

Land East of Trowes Lane
Swallowfield

Planning Statement

Submission of Outline Planning Application for up to 79 dwellings (Use Class C3) together with access, landscaping and associated infrastructure, with all matters reserved except access

Prepared on behalf of City & Country Group EPS

September 2025

Lucid
Planning

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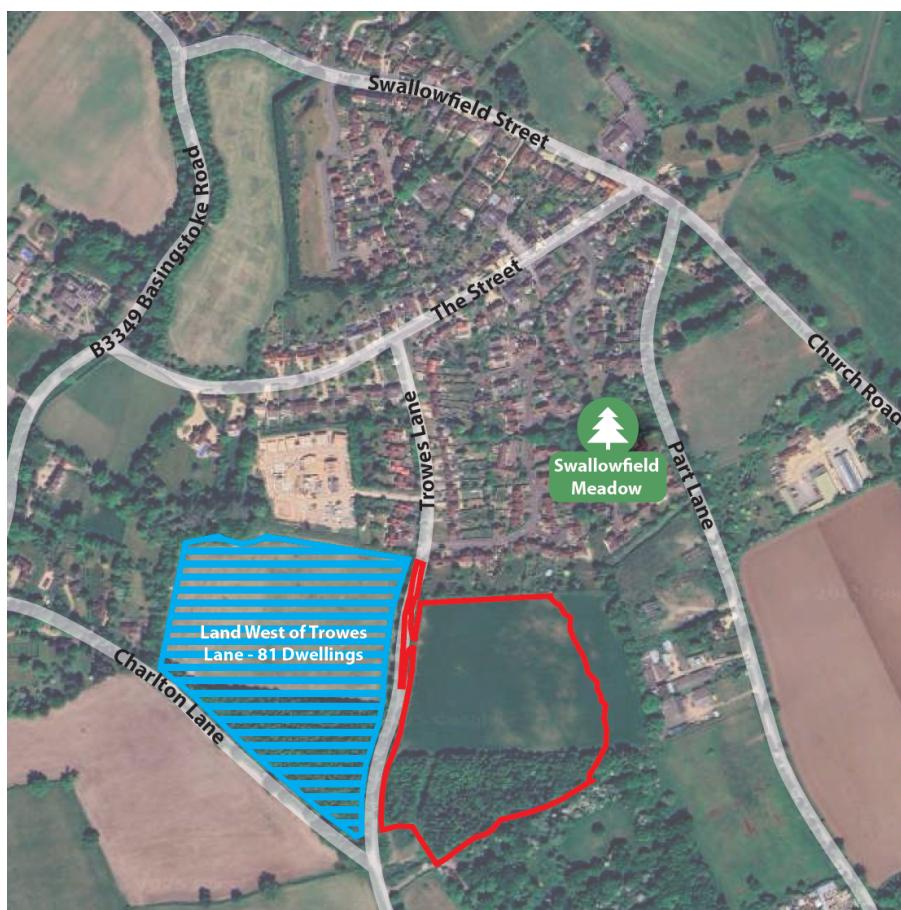
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1. Introduction

1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared on behalf of the Applicant, City & County Group EPS (C&C) to Wokingham Borough Council (WBC), in support of an outline planning application submitted in relation to Land East of Trowes Lane, Swallowfield (the Site).

1.2 The description of development is as follows:

“up to 79 residential dwellings (Use Class C3), together with access, landscaping and associated infrastructure, with all matters reserved except access”



Location Plan

- 1.3 The application is in outline with the principle of the proposed use, heights and means of access to be considered whilst appearance, landscaping and layout will be reserved matters. Development will also provide a financial contribution towards community infrastructure as part of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), alongside financial contributions through a separate s106 agreement.
- 1.4 This planning statement forms part of a suite of documents submitted in support of the application (see section 3 for more detail).
- 1.5 This statement sets out the proposals and demonstrates how they are compliant with the relevant planning policies of Wokingham Borough Council and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

2. The Site and Its Surroundings

- 2.1 The Site is located on the southern edge of Swallowfield, east of Trowes Lane.
- 2.2 The Site measures 4.89 hectares including the proposed access, and is generally flat in nature. The northern section is currently in agricultural use; the southern section comprises 1.52 hectares of poor quality woodland.
- 2.3 It is bounded to the north by the rear gardens of residential properties of Foxborough. To the east, the Site is bounded by dense, mature trees and hedgerow, a watercourse and commercial uses on Part Lane. It is bounded by fields to the south. To The west it is bounded by hedgerow and trees and Trowes Lane.
- 2.4 Vehicular access for agricultural vehicles is currently taken from Trowes Lane.
- 2.5 Immediately to the west of Trowes Lane is the Croudace site, which has planning permission for the erection of 81 dwellings.
- 2.6 The Site:
 - is in Flood Zone 1, and therefore at low risk of fluvial flooding, including the predicted effects of climate change
 - has no landscape, nature conservation or ecological designation
 - has no tree preservation orders, Ancient Woodland or veteran trees on site
 - has no designated heritage assets on or close to the Site
 - has no scheduled monuments within it, or adjacent to the Site.
- 2.7 The Site is not a protected area or asset of particular importance as set out in Footnote 7 of the NPPF: designated or potential Special Protection Area, Special Area of Conservation or Ramsar; Site of Special Scientific Interest; Green Belt, Local Green Space, National Landscape, National Park or Heritage

Coast; irreplaceable habitat; designated heritage asset (and other heritage assets of archaeological interest referred to in footnote 75); or an area at risk of flooding or coastal change.

2.8 C&C anticipate, at this point in time, that the overhead electric cable will be put underground.

2.9 The site is bounded by existing development to the north and east. Once the Croudace development is constructed the Site will be enclosed on three sides with the Site's woodland, which is proposed to be retained and enhanced, acting as a buffer to the countryside to the south. Hence, though the Site is technically considered to be outside the settlement boundary of Swallowfield, it does form a natural extension rounding off this part of the settlement whilst also being well connected to the village.

2.10 Further, it is also the case that currently adopted policies that concern housing need and supply, or which are clearly related (such policies concerning settlement boundaries) are out-of-date, and attract less weight for the purposes of determining planning applications.

2.11 The main extent of village lies to the north, and can be accessed via Trowes Lane, leading directly to The Street and Swallowfield Street. The main cluster of services are around a 600m walking distance from the Site, equivalent to a 7-minute walk. The Street includes covered bus stops, Swallowfield Post Office/shop, Swallowfield Medical Centre and The Crown Public House. Swallowfield Pre-school, Swallowfield Parish Hall and Swallowfield Park are co-located on Swallowfield Street. The Citibase Reading and Wyvols Court employment sites are located approximately 800m from the Site to the east on Basingstoke Road.

2.12 The Site is not within or adjacent to the Swallowfield Conservation Area. The nearest listed building(s) lie more than 200m away. None of the nearest heritage assets has inter-visibility or an enduring historic link with the Site.

- 2.8 The Site lies on the edge of an Area of High Archaeological Potential (AHAP); however, geophysical survey on the southern part of the Site, now under woodland, did not indicate any significant archaeology. More recent archaeological investigation to the north west of the Site also found nothing of note, as did more limited monitoring of works to the south east, within the AHAP.
- 2.13 The Site lies within the 400m to 5km Zone of Influence of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area, where residential development is acceptable in principle, subject to established mitigation measures. This is addressed in the accompanying Ecological Report.

Planning History

- 2.14 There is no planning application history on this Site.
- 2.15 The planning history of the field to the west of Trowes Lane (the Croudace site) is relevant, however. This Site received planning permission for 81 dwellings on appeal on 19 July 2024. WDC reference: 230422. Planning Inspectorate Appeal Decision reference: APP/X0360/W/24/3340006.
- 2.16 The Site was promoted through the Local Plan Update (LPU). As part of the work undertaken by the Council for the emerging local plan this Site was assessed under reference 5SW005 and considered to be 'potentially suitable' for 85 dwellings (based on a slightly large site area). See paragraph 5.10 of this Statement for more detail.

3. The Application and Proposed Development

3.1 Outline planning permission is sought for:

- Up to 79 dwellings, including 40% affordable housing
- Building heights of two storeys
- Detailed vehicular and pedestrian access off Trowes Lane
- Open space, including play space and recreation opportunities for all ages, including integration of the woodland to the south
- Site-wide landscaping strategy, including biodiversity enhancements to achieve 20.35% biodiversity net gain
- Sustainable drainage attenuation
- Supporting highways infrastructure
- Pedestrian link to the public right of way to the south of the Site

3.2 The application is in outline with the principle of the proposed use, heights and means of access to be considered whilst appearance, landscaping and layout will be addressed as part of a future reserved matters application.

New Homes

3.3 In accordance with criterion 1 of emerging Policy H1, the proposed new homes will contribute to the delivery of sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities by providing an appropriate mix of housing types, tenures, densities and sizes, to meet the existing and future housing needs of all sectors of the community, including those with specialist requirements.

3.4 The application provides for 40% affordable housing to meet emerging Local Plan Policy H3. This means that 32 of the 79 new homes will be affordable.

3.5 The proposed mix of affordable new homes is in accordance with the Council's indicative policy mix for Affordable Housing, as set out in emerging Local Plan Policy H1, thereby meeting criterion 2 of that policy:

Emerging Policy		Proposal		
No of Bedroom	Percentage	Number of dwellings	Percentage	Number of dwellings
1 bed	17%	5	13%	4
2 bed	38%	12	37%	12
3bed	33%	11	37%	12
4+	12%	4	13%	4
Total		32		32

3.6 As set out in emerging Policy H3, the tenure, size and type of affordable units will be negotiated having regard to housing needs, site specifics and other factors. It is envisaged that details to guide the type of affordable housing for the development will be discussed during the application process and agreed within an accompanying S106 legal agreement.

3.7 The market housing mix will be developed as the proposals evolve towards the more detailed phase of Reserved Matters and will be broadly in accordance with emerging Policy H1.

3.8 The outline application proposals will also meet emerging Policy H1 by:

- Making efficient use of land and achieve high quality design that responds to the size, location, opportunities and constraints of the Site and is appropriate to the character and amenity of the area (Criterion 3)
- Providing all new homes that are accessible in line with M4(2) of the Building Regulations (Criterion 4)
- Providing 5% of the new homes as wheelchair accessible and adaptable in line with M4(3) of the Building Regulations (Criterion 5)

- All new homes will meet the nationally described space standards for minimal internal space (Criterion 8)

3.9 Parking provision will be considered at the Reserved Matters stage, but will be in accordance with WBC's standards and in conjunction with discussions with officers. Electric car charging points are proposed for each new home.

Financial Contributions

3.10 Development will also provide a financial contribution towards community infrastructure as part of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), alongside financial contributions through a separate s106 agreement.

Thames Basin Heaths SPA

3.8 The Site is located 2.1km to the northwest of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA. A site designated for its populations of heathland birds. The Site is located within the SPA 400m to 5km 'zone of influence'. As such, a 'Report to Inform HRA' is submitted as part of this application to help enable WBC to discharge its duty in determining whether the project will adversely affect the integrity of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA.

3.9 With regards to recreational impacts, it is well documented in planning policy, and as set out in the Thames Basin Heaths Delivery Framework, that net increases in residential dwellings up to 7km from the SPA are likely to contribute to recreational visits to the SPA and thereby require appropriate avoidance and mitigation measures in the form of:

- Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) contributions.
- Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) provision.

3.10 In light of the requirements set out in the Delivery Framework, local authorities, including Wokingham, have progressed the creation of a strategic SANG network, funded by developer contributions to enable residential developments

to come forward without adversely affecting the Thames Basin Heaths SPA. The Swallowfield's project intends to rely upon providing the appropriate financial contributions towards SAMM and strategic SANG and therefore would avoid adverse effects on the integrity of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA, either alone, or in-combination.

Environmental Impact Assessment Development

3.11 In terms of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), the development proposed falls within the description at 10 (b) of Schedule 2 to the Town and Country Planning (EIA) Regulations 2017 above Regulations. Having taken into account the criteria in Schedule 3 to the above Regulations, the proposal would not be likely to have significant effect on the environment for the following reasons:

- Considering the nature, scale and location of the Proposed Development and nature of the receiving environment, whilst there may be some impact on the surrounding area and nearby designated sensitive area as a result of this development, it would not be of a scale and nature likely to result in significant environmental impact.

3.12 The Proposed Development is not considered to be EIA Development.

3.13 This concurs with the Planning Inspectorate's Screening Opinion for the slightly larger Croudace development to the west of Trowes Lane.

Sequential Test

3.14 The Site is in Flood Zone 1 and therefore any risk of flooding from any source, now or in the future, is being avoided in accordance with the sequential approach. There is a small amount of localised *modelled* surface water "ponding" caused by small scale topographical depressions, which are very typical of agricultural land; however, in reality, the farmer (who has farmed the land for many years) has not experienced any waterlogging. This will be

addressed along with the surface water run-off from the development itself through the SuDS strategy and levels design, as set out in the FRA. As such, development can be made safe throughout its lifetime without increasing risk elsewhere; hence, a sequential test is not required in accordance with the Changes to Planning Practice Guidance on Flood Risk & Coastal Change, September 2025 Update.

Community Engagement

3.15 As detailed in the accompanying Statement of Community Involvement, a proportionate community consultation was undertaken in August and September 2025 to inform local residents and stakeholders of the proposals, and to invite comment. The approach applied was informed by the 'inform, involve and consult' principles set out in WBC's Statement of Community Involvement, which was adopted by the Council's Executive in February 2019.

3.16 It comprised:

- Stakeholder engagement meeting with the Parish Council and WBC Cllr David Edmonds on 28 August 2025
- A newsletter distributed to 330 addresses within Swallowfield.
- A dedicated consultation website to provide residents an accessible means to view the emerging proposals and respond to an online survey and provide comments.

3.17 As far as possible, given the proposals are in outline and comments received, feedback from the community has influenced the proposed development. This is addressed in the Statement of Community Involvement.

4. Planning Policy Context

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

The Development Plan

4.2 The Development Plan consists of:

- Wokingham Borough Core Strategy 2006 - 2026 (2010) (CS)
- Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (2014) (MDDP)
- Saved Policy NRM6 (Natural Resource Management 6) of the South East Plan

4.3 Local planning policies from these documents which are considered to be relevant to the determination of this application are set out below.

Wokingham Borough Core Strategy 2006 - 2026 (2010) (CS)

CP1: Sustainable Development	Developments are required to enhance the overall sustainability of the local area through having a minimal impact on the environment and providing good access to facilities
CP2: Inclusive Communities	Developments are required to contribute towards the provision of sustainable and inclusive communities in the long term
CP3: General Principles for Development	Development proposals should address and meet the design and access-related matters set out.
CP4: Infrastructure Requirements	Developments required to make provision of infrastructure, services and community facilities required for new developments. The policy indicates

	that these may be secured through conditions and planning obligations where appropriate.
CP5: Housing Mix, Density and Affordability	Residential developments will be required to provide a housing mix with a balance of densities, dwelling types, tenures and sizes. Subject to viability, 40% affordable housing is required on sites of 5+ homes outside of the identified 'Development Limits'.
CP6: Managing Travel Demand	Development proposals must promote sustainable forms of travel and improve the existing infrastructure network where necessary.
CP7: Biodiversity	Development proposals will only be permitted where biodiversity is conserved and enhanced. Any harm caused to the safeguarding of nature must be mitigated against.
CP8: Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area	Development which is likely to have a significant effects on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area to demonstrate that adequate measures to avoid and mitigate any potential adverse effects are delivered
CP9: Scale and Location of Development Proposals	Scale of new development proposals must reflect the existing or proposed levels of local facilities, together with their accessibility
CP10: Improvements to the Strategic Transport Network:	Developments must contribute towards improvements to the Strategic Transport Network to offset local safety and environmental problems.
CP11: Proposals Outside Development Limits (including countryside)	Proposals outside settlement limits will not usually be permitted.
CP17: Housing Delivery	Sets out a now out-of-date housing requirement, which indicates that 13,230 new dwellings must be provided within the Borough between 2006 - 2026 (the adopted Local Plan period). In Limited Development Locations, it is stated that developments should not generally exceed 25 dwellings in size.

**Wokingham Borough Managing Development Delivery Document 2014
(MDDP)**

CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development	WBC will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development. It indicates that planning applications that accord with the policies in this Local Plan will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping	States that development proposals should demonstrate how they have considered the retention and enhancement of green infrastructure, trees and landscaping
CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction	Proposals should deliver high quality sustainably designed and constructed developments
Renewable energy and decentralised energy networks	States that new developments must provide sustainable homes in line with the full Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4
CC06 – Noise	Indicates that new developments must demonstrate how they address and mitigate against any local noise impacts
CC07 – Parking	Explains that new developments must meet the adopted parking standards
CC09 – Development and Flood Risk	Explains that new development will be guided to areas of lowest flood risk from all sources of flooding through the application of the sequential test
Policy CC10 – Sustainable Drainage	States that new developments must manage surface water in a sustainable manner.
Policy TB05 – Housing Mix	Requires new residential developments to provide a housing mix that is informed by the local character of the area and assessed local household need.

Policy TB07 - Internal Space Standards	Indicates that residential units must meet minimum standards to ensure that the internal layout and size are suitable to serve the amenity requirements of future occupiers.
Policy TB08 – Open Space, Sports and Recreation Facilities Standards	Stipulates that open space should be required on-site for new development proposals.
TB12 – Employment Skills Plan	Indicates that proposals for major development should be accompanied by an Employment and Skills plan.
TB21 – Landscape Character	Confirms that new development proposals must address local character assessments and retain or enhance the character and landscape of the area
TB23 – Biodiversity and Development	Denotes that development proposals must demonstrate how they develop biodiversity through the design approach
TB24 – Designated Heritage Assets	Requires developments to conserve and enhance designated heritage assets.
TB25 – Archaeology	Indicates that new developments should protect or where not practical, excavate and archive any archaeological remains

Saved Policy NRM6 (Natural Resource Management 6) of the South East Plan

4.4 Policy NRM6 of the partially revoked South East Plan states that new residential development which is likely to have a significant effect on the ecological integrity of Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) will be required to demonstrate that adequate measures are put in place to avoid or mitigate any potential adverse effects

Neighbourhood Plan

4.5 Although Swallowfield Parish Council applied for designation as a Neighbourhood Area, a Neighbourhood Plan has not been progressed.

Supplementary Planning Documents

Sustainable Design and Construction SPD

4.6 Adopted in May 2010, this SPD predates the publication of the NPPF 2012 and references the South-East Plan. However, it broadly encompasses measures to achieve a 10% carbon emissions reduction in line with policies in the adopted MDD.

Borough Design Guide SPD

4.7 The Design Guide was adopted as SPD in June 2012, following the publication of the NPPF 2012. This guidance sets out design standards for new development in the Borough.

Infrastructure Delivery and Contributions SPD

4.8 This SPD was adopted in 2011 and sets out how planning obligations will be sought for strategic development and the phasing of obligations. It is expected this SPD will be updated in due course, alongside the emerging LPU, and it should be noted that WBC adopted a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule in February 2015.

Other Council Standards and Requirements

Wokingham Borough Parking Standards Study (2011)

4.9 Prepared in 2011, the Parking Standard Study is used to inform the level of car and cycle parking required in proposed developments

Swallowfield Village Design Statement (2009)

4.10 Prepared in 2001 and updated in 2009, this document was prepared to ensure that any change to the village and its surrounding area is done in sympathy with the essential character of the village. Examples of 'Good Design Features of Buildings' are provided.

Climate Change Interim Policy Position Statement (2022)

4.11 This document sets WBC's interim position, on the issue of Climate Change as relevant to the assessment and determination of planning applications.

Play Space Design Guide Technical Note (2019)

4.12 Prepared in March 2018 and updated in December 2019, this document sets out technical standards for play spaces. It is assumed that the standards and requirements of this document are regarded as up-to-date and relevant.

Wokingham Borough Council Statement of Community Involvement' (2018).

4.13 Adopted in 2018, the Statement of Community Involvement sets out the Council's approach to public consultation. At Section 6, the document indicates that developers should engage meaningfully with local stakeholders, prior to the submission of planning applications.

4.14 Regard has also been given to the 'Living Streets – A Highways Guide for Developers in Wokingham' document produced by WBC. It is however, noted that this is a guidance document and does not form part of the statutory Development Plan.

4.15 Relevant extracts from the planning policies and guidance documents highlighted above are discussed in relation to the proposed development in Section 5 of this Statement and also (where relevant) in the technical reports, drawings and associated documents which are included as part of this submission.

Emerging Local Plan – Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update 2023-2040 Proposed Submission Plan, 2024

4.16 WBC is preparing a new Local Plan, the Local Plan Update ('LPU'), which will replace the adopted CS and the MDDP.

4.17 The LPU was submitted to the Secretary of State for examination on 28 February 2025. No hearing sessions have been published to date, but the first sessions are anticipated at the end of 2025.

4.18 According to the latest Local Development Scheme dated September 2024, the Examination was anticipated to start in April 2025, following submission in January 2025, with Adoption in May 2026.

4.19 On that basis the programme is 7 months behind schedule so the earliest the Plan could be adopted is December 2026, but more likely to be in Q1/Q2 of 2027.

4.20 Nonetheless, policies that are considered relevant are set out here.

SS1 – Spatial Development Principles	Proposals should contribute to meeting identified development needs and deliver high quality sustainably designed development.
SS2 – Spatial Strategy and Settlement Hierarchy	Scale of new developments must reflect the existing or proposed level of facilities and services at or in the location, together with their accessibility.
SS4 – Development within and adjacent to minor settlements	Limited residential development adjacent to minor settlements will only be supported when certain circumstances are met.
SS15 – Securing Infrastructure	Development proposals must mitigate impacts and contribute to the provision and maintenance of infrastructure, services, resources and amenities, or other assets lost or impacted on as a result of development
SS17 – Transport Improvements	Development should provide active travel measures, and public transport and road network improvements
CE1 – Net zero carbon development	Development proposals should adequately demonstrate zero carbon principles

CE3 – Environmental Standards for Residential Development	Residential development must be supported by an energy and sustainability statement which confirms a number of standards
CE4 – Supporting a Circular Economy	Development proposals should consider lifetime impacts of development
CE5 – Embodied Carbon	Development proposals should, where practical and viable, take opportunities to reduce the development's embodied carbon content
C1 – Active and Sustainable Transport and Accessibility	States that development proposals should contribute to the delivery of an integrated transport system that is safe and accessible to all
C2 – Mitigation of Transport Impacts and Highways Safety and Design:	Indicates that development proposals must fully assess the transport impacts of the development and provide for appropriate mitigation to minimise the adverse effects. Specific criteria surrounding safely and accessibly designed highways are also set out
C3 – Active Travel	Development proposals must promote sustainable transport by prioritising walking and cycling through the provision of high-quality public realm.
C84 – Green and Blue Infrastructure and Public Rights of Way	Development proposals should contribute to enhancing the network of habitats, open spaces and waterscapes and should be considered by developers from the outset and form an integral component of the planning and design of development proposals.
C5 – Vehicle and Electric Vehicle Charging	Developments must provide vehicle and electric vehicle charging in accordance with adopted standards
C7 – Digital Infrastructure and Communication Technology	New residential and non-residential development proposals must provide access to full fibre gigabit capable broadband
C8 – Utilities	Development proposals must provide adequate water supply, and wastewater collection and treatment infrastructure.
ER5 – Employment and Skills Plan:	Major developments will contribute to employment, education and skills initiatives through an employment and skills plan
H1 – Housing Mix, Density and Standards	Residential developments to create sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities, by providing a mix of house types and sizes at an appropriate density for the area in line with identified housing needs. It is

	added that proposals should optimise density whilst achieving good design, in line with building regulation accessibility standards M4(2). 6% of dwellings should be provided as wheelchair accessible M4(3) homes.
H3 – Affordable Housing	Affordable housing in new developments must comprise the minimum standards subject to viability and their tenure should reflect assessed local housing need.
FD1 – Flood Risk	Development proposals must take into account all sources of flood risk
FD2 – Sustainable Drainage Systems	Development proposals must ensure surface water arising, including the impact of climate change, is managed in a sustainable manner
NE1 – Biodiversity and Geodiversity	Development proposals should protect and enhance biodiversity and/or geodiversity features of conservation value
NE2 – Biodiversity Net Gain	Development proposals should achieve a minimum 10% net gain for biodiversity. Proposals must also retain and enhance biodiversity features within their design.
NE3 – Thames Basin Heaths SPA	Development proposals that are likely to have a significant adverse effect on the integrity of the SPA must demonstrate that adequate measures will be put in place to avoid or mitigate any such effects
NE4 – Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows	Developments to ensure that existing trees, hedgerows and other landscape features are protected, and where possible enhanced, as an integral part of proposals. Where such features are lost, proposals should minimise the impact and take mitigation measures to reincorporate planting
NE5 – Landscape and Design	Developments must respect, conserve and enhance the character and distinctiveness of the local landscape by adopting a landscape led approach
DH1 – Place Making and Quality Design	Developments to promote a strong sense of place through quality design. Specific criteria are described including the provision of renewable energy; appropriate design; accessibility to services; attractive, inclusive and safe environments; and efficient use of land
DH2 – Safeguarding Amenity	Development proposals should not cause a detrimental impact on the amenity of existing properties or new occupiers

DH6 – Archaeology	Developments affecting archaeological sites should take appropriate measures to protect any archaeological remains by preservation in situ, or by excavation, recording and archiving where this is not justified or proportionate.
HC1 – Promoting Healthy Communities	Developments must be accompanied by a Health Impact Assessment and promote strong, vibrant and healthy communities through a high-quality environment with local services to support health, social and cultural wellbeing and reduce inequalities.
HC4 – Open Space, Sports, Recreation and Play Facilities	Residential development proposals are required to provide or contribute to the provision of open space, sport and recreation and play facilities.
HC5 – Environmental Protection	Developments must not have an unacceptable impact on human health, residential amenity, environmental quality or other sensitive receptors
HC6 – Air Pollution and Air Quality	Developments must mitigate against prevailing airborne emissions associated with its construction and operation. Air Quality Assessments are required when the site is within proximity to a source of air pollution which could present a significant risk to human health or when the site is located within an Air Quality Management Area.
HC8 – Noise Pollution	Developments to demonstrate how they have addressed noise impacts and protect noise sensitive receptors (both existing and proposed).

Housing Need

Five Year Housing Land Supply Position

4.21 WBC published its latest five year housing land supply statement in August 2025, showing the position as of 31 March 2025.

4.22 Using the December 2024 standard methodology the Local Housing Need (LHN) is 1316 dwellings per annum from 1 April 2025.

4.23 With the requisite 5% buffer, the Council can only demonstrate a housing land supply of 2.5 years. This means there is a shortfall of 3,455 dwellings over the next five years in Wokingham.

4.24 This is worse than the agreed position at the Croudace appeal in June 2024 of 3.2 years (at that time judged as a deficit of 0.8 years supply against a four year land supply position which was the test at the time).

4.25 It should be noted that these latest figures *include* the 81 dwellings from the Croudace full planning permission.

4.26 Paragraph 4.5 of the statement also indicates that even when applying the pre-December 2024 standard methodology (i.e. the methodology that the emerging local plan is based upon) the Council only has a housing land supply of 4.5 years.

4.27 In terms of affordability, the Council's Housing Strategy 2024-2028 document states that the average price of a home in the Borough is £511,505 compared to a national average of £292,882 (UK House Price Index, Aug 2023).

Affordable Housing Need

4.28 In addition to only having a 2.5 year housing land supply, there are 1342 households on the housing waiting list in Wokingham, as at 31 March 2025, according to the Local Government Inform website, based upon MHCLG figures.

4.29 The Council's Housing Strategy 2024-2028 document goes on to state that there are 606 households on the Council's Housing Register identified as being in priority housing need (Band 1-3) (as at September 2023).

Weight to be Given to the Adopted Local Plan Policies

4.30 Both the Core Strategy (adopted in 2010) and the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (adopted in 2014) are old (11 and 15 years old). Paragraph 232 of the NPPF says that existing policies should not be considered out-of-date simply for this reason. It states that due weight should be given to them, according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF, in particular the framework's objective of

significantly boosting the supply of homes. This is addressed in Section 5 of this Planning Statement.

4.31 Paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF, however, states that planning decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development,

“Where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date⁸, granting permission unless:

- (i) *the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance⁷ 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, 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 combination⁹.*

4.32 NPPF footnote 8 clarifies the meaning of ‘out of date’:

“This includes, for applications involving the provision of housing, situations where: the local planning authority 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 indicates that the delivery of housing was substantially below (less than 75% of) the housing requirement over the previous three years.”

4.33 As set out above at paragraph 4.24 of this Statement, WBC cannot demonstrate a five-year housing land supply. As at 31 March 2025 there is only a 2.5 year supply which equates to a shortfall of 3,455 dwellings.

4.34 As such, 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, 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.

4.35 This is an important material consideration and is considered in Section 5 'Planning Appraisal' of this Planning Statement.

Weight to be Given to the Emerging Local Plan Policies

4.36 As a local plan progresses, the greater the weight which can be applied to its policies. Precedent through appeal decisions, however, concludes that emerging policies have weight once the policies have been considered (at Examination) and generally accepted at Main Modifications stage. The LPU is some way off that stage.

4.37 It is understood, however, that the LPU may be adopted when the reserved matters are submitted and/or the Site is developed. C&C wants to have a forward-facing development that meets the future needs of the borough. So ,where there is strong evidence, and/or policies comply with national policy, C&C have sought to meet emerging policies.

Other Material Considerations

The Croudace Appeal Decision

4.38 The Croudace appeal decision (APP/X0360/W/24/3340006) is particularly relevant as:

- the site is on the opposite side of Trowes Lane to this Site and the same distance from the centre of the village

- the site is almost identical to the Site in terms of its landscape character and context: both are presently medium sized, rough grazing fields with woodland to the South and modern development on the edge of Swallowfield and are highly enclosed within the landscape with limited influence on the surrounding landscape
- the proposal for 81 new homes)is a similar size
- the appeal decision addressed the main planning issues that apply to land east of Trowes Lane
- the appeal decision was recent, just over a year ago on 19 July 2024
- was granted planning permission when the Inspector considered the presumption in favour of sustainable development under NPPF paragraph 11d as the Council was unable to demonstrate an adequate housing land supply the planning balance of benefits against any to be applied.

4.39 The Inspector concluded:

- that the proposal conflicted with the spatial strategy but given the lack of housing supply, *“the application of that strategy needs to be applied in a flexible way to ensure that sufficient land for housing continues to come forward.”*
- the scale of the proposed development is such as to conflict with the strategy for development in settlements of the size of Swallowfield. That conflict is given moderate weight.
- 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.
- that accessibility to facilities and services is constrained and would generate a significant proportion of trips by motor car. That conflict was given moderate weight.
- set against these conflicts, there are a number of benefits from the appeal scheme:
 - the most important is the provision of 81 new dwellings in a range of sizes. That was of particular importance given the demand for

housing in the area and the lack of available land on which to build new dwellings. This carries substantial weight.

- forty per cent of the dwellings would also be affordable housing tenures which would help address a real problem of affordability in the area, and a persistent unmet demand from those unable to afford housing on the open market. The scheme would help to address that need. This carries substantial weight.
- 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 construction of the buildings, which had been designed to mitigate carbon dioxide emissions in excess of 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.
- The adverse impacts of the proposed development, therefore, would not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the substantial benefits of the scheme.
- Accordingly, the Framework supports planning permission being granted.

5. Planning Appraisal

The National Planning Context

5.1 The requirement for local planning authorities to deliver sustainable housing sites has been a fundamental tenet of the planning system for many years; as is having an up-to-date local plan. Many authorities have failed to do so, particularly in the south east of England where the need for both market and affordable housing is high, resulting in increasing affordability ratios and high rents.

5.2 Matthew Pennycook's Ministerial Speech of 12 December 2024 accompanying the publication of the revised NPPF goes a little further stating,

"This Government has inherited an acute and entrenched housing crisis. The average new home is out of reach for the average worker, housing costs consume a third of private renters' income, and the number of children in temporary accommodation now stands at a historic high of nearly 160,000. Yet just 220,000 new homes were built last year and the number of homes granted planning permission has fallen to its lowest in a decade.

That is why the Plan for Change committed to rebuild Britain, with the hugely ambitious goal of delivering 1.5 million new homes this Parliament, and the vital infrastructure needed to grow our economy and support public services."

The Principle of Development

The Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

5.3 The Site is situated on land adjoining, but outside of, the Development Limits of Swallowfield. It is therefore situated within the Countryside. The proposals are therefore in conflict with CS Policies CP9 and CP11 and MDD Policy CC02.

5.4 However, in the Five Year Land Supply Statement of August 2025, WBC accept that the Authority can only demonstrate a 2.5 year housing supply.

5.5 This is a position which has deteriorated in 14 months, from the 3.2 years at the Croudace inquiry in June 2024. This is a 22% reduction, which equates to a further shortfall of 967 new homes from June 2024 to August 2025.

5.6 Paragraph 11 of the NPPF is clear that where a local authority is unable to demonstrate a 5YHLS, the most important policies relating to the application may be viewed as being out of date.

5.7 This results in the application of the paragraph 11(d) ‘presumption in favour of sustainable development’, meaning that planning permission should be granted unless the adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the NPPF. This is referred to as the ‘tilted balance’. For the avoidance of doubt, the Site does not fall under any of the categories identified at NPPF footnote 8.

5.8 In addition, and separately from the matter of 5YHLS, the 2010 CS (by virtue of its age) comprises pre-NPPF (2012) policies. The lack of consistency of CS policies, particularly those relating to the housing requirement and the subsequent definition of development limits and ‘the countryside’ (and having regard to the non-NPPF compliant assessment of housing needs), means that a number of policies of the Local Plan attract limited weight.

5.9 This means that Policies CP9, CP11 and CC02 are out-of-date.

WBC HELAA September 2024

5.10 As part of the work undertaken for the emerging local plan (LPU) this Site was assessed under reference 5SW005 and considered to be ‘potentially suitable’ for 85 dwellings (based on a slightly large site area). The following assessment comments are of note:

- *“The site is situated within the countryside, adjacent to the settlement of Swallowfield. The site is framed by the housing to the north, Oakleigh Farm buildings to the east and woodland to the south. The site could form a logical extension to the settlement area. The proposed development would not lead to the physical or perceived coalescence of settlements”*
- *“Overall, the context of the site provides an opportunity for development which broadly conforms to the existing settlement form, with sensitive design able to reflect the edge of village environment and landscape character.”*
- *“SUITABILITY CONCLUSION: The site provides an opportunity for development which broadly conforms to the existing settlement form and through sensitive design can appropriately reflect the edge of village environment and landscape character. Whilst acknowledging the relatively low level of accessibility to services and facilities, the context of the site is considered potentially suitable when viewed comparatively across opportunities at smaller settlements.”*

5.11 It should be noted that the Croudace site west of Trowes Lane received the same status of ‘potentially suitable’ for 70 homes.

Emerging Local Plan

5.12 The Croudace site west of Trowes Lane was, however, allocated for 81 dwellings under Policy SS14.18 in the Submission Local Plan. The Council has therefore realised that it needs to distribute housing growth not only to large Strategic Development Locations, but also to smaller settlements within the settlement hierarchy, thereby supporting a more balanced and equitable spatial strategy which facilitates diversity in the supply of housing and addresses need throughout the borough.

5.13 The local plan examination evidence base includes a Settlement Hierarchy Assessment, September 2024 which finds Swallowfield to be a sustainable settlement, with services commensurate with and/or exceeding its status within the ‘Limited Development Location’ category.

5.14 The Settlement Hierarchy Assessment concludes on page 37 that, *“Swallowfield contains an appropriate level of key services appropriate to a small village, which includes a GP surgery. Other key and higher-order facilities, including primary schools, would be accessed in surrounding towns and villages, with fairly good access by bus.”*

5.15 It is noted in the Sustainability Appraisal September 2024 (paragraph 5.4.48) that the allocation of both land west and east of Trowes Lane would amount to over-allocation in the Swallowfield context.

5.16 However, the Interim Sustainability Appraisal Report 2021 at paragraph 5.4.106, indicates that the loss of supply from Grazeley *“gives weight to the argument for higher growth at lower tier settlements”*, with it being suggested that an additional site could be allocated for residential development at Swallowfield, potentially resulting in 150 homes in total. This was described as a *“a reasonable scenario to explore further on balance.”*

5.17 Swallowfield is identified in the Southwest sub-area of the south of the borough, along with Shinfield, Spencers Wood, Three Mile Cross and land west of the A33. However, Spencers Wood, Three Mile Cross and the land west of the A33 are all covered by the extension to the Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ) around AWE Burghfield, which means no allocations for development and, at this point, extremely limited opportunity for additional residential development within the DEPZ.

5.18 Outside the SDLs, only Shinfield and Swallowfield, therefore, are in a position to be able to provide sustainable opportunities for development to meet the needs in this sub-area and provide smaller sites to assist with the five year housing land supply.

5.19 Shinfield has been allocated three sites of 10, 175 and 191 dwellings and Swallowfield 81 dwellings on the Croudace site. Given the extremely limited opportunities for development in the sub-area, due to the DEPZ; the Council's view of Swallowfield as set out in paragraph 5.14 above and the Council's consideration of the potential of Land East of Trowes Lane in the HELAA as being 'potentially suitable' like the Croudace site, it is concluded that the principle of residential development is acceptable on this site.

Contribution to Market Housing Supply

5.20 As at 31 March 2025, WBC only has a 2.5 year housing land supply; half of what is required by the NPPF. This equates to a shortfall of 3,455 new homes affecting 8290 Wokingham residents.

5.21 In providing 79 additional dwellings, this proposal could help improve the Council's shortfall. The Inspector at the Croudace appeal stated, in paragraph 55 of the appeal decision, that the most important benefit of that proposal was the provision of 81 new dwellings in a range of sizes and this was "***of particular importance given the demand for housing in the area and the lack of available land on which to build new dwellings***". The inspector therefore applied substantial weight to this.

5.22 This is a key material consideration, noting that Paragraph 61 of the NPPF makes it clear that it is the Government's objective to significantly boost the supply of housing. Albeit this application is in outline, C&C can bring forward reserved matters quickly and build out the Site to make a very timely contribution to WBC's housing supply.

Contribution to Affordable Housing Supply

5.23 In addition to the provision of market homes, the contribution to the supply of affordable housing is another important and distinct benefit of the proposed development.

5.24 As set out in paragraph 4.28 of this Statement, there are 1342 households on the housing waiting list in Wokingham, with 606 households identified as being in priority housing need. With the reduction in housing land supply in the next five years, these figures will worsen.

5.25 At paragraph 55 of the Croudace appeal decision, the Inspector noted that there is a real problem of affordability in the area, with persistent unmet demand for those unable to afford housing on the open market. This proposal would help further address that need. As such, the Inspector also applied substantial weight to this benefit.

Settlement Sustainability

5.26 In terms of locational sustainability and availability of services and social infrastructure, Swallowfield is identified as a 'Limited Development Location' which means it contains a basic range of services and facilities, and which are physically and socially cohesive.

5.27 The Settlement Hierarchy Assessment (2024) indicates that Swallowfield benefits from 4 'key services and facilities', which is more than any of the other settlements identified within this category other than Charvil and Hurst.

5.28 In summary, the following local services and facilities can be found within the village and surrounds:

- Swallowfield Medical Practice
- Swallowfield Post Office

- Convenience store
- Swallowfield Parish Hall (which accommodates a range of community clubs)
- Swallowfield Pre-school
- Two public houses and a restaurant
- Football field
- Bowls club
- Play park
- Allotments
- An extensive network of Public Rights of Way and bridleways
- Church and community facility and
- Local Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG), including at Reading University land and at the Duke of Wellington development.

5.29 In addition, Swallowfield benefits from a number of nearby employment opportunities, for example the Citibase Reading and Wyvols Court Farm employment sites on Basingstoke Road.

5.30 The Settlement Hierarchy Assessment (2024) concludes that Swallowfield contains an appropriate level of key services appropriate to a small village, which includes a GP surgery, with eight GPs. Other key and higher-order facilities, including primary schools, would be accessed in surrounding towns and villages, with fairly good access by bus.

5.31 The Inspector at the Croudace appeal recognised (at paragraph 22) that there is a thriving social scene in the village, within walking distance of the Site. He goes on, in paragraph 28, to understand residents' concerns about the capacity of local services but recognises "*that is essentially a matter for the relevant service provider to solve, including increasing capacity where needed to meet additional demand*". He goes on to state from evidence before him, that "*the Council is seeking to build a new school that would free up space nearer Swallowfield..the anticipated time scale for its provision would be broadly comparable to that for completion of the appeal scheme.*" As such, that provision could also allow for a further c.20 primary school pupils generated by this development.

5.32 In terms of the medical centre, The Inspector recognised (in paragraph 29) that 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. The Inspector stated, *"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"*. This conclusion is true for this Site too.

5.33 It must also be remembered that NPPF paragraph 83 recognises that housing developments at smaller villages can serve to enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities.

5.34 On the issue of accessibility of the Site to facilities and services, the Inspector (at paragraph 30) concludes the picture is mixed. He stated that although the Croudace 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, 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. As such, he gave the conflict with the policies on this issue *"only moderate weight"*.

Site Sustainability

5.35 Swallowfield, therefore, is a settlement with good sustainability credentials.

5.36 As detailed in the accompanying Transport Statement, new homes on this Site will be located about 600m from the village centre making the facilities within and around the village centre accessible by walking and cycling from the Site. Within an 8-minute cycle ride, future residents will be able to access an employment area, medical centre, a pub and a primacy school from the Site.

5.37 Enhancements to the adjacent active travel and bus network are secured as part of the neighbouring Croudace development which the proposed development would benefit from:

- Bus Contribution
- Bus Stop Contribution
- Highway Contribution for improvement to the Basingstoke Road footway between Swallowfield Street and Lambs Lane (to include new crossing provision at the school) or towards sustainable home to school transport for the Site
- Cycle route improvement to Mortimer Arborfield and employment areas
- Highways Works, including enhancements such as crossing points, localised narrowing and lighting enhancements.

5.38 There are existing walking and cycle routes within the area connecting the Site to local facilities and destinations including the Round Berkshire Cycle Route and the National Cycle Network (NCN) Route 23.

5.39 The Site is also accessible by bus. Bus Service 600 which can be joined at The Crown pub bus within a 5-minute walk from the Site provides regular services from Reading to Shinfield via Swallowfield and the Mereoak Park & Ride. Rail services can be accessed at the Mortimer Train Station and the Reading Green Park Train Station for journeys to Reading and Basingstoke. There is therefore a significant potential for future residents to undertake day-to-day journeys using sustainable modes.

5.40 In terms of the NPPF policy tests applicable to this outline planning application, the TA concludes that the Site:

- is located in a sustainable location to enable future residents to travel via sustainable modes, in accordance with paragraph 115a
- can achieve a safe and suitable access to the Site as set out in paragraph 115b

- would not have an unacceptable impact upon the local highway network or exacerbate any existing highway issues in accordance with paragraph 115d)

5.41 The design of streets, parking areas and other transport elements in paragraph 115c will be addressed through reserved matters.

Site Access

5.42 Two alternative detailed accesses have been submitted as part of this application, as access is not reserved:

Scenario 1: assumes that the Croudace site is implemented and their access in place prior to this Site being developed.

Scenario 2: provides an access design without the Croudace development.

5.43 This strategy provides confidence that access can be delivered for the Site regardless of which site comes forward first in accordance with emerging Policy DH1.

5.44 As part of the access strategy, the TA considers the context of Trowes Lane, which has characteristics of a Quiet Land, albeit not officially designated as one. The strategy is to widen Trowes Lane (northbound from the proposed access) to 5.5m as well as the introduction of a 2-metre footpath. However, a priority narrowing arrangement will also be provided (north of the access) to act as a speed calming measure and Gateway feature to the built-up area. This will assist in maintaining low speeds along Trowes Lane but also enable access to the Site for all vehicles. An example of this type of arrangement is within the Foxborough housing estate immediately north of the Site and is shown Photograph 4.1 of the TA.

5.45 As set out in the accompanying AIA, the proposed access arrangements would have limited adverse impacts on the existing hedgerow along Trowes Lane, in

accordance with emerging Policy NE2. The specific location of the access has indeed been configured to limit the removal of existing trees and arboricultural impacts. Appropriate landscaping will be provided to soften the appearance of this new infrastructure, whilst maintaining required visibility splays for highways safety reasons. The hedgerow required to be removed is proposed to be replaced and forms part of the significant biodiversity net gain offered by the proposals.

- 5.46 Details relating to layout and car and cycle parking will be determined at the reserved matters stage; however, based on the Illustrative Masterplan, a total of 154 allocated car parking spaces are proposed alongside 12 visitor / unallocated spaces. This comprises of 1 space allocated to the 1 bed dwellings and 2 spaces allocated to the 2, 3 and 4 dwellings and the requirement for 12 unallocated spaces, in line with policy.
- 5.47 The proposed development will provide cycle parking in accordance with the local parking standards to be provided within garages or sheds.

Layout and Design

- 5.48 Emerging Policy DH1 requires all new development to be of high quality and create a strong sense of place that considers context, identity, built form and movement. Despite being an outline application, it is clear from the Design and Access Statement, accompanying the application, that all these matters have been considered in accordance with adopted an demerging local plan policy and the National Design Guide as specified in the NPPF, with particular consideration of the Swallowfield Village design Statement.
- 5.49 The outline application sets out the scale, mass, and height of the proposal. To give a clearer idea of the high quality of a C&C development, the Illustrative Masterplan indicates the layout and the Design and Access Statement indicates the form, elevational treatments, architecture and appearance which are in

keeping with the character of the local area. This will be worked up in more detail at reserved matters stage.

- 5.50 The proposed dwelling types will include a mixture of terraces, semi-detached and detached houses which are proposed to be 2 storeys in height.
- 5.51 The form, elevational treatments, architecture and appearance of the proposed dwellings is explained in detail in the accompanying DAS. However, the detailing and palette of materials proposed for the Site draws inferences from the traditional architectural styles present within Swallowfield.
- 5.52 In terms of the quantum of development, 79 homes are proposed at the Site. This equates to an overall density of 35 dph, which is directly comparable to the Croudace approval.
- 5.53 In accordance with Paragraph 129 of the NPPF, the proposed development is intended to deliver a high-quality built environment which is sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, and will establish a strong sense of place utilising an arrangement of streets, space, building types and materials to create a distinctive place to live and visit. The proposals therefore also accord with Policies, CP2, CP3 and Draft Policy DH1.

Housing Mix

- 5.54 In accordance with criterion 1 of emerging Policy H1, the proposed new homes will contribute to the delivery of sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities by providing an appropriate mix of housing types, tenures, densities and sizes, to meet the existing and future housing needs of all sectors of the community, including those with specialist requirements.
- 5.55 The application provides for 40% affordable housing to meet emerging Local Plan Policy H3. This means that 32 of the 79 new homes will be affordable.

5.56 The proposed mix of affordable new homes is in accordance with the Council's indicative policy mix for Affordable Housing, as set out in emerging Local Plan Policy H1, thereby meeting criterion 2 of that policy:

		Emerging Policy		Proposal	
No of Bedroom	Percentage	Number of dwellings	Percentage	Number of dwellings	
1 bed	17%	5	13%	4	
2 bed	38%	12	37%	12	
3bed	33%	11	37%	12	
4+	12%	4	13%	4	
Total		32		32	

5.57 As set out in emerging Policy H3, the tenure, size and type of affordable units will be negotiated having regard to housing needs, site specifics and other factors.

5.58 The market housing mix will be developed as the proposals evolve towards the more detailed phase of Reserved Matters and will be broadly in accordance with emerging Policy H1.

5.59 The outline application proposals will also meet emerging Policy H1 by:

- Making efficient use of land and achieve high quality design that responds to the size, location, opportunities and constraints of the Site and is appropriate to the character and amenity of the area (Criterion 3)
- Providing all new homes that are accessible in line with M4(2) of the Building Regulations (Criterion 4)

- Providing 5% of the new homes as wheelchair accessible and adaptable in line with M4(3) of the Building Regulations (Criterion 5)
- All new homes will meet the nationally described space standards for minimal internal space (Criterion 8)

5.60 This is set out in more detail in the Design and Access Statement along with the design layout principles of the proposal.

5.61 The proposed housing mix therefore provides a range of dwelling types, tenures, and sizes to meet emerging Policy H1.

Landscape

Landscape and Visual Impact

5.62 The application is supported by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment ('LVIA'). This assesses the landscape characteristics of the Site from various receptors, and advises on the landscape and visual issues which have informed the approach to site design.

5.63 The findings of the accompanying LVIA confirm that the Site is not subject to any statutory or non-statutory landscape designations and has no notable or rare features.

5.64 The Site is located within Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2019) Character Area I2: 'Riseley Farmed Clay Lowland'. The Site is atypical of the character area.

5.65 Visibility is highly restricted by existing built-form, hedgerows, woodland and trees. The Zone of Significant Visibility (ZSV) extends approximately 10ha. Two visual receptors that lie on the or near the Site boundary would experience significant adverse effects during construction. Beyond these viewpoints no visual effects of any consequence are predicted. Effects during operation

remain broadly similar to those during construction, although maturing vegetation will aid integration into the surroundings.

- 5.66 The predicted visual effects would, therefore, be limited, localised and experienced over a limited geographical area.
- 5.67 There are no significant effects upon the Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment character areas.
- 5.68 The landscape strategy includes retaining and enhancing existing vegetation, introducing new planting, improving biodiversity, and integration with the wider landscape through tree and scrub planting.
- 5.69 The introduction of public open space, informal walking routes and play provides a significant benefit to leisure and amenity upon completion.
- 5.70 The Croudace site on the west of Trowes Lane is almost identical to the Site in terms of its landscape character and context: both are presently medium sized, rough grazing fields with woodland to the South and modern development on the edge of Swallowfield and are highly enclosed within the landscape with limited influence on the surrounding landscape.
- 5.71 The Appeal Inspector concluded on Landscape, at paragraph 20 of the appeal decision,

*“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.”*

5.72 The same conclusions on impact and limited impact on local plan policy should therefore be applied to this Site.

Landscape Design

5.73 As shown on the Illustrative Masterplan, the landscape element of the proposal has been carefully designed to integrate the development within its immediate landscape and provide a variety of spaces and experiences from the gardens and incidental spaces within the residential development area to the attenuation pond with a boardwalk over it linking to footpaths on the periphery of the Site, to providing a variety of new habitats and opportunities for safe and accessible informal and formal play.

5.74 In addition to the ecology enhancements and BNG, the woodland has also offered the opportunity to connect the development, and the village to the public right of way to the south.

5.75 This is in accordance with emerging Policy C4.

Public Open Space and Play Strategy

5.76 The play strategy has been formulated having considered the Council's emerging policies HC1, HC4 and Play Space Design Guide and the opportunities presented by the Site.

5.77 Page 13 of the Guide seeks to encourage innovative and imaginative approaches to play provision and welcomes bespoke design as well as schemes that focus on natural play. The proposed woodland play accords with these aspirations and provides a high quality and larger combined area play area that will appeal to a wide range of users from the new and existing community.

Trees

5.78 In accordance with emerging Policy NE4 the development has protected and incorporated existing trees, hedgerows and woodland and sits comfortably within its immediate landscape.

5.79 As set out in the AIA and Illustrative Masterplan, the design has carefully considered the effect on trees and hedgerows on the boundaries of the residential area and the relationship those trees with new homes. This will be further refined at reserved matter stage.

5.80 A significant benefit of this proposal is the proposed enhancement to the woodland to the south and its integration into the proposal and the wider village. The ecological enhancements and BNG afforded from this are set out in paragraph 5.94 below.

Flood Risk and Sustainable Drainage***Proposed Surface Water Drainage Strategy***

5.81 The FRA also describes the SuDS proposed for the development. It states that testing at the Site has confirmed that infiltration is not a viable solution. Consequently, the proposed surface water drainage strategy seeks to discharge runoff into the ordinary watercourse / ditch that lies adjacent to the Site's eastern boundary and which is believed to ultimately discharge into the River Blackwater. The condition of the ditches is proposed to be improved through clearing to restore its drainage capacity. However, to address the increase in impermeable areas arising as a consequence of development, an attenuation basin is proposed. This ensures runoff is consistent with existing greenfield rates.

5.82 The provision of the attenuation basin creates opportunities for landscape and biodiversity enhancements, and this drainage feature is designed to contribute to the broader green infrastructure strategy for the Site. The basin has been designed to appear naturalistic, rather than engineered or structural.

5.83 On the basis of the accompanying FRA, it is anticipated that the proposals will comply with emerging Policies SS1, FD1 and FD2, as well as NPPF Section 14.

Proposed Foul Water Drainage Strategy

5.84 It is proposed that the development foul drainage will be gravity fed to a pumping station to the north of the access within the Site boundary from where it is pumped to a level to provide a gravity connection into the Thames Water sewer within Trowes Lane. This connection will be subject to Thames Water consent and Infrastructure Charging.

Biodiversity Net Gain & Ecological Improvement

Habitats and Species

5.85 Emerging Policies SS1, NE1, NE2 and FD2 indicate that planning permission will only be granted where an application demonstrates that they provide new opportunities through design, layout, and landscaping, to enhance and provide additional biodiversity features whilst providing appropriate buffer zones to conserve protected habitats and species. In addition, all new developments should be ecologically permeable and incorporate integrated green infrastructure networks.

5.86 As set out in the accompanying Ecological Appraisal (and in the BNG section below), there is a significant uplift of the habitat units at the Site as a result of:

- The retention and maintenance of existing hedgerows and trees
- the proposed enhancement of the woodland, e.g. selective thinning, coppicing, glade creation, creation of brash piles, removal of non-native species, the removal of invasive non-native plants such as Himalayan balsam and the restoration of the dry ditch to the south
- the proposed planting of higher distinctiveness habitats, namely other neutral grassland, mixed scrub and individual trees

- the provision of a Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and new wetland habitat in the east of the Site.
- grassland and tree planting
- provision of bat boxes, bird boxes, log piles and mammal gaps for species such as hedgehogs

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Reptiles

5.88 Habitats within the wider area, namely ditches and areas of longer sward grassland provide optimal habitat for grass snake. Despite the high likelihood that grassland is present within the wider area, the development footprint is limited to the area of modified grassland, which is of low suitability for reptiles. New native planting of scrub vegetation, other neutral grassland, and wetland area comprised of ruderal/ephemeral vegetation in the east of the Site will provide suitable foraging, basking and sheltering habitat for grass snakes, and other native reptile species.

Birds

5.89 The hedgerows on Site provide suitable habitat for common and widespread nesting bird species and the grassland provides foraging opportunities. Proposals do not impact the hedgerows on Site.

5.90 The grassland is of low ecological value to ground nesting birds and foraging birds due to the regular mowing it is subject to. Indeed, no ground nesting birds such as skylark were recorded.

5.91 The habitat creation and extensive woodland enhancements (e.g. thinning, coppicing and glade creation) proposed within the Site would be expected to

provide a significant enhancement for breeding birds by increasing habitat niche diversity and availability, increasing food sources and nesting sites, and would be expected to attract an increased breeding bird diversity. The provision of species specific bird boxes within the residential development in the west of the Site will also increase nesting opportunities for species such as house martin, swift, and house sparrow, all priority species. Which would be expected to benefit from the proposals.

5.92 The accompanying Ecological Appraisal concludes that through the proposed mitigation and precautionary measures, the development is not anticipated to result in any significant residual negative effects on important ecological features. As such, the proposals will accord with all relevant nature conservation legislation, as well as Policies CP7 and TB23, and Draft Policy NE3.

Other Protected Species

5.93 There are no survey recordings of Dormouse or Great Crested Newts.

Biodiversity Net Gain

5.94 The accompanying Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment provides a baseline assessment of the Site's habitats, with the Natural England Biodiversity Metric 3.1 then being used to calculate the change in biodiversity units arising as a result of the proposed development (with particular reference to the proposed Illustrative Masterplan).

5.95 The BNG Assessment concludes:

- The proposals have the potential to achieve a net gain of habitat units, which is an increase of **20.35%** from the baseline value of the Site
- the proposed Illustrative Masterplan could be expected to result in a net gain of 4.94 Habitat Units (equating to +24.56%), a net gain of 2.36 Hedgerow Units (+182.54%) and 0.39 River Units (+31.20%).

- The main reason for this uplift is the enhancement of poor condition woodland and the replacement of low distinctiveness habitat with that of medium and high distinctiveness
- The key contributors to the uplift in habitat units are:
 - The enhancement of the woodland from poor condition to moderate condition, which will deliver 14.33 habitat units; and
 - The creation of the large area of other neutral grassland will provide 3.1 habitat units, which also contribute to the net gain of the Site
- The creation of these habitats will provide opportunities for invertebrates, birds, bats, reptiles, amphibians and small mammals within the Site.
- The proposals have the potential to achieve a net gain of 0.52 hedgerow units, which is an increase of 10.64% from the baseline value of the Site
- The main reason for this uplift is the creation of c87m of new species rich native hedgerow within the northeastern corner of the Site.

5.96 The above represents a significant enhancement, well above that required by the Environment Act and emerging Policy NE2.

Sustainable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM)

5.97 The Site is located 2.1km to the northwest of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA. A site designated for its populations of heathland birds. The Site is located within the SPA 'zone of influence' and therefore a Habitat Regulations Assessment is required.

5.98 The requirement to undertake HRA of development plans and projects was confirmed by the amendments to the Habitats Regulations published for England and Wales in 2007 which is now known as the Habitats Regulations 2017 (as amended) . When proposing a development project which could affect a Habitats Site (e.g. an SPA), the applicant is required to provide the 'competent authority' (in this case Wokingham Borough Council (WBC)) with sufficient information on which to base its decision.

5.99 Because it is the duty of WBC as the 'competent authority' to complete the HRA, LUC has prepared a 'Report to Inform HRA', often also referred to as a 'Shadow HRA'.

5.100 The 'Report to Inform HRA' will enable WBC to discharge its duty in determining whether the project will adversely affect the integrity of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA (the only Habitats Site requiring consideration as part of this assessment).

5.101 The Screening Stage identified that the development proposals alone would not result in likely significant effects (LSEs) but that there is potential to contribute to LSEs in-combination with other plans and projects, including from air pollution associated with increases in road traffic, and as a result of increased recreational visits to the Thames Basin Heaths SPA. These LSEs were carried forward for further consideration at the Appropriate Assessment stage to determine whether they would contribute to adverse effects on integrity (AEol) of the SPA.

5.102 In terms of air pollution, the Appropriate Assessment concluded that it would not result in AEol due to evidence provided as part of recent road traffic and air quality modelling completed as part of the Wokingham Local Plan Update Regulation.19 HRA. The HRA identified that exceedances above the critical load thresholds would only occur at a small number of specific locations along roads in proximity to the SPA. These locations were reviewed in detail and it was confirmed that the constituent habitats at these locations comprised rotationally managed conifer plantation, which is not susceptible to changes in air quality to a degree which would affect SPA birds. Therefore, any contribution arising from the Swallowfield's development at these locations would not result in AEol. Furthermore, any contribution to road traffic changes arising from the Swallowfield's development would mainly be associated with primary routes between the Site and Reading to the north, Basingstoke to the southwest and Wokingham to the northeast, away from the Thames Basin Heaths.

5.103 With regards to recreational impacts, it is well documented in planning policy, and as set out in the Thames Basin Heaths Delivery Framework, that net increases in residential dwellings up to 7km from the SPA are likely to contribute to recreational visits to the SPA and thereby require appropriate avoidance and mitigation measures in the form of:

- Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) contributions.
- Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) provision.

5.104 In light of the requirements set out in the Delivery Framework, local authorities, including Wokingham, have progressed the creation of a strategic SANG network, funded by developer contributions to enable residential developments to come forward without adversely affecting the Thames Basin Heaths SPA. The Swallowfield's project intends to rely upon providing the appropriate financial contributions towards SAMM and strategic SANG and therefore would avoid adverse effects on the integrity of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA, either alone, or in-combination and would be in accordance with emerging Policy NE3.

Heritage

Archaeology

5.105 In accordance with emerging Policy DH6, an Archaeology and Heritage Assessment has been prepared and is submitted in support of the outline application. Although the report is dated August 2022, the fundamental tenets applying to archaeology and heritage assets have not changed in national or local policy (regardless of weight to be applied).

5.106 The Site lies on the edge of an Area of High Archaeological Potential (AHAP); however, geophysical survey on the southern part of the Site, now under woodland, did not indicate any significant archaeology. More recent archaeological investigation to the north west of the Site also found nothing of note, as did more limited monitoring of works to the south east, within the AHAP.

5.107 Any remains within the Site area are likely to have been disturbed by past cultivation of the field in which it lies as well as by a modern irrigation system. The current state of the open part of the Site would also prevent geophysical survey. Given no indication of significant remains when the southern part of the Site was surveyed, it is suggested that no further archaeological investigation need be required ahead of planning permission being granted.

Built Heritage

5.108 The Site is not located within the immediate vicinity of any above ground heritage assets, including listed buildings and Conservation Areas.

5.109 The closest designated heritage assets to the Site include a small number of listed buildings to the north and south which all lie more than two hundred metres distant. The only other designated heritage asset within the study area is the Grade II Registered Swallowfield Park. Those closest to the Site are surrounded by later development and there is also considerable intervening vegetation. None of the nearest heritage assets has inter-visibility or an enduring historic link with the Site.

5.110 Given this context, residential development of the well enclosed Site would not harm the significance of any asset or an appreciation of that significance in accordance with emerging Policy DH5.

Agricultural Land Classification

5.111 An Agricultural Land Classification Report has been prepared to assess the loss of existing associated agricultural land, as the Site is redeveloped to meet identified housing needs. Although the report is dated May 2022, the fundamental tenets applying to agricultural land quality have not changed in national or local policy (regardless of weight to be applied).

5.112 The report finds that the agricultural land is classified as Subgrade 3a and the rest of the Site is classified as non-agricultural (woodland). This would mean a loss of 3.32 ha of 3a land.

5.113 The report further indicates that the quality of agricultural land in Wokingham borough is mainly Grade 3. As such any development in the borough is likely to give rise a similar loss.

5.114 Therefore, this is considered to be a less than significant loss of agricultural land and as such, would not result in unacceptable impacts, particularly when put into balance with the high level of housing need and the suitability of the Site for residential redevelopment which accords with emerging Policy SS1. This is particularly the case when the factoring in the continued availability of other agricultural land of similar quality in the borough.

Energy

5.115 The application is supported by an Outline Energy and Sustainability Statement. Due to the nature of the outline application, detailed design of the construction strategy and building performance are not yet available but will be provided at the reserved matters stage.

5.116 The Outline Energy and Sustainability Statement outlines how the proposal will utilise a fabric first approach towards the thermal envelope of buildings to minimise heat loss, as well as efficient heating via ASHPs, lighting systems and Solar PV, which will drive energy efficiency in the buildings. This is in line with the required policy objectives of sustainable design and reducing energy use.

5.117 Initial details of the proposal's sustainable construction methods, including that of circular economy and embodied carbon have been outlined, with full assessments being completed to verify performance at reserved matters submission. Efforts to reduce waste and promote efficiency have been discussed. This will be achieved through an effective procurement strategy and

implementation of measurable on-site practices, underpinning the stated performance of the Site in relation to its energy efficiency and carbon emission savings predicted.

5.118 The suggested design and services strategy is the anticipated solution at this time, reflecting the level of development at outline application stage. The proposed development is aligned to achieve the requirements in emerging Policies CE1, CE3, CE4 and CE5 and national design guidance. The strategy and required performances stated in the Outline Energy and Sustainability Statement may be subject to change as design develops and through the reserved matters application. Nonetheless, it will be ensured that where any changes are made, the policy requirements listed will be maintained.

6. Affordable Housing Statement

- 6.1 With respect to affordable housing, all such homes will be provided on-site, in accordance with adopted Local Plan policies (as applicable at the point of determination).
- 6.2 Of the 79 homes proposed, 40% are proposed to be affordable, equating to 32 homes in total.
- 6.3 The proposed mix of affordable new homes is in accordance with the Council's indicative policy mix for Affordable Housing, as set out in emerging Local Plan Policy H1, thereby meeting criterion 2 of that policy:

No of Bedroom	Emerging Policy		Proposal	
	Percentage	Number of dwellings	Percentage	Number of dwellings
1 bed	17%	5	13%	4
2 bed	38%	12	37%	12
3bed	33%	11	37%	12
4+	12%	4	13%	4
Total		32		32

- 6.4 As set out in emerging Policy H3, the tenure, size and type of affordable units will be negotiated having regard to housing needs, site specifics and other factors.
- 6.5 The affordable dwellings will be distributed throughout the Site in order to encourage community integration and, in accordance with the development plan and national policy guidance, the affordable units will not be discernible, in quality and appearance, from the market housing on site.
- 6.6 Provision will be secured through a s106.

7. Draft Heads of Terms

- 7.1 C&C will engage in proactive discussions with WBC in respect of the potential on-site and off-site planning obligations related to this outline application.
- 7.2 The obligations will have to meet the standard Regulation 122 tests of being:
 - 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.
- 7.3 It is expected that the scope and nature of any contributions will be established through the determination period, taking account of responses provided by statutory consultees.
- 7.4 However, at this stage we anticipate that contributions will be required for the following:
 - CIL
 - Affordable housing
 - Travel Plan monitoring
 - Strategic SANG contribution and SAMMS
 - Contributions to support an Employment Skills Plan

8. Conclusions


- The Government's Plan for Change seeks to deliver 1.5 million new homes this Parliament to address "an inherited acute and entrenched housing crisis".
- As of August 2025, WBC only has a 2.5 housing land supply.
- As such the presumption in favour of sustainable development set out in NPPF paragraph 11d) the 'tilted balance' applies.
- The proposed development at Land east of Trowes Road provides an opportunity for WBC to sustainably meet its unmet housing need in a location that is surrounded by existing and approved development on three sides. The proposed enhanced woodland provides a buffer to the countryside to the south, thereby forming a natural extension rounding off this part of the settlement whilst being well connected to the village.
- The proposal will provide:
 - Up to 79 dwellings, including 40% affordable housing, to meet the needs of Wokingham residents
 - Building heights of two storeys
 - Detailed vehicular and pedestrian access off Trowes Lane
 - Open space, including play space and recreation opportunities for all ages, including integration of the woodland to the south
 - Site-wide landscaping, public open space and play
 - Ecological enhancement to the woodland to the south
 - Significant biodiversity enhancements to achieve 20.35% biodiversity net gain
 - Sustainable drainage attenuation
 - Supporting highways infrastructure
 - Pedestrian link to the public right of way to the south of the Site

- Protection and maintenance of existing trees and hedgerows on site
- The proposals are in accordance with national planning policy, particularly in regard to meeting unmet housing need, and emerging WBC Local Plan policies.
- The proposals are very similar to the Croudace appeal approval on land west of Trowes Lane, where Inspector concluded:
 - that the proposal conflicted with the spatial strategy but given the lack of housing supply, “the application of that strategy needs to be applied in a flexible way to ensure that sufficient land for housing continues to come forward.” **At this time the housing land supply was agreed to be 3.2 years. It is now 2.5 years.**
 - the scale of the proposed development is such as to conflict with the strategy for development in settlements of the size of Swallowfield. That conflict is given moderate weight; **however, WBC clearly considered this size of site to be appropriate as the site was allocated prior to the appeal decision in the draft local plan, and still is an allocation in the emerging Local Plan.**
 - 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.
 - that accessibility to facilities and services is constrained and would generate a significant proportion of trips by motor car. That conflict was given moderate weight.
 - set against these conflicts, the Inspector identified a number of benefits from the appeal scheme – **all of which apply to the proposals on Land east of Trowes Lane:**
 - the most important is the provision of 81 new dwellings in a range of sizes. That was of particular importance given the demand for housing in the area and the lack of available land on which to build new dwellings. This carries substantial weight.

- forty per cent of the dwellings would also be affordable housing tenures which would help address a real problem of affordability in the area, and a persistent unmet demand from those unable to afford housing on the open market. The scheme would help to address that need. This carries substantial weight.
- 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 construction of the buildings, which had been designed to mitigate carbon dioxide emissions in excess of 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.

- Similarly on Land East of Trowes Lane, it therefore follows that the adverse impacts of the proposed development would not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the substantial benefits of the scheme.
- Accordingly, the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in paragraph 11d) of the Framework should be applied, as the Council was unable to demonstrate an adequate housing land supply. This would also comply with Policy SS1 of the emerging Local Plan.

Appendix 1: Outline Application Parameter Plans



Residential Development Area up to 79 dwellings, all 2 storey including 40% affordable provision and infrastructure, including gardens, drainage and roads.

Public Open space including retention of trees, hedgerows, woodland enhancement, BNG, play formal and informal open space provision & drainage attenuation

Existing Woodland and Trees

Extent of Highway works

Indicative drainage attenuation basin

Site Access Point


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Project:-
Land East of Trowe's Lane, Swallowfield

Description:-
**Parameter Plan 1
Land Use & Storey Heights**

Date:-
September
Drawing number:-
CC017 PL-02
Revision:-
D

Drawing Scale:-
1:500 @ A0
Plot Date - September 29, 2025
www.jcndesign.co.uk

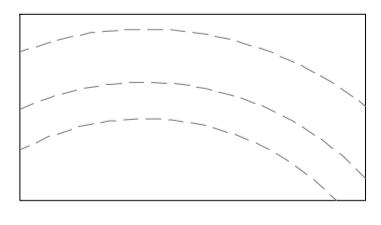


Residential Development Area up to 79 dwellings, all 2 storey including 40% affordable provision and infrastructure, including gardens, drainage and roads.

Existing Highway

Public Open space including retention of trees, hedgerows, woodland enhancement, BNG, play formal and informal open space provision & drainage attenuation

Public Right of Way



Indicative drainage attenuation basin

Indicative Pedestrian Access to Public Right of Way



Extent of Highway works

Indicative Primary Access Route



Indicative Secondary Access Route

Indicative Secondary Access Route

0 25 50 metre

Project:-
Land East of Trowe's Lane, Swallowfield
Description:-
Parameter Plan 2 Access & Movement

Date:- September 2025 Drawing Scale:- 1:500 @ A0
Drawing number:- CC017 PL-03 Revision:- E

www.jcn-design.co.uk

Plot Date - September 29, 2025