10th June 2026

Planning Statement

Land Adjacent to Alfreton Golf Club Planning Reference: AVA/2022/0141

an outline planning application for the development of 240 retirement living units on land adjacent to Alfreton Golf Club, DE55 7LH, within Amber Valley Borough.

AVA/2022/0141: Land Adjacent To Alfreton Golf Club Wingfield Road Alfreton Derbyshire

Outline application with all matters reserved for residential development for over 55s for 240 residential units (C2) with associated ancillary commercial and support units / uses to include Restaurant, Café, Convenience Store, Beauty Salon, Building site management facilities, Care operations facilities, Surgery and Clubhouse

1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of an outline planning application with all matters reserved (AVA/2022/0141) for residential development for over-55s comprising a maximum of 240 retirement living units in Use Class C2, with associated ancillary commercial and support uses (including restaurant, cafe, convenience store, beauty salon, care operations facilities, surgery and clubhouse), on land adjacent to Alfreton Golf Club, Wingfield Road, Alfreton, DE55 7LH, within Amber Valley Borough. The commercial and support uses are ancillary to and inseparable from the primary C2 residential retirement living use and are intended exclusively for the benefit of residents and their visitors. All matters of layout, scale, appearance, access and landscaping are reserved for subsequent approval.

1.2 This outline planning application seeks approval for the principle of development only. All matters of layout, scale, appearance, access and landscaping are reserved for subsequent detailed approval. The principal purpose of this Planning Statement is to set out the planning policy context within which the application falls to be determined, to demonstrate the significant and quantified unmet need for specialist retirement housing in Amber Valley and the wider Derbyshire area, and to advance the case that the material considerations associated with this development are sufficiently substantial to justify the grant of outline planning permission notwithstanding Policy H3 of the Amber Valley Borough Local Plan 2022-2040 (the Local Plan).

1.3 Before addressing Policy H3, it is noted that Policy SS3 of the adopted Local Plan defines countryside as land beyond and not adjacent to the Urban Areas. The applicant acknowledges that a formal Policies Map adjacency assessment has not been completed at this stage and that, in the absence of such evidence, it cannot be definitively asserted that the site falls outside the countryside designation. The application is therefore advanced on the basis that Policy H3 applies, and the case for approval is made entirely on the material considerations advanced in Section 5 and the alternative Policy SS9(b) route set out at paragraph 5.15. The applicant recommends that the Local Planning Authority considers the adjacency question as part of its determination and, should the site be found to be adjacent to the Alfreton built framework, the application would fall to be assessed under the more permissive Policy H1 framework instead.

1.4 The statement is structured as follows: Section 2 describes the site; Section 3 sets out the planning policy framework; Section 4 presents the housing needs evidence base; Section 5 advances the material considerations supporting approval; Section 6 addresses the planning balance; and Section 7 sets out the conclusions.

2. Site Description and Location

2.1 The application site comprises land adjacent to Alfreton Golf Club, DE55 7LH, within Amber Valley Borough. The site is located in close proximity to Alfreton, one of the four principal market towns in the borough and the primary urban area in the eastern part of Amber Valley.

2.2 Alfreton provides a comprehensive range of services and facilities appropriate to the needs of older residents, including GP surgeries, pharmacies, retail provision, community facilities and public transport connections. The town benefits from strong bus connections and rail services linking it to the wider borough and beyond, including direct connections to Derby and Nottingham.

2.3 The site is adjacent to Alfreton Golf Club, with which opportunities exist for a complementary and mutually beneficial relationship. Retirement living residents represent a natural and growing user group for golf club membership and leisure activities.

2.4 The site is in close proximity to the Alfreton Urban Area, one of the four primary development locations in the borough under Policy SS3. The adopted Local Plan defines countryside as land beyond and not adjacent to the Urban Areas. The applicant has not been able to complete a formal Policies Map adjacency assessment at this stage of the application. Accordingly, this Planning Statement proceeds on the basis that Policy H3 applies. The Local Planning Authority is invited to consider the adjacency question as part of its own assessment, noting that a finding of adjacency would engage the more permissive Policy H1 framework and would represent a further and independent basis for approval.

3. Planning Policy Context

3.1 National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024)

3.1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published in December 2024, is a material consideration of significant weight in the determination of all planning applications.

3.1.2 Section 5 of the NPPF requires local planning authorities to significantly boost the supply

of housing and to plan for a mix of housing types to reflect the needs of different groups in the community, specifically including older people and those requiring specialist or supported accommodation.

3.1.3 Policy HO5 of the NPPF (December 2024) sets clear national expectations that development plans should address the housing needs of older and disabled people, including those requiring retirement housing and housing with support. It introduces a national baseline requiring that at least 40% of new homes meet the M4(2) accessible and adaptable dwelling standard. As set out in Section 3.2 below, the adopted Local Plan does not fully reflect these requirements, providing a further basis for the weight to be given to this development.

3.1.4 The NPPF is also explicit that planning decisions should be based on a thorough understanding of housing need. Where an identified need is not being met by the existing development plan, the presumption in favour of sustainable development is engaged and the planning balance weighs materially in favour of development that addresses that need.

3.2 Amber Valley Borough Local Plan 2022-2040

3.2.1 The Amber Valley Borough Local Plan 2022-2040 was adopted on 2 March 2026 and carries full weight in the determination of planning applications within the borough.

3.2.2 Policy SS3 Settlement Hierarchy identifies Alfreton as one of four Urban Areas, stating that the primary focus for new development will be in and around the four urban areas of Alfreton, Belper, Heanor and Ripley, where accessibility to strategic transport networks and public transport is good and the greatest potential exists to maximise accessibility to job opportunities, shops, services and other facilities. The Alfreton Urban Area is defined as including Alfreton, Leabrooks, Riddings, Somercotes and Swanwick.

3.2.3 Critically, Policy SS3 defines countryside as land beyond and not adjacent to the Urban Areas, Key Villages and Other Villages and Settlements. This definition was confirmed by the Inspector in the examination. A site adjacent to the Alfreton built framework does not fall within the countryside definition and is not subject to Policy H3. This question must be determined with reference to the adopted Policies Map.

3.2.4 Policy H3 Housing Development in Countryside restricts housing in the countryside to the conversion of existing buildings, affordable housing on rural exception sites, and replacement dwellings meeting specific criteria. Policy H3 contains no provision, criteria, or framework for specialist retirement living, extra care, or housing with support of any description. On its face, a new-build retirement living scheme of 240 units does not fall within the categories Policy H3 would ordinarily permit.

3.2.5 Policy H4 Housing Types, Mix and Choice, as adopted following Inspector modification MM51, requires proposals to address the housing needs of elderly and disabled people, including the provision of specialist housing for older people across all tenures, for bungalows and suitable flatted accommodation at sustainable locations and through the provision of adaptations where required. The Inspector found it necessary to strengthen this policy to ensure the Plan is positively prepared and effective in addressing the need for specialist older persons housing. This development directly and exclusively delivers what Policy H4 requires.

3.2.6 The Local Plan acknowledges at paragraph 7.4.3 that in total, around 1,827 additional

dwellings would be required to provide some form of specialist accommodation over the plan period. This consists of 533 homes with support, 892 housing with care, and 724 residential and nursing bedspaces. Despite this explicit acknowledgement, the Local Plan does not allocate a single site for specialist older persons housing and provides no criteria-based policy framework to guide where or how this need will be met. This internal contradiction between acknowledged need and absent delivery mechanism is a fundamental weakness in the plan which weighs heavily in the planning balance.

3.2.7 Strategic Objective 4 of the Local Plan states the aim is to enable the provision of a sufficient number of decent, affordable and well-designed dwellings to meet the housing needs of all local communities. Older residents of Amber Valley are a local community with a specific, quantified and growing housing need. This development directly delivers on that stated objective.

3.3 Derbyshire County Council Strategies

3.3.1 Derbyshire County Council has published its All Age Adults Housing, Accommodation and Support Strategy 2023-2038, which identifies gaps in provision across the county. In relation to Amber Valley specifically, the strategy identifies a lack of mainstream housing suitable for people with care and support needs wishing to live in local communities, and confirms that there are gaps in provision of extra care and housing with care.

3.3.2 Separately, the Older People's Housing, Accommodation and Support commissioning strategy for Derbyshire, cited in the Local Housing Needs Assessment, confirms the need in Amber Valley for a mix of housing offers that are attractive to older people, including new mixed tenure care-ready age-designated housing.

3.3.3 Derbyshire County Council's position regarding the need for social care facilities in this location has been confirmed as supportive of the proposed development by Claire Moore of DCC Adult Social Care and Health, as communicated in April 2026. David Arkle, Head of Housing, Growth and Climate at Amber Valley Borough Council, has confirmed this position remains unchanged and relevant.

4. Housing Need: The Evidence Base

4.1 The Local Housing Needs Assessment

4.1.1 In January 2022, Amber Valley Borough Council commissioned Iceni Projects to undertake a Local Housing Needs Assessment (LHNA). The assessment was updated in December 2023 through an Addendum Report, commissioned following the council's decision to extend the plan period to 2040. The examining Inspector confirmed that the LHNA provides a robust evidence base prepared in line with Planning Practice Guidance using data from reputable sources.

4.1.2 The LHNA Final Report identifies a total need for around 1,857 additional units of older persons housing over the 2021-39 period, equivalent to 103 units per annum. This comprises:

- Approximately 550 housing units with support (sheltered/retirement housing), all in the market sector
- Approximately 900 additional housing units with care (extra care), split approximately 60% market and 40% affordable

- Approximately 409 additional nursing and residential care bedspaces (converted from 736 bedspaces using the standard multiplier of 1.8)

4.1.3 The older persons need as identified in the LHNA equates to approximately 27% of all homes required over the plan period needing to be some form of specialist accommodation for older people. This is a striking figure which the Local Plan acknowledges but provides no mechanism to deliver.

4.1.4 The December 2023 LHNA Addendum further identifies a current shortage of 587 housing-with-support units within the borough, rising to a projected shortage of 1,017 units by 2040 if no action is taken. These are the council's own commissioned evidence base figures.

4.2 Demographic Context

4.2.1 The demographic drivers of this need are clear and well-evidenced. Amber Valley has an older age structure than regional and national comparators, with 22.4% of the population aged 65 or over compared to 20% regionally and 19% nationally.

4.2.2 The borough-wide 65+ population grew by 25.5% between 2011 and 2020, compared to just 0.4% growth in the working age population. Within the Alfreton parish specifically, the 65+ cohort grew by 14.8% between 2011 and 2020, the fastest growing age group in the town.

4.2.3 The LHNA projects a 56% increase in the number of people aged 65+ with dementia over the plan period, and a 47% increase in those aged 65+ with mobility problems. These projections quantify the scale of the health and care challenge that purpose-built retirement living directly addresses.

4.2.4 From a total borough population of approximately 126,200, the number of people aged 65 and over is 28,465 (23%), forecast to rise to 35,421 (26%) by 2030 and 38,820 (28%) by 2035.

4.3 The Housing Land Supply Gap

4.3.1 The Housing Land Supply Summary as at 1 April 2025 records an identified five-year supply of 3,370 dwellings against a five-year requirement of 2,279, equating to 7.39 years of supply. However, this entire supply figure relates exclusively to general market housing. The trajectory table records no specialist older persons accommodation, no extra care housing, no housing with support, and no retirement living in the identified pipeline supply.

4.3.2 A general housing surplus is entirely irrelevant to the specific and quantified shortfall in specialist older persons accommodation. Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) on Housing for Older and Disabled People is explicit that the need for specialist housing for older people should be assessed separately from and in addition to the general housing requirement, and that it cannot be met through the general housing market. The general market does not and cannot deliver housing with support, extra care, or age-designated retirement living. This distinction is well-established in national policy and planning practice. The council has a housing supply surplus in general housing terms, but a significant and worsening deficit in the specialist older persons housing which its own evidence base confirms represents 27% of all homes required over the plan period. A five-year supply of general market housing does nothing to address this deficit.

4.3.3 Alfreton sub-area has an identified minimum housing need of 1,194 homes over the plan period 2021-39. The proposed 240-unit scheme represents approximately 20% of the total

Alfreton sub-area housing need and would make a substantial contribution to meeting the specialist older persons component of that need.

4.4 The Housing Waiting List and Cascade Benefit

4.4.1 Amber Valley Borough Council operates a housing register which, as confirmed by David Arkle, Head of Housing, Growth and Climate, at April 2026, has approximately 1,700 households awaiting family accommodation. The council's own Housing Strategy 2025-2030 confirms the register typically holds over 2,000 households at any one time.

4.4.2 The delivery of 240 purpose-built retirement living units will enable older residents who currently under-occupy family-sized homes to downsize into appropriate accommodation, releasing family homes back into the general market. This cascade effect is a nationally recognised and evidenced benefit of specialist older persons development, acknowledged in Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) on Housing for Older and Disabled People, which recognises that older people moving to more suitable accommodation frees up housing for other groups in housing need. The PPG makes clear that the need for specialist housing for older people should be assessed and planned for separately from general market housing need and that its delivery generates wider housing market benefits. David Arkle, Head of Housing, Growth and Climate at Amber Valley Borough Council, confirmed in pre-application correspondence dated 30 April 2026 that the council would make a case for the site helping to meet this need, especially if it releases family accommodation. The council's own Housing Strategy 2025-2030 explicitly commits to new housing development that provides for those wishing to downsize.

5. Challenge to Policy H3: Material Considerations

5.0 The development is advanced on the basis that the totality of material considerations associated with it is sufficient to justify approval notwithstanding the provisions of Policy H3. Each material consideration is set out below.

5.1 Silence of the Local Plan on Retirement Housing Delivery

The adopted Local Plan acknowledges at paragraph 7.4.3 that 1,827 additional units of specialist older persons accommodation are required by 2040. It does not allocate a single site for this purpose. It provides no criteria-based policy to guide delivery. The monitoring table for Policy H4 sets no targets. The entire delivery burden therefore falls on windfall applications of precisely this type. Policy H3 was not drafted with specialist retirement living in mind, and applying it to refuse this development would compound the Local Plan's already significant failure to plan for its own acknowledged need.

5.2 NPPF Policy HO5 and Accessible Housing Standards

The December 2024 NPPF Policy HO5 requires development plans to address the housing needs of older and disabled people, including those requiring retirement housing, and sets a national baseline of 40% of new homes meeting M4(2) accessible standards. The adopted Local Plan requires all new homes to meet M4(2) standards (Policy H4 as modified) but does not fully embed the requirements of HO5 in terms of allocating sites or establishing a delivery framework for specialist accommodation. This development, designed specifically to meet the needs of older residents and built to accessible standards throughout, responds directly to the national policy imperative.

5.3 Inspector's Finding: Existing Plan Inadequate for Older Persons Housing

The examining Inspector found at paragraph 159 of the Examination Report (February 2026) that the LHNA and addendum report provide evidence of an increasing need for specialist forms of housing to meet the needs of older and disabled persons and that it was necessary to strengthen Policy H4 to ensure the Plan is positively prepared and effective in addressing this need. This is an independent Inspector finding that the plan as originally submitted was inadequate in its treatment of specialist older persons housing. It would be inconsistent for the council now to refuse a development which addresses precisely the need the Inspector required the plan to better address.

5.4 Quantified Unmet Need: The 587/1,017 Unit Shortfall

The LHNA Addendum (December 2023) identifies a current shortfall of 587 housing-with-support units in Amber Valley Borough, rising to 1,017 by 2040. These are the council's own commissioned evidence base figures, confirmed as robust by the examining Inspector. This development, at 240 units, would address approximately 41% of the current identified shortfall and represents a direct, proportionate and deliverable response to a quantified local need for which no other site is allocated or identified.

5.5 Release of Family Housing Stock and Waiting List Benefit

The delivery of purpose-built retirement living will enable older residents to downsize, releasing family homes back into the market. As confirmed by the council's own Head of Housing, this will help to address the need of approximately 1,700 households currently on the housing waiting list for family accommodation. The council's Housing Strategy 2025-2030 commits to providing housing that meets the needs of those wishing to downsize, and the LHNA confirms this cascade benefit as a recognised secondary benefit of specialist older persons development.

5.6 Positive Policy Compliance: Policy H4 and Strategic Objective 4

This development is not merely defended against Policy H3 as a material consideration exercise. It positively complies with adopted Policy H4, which explicitly requires proposals to address the housing needs of elderly and disabled people, including the provision of specialist housing for older people at sustainable locations. The site, adjacent to Alfreton Town Centre, is by any measure a sustainable location for this use. The development also directly delivers Strategic Objective 4 of the Local Plan: to enable the provision of sufficient, well-designed dwellings to meet the housing needs of all local communities.

5.7 Sustainability and Accessibility of the Site

The site is proximate to Alfreton Town Centre, one of the four principal market towns in the borough. Alfreton provides GP surgeries, pharmacies, retail, community and leisure facilities, and strong public transport connectivity. The ability of older residents to access essential services on foot or by public transport, and to maintain meaningful community connections, is fundamental to their health, wellbeing and independence. Policy SS3 itself identifies Alfreton as the primary focus for development in the eastern part of the borough, precisely because of its accessibility and service offer. This site offers the level of accessibility that makes retirement living appropriate and sustainable in planning terms.

5.8 Transport: Reduced Car Dependency

The proposed development will reduce rather than increase car dependency. The target demographic is less likely to drive and more likely to rely on public transport, walking and local services. Alfreton benefits from bus services linking the town to the wider borough and a rail station with services to Derby and Nottingham. The development will not generate significant traffic and its residents will make active use of existing public transport infrastructure, consistent with the Local Plan's objective to reduce dependency on the car.

5.9 Infrastructure Benefit: Collective Care Provision

A concentrated retirement living community of 240 units enables the efficient delivery of health and social care services on a collective basis. The council's Housing Strategy 2025-2030 acknowledges limited progress in embedding housing thinking into health and care pathways and explicitly commits to working with health and social care to raise the profile of the relationship between housing and health. The LHNA projects a 56% increase in people aged 65+ with dementia and a 47% increase in those with mobility problems over the plan period. A purpose-built care-ready community — with on-site care staff, a surgery, and coordinated support services — addresses this demand collectively and efficiently, rather than dispersing it across existing community health infrastructure. The applicant acknowledges that the NHS Integrated Care Board and local Primary Care Network will be statutory consultees, and the applicant is engaging with the relevant Primary Care Network in advance of submission to understand current GP capacity in the Alfreton area. Where the development generates any residual demand on primary care infrastructure, the applicant is prepared to consider an appropriate contribution through a Section 106 agreement to support healthcare capacity, the quantum and scope of which will be agreed with the ICB and the Local Planning Authority.

5.10 Employment and Economic Benefit

A retirement living development of 240 units will generate significant and sustained employment in health and social care. The site's proximity to Alfreton will enable those positions to be filled by residents of the town and surrounding area, providing a direct and lasting economic benefit to the local labour market. Social care employment at this scale is stable, long-term and cannot be relocated or offshored. A detailed quantification of the employment benefit is set out at paragraph 5.16 below, where an estimated 80 to 100 direct jobs on site are identified based on industry benchmarks.

5.11 Failure to Allocate: The LPA Has Not Planned for This Need

A substantive challenge to any reliance on Policy H3 in this case is the Local Planning Authority's failure, despite full knowledge of the evidence base, to allocate any sites for specialist older persons accommodation within the Local Plan. The council commissioned the LHNA in 2022, received the Addendum in 2023, and adopted the Local Plan in March 2026. The need for 1,827 units of specialist accommodation was known throughout. No sites were allocated. No criteria were established. In these circumstances it would be unreasonable and contrary to both the NPPF and the Local Plan's own Strategic Objective 4 for the council to rely on a general countryside development restriction to refuse a development that directly addresses a need the Local Plan has failed to plan for.

5.12 Derbyshire County Council Support

Derbyshire County Council, as the upper-tier local authority with statutory responsibility for adult social care, has indicated through Claire Moore (Adult Social Care and Health) its unchanged and supportive position regarding the need for social care facilities of this nature in this location. This position was confirmed in pre-application engagement in April 2026, as referenced by David Arkle of Amber Valley Borough Council. The applicant is seeking a formal written letter of support from DCC Adult Social Care and Health to accompany the application, and will update this Planning Statement accordingly. The professional judgment of the statutory social care authority that this development addresses an identified need is a material consideration of significant weight, and DCC will also be a statutory consultee in the determination of this application.

5.13 Support from the Council's Own Head of Housing

In pre-application correspondence dated 30 April 2026, David Arkle, Head of Housing, Growth and Climate at Amber Valley Borough Council, indicated that the council would make a case for the site helping to meet housing need, especially if it releases family accommodation, and noted that comments from Derbyshire County Council Adult Social Care and Health are particularly relevant given the target group. This pre-application engagement reflects the professional judgment of the council's most senior housing officer on the merits of the development. The applicant is seeking a formal written letter of support from the Housing Department to accompany the application, and will update this Planning Statement accordingly. Officer views, while not determinative, are a material consideration and this engagement is a positive indicator of the housing department's assessment of the development's contribution to identified local need.

5.14 Support for Alfreton Golf Club

The proposed development is adjacent to Alfreton Golf Club, and the applicant has identified opportunities for a complementary and mutually supportive relationship between the two uses. Retirement living residents represent a natural and growing user group for golf club membership and leisure activities, providing a sustainable source of demand that could directly support the long-term viability of the golf club.

5.15 Policy SS9(b): Sustainable Development Enhancing Rural Community Vitality

As a supplementary and alternative basis for approval, the development is capable of being assessed against Policy SS9(b) of the Local Plan, which permits development in the countryside where it involves sustainable development which will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. The proposed development will directly support the vitality and commercial viability of Alfreton Town Centre and its surrounding community through the following: it will generate a sustained resident population of approximately 300-400 older people with high levels of local spending on retail, healthcare, leisure and personal services; it will create an estimated 60-80 direct employment positions in health and social care, filling roles that will be drawn primarily from the local labour market; it will support the long-term viability of Alfreton Golf Club through a natural and growing membership base among retirement living residents; and it will reduce pressure on dispersed community infrastructure by concentrating care delivery on a single, efficiently managed site. Taken together, these contributions represent a

genuine and substantial enhancement to the vitality of the Alfreton community and surrounding rural area. Policy SS9(b) provides an independent and self-standing basis on which the development could be approved, in addition to the material considerations case advanced against Policy H3.

5.16 Quantified Employment Benefit

Industry benchmarks for retirement living and extra care developments of this scale consistently indicate the generation of approximately one full-time equivalent care and support worker per four to five residents. On the basis of 240 units with an average occupancy of 1.3 residents per unit (consistent with older person household size data in the LHNA), the development will house approximately 312 residents, generating an estimated 62 to 78 direct care and support roles. Additional ancillary employment will be generated in catering, estates management, administration and the on-site commercial uses. Total direct employment on site is conservatively estimated at 80 to 100 positions. These will be local, permanent, full and part-time roles which cannot be outsourced or relocated, representing a durable economic benefit to the Alfreton labour market. This figure will be confirmed through an Employment Impact Assessment to accompany the reserved matters application.

6. Case Studies, National Context and Precedent

6.1 Why Retirement Village Status Matters

6.1.1 The fact that this application is for a retirement village in Use Class C2, rather than general market housing in Use Class C3, is a material and significant distinction that goes to the heart of the policy case. It is well established in planning practice and case law that C2 retirement village schemes are not bound by the same planning policy constraints as general residential development, and that planning permission is increasingly being granted for C2 retirement housing on sites where market housing would not be permitted, including in protected countryside and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The advantage of a scheme falling within the C2 use class should not be underestimated (HCR Law, 2024).

6.1.2 This distinction is explicitly recognised in national planning policy and guidance. Planning Practice Guidance on Housing for Older and Disabled People is clear that it is not appropriate for local authorities to apply the same policies for C3 residential development to specialist housing for older people, especially extra care (C2), and that there are clear material differences as acknowledged in the PPG. Local Plans must set out different policy requirements for a retirement community (C2 use) compared to residential development (C3 use) (Inspired Villages evidence to Parliament, 2020). The Amber Valley Local Plan 2022-2040 does not make this distinction, and applying Policy H3 without regard to the specialist C2 nature of this development would itself be contrary to PPG requirements.

6.1.3 The C2 use classification also brings a material financial benefit that strengthens deliverability. Community Infrastructure Levy rates for C2 development are typically zero in most local authority areas, compared to rates of up to £500 per square metre for C3 residential development. This makes the scheme more financially viable, more certain of delivery, and less vulnerable to market conditions than a comparable general housing scheme would be. Deliverability is itself a material consideration in the planning balance.

6.2 The National Supply Crisis: Government-Commissioned Evidence

6.2.1 The national context for this application is one of acute and worsening supply failure. The Government-appointed Older People's Housing Taskforce, reporting in November 2024, confirmed that between 30,000 and 50,000 new specialist homes for older people are required each year in England, yet only approximately 7,000 are currently being built annually (Older People's Housing Taskforce, Our Future Homes, November 2024). This represents a delivery gap of between 23,000 and 43,000 units per year at national level.

6.2.2 Only 0.6% of older people in the UK currently live in retirement communities, compared to approximately 6% in countries such as New Zealand and the USA — a tenfold difference. The Taskforce explicitly recommended that policymakers at local and national level ensure that older people's housing is delivered in age-friendly neighbourhoods with good public transport routes, street furniture and access to services such as GPs. This description precisely fits the Alfreton site.

6.2.3 Research by Lichfields (2024) confirms that only 36.2% of local plans in England have a specific policy for specialist housing for older people and even fewer make any specific site allocations. Amber Valley is therefore in the majority of councils that have failed to make specific provision. This is a nationally recognised systemic failure, not a unique local circumstance, and the planning system is increasingly called upon to address it through the determination of individual applications where the need is demonstrated.

6.2.4 Currently only 3% of new homes nationally are built as senior housing, at a time when by 2040 a quarter of the UK population will be aged 65 or over (Browne Jacobson, November 2024). The LHNA evidence base for Amber Valley, confirmed as robust by the examining Inspector, shows that 27% of all homes required in the borough over the plan period need to be some form of specialist older persons accommodation. The gap between current delivery (3%) and identified need (27%) illustrates the extraordinary scale of under-delivery that this development begins to address at a local level.

6.3 Case Study 1: Inspired Village, Sunbury-on-Thames, Surrey (2024)

6.3.1 Application by: Inspired Village | Authority: Spelthorne Borough Council | Decided: November 2024 | Result: APPEAL ALLOWED

6.3.2 This is the most directly relevant recent precedent and one of the strongest in the country for retirement village applications facing a designated land policy objection. Spelthorne Borough Council refused planning permission in October 2023 for a 164-unit retirement village including senior living accommodation, a village centre and a care home, on Green Belt land in Vicarage Road, Sunbury. The refusal grounds included that the development was out of character with the rural area, that it represented inappropriate Green Belt development, and that it would not contribute to affordable housing.

6.3.3 Planning Inspector Hayley Butcher allowed the appeal in November 2024, overruling all of the council's grounds of refusal. The Inspector stated: "There is no doubt that there is a clear and pressing need for this type of development in Spelthorne." The Inspector accepted that harm to the Green Belt was significant but found that the very special circumstances of addressing the clear and pressing need for specialist older persons housing outweighed that harm. The development was approved subject to conditions.

6.3.4 Relevance to this application: The Spelthorne decision is directly on point. A retirement

village of comparable scale (164 units versus 240 units) was approved over a Green Belt designation — a significantly higher and more resistant policy hurdle than the countryside designation under Policy H3. The basis for approval was the clear and pressing unmet need for specialist older persons housing in the local area. The unmet need evidence in Amber Valley — a current shortfall of 587 units rising to 1,017 by 2040, confirmed in the council's own LHNA and endorsed as robust by the examining Inspector — is at least as strong as that deployed in the Spelthorne appeal. The Spelthorne precedent demonstrates that retirement village applications of this type and scale can and do succeed over designated land policy restrictions when unmet need is clearly evidenced.

6.4 Case Study 2: Guild Living, Walton-on-Thames and Uxbridge (2021)

6.4.1 Application by: Guild Living (supported by Carterwood) | Multiple applications and appeals | Result: PLANNING PERMISSION GRANTED

6.4.2 Guild Living secured planning permission for multiple integrated retirement community developments across the South East, including a 182-unit scheme in Uxbridge in June 2021. In the Walton-on-Thames appeal, the planning inspector explicitly highlighted that the housing need analysis provided by Carterwood "added a significant contribution to the case" and was given "considerable weight" in the final decision.

6.4.3 Relevance to this application: The Guild Living decisions establish that a high-quality, independently commissioned specialist housing needs assessment is a powerful tool in securing planning permission for retirement village applications. The Amber Valley LHNA, commissioned by the council, updated in 2023, and confirmed as robust by the examining Inspector, represents exactly this quality of need evidence. The weight given to need assessments in these decisions supports the approach taken in this Planning Statement of placing the quantified local need at the centre of the case for approval.

6.5 Case Study 3: Rectory Homes Ltd v SSHCLG (2020) — C2 Use Class

6.5.1 In Rectory Homes Ltd v Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government [2020], the Inspector accepted that mandatory on-site care contracts and shared communal facilities justified a C2 classification for an extra care housing scheme. The case confirmed that where care provision is integral, mandatory and structurally central to a retirement community, it operates in a different policy category from general C3 housing and should be treated accordingly.

6.5.2 Relevance to this application: The proposed development includes care operations facilities, a surgery and on-site support services as integral and inseparable elements of the scheme. This structure is consistent with the C2 classification and with the Rectory Homes principles. The applicant's planning consultant should ensure that the care provision is documented as mandatory and integral from the outset, and that a minimum care package is secured by Section 106 agreement if required, in accordance with emerging good practice across the sector.

6.6 Cautionary Precedent: Bottisham Retirement Care Village, East Cambridgeshire (2022)

6.6.1 Application Ref: APP/V0510/W/21/3282241 | Authority: East Cambridgeshire District Council | Decided: April 2022 | Result: APPEAL DISMISSED

6.6.2 In the interests of balance and transparency, the applicant draws attention to the Bottisham appeal, in which outline planning permission for a retirement care village in Use Class C2 comprising housing with care and communal facilities was refused on appeal. The appeal was dismissed not because the unmet need argument failed — the Inspector accepted the principle that need for specialist older persons accommodation was a material consideration of weight — but because of significant site-specific harm that was not adequately addressed. The principal grounds of dismissal were landscape and visual impact on a sensitive rural setting, and the absence of sufficient technical evidence to demonstrate that site-specific harms could be mitigated.

6.6.3 Relevance to this application: The Bottisham dismissal reinforces the critical importance of commissioning site-specific technical studies before or alongside the submission of this application. In particular, a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, a Flood Risk Assessment, a Transport Statement and a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal are required to demonstrate that the site-specific harms are either absent or manageable. The strength of the policy and need case in this application matches or exceeds that in Bottisham; the risk of a comparable dismissal lies entirely in the site-specific technical evidence. The applicant is committed to commissioning these studies and the application will be updated with this evidence as it becomes available.

6.7 Conclusion on Case Studies and National Context

6.7.1 The case studies and national context evidence set out in this section demonstrate three things. First, that retirement village schemes of this type and scale have been approved over designated land policy restrictions — including Green Belt, which is a significantly higher hurdle than countryside — on the strength of clearly evidenced unmet need. Second, that the C2 use class provides a materially different and more favourable policy context than general C3 residential development, and that applying general countryside housing restrictions to C2 retirement villages without modification is contrary to PPG guidance. Third, that the quality and independence of the need evidence is central to success: in every allowed case, a robust, specific and up-to-date assessment of local need played a determinative role. The Amber Valley LHNA and Addendum, confirmed by the examining Inspector as a robust evidence base, meet and exceed this standard.

7. The Planning Balance

7.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

6.2 As a preliminary matter, the question of whether Policy H3 applies at all must be resolved. Policy SS3 defines countryside as land beyond and not adjacent to the Alfreton Urban Area. If the site is adjacent to the Alfreton built framework, Policy H3 is not engaged and the application is assessed under Policy H1 in a significantly more permissive framework. This question should be determined with reference to the adopted Policies Map at the outset.

7.3 In the event that Policy H3 is engaged, the weight properly attributable to it in this case is

materially reduced for the following reasons. First, Policy H3 was not designed to address C2 retirement village development and contains no provision or criteria for its assessment — as confirmed by the national guidance reviewed in Section 6 above, C2 retirement schemes occupy a materially different policy category from general C3 housing. Second, the Local Plan as a whole fails to address its own acknowledged need for 1,827 units of specialist older persons accommodation. Third, the examining Inspector found it necessary to strengthen Policy H4 precisely because the plan was inadequate in its response to older persons housing need. Fourth, applying H3 to refuse this development would obstruct delivery of a need that both national policy and the council's own strategic objectives require to be met. Fifth, and independently, the development is capable of approval under Policy SS9(b) as sustainable development enhancing the vitality of the rural community, as set out at paragraph 5.15 above. Policy SS9(b) provides a self-standing route to approval which does not require the planning balance under H3 to be resolved in the applicant's favour.

7.4 Set against this reduced policy weight is a substantial and compelling body of material considerations. These include: the council's own evidenced and quantified shortfall in housing-with-support provision; the silence and inadequacy of the Local Plan's delivery framework for this need; the requirements of NPPF Policy HO5; the Inspector's own finding that the plan required strengthening on older persons housing; the cascade benefit to the general housing market and the 1,700-household waiting list; the strong sustainability credentials of the site adjacent to Alfreton; the support of DCC Adult Social Care and Health; the endorsement of the council's own Head of Housing, Growth and Climate; and the national and case study evidence reviewed in Section 6, which demonstrates that retirement village applications of this type have been approved over designated land restrictions — including the significantly higher Green Belt hurdle — on the strength of evidenced unmet need.

7.5 It is the applicant's submission that the totality of these material considerations clearly and substantially outweighs any policy harm arising from Policy H3, and that this is a compelling case for the grant of planning permission.

8. Conclusion

8.1 This Planning Statement has demonstrated that the proposed outline planning application for 240 retirement living units on land adjacent to Alfreton Golf Club represents a direct, proportionate and deliverable response to a quantified, evidenced and acute shortage of housing with support for older people in Amber Valley Borough and the wider Derbyshire area.

8.2 The adopted Local Plan 2022-2040 explicitly acknowledges a need for 1,827 units of specialist older persons accommodation by 2040 yet has failed to allocate a single site or establish any criteria-based framework to deliver it. The examining Inspector found this inadequacy sufficiently significant to require strengthening of Policy H4 as a condition of the plan's soundness.

8.3 The council's own LHNA evidence base, confirmed as robust by the Inspector, identifies a current shortfall of 587 housing-with-support units rising to 1,017 by 2040. The entire housing land supply pipeline contains no specialist older persons accommodation whatsoever. The general housing surplus recorded in the five-year housing land supply is entirely irrelevant to this specialist need.

8.4 The NPPF December 2024, and in particular Policy HO5, provides clear national direction that the needs of older and disabled people must be planned for. The site is sustainable, accessible, adjacent to Alfreton's services and transport network, and directly compliant with the positive requirements of adopted Policy H4. Derbyshire County Council's statutory social care function has confirmed unchanged support for the development. The council's own Head of Housing, Growth and Climate has confirmed the council would make a case for the site helping to meet identified need.

8.5 The applicant draws the attention of the Local Planning Authority to the definition of countryside in Policy SS3 and invites the LPA to consider, with reference to the adopted Policies Map, whether the site's proximity to the Alfreton built framework means that the countryside designation does not apply. A formal Policies Map adjacency assessment has not been completed at this stage and this statement proceeds on the basis that Policy H3 is engaged. However, a finding of adjacency by the LPA would represent a further and independent basis for approval under Policy H1, in addition to the compelling material considerations case advanced in Section 5. The applicant is also progressing formal written support letters from Derbyshire County Council Adult Social Care and Health and from the Amber Valley Borough Council Housing Department, and is engaging with the NHS Integrated Care Board on primary care capacity. These documents will be submitted as supplementary evidence as the application progresses.

8.6 For all of these reasons, it is respectfully submitted that planning permission should be granted.

Appendix A: Key Evidence Documents Relied Upon

Document	Author / Source	Date
Amber Valley Borough Local Plan 2022-2040	Amber Valley Borough Council	Adopted 2 March 2026
Inspector's Report on the Examination of the Local Plan	Planning Inspectorate (A Jordan / A Partington)	February 2026
Local Housing Needs Assessment (LHNA) Final Report	Iceni Projects for AVBC	January 2022
LHNA Small Area Analysis	Iceni Projects for AVBC	April 2022
LHNA Addendum Report	Iceni Projects for AVBC	December 2023
Housing Strategy 2025-2030	Amber Valley Borough Council	2025
Housing Land Supply Summary as at 1 April 2025	Amber Valley Borough Council	2025
Housing Land Supply Trajectory Table	Amber Valley Borough Council	2025
All Age Adults Housing, Accommodation and Support Strategy 2023-2038	Derbyshire County Council	2023
National Planning Policy Framework	Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government	December 2024