



DESIGN STATEMENT PROOF OF EVIDENCE

SITE: STATION ROAD, GREAT SHELFORD, CB22 5LT

CHURCHILL RETIREMENT LIVING LTD

CHURCHILL HOUSE

PARKSIDE

RINGWOOD

BH24 3SG

JUNE 2022

TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

APPEAL BY CHURCHILL RETIREMENT LIVING LTD AGAINST THE NON-DETERMINATION OF A FULL PLANNING APPLICATION FOR REDEVELOPMENT TO FORM 39 RETIREMENT LIVING APARTMENTS FOR OLDER PERSONS INCLUDING COMMUNAL FACILITIES, CAR PARKING AND ASSOCIATED LANDSCAPING

SITE AT: STATION ROAD, GREAT SHELFORD, CB22 5LT

LPA REF: 21/05276/FUL

PLANNING INSPECTORATE REF: APP/W0530/W/22/3296300

PLANNING INQUIRY DATE: 12TH JULY 2022

PROOF OF EVIDENCE AUTHOR:

Gideon Lemberg BArch RIBA ARB

Design Director, Eastern Design

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1.0 Introduction

Qualifications and Experience

- 1.1 I am Gideon Lemberg, Eastern Design Director of Planning Issues Ltd, Churchill House, Hatfield Road, St. Albans.
- 1.2 I am a Chartered Architect, being a corporate member of the Royal Institute of British Architects (Membership no. 20002850) and registered with the Architects Registration Board (Membership No: 0757031). I hold a Diploma of Professional Practice in Architecture and I qualified as an architect in 2009.
- 1.3 I have worked for Planning Issues since April 2011 where I have been responsible for a team of Architects and designers. Planning Issues is a subsidiary company of Churchill Retirement Living (Group) Limited (Appellant) and have been engaged to provide professional evidence in respect of this Appeal.
- 1.4 In 2001 I graduated with a BArch degree from the University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia. During the course of this degree I spent a year working in London with Farrell and Clarke, an award winning architectural practice specialising in Housing and Retail design. Following completion of this degree and on my return to the UK I spent a further 2 years working at that same firm. I have also worked for Neustein Rosenberg, an architectural practice in Sydney, Australia who specialised in retirement developments across New South Wales. I was particularly involved in the master plan of an Anglican Retirement Village and a Jewish Care development both of which were in the Eastern suburbs of Sydney.
- 1.5 In 2004 I commenced working within the Eastern design department at McCarthy and Stone, a leading UK Retirement Developer. I worked for McCarthy and Stone for over 5 years and was personally involved in the design of over 25 retirement housing schemes. My experience within the retirement sector has been further enhanced over the last 11 years working for Planning Issues on Churchill Retirement Living schemes. During this period, I have obtained 30 planning consents for the company and have advised in relation to design matters on hundreds of other potential sites.

Scope of Evidence

- 1.6 I have reviewed specifically the Council's putative reasons for refusal as set out in the Statement of Case dated May 2022. My scope of evidence refers to reasons for refusal 2 and 3 only – Character and Appearance of the Area (2) and Neighbour Amenity (3).

- 1.7 I have been responsible for and directly involved with this project. All drawings have been prepared under my direction. I have inspected the site and carried out a detailed analysis. I presented to the Town Council, was involved with the design development of the scheme, internal approvals and preparation of the planning application documents.
- 1.8 My evidence deals solely with design issues, specifically the design reason for refusal, although these inevitably cross over other issues. I defer to Mr Shellum on Policy issues and Mr Fayers on Highways issues.
- 1.9 I have undertaken a thorough and extensive design exercise in identifying the opportunities and constraints presented by the Appeal site and have then employed that research to produce a high quality and visually appealing design which respects and responds to the character and appearance within the local context.
- 1.10 This proof of evidence has been prepared both to describe the design process undertaken in arriving at the appeal proposals and to respond to South Cambridgeshire District Council's criticism of the design contained within their Statement of Case and Planning Committee Report. This proof is submitted on behalf of Churchill Retirement Living Limited (the Appellant) in support of its appeal against the non-determination of the planning application at Station Road, Great Shelford, CB22 5LT (LPA ref: 21/05276/FUL) for:

Redevelopment of the site to form 39 retirement living apartments for older persons including communal facilities, car parking and associated landscaping.

PROFESSIONAL ENDORSEMENT

- 1.11 The evidence which I have prepared and provided for this appeal in this proof of evidence is true and has been prepared and is given in accordance with guidance of my professional institution and I confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional opinions.

Gideon Lemberg RIBA

Date: 15.06.22

2.0 The Appeal Site Appraisal and Contextual Analysis

- 2.1 The supporting Design and Access Statement submitted with the application provides a detailed description of the site and local and wider context and covers the following:
- Site Location and Description (page 13)
 - Contextual History (pages 14-16)
 - Local contextual photos and descriptions (pages 17-20)
 - Wider context/Conservation Area (pages 21-24)
 - Design precedents/Local materials (pages 25-26)
 - Urban Grain Analysis (page 27)
- 2.2 The Heritage Statement submitted with the application demonstrates how the proposed development preserves the setting of the nearby Conservation Area by drawing precedent from the local vernacular in its design to contribute positively to the local distinctiveness of the area.
- 2.3 The Appeal site, which is approximately 0.29 hectares is located on the east side of Station Road, with the railway line marking its eastern boundary. To the north-east and north is Shelford Park Avenue and Station Court respectively. – Please refer to Location Plan, Appeal Brochure Section 4.
- 2.4 The Appeal site includes several standing buildings set around a central carpark. Vehicular access is taken from Station Road within the south western portion of the site.
- 2.5 The western most building with the Appeal site fronts Station Road and comprises a single-storey office building known as The Stables, rising to two-storeys within the central part of the building and a steep roof profile accommodating an attic-storey at its northern end. The frontage to Station Road is largely blind, devoid of any window openings with a flat roofed single-storey projection to the east elevation.
- 2.6 The Stables building sits directly adjacent to the public footpath resulting in a narrow footpath width which in some areas is less than 800mm wide. This often results in pedestrians needing to ‘cut through’ the Appeal site via an existing gate on the north west portion of the site and exiting via the existing site access in order to avoid the narrowed footpath.
- 2.7 The easternmost building comprises a one and a half storey office building known as The Maltings and is located close to the railway line. The southernmost building is two-storeys and marks the southern boundary of the site. Although two storey, the Granary House element of this building is taller in height

when compared to the Link House element of the building. The more historic southern and westernmost buildings have seen extensive change over time and contribute little in streetscape terms.

- 2.8 To the north is a recently built contemporary development of 12 town houses and apartments set over three storeys of accommodation, with the top floor formed by a mansard roof featuring full height dormer windows. An elevated terrace belonging to No 4 Station Road, a curved three storey town house directly to the north of the Appeal site's northern boundary is present. Please refer to pages 13 & 19 of the Appeal Brochure Section 2 for townhouse photos.
- 2.9 There is currently no soft landscaping, vegetation or trees evident within the Appeal site aside from a couple of small trees to the eastern boundary.
- 2.10 To the south of the Appeal site, consent has been granted for a two to three storey, 63-unit Care Home on former employment land. Ground works for this development is currently underway.
- 2.11 The western side of Station Road includes several 20th century semi-detached, two storey residences.
- 2.12 The Great Shelford Conservation Area adjoins the application site to the west and south-west. The Stapleford Conservation Area is located approximately 380 metres to the east.
- 2.13 The character of Great Shelford town centre is generally derived from the historical growth of the town and can be read in street patterns and buildings. Much of the town centre is within the Great Shelford Conservation Area which has helped preserve its historic street plan and takes in key elements of the town's expansion. The older core is centred around the church and later ribbon development along the edges of the former village green and the Cambridge to Saffron Walden turnpike.
- 2.14 The variety of historical building periods represented within the town centre provides a high-quality townscape. Many fine examples of medieval timber framed buildings, Georgian and Victorian buildings can be found through this part of the town centre.
- 2.15 As demonstrated in the Design and Access Statement, I recognised from the outset that: (page 21)

Although the site does not fall within the Great Shelford Conservation Area, it is directly adjacent to it, and shares a boundary with the edge of this designated zone. As such, it is important to consider the features of it.

- 2.16 There are no listed buildings within the immediate vicinity of the site.
- 2.17 There are a number of 'positive buildings' in close proximity to the site, namely those dwellings which front Tunwell's Lane, and there is an important view which looks north west towards these buildings

from London Road. The Appeal site is however not visible from any of these important views with the majority of the focus of the Conservation Area around Church and High Streets.

- 2.18 Redevelopment affords the opportunity to improve the Site's contribution to the Conservation Area by improving the approach into the town centre.
- 2.19 The Appeal site is located within an area that comprises a mixture of residential and commercial properties. The site becomes evident as one travels north or south along Station Road but is screened from other vantage points by the intervening built environment including neighbouring residential properties.

Station Road

- 2.20 The Appeal site is situated centrally within Station Road on the eastern side of that road. South-west of Station Road is the village centre of Great Shelford. Station Road runs in a north-south direction and begins to the south at the junction of London Road, Woollards Lane and Tunwells Lane. Station Road terminates to the north at the rail crossing junction close to Shelford Railway Station.
- 2.21 The eastern side of Station Road has a different character when compared to the western side of the road which is primarily formed of two storey, 20th century semi-detached houses with front driveways and front gardens.
- 2.22 The eastern edge of Station Road comprises currently of a mixture residential and vacated commercial properties (within the Appeal site) that vary in height from 1 to 3 storeys. Reed house, which looks on to the southern road junction with Station Road and London Road is of traditional appearance with buff brick finish and slate roof tiles. This building was extended and converted into flats and has recently been extended again into a terraced dwelling. These buildings are sited in close proximity to the pavement edge. Please refer to pages 17 and 18 of the Appeal Brochure Section 2 for images of Reed House and terrace extensions.
- 2.23 Moving further north from Reed House, a new two to three storey 63 unit care home is currently being constructed on what was former employment use land immediately to the south of the Appeal site. The new care home extends deep into the site and is unusual in that it is the only building that will be set back from the road frontage on the eastern side of Station Road.
- 2.24 As described previously, the existing Stables building within the appeal sits directly on the pavement edge narrowing the pavement in this location.
- 2.25 North of the Appeal site are the recently built contemporary town houses and apartments which again front on to the pavement edge but allow for a wider public footpath.

- 2.26 Walking north along Station Road from the south, it is apparent that building heights along station road rise in height from the 2 storey Reed House building and extensions to the 2-3 storey care home scheme, the existing 1-2 storey commercial buildings on the Appeal site and the 2-3 storey modern townhouses and flats that front the northern (eastern side) of Station Road.
- 2.27 There is a wide variety of building and architectural styles along Station Road with a mixture of material types evident. These include white, buff and grey brick as well as light renders. There are examples of dormer and mansard roofs, as well as clay, zinc and slate roof tiles.
- 2.28 The juxtaposition of different building heights, scale and material type helps create an interesting townscape and should be considered a positive characteristic of the town and local context.
- 2.29 No particular building form can be said to be characteristic of the immediate area. The Appeal site sits within a position where recent commercial and residential development is interspersed with more historic residential development approaching and within the conservation area.
- 2.30 Within the local and wider context there are examples of more tightly knit clusters of recent development built within the last 10 years. Some these can be found within the Appeal Brochure Section 09 – Other Great Shelford Developments. Recent developments at Farriers Way (0.3miles from the Appeal site), Gordons Close (0.3miles away) and Old School Court (0.3miles away) all have buildings positioned in close proximity to each other.
- 2.31 No particular building form or architectural style can be said to be characteristic of the immediate area. – Refer to Design and Access Statement page 20, Appeal Brochure Section 13.
- 2.32 Although the western side of Station Road has some soft landscape features including boundary tree screening, hedges and front gardens, this is lacking within the eastern edge of that street where buildings are generally positioned at the pavement edge and gaps between buildings are generally onto hard surfaced landscapes such as car parking courts.

3.0 Constraints and Opportunities

- 3.1 The proposed apartment development is a single building. My client's requirements include the need to link all the flats, owners lounge and associated facilities within a series of interconnecting corridors. The aim is to allow social interaction to occur, to facilitate neighbours to visit each and being able to do this without the need to go outdoors. The ability to stand outside a neighbour's flat in a warm and dry environment is important for the successful functioning of the retirement apartment development. – (Refer to pages 5 & 10 of the Design and Access Statement)
- 3.2 I have highlighted below the key opportunities and constraints from an architectural perspective many of which have been iterated within the Design and Access Statement submitted with the application.
- (see pages 28-29 of the Design and Access Statement)

Consideration of separation distances in relation to town houses to the north and care home to the south.

Potential train noise from rail tracks to the east

Impact on the Great Shelford Conservation Area.

Respect existing building lines along Station Road.

Opportunity to enhance the Conservation Area.

Replace a group of buildings that have a negative influence on the street scene.

Redevelop a brownfield site.

Improve planting along the railway line.

Improve outlook of the buildings to the south by setting the proposals back into the site.

Opportunity to provide a high quality design for the elderly within the local context and close to local amenities.

Bring back to life a site that is currently unoccupied.

4.0 The Policy Context Relating to Design

4.1 The Appellants case is supported by a Proof from Mr Matthew Shellum that specifically considers matters of planning policy and the scheme's compliance with the Development Plan, The National Planning Policy Framework, planning balance including the material planning benefits of specialist accommodation for older people. This section focuses more on the relevant policy relating to the appeal design.

4.2 The below Local and national planning policies were reviewed prior to commencing the design of the scheme and this section briefly describes how their principles are fundamental to the appeal scheme.

4.3 **NPPF - Para 127 seeks to ensure that developments;**

- Function well and add to the quality of the area over their lifetime;
The appeal site is particularly suitable for retirement housing on account of its location within easy reach of transport and shopping facilities. Future occupiers would buy their apartments on a 999 year lease, thereby ensuring the building would remain under this usage for the lifetime of the building. The integration of a retirement housing development into the area would further add to the diversity and balance of the community and meet an identified local housing need.
- are visually attractive due to good architecture, layout and landscaping;
Detailed contextual analysis and design development as set out in the DAS informed the building so it appropriate to its site and context. A landscape architect was appointed of national repute from the conceptual stage as part of the design team to ensure the external areas were afforded due importance and a holistic approach in terms of architecture and landscaping was taken.
- are sympathetic to local character and history including the built environment and landscaping, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change including increased densities;
References were taken from the key factors characterising the contextual area whilst designing the proposals. Factors such as the surrounding building scale, form, siting, articulation, elevation components and materials were referenced and used to inform the design proposal.

- Establish or maintain a strong sense of place to create attractive, distinguished places;
The appeal proposals were designed to make a positive contribution to the public realm with a building of appropriate mass, scale and disposition for the site.
- Optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development;
A retirement housing development with car parking and landscaped gardens would both add to the mix of uses within the locality whilst also ensuring that local facilities and transport are used to full effect. The future occupants of the proposed retirement housing would integrate into the community by shopping locally and using local services and facilities thereby contributing to a highly sustainable and inclusive development.
- Create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible, promoting health and wellbeing, with a high standard of amenity and where crime does not undermine the quality of life.
One of the pre-requisites of sheltered housing is to provide a sense of security whilst designing a development which is integrated into, rather than separated from, the community.

4.4 NPPF - Para 4.8

- Design: Process and Tools: The NPPG advises that well-designed places can be achieved by taking a proactive and collaborative approach at all stages of the planning process (Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 26-001-20191001).
As will be discussed within this document the appellant looked to engage throughout the pre-application and application process with the local planning authority, consultees and the local community.

4.5 National Design Guide 2019

4.5.1. The appeal scheme satisfactorily addresses the ten characteristics for well-designed development set out in 2019 National Design Guide and referenced within the Design and Access Statement (pages 61-64). In doing so it should comply with the corresponding chapters of the NPPF. Characteristics relating to context, identity and built form are of relevance to this appeal with regard to design. For example:

- **Context**
The national design guidance advises that well-designed places are based on a sound understanding of the features of the site and surrounding context, to integrate into

surroundings, are influenced by and positively influence their context (p.10, para 39). The application was submitted with a Design and Access statement that clearly demonstrates this thorough analysis of the site and its context.

- **Identity**

The national design guidance advises that well-designed places have a character that suits its context and should be visually attractive to its occupants and other users (p.14, para 50). The Appeal design carefully considers the composition of the streetscene along Station Road and the local and wider context and assimilates the local vernacular and existing factors such as: height & scale, roofscape, spacing, landscaping and façade design to inform the built form.

- **Built form**

The design guide advises (p.18, para 60) that built form is the three-dimensional pattern of development blocks, buildings and spaces. Well-designed places will have compact forms of development that are walkable, accessible to local public transport, provide recognisable spaces defined by buildings, have memorable features that create a sense of place, and makes efficient use of land. The guide informs that built form is determined by good urban design principles that combine layout, form and scale in a way that responds positively to context. The proposed design provides a legible building with a sense of arrival from car parking, to the principle building entrance. The design creates a coherent pattern of development that is in keeping with its context. The proposed development reinforces existing attributes along Station Road for example building line, scale and massing & appearance.

4.6 South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018

4.6.1 Policy HQ/1 states:

1. All new development must be of high quality design, with a clear vision as to the positive contribution the development will make to its local and wider context. As appropriate to the scale and nature of the development, proposals must:

a. Preserve or enhance the character of the local urban and rural area and respond to its context in the wider landscape;

b. Conserve or enhance important natural and historic assets and their setting.

c. Include variety and interest within a coherent, place-responsive design, which is legible and creates a positive sense of place and identity whilst also responding to the local context and respecting local distinctiveness;

d. Be compatible with its location and appropriate in terms of scale, density, mass, form, siting, design, proportion, materials, texture and colour in relation to the surrounding area;

- e. Deliver a strong visual relationship between buildings that comfortably define and enclose streets, squares and public places, creating interesting vistas, skylines, focal points and appropriately scaled landmarks along routes and around spaces;
- f. Achieve a permeable development with ease of movement and access for all users and abilities, with user friendly and conveniently accessible streets and other routes both within the development and linking with its surroundings and existing and proposed facilities and services, focusing on delivering attractive and safe opportunities for walking, cycling, public transport and, where appropriate, horse riding;
- g. Provide safe and convenient access for all users and abilities to public buildings and spaces, including those with limited mobility or those with other impairment such as of sight or hearing;
- h. Ensure that car parking is integrated into the development in a convenient, accessible manner and does not dominate the development and its surroundings or cause safety issues;
- i. Provide safe, secure, convenient and accessible provision for cycle parking and storage, facilities for waste management, recycling and collection in a manner that is appropriately integrated within the overall development;
- j. Provide a harmonious integrated mix of uses both within the site and with its surroundings that contributes to the creation of inclusive communities providing the facilities and services to meet the needs of the community;
- k. Ensure developments deliver flexibility that allows for future changes in needs and lifestyles, and adaptation to climate change;
- l. Mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change on development through location, form, orientation, materials and design of buildings and spaces;
- m. Include high quality landscaping and public spaces that integrate the development with its surroundings, having a clear definition between public and private space which provide opportunities for recreation, social interaction as well as support healthy lifestyles, biodiversity, sustainable drainage and climate change mitigation;

4.7 District Design Guide SPD – Adopted March 2010

4.7.1 Chapters 4 (Urban Design), 5 (Appreciating Context) and 6 (The Elements of Design) are particularly relevant:

Paragraph 4.3 - *Prior to any design work being undertaken, it is essential that the site is fully understood in its context. It must be fully understood how the proposed development will be*

integrated with the existing communities and their supporting facilities and services, from the sub-regional level down to the neighbourhood and block level; dependant upon the location of the site and the intended scale and nature of the proposed development. The residents and workers of, and visitors to, the new development must have ready and convenient access to existing facilities and services

Paragraph 4.5 - The purpose for developers of properly understanding context is to enable them to promote development, which will integrate with its surroundings. Development proposals that are an imposition on a location and do not address the social, sustainable, economic, transport and ecological structure of the context will not be accepted.

Paragraph 4.6 - Quality is not a matter of luxury, i.e. of expensive design details and construction materials. Quality is concerned with the whole approach to the planning and design of new developments, not just by the developer and the Local Planning Authority, but by all the partners involved, to ensure that new developments conveniently and efficiently provide the facilities, services and conditions that the people living and working in, or visiting them, require, within the capacity of the environment to sustain them and protect local distinctiveness.

Paragraph 4.21 - The starting point for development proposals should be what is “the spirit of the place” (the genius loci); what is good, strong and desirable to harness and what is poor, weak and undesirable that presents the opportunity for change and improvement. In relation to new development the aim should be to create somewhere that is recognisably distinct, whilst simultaneously strengthening the larger local identity.

Paragraph 5.3 - Developers are required to undertake a design-led approach that demonstrates and justifies its appropriateness for the development and its location.

Paragraph 5.23 – The variety of building forms, types and uses found in most traditional villages is a key part of their character and appeal

Paragraph 5.44 - The context of any new design will be informed by the established character of the area. This will include views, roads and paths, trees and landscapes and the scale, proportions, orientation, positions, building lines, styles, and materials of existing buildings

Paragraph 5.46 - Responding to existing variety in building design is a key challenge for new development as is the need to reflect the distinctive character and identity of each village

Paragraph 5.47 - Proposals should identify the focus of the context, whether countryside or Settlement.

Paragraph 5.48 - The layout of each settlement also defines the positions, forms and footprints of new urban structure. A linear settlement follows the line of a road and does not extend significantly beyond the roadside buildings.... New development therefore is generally restricted to the road edge.

Paragraph 5.61 - A detailed analysis of the adjacent built environment should form the foundation of any design, in order to understand how the proposal will relate to its surroundings. Considerations include: the distance of building fronts from the pavement edge; heights, positions and types of boundary treatment; storey-heights of buildings compared to their widths; depths and character of surrounding gardens; and typical building types: whether detached, semi-detached, terraced or courtyard developments.

Paragraph 6.10 - Higher density developments are better located close to the local centres to maximise the numbers of people able to support those facilities within the 400 and 800 metre walking distances. The scale and density of a potential neighbourhood centre is dependant upon where the development is located within the urban hierarchy.

Paragraph 6.15 - The edges of new development should blend into the landscape by means of lower density towards the perimeter, with increased planting predominately of native species. The use of close-boarded fencing along development edges is not appropriate within a rural context, which is generally local hedging species or a post and rail fence.

Paragraph 6.37 - High-density residential development is often misconstrued as being synonymous with poor quality and high-rise urban housing. In comparison medium rise high-density buildings of 3 – 4 storeys maximises density whilst minimising perceived intensity or overcrowding. Density is a product of the design and should not be used as a determining factor in the design approach adopted. Therefore, a design led approach to residential areas should be adopted, that is appropriate to the site, its location, surrounding density and context.

Paragraph 6.38 - *Higher density residential developments can locate greater numbers of people within the 400 and 800 metre walking distances of local centres improving the viability of the services located there.*

Paragraph 6.48 - *The landscape needs to be considered early in the design process. It is not something that can be successfully added after the event. The landscape proposals must therefore be included as an integral part of the design process and the Council will expect landscape proposals to be submitted concurrently with applications for full planning permission, rather than be left as a reserved matter to be sorted out later.*

Paragraph 6.62 - *A variety of built forms and public realm spaces provide identity and interest that enables people moving through an area to navigate by. This can be greatly enhanced through the provision of key landmarks that people can identify. Such landmarks could be distinctive places at the intersection of routes, distinctive buildings at key locations such as intersections and at the end of vistas, or the provision of towers to provide landmarks in a wider context.*

Paragraph 6.68 - *To prevent the overlooking of habitable rooms to the rear of residential properties and rear private gardens, it is preferable that a minimum distance of 15m is provided between the windows and the property boundary. For two storey residential properties, a minimum distance of 25m should be provided between rear or side building faces containing habitable rooms; which should be increased to 30m, for 3 storey residential properties. Where the opposing alignment of facing windows is significantly offset, these distances may be slightly reduced. Where blank walls are proposed opposite the windows to habitable rooms, this distance can be reduced further, with a minimum of 12m between the wall and any neighbouring windows that are directly opposite.*

Paragraph 6.71 - *Every home should have the benefit of some private or communal outside amenity space. This can take the form of private gardens, communal gardens, roof terraces or balconies. Within denser development of new settlements and urban extensions, the careful design of outside amenity spaces is required to optimise the benefits of good locations and ensure these spaces offer maximum benefit to new residents. In such compact developments*

within appropriate urban contexts there will be an emphasis on private balconies and communal gardens / terraces.

Paragraph 6.73 - *Communal gardens including roof terraces should:*

- *Be convenient to use.*
- *Be clearly distinguished from the public realm.*
- *Not be bisected by vehicular routes to parking courts.*
- *Feel safe and secure.*
- *Not unduly affect the privacy of residents' internal accommodation, particularly those at the same level as the communal space, or below in the case of roof terraces.*
- *Incorporate a variety of semi private sub spaces to permit flexibility of use.*
- *Provide accessible yet discreet locations for clothes lines.*
- *Be designed with interesting planting, hard surfacing and places for sitting and socializing.*
- *Be properly managed and maintained*

Paragraph 6.74 - *Balconies should:*

- *Benefit from sunshine and good microclimate (including air quality).*
- *Be well related to internal accommodation.*
- *Be of sufficient size as to permit outside sitting / dining.*
- *Have good outlook.*
- *Be secure and relatively private.*
- *Be placed on the quiet side of the building where possible.*
- *Relate well to the architecture of the building on which they are placed*

Paragraph 6.75 - *Ground floor apartments should have a minimum of 10m² private amenity space immediately outside their living accommodation, or use of a communal garden, where 25m² is allowed for each apartment. Upper floor apartments should have use of a private balcony, of a minimum of 3m², plus use of a communal garden, where 25m² is allowed for each apartment. This provision is in addition to the stated requirements for car parking and bin storage. Residential properties in some villages, historically, have small private gardens, in the context of which it may not be appropriate to provide private amenity space in accordance with the above guidelines.*

Paragraph 6.82 - *Parked cars should not be allowed to dominate the street scene; they should preferably be accommodated within, beneath, or at the side or rear of buildings.....In most cases*

parking spaces and garages located within the dwelling plot should be recessed from the building frontage so as to lessen their visual impact.

5.0 Design Evolution

Client's Requirements

- 5.1 Design a single apartment building to contain a mix of one and two bed apartments and communal facilities which optimise the use of the site.

The apartment building shall include the following:

Lodge Manager's office

Reception Area

Owners' lounge and coffee bar

Communal toilet at ground floor level for use by residents and visitors

Guest Suite

Lift and staircases to all floors

Refuse room

Communal car park parking area for use by residents who have cars

Area for housing and recharging battery buggies

The development is contained within a single internally connected building, a central corridor providing access to accommodation.

Communal landscaped garden area which is maintained by the Management Company with high quality landscaping

- 5.2 Churchill Retirement Living (the appellant) specialise in the provision of retirement housing for the elderly and have acquired the application site with the intention of building their second development within Cambridgeshire following the successful completion of the Huntingdon development and other schemes in the Eastern part of the country.
- 5.3 The appellant provides for a wide variety of customer/owner preferences including a variety of apartment design and different heights, orientation and views within the development.
- 5.4 Amenity space around retirement developments is more important for its passive visual quality and as an attractive setting for the building rather than in any need for large areas of land for active recreational use.

Initial Design Concept

- 5.5 Once initial design concepts were established drawings were prepared for a pre-application meeting with South Cambridgeshire District Council. The following key points summarise the design of the proposal.

Take into account the opportunities and constraints identified to optimise the development while taking into account the local context, conservation area and listed buildings.

Site the building within an area identified as being appropriate for development

A retirement apartment building was indicated that was 2.5-3 storeys in height.

Creates a new internal access road arrangement that runs along the northern boundary of the site.

Provide a 'T' shaped footprint fronting Station Road with a rear leg extending centrally into the site.

The apartment block was to be a single building broken up by the use of form and materials responding to the mix of traditional architectural styles within the immediate and adjacent context. Materials included buff brick facades and slate roofs.

Pre-Application Meeting

5.6 A pre-application meeting was held on site on the 14th April 2021 and was attended by myself, representatives from Planning Issues Ltd and a representative from the Council.

5.7 Items below relate to the verbal comments received by the planners at that meeting (references have been made to this on page 34 of the Design and Access Statement).

Height of the building frontage a concern with particular reference made to the adjacent town house development to the north. Ridge heights should be reduced to be made comparable to the northern development.

Proposed set back of building from the pavement edge as indicated is strongly supported.

Adjacency to neighbouring Conservation Area should be considered in terms of design and material choice.

Noise impact from the railway line should be considered.

Changes made post pre-application meeting

5.8 References to this scheme can be found on Page 37-38 of the Design and Access Statement.

Main changes to proposal included:

Proposal was now two and a half storeys in height along the main frontage to Station Road thereby responding to pre-application concerns by lowering eaves and ridge heights to be comparable to neighbouring dwellings to the north.

A new kinked capital 'I' shape (or 'H' shape) building footprint was proposed which improves the relationship with dwellings to the north and brought the building proposal further away from the train tracks to the east.

The new building footprint arrangement resulted in an improved amenity space arrangement providing both northern, eastern and southern amenity areas.

The majority of parking spaces were now well screened from public vantage points along Station Road.

Public Consultation

- 5.9 Proposals were then developed and refined, discussed with our client prior to the preparation of documents for a public exhibition which was held online during October 2021.
- 5.10 The public were able to comment on the proposal and feedback from the local community was encouraged. The Public Consultation was held by way of an on-line, interactive web site. Access to a project phonenumber and email address were made available to participants.
- 5.11 Respondents reacted positively to the principle of development, the perceived health and social benefits of retirement housing and the positive economic benefits it would bring to the area.
- 5.12 Concerns were raised about whether the footpath width in front of the site would be widened and whether there would be sufficient parking provision.
- 5.13 As part of the consultation process a meeting was held with the Great Shelford Town Council on the 20th September 2021 where the scheme proposal was presented. Overall, the response from the Town Council was positive but some concern was raised in relation to parking provision, the position of the site access and general need for older persons specialised housing in the area. – Refer to page 35 of the Design and Access Statement for details.

6.0 The Proposals

- 6.1 This section explains how we arrived at an appropriate design. I have provided a detailed description of that design under six headings as well as a breakdown of accommodation and layout explanation.
- 6.2 The design proposals comprise:
- 39 sheltered apartments (24 x 1 bed and 15 x 2 bed)
 - Lift and staircases
 - Owners lounge
 - Lodge manager's office and reception area
 - Communal refuse
 - Guest suite
 - Mobility scooter store
 - External works include:
 - 16 car parking spaces
 - Landscaped amenity areas
 - Main entrance via new site access road from Station Road
 - Patio areas

Layout

- 6.3 There is a single point of access into the site through the creation of a new site access road from the Station Road that then runs along the northern boundary of the Appeal site. The new access road will contain a footpath that will provide pedestrian and buggy access into the wider network including the town centre. A new 'pulled in' western boundary position to Station Road has allowed for the widening of the existing narrowed pedestrian footpath thereby improving access in this area.
- 6.4 Good urban planning suggests that car parking is screened or placed away from the most prominent frontages and public vantage points. The proposal allows for this by providing a main car parking area towards the rear of the site, views to which will be partly obscured by the proposed apartment buildings and soft landscaping . A smaller number of car parking spaces are positioned parallel to the new access road towards the front of the site and will be interspersed with soft landscaping and tree planting.
- 6.5 The apartment building is accessed from the northern elevation at the ground floor through a legible main entrance close to parking areas and via an attractive landscape garden. The main entrance to the building is in full view from the reception and leads into the Owner's Lounge. A lift that accesses all floors is located close to the main entry point. The Owner's Lounge is served by a coffee bar which opens up into this internal amenity space.

- 6.6 A communal toilet is located on the ground floor adjacent to the lift.
- 6.7 A communal refuse store is located on the ground floor at the western end of the building close to an external refuse collection area and Station Road. The refuse store is accessed via a protected lobby from inside the building and is provided with a set of double doors on the external face of the building for on-site waste collection.
- 6.8 A guest suite, for use by relatives of the owners is located on the Ground Floor.
- 6.9 The central corridor is approximately 1.5m wide with dwellings on either side. The building is served by two communal stairs located towards either ends of the corridor and the junction of corridors. All escape distances are designed in line with Building Regulations Approved Document B.
- 6.10 The ends of the corridors feature glazed opening vents which will provide natural light and ventilation.
- 6.11 Internal flat layouts have been developed to meet specific needs of older persons and are Part M4(2) of the Building Regulations compliant.
- 6.12 To avoid unnecessarily long internal corridors within apartments, entrances to all dwellings lead to a protected hallway located centrally to the apartment, rooms are then accessed off this hallway.
- 6.13 There is storage space that is easily accessible in each apartment located either in the entrance hallway or in the living area.
- 6.14 Two-bedroom units have either a second WC in the entrance hall or an en-suite to the main bedroom.
- 6.15 A variety of different forms of communal and private external amenity space are provided. A larger communal amenity area is provided at the southern portion of the site that benefits from a south facing orientation. Access to this area can be achieved internally through a communal corridor or externally by walking around the building. A north facing amenity area is achieved outside of the owners lounge area together with a large owners lounge patio area. This area would particularly benefit those who prefer being in a more shaded environment which is common among the age group of the residents. A wide amenity area is also provided at the eastern end of the site providing an attractive outlook for the residents facing east as well as a buffer to the train tracks to the east.
- 6.16 Ground floor apartments benefit from having private patios that suitably sized to accommodate a small table and chairs. Eight apartments at First and Second Floor level also benefit from private walk out balconies within the proposed layout. It is thought that this is the most sensible location for balconies given the southerly aspect and appropriate separation distances to the care home to the south.
- 6.17 In total the development provides 978sqm of external communal amenity space and 29sqm of private space from balconies (refer to Section 11 of the Appeal Brochure for Amenity Area Considerations).

19 of the 39 flats have direct access to either a patio or a private balcony. The proposal also provides 97sqm of communal internal amenity space via the Owners Lounge. The Owners Lounge is normally the most used amenity facility in the development.

- 6.18 Along with the on-site provision of outdoor amenity space the residents also benefit from the amenities of the Great Shelford Recreation Ground which is only 0.2miles away to the south west.
- 6.19 The landscape design, using a combination of soft and hard landscaping is based on the creation of accessible, multi-functional outdoor spaces that can adapt to the changing needs of residents. The various spaces have been designed to facilitate a range of activities and different levels of interaction, allowing residents the space for quiet, passive recreation outside, as well as the ability to host a larger group. See landscape strategy submitted with the planning application found at Section 10 of the Appeal brochure for details.
- 6.20 The soft landscaping is formed by a combination of trees, hedging, ground covering shrubs and lawn. Enhanced soft landscaping along the western site boundary reintroduces much needed greenery to the eastern side of Station Road. Additional tree plantation and hedges also address views from the south along Station Road by providing a green infill to the gap between the new care home development to the south and the Appeal scheme. Refer to VVM images in Section 5 of the Appeal Brochure.
- 6.21 An enhanced landscape buffer towards the eastern boundary with the rail tracks will provide a degree of noise mitigation and attractive landscape setting for the east facing apartments. Views towards the southern care home site will also be screened via new tree plantation on the southern boundary, while new trees within the northern amenity area around the owners lounge patio will partially filter views in a northerly direction.
- 6.22 Low level hedges and other soft landscaping will provide a degree of privacy to Ground Floor patio areas for the apartments that face towards Station Road and apartment 01 to the east that is in a closer proximity to the new parking area.

Scale, Height and Mass

- 6.23 The scale, height and massing of the proposal has been designed in accordance to its setting and context as set out in the contextual analysis previously.
- 6.24 The massing of the building has been articulated in plan and elevation through the use of materials and set back linked blocks to provide variation in form, and height.

- 6.25 The overall height of the proposed apartment development varies from 2.5 storeys to 3 storeys. As examined within the Design and Access Statement (page 39-41, Appeal Brochure Section 12) the front (west) facing elevation has an eaves line lower than that of the neighbouring town houses to the north while the ridge height is set at slightly lower level.
- 6.26 Along the central axis, the apartment building gains height to 3 storeys although ridge heights remain at a similar level to the western elevation through the introduction of crown roof. The roof therefore becomes less dominant in the skyline within this section of the building which is also set back from the side boundaries.
- 6.27 Towards the rear of the site, the north south wing of the building is still 3 storeys but the overall ridge height increases in height although is still below the height of the neighbouring Care Home development to the south – refer to Appeal Brochure Section 12, Height Comparison drawing for the rear of the site.
- 6.28 A gradual increase in height is apparent moving away from the road towards the rear of the site however it should be noted that perception of the overall building mass and height are only apparent from very particular vantage points along Station Road as the building is screened from view by the intervening built environment, and in particular immediate neighbours, in long distant views north and south.
- 6.29 It should also be noted that the existing Granary House building located directly on the southern boundary is two storeys of commercial height and should be considered comparable in terms of overall ridge heights to the 3 storey central element of the Appeal proposal. (Refer to the site section at Section 12 of the Appeal Brochure for details).

Form

- 6.30 The main elevational form is organised into a series of recessive and projecting blocks/bays at 2.5 and 3 storeys in height and broken up by variation in form and material choice. The terrace like bays at the Station Road frontage pay homage to existing traditional terrace houses within the local context and nearby conservation area and are broken up by rendered recesses providing additional visual interest. This interest is further expanded by varying roof ridge and eaves positions. The use of walk out balconies on either side of 3 storey kitchen bays on the southern elevations further expands on this visual interest by adding an additional 'layer' to the elevation.
- 6.31 To varying degree the west, north and south elevations will be able to be seen from certain public vantage points however the western elevation including its associated northern and southern flank walls, is the area where the scheme will be most prominent as one travels kinetically along Station

Road. Due to the linear nature of Station Road, it is only when one is positioned directly in front of this elevation that the entire façade will be seen due to tight angled site lines.

- 6.32 The proposal clearly attempts to address views from the south along Station Road and towards the southern flank wall of the frontage through the use of centrally positioned windows that look on in this direction. A gap in between the new care home which is set back from the street frontage and the proposed retirement building has created an area where part of the southern elevation reveals itself to the street. Please refer to the southern VVM within the Appeal Brochure Section 04. Attractive soft landscape boundary treatment and new trees provide a leafy elevation and soften views in this direction. The kitchen bays with balconies add a sense of rhythm to this elevation with the parapet of the bays running into the roof scape and rising above the adjacent eaves line providing visual interest and verticality.
- 6.33 As with the adjacent care home, the rear of the proposed development increases in height to 3 full storeys with a full height gabled ridge line although this height is still below that of the care home in this area. – refer to Appeal Brochure Section 12 – Height Comparison for sections.
- 6.34 The northern elevation is of a similar form to the southern elevation with 3 storey flat roof kitchen bays apparent and providing a contrasting projected form adding verticality and rhythm. Unlike the southern elevation, it was deemed inappropriate to include balconies on this elevation due to overlooking considerations to the north.
- 6.35 The ‘H’ form building footprint has allowed the external northern central space to become almost ‘courtyard like’ with an attractive soft landscape garden positioned in front of the owners lounge patio containing species that are suitable for a more shaded environment. This is an attractive and welcoming setting for the main entrance into the development.
- 6.36 The main eastern elevation has a domestic form of three recessive and projecting bays at three storeys in height with varying roof ridge heights which, in similarity to the western elevation, allude to some of the more traditional terraced housing forms in the immediate locality. Smaller recessed side wing extensions, one with a flat roof, reduce the overall mass of this elevation.
- 6.37 It is clear from the contextual analysis described previously in this document that no particular architectural style or form can be said to be characteristic of the area. The site is located both close to the Conservation Area with its variety of historic built form that has evolved over time, yet is also close to more modern commercial and residential developments located off Station Road. The proposal has therefore utilised forms and materials that relate well to both and fuses modern and traditional materials.

Siting

- 6.38 The proposed apartment building footprint is that of a 'H' Shape (or kinked capital 'I' shape) with front and rear wings running north to south and a central wing running east to west. Various footprint options were assessed during the design process and these can be found within the Design and Access Statement on page 37 of that document. When assessed against other footprint options, the 'H' form provides the most benefits including a good buffer distance away from the rail tracks, and a reduction in numbers of apartments looking solely north and south towards the town houses and care home respectively. In addition to this, the main car parking location is now mainly hidden from public view as it wraps around the north eastern corner of the site and is screened by the proposed building and associated landscaping. This has therefore allowed for the creation of a more meaningful amenity space on the northern side of the development overlooking the owners lounge and patio devoid of car parking.
- 6.39 Care has been taken to set the building further away from the pavement edge allowing for an increased width public footpath to run adjacent to the site along Station Road which will be a real benefit to the local population who travel in and out of the town centre by foot. A newly established soft landscaped zone along the western boundary both softens the street scene and also provides a more leafy outlook for residents within the Ground Floor western elevation as they will have a private patio protected by boundary hedge and planting on either side - Refer to Landscape drawing on Section 10 of the Appeal Brochure.
- 6.40 The nearest neighbour to the north is No 4 Station Road which is a 3 storey curved town house. Separation distances between the proposed retirement development and No 4 Station Road vary but there is an approximately gap of 17.3m in a north/south direction between windows.
- 6.41 No 4 has a series of 3 Ground Floor windows belonging to a home office but these look out in a westerly direction and avoid directly looking into the proposed retirement building. At First Floor level there are two windows belonging to a staircase and kitchen that also look out towards the west avoiding the retirement building. There is one narrow window that faces south (approx. 17.3m away from the retirement scheme) and serves part of an open plan living/dining space. It should be noted however that this window is a secondary window and the main outlook from the open plan space is towards the south east via a set of large bi-fold windows. Again, the line of site from the bi-fold doors does not directly overlook the proposed retirement building. The open plan living/dining space opens onto a raised deck area that is screened via an existing timber fence which protects privacy and filters potential views from the south. At the second floor there are two bedrooms that look west and south east and avoid windows to window considerations. A narrow window does look south but this is a non-habitable window belonging to a bathroom. The approved plans show a roof terrace however this area does not appear to be used as the terrace is lacking any fall restraint (parapet wall or railings). It is simply a flat roof currently. See Drawing P12D, Appeal Brochure Section 08 – Neighbouring Consents for details.

- 6.42 Separation distances to the southern care home vary but at its closest point the building is positioned 13.5m away. The District Design Guide states that where habitable windows look on to blank walls a figure of 12m distance is sufficient (paragraph 6.68). I note that the Planning Committee document, Page 223, mentions a figure of 7m however I am unsure as to how the local authority have come to this figure. At the closest 13.5m point there is no window to window situation as the retirement development has a flank wall here devoid of windows. The nearest windows look east and west, but not south towards the Care Home. There is one secondary window in each of Apartments 03, 25 and 39 that look south at a distance of approximately 16m away from the Care Home however should these windows be found to be an area of concern then they could be obscured under a planning condition. Again, these are secondary windows.
- 6.43 The main window to window consideration comes from the main central access of the south elevation, and only two apartments on each floor (6 apartments in total) directly look onto the Care Home which is set approx. 25m away. Views here will however be filtered via proposed boundary trees.
- 6.44 At its closest point, the eastern end of the building is positioned approximately 15m away from the rail tracks to the east (widening to 20m elsewhere) with distances to the eastern boundary of the site varying from 4.3m to 14.3m. The rear part of the building is set at a similar position to the rail tracks as the adjacent care home.

Architectural Style & Materials

- 6.45 Following a detailed assessment of the context, it is clear that there is no apparent typical architectural style or character within the immediate context as a wide variety of building types and architectural styles are evident.
- 6.46 The local context contains a mixture of architectural styles and ages of properties, from imposing turn of the century semi-detached and detached dwellings to 18th century cottages and mid-twentieth century semi-detached houses. Interspersed with this are more contemporary 2-3 storey flatted developments of contemporary appearance and 1-2 storey commercial properties.
- 6.47 The proposed buildings architectural 'style' is however influenced by some of the more traditional elements which have been interpreted in a more contemporary manner.
- 6.48 As demonstrated in the Design and Access Statement (Appeal Brochure Section 13, page 45),

The facade has been refined to pick up further cues from the surrounding area, and allow a contemporary appearance that selects elements of the historic fabric of the conservation area to call back to. Specifically, the dormer windows have been regularised to one box dormer appearance, and rendered bay windows have been added to enhance the presence of the building. The relative

symmetry of the facade and simplicity of its form gives the building a good relationship to the contemporary townhouses to the north of the site.

- 6.49 In terms of architectural composition, the mass and bulk of the elevations are broken into terraced like elements by articulation of wall alignment, bays, balconies, materials and ridge line, explained in “Form” previously.
- 6.50 To provide consistency and order to the overall development a similar architectural approach is employed. The retirement apartment building utilises a buff/gault brick throughout although in the central wing section a Ground Floor render band provides horizontality and variety and contrasts well with the brick elsewhere. Within the central axis and above the render band is a stone string course which helps tie the overall development together and provides both a consistency of architectural style and a hierarchy to the elevation.
- 6.51 Stone surrounds to windows on projecting elements of the north, south and western elevations provide visual interest and depth to the window reveals and also contrast well with the grey modern windows.
- 6.52 As identified previously, no particular material type can be said to be characteristic of the area so with this in mind, it was proposed that a varied material palette was employed that would relate well with both the traditional Georgian and Victorian buildings found within the conservation area and other more modern developments.
- 6.53 As demonstrated in the Design and Access Statement (page 42):
‘...material selection for the proposal has been informed by a careful survey of the neighbouring properties, as well as those in the wider village landscape. The proposed building is infilling between two contemporary schemes, however its proximity to the conservation area must inform the material palette. As such, a combination of render, buff brick, grey slate tiles and stone/brick features have been chosen to provide the building with a modern appearance, whilst also fitting seamlessly within the street scene and village beyond.
Flush frame and grey casement windows are proposed. These would be uPVC for low maintenance and high Green Guide rating.
Walk-out and Juliet balconies and railings will be grey painted metal, similar in appearance’.
- 6.54 The apartment building mainly features gabled roofs forms and draws reference from some of the more traditional roof forms in the area however the rear looking element of the western wing contains standing seam cladding which references the contemporary town houses to the north.

- 6.55 The roof line moves up and down in small degrees reflecting the changing parts of the building. Full balconies are provided to maximise views to the south over the attractive amenity setting while other Juliet balconies elsewhere provide enhanced natural light into apartments.
- 6.56 The above approach is intended to provide enough variation to create an interesting and distinctive design that is harmonious towards its setting and relates well to the juxtaposition of other developments within the local context. The design doesn't seek to replicate other buildings within the area but seeks to be a building of its time and visually attractive in its own right.

Conclusions on design

- 6.57 Taking into consideration the detailed assessment in the first part of this document, there is no doubt in my opinion that the proposed design would make a positive contribution to both the townscape and contextual area.
- 6.58 In summary the proposed development has in my professional opinion achieved the following:

Provides a building of appropriate mass and scale according to the contextual area

Respects the diverse character and context of the site.

Provides an appropriate built form in relation to adjacent Conservation Areas and the adjacent built context.

Creates articulated elevations appropriate to the contextual area, that enhance local distinctiveness with a building of appropriate height, rhythm and alignment for its location.

Employs high quality materials appropriate to the context.

Provides an appropriate green set back to Station Road and widens the existing public footpath.

Protects the amenity of occupants through appropriate separation distances.

Provides appropriate and attractive landscape and amenity areas that are suitable for the intended end user.

Creates a design which fuses traditional and modern materials and colour.

Provides an appropriate level of shared amenity space.

7.0 Design Issues & Reviewing the Plans Against Policy

- 7.1 Although this appeal is for the non-determination of the planning application, the LPA set out their putative reasons for refusal within the Statement of Case and Committee Report.
- 7.2 South Cambridgeshire District Council have identified in their reasons for refusal the specific policies that they contend the appeal design does not accord with.
- 7.3 If the LPA were in the position to determine the planning application, they would have advanced reasons for refusal which comprises six parts. In reference to design, and the subject of this Proof are Reasons for refusal 2 and 3.

Reason 2

The proposed development, by reason of its density of approximately 134 dwellings per hectare, cramped layout and close proximity to the boundaries with lack of landscaping, siting in close proximity to Station Road, three storey height central and rear sections, substantial size and scale, 'H' plan form, and a poor level of communal and private amenity space, is considered to result in a poor quality design and living environment which would not make a positive contribution the local and wider context. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies S/7, H/8 and HQ/1 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018 which seek developments to preserve or enhance the character of the local urban and rural area and respond to its context in the wider landscape; include variety and interest within a coherent, place-responsive design, which is legible and creates a positive sense of place and identity whilst also responding to the local context and respecting local distinctiveness; be compatible with its location and appropriate in terms of scale, density, mass, form, siting, design, proportion, materials, texture and colour in relation to the surrounding area; deliver a strong visual relationship between buildings that comfortably define and enclose streets, squares and public places, creating interesting vistas, skylines, focal points and appropriately scaled landmarks along routes and around spaces; ensure that car parking is integrated into the development in a convenient, accessible manner and does not dominate the development and its surroundings or cause safety issues; and include high quality landscaping and public spaces that integrate the development with its surroundings, having a clear definition between public and private space which provide opportunities for recreation, social interaction as well as support healthy lifestyles, biodiversity, sustainable drainage and climate change mitigation.

Reason 3

The proposed development, by reason of the provision of a significant number of habitable rooms in the north and south elevations and lack of separation between the adjacent dwelling to the north and the approved care home to the south, is considered to result in overlooking and a severe loss of privacy to habitable rooms and a roof terrace which would adversely affect the amenities of neighbours. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policy HQ/1 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018 which seeks developments to protect the health and amenity of occupiers and surrounding uses from development that is overlooking, overbearing or results in a loss of daylight or development which would create unacceptable impacts such as noise, vibration, odour, emissions and dust.

Analysis of the Design Issues

7.4 The suggestion within the first part of reason for refusal 2 is that the site is essentially 'overdeveloped' by virtue of *'its density of approximately 134 dwellings per hectare, cramped layout and close proximity to the boundaries with lack of landscaping, siting in close proximity to Station Road, three storey height central and rear sections, substantial size and scale, 'H' plan form, and a poor level of communal and private amenity space'*.

7.5 Concerns in relation to overdevelopment, (density, massing, layout and landscaping), do not appear to be shared by the Conservation Officer who raises no objection to the proposal and who would have assessed the scheme in terms of its relationship with the conservation area which runs adjacent to the Appeal site. – see Planning Committee report paragraph 6.5.

7.6 Paragraphs 9.51 of the Officers Committee Report states the following:

The site measure approximately 0.29 of a hectare in area. The proposed density of the development would equate to approximately 135 dwellings per hectare. This would be significantly above the average net density for the village.

7.7 Paragraphs 9.51 of the Officers Committee Report also states:

Whilst it is acknowledged that the development of 12 dwellings to the north at Nos. 4 to 26 Station Road approved under application reference has a higher than average density of approximately 92 dwellings per hectare, it was considered acceptable in terms of the layout of the site and the visual impact upon the character and appearance of the area

7.8 I refer to section 2, (Context) and section 6, (Proposal) of my proof where I have set out my assessment of the contextual area appropriate to inform the design of a building for the appeal site. Additionally, I have described the salient factors from that assessment which have contributed to the final design solution before concluding how those elements, in my opinion, would make a positive contribution to the character the area.

7.9 Turning first to the question of density, the Appeal proposal is situated within an area that is suitable for a denser form of development. As referenced in paragraph 4.7.1 of this Proof, and found within the District Design Guide (paragraph 6.10) '*Higher density developments are better located close to the local centres to maximise the numbers of people able to support those facilities within the 400 and 800 metre walking distances.*'

The Appeal site is located well within the 400 and 800 metre walking distant zone.

7.10 Paragraphs 6.37 of the District Design Guide notes:

Density is a product of the design and should not be used as a determining factor in the design approach adopted. Therefore, a design led approach to residential areas should be adopted, that is appropriate to the site, its location, surrounding density and context.

7.11 Density is purely a mathematical calculation and if all matters of design and 'fit' on site were considered acceptable I would fail to see how a high density scheme in itself would be considered harmful. Retirement Living schemes developments are often of a higher density. They are primarily formed of one and two bedroom apartments with communal facilities and a level of parking that reflects the need of its residents. Typically these schemes operate at densities of between 100-200 dwellings/hectare.

7.12 Appeal Brochure Section 11 – Amenity and Density Area Comparisons indicate typical density ratios within other recent Churchill Retirement schemes within Cambridgeshire and the East of England. Recently approved schemes at Bury St. Edmunds (138.29 units/ha) and Haverhill (163.7 units/ha) both have density ratios well in excess of the Appeal site which has a density ratio of approximately 129 units/ha.

7.13 It is clear however that when assessing the local and wider context of the Appeal site that there are numerous examples of other developments with similar density levels when compared to the Appeal scheme. Within the wider context there are residential schemes at 176-178 Cambridge Road, Great Shelford that has a density ratio of 150 units/ha and Hauxton Meadows, Hauxton with a ratio just under the Appeal scheme of 116 units/ha.

7.14 As demonstrated within paragraph 7.10 above, the site is within a highly sustainable location and within easy walking distance to the town and is precisely the sort of site where higher than average density levels should be considered appropriate. The proposed retirement living scheme also has

density levels which are typical of that form of development and if simply looking at the density numerical figure, the Appeal scheme, with a Density level of 129 units/ha is appropriate.

- 7.15 The contention within Reason for Refusal 2 is that the Appeal proposal has a '*cramped layout and close proximity to the boundaries with lack of landscaping, siting in close proximity to Station Road*'.
- 7.16 I disagree entirely. As demonstrated in the earlier contextual assessment of Station Road within this Proof (paragraphs 2.20-2.32), the eastern side of Station Road is characterised by built form in close proximity to the pavement edge. This is evident on the southern part of Station Road with Reed House and subsequent terraced extension all being on, or within close proximity of the road. The existing Stables building within the Appeal site is sited at the pavement edge while the town houses to the north are also located directly adjacent to the pavement. Although the Care Home to the south is pulled away from the street this is the exception within the street-scape.
- 7.17 It was recognised from an early assessment of the site and surrounds identified within this document and the Design and Access Statement, that the building line of the Appeal proposal would benefit from being brought in and away from the road in order to widen the pedestrian footpath, reinforce the building line with the adjacent town house thereby strengthening townscape and create a soft landscape area to building frontage, providing a green landscaped zone on a side of the road where it is lacking.
- 7.18 The Council have suggested that further stepping the building back can offer a smooth visual transition between the town scheme to the north and the care home site. I suggest however that the care home site has a very short road frontage requiring an access road with suitable visibility splays. This, combined with the requirement for a single building footprint and the extent of land to the rear for redevelopment means that the care home had to be set back into the site for functional reasons. The care home site also relates more closely with the Reed House site to the south, whereas the site subject to this Appeal relates closer to the adjoining townhouse scheme to the north reinforced by a break in townscape created by the care home. I do not believe that pulling the building further back from the road will relate positively to either the townhouse scheme to the north or care home to the south and will result in a poor response to the townscape along Station Road. In addition to this, if pulled back the Appeal proposal would not make effective and efficient use of the site and accord with Paragraph 119 and 120d of the NPPF.
- 7.19 In order to accurately depict how the proposed Appeal Scheme would sit within the landscape a series of 'Verified Views' have been commissioned and can be found within the Appeal Brochure Section 5 – Verified Views). A verified view is an image that combines a photographic view with an accurate 3d CAD representation of a proposed development, displayed to an agreed level of detail. Using a baseline of verifiable visual data and information, its purpose is to impartially and, realistically represent the proposal. Not just the appearance and context, but also its scale. By using verifiable visual data this image can then be used by others (if required) to scrutinise the work, without its accuracy being questioned.

- 7.20 View 1 of the Verified Views is taken along Station Road at the junction with Shelford Park Avenue looking south. It is clear from this view that the proposed retirement is sited appropriately with a building line that is 'in line' with the adjacent town house development and the Reed House and terrace housing beyond. The proposal is set back from the frontage sufficiently to provide an attractive soft landscape zone along Station Road and a widened footpath. Natural surveillance over Station Road is now achieved and when compared to the existing office building (which is devoid of any natural surveillance over the street) that sits directly adjacent to the footpath, the proposed frontage is less dominant in the streetscape. The proposal is also at an appropriate height within the townscape and provides good enclosure to Station Road.
- 7.21 View 2 of the Verified Views is also taken along Station Road looking south but in a closer proximity to the Appeal scheme. As one moves along the Station Road other parts of the building proposal reveal themselves through gaps between buildings. Again, rather than feeling 'cramped' or 'squeezed' the image shows a green landscaped area to the side of main vehicular access into the site and in front of the retirement development running along Station Road, providing an attractive and entrance into the development. This needs to be considered as vast improvement when compared to the existing status of the Appeal site which is for the most part devoid of any soft landscape treatment.
- 7.22 Views 3a and 3b of the Verified Views looks towards the north and north east and in take in some of the neighbouring care home development to the south. These views demonstrates that although the south facing units of the retirement development look in the direction of the care home they are still set well away from it and have a soft landscaped amenity zone with tree planting which help filters views between the two buildings. The landscaped frontage of the retirement development wraps around the site to the south and together with additional tree planting provide an attractive outlook and address views as one moves through Station Road from the south.
- 7.23 View 3b demonstrates that although the central section of the Appeal proposal is indeed 3 storeys, the ridge height of the roof is set a lower level when compared to the ridge heights at the eastern (rear) end of the scheme. This is achieved via a crown roof in this area and substantially reduces and perceived overbearing impact the development in this area.
- 7.24 Views 3a and 3b clearly show a built proposal that is well designed and appropriate for its context. The elevations have a traditional form but with a contemporary 'twist' and utilise materials that are locally distinctive. The building addresses both views from the south and north and provides visual interest in these areas. The proposal makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area.
- 7.25 Paragraph 9.111 of the Officer's Committee report notes:

Whilst the height of the development adjacent to Station Road would be slightly lower than the development to the north and is satisfactory, the central and rear sections of the development would be significantly higher in closer proximity to Station Road than the development to the south. In addition, the scale of the building would be larger in size than the adjacent development. This is

considered to result in a visually dominant development which would detract from the character and appearance of the street scene.

The Care Home scheme to the south is unusual in that it is the only building significantly set back from the Station Road frontage. It is acknowledged that the three storey central element of Appeal proposal is in a closer proximity to Station Road than the three storey element of the Care Home. That said, it is felt that the height of the central wing is entirely appropriate in that it has a ridge line that is set no higher than the two and a half storey frontage of the building which the Case Officer has acknowledge is satisfactory.

- 7.26 In addition, it is suggested that the scale of the development would be larger than the adjacent development (care home) however for a large section of the Appeal scheme this is not the case. The Height Comparison drawing within Appeal Brochure Section 12 shows a building section taken through the central section of the proposed development with existing buildings indicated on either side. It is apparent that the proposed 3 storey central section with crown roof is of a lower scale than the existing Granary House building on site that sits along the southern boundary and slightly taller than the Link House building. The fact that the proposed development is set substantially further away than the existing southern office units lessens their impact particularly in terms of overbearing considerations to the south.
- 7.27 The central three storey height of the retirement development is also set at a lower level than the 3 storey height of the Care Home as demonstrated within the Section above (paragraph 7.26).
- 7.28 An additional height comparison drawing within Appeal Brochure Section 12 compares height towards the rear portion of the Appeal scheme and the neighbouring Care Home. It is clear here that the Appeal scheme has a lower height than the Care Home in this area. It would therefore be untrue to suggest that the Appeal proposal would be larger than the adjacent development and 'visually dominant'.
- 7.29 Paragraph 9.110 of the Officer's Committee Report suggests that the 'H' shaped footprint is overcomplex. This is also picked up with the Urban Design Officer's consultation comments. It is suggested that an 'L' or 'T' shaped building form would be an improved solution. As set out in paragraph 6.38 of this Proof and also explained with the Design and Access Statement, it is felt that the 'H' shape is the most appropriate development form, limiting views both north and south, providing attractive spaces around the development and providing a good separation distance to the rail tracks. The relationship to the rail tracks is very similar to that approved within the Care Home scheme to the south yet seems to be criticised within the Committee Report.
- 7.30 It is suggested within the Committee report (paragraph 9.110) that due to the 'H' form building arrangement (with particular reference to the most eastern wing) that the proposal would:

.....be very close to the parking area, railway line, and invade the communal garden to the south of the building. There would be lack of buffer space around the building to soften the impact of the parking area upon residents.

It is my view that the parking area is sited appropriately and within the part of the site where it will have the least impact upon residents, amenity areas and views into the site. Paragraph 6.4 of this proof describes the positive aspects of the car parking layout design. If one were to follow the Council's preferred 'L' shape or 'T' shape design, then far more parking spaces would be within a closer proximity to a greater number of apartments, running east-west along the northern part of the site and would be more prominent in views in to the site from Station Road. A positive aspect of the proposed car parking layout is that it is set well away from Station Road (except for 2 parallel spaces that are well screened by proposed soft landscaping) and is also partly obscured by the built form itself.

7.31 The District Design Guide states at paragraph 6.82 –

Parked cars should not be allowed to dominate the street scene; they should preferably be accommodated within, beneath, or at the side or rear of buildings.....In most cases parking spaces and garages located within the dwelling plot should be recessed from the building frontage so as to lessen their visual impact.

7.32 There is only one area where the new parking arrangement comes near the proposed apartments and that is in front of Apartment 01. Even here however, there is a green buffer zone that is positioned in front of this apartment with a low-level hedge providing a visual barrier to any parking movement and headlights and will allow the resident of this apartment to use the patio space in front. I refer the reader to the Landscape drawing submitted with the application and found in Appeal Brochure Section 10.

7.33 It is stated that there would '*be a lack of buffer space around the building to soften the impact of parking spaces around the building*' (Committee Report paragraph 9.110). I simply do not believe this to be the case. The landscape plan indicates an attractive green amenity space positioned centrally along the northern elevation on the edge of the access road and in front of the owners lounge patio. This will be an attractive space which is demonstrated in a Computer Generated Image produced for the Appeal and found within the Appeal Brochure, Section 06. A grassed area, tree planting and low-level hedge do in fact '*soften the impact of the parking spaces around the building*'.

7.34 A low level hedge and planted area to the west of the five parking spaces that run north to south also aid in screening this area.

7.35 Although part of the proposed new access road wraps around the north east corner of the site and extends south to the most eastern amenity area, there is a hedge positioned at the southern edge of the road that clearly demarcates the parking zone from the amenity area through a soft landscaped feature.

7.36 The planning Committee Report at paragraph 9.114 states:

The position of the building is considered to compromise the privacy of the ground floor apartment facing the road

As set out previously within this document, the eastern side of Station Road is characterised by development in close proximity to the road. This is seen at the townhouse scheme to the north and Reed House and adjacent terraces to the south. Both within the conservation area itself there are numerous examples of residential dwellings built directly adjacent to the road frontage with windows and doors looking on to these areas. Siting the building close to the road is entirely appropriate in this instance and the privacy and security of Ground Floor units is achieved via railings, a hedge and planting to the building frontage. This is apparent in the Verified Views produced in Section 05 of the Appeal Brochure.

7.37 Paragraph 9.113 of the Committee Report suggests that the mobility scooter store is positioned in an area without any natural surveillance. Again, I dispute this as the store is positioned within easy walking distance from the main entrance and in view of the owners lounge patio. Although the store sits directly next to a refuse room and Guest suite, there are apartments above that look onto this area. There are also side windows onto apartments 11 and the units above providing surveillance to the entrance to the site.

7.38 Paragraphs 9.115 – 9.119 of the Committee Report suggest a lack of appropriate provision and quality of the communal amenity areas around the building. I disagree with this entirely. A landscape strategy produced by landscape architects James Blake Associates clearly provides a high quality landscape design that is suitable for its intended end user. The Council have intimated that due to the density of development and building layout on the site there is not enough space around the proposed buildings of high enough quality. I am of the view that there is enough space however it should be noted that the quality of these spaces, and in particular its visual quality, is more important than the sheer size. The District Design Guide SPD does not provide any guidance on amenity space provision for specialised accommodation for older persons. In a general needs residential development consideration would need to be given to serving the needs of a wide range of residents, including families with children, and young people. In a retirement housing scheme users are restricted to a group of people with similar needs and requirements, namely older residents, and it is not therefore necessary to provide a variety of different types of space, such as children's play space and 'kick about' areas. Churchill have won national awards for their communal gardens; a factor that prospective buyers are drawn to when considering the purchase of a sheltered apartment.

- 7.39 As described at 7.38 above, the nature and characteristics of the residents themselves have implications for the amount and type of on-site amenity space provision required. With residents typically being in their early 80s they use amenity space in a passive way. Active use of external amenity space tends to be relatively limited and mainly involves sitting out for those few residents who occasionally choose to do so, and perhaps tending a small flower border immediately outside of ground floor apartments where access is provided to individual apartments. In all instances, there is sufficient space around the building for residents to sit outside their living rooms, at ground floor level, albeit in the knowledge that privacy is limited especially as these areas are communal. The situation is no different to many similar developments which have been successfully completed by Churchill Retirement Living or McCarthy & Stone or other builders of a similar retirement accommodation. On most developments should residents seek other space for sitting out, they are likely to make use of the patio areas adjacent to the residents' lounge, and indeed, this is the location which the residents of upper floors are more likely to utilise should they so wish. There is, of course, nothing to prevent residents of upper floors making use of any area of amenity space, all areas of garden being in communal control. The visual quality of the space and landscaping is of far more importance than the quantum of space. This is further expanded upon on Page 57 of the Design and Access Statement (Appeal Brochure Section 13).
- 7.40 An analysis of the Amenity Area Considerations drawing within the Appeal Brochure Section 11 demonstrates the left over 'green space' around the Appeal scheme is very comparable to other retirement schemes and other recent residential developments within the local and wider context. Approximately 37% of the Appeal site will be left over for green space. The adjacent care home to the south only has slightly more green space with 38.3%. Recently approved Churchill Retirement Living Schemes at Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill both have green space levels below that of the Appeal scheme with 36.4% and 30% respectively. As mentioned previously, it is common for retirement living schemes to have reduced levels of green space on site.
- 7.41 Paragraph 6.75 of the District Design Guide suggests that Ground floor apartments should have the use of a communal garden, where 25m² is allowed for each apartment. Upper floor apartments should have use of a private balcony, of a minimum of 3m², plus use of a communal garden, where 25m² is allowed for each apartment. As paragraphs 7.38-7.39 suggest, there are reasons why Retirement schemes do not generally meet numerical targets of amenity provision. That said, the Appeal scheme does achieve the required provision amount of 975 sqm. Please refer to Appeal Brochure Section 11 – Usable Amenity Drawing that indicates the retirement scheme achieving 978sqm of amenity space. This figure discounts certain narrow strips around the parking zone and the pinch point between southern and eastern zones.
- 7.42 The Council seem to suggest that certain areas should be discounted from the amenity provision figures because they may be '*narrow, overshadowed and dominated by parking area*', (paragraph 9.118). Within the District Design Guide there is no mention of discounting areas because they are overshadowed. In fact, in certain circumstances it may be impossible to provide anything other than a north facing amenity area. As described in earlier paragraphs of this proof, the amenity area is not at all dominated by parking areas but is instead shielded from these areas due to position and soft

landscape treatment. Even if the narrow strip of planting to the western frontage were to be discounted then the proposal would still be close to meeting amenity levels that are required for all types of residential purposes rather than for the elderly. I do however consider that the western landscape frontage should be included within the calculation as it provides good visual amenity, a soft landscape hedge and planting that provides privacy for residents who wish to use their Ground Floor patio.

7.43 The Council, within the Committee report (paragraph 9.119), seem to criticise the landscaping scheme suggesting that it should provide:

'Some spaces should be shaded and some open to the sun and some spaces should be social areas and some solitary areas. Different types of planting should be provided from trees to flowers of different textures, colours and scents to activate the senses and increase biodiversity.'

I suggest that the landscaping design for the site does exactly that. I refer the reader to Design Parameters and Planting Palette section of the Landscape section within the Appeal Brochure – Section 10 which reads:

Overall, the proposed landscape design is at a domestic scale, creating homely spaces, allows for small social gatherings and quieter contemplative resting places. The inclusion of local ornamental blossom trees will add visual appeal to the garden areas and link the scale from the buildings to the garden shrub planting. Elements of herbaceous planting will be proposed throughout the scheme for seasonal interest and increase biodiversity.

The Owners' lounge and associated patio is on the northern elevation of the proposed building. An outdoor seating area with outdoor garden timber furniture in the rear garden space will be provided for the owners lounge.

On the road frontage facing the western boundary, will be planted with an evergreen hedge. This will create a boundary to the road, and delineation between the public and private. The planting style for the amenity spaces will be more formal with seasonal interest and a strong year-round evergreen presence. Use of ornamental hedging and topiary specimens will offer instant impact and cohesive structure to the planting beds. Large specimen shrubs chosen for their tone and texture will give an established appearance upon implementation. Flowering shrubs including fragrant perpetual flowering shrubs, grasses and topiary planting provides a visual aid toward the access and egress points to the building. Proposed planting on the northern elevation of the building will be chosen for their shade tolerance given the height and shadow cast by the building. Geometrical and organic

shaped planting beds filled with topiary, semi evergreen and herbaceous plants with seasonal interest to provide an attractive garden experience. Smaller local variety and locally sourced fruit trees provide focal points at a small domestic scale whilst boundary tree planting provides screening and enclosure for the residents. Bulbs and herbaceous planting will provide seasonal interest to the site including bee friendly flowering species. Climbers including clematis and honeysuckle will be proposed on boundary treatments. A native hedge and wildflowers on the southern and eastern boundary will provide refuge for local fauna. A diverse selection of proposed plant species will provide an overall enhancement to biodiversity with the site having the potential to attract a greater range of invertebrates and therefore providing foraging/nesting habitat for notable urban species.

7.44 Although paragraphs 6.75 of the District Design Guide suggest that upper floor apartments should have use of a private balcony of a minimum 3sqm size, paragraph 6.74 does provide guidance regarding the certain circumstances where balconies should be positioned. This paragraph mentions that balconies should (amongst other requirements):

- *Benefit from sunshine and good microclimate (including air quality).*
- *Have good outlook.*
- *Be secure and relatively private.*
- *Be placed on the quiet side of the building where possible.*
- *Relate well to the architecture on which they are placed.*

From an early analysis of the site constraints it became apparent that the most appropriate position for the placement of balconies is on the southern elevation. Here balconies benefit from a southern aspect, are on the quieter side of the development (away from the access road), will not be shaded and positioned sufficiently away from the adjacent Care Home.

7.45 It is felt that positioning balconies within other parts of the scheme would not be appropriate. Balconies on the building frontage to Station Road would be an uncommon feature within the street scene and detrimental to the townscape. Balconies looking over the rail tracks are not desirable. It is also felt that positioning balconies on the north elevation would, at that position, bring the Appeal scheme too close to the amenity areas belonging to No. 4 and 6 Station Road. The balconies would also lack sufficient sunshine here as required in paragraph 6.74 of the District Design Guide.

7.46 Eight balconies have been provided on the scheme all of which have internal areas in excess of the 3sqm requirement.

7.47 Reason for refusal 03 relates to neighbouring amenity issues. It is suggested that the Appeal scheme will adversely affect the neighbouring amenity at No 4 Station Road and the approved care home to

the south through a severe loss of privacy. Reference is made to the roof and windows of No 4 Station Road and the windows belonging to the care home.

- 7.48 Paragraphs 6.40 – 6.44 of this Proof set out the nature of the relationship between the proposed Appeal scheme and the adjacent neighbours north and south.
- 7.49 Paragraph 9.176 of the Committee Report suggests that the proposed retirement building should be offset from neighbouring properties by the distances recommended in the District Design Guide (30m for a three storey scheme). This is also suggested by the Urban Design Officer's consultation response (item 6.2 in the Planning Committee Report).
- 7.50 If one were to consider offsetting the proposed built form by the recommended 30m, the Appeal site would be virtually undevelopable. I refer the reader to the Overlooking Distance Diagram produced at Section 07 of the Appeal Brochure. This diagram shows both 25m and 30m zones of influence. It is clear that if one were to strictly adhere to local policy guidance for a 3 storey scheme then the majority of the site would be undeliverable. Even at 2 storeys, only using the 25m offset, only a thin sliver of the central section of the site would be viable. It appears that the only area that could possibly be built upon is the south-western section of the site. This would surely not efficient use of a site in a highly sustainable location and close to the town centre and that is currently vacant.
- 7.51 In relation to the approximate 25m distance relationship with the Care Home, the separation distances need to be considered along with the benefits to the residents of the Care Home through the removal of the existing building on the southern boundary (Link House and Granary House). Overlooking Distance Section A-A found within Section 07 of the Appeal Brochure shows that existing southern buildings on the Appeal Site are situated less than 15m away from the Care Home. I would suggest that it is of huge benefits to the residents of the Care Home that these buildings are removed thereby opening up the space in front of the north facing care home apartments so that these units feel less enclosed.
- 7.52 Currently the south (rear) facing wall belonging to Granary House and Link House are devoid of windows. These office buildings are currently vacant however they could be converted to residential dwellings via permitted development with windows possibly added to the southern elevation. This would have a have more detrimental effect on the care home residents to the south than the proposed Appeal scheme which is in my opinion is sited appropriately.
- 7.53 The visual improvement by the removal of the southern buildings with the introduction of landscaping and tree planting is considered to offset the marginal reduction in separation distance set out in Paragraph 6.68 of the District Design Guide.
- 7.54 With regard to No 4 Station Road, at its closest point the proposed window to window relationship is 17.3m however this is to a narrow secondary window that serves part of an open plan living/dining space at First Floor. The main outlook from the open plan space is towards the south east via a set of large bi-folding doors. I refer the reader to paragraph 6.41 of this proof.

- 7.55 It should be noted that the window to window relationship noted in paragraph 7.54 above is only from First and Second floors of the Appeal proposal. Ground Floor windows within the retirement building will look onto a tall brick wall that forms part of the northern boundary of the Appeal site. This wall varies in height between 3.1m and 3.6m and, together with a further timber fence belonging to the First Floor rear deck of No 4 Station Road, screen views to the amenity areas in this area.
- 7.56 Within the local and wider context it is not uncommon for window to window distances to be at a shorter distance than the Design Guide requirement. Section 09 of the Appeal Brochure shows window to window distances, and window to amenity distances within recently constructed developments in Great Shelford. These schemes were granted permission presumably in full knowledge of the window to window distance guidance requirements. The Fletchers Way scheme is a two storey 'mews' type of development constructed in 2014. Distances between windows (habitable room to habitable room) are as close as 7.7m meters within the central plots. Distances to neighbouring windows at Granta Terrace are less than 15m. Window distances to rear gardens within the development are less than 10m (plot to plot). This distance decreases further still to less than 8m looking at window to neighbouring garden amenity areas at No 30 and No 34 London Road.
- 7.57 The two to two and a half storey Old School Court development, indicated at Section 09 of the Appeal Brochure, was constructed in 2011 and again has window to window distances at a much closer proximity than Guidance requirements. Here distances vary from under 20m to as low as 9.7m.
- 7.58 In both the Fletcher Way scheme and Old School Court schemes, window to window distances are considerably less than that of the Appeal scheme. It is presumed that the benefits of development in both these sites outweighed any negative amenity issues, and this is a consideration that should also be given to the Appeal site.
- 7.59 Section 6 of this document goes into some detail explaining the design of the scheme and provides a comprehensive rationale behind the development of the scheme and design intention. I firmly believe that the Appeal proposal is appropriate for its setting and provides a high quality design that reflects well within its context and meets the needs of its future occupiers.
- 7.60 The materials chosen are sympathetic to the context while the proposed elevations are articulated into smaller elements within the overall façade in an order and consistency to the overall development.
- 7.61 I have identified previously within this document the building is sited appropriately and relates well to its neighbours and local and wider context. I do not believe the proposed building to be too dense, or of an inappropriate building form, height and scale. The landscaping is of a high quality and specifically designed for targeted age group. The proposal enhances the character of the local urban environment with a scheme that reflects local distinctiveness and is place responsive. The scheme utilises appropriate materials and is visually attractive and should be considered a high quality design.

8.0 Summary and conclusion

- 8.1 I described above how the design process started with a detailed visual analysis of the wider and local context of the Appeal site.
- 8.2 A thorough and extensive design exercise was undertaken in identifying the opportunities that the appeal site presents. This research has resulted in a high quality and visually attractive design that befits its surroundings.
- 8.3 It was apparent at an early stage of the design process that the Appeal site has the capacity to accommodate a 2.5 - 3 storey apartment building without harming the special interests of the conservation area and immediate townscape. Furthermore, the proposed development reflects the scale, density, height and massing of the immediate environs without creating an overdeveloped or cramped site.
- 8.4 Taking into consideration the detailed assessment of all factors outlined above, in my opinion the proposed design would make a positive contribution to the townscape thereby reinforcing the established character of the contextual area.

To summarise the Appeal proposal would:

Provide buildings of appropriate mass and scale according to the contextual area.

Provide a satisfactory relationship of structures, spaces and successfully integrates into the surrounding environment.

Provide a form that reflects its setting to reinforce the local character.

Create articulated elevations appropriate to the contextual area, that provide visual interest with a building of appropriate height, rhythm and alignment for its location.

Employ high quality materials appropriate to the context.

Provide a high quality an appropriate residential environment for the intended end user.

Provide an appropriate level of shared amenity space that is of a high quality and specifically designed for the intended user.

For all of the above reasons I consider that the proposal will make a desirable contribution to the character of Great Shelford and I do not consider that this planning application should have been refused on design grounds.

