

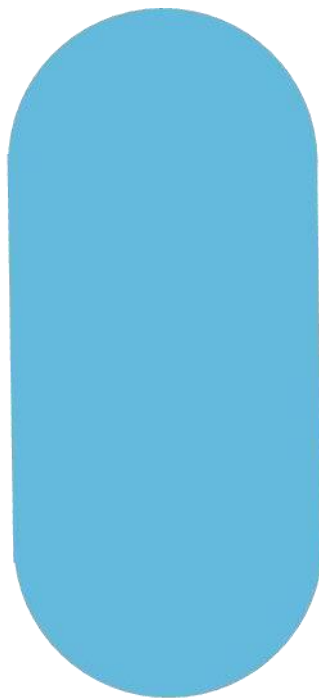


 Part of Shakespeare Martineau

Croudace Homes, Vortal Homes Limited and Falcon Developments (SE) Limited

Land North of School Road, Arborfield Cross, Wokingham

Planning Statement





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1. Introduction

1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Marrons on behalf of Croudace Homes, Vortal Homes Limited and Falcon Developments (SE) Limited (the “Applicant”) and is submitted to Wokingham Borough Council (the “Council”) in support of its application for outline planning permission for up to 70 dwellings on Land North of School Road, Arborfield Cross (the “Site”).

1.2 The description of Proposed Development is as follows:

“Proposed residential development of up to 70 dwellings together with landscaping, open space, access and associated works. Means of Access to be considered (with Appearance, Landscaping, Layout and Scale to be reserved)”.

1.3 The Site is located to the east of the village Arborfield Cross, adjacent to the edge of the settlement. The vision is to create a well-integrated neighbourhood that complements the local character of Arborfield Cross, while ensuring a sensitive transition with the surrounding area.

1.4 The full details of the Proposed Development are set out in Section 4 of this Statement and within the accompanying Design and Access Statement (DAS) prepared by Marrons. In summary the key elements of the scheme include:

- Up to 70 new homes, delivering a mix of dwelling sizes to meet local housing needs.
- 40% affordable housing (to up to 28 homes), ensuring a range of tenures to support local families and key workers.
- Creation of a high-quality residential development to provide new housing for the village and help the Council meet its chronic undersupply.
- Provision of new public open space and play areas.
- Significant increase in biodiversity value, equating to 34.48% increase in the biodiversity value of habitats and 91.35% in relation to hedgerows post development. This will include new native woodland planting, trees, wildflower meadows and a community orchard.



- New pedestrian and cycle links, improving connectivity with the village and enhancing sustainable transport modes in the area.
- A comprehensive Sustainable Urban Drainage Strategy, which could include swales, rain gardens, attenuation basins and permeable surfaces.
- An improved road layout on School Road, designed to ensure safe and efficient movement. A pedestrian/cycle route onto Cole Lane to increase accessibility and permeability with the village.
- A landscape-led development, featuring enhanced green buffers, a centrally located public open space, which includes child play space and improved biodiversity.
- Retention of existing hedgerows and trees where possible with additional planting to minimise visual impact.
- Contribution of an additional population and financial contributions to support local services and facilities (in excess of £2.5m).

Background and application context

- 1.5 Founded in 1946, Croudace Homes is a residential developer providing a wide range of high-quality new homes throughout the south-east of the country. Having been founded to meet the rising shortage of both council and private housing stock in Surrey, the company continues to meet the significant and challenging housing crisis of today and is committed in assisting the Government's pledge to build 1.5million new homes by the end of the Parliament.
- 1.6 Croudace Homes is *"committed to building high-quality homes backed up with a first-class customer service. Our strength lies in the care and attention given to the internal and external design, specification of fixtures and fittings and a quality finish. This applies equally to the buildings and the landscaping, and surroundings which enhance the street scene."*
- 1.7 The Site forms the western extent of an application for outline planning permission (planning reference 242421) that was refused by Wokingham Borough Council on 20th December 2024. Design work has been ongoing since December and this planning application takes account of the Officer's Report and the consultation



responses received during the application process, while addressing the reasons for refusal. It is notable that no objections were received from the 13 external statutory consultees and of the 20 internal statutory consultees, the majority had no objection or requested further information to fully assess the proposals (noting that the application is in outline). Accordingly, the supporting technical reports for this new application examine in detail how the proposals have been amended to address the Officers' comments and the Decision Notice. The reasons for refusal have been examined in Section 3 of this Statement and again, in Section 7.

1.8 The key changes from the previous application can be summarised as follows:

- Stronger integration with the existing village – The proposed development is now focused on the western parcel, which reflects the existing settlement pattern and provides a gap to the now distant Listed Building to the east.
- Enhanced Landscape & Visual Integration – The masterplan now incorporates stronger green buffers, an improved open space network, and additional structural tree planting, reinforcing a distinct landscape-led approach.
- New Central Open Space – The open space has been relocated to the heart of the development, creating a focal point for the community, child play space in a central location, allowing overlooking and ensuring accessibility for all residents.
- Site access and connectivity – The proposals continue to ensure safe and efficient connections with local services and facilities. This includes moving the pedestrian and cycle link further southwest along Cole Lane to reduce the distance to the village. As the proposed emergency link along this route is not required (due to the quantum of development), the design is focussed on a suitable pedestrian and cycle link, which will minimise the impact on arboriculture and ensure an enhanced environment for users.
- Green Route improvements – The scheme sets out a range of suggestions which would allow School Road to better align with its Green Route status. This includes removing the speed cushion and some signage which would no longer be required with the new access design and replacing the build outs with wildflower planting.
- Biodiversity Net Gain [34.48%] and ecological enhancements – The proposals exceed biodiversity net gain requirements, creating a strong green infrastructure network that supports local habitats.



- Re-designed green and blue infrastructure – The scheme proposes appropriate flood risk mitigation measures, integrating sustainable drainage solutions in line with best practice whilst also increasing ecological habitats.
- Provision of additional design details – The DAS now includes assessment of design considerations including density, layout, surveillance opportunities and garden sizes.
- Provision of additional supporting information – The application pack responds to the feedback from the previous application and further clarification is provided on a range of topics including agricultural land classification, a pedestrian audit and the Council's Housing Land Supply position.

1.9 The need for all types of housing across the country is significant, well-documented and widely recognised. The housing shortage is one of the biggest economic and social challenges the country faces. Since the previous planning application was submitted and indeed determined, the Labour Government has introduced significant planning reforms which seek an overhaul of the planning system to accelerate housebuilding and to support the Government's 'Plan for Change' milestone of building 1.5 million homes by the end of its Parliament.

1.10 Under the new planning rules, Councils have been told to play their part to meet housing need, with the introduction of new immediate mandatory housing targets to ramp up housebuilding and deliver growth across the country. For Wokingham, this means delivering 1,308 new homes per year, rather than the previous level of 748.

1.11 The proposed development of the Site can deliver up to 70 new homes, with 40% affordable, adjacent to the settlement boundary in a borough that can only demonstrate a 1.7-year housing land supply position. The proposals can make a significant contribution to the Council's housing targets, help work towards achieving the national objective of 1.5m new homes and they can make an immediate positive impact as delivery can commence in 2026.

Submission Documents

1.12 This Statement should be read in conjunction with the range of other supporting technical documents and plans submitted as part of this application including:



- Site Location Plan (Marrons).
- Parameters Plan (Marrons).
- Design and Access Statement, including Illustrative Masterplan (Marrons).
- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment and Landscape Strategy Plan (CSA Environmental).
- Arboricultural Implications Report, including Outline Arboricultural Method Statement, Tree Survey Schedule and Tree Protection Plan (SJA Trees).
- Ecological Assessment, Biodiversity Net Gain Report, Statutory Biodiversity Metric and Habitat Regulations Assessment (Derek Finnie Associates).
- Agricultural Land Classification Report (Reading Agricultural Consultants).
- Transport Assessment (Transport Planning Associates).
- Framework Travel Plan (Transport Planning Associates).
- Framework Construction Management Plan (Transport Planning Associates).
- Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy (Abley Letchford Partnership).
- Heritage Impact Assessment (Marrons).
- Economics Benefit Statement (Marrons).
- Affordable Housing Statement (Marrons).
- Statement of Community Involvement (Marrons).
- Designers Response and Stage 1 Road Safety Audit (Alpha Consultants).
- Phase 1 Contaminated Land Desk-top Study Report (ST Consult).

1.13 The supporting expert assessments and reports demonstrate that there are no technical, physical, or environmental constraints that would preclude the development of this site, subject to planning conditions and/or planning obligations.

Planning Statement Structure

1.14 The remaining sections of this Planning Statement are structured as follows:

- **Section 2:** Provides a description of the Site and its surroundings, planning designations and the relevant planning history
- **Section 3:** Provides details of the Proposed Development
- **Section 4:** Details the planning history in relation to the Site and sets out how the reasons for refusal of planning application 242421 have been addressed.



- **Section 5:** Sets out the relevant local planning policy context of the adopted and emerging Development Plan
- **Section 6:** Sets out the relevant national planning policy context of the adopted and emerging National Planning Policy Framework
- **Section 7:** Provides a planning assessment of the Proposed Development against local and national policies, and other material considerations
- **Section 8:** Details the S106 Heads of Terms
- **Section 9:** Provides the summary and conclusions

2. The Site and Surrounding Area

- 2.1 The following section describes the key characteristics of the Site and surrounding area.
- 2.2 An assessment of the constraints and opportunities has been undertaken and is included within the Design and Access Statement.
- 2.3 The Site is located to the east of village of Arborfield Cross, adjacent to the edge of the settlement, north of School Road (B3349). The Site is currently accessed via Wood Lane. Please refer to Figure 1 below for the Site Location Plan.

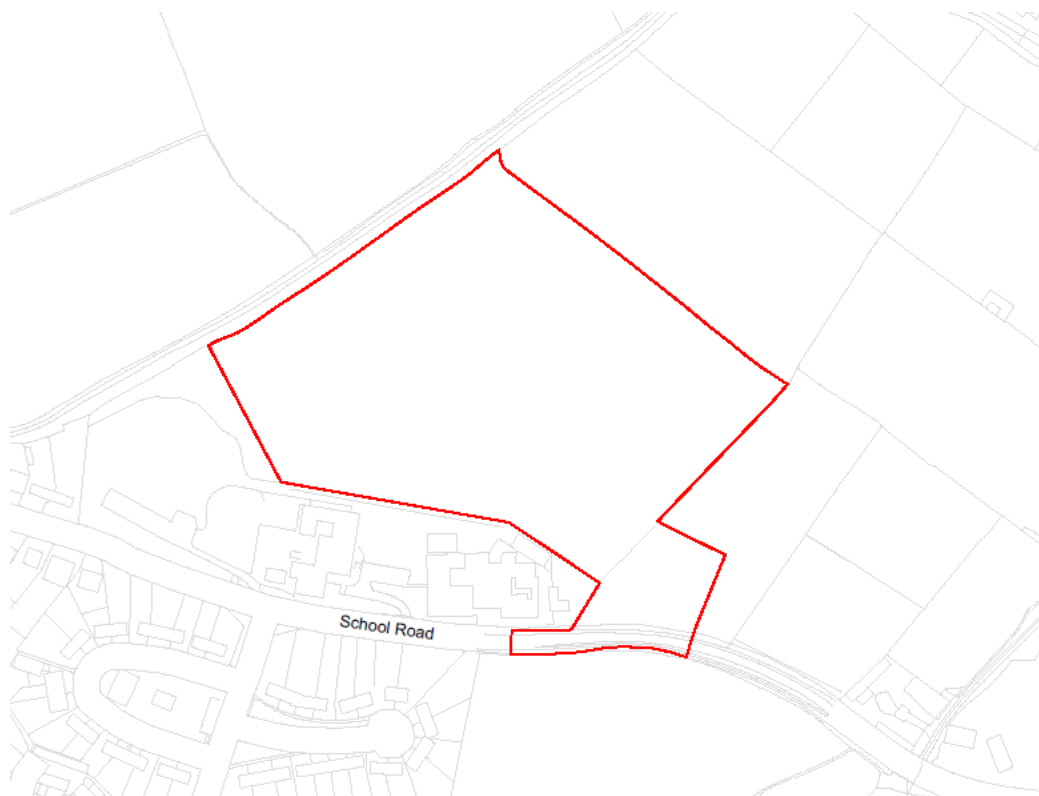


Fig 1. Site Location Plan

- 2.4 The Site has been reduced in size from the previous application (Ref. 242421) to 5.52 hectares and omits a large parcel of the eastern extent which extended east to Wood Lane.
- 2.5 The Site immediately adjoins the settlement boundary of Arborfield Cross and is bound to the north and east by farmland, to the south by The Coombes Church of England Primary School and School Road, and to the west by Cole Lane.



- 2.6 The Site's topography rises slightly from north to southwest. The Site is contained by belts of mature and semi-mature trees and hedgerows, with a tree belt along the western boundary which is dominated by large mature English oak trees.
- 2.7 There is no public access to the Site, however there are two Public Rights of Way (PROW) within proximity of the Site, one along the western boundary on Cole Lane (ARB09) and one further east, along Wood Lane (ARBO10). School Road is designated as a "Green Route".
- 2.8 There are no trees on-site which are subject to a Tree Preservation Order (TPO), however two trees to the east along School Road are covered by a TPO but will not be impacted by the proposed development.
- 2.9 There are no listed buildings within the Site. The closest listed buildings are the Grade II listed Langleypond Farmhouse located circa 180m to the east and a cluster of Grade II Listed Buildings at Newland Farm located 200m to the west.
- 2.10 The Site is located entirely within Flood Zone 1 and has no known land contamination, pollution or other environmental quality issues.
- 2.11 The village of Arborfield Cross offers a range of services and facilities including a convenience store, a village hall (incorporating Swallowfield Medical Practice consulting room), a primary school, a nursery, a public house, the Royal British Legion Club, a large recreation ground, a garden centre and café and a farm shop offering services which include a butcher, hair salon, café and pizzeria.
- 2.12 In terms of connectivity, there are four bus stops in Arborfield Cross (on Eversley Road), served by the Leopard 3 service and within walking distance of the Site. The service operates between Reading and Wokingham via Shinfield, Arborfield Green, Finchampstead and Barkham.
- 2.13 One mile to the south of the Site, the former Arborfield Garrison and Hogwood Farm sites are being developed into a new sustainable garden village (designated a "Strategic Development Location" in the adopted Core Strategy). Commonly known as "Arborfield Green", the area will provide up to 3,500 new homes, a secondary school, primary school, sports pitches, a district centre with food store, shops, leisure centre and community centre. New roads, footpaths,



cycle and bridleways, children's play parks, including a skate park, allotments and nature parks; and will include an extension to the existing Hogwood Industrial Estate, providing additional employment opportunities.

- 2.14 The market town of Wokingham is located approximately five miles northwest of the Site directly via Eversley Road and Langley Common Road (approximately a 12-minutes' drive, 22-minutes via public transport and a 24-minutes cycle), which offers a greater range of services including supermarkets, an array of schools, hotels, restaurants, cinemas, and a hospital. Wokingham train station, which is accessible via the Leopard 3 bus service (as is Reading train station) is served by South Western Railway and provides a regular direct service to London Waterloo, alongside services to Reading and Gatwick Airport.



3. Planning History

- 3.1 The Site forms the western parcel of a previous planning application which was refused outline planning permission by the Council in December 2024 (planning reference: 242421).
- 3.2 Those proposals sought outline planning permission for up to 95 dwellings with associated access, infrastructure, open space, landscaping and associated works (all matters reserved except for means of access).
- 3.3 The proposals were subject to public consultation, internal and external statutory consultations. There were no objections received from the 13 external statutory consultees and of the 20 internal consultees, the vast majority had no objection or requested further information to aid their assessments.
- 3.4 The Case Officer's report includes detailed comments on those requests for further information, which have been captured within this planning application.
- 3.5 The decision notice listed 20 Reasons for Refusal.
- 3.6 Of the Reasons for Refusal, 13-20 concern the absence of a s.106 obligation to secure a variety of social and physical infrastructure. The Applicant confirms that all obligations are capable of being secured via a S106 Agreement, subject to compliance with Reg. 122. The Applicant will enter into discussions on all necessary obligations at the earliest opportunity.
- 3.7 Reasons for Refusal 7-12 contend lack of relevant information across several topics (biodiversity, harm to protected species, highways, drainage and construction details). The requisite information is included within this planning application.
- 3.8 Table 1 presents an overview of the Reasons for Refusal alongside an overview of how the proposals now subject to this application address those reasons for refusal.



Table 1: Reasons for refusal and how they have been addressed

	Reason for refusal	How this has been addressed
1	The proposal represents inappropriate unplanned development outside of development limits within the countryside.	The Site now centres on land directly north of the primary school, with primary vehicle access from School Road and a secondary pedestrian/cycle route onto Cole Lane which is located further south and closer to the existing village. In the context of the Council's housing land supply position, this application represents sustainable development, providing much needed new homes, including a policy compliant 40% affordable housing.
2	(i) The proposed quantum of development within the parameters submitted would result in a cramped and poorly laid out scheme which has not been demonstrated to achieve minimum separation distances or adequate private amenity space. (ii) development with streets that have poor passive surveillance. (iii) access road that does not create a legible or integrated street network.	(i) The accompanying Design and Access Statement demonstrates how the Site could accommodate the proposals making efficient use of land whilst respecting local character and on-site features. The illustrative masterplan and parameters plan demonstrates that minimum separation distances and adequate private amenity space could be achieved. (ii) The scheme has been redesigned to have a central green space at its heart, with dwellings overlooking both it and the internal streets. Dwellings will also address open spaces at site boundaries. The scheme design significantly improves passive surveillance. (iii) The access strategy has been refined and enhanced to ensure safe and efficient connections with the local road network and Green Route.
3	(i) A prominent negative and detrimental impact on the Bearwood and Barkham Valued Landscape, character of School Road and character and appearance of area. (ii) Appear as detached from village's main built-up core and fail to read as organic extension to the settlement.	(i) The approach to the design has been landscape-led and has considered the landscape value of the Site on its own merit, using the Council's Landscape Character Assessment. The proposals protect and enhance the character of School Road and appearance of the area. The "Bearwood and Barkham Valued Landscape" is an emerging policy and is yet to be tested at examination. Notwithstanding, the valued landscape characteristics have been assessed to be less evident within this Site.



		(ii) The Site has been reduced in size with the residential development limited to the field north of the school buildings. It is considered that the proposals read as an organic extension of the village and maintain the character of the area and School Road.
4	(i) Erode the open space that separates Arborfield Cross and Barkham Hill and Arborfield Cross and Arborfield – detrimental degree of visual and perceived coalescence.	A Landscape and Visual Assessment has been prepared. By centring the proposals to the north of the primary school, there is no erosion of open space nor a detrimental degree of visual nor perceived coalescence. The scheme reflects the character of the village through the utilisation of the Arborfield and Newland Village Design Statement.
5	Harmful impact on the setting of the Grade II listed building through the erosion of open fields which contribute to its rural setting.	A Heritage Impact Assessment has been prepared. The Site no longer extends to the east, with the submitted HIA confirming that there is neutral impact on the setting of the listed building.
6	Fails to demonstrate that there would be no loss of Grade 3a Best and Most versatile Agricultural Land or such loss would be outweighed by material considerations.	An Agricultural Land Classification survey has been undertaken. The report concludes that 1ha of the Site is Grade 3a, equating to 20%, albeit it is recognised that not all of that 1ha of land will be developed. It is considered that the very small loss of 1ha of Grade 3a land is outweighed by the provision of 70 dwellings in the context of the Council's 1.7-year HLS position and should not prevent the grant of planning permission.
7	A lack of accurate and updated information means a baseline survey date cannot be agreed and assessment of how 10% BNG will be achieved is not possible.	The accompanying BNG report has been updated and it is considered that the baseline survey date can be agreed with Officers. The accompanying BNG metric shows a 34.48% habitat gain and 91% hedgerow gain.
8	Harm to bat and reptile protected species and species of principal importance.	An Ecological Assessment has been prepared by Derek Finnie Associates and confirms that ... It is considered that a planning condition can deal with further surveys.
9	Insufficient information submitted to enable	A Transport Assessment and Framework



	highways, parking and transportation implications to be assessed.	Travel Plan have been prepared by TPA and form part of the application submission. It is considered that the information submitted provides the required information for a highways assessment to be undertaken by Officers. Please refer to Section 7 for more detail.
10	Insufficient information to demonstrate a modal shift towards sustainable modes of transport.	The Transport Assessment provides the necessary information on the proposals to encourage sustainable modes of transport, including walking and cycling, including an amended route from the Site onto Cole Lane to increase accessibility and permeability.
11	Insufficient information to demonstrate that the proposed foul water drainage strategy would be viable.	A Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy has been prepared by Abley Letchford Partnership Ltd and forms part of the application submission. This confirms that the proposed strategy is viable and can be accommodated onsite. Please refer to Section 7 of this Statement for further detail.
12	Insufficient information to demonstrate how planning policies relating to sustainable construction and reductions on carbon dioxide emissions would be complied with.	High quality, sustainable developments are at the forefront of the vision of Croudace Homes. New homes are designed by experienced professionals using high quality materials and all homes achieve an EPC energy rating of at least a "B". Croudace is committed to minimising energy consumption (by 10%), incorporating on-site renewable energy features in all its schemes; and adhering to the requisite Building Regulations.
13	Absence of planning obligation for adequate mitigation measures relating to Thames Basin Heaths SPA.	Included within Draft Heads of Terms at Section 8 and can be secured via a S106 Agreement between the applicant and the Council.
14	Absence of planning obligation to secure opportunities for training, apprenticeships and other vocational initiatives.	Included within Draft Heads of Terms at Section 8. An 'Employment and Skills Plan' can be secured via a S106 Agreement between the Applicant and the Council.
15	Absence of planning obligation for provision of affordable housing.	The scheme provides for 40% affordable housing (up to 28 new homes). Included within Draft Heads of Terms at Section 8 and can be secured via a S106 Agreement between the Applicant and the Council.
16	Absence of planning obligation to secure adoption of internal estate roads or installation of pavement on southern side of Barkham Ride* (*noting error in street name).	Included within Draft Heads of Terms at Section 8 and can be secured via a S106 Agreement between the Applicant and the Council.



17	Absence of planning obligation to secure a travel plan or contributions to various transport schemes.	A Framework Travel Plan is submitted with the application. A detailed Travel Plan can be secured by planning condition and appropriate contributions can be secured via a S106 Agreement between the Applicant and the Council.
18	Absence of planning obligation to secure contribution to healthcare.	Appropriate contribution can be secured via a S106 Agreement between the Applicant and the Council.
19	Absence of planning obligation to secure delivery, maintenance and monitoring of habitat creation and on-site enhancement measures.	Included within Draft Heads of Terms at Section 8 and can be secured via a S106 Agreement between the Applicant and the Council.
20	Absence of planning obligation to secure delivery and ongoing maintenance of Public Open Space.	Included within Draft Heads of Terms at Section 8 and can be secured via a S106 Agreement between the Applicant and the Council.

3.9 An earlier planning application (planning reference: 180596) on the site and land on the south side of School Road was refused outline planning permission for the development of up to 120 dwellings on 22nd June 2018. It is notable that of the eight Reasons for Refusal, four concerned the absence of a S106 obligation to secure a variety of social and physical infrastructure and one contended that not enough information had been submitted to assess the proposals. It is also noted that the application was considered when Wokingham had a five-year housing land supply.



4. The Proposed Development

Context

- 4.1 The planning reforms released in December 2024 reflect the critical need and key priority to tackle the country's housing crisis and build more homes.
- 4.2 The Council cannot demonstrate a five-year housing land supply, with only a 1.7-year housing land supply as of 31st March 2024.
- 4.3 New homes in the borough are much needed.
- 4.4 The proposals subject to this outline planning application will provide up to 70 dwellings (up to 28 new affordable new homes) together with open space and associated works, providing social, economic and environmental benefits for the existing and future residents of Arborfield Cross.
- 4.5 The outline application is supported by a site-wide illustrative masterplan and parameters plan showing how the proposed development could be brought forward.
- 4.6 The proposals are described in more detail within the accompanying Design and Access Statement; however, the key elements for the purposes of this Planning Statement are set out below.

Housing

- 4.7 The Proposed Development will deliver up to 70 new homes and will include a policy compliant position of 40% affordable housing (up to 28 homes) to assist with the Council's identified local housing needs for both affordable and market housing.
- 4.8 Whilst the detailed design is to be decided at Reserved Matters stage, an appropriate mix of dwelling sizes, types and tenures will be provided, with affordable housing reflective of the Local Housing Needs Assessment (November 2023), or any relevant updates; and secured via a S106 Agreement.
- 4.9 Dwellings will be provided with private parking areas, private garden space and safe and secure cycle storage (all in accordance with Borough Design Guide).



- 4.10 The Illustrative masterplan demonstrates that each home benefits from a minimum garden depth of 11m, complemented by a centrally located green space that provides accessible recreational areas, enhancing community interaction and well-being. The minimum back-to-back distance of 24m exceeds the 22m local standard, ensuring privacy and a well-spaced layout, ensuring that the Reason for Refusal No.2 has been fully and robustly considered within the design process.
- 4.11 Building heights will vary from 1 storey to 2.5 storey creating variation in the roofscape and street scene, taking the form of short terraces, semi-detached and detached homes at a relatively low density across the Site.
- 4.12 The wider development will include extensive landscaping, children's play space, public open space, attractive walkways and unallocated/visitor parking.
- 4.13 It should be noted that the illustrative masterplan now provides for a centrally located green space including children's play, benches and a civic space which will enhance community interaction and well-being. The play space will be a Local Equipment Area for Play (LEAP), providing a safe and secure play space for independent outdoor play.
- 4.14 The illustrative masterplan demonstrates how the site could accommodate the proposals making efficient use of the land whilst respecting the transition between the built-up environment that fronts School Road (i.e. the primary school), on-site features such as hedgerows and trees and the open countryside to the north and west. The Design and Access Statement provides further information on the character analysis.
- 4.15 The applicant is committed to delivering new homes which meet the Technical Space Standards, the appropriate and required M4(2) and M4(3) standards, include appropriate on-site renewable energy features and minimise energy and water consumption.



Accessibility and Movement

- 4.16 Access is a matter to be considered as part of this outline planning application.
- 4.17 The primary vehicular access is proposed from School Road, which would be realigned to continue into the Site with a priority junction on the minor arm of School Road. This realignment was welcomed by Wokingham Highways within its statutory consultee response to the previous application. The new access road would be 5 metres wide and incorporate 2 metre footways on both sides which was also welcomed by Wokingham Highways. The existing footway on School Road will be widened to a minimum of 2 metres up to the existing pedestrian crossing.
- 4.18 Visibility splays for the proposed minor arm on School Road have been provided for a 20mph speed limit which was welcomed and found to be acceptable (subject to detailed design) by WBC Highways Officer (Paragraph 128 of the Case Officer's Report). Details can be found within Chapter 4 of the Transport Assessment (TA).
- 4.19 As requested by WBC Highways, swept paths and visibility splays have now been submitted for refuse vehicles and fire appliances to show that the internal road layout can safely facilitate them; and for vehicles accessing and egressing from School Road. These are included within Appendix F of the TA.
- 4.20 Private parking will be provided for all dwellings in accordance with the Council's standards, in the form of car parking spaces adjacent to the dwelling and within garages. In responding to WBC Highways requests, the Borough's parking calculator has been used based on the submitted illustrative masterplan an illustrative housing mix. Unallocated visitor parking has been provided, again in accordance with the Council's parking standards (Please refer to Appendix C of the TA for further details) and it is confirmed that the proposals can accommodate the anticipated provision of parking within the site.
- 4.21 Cycle parking will also be in accordance with the Council's standards and will be considered at detailed design stage/Reserved Matters. In their consultation response to the previous application, WBC Highways Officers were "*content for cycle parking to be included as a reserve matter*".
- 4.22 An additional pedestrian and cycle access will be provided onto Cole Lane in the south-western corner of the Site to increase the permeability of the Site by active



modes of travel and will link up with the internal walking and cycle routes. This route has been moved further south within the development scheme to respond to Officers comments on accessibility, permeability and connectivity with the existing village. It is considered that this amended route will increase connectivity with the village, Wokingham and the wider area; and help increase permeability between and within the Public Rights of Way and Green Routes.

- 4.23 In accordance with the recommendations received from WBC Highways Officer (Paragraph 118 of the Case Officer's Report), appropriate financial contributions towards improvements to the existing Swan bus stops (to improve the waiting area to make it more attractive and to provide a new sheltered bus stop); and enhancement of the Leopard 3 bus service (to increase frequency to Wokingham) will be secured via S106 Agreement.

Green and Blue Infrastructure

- 4.24 The proposals incorporate approximately 2.34ha of green infrastructure, equating to over 42% of the whole site. This is dominated by a green buffer which encompasses the Site, retains and enhances its natural screening qualities and presents a soft transition to the wider countryside. These green areas will create a network of open spaces, woodland, play areas and green corridors to be enjoyed by wildlife, and new and existing residents of Arborfield Cross.
- 4.25 A small amount of vegetation removal is required to facilitate the access, while additional tree planting, particularly within the green buffers, at the entrance of the Site and along internal street frontages will enhance the environment and continue the verdant character of School Road within the Site.
- 4.26 The layout has been configured to include surface water drainage features in the form of Sustainable Urban Drainage System basins at the northwestern corner of the Site, with the potential for swales and rain gardens to be provided.
- 4.27 Given the extent of the enhancement and creation of new habitat on Site, the Defra Biodiversity Net Gain metric realised a 34.48% increase the biodiversity value of habitats and 91.35% in relation to hedgerows, representing a significant ecological enhancement post development.



Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG)

- 4.28 The proposal involves more than one net additional dwelling and is located within a 5km (linear radius) to the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area (TBHSPA). In accordance with the Delivery Framework, a financial contribution to the TBHSPA will be secured via a S106 Agreement. In addition, there is a requirement for the provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) at 8ha/1000 population based on 2.4 persons per household. The Applicant has an in-principle agreement with the University of Reading and should planning permission be forthcoming, the appropriate SANG capacity (circa 1.34ha) would be secured via the Section 106 Agreement. Noting comments received from the Council's ecologist on the previous application (paragraph 174 of the Officer's Report), the applicant has (re)confirmed with the University of Reading that the appropriate SANG capacity can be secured and allocated to this scheme. As outlined above, this will be secured via a S106 Agreement.
- 4.29 Each of the accompanying technical documents provides detailed information on the proposed development and how it has been amended to address the Case Officer's detailed comments.



5. The Development Plan

- 5.1 The starting point for the determination of any planning application is the adopted Development Plan. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that planning applications should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.2 The Development Plan for the purposes of this application is:
- The Core Strategy (CS), adopted in January 2010.
 - The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan, adopted in February 2014 (MDD Local Plan).
 - The Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan, made in April 2020.
 - Saved Policy NRM6 (Natural Resource Management) of the South East Plan (partially revoked 2013).
 - Joint Minerals and Waste Plan, adopted January 2023.
- 5.3 The Core Strategy and the MDD Local Plan sets out the vision and objectives for the borough and the policies to achieve those objectives.
- 5.4 The Core Strategy is however over 15 years old, while the MDD is 11 years old. In accordance with Annex 1, paragraph 232 of the National Planning policy Framework (2024) (The Framework), due weight will be given to the policies contained within the Development Plan according to their degree of consistency with the Framework (“the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given”).
- 5.5 It is therefore considered that those specific policies relating to housing delivery in both documents alongside the made Neighbourhood Plan are out-of-date.
- 5.6 A summary of relevant policies is contained in Appendix 1.

Emerging Local Plan

- 5.7 Wokingham Borough Council has been preparing a new Local Plan which will put in place a new planning strategy for the period to 2040, and when adopted would replace the current Local Plan documents.



- 5.8 While preparing this outline planning application, the Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update 2023-2040: Proposed Submission Plan (the “LPU”) was submitted to the Secretary of State for examination by an independent Planning Inspector on 28 February 2025. At the time of writing, no date has been set for the Examination hearings.
- 5.9 It is notable that the LPU does not account for the December 2024 increase in local housing need.
- 5.10 Transitional arrangements in Paragraph 236 of the Framework state that where an adopted plan meets less than 80% of local housing need, the local authority must begin work on a new plan as soon as provisions take effect.
- 5.11 In view of Paragraph 49 of the Framework, it is considered that the submitted LPU faces fundamental unresolved objections as seen from the consultation responses to the Regulation 19 stage and with particular reference to draft Policy NE6 (Valued Landscape); and accordingly, holds limited weight.



6. The National Planning Policy Framework and other Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework)

- 6.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (“the Framework”) was updated in December 2024 and is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.
- 6.2 The Framework sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and how these should be applied, confirming the “presumption in favour of sustainable development” at its heart (Paragraph 11).
- 6.3 Annex 1 of the Framework confirms that the policies should be taken into account in dealing with applications from the day of its publication (Paragraph 231). Due weight should be given to existing Development Plan policies according to their degree of consistency with the Framework, even if they were adopted or made prior to the publication of this Framework (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given) (Paragraph 232).
- 6.4 The Framework is clear that where the policies within the development plan are considered out of date, permission must be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies within the Framework (Paragraph 11d (ii)).
- 6.5 The Framework directs local planning authorities to approach decisions in a positive and creative way, indicating that decision-makers should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible (Paragraph 39).
- 6.6 With regard to prematurity and emerging local plans, and with particular reference to the presumption in favour of sustainable development, the Framework explains arguments that an application is premature are unlikely to justify a refusal of planning permission (Paragraph 51).
- 6.7 Chapter 5 of the Framework underlines the importance of delivering a sufficient supply of homes. Paragraph 61 emphasises the need to support the Government’s objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, by enabling a sufficient



amount and variety of land to come forward, to ensure the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed and that land with permission is developed without unnecessary delay.

- 6.8 Within the context of establishing need, the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies; and this includes people who require affordable housing and people wishing to commission or build their own homes (Paragraph 63).
- 6.9 Paragraph 71 advocates for “mixed tenure sites” and recognises that they “can provide a range of benefits, including creating diverse communities and supporting timely build out rates”.
- 6.10 Paragraph 73 highlights that “small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area and are often built out relatively quickly”.
- 6.11 Section 9 of the Framework seeks to promote sustainable transport. Paragraph 109 states that transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of development proposals, so that the potential impacts of development on transport networks can be addressed; while opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use are identified and pursued; and the environmental impacts of traffic can be identified, assessed and taken into account.
- 6.12 Paragraph 116 states that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.
- 6.13 Within this context, Paragraph 117 outlines what is required from development proposals:
- a) give priority first to pedestrian and cycle movements, both within the scheme and with neighbouring areas; and second – so far as possible – to facilitating access to high quality public transport;
 - b) create places that are safe, secure and attractive – which minimise the scope for conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles, avoid unnecessary street clutter, and respond to local character and design standards;
 - c) allow for the efficient delivery of goods, and access by service and emergency vehicles; and



d) be designed to enable charging of plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles in safe, accessible and convenient locations.

- 6.14 The Framework is clear that to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. Planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services. Where there are groups of smaller settlements, development in one village may support services in a village nearby (Paragraph 83).
- 6.15 The Framework acknowledges that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas and this should be taken into account in decision-making (Paragraph 110).
- 6.16 Section 11, Paragraph 124 outlines that planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions.
- 6.17 Paragraph 130 states that where there is an existing or anticipated shortage of land for meeting identified housing needs, it is especially important that planning policies and decisions avoid homes being built at low densities and ensure that developments make optimal use of the potential of each site.
- 6.18 Section 12 of the Framework sets out that “the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve” (Paragraph 131). The paragraph further states that “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”.
- 6.19 Paragraph 135 of the Framework states that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments will, inter alia, “function well, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development; are visually attractive; are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change; optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development; and create places that are safe, with a high standard of



amenity for existing and future users”.

- 6.20 Paragraph 139 states that significant weight should be given to:
- a) development which reflects local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes; and/or
 - b) outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings.
- 6.21 The Framework highlights that trees make an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments, and can also help mitigate and adapt to climate change (paragraph 136). Opportunities should be taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments (such as parks and community orchards), that appropriate measures are in place to secure the long-term maintenance of newly planted trees, and that existing trees are retained wherever possible.
- 6.22 The Framework supports multiple benefits from sites, including net environmental gains, new habitat creation and improved public access to the countryside. It also promotes the development of under-utilised land, especially where it would help to meet identified needs for housing where land supply is constrained (Paragraph 125).
- 6.23 The Framework directs local planning authorities to take a proactive role in identifying and helping to bring forward land that may be suitable for meeting development needs (Paragraph 126).
- 6.24 The Framework recognises the role of the planning system in protecting and enhancing natural ecosystems. Paragraph 187 sets out that decisions should protect sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan) and minimise impacts on and provide net gains for biodiversity.
- 6.25 Paragraph 192 underlines that opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity should be identified and pursued.
- 6.26 Section 16 covers the historic environment and states that heritage assets should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations



(paragraph 202).

- 6.27 When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (paragraph 212) and where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal (paragraph 215).

National Planning Practice Guidance

- 6.28 The National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), a web-based resource sets out the mechanism for the application of policies found within the Framework and is a material consideration in decision making.
- 6.29 The PPG acknowledges that *"the National Planning Policy Framework represents up-to-date Government planning policy that must be taken into account where it is relevant to a planning application or appeal, this includes the presumption in favour of sustainable development found at paragraph 1 of the Framework"* (Paragraph: 006 Reference ID: 21b-006-20190315).
- 6.30 Furthermore, *"in decision-taking, if an authority cannot demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply, including any appropriate buffer, the presumption in favour of sustainable development will apply as set out within paragraph 11d of the NPPF"* (Paragraph: 008 Reference ID: 68-008-20190722).

Wokingham Borough Five Year Housing Land Supply Statement

- 6.31 The Wokingham Borough Five Year Housing Land Supply Statement (published 30th January 2025) sets out housing completions on 31st March 2024 and the supply of deliverable sites for the subsequent five-year period 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2029.
- 6.32 Taking account of the planning reforms of December 2024, notably the updates to the formula for calculating Local Housing Need (LHN), the Council has assessed its five-year housing land supply position against the standard method and the application of additional buffers.



- 6.33 As a result, the LHN for Wokingham Borough increased from 748 dwellings to 1,336 dwellings, an increase of 78%. The LHN of 1,336 homes per annum has therefore been applied to the housing land supply position on 31st March 2024.
- 6.34 Performance against the latest Housing Delivery Test requires the Council to apply a 5% buffer, having delivered 169% of the required homes over the preceding three years. Housing need over the five-year period, including a 5% buffer, is therefore **7,014 dwellings**.
- 6.35 On 31st March 2024, the Council can demonstrate a **1.7-year housing land supply** against the LHN of 1,336dpa with the total number of dwellings deemed deliverable in the 5-year period being 2,321 dwellings. This is a highly significant shortfall.
- 6.36 The Council's housing officer in his statutory consultation response to the previous application confirmed that "by virtue of the council's acknowledged housing land supply position, the presumption in favour of sustainable development set out in the NPPF at paragraph 11 is now engaged in the decision-making process. Accordingly, an assessment will need to be made on whether any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF framework taken as a whole".
- 6.37 It is evident that that the contribution of up to 70 new homes, including up to 28 affordable dwellings is a significant benefit, helping to minimise the significant shortfall and accordingly, should be afforded very substantial weight. In considering the weight to be afforded to providing new homes in the previous application, the Case Officer's Report (paragraph 204) advises that *"the provision of market and affordable housing is a weighty benefit in favour of the development given the housing land supply shortfall and acute identified affordable housing need"*. The Case officer concludes that *"...substantial weight, rather than very substantial weight is afforded to the benefits of this scheme of 95 homes, in contributing to the Council's housing land supply position"*. In drawing upon this conclusion, the Case officer's report refers to the Council's *"significant over delivery in recent years... which remains a material moderating factor against the full weight able to be given to the supply of additional housing"*.
- 6.38 It is confirmed in the appeal decisions outlined in later paragraphs of this Section that Inspectors have considered past supply and concluded that *"the requirement*



on local planning authorities to deliver housing is forward facing” and have given only limited weight to this past over supply.

Wokingham Borough Council Local Housing Needs Assessment 2022

6.39 Published in November 2023 and prepared by Opinion Research Services, the Wokingham Borough Council Local Housing Needs Assessment 2022 (LHNA) provides evidence regarding the overall need for housing as well as the size, type and tenure and the housing needs of different groups to inform local and strategic plans in Wokingham covering the period of 2018-2040.

6.40 The LHNA identifies that Wokingham Borough Council has a Local Housing Need (LHA) of 781 dwellings per annum (utilising the minimum LHN figure) which includes a total affordable housing need of 1,943 dwellings and a total market housing need of 11,339 dwellings across 2021-2040 as set out in the table below.

	Affordable Housing	Market Housing	Total Housing
1 bedroom	329	515	843
2 bedroom	745	1,399	2,142
3 bedroom	634	5,041	5,675
4+ bedroom	234	3,890	4,124
Dwellings	1,943	10,845	12,783
Additional Need	-	494	494
Local Housing Need	1,943	11,339	13,277

Table 2. Table showing Housing Need by property size 2021-2040

6.41 The LHNA concludes that on assessing the unmet affordable housing need in 2021, together with the future need for affordable housing and those aspiring to home ownership arising over the 19-year period, the overall need for affordable housing would comprise a total of 6,689 households, equivalent to an average of 352 per annum (45% of the 781 LHN). Therefore, the demand for affordable housing in Wokingham Borough is substantial. Equally, Fig.3 clearly demonstrates that the need for market housing is even more substantial, representing just over 85% of the total housing need in the Borough.



6.42 In support this application, an Affordable Housing Need Technical Note has been prepared and submitted which assesses the affordable housing position in Wokingham Borough in greater detail. The Note highlights that only 34-47% of affordable housing need has been delivered in Wokingham Borough over the past 12 years and the number of households on the Council's housing waiting list has risen by 49%. This stark position is confirmed in the Case Officer's Report (paragraph 204) whereby *"the provision of market and affordable housing is a weighty benefit given the housing land supply shortfall and "acute identified affordable housing need"*.

Arborfield and Barkham Joint Neighbourhood Plan

6.43 The Arborfield and Barkham Joint Neighbourhood Plan (the "NP") was made in December 2019.

6.44 The vision for the NP is "A sustainable future for Arborfield and Barkham as a thriving and accessible community, managing development to be inclusive for all age groups and enhancing the identity and rural setting of the villages".

6.45 14 policies are included within the NP and are based around the four themes of "Identity and Setting", "Thriving Communities", "Appropriate Development" and "Getting Around".

6.46 As noted previously within this Statement, the policies relating to the supply of land for housing and housing delivery within the NP are considered to be out-of-date. Notwithstanding this, the revised scheme reflects the vision and objectives of the NP.



Appeal Decisions

Appeal Reference / Date	Site Address	Findings
APP/X0360/W/24/3340006 19 th July 2024	Land West of Trowes Lane and North of Charlton Lane Swallowfield	Housing supply: The Council unable to demonstrate an adequate housing land supply position. Limited weight given to past oversupply. TBHSPA: Financial contributions and SANG site at University of Reading would mitigate any additional recreational pressure arising from the appeal scheme.
PP/X0360/W/23/3331651 6 th March 2024	Land off Watmore Lane/ Maidensfield, Winnersh, Berkshire	Housing land supply figure of 3.2 years - awarding this significant weight. 40% affordable housing – awarding this significant weight, highlighting the “affordable housing crisis”; and noting the exceptional need was identified as long ago as 2010.
APP/X0360/W/24/3350170 5 th February 2025	Land to the North of the A4, New Bath Road Twyford, Reading	Limited weight given to past oversupply.

Table 3 - Relevant Appeal Decisions

Affordable Housing SPD

6.47 Adopted in July 2013, the Wokingham Borough Council Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document provides further guidance on the Council’s approach to securing affordable housing through the planning process, including setting out the evidence of housing need (albeit out of date), types, size and tenure



mix of affordable housing and design and distribution.

Sustainable Design and Construction SPD and companion document

- 6.48 Adopted in May 2010, the Wokingham Borough Local Development Framework Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document and companion document promotes the use of sustainable techniques and materials in the construction of buildings and structures and provides guidance to help improve the sustainability performance of buildings and spaces through their design and subsequent use.

Borough Design Guide SPD

- 6.49 Adopted in June 2012, the Wokingham Borough Council Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document updates and builds upon the design guidance within the Core Strategy for development across the Borough.

Arborfield and Newland Village Design Statement

- 6.50 Adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document on 26th March 2015, the Arborfield and Newland Village Design Statement sets out the design guidelines for the plan area with a view to preserving the rural qualities of the Parish.



7. Assessment of the Proposed Development

- 7.1 This section of the Statement assesses the Proposed Development against the Development Plan and other material considerations where appropriate.
- 7.2 As outlined in this Statement, the application is submitted within the context of a national housing crisis and a pledge by the Government to build 1.5million new homes and to boost affordable and social housing.
- 7.3 The Site is within the ‘Countryside’, the ‘Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area’ and ‘Special Protection Area, Linear Mitigation Zone’ as designated in the adopted Development Plan. It is however outside of the Arborfield Cross Conservation Area and Green Belt and is not subject to any site-specific landscape protection designations.
- 7.4 From an assessment of the relevant local plan policies, national planning guidance and site-specific considerations, the key planning considerations are:
- The Principle of Development
 - Housing (including mix and affordability)
 - Design (including scale, layout and appearance)
 - Open Space Provision
 - Flood Risk and Drainage
 - Transport, access and parking
 - Heritage and Archaeology
 - Ecology and Biodiversity Net Gain
 - Arboriculture
 - Agricultural Land Classification
 - Landscape and Visual Impact
 - The Planning Balance

The Principle of Development

- 7.5 The starting point for the determination of any planning application is the adopted Development Plan. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that planning applications should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.



- 7.6 The Framework (Paragraph 48) reiterates that legal position, stating that planning applications should be determined in accordance with the relevant policies of the adopted Development Plan unless there are material considerations which indicate otherwise.
- 7.7 The Framework clearly sets out the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development taking account of economic, social and environmental objectives and indicates a presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- 7.8 Paragraph 8 identifies that achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives – economic, social and environmental – all of which should be interdependent and therefore need to be pursued in mutually-supportive ways.
- 7.9 So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- 7.10 Paragraph 11 states that plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision-taking this means (inter alia):
- (d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless*
- (i) The application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or*
- (ii) Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole (otherwise known as ‘titled balance’).”*
- 7.11 Footnote 8 of the NPPF explains that out-of-date policies also applies where LPAs cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites (with the appropriate buffer, as set out in paragraph 78); or where the Housing Delivery Test (‘HDT’) indicates that the delivery of housing was substantially below (less than 75% of) the housing requirement over the previous three years.



- 7.12 The priority for the Development Plan is to steer new housing to the most sustainable locations within settlement boundaries and limit development within the countryside.
- 7.13 It is acknowledged that the Site is within the countryside and outside of the built confines of the village of Arborfield Cross and would not comply with the development strategy as set out in the Development Plan. Notwithstanding, it is also acknowledged that the local planning policies which seek to control the supply of land for housing are now considered to be out-of-date and the policies are further compromised by the Wokingham's current housing land supply.
- 7.14 Policy CP9 states that development proposals within the defined development limits (of the limited development location of Arborfield Cross) will be acceptable. Policy CP11 (Proposals outside development limits (including countryside)) sets out that in order to protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of the environment, proposals outside of development limits will not normally be permitted, unless it meets a number of exception criteria.
- 7.15 With regards to Policies CP9 and CP11, it is notable that the Inspector in Appeal reference APP/X0360/W/24/3350170 (decision dated 5th February 2025) which involved a site within the countryside and outside of the defined settlement boundary concluded that *"these policies [CP9 and CP11] present a more restrictive approach to development outside of defined development limits than the Framework. As such, this reduces the weight I attach to this development plan conflict"*.
- 7.16 In Appeal reference APP/X0360/W/24/3340006 (decision dated 19th July 2024), the Inspector remarked that *"given the lack of housing land supply, application of that [spatial] strategy needs to be applied in a flexible way to ensure that sufficient land for housing continues to come forward"*.
- 7.17 Noting that the two Appeals detailed at paragraph 7.15 and 7.16 above were not assessed under the now confirmed housing land supply position of 1.7-years, it is even more apparent that sites which are adjacent to or are in proximity to the development boundaries can also be sustainably located and suitable for supporting growth and can help to contribute to the Council's significant need for new housing.
- 7.18 WBC Senior Planning Policy Officer confirms in their consultee response to



application 242421 that *“by virtue of the council’s acknowledged housing land supply position, the presumption in favour of sustainable development set out in the NPPF at paragraph 11 is now engaged in the decision-making process. Accordingly, an assessment will need to be made on whether any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF framework taken as a whole”* (Response dated 17.10.24).

- 7.19 The Inspector on Appeal reference APP/X0360/W/24/3350170 (dated 5th February 2025) went on to note that in the case of that appeal, *“the presumption in favour of sustainable development applies as set out within the Framework. This states that where a Council cannot demonstrate an adequate housing supply, as is the case here, then permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies of the Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in isolation”*.
- 7.20 Given that the Council’s housing policies are found to be out-of-date, and that Wokingham cannot demonstrate a five- year supply of deliverable housing sites (as required by paragraph 72), paragraph 11(d)(ii) of the Framework is triggered. Therefore, the presumption in favour of sustainable development will be engaged which means that unless there is conflict with the Framework around protected areas / assets or any adverse impact would significantly outweigh the benefits of development, then planning permission should be granted. It is noted that at recent Planning Committee meetings, officers have been clear with Members regarding the current position of the Council, on this point, advising that any reasons for refusal must be robust.

Housing, including mix and affordability

- 7.21 Given the application is submitted in Outline, the final housing mix and tenure split is to be informed by the most up-to-date Local Housing Needs Assessment at the time and agreed with Wokingham Borough Council at Reserved Matters stage. The



proposals will however deliver 40%, policy compliant affordable housing, which will be secured via a S106 Agreement.

- 7.22 The Proposed Development will boost the supply of housing within the borough and will deliver more diversity within the housing market providing a range of housing types. A mix of housing sizes and tenures will attract a wider population demographic, creating a mixed and balanced community and contribute towards meeting housing need. The Proposed Development will make an immediate and effective contribution towards meeting the need for new homes.
- 7.23 It is considered that the principle of residential development in this location is acceptable and will help to meet the Council's new housing targets as set out under the new standard method.
- 7.24 The provision of both affordable and market housing will be a significant benefit to the Borough which has an acute need for both forms of housing.
- 7.25 On this basis, the Proposed Development is considered to accord with the Framework and Core Strategy Policy CP5, MDD Local Plan Policy TB05 and NP Policy AD2.

Design, including scale, layout and appearance

- 7.26 Planning policy at a national, strategic and local level places suitable emphasis on the design of new buildings having regard to the form, function and structure of an area.
- 7.27 Matters relating to layout, scale and appearance are to be considered at Reserved Matters stage. Notwithstanding, the accompanying Design and Access Statement (DAS) sets out the indicative design approach for this Site, which is fully reflective of national and local design policies and guidance.
- 7.28 The DAS sets out the context, opportunities, constraints and design principles which have informed the supporting illustrative design drawings and plans. It identifies the design strategy of the scheme, presenting the evolution from the initial assessment of the Site and the surrounding area to the Illustrative masterplan which has been informed by the full suite of technical information which supports this submission.



- 7.29 The vision for the Site is to create a well-integrated neighbourhood that complements the local character of Arborfield Cross while ensuring a sensitive transition to its rural setting. The revised proposal balances appropriate density, enhanced landscape integration, and green buffers to minimise visual impact. Prioritising placemaking and sustainability, the scheme achieves over 34.48% Biodiversity Net Gain in relation to on-site habitats, retains and enhances existing vegetation, and incorporates sustainable drainage solutions (SuDS). A strong emphasis on active travel promotes safe walking, wheeling and cycling routes, fostering connectivity and healthier lifestyles. These refinements ensure the development delivers much-needed new homes while respecting Arborfield Cross's valued rural character.
- 7.30 The Illustrative masterplan outlines the arrangement of buildings, plots, gardens, parking, open space, and streets, providing a visual representation of how the Site could be developed.
- 7.31 The proposals create a soft transition from School Road into the Site with an enhanced landscape entrance which creates a sense of arrival. The proposed dwellings are set back from the existing buildings on School Road and separated by a new landscape buffer.
- 7.32 The design has been landscape-led with a focus on maintaining and enhancing existing trees and hedgerows on the Site, in addition to delivering new landscape buffers, additional planting and child play space within a new central green space at the heart of the development.
- 7.33 In terms of placemaking, the illustrative masterplan seeks to:
- Deliver good quality homes and buildings that provide an attractive and comfortable place for people to live, work and play.
 - Create a new neighbourhood that responds to the local character and feels rural.
 - Create a permeable network of interconnected and attractive streets that make it easy to move around.
 - Create recognisable streets and spaces including vibrant squares and high-quality green space.
 - Create a variety of public open space to serve the needs of all.



- Create beautiful and safe streets that encourage neighbourliness making it easy for social encounters.

7.34 In terms of sustainability, the vision and illustrative masterplan has made allowances for the energy infrastructure required for a development of this size. Well-designed and oriented buildings will make the most of passive design strategies to minimise overheating, aid solar gain and achieve internal comfort. The Applicant and design team recognises the importance of reducing water consumption people, nature and the economy. Accordingly, water efficient homes comprising water efficient shower heads, taps, toilets and appliances will contribute towards climate change adaptation. In addition, design elements will encourage urban cooling. Vegetation and green spaces will permeate every part of the new settlement, providing shade and helping cool the surrounding air temperature.

7.35 The DAS provides further detail on land use, access and movement, and scale and appearance demonstrating the acceptability of the proposals and alignment with the distinctive and traditional character of Arborfield Cross.

7.36 On this basis, the Proposed Development is considered to accord with Core Strategy Policies CP2 and CP3, and NP Policy IRS2 with detailed design matters to be considered through a subsequent Reserved Matters application.

Open Space Provision

7.37 The Framework advises that access to a network of high-quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities and can deliver wider benefits for nature and support efforts to address climate change (Paragraph 103).

7.38 As detailed within the DAS, the development proposals include approximately 2.34ha of public open space, which is divided into various typologies including parks/natural/semi-natural greenspace; amenity greenspace, play space, and orchards. Should the development be capable of accommodating circa 175 occupants (2.6 ppl. per dwelling) it would be required to deliver a total of 1ha of public open space in accordance with the requirements of the MDD Local Plan (Policy TB08).



7.39 The table below presents an overview of the proposed open space compared with the Site requirements as set out in MMD Local Plan Policy TB08.

Open Space Type	Requirements for the Site (ha)	The Proposed Development (ha)
Parks and public gardens	0.19	0.23
Natural/semi natural green space (excluding Country Parks)	0.50	1.87
Amenity green space	0.17	0.18
Provision for children, young people (Neighbourhood Equipped Areas of Play, Local Equipped Areas of Play, and Local Areas of Play)	0.04	0.04
Civic space	0.002	0.01
Allotments	0.09	0.09

Table 4: Proposed Open Space provision

7.40 The Proposed Development is in excess of the local standards, thereby wholly respecting the character of the area and contributing to the openness of the surrounding area.

7.41 The central green space, alongside play areas and green corridors, ensures that all residents benefit from immediate access to shared recreational space.

7.42 The Proposed Development is considered to accord with the Framework, Core Strategy Policy CP3, MMD Local Plan Policy TB08 and NP Policy AD3.

Flood Risk & Drainage

7.43 MDD Local Plan Policy CC09, 'Development and Flood Risk (from all sources)' and Policy CC10, 'Sustainable Drainage' state that flood risk and drainage must be taken into account to avoid inappropriate development.

7.44 A Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy has been produced by Abley Letchford Partnership and demonstrates that the proposed development complies with national and local planning policy in respect to flood risk and establishes that a suitable drainage strategy could be accommodated on the Site.



- 7.45 The Flood Risk Assessment confirms that the site is located within Flood Zone 1 and therefore is not at risk of fluvial flooding, and most of the Site is at a very low risk of surface water flooding. The EA Long Term Flood Risk Service also states that flooding from groundwater and reservoirs is “unlikely” in this area. It is acknowledged that the WBC Flood Risk and Drainage Officer raised no objections to application 242421 on grounds of flood risk.
- 7.46 The proposed development falls within the definition of ‘More Vulnerable’ as per Annex 3 to the PPG Flood Risk and Coastal Change classification. Residential use is considered compatible within Flood Zone 1 and areas with a ‘Low’ or ‘Very Low’ risk of surface water flooding without the need for the Sequential Test to be undertaken. Accordingly, the Exception Test is not needed for this site.
- 7.47 In terms of mitigation, the proposed development areas are set back from the ditches around the Site boundaries, and it is recommended that surrounding ground levels are appropriately contoured to direct surface water away from the development.
- 7.48 A fully integrated Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) has been incorporated into the masterplan embracing the SuDS philosophy and key principles by ensuring effective surface water management and supporting biodiversity. The layout now includes attenuation basins, swales, and rain gardens, which contribute to both drainage efficiency and visual quality; and will enhance biodiversity. These features create a more resilient and sustainable landscape, mitigating flood risk while enhancing green corridors across the site. The strategy aligns with best practices, providing confidence in the long-term sustainability of the development.
- 7.49 Geological data indicates that infiltration is not a viable method of disposal, therefore surface water drainage proposals will be designed to attenuate runoff with controlled discharge to the existing local watercourses i.e. the existing Ordinary Watercourse to the east and north-west of the site which would be feasible points of discharge.
- 7.50 Implementation of SuDS will ensure that flood risk downstream is not increased due to the proposed development. These features will also provide positive improvements to the quality of surface water runoff.
- 7.51 The following SuDS components are deemed applicable to the site:



- Conveyance systems – components that convey flows to downstream storage systems, e.g. swales and filter drains.
- Storage systems – components that control flow, and possibly volumes, by storing water and releasing it slowly, e.g. geocellular units, attenuation basins and wetlands.
- Treatment systems – components that remove or facilitate the degradation of contaminants present in runoff, e.g. filter strips and proprietary treatment systems.

7.52 The proposed surface water drainage strategy will manage the surface water runoff from the Site. Any increase in surface water run-off will be managed using SuDS source control techniques as well as attenuation features to provide storage in extreme storm events. All surface water drainage systems will be designed to restrict drainage discharge rates to QBAR runoff rates and store the balance of water for all events up to and including the 1 in 100-year event including allowance for a 40% increase in rainfall intensities due to climate change and urban creep.

7.53 It is proposed to provide a network of trapped gullies, pipes and Sustainable Drainage (SuDS) features to collect the surface water runoff from impermeable areas such as roads, roofs and driveways. The traditional system will work in combination with such features as permeable paving, roadside swales and basins to provide attenuation storage and high-quality water benefits.

7.54 A ditch that runs along the northern boundary of the site will receive the surface water runoff from the proposed development to mimic the existing drainage conditions.

7.55 Appendix C of the FRA/Drainage Assessment includes an indicative drainage layout drawing (Drawing HD083-003), providing a high level overview of the drainage proposals together with the estimated requirements for the required storage and SuDS features.

7.56 The drawing shows an option for the location and size of the basin. The drainage strategy may be revised at a later stage if site investigation including soakage testing shows that infiltration is a viable means for the discharge of surface water. The locations and general form of the basin demonstrate that there is adequate space for a suitable feature at this stage. The final details will be confirmed during



Reserved Matters.

- 7.57 The basin shown in Appendix C of the FRA/Drainage Strategy, alongside the Parameter Plan demonstrates that a suitable strategy, which would adequately fulfil its amenity, biodiversity and landscape functions, can be adequately accommodated on the Site. The final form will be confirmed Reserved Matters stage. It is acknowledged that WBC Flood Risk and Drainage Officer raised no objection in terms of risks of surface water flooding in a post-development scenario, subject to conditions on the drainage strategy.
- 7.58 The Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy demonstrates that the Proposed Development complies with national and local planning policy. The risk of flooding is adequately managed and with the implementation of a surface water drainage strategy, the off-Site flood risk is not increased. Accordingly, the Proposed Development is considered to accord with MDD Local Plan Policies CC09 and CC10 and NP Policy AD4.

Transport, access and parking

- 7.59 A Transport Assessment (TA), Framework Travel Plan (FTP) and Framework Construction Management Plan have been prepared by Transport Planning Associates. The documents assess the Site's suitability for residential development with regards to highway impacts and safety; and takes account of the statutory consultation response from WBC Highways officer and Reasons for Refusal 9 and 10.
- 7.60 No personal injury collision data has been recorded on School Road within five years and it has been concluded that the proposals will not exacerbate any pre-existing highway safety issues on School Road.
- 7.61 The TA confirms that the proposed vehicular access to the Site (for residents, visitors, servicing, refuse and emergency services) will be off School Road, which will be realigned to prioritise movements into the Site. The existing footway will be widened to a minimum of 2m up to the existing pedestrian crossing (please refer to Appendix D of the TA). These proposals have been welcomed by WBC Highways Officers in their statutory consultation (dated 21st October 2024).



- 7.62 The proposals have been developed in accordance with a Tertiary Street in WBC's 'Highway Design Guide for Developers' and in the context of Manual for Streets (2007). As such, visibility splays of 2.4m X 25m have been provided from the proposed priority junction, and 25m of forward visibility has been provided to the proposed pedestrian crossing.
- 7.63 The proposed access arrangement includes alterations to the existing traffic calming scheme on School Road as set out in Appendix D of the TA. The proposals include:
- i. The removal of the existing one-way working to be replaced by a raised junction on School Road; and
 - ii. The removal of the existing speed cushions on School Road to be replaced by a chicane, which would allow for low left soft landscaping in the context of its designation as a Green Route.
- 7.64 An additional pedestrian and cycle access will be provided onto Cole Lane in the south-western corner of the Site to increase the permeability of the Site by active modes of travel and will link up with the internal walking and cycle routes. This route has been moved further south within the development scheme to respond to Officers comments on accessibility and permeability. The access will be a minimum of 3m wide in accordance with the requirements of a shared cycle/ footway in Local Transport Note 1/204 (LTN1/20) and will reduce walking distances to the services and amenities of Arborfield Cross.
- 7.65 It is considered that this amended route onto Cole Lane, alongside appropriate financial contributions to improve the bus stops in the village and to improve Leopard 3 bus route will help to minimise the reliance on the car.
- 7.66 As requested by WBC Transport Officer, the TA (Appendix C) uses the Council's parking calculator to determine the quantum of vehicle parking for the proposed development utilising the Illustrative masterplan and provisional unit split in accordance with the Council's parking calculator. Appropriate provision has been made onsite for both designated and unallocated parking. Likewise, cycle provision can be accommodated in accordance with the Council's parking calculator.
- 7.67 Noting Officers comments on electric vehicle parking, charging will be provided in line with Building Regulations Approved Document S, with locations confirmed at



Reserved Matters.

- 7.68 In response to WBC Highways Officers request for various swept paths (paragraphs 22-25 of their statutory response), these are now included within the TA (Chapter 4).
- 7.69 A pedestrian audit requested by Officers has also been undertaken and aligns with the Active Travel Zone Assessment (ATZ) methodology set out by Transport for London. Possible improvements have been identified, which could be facilitated through appropriate financial contributions. The scope and extent of the contributions would be determined during S106 discussions with the Local Authority.
- 7.70 The proposed development could generate a total of 66 trips by all modes of transport during the traditional AM peak hour and 51 trips by all modes of transport during the traditional PM peak hour. Focusing on vehicle movements, the proposals are predicted to generate circa 33 and 29 vehicular movements during the traditional AM and PM network peak hours respectively.
- 7.71 It is considered that the application documentation robustly responds to Officers requests for further information and confirms that a safe and efficient access can be delivered from School Road, while pedestrian and cyclist access onto Cole Lane will enhance permeability and connectivity with the village and wider area.
- 7.72 The proposals comply with national, regional, and local policies and good practice. The proposed development will not result in an unacceptable impact on highway safety, nor would the cumulative impacts be severe; and accordingly, there are no transport reasons as to why the development proposals should not be granted planning permission.

Heritage and Archaeology

- 7.73 Chapter 16 of the Framework is concerned with protecting and enhancing the historic environment, conserving assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations (paragraph 202).
- 7.74 A Heritage Impact Assessment has been prepared by Marrons which considers the known and potential historic environment resources within the Site and its environs



and any potential impacts which may be imposed upon it by the Proposed Development.

- 7.75 The Report concludes that there is a low potential for development to impact upon remains of up to a local level of archaeological interest. If encountered, remains of a local level of archaeological interest are most likely to be associated with Romano rural land management regimes, Medieval woodland management or Post-Medieval agricultural regimes and land management practices.
- 7.76 Based on the information available, the potential archaeological interest of the Site does not undermine the principle of its development.
- 7.77 The proposed development of the Site would have a neutral impact upon the significance of the Arborfield Cross Conservation Area, Grade II listed former farmhouse of Langleypond Farm and the Grade II listed War Memorial.
- 7.78 The heritage assessment demonstrates that the proposed development aligns with the statutory objective set out in Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Paragraphs 206 and 208 of the NPPF alongside the relevant local planning policies, including Policy CP3, and Local Plan MMD Policies TB24 and TB26.

Ecology and Biodiversity Net Gain

- 7.79 An Ecological Assessment has been prepared by Derek Finnie Associates which concludes that the proposed mitigation and enhancements are predicted to more than offset the potential impacts of the scheme.
- 7.80 The necessary surveys have been carried out and the results included within the Ecological Assessment. These demonstrate that Great Crested Newt are likely absent from the Site and that the proposals would not have unacceptable impacts on bats and reptile species of principal importance.
- 7.81 The residual impacts are likely to be positive at a Local scale, given that over 42% the Site will be given over to green infrastructure and the creation of high-quality habitats. This is reinforced by the results of the Defra Biodiversity Net Gain metric



which realised a 34.48% increase the biodiversity value of habitats and 90% in relation to hedgerows within the Site post development, highlighting the Applicant's commitment to provide more than the 10% minimum required.

7.82 The main features of ecological value within the application site boundary, namely the hedgerows and linear tree belts, will be retained and enhanced wherever possible.

7.83 Extensive new boundary planting is proposed providing landscape screening to the Site and increasing the biodiversity value and ecological permeability. Apart from the required access and internal road, there would be no built feature within 15m of retain hedgerows.

7.84 The landscape design creates additional habitat of high ecological value and includes:

- Over 5,600m² of new native woodland planting.
- New wildflower meadow covering approximately 9,600m².
- Species rich wet meadow of over 3,600m².
- A new community orchard covering 100m².
- 100 new native trees; and
- 1.5km of new native hedgerows with trees.

7.85 A Landscape Strategy Plan has been developed for the Site by CSA Environmental, which demonstrates how the Site can be sensitively developed, retaining many of the trees and hedgerows and providing for new landscaping, open space, recreation and play space. The limited vegetation losses associated with the site access would be offset with new trees to be replanted behind the visibility splays of the access and elsewhere throughout the Site. A robust boundary between the proposed housing and the countryside to the north would be provided. Planting will be of native species and include a high proportion of English Oak. Ornamental street trees will define the main routes through the Site.

7.86 There would be a localised effect on the character of the Site and its immediate surroundings, although the well contained nature of the Site would minimise the effect on the character of the wider landscape.



- 7.87 The Applicant is committed to delivering a SANG solution, to form part of a package of mitigation / avoidance measures directed at potential increases in recreational pressure at the Thames Basin Heaths SPA. Any proposed SANG solution will have regard to relevant guidance published by Natural England. This would include considerations in relation to SANG catchment areas and accessibility, in addition to the design and layout of the SANG and provision of an appropriate length circular walk.
- 7.88 The Applicant is currently in advanced discussions with the University of Reading regarding the provision of SANG, which will be located off-site but within Wokingham Borough. It should be noted that the University has reiterated that it does have capacity for the appropriate SANG. Both the SANG and SAMM financial contribution would be secured via a Section 106 Agreement.
- 7.89 The Proposed Development is therefore considered to accord with Policy CP7, Policy CP8, Policy TB23 of the MDD Local Plan; NP Policy IRS3; and saved Policy NRM6 of the partially saved South East Plan.

Arboriculture

- 7.90 An Arboricultural Implications Report which includes an Outline Arboricultural Method Statement, Tree Survey Schedule and Tree Protection Plan has been prepared by SJA Trees.
- 7.91 The report concludes that the arboricultural impact of the proposed development is of low magnitude. No mature trees, no category 'A' or 'B' trees, and no trees of high landscape or biodiversity value are to be removed. The proposed removal of individuals and groups of trees to facilitate access will represent only a very minor alteration to the main arboricultural features of the Site, only a minor alteration to the overall arboricultural character of the Site and will not have an adverse impact on the arboricultural character and appearance of the local landscape.
- 7.92 It is notable that there were no objections from the Tree Officer to the previous application and the consultant team has taken onboard comments regarding the landscape impact and accordingly mitigated this impact through design and landscape proposals. This mitigation is further explained in the accompanying LVIA,



Landscape Strategy, Ecological Assessment and DAS.

- 7.93 As a result of the retention of these features, and the additional green infrastructure planting proposed, the proposal accords with MDD Local Plan Policy CC03 and NP IRS3.

Agricultural Land Classification

- 7.94 Agricultural land in England and Wales is graded between 1 and 5, depending on the extent to which physical or chemical characteristics impose long-term limitations on agricultural use. Grade 1 land is excellent quality agricultural land with very minor or no limitations to agricultural use. Grade 2 is very good quality agricultural land, with minor limitations which affect crop yield, cultivations or harvesting. Grade 3 land has moderate limitations which affect the choice of crops, timing and type of cultivation, harvesting or the level of yield, and is subdivided into Subgrade 3a (good quality land) and Subgrade 3b (moderate quality land). Grade 4 land is poor quality agricultural land with severe limitations which significantly restrict the range of crops and/or level of yields. Grade 5 is very poor-quality land, with very severe limitations which restrict use to permanent pasture or rough grazing.
- 7.95 An Agricultural Land Classification Survey and Report have been provided with this planning application in response to Reason 6 on the decision notice, which stated that “the application fails to demonstrate that there would be no loss of Grade 3a Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land, or that such a loss would be outweighed by other material considerations contrary to Core Strategy Policy CP1 and Section 15 of the Framework”.
- 7.96 The Report concludes that only 1ha of the Site is Grade 3a, equating to 20% of the site, the other 80% being Grade 3b. It is recognised that the majority of the 1ha of land will be free from housing, owing to the location of the sustainable drainage infrastructure in that north-western location.
- 7.97 It is considered that the very small loss of 1ha of Grade 3a land is outweighed by the provision of 70 dwellings in the context of the Council's 1.7-year HLS position and should not prevent the grant of planning permission.



Landscape and Visual Impact

7.98 The Section 15 of the NPPF deals with conserving and enhancing the natural environment. Paragraph 187 of the document states that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment through, among other things, protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, ‘... (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan)’. The paragraph also outlines that the planning system should recognise the, ‘... intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland.’

7.99 The Site is located on the northern edge, but wholly within, National Landscape Character Area (NCA) 129: Thames Basin Heaths. The below summary is extracted from the appropriate National Landscape Character Area (Natural England, 2014):

The Thames Basin Heaths National Character Area stretches westwards from Weybridge in Surrey to the countryside around Newbury in Berkshire. Further from London, in the west, the settlement pattern is a mix of dispersed hamlets, farmsteads and houses interspersed with villages, many of medieval origin. Vestiges of the historic royal hunting forests of Bagshot, Eversley, Pamber and Windsor comprise parkland, ancient woodland, and small to medium-sized fields of semi-natural grassland. Features include ancient hedgerows and veteran trees, and there are parklands at The Vyne and Highclere Castle.

7.100 It is noted that the Site is included within the submitted LPU as being located within the “Bearwood and Barkham Valued Landscape”. Robust representations were submitted by CSA Environmental on behalf of Croudace Homes to the Regulation 19 consultation process on draft policy NE6 “Valued Landscapes”. It is notable that the majority of consultation responses objected to the introduction of Policy NE6 and accordingly, it is considered that limited weight should be given to this draft policy.

7.101 The submitted Landscape Assessment deals with this emerging policy and concludes that “*whilst there is some intervisibility with the wooded estate to the north, the Site does not strongly share the same characteristics as the Bearwood estate. The Site is assessed as being of medium landscape value*”.



- 7.102A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has been prepared by CSA Environmental which assesses the site's suitability to accommodate the development proposals, and addresses the comments provided by officers during the statutory consultation stage.
- 7.103The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment identifies that the Site does not carry any statutory or non-statutory designations for landscape character or quality. It is well contained against the existing built edge of Arborfield Cross, with only glimpsed views of the Site available from most public vantage points, mainly due to the dense out-grown hedges with mature trees surrounding the Site.
- 7.104The supporting appendices of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment alongside the DAS and Illustrative masterplan show how the development proposals retain the buffers of trees and hedgerows onsite which are incorporated into the 2.34ha of green infrastructure which equates to over 42% of the site area, comprising a network of open spaces, woodland, play areas and green corridors.
- 7.105It is acknowledged that there would be some loss of trees to provide for the access into the Site, however they do not contribute to the local landscape (Categorised as Category C) and the losses would be offset with new trees to be replanted behind the visibility splays of the access and elsewhere throughout the Site.
- 7.106The new dwellings would be well contained by retained vegetation to the boundaries and that within the wider surrounding landscape, limiting the extent of visual effects to users of School Road and the adjacent Coombes Primary School. New structural thicket and trees planting is proposed to strengthen the existing Site boundaries which, together with new tree planting through the development, will reduce the level of visual effects as it matures.
- 7.107It is concluded that there would be a localised effect on the character of the Site and its immediate surroundings, however the well contained nature of the Site would minimise the effect on the character of the wider landscape both in terms of the considerations applied to the Proposed Development and the natural containment of the Site.
- 7.108The proposed development at the Site would be closely associated with the existing edge of Arborfield Cross and very well contained in views from the wider area.



Landscape effects on the character of the countryside beyond the Site would be limited.

7.109 The Proposed Development is considered to accord with MDD Local Plan Policy TB21 and NP Policy IRS3.

Planning Balance

7.110 In accordance with the Framework, planning applications should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. We set out benefits the proposed development would deliver which are important material considerations.

7.111 The Council is unable to demonstrate a five-year housing supply as required by paragraph 78 of the Framework acknowledging a housing land supply of 1.7 years, which automatically renders the most important planning policies in the determination of this application out-of-date, and accordingly the tilted balance is engaged.

7.112 The proposal would deliver up to 70 new homes, including up to 28 affordable homes in a sustainable location. The affordable housing provision at 40% would comply with policy CP5 of the Core Strategy. In an authority which is unable to demonstrate a 5-year supply of homes, these dwellings would boost the supply of housing in the area and seek to address the significant shortfall of both affordable and market housing.

7.113 The Case officer's previous report recognised the Council's acute affordable housing shortfall and its 1.7-year housing land position, confirming that the provision of both affordable and market housing "is a weighty benefit in favour of the development".

7.114 The affordable homes would deliver several social benefits by providing homes for a sector of the population for which there is an acute need and, in an area, where the delivery of affordable housing has fallen persistently short of meeting these identified needs.



7.115 We therefore attach very significant weight to the delivery of market and affordable housing in this sustainable location.

7.116 The proposal would result in a number of economic benefits, notably job creation during construction, increased local spend at shops and facilities, increased Council Tax receipts and a New Homes Bonus payment.

7.117 Significant CIL payments would also be generated through the development, of which up to 25% could be requested by the Parish Council given the status of the Neighbourhood Plan.

7.118 These economic benefits would accrue significant weight in the planning balance.

7.119 The proposal would also deliver environmental benefits in the form of publicly accessible open space, including a central open green space, children's play space, walking trails and a community orchard. The proposal would also deliver BNG in excess of the 10% mandatory target to which we attach significant weight.

7.120 The limited adverse impacts would not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the Framework, when taken as a whole. Accordingly, and in the context of Paragraph 11(d) of the Framework, the housing crisis and the Government's pledge to build 1.5million new homes, the application should be approved without delay.



8. Section 106 Agreement / Planning Obligations

- 8.1 Under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as amended, LPAs have the power to enter into planning obligations with any person interested in land in their area for the purpose of restricting or regulating the development or use of the land, among other things.
- 8.2 In accordance with paragraph 57 of the Framework, planning obligations must only be sought where they meet all of the following tests:
- Necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;
 - Directly related to the development; and
 - Fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.
- 8.3 Paragraph 55 of the Framework explains that planning obligations should only be used where it is not possible to address unacceptable impacts through a planning condition.
- 8.4 Paragraph 56 states that, “planning conditions should be kept to a minimum and only imposed where they are necessary, relevant to planning and to the development to be permitted, enforceable, precise and reasonable in all other respects.” It continues “agreeing conditions is beneficial to all parties involved in the process and can speed up decision making. Conditions that are required to be discharged before development commences should be avoided, unless there is clear justification.”
- 8.5 The Applicant is committed to working with the Council throughout the planning process and will enter into a Section 106 agreement with the Council to secure the reasonable and necessary planning obligations associated with the Development and in accordance with the Development Plan. The applicant welcomes early discussion on these matters with the Council and its consultees.
- 8.6 Planning obligations will be secured to mitigate the impacts arising from the Proposed Development and the list below sets out the provisions (draft Heads of Terms) that the Applicant is willing to enter into discussions to secure in the Section 106 Agreement.



- Affordable housing – 40% with tenure and mix to be confirmed.
- Employment and Skills Plan
- Ecology - Mitigation measures and access management measures in relation to TBHA SPA; delivery, maintenance and monitoring of on-site habitat creation and enhancement measures.
- Public Open Space – delivery and management of amenity and natural greenspace provided on-site; play space provided on-site; and open space provided on-site.
- SANG – necessary capacity secured at Ridge SANG (with University of Reading).
- SAMM – Financial contribution.
- Highways - Full Residential Travel Plan, S278 Agreement, management and/or internal estate roads.
- NHS (ICB) – Financial contributions (capital project funding) towards Swallowfield Medical Practice (pre-project study to be commissioned).



9. Summary and Conclusions

- 9.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Marrons on behalf of Croudace Homes, Vortal Homes Limited and Falcon Developments (SE) Limited in support of an outline planning application for a proposed residential development of up to 70 dwellings together with open space and associated works. Means of Access to be considered (with Appearance, Landscaping, Layout and Scale to be reserved) at 'Land North of School Road, Arborfield Cross' (the "Site").
- 9.2 The Site is located north of School Road (B3349), immediately adjoining the edge of the settlement of Arborfield Cross and extends to approximately 5.5 hectares of arable land.
- 9.3 The vision is to create a cohesive, well-integrated neighbourhood that retains and complements the local character and feel of the village, within an attractive landscape setting which ensures a sensitive transition with the surrounding area.
- 9.4 The key objectives of the Proposed Development are to:
- Deliver an attractive and sustainable development delivering a cohesive and well-designed extension to the existing settlement.
 - Boost the supply of housing by providing up to 70 high-quality new homes in a sustainable location.
 - Provide the policy compliant 40% affordable homes, which equates to up to 28 new affordable homes.
 - Provide extensive landscaping, including areas of enhanced and retained trees and hedgerows as well as new planting.
 - Provide biodiversity enhancements equating to 34.48% increase in the biodiversity value of habitats and 91.35% in relation to hedgerows post development.
 - Improved pedestrian and cycle connectivity throughout the Site, with increased permeability into village and the Public Rights of Way.
 - The provision of 2.34ha of green infrastructure, a central green open space, including child play space, increased landscaping and a community orchard.
 - Provide jobs associated with the preparation of the site and the construction of the dwellings; and
 - Provide the Council with a significant boost to its economy via council tax



payments, CIL receipts and the new homes bonus scheme.

- 9.5 Given that the Council's housing policies are found to be out-of-date, and the Council cannot demonstrate a five-year land supply of deliverable housing sites (as required by the Framework) (**1.7 years**), paragraph 11(d)(ii) of the Framework is triggered. Therefore, the presumption in favour of sustainable development will be engaged, which means that unless there is conflict with the Framework around protected areas/assets or any adverse impact that would significantly outweigh the benefits of the development, planning permission should be granted.
- 9.6 The Proposed Development achieves sustainable development in accordance with Paragraph 8 of the Framework. It achieves a wide range of economic, social and environmental benefits, which are not significantly or demonstrably outweighed by harm. The Case officer's Report for the previous application (paragraphs 200-204) recognised the economic and social benefits of the scheme, highlighting the "weighty benefit" of providing market and affordable housing and the economic benefits from construction, CIL payments, Council Tax receipts and New Homes Bonus.
- 9.7 In accordance with the National Planning Practice Guidance, the Site is:
- **Suitable** – as detailed within this Planning Statement the Site is in an appropriate location for development.
 - **Available** – there are no known legal or ownership impediments to development.
 - **Achievable** – the Site can accommodate the Proposed Development as detailed by this planning application.
- 9.8 The Proposed Development seeks to address the acute shortage of both affordable and market housing in the borough.
- 9.9 It is considered that the benefits of the Proposed Development strongly outweigh any perceived harm, particularly when applying the presumption in favour of sustainable development and considering the significance of the Council's five-year housing land supply position.
- 9.10 There are no insurmountable technical issues that should prevent permission being granted for this sustainable and suitable development and, it is concluded that planning permission should be granted.



Appendix 1 - Summary of Local Development Plan Policies

Core Strategy (2010)

The Wokingham Borough Core Strategy sets out the spatial vision and planning policy guidance for the borough across the plan period of 2006 to 2026.

Policy CP1, ‘Sustainable Development’ states that planning permission will be granted for development proposals that, amongst other things, maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment, ensure the provision of adequate drainage, and provide attractive, functional, accessible, safe, secure and adaptable schemes.

Policy CP2, ‘Inclusive Communities’ states that planning permission will be granted for development proposals that, amongst other things, contributes to the provision of sustainable and inclusive communities (including the provision of community facilities) by addressing the requirements of an ageing population, children, young people and families.

Policy CP3, ‘General Principles for Development’ states that planning permission will be granted for proposals that are of an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area together with a high quality of design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users including open spaces or occupiers and their quality of life.

Policy CP4, ‘Infrastructure Requirements’ states that planning permission will not be granted unless appropriate arrangements for the improvement or provision of infrastructure, services, community and other facilities required for the development taking account of the cumulative impact of schemes are agreed. Arrangements for provision or improvement to the required standard will be secured by planning obligations or condition if appropriate.

Policy CP5, ‘Housing Mix, Density and Affordability’ sets out the requirement for residential development to provide a mix and balance of densities, dwelling types, tenures and sizes. The Council will negotiate the tenure, size and type of affordable units on a site by site basis having regard to housing needs, site specifics and other factors. The Policy confirms that for the site at School Road, the minimum percentage of affordable housing sought based on land type and location would be 40%.



Policy CP6, ‘Managing Travel Demand’ states that planning permission will be granted for schemes that, amongst other things, provide for sustainable forms of transport to allow choice, improve the existing infrastructure network, mitigate any adverse effects upon the local and strategic transport network, and provide appropriate vehicular parking, having regard to car ownership.

Policy CP7, ‘Biodiversity’ states that development which may harm habitats or species of principle importance in England for nature conservation, veteran trees or features of the landscape that are of major importance for wild flora and fauna (including wildlife and river corridors) or that compromises the implementation of the national, regional, county and local biodiversity action plans will only be permitted if mitigation measures can be put in place to prevent damaging impacts.

Policy CP8, ‘Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area’ indicates that development which alone or in combination is likely to have significant effects on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area will be required to demonstrate that adequate measures to avoid and mitigate any potential adverse effects are delivered through the creation of a SANG.

Policy CP9, ‘Scale and Location of Development Proposals’ states that the scale of development proposals must reflect the existing or proposed levels of facilities and services at or in the location, together with their accessibility. The Policy confirms that, “development proposals within development limits will be acceptable in the limited development location of Arborfield Cross”.

Policy CP11, ‘Proposals Outside Development Limits (including Countryside)’ states that in order to protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of the environment, proposals outside of development limits will not normally be permitted except where, amongst other things, it does not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion away from the original buildings.

Policy CP17, ‘Housing Delivery’ sets out the Local Plan housing requirement to delivery at least 13,230 dwellings across the plan period (2006-2026), this has been portioned off into four phases; for the period between April 2021 to March 2026, the Policy sets out that this will be achieved at an average of 623 dwellings per annum.



Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (2014)

The MDD is the second part of the Local Plan building upon the Core Strategy by providing extra detail to the policies and including site allocations for housing and employment.

Policy CC01, ‘Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development’ states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Policy CC02, ‘Development Limits’ states that planning permission for proposals at the edge of settlements will only be granted where they can demonstrate that the development, including boundary treatments is within the development limits and respects the transition between the built-up area and the open countryside by taking account of the character of the adjacent countryside and landscape.

Policy CC03, ‘Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping’ states that development proposals should demonstrate how they have considered and achieved the protection and retention of trees, hedges and other landscape features, the integration of the scheme with, amongst others, any adjoining public open space or countryside and public rights of way.

Policy CC04, ‘Sustainable Design and Construction’ states that planning permission will only be granted for proposals that seek to deliver high quality sustainably designed and constructed developments by seeking to achieve the requirements of the full Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4; and meet internal potable water consumption targets of 105 litres or less per person per day.

Policy CC05, ‘Renewable energy and decentralised energy networks’ states that planning permission will only be granted for proposals that deliver a minimum 10% reduction in carbon emissions through renewable energy or low carbon technology (over 10 dwellings).

Policy CC07: ‘Parking’ states that planning permission will only be granted where the proposal demonstrates how the proposed parking provision meets the standards set out in Appendix 2 of the MDD and that the new scheme retains an appropriate overall level of off-street parking.



Policy CC09, ‘Development and Flood Risk (from all sources)’ states that all sources of flood risk, including historic flooding, must be taken into account at all stages and to the appropriate degree at all levels in the planning application process to avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding. Where required, suitable and appropriately detailed flood risk information will need to accompany a planning application.

Policy CC10, ‘Sustainable Drainage’ states that all development proposals must ensure surface water arising from the Proposed Development including taking into account climate change is managed in a sustainable manner, this must be demonstrated through a Flood Risk Assessment, or through a Surface Water Drainage Strategy.

Policy TB05, ‘Housing Mix’ states that proposals for residential development shall provide an appropriate housing mix which reflects a balance between the underlying character of the area and both the current and projected needs of households. Any scheme that requires the provision of affordable housing should provide an appropriate mix of accommodation on a site by site basis, which reflects the Council’s Housing Strategy and the Affordable Housing SPD. A portion of all dwellings must be built to Lifetime Homes Standards.

Policy TB07, ‘Internal Space Standards’ sets out the Councils minimum internal space standards for all new residential units.

Policy TB08, ‘Open Space, Sport and Recreational Facilities Standards for Residential Development’ sets out the on-site requirements for open space, indoor or outdoor play, sport and recreational facilities (as shown in Figure 4 of the MMD Local Plan and replicated below).

Open Space Type	Standards (ha per 1,000 population)
Outdoor	
Parks and public gardens	1.1
Natural/semi natural green space (excluding Country Parks)	2.84
Amenity green space	0.98
Provision for children, young people (Neighbourhood Equipped Areas of Play, Local Equipped Areas of Play, and Local Areas of Play)	0.25
Civic space	0.01
Allotments	0.52



Policy TB21, 'Landscape Character' states that proposals must demonstrate how they have addressed the requirements of the Council's Landscape Character Assessment, including the landscape quality; landscape strategy; landscape sensitivity and key issues. Proposals shall retain or enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape.

Policy TB23, 'Biodiversity and Development' states that planning permission for development proposals will only be granted where they comply with Core Strategy Policy CP7 and can demonstrate how they provide opportunities through design, layout and landscaping to incorporate new biodiversity features or enhance existing.

Policy TB24, 'Designated Heritage Assets (Listed Buildings, Historic Parks and Gardens, Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Conservation Areas)' states that proposals will conserve and seek the enhancement of designated heritage assets in the Borough and their settings.

[Arborfield and Barkham Joint Neighbourhood Plan \(2020\)](#)

The Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan 2019-2026, was made on the 22nd April 2020 and forms part of the Wokingham Borough Council Development Plan.

NP Policy IRS1, 'Preservation of Separation of Settlements' states that in order to protect the separation of settlements, development proposals outside of development limits will be required to comply with CS Policy CP11 and preserve the character and appearance of the countryside and not lead to the physical, visual or perceived coalescence of existing settlements.

NP Policy IRS2, 'Recognise, Respect and Preserve Identity and Rural Setting of Settlements' states that development proposals must have respond to the setting of the settlements with regard to scale and form, density, materials and landscaping. Applications should demonstrate how the design of new developments comply with the guidance set out within the Village Design Statements.

NP Policy IRS3, 'Protection and Enhancement of the Natural Environment and Green Spaces' states that development proposals should conserve and enhance the natural



environment and green spaces of the area.

NP Policy IRS4, ‘Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Character of the Area’ states that development proposals will need to demonstrate how they protect or enhance the historic and natural character of the area.

NP Policy AD2, ‘Prioritise Housing for Local Needs’ states that all proposals for new housing development must demonstrate how the types of homes provided will contribute to a balanced mix of housing and meet the needs identified in the most current assessment of housing needs. In all new housing developments providing affordable housing, the purchase of affordable homes for sale is encouraged to be prioritised for key workers locally in the first instance, with the local connection proposed to be within the neighbourhood area firstly and then within the borough of Wokingham.

NP Policy AD3, ‘High Quality Development with Generous Open Space, Properly Landscaped’ sets out the criteria for all new development to meet in reflecting the rural character and historic context of the existing dwellings and delivering good design quality.

NP Policy AD4, ‘Address Local Flood Risk Management’ sets out the criteria the planning applications must meet in addressing flood risk, which include principles of flood risk management, measures to slow the rate of water run off by the adequate provision of swales, ponds and other SUDS measures and tree planting to reduce run off.

NP Policy GA1, ‘Minimise Additional Traffic on Unsuitable Roads’ states that development proposals must consider, assess and address their impact on junctions and the roads and other PROWs that connect them, including road safety, and implement measures of mitigation as required. In establishing the capacity of individual roads, consideration must also be given to the general frontage land-use and its sensitivity to traffic.

NP Policy GA2, ‘Implement Local Network of Green Routes for Non-Motorised Users’ sets out that development proposals should where possible support, amongst other things, a network of all-weather routes, safe crossings and better connectivity.



APPENDIX 2 – RELEVANT APPEAL DECISIONS



Appeal Decision

Inquiry held on 30 January – 2 February and 6 February 2024

Site visits made on 29 January and 2 February 2024

by Graham Chamberlain BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 06 March 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/X0360/W/23/3331651

Land off Watmore Lane/Maidensfield, Winnersh, Berkshire Easting 478940 and Northing 170753

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant outline planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Taylor Wimpey Strategic Land (Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd) against the decision of Wokingham Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 230208, dated 18 January 2023, was refused by notice dated 11 August 2023.
 - The development proposed is described as 'Residential development for up to 234 units, with all matters reserved except access from Maidensfield'.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed, and outline planning permission is granted for a residential development of up to 234 homes with all matters reserved except for an access from Maidensfield, at Land off Watmore Lane/Maidensfield, Winnersh, Berkshire Easting 478940 and Northing 170753, in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref: 230208, dated 18 January 2023, subject to the conditions set out in the attached schedule.

Preliminary Matters

2. The planning application was submitted in outline with all matters of detail reserved for future consideration save for an access into the site from Maidensfield. I have assessed the proposal on this basis and treated the drawings, other than the Maidensfield access drawing, as simply being an illustration of how the proposal could ultimately be configured.
3. A revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (the 'Framework') has recently been published. The parties were able to address the amendments in their submissions and again at the event. A screening direction issued on the 10 November 2023 confirmed the proposal is not Environmental Impact Assessment development within the meaning of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017.

Main Issues

4. A planning obligation pursuant to s106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, in the form of a legal agreement between the Council and appellant, was submitted after the inquiry closed. It is common ground¹ between the

¹ Core Document (CD) 16.1 – Planning Statement of Common Ground

appellant and Council that the s106 Agreement would secure adequate provision for an employment skills plan, affordable housing and several items of infrastructure, the details and necessity of which I discuss later. As there is common ground on these points, I have not considered them as main issues. Accordingly, the main issues in this appeal are:

- Whether the appeal site is an appropriate location for the proposed development with reference to 1) the spatial strategy for housing in the development plan; 2) permeability and integration with pedestrian and cycle routes; and 3); the accessibility of services and facilities.
- The effect of the proposed development on the landscape character and visual amenity of the countryside; and
- The effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area, with particular reference to 1) the settlement pattern and townscape; 2) the legibility of any local street hierarchy and 3) the usability and sense of place of Maidensfield.

Reasons

The appropriateness of the location with reference to the spatial strategy

5. To manage the growth identified in Policy CP17 of the Core Strategy² (CS) in a sustainable way, the Council, through the CS, seeks to guide development to locations where there would be balanced communities, commensurate levels of infrastructure and appropriate access to services and facilities.
6. To this end, a settlement hierarchy was developed following a sustainability appraisal. This hierarchy forms the basis of Policy CP9 of the CS, which identifies three development categories – major, modest and limited. Major Development Locations (MDLs) have the greatest range of facilities and services with the highest choice in transport modes to access them. Major development is therefore supported within MDLs with the level of growth anticipated in modest and limited development locations being reflective and proportionate to where they are in the hierarchy.
7. Winnersh is identified in Policy CP9 as an MDL. The appeal scheme would be a major development next to this MDL, which by definition has a high level of services and facilities relative to other settlements in the borough. Thus, in some respect, the scale of development proposed would not be out of kilter with the settlement hierarchy in Policy CP9. However, Policy CP9 states that development proposals *within* development limits will be acceptable. It provides no support for development adjacent to an MDL. It does not directly state that development outside the settlement limits would not be supported, but this is not uncommon in a positively worded policy.
8. Accordingly, the corollary is clear, in that development outside the limits of Winnersh would be at odds with Policy CP9. This is entirely logical as the settlement limits focus development within the more accessible built-up areas and those allocated for development as Strategic Development Locations (SDLs). Indeed, a porous settlement limit would undermine the Council's spatial strategy. Thus, the appeal scheme would be at odds with Policy CP9 of

² Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (Adopted 29 January 2010)

the CS because it would amount to a large body of homes outside the settlement limits of Winnersh.

9. Policy CP11 of the CS has a different objective to Policy CP9 in that it seeks to protect the separate identities of settlements and maintain the quality of the environment. The latter includes the landscape and countryside. The policy states that a proposal outside development limits will not normally be permitted unless it would be one of the types of development listed, such as a barn conversion or replacement dwelling. Essential community facilities are also permitted outside settlement limits by Policy CP11, which helps explain why the SEN school adjoining the appeal site was granted. The appeal scheme would be outside the settlement boundary of Winnersh and would not be any of the types of development listed in Policy CP11. Consequently, the proposal should 'not normally be permitted' when applying this policy.
10. The reference to schemes not 'normally' being permitted seems to be a deliberate insertion aimed at providing some flexibility. This may, perhaps, be in circumstances where a scheme does not quite align with all the criteria in the policy but would nevertheless maintain the quality of the environment. However, this flexibility should not extend to the appeal scheme because it would be a significant breach of the settlement limit of Winnersh and would not, for reasons I go into, maintain the quality of the environment.
11. Policy CC02 of the Local Plan³ (LP) postdates the CS and updates the settlement limits to include SDLs and address inconsistencies. It states, in less flexible terms than Policy CP11, that development on the edge of a settlement will only be granted where it is within the revised development limits. The appeal scheme would not adhere to this requirement, which is straight forward and unnuanced. Thus, the proposal would be at odds with Policy CC02 because it would be outside the settlement limit of Winnersh.
12. In conclusion, the proposal would be at odds with Policies CP9 and CP11 of the CS and Policy CC02 of the LP. In this respect, the appeal site would not be a suitable location for the appeal scheme when applying the spatial strategy in the development plan, which is a carefully drafted and considered statement of policy informed and shaped by public participation. Instead, the proposal would undermine the objectives of the strategy. This would be harmful given the public interest in having a genuinely plan led system that provides consistency and direction.

Integration with pedestrian and cycle routes and permeability

13. The proposed access into the site would include 2m wide pavements which would be an extension of those in Maidensfield. The pavements in the area are lit, overlooked and form a contiguous network. As a result, future pedestrians could enter or exit the appeal site and travel around existing streets safely. In addition, the Council's concerns regarding the usability of Maidensfield, Watmore Lane and Danywern Drive for cycling were resolved during the process of the Inquiry⁴. Accordingly, the appeal scheme would integrate satisfactorily with existing pedestrian and cycle routes.

³ Wokingham Borough Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Document (adopted 21 February 2014)

⁴ CD9.6 - Cycle Infrastructure Design Local Transport Note 1/20. If traffic flows are above 5,000 vehicles a day, then few people would be prepared to cycle on-street. The flows in Maidensfield, Watmore Lane and Danywern Drive would remain well below this level.

14. In respect of permeability, the appellant submits there is no technical highways reason to prevent up to 234 homes being served from Maidensfield. I have no reason to dispute this as Mr Adams ultimately agreed this point when giving evidence. Moreover, the appeal scheme would adhere to the Council's guidance⁵ on this matter. Accordingly, a second access is not justified on account of highway safety or capacity. Furthermore, Maidensfield would be the main desire line to most facilities as demonstrated by Mr Thomas' analysis⁶.
15. However, a second access to the south would reduce the walking distance to the nearest convenience shop, a sports and social club, a dental practice and, crucially, a frequent bus service on Reading Road. Wheatfield Primary School would also be closer making the round trip for an escorting adult shorter and more likely to occur. Given the mixed picture regarding the site's accessibility to services and facilities, it is necessary for journey lengths to be reduced as far as possible, especially for those residents furthest into the site.
16. A second access would also lessen the extent to which the appeal scheme would be experienced as an insular enclave of housing on the edge of Winnersh. This is because visitors and residents would be able to pass through the development, giving it the feel of an integrated parcel of townscape. Future residents would also have a choice of routes out of the estate, with the interest and variety that would entail. In this respect, a circular walk would be possible taking in Watmore Lane. A second access would also facilitate a clear desire line south towards Reading Road and on to Wokingham. The National Design Guide explains that ease of movement, including direct links and connections, are important components of a well-designed place.
17. Accordingly, a second access to the south of the site is necessary to achieve good urban design and enhanced accessibility. Indeed, guidance in Manual for Streets (MfS)⁷ explains that a development with poor links to the surrounding area can create an enclave. Internal permeability within the scheme would be a necessary extension of such good practice, but it would not mitigate for the limitations of a single entrance, even when accounting for the general lack of permeability in Winnersh due to main roads and the railway line.
18. During the Council's assessment of the application discussions took place with the appellant regarding the provision of a second access to the south. Such an access was considered technically possible. And there is nothing to suggest it would result in harm to highway safety, congestion or living conditions. Officer's originally intended to recommend the proposal for approval on the proviso of a second access being delivered⁸.
19. Accordingly, a condition was drafted which, if imposed, would prevent the second half of the scheme coming forward until a second access was implemented. Both the Council and appellant agreed that a 'Grampian'⁹ type condition along these lines could be imposed if it was considered necessary and reasonable¹⁰. As set out above, there are factors relating to urban design and accessibility that direct towards the necessity of a second access.

⁵ CD12.1 – Living Streets, which states that up to 500 homes can be served off at carriageway that is 5.5m wide, which is the width of Maidensfield

⁶ Table 6.5 of his Proof of Evidence

⁷ CD9.3, Paragraph 4.2.5

⁸ CD5.2 – Officer's draft report

⁹ A condition prohibiting development in full or in part from proceeding until a specified action has occurred.

¹⁰ Indeed, legal advice was given to that effect in a letter dated 30 June 2023

20. The Planning Practice Guide (PPG)¹¹ explains that a Grampian condition should not be used where there are 'no prospects at all' of the action in question being performed within the time-limit imposed by the permission. In this instance, the appeal site and land to the south (Winnersh Farm) are currently allocated for development in the emerging local plan as a single scheme. As a result, there is a clear inference that the sites should be connected. Indeed, several tested development options included an access into the appeal site¹². In addition, the Council recently submitted a planning application for residential development which included an access through to the appeal site. This application was withdrawn, but substantive evidence is not before me to demonstrate this was due to concerns raised by the Local Planning Authority. An extract of the report to the Council's Executive Meeting¹³ provides no further detail on why the Winnersh Farm application was withdrawn.
21. Indeed, Cllr Bray's evidence was helpful in providing context to the decision to withdraw the application. It was on account of a Strategic Asset Review whereby the Council is evaluating its land holdings to ascertain how its sites should be used. Cllr Bray, who is the Deputy Leader of the Council, explained during the Inquiry that the Winnersh Farm site is likely to be developed in the future and might be used for a care home or key workers housing. She also outlined the Council's financial pressures which may also be a factor in deciding whether to realise the value of Winnersh Farm as an asset. When asked to put a timescale on this, Cllr Bray confirmed that the strategic review could be concluded within 18 months to 3 years. If it is the former, and there is nothing of substance to demonstrate that would be unachievable, then an access could be delivered in the necessary timeframe¹⁴. This could be as part of a development proposal promoted by the Council or as a separate discrete project. As a result, the evidence before me suggests there is a prospect of a second access to the south. Put another way, there is nothing of substance to suggest there is 'no prospect at all'.
22. In summary, there is a clear need to improve the permeability of the appeal scheme through a second entrance. This would enhance access to services and facilities and achieve the necessary urban design quality. There is a prospect that such an access can be provided within three years. With a second access the proposal would be as permeable as it can be when accounting for surrounding physical constraints. As a result, the proposal would be functional, accessible, safe and adaptable and therefore a conflict with Policies CP1 and CP3 of the CS in respect of this main issue would not occur.

The accessibility of services and facilities

23. The appeal site is located on the edge of a suburban area on the periphery of Winnersh. It is severed from many facilities by the railway line and busy roads. This means there are few routes between the appeal site and local facilities and that these often require the use of crossing facilities. The analysis in the Transport Assessment supplied by the appellant confirms that the only facilities within an 800m walking distance of the centre of the appeal site are the SEN School, the workshops in Grovelands Avenue and Wheatfield Primary School.

¹¹ Paragraph: 009 Reference ID:21a-009-20140306

¹² Inquiry Document 4 (ID4) p14

¹³ CD9.14

¹⁴ Of three years

The first two destinations are unlikely to be well used by residents of the appeal scheme given their modest scale or targeted function.

24. This is important because MfS states that walkable neighbourhoods are typically characterised by having a range of facilities within 10 minutes/800m walking distance of residential areas. This is a realistic distance when considering convenience, inclement weather, when accounting for young children, those with mobility issues and the distance and time taken to undertake a whole journey, including the return leg. Accordingly, the appeal scheme would not be part of a walkable neighbourhood, and this would notably curtail opportunities to inclusively promote walking. The impact of this needs to be considered in the context of the large number of homes being proposed.
25. That said, MfS also indicates that 800m is not an upper limit and states, with reference to PPG13¹⁵, that walking offers the greatest potential to replace short car trips under 2,000m. However, PPG13 is no longer extant and therefore this statement should be given limited weight. In any event, there is little substantive evidence before me suggesting most people would walk 2,000m. In fact, when giving his evidence Mr Thomas referred to the National Travel Survey (NTS) which indicates that 80% of walking journeys are under 1,600m/one mile. His analysis of accessibility by walking revolved around this figure as an aspirational upper limit. When applying this threshold, several additional facilities would fall into a reasonable walking distance. This includes, Winnersh Local Centre, The Forest School, local shops including a supermarket, a dental practice, pharmacy, rail station and bus stops.
26. However, there is a potential pitfall in deriving an upper walking distance from the NTS because it is unclear how the 80% figure is broken down. In other words, how many of the 80% of walking journeys were close to one mile. It could be that most walking trips captured within the 80% were not. At the least, there is likely to be a sliding scale. To establish this, it would have been useful to see a further breakdown of walking trips by distance¹⁶. This evidence is not, however, before me.
27. I share the view of Mr Thomas that many future residents might be prepared to walk up to a mile if they are fit enough to do so. They may even walk further, including into Wokingham on occasion. However, that is not the relevant policy test. The Framework explains that significant development, such as that proposed, should offer a genuine choice of transport modes. The National Model Design Code (NMDC) indicates that a genuine choice is one that is easy, comfortable and attractive. The guidance in the NMDC needs to be read alongside the National Design Guide (NDG), which defines 'walkable' as no more than 800m. I take this to be an indication of what would be easy, comfortable and attractive. A mile's walk would be twice that, and is not, therefore, a good measure of a genuine transport mode.
28. Although not referred to in national planning policy, the appellant has also referred to guidance prepared by the Chartered Institution for Highways and Transportation (CIHT)¹⁷. This includes helpful advice as to a desirable (400m), acceptable (800m) and preferred maximum (1,200m) walking distances. However, this does little to assist the appellant's case as there are no retail or

¹⁵ Planning Policy Guidance Note 13

¹⁶ For example, 0-400m, 400-800m, 800-1200m and 1200-1600m

¹⁷ Providing Journeys on Foot

leisure facilities within these walking distances¹⁸. This is significant because Table 6.1 of the TA indicates that around 26% of trips will be for leisure and 19% for shopping, which are the two largest categories. That said, a second access would bring a shop within the 1,200m preferred maximum.

29. The CIHT guidance indicates that residents may be prepared to walk up to 2,000m if commuting to work. This is logical as people may be willing to walk further if they intend to spend longer at the destination. The TA explains that commuting could account for 18% of trips. There are some employment opportunities within 2,000m radius of the appeal site, but major employment hubs such as Winnersh Retail Park and Winnersh Triangle are beyond this preferred maximum walking distance.
30. Regarding access to education, which could account for around 13% of trips, the primary school would be within a comfortable walk. Data from the NTS indicates that the proportion of secondary school children walking 1,600m to 3,200m is around 37%. Therefore, some children will be prepared to walk to Emmbrook School, but it would not be easy or comfortable to do so twice a day. Most would likely rely on a bus, but they would have to walk around 1,000m before reaching the nearest bus stop with a service to the school.
31. In respect of cycling, up to 8,000m (5 miles/30 minutes) is a reasonable radius against which to test the range of facilities within cycling distance of the appeal site¹⁹. Accordingly, the whole of Winnersh and Wokingham is brought within the range of this mode of transport, including rail stations and town centres. Many of the roads around the appeal site appeared to be reasonably flat suburban streets conducive to cycling. Indeed, Danywern Drive and Watmore Lane are promoted²⁰ through My Journey as quiet cycling routes suitable for this mode of transport all year round. Watmore Lane provides a link to Reading Road, which includes a dedicated cycle route, albeit with sections within the carriageway, to both Wokingham and the Winnersh Triangle. Further cycle routes spur off Reading Road and this contributes towards a network. A second access would provide a quick direct route to Reading Road.
32. Consequently, there would be genuine opportunities for residents to travel by bicycle, although this would be notably tempered by an inherent limitation that many residents would not have the fitness, confidence or proficiency to cycle. Furthermore, cyclists may be understandably nervous of cycling along Reading Road due to the volume of traffic. This is demonstrated by relevant guidance²¹. Moreover, I have not been provided with substantive evidence to suggest cycling is a frequently used mode of transport in the local area and some residents may simply not have a bicycle. A voucher may assist, but it would need to be more than the £150 suggested in the draft Travel Plan if a family were to be supported to purchase bikes. As Mr Ormondroyd put it in closing, cycling would be a small part of the 'sustainable transport pie'.
33. There are bus stops in Reading Road and Robin Hood Lane that, in combination, provide a quick and reasonably comprehensive service linking Winnersh with local facilities and larger centres such as Wokingham. The service is better at Reading Road than Robin Hood Lane and a second access

¹⁸ As categorised in Table 6.5 of Mr Thomas' proof

¹⁹ See Paragraph 6.3.11 of the TA, which is undisputed by the Council.

²⁰ ID2

²¹ Local transport Note 1/20, which suggest that cycling becomes more comfortable when traffic flows are below 2,500 per day and speeds are no more than 20mph. Neither applies to Reading Road.

would reduce the walking distance to here from 1,300m to about 1,000m. Although more positive, the distance to bus stops even with a second access into the site would still be longer than the aspirational target walking distance of up to 400m for a high frequency service²². Having to walk longer would likely suppress the use of buses as a genuine transport mode.

34. Accessibility to public transport also needs to factor in the rail station. This is around a 1,000m walk from the centre of the site and provides a comprehensive service. The Council and appellant agree that this is an acceptable walking distance because the return trip would be undertaken sometime later and after a rest. This may explain why Census data indicates that around 19% of residents in Maidensfield travel to work by public transport.
35. In summary, the Framework establishes a movement hierarchy by stating that developments should give priority to pedestrian and cycle movement and then, so far as possible, facilitate access to public transport. This makes perfect sense as personal active travel is the most affordable, resilient and low impact mode of transport. The appeal scheme would not be within a walkable neighbourhood despite the works that would take place to improve pedestrian connectivity²³, and this is a significant limitation to this mode being a genuine transport option. Alternatively, there would be genuine opportunities to cycle, but there would be inherent limitations with the uptake of this mode. As such, most residents of the appeal scheme would not be predisposed to regularly engage in active travel with the benefits this accrues, including to their health. This is an important point against the scheme.
36. That said, the impact would be moderately offset by the availability of some facilities within longer walking distances, which could be accessed occasionally on foot. These longer walks would, on the whole, be along level, lit pavements. Although traffic flows and noise may suppress the attractiveness of some of the routes, such as Reading Road. A second access would also assist in reducing walking journeys to some services, including a convenience store, high frequency bus stop and primary school. The picture regarding public transport is mixed, with bus stops being poorly related to the appeal site but the rail station being accessible. Provision would also be made for ultra-low emission vehicles, but it would likely take a long time before they are universally used due to the cost. The Travel Plan (the My Journey scheme) would also provide some limited assistance in promoting sustainable travel.
37. In conclusion, given the size of the scheme, its location outside a walkable neighbourhood could result in significant harm. However, the impact would be moderately offset by the factors outlined above. It is also important to note that the appeal scheme would be located at Winnersh, which is an MDL, and therefore car journeys to many services would be shorter than elsewhere in the Borough. This sequential point is of some relevance when identifying sites for housing. Overall, siting up to 234 homes at the appeal site would result in a moderate level of social and environmental harm linked to additional car use, including reliance on fossil fuels and undermining the health benefits from active travel. As a result, there would be a conflict with Policies CP1 and CP6 of the CS, which seek to manage the demand and need to travel, by locating development where there will be sustainable travel choices.

²² See CD12.2 and CD12.3

²³ Listed at Paragraph 5.4.1 of the Framework Travel Plan

The landscape character and visual amenity of the countryside

38. The landscape for the purpose of my assessment includes the appeal site and its local context. This includes built features such as the settlement edge of Winnersh, the M4 and the A329(M), including their embankments and roadside fencing. It also incorporates natural or undeveloped features such as a section of the Emm Brook, a pocket of ancient woodland adjoining the appeal site, Winnersh Marsh/Blackberry Gardens and areas of open land between Winnersh and Wokingham, including Old Forest Meadows and allotments.
39. This landscape is identified in the Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) as being within Area J1: Wokingham-Winnersh Settled and Farmed Clay. The LCA identifies several key characteristics for Area J1. In particular, the extensive post war growth of Wokingham and Winnersh is identified as a dominate feature, with only small areas of arable fields and recognisable countryside left. The extensive urbanising influence in Area J1 is compounded by abrupt and poorly designed rural-urban interfaces, the presence of major transport corridors²⁴ and recent large-scale development as part of the North Wokingham SDL. The overall landscape condition is therefore understandably identified as often being in 'poor' condition due to fragmentation and lack of distinctiveness.
40. That said, Area J1 does include some valuable landscape attributes. The LCA identifies the Emm Brook, its floodplain and the buffer provided by the undeveloped agricultural fields between Wokingham and Winnersh as such. The appeal site is one of these fields. It also adjoins the Emm Brook, providing an undeveloped setting to this landscape feature. This enhances the water course's sense of ruralness. The Emm Brook, the pocket of ancient woodland alongside and the presence of mature specimen trees within the appeal site, including several Oaks, enhance the condition, sensitivity, and biodiversity value of the landscape above that typically found in Area J1.
41. In this respect, the localised landscape to the southeast of Winnersh between the settlement and the M4 is unrepresentative of the generally more urban character found elsewhere in Area J1. Moreover, the agricultural use of the appeal site is now a relatively rare feature in the landscape character area, and this elevates its landscape value. Indeed, countryside such as the appeal site is defined in the development plan as green infrastructure.
42. In addition, it is still possible to discern aspects of the historic field scape as the boundaries of the appeal site are those established over one hundred years ago when several smaller fields were amalgamated. This, taken with a section of Watmore Lane, which retains a sense of the rural thoroughfare it once was, hint at the landscape's deeply rural origins, as evidenced on ordnance survey maps from the late nineteenth century. This enhances the intactness and condition of the landscape and provides some limit cultural value.
43. Nevertheless, the boundary hedge around the appeal site is fragmented, and the field is mainly poor semi-improved grassland of limited biodiversity interest. Moreover, the localised landscape to the southeast of Winnersh is fragmented by motorways such that it is separated from the countryside northeast of the A329(M). It is therefore viewed as a remnant of countryside broadly enclosed by existing urbanising influences including modern housing

²⁴ Motorways, the rail line and the north Wokingham relief road

estates with properties built close to the field edge, a mobile home park and a strident school building. In addition, the motorways are extremely apparent due to the noise and very conspicuous passage of traffic. As a result, the localised landscape is fragmented and lacks tranquillity.

44. The urban influence also effects the scenic value of the landscape. There is currently a pleasant view from Maidensfield over the gently undulating appeal site down towards the ancient woodland around the Emm Brook. However, the unescapable presence of the motorway, SEN school and adjoining housing means the scenic value is not elevated beyond the ordinary. The same can be said of the other main view of the appeal site from the M4 slip road. Other than the allotments, Old Forest meadow and Winnersh Marsh, there is little public access to the localised landscape for recreation. Moreover, the spatial contribution to the sense of separation between Winnersh and Wokingham is moderate given the physical barrier provided by the M4 corridor.
45. Thus, when having regard to the foregoing characteristics and attributes, the landscape (the site and its context) has a value that is higher than the norm for Area J1. Nevertheless, the Council and appellant agree that the appeal site is not a 'valued landscape' or located within one. This is a sound conclusion when the positive and negative landscape attributes are considered in the round. That said, I lean more toward the Council's categorisation of the landscape as being of ordinary moderate value rather than the appellant suggestion that it is of low value. This is because it contains valuable landscape attributes, such as the Emm Brook and a historic field. It is also untypical, in a positive way, of the urban character that otherwise dominates Area J1.
46. The appeal scheme would be an urbanising incursion into the countryside that would breach a well-established and logical settlement boundary. The agricultural character of the appeal site would also dramatically change, as an open field would become a housing estate. Moreover, the appeal scheme would be a comparatively large body of homes with an inevitable suburban character. This would be due to the extent of developable area that the housing would need to be accommodated within due to constraints such as noise contours, important trees and areas at risk of flooding.
47. Given the comparative rarity of agricultural land in Area J1, the loss would be more keenly felt, especially as the countryside buffer largely provided by the appeal site between the motorway and the edge of Winnersh would, in all practical sense, be largely extinguished. The remaining countryside between Winnersh, as enlarged by the appeal scheme, and the motorways would be a fragmented remnant. Accordingly, the appeal scheme would not adhere to the landscape strategy in the LCA for Area J1, which is to maintain the landscape character by conserving the openness of the fields next to transport corridors.
48. In respect of the latter, the indicative layout demonstrates that a large open space could be provided between the Emm Brook and the new houses. This would provide an open semi natural setting to this landscape feature. However, the open space would include suburban features such as play equipment and a sustainable drainage system. This could be designed to have a soft rural appearance, but the open space would nevertheless be experienced as part of the wider development. Accordingly, the river corridor of the Emm Brook would be moderately suburbanised.

49. There is scope for some mitigation in the form of additional woodland planting, habitat creation and the retention and improvement of the boundary hedges. These are all landscape guidelines for Area J1 that can be explored through the reserved matters, of which landscaping is one. Moreover, the scheme in some respects would be a rounding off of the settlement given the presence of development on three sides. This would provide some containment. However, the overall impact on landscape character would still be net negative even when accounting for these points.
50. Both the Council and appellant agree that there would be harm to the landscape arising from the proposal. There is however divergence over the extent. The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) suggests a slight adverse impact at year 1 falling to neutral at year 15. The Council on the other hand suggests substantial/moderate adverse effects falling to moderate over the same timescale. This analysis is informed by the quality and sensitivity of the landscape. The appellant scored this as 'low', so the findings of a neutral long-term effect is unsurprising. However, for the reasons given, I consider the LVIA underscores the quality and value of the landscape in which the appeal site is located and forms a dominant and important part. I favour the Council's position that the landscape (the site and its context) is of moderate overall value. It therefore follows that the magnitude of change to landscape character at year 15 would be moderate adverse, in that there would be a noticeable adverse change that cannot be fully mitigated.
51. When considering the visual impact, the Council and appellant agree that the views identified in the LVIA are broadly representative. The LVIA also demonstrates the proposal would have a contained visual envelope due to the enclosure provided by existing development and the embankments and planting around the motorway. It is of particular note that the proposal would not be readily apparent from the sensitive locations of Old Forest Meadows or Winnersh Marsh. Instead, the appeal scheme would mainly be visible from locations around the site boundary such as the SEN school, Wheatfield Primary School and Grovelands. The views from these locations, including some residential properties, are likely to experience substantial changes in the short term. Landscaping could be used to soften the impact over time such that by year 15 the residual effect would be moderate adverse.
52. The view from the gate at the end of Maidensfield (Viewpoint 3 in the LVIA) down towards the Emm Brook is a pleasant vista the appeal scheme would adversely effect. However, the indicative layout shows that an area of open space could be retained close to the access into the site. This would provide a softening effect. It could also be enlarged by removing the cluster of six homes currently shown on the illustrative masterplan (along the northern boundary of the appeal site) dividing the two areas of open space. With such an amendment, a sense of the existing view down towards the Emm Brook and adjoining woodland could be retained. This is one way the existing view from Maidensfield can be recognised in the scheme, but there may be others.
53. The street into the development could also be tree lined and generous front gardens provided to ensure a visual sense of transition between the built-up area and countryside beyond. The interface with the countryside could also be carefully designed with houses to face east over the open space as shown on the indicative layout. This is an aim of Policy CC02 of the LP, albeit for development sites within the settlement limits. It was also confirmed at the

hearing that there is no need for three storey buildings, which would otherwise appear visually dominant. Consequently, there is scope to carefully address the view from Maidensfield so that a sense of the settlement edge would be retained. As such, the visual impact from VP3 could be moderate adverse rather than substantial.

54. For practical reasons the LVIA has not identified a view from the M4 slip road. From this direction the proposal would appear as a stark incursion into the countryside. This is because the edge of Winnersh is generally screened at present by existing hedges. However, there is scope for significant structural landscaping to soften the impact of the development. Feature trees could also be planted within the scheme to break up the roof scape. A muted palette of materials, including dark roofs, could also soften the visual impact. Significantly, the view from the motorway is one where the receptors would be traveling in vehicles at speed and are therefore of lower sensitivity. Moreover, in the wider context there is development along the motorway corridor including fencing and visible housing estates. In this respect, the proposal would not appear significantly out of place. The SEN school also dominates the foreground and is a stark addition given its colour and form. Thus, the visual impact from this direction could also be moderate adverse.
55. In conclusion, the proposal would fail to adhere to the landscape strategy in the LCA and would not maintain or enhance the environment. It would also result in the fragmentation of green infrastructure and a detrimental impact on important landscape features which, in this instance, include the setting of the Emm Brook and the gap between Winnersh and Wokingham. That said, the urban context, contained visual impact and scope for some mitigation through design, including a large open space and further planting, means the overall effect would not be of a high order. The impact would be moderate adverse. Accordingly, the proposal would be at odds with Policies CP1 and CP3 of the CS and Policies CC03 and TB21 of the LP.

Settlement pattern, townscape, legibility, and usability of Maidensfield

56. As already explained, the appeal site encompasses a field enclosed by hedging broadly located between motorways and the abrupt edge of Winnersh. The site is subject to significant urbanising influences, the most evident being the SEN school and motorway. However, it retains a rural overall character. Watmore Lane also has aspects of a rural character, including mature trees that would have been present when it was a quiet country lane. That said, this street is now suburban in appearance when moving north past Maidensfield and its character is heavily influenced by the housing estates that branch off it.
57. Adjacent to the appeal site is development on three sides that includes the residential estates at Grovelands Park, Maidensfield and Winnersh Gate. The pattern of development in these three locations is 'informal suburban' as defined in the Borough Design Guide²⁵. They broadly comprise of cul-de-sacs with further small clusters of housing branching off. The houses²⁶ are generally two storeys tall and arranged in differing plot sizes and shapes. This results in variable building lines and several instances of fencing adjacent to the street. The overall effect is street scenes with little composition.

²⁵ CD6.6

²⁶ The homes nearest to the appeal site in Grovelands Park include a mix of single storey park homes and others arranged over two storeys.

58. Considering the above, the appeal site and its immediate environs incorporates both rural and suburban features. Indeed, the urban character found around the Robin Hood Lane/Reading Road crossroads gives way to a more 'formal suburban' character (using the terminology in the Borough Design Guide) in Danywern Drive. There is then a sense of the settlement tapering off into the countryside when reaching Watmore Lane and after this the informal edge of settlement character of Maidensfield, which then opens into countryside. The hierarchy of streets and spaces is intuitive, legible and easy to understand when travelling to and from the centre of Winnersh. Indeed, it is fair to say that Maidensfield is not currently designed to be a through road or signal the presence of a large housing development to its east.
59. The appeal scheme would be the single largest grouping of homes in the area. It would also be developed at a density greater than Maidensfield – 34 dwellings per hectare (dph) compared with 24dph²⁷. The density may eventually increase even further to address some of the understandable concerns raised by Ms Crafer, including the proximity of some of the homes to protected trees and boundary hedges²⁸.
60. The indicative layout shows a scheme that would be 'formal suburban' in character due to the use of consistent building lines and garden depths. Street trees would be used to provide greenery, but they would appear regimented and formal. Moreover, the indicative layout would lack any meaningful sense of a tapering off into the countryside because front garden depths, levels of planting and the massing and height of buildings would remain broadly the same throughout. Significantly, the layout shows two and half and three storey buildings, which Mr Williams' own townscape analysis indicates are almost entirely absent from the wider area. As a result, the scheme as outlined in the indicative layout would be larger, denser, taller and more compact than its surroundings. Such an approach could jar with Maidensfield, disrupt the legibility of the local street hierarchy and harm the settlement pattern of the area.
61. However, the indicative layout is just that. The scheme need not come forward in the way currently suggested. Indeed, Mr Williams confirmed that the provision of two and half and three storey buildings as shown in the indicative layout was a choice rather than being required to fit the scheme in. As a result, the proposal could (and should in my view) ultimately come forward with no building exceeding two storeys in height. In this respect, the scheme would respond better to the existing townscape by not being taller than it, which would otherwise appear odd on the settlement edge.
62. The provision of an informal central open space, as well as 'parkland' near the site entrance around mature Oak trees, could replicate the open space at Eastbury Park. Tree lined streets and hedged front gardens would also link these areas of open space and hint at the character of Watmore Lane, especially if space is provided to allow some specimen trees to reach a similar stature. To meet the Framework's requirement that all streets are tree lined, it is likely that more trees will need to be provided than is currently shown on the

²⁷ ID13

²⁸ I share the concern of Ms Crafer that the illustrative layout shows houses too close to important trees on the western boundary of the appeal site. Indeed, the proximity would create a nuisance through branch shedding and leaf litter and interrupt day and sunlight to gardens and properties. Siting five homes in the northeastern corner in the way shown on the illustrative layout would be especially problematic.

illustrative site layout plan. This would provide further greening of the scheme. An informal 'village green' could provide a subtle and attractive centre to the development. This would aid legibility rather than provide an incongruous local centre on the edge of the village.

63. Accordingly, there is scope to incorporate significant levels of greenery to soften the overall form of the proposal and thus ensure a discordant 'density clash' with Maidensfield and Winnersh Gate does not occur. This would allow the scheme to respect the current settlement edge character and street hierarchy. I am also mindful that land needs to be used efficiently and that a contemporary scheme should exhibit current good practice in urban design. For these reasons, it would not be appropriate to replicate Maidensfield.
64. That said, there would still be scope to design the link with Maidensfield respectfully by referencing the existing view towards the Emm Brook. Such an approach would allow Maidensfield to retain a semblance of being on the settlement edge. In a similar vein there would be scope to soften the transition from Maidensfield into the scheme by loosening the density at the site entrance, perhaps with a small pocket of landscaping, so that it would not appear as stark as shown in Viewpoint 2²⁹. Indeed, the scheme could be designed with a green gateway and similar building heights to Maidensfield. This may require the density to be increased elsewhere, probably to the south of the scheme, but this part of the site is influenced by the large SEN school.
65. When considered in the round, I am satisfied a scheme could come forward which could successfully integrate with the townscape and settlement pattern of Winnersh by being suburban with a leafy settlement edge character. In doing so it would respect the hierarchy of streets and provide sufficient legibility. Indeed, the high level HELAA³⁰ assessment concluded that development of the appeal site would be a logical extension of Winnersh. Arriving at a successful design would be a challenge and may require some imaginative thinking rather than a standardised approach. The Framework advocates the use of design tools to assist with this, including design review. Taking the foregoing points together, an appropriate well-designed scheme would not be inherently unachievable.
66. Turning to the Council's other concerns regarding the usability and sense of place of Maidensfield. The Council in this respect has concerns about the increased level of activity, which in turn would require some works within the highway. These works would involve painting 'give way' lines to the spurs off Maidensfield, such as Eastbury Park, and the provision of tactile paving and dropped kerb crossing points. But they would not appear out of place in a suburban context and would not be harmful as a result.
67. When giving his evidence, Mr Adams conceded that access through Maidensfield would not be suboptimal when considering traffic volumes³¹ and speeds³². He also agreed that a 5.5m road width would be acceptable and this would allow motorists, including HGVs and refuse vehicles, to safely pass one

²⁹ Viewpoint 2 shows a house squeezed in next to 2 Eastbury Park

³⁰ Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment 2021

³¹ Daily traffic levels in Maidensfield would be around 1,700, which is well below the threshold (2,500) where cyclists would not wish to cycle in the road as indicated in CD9.6. This is indicative of a lightly trafficked street. A 5.5m wide road such as Maidensfield is also capable of accommodating up to 500 homes when applying Table A1 in the Council's Living Streets: Highway Design Guide

³² Maidensfield current has speeds of around 20mph and the appeal scheme would be designed to achieve this

another despite on street parking. He was unconcerned by emergency access and ultimately agreed that Maidensfield would be conducive to cycling. The common ground between the highway experts is a matter of significant weight that indicates access from Maidensfield would be safe and suitable in highway terms. The Council's residual concerns with the usability of Maidensfield ultimately boil down to the use of the open space in Eastbury Park and the volume of traffic changing the character of Maidensfield.

68. Eastbury Park is a small informal space that does not include play equipment. Its size and the number of mature trees means that it is unlikely to be regularly used as a kick about area or such like. As a result, the space is likely to be predominantly ornamental. In these terms the proposal would have little effect on the usability of the space. That said, even if it is used as a play area, Eastbury Park could be safely access from pavements, which also provide a buffer with moving traffic. The risk of children running into the street would not be high. In addition, traffic movements would not be so regular as to prevent safe road crossings. Moreover, any risk must also be considered in the context that the appeal scheme would provide a larger area of open space that children would be more likely to visit and play at.
69. Maidensfield is currently a quiet cul-de-sac and in this respect has the characteristics of a tertiary street as defined in Living Streets³³. The illustrative layout shows the spine road in the development would have characteristics of a secondary street on account of its width. As a result, the relationship could be characterised as Maidensfield being a tertiary street linking two secondary streets (Watmore Lane and the appeal site). However, Maidensfield has a 5.5m wide carriageway with 2m pavements either side and therefore has features of a secondary street. Moreover, the appeal scheme could be designed to ensure a design speed of 20mph thereby exhibiting a characteristic of a tertiary street. This could be reinforced with generous planting. Accordingly, the appeal scheme could incorporate a mixed secondary/tertiary street character that would integrate with Maidensfield.
70. The level of traffic in Maidensfield would increase from 335 movements a day to a combined total of 1,709 (existing and proposed flows). Most of this would be through traffic, which by definition would significantly change the current character of Maidensfield as a cul-de-sac. In the peak hour the flow would go from approximately one movement every two minutes to about one every 22 seconds if all development traffic used Maidensfield. This would be a noticeable increase in vehicle movements.
71. Local Transport Note 1/20 states that streets with less than 2,500 vehicle movements per day are conducive to comfortable on street cycling³⁴. The traffic flows after the completion of the appeal scheme would be well below this. This indicates that traffic flows in Maidensfield would not be relatively high. Moreover, when applying IEMA³⁵ guidance for traffic volumes and speeds, the fear and intimidation score upon pedestrians would be 'small' in Maidensfield, which is also indicative of a lightly trafficked street. In essence, Maidensfield would remain a suburban street.

³³ Table A1

³⁴ CD9.6 Paragraph 7.1.1

³⁵ CD9.5 - Table 3.1 and 3.2, Environmental Assessment of Traffic and Movement - Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment Guidance

72. However, if all development traffic passed through Maidensfield then it would not retain the existing character of a quiet cul-de-sac. In this respect, the provision of a second access to the south of the site would likely reduce the number of movements passing through Maidensfield, as it would be the more direct route into Wokingham. An analysis agreed between the appellant and Council indicated that the increase in vehicle movements along Maidensfield for 111 occupied houses would equate to approximately 1 extra vehicle per minute at peak times. This level of use would be more conducive to a quiet residential street. Maidensfield would not remain a cul-de-sac, but this level of traffic would not significantly alter its character and sense of place. This adds further weight to my conclusion that a second access is necessary to make the development acceptable. Overall, I am satisfied that the usability and sense of place of Maidensfield would not be harmed.
73. In conclusion, the proposal need not harm the settlement pattern and townscape of Winnersh, the legibility of the local street hierarchy or the usability and sense of place of Maidensfield. Accordingly, in this respect the character and appearance of the area would be preserved and therefore a conflict with Policies CP1 and CP3, as supported by the Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document, which seek to preserve local character, would not occur in respect of this main issue.

Other Matters

Planning Obligation

74. *Affordable Housing* – In this instance, Policy CP5 of the CS requires 40% affordable housing. There is nothing before me to suggest provision at this level would be unviable. The appellant's own evidence also identifies the acute need for this type of housing. Accordingly, the appellant does not dispute the necessity of securing affordable housing to make the scheme acceptable. Provision is therefore made through the planning obligation.
75. *Employment Skills Plan* – Policy TB12 of the Local Plan requires all major development in the borough to be accompanied by an employment skills plan or a financial contribution in lieu of this. The contribution is calculated with reference to a logical methodology informed by estimated construction costs and benchmarks supplied by the Construction Industry Training Board. The appellant agrees with the Council that the scheme needs to make provision through the planning obligation to make the proposal acceptable.
76. *Allotments* – Policy TB08 requires the provision of allotments at 0.52ha per 1000 people. It states that such provision should be on site. This is entirely rational as the allotments should be positioned as close to the new residents as possible as they would increase the demand. Moreover, facilities such as this can help foster a sense of community. The supporting text to policy TB08 states that a financial contribution can be made to allotment provision if the appellant can demonstrate that on site provision cannot be accommodated. The appellant has not made this case and it would be hard to do so given the over provision of open space. Accordingly, the planning obligation addresses this by allowing the developer to elect to provide allotments on site or make a financial contribution. That decision would be informed by whether the Council requires on site provision as part of the reserved matters.

77. *Offsite Sport and Recreation* – To support health and wellbeing, Policy TB08 of the CS also requires the provision of sport and recreation facilities. Like with allotments, these should be provided on site in the first instance. However, providing sport and recreation at a combined facility would result in overall betterment in the quality of what is provided. In this respect, the Council are seeking a contribution towards developing a sports hub at Greys Fruit Farm. This would be some distance from the appeal site, but on balance it would satisfy the requirements of Policy TB08. Again, the appellant raises no objection and therefore provision is made through the obligation.
78. *Sustainable transport contribution* – This includes financial contributions toward improving bus stops and the My Journey travel plan initiative. Both are required to promote sustainable transport pursuant to Policies CP4 and CP6 of the CS and Paragraph 117 of the Framework. This will help to offset some of the adverse issues I have identified earlier. The appellant is seeking to provide the contributions as the need is not disputed. This provision would be secured through the planning obligation.
79. *Estate Roads* – To ensure appropriate accessibility to individual properties in accordance with Policies CP1 and CP3 of the CS, the Council has sought a deed that would require the estate roads to be offered for adoption to the Local Highway Authority or maintained via a management company. The appellant has not objected to this and therefore it would be secured through the planning obligation.
80. Given the above analysis, the obligations identified above are necessary to make the development acceptable when applying the requirements of the development plan and are directly, fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the proposal and its impacts. As a result, I can take them into account.

Conditions

81. I have had regard to the advice in the Planning Practice Guide (PPG) and the suggested conditions³⁶. In addition to commencement conditions, it is necessary to define the reserved matters and require their approval. These include aspects of access. A drawings condition relating to the position and design of the access from Maidensfield is necessary in the interests of certainty and highway safety. This is supplemented by a further condition requiring the approval of some residual details relating to the access.
82. To support sustainable transport, it is necessary to secure pedestrian crossing improvements. It is necessary to secure the approval of a Construction Method Statement in the interests of highway safety and living conditions. To prevent a risk of flooding it is necessary to secure a drainage strategy. To protect as yet unknown archaeology, it is necessary to secure a written scheme of investigation. Given the presence of important trees and hedging, it is necessary to secure an Arboricultural Method Statement.
83. Landscaping is a reserved matter, but it is nevertheless necessary to secure replacement of any failed planting within five years of the completion of the development. Further conditions could be imposed at the reserved matters to deal with the management of boundary hedgerows if this is considered necessary once the final layout is clear.

³⁶ ID15

84. In the interests of wildlife, it is necessary to secure a 10% net gain in biodiversity, reptile mitigation and the preparation of a Landscape Environmental Management Plan. Given the noise from the motorway it is necessary to secure mitigation to safeguard living conditions. To secure adequate foul water drainage, it is necessary to prevent occupation until the necessary infrastructure is in place or a phasing plan approved. To protect living conditions, it is necessary to secure the appropriate remediation of any unexpected contamination. In the interests of mitigating some of the impacts on climate change, it is necessary to secure development in accordance with the principles set out in the energy report and sustainability statement. I have already explained why a second access is necessary and why this can be secured by condition. To secure a benefit of the scheme it is necessary to set the minimum level of open space above that ordinarily required by development plan policies.

The residual concerns of interested parties

85. Several interested parties have raised concerns that the appeal scheme would harm highway safety and would result in congestion. However, the appellant, through their highway consultants, have submitted a Statement of Common Ground (SOCG)³⁷ with the Local Highway Authority (LHA) relating to highway safety and transport matters. Substantive technical evidence is not before me that would justify departing from these expert views in this instance, which were based on a detailed analysis set out in a Transport Assessment. The proposal has also been subject to a successful Road Safety Audit.
86. In particular, the highway evidence before me, including the SOCG, demonstrates that visibility splays would adhere to the standards in Manual for Streets. Following careful analysis, it has been established that there are no traffic capacity constraints, and the area has a good highway safety record. These points strongly indicate that the scheme's traffic can be absorbed.
87. The impacts from construction traffic will be addressed through a management plan. Modelling of the traffic impacts on several off-site junctions confirm that there would only be a negligible increase in queuing. This would be considerably below the 'severe' test set by the Framework. Overall, the proposal would not result in a harmful impact on highway safety and capacity.
88. Paragraph 161 of the Framework explains that to avoid flood risk to people and property, a sequential, risk-based approach to the location of *development* should be taken to flood risk from all sources, and that this should be done by applying the sequential test. The PPG states that only if a *site* is in an area at a low risk of flooding from all sources should the sequential test not be undertaken³⁸. Neither 'development' nor 'site' exclusively mean the area that would contain buildings. A housing scheme such as this requires open space and drainage infrastructure to be acceptable, and these elements within the 'site' form part of the 'development'.
89. When considering the flood risk of the site, the Environment Agency's flood map identifies large areas of the appeal site as being at medium to high risk of flooding from the Emm Brook. The area covered would be most of the open space to the east, which would include drainage features. The Flood Risk

³⁷ CD16.2

³⁸ Planning Practice Guide - Paragraph: 027 Reference ID: 7-027-20220825

Assessment has considered this further and has demonstrated that the Environment Agency's flood map overestimates the extent of the flood zone. I have no reason to doubt this technical assessment and the Environment Agency have not raised any concerns. As a result, only the area of the site immediately adjoining the Emm Brook would be in the flood zone. This area is likely to be used for planting and habitat enhancements. Importantly, it would not be used for attenuation basins or play space.

90. It cannot be said that the *site or development* would be in an area of low risk of flooding from all sources. A case could therefore be made for applying the sequential test. The Council has not applied a sequential test because the area at risk of flooding is 'water compatible' as defined in Annex 3 of the Framework. Nevertheless, these classifications are intended to inform the application of the exceptions test³⁹, which is only relevant if the sequential test is passed. Similarly, applying a sequential approach to development within the site does not negate the need for the site to be subject to a sequential test⁴⁰.
91. However, I share the view of the Council and appellant that it is a matter of planning judgment whether a sequential test should be applied having regard to the circumstances. In this instance the area of the site at risk of flooding is small and would not contain any significant part of the development that could be adversely affected by flood water, including flood storage areas or play spaces. Therefore, a sequential test would serve little purpose. Indeed, the area at risk of flooding could be omitted from the site with little consequence. As a result, I am satisfied that a sequential test would be unnecessary.
92. In coming to this view, I am mindful that the surface water drainage system would discharge surface water into the Emm Brook, even during fluvial flooding events. However, the flows would be managed to existing rates and therefore the risk of flooding would not be increased. The outfall would also be raised above the level of the 1 in 100 flood year event so the risk of backwater effects would be negligible. The drainage system has also been designed to be resilient to severe flood events. The Lead Local Flood Authority have not raised any objections to the outline drainage strategy, and I have no reason to reach a different view in this instance.
93. At my request the appellant has provided a further technical note on noise impacts given the proximity of the motorway⁴¹. The note discussed the evidence already submitted in the context of several written questions I asked after the Case Management Conference. The technical note explains that if a scheme along the lines of the illustrative layout is ultimately proposed, then around 50 homes would need additional acoustic measures to provide appropriate internal and external living conditions.
94. The mitigation would include fencing to screen road noise in gardens and the use of thermal double glazing and ventilation system to secure internal noise and cooling. Importantly, the double-glazed windows would also provide some noise mitigation when open to the extent that sleep would not be disturbed. As a result, future residents could choose to open a window or rely on an alternative ventilation system. The analysis has been provided by an expert

³⁹ Planning Practice Guide - Paragraph: 079 Reference ID: 7-079-20220825

⁴⁰ See Paragraph 173 of the Framework – an internal sequential approach only applies once the overall sequential test has been passed.

⁴¹ The appellant provided an updated technical note from an acoustician on this matter appended to CD15.1

acoustic engineer and has been reviewed by the Council's Environmental Health Team. I have no reason to doubt the conclusion that living conditions would be acceptable in terms of noise and ventilation.

95. Substantive evidence is not before me to demonstrate that the appeal scheme would have a significant adverse impact on air quality or that local education and health infrastructure could not accommodate the additional demand arising from the appeal scheme. Thames Water has confirmed that its infrastructure once upgraded would have capacity for the proposal. The evidence before me, including an Ecological Impact Assessment, which is undisputed by the Council, demonstrates that the proposal would not have a significant impact on wildlife and would achieve a net gain in biodiversity. The proposal could be designed at the reserved matters stage to preserve the living conditions of neighbours. The impacts on the living conditions of the residents of adjoining properties would require particular care to ensure privacy and outlook is not harmed.

Other Considerations

96. The appellant and Council agree that the proposal would be at odds with the development plan taken as a whole. A proposal should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The benefits of the scheme are important material considerations to examine, as is the Framework.

The benefits of the proposal

97. There is agreement⁴² that the Council is currently able to demonstrate only 3.2 years of housing land supply against a four-year requirement, which equates to around a 635-home shortfall. The delivery of housing is therefore a benefit of the scheme as it would provide a very sizeable contribution to addressing the shortfall. Indeed, it could account for about a third of it.
98. However, on every relevant⁴³ measure⁴⁴ the Council has over delivered by some way since 2006/7. For instance, on the highest measure⁴⁵ the Council has delivered 10,393 homes against a need for 8,560. The performance against the Housing Delivery test has been exceptional, with the measurement since 2018 being as high as 205% and not lower than 157%.
99. Evidence supplied by the Council indicates that significantly boosting the supply of housing in recent years has not in itself stabilised or reduced house prices. In truth, they have continued to rise sharply. Indeed, if house prices were dictated solely by supply, then Wokingham should, in theory, have seen a reduction in house prices given the extensive scale of delivery in recent years. This in turn should have stabilised or lowered the housing requirement significantly, but that has not been the case.
100. Because of this, the Council and appellant ultimately agreed at the Inquiry that the affordability adjustment in the standard method should not be the sole means of accounting for past over delivery in my assessment. Recent statements by the Government reinforce this position⁴⁶. Instead, it was agreed

⁴² ID9

⁴³ Mr Austin Fell ultimately agreed that the delivery of affordable housing is not a proxy for measuring the Council's overall performance in respect of housing delivery.

⁴⁴ The CS requirement, Objectively Assessed Need, SHMA Sensitivity Testing and Local Housing Need

⁴⁵ Objectivity Assessed Need from the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2016),

⁴⁶ See Mr Church's Proof, Paragraphs 3.22 – 3.24

by the Council and appellant that over-delivery is capable of being a separate material consideration which can be factored into the weight that should be given to housing delivery as a benefit. Indeed, other Inspectors have taken this approach, including the Inspector in the Lodge Road appeal⁴⁷.

101. Mr Church has provided an analysis⁴⁸ that illustrates one way in which over-supply can be factored into an assessment of the overall housing land supply. The Council does not seek to advance this analysis as its housing land supply position though⁴⁹. It is simply an attempt to demonstrate that if over supply is factored in, then the situation would be more positive. I am also mindful that the current shortfall of around 635 dwellings is overshadowed by the historic over delivery. Considering these points together, the weight I afford to the benefit of housing delivery arising from the appeal scheme is tempered.
102. Moreover, the Council are in the process of preparing a new Local Plan. The current timetable for adoption is towards the end of 2025. Consequently, even when allowing for some moderate slippages in the programme, the adoption of the new local plan is unlikely to be far off. The proposal would therefore only assist in bridging a short-term supply gap between a period of considerable over delivery and the adoption of a new Local Plan, which will need to re-establish an adequate strategy for delivering the housing requirement.
103. Furthermore, there is some doubt over the extent to which the appeal scheme would actually bridge this gap. Evidence provided by the Council⁵⁰ indicates that schemes of between 100-249 homes take on average 46 months from outline planning permission being granted to the first house sale occurring. Then after that, the average build out is around 50 dwellings a year. Therefore, it is possible the proposal would provide only a handful of homes towards the four-year supply and that most of the homes would come forward once the new local plan is in place. I am also mindful that the scheme cannot be considered 'deliverable', and thus count towards the four-year supply, until there is 'clear evidence' that housing completions would occur within the relevant period. Such clear evidence was not presented at the Inquiry and may not occur for a couple of years with the approval of all reserved matters.
104. That said, the appellant is a volume house builder rather than a land promoter and could therefore move quickly towards applying for reserved matters. Mr Shepherds' analysis was that first completions could occur in 2026 with perhaps 100 homes delivered a year after that. However, I have not been provided with substantive evidence that this is the appellant's usual rate of delivery. It seems optimistic given the Council's analysis above. Moreover, I have already explained that there will be some challenges in devising an acceptable design and the need for a second access may slow progress. That said, reducing the period permitted to submit reserved matters and then commence development may speed up delivery⁵¹.
105. The housing requirement is expressed as a minimum and therefore providing housing in addition to this would still be a benefit given the wider need for housing. However, the points outlined above significantly temper the benefit.

⁴⁷ CD8.1, see also Section 5 of Mr Church's proof

⁴⁸ CD10.4 Table 5

⁴⁹ Its current position is set out in CD17.3

⁵⁰ CD17.3

⁵¹ This is advocated by Paragraph 81 of the Framework

Overall, the contribution towards housing land supply is a matter of moderate weight in favour of the proposal.

106. The appeal scheme would deliver 40% affordable housing (up to 94 homes). This is a discrete benefit of the scheme as the housing would be addressing a specific need. The appeal scheme would provide a large contribution to the supply of affordable housing, the benefits of which are set out in Mr Stacey's evidence. Supply of this type of housing is not keeping up with the growing need, which is increasing on account of high house and rental prices and stagnant wages. The affordability ratio has increased from around 8 times medium salaries in 2006 to something now approaching 13 times. This means that some people cannot afford to purchase a home and others to rent. Mr Stacey fairly describes the situation as an affordable housing crisis. The CS identified an 'exceptional need'⁵² as long ago as 2010.
107. To combat this, the Local Housing Needs Assessment 2019 (LHNA) identified a need for 403 affordable homes in the borough every year up to 2036. The appellant suggests that in the short term this would need to increase to 487 homes a year if the past shortfall was to be made up in the next five years. However, in the next five years the Council expects to deliver only 570 homes in total. A further 1,156 homes are in the pipeline beyond this. These are gross figures though, which do not account for losses through Right to Buy, which has been of note to date⁵³. Accordingly, the indications are that the Council will not come close to meeting the need identified in the LHNA.
108. The emerging Local Plan will likely seek to deliver more affordable housing. However, previous trends have shown that delivery has only averaged 23% of total housing completions since 2006/7. Going forward, affordable housing would likely need to exceed 50% of all housing completions to achieve 403-487 affordable homes each year⁵⁴, but it is unclear if this would be viable. Moreover, not all housing schemes will provide affordable housing because they fall below the local threshold triggering the requirement (of five homes). The implication of this is that in recent years the Council has only achieved delivery of affordable housing at around 487 homes a year when total net completions were over 1,500 a year. Such a level of annual growth up to 2036 is unlikely to be a sustainable or achievable means of meeting affordable housing needs because it is twice the Objectively Assessed Need for total housing completions.
109. The above analysis demonstrates that to a large extent, the ability to meet affordable housing need is outside the control of the Council. In recognition of this there is no legal or policy requirement that requires the Council to fully meet the affordable housing needs in its area. Mr Stacey's analysis focusses on the need for affordable housing but does not identify a reasonable and realistic delivery target that factors in the inherent difficulties and constraints in addressing the need. He also conceded that the Council were doing what it reasonably could to address affordable housing need, which has included the preparation of a housing strategy and adopting a low threshold for triggering the requirement for affordable housing. This may explain why the Council has delivered relatively well when compared with other authorities in Berkshire.

⁵² Paragraph 4.34 of the CS

⁵³ Around 115 homes between 2006 and 2022, which is about 7 a year

⁵⁴ Assuming an Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) of around 801 homes a year as set out in Mr Church's Proof

110. To this end the Council submit that its performance on affordable housing delivery should be considered against what is realistic. In this respect, it looks to address those most in need. The analysis provided in the LHNA indicates that around 100 homes are required per annum up to 2036 to address the most acute need – those unable to rent or buy. Mr Stacey's analysis is that, based on past trends, the Council will deliver around 161 affordable homes a year over the next five years. The Council has averaged 177 since 2006/07. This level of delivery would meet the acute affordable housing need with some head room. On this measure, the Council's performance would be strong and therefore it submits that the weight given to affordable housing delivery should be tempered.
111. There is some traction to the Council's argument as it can only do so much. Moreover, the Council's inability to meet an apparently unassailable affordable housing need could consistently be used to justify departing from the spatial strategy, and thus undermine the public benefit of a plan led system. However, I am conscious that even if the Council is taken to be performing well when assessed against a realistic measure, there would still be a large residual need for affordable housing in the borough. In fact, supply would still be short of need by some way, with some of the real-world consequences that will flow from this⁵⁵. As such, and when considered in the round, the sizeable contribution to the provision of affordable housing would still be a notable benefit which attracts more weight than suggested by the Council but less than advocated by the appellant. I afford the matter significant weight, although it would not be a determinative benefit on its own.
112. The Council and appellant agree that moderate weight should be given to the economic benefits of the scheme, including construction and post occupation spending. I have no reason to disagree. In a similar way to affordable housing, achieving a net gain to biodiversity is a policy requirement that secures a benefit. However, I have not been provided with substantive evidence to suggest that a 10% net gain in this instance would, in absolute terms, result in anything more than a benefit of limited weight even when accounting for the pressing need to improve biodiversity.
113. The provision of public open space would also be a benefit as it would be a large area that could serve more than just the future residents of the appeal scheme. Indeed, the open space would exceed policy requirements, although that is partly a product of site constraints ranging from noise, drainage, flooding and tree protection. Moreover, the eastern area of open space would be dominated by drainage infrastructure thereby reducing its usability as somewhere to play. It would also be close to a noisy motorway and tucked towards the back of the site. The provision of open space would also be one form of green infrastructure that would replace another (the appeal site as countryside). These factors result in open space provision being a benefit of moderate weight. When considered cumulatively, the overall benefits of the scheme collectively carry significant positive weight in its favour.

Whether the adverse impacts of the proposal would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits

114. Policy CC01 of the LP sets out an approach for considering applications under a presumption in favour of sustainable development. However, the wording in

⁵⁵ Mr Stacey's Proof, Section 3

this policy is inconsistent with the Framework in some significant respects. Consequently, it would instead be prudent to apply the presumption in favour of sustainable development as set out in Paragraph 11 of the most recent version of the Framework. This states that when a Council cannot demonstrate an adequate housing land supply, as is the case here, then permission should be granted unless the adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when considered against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole⁵⁶.

115. The adverse impacts of the proposal would be a conflict with the spatial strategy in the development plan, a moderately adverse impact on the landscape of the countryside and a moderate level of harm flowing from the limitations around access to services and facilities.
116. The conflict with the spatial strategy needs to be considered in the context that a strict application of the settlement limits would frustrate attempts to remedy the housing land supply shortfall and thus significantly boost the supply of housing going forward. The absence of a five-year housing land supply is an indication that the spatial strategy is running out of steam and requires updating. To this end, it is likely the emerging local plan will look to allocate more housing sites in the countryside. Indeed, the appeal site is currently allocated for housing in the draft plan. This document carries only limited weight at present, but it indicates that housing beyond settlement boundaries will probably be necessary. If housing in the countryside is to come forward, then the appeal site is a reasonable candidate given that the harm from breaching the settlement boundary would not be of a high order for the reasons I have already outlined.
117. That said, the settlement boundary around Winnersh is logically drawn and there is nothing in the Framework that states they should not be used. Furthermore, the spatial strategy has delivered well up until recently. As a result, the approach in the spatial strategy is broadly consistent with the Framework as it seeks to balance conflicting priorities including housing delivery, promotion of sustainable transport and recognition of the character and beauty of the countryside. Overall, and in the context of this appeal, I attached moderate weight to the conflict with the spatial strategy in the development plan.
118. Paragraph 180 of the Framework states that planning decisions should contribute to, and enhance, the natural and local environment by recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. Ms Crafer explained that in her view, this means recognising the influence of the countryside on the local context and what it provides to the character of the area, which is a helpful way to put it. In this respect, I fail to see how the appeal scheme would do this, as the proposal would undermine the rural influence and sense of place provided by the appeal site to this part of Winnersh. Therefore, the proposal would not recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. The harm to the local landscape character would also result in a conflict with Paragraph 135c) of the Framework and its aim for developments be sympathetic to local landscapes.

⁵⁶ In this instance the application of policies in the Framework that protect areas or asset do not provide a clear reason for refusal

119. Nevertheless, for the reasons already set out, the harm to the landscape would be of only a moderate magnitude because many of the landscape features of note could be retained and enhanced, such as the boundary hedgerows and to some extent the open setting of the Emm Brook. I am also mindful that if housing is to be developed in the countryside, which seems to be the direction of travel, then some local urbanisation will be inevitable. In this instance, the harm arising from the urbanisation of the appeal site would be contained by surrounding development. As a result, the moderate harm, and the conflict with national and development plan policies flowing from this, also attracts moderate weight against the proposal.
120. Added to this there would be harm arising from access to services and facilities on foot not being a genuine transport choice. However, this would be partially offset by the ability to cycle, walk longer distances on occasion and use local rail and bus services. The moderate harm, and the conflict with national and development plan policies flowing from this, also attracts moderate weight. Taken together, the adverse impacts of the proposal collectively carry significant weight against the appeal scheme.
121. Paragraph 11d) of the Framework starts with the premise that a proposal should be granted in circumstances where a five-year housing land supply cannot be demonstrated. In this instance, that presumption can only be displaced if the adverse impacts of the scheme would significantly and demonstrably outweigh its benefits. This 'tilted balance' has therefore been designed to authorise harm because of the importance the Government places on housing delivery. The appeal scheme would collectively have benefits of significant weight that would deliver positively against several policies in the Framework⁵⁷. Against this there would be harm that collectively carries significant weight in the context of other policies in the Framework⁵⁸, as well as the development plan.
122. In conclusion, the adverse impacts of the appeal scheme would not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole. Accordingly, on this occasion other considerations indicate the decision should be taken otherwise than in accordance with the development plan. This is a material consideration of determinative weight in this instance.

Conclusion

123. The appeal scheme would conflict with the development plan taken as a whole. However, in this instance material considerations, namely the Framework, indicate that the appeal should be determined otherwise than in accordance with the development plan. Accordingly, when having regard to all issues raised, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

Graham Chamberlain
INSPECTOR

⁵⁷ Including Paragraphs 60, 63, 77, 85, 102 and 158

⁵⁸ Including Paragraphs 20, 109, 157 and 180

APPEARANCES

FOR THE APPELLANT:

Peter Goatley KC and Jessica Allen, Counsel for the appellant
instructed by Stantec

Called:

Ben Thomas BSc (Hons) MSc MCIHT CMILT	Associate Partner, i-Transport
Andrew Williams Dip LA Dip (Urban Design)	Director, Define
Clive Self Dip LA, CMLI, MA (Urban Design)	Managing Director, CSA
Cameron Austin-Fell BA (Hons) MA TP MRTPI	Planning Director RPS
James Stacey BA (Hons) Dip TP MRTPI	Managing Director, Tetlow King
Robin Shepherd BSC (Hons) Dip TP MRTPI	Director, Stantec

FOR THE LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY:

Cain Ormondroyd, Counsel for the Local Planning Authority
Instructed by Head of Legal, Wokingham Borough Council

Called:

Gordon Adams BA Dip Econ MA FCIHT MILT Engineer	Principal Development Control
Bridget Crafer BA (Hons) Dip LA PG Urban Design	Landscape Architect
Ian Church BA(Hons) MA MRTPI	Local Plan Manager
Laura Ashton MRTPI	Director LAUK Planning Ltd
Lyndsay Jennings	Solicitor
Raymond Barry	Green Infrastructure Officer

INTERESTED PERSONS

Cllr Prue Bray

INQUIRY DOCUMENTS

The following is a list of documents submitted at the Inquiry

CD17.1	LPA's opening submissions
CD17.2	Appellant's opening submissions
CD17.3	Updated Housing Land Supply Position Statement 26 Jan 2024
ID1	Statement from Cllr Prue Bray
ID2	Wokingham Borough Cycle Routes
ID3	Illustrative Masterplan, Winnersh Farm
ID4	Winnersh Farm Design and Access Statement
ID5	Winnersh Farm, Landscape and Open Space Plan
ID6	Committee Report pertaining to the application for the adjacent SEN School
ID7	Note relating to Traffic Flows in Danywern Drive and Watmore Lane agreed by the Council and appellant
ID8	Density note agreed by the Council and appellant
ID9	Housing land supply note agreed by the Council and appellant
ID10	Addendum to the suggested site visit route
ID11	Final draft of the Planning Obligation
ID12	LPA's closing submissions
ID13	Appellant's closing submissions
ID14	Copy of executed planning obligation
ID15	Final list of suggested planning conditions

SCHEDULE OF PLANNING CONDITIONS

1. A) All applications for approval of the reserved matters shall be made to the local planning authority not later than 2 years from the date of this permission.

B) The development hereby permitted shall be begun not later than 1 years from the date of approval of the last of the reserved matters to be approved.
2. Details of the appearance, landscaping, layout, scale, access (other than from Maidensfield) (hereinafter called "the reserved matters") shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority prior to the commencement of development and the development shall be carried out as approved.
3. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Location Plan (titled Land off Watmore Lane Winnersh, Jan 2023, scale 1:1250 by JAS plan services) and Access Plan (drawing number: ITB6076-GA-005 Revision H).
4. Prior to the commencement of development, full details of the construction of the access off Maidensfield and the pedestrian crossing shown in principle on drawing number: ITB6076-GA-005 Revision H including levels, widths, construction materials, depths of construction, surface water drainage, boundary treatment, landscaping and lighting shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Each dwelling shall not be occupied until the vehicle access/road to serve that dwelling has been constructed in accordance with the approved details to road base level and the final wearing course will be provided within 12 months of occupation. The access shall thereafter be maintained in accordance with the approved details and plans.
5. No more than 50 dwellings shall be occupied until the pedestrian crossing improvements approved pursuant to Condition 4 have been completed to the satisfaction of the local planning authority.
6. No development shall take place, until a Construction Method Statement, including a CEMP (Construction Environmental Management Plan), has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The approved Statement (including CEMP) shall be adhered to throughout the construction period. The Statement (including CEMP) shall provide for but not be limited to the following:
 - a) construction of suitable works access;
 - b) the parking of vehicles of site operatives and visitors;
 - c) loading and unloading of plant and materials;
 - d) storage of plant and materials used in constructing the development;
 - e) the erection and maintenance of security hoarding including decorative displays and facilities for public viewing, where appropriate;
 - f) wheel washing facilities;
 - g) measures to control the emission of dust and dirt during construction;

- h) a scheme for recycling/ disposing of waste resulting from demolition and construction works;
 - i) hours of construction;
 - j) hours of delivery;
 - k) mitigation and avoidance measures for ecology and biodiversity; and
 - l) the use of any mineral material extracted during construction.
- 7. Prior to the commencement of development details for disposing of surface water by means of a sustainable drainage system (SuDS) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. No dwelling hereby permitted shall be occupied until the aforementioned approved details (in so far as they apply to that dwelling) have been implemented and shall be retained and managed in accordance with the SuDS Maintenance Plan (Condition 9) thereafter.
- 8. Prior to the commencement of development, a SuDS Maintenance Plan for the long-term maintenance of the SuDS system shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The SuDS Maintenance Plan shall include details of routine maintenance activities, remedial actions and monitoring of the separate elements of the system. The development thereafter shall be carried out in accordance with the SuDS Maintenance Plan.
- 9. No development shall take place until a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation has been submitted and approved by the planning authority. The development shall only take place in accordance with the approved detailed scheme.
- 10. No development shall take place until an Arboricultural Method Statement has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The Arboricultural Method Statement shall include details of existing trees and hedges to be retained in the submitted Arboricultural Impact Assessment, in line with BS5837:2012, and shall include details of:
 - a) any proposed topping or lopping of any retained tree, or of any tree on land adjacent to the sub-phase;
 - b) any proposed alterations to ground levels within the Root Protection Area or Crown Spread (whichever is the greater) of any retained tree, including trees on land adjacent to the site;
 - c) the specification and position of fencing and of any other measures to be taken for the protection of any retained tree from damage before or during the course of development.
 - d) the erection of fencing for the protection of any retained tree shall be undertaken in accordance with the approved plans and particulars before any equipment, machinery or materials are brought on to the site for the purposes of the development, and shall be maintained until all equipment, machinery and surplus materials have been removed from the site. Nothing shall be stored or placed in any area fenced in accordance with this condition and the ground levels within those areas shall not be altered, nor shall any excavation be made without the written consent of the local planning authority.

- e) Prior to occupation of the first dwelling, a Veteran Tree Management Plan shall be agreed in writing with the local planning authority. This Plan shall include:
- Specialist Survey Method assessment of the trees;
 - Individual tree management programme geared towards maximising longevity;
 - Provision and maintenance of knee-rail style fencing beyond crown driplines, enclosing access-deterrent planting; and
 - Regular review by a competent person of veteran trees' condition, with follow-up management works being implemented as recommended. The first three elements of the Plan shall be implemented also prior to first occupancy.

Once approved, the development shall only be carried out in accordance with the approved Arboricultural Method Statement and Veteran Tree Management Plan.

11. No trees, shrubs or hedges within the site which are shown as being retained shall be felled, uprooted wilfully damaged or destroyed, cut back in any way or removed without previous written consent of the local planning authority; any trees, shrubs or hedges removed without consent or dying or being severely damaged or becoming seriously diseased within 5 years from the completion of the development hereby permitted shall be replaced with trees, shrubs or hedge plants of similar size and species and shall be planted at the same location in the next planting season/within one year of the original tree/shrub/hedge's demise unless the local planning authority gives written consent to any variation.
12. Prior to the commencement of the development a Landscape Environmental Management Plan (LEMP), including long term design objectives, management responsibilities, timescales, and maintenance schedules for all landscape areas, other than privately owned domestic gardens, which delivers and demonstrates a habitat and hedgerow biodiversity net gain shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved LEMP.
13. Prior to the commencement of development, details of how the development will achieve a biodiversity net gain of 10% for habitats shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The details thereby agreed shall be fully implemented in accordance with an approved timetable.
14. Prior to commencement of development and concurrently with the layout of a reserved matters application, the applicant shall submit to the local planning authority for written approval, details of how the following internal noise levels will be achieved in living rooms, dining rooms and bedrooms with measures to include adequate cooling and ventilation: Living Rooms and bedrooms (daytime) – 35dB LAeq,16 hours (0700-2300), Dining Rooms 40dB LAeq,16 hour (0700 – 2300), Bedrooms: 30dB L Aeq, 8 hour (2300 – 0700).

15. No development shall be occupied until written confirmation has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority that all water network upgrades required to accommodate the additional demand to serve the development have been completed; or - a development and infrastructure phasing plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Where a development and infrastructure phasing plan is approved, no occupation shall take place other than in accordance with the approved development and infrastructure phasing plan.
16. Prior to the commencement of development, a reptile mitigation strategy shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out fully in accordance with the approved Reptile Mitigation Strategy thereafter.
17. Should unexpected contamination be found after development has commenced, development must be halted on the part of the site affected by the unexpected contamination. A proportionate and appropriate remediation strategy shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall then be remediated and thereafter carried out in accordance with the approved remediation strategy.
18. The development shall be carried out in general accordance with the principles set out in the Outline Energy Report (produced by RPS Group and dated 16 January 2023) and the Sustainability Statement (produced by RPS Group and dated January 2023).
19. Notwithstanding condition 3, of the total open space to be provided (both through offsite contributions and on site measures) a further 1.3ha open space shall be provided on site so as to provide a minimum of 3.9ha of open space on site (including drainage, swales, infrastructure and play spaces).
20. No more than 111 dwellings shall be commenced until details of a second vehicle and pedestrian access, including a timetable for delivery of the access, is submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall thereafter be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

End of Schedule



Appeal Decision

Inquiry held on 26-28 June and 2-3 July 2024

Site visit made on 26 June 2024

by Guy Davies BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19/07/2024

Appeal Ref: APP/X0360/W/24/3340006

**Land west of Trowes Lane and north of Charlton Lane, Swallowfield
RG7 1RT**

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Croudace Homes Ltd against the decision of Wokingham Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 230422.
 - The development proposed is the erection of 81 dwellings (including 40% affordable homes), open space, SuDS, landscaping, biodiversity enhancements, new vehicular access off Trowes Lane, pedestrian and cycle links, and associated infrastructure.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the erection of 81 dwellings (including 40% affordable homes), open space, sustainable drainage system, landscaping, biodiversity enhancement, new vehicular access off Trowes Lane, pedestrian and cycle links, and associated infrastructure on land west of Trowes Lane and north of Charlton Lane, Swallowfield RG7 1RT in accordance with the terms of the application Ref 230422 and subject to the conditions set out in the attached schedule.

Preliminary Matters

2. The description of development on the application form includes the words 'Full planning application' and 'on Land West of Trowes Lane and North of Charlton Lane, Swallowfield'. I have omitted them from the description in the banner heading above to avoid unnecessary repetition.
3. A bilateral legal undertaking has been submitted under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. The Council is satisfied that the obligations contained in the undertaking address the matters raised in reasons for refusal 4-8 of its decision notice relating to the provision of affordable housing, mitigating harm to the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area, providing contributions towards employment opportunities, sport and recreation, and highway matters. I consider the undertaking in more detail later in my decision.
4. Additional drawings have been submitted with the appeal amending the position of the play areas within the site, giving further details of the pedestrian access to Charlton Lane, and adding further landscaping on Trowes Lane and Charlton Lane. These additional drawings were the subject of publicity by the appellant and are accepted by the Council. They are relatively

minor changes and corrections to the plans on which the planning application was determined. I am satisfied that they do not prejudice the interests of any parties in this appeal and I have taken them into account in my decision.

5. The Wokingham Draft Local Plan was published under Regulation 18 of the Town and Country (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 in February 2020. It has not yet progressed to Regulation 19 or independent examination and therefore I give it little weight in this appeal. I deal with its relevance in the calculation of the housing land requirement under main issues.

Main Issues

6. Having regard to the matters addressed by the legal undertaking, I consider the main issues in this appeal are the effect of the development on:
 - The spatial objectives of the Local Plan as regards the location of new development
 - Landscape
 - Accessibility to facilities and services
 - Housing land requirement and supply
7. It is also necessary to consider other relevant matters including the benefits of the scheme, and how the main issues and other material considerations should be weighed together. I do this in the planning balance.

Reasons

Location of development

8. The spatial strategy of the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy Development Plan Document adopted January 2010 (the Core Strategy) is to focus new development within strategic development locations and settlements that either have or are planned to have a significant range of facilities and services. The scale of development should reflect the existing or proposed levels of facilities and services available, with a hierarchy of settlements ranging from major through modest to limited development locations. Outside settlements only certain types of development are considered appropriate, primarily relating to agriculture, open recreation, burial grounds and the rural economy.
9. Swallowfield is recognised as a limited development location in Policy CP9 of the Core Strategy with its development limits defined by Policy CC02 of the Wokingham Borough Managing Development Delivery Document, adopted February 2014 (the Local Plan) and shown on the Policies Map. Policy CP17 of the Core Strategy allocates 100 dwellings across limited development locations, where sites should generally not exceed 25 dwellings each.
10. The appeal site lies outside the development limits of Swallowfield. The proposal does not fall into any of the categories of development included in Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy as being appropriate in the countryside. Even if it had fallen within the development limits of the village, at 81 dwellings it is of a scale of development that exceeds that envisaged for limited development locations.

11. The weight to be given to these policies are dependent on the degree to which they are consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework revised in December 2023 (the Framework), in particular the Framework's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes. I address this weighting in the planning balance after having considered the issue of housing land requirement and housing land supply.
12. However, so far as these policies are relevant, I conclude that the appeal scheme conflicts with the spatial strategy of the development plan and runs counter to its approach to the location of new residential development. As a consequence, the proposal conflicts with Policies CP9, CP11 and CP17 of the Core Strategy and Policy CC02 of the Local Plan.
13. The Council's reason for refusal relating to this issue refers to other planning policies. Policies CP1 and CP3 of the Core Strategy are about sustainable development and general principles rather than development location and are of limited relevance to this particular issue. Policy CP6 of the Core Strategy on managing travel demand I look at in more detail under the issue of accessibility. Policy CC01 of the Local Plan reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development which I consider in the planning balance. Policies CC03 and TB21 of the Local Plan relate primarily to landscape, which I address in the next section.

Landscape

14. The site falls within the I2: Riseley Farmed Clay Lowland landscape character area as described in the Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment 2019. The landscape is characterised by arable farming in large open fields bounded by hedgerows. Rural lanes are often narrow and lined with verges containing ditches and mature trees. There are occasional small blocks of woodland.
15. The settlement pattern consists of nucleated villages with a scatter of farmsteads. Swallowfield originated as a rural village centred on the crossing of The Street and Swallowfield Street. It expanded mainly during the 20th century to the west and south forming a compact settlement. The village is set back from the B3349 Basingstoke Road, surrounded by farm and park land.
16. Although the countryside around Swallowfield is not a 'valued' landscape in the sense used in paragraph 180 of the Framework, it retains a largely rural character and is recognised in the landscape character assessment as having valuable landscape attributes.
17. The appeal site exhibits many of the landscape features described in the landscape character appraisal. It currently forms an arable field on the southern edge of Swallowfield, surrounded by trees and woodland. Trowes Lane running along its eastern boundary is characteristic of the lanes in the area being narrow with verges and ditches either side, and lined with hedgerows containing mature trees. To the south a block of plantation woodland screens the arable field from Charlton Lane, other than for a limited view through a field access. Houses along its northern boundary, including a small estate currently under construction, form a boundary between the village and the countryside.

18. Development of the site with a housing estate would inevitably harm its contribution to the landscape by introducing built development on what is currently open agricultural land. The widening of the northern end of Trowes Lane and provision of footpaths to form the main access to the site would also erode its rural character. Some mitigation would be provided by setting the houses back from the eastern boundary with Trowes Lane, and tree planting and landscaping within the site, along the Trowes Lane boundary and around the Charlton Lane pedestrian access. Nevertheless, the presence of residential buildings would be apparent in views from Trowes Lane and from the permissive paths in the woodland, as would be the domestic activities and movement of vehicles that are inherent in a residential setting. The development would have the effect of extending the built form of the village further south into the countryside, and eroding the rural setting of Trowes Lane as it approaches the village.
19. Having said that, the effect on the landscape would be largely confined to the site itself and the section of Trowes Lane along its eastern boundary. The containment provided by the trees and hedges around the boundaries, and the block of woodland in the southern part of the site, would largely screen the development in views from the wider landscape. This includes views from Charlton Lane, where the view through the field access would be stopped by additional landscaping. The impact on the character and appearance of the countryside outside the immediate southern environs of the village would therefore be minimal.
20. The evidence presented to me on landscape impact was consistent in its assessment of character and visual effects, albeit with varying degrees of judgement on the scale of that impact. Once planting has matured, I consider that the effect of the development on the landscape would be moderately adverse in terms of its local impact, and at most slightly adverse in terms of its wider impact on the landscape. I conclude that the proposal would cause harm to the landscape and would therefore conflict with Policies CP1 and CP3 of the Core Strategy and Policies CC03 and TB21 of the Local Plan, which seek to retain or enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape, but only to the limited extent outlined above.
21. The Council's reason for refusal on the issue of landscaping includes further policies. While Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy and Policies CC01 and CC02 of the Local Plan do obliquely refer to countryside and landscape, their primary roles relate to the presumption in favour of sustainable development and the location of development outside settlement boundaries, which I address elsewhere in my decision. I consider they are of secondary importance to the issue of landscape.

Accessibility to facilities and services

22. Facilities and services available in Swallowfield include a public house, a church, a modern village hall, a recreation ground with play equipment, a small shop, and a general medical practice. As I found out at the inquiry, it has a thriving social scene with the hall in particular being used for a wide range of social activities. These facilities are within walking distance of the appeal site. Their presence supports the designation of Swallowfield as a limited development location in the Core Strategy, which is defined as being a

settlement with a basic range of services and facilities and being physically and socially cohesive.

23. The village does not have a primary school, and a pre-school club held in the village hall has recently closed. While there are some employment opportunities in or around the edge of the village, it was acknowledged that most economically active villagers find employment elsewhere, unless they work from home. These needs, as well as access to higher order facilities and services such as secondary and post-16 education, larger convenience and comparison shopping, and leisure, require villagers to travel to centres some distance away.
24. Public transport to other centres is limited. There is one bus route to Reading via Spencers Wood to the north, and to Riseley to the south, which operates Monday to Saturday but with a limited evening and no Sunday service. Cycling to the nearest centres is possible but is via well trafficked roads, and therefore not attractive for other than competent cyclists.
25. The legal obligations linked to the appeal scheme would support improvements to footpaths and crossing points in the village, widen the footpath along the Basingstoke Road to Lambs Lane Primary School, upgrade local bus stops, provide a subsidy for the bus service, and encourage cycling, use of the bus service and car sharing as part of a travel plan initiative. While these improvements would help maximise the use of sustainable transport modes, given the limited availability and attractiveness of such options in Swallowfield it is likely that the majority of trips to facilities and services outside the village would still be undertaken using the private motor car.
26. Policies CP1, CP3 and CP6 of the Core Strategy seek to locate new development where there is a choice in the mode of transport available and which minimise the need to travel. These aims are consistent with paragraph 109 of the Framework which requires significant development to be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. I recognise that opportunities for sustainable travel will vary between urban and rural areas but given the scale of the proposed development, which exceeds that envisaged in Policy CP17 of the Core Strategy for limited development locations such as Swallowfield, it would inevitably generate a significant increase in trips by private motor car.
27. Local residents are concerned about the capacity of local facilities and services to accommodate additional demand. The manager of the medical centre comments on the increasing pressure on medical services, although the centre remains open to new registrations. Access to education also clearly worries many villagers. The nearest primary school at Lambs Lane is at capacity, and children from the village have to attend a wide range of different schools in the area, in some cases considerable distances away, with the difficulties of travel and social cohesion that brings.
28. While I understand the frustrations expressed about the capacity of local services, that is essentially a matter for the relevant service provider to resolve, including increasing capacity where needed to meet additional demand. In the case of primary education, the Council is seeking to build a new school that would free up space nearer Swallowfield, although that has been delayed because of the expansion of the detailed emergency planning

zone around the Atomic Weapons Establishment at Burghfield. Nevertheless, based on what I was told at the inquiry, the anticipated time scale for its provision would be broadly comparable to that for completion of the appeal scheme.

29. So far as the medical centre is concerned, it is large enough to cater for patients in Swallowfield but is under strain because it provides health services for patients well beyond the village. It is a matter for the Health Authority how best to cater for those demands, as new housing is built in the area. For those reasons, capacity concerns are not sufficient to prevent development on the appeal site.
30. The picture as regards the accessibility of the site to facilities and services is therefore a mixed one. I conclude that the proposal would conflict with Policies CP1, CP3 and CP6 of the Core Strategy because it would occupy a location that is not as accessible for a development of this scale as required by the spatial strategy, but that conflict is lessened because of the basic facilities and services that are available in the village, and because appropriate opportunities have been secured to promote the limited sustainable transport modes that are available. For those reasons, I give the conflict with the policies only moderate weight.
31. The Council's reason for refusal relating to the issue of accessibility refers to other policies than those identified above. Policy CP2 of the Core Strategy relates to accommodating the needs of specific groups. Policies CC01 and CC02 of the Local Plan relate to the presumption in favour of sustainable development and the application of development limits. None of those policies are directly relevant to this issue.

Housing land requirement and supply

32. Paragraphs 76-77 and 226 of the Framework establish how many years of housing land is required at any given time. Where a local planning authority has an emerging local plan that has reached either the Regulation 18 or Regulation 19 stage and includes both a policies map and proposed allocations towards meeting housing need, the requirement is to show 4 years' worth of housing land supply.
33. The Council published a draft local plan under Regulation 18 in February 2020, which contains both a policies map and housing land allocations. The appellant argues that given the length of time since its publication and the extent to which it is proposed to be revised, it should be disregarded. However, there is nothing in the Framework that suggests that should be the case. The circumstances of the plan also differ to those drawn to my attention in 2 appeal decisions¹, one of which I determined. In those cases, the local planning authorities had effectively abandoned earlier draft plans and decided to begin the plan making process again. That is not the situation in Wokingham, where the Council has continued to develop its draft plan with revisions published in 2021. I therefore consider that the emerging plan does meet the requirements of paragraph 226 of the Framework, and for the purposes of this appeal the Council is required to demonstrate a 4-year housing land supply.

¹ APP/D1265/W/23/3323727: Land between Sailsbury Street, Tanzey Lane and Sodom Lane, Marnhull, Dorset and APP/K2420/W/23/3330774: Land off Desford Lane, Ratby, Leicestershire

34. Because the development plan is more than 5 years old, calculation of housing land supply uses the methodology set out in the Planning Practice Guidance. The main parties are agreed that at present there is only 3.2 years' worth of housing land available. A revised affordability ratio was published in March 2024 that will affect the calculation to a small extent, but the Council is content to rely on the supply published in its current housing land supply statement until such time as the statement is updated.
35. The Council is therefore unable to demonstrate an adequate housing land supply position at present, with the extent of the shortfall being of the order of 0.8 years.
36. As the Council is unable to demonstrate an adequate housing land supply, footnote 8 of the Framework deems the policies which are most important for determining the application to be out-of-date. Where those policies are out-of-date, paragraph 11d) of the Framework says that planning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole. This is an important material consideration I consider in the planning balance.
37. The Council argues that the weight to be afforded to the shortfall in housing land supply should be tempered because of past over-delivery of housing. Paragraph 77 of the Framework indicates that past over-supply may be a relevant factor in calculating housing land supply, but notwithstanding what is said in that paragraph no methodology has yet been provided in national planning guidance for doing so. The main parties have offered me differing figures for over-supply based on methodologies of their own devising.
38. Measured against the housing targets in Policy CP17 of the Core Strategy, there has been an over-delivery of housing of some 16.9% over the plan period. Even when measured against the standard methodology, which produces the highest housing need figure, the last 5 years has seen delivery outstrip need by some 57%. An alternative approach put forward on behalf of the appellant using a different method of calculating housing need consistent with changes in national planning guidance over the plan period results in the over-delivery of housing being marginal. The Council considers this approach invalid as it double counts unmet need and under-supply.
39. Without an agreed methodology for factoring in over-supply in housing land supply calculations, it is difficult assign weight to this matter. Looking at the most recent housing delivery test for Wokingham, which at 205% is impressive, it is clear that recent housing delivery has been strong and has exceeded the minimum housing requirement by a considerable margin. However, it is equally clear from the shortfall in future housing land supply that such delivery will not be achieved over the next 4 years if the spatial strategy is applied rigidly. Since the requirement on local planning authorities to deliver housing is essentially forward facing, I give only limited weight to past over-supply.
40. Another matter that is disputed between the parties is whether past housing supply has been reliant on non-policy compliant schemes being either permitted or allowed on appeal outside development limits. There have been such schemes over the plan period. However, the majority of these are still within strategic development locations and were permitted by the Council

under a normal planning balance in order to help deliver highway infrastructure. I do not therefore consider that housing delivery has been reliant to any significant extent on non-policy compliant schemes.

Other Matters

41. The site lies within the zone of influence of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area, which is noted as an internationally important habitat for rare bird species. I am required to undertake an appropriate assessment to determine if the proposed development could have a significant adverse effect on the special protection area, and if so whether that effect could be mitigated.
42. Increased recreational pressure arising from additional residents in the zone of influence could potentially have an adverse effect on the habitat, as some of the rare bird species it supports nest on the ground and could be disturbed by walkers or their dogs. To counter such potential harm local authorities, including Wokingham Borough Council, working in partnership with Natural England have devised a strategy to limit recreational pressure through a combination of providing alternative natural green space and managing access to the special protection area.
43. The development, through obligations contained in the legal undertaking, would provide financial contributions towards the provision of a strategic access management and monitoring scheme, and support the formation of an alternative natural green space at The Ridge which is being undertaken by the University of Reading. These measures would mitigate any additional recreational pressure arising from the appeal scheme. I am therefore satisfied that the development would not have an adverse effect on the integrity of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area. It would also comply with saved Policy NRM6 of the former South East Plan Regional Strategy and Policy CP8 of the Core Strategy.
44. I was told at the inquiry that there have been instances of foul sewer surcharging in the village. The reason is reportedly due to an excessive amount of surface water entering the foul sewerage system during times of heavy rain. The proposed development would have separate foul and surface water systems. While it would introduce an additional foul flow to the sewerage system, that would not include surface water and would not itself exacerbate matters during times of heavy rain. The onus lies with the drainage provider rather than the developer to resolve existing problems and where necessary increase capacity to accommodate demand. Therefore, where surcharging has happened, regrettable though it is, it does not amount to a reason to prevent the development taking place. I have imposed conditions allowing clarification and if necessary coordination between the development and any improvement works planned for the sewerage system.
45. Parts of the site has apparently been subject to seasonal waterlogging, although according to local knowledge this may be the result of lack of maintenance of the field drains. The proposal includes a sustainable drainage system that would provide a means of collecting and disposing of surface water to avoid such drainage problems affecting the proposed development. I consider that surface water drainage should not, therefore, be a limiting factor for development on the site.

46. Concern has been expressed about highway safety and congestion in the wider area, in particular accessing the primary road network at peak times. No objection has been raised by the Council as Highway Authority, and I see nothing in the scheme or proposed highway access works that lead me to reach a different view. The design and layout of surrounding roads, including the width of Trowes Lane, are not inherently unsafe or incapable of accommodating the additional vehicle movements associated with the scheme. So far as the wider road network is concerned, a development of the scale proposed would have little if any measurable effect on congestion, certainly on junctions as far away as those on the M4. The cumulative effect of new development on the road network is a matter for consideration as part of the existing and emerging local plans.
47. The part of the appeal site used as an arable field is classified as best and most versatile agricultural land, containing grade 2 and grade 3a soils. No objection has been raised by the Council to the loss of the field in terms of agricultural production. As any development on agricultural land in the area is likely to result in the loss of best and most versatile land, I do not consider that the loss of this parcel of land carries material weight. It is likely that similarly classified land in the borough will have to be released to meet housing demand.
48. Concern about harm to character, in terms of the increase in the number of houses and/or developed area compared to the existing or past size of the village, is more intangible. While increasing the number of people may make the village a somewhat busier place, which some might regret, it would also add to those participating in social activities and provide more custom for local businesses, such as the local shop, which would be of benefit to their continued operation, and therefore indirectly beneficial to all. The consequence of change to what may be described as the character of the village is therefore multifaceted, but in my view not intrinsically harmful.
49. My attention has been drawn to a wide range of appeal decisions. I have had regard to those decisions where applicable, in particular on an adjoining site², elsewhere in Wokingham³, and in relation to housing land requirement and supply⁴. I have come to my own conclusions based on the evidence presented to me and the most recent version of the Framework.

Legal Undertaking

50. The appeal is accompanied by a bilateral legal undertaking under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 that commits the developer of the site to several planning obligations.
51. Those obligations secure the provision of: 33 affordable dwellings in a range of agreed tenures; financial contributions towards the provision of allotments, off-site sports and recreation facilities, bus service provision, and the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area strategic access, monitoring and management plan; an employment skills plan or contribution in lieu; highway works comprising construction of estate roads to adoptable standards, formation of new accesses, bus stop improvements, footpath widening on Trowes Lane, crossing points on The Street and Foxborough, and funding of

² APP/X0360/W/17/3175817: Land to the west of Trowes Lane, Swallowfield

³ APP/X0360/W/22/3309202: Land east of Lodge Road, Hurst

⁴ APP/X0360/W/23/3331651: Land off Watmore Lane, Winnersh

footpath widening along Basingstoke Road from Swallowfield to Lambs Lane; establishment of a management company to maintain the woodland and any retained communal areas; a travel plan; transfer of open space and play areas to public ownership if agreed; and a contribution toward provision of suitable alternative natural green space at The Ridge.

52. The obligations are agreed by both main parties, and address reasons for refusal 4-8 on the Council's decision notice. Having regard to the submitted evidence contained in the Council's justification statement and the discussion that took place at the inquiry, I am satisfied that each obligation is necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms, is directly related to the development, and is fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind. The obligations therefore meet the tests set out in Regulation 122 of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010, and I have taken them into account in reaching my decision.

Planning Balance

53. I have found that the appeal proposal would conflict with the spatial strategy of the development plan as the site lies outside the settlement limits of Swallowfield and does not constitute development appropriate in a countryside location. Given the lack of housing land supply, application of that strategy needs to be applied in a flexible way to ensure that sufficient land for housing continues to come forward. However, even if the settlement limits around Swallowfield are applied flexibly to allow development on the edge of it, the scale of the proposed development is such as to conflict with the strategy for development in settlements of the size of Swallowfield. I give that conflict moderate weight.
54. I have found that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the landscape, although that harm would be limited given the contained nature of the site. I have also found that accessibility to facilities and services is constrained and would generate a significant proportion of trips by motor car. I give moderate weight to that conflict.
55. Set against these conflicts are a number of benefits that would flow from the appeal scheme. The most important would be the provision of 81 new dwellings in a range of sizes. That would be of particular importance given the demand for housing in the area and the lack of available land on which to build new dwellings. Forty per cent of the dwellings would also be affordable housing tenures. I was presented with evidence at the inquiry which showed there to be a real problem of affordability in the area, with a persistent unmet demand from those unable to afford housing on the open market. The scheme would help to address that need. I give both these benefits substantial weight.
56. Other benefits would also accrue. There would be economic benefits arising in the short term from construction of the dwellings, and in the longer term from the spending power of future residents and their availability as part of the local workforce. The development would result in a biodiversity net gain on the site, greater than that required by policy. The same would apply to the construction of the buildings, which have been designed to mitigate carbon dioxide emissions in excess of that currently required by policy. The open space, woodland and play equipment on the site is intended primarily for the benefit of future residents but would also be open to other villagers to enjoy. I give these benefits limited weight.

57. My approach to balancing these competing factors must however rest on the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in paragraph 11d) of the Framework, sometimes referred to as the 'tilted balance'. As the Council is unable to demonstrate an adequate housing land supply, national planning policy contained in that paragraph requires planning permission to be granted unless any adverse impact of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. I consider that the application of that national policy should be tempered to a limited extent because of recent past over-supply of housing and having regard to the size of the shortfall at 0.8 years. Nevertheless, the presumption remains and carries significant weight. The need to apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development is reinforced by Policy CC01 of the Local Plan.
58. I have concluded that there would be substantial benefits accruing from the scheme, in particular the provision of open market and affordable housing. Balanced against those benefits is the harm that would be caused to the strategy that directs where new development should be located, the landscape, and accessibility to facilities and services. However, in each case I have found that only moderate or limited weight should be given to that harm. It follows that the adverse impacts of the proposed development would not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the substantial benefits of the scheme. Accordingly, the Framework supports planning permission being granted.

Conditions

59. I have considered the conditions suggested by the main parties, including additional and alternative conditions discussed at the inquiry, and imposed them where I consider they meet the tests set out in paragraph 56 of the Framework. I have made changes to the suggested wording where necessary in the interests of precision and enforceability. The conditions have been reordered in accordance with the advice in the Planning Practice Guidance. Conditions that are required to be discharged before development commences have been avoided where possible. Those pre-commencement conditions that remain have been agreed in writing by the appellant.
60. Conditions setting a time limit and identifying the approved plans are necessary for certainty. Pre-commencement conditions are necessary to agree and implement a construction method statement, exceedance flow routing, tree protection and archaeological investigation in the interests of the amenities of neighbouring and future residents, the natural environment and any remains of historic interest that might be found under the site.
61. Conditions that are required to be discharged before occupation of the development begins are necessary to agree external materials in the interests of the appearance of the site, construction of the highway accesses and provision and management of car and cycle parking in the interests of highway safety and to promote sustainable transport, provision and arrangements for maintenance of landscaping and surface water drainage in the interests of the appearance and operation of the development, the design of external lighting and means of enclosure in the interests of safety, amenity and wildlife, installation of energy saving measures in the interest of minimising carbon emissions, and the installation of refuse and recycling facilities in the interests of future occupants. I have combined conditions dealing with landscaping,

ecology and biodiversity net gain for simplicity and to avoid unnecessary repetition.

62. Other conditions are necessary to replace any trees, shrubs or hedges that are intended to remain but are removed or damaged in the interests of the appearance of the site, to control hours of construction in the interests of neighbouring occupants, to provide a framework for action in the unlikely event that contamination is found on the site in the interests of public health, and to clarify the position of the local area of play in the interests of certainty.
63. I have imposed 2 conditions having regard to the consultation response from Thames Water and in a modified form with the agreement of the main parties which deal with foul drainage and water supply, the first being a pre-commencement condition and the second a pre-occupation condition. These respond to concerns raised by local residents who have experienced deficiencies in the existing foul drainage system and water supply, and are concerned that the development might exacerbate those problems. While I understand the concerns, it is a matter for the utility provider rather than a developer to respond to existing problems in the sewerage and water networks and to provide additional capacity where required. The conditions are not intended to prevent the development being undertaken but to enable the Council to confirm that capacity is available in those systems or that suitable action is being taken by the utility provider to ensure that additional demand can be met.
64. I have not imposed a condition requiring approval and future maintenance of highway details as these are the subject of an obligation in the legal undertaking. I have not imposed a condition requiring the installation of electric vehicle charging points as this is now secured under the building regulations and to do so would result in unnecessary duplication of requirements. I have not imposed a condition requiring details of surface water drainage overflow as this is covered in the conditions on drainage management and drainage exceedance routing. I have not imposed a condition relating to noise as control over any such disturbance that might occur during the construction period is addressed by the construction and ecological management plan, and I see no need for noise controls over and above normal environmental health powers once the development is complete.
65. I have also not imposed conditions restricting how occupants could use their garages or make use of permitted development rights that allow for domestic extensions and associated works, including means of enclosure and paving. Paragraph 54 of the Framework states that planning conditions should not be used to restrict national permitted development rights unless there is clear justification to do so. I do not consider that the arguments put forward by the Council clearly demonstrate that the circumstances of this development would be materially different to other housing estates where such rights apply.

Conclusion

66. The development would conflict with policies relating to the location of new development, protection of the landscape, and accessibility to facilities and services. It would therefore conflict with the development plan when taken as a whole. However, the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in paragraph 11d) of the Framework points towards planning permission being granted. In this case, I conclude that this significant material

consideration outweighs the conflict with the development plan, notwithstanding the scale of the current shortfall in housing land and past delivery of housing in the borough.

67. Consequently, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

Guy Davies

INSPECTOR

Appearances

For the appellant:

Andrew Tabachnik KC	Counsel
Clive Self Dip LA CMLI MA (Urb D)	Director, CSA Environmental
Tim Wall BA MA MCIHT CMILT	Partner, i-Transport LLP
Steven Brown BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI	Managing Director, Woolf Bond Planning Limited
Karen Charles BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI	Executive Director, Boyer

For the Council:

Matthew Lewin	Counsel
Stuart Ryder BA (Hons) CMLI	Director, Ryder Landscape Consultants
Alan Lewis CEng FIHE CMILT	Highway Development Manager, Wokingham Borough Council
Ian Church BA (Hons) MA MRTPI	Local Plan Manager, Wokingham Borough Council
Laura Ashton BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI	Director, LAUK Planning

Interested parties:

Ian Fullerton	Smallfield Community Action Group
John Anderson	Smallfield Parish Council
David Entwistle	Resident
Richard Hale	Resident
Jeremy Bayliss	Resident
Philip Guard	Resident
David Edmunds	Ward Councillor
Colin Tweedale	Resident
Professor Richard Hoyle	Smallfield Community Action Group
Catherine Glover	Ward Councillor

For the round table sessions on conditions and legal undertaking:

Caroline Bailey	Group Legal Director, Croudace Homes Ltd
Mark Croucher	Development Management Team Leader, Wokingham Borough Council
Lyndsey Jennings	Solicitor, Wokingham Borough Council
Graham Stanley	Swallowfield Flood Resilience Group

Documents submitted at or after the inquiry

- ID1 Appearances for appellant
- ID2 Note on public consultation of additional landscape plans
- ID3 Opening statement on behalf of the appellant
- ID4 Opening statement on behalf of the Council
- ID5 Statement and results of survey of households by Mr Fullerton
- ID6 Statement by Mr Anderson
- ID7 Statement by Mr Entwistle
- ID8 Statement by Mr Hale
- ID9 Statement by Mr Bayliss
- ID10 Statement by Mr Guard
- ID11 Hard copy of draft conditions
- ID12 Errata sheet for proof of evidence of Mr Lewis
- ID13 Statement by Professor Hoyle
- ID14 Statement by Mrs Glover
- ID15 Copy of email from Swallowfield Medical Practice Business Manager
- ID16 Draft copy of unilateral legal undertaking
- ID17 Compliance statement on legal obligations
- ID18 Confirmation of acceptance of pre-commencement conditions
- ID19 Draft copy of bilateral legal undertaking
- ID20 Closing statement by Mr Fullerton
- ID21 Closing statement on behalf of the Council
- ID22 Closing statement on behalf of the appellant
- ID23 Shadow appropriate assessment
- ID24 Copy of completed bilateral legal undertaking

Schedule of conditions

1. The development hereby permitted shall begin no later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following plans:
 - Site Location Plan 3145-A-1000-PL-B
 - Site Layout 3145-A-1005-PL-G
 - Site Layout Coloured 3145-C-1005-PL-H
 - Parking Plan 3145-A-1700-PL- E
 - Street Scenes 3145-C-1010-PL-D
 - Street Scenes 3145-C-1011-PL-E
 - Refuse Strategy Plan 3145-A-1701-PL-D
 - Boundary Treatments Plan 3145-A-1702-PL-D
 - Materials Plan 3145-A-1703-PL-D
 - Fire Strategy Plan 3145-A-1705-PL-D
 - Garden Sizes Plan 3145-A-1706-PL-F
 - POS Typologies Plan 3145-A-1707-PL-J
 - Landscape Masterplan CSA/5643/118G
 - LEAP Landscape Proposals CSA/5643/119C
 - LAP Play Area Proposals CSA/5643/120B
 - Hard Landscape Proposals (Sheet 1) CSA/5643/111F
 - Hard Landscape Proposals (Sheet 2) CSA/5643/112F
 - Hard Landscape Proposals (Sheet 3) CSA/5643/113F
 - Soft Landscape Proposals (Sheet 1) CSA/5643/114F
 - Soft Landscape Proposals (Sheet 2) CSA/5643/115G
 - Soft Landscape Proposals (Sheet 3) CSA/5643/116G
 - Soft Landscape Proposals (Sheet 4) CSA/5643/117F
 - Boundary Design Details Sheet 1 5643_125_A
 - Boundary Design Details Sheet 2 5643_126
 - Proposed Access Road 5638/004D
 - Charlton Lane Pedestrian Connection ITB19769-GA-005
 - B3015 Plans and Elevations 3145-C-3005-PL-B
 - B3016 Plans and Elevations 3145-C-3010-PL-C
 - B3016 Plans and Elevation 3145-C-3011-PL-A
 - B3016+B2009M Plans and Elevations 3145-C-3015-PL-B
 - B3017 Plans and Elevations 3145-C-3020-PL-B
 - B3017 Plans and Elevations 3145-C-3021-PL-B
 - B3017 Plans and Elevations 3145-C-3022-PL-B
 - B3017 Plans and Elevations 3145-C-3023-PL-C
 - B3018 Plans and Elevations 3145-C-3025-PL-C
 - S4029M Plans and Elevations 3145-C-3035-PL-B
 - S4029M Plans and Elevations 3145-C-3036-PL-B
 - S4026M Plans and Elevations 3145-C-3040-PL-B
 - S4027M Plans and Elevations 3145-C-3045-PL-B
 - S4027M Plans and Elevations 3145-C-3046-PL-B
 - G4031M Plans and Elevations 3145-C-3050-PL-B
 - G4031M Plans and Elevations 3145-C-3051-PL-B
 - G4032M Plans and Elevations 3145-C-3056-PL-B
 - G4031M Plans and Elevations 3145-C-3059-PL-C
 - A2708M Plans and Elevations 3145-C-3060-PL-B
 - A2708M Plans and Elevations 3145-C-3061-PL-B

A2708M+A1702M Plans and Elevations 3145-C-3065-PL-C
A3710M Plans and Elevations 3145-C-3070-PL-B
A4714M Plans and Elevations 3145-C-3075-PL-B
A1702M Plans and Elevations 3145-C-3080-PL-B
Maisonette Block A Plans and Elevations 3145-C-3085-PL-C
Maisonette Block B Plans and Elevations 3145-C-3086-PL-B
A2706M Plans and Elevations 3145-C-3100-PL-B
Garages & Stores Plans and Elevations 3145-C-3150-PL-A
Garages & Stores Plans and Elevations 3145-C-3151-PL-A

3. No development hereby permitted shall commence until a construction method statement, including a construction ecological management plan, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The approved statement shall be adhered to throughout the construction period. The statement shall include but not be limited to the following:
 - (a) construction of suitable works access
 - (b) the parking of vehicles of site operatives and visitors
 - (c) loading and unloading of plant and materials
 - (d) storage of plant and materials used in constructing the development
 - (e) the erection and maintenance of security hoarding
 - (f) wheel washing facilities
 - (g) measures to control the emission of noise, dust and dirt during construction
 - (h) a scheme for recycling/disposing of waste resulting from demolition and construction works
 - (i) hours of construction
 - (j) hours of delivery
 - (k) mitigation and avoidance measures for ecology and biodiversity.
4. No development hereby permitted shall commence until an exceedance flow routing plan for flows above the 1 in 100 + 40% climate change event has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Exceedance flow paths should be directed to highways and public open space and should avoid paths through areas in private ownership. The approved exceedance flow routing plan shall be implemented prior to occupation of the development hereby permitted.
5.
 - (a) No development hereby permitted shall commence until a scheme for the protection of trees, shrubs and hedges to be retained on or adjacent to the site in accordance with BS5837:2012 has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The protection measures shall be implemented in accordance with the approved scheme and retained during the construction period including site preparation work, tree felling or pruning, soil moving, temporary construction access and any operation involving the use of vehicles or construction machinery.
 - (b) No development hereby permitted shall commence until written notice has been provided to the local planning authority with a period of not less than 7 working days to enable inspection of the measures undertaken to protect trees, shrubs and hedges in accordance with the approved scheme.
 - (c) No excavations, storage of materials or machinery, parking of vehicles, deposit of spoil or rubble, lighting of fires or disposal of liquids shall take

place within any area designated as being fenced off or otherwise protected in the approved scheme.

(d) The fencing or other means of protection installed in accordance with the approved scheme shall not be moved or removed until all construction works have been completed and all equipment, machinery and surplus materials removed from the site.

6. No development hereby permitted shall commence until a programme of archaeological work including a written scheme of investigation has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The scheme of investigation shall include but not be limited to the following:
 - (a) programme and methodology of site investigation and recording
 - (b) programme for post investigation assessment
 - (c) analysis of the site investigation and recording
 - (d) means of publication of the analysis and recorded finds
 - (e) archive deposition of the analysis and recorded finds
 - (f) nomination of a competent person or organisation to undertake the site investigation.The site investigation shall take place in accordance with the approved programme of archaeological work. The development hereby permitted shall not be occupied until the post investigation assessment has been undertaken and the analysis and recorded finds have been published and deposited.
7. Before any above ground construction works of the development hereby permitted are commenced, samples and details of the materials to be used on the external surfaces of the buildings shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
8. No development hereby permitted shall commence until details of the means of foul sewerage disposal have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
9. Prior to occupation of the development hereby permitted the Trowes Lane access shall be constructed in accordance with drawing 5638/004D and the Charlton Lane pedestrian access shall be constructed in accordance with drawing ITB 19769-GA-005 and the visibility splays to both accesses shall be cleared of any obstruction exceeding 0.6m in height. The accesses shall be retained in accordance with the approved details and the visibility splays shall be maintained clear of any obstruction exceeding 0.6m in height at all times.
10. Prior to occupation of any dwelling hereby permitted the vehicle parking space associated with that dwelling has been provided in accordance with the drawing 3145-A-1700-PL-E. All visitor and unallocated spaces shall be provided prior to occupation of all of the dwellings.
11. Prior to occupation of the development hereby permitted, a parking management strategy for the management of visitor and unallocated spaces shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The strategy shall be implemented once approved.

12. Prior to occupation of the development hereby permitted, details of secure and covered bicycle storage shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The bicycle storage shall be provided in accordance with the approved details prior to occupation of the dwelling to which each bicycle store relates and shall thereafter be retained.
13. Prior to occupation of the development hereby permitted, a landscape and ecological management plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The plan shall include but not be limited to the following details: long term design objectives, management responsibilities, timescales and maintenance schedules for all non-private landscape areas which demonstrates habitat and hedgerow biodiversity net gain in accordance with Ecological Impact Assessment CAS/5643/05 (August 2023). The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved landscape and ecological management plan.
14. Prior to occupation of the development hereby permitted a sustainable drainage system management and maintenance plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The plan shall include details of the arrangements and responsibilities for securing the operation of the drainage system for the lifetime of the development hereby permitted and shall include details of maintenance access to all parts of the drainage system and a method for removal and disposal of waste. The approved drainage system shall be implemented prior to the occupation of the development hereby permitted.
15. Prior to occupation of the development hereby permitted details of external lighting shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The details shall include but not be limited to the following: location, height, type and direction of light sources, intensity of illumination, and highway lighting. External lighting shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details.
16. Prior to occupation of the development hereby permitted, details of walls, fences and other means of enclosure shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The details shall demonstrate how the walls, fences and other means of enclosure will be ecologically permeable to small mammals and other wildlife. The walls, fences and other means of enclosure shall be erected in accordance with the approved details.
17. Prior to the occupation of the development hereby permitted, the solar panels and heat pumps detailed in the Energy and Sustainability Statement BO.S.RG7 Rev 3 shall be installed and thereafter retained unless replaced by more efficient and sustainable equipment.
18. Prior to the occupation of any dwelling hereby permitted the bin storage area and facilities for that dwelling shall be installed in accordance with drawing 3145-A-1701-PL-D. The bin storage area and facilities shall thereafter be retained and used for no purpose other than the storage of refuse and recycling materials.
19. Prior to the occupation of the development hereby permitted a scheme shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority

demonstrating that the water network infrastructure has capacity to serve the development. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved scheme.

20. No trees, shrubs or hedges shown to be retained on landscape plan CSA/5643/11F, CSA/5643/115G, CSA/5643/116G and CSA/5643/117F shall be felled, uprooted, damaged, destroyed or removed. Any trees, shrubs or hedgerows removed or damaged within 5 years from the occupation of all of the development hereby permitted shall be replaced with trees, shrubs or hedgerow plants or similar size and species unless any variation is agreed in writing by the local planning authority.
21. No work, including demolition and preparation prior to building operations, relating to the development hereby permitted shall take place other than between the hours of 0800 to 1800 Mondays to Fridays and 0800 to 1300 on Saturdays. No works shall take place at any time on Sundays or Bank Holidays or National Holidays.
22. If land contamination is found at any time during the construction of the development hereby permitted the discovery shall be reported in writing as soon as possible to the local planning authority. Prior to any further works being conducted, a contamination risk assessment shall be carried out and a remediation method statement submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Work shall only recommence if in accordance with the approved remediation method statement.
23. Notwithstanding drawings refs 3145-A-1700-PL-E, 3145-A-1701-PL-D, 3145-A-1702-PL-D, 3145-A-1703-PL-D, 3145-A-1704-PL-D, 3145-A-1705-PL-D and 3145-A-1706-PL-F, the Local Area of Play shall be located in the central greenspace as shown in drawing 3145-C-1005-PL-H.

***** end of conditions *****



Appeal Decision

Inquiry held on 26 November - 4 December 2024

Accompanied site visit made on 3 December 2024

by C Masters MA (Hons) FRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 5th February 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/X0360/W/24/3350170

Land to the North of the A4, New Bath Road, Twyford

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant outline planning permission
 - The appeal is made by David Wilson Homes Southern Ltd against the decision of Wokingham Borough Council
 - The application Ref 223455, dated 11 November 2022 was refused by notice dated 14 June 2024
 - The development proposed is outline application with all matters reserved for a residential development of up to 230 dwellings, open space, internal accesses and parking, drainage measures, landscaping, demolition of all existing structures, and all other associated works.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed, and planning permission is granted for outline planning application with all matters reserved for a residential development of up to 230 dwellings, open space, internal accesses and parking, drainage measures, landscaping, demolition of all existing structures, and all other associated works at Land to the North of the A4, New Bath Road, Twyford in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 223455, subject to the conditions in the attached schedule.

Preliminary Matters

2. The planning application was submitted in outline with all matters of detail reserved for future consideration. I have proceeded to determine the appeal on this basis. The drawings which accompanied the appeal are for illustrative purposes only and have been treated as such.
3. I was provided with a draft planning obligation prior to the inquiry opening. I allowed some time following the close of the inquiry for the document to be finalised. A signed copy of the document was received on the 20 December 2024. I return to this matter below.
4. The Council confirmed that on the basis of this document, reasons for refusal 4,5,6 and 7 would be satisfactorily addressed and would not be contested by the Council.
5. The Council has granted outline planning permission in July 2023 for the redevelopment of the site opposite the appeal site for 200 residential units. The statement of common ground (SoCG) confirms that the Bridge Farm site is a

sustainable and accessibly located site and is a material consideration to this appeal. The scheme is known as the 'Bridge Farm Proposals' and where necessary, I shall refer to the scheme as this throughout my decision.

6. A revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published on the 12 December 2024. As this was following the close of the inquiry but before the decision had been issued, the parties were given time to provide written comments on this revised document. I have taken on board the comments received in reaching my conclusions set out below. All references to the Framework within this decision are to the latest version of the document.

Main Issues

7. This appeal has two main issues:

- Whether the appeal site is an appropriate location for residential development (sustainability and physical separation);
- Whether the proposal adequately provides for sustainable transport measures including pedestrian and cycle movements.

8. I deal with each of these matters in turn.

Reasons

Whether the appeal site is an appropriate location for residential development (sustainability and physical separation)

Sustainability

9. The appeal site is located to the north of Twyford and outside of the defined settlement boundary of Twyford in an area currently defined as countryside within the development plan.
10. Twyford is recognised within the Core Strategy as a major development location within the borough. The Core Strategy defines these locations as settlements with the greatest range of facilities and services which also allows residents the greatest choice in modes to access them. Reflective of this designation, the settlement provides for a range of services and facilities commensurate with the status of the settlement as one of the higher order centres within the borough. These include (but are not limited to) doctors, shops, places of worship, primary schools and public houses. There is a secondary school (the Piggott School) within 800m of the settlement boundary and a core employment area within 400m of the settlement boundary.
11. In terms of transport connections, Twyford station is on the Elizabeth line which provides services to London and beyond to the east as well as providing mainline services to neighbouring settlements such as Slough, Maidenhead and London Paddington. It was broadly agreed between the parties that this represents an excellent service and I can see no reason to disagree with this. In terms of the appeal site, existing pedestrian and cycle connections are available to Twyford along the A4 New Bath Road and then along Wargrave Road. These pedestrian and cycle connections would potentially be enhanced through the completion of the Bridge Farm Proposals which would deliver a further route to the centre of Twyford directly opposite the appeal site.

12. The appeal site is well served by existing bus services which are provided through bus stops located a short walk away on the A321 to the north of the A4/A321 roundabout which is served by the 850 bus. This provides direct links between Reading and High Wycombe through a service every 20 minutes between 0800 and 2000 Monday to Friday as well as a reduced service outside of these hours (between 0500 -0800 and 2000-2330) and a service every 30 minutes to 1 hour at the weekends. The Council recognise this is a good service – given the sites location on the edge of the settlement and taking into account the size of the settlement, I consider this to represent an excellent service. Although the Rule 6 party expressed doubts regarding the financial viability of this service going forward, as well as difficulties associated with the bus lanes in Reading, I have no substantive evidence on these matters.
13. In terms of the Bridge Farm proposals, I am aware of the conclusions which the Council reached in terms of the sustainability of this site and its suitability for residential development which is located directly opposite the appeal site, within the countryside and also outside of the defined settlement boundary. Taking into account the locational characteristics of the appeal site, as well as the evidence presented on this issue, it is my view that the appeal site would present a sustainable location for residential development.

Physical Separation

14. The Council's case in relation to this matter focused on the existing A4 road acting as a 'physical and psychological' barrier separating the appeal site from the remainder of Twyford. Whilst the Council have referred to a number of design guides to support this assertion, there was a clear lack of any detailed analysis of the sites existing and emerging context to support the assertions made in relation to this issue.
15. There are a number of important points to consider in this regard. Firstly, although it was broadly accepted and agreed between the parties that the road is relatively heavily trafficked with some cars travelling at speed, it is also an important existing shared pedestrian and cycle route and is identified as such within the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) 2023. It is also identified as being part of an existing Greenway and Active Travel Network suitable for medium and longer distance cycle journeys. In terms of its actual use, I witnessed many pedestrians and cyclists including school children but also dog walkers using the footpath/shared cycleway next to the road during my site visits. There are a number of opportunities for crossing points along the road including the pedestrian footbridge. It is my view that rather than presenting a psychological barrier as suggested by the Council, the A4 clearly forms an important and well used part of the existing transport infrastructure of the area. As a result, it provides important connections to other parts of the existing transport network which I will address in further detail under main issue 2 below.
16. Secondly, the Council's contention that the site has a high degree of physical separation from built development and the settlement of Twyford is misleading. There is existing built development beyond the A4 road. This built development includes the Piggott School, with its associated car parking, playing fields and ancillary buildings, a nursery, pockets of housing development, the Thames Water Wargrave Sewage Treatment works as well as a small caravan park associated with the fruit picking businesses.

17. Thirdly, the existing environment of the road will change as a result of the Bridge Farm Proposals. The Bridge Farm proposals would deliver a number of additional traffic calming measures including a speed reduction from 60mph to 40mph as well as an additional pedestrian crossing point close to the indicative entrance to the appeal site. This development will bring the built form of Twyford further north and west than existing and beyond the development limits as identified within the adopted development plan. It would result in the opportunity for greater pedestrian and vehicular connections to the appeal site to be achieved on this existing road frontage.
18. Contrary to the position presented by the Council, the appellants evidence concerning the issue of physical separation was compelling in this regard. It demonstrates a clear understanding of the existing site context, the evolution of Twyford and its settlement form and the potential for the design approach to create physical and visual cohesion between the appeal site and the settlement edge.
19. Finally, specific concerns were raised by the Council that the proposal could result in an 'airgap' along the A4 between the appeal site and the Bridge Farm proposals. For the reasons I have set out above, I do not agree that the existing road results in a severance effect and the concerns regarding the creation of an airgap in policy terms are also unfounded.

Conclusion on main issue 1

20. To conclude, I am of the view that the appeal site would be an appropriate, sustainable location for residential development which would not be physically separated from the settlement of Twyford. In terms of the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (2010), the Council have referred to policy CP1 concerning sustainable development. This policy identifies a number of criteria which seek to, in the round, direct development where it can enhance the overall sustainability of the area by minimising the impact on the environment. I conclude that the proposal would accord with this policy.
21. The Council have also cited a conflict with policy CP2 of the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (2010). This policy addresses inclusive communities, and the Council's alleged harm relates to parts a-c of the policy. There is nothing before me to suggest that the groups identified by the policy would be disadvantaged in terms of accessing facilities in a sustainable way. There is no conflict with this policy.
22. Notwithstanding the above conclusions, there would be conflict with policies CP9 and CP11 of the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (2010) as the proposal would be located outside of the development limits. Policy CP9 states that development proposals will be acceptable within the defined development limits as defined by the policy. The proposal would not be located within these defined development limits. Policy CP11 sets out that in order to protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of the environment, proposals outside of development limits will not normally be permitted. A list of exceptions are then set out, none of which would be applicable to the appeal site.
23. My attention has also been drawn to policies CC01 and CC02 of the Wokingham Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (2014). Policy CC01 highlights the presumption in favour of sustainable development and in broad terms, echoes

the requirements of paragraph 11 (d) of the Framework. As I will go on to assess the proposal against this part of the Framework later within my decision, I do not reach a conclusion on whether there is a conflict with this policy at this time. Policy CC02 requires, amongst other things, that planning permission at the edge of settlements be granted where the development is located within the development limits. As the proposal would be located outside of the development limits, there would be a conflict with this policy.

24. The reason for refusal also refers to the Boroughs Design Guide SPD as well as the National Design Guide. However there is nothing contained within these documents which would lead me to reach a different conclusion on the above main issue.
25. In terms of the weight to be given to these identified policy conflicts, this is dependent upon the extent to which these policies are consistent with the Framework. I shall go on to address the weight to be afforded to these policy conflicts later within my decision.

Whether the proposal adequately provides for sustainable transport measures including pedestrian and cycle movements

26. I have already concluded above that the site would present a sustainable location for housing development. Although the site is located outside of the settlement boundary, the site has direct access to the cycle network outside the appeal site onto the A4 New Bath Road, a designated cycle route. The appeal site would connect to the existing pedestrian and cycle network which is flat, well lit and well maintained. Moreover, the SoCG confirms the Bridge Farm Proposals would facilitate various pedestrian and cycle improvement works and that a route through this scheme would provide connections to the centre of Twyford. The Bridge Farm proposals would include the introduction of a toucan crossing on the A4 New Bath Road, with associated amendments to the existing shared footway/cycle path.
27. Even without the improvements proposed as part of this scheme as well as the Bridge Farm proposals, it is clear that walking and cycling are existing modes of transport which are well used in the immediate area. The frequency of the bus service and proximity of the bus stop would also make this a genuine choice of transport modes in the context of paragraph 110 of the Framework, particularly for onwards connections to the station where the Rule 6 party explained in some detail that there are existing car parking capacity issues.
28. To inform my view, and as part of the site visit, I was able to walk from the appeal site to a number of the key services and facilities within Twyford. The route provided had been agreed between the main parties and provided a useful comparison to the wealth of evidence presented on acceptable walking distances¹. The topography of the area is favourable, footpaths are well lit and there is good clear visibility on the footpaths from the appeal site to the centre of Twyford. Whilst I fully recognise that the use of the private car may still be preferred by those with young children, mobility issues or those undertaking a weekly shop, this does not mean that there is not the genuine choice available as envisaged by the Framework. Given the above, I am not convinced that for most journeys, the car would remain the sole choice for future residents of the development as suggested by the Council.

¹ CD7.3, CD7.5, CD5.15, CD5.17

29. I therefore conclude that the proposal would adequately provide for sustainable transport measures including pedestrian and cycle movement. The homes proposed on the appeal site would be within a reasonable walking and cycling distance to the key services and facilities within Twyford. They would also be an acceptable walking distance to the nearby bus stops located on the A321. There would be no conflict with the development plan policies which the Council have identified and which I shall now go onto summarise below.
30. In the context of policy CP1 of the Core Strategy, this is a general policy concerning sustainable development. The Council allege conflict with parts 1,2 and 11 of this policy. These criteria relate to maintaining or enhancing the high quality of the environment, minimising the emission of pollutants into the wider environment and demonstrating how the development proposal would support opportunities for reducing the need to travel by private car in line with policy CP6. For the reasons I have set out above, I do not consider that there would be any conflict with this policy which is broadly consistent with the Framework.
31. I also conclude that the proposal would accord with policy CP6 of the Wokingham Core Strategy (2010) which relates to managing travel demand and seeks to ensure, amongst other things, that schemes provide for sustainable forms of transport to allow choice.
32. Furthermore, the proposal would accord with policy CC03 of the Wokingham Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (2014) which relates to green infrastructure, trees and landscaping. Part (b) of the policy requires development proposals to promote linkages and permeability between and within existing green corridors including public rights of way. For the reasons I have identified above, the proposal would accord with this policy.
33. My attention has also been drawn to policies TW1, TW2 and TW13 of the Twyford Neighbourhood Plan (2023). During the inquiry, it was evident that the extent to which the Council consider there is any conflict with these policies is limited. However, I have nevertheless addressed them below for the sake of completeness.
34. Policy TW1 relates to encouraging sustainable travel. The policy advises that the Neighbourhood Plan identifies the existing sustainable travel network and opportunities for improvements, for the purposes of prioritising active travel and encouraging the use of public transport. The policy goes on to note that development proposals on land that lies within or adjacent to the Network should sustain and where practicable, enhance the functionality of the network. The appeal site lies adjacent to the A4 New Bath Road which is defined as one such route and I am satisfied that the development would deliver a number of measures which would align with this policy objective.
35. Policy TW2 addresses sustainable accessibility and mobility. The policy refers to the detailed layout of streets and spaces in relation to major development proposals as well as requiring measures through a travel plan to improve active travel for all users. Although the scheme before me is outline form only, I am satisfied that subject to appropriately worded conditions, the scheme would be able to address this policy objective at the detailed design stage.
36. Policy TW13 refers specifically to design codes. Part of the policy refers specifically to development proposals which effect the historic environment which is not directly relevant to the issues before me. The remaining part of

the policy is in two parts and relates (i) to the individual character areas typologies as shown on the policies map. The appeal site is not covered by such a designation and as such I see no conflict with this part of the policy. Part (ii) requires development proposals to demonstrate the way in which they have responded positively to the general design principles set out within the Twyford Design Guidelines and Codes report. Although the scheme before me is in outline only, it is accompanied by a detailed Design and Access Statement which appropriately addresses the requirements of these documents.

37. The reason for refusal also refers to the Boroughs Design Guide SPD as well as the National Design Guide. However, there is nothing contained within these documents which would lead me to reach a different conclusion on the above main issue. Similarly, for the reasons set out above, I do not consider the proposal would lead to any conflict with paragraph 139 of the Framework as alleged by the Council.
38. The Council have also referenced policies CC01 and CC02 of the Wokingham Management Development Policies (2014) as well as policies CP2, CP3 and CP11 of the Wokingham Core Strategy (2010) document however I do not consider these policies are directly relevant to this main issue.

Other Matters

39. Much of the Rule 6 Party's case as well as a number of third parties focused on the highways impacts of the development and a concern that the proposal would result in a severe residual cumulative impact on the road network. These concerns relate specifically to the impact of the development on the existing traffic flow on Wargrave Road during the drop off and pick up times at the Piggott School. In support of this position, the Rule 6 Party submitted drone footage of the existing traffic movements taking place at these times. I was also able to witness the existing situation first hand during a number of site visits.
40. I readily accept that the evidence demonstrates that there are times during the day when traffic queueing occurs at the access to the school. This can have implications for the free flow of traffic at the roundabout. However, this situation is not itself unusual in a location where there is a school. I have no evidence before me to support the assertion that the proposal would result in a severe residual cumulative impact of the road network as suggested by the Rule 6 Party. The Council have not raised any objections on highways grounds and are content that the modelling undertaken demonstrates that the highways impacts of the development would be acceptable. I have no evidence to support the assertion made that the Council have in some way underestimated or misunderstood the highways impacts of the appeal proposal. Similarly, on wider highways matters raised such as highways safety, I can see no reason to disagree with the highways authority on this matter.
41. A significant number of the concerns raised include matters relating to ecology and wildlife, minerals safeguarding, air quality, highways safety, noise and odours and the impact on local infrastructure. A number of these issues are addressed through the use of appropriately worded conditions which I cover below. Specific concerns regarding the credentials of the appellant in terms of the quality of the house build is not a matter for my deliberations. The appeal is supported by a detailed Agricultural Land Classification report which concludes that the site would not result in the loss of BMVAL and the Council

also concur with the conclusions reached on this issue. I have no evidence before me to suggest that these findings are incorrect.

42. Concerns have also been raised regarding the existing flooding which occurs in the area and I have no doubt that these concerns are real concerns for those who live locally. However, the flood risk assessment and associated addendum have been completed in accordance with the guidance contained within both the Framework and the PPG on this matter. The statement to the inquiry² provides a comprehensive response to the issues of flood risk and drainage pertinent to the appeal site. Furthermore, and subject to appropriate conditions which I shall go on to address below, the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), Environment Agency and Thames Water have raised no objection to the development. Accordingly, I do not consider that the issue of flood risk is one which should weigh against this proposal.
43. I acknowledge that the proposal has attracted a significant amount of local interest and objection. I have taken all of these representations into account in reaching my conclusions below however there is nothing contained within these objections which would lead me to reach a different conclusion than the statutory consultees and local planning authority on these matters.
44. The Council's witness took the view that the Officers report to committee was not a relevant material consideration and contained nothing more than a recommendation. I disagree. In my view, this document is a relevant material consideration in relation to this appeal. The report presents a comprehensive consideration of the relevant site context, planning matters, consultation responses, an assessment of the harms and benefits and also balances the relevance of the Bridge Farm Proposals in this context. Whilst the Committee did not agree with the Officers' overall judgement and recommendation, they are perfectly entitled to do so. However, this does not mean that the Officer report and analysis undertaken should be totally disregarded in the context of the appeal.
45. The Council have also suggested that allowing the appeal would undermine the principle of plan led development in the area. However, the Council also acknowledge that given the present housing land supply position, flexibility needs to be applied to the development limit boundaries identified within the development plan, as has been the case with the Bridge Farm proposal. Accordingly, in the case of this appeal, I do not agree that assessing the proposal through the application of paragraph 11 (d) of the Framework undermines the primacy of the development plan.
46. The emerging plan is at an early stage and on this basis and as agreed within the SoCG, I attach limited weight to this emerging policy position.

Other appeal decisions

47. The parties have referred me to no fewer than 25 other appeal decisions³ which they consider to have comparable characteristics to the case before me. Where there are matters which are directly comparable, I have referred to the individual decision within my findings. For the remainder of the decisions, they are for materially different schemes, often within other local planning authority areas with a different development plan policy to the one before me. Even the

² Appendix 2 to Mr Murray Cox Proof of Evidence

³ Appeal Decisions as listed at section CD10 of the Core Documents library

appeal decisions relating to this local authority area do not address the specific characteristics of this appeal site within Twyford. Furthermore, the decisions all predate the publication of the latest version of the Framework against which this appeal must be assessed.

Planning Obligation

48. As I have already outlined, the appellant submitted a completed planning obligation following the close of the inquiry. I have had regard to the requirements of Regulation 122(2) of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulation 2010 as well as paragraph 58 of the Framework.
49. In relation to affordable housing, the obligation identifies both the quantum, tenure mix and delivery threshold levels linked to the market housing provision. The obligation includes for a contribution towards open space in the form of an open space commuted sum identified as formal public parks (£360,930), amenity open space (£160,140) natural green space (£554,880), play areas commuted sums as defined/designated for both a LAP (local area of play) and LEAP (local equipped area of play) to total £241,360 as well as an allotment contribution of £157,872. An employment skills contribution is also defined within schedule 6 of the document to support employment and training initiatives.
50. In terms of transportation and highways, the document provides for a My Journey contribution to a maximum of £130,410 which represents the Council's borough wide travel awareness initiative, a £4000 contribution towards costs for a traffic regulation order along the A4 reducing the legal speed limit as well as a £6000 contribution towards speed reduction signs at the Piggott School, a public transport contribution of £121,900 towards the funding of public transport to serve the area. The obligation also makes provision for a s278 agreement in relation to off site highways works which are identified at Schedule 9 of the document. These off site highways works include the provision of a crossing over New Bath Road should this not be brought forward through the Bridge Road proposals, the provision of a new bus stop and advisory cycle lane as well as the provision of a crossing over the northern arm of the A4/A321 roundabout.
51. In addition to the above, the document makes provision for a NHS contribution of £198,720. The justification provided by the Council in relation to this condition relies to some extent on an approach adopted by a previous Inspector at Haddenham⁴. The NHS Integrated Care Board (ICB) appeared at the inquiry and confirmed that the existing Twyford Surgery is over capacity and requires additional clinical space to be able to accommodate any new patients from the proposed development. This would be achieved through either the reconfiguration of existing non clinical space or an extension to the premises. The contribution has been calculated based on the number of dwellings proposed which has been used to define an additional patient yield. Taking into account the representations made, as well as the approach adopted by the Inspector in the case of the Haddenham appeal, I am satisfied that this obligation would meet the necessary tests. Finally, the obligation includes a monitoring fee clause to the value of £512 per clause. Given that the document includes some 40 clauses, the total amount for the monitoring fee would be £20,480.

⁴ APP/J0405/W/24/3339126

52. The Council have provided full details in relation to how these contributions have been calculated as well as the relevant policy justification for the obligations being sought. These provisions are in accordance with policies CP1, CP3, CP4, CP5, CP6 of the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (2010), as well as policies TB08, TB12 and CC03 of the Wokingham Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (2014).
53. I am satisfied that the obligations outlined above are necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms, directly related to the development and fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development. I have therefore taken them into account in reaching my decision. To conclude, the proposal would make adequate provision towards the local infrastructure requirements.

Conditions

54. The Council and Appellant produced a list of conditions, which were largely agreed, at the round table session. Where there was a dispute between the parties, this was discussed at the round table session. In addition, the Rule 6 party were afforded the opportunity to input to the drafting of the conditions as this session. I have had regard to these discussions in preparing the list of conditions as they are set out on the attached schedule, as well as the guidance contained within the Planning Practice Guidance regarding the use of conditions and paragraph 56 of the Framework. Where necessary, I have amended the wording of the suggested condition in the interests of clarity, precision and enforceability.
55. Conditions dealing with the timescale for the implementation of the permission, the approved plan as well as the reserved matters submission are necessary to provide certainty (conditions 1,2,3) . A number of conditions are necessary and reasonable to ensure the appearance of the development is satisfactory (conditions 24,25,26,27,28,39, 40,41,42,43,44). Conditions are necessary to ensure that the living conditions of the future occupiers of the development are adequately protected (conditions 4,37,45). In the interests of public health, condition 7 has been included to address any potential contamination issues on the site. Condition 8 requires the submission of a construction environmental management plan to ensure the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers are satisfactorily addressed and to ensure the development promotes sustainable construction processes. For the same reasons, condition 9 covers the hours of construction at the site.
56. Conditions 5 and 6 requires the development to submit details in relation to a scheme for archaeological investigation at the site. This is necessary to ensure that any archaeological issues are satisfactorily addressed. Condition 29 and 30 provide protection to existing trees on the site, these are necessary in the interests of the character and appearance of the area. Conditions 31,32 and 33 deal with protected species and are necessary to ensure that measures to adequately protect wildlife are suitably addressed.
57. In the interest of highways safety as well as the provision of pedestrian and cycle infrastructure, conditions 19,20,21,22,23 deal with the provision of a safe and suitable access, the layout of any car parking and cycle parking, and connections to the adopted highway. In the interest of sustainable development, condition 34 seeks to secure the submission of a scheme for

achieving a 10% reduction in the predicted carbon emissions arising from the operation of the development.

58. A number of conditions (conditions 15,16,17,18,35,36,38) are included which deal with foul water drainage and water supply, these include conditions as suggested by Thames Water and will ensure that foul water drainage and water supply are appropriately addressed, including odour mitigation measures. These conditions are both reasonable and necessary. Conditions 10,11,12,13,14 are all reasonable and necessary to ensure that flood risk at the site is adequately addressed.

Other considerations

59. In accordance with the Framework, a proposal should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. I now turn to set out the benefits the appeal scheme would deliver which are important material considerations.

The benefits of the proposal

60. There is agreement between the Council and the appellant that the Council are unable to demonstrate a five year housing supply as required by paragraph 78 of the Framework. The Council recognise that that the agreed position of 3.2 years supply at 31 March 2023 is now reduced based on the changes to the standard method for calculating local housing need as well as the deletion of the four year requirement. However, the Council have not quantified what these changes mean. Conversely, the appellant has set out, adopting the same methodology contained within the Housing Land Supply SoCG, and utilising the most up to date local housing need figure, the housing supply is in the region of 1.81 years.
61. The Council and Rule 6 party have suggested that the housing position in Wokingham demonstrates the Council is performing well given its historic over delivery and as a result, the weight to be afforded to housing delivery should be tempered. In my view, the housing land supply figure does not present a ceiling which should not be exceeded. However, I have taken into account the conclusions drawn by the previous Inspectors⁵ on this matter. It is worth noting that since the previous decisions were issued, the new Framework against which this appeal falls to be considered against has additional text in relation to paragraph 11(d) which states *having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well -designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination*. The decision at Lodge Road, Hurst is now in the order of some 2 years old, and the main issues are materially different to the appeal before me. Importantly, the Inspector concluded the appeal site was not a sustainable location. In terms of Orchard Road, Reading, the Inspector concluded that the circumstances outlined by the Council do not prevent the application of paragraph 11(d) and oversupply of housing is in itself not a justification for resisting development.
62. Taking into account the above, I consider the approach adopted by the Inspectors at Swallowfield⁶ and Orchard Road to be the most appropriate. That

⁵ APP/X0360/W/22/3309202 and APP/X0360/W/24/3342812

⁶ APP/X0360/W/24/3340006

is to say the requirement on local planning authorities to deliver housing is forward facing and I give only limited weight to this past over supply.

63. With this in mind, I now turn to consider the benefits of the proposal. The proposal would deliver 230 market homes and 92 affordable homes in a location which I have already concluded to be a sustainable one. The affordable housing provision at 40% would comply with policy CP5 of the Wokingham Core Strategy (2010). In an authority which is unable to demonstrate a 5 year supply of homes, these dwellings would boost the supply of housing in this area which would go some way to addressing this shortfall. The affordable homes would deliver a number of social benefits by providing homes for a sector of the population for which there is an acute need and in an area where the delivery of affordable housing has fallen persistently short of meeting these identified needs. Overall, there is a clear and pressing need for the delivery of both affordable and market homes in Wokingham. I therefore attach significant weight to the delivery of the market housing and in addition, very significant weight to the delivery of the affordable housing in this sustainable location.
64. The proposal would deliver economic benefits in the form of employment during the construction phases of the development, as well as increased spending within the borough as a result of the new occupiers. I therefore attach moderate weight to this.
65. The proposal would also deliver environmental benefits in the form of publicly accessible open space on the site as well as allotments (or an off site contribution). As I recognise that this space is most likely to be used by the occupiers of the new dwellings, I attach only limited weight to this benefit. The proposal would also deliver BNG in excess of the 10% mandatory target to which I attach moderate weight.
66. A number of the highways measures proposed will have benefits not only for the residents of the proposed development but will also benefit existing residents in the area. I attach moderate weight to these benefits.

Conclusion and Planning Balance

67. The proposal would conflict with policies CP9 and CP11 of the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (2010) as well as policy CC02 of the Wokingham Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (2014). It conflicts with the development plan as a whole. On my reading, these policies present a more restrictive approach to development outside of defined development limits than the Framework. As such, this reduces the weight I attach to this development plan conflict.
68. However, in the case of this appeal, the presumption in favour of sustainable development applies as set out within the Framework. This states that where a Council cannot demonstrate an adequate housing supply, as is the case here, then permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies of the Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in isolation.

69. In addition to this conflict with the development plan as a whole, the adverse impacts would be the change to the countryside to which I attribute limited harm.
70. Taking into account the above conclusions, material considerations⁷ indicate that notwithstanding the conflict with the development plan, planning permission should be granted. It is my view that there would be no adverse impacts which would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of granting planning permission. Accordingly, planning permission should be granted.

C Masters

INSPECTOR

⁷ In light of this conclusion, there would be no conflict with policy CC01 as referred to within paragraph 22 above.

Conditions

1. No development shall commence (except in relation to survey work necessary for demolition) until details of the access, appearance, landscaping, layout, and scale (hereinafter called "the reserved matters") of the development have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and the development shall be carried out as approved. Application for approval of the first reserved matters shall be made to the Local Planning Authority not later than 3 years from the date of this permission and all reserved matters applications shall be made within a period ten years from the date of this permission. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of five years from the date of this permission.

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plan: Parameter Plan 009 Rev I.

3. Prior to the commencement of development, a strategy for the phasing of the development hereby approved shall be first submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Phasing Strategy will define: (i) the development to be delivered within each phase of the development; (ii) timescales for delivery ; (iii) details of the coordination of housing and infrastructure delivery including triggers for delivery of infrastructure and the arrangements to prevent interruption of delivery across sub-phase and phase boundaries. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved Phasing Strategy, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

4. Prior to development above slab, all buildings associated with Riverways Farm, New Bath Road, Twyford, Berkshire, RG10 9RY are to be demolished and permanently removed from the application site in their entirety.

5. Prior to the determination of reserved matters applications dealing with layout, a programme of archaeological work (which may comprise more than one phase of works) shall be implemented in accordance with a written scheme of investigation, which has been submitted and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall only take place in accordance with the detailed scheme approved pursuant to this condition.

6. No development shall take place on any phase of the development hereby approved until a Phase 2 Contamination Investigation report (including any potential remediation proposals) for that phase is submitted to and approved in writing by the local authority in consultation with the water undertaker. The risk assessment shall document the nutrient impact to groundwater abstraction as a result of the development and propose mitigation and monitoring to ensure that at least 'nutrient neutrality' is achieved. The development shall be constructed in line with the recommendations of the Risk Assessment. All remediation measures so-approved on each phase shall be implemented in full prior to any construction taking place on that phase.

7. In the event that unexpected contamination is found at any time when carrying out the development hereby approved that was not previously identified it must be reported in writing immediately to the Local Planning Authority. An investigation and risk assessment must be undertaken in accordance with DEFRA and the

Environment Agency's 'Model Procedures for the Management of Land Contamination, CLR 11', and, where remediation is necessary, a remediation scheme must be prepared in accordance with the approved investigation report which shall be subject to the approval in writing of the Local Planning Authority. Following completion of measures identified in the approved remediation scheme a verification report must be prepared, which is subject to the approval in writing of the Local Planning Authority in accordance with the approved remediation scheme.

8. Prior to commencement of any phase of development hereby permitted, a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) in respect of that phase shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Construction of the development shall not be carried out otherwise than in accordance with the approved CEMP. The CEMP shall include details on the following matters relevant to that phase:

- the parking of vehicles of site operatives and visitors;
- the turning of vehicles within the site;
- loading and unloading of plant and materials;
- storage of plant and materials used in the construction of the development;
- the erection and maintenance of security hoarding
- wheel washing facilities;
- measures to control the emission of dust and dirt during construction,
- a scheme for recycling/disposing of waste resulting from demolition and construction works;
- risk assessment of potentially damaging construction activities for protected species and/or the River Loddon;
- identification of "biodiversity protection zones";
- practical measures (both physical measures and sensitive working practices) to avoid or reduce impacts during construction (may be provided as a set of method statements).
- the location and timing of sensitive works to avoid harm to biodiversity features.
- the times during construction when specialist ecologists need to be present on site to oversee works.
- responsible persons and lines of communication including with local residents
- the role and responsibilities on site of an ecological clerk of works (ECow) or similarly competent person.
- use of protective fences, exclusion barriers and warning signs.
- provision of boundary hoarding;
- details of any site construction office, compound and ancillary facility buildings. These facilities shall be sited away from biodiversity features;
- measures to ensure no on-site fires during construction;
- methods for ensuring that minerals that can be viably recovered during the development operations are recovered and put to beneficial use; and,
- methods to record the quantity of recovered mineral (re-use on-site or off-site) and to report this data to the LPA upon completion of the development; and
- badger mitigation strategy (including a status check and follow up licensing and compensation) and reptile and amphibians mitigation strategy, in accordance with British Standard 4202:2013.

The development shall be carried out in full compliance with the approved CEMP at all times.

9.No work relating to the development hereby approved, including works of demolition or preparation prior to building operations, shall take place other than between the hours of 08:00 and 18:00 Monday to Friday and 08:00 to 13:00 Saturdays and at no time on Sundays or Bank or National Holidays.

10.The development of each phase shall be carried out in accordance with the submitted flood risk assessment (Flood Risk Assessment & Preliminary Drainage Strategy, David Wilson Homes (Southern) Land North of the A4, New Bath Road, Twyford, August 2022, Vectos) and addendum (Land north of the A4, New Bath Road, Twyford, Flood Risk Assessment Addendum 9th October 2023 ref. 184398, Vectos), and the following mitigation measures detailed in the addendum:

- Finished floor levels shall be set no lower than 35.46 metres above Ordnance Datum (AOD), as detailed on page 6 of the addendum.
- All built development, SuDS and land raising will be excluded from the 1% annual exceedance probability (1 in 100 year) event plus 35% climate change flood extent, as detailed on page 6 of the addendum.

These mitigation measures for each phase shall be fully implemented prior to first occupation within that phase and shall be in accordance with the scheme's timing/phasing arrangements. The measures detailed above shall be retained and maintained thereafter throughout the lifetime of the development.

11. Before or concurrent with submission of the first application pursuant to reserved matters, a Drainage Strategy based on the Flood Risk Assessment Addendum (dated 9 October 2023) and including evidence of the level of the seasonally high groundwater table, drainage calculations, assessment of SuDS components as listed in the CIRIA SuDS Manual (and justification for exclusion of any if necessary), details of the layout, position and size of attenuation basins, and principles for locally based treatments such as rain gardens, filter strips and swales shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

12.Before each phase of the development is brought into use measures for effective water quality treatment (using the methodology set out in the SuDS Strategy and Section 26.7 of the CIRIA SuDS Manual (C753) or any guidance that supersedes it) shall be provided in accordance with details for that phase that have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

13. Reserved matters for each phase shall include details of SuDS to serve that phase, based on the approved SuDS Strategy, and shall include full construction details of all SuDS and drainage components. Detailed design of SuDS features shall demonstrate how they will be integrated into the wider landscape, with attenuation basins having a natural shape and shallow profile (not requiring lifesaving equipment and fence barriers), allowing them to fulfil amenity, ecological and drainage functions. SuDS shall be provided prior to first occupation of that phase of the development it is to serve in accordance with the approved details and the phasing details pursuant to condition 3 above and retained thereafter.

14. Prior to commencement (excluding demolition) of any phase of the development hereby approved, a plan for flows above the 1 in 100+40% climate change event (hereinafter referred to as an Exceedance Flow Routing plan) for that

phase shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Exceedance Flow Routing plan:

- shall identify exceedance flow routes through the development based on proposed topography with flows being directed to highways and areas of public open space;
- will demonstrate how flow routes avoid passing through gardens and other areas in private ownership;
- shall be accompanied by an exceedance map with arrows showing the direction of surface water in an event above 1 in 100+40% climate change or blockage;

Each phase of the development shall be carried out in accordance with the details so approved before the first occupation of the development hereby permitted within that phase.

15. No dwelling within the development hereby permitted shall be occupied until a SuDS Management and Maintenance Plan for the lifetime of the development has been submitted to and approved in writing by Local Planning Authority. The plan should include details of:

- arrangements to secure the operation of the scheme throughout its lifetime, including adoption by a Private Management Company, WBC or a Statutory Undertaker;
- maintenance access;
- a method statement for safe and sustainable removal and disposal of waste from drainage system, detailing frequency, materials to be used and standard of work; and
- a GIS shape file for the drainage system serving the site.

The approved SuDS Maintenance and Management Plan shall be implemented in full in accordance with the details hereby approved.

16. No development shall be occupied until confirmation has been provided that either:-

1. Foul water capacity exists off site to serve the development, or;
2. A development and infrastructure phasing plan has been agreed with the Local Authority in consultation with Thames Water. Where a development and infrastructure phasing plan is agreed, no occupation shall take place other than in accordance with the agreed development and infrastructure phasing plan, or;
3. All Foul water network upgrades required to accommodate the additional flows from the development have been completed.

17. No construction shall take place within 5m of the water main. Information detailing how the developer intends to divert the asset / align the development, so as to prevent the potential for damage to subsurface potable water infrastructure, must be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority in consultation with Thames Water. Any construction must be undertaken in accordance with the terms of the approved information. Unrestricted access must be available at all times for the maintenance and repair of the asset during and after the construction works.

18. Development hereby approved shall not commence until a Source Protection Strategy, detailing how the developer intends to ensure the water abstraction source is not detrimentally affected by the proposed development both during and

after its construction, has been submitted to and approved by, the local planning authority in consultation with the water undertaker. The development shall be constructed in line with the recommendations of the strategy.

19. The first application for reserved matters for the development hereby approved shall include details of the proposed vehicular access onto the A4. These details shall include visibility splays acceptable for the speed limits on the A4. No phase of the development hereby approved shall be commenced until such details have been first approved by the Local Planning Authority. The accesses shall be formed as so approved, and the visibility splays shall be cleared of any obstruction exceeding 0.6 metres in height prior to the occupation of the development. The accesses shall be retained in accordance with the approved details and used for no other purpose and the land within the visibility splays shall be maintained clear of any visual obstruction exceeding 0.6 metres in height at all times.

20. The reserved matters for the development shall include details of internal pedestrian and cycle infrastructure and connections from the development to the adopted highway. The approved infrastructure shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details prior to the occupation of the first dwelling.

21. The reserved matters application for the development shall include details of car and motorcycle parking in accordance with the Council's policies and which are to be approved in writing by the Council. No dwelling shall be occupied until the vehicular accesses, driveways, parking and turning areas to serve it including any unallocated space have been provided in accordance with the approved details and the provision shall be retained thereafter. The vehicle parking shall not be used for any other purposes other than parking and the turning spaces shall not be used for any other purposes than turning.

22. The reserved matters application for each phase of the development hereby approved shall include details of secure and covered bicycle storage/parking facilities serving those dwellings within that phase for the occupants of, and visitors to the development. The cycle storage/parking shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details before first occupation within that phase of the development and shall be permanently retained in the approved form for the parking of bicycles and used for no other purpose.

23. Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (or any Order revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification), the garage accommodation on the site identified on the plans to be approved shall be kept available for the parking of vehicles ancillary to the residential use of the site at all times. It shall not be used for any business nor as habitable space.

24. Concurrent with the submission of a reserved matters application in relation to landscape matters of the development, an overarching landscape strategy document for the whole site shall be submitted and approved in writing by the Local Authority. The landscape strategy shall be based on the approved Parameter Plan (as referred to in condition 2 above) and provide more detailed information on the types of structural planting proposed throughout the site and how this relates to the existing landscape features to be retained. It should also define structural landscape elements within the development parcels including SuDS, green infrastructure, and street tree planting. In areas outside the development parcels

the strategy will need to show the location of footpaths and possible linkages to rights of way off site as well as SUDs proposals and all formal recreational locations. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved strategy unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

25. No development (except for demolition) shall take place within a phase until full details of both hard and soft landscape works have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and these works shall be carried out as approved. The submitted details shall include, as appropriate:

- scheme drawings;
- proposed levels and contours;
- detailed design of SuDS features in accordance with the SuDS Strategy, demonstrating how they will be integrated into the wider landscape, with attenuation basins having a natural shape and shallow profile, (not requiring lifesaving equipment and fence barriers), allowing them to fulfil amenity, ecological and drainage functions;
- soft landscaping details including planting plans, schedules of plants, noting species, planting sizes and proposed numbers/densities where appropriate;
- a landscape specification document covering soft landscaping (including site preparation, cultivation, plant handling and other operations associated with plant and grass establishment) and hard landscaping including all construction works such as paths, bridges and retaining walls;
- details of the street tree planting pits in combination with the roadside swales/raingardens demonstrating that the trees have sufficient rooting volume to enable their successful retention long term health;
- hard landscaping materials including samples;
- minor artefacts and structures (e.g. play equipment, street furniture, refuse or other storage units, signs, external services) including specifications for the product and its installation;
- specification for tree rooting systems and use of structural soils under paving or where rooting volumes are limited;
- all boundary treatments, and other means of enclosure or controlling access such as gates, bollards and vehicle restraint systems, which shall include consideration of ecological permeability;
- measures required for ecological mitigation and biodiversity net gain to include an updated assessment using the Defra metric to achieve a biodiversity net gain;
- details of quality control measures, including supervision of landscape contract(s) by a suitably qualified landscape specialist and annual landscape audits for the five-year period from completion of the landscaping for the Landscape Phase or until adoption (whichever is longer). The annual Landscape Audit shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for information prior to the next planting season and replacement planting undertaken in accordance with the landscape audit and ii) below.

26. The hard and soft landscaping scheme of a defined phase shall be implemented in accordance with the details so approved prior to final occupation of that phase.

27. Any trees or plants which, within a period of five years after planting within each phase, are removed, die or become seriously damaged or defective, shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of species, size and number as originally approved and permanently retained (in which case the five-year period shall re-commence for that particular plant).

28. No development shall take place within any phase until a landscape and ecological management plan (LEMP), including long-term design objectives, management responsibilities, timescales and maintenance schedules for all landscaped areas (except privately owned domestic gardens), has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority for that phase. The submitted LEMP shall include the following elements:

- plans showing the extent and layout of the buffer zone adjacent to the River Loddon and the ordinary watercourse within the boundary of the site;
- details of any new habitat created within the buffer zone of the River Loddon, including the proposed planting scheme (these must be native species, ideally of local provenance);
- details demonstrating how the buffer zone will be protected during development and managed over the longer term including adequate financial provision and named body responsible for management plus production of detailed management plan

The landscape and ecological management plan shall be carried out as approved and any subsequent variations shall be agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

29. No retained tree shall be cut down, uprooted or destroyed, nor shall any retained tree be topped or lopped other than in accordance with the approved plans and particulars, without the written approval of the Local Planning Authority. If within a period of five years from the date of the occupation of the first unit, any tree planted is removed, uprooted or destroyed or dies, another tree of the same species and size as that originally planted shall be planted at the same place, unless the Local Planning Authority gives its written consent to any variation.

30. No development or other operation shall commence within each phase until a scheme which provides for the retention and protection of trees, shrubs and hedges growing on or adjacent to that phase in accordance with BS5837: 2012 has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority (the Approved Scheme).

- the tree protection measures approved shall be implemented in complete accordance with the approved scheme for the duration of the development (including, unless otherwise provided by the approved scheme) demolition, all site preparation work, tree felling, tree pruning, demolition works, soil moving, temporary access construction and or widening or any other operation involving use of motorised vehicles or construction machinery.
- no development (including any tree felling, tree pruning, demolition works, soil moving, temporary access construction and or widening or any other operation involving use of motorised vehicles or construction machinery) shall commence until the Local Planning Authority has been provided (by way of a written notice) with a period of no less than 7 working days to inspect the implementation of the measures identified in the approved scheme on-site.
- no excavations for services, storage of materials or machinery, parking of vehicles, deposit or excavation of soil or rubble, lighting of fires or disposal of liquids shall take place within an area designated as being fenced off or otherwise protected in the approved scheme.

- the fencing or other works which are part of the approved scheme shall not be moved or removed, temporarily or otherwise, until all works including external works have been completed and all equipment, machinery and surplus materials removed from the site, unless the prior approval of the Local Planning Authority has first been sought and obtained.

31. The reserved matters for the development shall include a detailed scheme to maintain or enhance the ecological permeability of the site (especially with regard to mammals). The mitigation and contingency measures contained within the plan shall be implemented in accordance with the approved plan unless otherwise approved in writing by the local planning authority.

32. The reserved matters application for each phase of development hereby approved shall be accompanied by a detailed strategy demonstrating how ecological enhancement measures detailed in section 5 of *Land North of the A4, New Bath Road, Twyford – Response to Ecology Comments* prepared by Thomson Environmental Consultants received by the Local Planning Authority on 15 November 2023 have been incorporated for that phase. The development with each phase shall be carried out in accordance with details so approved.

33. The reserved matters application for each phase of development hereby approved shall be accompanied by a Lighting Design Strategy for Biodiversity for that phase, for the written approval of the Local Planning Authority. The strategy shall be in accordance with 'Bats and Artificial Lighting at Night: Guidance Note GN08/23 and shall outline appropriate mitigation for commuting and foraging bats. All external lighting within a phase shall be installed in accordance with the specifications and locations set out in the strategy, and these shall be maintained thereafter in accordance with the strategy. Under no circumstances should any other external lighting be installed without prior consent from the Local Planning Authority.

34. Prior to the commencement of development, a scheme for achieving a 10% reduction in the predicted carbon emissions arising from operation of the development using decentralised renewable and/or low carbon sources (as defined in the glossary of Planning Policy Statement: Planning and Climate Change (December 2007) or any subsequent version) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The minimum 10% reduction shall be achieved in addition to the levels of reduction in carbon emissions required through the Building Regulations in force at the date of this permission. The approved scheme shall be implemented before the development is first occupied and shall remain operational for the lifetime of the development.

35. No dwelling hereby approved shall be occupied until fittings have been installed that are designed to achieve a water consumption target of 105 litres/person/day or less in accordance with details that have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

36. The reserved matters for each phase of the development shall include provision for all dwellings of a water butt of an appropriate size installed to maximise rainwater collection and space for composting, unless it can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority that it is not practicable to accommodate it within the curtilage of the building. No dwelling shall be occupied

until a water butt and space for composting have first been provided for that dwelling.

37. The dwellings within each phase of development hereby approved shall be designed and/or insulated so as to provide attenuation against externally generated noise in accordance with a noise mitigation scheme that has first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before commencement of development within that phase. The submitted noise mitigation scheme shall ensure that ambient internal noise levels and the noise levels within gardens for dwellings meet the BS8233/2014: Guidance on sound insulation and noise reduction for buildings. The approved mitigation measures to serve each dwelling shall be implemented prior to first occupation of that and retained thereafter.

38. The development hereby approved shall not be commenced unless and until the applicant has provided written confirmation from Thames Water Utilities Limited ("Thames") to the local planning authority that the applicant has entered into an agreement with Thames which provides for the delivery mechanism (including a programme and timetable for implementation) for the odour mitigation measures set out in Section 7.1 of the Olfasense Odour Assessment Report DWHO23A_03 dated 2 March 2023 ("the Odour Mitigation Measures"). The Odour Mitigation Measures shall be implemented and operational prior to first occupation of any phase of the development hereby approved

39. No development within any phase shall take place until a measured survey of the site and a plan prepared to scale of not less than 1:500 showing details of existing ground levels for the application site and proposed finished ground and floor levels (in relation to a fixed datum point) and finished roof levels for that phase shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, and the approved scheme shall be fully implemented prior to the occupation of the building(s).

40. Prior to the commencement of the development within each phase involving earthworks, details of the earthworks for that phase shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These details shall include the proposed grading and mounding of land areas including the levels and contours to be formed, showing the relationship of proposed mounding to existing vegetation and surrounding landform. The Earthworks shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details and permanently so retained.

41. The reserved matters application for each phase of the development shall include details of how the development has taken into account principles of Secure by Design for that phase. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

42. Before the development of any phase including dwellings hereby permitted is commenced, samples and details of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the building/s for that phase shall have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall not be carried out other than in accordance with the so-approved details.

43. Before the development hereby permitted is commenced on any phase details of all boundary treatment(s) to plots within that phase shall first be submitted to

and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The details shall include relevant measures to provide ecological permeability throughout the site. The approved scheme shall be implemented prior to the first occupation of the development or phased as agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall be maintained in the approved form for so long as the development remains on the site.

44. Details of external lighting for each phase shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before that phase of the development is occupied. The details shall be in accordance with the Lighting Design Strategy for Biodiversity include location, height, type and direction of light sources and intensity of illumination for all external lighting strategies including details of lighting for all highways, cycleways, footpaths and public areas. No further external lighting shall be installed without having first obtained written approval from the Local Planning Authority.

45. No dwelling shall be occupied until adequate ducting, that shall enable the connection of superfast broadband or similar technologies, has first been provided to serve that dwelling.

Conditions End

APPEARANCES

FOR THE APPELLANT:

Sasha White KC	Instructed by Turley
David Murray Cox BA (Hons) MPlan MRTPI	Turley
Clare Brockhurst FLI, BSc (Hons) Dip LA	Leyton Place Limited
James Bancroft	SLR Consulting Ltd
Sophie Horsley*	David Wilson Homes
Richard Harding*	Osbourne Clarke

FOR THE LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY:

Joseph Thomas	Instructed by Working Borough Council
Laura Ashton MRTPI	LAUK Planning Limited
Andrew Chugg* MRTPI DipTP	Assistant Director of Planning Wokingham Borough Council
Catherine Brimble* BA (Hons) Dip LA MNLI Landscape Architect	Wokingham Borough Council
Ray Drabble* Flood Risk Manager	Wokingham Borough Council
Alan Lewis* Highways Team	Wokingham Borough Council
Nicky Phillips* Employment and Skills Officer	Wokingham Borough Council
Jeffery Ng*	NHS Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West ICB

RULE 6 PARTY:

Alex Shattock	Instructed by Wargrave Parish Council
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Cllr Kevin Southworth

INTERESTED PARTIES:

Lillian Pearson Bishop	Local Resident
Jonathan Riley	Local Resident
Richard Thomas	Local Resident
Steven Conway	Local Resident
Cerri Hart	Local Resident

Elizabeth Tawse	Local Resident
Catherine Abbott	Local Resident
Patricia Sutcliff	Local Resident
Charles Wickenden	Twyford Parish Council
Gavin Dunbar	Local Resident
Graham Howe	Local Resident

**denotes participation at Planning Obligation and Conditions session only*

Documents submitted at the inquiry

Updated Core Documents list

Opening Statement on behalf of the Local Planning Authority

Opening Statement on behalf of the Rule 6 Party

Opening Statement on behalf of the Appellant

Statement on behalf of J Riley

Statement on behalf of R Thomas

Statement of behalf of L Bishop

Statement on behalf of G Dunbar

TAG Unit A4.1 Social Impact Appraisal November 2022

DMRB Volume 11 Section 3 Part 8 and LA112

Draft Planning Obligation

Draft Conditions with commentary from the LPA and the Appellant

National Cycle network route 4 Map extract source: Sus Trans website

Attendance sheet

Closing Statement on behalf of the Local Planning Authority

Closing Statement on behalf of the Rule 6 Party

Closing Statement on behalf of the Appellant

Site visit route map

Site plan extract