

Item No.	Application No. and Parish	Statutory Target Date	Proposal, Location, Applicant
(1)	26/00555/REG3 Hungerford Parish	14 TH May 2026	Proposed change of use from Class C2 (Residential Institution) to Class C1 (Hotel/Hostel) to provide supported temporary accommodation with onsite management and security measures. Construction of new Air source heat pump compound and cycle store. Relocation of bin store. Former Old Peoples Home, Chestnut Walk, Hungerford West Berkshire Council
¹ Extension of time agreed with applicant until 20 th August 2026			

The application can be viewed on the Council's website at the following link:
"copy link to documents online"

<https://publicaccess.westberks.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=TBHOP4RDH6J00>

Recommendation Summary: The Development Control Manager be authorised to grant conditional permission.

Ward Member(s): Councillor Benneyworth
Councillor Vickers
Councillor Gaines

Reason for Committee Determination: The applicant is the Council and in addition more than 10 objections received

Committee Site Visit: 9th July 2026

Contact Officer Details

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is for the Committee to consider the proposed development against the policies of the development plan and the relevant material considerations, and to make a decision as to whether to approve or refuse the application.
- 1.2 Given that the applicant and owner of the land is this Council the application is made under the remit of Regulation 3 of the 1992 Town and Country Planning Regulations which controls how local planning authorities determine applications made by the same Council.
- 1.3 This applicant is seeking planning permission for the change of use of a now vacant Old Persons Home, formerly operated by this Council [Class C2] to a hostel for the single homeless-supported living [but no care given per se] so this will be Class C1 of the 2020 Use Classes Order as amended. This will be for up to 12 rooms with the ability to vary the internal accommodation in the future to allow for some family units if required. It is anticipated that as a maximum, 16 residents could be accommodated in the facility. There will also be some staff employed on the site [but not living there] to assist the occupiers in life skills where needed, but this is not “care” as such so the use class is C1 not C2-hence the need for the application as presented to the Committee.
- 1.4 In addition, there is to be a new external air source heat pump compound, a new bike store plus a relocated bin store. The existing 3 car parking spaces on site [one disabled] will remain with no additional spaces proposed on site for staff or visitors or indeed residents. There are few other external physical changes to the building, which is single storey.
- 1.5 The building itself lies in a well established residential area in the town, so lying within the defined settlement boundary. In addition, the North Wessex Downs National Designated Landscape [NWDNDL] washes over the whole area-was the AONB. It is single storey. All of the application site lies in flood zone 1 and there are no arboricultural or ecological specific restraints on the site.

2. Planning History

- 2.1 The table below outlines the relevant planning history of the application site.

Application	Proposal	Decision / Date
21/01868/fuld	Demolition of Home at Chestnut Walk and erection of 8 dwellings.	Resolved to be approved but no decision issued. Will be disposed of under the DMPO of 2015.
25/02514/preapp	Pre application enquiry for change of use of the Old Persons Home to a C1 use.	Closed - December 2025.

- 2.2 It is noted that no formal decision notice was issued with 21/01868/FULD. This is because the required s106 agreement was not finalised between the Council and Sovereign Housing. No extant permission lies on the site, other than the present C2 use which has not been abandoned notwithstanding the closure of the site in 2016.

3. Legal and Procedural Matters

- 3.1 **Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA):** Given the nature, scale and location of this development, it is not considered to fall within the description of any development listed in Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017. As such, EIA screening is not required.
- 3.2 **Publicity:** Publicity has been undertaken in accordance with Article 15 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015, and the Council's Statement of Community Involvement. Site notice[s] were displayed on the site on the 2nd of April this year, with a deadline for representations of the 23rd April. Notification letters were sent to 28 neighbours on the 25th of March 2026.
- 3.3 **Local Financial Considerations:** Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) provides that a local planning authority must have regard to a local finance consideration as far as it is material. Whether or not a 'local finance consideration' is material to a particular decision will depend on whether it could help to make the development acceptable in planning terms. It would not be appropriate to make a decision based on the potential for the development to raise money for a local authority or other government body. The table below identified the relevant local financial considerations for this proposal. It is necessary to note that whilst not a land use planning matter, if the application is approved the implementation of the application will mean cost savings to the Council since fewer homeless people will be housed in bed and breakfast accommodation.

Consideration	Applicable to proposal	Material to decision	Refer to paragraph(s)
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)	No	No	
New Homes Bonus	No	No	
Affordable Housing	Yes	Yes	
Public Open Space or Play Areas	No	No	
Developer Contributions (S106)	No	No	
Job Creation	No	No	

- 3.4 **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):** Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a levy charged on most new development within an authority area. The money is used to pay for new infrastructure, supporting the development of an area by funding the provision, replacement, operation or maintenance of infrastructure. CIL will be used to fund roads and other transport facilities, schools and other educational facilities, flood defences, medical facilities, open spaces, and sports and recreational areas. Subject to the application of any applicable exemptions, CIL will be charged on residential (Use Classes C3 and C4) and retail (former Use Classes A1 – A5) development at a rate per square metre (based on Gross Internal Area) on new development of more

than 100 square metres of gross internal area (including extensions) or when a new dwelling is created (even if it is less than 100 square metres). CIL liability, and the application of any exemptions, will be formally confirmed by the CIL Charging Authority under separate cover following any grant of planning permission. More information is available at <https://www.westberks.gov.uk/community-infrastructure-levy>

- 3.5 **New Homes Bonus (NHB):** New Homes Bonus payments recognise the efforts made by authorities to bring residential development forward. NHB money will be material to the planning application when it is reinvested in the local areas in which the developments generating the money are to be located, or when it is used for specific projects or infrastructure items which are likely to affect the operation or impacts of those developments. NHB is not considered to be a relevant material consideration in this instance, but can be noted for information.
- 3.6 **Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED):** In determining this application the Council is required to have due regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The Council must have due regard to the need to achieve the following objectives:
- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 3.7 Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to—
- (a) remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
 - (b) take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
 - (c) encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.
- 3.8 The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief. Whilst there is no absolute requirement to fully remove any disadvantage, the duty is to have regard to and remove or minimise disadvantage. In considering the merits of this planning application, due regard has been given to these objectives. It is necessary to note that the application if approved will assist in delivering additional accommodation for the homeless, so improving overall equality.
- 3.9 **Human Rights Act:** The development has been assessed against the provisions of the Human Rights Act, including Article 1 of the First Protocol (Protection of property), Article 6 (Right to a fair trial) and Article 8 (Right to respect for private and family life and home) of the Act itself. The consideration of the application in accordance with the Council procedures will ensure that views of all those interested are taken into account. All comments from interested parties have been considered and reported in summary in this report, with full text available via the Council's website.

- 3.10 It is acknowledged that there are certain properties where they may be some impact (this can be mitigated by conditions – if relevant) However, any interference with the right to a private and family life and home arising from the scheme as a result of impact on residential amenity is considered necessary in a democratic society in the interests of the social well-being of the district and wider area and is proportionate given the overall benefits of the scheme in terms of the provision of more homeless accommodation.
- 3.11 Any interference with property rights is in the public interest and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 regime for controlling the development of land. This recommendation is based on the consideration of the proposal against adopted Development Plan policies, the application of which does not prejudice the Human Rights of the applicant or any third party. It is noted that some of the objections relate to a reduction in local property values-this is not a planning matter and cannot be treated as material to consideration of this application.
- 3.12 **Listed building setting:** Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that special regard must be had to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. Section 16(2) has the same requirement for proposals for listed building consent. There are no listed buildings in the site vicinity.
- 3.13 **Conservation areas:** Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires special attention to be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area. There are no conservation areas in the vicinity.
- 3.14 **National Landscapes (AONB):** Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 (as amended) provides a general duty for public bodies: “Any relevant authority exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to effect, land in an area of outstanding natural beauty in England must seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty).” AONBs have been rebranded to be known as National Landscapes, although their legal AONB status continues. All of the application site lies in this designation.

4. Consultation

Statutory and non-statutory consultation

- 4.1 The table below summarises the consultation responses received during the consideration of the application. The full responses may be viewed with the application documents on the Council’s website, using the link at the start of this report.

Hungerford Town Council	Objection -appended to the report as Appendix 1 is the objection as it covers many points which the Committee should take into account.
Highways:	Seeking more information as to why no additional onsite parking is not being provided, given the number of proposed residents and staffing numbers. Information awaited -will be noted on update sheet. No concerns about additional traffic generation in the area.

Environmental Health	No objections but it is noted that no noise impact assessment has been submitted with the application, in relation to the increased noise arising from the ASHP as proposed. This can be conditioned.
Ecology, trees and Adult Social Care. Plus waste services, and SUDS.	No observations to make. No objections. No conditions recommended.

Public representations

4.2 Representations have been received from 15 contributors, one of which supports, and 13 of which object to the proposal. In addition, one is ambivalent.

4.3 The full responses may be viewed with the application documents on the Council's website, using the link at the start of this report. In summary, the following issues/points have been raised:

- Objections -the hostel is not needed in this area, but if so should go somewhere else, increase in crime , increase in antisocial behaviour, not a suitable use for this area, fear of crime will rise, drop in property values, poor external appearance with ASHP , increased noise from the latter, overall rise in noise and disturbance, how will security measures be enforced , over intensification of the site, rise in local parking pressures. Is this good value for money in terms of the Council? Visual harm to the NWDNDL. Will encourage local drug taking. How will the site be policed? Increased impact on local infrastructure.
- Ambivalent. Support in principle the use, but consider that more beneficial renewable technologies could be used other than the ASHP, such as solar panels.
- One support, but still some concerns about increased noise, and security issues.

5. Planning Policy

5.1 Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The following policies of the statutory development plan are relevant to the consideration of this application.

Development Plan Document	Relevant Policies
<u>West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2023-2041</u>	Strategic Policies • Policy SP1 The Spatial Strategy • Policy SP2 North Wessex Downs AONB • Policy SP3 Settlement Hierarchy • Policy SP7 Design Quality • Policy SP8 Landscape Character Development Management Policies

	• Policy DM19 Specialised Housing • Policy DM44 Parking • Policy DM45 Travel Planning
<u>Hungerford NDP (2025)</u>	Objective B: Ensure that housing development provides a range of house types, sizes and tenures that meets the needs of all age groups and incomes. [Officer note-this presumably includes any local homeless persons].

5.2 The following material considerations are relevant to the consideration of this application:

- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

6. Appraisal

Principle of development/ Policy.

- 6.1 The principle of the use accords with the general thrust of policy SP1 in the WBLPR, in that it involves a clearly unused brownfield site, in a sustainable location. As the advice notes in SP1, this application effectively involves a windfall site for housing [albeit not use class C3] in one of the District's "major" settlements. In addition, in terms of overall housing need for the homeless it is well located in the West of the District, given existing provision already in both Newbury and Thatcham.
- 6.2 In terms of detailed policy, policy DM19 for specialised housing identifies the following—"The provision of new specialist forms of housing designed to meet the needs of those with identified support or care needs will be supported where: a. Housing meets a proven locally identified need in the District for the specific housing product being proposed; and b. The location is appropriate, in terms of design, layout, and accessibility of facilities, services and public transport, subject to other policies in the Plan being satisfied. Planning permission for extensions or alterations to existing specialised housing will also be supported where: c. The activities and/or operations associated with the development do not cause unacceptable harm to the amenity of neighbours, through increased noise and disturbance or obtrusive light; and d. Due regard is given to the design of the development, taking into account the needs of the end users, particularly with regard to onsite accessible outdoor spaces and provision of a satisfactory outlook for all residents. Proposals for new specialised housing or extensions to existing accommodation, should demonstrate appropriate and evidence-based provision for: i. On-site car and cycle parking; and ii. The storage of mobility scooters and/or wheelchairs.
- 6.3 The above criteria will now be considered in more detail below.
- 6.4 Firstly, there is the ongoing demand and need for additional accommodation for the homeless across the District -the Council has a legal responsibility to house all those in need seeking such accommodation. Indeed over the last year across the District the number of households living in temporary accommodation has risen from 100 to 163 which is a significant rise. Accordingly, criterion [a] is met. In terms of location [criterion b] the site is very well located within reasonable walking distance of Hungerford centre with all its facilities, plus bus routes and the train to eg Newbury. Criterion [b] is met. Thirdly, criterion [c] examines local amenity impacts: despite local objections the EH officer, subject to the noise impact condition for the air source heat pumps, has raised

no objections. In terms of the design and layout of the scheme it is noted that there is little onsite amenity space but the Common and the Town Recreation Ground all lie in close proximity to the site. In relation to the onsite parking query, the applicant has been asked to provide further information on this point, and this will be identified in the update report. It is acknowledged that given the nature of the future occupants the likelihood of car ownership at all, is low. Fewer visitors will be experienced as compared to the past use as well.

- 6.5 It is concluded by officers, that the policy advice in DM19 is met. In addition, it is also noted that the scheme complies with Objective B of the Hungerford NDP.

6.6 Concerns of objectors and the Town Council.

- 6.7 It is noted that the possible devaluation of homes has been raised in objection but is not a planning matter. However, it is also accepted that the fear of anti social behaviour and on site /off site security issues relating to potential crime and drug use are capable of being material planning matters which the Committee can take into account. Case law substantiates this matter. Officers do not consider that the proposed works will result in such a level of impact in this respect as to merit reason for refusal of the application.
- 6.8 The Environmental Health officer has not raised any objections apart from noise issues from the ASHP so amenity issues other than the ones above are considered acceptable by officers. The parking issue will be addressed in the update report and the LPA must consider the merits and demerits of the application before it, not reject it on the basis that it would not be suitable for Hungerford, or might fulfil greater utility in an alternative location.
- 6.9 The likelihood of the new use somehow affecting the special qualities of the NWDNDL is extremely low. Given the location in the built-up area and the very few external changes to be made.
- 6.10 Whether the scheme is good value or not for the Council is not a planning matter for the LPA, but a matter for the Council as a whole.
- 6.11 Finally, the possibility that the new residents will have a greater impact on local infrastructure and facilities over and above the permitted C2 use [which could be restarted at any time without recourse to planning permission] is very low. This is because the impact of the care home on local services would have been as great if not greater than the proposed use. Next, some objections relate to the impact on the local street scene due to the ASHP being constructed on the frontage. The case officer has examined the submitted plans and seen the site and is content that the impact will be low, given the existing nature of the building which is becoming dilapidated. Indeed, the new scheme by bringing the building back into use will be a visual enhancement in the officer opinion, so complying with the advice in policy SP7 in the WBLPR.
- 6.12 Accordingly, to conclude, whilst the Committee should take some of the objections into account, a number should not be, as highlighted above.

7. Planning Balance and Conclusion

- 7.1 On the one hand the objections of the local residents are recognised and have been taken into full account, in the recommendation arrived at. It is perhaps inevitable that there may be a limited degree of impact on local amenity with the change of use from the nursing home to the hostel, simply because of general increased activity on and off site. However, on the other hand there are strong reasons to approve the scheme,

because the site is currently an underused resource, it is previously developed and lies in a sustainable location with good access to services and amenities. In addition, it will address a specific high need in the local area for supporting the homeless community in the District, so complying with the advice in policy DM19.

- 7.2 Accordingly, officers are recommending that conditional permission be granted, given the clear social benefits which will arise from the implementation of the scheme.

8. Full Recommendation

8.1 To delegate to the Development Manager to GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION subject to the conditions listed below.

Conditions

1	Commencement of development The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission. Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).
2	Approved plans The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans and documents listed below: all 250120-job number. 60-101, 30-102, and 10-002. [Location, elevations and floor plans]. Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interest of proper planning.
3	Noise Impact Assessment. A noise impact assessment shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority within 3 months of the date of this decision. Based on its findings, a scheme to protect nearby dwellings and gardens from plant noise shall also be submitted and approved, within 5 months of the date of this decision. The approved noise mitigation measures must be fully implemented prior to the operation of the air source heat pump [not occupation of the premises] and shall be retained and maintained thereafter. Reason: To ensure adequate protection for nearby residents from noise arising from plant noise. In accord with policy DM30 in the WBLPR of 2023 to 2041.