Access Statement to satisfy any requirements of new planning guidance (for example, Policy D12 of the London

Plan is not directly applicable here, but the spirit is addressed). This shows how evacuation and management strategy are considered (as already described above in summary).

In conclusion, the pre-application process has been invaluable in refining the proposal. The advice received has directly informed changes to the parking/access design and the preparation of necessary supporting information (swept paths, emergency plan, etc.). The Council's letter stated that, subject to addressing the highlighted points (parking and emergency planning), the scheme "is considered to accord with national and local policy and therefore is likely acceptable." The applicant is confident that all those points have been comprehensively addressed in this resubmission.

Proposed Development

The application seeks full planning permission for extensions and alterations to Belamie Gables care home, aimed at improving the facility's accommodation quality, capacity, safety and accessibility. The proposal can be broken down into the following components:

- **Two-Storey Front Extension:** Demolition of the existing small front porch and ramp and construction of a two-storey extension on the eastern (front) elevation. This extension will project modestly forward from the original façade (by approximately 3.5 metres) and will span roughly the central portion of the frontage. It creates a new welcoming entrance lobby at ground floor (with level threshold and improved accessibility) and an enlarged first-floor bedroom above. A pitched roof, lower than the main ridge, ties into the existing roof. A porch canopy feature is included over the new entrance doors. The design uses matching brickwork and roof tiles, with fenestration aligned to existing windows, so that it appears as a seamless addition to the building. The front extension not only improves aesthetics (providing a focal entrance) but also internal functionality, including space for a lift if needed in future (to enhance accessibility to the first floor).
- **Single-Storey Side Extension:** On the south elevation, a single-storey extension is proposed to infill an underused space and expand the ground-floor area. It will accommodate ancillary facilities such as an enlarged dining/lounge area or accessible bedroom. This extension has a flat or low-pitched roof hidden behind a parapet (to remain subordinate) and its footprint is small-scale. It will not be prominent from the road due to the positioning and existing boundary vegetation.
- **Part Single, Part Two-Storey Rear Extension (New Stair Core):** At the rear (west side) of the main building, a new extension will be added to house a staircase connecting ground, first (and potentially roof/loft levels). This extension is two-storey for the portion containing the stairwell, with a single-storey element wrapping where needed. The intent is to provide a new steel stair fire escape route. The two-storey element rises to just below the main eaves line and is designed with matching materials.

It projects only a few metres into the rear garden, minimizing loss of amenity space. This rear extension also facilitates reconfiguration of internal layouts allowing some small existing bedrooms to be re-purposed or combined for larger ensuite rooms.

- **Extension to Outbuilding:** There is an existing detached outbuilding in the rear garden (used as a food store/cleaning store room). The proposal includes demolishing the wooden shed outbuilding to create a modest brick built laundry/utility area. The extension is single-storey with a flat roof, designed in rendered finish similar to a garden outbuilding. It remains ancillary in appearance and is screened by the boundary fence. Removing the dilapidated shed and external metal staircase (currently attached to the main building's rear) will offset any visual impact, resulting in a tidy garden area with one consolidated outbuilding.
- **Fenestration Changes:** As part of modernising the building, some windows and doors will be replaced or added. New windows will match the style of the existing (white uPVC casements) and be positioned to avoid overlooking neighbors (most new windows face front or rear, not towards the sides except where obscured or high-level if within 10m of a boundary). The changes will improve natural light in corridors and new rooms, contributing to better living conditions for residents.
- **Accessibility Upgrades:** The new front ramp (with gentle gradient and handrails) will improve wheelchair access. Internally, corridors and doorways will be widened where necessary. The circulation improvements (level thresholds) are in line with the Equality Act and Part M of building regs, ensuring the care home can accommodate residents with varying mobility needs safely and with dignity.
- **Site Access and Parking Works:** The external works form an essential part of the proposal. The front forecourt and driveway will be comprehensively reconfigured to provide a total of 17 marked parking bays, comprising four accessible bays nearest the entrance and thirteen standard bays, together with a clearly defined dedicated ambulance/delivery bay adjacent to the main pathway. Surfacing will be upgraded using permeable resin-bound or permeable tarmacadam finishes, with appropriate drainage channels and soakaway provision to ensure durability and compliance with SuDS principles. The layout retains a central open area to allow safe turning manoeuvres in forward gear, consistent with the submitted swept-path drawings.
- A new electric sliding gate will be installed across the private driveway, approximately 10 metres back from Hyde End Road, to enhance safeguarding and prevent unauthorised access. The gate will remain open during daytime operating hours and will be capable of remote override to ensure full, unhindered access for emergency vehicles. As a sliding design, it does not reduce the effective width of the entrance when open. The gate will be metal with an open-railed construction, finished in a muted dark green or black to blend with the surrounding vegetation and maintain a discreet, domestic appearance.
- Low-level, PIR-activated, downward-directed lighting may be introduced along the driveway and parking areas to improve safety while avoiding light spill, reflecting

ecological considerations (particularly bats) and neighbour amenity.

- **Landscaping and Boundary Treatment:** The proposal includes a landscaping scheme to complement the physical works. At the front, where some ground will be re-ordered for parking, new planting beds will be created along the site's front boundary and beside the building's front extension. These could include ornamental shrubs and a small tree, improving curb appeal and providing some screening of parked cars. The existing mature hedge along the south side of the access drive will be largely retained, maintaining privacy and the green character. Any gaps will be infilled with native species. In the rear garden, aside from the extension footprint, the green space remains mostly unchanged for residents' enjoyment. If any trees or large shrubs must be removed for construction, replacement planting (at least equivalent if not enhanced) will be undertaken. A protective fence will be erected around retained trees (as per BS5837 guidelines) during the build. The perimeter fence lines remain as existing (close-boarded fences providing security around the garden).
- **Ecological Mitigations:** Pending the bat survey results, the roof works (particularly to tie in the new roof pitches) will be done either outside of sensitive seasons or under a watching brief. If bats are confirmed, a Natural England licence will be obtained and mitigation (such as installing bat boxes on trees or integrated bat bricks into the new eaves) will be implemented. Similarly, to ensure compliance with the Great Crested Newt considerations, the applicant is enrolling in the District Licensing scheme as a precaution or will undertake any necessary habitat measures if required by the ecology report. Additionally, bird nesting boxes (for species like house sparrow or starling) will be placed on site to enhance biodiversity.

In summary, the proposed development is a comprehensive upgrade of the Belamie Gables facility. It increases capacity from 20 to 27 residents (approximate, subject to CQC registration) which is a moderate intensification well within what the site can accommodate. The design has carefully balanced the need to improve and enlarge the building with respecting the site constraints and neighbours. The end result will be a modernised care home with mostly ensuite bedrooms, better accessibility, sufficient parking and improved safety measures – all achieved with a design that remains in character with the area and policy compliant.

Planning Policy Context

The development plan for Wokingham Borough relevant to this application comprises the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (adopted January 2010) and the Managing Development Delivery (MDD) Local Plan (adopted February 2014). Additionally, several Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) provide further guidance (e.g. Borough Design Guide SPD). The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2021) and National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) are important material considerations. This section outlines the key policies and guidance that inform the assessment of the proposal.

5.1 National Policy (NPPF): The NPPF (most recently revised July 2021) sets out the Government's planning policies. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (para 11). For decision-making, this means approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay. In this case, the proposal contributes to sustainable development by improving a community care facility (social objective) within an existing settlement (environmental objective of using previously developed land) and supporting jobs in care (economic objective). Specific NPPF chapters relevant here include:

- *Chapter 5: Delivering a sufficient supply of homes* – by analogy, meeting the housing needs of different groups including older people (para 62) is relevant and care homes form part of the housing mix.
- *Chapter 8: Promoting healthy and safe communities* – para 93 supports provision of community facilities such as care homes and para 95 emphasises planning for safety including emergency planning for large developments (the AWE DEPZ consideration ties into ensuring community safety).
- *Chapter 9: Promoting sustainable transport* – development should ensure safe and suitable access for all (para 110) and adequate parking/turning, which this proposal addresses. Also support for electric vehicle charging infrastructure (para 112).
- *Chapter 12: Achieving well-designed places* – requires developments to be visually attractive, sympathetic to local character and to create a high standard of amenity (para 130). The Borough Design Guide SPD aligns with these aims.
- *Chapter 14: Meeting the challenge of climate change and flooding* – support SuDS and energy efficiency (para 154, 159 etc.).
- *Chapter 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment* – planning decisions should minimize impacts on biodiversity and provide net gains (para 174, 180), which this proposal does through mitigation and enhancement.

Overall, the NPPF supports the proposal's objectives and the scheme does not conflict with any NPPF policies; on the contrary, it will improve an important local care facility and has been designed with sustainability and safety in mind.

5.2 Core Strategy (2010) Policies: The Wokingham Core Strategy forms the strategic planning framework. The most pertinent policies include:

- **CP1 – Sustainable Development:** States that planning permission will be granted for proposals that, amongst other criteria, contribute to the sustainable development of the Borough. This includes making effective use of land within settlements, avoiding areas of flood risk, providing measures to adapt to climate change and not causing detriment to environment or amenity. The proposal accords with CP1, being within a settlement,

improving an existing use and having no significant adverse impacts.

- **CP2 – Inclusive Communities:** Seeks to ensure new development contributes to the provision of sustainable and inclusive communities to meet long-term needs. It explicitly supports proposals that address requirements of an ageing population and people with special needs. The extension of a care home directly advances this policy by providing improved facilities for elderly residents (some with dementia or physical care needs) in the community.
- **CP3 – General Principles for Development:** Sets out that development must be appropriate in scale, mass, layout and character to its location, of high quality design and without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land uses. The compliance of the proposal with CP3 is central to this application: as discussed in the Design and Amenity sections, the extensions are proportionate and sympathetic to the area's character and do not harm neighbours. The design quality is high, using matching materials and aligning with SPD guidance. CP3 also encompasses protecting environmental features and ensuring safe access – which this scheme achieves (e.g. tree protection, safe site access).
- **CP4 – Infrastructure Requirements:** Requires that new development makes appropriate contributions to infrastructure. Although a small-scale proposal, it will be liable for CIL and any site-specific requirements (like an emergency plan) will be secured. There are no additional burdens on public infrastructure; rather, the scheme enhances social infrastructure (care provision).
- **CP6 – Managing Travel Demand:** This policy expects development proposals to contribute to sustainable travel and safety. Key relevant points: development should be located where there is a choice of transport modes (Spencers Wood is served by bus routes and is near Shinfield local centre; staff often live locally or can commute via bus/car share), should provide appropriate vehicular access and not cause highway safety issues and should provide parking in accordance with adopted standards. The proposal, after revisions, satisfies CP6 by providing safe improved access, on-site turning for large vehicles and parking per standards. It also includes sustainable transport measures (cycle parking, etc.), aligning with CP6's objectives.
- **CP7 – Biodiversity:** Requires new development to avoid net loss of biodiversity and actively enhance it. Through the ecological mitigation and BNG measures proposed (bat roost features, bird boxes, new planting), the scheme supports CP7.
- **CP8 – Thames Basin Heaths SPA:** This policy addresses the impact of residential development on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area. Care homes (Use C2) are not typical dwellings; often, local guidance considers C2 uses as having minimal recreational impact on the SPA (since residents are often frail and less likely to visit heathland). The site is approximately 7.5km from the nearest part of the SPA (WBC's

mapping shows Spencers Wood just outside the 7km zone). Therefore, this proposal is not expected to significantly affect the SPA. In any case, the scale (7 additional residents) is minor. CP8's requirement of mitigation (typically SANG and monitoring contributions for net new dwellings within 7km) likely does not apply to C2 or outside the zone. We will liaise with the LPA on any need for SPA mitigation, but anticipate no issue with CP8 compliance.

- **CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals:** Guides development to appropriate locations. Spencers Wood is identified as part of a major development location (within the South of M4 SDL). CP9 generally supports development within defined settlements and SDLs, subject to the scale being appropriate. This proposal is a small-scale extension to an existing use; it does not undermine the planned spatial strategy. In fact, enhancing a care home within an SDL supports the objective of creating sustainable communities in growth areas. Thus, the proposal aligns with CP9 (and the specific SDL policies CP19 for South of M4 SDL, by contributing a community facility improvement alongside the mainly residential growth in the area).

5.3 MDD Local Plan (2014) Policies: The MDD provides detailed development management policies. The following are particularly relevant:

- **CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development:** Echoes the NPPF's presumption that applications in accordance with the Development Plan should be approved promptly. This statement demonstrates the proposal's accordance with the plan; accordingly, CC01 supports granting permission.
- **CC02 – Development Limits:** Confirms that development should be within established settlement boundaries. The site is within Spencers Wood's development limit, satisfying CC02. (Development outside limits would have stricter controls, but that is not applicable here).
- **CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping:** Seeks to protect and enhance green infrastructure. It expects proposals to retain existing trees and landscape features of value, provide for any loss and include appropriate new landscaping. Our landscape strategy (retaining boundary hedges, protecting trees and adding new planting) is consistent with CC03. No important landscape features will be adversely affected.
- **CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction:** Requires development to demonstrate high standards of sustainable design (energy and water efficiency, renewable energy where possible, waste reduction, etc.). The new extensions will comply with updated building regulations which incorporate high fabric efficiency; in addition, the applicant is exploring installing solar panels on the south-facing roof slope to contribute to on-site renewable energy. An energy statement can be provided if required. Water-saving devices will be included (low-flow taps, dual-flush toilets). The construction will use modern methods and materials with good thermal performance (e.g. insulated

blockwork, double glazing). The proposal thereby adheres to CC04 and the guidance of WBC's Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2010).

- **CC06 – Noise:** Aims to avoid noise impacts on new or existing sensitive development. The care home extension itself is a noise-sensitive use, but it is located in an area that is predominantly residential and not subject to significant external noise (Hyde End Road has moderate traffic; however, the building is set back and shielded). The development will not introduce a noisy use; operational noise (from any plant) will be controlled. During construction, standard working hours and best practice will be observed to minimize disturbance. Therefore, the development is consistent with CC06.
- **CC07 – Parking:** Parking requires new development to provide vehicle and cycle parking in line with adopted standards, or to demonstrate why an alternative level is appropriate. The proposal fully accords with WBC's adopted parking standards for C2 care homes, which require approximately one space per three residents plus one space per staff member on duty. For 27 residents and a staffing cap of 7–8 FTE staff at peak, this equates to a requirement of 16–17 spaces. The scheme provides 17 marked car spaces within the site boundary, comprising thirteen standard bays and four accessible bays, together with a dedicated 6.0m × 3.0m ambulance and delivery bay provided in addition. This results in either a small surplus or an exact match to the standard, depending on staffing levels and significantly exceeds the minimum requirement for accessible provision. Cycle parking is also incorporated, with secure storage for at least four staff bicycles and a visitor Sheffield stand located at the entrance, supported by EV charging for one bay subject to demand assessment. A Parking Management Plan will be in operation to ensure compliance at all times, including staff caps, shift staggering and visitor bay allocation, thereby preventing any risk of overspill onto the public highway. The proposal therefore fully satisfies the requirements of Policy CC07.
- **CC09 – Development and Flood Risk:** Requires that development takes account of all sources of flooding and does not increase flood risk elsewhere. The site is Flood Zone 1 and the hard surface increase is minimal relative to the size of the plot (and will be mitigated via infiltration drainage), so flood risk is effectively unchanged. A Flood Risk Assessment is not required for a site of this size in Zone 1, but a drainage statement is provided to demonstrate compliance with CC09 principles (e.g. capturing runoff on-site).
- **CC10 – Sustainable Drainage:** This policy expects the use of SuDS to manage surface water. As described, we will implement permeable paving and soakaways – which are forms of SuDS – thereby satisfying CC10. There will be no connection of additional surface runoff to the public sewer; instead all new runoff will percolate within the site like the existing scenario.
- **TB04 – Development in vicinity of AWE Burghfield:** Extremely pertinent, this policy only permits development in the AWE DEPZ where the applicant can demonstrate that the increase in people on site can be safely accommodated with regard to emergency

services and the off-site emergency plan. Our approach to meeting TB04 has been detailed in sections above (Emergency Planning). By providing a comprehensive emergency plan and liaising with West Berkshire Council's emergency planners, we ensure compliance. The vulnerable nature of residents is recognised and accounted for in the plan (e.g. arrangements for transport and staff training to quickly respond). The Council has indicated this approach can make the proposal acceptable under TB04.

- **TB07 – Internal Space Standards:** Although this policy was introduced primarily to implement minimum space standards for new dwellings (from the nationally described space standard), it also reflects a general desire for adequate living space. In a care home context, there are no specific local size standards; however, the proposal will improve internal space by eliminating multi-occupancy rooms and making all new rooms single occupancy with en-suites. The sizes of new bedrooms and communal areas will meet relevant care home guidance (typically rooms ~12-15 sqm plus en-suite, corridors 1.2m+ width, etc.). Therefore, the spirit of TB07 (ensuring good quality living conditions) is upheld.
- **TB09 – Residential Accommodation for Vulnerable Groups:** This policy explicitly states that the Council will support proposals that provide accommodation for older persons and other vulnerable groups. The types listed (extra care homes, dementia units, etc.) align with what Belamie Gables offers (residential dementia care). The proposed development directly advances TB09's objectives by expanding and improving a facility for vulnerable elderly residents, enabling more people to be cared for. TB09 also implies consideration of location (such homes should ideally be in residential areas with access to local services). In this case, Spencers Wood has local shops, GP surgery and community amenities within reach and the location has been operating as a care home successfully. Thus, the proposal strongly conforms to TB09.
- **TB21 – Landscape Character:** Requires development to consider the landscape character of the area and enhance it where possible. While the site is not in a designated landscape, we have been mindful of the semi-rural village character: keeping the height of extensions compatible, retaining landscaping and adding planting. The visual impact from any public vantage is very limited (the building is set back and partially screened). The character of the area (mix of residential forms) will not be harmed; indeed the improved frontage landscaping could slightly enhance local visual amenity. We consider this compliant with TB21.
- **TB22 – Sites of Urban Landscape Value:** Not directly applicable as the site is not designated as such.
- **TB23 – Biodiversity and Development:** This policy expects development to provide new biodiversity features, avoid fragmentation of habitats and integrate with green infrastructure. Our biodiversity enhancements (bat/bird boxes, native planting) fulfill the requirement to incorporate new features. There is no significant habitat on site (no ponds

or woodlands), but any potential for protected species is being addressed by survey and mitigation. By creating more wildlife-friendly garden elements, the proposal aligns with TB23.

- **TB26 – Buildings of Traditional Local Character / Areas of Special Character:** This policy is relevant if the site were in an area of defined special character or if the building was identified as a non-designated heritage asset of traditional local character. Belamie Gables is not formally designated in any local listing. However, it is a traditional building in a village context. The extensions have been designed to maintain the architectural integrity of the building, using pitched roofs, matching brick and proportionate scaling, thereby preserving the local character. In that sense, the proposal does not conflict with TB26's aims (which include ensuring extensions to traditional buildings are sympathetic).

5.4 Supplementary Planning Documents and Guidance: Wokingham has several SPDs that are material considerations:

- **Borough Design Guide SPD (June 2012):** This comprehensive guide sets out design principles for all forms of development. Relevant sections include Chapter 4 on alterations and extensions. It emphasises that extensions should be subordinate to the host building, use matching materials and respect the street scene and neighbor amenity. The proposal accords with these principles: the front and rear extensions are stepped down and in from the main building lines, appearing subordinate. The design replicates the existing roof pitches and materials, ensuring coherence. The SPD's guidelines on privacy and daylight (e.g., maintaining adequate distances to neighbors, avoiding side windows facing boundaries, etc.) have been followed – there are no new side-facing habitable windows close to boundaries (any necessary will be obscure-glazed). R23 of the SPD (noted in the pre-app letter) specifically requires that extensions relate well to neighboring properties – as discussed, this is achieved by the siting and scale which avoid imposing on adjacent homes. Overall, the scheme exemplifies good practice as outlined in the Design Guide SPD.
- **WBC Parking Standards (within the WBC Managing Development Delivery Plan and supplementary guidance):** The standards have been adhered to (1 per 3 residents + 1 per FTE staff for care homes, plus guidance on bay sizing and disabled provision). The inclusion of cycle parking and EV charging (if required) also aligns with WBC's emerging policies on sustainable transport.
- **Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (May 2010):** Provides detailed recommendations for energy efficiency, water, materials, etc. The development will incorporate those recommendations as far as feasible (e.g. use of energy-efficient boilers, consideration of solar panels, high levels of insulation beyond minimum requirements, locally sourced materials where possible, provision for recycling storage on site, etc.). The design team has referenced this SPD to ensure compliance with its

checklist.

- **Affordable Housing SPD / Planning Obligations SPD:** Not applicable here, as C2 care accommodation is not within the Use Class C3 dwelling definition for affordable housing requirements and no new dwellings are created.
- **AWE Off-Site Emergency Planning Area guidance:** While not an SPD, it's worth noting that West Berkshire Council (who lead on AWE off-site planning) have guidelines for developers in the DEPZ. The applicant is cognisant of those and has ensured the emergency plan aligns with the Resilience Forum's expectations.
- **Other Guidance:** The development will comply with all relevant Building Regulations covering structure, fire safety, accessibility and other applicable areas. It will also meet any Care Quality Commission (CQC) requirements for care home facilities, although these fall outside the scope of planning control. The planning submission is supported by a full set of specialist reports, including ecology and highways assessments with swept path analysis, as outlined in the validation checklist provided in the pre-application response.

In summary, the proposal has been rigorously evaluated against the relevant planning policies of Wokingham's Development Plan and associated guidance. It is found to be in full compliance, with notable policy support for the nature of the development (care home improvements) and no policy conflicts identified. The next section will assess the proposal in detail with respect to the key planning issues, making reference back to these policies to demonstrate conformity.

Planning Considerations and Assessment

This section provides an appraisal of the proposal against the main planning considerations, structured by topic. It draws together the facts of the proposal, site context and policy requirements outlined above, to show that the development is acceptable and indeed beneficial in planning terms.

6.1 Principle of Development (Land Use and Need)

Location within Settlement: The site is within the defined development limits of Spencers Wood (a Category 3 settlement in Wokingham's settlement hierarchy, benefiting from significant planned growth as part of the South of M4 SDL). Core Strategy Policy CP9 and MDD Policy CC02 direct development towards such settlements. The principle of extending an existing care home use on this brownfield site is thus fundamentally supported. There is no change of use involved; the residential institution (C2) use remains and is intensified in a modest way. This is far preferable to locating a new care facility on a greenfield or out-of-settlement site – so it aligns with sustainable spatial strategy.

Enhancement of Community Facility: Belamie Gables provides residential care for elderly persons (many with dementia). This is considered a community facility/institution that contributes to the social infrastructure of the Borough. NPPF para 93 encourages planning decisions to plan positively for community services such as care homes. By improving this facility, the development will help meet the growing community need for elder care.

Wokingham's demographic trends (as noted in supporting text to Policy CP2 and TB09) show a significant increase in the over-85 population by 2026. Demand for quality care home spaces is high. Upgrading Belamie Gables ensures it can continue to operate viably and provide care to residents of Wokingham who require more support than can be offered in their own homes.

Inclusive Communities / Housing Mix: Core Strategy Policy CP2 (Inclusive Communities) explicitly requires that development proposals address the needs of an ageing population and people with disabilities. Expanding and modernizing an elderly care home is a direct positive response to CP2. It will provide more accommodation for those who can no longer live independently, including dementia sufferers. MDD Policy TB09 reinforces this, stating the Council will in principle support proposals that provide extra care housing, dementia care units, or other accommodation to allow the elderly or those with disabilities to live with support. While Belamie Gables is not an "extra care" housing scheme (which are usually self-contained flats), it falls under the umbrella of "residential accommodation for vulnerable groups" that TB09 addresses. The policy's thrust is clearly to encourage the development of facilities that cater to these needs, given the identified shortage and growing requirement. By enabling Belamie Gables to offer predominantly single, ensuite rooms (instead of the outdated shared rooms), the proposal not only increases quantity (capacity +7 residents) but crucially improves quality of provision. This will help meet modern expectations (most families and care professionals now consider en-suite facilities essential for dignity and infection control in care homes). In turn, this supports the long-term viability of the home; without such upgrades, the home might become less attractive to residents or fall short of Care Quality Commission standards over time. Thus, approving this proposal contributes to maintaining a network of high-quality care accommodation in the Borough – an aim consistent with Wokingham's older persons' housing strategy and policies CP2/TB09.

It should also be noted that accommodating more elderly people in care homes can free up general housing in the community (since many come from local homes that can be occupied by others) and reduces pressure on healthcare services (if people are cared for properly, hospital admissions can be reduced). These wider benefits underscore the positive principle of the development.

Strategic Development Location context: Spencers Wood, Shinfield and Arborfield areas are experiencing substantial new housing development as part of the SDL, increasing the local population. With growth comes the need for expanded local facilities, including care for the elderly. Supporting and improving an existing care home within the SDL area is thus logical planning – it contributes to the self-containment objective of the SDL (the idea being new communities have local services). This proposal means that some residents of the new housing (or their elderly relatives) could find care locally rather than outside the Borough.

Conclusion on Principle: The development is an extension to an established use on previously developed land in a settlement – which is encouraged by both local and national policy. It directly meets policy objectives for inclusive communities and specialist housing. There is no policy that counts against the principle; the site is not in a restricted location (e.g., Green Belt or open countryside) and raises no land use conflict (surrounding uses are compatible residential). The minor increase in resident numbers is appropriate for the site's size and location. Therefore, the principle of development is considered wholly acceptable. The remainder of this assessment focuses on ensuring the detailed matters are acceptable.

6.2 Design, Character and Visual Amenity

Design Approach: The architectural design of the extensions and alterations has been conceived to appear as a natural evolution of the existing building, rather than a conspicuous addition. The overall form of Belamie Gables, a two-storey pitched-roof building, will be maintained. The front extension's roof ridge is set lower than the main ridge and its footprint is centered, which prevents a sprawling or unbalanced look. The use of matching bricks, tiles and window style will make it difficult to distinguish old from new upon completion (aside from the obviously improved condition). The front facade will actually benefit from the extension, which adds some interest and symmetry (the current frontage is somewhat plain; the new gabled projection will create a more defined entrance focal point).

Scale and Massing: In terms of massing, the extensions are subordinate:

- Front extension: two-storey but narrow width, not spanning the full façade and projecting ~3.5m which is less than half the depth of the original building. It will read as a bay projection, common in residential design.
- Rear extension (stair core): two-storey but only ~2.5m wide projection off the rear and ~4m depth. This is tucked at the back and will barely be perceptible from any public view.
- Side extension: single-storey, hidden behind existing boundary fence/hedge and small in footprint.
- Outbuilding extension: low-profile and in rear garden, invisible from road.

The resultant building height remains two-storey (approx. 7.5m to ridge as existing). No increase in overall height occurs. The extensions do not lead to overdevelopment; the plot can easily accommodate the additional building footprint while retaining ample garden and open space around (site coverage will still be relatively low, with the building occupying well under 30% of the plot).

Streetscene Impact: The main public vantage is from Hyde End Road, about 30m away, looking down the private drive. Currently, Belamie Gables is partially visible beyond the frontage vegetation to main road. With the proposed changes, the streetscene impact is minimal:

- The front extension might be glimpsed but given it's aligned centrally and not significantly taller, it will likely just continue to read as part of the existing house form. The building remains set back and screened by trees and hedges along the drive.
- A secure entrance gate is proposed for improved safety, with operational details to be agreed at Building Control or detailed design stage not as part of this planning. However, as described, similar entrance gates exist on other properties along this road. It will be seen in context as a typical feature for a private site entrance. The gate's design (open metalwork) will avoid a solid "wall-like" appearance and being set back from the pavement by about 10m, it won't dominate the streetscene. Furthermore, vegetation flanks the drive, softening views of the gate. We can also paint it a recessive colour. Overall, the character of Hyde End Road is not harmed; if anything, a well-kept gate and new planting might marginally improve the look of the site's entrance compared to the current basic gate.
- No changes exceed the height of the existing roof, so the silhouette of the building against the sky remains similar. The front extension's roof ties in without increasing bulk visible from the street.
- Materials will match (a planning condition can be accepted to ensure brick/tile samples match the existing). This continuity helps the development blend in.

Local Character and Context: Spencers Wood does not have an overly rigid architectural vernacular – it has a mix of older houses, newer estate houses from SDL development and some bungalows and commercial buildings. Belamie Gables itself looks like a large detached house, which is not out of place. The extensions continue that domestic scale aesthetic. We have avoided any institutional or utilitarian design cues; instead the design language is residential, e.g., pitched roofs rather than flat wherever visible, windows with domestic proportions, a porch feature, etc. This is important to ensure the care home remains in keeping with the predominantly residential area.

Also, by extending the existing building rather than building a new separate block, we concentrate the mass in one coherent structure, which is preferable to scattering built form around the site. The outbuilding extension is an exception but is very minor and stays clearly subordinate to the main building (used for ancillary uses only).

Compliance with Design Policies: Core Strategy CP3's requirement for high quality design is met as follows: the design has functional improvements (better layout, accessibility), aesthetic consistency (matching materials and scale) and it does not cause any adverse effect on its surroundings (no overshadowing or overbearing appearance). The Borough Design Guide

SPD's principles on extensions – such as maintaining character, roof form consistency, window alignment and subservience – have been adhered to. As evidence, the previous planning officer explicitly concluded the design was acceptable in the 2023 application. The current design is essentially unchanged in form, thus we trust the Council will reach the same conclusion.

Secured by Design: Although not specifically requested, it's worth noting that the electric gate and improved lighting will enhance security for residents (an important consideration given some residents can be vulnerable to purposeful walking due to dementia). The layout still allows good observation (staff can see approaching visitors from the new lobby, etc.). Thus, the scheme also promotes a safe environment.

Conclusion on Design/Character: The proposal represents a well-considered design solution that updates the facility without detracting from the local character. It is a sympathetic extension to a building in a way that an observer would consider it a natural part of the building. The visual impacts are limited and acceptable. There is compliance with Core Strategy CP3 and the Borough Design Guide SPD and no conflict with MDD TB21 or TB26 (since local character is respected).

6.3 Neighbouring Residential Amenity

Protecting the amenity of surrounding residents is a key consideration, addressed by Core Strategy Policy CP3 and the Borough Design Guide (which includes guidelines to prevent undue overbearing, loss of light or privacy). In this case, the nearest neighbours to consider are:

- The property to the north (No. 212 Hyde End Road): This is a detached dwelling set on a large plot. It lies roughly 20 metres north of the Belamie Gables building at the closest point, with some interspersed trees and possibly a garage in between. The proposed extensions on the north side include the front extension (which is closer to the center of Belamie Gables, not particularly closer to No.212 than existing) and the rear stair extension (which is on the west/rear, partially on the north side of the back elevation). The side extension is on the south side, so irrelevant to the north neighbour. Given the distances and that the bulk of the extensions are not directly abutting the boundary, the potential impacts are minimal:
 - **Daylight/Sunlight:** The front extension might cast a very small additional shadow early in the morning towards the north, but given its limited projection and separation, it would not noticeably reduce light to No.212. The rear stair extension is small and mostly to the west; any overshadowing of No.212's garden in late evening would be negligible due to distance. The two-storey mass remains largely where it was originally; no new tall structure is being placed near the boundary.
 - **Outlook:** From No.212's perspective, they currently see the side of Belamie Gables. The extensions do not significantly alter that view – the building gets a bit larger but not in a way that looms or appears overbearing. The front

extension, if visible, will appear as part of the façade. The rear stair extension might be perceptible from parts of their garden, but again it is a modest projection. The roof heights remain the same. Therefore, No.212 should not experience any sense of enclosure or overdominance. The Council previously found no overbearing impact and that holds.

- **Privacy/Overlooking:** Currently, Belamie Gables would have some first-floor windows facing north (serving bedrooms). Post-extension, the arrangement is similar. No new first-floor windows are proposed on the north side elevation directly facing No.212's property line. New windows are primarily front (east) or rear (west) facing. To ensure privacy, any new side-facing windows (for example, if the new stairwell has a small window on the north side) can be obscure-glazed and fixed shut below 1.7m height. We are willing to accept a condition to that effect. The main new habitable windows are oriented front and rear, which look down the drive or into Belamie Gables' own garden, not directly into neighbour's windows or private garden areas. No.212's main private garden is likely behind their house – largely to the west or northwest of their house. The rear windows of Belamie Gables (existing and proposed) could potentially overlook the far end of No.212's garden, but there is existing mutual visibility given the current two-storey building. The extension doesn't introduce any closer vantage point than the existing windows do. We note vegetation along the boundary also provides screening, especially in summer. Given these factors, the privacy of No.212 is preserved.
- The properties to the south of the site: Along the same private drive, there are one or two dwellings. The closest is possibly No. 208 or 206 Hyde End Road, which might have a side or rear elevation facing towards Belamie Gables. The distance is again on the order of 20–25m and with boundary vegetation in between (there is a well-established hedge on the south side of Belamie Gables). The proposed side (south) extension is single-storey and hugs the boundary; however, it extends into an area that is currently an open side yard.
 - Being only one storey with a flat roof ~3m high and largely concealed by the 1.8m boundary fence/hedge, it's unlikely to be noticeable to the neighbour's ground floor and certainly not affecting their first-floor windows (since it's low). There might be a slight projection visible above the fence, but not significant. No overshadowing beyond the fence line will occur; the neighbour to the south might see a marginal change in shadow in winter afternoon, but given hedge already casts some, it's trivial.
 - The two-storey front extension is to the northeast of them and the main building will partially screen it, so no effect there. The rear stair extension is to the north of them, again no effect for the southern neighbour.

- Overlooking: We will not add any new windows on the south side elevation that face the neighbour, except possibly a high-level or obscure utility window. The existing south elevation of Belamie Gables has limited windows (to avoid previous overlooking concerns). We will maintain that. Any new room on first floor that could face south will instead have windows facing east or west (front or back). If any bathroom or stair window faces south, we commit to obscuring it. Thus, the southern neighbour's privacy is safeguarded.
- Noise: The parking area is at the front (east) and could be adjacent to the side boundary of the south neighbour's garden. In the revised layout, two parking bays are close to the south boundary at the front. This is not significantly different from existing use (cars currently park in that forecourt). The number of vehicle movements will increase slightly with 7 more residents (and associated staff/visitors). However, the pattern of a care home is such that residents themselves do not drive; vehicle trips are mainly staff shift changes (staggered) and occasional visitors, plus service vehicles. The incremental change (perhaps a couple more staff cars and a few more visits per day) is not likely to create a noticeable noise disturbance. Any sliding gate that is proceeded at Building control stage being electric would have a near-silent motor. Refuse collection remains as existing (bins to the curb or small truck in, likely unchanged frequency). Overall, no significant noise impact is anticipated. We note the Council did not raise noise as a concern previously.
- **Opposite and Rear Neighbours:** Opposite the site entrance (east across Hyde End Road) are houses, but they are over 30m away from the building and separated by the road; no direct impact except potentially seeing a new gate, which is not an amenity issue. To the west (rear) are open fields, so no neighbours to consider beyond ensuring the development looks acceptable (which it does, as the rear elevation is well designed). So no amenity issues at the rear boundary.

Daylight/Sunlight Study: Given the relative positions and distances, a formal daylight/sunlight analysis is not necessary; we can qualitatively conclude compliance. None of the extensions infringe a 45-degree line from the center of any neighbouring window due to separation, so BRE guidelines for daylight are satisfied. The rear garden of No.212 might get a tiny bit more shadow late in day from the stairwell block, but not enough to affect garden usability. The southern neighbour's garden might see midday sun slightly filtered by the new side extension in one corner, but again the hedge likely dominates that anyway. So no material loss of sunlight either.

Odour/Other Disturbance: The care home will continue to manage waste appropriately. A designated bin storage area is shown (relocated slightly to be fully within the site boundary, per pre-app advice). This store will be enclosed to prevent any odour or visual issues for neighbours. Clinical waste will be handled per regulations. These arrangements are as per existing practice, scaled up slightly, but still manageable on site.

Construction Phase: It is acknowledged that construction works could temporarily affect neighbours (noise, traffic). The applicant will mitigate this through a Construction Management Plan (as recommended by Highways). For example, deliveries will avoid peak hours, contractors will park on-site (using part of garden if needed) to avoid blocking the drive or road, noisy operations will be limited to normal daytime hours and neighbours will be informed in advance of key activities. Given the modest scale of the project (not a major construction site), the construction period will be relatively short and impacts can be minimised. A planning condition for a Construction Method Statement is acceptable.

Conclusion on Neighbour Amenity: The proposal has been crafted to avoid any undue impact on neighbours' living conditions. The Council's previous assessment already found it acceptable in this regard and the only change (parking reconfiguration) does not alter that conclusion. We have demonstrated there will be no significant loss of light, privacy, or quiet enjoyment for adjacent residents. In fact, by improving on-site turning, we reduce any need for awkward vehicle maneuvers near neighbours, which is positive. The development therefore complies with Core Strategy CP3 (protecting amenity) and guidance like the Design Guide SPD (which demands respectful extensions).

6.4 Highways, Access and Parking

This aspect has been extensively covered in earlier sections, given its importance. Here we summarize the final proposal's highways arrangements and demonstrate compliance with relevant standards and policies.

Site Access: Access to the site will continue via the existing private drive off Hyde End Road, a B-class road now subject to a recently introduced 30mph speed limit in this section. The junction of the private drive with Hyde End Road benefits from acceptable geometry and visibility, with an estimated sightline of at least 2.4m x 43m in both directions, which aligns with design standards for roads of this speed. No alterations to the junction are necessary. A new sliding gate is proposed approximately 10 metres back from the highway, allowing vehicles including larger ones to leave the main carriageway fully before stopping at the gate, avoiding any obstruction to Hyde End Road. This is considered a key safety feature. The gate will be configured to ensure immediate access for emergency services, with operational details to be confirmed (such as a fire service lock or keypad system). During peak hours, the gate is expected to remain open or respond automatically to approaching vehicles to prevent delays or queues on the highway.

Within the site, the access drive leads to the parking/turning forecourt. The internal circulation has been swept-path tested, as included in the Transport Note. A fire tender (approximated by a 8.1m long, 2.5m wide, 3.3m high vehicle per WBC spec) can enter and turn by making a multi-point maneuver using the space across the front of the building and ambulance bay. It can then position near the front door (within 20m of it, as required by Building Regs for hose distance) and exit forward. An ambulance (typically a large van size) can easily loop in and out, parking in the designated bay adjacent to the entrance ramp for patient loading. Smaller delivery vans can

use the same turning area. In sum, suitable access for all expected vehicles is achieved within the site, satisfying safety and convenience.

The applicant can also put in place a Delivery/Servicing Management Plan at the planning assessment stage or by condition if required (framework to be submitted) to schedule deliveries at times that don't conflict with staff shift changes or busy periods, further smoothing on-site operations. Refuse collection is currently done from Hyde End Road (bins are moved to the curb on collection day). If WBC refuse team is willing to come down the drive (some councils do for care homes), the swept paths show a refuse lorry could make it, but if not, the practice remains unchanged. The bin collection point will be just inside the gate on collection days to make it easy for crews, if needed.

Traffic Impact: The traffic generation from the care home extension is minimal. Typically, care homes generate very few peak hour trips because residents do not drive and staff shifts often occur outside peak hours or are staggered. For 7 additional residents, staffing might increase by perhaps 2-3 per shift. Visitor numbers might increase by a few per day. This could translate into maybe 5-6 additional vehicle movements over a day and maybe 1 in the AM peak, 1 in PM peak (if a shift change or a delivery falls then). Such an increase on Hyde End Road is negligible (<1% of typical flows). The Highway Authority in pre-app comments concurred that the traffic impact on the network would be negligible and no formal Transport Assessment is needed, a concise Transport Note suffices (which we have provided). Therefore, there will be no adverse effect on road capacity or congestion.

On-Site Parking Provision: The revised scheme provides a total of 17 marked car parking spaces within the site boundary, comprising thirteen standard bays for staff and visitors and four fully compliant accessible bays, significantly exceeding the statutory minimum. In addition, a dedicated 6.0m × 3.0m ambulance and delivery bay has been positioned adjacent to the entrance ramp for immediate access, which is provided in addition to the car parking supply. This provision has been directly derived from WBC's adopted parking standards for C2 care homes, which require one space per three residents plus one per staff member on duty. For 27 residents, this equates to nine spaces and with a staffing cap of 7–8 FTE staff at peak, the overall requirement is 16–17 spaces. The proposal therefore provides either a precise match (with 8 staff) or a small surplus (with 7 staff), ensuring that the needs of residents, staff and visitors can be fully accommodated. The inclusion of four accessible bays represents best practice and demonstrates a clear commitment to inclusivity and compliance with Core Strategy Policy CP2.

Staff and Visitor Management: To ensure compliance in daily operation, a Parking Management Plan will be implemented. This will cap on-site staff vehicles at a maximum of 7 to 8, manage shift start and finish times to minimise overlap and allocate at least two bays for visitor use at all times. In exceptional circumstances, overflow capacity can be provided through three outer forecourt bays to accommodate contractors or additional visitors. Together, these measures will prevent overspill parking onto Hyde End Road, ensuring all demand is contained within the site.

Cycle Parking & Sustainable Travel: The proposal incorporates sustainable travel infrastructure, including secure covered cycle storage for at least four staff bicycles and an external Sheffield stand for visitors at the entrance. EV charging will be provided for one bay if there is demand and is required, supporting the transition to low-emission travel. The applicant will also introduce a staff travel plan, promoting car-sharing and local recruitment to reduce reliance on single-occupancy vehicles.

A dedicated mobility scooter store with charging has not been included, given the non-town-centre location, local amenities and the resident profile at Belamie Gables, which is residential medium-needs rather than highly mobile or independently travelling residents. In the 12 years that Nadam Care Ltd T/A Belamie Gables Care Home has operated, no resident has required a mobility scooter, with local wheelchair-accessible taxi services consistently used where individual transport assistance is needed.

Emergency and Servicing Access: Swept path analysis has confirmed that a standard fire tender can access and manoeuvre within 20m of the building and exit in forward gear; an ambulance can park and egress safely from the dedicated bay; and 7.5t delivery and refuse vehicles can turn within the forecourt without reversing onto Hyde End Road. Sliding entrance gates to be discussed at building control stage will be set back from the carriageway so vehicles can clear the road before entry and will include an emergency override system for immediate access by blue light services.

Highway Safety and Compliance: By providing safe turning within the site, the need for reversing onto Hyde End Road has been eliminated, significantly improving safety. Visibility at the entrance is clear and unobstructed and boundary planting will be maintained to avoid interference with sightlines. The scheme therefore ensures safe access and circulation without adverse effect on road capacity or congestion, in full compliance with Core Strategy Policy CP6, MDD Policy CC07 and the Borough Design Guide SPD. The proposal also accords with NPPF paragraphs 110–112, which require safe and suitable access and confirm that development should only be refused on highways grounds where there is an unacceptable impact on highway safety or capacity.

On-site Fire Safety Measures: Given this is a care home, Building Regulations (ADB and relevant fire safety standards, possibly NFPA or otherwise) will require a high level of fire protection:

- The new external metal stairwell will enable the safe vertical evacuation of first-floor residents in the event that their normal exit route is obstructed.
- A fire alarm system will be installed in line with the Fire Risk Assessment and consultation with the Fire Officer, ensuring compliance with care sector standards.
- Emergency lighting and clear escape signage will be installed throughout.

- Compartmentation: The Extensions are designed and will be constructed to maintain fire compartmentation, limiting fire spread. Fire doors will be used internally as required.
- Staff are/will be trained in evacuation procedures (phased or progressive horizontal evacuation is often the strategy in care homes – moving residents to a safe compartment).
- If needed, refuge areas for wheelchair users on first floor (though likely we try to house less mobile residents on ground floor).
- The external finishes will comply with surface spread of flame requirements (e.g., roof covering will be Class AA or similar, walls non-combustible or limited combustibility, etc., in line with regulations).

While these are Building Control issues, it's important in planning to note that the design inherently allows for them (the new stair core was specifically planned to improve emergency egress). There are no features in the design that would compromise fire safety (e.g., no inner rooms without escape, no excessive travel distances beyond what guidelines allow). The council can be assured that at Building Regulations stage, a full Fire Strategy will be developed and approved. Given the new requirement under The Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022, a Fire Statement may be required for planning in certain high-risk building scenarios. This building, being 2 storeys and care home use, might not strictly require a formal Fire Statement under planning rules (those typically apply to high-rise residential buildings). However, to be thorough, we have provided a commentary here and are happy to accept a condition to submit a Fire Strategy if the Council wishes.

Evacuation and Emergency Plan (non-AWE related): Aside from the AWE-related emergency plan, the home has a fire evacuation plan (drills, personal emergency evacuation plans for each resident, etc.) as per CQC regulations. The new layout assists that: more en-suites means fewer residents per corridor, easier to manage evacuation compartments; the additional stair means an alternative route if one is compromised by fire; improved accessibility means even immobile residents can be evacuated with evacuation sledges or by using that protected stair (which may be built to accommodate stretcher if needed).

Hydrant / Water Supply: The site is near a main road so hydrants likely exist within 90m. If not, as part of Building Regs, a private hydrant or larger mains connection might be required. The external space can accommodate a fire service pumping appliance and maybe even an aerial appliance if ever needed to rescue, though at two storeys, ladders suffice.

In conclusion, fire safety considerations have been integral to the design. The scheme will ensure compliance with all statutory requirements and planning can be confident that the safety of future occupants and that of neighbouring properties is secured. This aligns with NPPF para 130 (create safe places) and local policy CP3 (appropriate, safe development). The specific

concern raised previously was about emergency vehicle (fire tender) access, which we have resolved – thus removing the underpinning issue of Reason for Refusal 2.

6.6 AWE Burghfield DEPZ and Emergency Planning

As discussed, the site is within the Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ) for the Atomic Weapons Establishment, Burghfield, which lies to the west. Under the Radiation (Emergency Preparedness and Public Information) Regulations 2019 (REPPPIR), this area (spanning a radius of approximately 3-5km from AWE) has an off-site emergency plan aimed at protecting the public in the unlikely event of a radiation emergency at AWE. Development within the DEPZ must be scrutinised to ensure it does not compromise those emergency arrangements, particularly by adding people who may need assistance or who could be affected.

Policy Context: MDD Policy TB04 is specifically worded to address this. It effectively requires that any increase in people living/working/visiting in the DEPZ can be “safely accommodated having regard to the needs of Blue Light services and the AWE off-site emergency plan.” In simpler terms, if you put more people in this zone, you must demonstrate plans/procedures to ensure those people can be kept safe in an emergency (without hindering the overall evacuation or sheltering strategy for the area and not over-burdening emergency responders).

Application to Belamie Gables: The proposal would increase the number of residents on site by about 7 if occupied at full capacity (from 20 to 27, a 35% increase). These residents are among the more vulnerable population, likely requiring assistance to evacuate due to age/mobility/cognitive issues. Therefore, it’s absolutely crucial that the facility has a robust plan to deal with an AWE incident. Typically, the off-site plan for AWE (run by West Berkshire Council’s Emergency Planning team in cooperation with Wokingham) will advise either shelter-in-place or evacuation depending on the situation. For a care home, evacuation of all residents could be complex, so a shelter plan might be more appropriate unless instructed otherwise. Regardless, the onus is on the care home operator to have an internal Business Continuity/Emergency Plan that dovetails with the wider off-site plan.

Previous Submission’s Issue: The initial plan provided at appeal was deemed insufficient by the Emergency Planning Officer (EPO). Likely shortcomings might have been lack of detail, unrealistic assumptions (like expecting emergency services to assist in evacuation), or no identification of an evacuation location outside the DEPZ.

Improved Emergency Plan: In this application, a significantly enhanced Belamie Gables Emergency Plan is included. Without going into specific details as the full plan accompanies the document submissions, the broad strategy is:

- **Shelter-in-Place Capability:** The care home can shelter residents on site for a certain duration if needed (the building construction, once improved, offers some protection; additionally, plans for sealing windows/doors and moving residents to an internal room if required to shield from radiation can be made). Essential supplies (food, water, medication) are stored on site to last at least 72 hours, ensuring residents can safely

remain if evacuation is not immediately safe.

- **Communication:** The plan establishes clear lines of communication: the home manager or senior staff will maintain contact with Wokingham's emergency team and follow their instructions. They also have a means (like telephone cascade or radio) to get information if phones fail.
- **Evacuation Procedure:** If authorities instruct evacuation, the plan identifies how residents will be moved. Because relying on Blue Light emergency services (ambulances) could conflict with the bigger off-site plan, the home's plan instead includes private transport arrangements: e.g. use of the group homes minibus and/or a contract with a local minibus company or use of staff cars for mobile residents and pre-arranged priority assistance for bedbound residents perhaps via mutual aid from another care facility. The plan will specify the number of vehicles needed and how quickly they can be mobilised.
- **Destination:** A predetermined evacuation site outside the DEPZ is identified (for instance, another care home or community hall in a safe zone). This prevents confusion during an incident – everyone will know where to go.
- **Staff Training and Drills:** Staff will receive training on this emergency plan at induction and refresher training annually. The home will conduct periodic drills or tabletop exercises to ensure staff are familiar with their roles (for example, assigning tasks like who contacts relatives, who grabs emergency kits, who leads residents to vehicles, etc.).
- **Coordination with Authorities:** The plan will be shared with WBC Emergency Planning for agreement. It complements the Council's off-site plan by ensuring Belamie Gables is self-sufficient initially and can implement protective actions swiftly.
- **Vulnerable Residents Registry:** Usually, LPA emergency planners keep a register of sites with vulnerable people to prioritize in emergencies. Belamie Gables is already on that list. Our plan in effect lessens the load on them by saying "we can take care of our evacuation up to point X, unless situation Y in which case we'll need assistance", thereby integrating smoothly.
- **Construction Phase Plan:** Additionally, as noted by EPO, a construction phase emergency plan (should a radiological emergency occur while construction is ongoing) will also be prepared. This ensures builders on site also know what to do (likely similar: they would shelter or leave area as directed, ensuring they don't cause issues for care staff). This can be conditioned separately.

With this robust plan, we can convincingly demonstrate that even with 7 more residents, Belamie Gables does not increase risk to an unacceptable level, because they will not be reliant

on outside help beyond what the off-site plan can manage. The Council's EPO indicated willingness to condition an updated plan – we are providing it upfront to satisfy them.

Blue Light Services Consideration: The phrase “needs of Blue Light services” implies ensuring emergency responders can still do their job. In a mass evacuation, roads need to be clear for emergency vehicles, etc. Our plan's approach to possibly shelter in place (if advised, to avoid a panicked evacuation into traffic) or evacuate early via own transport avoids adding to road congestion at peak emergency time. Also, by securing on-site emergency rescue ability (like having evacuation sledges), we minimize reliance on ambulances. Essentially, the presence of 7 more people will not materially affect what the emergency services have to do in a radiation emergency scenario, because the facility has prepared to handle its own occupants. This should satisfy West Berkshire's Off-Site Emergency Planning Group, which monitors such developments.

Engagement: The applicant has been in contact with WBC's Emergency Planning Officer during the preparation of this application to ensure the plan's adequacy (if possible, we intend to get a letter of comfort from them that the measures proposed are acceptable, to submit alongside the plan). Given the EPO's pre-app comment that they wanted to see it before determination, we trust this submission addresses that request.

Compliance with TB04: With the above measures, the test of Policy TB04 is met – we can demonstrate safe accommodation of the increased population in terms of emergency planning. Moreover, as the pre-app letter concluded, if an adequate plan is provided, the Council could withdraw the previous objection. This development would therefore no longer conflict with TB04. The use of a planning condition to enforce the continued maintenance and periodic review of the emergency plan could be appropriate (e.g., a condition requiring the site to operate at all times in accordance with the submitted Business Continuity Emergency Plan and to review it every 3 years or upon any material change, in consultation with the EPO).

Wider AWE DEPZ Context: It is acknowledged that any increase in DEPZ population is sensitive. However, this increase is very small (7 persons) and must be weighed against the important benefit of providing care for those people. Wokingham's policies do not prohibit development in the DEPZ; they simply require caution and planning. We have satisfied that requirement. It's relevant that other care homes or housing in the area have been allowed with emergency plans in place. For completeness, should WBC or West Berks have any specific requests (like contribution to emergency planning resources or community warning systems), the applicant is open to dialogue, but typically, having a plan is the main requirement.

In summary, the development complies with Policy TB04 and addresses the DEPZ issue thoroughly. There should be no residual reason to refuse on these grounds, as the matter can be conditioned and has in principle been resolved through the measures described. This ensures that the safety of residents and the efficacy of the AWE off-site emergency plan are maintained, even after the extension.

6.7 Landscape and Trees

Landscape Character: Although the site is not in a protected landscape, it is within the general rural fringe area around Spencers Wood. The proposal's impact on the broader landscape is negligible: all works are within the curtilage of an existing developed site and do not encroach into open countryside. The scale of building remains domestic. There will be no discernible change to the landscape's character or views from public vantage points (aside from the immediate foreground along Hyde End Road which has been addressed in design/visual terms). Therefore, the proposal is in line with MDD Policy TB21 (Landscape Character) which seeks development that respects and where possible enhances the local landscape. By retaining existing mature boundary planting and adding new soft landscaping, we are in fact contributing minor enhancements to the site's immediate landscape quality.

Existing Trees and Vegetation: There are some small trees and shrub masses, none protected. There is a line of Leylandii along part of the southern boundary (in neighbour's garden perhaps). The extensions mostly avoid these: for example, the rear stair extension is coming out near an existing patio area with no significant trees; the front extension is on an area of lawn and path with only low shrubs that can be replanted; the side extension is near some small shrubs which might need removal but can be replaced. The parking area reconfiguration may require removing one small ornamental tree at the front (if any exists by the front wall) our landscape plan proposes replacing it with a new tree slightly further from hardstandings, possibly a flowering cherry or similar suitable for a front garden.

To ensure tree roots are protected, especially for the hedge and any tree near construction, we will follow BS5837 guidelines:

- Erect protective fencing around the drip line of the hedge on south side before works (hedge roots are shallow so also avoid material storage right up against it).
- Construction near trees (if any within root zone) will use careful methods, e.g., hand digging for any fencing posts near trees.
- No mixing of concrete or fuel storage where runoff could harm roots.

Tree Protection Plan (TPP): We can prepare a TPP if required and arboricultural method statement if needed for the build phase. Given no protected and/or high-value trees are on site, this is straightforward. The Council's pre-app comment was to be careful with storing materials such that vegetation is not damaged; the contractor will be instructed to keep stockpiles on hard surfaces or areas away from tree root zones (like perhaps on part of the existing front gravel where no roots are, or even off-site if possible).

Proposed Landscaping: Landscaping is an integral part of making the scheme soften into its environment:

- **Frontage:** Two planting beds are proposed flanking the new entrance path and ramp. These could feature low shrubs (e.g., lavender, rosemary – which also provide sensory

benefit for residents) and some taller grasses or ornamental plants to add year-round interest. Along the edge of the new parking area by the drive, we'll plant a strip of groundcover and shrubs to break up the pavement expanse. A small tree (like a Rowan or Crabapple) could be planted in the front garden area east of the extension, where it has space to grow without shading the building excessively. This will also help screen and beautify the site entry.

- **Rear Garden:** The majority of the rear lawn remains for resident use. Post-construction, we will reinstate any lawn damaged and consider adding a new tree at the far end of the garden to replace any canopy lost (could be a native species like silver birch or a fruit tree to maintain garden feel). We will also use the opportunity to enrich planting along the boundaries – for example, adding climbers or shrubs along the fences that provide habitat for birds (this ties into biodiversity enhancement).
- **Outbuilding area:** around the extended outbuilding, some foundation planting can be done to help it blend into the garden (like planting around the base).
- **Hard Landscaping:** The new hardstandings (paths, ramp, parking) will be done in aesthetically pleasing materials where possible. Perhaps the parking could use porous pavers in a colour that complements the house (instead of plain black tarmac). The ramp and entrance path might be block paved or textured concrete for slip-resistance and visual appeal. Details can be conditioned or included in the materials plan.

Management: Once landscaped, the site's planting will be maintained by the care home gardener/maintenance team. They'll ensure new plantings are watered and established well and hedges are trimmed as needed to keep sightlines clear.

Conclusion on Landscape/Trees: The scheme has minimal negative impact on existing green features and provides some positive new landscaping. It aligns with Policy CC03 by retaining what green infrastructure exists (like the mature hedge and any trees) and enhancing the site's greenery with new planting. No important trees are lost – thus no conflict with CC03's aim to protect trees. Indeed, we proactively avoid the scenario of say removing all front greenery for parking; we've balanced it by keeping some green edges. The result will likely be a net improvement in the visual greenery of the site (since currently the site frontage is somewhat sparse aside from the driveway hedge and the plan proposes more ornamental planting). Therefore, we consider the proposal compliant with landscape and tree protection policies and contributing to the attractiveness and biodiversity of the site environment.

6.8 Ecology and Biodiversity

Baseline Ecology: Belamie Gables is in a semi-rural area; however, the site itself is a managed residential garden with building structures. It is not designated for any ecological interest (no SSSI or local wildlife site on it), but as noted, it lies within an amber risk zone for

Great Crested Newts (GCN) and has buildings that could support bat roosts. Also, any mature trees or dense hedges could support nesting birds.

An Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey was carried out by a qualified ecologist in August 2025. Key findings (to be fully detailed in the Ecological Report) are summarised here:

- The site comprises buildings, hardstanding, amenity grass lawn, non-native hedges, a few ornamental trees and sheds. Habitats on site are common and of low intrinsic ecological value.
- **Bats:** The main building and outbuildings were inspected for bat roost potential. The main roof of the care home has some small gaps at the eaves and soffits that could allow bat entry. One of the outbuildings (the old shed to be removed) has gaps in woodwork. These features were assessed as having *moderate* bat roost suitability. Therefore, further surveys (dusk emergence and/or dawn re-entry surveys) were recommended. A dusk emergence survey was scheduled for early September 2025 (during the optimal survey season) – results are pending at the time of writing. If bats are found using the structure, species and roost type will be identified and appropriate mitigation planned. If no bats are observed, it indicates a likely absence of a significant roost, but as a precaution, a “soft strip” method of roof removal will be implemented (whereby roofing materials are carefully removed by hand, under ecological supervision, to ensure no hidden bats are harmed).
- **Great Crested Newt (GCN):** The site is within an Amber Risk zone which means GCN may be present in the wider area, but not necessarily on-site. The site itself has no ponds or waterbodies. The nearest known water body is more than 250m away. The site has limited suitability for terrestrial newts (mostly lawn and hard surfaces, with a bit of hedge that could be cover). The risk of GCN presence on-site is low. Nonetheless, as best practice, the works will proceed under a Precautionary Method of Working: e.g., any clearance of dense vegetation will be done carefully, preferably in winter when newts (if any) would be hibernating in specific places (and likely not present in a small garden without features) or during times when newts would not be migrating. Additionally, site staff will be briefed on what GCN look like and to stop work if any amphibians are found. Wokingham is a partner in a District Licensing Scheme for GCN – given the low risk, it may not be necessary, but if required (if a pond was discovered nearby), the developer will join the scheme or apply for a low-impact class licence.
- **Breeding Birds:** The hedges and small trees could support common garden birds. Any vegetation clearance (like trimming the hedge or removing any shrub for construction) will be timed outside the nesting bird season (which is generally March to August inclusive) or will only proceed after an ecologist confirms no active nests. This avoids contravention of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 regarding nest protection.
- **Reptiles:** Habitat for reptiles is poor (mown lawn, no rough grass or log piles) so unlikely to have them (and none seen during survey). Similarly, no evidence of badgers or other

protected mammals was found (site is secure, no badger setts).

- **Summary of Baseline:** The site has limited ecological constraints aside from potential bats in buildings. No immediate evidence of bat roosts was found in preliminary check, but we are doing due diligence with proper surveys.

Mitigation and Enhancement:

- **Bats:** If a bat roost is confirmed, appropriate mitigation will be executed under licence. Typically, that would mean:
 - Phasing works to avoid sensitive times (e.g., don't demolish a roost in summer maternity period unless licensed to exclude them beforehand).
 - Providing alternative roosting features: e.g., installing two bat boxes on retained mature trees or integrating bat tubes in the new building's gable ends or eaves. These will give bats new roosting opportunities (and even if no roost was present before, they serve as an enhancement encouraging bats to use the site).
 - Sensitive lighting: External lighting will be minimal and downlit to avoid illuminating hedges or bat flight paths. The new parking lights if any will have shields. This prevents disturbance to foraging bats in the area.
- **Newts and Reptiles:** By following a careful site clearance method (hand strimming of any tall grass to encourage any hidden animals to move, maintaining an "escape route" to gardens beyond, etc.), we mitigate any extremely low risk of harming a GCN or reptile. We will also improve habitat a bit by leaving a small log pile or two in the far corner of the garden post-development – which can act as refuges for amphibians or hedgehogs (an urban species of note).
- **Birds:** As mentioned, avoid hedge removal in spring/summer. Also as enhancement, we will put up at least 3 bird nesting boxes on site (targeting species like house sparrow with a sparrow terrace box under eaves, a starling box on a tree and maybe a robin open-fronted box in a hedge). These measures align with TB23's requirement of incorporating new biodiversity features.
- **Invertebrates:** Could plant pollinator-friendly flowers (lavender, etc.) as planned, which is good for bees and butterflies. Additionally, maybe include an insect hotel in a quiet corner for education and biodiversity.
- **Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG):** Under the Environment Act 2021, BNG may be mandatory for minor developments. We have taken steps to ensure a net gain in biodiversity:

- We are not significantly reducing any habitat – the garden remains largely intact, just minor loss under extensions which will be compensated by new planting.
- By adding diverse planting (native or wildlife-friendly species), we increase habitat quality. A small wildflower patch could be sowed at one lawn edge rather than maintained as short grass, boosting insect resources.
- Installing bat and bird boxes adds roosting/nesting habitat that wasn't there.
- If quantifying by the Defra Metric, the site being small and currently mostly low-value habitat likely can achieve >10% net gain easily with these enhancements. We will document our BNG calculation in the ecology report.
- A Biodiversity Gain Plan can be submitted to the Council for approval (as required by the new Act) prior to commencement, detailing all measures and how they meet 10% gain. Given the modest size, this is manageable.

Long-term Management: The care home will maintain the garden and any installed boxes. Typically, bat boxes and bird boxes require minimal maintenance (just cleaning if needed every few years). Plantings will be tended by the gardener. So, the enhancements are sustainable long-term.

Conclusion on Ecology: The development will not have any significant negative impact on biodiversity. With mitigation in place for protected species (notably bats), we avoid harm, fulfilling legal obligations and MDD Policy TB23 (which presumes refusal if harm to biodiversity can't be avoided – here it can and will be avoided). More so, the project provides a chance to slightly enhance biodiversity on a site that is currently relatively nature-poor (just mown lawn and ornamental shrubs). This aligns with national policy (net gain) and local strategy (Core Strategy CP7 and TB23). As such, ecology considerations are properly addressed and should not pose a barrier to planning approval. The pending bat survey will be submitted as soon as available and we would request that any permission be conditioned to implement the recommendations of the ecological report (to cover if a licence needed, installation of boxes, etc.). The applicant is fully committed to these ecological responsibilities.

6.9 Sustainable Design and Energy Efficiency

Wokingham Borough has declared a climate emergency and has policies encouraging sustainability in new development (Core Strategy CP1 and CP4 in broad terms, MDD CC04 specifically, plus the Sustainable Design & Construction SPD). While this proposal is not a major development, it still aims to incorporate sustainable practices:

Energy Efficiency: The new extensions will be built to modern insulation standards (likely exceeding current Part L by some margin as typically achieved by new builds). This means walls with U-values ~0.18 W/m²K, roofs ~0.13, floors ~0.15 and new windows ~1.2 or better

(double-glazed low-E). This dramatically improves energy efficiency for those portions of the building compared to the older existing structure. Additionally, as part of the works, we will retrofit some upgrades in the existing building: e.g., replace older boilers with a new high-efficiency condensing boiler or potentially install a communal heat pump, improve loft insulation throughout and upgrade any single-glazed windows (if any remain) to double glazing. The aim is to reduce the overall energy consumption and carbon emissions of the care home. The applicant is exploring whether an Air Source Heat Pump (ASHP) could be installed to handle a portion of heating and hot water (with the existing boiler as backup/peaking). This could significantly cut gas use. Also, all lighting will be LED with sensors in lesser-used areas to avoid waste. These measures support Policy CC04's goal of climate change mitigation.

Renewable Energy: The south-facing roof of the new front extension or main roof could host solar photovoltaic (PV) panels without being too visually intrusive (they'd be tilted same as roof pitch and since building is set back, they won't be eye-catching from street). Even a small 2-3kW array could provide a good portion of the home's electricity (especially daytime when washing machines, etc., run). We commit to investigating PV installation likely a separate planning permission is not needed if flush to roof, but we mention it to show potential future intent. If not PV, solar thermal for hot water is an option but PV is more versatile now.

Water Conservation: The care home will install water-efficient fittings in new en-suites (low-flow showers, dual-flush toilets, taps with aerators). This is both good practice and reduces running costs. Possibly, given the garden size, a rainwater butt will be placed on a downpipe to harvest water for irrigating plants – a small scale SuDS/ water saving feature. CC04 and the Sustainable Design SPD encourages such measures.

Materials and Waste: Wherever possible, construction materials will be sourced locally or from suppliers with sustainable credentials. The demolition waste (from removing the porch, shed, etc.) will be segregated and recycled as much as possible (metal staircase to metal recycling, concrete rubble used as sub-base, etc.). The design avoids use of excessive concrete (except where needed for foundations). Timber used will be from certified sustainable sources. These reflect SPD recommendations on materials and waste.

Overheating and Ventilation: With climate change causing hotter summers, care homes need to avoid overheating for occupant health. The design has taken this into account by, for example, not excessively glazing the extensions and by ensuring cross-ventilation opportunities in layout. New insulation also helps keep heat out. If needed, comfort cooling (high-efficiency air conditioning) might be installed in certain areas like lounges – if so, units will be the least energy-demanding and placed considerately.

Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging: In accordance with current standards and to support the transition to low-emission transport, a likely 7kW EV charging point will be installed within the car park. Provision for EV charging infrastructure will be made within the car park, with installation subject to demand and viability assessment by the Care Home Provider. This will be available for use by staff and visitors on a pay-per-use basis at a reasonable tariff and will be

managed as part of the site's Parking and Travel Plan. The provision supports sustainable travel objectives and aligns with local and national climate commitments.

Sustainable Transport: By providing cycle facilities and a travel plan, we reduce carbon footprint of commuting.

Drainage and Water Environment: Under sustainability, a big aspect is SuDS (already detailed under Flood Risk below). By managing water on site, we reduce flood risk and also improve water quality (permeable paving filters runoff). We also avoid adding to storm sewer loads. This is important given climate change predictions of heavier rainfall.

Climate Change Adaptation: In addition to addressing potential overheating, consideration has been given to the increasing risk of intense storms and potential power outages. The care home's emergency plan includes provisions to maintain power supply for essential systems such as fire alarms and emergency lighting in the event of a grid failure. This forms part of a broader resilience strategy. Provision for future installation of solar panels may also be explored as a supplementary measure to enhance energy security and sustainability.

Compliance with CC04 and SPD: Given all the above, we strongly feel the development meets the spirit and requirements of Policy CC04. It demonstrates sustainable design (energy/water efficient, some renewables, SuDS, etc.) and will contribute to Wokingham's climate objectives. The Borough's Sustainable Design & Construction SPD (2010) outlines steps to achieve at least Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4 for new housing and BREEAM for non-res – as a small extension we're not doing formal BREEAM, but in principle, the improvements align with a high standard. We can include an Energy and Sustainability Statement if needed as part of the application documents to formalize these commitments.

Carbon Footprint Reduction: Though not a requirement, it's worth noting that improving this facility may indirectly lower carbon emissions compared to if those 7 residents lived in older, perhaps poorly insulated individual homes. Centralizing care can be efficient. Additionally, new build parts are efficient, lowering per capita energy usage in the home.

Conclusion on Sustainability: The proposal integrates a range of sustainable design features suitable for a development of this scale. It accords with development plan policies on sustainability (CP1, CC04) and national policy (NPPF Section 14). There are clear environmental benefits alongside the social benefits of the scheme.

6.10 Flood Risk and Drainage

Flood Risk: The site is in Flood Zone 1, indicating a less than 1 in 1000 annual probability of river or sea flooding. There are no nearby watercourses that threaten fluvial flooding. Surface water flood maps show the site to be at very low risk, with perhaps some shallow pooling on Hyde End Road in extreme events but nothing significant on-site. Therefore, a formal Flood Risk Assessment is not mandated. However, MDD Policy CC09 still requires considering any

potential sources of flooding and ensuring the development doesn't exacerbate flooding elsewhere. Potential sources:

- Surface water (heavy rain): The new hard areas could generate runoff but we will capture on-site (see below).
- Groundwater: Unlikely to be an issue here (no history of high groundwater reported).
- Sewer: If local sewers surcharged, the site is upslope enough not likely to be impacted. Regardless, raising electricals above floor, etc., as standard practice covers that eventuality.

The building extensions will be built with floor levels matching or slightly above existing, which is already above ground level by at least 150mm, protecting from minor surface water. There's no need for special flood resilience measures beyond normal practice.

Drainage Strategy: For the additional roof areas (front/side/rear extensions), we intend to implement Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) in line with Policy CC10:

- Roof rainwater from the extensions can be piped to new soakaways in the garden. Percolation tests will be done, but given the general area's geology (likely clay over chalk in some parts of Wokingham – if near chalk good infiltration, if heavy clay might need a different approach). If infiltration is feasible, soakaways sized to accommodate a 1 in 100 year storm + climate change factor will be installed (likely crates or gravel pits). These would be located at least 5m from buildings and property boundaries as required.
- If infiltration is poor, an alternative could be to discharge to the existing drainage system (there might be a surface water sewer or combined sewer on Hyde End Road). If so, we'll include attenuation (e.g., a cellular storage tank or oversized pipe) with a controlled discharge (using a flow control like an orifice or hydrobrake) to ensure the outflow is no more than existing rates. But given the minor area added, we suspect existing system could handle it, but we prefer infiltration if possible.
- **Permeable Paving:** The new parking bays and drive modifications can use permeable block paving. This will allow rain to percolate through into a sub-base, from where it either infiltrates to ground or is collected by drains. This approach reduces runoff and filters pollutants from car drip (oil etc.). In winter, permeable surfaces also reduce ice because water doesn't pond.
- The ambulance bay and drive, if they must be tarmac for structural reasons, can still drain into a filter trench or slot drain leading to a soakaway.
- Ultimately, the goal is no net increase in runoff from the site post-development. In fact, by adding permeable surfaces where currently there may have been some impermeable

or compacted surfaces, we might marginally improve runoff characteristics.

Foul Drainage: The care home is currently connected to the mains sewer (Thames Water). The increase of 7 residents will produce additional foul effluent, but this is a relatively small quantity (perhaps an extra 1.5 m³ per day, based on typical per capita). The existing sewer network should accommodate this with no problem, but we will consult Thames Water if necessary. We foresee no issues as it's within margin for the sewer capacity in a growing area with planned growth (the SDL developments are accounted for, this is minor in comparison).

Rainwater Harvesting Potential: Not required, but we might put a water butt on a downpipe from the outbuilding extension to use for watering plants – that's a small-scale sustainable feature.

Maintenance of SuDS: The care home's management will ensure drains and soakaways are kept clear (e.g., remove sediment from permeable paving joints annually, clean gutters so leaves don't clog soakaway inlets). This can be part of a maintenance schedule appended to the SuDS design. A maintenance plan can be provided to the LPA or conditioned.

Residual Flood Risk: Considering the above, the development itself is not at risk (and it's a 'more vulnerable' use in flood risk terms, but in zone 1 that's okay) and it will not displace floodwater or raise flood risk elsewhere – we're actually managing water on site better than before in some respects.

Policy Compliance: By implementing SuDS, we satisfy MDD Policy CC10 which mandates consideration of SuDS for all developments. We also align with the NPPF's requirement to prioritize SuDS. CC09's aim to not worsen flooding is clearly met, as our runoff won't increase (peak flow and volume likely maintained at greenfield equivalent or better).

Conclusion on Drainage/Flooding: The approach taken is straightforward and effective for a development of this scale. There are no flooding concerns and drainage has been properly planned. This ensures the development is environmentally sound and doesn't cause problems for others, in accordance with both local policy and best practice.

6.11 Other Matters (Noise, Contamination, Community Infrastructure)

Finally, a brief consideration of a few remaining aspects:

Noise and Disturbance: As previously noted under neighbour amenity, the ongoing use of the site remains residential (care home). There will not be significant noise generated beyond domestic levels. The additional residents do not equate to additional loud activities; care homes maintain a quiet environment. There could be slight increases in activity (cars coming/going), but Hyde End Road has a fair amount of baseline traffic and the few more cars won't be noticeable. During construction, there will be temporary noise from building works; contractors will abide by considerate working hours (e.g., 8am-6pm weekdays, 8am-1pm Saturdays, no Sundays/Bank Holidays heavy work) to minimize disruption. If any neighbour issues arise, the

site manager will address them proactively. MDD Policy CC06 on noise is thus satisfied – no new noise source is introduced that would harm sensitive receptors and conversely, the site itself remains a suitable environment for its residents (the slight road noise from Hyde End Road is manageable and not extreme; plus adding double glazing will improve indoor quietness for residents).

Air Quality: Not in an Air Quality Management Area. The only potential source is traffic on Hyde End Road, which is moderate. The incremental traffic we add is negligible for pollution. The shift to EVs (with our charging point encouraging them) will over time reduce any emissions. Construction dust will be managed by damping down if necessary during demolition and avoiding dust generating tasks in very windy conditions, etc. There is no significant air quality impact requiring detailed assessment.

Contamination: The site has been a residential use for decades (with gardens). There's no evidence of any contaminative historic use (no industrial or agricultural use known on that specific plot). A search of the Council's GIS likely shows nothing of concern. The only potential contaminants could be from ground or minor spillage of heating oil if any (but the care home presumably on gas, so likely none). Therefore, no formal Phase 1 contamination assessment is deemed necessary by validation requirements. However, as a precaution, a discovery strategy can be followed: if any unexpected suspect materials (e.g., an old fuel tank, or asbestos in building fabric) are found, works will cease and appropriate investigation/remediation done. This approach is common and acceptable to ensure safety. Given no known contamination, Policy CP3's requirement that development not harm health or safety is met (nothing on site to pose risk after development either – the new building materials will be safe and any asbestos removed safely if present in old building).

Lighting: Some external lighting will be installed for the new parking and pathways. It will be designed to be unobtrusive; low-level bollard lights or downlights on building, with no glare to neighbours. A planning condition on lighting could be acceptable (to ensure any new lighting is positioned and baffled appropriately to protect neighbour amenity and ecology). This ensures we meet guidelines on light pollution.

Designing out Crime: We touched on gated access improving security. The site will also have CCTV covering entrances for safety (common in care homes). This does not harm privacy as it's angled internally.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL): Wokingham Borough Council operates a CIL Charging Schedule; however, developments falling within Use Class C2 (residential care homes) are not liable for CIL. Although this scheme creates a net increase in floorspace above the 100 sqm threshold, the CIL charging schedule applies only to C3 residential and other specified uses, not to C2 care homes. The Council has confirmed that C2 development is not chargeable and therefore no CIL liability arises from this application. A Form 0 (CIL Additional Information) is submitted with the application to record the new floorspace for validation purposes, but the development will not attract a CIL payment.

Section 106 and Planning Obligations: Typically, for a private care home extension, there are no site-specific s106 needs apart from possibly the emergency plan condition (which is more a condition than obligation). Affordable housing contributions are not applicable (C2 use is excluded). Highways works – none needed off-site. The pre-app letter mentioned that since the proposal is “for affordable housing” on Page 12 it might require a s106; but that seems a template error, as this is not an affordable housing scheme. So we anticipate no s106 agreement required, just planning conditions and CIL.

Dependency on Other Consents: Building Regulations approval will be needed separately – but that is standard and not a planning obstacle. We will also keep the Care Quality Commission informed of the changes as it may alter our registration details (increase beds). But again, that’s operational, not planning.

Public Consultation: The Council advised that public engagement would be beneficial. The applicant has previously spoken informally with immediate neighbours during earlier applications. As the current design closely follows the earlier proposals, which did not attract objections on design grounds, no significant opposition is anticipated provided parking concerns are appropriately addressed. Nonetheless, the applicant will make information available to neighbours and remains open to constructive feedback during the application process, with a view to resolving any issues collaboratively.

Disclaimer Regarding Implementation of Proposed Measures

The details contained in this statement, including but not limited to fire safety systems, electric vehicle charging infrastructure, site access features and associated landscaping, external works are proposed in good faith to demonstrate the applicant’s commitment to delivering a safe, functional and policy-compliant development.

However, unless specifically required as a planning condition by the Local Planning Authority, the implementation of individual measures remains subject to further assessment, including detailed design, viability, cost analysis, site constraints and consultation during the Building Control process. Some features may be adapted or refined during construction to ensure feasibility, practicality and compliance with relevant standards and guidance.

No guarantee is given that all described features will be provided exactly as stated, unless secured through formal condition or agreement.

Conclusion

This Planning Statement has examined the proposed extensions and upgrades to Belamie Gables care home against all relevant planning considerations. The analysis demonstrates that the development is acceptable and desirable in planning terms, for the following overarching reasons:

- The proposal supports Wokingham’s strategic aim of creating inclusive communities and meeting the needs of an ageing population (Core Strategy CP2, MDD TB09). It

enhances an existing care facility within the settlement, contributing to local infrastructure and social care provision.

- The development is well-designed, respecting the character of the area and the host building (CP3, Design Guide SPD). It is modest in scale and will integrate visually, causing no harm to the street scene or landscape setting.
- There are no adverse impacts on neighbouring amenity – privacy, daylight and general amenity of nearby residents are preserved (CP3). The small intensification of use will not cause nuisance.
- Crucially, the previous technical concerns have been resolved: The scheme now provides adequate on-site parking and turning to accommodate vehicles including fire appliances and ambulances (CP6, CC07). A comprehensive emergency plan will ensure the increased occupancy does not compromise safety within the AWE Burghfield DEPZ (TB04). These measures overcome the past reasons for refusal.
- The site is accessible and the design promotes sustainable travel (cycle parking, EV charging if there is demand, manageable traffic impact), aligning with transport policies (CP6, CC07).
- Environmental considerations are addressed: The project will result in biodiversity net gain (TB23) through new habitat features and careful mitigation for bats. It employs sustainable drainage to manage water (CC10) and includes energy-efficient construction and renewable energy features (CC04), thus contributing to climate change mitigation.
- There are no insurmountable infrastructure or servicing issues. The development will be CIL-liable, providing financial contributions to the community and it requires no additional burdens on public infrastructure beyond what can be conditioned or addressed through normal processes.
- No objections are anticipated from technical consultees given the supportive information provided (Highways, Ecology, Emergency Planning, etc., have been proactively consulted during pre-app stage and their requirements met).

The planning balance clearly falls in favour of approval. The scheme delivers significant benefits: improved living conditions for residents (en-suite rooms, better facilities), extended capacity to meet demand for care and improved site safety/accessibility. These benefits carry substantial weight, particularly the social benefit of enhancing care provision for vulnerable elderly individuals, which aligns with national and local objectives for housing and care.

On the other hand, any potential negative impacts are minimal or neutral: the design causes no visual or amenity harm and any temporary construction impacts are transient and can be mitigated. The previous highway and emergency planning concerns have been designed out

and no longer pose a barrier. Therefore, there are no adverse impacts that would significantly or demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposal (to borrow the NPPF tilted balance wording, which in any event supports approval since the development plan is complied with).

The proposal accords with the Development Plan as a whole. We have explicitly shown compliance with relevant policies: CP1, CP2, CP3, CP6, CP7, CP9, CC01, CC02, CC03, CC04, CC07, CC09, CC10, TB04, TB09, TB21, TB23, TB26 (and others), as well as consistency with the NPPF. In line with MDD Policy CC01 and NPPF §11, such policy compliance means the application should be approved without delay.

We also took into account the recent appeal decision and pre-application advice – the scheme now represents an improved re-submission that directly tackles the previous issues. There is no reason to expect any new issues to arise. In essence, all refusal reasons have been satisfactorily addressed and the Planning Inspector's concerns have been resolved by the additional information and design tweaks in this application.

The applicant is committed to working with Wokingham Borough Council through the determination process, including agreeing on appropriate planning conditions (for example: to secure the parking layout and provision prior to occupation, to enforce the emergency plan implementation, to require ecological mitigation, materials matching, etc.). We trust that the information provided enables the Council to confidently grant planning permission, allowing this beneficial development to proceed.

Recommendation:

For the reasons set out in this statement, we respectfully request that planning permission be **GRANTED**, subject to any necessary conditions, so that Belamie Gables can be improved and continue to serve the community's needs for years to come.

References

1. **Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (Adopted 29 January 2010)** – Relevant policies: CP1, CP2, CP3, CP4, CP6, CP7, CP8, CP9, CP19 (South of M4 SDL), etc.
2. **Wokingham Borough Managing Development Delivery (MDD) Local Plan (Adopted 21 February 2014)** – Relevant policies: CC01, CC02, CC03, CC04, CC06, CC07, CC09, CC10, TB04, TB07, TB09, TB21, TB22, TB23, TB26.
3. **Wokingham Borough Council Borough Design Guide SPD (Adopted June 2012)** – Guidance on design principles for new development and extensions, including sections on residential extensions and local character (R Sections).

4. **Wokingham Borough Council Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (Adopted May 2010)** – Guidance on achieving energy efficiency, renewable energy, water conservation and sustainable construction practices in new developments.
5. **WBC Planning Application Ref. 223802 – Decision Notice (28 Feb 2023)** – Refusal of previous Belamie Gables extension proposal, citing reasons related to AWE DEPZ (Policy TB04) and parking/turning (CP6, CC07, Design SPD).
6. **Planning Inspectorate Appeal Decision Ref. APP/X0360/W/23/3326997 (8 Feb 2024)** – Appeal decision dismissing the above application; Inspector's findings on insufficient parking/turning info and noting DEPZ issue could be mitigated via condition.
7. **WBC Pre-Application Advice Letter Ref. 242463 (dated 28 Oct 2024)** – Written advice from Wokingham Borough Council on the current proposal, outlining policy context, required information and supportive comments subject to addressing highways and emergency planning matters.
8. **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, July 2021.** – National policy underpinning sustainable development, good design, meeting housing needs (including for older persons), promoting sustainable transport and protecting the environment. Relevant sections: 2, 5, 8, 9, 12, 14, 15.
9. **AWE Burghfield Off-Site Emergency Plan (West Berkshire Council, latest version)** – (Reference to the context of emergency planning requirements under REPPiR 2019, informing Policy TB04 considerations).
10. **BS 5837:2012 – Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction – Recommendations.** – (Guidance followed for tree protection during development).

(Note: All policy documents are as adopted at the date of this statement. The planning application is assessed against the policies of the Wokingham development plan listed above and material considerations including the NPPF and site-specific factors such as the appeal decision and pre-application advice.)