



# **Compton Neighbourhood Development Plan**

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## **Pirbright Site Issues and Policy Objectives**

**Interim Policy Statement**

**September 2019**

## 1. Objective of Report

- 1.1. The purpose of this Report is to provide an early and clear view of the Compton Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) position, supported by its Village survey results, regarding the application of planning policies to the potential future development of the Pirbright Institute site<sup>1</sup> (previously known as the Institute for Animal Health – IAH site). The NDP agrees that the site should in the future be redeveloped pursuant to West Berkshire Housing Site Allocations DPD Policy HSA23 and the 'Pirbright Institute Site, Compton' Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). Since the production and adoption of this SPD, the site has been purchased by Homes England (HE).
- 1.2. The NDP Steering Group are aware that HE are seeking to submit an outline planning application for the redevelopment of the Institute site. This application may be made as early as Autumn 2019, which would be in advance of the NDP reaching an advanced stage. The NDP Steering Group has listened to the views of the community, which has revealed general concerns about the potential redevelopment and the opportunities afforded by a neighbourhood plan to provide further detail and direction on how this should be redevelopment. This Report has therefore been prepared to clarify the likely policy direction of the emerging Compton NDP concerning the redevelopment of the Site, which is an important component of the overall NDP for the whole Compton Designated Neighbourhood Area, covering the entire parish.

## 2. Recommendations

Compton Parish Council is recommended to:

- 2.1. Note and endorse the contents of this report as a planning policy position statement associated with the emerging Compton NDP on the potential future development of the Pirbright site in Compton.

## 3. Background

### The Site

- 3.1. The Parish of Compton<sup>2</sup> covers an area of 1,502.19 hectares with a population of 1,571 persons and 624 dwellings<sup>3</sup>. The 15-hectare(ha) brownfield site is located currently comprises mainly research and agricultural units, along with ancillary office space reflecting

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<sup>1</sup> The site was formerly known as the Institute for Animal Health (IAH) site in Compton but was subsequently renamed

<sup>2</sup> The Designated Compton Neighbourhood Area

<sup>3</sup> 2011 Census

the function of the site as a scientific research facility. The buildings vary in age, quality and size, and are spread across the site.

- 3.2. The Pirbright Institute is an institute of the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC), whose primary function is to fund biological and biotechnological scientific research. The Institute delivered applied science at the Site focused on infectious diseases of farm animals. This knowledge was used to advance veterinary science, and to enhance the sustainability of livestock farming. In addition to research, the Institute provided diagnostic services for a number of diseases and gives expert advice to the UK government and international agencies.
- 3.3. The Institute occupied the site in Compton from 1942 until 2015 and as a result the village has grown around the site and integrated it into community life. As a large employer in the village the Institute had many of its employees living and working in Compton during the peak of its operations and its departure has had a significant impact on not only the village but the community as a whole.
- 3.4. The BBSRC has consolidated activities of the Institute onto its site at Pirbright in Surrey, thus leaving the site at Compton vacant.
- 3.5. The Pirbright Institute Site (the site) and surrounding land is now under the control of Homes England (HE) who are intending on submitting a planning application to West Berkshire Council for the redevelopment of the site.

#### Current Planning Policy

- 3.6. The relevant development plan comprises the West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006-2026) adopted July 2012 (CS) and the West Berkshire Housing Site Allocations DPD (2006-2026) adopted May 2017 (HSADPD).
- 3.7. The village of Compton is designated within the CS as a 'Service Village' located wholly within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Policy ADP 1 confirms Services Villages have '*More limited range of services and some limited development potential*' in the third tier of the settlement hierarchy. It continues to state:  
  
*'The scale and density of development will be related to the site's current or proposed accessibility, character and surroundings. Significant intensification of residential, employment generating and other intensive uses will be avoided within areas which lack sufficient supporting infrastructure, facilities or services or where opportunities to access them by public transport, cycling and walking are limited.'*
- 3.8. CS Policy ADPP5 for the North Wessex Downs AONB confirms that new housing allocations will have an emphasis on meeting identified local needs, development allocated '*will depend on the role and function that the settlement perform, supported by suitable development opportunities*', with the site assessment led by the '*conservation and*

enhancement of the natural beauty of the landscape’. It continues to state ‘The service villages will continue to provide a range of services to their communities and surrounding areas. A limited level of development will be accommodated to meet local needs, including employment, housing, amenity and community facilities, to maintain the areas as vibrant and balanced communities with their own sense of identity.’ The CS recognises that the site ‘could potentially provide a greater level of growth than that normally expected in a service village, which will have implications for the distribution of development. However, as well as infrastructure and sustainability issues associated with these sites’ clarity on delivery and appropriate scale of development was not known at the point of adopting the CS.

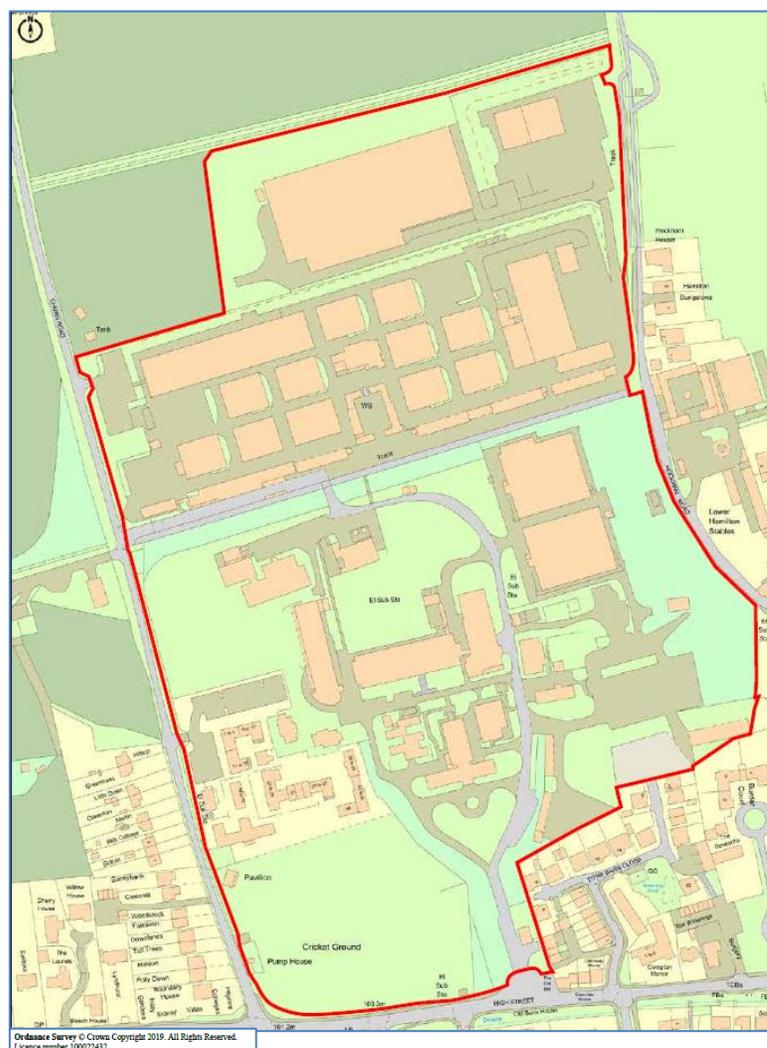


Figure 1 - Extent of Policy HSA23 allocation

- 3.9. Figure 1 above shows the extent of the whole site for allocation. Under Policy HSA23 ‘a developable area of approximately 9.1 hectares’ is considered suitable for a residential led mixed-use development scheme with a mix of employment floorspace, green infrastructure and community uses. The whole of the ‘red line’ is therefore not suitable for development. The development will be delivered in accordance with 13 parameters including that the

*'development will be residential-led with the provision of approximately 140 dwellings, delivering an appropriate mix of dwelling sizes and types which conserve and enhance the character of Compton. An element of employment floorspace will be replaced within the site.'*

3.10. This number of 140 dwellings will represent a considerable change in the size and balance of Compton by introducing an anticipated approximately 340 additional inhabitants<sup>4</sup> (a population increase of approximately 20%), impacting all aspects of the village community, infrastructure and facilities.

3.11. The formal allocation by the HSADPD followed examination with the Inspector concluding in their report<sup>5</sup> the following matters:

- It is essential that any development respects the location of the site within the AONB and is compatible with the character and appearance in the village (para 97).
- The significant areas required for landscape buffers are justified in order to ensure that, in particular, the visual consequences of the development on the AONB would be acceptable (para 97).
- There is a risk that the provision of any such significant number of new dwellings (in addition to those under HSA23) in a relatively small settlement could have detrimental consequences, not only on the character of the village but also on the community itself (para 98).
- The implementation of a scheme would be viable in accordance with Policy HSA23 (para 99).
- Any change in circumstances could be assessed and considered as part of the NDP process (para 101).

3.12. The formal allocation in the HSADPD updates a Supplementary Planning Document (the SPD) adopted by West Berkshire Council in September 2013, which was produced from engagement with the Parish Council, local community and landowners. Any conflict between the original SPD and the HSADPD must be resolved in favour of the policy which is contained in the last document to be adopted, approved or published.

3.13. In summary, Policy HSA23 in combination with relevant sections of the SPD, provides the starting point upon which any future planning application must be prepared and determined. It is essential that any development respects the location of the site within the AONB and is compatible with other densities in the village. Significant areas required for landscape buffers are justified in order to ensure that, in particular, the visual consequences

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<sup>4</sup> Based on 2.4 persons per dwelling

<sup>5</sup> File Ref: PINS/W0340/429/6 (06<sup>th</sup> April 2017) Inspector's Report on the examination into the West Berkshire Housing Site Allocations Development Plan Document.

of the development on the AONB would be acceptable. The amount and extent of development envisaged by Policy HSA23 has been tested by the HSADPD Inspector and was considered viable and sound. Any change in circumstances can be assessed and considered as part of the NDP process.

#### Emerging Planning Policy

- 3.14. A Neighbourhood Area for Compton Parish was designated in January 2017, of which the HSADPD allocation HSA23 (Pirbright Site) is included. A Steering Group has been established to lead the preparation of the Compton Neighbourhood Plan (NDP) on behalf of Compton Parish Council. The NDP is proceeding towards the preparation of a draft NDP and evidence base leading towards a Regulation 14 consultation. The NDP will cover the period to 2036.
- 3.15. West Berkshire Council is currently reviewing the Local Plan to cover the period to 2036. A consultation statement on the 2018 Regulation 18 consultation paper was published in June 2019. The timetable for the Local Plan Review will be published in Autumn 2019.

#### National Policy

- 3.16. The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (February 2019) states the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. At a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has 3 overarching economic, social and environmental objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives).
- 3.17. The whole of the parish of Compton is located within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads. The scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited. Planning permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances.
- 3.18. Neighbourhood planning gives communities the power to develop a shared vision for their area. Neighbourhood plans can shape, direct and help to deliver sustainable development, by influencing local planning decisions as part of the statutory development plan. Neighbourhood plans should not promote less development than set out in the strategic policies for the area, or undermine those strategic policies. Neighbourhood plans must meet certain 'basic conditions' and other legal requirements before they can come into

force. These are tested through an independent examination before the neighbourhood plan may proceed to referendum.

- 3.19. Once a neighbourhood plan has been brought into force, the policies it contains take precedence over existing non-strategic policies in a local plan covering the neighbourhood area, where they are in conflict; unless they are superseded by strategic or non-strategic policies that are adopted subsequently.

## 4. NDP Proposals

- 4.1. The NDP will develop a shared vision for Compton to shape the development and growth of the local area. The NDP will be aligned with the strategic needs and priorities of the wider local area with the plan period to 2036 consistent with the Local Plan Review. The NDP will include planning policies for development and use of land in the designated Neighbourhood Area, which includes the HSA23 allocation site.
- 4.2. The Planning Practice Guidance<sup>6</sup> confirms neighbourhood plans should not re-allocate sites that are already allocated through these strategic plans. However, the HSADPD Inspector was very clear that any change in circumstances at the Site could be assessed and considered as part of the NDP process.
- 4.3. Based on the NDP evidence-base collected to date and consultation with the community, it has established that the following key issues relating to the Site have not been adequately addressed within HSADPD Policy HSA23 and the SPD. Consequently, the NDP Steering Group considers that there is justification for the NDP to add further detail and interpretation on the HSA23 allocation through the creation of planning policies for the site in the NDP in respect of the following matters:
- The number of dwellings and the density of development.
  - The type of employment floorspace / land that should be delivered.
  - How an appropriate range of homes can be delivered, including to meet demonstrable local needs.
  - How constructing at an appropriate density and typology of housing can assist with the transition to the open countryside to the north.
  - What existing buildings and facilities should be retained and enhanced on the Site to achieve a healthy and inclusive community.

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<sup>6</sup> ID: 41-044-20190509

- The high value of greenspace at the Site, including whether the Local Greenspace Designation is appropriate.
- The need to deliver a sustainable and well-designed place with community involvement at the heart of the design process.

## Number of dwellings and density

- 4.4. Policy HSA23(i) confirms the development will be residential-led with the provision of approximately 140 dwellings. The examining Inspector confirmed this quantum was both viable and sound, including in the context of major development in the AONB where the development, as allocated to the developable areas in B and C, is in the public interest.
- 4.5. The term ‘approximately’ is not defined, however it is also clear from the examining Inspector that a significant number of new dwellings in a relatively small settlement could have detrimental consequences, not only on the AONB where planning permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances, the character of the village but also on the community itself which consists of a dwelling stock of 639 dwellings. The proposed addition of 140 dwellings to this present stock represents a 22% increase. The developable area of the site is based upon that within the adopted SPD which has been influenced by the location within the AONB and impact upon the landscape. In accordance with Core Strategy policy ADPP5, West Berkshire Council’s paramount consideration for the site is that development does not cause harm to the natural beauty and special qualities of the AONB. To calculate the indicative number of dwellings for the site, a standard density for the AONB was used (20 dwellings per hectare). Therefore, a density of 20 dwellings per hectare was applied to an area of 7 hectares. The HSA DPD glossary outlines that the approximate dwelling figures are given to allow for some flexibility at the detailed design stage.
- 4.6. There is great concern that the October 2017 Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Report<sup>7</sup> for the redevelopment of the site at Section 3 describes the proposal for *200 to 250 dwellings*, which would equate to a 79% above the size of the allocation and a 39% increase in the stock of dwellings at Compton. This quantum is far beyond the scope of ‘*approximate*’ to the ordinary and reasonable reader.
- 4.7. Question 12 of the 2018 NDP Survey asked how many houses (in addition to 140 homes at the Institute) could sustainably be built within Compton parish over the next 15 years. A total of 191 of 414 returns (the vast majority) stated 1-25 homes and 61 of 414 stated 26-50 homes. These aspirations would result in the increase in housing stock of between 3.2% and 6.4% of the dwelling stock. These responses must be considered in context with questions 13 and 14 that offered greatest support (72%) for smaller developments (9 dwellings or fewer) with a priority towards infilling or re-use of brownfield sites within the built-up area. The Institute is a brownfield site, however it should not be assumed that the

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<sup>7</sup> Prepared by AECOM on behalf of Homes England dated October 2017 under 17/02874/SCOPE

whole of the curtilage should be developed, as confirmed by Policy HSA23 of the SPD, whereby a proportion of the theoretical additional 25 homes could be located – thereby removing pressure on greenfield sites elsewhere.

4.8. Policy HSA23(iv) requires the overall density of the site to reflect the character of Compton (which has a range of densities between 11 and 21<sup>8</sup>) with a distinction between Area B (lower density) and Area C to reflect the built form pattern on the northern edge of the village and to prevent an adverse impact on the AONB. The overall developable area (excluding Area A, landscape buffers and land within fluvial Flood Zones 2 and 3 below 103m AOD) is estimated to extend to approximately 7 hectares equating to an overall density of around 20 dwellings per hectare based on 140 dwellings, which is already at the higher end of the density ranges in the village. In preventing any adverse impact on the AONB and considering an increase in dwellings above 140 and therefore density, paragraph 172 of the NPPF states that *“Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in... Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues.”* It goes on to state that *“the scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited. Planning permission should be refused for major development unless exceptional circumstances exist”* which are then defined in national policy.

4.9. The proposed NDP policy response is as follows:

**Proposed Policy Direction 1 – The redevelopment of the Institute for a residential-led mixed-use scheme will be supported in accordance with Policy HSA23 provided that the quantum of residential development remains for 140 dwellings and any greater number of dwellings demonstrates it will not harm the character of the village and the community and, in relation to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in the AONB includes an assessment of:**

**(a) the need for the additional development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy;**

**(b) the cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and**

**(c) any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.**

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<sup>8</sup> See West Berkshire Housing Site Allocations DPD Examination Document PS/04/05/33 ‘Summarise density work carried out for Pirbright Institute’

## Employment

- 4.10. In 1937, landowners Alfred Barclay sold the Manor Farm Estate of 1500 acres to the Agricultural Research Council (ARC). Compton was chosen as a site for an ARC Field Station because Barclay had already been working alongside the ARC on some small-scale research project. The ARC later bought a further 500 acres between Compton and Ilsley. Renamed the Institute for Research on Animal Diseases, the organisation had a huge impact on village life, building over 100 houses for staff and villagers were reported to welcome the employment opportunities. In 1975 there was 350 staff, easily the major employer in the village. Numbers that were roughly maintained until 1993. The company was renamed the Institute for Animal Health and continued to add and improve its services. In 1993 Compton produced one of the first breakthroughs in the understanding of BSE. The site's last major addition was the Edward Jenner Institute for Vaccine Research. In 1987, the operation was renamed the Pirbright Institute. The facility at Compton closed down in 2015, all of the company's operations moving to the Surrey base at Pirbright.
- 4.11. The company's influence in the village was significant with many families associated with employment on the Pirbright site. Some have remained in Compton, with a number commuting to the site in Surrey, while others have continued to live in Compton but have found scientific roles elsewhere. The 2011 census data shows that 14.1% (the highest percentage) of the population is employed in the scientific and technical sector. This is further supported by the NDP Survey 'Where Do You Work' conducted in July 2019, where the scientific and technical sectors were again the most popular. A very high percentage of Compton's inhabitants work in the science industry as Compton is a short distance south of 'Science Vale UK', which is a significant area of economic growth that is well on the way to becoming a global hotspot for enterprise and innovation. Spread across both South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils' areas, it is home to a significant proportion of the region's scientific, research and development, and high technology businesses. The region is gaining an international reputation as a first-choice business location for companies wanting to make their mark in business and research. Science Vale UK has two enterprise zones and new businesses relocating to these areas can benefit from business rates discounts, superfast broadband and simplified planning.
- 4.12. Further significant-sized businesses have moved to Compton, most of them with scientific backgrounds, such as Ridgeway Pharmaceuticals, Carbosynth, the companies attracted by the facilities in the village and the good transport links. Carbosynth, a growing company who has recently merged with another German company, has two locations in the village and is keen to remain here. They have already expanded from their original site to include the former Raceform building on the High Street. As a key local employer it is of utmost importance to retain them in the village. At present around 10 per cent of its 90-strong work force are Compton residents – at all levels from manual workers to board level.
- 4.13. A Business Survey has been conducted in support of the NDP. The Survey revealed established companies ranging from local downland to international businesses based in

Compton, with single homeworkers to companies employing more than 50 members of staff. While the Survey revealed general satisfaction towards companies being located in Compton, the Survey indicates challenges associated in attracting staff and moving to the village. The Survey revealed high support for more business development in Compton. Carbosynth would be interested in some shared business space for meetings and a business hub, possibly also sports and showering facilities. This view was echoed by all sizes of businesses in the village, including the growing band of full-time and part-time homeworkers, single person companies as well as the larger organisations based in the village. The shop and Post Office and the Foinavon are important facilities to retain in the village for local businesses. Improved broadband was similarly another service requiring improvement.

- 4.14. Policy HSA23(i) aims an element of employment floorspace will be replaced within the Site, however the policy does not determine the quantum or type of floorspace. There is currently approximately 16,700sqm of employment floorspace at the site and there has always been a strong desire to have a level of employment on the site as part of any future redevelopment to help keep Compton as a vibrant place to live and work, reflecting its history as a working village and the contribution of the Institute to the local rural and science economy. It is recognised that the redevelopment cannot provide equal quantity of employment floorspace, however there is great concern that the October 2017 EIA Scoping Report at Section 3 excluded any reference to employment floorspace on-site within the description of the proposed development.
- 4.15. The inclusion of employment floorspace, such as offices and small industrial units as part of a business-hub for those wishing to start and grow business, remains essential to encourage job creation and support the existing employers in the village. While there are a range of local employers, the closure of the largest employment sites mean that the majority of employed persons now travel out of Compton to their work. A range of primarily small-scale employment floorspace should be provided for Use Classes B1a (offices), B1(b) (research and development) and B1(c) (light industry). Reflecting on the strong tradition of scientific businesses in the village and the wider local region, the NDP would encourage the provision of floorspace for “clean businesses”. Compton is ideally located to take advantage of the 2020 Thames Valley Berkshire LEP life Science Sector, and due to the range of existing structures on the Site that could be suitable for continued employment use, the Pirbright site is considered the most suitable for such opportunities. A planning application should therefore demonstrate why it is not possible to re-use existing buildings to establish the enterprise hub.
- 4.16. The proposed NDP policy response is as follows:

**Proposed Policy Direction 2 – The redevelopment of the Site shall provide an enterprise hub for a range of small-scale employment floorspace for Use Classes B1(a), B1(b) and B1(c) for those wishing to start and grow businesses, that are compatible in terms of amenity with a residential-led mixed-use scheme. There will be a preference for the re-**

use existing buildings for this purpose and any proposals for new employment buildings should demonstrate why this is essential.

## Housing

- 4.17. CS Policy CS4 requires residential development to contribute to the delivery of an appropriate mix of dwelling types and sizes to meet the housing needs of all sectors of the community. The mix on an individual site should have regard to a number of considerations including the character of the area and evidence of need and demand.
- 4.18. CS Policy CS6 requires 30% provision of affordable housing on previously developed land. Policy HSA23(ii) requires a local lettings policy to be explored for the site to allow a percentage of the affordable housing provision to be reserved for people with local needs. It is understood that there can be no other priority given on HE grant funded schemes other than those serving in the MOD unless the Section 106 Legal Agreement states otherwise and is dated prior to January 2017. All others must be allocated on a first come first served basis. With non-grant funded schemes this rule does not apply. Consequential it may be that local lettings may not be feasible for shared ownership / equity tenures.
- 4.19. The NDP vision is to provide a range of owned and rented housing of different types, in a sustainable mixed setting of energy efficient quality homes, recreational facilities, green spaces and work places, to suit and be affordable to each demographic, as defined by age and circumstances, and sympathetically designed to integrate with and protect the rural character of the village.
- 4.20. Compton Parish Council commissioned CCB to provide a 'Report on Housing Need Compton' in November 2016. It recognised there is significant aspiration for home ownership in Compton. Some of that will be met within any new development at the Institute. It can be assumed that general development at the Institute will include mixed ownership tenures that will provide opportunities for Shared Ownership as well as outright purchase and may also include Right to Buy or even Starter Homes. The Report recommended the development of a rural exception site to meet the affordable housing needs of local people. The identified need is set out in the table below. A site of 12 homes comprising a mixture of 1, 2- and 3-bedroom properties, including both Shared Ownership and Affordable Rent tenures is advised. Such units should come forward on-site as part of the redevelopment of the Site in order to bring forward a range of homes to meet needs at the earliest opportunity. Delivery at the site could reduce the need to bring forward an exception site on greenfield land.

*Table 1: Property need, size and tenure in Compton (CCB report)*

	<b>Affordable Rent units</b>	<b>Shared Ownership units</b>
1 bedroom	6	5
2 bedrooms	3	1
3 bedrooms	2	2
Total	11	7

- 4.21. As of November 2016, there were 41 households registered on the West Berkshire Housing Waiting List with a local connection to Compton. The greatest need identified is for 1 and 2 bedroom properties.
- 4.22. The NDP will therefore ensure that required numbers of affordable homes are met in the development in order to provide a wide choice of high-quality homes that are affordable across a range of tenures for local people.
- 4.23. The proposed NDP policy response is as follows:

**Proposed Policy Direction 3 – The size, mix and tenure of affordable homes at the Site should take into account the recommendations of the CCB Report on Housing Need Compton and other evidence of local need. At least 12 of the affordable homes of an appropriate size, mix and tenure shall be delivered at the Site under a local lettings policy to be reserved for people with local needs.**

- 4.24. Paragraph 118 of the NPPF recognizes the need to promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings especially if this would help to meet identified needs for housing where land supply is constrained and available sites could be used more effectively. In this case, Compton is located within the AONB and as a significant brownfield resource within the built-up area, all opportunities to effectively re-use existing buildings should be utilised.
- 4.25. There are a range of existing buildings at the Site. The Hostel complex was previously used as accommodation for students attending the Institute. It is believed to consist of at least twelve 1- or 2-bedroom flats/houses, some with shared kitchen and bathroom facilities. Until recently leased to Sovereign Housing to provide accommodation for single persons and young couples. The building has an attractive external layout with paths and green spaces between blocks, vehicle access to Churn Road, car parking and with some accommodation overlooking the cricket pitch. This building is outside of the development areas within the Pirbright SPD. The retention and refurbishment of this Hostel accommodation should be considered as part of the redevelopment and could provide suitable accommodation to meet a range of housing needs. At time of this document a request from the NDP to HE to gain access to inside of selected buildings has so far been refused.

4.26. The proposed NDP policy response is as follows:

**Proposed Policy Direction 4 – The redevelopment of the Site should include the retention and refurbishment of the Hostel complex (as identified on the map below) to deliver a range of one and two-bedroom homes.**



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4.27. The redevelopment of the Institute site has potential to make a significant contribution towards meeting the supply demands for open market homes. The CCB Report outlined that a large number of the responses were from people with an aspiration to home ownership or people who own homes who aspire to larger homes. The Planning Practice Guidance<sup>9</sup> confirms that affordable housing need includes those that cannot afford their own homes, either to rent, or to own, where that is their aspiration. More recently, the NDP Survey found that only 47% of respondents said that their current home would meet their needs for the rest of their life. It established the four most required property sizes in the future to be 3-4-bedroom houses (22%), 2-3-bedroom houses (14%), Bungalows (14%) and 5+ bedroom houses (13%). These top 4 categories covered a range of dwelling types, including retirement and disabled housing, to maximise opportunities for residents to be able to stay within the village through all stages of their lives.

4.28. The density of the Policy HSA23 allocation makes it possible to deliver a range of homes, including 3 to 5-bedroom homes in larger plots, thereby meeting housing needs and reflecting the character of Compton and assisting with the progression to a lower density on the northern edge of the development. The inclusion of a range of single storey

<sup>9</sup> Planning Practice Guidance Ref. ID# 2a-020-20190220

accommodation (i.e. bungalows) within Area B would help to achieve this transition to the restored landscape within Area A to the north. The need to provide housing for older people is critical. People are living longer lives and the proportion of older people in the population is increasing. Accessible and adaptable housing enables people to live more independently, while also saving on health and social costs in the future. It is better to build accessible housing from the outset rather than have to make adaptations at a later stage – both in terms of cost and with regard to people being able to remain safe and independent in their homes. A percentage of accessible and adaptable housing, designed to M4(2) Category 2, at the site will contribute towards providing housing for older people that provides safe and convenient approach routes into and out of the home and outside areas, suitable circulation space and suitable bathroom and kitchens within the home.

4.29. The proposed NDP policy response is as follows:

**Proposed Policy Direction 5 – The density of the development provides an opportunity for a range of house sizes to meet local needs where a majority of open market homes will be 3 to 5 bedrooms, including the provision of suitable single storey homes designed to M4(2) Category 2: Accessible and adaptable within Area B where they are sited to assist with the transition of the development in an appropriate scale to the open countryside beyond.**

## **Community Uses**

4.30. Policy HSA23 references the potential for the Site to accommodate community uses as part of a residential-led mixed use scheme. Previous consultation for the SPD highlighted a strong desire from the community to see some form of community use on the site, enhancing the villages social, sporting and educational facilities. It is important that as part of the mixed-use scheme consideration is given to additional uses which may be appropriate or necessary for Compton, or contribute to social sustainability.

4.31. The NDP Survey 2018 and subsequent qualitative analysis has identified the following greatest evidenced priorities for community, education and facilities in Compton:

- i. Enhanced Preschool facilities. The pre-school submitted quite comprehensive feedback and included not only concerns for their own infrastructure but also for the wider community. As a charitable institution, they rely on fundraising and grants for survival; and with more young families moving to Compton they anticipate a greater burden on resources in the future; moreover they have to cater for children from the surrounding area who have no such facility in their own villages so would ideally like to look for premises with more capacity. The pre-school currently have one room for up to 24 children of all abilities together and limited ancillary facilities. The Piglets Nursery offers a 16-place pre-school room with access to garden, a

second 12 place toddler room and a further 12 place baby room alongside a wider range of fit-for-purpose ancillary facilities.

- ii. Enhanced 'Village Hall/Community Centre' type facilities, particularly to accommodate football pavilion and café/youth club. While the current use of the Village Hall and Wilkins Centre are 'healthy', the issue relates around two factors – age of current premises and further space for indoor sports. The current buildings, whilst having been built in the late 1950's, have been refurbished over the years and, although old, are not in unreasonable condition. However, the NDP process is an opportunity to promote a step change in sports and social facilities, particularly given that fact that it underpins a village plan up to 2036, by which time existing facilities will be getting on for 80 years' old. Additionally, the increase in population that will come with any future development will increase the pressure on, and capacity needed of these community facilities. Due consideration needs to be given to positioning of any new facilities. On one hand, there is an opportunity to 'centralise' facilities in some sort of village centre, however there may be opportunities to relocate elsewhere in the village and therefore free-up a potential development site.
- iii. Park/recreation ground upgrades, such as a skatepark or other 'youth' facilities.
- iv. A village web-based 'information hub' which captures all activities in the village and links to Compilations<sup>10</sup> and the Facebook page.
- v. Public access to the swimming pool at the Downs Leisure Centre.
- vi. Improvements to traffic and car parking through provision of new Village car park.

4.32. The Site therefore offers the potential to address matters (i), (ii) and (iii) above, either through the re-use of existing buildings or investment into new.

4.33. In terms of preschool facilities, the Piglets Day Nursery at the Institute was previously used as a crèche for pre-primary school aged children of Institute staff and private. It is believed to consist of internal and external play areas and toilet facilities. This facility should be explored to provide an alternative playgroup space freeing up more space for the Village Hall, possibly providing alternative space for a village hub/coffee shop. Alternatively, the Canteen Facility, whilst in need of refurbishment, could also be the site of preschool facilities and used a wider social space outside of the school hours.

4.34. In terms of enhanced village hall / community centre, the Site includes the Recreational Club Facility (Pickled Pig) that was previously used by Institute staff and their families for socialising and post team sporting events entertaining. It is believed to consist of communal space, changing facilities, catering facilities, a bar and toilets with a balcony overlooking the

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<sup>10</sup> Compton Village Monthly Magazine

cricket pitch. The facility offers potential for the creation of a Village Community Sports and Recreational Club.

4.35. In terms of parks / recreation ground provision, the retention of the cricket ground as public open space was identified by 1/5 of the respondents and would widen the availability of such land within the village. Alongside qualitative improvements for sport and recreation, this could meet the needs of residents within the redevelopment and elsewhere in the village.

4.36. The proposed NDP policy response is as follows:

**Proposed Policy Direction 6 – The following existing buildings at the Site (as identified on the map below) should be protected for future community provision and secured with transfer to community ownership through the Section 106 Legal Agreement:**

- ‘The Piglets Day Nursery’ should be retained and enhanced for community use as a Pre-School for Compton.
- ‘The Pickled Pig’ and associated changing room complex should be retained and enhanced for community use as part of a village sports and recreation hub.
- The Cricket Ground should be retained and enhanced as public open space for the community in a manner commensurate with its designation as a Local Green Space.



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## Local Green Space

4.37. Paragraph 99 of the NPPF enables the designation of land as Local Green Space through local and neighbourhood plans, allowing communities to identify and protect green areas of particular importance to them. Designating land as Local Green Space should be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services. Local Green Spaces should only be designated when a plan is prepared or updated, and be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period. The Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green space is:

*(a) in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;*

*(b) demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquility or richness of its wildlife; and*

*(c) local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.*

4.38. The Site includes a former cricket ground between the High Street and the Institute in the south west corner of the site, adjacent to the main access. The cricket ground is an area of open space which makes a positive contribution to the pattern of open spaces throughout the village and is highly valued by the local community given its historical significance and recreational value. The cricket ground has a close relationship to the Compton Conservation Area which should be conserved and enhanced, whereby the cricket ground forms a positive part of the Conservation Area setting and should be retained as part of the green infrastructure for community use and potential flood alleviation. The designation of the cricket ground as Local Green Space is therefore appropriate.

4.39. The community engagement has revealed strong support for the creation of public access to this land and it has significant recreation potential and can deliver benefits for the wider community. It is therefore considered that opportunities should be taken to re-establish community utilisation of the cricket pitch commensurate with its status as Local Green Space.

4.40. Policies for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with those for Green Belts. The provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, are not inappropriate development; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.

4.41. The proposed NDP policy response is as follows:

Proposed Policy Direction 7 - The Cricket Ground (as identified on the map below) is designated as a Local Green Space as defined in paragraphs 99 to 101 of the NPPF. Local policy for managing development within this Local Green Space will be consistent with national policy for Green Belts.



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## Sustainable Design

- 4.42. The NPPF confirms the creation of high-quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Plans should, at the most appropriate level, set out a clear design vision and expectations, so that applicants have as much certainty as possible about what is likely to be acceptable. Neighbourhood plans can play an important role in identifying the special qualities of each area and explaining how this should be reflected in development. The NPPF also confirms that the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change. It should help to: shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings; and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.
- 4.43. To support the achievement of good design, the Government has published<sup>11</sup> detailed guidance on the key points to take into account on design with a National Design Guide that sets out the characteristics of well-designed places and demonstrates what good design means in practice. This will be taken into account in the masterplanning and design of the

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/design>

development alongside any Local Design Guide for West Berkshire and update to the Compton Village Design Statement.

- 4.44. The redevelopment of the Institute is a development of strategic importance within a Service Village in the AONB, where great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty. The redevelopment of the Site is of greater significance than others in the village owing to its scale, location, and impact on sensitive areas or important assets and it is therefore crucial to achieve a well-designed place in the context of all relevant site constraints and opportunities.
- 4.45. In order to create a distinctive place, with a consistent and high-quality standard of design that is consistent with the objectives of the NPPF, the application should be informed by a detailed masterplan leading to a Design Code being established as a requirement of any Outline Planning Permission to guide the submission of the 'reserved matters'. The Pirbright site, being discreet, offers an ideal opportunity to build a state of the art development, using the latest eco building materials, energy efficiency measures, emission controls and central power/heat sources that will assist in transitioning to a low-carbon future in a changing climate. Groundwater in the aquifer is approximately 10-20 metre underground is an ideal heat source for ground source heat pumps that could be deployed for individual dwellings or for collections of dwellings as in a district heating approach. The scale of any ground source heat pump installations may be feasible to supply properties outside of the site.
- 4.46. All stages of the design process should be subject to meaningful engagement with the local community and stakeholders. These include workshops to engage the local community, design advice and review arrangements, and assessment frameworks such as 'Building for Life'. West Berkshire Council should have regard to the outcome from these processes, in the exercise of development management functions, including any recommendations made by design review panels. The proposed NDP policy response is as follows:

**Proposed Policy Direction 8 – The planning application for the redevelopment of the Site will be expected to be accompanied by a design brief or masterplan that has been subject to public consultation undertaken broadly in line with the West Berkshire Statement of Community Involvement. This should be preceded by a design code in consultation with the community and this will be a condition of the outline permission in such circumstances. Those commissioning the project should aim to achieve high quality and sustainable design using the 'Building for Life' assessment framework to take an innovative and creative solution for this site. The design framework should identify opportunities for development to draw its energy supply from decentralised, renewable or low carbon energy supply systems and for co-locating potential heat customers and suppliers. It is recommended that appropriately qualified and experienced design professionals such as registered architects, urban designers, landscape architects and public artists are engaged at an early stage of the development proposal to ensure all aspects of design are considered.**

