



Planning

Planning Statement

Client: Mrs Geraldine Ward & Mrs Eileen Ward

Land opposite Charlton Lane

Trowes Lane, Swallowfield

Erection of 5no. Gypsy and Traveller pitches

Holly Goulding **BSc (Hons) MSc**

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Contents

1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION	2
3. PLANNING HISTORY	2
4. DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS	4
5. POLICY ASSESSMENT	5
6. CONCLUSION	22

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Appeal ref: APP/X0360/C/22/3311592

Appendix 2 – Appeal ref: APP/X0360/W/24/3340006

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This statement is produced to support a planning application for the erection of 5no. Gypsy and Traveller pitches at Land Opposite Charlton Lane, Trowes Lane, Swallowfield, RG7 1RN.
- 1.2 This planning statement will cover the background to the application and provide the necessary information to enable its determination by officers at the Council. It will consider the proposal in light of relevant planning policies and other material considerations. The conclusion reached is that key material considerations and the wider objectives of National and Local planning policy support the grant of permission.
- 1.3 In addition to this planning statement, the application is accompanied by the appropriate planning application forms and ownership certificate, duly signed and completed, and the following documents prepared by Martin Peacock Architectural Services, EDM Planning, Swallowfield FRA and John Russell Transport Planning:
- 1:1250 Site Location Plan
 - 1:500 Site Plan
 - 1:50 Day Room Section
 - 1:50 Day Room Layout Plan
 - 1:100 Day Room Elevation Plan
 - 1:100 Static Caravan Elevation
 - 1:50 Static Caravan Floor Plan
 - Flood Risk Assessment & Drainage Strategy
 - Biodiversity Net Gain Statement

- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
- Access Appraisal prepared by John Russell Transport Planning

1.4 The relevant application fee will be submitted by the applicant separately.

2. Site Location and Description

- 2.1 The site comprises a parcel of land measuring 0.31 hectares with an existing access point taken at the junction of Charlton and Trowes Lane. The land is vacant as existing and is located in the countryside some 250m south of the limited development location of Swallowfield.
- 2.2 The site lies within the Riseley Farmed Clay Lowland Landscape Character Area and benefits from existing mature boundary landscaping, offering a high level of screening.

3. Planning History

- 3.1 The site has no planning history although Google Maps imagery demonstrates that the site access has been established for a period in excess of 15 years.
- 3.2 Prior to the submission of this application, a pre-application was submitted to the LPA. The pre-application confirmed the following points regarding the principle of development. Matters such as character, amenity, highways and flooding will be discussed in further detail throughout this statement.
- The Council is currently unable to demonstrate a five year supply of pitches and references PPTS paragraph 28 which states that

"If a local planning authority cannot demonstrate an up-to-date 5 year supply of deliverable sites, this should be a significant material consideration in any subsequent planning decision when considering applications for the grant of temporary planning permission"

- Accordingly, the tilted balance is engaged to some degree given the Council's supply position
- The site is considered to be adjacent to an existing settlement in accordance with Policy TB10a), and can be reasonably considered as 'close' to the settlement of Swallowfield in light of policy CP2 of the Core Strategy
- The developed area is relatively modest and cannot be considered, in isolation, to dominate the settlement of Swallowfield owing to the dense vegetation providing a clear verdant buffer between the site and Swallowfield, the proposal therefore accords with Policy TB10b)
- The site is 250m to the south of Swallowfield which includes a village shop, church, community centre and public house, access to the services via private vehicles would be viable due to the short distances between the site, the proposal therefore accords with Policy TB10c)
- The site is not located within any potentially hazardous areas, but the site has a history of surface water flooding, largely due to its proximity to drainage ditches on the eastern frontage of the site. Subject to an appropriate drainage strategy, compliance with Policy TB10d) is likely to be achieved.
- The extent of residential development proposed in this sensitive rural landscape would disrupt its tranquil character, to the

detriment of its visual amenities. Screening of the site's frontage would have to be limited to ensure adequate visibility splays, compliance with Policy TB10e) is therefore unlikely to be achieved.

- There are no anticipated impacts on the amenities of adjoining land uses
- Any future application should be accompanied by a clear plan as to how services will be accommodated for the site

3.3 These matters will be addressed in further detail throughout this Planning Statement.

4. Development Proposals

- 4.1 The proposed use is for the siting of 5no. Gypsy and Traveller pitches, each to include a caravan, touring caravan, day room, bin store and 2 no. parking spaces.
- 4.2 An example of the dayroom has been submitted as part of this application and can be controlled by condition in the event of a grant of planning permission.
- 4.3 The site benefits from existing mature boundary landscaping which is to remain on site as part of the proposal.
- 4.4 All elements of the proposal will be single storey in scale

5. Policy Assessment

- 5.1 **National Guidance:** The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a relevant material consideration to the application.
- 5.2 The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 39 of the NPPF states that “Local planning authorities should approach decision on proposed development in a positive and creative way” and “at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible”. Paragraph 124 of the NPPF comments that planning should “promote an effective use of land” in “meeting the need for homes and other uses, whilst safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions”.
- 5.3 Paragraph 61 confirms the Government’s objective to boost the supply of housing, and paragraph 8 identifies the three objectives of sustainable development, as economic, environmental and social.
- 5.4 Paragraph 131 identifies 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”, whilst paragraph 139 states that significant weight should be given to “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.”
- 5.5 The National Design Guide builds on the above and clarifies that “well-designed neighbourhoods need to include an integrated mix of tenures and housing types that reflect local housing need and market

demand. They are designed to be inclusive and to meet the changing needs of people of different ages and abilities. New development reinforces existing places by enhancing local transport, facilities and community services, and maximising their potential use” (para 109).

5.6 **Principle of Development:** Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this instance, the Development Plan comprises the following documents:

- Wokingham Borough Managing Development Delivery Plan (2014)
- Core Strategy Development Plan Document (2010)

5.7 The Government’s Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS) and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) are material consideration of significant weight in the determination of this application.

5.8 The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. Policy CC01 of the MDD Local Plan states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

5.9 The site lies outside of the defined settlement limits and within the countryside and is therefore subject to Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy. It is acknowledged that the proposal does not accord with any of the exceptions outlined within the Policy. However, the proposal should also be considered against the underlying objectives of the policy, especially when considering maintaining the quality of the rural environment and preventing the coalescence of settlements.

As will be discussed in detail throughout this statement, the proposal is found to be modest in size and scale, and makes an efficient use of the land with defensible boundaries and mature vegetation. The site would not result in the physical or visual coalescence of settlements or compromise the separate identity of Swallowfield. Whilst some localised landscape impacts are acknowledged, these have been mitigated through sensitive design and retention of the existing landscaping. As a result of this, the proposal is considered to accord with the broader aims and objectives which underpin Policy CP11.

- 5.10 The Government's Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS) set out the Government's aims in respect of traveller sites. This includes at paragraph 4 a requirement *"to ensure that local planning authorities, working collaboratively, develop fair and effective strategies to meet need through the identification of land for sites.....to promote more private traveller site provision while recognising that there will always be those travellers who cannot provide their own sites...and... to increase the number of traveller sites in appropriate locations with planning permission, to address under provision and maintain an appropriate level of supply"*.
- 5.11 The PPTS at Policy B states that local planning authorities, in producing their Local Plan, should identify and update annually, a supply of specific deliverable traveller sites, sufficient to provide five years' worth of sites against their locally set targets. In this context 'deliverable' means sites that are available now, offering a suitable location for the development. Furthermore, Policy H and paragraph 25 of the PPTS go further to say that Councils should, amongst other things, consider the level of need for additional Gypsy and Traveller accommodation, the availability of alternative accommodation and also personal circumstances.

- 5.12 A Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) was prepared by the Council in 2023 which takes into account all past delivery and supply of pitches in the borough and in a Supplementary Statement produced in August 2024 for appeal reference: APP/X0360/C/22/3311592 (Appendix 1), the Council indicated that they were unable to demonstrate a five year supply of pitches. The position is reflected throughout the pre-application response received, whereby the LPA acknowledged *'this baseline position means that the Council is currently unable to demonstrate a five year supply of pitches, in part due to the timing of the GTAA 2023 being finalised.'* Accordingly, the tilted balance is engaged in the determination of this application, and the application must be assessed against Policy TB10 of the MDD and Policy CP2 of the Core Strategy.
- 5.13 The Council indicates that the emerging local plan (currently at Regulation 19 stage), which will replace both the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (CS) and the Wokingham Borough Management Development Delivery Plan (MDD), as the new development plan, will allocate a range of sites for gypsy and traveller purposes. It makes reference to draft policy 19 thereto and indicates that provision will be made for a minimum of 86 additional pitches during the plan period. In other words, it is hoped to meet the need identified in the GTAA, in full. The Council's local development scheme envisages adoption in May 2026, at the time of writing the emerging local plan has not been adopted and accordingly is considered to be a material consideration in the determination of this application.
- 5.14 In light of this, MDD policy TB10 'Traveller Sites', a criteria based policy, which is in accordance with the aims of CS policy CP2, remains in effect. The Council has provided details to show that, since the

MDD's adoption, planning permission has been granted for 56 net additional pitches. Further, although acknowledging that a five year supply of pitches cannot now be shown, the Council indicates that this is only temporary, and it was indicated to me via the Council's Supplementary Statement which updates the local gypsy and traveller land supply position, that policy TB10 has played its part in previously ensuring that the Council has maintained a five year land supply.

5.15 Policy CP2 of the Core Strategy states that permission will be granted for:

"d) The specific identified needs of minority groups in the borough, including Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople and black and minority ethnic groups. Proposals for gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople (including allocations in other Development Plan Documents) will demonstrate that:

i) The site is located either within or close to the development limits of a settlement in policy CP9 in order to maximise the possibilities for social inclusion and sustainable patterns of living;

5.16 The pre-application response received states that:

'With consideration for CP2 of the Core Strategy, the site can also reasonably considered 'close' to the settlement of Swallowfield.'

5.17 Accordingly, the site will benefit from The Crown Public House 0.4 miles away, Swallowfield Medical Centre 0.5 miles away, Swallowfield Community Centre 0.6 miles away, Swallowfield Meadow 0.7 miles away and All Saints Church 1 mile away. The nearest school is 1.6 miles north of the site, with a preschool also being 1.8 miles away.

- 5.18 The site also benefits from access to The Crown bus stop, some 0.4 miles away, offering services to central Reading via Spencer's Wood, Shinfield and Three Mile Cross where a number of additional amenities can be accessed.
- 5.19 The proposed site is not considered to have an adverse disproportional effect owing to its relative size and location. The site lies in an area with sporadic development, and the site has defensible boundaries, ensuring there will be no further extensions of the development. The proposal for 5 pitches is considered appropriate in this context. Considerable weight is also attached to the current shortfall in land supply, and the proposal is demonstrated to be acceptable in principle subject to impacts upon the character of the area, residential amenity and highways.
- 5.20 Turning to Policy TB10, the policy states that: planning permission may be granted for new Gypsy and Traveller pitches or travelling showpeople plots or extensions to existing sites where it can be demonstrated that:
- a) *The site is located in the Borough's existing settlements or is adjacent to an existing settlement either within or adjacent to the Borough*
 - b) *Avoids impacting on the separate identity of settlements*
 - c) *The site has access to a range of local services such as shops; health facilities including doctors, schools, and a range of amenities including play areas and other recreation facilities*
 - d) *No significant barriers to development exist in terms of flooding, poor drainage, poor ground stability or proximity to other hazardous land or installations where conventional housing would not be suitable*
 - e) *Unacceptable impacts on the character and appearance of the surrounding landscape will be minimised through the sensitive and appropriate design of the scheme*

- f) *The proposals will not result in an unacceptable loss of amenity of neighbouring land uses*
- g) *Mixed use proposals (which are sites that include a business use) will only be considered if appropriate to the locality and such uses will not result in an unacceptable loss of amenity*
- h) *The scheme avoids any adverse impacts on the Special Protection Area*

5.21 The proposed development is considered to accord with the overarching objectives of Policy TB10 and Policy CP2 of the Core Strategy by providing 5 additional Gypsy and traveller pitches in a sustainable location at a time when the Council cannot demonstrate a deliverable five year supply.

5.22 The Council's pre-application response confirms that the site can reasonably be considered as both 'close' and 'adjacent' to the settlement of Swallowfield and accepts that compliance with criteria a, b, c and f of Policy TB10 is likely to be achieved. The Council further acknowledges that the proposal would not dominate the nearest settlement, that the site has access to local services and facilities, and that no unacceptable neighbouring amenity impacts are expected to arise as a result of the proposal.

5.23 The site benefits from access to a range of local services and facilities within Swallowfield and is considered to comprise a modest self-contained development in an area characterised by sporadic development and defensible boundaries. Matters relating to landscape impacts, drainage and SPA mitigation will be discussed in greater detail throughout this statement.

5.24 In light of the current lack of a five year supply of Gypsy and Traveller pitches, the tilted balance in favour of sustainable development is engaged. Accordingly, significant weight should be afforded to the contribution that the proposal would make towards meeting the identified unmet need across the Borough, in line with the PPTS,

Policy TB10 and Policy CP2. As a result, the proposal is found to be acceptable in principle.

- 5.25 **Character and Appearance of the Area:** Policies CP1 and CP3 seek for development to maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment and ensure development is on an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height and materials and character of the area.
- 5.26 Policy CP11 supports development in the countryside only where it maintains the high quality of the rural environment. Policy CP1(1) similarly only supports development that maintains or enhances the high quality of the environment, with policy CP3 supporting development of an appropriate mass, layout, built form, height and character to the area CP3(a) and which makes a positive contribution to the sense of place contributes to the buildings and spaces themselves and in the way they integrate with their surroundings CP3(f).
- 5.27 Paragraph R24 of the Borough Design Guide Supplementary Document states that the layout and design of gypsy sites should provide a safe living environment that meets the needs of residents, whilst respecting the character of the area. The proposed pitches will be set back from the highway and screened by existing mature landscaping to the boundary.
- 5.28 Paragraph 26 of the PPTS states that when considering applications, local planning authorities should attach weight to the following matters (inter alia):
- b) sites being well planned or soft landscaped in such a way as to positively enhance the environment and increase its openness*

c) promoting opportunities for healthy lifestyles, such as ensuring adequate landscaping and play areas for children

d) not enclosing a site with so much hard landscaping, high walls or fences, that the impression may be given that the site and its occupants are deliberately isolated from the rest of the community

- 5.29 The site is situated within the Riseley Farmed Clay Lowland (I2) landscape character area as per the Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2019). Key characteristics include the intensive arable farming in large open fields bounded by hedgerows and fences, rural roads lined with ditches and mature oak trees, and small scale settlements concentrated in Riseley and Swallowfield.
- 5.30 Appeal ref: APP/X0360/W/24/3340006 (Appendix 2) outlines that *'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.'*
- 5.31 The Inspector did however acknowledge 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.'
- 5.32 Similarly, it is acknowledged that some vegetation will need to be cleared in order to facilitate the development proposed. Notwithstanding this, the site is well screened by established, mature

landscaping which promotes a self-enclosed site which is considered to retain a rural character across the wider area and conserve the rural settlement pattern. The scheme is modest in scale, offering 5no. pitches, giving glimpsed views of the pitches when looking in from the highway and Public Right of Way (SWAL16) to the south, with any impacts being highly localised.

- 5.33 As such, it is considered that the development complies with Policies CP1 and CP3 and has acceptable impacts upon the character of the area.
- 5.34 **Residential Amenity:** Policy CP3 of the CS and TB10 of the MDD seeks for development to not have a detrimental impact upon the amenity of adjoining land users and occupiers.
- 5.35 In terms of amenity impact for prospective residents, the pitches will provide further private space for the occupants and their families to live, allowing for them to build local connections. When considering the current undersupply of pitches across Wokingham Borough, this is found to be a key amenity benefit of the scheme.
- 5.36 Each of the pitches have been designed to have a suitable distance from one another, allowing for ample private amenity space and landscape screening for each occupant as well as providing children with adequate play space. Day rooms are also to be provided for each pitch, affording additional amenity space for future occupants.
- 5.37 The application site is well distanced from any neighbouring land uses and accordingly there are not considered to be any impacts to neighbouring amenity in accordance with Policies CP3 and TB10.
- 5.38 **Trees and Landscaping:** Policy CC03 of the CS states that development proposals should demonstrate how they have considered and achieved a number of criteria into proposals including

how they protect and retain existing trees, hedges and other landscape features and incorporate native planting and landscaping as part of the scheme.

5.39 The existing boundary trees will be retained and can be further supplemented by condition in the event of a grant of planning permission alongside further soft/hard landscaping of this is required.

5.40 As such, the proposal is considered acceptable in tree/landscape terms in accordance with Policy CC03 of the CS.

5.41 **Transport and Parking:** The site is to be accessed from the existing access point taken from Trowes lane, and each plot has been designed to provide 2 vehicle parking spaces and turning areas so that vehicles can access and egress the site in forwards gear.

5.42 The pre-application response acknowledges that the traffic generated from 5no. pitches would not have any significant impacts on the wider highway network.

5.43 This application is submitted alongside an Access Appraisal prepared by John Russell Transport Planning. The appraisal considers the visibility at the site access with regard to observed traffic speeds, and emergency access for fire tenders as raised throughout the pre-application response. The findings of a speed survey demonstrate that safe and suitable visibility in accordance with the current design guidance can be delivered and maintained on site and that a standard fire engine is able to enter the site, turn, and exit in a forwards gear.

5.44 Of relevance to this application is appeal ref: APP/X0360/W/24/3340006 at land west of Trowes Lane and north of Charlton Lane, Swallowfield, RG7 1RT. Throughout the appeal decision, the Inspector identified that *'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.’ Figure 1 below demonstrates the proximity of the application site (edged blue) to the site subject to appeal ref: APP/X0360/W/24/3340006. Accordingly, the proposal is not considered to give rise to any highway safety implications and is unlikely to have a material impact upon the local transport networks.

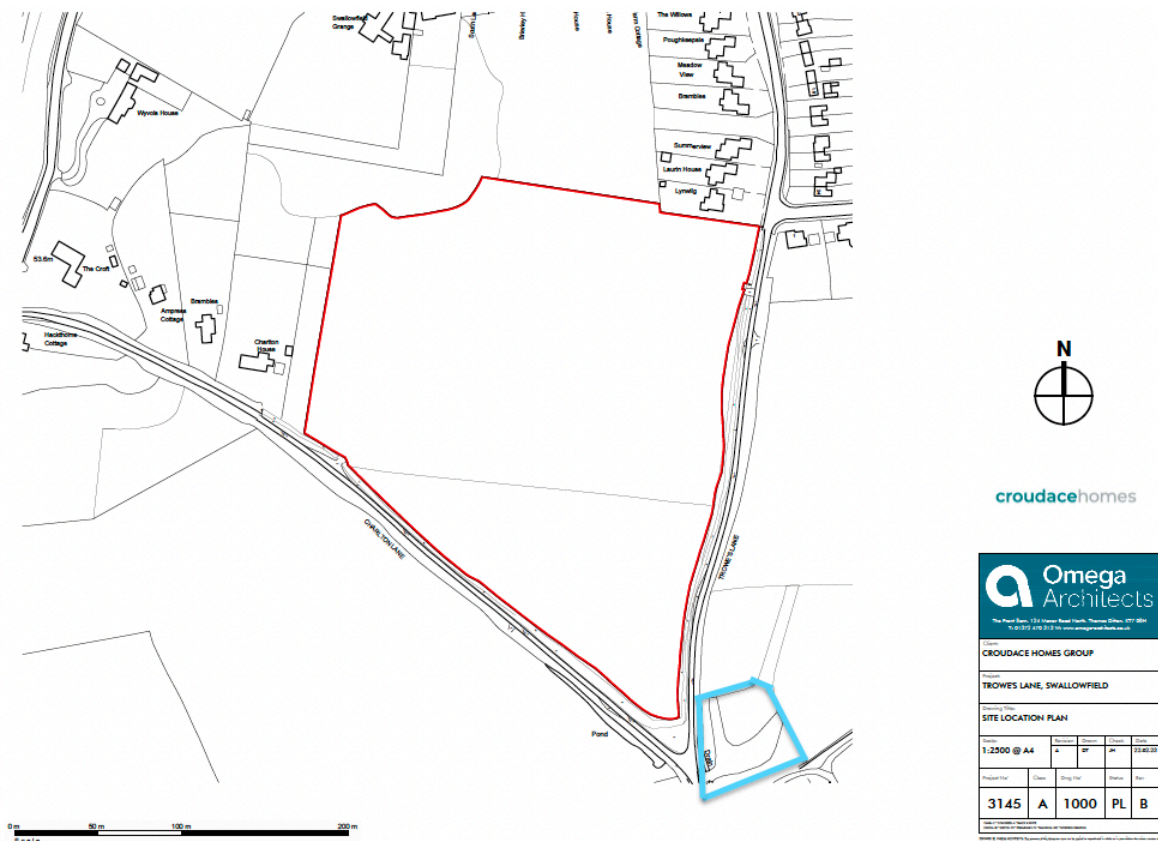


Figure 1 – Location plan for appeal ref: APP/X0360/W/24/3340006 with the proposal site edged blue to the south east

- 5.45 The proposal also includes provision for two car parking spaces per pitch in line with WBC’s Parking Standards.
- 5.46 **Cycle Provision:** Cycle storage can be provided within each plot as required. In the event of the grant of planning permission, the applicant considers that this can be controlled via condition.

- 5.47 **Refuse Provision:** The proposal includes a private bin store for each pitch. A swept path analysis has been completed as part of the Access Appraisal, this demonstrates that a large vehicle can enter and exit the site for refuse collection. In the event of the grant of planning permission, the applicant considers that this can be controlled via condition.
- 5.48 **Drainage and SuDS:** Policy CP1 of the Core Strategy and Policies CC09 and CC10 of the MDD requires flooding protection, sustainable drainage methods and the minimisation of surface water flow.
- 5.49 Whilst the site is located within Flood Zone 1, it is acknowledged that the western boundary is prone to surface water flooding and accordingly a Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy has been prepared as part of this application.
- 5.50 The FRA has considered all potential sources of flooding, including fluvial, surface water, groundwater, sewer, and reservoir flood risks, and has taken account of the potential impacts of climate change over the lifetime of the development. The assessment indicates that the site has a medium risk of groundwater flooding, a high risk of surface water flooding, while the risk from all other sources is considered low.
- 5.51 To mitigate potential flood risk, a range of flood resistance and resilience measures are proposed for all new elements of the building and vulnerable areas. This includes raising the static caravans approximately 1m above ground level, implementing a Property Flood Resilience approach to building design as set out in Figure 2 below.

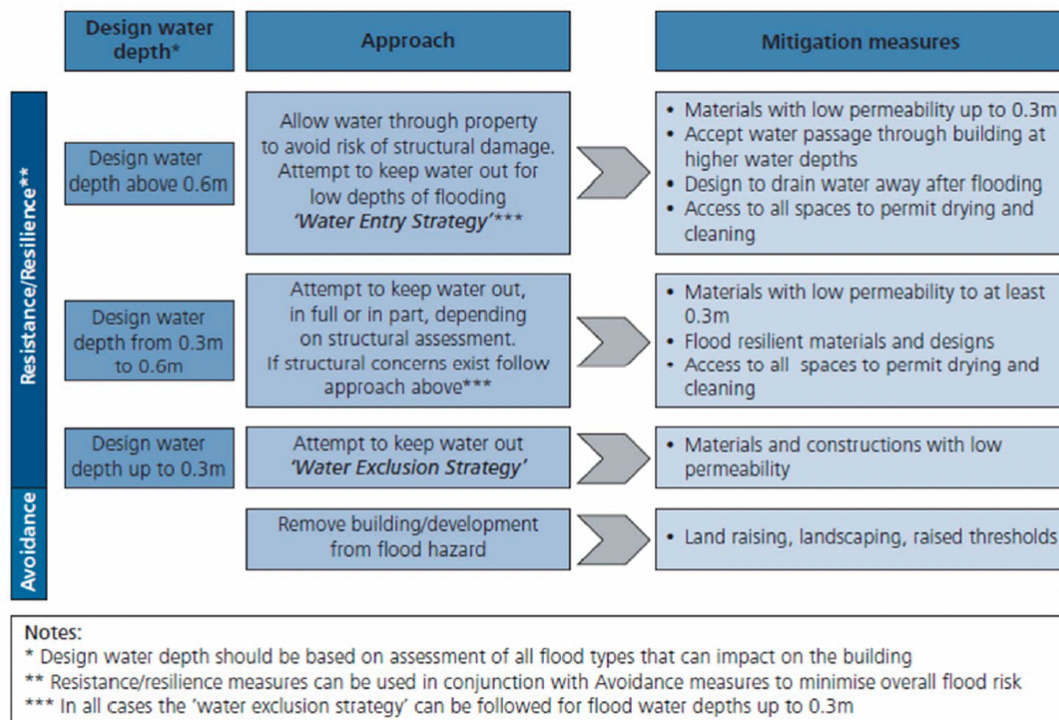


Figure 2 – Property Flood Resistance model

5.52 This also includes:

- The use of materials with low permeability at least 0.3m above floor level to limit water ingress,
- Incorporation of flood-resilient construction materials and designs for walls, floors, and fixtures.
- Ensuring access to all internal spaces to facilitate effective drying and cleaning after a flood event.
- Installation of raised thresholds, door barriers, and impermeable barriers around vulnerable areas.
- Use of water-resistant finishes and construction materials at ground floor levels, including plaster, flooring, and joinery.
- Flood-proofing of electrical, mechanical, and service installations to prevent damage and maintain safety.

- *Provision of safe evacuation routes and adherence to emergency planning guidance as outlined by the Environment Agency.*
- *Consideration of site layout and landscaping to manage overland flows and minimise the impact of external flooding on the building.*
- *Implementation of operational procedures, including maintenance of flood barriers, monitoring systems, and staff or resident training to respond effectively during a flood event.*

5.53 Accordingly, the proposal is found to accord with Policy CC09 and CC10.

5.54 **Contamination:** The site is not known to be contaminated. Should any concerns arise throughout the course of the application, it is considered that such matters can be controlled by condition.

5.55 **Archaeology:** The site is not known to be of any archaeological interest. Should any concerns arise throughout the course of the application, it is considered that such matters can be controlled by condition.

5.56 **Ecology and Biodiversity Net Gain:** The proposal is submitted alongside a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Biodiversity Net Gain Statement prepared by EDM Planning.

5.57 The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal confirms that habitat features associated with sheltering, dispersal and hibernation are generally limited and the likelihood of great crested newts occurring within the site is considered low. The site was also considered to offer negligible suitability for roosting bats and low suitability for foraging and commuting bats. No statutory or non-statutory designated sites are located within the site itself, and no Priority Habitats were identified on-site.

- 5.58 With regards to Biodiversity Net Gain, the proposal would result in a loss of 1.11% of area based units, a 0.13 unit deficit. Accordingly, the applicant will look to secure off site credits throughout the course of the application.
- 5.59 **Special Protection Area:** The site lies within the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area 5km Zone. Core Strategy Policy CP8 states 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.
- 5.60 As the proposal seeks for the addition of 5 no. residential units, it is acknowledged that mitigation will be required through a s106 Agreement.
- 5.61 **Affordable Housing:** The proposal scheme does not meet the threshold for affordable housing.
- 5.62 **Community Infrastructure Levy:** Community Infrastructure Levy is not applicable to caravan sites, with day rooms being ancillary utility buildings. The relevant CIL forms have been submitted in light of this.
- 5.63 **Material Considerations:** Should the LPA consider that the development does not accord with the Development Plan as a whole, it is considered that there are a number of material considerations to be considered to resolve in favour of the grant of planning permission in this instance. Importantly, under paragraph 11d of the NPPF, the tilted balance is engaged.
- 5.64 As discussed throughout this statement, the PPTS is a material consideration in the determination of this application. Should there

be any conflict in regard to the location of this site, it should be noted that the PPTS implicitly accepts pitches in countryside locations regardless of their proximity to facilities and features. Accordingly, should the LPA consider there to be any policy conflict owing to the location of the site in the countryside, the weighting of this conflict can only be considered as limited in light of the tilted balance. This is also considered to include any visual impacts across the countryside landscape as it is implicitly accepted that this form of development can come forward in these locations, including those which do not comprise previously developed land.

- 5.65 Notwithstanding compliance with Policies CP2 and TB10 of the Development Plan, there remains an identified unmet need for development such as this across the Borough. Following the production of the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment in 2023, the Council agreed as part of the Statement of Common Ground for appeal ref: APP/X0360/W/25/3364902 that they are unable to deliver a five year pitch supply, with their currently supply standing at 3.64 years.
- 5.66 In these circumstances, the delivery of 5no. pitches would contribute significantly to addressing the Council's short fall, weighing in favour of the development.
- 5.67 Paragraph 128 of the NPPF promotes decisions that make an efficient use of land taking into account the identified need for development and the availability of land suitable for accommodating it. In the context of the current shortfall of Gypsy and Traveller pitches, it is prevalent that pitches will need to come forward across the Borough, in some cases in countryside locations.
- 5.68 The application is therefore considered to provide an opportunity to optimise the use of the site to meet the Borough's need, without

detrimental impacts upon the character of the area or landscape harm.

6. Conclusion and Planning Balance

- 6.1 This statement has demonstrated that the proposed development is acceptable in principle and makes an efficient use of land.
- 6.2 Material planning considerations have been carefully considered and analysed, as evidenced in section 5 of this statement and the supporting plans and documents. It is considered the proposed development would contribute an appropriate windfall site to the Borough's housing supply, without adverse effect on the character of the area or the amenity of neighbouring residents.
- 6.3 In regard to the planning balance, significant weight should be afforded to the Council's lack of supply for Gypsy and Traveller pitches, with the site being located in a sustainable location by virtue of its proximity to Swallowfield.
- 6.4 Accordingly, the proposals contribution towards the general need for sites should be afforded significant weight, as should the fact that the Council is not providing accommodation for the needs of the travelling community.
- 6.5 Landscape, ecology and biodiversity net gain matters are shown to be policy compliant and are accordingly attributed neutral weight as well as other policy compliant matters including sustainability, highways and amenity.
- 6.6 Overall, the proposal is found to provide a suitable location for the siting of 5no. Gypsy and Traveller pitches which supports the need for sites across the Borough within a suitable and available location.

6.7 It is considered that the proposed scheme complies with relevant Development Plan Policies and is further supported by National Guidance. Therefore, it is respectfully requested that planning permission is granted.

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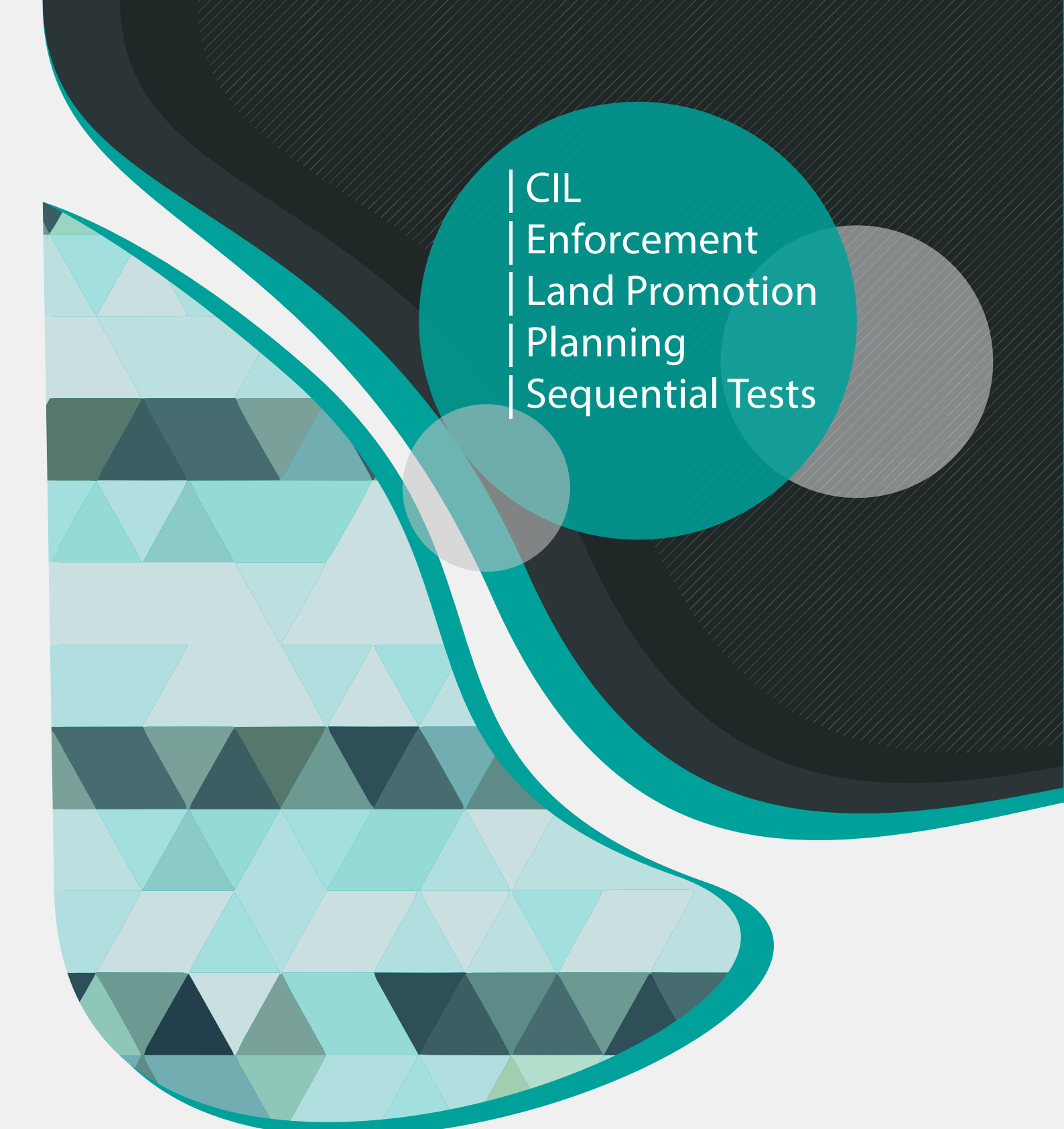
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Editorial Assistance Only

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