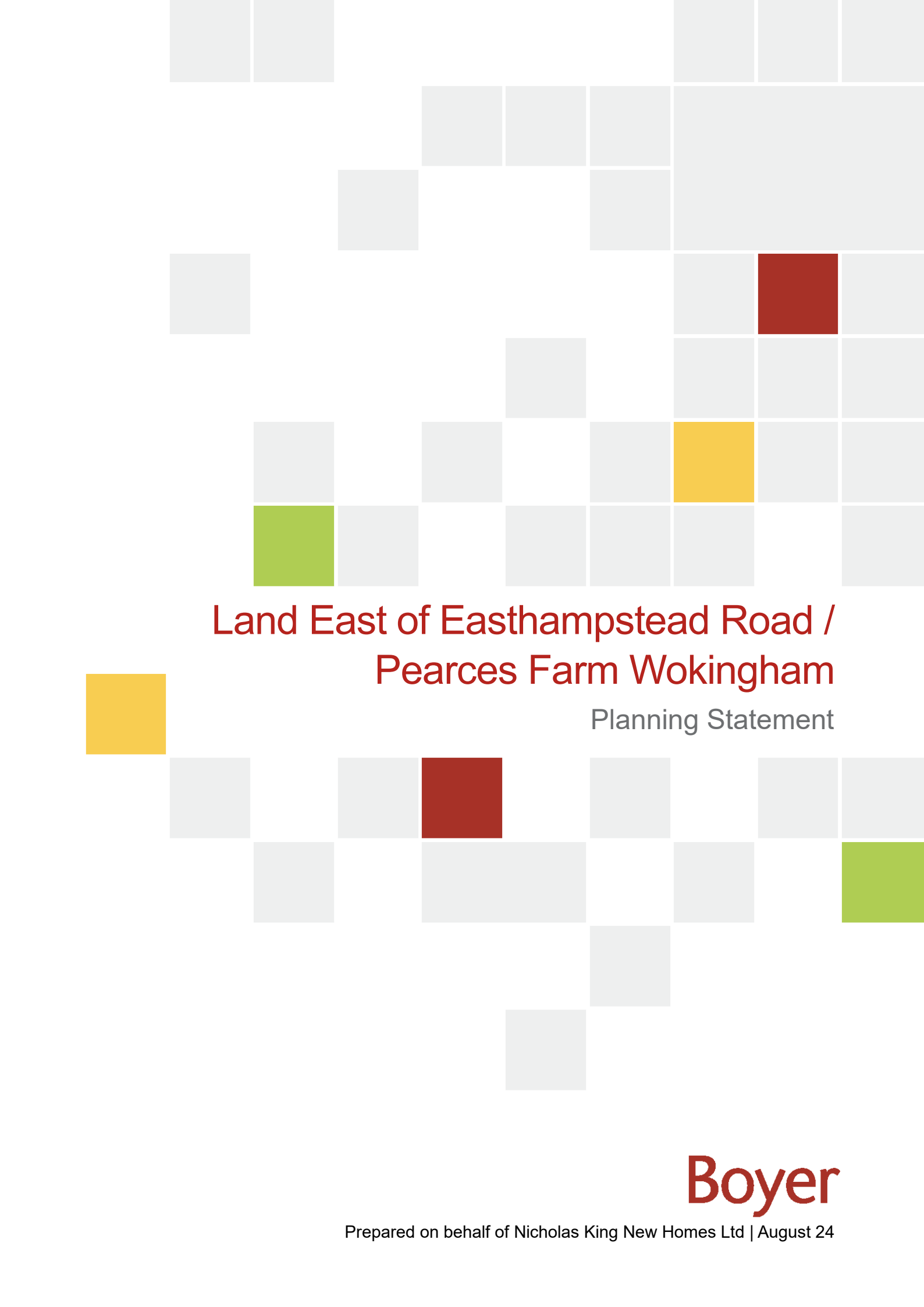




Land East of Easthampstead Road / Pearces Farm Wokingham

Planning Statement

Boyer

Prepared on behalf of Nicholas King New Homes Ltd | August 24

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Location Plan

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared on behalf of Nicholas King New Homes Ltd ('NKH' or 'the Applicant') in support of an Outline Planning Application for residential development on Land to the East of Easthampstead Road, Wokingham.

Description of Development

- 1.2 This planning application seeks permission for the following development.

'Up to 180 market and affordable homes, and associated infrastructure, including open space, play space, landscaping SuDs and green infrastructure. All matters reserved except the main access into the site.'

- 1.3 The application site (also referred to as 'Pearces Farm') falls within the administrative boundary of Wokingham Borough Council ('WBC'), which is also the Local Planning Authority ('LPA'). As such, the proposals are to be considered against its adopted Development Plan and any other relevant material considerations.
- 1.4 This Planning Statement forms part of a suite of documents submitted in support of this outline planning application. The report provides a description of the proposed development, outlines the relevant background information used to inform the scheme design, details the evolution of the proposal, and assesses the scheme against national and local planning policy.
- 1.5 This Planning Statement is structured as follows:
- Section 2 - Site and Surrounding Context
 - Section 3 - Planning History
 - Section 4 – Stakeholder and Community Engagement
 - Section 5 - Proposed Development
 - Section 6 - Planning Policy Context
 - Section 7 - Planning Assessment
 - Section 8 - Draft Heads of Terms
 - Section 9 - Summary and Planning Balance

Background

- 1.6 The application site forms part of a proposed strategic allocation, as identified in the emerging Local Plan Update / Local Plan 2040. The proposed allocation is known as either 'Land to the East of Easthampstead Road and West of Old Wokingham Road' or, alternatively, the 'South Wokingham Strategic Development Location (SDL) Extension'.
- 1.7 Within the proposed SDL Extension there are two controlling parties, NKH (a housebuilder) and Lightwood Strategic ('Lightwood', a land promoter). NKH controls land at

Easthampstead Road / Pearces Farm, whilst Lightwood controls the balance (and greater part) of the land, known as Prior's Farm.

- 1.8 It is relevant that the current Development Plan identifies the site as falling within the boundary of the existing South Wokingham SDL (as defined in Policy CP21 of the Core Strategy). The South Wokingham SDL Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) adopted in 2011 identifies the subject land for the provision of green space.
- 1.9 However, it has since become apparent that the land is no longer required for this purpose. Accordingly, the emerging Local Plan identifies land south of Waterloo Road and east of Easthampstead Road for residential development, with green open space and SANG now envisaged further to the south. Indeed, Draft Policy SS12 indicates that development to the south of Waterloo Road is envisaged as a modification of the current approach to the South Wokingham SDL.

Holistic Development – Relationship Between Planning Applications

- 1.10 As detailed below, NKH, Lightwood, and WBC have engaged WBC through an extended period of informal and formal engagement. As a result, it is agreed that future growth at the SDL requires a coordinated approach.
- 1.11 NKH, therefore, shares the view that, although separate planning applications will be brought forward within the SDL extension (by NKH and Lightwood) and determined on their respective merits, which will enable them to be delivered independently, there will be a degree of alignment between them.
- 1.12 Accordingly, NKH and Lightwood have collaborated closely to develop a coherent approach to development. This means that both parties can bring forward their separate planning applications at approximately the same time. These submissions, taken together fully encompass the SDL extension area and demonstrate the deliverability of the whole emerging allocation area.
- 1.13 Furthermore, whilst separate planning applications are submitted, a joint Environmental Statement (ES) has been prepared which encompasses the two sites. This will ensure that the overall impact of development within the SDL extension can be assessed and mitigated comprehensively.
- 1.14 Under this umbrella, three separate planning applications are being submitted. These are as follows:
- a. An Outline Planning Application for up to 180 units with all matters reserved (except access to the site) by Nicholas King New Homes Ltd ("NKH Site") (i.e., the application to which this Planning Statement pertains);
 - b. A Hybrid Planning Application seeking Outline permission for up to 850 units with all matters reserved (except access to the site) and a full application for SANG land and associated facilities by Lightwood Strategic ("Lightwood Site"); and

- c. A Full (detailed) Planning Application to provide a vehicular crossing across Byway 30 to allow access for the two parcels of land comprising the South Wokingham SDL Extension and Active Travel Connections to the Byway to the south from the NKH site and to the north from the Lightwood Site.

- 1.15 Although these three applications are interrelated, they have been prepared in such a way that they do not necessarily need to be determined together. NKH's proposal on Land at Easthampstead Road is comparatively small-scale (up to 180 homes) compared to that progressed via Lightwood, and it can be delivered as a discrete, independent proposal. Additionally, NKH's application also includes key road infrastructure, providing the northern access to the existing SDL and connectivity to Wokingham, the early implementation of which would facilitate the delivery of the SDL extension as a whole.
- 1.16 It should also be noted that NKH's planning application and those prepared by Lightwood are submitted in advance of the Regulation 19 Local Plan consultation, which is taking place (at the time of writing) in the Autumn of 2024. Consequently, the application will be 'in the system' before the future Local Plan Examination. The intention is for all technical and design considerations to be thoroughly addressed via the development management process, thereby confirming the proposed allocation's deliverability, suitability, and support of WBC during the Examination.

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

- 1.17 NKH and Lightwood agree that their proposals represent EIA development when taken in conjunction. Because of this, it is appropriate to consider relevant EIA topics holistically. Accordingly, an EIA has been prepared to cover the whole of the SDL extension area, of which this application forms part, and is submitted to accompany the application¹.
- 1.18 The Environmental Statement (ES) includes the following technical topics:
- Socio-economics;
 - Transport and Access;
 - Air Quality;
 - Hydrology and Flood Risk;
 - Biodiversity;
 - Landscape and Visual;
 - Archaeology and Heritage;
 - Noise; and,
 - Ground Conditions.

Accompanying Documentation

- 1.19 The planning application (as submitted by NKH in relation to Land East of Easthampstead Road) is supported by an EIA, details of which are set out in the accompanying ES.
- 1.20 The tables below set out the drawings for approval, those provided for illustrative purposes alongside the technical assessments and other supporting documents.

¹ The same ES is submitted in parallel in Lightwood's application.

Table 1. Drawings for Approval

Drawing Title	Drawing Reference
Site Location Plan	NICH210436-SLP-02
Access and Movement Parameter Plan	NICH210436-AMPP-01-P3
Storey Heights Parameter Plan	NICH210436-SHPP-01-P5
Land Use Parameter Plan	NICH210436-LUPP-01-P4
Main Western Access Easthampstead Road	A218-014-P3

Table 2. Drawings for Illustrative Purposes

Drawing Title	Drawing Reference
Illustrative Masterplan	NICH210436 SL-01 P1
Illustrative Landscape Masterplan	Edp7438_d035F
GI Land Budget Plan	Edp7438_d034E

Table 3. Application Documents

Document Title	Prepared By
Agricultural Land Assessment	Kernons
Air Quality Assessment	Air Quality Consultants Ltd
Arboricultural Impact Assessment	Quaife Woodlands
Archaeological and Heritage Assessment	Environmental Dimension Partnership (EDP) Ltd
Biodiversity Report and BNG Metric	Ethos Environmental Planning
Design and Access Statement	Thrive
Energy Report	Energist
Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy	Abley Letchford Partnership Ltd
Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (contained within ES)	Environmental Dimension Partnership (EDP) Ltd
Noise Impact Assessment	Omnia
Phase 1 Ground Condition Report	Omnia
Planning Statement	Boyer
Statement of Community Involvement	Boyer
Transport Assessment	Abley Letchford Partnership Ltd
Utilities Report	Abley Letchford Partnership Ltd

- 1.21 Appropriately worded planning conditions are expected to require submission of additional information for approval. This is noting that the application is submitted in Outline (and only seeks Full approval for the main access), such that Reserved Matters submissions will need to follow.

- 1.22 As indicated, the supporting documentation includes a Statement of Community Involvement, which summarises the comprehensive public consultation undertaken by the applicants to date, and a Design and Access Statement, which provides details relating to the design of the proposed development and its evolution.

2. SITE & SURROUNDING AREA

Site Description

- 2.1 Land to the East of Easthampstead Road falls within WBC's administrative boundaries and, locally, the Wokingham Without Ward. Currently situated to the south of the current Development Limits (settlement boundary) of Wokingham, the site adjoins committed development to the north and northeast, associated with the South Wokingham SDL. Indeed, the application site itself is wholly included in the adopted SDL boundary.
- 2.2 The site (as illustrated in **Appendix 1**) comprises a generally rectangular expanse of land with an area of approximately 7.4ha. It is formed of the extended curtilage of a residential garden, equestrian paddocks, agricultural land, together with associated agricultural/equestrian structures, and a single dwelling.
- 2.3 Topographically, the site slopes gently from the northeast towards the south and northwest. Along the middle of the northern boundary, the land elevates to a high of around +66m AOD. Lower levels (around +60m AOD) characterise the western corner of the site, whereas to the south elevates to around +63m AOD.
- 2.4 The residential and ancillary buildings comprising Pearces Farm are not included within the application site boundary but are enveloped by it on three sides. These buildings incorporate a number of Grade II Listed structures, most notably 'Pearces Farmhouse' (Historic England ref: 1319115), 'Granary' (ref: 1135768) and 'Barn' (ref: 1118118). There are no Scheduled Monuments on-site or situated within its vicinity.
- 2.5 Environment Agency mapping confirms that the site lies wholly within Flood Zone 1 and is at a 'low probability' of fluvial flooding. Some areas within the site are identified as being at a 'low risk' of surface water flooding, with a 'high risk' associated with an existing pond that lies centrally within the site, close to its northern boundary.
- 2.6 The site does not fall within a National Landscape and is not subject to any specific local-level designations. It generally benefits from mature landscaped boundaries, which provide screening to views from Public Right of Way (PRoW), WOKW5, to the north, Easthampstead Road to the west, and Byway BW30 (Holme Green Lane). Views into the site are, therefore, restricted and generally limited to the immediate surroundings.
- 2.7 Reflecting the above, an Area Tree Preservation Order (1376-2011-A1) is designated along the site's northwestern and northern boundaries, adjoining Easthampstead Road and PRoW to the north. A further Area TPO is designated along the southern boundary with Easthampstead Road and the southeastern boundary with Holme Green Lane (1376-2011-W1). Two specimen-specific TPOs are also located along the site's eastern boundary.
- 2.8 Regarding biodiversity, the site is not subject to any prevailing statutory or local ecology-related designations, and surveys have confirmed that no Habitats of Principal Importance for Nature Conservation are present within the site. The majority of the site comprises modified grassland, which is of limited ecological interest.

- 2.9 There are no nationally or internationally designated sites within the immediate vicinity of the application site. However, it falls within the 2km Impact Risk Zone of one designated site and the 400m to 5km zone associated with the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA), which is to be addressed by established mitigation measures².
- 2.10 The primary existing noise sources potentially impacting the site are traffic traversing Easthampstead Road and the railway line to the north. Future noise sources will include traffic associated with the new South Wokingham Distributor Road ('SWDR', also to the north) once it is built out alongside committed new housing.
- 2.11 Initial surveys suggest the site is not subject to contamination or other active pollution pathways.

Wider Context

- 2.12 Regarding its immediate surroundings, further agricultural land parcels bound the site to the northwest/north, northeast and east. To the south/southeast lies Holme Green Lane, with six existing residential properties and further agricultural land beyond. Easthampstead Road bounds the site to the west/southwest.
- 2.13 To the south of Easthampstead Road lies Holme Grange School and its associated curtilage, in addition to several detached residential properties. The White Horse public house lies to the northwest, alongside a linear row of existing houses fronting onto Easthampstead Road and the junction with Heathlands Road.
- 2.14 Currently, the area surrounding the application is generally semi-rural in character. Areas of agricultural land are interspersed with larger residential plots and sporadic commercial/light industrial uses that have emerged historically. Easthampstead Road and Holme Grange Lane are also characterised by their rural wooded boundaries, although Easthampstead Road is very well-trafficked as a major route into Wokingham Town centre from the South
- 2.15 However, it must be remembered that the area's character will change markedly as the committed development to the north and northeast of the site is built out. Indeed, the wider context of the South Wokingham SDL is particularly relevant to consideration of the development's impacts. This is detailed below.

South Wokingham SDL

- 2.16 The site lies within the existing boundary of the South Wokingham SDL, as allocated in the adopted Core Strategy (2010) via Policy CP21. The Core Strategy sets out that the SDL is an urban extension that will deliver around 2,500 homes alongside new strategic infrastructure.
- 2.17 The existing SDL essentially comprises three elements:

² I.e., Sustainable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) provision, and Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) payments.

1. Land to the north of the railway line at Montague Park has already been built for 636 dwellings, a primary school, a local centre, and the northeastern part of the South Wokingham Distributor Road (SWDR).
2. South of Montague Park, the Eastern Gateway section of the SWSR has been completed, and the remaining sections of the SWDR land immediately to the south of the railway and alongside the SWDR have recently been granted planning permission for 1,820 homes with associated facilities, including sports facilities and SANG land. The delivery of the SWDR is due to start imminently (sept 24) with the construction due to be completed by 2025/26.
3. Although all these developments are within the SDL, the overall urban design strategy does not completely reflect the guidance set out in the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for the SDL in terms of the anticipated location of housing and SANG/open space. However, Policy CC02 (Development Limits) enables flexibility in this regard.

Figure 1. Pearces Farm site within existing SDL boundary



- 2.18 The remainder of the land within the South Wokingham SDL (including the Site) is currently identified as open space in the SPD.
- 2.19 It should also be noted that, within a small part of the remaining area, an outline application (ref. 211033) seeking permission for up to 95 homes on land South of Waterloo Road

(immediately north of the Site) is currently being determined as a cross-boundary application by WBC and Bracknell Forest Borough Council.

- 2.20 The effect of the above is that substantial new development is committed to the north and northeast of the application site. The consequential effect, albeit mitigated through good design and appropriate landscape treatments, will be that the character of the site's immediate surroundings will become more urban. The site will also become more accessible to both Wokingham and the new services envisaged in the SDL.
- 2.21 Moreover, the recent approval of Ref. 191068 (the Kier / Miller development) will effectively bring the urban edge of Wokingham to abut the application site, consistent with the settlement's Development Limits.
- 2.22 In addition (and as explained throughout this Planning Statement), the application site now forms part of an emerging allocation, which proposes to extend the residential development area of the South Wokingham SDL to the South of Waterloo Road and on land to the east of Easthampstead Road. An extract from the Draft Proposals Map is provided in **Appendix 2**.
- 2.23 Development in accordance with the emerging draft Policy SS12 will necessarily result in further changes to the site's context. Indeed, the draft policy requires that the application site accommodate significant new infrastructure that is integral to the ambition of the proposal SDL extension as a whole.
- 2.24 Accordingly, the application site lies within an area of significant change. This includes some inevitable transition of character, but with respect to improvements in accessibility and access to services, as detailed below.

3. PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 A review of the online planning register did not identify any relevant planning applications for the application site itself. However, as stated above, the site lies adjacent to committed developments within the existing South Wokingham SDL and proposed development within the Extension.
- 3.2 The table below sets out the status of the various (relevant) planning applications in the site's immediate vicinity.

Table 4. Planning Applications within South Wokingham

Site Address	Site Status	Proposed Development
Land at phase 2b, South Wokingham SDL (Ref: 191068) (Located immediately to the north and west of the site)	Approved 19 July 2024	Hybrid planning application comprising an Outline application with all matters reserved except principal means of access to the highway for a mixed-use development of up to 1,434 dwellings, a two-form entry primary school, local centre (A1, A2, A3, A4, A5 and D1 including community building D1/D2), public open space, play areas and associated infrastructure and landscaping; and a full application for SANG, associated landscaping and temporary car park. To be read in conjunction with applications 190900 & 190914.
Land southeast of Finchampstead Road, South Wokingham SDL (Ref: 192325)	Resolution to grant approval	A hybrid planning application (part outline/part full) is comprised of an outline application with all matters reserved for up to 171 no. dwellings, public open space, associated infrastructure, and full application for Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG).
Land at Phase 2a, South Wokingham SDL (Ref: 190914)	Approved 19 July 2024	Outline application with all matters reserved except for principal means of access to the highway for up to 215 dwellings, public open space, play areas, associated infrastructure and landscaping.
Land South of Waterloo Road (Ref: 211033) and BFBC. (Ref: 21/00372/OUT) (Located to the northeast)	Under consideration	Outline application for the demolition of equestrian buildings and up to 95no. dwellings (35% affordable housing), public open space, attenuation, ecological enhancement and associated works with details of vehicular access from Old Wokingham Road and pedestrian/cycle access from byway WOKW BW30 with all other matters reserved.
Land to the West of St Annes Drive	Approved at Appeal	Full application for the proposed erection of 54 units (including 19 affordable homes) with associated access

Site Address	Site Status	Proposed Development
and South of London Road (Ref: 203544)	December 2022.	road from St Annes Drive, landscaping, and open space.
Land at Newlands Farm Old Wokingham Road (Ref: 233185)	Under Consideration	Full application for the change of use of agricultural land to outdoor sport or recreation (Class F2c) for use as Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG), plus associated landscape and drainage works, SANG car park and access from Old Wokingham Road

- 3.3 In addition, applications have also been submitted to both Wokingham and Bracknell Forest regarding a trunk road connecting Waterloo Road and the Eastern Gateway Roundabout within the SDL (Wokingham Ref: 240892 / Bracknell Forest Ref: 24/00253). At the time of writing, these applications were yet to be determined.

4. STAKEHOLDER AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Engagement with WBC

- 4.1 NKH and Lightwood have engaged extensively with WBC officers, with this engagement commencing when the South Wokingham SDL Extension was first proposed as a new allocation (in late 2021) within the Revised Growth Strategy consultation. Initial engagement included meetings with senior officers to discuss (inter alia) the proposed allocation, matters raised in the Regulation 18 consultation and the South Wokingham Inset Study³.
- 4.2 From January 2023, NKH and Lightwood subsequently entered into a formal Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) with WBC. The substance of the PPA comprised a series of structured meetings with senior members of the Development Management, Policy and Infrastructure teams and a range of technical consultees. Therefore, WBC has been proactive in assessing the potential of developing the site, and key issues are well understood.
- 4.3 Indeed, senior planning and technical officers who were involved in the PPA process reviewed and advised on the content of the emerging design and the supporting technical information submitted. The PPA meetings covered a range of topics, as detailed in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Planning Performance Agreement

PPA Meetings	Discussion Topics
1 – 5 January 2023	Initial Masterplanning, Transport, Drainage, and the Local Plan Update.
2 – 22 February 2023	Masterplanning Options, Transport Connections and Access.
3 – 25 March 2023	Site Visit and Discussion
4 – 11 May 2023	Green Infrastructure, SANG, Ecology.
5 – 25 May 2023	Masterplanning, Green infrastructure.
6 - 15 January 2024	Transport
7 – 15 January 2024	Heritage, Green Infrastructure
8 – 9 April 2024	Local Plan Update, Timescales, Design and Housing Mix

- 4.4 The PPA process is also understood to have reciprocally informed the content of draft Policy SS12, thereby helping to ensure the emergent policy for the site is robust. Indeed, an important point of discussion concerned the number of new homes that the allocation (to the south of Waterloo Road/east of Easthampstead Road) could potentially accommodate. The starting point in this regard was the approximate capacity of 835 dwellings identified in the Revised Growth Strategy consultation document.
- 4.5 However, when taking account of the evidence provided by NKH and Lightwood, it was acknowledged that the subject land may be capable of delivering more homes than the

³ Produced by David Lock Associates on behalf of WBC.

estimated figures identified. Consequently, based on our engagement with Officers at WBC we expect that the draft policy in the upcoming Regulation 19 Submission Version Draft Local Plan will propose that 1,100 dwellings be delivered on land south of Waterloo Road. This better reflects the approximate capacity of the available land while also taking into account constraints and other required land uses.

- 4.6 The submitted Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) further details the PPA meetings and discussions.

Community Engagement

- 4.7 The applicants have undertaken a programme of local consultation with key stakeholders and residents as per the guidance in the Wokingham Statement of Community Involvement (March 2024). NKH and Lightwood undertook the consultation programme jointly.
- 4.8 A development-specific Statement of Community Involvement (prepared by Boyer) accompanies this submission. It fully explains the engagement process and details the feedback provided. However, in summary, stakeholders were engaged to ensure they were aware of the proposals and allowed to provide feedback. Ward Members were contacted, and a meeting was held with the Wokingham Without Parish Council on 3 June 2024.
- 4.9 Concerning the wider community, a leaflet was prepared and posted to 1,702 addresses within the immediate area of the proposed SDL Extension. This advised residents of the proposals and the forthcoming exhibition, where further information would be presented. It also provided details of a website where the proposals could be viewed online and allowed comments to be submitted. www.swextension.co.uk.
- 4.10 The Public Exhibition was held on 14 June 2024 at St Sebastians Memorial Hall, Nine Mile Ride, Wokingham. Feedback could be provided at the exhibition, through the website or by email to comments@swextension.co.uk. Comments were requested by 28 June 2024, although those received later were still considered in the SCI.

Feedback

- 4.11 The accompanying SCI provides further details of the 41 comments received following the community consultation. However, several pertinent points and recurrent themes (as relevant to NKH's site specifically) are as follows;
- It was suggested that the project website be kept 'live' as NKH's and Lightwood's applications are submitted and updated throughout the determination process to ensure residents have an accessible source of up-to-date information.
 - There was concern about the scale of new housing envisaged in the SDL and the area's changing character. However, the provision of affordable housing and a mix of dwelling sizes and types was generally viewed as a positive part of the proposals.
 - Generally, respondents welcomed the traditional redbrick architectural style of NKH's houses and recognised the proposed approach to the setting of the Listed buildings at Pearces Farm.

- It was generally welcomed that the proposals will limit tree removal to that which is strictly necessary and seek to strengthen boundary landscaping to screen the development.
- There was some lack of awareness of the existing SDL schemes, including the SDR and the potential to partly close Easthampstead Road to through traffic north of the new Heathlands Road junction (which is being improved as part of the SWDR scheme).
- A desire to see safe crossing points provided between the application site and Holme Grange School and pedestrian/cycle improvements along Easthampstead Road, as well as to enhance the management of school drop-off/collection traffic.
- General emphasis on non-car connections into Wokingham, including consideration of how pedestrians and cyclists can safely cross the railway line when travelling to and from Wokingham Town Centre. There was support for a bus route running through the site into the wider SDL Extension.
- Concerns were expressed over queues at the Easthampstead / Old Wokingham Road junction and how the development and changes to the road network would impact those travelling on Heathlands Road. This was balanced by an understanding that new roads proposed through the SDL extension would change and improve the pattern of traffic in general.
- Some respondents considered that the existing Easthampstead Road / Old Wokingham Road junction should be upgraded to a roundabout. Others felt this might not be appropriate if traffic was to be directed away from Easthampstead Road. In general, respondents want to see a clear improvement in traffic management along Old Wokingham Road, and its associated junctions.
- Comments were raised regarding education provision/availability of school places, as no new secondary school is envisaged within the SDL as a whole. This was balanced by some acknowledgement that the emerging Local Plan will apply a strategic approach to education provision and that developers are obliged to help fund places through S106 / CIL payments.
- Concerns were raised about access to NHS GPs and dentists and difficulties in securing appointments. However, there was some acknowledgement that although developers could provide premises for a GP surgery (in the SDL's Local / Neighbourhood Centres, for example), they cannot fund the practitioners nor address underlying issues in the NHS.

Applicant Response

- 4.12 In reviewing the feedback and from in-person discussions at the public exhibition, it was apparent that transport and highways matters were particularly resonant. As such, NKH will continue to engage with the Local Highways Authority (LHA), councillors, and other relevant stakeholders during the application determination period to refine the overall transport strategy, including the long-term approach to Easthampstead Road. A detailed overview of transport matters has also been set out in the submitted Transport Statement / Assessment.

- 4.13 Many respondents cited the need for infrastructure to accompany the development. NKH concurs and will deliver infrastructure on-site and provide financial contributions through S106 / CIL to facilitate wider improvements. Infrastructure provision is expected to accord with the Council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) and will respond to discussions with WBC during the determination period.
- 4.14 Whilst there was relatively limited comment on detailed design matters (as mentioned) the traditional architectural styles presented by NKH and Lightwood were generally considered appropriate and compared more favourably to the contemporary design seen at nearby Buckler's Park. Accordingly, the Design and Access Statement (DAS) accompanying this submission favours a traditional architectural character. NKH would expect to follow this principle through at the Reserved Matters stage.

5. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Outline Planning Application

- 5.1 Outline planning permission is sought for the following development:
- ‘Up to 180 market and affordable homes, and associated infrastructure, including open space, play space, landscaping SuDs and green infrastructure. All matters reserved expect the main access into the site.’*
- 5.2 Matters of appearance, landscaping, layout, and scale are therefore reserved for future consideration. Conversely, detailed planning permission is sought only for the main access to the site, achieved from Easthampstead Road.
- 5.3 The rationale of the proposed design is explained fully in the accompanying Design and Access Statement (DAS). However, the key elements of the proposals are summarised below:
- Up to 180 homes;
 - Low carbon development
 - Buildings predominately 2 storeys in height, with some 2.5 and 3-storey elements
 - 35% affordable housing
 - Development density of approximately 35.8 dwellings per hectare (net)
 - A safe vehicle and pedestrian access, via a new priority junction at Easthampstead Road
 - Safeguarded land for a potential future vehicular and pedestrian correction to the north to the new Heathlands spur/SWDR if the LPA enables this.
 - Ability to provide additional points of pedestrian and cycle connections, around the site
 - Parking provision in accordance with relevant standards
 - A design that responds to the characteristics of the site, including heritage assets at Pearces Farm;
 - Green infrastructure and biodiversity enhancements
 - Public open spaces and recreational routes.
 - A Local Area of Play (LAP) and a Locally Equipped Area for Play (LEAP)
 - Integration of SuDS features throughout the site, as part of a holistic Green Infrastructure strategy
 - A permeable layout with a clearly defined street pattern, separating the public and private realms; and,
 - Retention of existing trees along the boundaries wherever possible

Detailed Proposals (Access)

- 5.4 The proposed access is presented in the accompanying Transport Assessment (TA) and separately in drawing ref A218 – 014 – P3, which is submitted for approval. Specifically, detailed approval is sought for a single priority junction formed with Easthampstead Road.
- 5.5 The access junction is located approximately 110m south of the Heathlands Road junction. Easthampstead Road will be widened to 6.5m between the access junction and the

Heathlands Road junction to facilitate the road being used as a bus route through the development. As part of the committed SWDR works, the Heathlands Road junction will be remodelled to deliver a four arm signalised arrangement and in turn form the southern end of the Heathlands Link portion of the SWDR.

Parameters Plans

- 5.6 The application is proposed in Outline with all matters reserved except for main access. Nonetheless, the Outline application includes several parameter plans that are submitted for formal approval. These demonstrate how the development addresses key constraints and ensures integration with the wider SDL.
- 5.7 A Land Use Parameter Plan (Ref. NICH210436-LUPP-01-P4) - is provided to 'fix' the general areas proposed for built form and to identify those parts of the site where green and blue infrastructure is envisaged. An important purpose of this plan is to secure an appropriate buffer for the Listed buildings at Pearces Farm and to inform the detailed layout that will follow at the Reserved Matters stage.
- 5.8 A Building Heights Parameter Plan (Ref. NICH210436-SHPP-01-P5) - establishes the maximum height of new buildings provided within the proposed development, both overall and within different parts of the scheme. This, in turn, informs the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA). The plan specifies;
- Properties located along the main spine road and near the gateway entrance to the northwest of the site will range from 2 – 2.5-storey houses to 3-storey apartments.
 - Development surrounding Pearces Farm will be of a lower scale, up to two storeys. Buildings along the main spine road, which fronts Pearces Farm, will be generally restricted to two and 2.5 storeys in limited key locations.
- 5.9 An Access and Movement Parameter Plan (Ref. NICH210436-AMPP-01-P3) - secures the alignment of the primary transport route through the site (the spine road), linking Easthampstead Road to Holme Green Lane to the southeast. The plan also safeguards land for a future direct connection to the SWDR, should the LPA wish to deliver this, albeit NKH does not control the land necessary to deliver the link beyond its boundary directly.
- 5.10 It should be noted that the above plans are distinct from the parameters plans that form part of the overarching ES in that they specifically the site rather than the SDL Extension overall. However, the two sets of plans are consistent with each other.

Illustrative Drawings and Design and Access Statement

- 5.11 The Outline application is supplemented by several illustrative drawings illustrating the proposed development. These include:
- Illustrative Masterplan; and,
 - Illustrative Landscape Masterplan.
- 5.12 These drawings are not submitted for approval. However, they demonstrate how the site could be developed and provide greater certainty as to the quantum of development that can

realistically be achieved there. The illustrative drawings have also helped inform other technical reports, notably the LVIA and the Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) calculation.

- 5.13 In addition to the aforementioned illustrative plans, the application also includes a DAS. While not a document for formal determination, the DAS describes the site, identifies its constraints and opportunities, explains the evolution of the design approach and provides a detailed overview of the key principles that have informed the parameter plans.
- 5.14 Furthermore, although Outline planning permission is sought, NKH is a family-owned regional housebuilder who fully expects to build the development out once an implementable planning consent has been obtained. The DAS, therefore, provides a good indication of how the completed scheme will appear, including with respect to the street scenes and architectural content.
- 5.15 The scheme design is described further in the Planning Assessment section of this Planning Statement.

6. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

- 6.1 This section outlines the relevant planning policy framework against which the proposed development has been prepared and against which it should be determined.

The Development Plan

- 6.2 Section 70 (2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 indicates that the local planning authority shall have regard to the provisions of the Development Plan (in so far as they are material to the application) and any other material considerations.
- 6.3 Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that regard is to be had to the Development Plan and confirms that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 6.4 The Development Plan currently comprises the adopted Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (2010) ('CS'), the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (2014) ('MDDP') and the partially revoked South East Plan. Concerning the latter, only policy NRM6 remains part of the Development Plan. This concerns the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area.

Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (2010)

- 6.5 The CS sets the strategic direction for the Borough up to 2026. This document was adopted as part of the Development Plan on 29 January 2010, is over 14 years old and predates the current National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF') (December 2023).
- 6.6 Therefore, while CS policies have statutory status (as part of the Development Plan), their weight in decision-taking is commensurate with the degree to which they conform to the policies of the NPPF. Furthermore, the policies of CS and the MDDP are intended to be replaced by those in the emerging Local Plan when it is adopted in 2026⁴.
- 6.7 Noting the above, the policies of CS and the MDDP may not be relevant if the application is determined following the adoption of the new Local Plan. Notwithstanding this, at this stage, the following CS policies are considered relevant to the determination of this application:
- Policy CP1: Sustainable Development:
 - Policy CP2: Inclusive Communities:
 - Policy CP3: General Principles for Development:
 - Policy CP4: Infrastructure Requirements:
 - Policy CP6: Managing Travel Demand:
 - Policy CP7: Biodiversity:
 - Policy CP9: Scale and Location of Development Proposals
 - Policy CP10: Improvements to the Strategic Transport Network
 - Policy CP11: Proposals Outside Development Limits (including countryside)
 - Policy CP17: Housing Delivery

⁴ As anticipated by WBC.

6.8 Policy CP21 South Wokingham Strategic Development Location is of specific relevance as it sets out the existing policy for the SDL. It identifies the area south of Wokingham for a sustainable, well-designed, and mixed-use development intended to be delivered by 2026.

CP21 requires the following:

- Delivery of around 2,500 dwellings, including affordable housing;
- Appropriate retail facilities;
- Social and physical infrastructure (including provision for two new primary schools);
- Measures to maintain separation from Binfield/Bracknell, Crowthorne/Pinewood (Crowthorne) and Finchampstead North;
- Measures to protect and enhance pedestrian access to the countryside from Wokingham town centre;
- Necessary measures to avoid and mitigate the impact of development upon the Thames Basin Heaths SPA (SANG and SAMM)
- Improvements to transport capacity along the A321 and A329, including the provision of the South Wokingham Relief Road (i.e., the SWDR) from the vicinity of the Coppid Beech roundabout to the Finchampstead Road;
- Improved accessibility by non-car transport modes along the A321, A329, and Wokingham town centre.

Wokingham Borough Management Developing Delivery Local Plan (2014)

6.9 The MDDP was adopted in February 2014 and develops the policies of the Core Strategy. It contains several cross-cutting development management policies. Again, given that the policies are over 10 years old, they carry weight in decision-taking, commensurate to the extent they conform to the policies of the NPPF.

6.10 As indicated, the MDDP is expected to be replaced by the new Local Plan upon its adoption. Notwithstanding this, the following MDDP policies are judged to be of relevance to the application at this stage:

- Policy CC01 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- Policy CC02 Development Limits
- Policy CC03 Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping
- Policy CC04 Sustainable Design and Construction
- Policy CC05 Renewable Energy and Decentralised Energy Networks
- Policy CC06 Noise
- Policy CC07 Parking
- Policy CC09 Development and Flood Risk
- Policy CC10 Sustainable Drainage
- Policy TB05 Housing Mix
- Policy TB07 Internal Space Standards

- Policy TB21 Landscape Character
- Policy TB23 Biodiversity and Development
- Policy TB24 Designated Heritage Assets
- Policy TB25 Archaeology

National Planning Policies

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2023)

- 6.11 The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and explains how these should be applied. The NPPF must be taken into account in preparing a Development Plan and is an important material consideration in planning decisions, including in the case of this application, as it offers the most up-to-date policy guidance.
- 6.12 The NPPF states in paragraph 7 that the *"purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development."* This is expanded in paragraph 8, where it is explained that *"achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives"*; economic, social, and environmental.
- 6.13 NPPF Paragraph 11 then sets out the 'Presumption in favour of sustainable development'. Whilst not changing the statutory status of the Development Plan, for decision-taking, this means *"approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay"*.
- 6.14 It is then added that planning permission should also be granted *"where there are no relevant Development Plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date..."*, unless certain prerequisites apply.
- 6.15 The NPPF, paragraph 38, strongly encourages LPAs to approach decision-taking positively and to work proactively with applicants to foster the delivery of sustainable development. Paragraphs 39 to 42 place a corresponding emphasis on effective pre-application engagement and collaboration.
- 6.16 Regarding the treatment of emerging Local Plans, NPPF Paragraph 48 states that relevant policies in emerging Plans may be given weight according to their stage of preparation, the extent of unresolved objections, and the consistency of emerging policies with the Framework. Conversely, in Paragraph 225, it is indicated that policies in an adopted Local Plan carry due weight, again depending on the extent to which they are consistent with the NPPF.
- 6.17 With regard to delivering a wide choice of high-quality homes, paragraph 60 requires local planning authorities to support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes. The paragraph states that;
- "...it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed...The overall aim should be to meet as much of an area's identified housing need as possible, including with an appropriate mix of housing types for the local community."*

6.18 In addition to these overarching principles, the NPPF sets out policies in respect of a number of specific topics. We consider the following sections of the Framework to be of potential relevance to the proposed development;

- Section 5: Delivering a Sufficient Supply of Homes;
- Section 8: Promoting Healthy and Safe Communities;
- Section 9: Promoting Sustainable Transport;
- Section 11: Making Effective Use of Land;
- Section 12: Achieving Well-Designed Places;
- Section 14: Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change;
- Section 15: Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment; and,
- Section 16: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment.

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

6.19 The PPG constitutes a set of regularly updated online guidance provided by the Government to support effective Plan-making and decision-taking. Topics which are considered relevant to the determination of this application are:

- Design;
- Climate Change;
- Historic Environment;
- Natural Environment;
- Noise;
- Open space, sports and recreation facilities, public rights of way and local green space;
- Planning obligations;
- Renewable and low carbon energy;
- Travel plans; transport assessment and statements in decision-taking;
- Use of planning conditions

Other Material Considerations

Supplementary Planning Documents

6.20 WBC has adopted several Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs), of which the following are relevant to the application:

- Sustainable Design and Construction SPD - 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% reduction in carbon emissions, which aligns with policies in the adopted MDDP.
- Borough Design Guide SPD - Adopted 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 - Adopted in 2011, this document sets out how planning obligations will be sought for strategic development. It is expected this will be updated in due course, alongside the emerging Local Plan.

- Affordable Housing SPD - Adopted in 2013, the document identifies the minimum percentages of affordable housing sought on-site, subject to viability. Within SDLs, a 35% provision is sought. The SPD also sets out a preferred affordable housing mix, albeit this is no longer regarded as fully reflecting current needs.

South Wokingham Strategic Development Location SPD

- 6.21 Besides the Borough-wide SPDs summarised above, the 'South Wokingham SDL SPD' is particularly relevant to the application proposals. This is more the case, noting that WBC (at present) does not propose that the existing SPD be further updated or replaced.
- 6.22 The SPD sets out an overall vision for South Wokingham and outlines a development concept, including the approach to the overall SDL site. Namely, this includes creating a sustainable and high-quality living environment with the document setting out a preferred masterplanning approach and describing several design principles.

Other WBC Standards and Requirements

- 6.23 Wokingham Borough Parking Standards Study - Prepared in 2011, the Parking Standard Study informs the level of car and cycle parking required in proposed developments.
- Play Space Design Guide Technical Note - This document sets technical standards for play spaces. It was prepared in March 2018 and updated in December 2019.
 - Wokingham Borough Council Statement of Community Involvement - Adopted in 2018, the Statement of Community Involvement sets out the Council's approach to public consultation. Section 6 (of the document) indicates that developers should engage meaningfully with local stakeholders before submitting planning applications.
 - Wokingham District Landscape Character Assessment - Produced in 2004, this assessment formed part of the adopted CS evidence base and is intended to guide development management decisions. This assessment identifies the application site and surroundings as falling within a single Landscape Character Areas, 'LCA N1 Holme Green Pastoral Sandy Lowland'.
 - Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment - Prepared in 2019, this document has informed the production of the emerging Local Plan. In this document, the application site and its immediate surrounds are identified as lying within a single Landscape Character Area; 'LCA N1 Holme Green Pastoral Sandy Lowland'.

Emerging Local Plan

- 6.24 At the point of drafting, the Regulation 19 Version of the Wokingham Local Plan has yet to be published. Therefore, there will be a requirement to supplement this document with a Planning Statement Addendum in due course to respond to the policy context in the emerging local plan.
- 6.25 Nonetheless, NKH and Lightwood have been engaged in extensive discussions with WBC and, therefore, have a good understanding of the anticipated policy requirement for the South Wokingham SDL and the extension.

NPPF Consultation (July 2024)

- 6.26 The Government's draft revisions to the NPPF were published in July 2024. The revised NPPF forms part of a wider consultation of planning reforms, which runs until 24 September 2024. This consultation, alongside a letter from the Secretary of State to Council Leaders and Local Authority Chief Executives (dated 30 July 2024), provides an insight into the new Government's aims and ambitions for the future, particularly the emphasis placed on 'building the homes we need'.
- 6.27 The documents set out the Government's aims to achieve universal coverage of Local Plans as quickly as possible, with suitably ambitious housing targets. Consequently, the Government is reversing many of the changes made to the NPPF in December 2023. This includes proposing a new Standard Method to support the Government's commitment to deliver 1.5 million homes over the next five years.
- 6.28 The proposed amendments to the Standard Method mean that many local planning authorities, including Wokingham Borough, will see their housing need figures increase dramatically, with strict timescales set out on how Local Plans are to be progressed to include those new figures as soon as possible.
- 6.29 Following the outcome of the Government's consultation, it may be necessary for a Planning Statement Addendum to be issued to address policy changes that impact the application proposals.

7. PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1 In this section, the scheme's planning merits are assessed with regard to relevant Development Plan policies (see the preceding Section of this Statement) and other material considerations, including national guidance contained in the NPPF.
- 7.2 The relevant policies in the Development Plan, together with national policy, are discussed below by key issue. These are;
- The Principle of Development
 - Access and Movement
 - Transport
 - Design, Layout and Scale
 - Housing Mix and Affordable Housing
 - Landscape and Open Space
 - Flood Risk and Drainage
 - Noise
 - Ecology and Biodiversity
 - Arboriculture
 - Air Quality
 - Heritage and Archaeology
 - Contamination
 - Energy and Sustainability

The Principle of Development

Development Limits and the Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

- 7.3 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless other material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 7.4 In this instance, the application site lies outside of but abuts the nearest adopted 'development limits' and falls within the 'countryside'. The proposals are not for a rural exception scheme, or another form of development identified in Policy CP11 as acceptable outside development limits. Because of this, there is a factual conflict with adopted policies CP9 and CP11.
- 7.5 However, it should first be noted that the weight to be afforded to these and other Development Plan policies (and the harm associated with any conflict with them) is reduced by their lack of consistency with the NPPF and the absence of a four or five-year housing land supply. Indeed, WBC does not dispute that the NPPF paragraph 11d presumption in favour of sustainable development is currently in effect.
- 7.6 Furthermore, WBC accepts that the CS housing requirement is not up-to-date. The CS requirement (662 dpa), as set out in its strategic policies, has never been formally reviewed as is required by NPPF paragraph 33 and it does not correspond to the current 'Standard Method' for establishing housing needs. In this respect, the Standard Method identifies a

Local Housing Need (LHN) figure of 748 dpa. Therefore, the housing needs now identified are higher than the adopted CS requirement.

- 7.7 Because of this, the current development limits identified on the Policies Map and the allocations provided for the CS and the MDDP no longer fully address housing needs. Indeed, this is why the emerging Local Plan seeks to identify and allocate new suitable sites for residential development, including greenfield land beyond existing Development Limits.
- 7.8 Within this context, the degree of conflict between the application proposals and adopted countryside protection/settlement boundary policies is subsequently lessened. As detailed below, the site's location within the SWSDL also indicates its suitability for residential development.

Development within Sustainable Development Locations

- 7.9 It is highly relevant that the site lies within the current extent of the South Wokingham SDL boundary, as identified in Policies CP21 and CC02. In this respect, Policy CC02 makes an important concession regarding development proposals within the current SDL boundaries;

“Development proposals within the areas allocated as SDL in the adopted Core Strategy (Policies CP18-21) will be permitted that are within the identified development limits unless an acceptable alternative has been agreed through the granting of planning permission accompanied by a deliverable SDL-wide:

d. Comprehensive masterplan; and

e. Infrastructure Delivery Plan which:

- I. Ensures that the applicant funds and delivers an appropriate share of the SDL infrastructure; and*
- II. Does not prejudice the comprehensive delivery and implementation of the wider SDL.”*

- 7.10 WBC has argued at recent Section 78 Planning Appeals that flexibility is taken where proposals come forward within the existing SDLs, even if development proposals do not accord with the adopted SPD (as has been the case in the North and South Wokingham, SDLs). Indeed, this formed part of the Council's case at the recent Inquiry concerning Land at Trowes Lane, Swallowfield (APP/X0360/W/24/3340006).
- 7.11 A flexible approach was certainly applied in WBC's determination of the Keir-Miller application (ref. 191068) within the SWSDL and to the north and northeast of the application site. In this instance, WBC supported masterplanning arrangements that differed markedly from those identified in the CS and SWSDL SPD.
- 7.12 This has seen the proposed SANG location move within the SDL's general masterplanning arrangement. This has been complemented by the provision of an additional SANG at St. Anne's Manor, just outside of the SDL, which has enabled further flexibility as to the balance of the remaining land within the SWSDL

- 7.13 Following this, it is relevant that Land at Easthampstead Road falls within the existing SWSDL boundary and directly adjoins land (controlled by Kier-Miller), benefits from Outline planning permission for residential-led development. As this adjoining development is implemented, the built extent of Wokingham will extend southward to adjoin and envelope Land at Easthampstead Road.
- 7.14 This is the context within which NKH's proposals on Land at Easthampstead Road should be understood initially. The site lies in an existing SDL, which means it falls within an area where WBC applies a flexible approach to development proposals. This has been confirmed in WBC's evidence at S78 Appeals and in its determination of planning applications. As indicated, WBC also does not dispute that the NPPF paragraph 11d presumption in favour of sustainable development is in effect.
- 7.15 In view of the above, and noting the self-containment of Land at Easthampstead Road, there may well be a case for NKH's application to be determined ahead of the much larger proposals progressed by Lightwood. This would have the dual benefit of materially boosting the supply of housing and securing infrastructure that can unlock the wider SDL extension to the south/southeast.

Emerging Local Plan

- 7.16 As indicated, the site already lies within the adopted boundaries of the SWSDL, where WBC applies a flexible approach to proposals which deviate from the CS Concept Plan or the SWSDL SDP. However, it is also relevant the WBC is planning how to meet its housing needs beyond 2026 (when the CS becomes time-expired) and up to 2040.
- 7.17 In accordance with the provisions of NPPF paragraph 48, the weight afforded to emerging Local Plan policies (for decision-taking) must be consistent with a Plan's stage of preparation and consider the extent of unresolved objections.
- 7.18 In this respect, it is notable that all of the Regulation 18-stage Plans that WBC has prepared have identified Wokingham as a Major Development Location, with it being the largest settlement in the Borough. Likewise, following the abandonment of the Grazeley proposals, the Revised Growth Strategy Consultation (November 2021 to January 2022) set out in paragraph 4.9 that;
- "... new development will continue to be predominantly focused on larger sites. This includes the completion of the existing SDLs, and their evolution to include new opportunities which are now available within and around them where they are consistent with their original visions"*
- 7.19 In other words, within the framework of this revised growth strategy, housing needs will be met (beyond 2026) partly through increased development within SDL boundaries. In this context, a southern expansion of the SWSDL was proposed, which would see residential development extended further south (compared to the CS Concept Plan / SWSDL SDP).
- 7.20 WBC has advised that the emerging Local Plan will likely reach the Regulation 19 stage in September 2024. We further understand that the spatial strategy and approach to the

distribution of growth are unlikely to change substantively compared to that presented in the Revised Growth Strategy. Indeed, a proposed extension to the SWSDL represented the most strongly performing of the strategic options tested across all scenarios/alternatives tested within the Interim Sustainability Appraisal (SA) associated with the 2021 Regulation 19 consultation.

- 7.21 The extended PPA process, as outlined in Table 5, has facilitated the progressive evolution of the overall masterplan for the applications by NKH and Lightwood. This evolution, achieved through iterative discussions with officers, underscores the collaborative nature of the planning process. The preferred masterplan resulting from this process will serve as the foundation for the drawings in the Regulation 19 version of the new Local Plan.
- 7.22 There is then a high degree of certainty surrounding the emerging policy position as relevant to the site. The new Local Plan is also expected to be Examined in 2025 and adopted in 2026. As such, by the time the application is brought before the Planning Committee for determination, the policies of the Local Plan Update can be expected to have accrued material weight for decision-taking.
- 7.23 In this context, NKH is bringing forward an Outline planning application on Land at Easthampstead Road. The application aims to subject the proposals to the rigours of the development management process. This testing is necessary to demonstrate the site's suitability and deliverability to a future Local Plan Inspector and support timely implementation. This latter point is particularly relevant in view of the anticipated reinstatement of the obligation (placed on LPAs) to demonstrate a rolling 5YHLS, even following a Local Plan's adoption, as is proposed in the revised NPPF consultation.
- 7.24 Accordingly, and notwithstanding the factual conflict with Policies CC9 and CP11, the site's inclusion within an existing SDL (within which WBC states it applies a flexible approach) in conjunction with the activation of NPPF paragraph 11d and noting the draft allocation, the principle of development is established at the site.

Access and Movement

Sustainable Travel

- 7.25 Policy CP1 emphasises the importance of reducing the need to travel, particularly by private car. This objective is amplified by Policy CP6, which seeks to manage travel demand by locating development to encourage sustainable travel modes. Policies CP10 and Policy CC08 further require that developments make provision for a choice of sustainable forms of transport, including improvements to existing infrastructure.
- 7.26 The site's baseline conditions are set out in the Transport Assessment (and the Transport Chapter of the accompanying ES), which provides an overarching assessment of the SW SDL Extension. However, to briefly summarise the accessibility of Land at Easthampstead Road, specifically, the nearest bus stops are located on Waterloo Road, 700m to the north of the site. These bus stops can be accessed via Easthampstead Road. Other bus stops near

the site are at Merlin Way, Peacock Farm and Tesco Finchampstead Road. These are served by services No. 124, 108, 4, 121, 125, 128 and 145⁵.

- 7.27 Besides bus routes, Wokingham Railway Station is located approximately 2.5km northwest of the site. It is located on the Waterloo to Reading Line and North Down Line, providing connections (inter alia) to Reading, Bracknell, Winnersh, Redhill and London Waterloo.
- 7.28 Regarding active travel infrastructure, the Transport ES Chapter and the accompanying TA note the permeability provided by Byway 30, which connects Easthampstead Road and Waterloo Road and is suitable for recreational pedestrian/cycle usage. It is envisaged that Byway 30 will be downgraded to prevent its use as a through-route for general vehicular traffic, thereby enhancing its suitability as an active travel corridor.
- 7.29 Noting the above, a key principle of this application (as further detailed in the Transport Chapter of the ES and the associated TA) is to interconnect development at the site with new pedestrian and cycle routes, which will be provided within the parameters of committed development within the SW SDL and the wider extension envisaged. The development will also include a main street that will be specified to accommodate buses, thereby facilitating the future integration of bus routes within the site and the broader SDL proposals.
- 7.30 Additionally, a travel plan is expected to encourage sustainable travel patterns. This is envisaged to be addressed through WBC's 'My Journey Wokingham' initiative. Accordingly, as part of the PPA discussions, it has been agreed that a financial contribution will be provided towards this initiative in lieu of preparing a travel plan for the site.
- 7.31 Through these measures, the application will ensure that future residents can access existing facilities and transport infrastructure within Wokingham and new services provided as part of the SDL. This is further detailed below.

Local Facilities

- 7.32 Several existing services are found within the immediate vicinity of the application site. These include the White Horse Public House (approximately 250m from the centre of the site), the private Holme Grange School (primary and secondary, approximately 100m), which incorporates the SKMA martial arts school.
- 7.33 Additional facilities include Meadows Farm Livery Stables (600m), the Holme Grange Craft Village (750m), the Crooked Billet Public House (950m), in addition to several MOT/car servicing businesses (500m – 1km). The site is also accessible (via PRoW and Holme Green Lane Bridleway) to the Oakwood Youth and Climbing Centre (approximately 1km).
- 7.34 The site lies approximately 500m south of Wokingham at its closest point and approximately 1.8km from the town centre. Wokingham, being the largest settlement within the titular Borough, benefits from a wide range of services, amenities and employment opportunities commensurate with its tier 1 status with the adopted and proposed settlement hierarchy, including;

⁵ The accompanying Transport Assessment provides further details of these services.

- Extensive retail facilities and supermarkets;
- Primary and Secondary education facilities;
- Cinemas, hotels, restaurants, public houses, and fast-food outlets;
- Healthcare facilities, including a community hospital, GP surgeries, dentists, and pharmacies;
- Community facilities, including post offices and a library;
- Sports facilities, including a leisure centre/swimming pool, parks, gyms, sports clubs – golf, tennis, etc, and,
- Large employment areas, notably the Molly Millars Industrial Estate / Mulberry Business Park.
- Main line rail services are available from Wokingham Rail Station, provide frequent services into Reading, Bracknell, London Waterloo and Gatwick Airport.

7.35 In addition, as part of the existing South Wokingham SDL, several local facilities will be provided. These include;

- A mixed-use Local Centre;
- Two new primary schools; and,
- Play areas, public open space and SANG.

7.36 These committed facilities will be complemented by extensive new outdoor and indoor sports facilities that are to be provided at Gray's Farm, off Heathlands Road. This comprises land purchased by WBC to be developed as the 'Wokingham Sports Hub' to serve the needs of the residents, including those within the SDL. A Special Educational Needs school is also proposed to be situated at this site, following an award of Department for Education funding.

7.37 Moreover, Lightwood's planning application (to the southeast of that submitted by NKH) proposes additional facilities in the form of a district centre, community facilities, and strategic areas of green space, and SANG. These will be accessible to future residents living at the development. Additionally, a further area of SANG has been proposed at Newlands Farm under application ref. 233185, which (if approved) will be accessible to future residents of the site.

7.38 Therefore, the provision of committed and further planning services, supported by new transport and active travel infrastructure, will significantly enhance the range of facilities accessible to the site. The proposals are, therefore, consistent with policies CP1, CP6, CP10 and CC08.

Transport Impacts

7.39 Policy CP6 requires the assessment of a proposed development's transport impacts. The policy also requires that developments mitigate transport-related impacts through the enhancement of infrastructure, including the provision of parking and measures to enhance road safety.

Site Access

- 7.40 Detailed permission is sought for a new vehicular access point, proposed to be formed from Easthampstead Road to the west of the application site. The proposed access is depicted in Drawing Ref. A218 – 014 – P3. This has been designed in accordance with relevant standards and will be capable of safely accommodating manoeuvring buses and other large vehicles.
- 7.41 As set out in the accompanying TA, the proposed access is located approximately 110m south of the Heathlands Road junction. Easthampstead Road will be widened to 6.5m between the proposed access and the Heathlands Road junction to facilitate the road's use as a bus route. As part of the approved and committed SWDR works, which are due to be commenced imminently, the Heathlands Road junction will be remodelled to deliver a four-arm signalised arrangement, which will, in turn, form the southern end of the Heathlands Link portion of the SWDR.
- 7.42 The access has been located to minimise existing tree loss, and 120m visibility splays (in line with a 40mph speed limit on Easthampstead Road) are achievable with minimal disruption to the existing hedge line. Behind the existing hedge line, a 3m footway/cycleway is shown, providing a route that will tie into the future signal arrangement at Heathlands Link. From here, the Heathlands Link provides footway/cycleway connections up to William Heelas Way and the wider SW Distributor Road network.
- 7.43 Accordingly, the proposed access arrangement is consistent with Policy CP6 and NPPF Chapter 9, 'Promoting Sustainable Transport'.

Internal Access and Movement

- 7.44 Whilst detailed consent is not sought for the internal road/street layout, an Access and Movement Parameters Plan (drawing ref. NICH210436-AMPP-01-P3) is enclosed with this application to provide certainty as to key elements of the proposals.
- 7.45 One such element is a central street through the development, connecting the proposed Easthampstead Road access to Byway 30 and onto the Lightwood-controlled land to the south. Subject to further discussions with WBC, the applicant proposes that a 3m-wide shared footway/cycleway will be provided along both sides of this central street/
- 7.46 Provision is also made to safeguard a future potential connection to the Heathlands Link within the adjoining Kier-Miller land to the north. A drawing (ref. A218-019 P3) is included within the TA to illustrate the feasibility of this connection, which WBC may wish to deliver in future. It is reiterated, though, that NKH does not control land beyond the redline boundary of its application.
- 7.47 Regardless, the development proposed through this application does not rely on this future potential connection, nor does the submission seek detailed consent for this. Nonetheless, it is expected that the required land within the site (in so far as this lies within NKH's control) will be safeguarded through provisions within the S106 Agreement that will be agreed upon in the future.

- 7.48 Accordingly, the proposals are consistent with Policy CP6 and NPPF Chapter 9, 'Promoting Sustainable Transport'.

Road Safety

- 7.49 The Transport Chapter in the accompanying ES, in conjunction with the appended TA, reviews WBC's accident records.
- 7.50 There is an opportunity to improve the operation of the Easthampstead Road / Wokingham Road junction. Based on discussions with WBC, this is envisaged to take the form of a point closure along Easthampstead Road. This would significantly reduce traffic passing through the junction, with a consequential improvement in highway safety.
- 7.51 Offsite improvements to the Heathlands Road / Easthampstead Road junction (in the form of signalling) will improve drivers' safety and aid pedestrian movements, connecting the application site to the infrastructure being delivered as part of the SWSDL development and onwards to Wokingham town centre.
- 7.52 Accordingly, the proposals are consistent with Policy CP6 and NPPF paragraphs 114 to 117.

Parking Provision

- 7.53 The level of car and cycle parking to be provided will be determined as part of future reserved matters submission(s). However, the Illustrative Masterplan (ref. NICH210436 IL-01 P1) demonstrates that the required level of parking for approximately 180 homes can be accommodated on-site in line with WBC's standards.
- 7.54 Suitable visitor space will be provided in addition to infrastructure for electric vehicle charging. Cycle parking will be provided within garages or dedicated cycle storage which is safe, secure and accessible.
- 7.55 Accordingly, the approach to parking provision is consistent with Policy CP6 and NPPF Chapter 9, 'Promoting Sustainable Transport'.

Traffic Impacts

- 7.56 Consistent with PPA discussions, the TA uses the Wokingham Strategic Traffic Model (WSTM) to assess traffic impacts.
- 7.57 Assessments were run for four scenarios;
- Run A : 2026 'Forecast Base'
 - Run B : 2038 'Forecast Base'
 - Run C : 2038 'With Nicholas King Development' 180 Units)
 - Run D : 2038 'With Cumulative Development' (1,030 Units)
- 7.58 A '2026 assessment year' has been assessed as the baseline position of the current highway network. This is then used in conjunction with a '2038 forecast base' to allow a future baseline to be derived against which the impacts of the proposals can be appraised. This allows for committed and planned development, including the full development flows associated with the SWSDL and the completion of the South Wokingham Distributor Road, which is forecast to be operational by 2026.

- 7.59 Runs C and D, then assess NKH's proposal for up to 180 homes and the wider development (i.e., NKH and Lightwood's proposals cumulatively). The relative impacts of the proposed development at the site are described in Table 6.1 of the accompanying TA.
- 7.60 The TA concludes that the proposed development at the site, in conjunction with associated off-site mitigation, will not result in a 'severe' highway impact on the operation of the local transport network and, therefore, meets the test set out in NPPF paragraph 115. The same conclusion is drawn with respect to the TA's assessment of the cumulative impacts of NKH's and Lightwood's proposals.
- 7.61 Overall, the proposals and their associated transport-related impacts are consistent with Policy CP6 and NPPF Section 9.

Design - Layout, Scale Density and Appearance

- 7.62 Policies CP1 and CP3 are relevant to assessing the proposals' design. These policies are amplified through the Borough Design Guide, while the SWSDL SPD also provides site-specific advice on achieving high-quality development within the SDL. NPPF Chapter 12, 'Achieving Well-Designed and Beautify Places,' reiterates the importance of good design and beauty within the planning system.
- 7.63 Collectively, national and local policies and guidance require developments to achieve a high-quality design that maintains or enhances the environment, with reference to scale, massing, layout, built form, height, materiality, the area's character, protecting amenity, and securing an attractive, functional, safe, secure, and adaptable environment.
- 7.64 The Outline planning application seeks 'in-principle' approval for residential development, with the matters of layout, scale, appearance, and landscaping reserved for future consideration.
- 7.65 However, to confirm the site's capacity to accommodate the proposed development and demonstrate how the proposals accord with planning policies, the Outline planning application is supported by a Design and Access Statement (DAS), and an Illustrative Masterplan (ref. NICH210436 IL-01 P1). In addition, three 'parameters plans' are provided as follows:
- Land Use Parameter Plan (Drawing No. NICH210436-LUPP-01-P4)
 - Access and Movement Parameter Plan (Drawing No. NICH210436-AMPP-01-P3)
 - Building Heights Parameter Plan (Drawing No. NICH210436-SHPP-01-P5)

Design Summary / Illustrative Masterplan

- 7.66 Reference should be made to the accompanying DAS. However, in summary, the Illustrative Masterplan is based on the following design principles:
- A new access to the site from Easthampstead Road to ensure safe and efficient accessibility;
 - A main street that can accommodate a bus route, with the ultimate goal of making public and active travel the preferred modes of transportation;

- New and enhanced cycle and pedestrian links along the main route and the periphery, connecting with existing paths and the wider network and routes of the SWSDL to the north and with Prior's Farm to the east;
- A wide range of homes (up to 180 dwellings), including affordable homes, to respond to local needs;
- A high-quality place with a distinct character that positively responds to its surroundings, with a particular emphasis on integrating positively with the existing Pearces Farm complex;
- A central green open space with planting to provide screening and a buffer around Pearces Farm complex;
- A development with a higher density along the main street to create a well-defined street and lower-density edges that provide transition and natural surveillance to green space areas;
- A robust network of open spaces that retains and enhances existing natural features and provides opportunities for recreation;
- A network of safe and attractive play areas, including a Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP) and a Local Area for Play (LAP); and,
- SuDS features are provided as an integral part of open spaces.

7.67 Key facets of the proposed design are further explained below⁶

Layout

- 7.68 While the site's layout is subject to a future Reserved Matters application(s), a Land Use Parameter Plan (Drawing No. NICH210436-LUPP-01-P4) is nonetheless submitted for approval. Accordingly, the distribution of the main development parcels, primary street network, and green infrastructure has been considered.
- 7.69 The general arrangement is structured around a central thoroughfare / main street, serving as the primary vehicular and multi-modal access point. Lined with street trees, this will incorporate pedestrian and cycle routes and bus stops.
- 7.70 Development along this route will present a more urban and enclosed village character with a continuous frontage in parts. More informal mews and 'edge streets' are provided off the main street to smooth the transition between the central spine and the development edges.
- 7.71 Public open space is placed at the heart of the community to safeguard and enhance the setting of the Pearces Farm complex. Green infrastructure and areas of public open space wrap around the site, including a 'gateway space' to the northwest and green buffers to accommodate landscaping and soften the visual appearance of the development.

⁶ Note – the landscape strategy for the site is considered separately under the Landscape sub-heading.

- 7.72 Therefore, it is considered that the scheme accords with policies CP3 and CP4, and NPPF Chapter 12.

Scale and Density

- 7.73 As demonstrated on the Building Heights Parameter Plan (Drawing No. NICH210436-SHPP-01-P5), buildings will include two and 2.5-storey houses alongside apartment buildings of up to three storeys.
- 7.74 Building heights will vary across the site. Taller buildings are envisaged along the main street and near the 'gateway entrance' within the northwest of the site to provide enclosure and legibility. In contrast, building heights will be limited to two storeys near Pearces Farmhouse complex. Building heights also taper off from the main street, creating a smooth transition between the development's edges and the 'heart'.
- 7.75 This approach to scale and density results in a greater mix of dwelling types, sizes and tenures being provided. Accordingly, the proposed development envisages up to 180 dwellings, achieving a net density of 35.8 dwellings per hectare (dph). This ensures the efficient use of land and is appropriate in the context of the SWSDL.
- 7.76 As such, the scale and density of the proposed development are considered appropriate and consistent with Policies CP2, CP3, CP5, and TB05, in addition to NPPF Chapters 11 and 12.

Appearance

- 7.77 Whilst 'appearance' will be addressed at the reserved matters stage, the proposed development will include a wide range of dwelling types and sizes, including terraced, semidetached and detached dwellings, and apartments.
- 7.78 As detailed in the accompanying DAS, the dwellings will incorporate materials that reflect the character of Wokingham and Berkshire more broadly, drawing on the Wokingham Borough Design Guide.
- 7.79 Furthermore, it should be noted that NKH is a housebuilder and intends, therefore, to secure Reserved Matters approval (after the grant of Outline permission) and build out the site. As such, the details provided in the DAS provide a clear indication of the form and architectural treatments that will be proposed at the detailed planning stage.
- 7.80 The proposed dwellings' appearance will, therefore, accord with CS Policy CP3 and address the requirements of NPPF Chapter 12.

Housing Mix and Affordable Housing

- 7.81 Policy CP5 sets out that planning permission will be granted for residential development, providing a mix and balance of densities, dwelling types, tenures, and sizes. The policy further specifies that affordable housing must reflect the sizes and types that meet the proven needs of people who are unable to compete in the general housing market.
- 7.82 In the case of this planning application, the housing mix is a reserved matter. However, the proposed development is envisaged to include houses and apartments of different types and

sizes, and this is indeed reflected in the Illustrated Masterplan. The mix secured at the reserved matters stage will reflect the latest evidence of need (which is expected to accompany the pending Regulation 19 Local Plan consultation), taking account of the site's character and market demand.

- 7.83 It is proposed that 35% of the homes will be affordable, with this provision secured through a Section 106 Agreement. The affordable tenure mix will be subject to discussions with WBC and potential registered providers. The mix will be fixed through subsequent reserved matters submission(s), and affordable homes will be tenure-blind and arranged in clusters throughout the development.
- 7.84 Accordingly, the proposed housing mix will accord with Policy CP5 and address the requirements of NPPF Chapter 5.

Landscape and Open Space

Landscape and Visual Impact

- 7.85 Policies CC02 and TB21 requires developments to address local character assessments and retain or enhance the character of the area. Accordingly, a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) and associated ES chapter has been prepared by Environmental Dimension Partnership Ltd (EDP) in support of the application.
- 7.86 The LVA identifies the baseline conditions of the site and its surrounding area, and determines those landscape and visual characteristics that might inform the design of the development proposals, including recommendations for mitigation. The LVA confirms that the site does not lie within a national or locally designated landscape.
- 7.87 At a local level, as illustrated on Plan EDP 7, the site falls within a single Landscape Character Areas, LCA N1 Holme Green Pastoral Sandy Lowland. LCA N1 *“is characterised by its predominantly pastoral land use with smaller areas of arable land. The landscape here is gently undulating, opening out into flatter areas east of Holme Green and is set within a partially wooded context created by the Settled and Forested Sands to the south and the urban areas of Wokingham in the north.”*
- 7.88 Site visits have been undertaken and confirm, as acknowledged within the published LCA N1, the site is dominated by medium sized open pastoral farming with enclosing trees and hedgerows in declining condition, and settlement edge equestrian and hobby farm use.
- 7.89 The existing trees and woodland blocks surrounding the site provide the main bulk of the existing Green Infrastructure, with the intra-site hedgerows and trees providing connectivity between the vegetated site boundaries. In turn, as identified within the published LCA, these mature and maturing landscape features serve to enclose the site and restrict views of the site to the local area.
- 7.90 A combination of local topography combined with the presence of maturing landscape features both within the site and its immediate context provide an enclosed site character. This is predominantly experienced through a lack of longer distance outward views and the perceptual presence of maturing landscape features. On the basis of the above

consideration of susceptibility factors, the overall susceptibility of the landscape character is deemed to be medium.

- 7.91 The report also considers visual amenity in relation to existing views and considering the potential changes to views brought about by the proposed development. This analysis is undertaken for different receptor groups, including PROW users, road users and residential dwellings/groups.
- 7.92 The report provided a number of recommendations which have been taken forward into the application proposals, as follows:
- Protection and enhancement of the existing site boundary hedgerows and protection of vegetation beyond the site boundaries;
 - Retention and enhancement of existing hedgerow planting along field boundaries to help biodiversity and help filter views from surrounding PROW network; and
 - Consideration of the private amenity of adjacent properties and the setting of heritage assets.
- 7.93 On this basis, the proposed development provides new housing while respecting the sensitivity of the site and thereby minimising adverse effects on landscape character and visual amenity. The requirements of policies CC02 and TB21, and NPPF Section 15 are therefore addressed.

Open Space

- 7.94 The proposed development area at the site covers approximately 4.24 hectares of land, while the balance of 3.16 hectares is retained. This is controlled through the Land Use Parameter Plan.
- 7.95 Overall, the development makes provision (illustratively) for public open space as follows:
- Natural and Semi-Natural Open Space: 0.54ha
 - Amenity Greenspace: 0.44ha
 - Parks and Gardens: 0.48ha
 - Provision of LAP and LEAPs: 0.06
- 7.96 In total, the development provides 1.56 hectares of new public open space, on-site, alongside existing woodland and attenuation areas.

Flood Risk and Drainage

- 7.97 Policy CC09 requires that all sources of flood risk be considered in the planning application process to avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding. Therefore, a flood risk assessment (FRA) is submitted in support of this application. Hydrology and Flood Risk is also a Chapter within the ES.

- 7.98 The FRA notes that the proposed development is located within Flood Zone 1 and, therefore, has a low probability of flooding. The majority of the site also has a very low risk of flooding from surface water. The proposed residential development, as a 'more vulnerable' use class, is appropriate in this location⁷.
- 7.99 The development's ground levels will be set to a minimum of 150mm above the surrounding ground level. This will further mitigate the residual flood risk from surface water runoff events. The isolated areas of surface water ponding within the site will be managed through the surface water drainage strategy.
- 7.100 The proposed surface water drainage strategy (described at Outline level in the FRA) will manage the flood risk posed by uncontrolled surface water runoff from the site. The FRA confirms that any increase in surface water runoff can be managed using SuDS source control techniques and attenuation features to provide storage in extreme storm events.
- 7.101 While the application is submitted in Outline, the Illustrative Masterplan has been informed by the advice of NKH's appointed flood risk and drainage consultant. Therefore, assumptions regarding land use and development areas take account of the likely need for Blue Infrastructure.
- 7.102 Swales and attenuation features are to be integrated into the wider Green Infrastructure strategy to maximise biodiversity value and enhance the development's aesthetic attractiveness.
- 7.103 The FRA demonstrates that the risk of flooding is adequately managed, and the offsite flood risk is not increased through the implementation of a suitable surface water drainage strategy. The development proposals, therefore, comply with Policy CC09 and the provisions of NPPF Section 14.

Noise

- 7.104 Policy CC06 indicates that proposals must demonstrate how they have addressed noise impacts and protect noise-sensitive receptors. Accordingly, a Noise Impact Assessment is submitted alongside this application and 'Noise' is a technical Chapter within the ES.
- 7.105 The Impact Assessment identifies the nearby noise sources as Easthampstead Road to the southwest and the railway to the north. The report finds that the majority of residential gardens (as future receptors within the proposed development) will fall below the adopted noise criteria level (55db). However, some gardens will range between 55db and 65db.
- 7.106 To achieve 55db, appropriate mitigation measures will be provided, such as sound barriers at the edge of gardens ranging in height from 1.8m to 2.5m. Depending on the detailed arrangement (fixed at the Reserved Matters stage) Acoustic barriers / walls at the appropriate properties will ensure external noise levels are met.
- 7.107 Regarding internal noise levels, standard double-glazing windows are assessed as offering suitable sound reduction for the vast majority of properties envisaged, with additional glazing

⁷ Such that the sequential and exception tests are not required.

being potentially required for a very small number of plots. This will be an acceptable way of controlling internal noise levels during the daytime for all dwellings

- 7.108 Bedroom windows closest to Easthampstead Road are expected to exceed the noise criteria level. Therefore, any bedroom window located within 220m of Easthampstead Road will require a trickle ventilator to achieve suitable noise levels for future occupants.
- 7.109 These measures are a matter of detailed design but are entirely conventional. Therefore, they can be controlled through appropriate planning conditions, to be addressed in conjunction with future Reserved Matters submissions.
- 7.110 As such, with appropriate embedded mitigation, the proposed development will maintain an acceptable standard of residential amenity with respect to the acoustic environment in accordance with Policy CC06, and NPPF Section 15.

Ecology and Biodiversity

- 7.111 The application is supported by an Ecological Assessment and BNG calculation prepared by Ethos Environmental Practice, a chapter in the Environmental Statement has also been prepared.
- 7.112 The key baseline ecological conditions are identified as follows:

“The site comprised three fields of modified and other neutral grassland with boundary hedgerows, a small area of woodland, mixed scrub, two ponds, developed land; sealed surface, unsealed surface, vegetated garden and seven structures.”
- 7.113 The site is within the Zone of Influence (Zol) of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA). However, conventional mitigation measures, in the form of SANG provision and SAMM payments, have been endorsed by Natural England as mechanisms that avoid impacts on the designated habitat.
- 7.114 With respect to protected species surveys, bat surveys found the site to be of County importance for roosting brown long-eared bats and of local importance for commuting common pipistrelle bats. A maternity roost for brown long-eared bat was identified in the barn structure, B3. The eDNA survey for both ponds was returned as negative for great crested newt (GCN) DNA.
- 7.115 The development layout has been designed to retain, protect and enhance the most valuable ecological features, namely the boundary hedgerows and woodland in the southwest corner of the site. Mitigation measures are described to ensure compliance with protected species legislation for hedgehog, hare, bats, birds and reptiles, details of which will be provided within a CEMP. SANG will be required as mitigation for the site being within the buffer zone of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA.
- 7.116 The BNG assessment for the proposed development has also been undertaken. The BNG metric calculation uses baseline habitat data from habitat surveys undertaken by Ethos

Environmental Practice while the post development habitat types and distinctiveness scores were based on the Illustrative Landscape Masterplan.

- 7.117 To calculate the percentage change in 'habitat units' from the development, the predevelopment (baseline) and post-development (proposed) value of the habitats within the Proposed Development were entered into the Natural England Biodiversity Metric 4.0 calculation tool (Natural England, 2023).
- 7.118 The pre-development value of the site has been calculated using Biodiversity Metric 4.0 as 40.74 total habitat units. No high distinctiveness baseline habitat areas were identified.
- 7.119 The post-development habitats have been calculated as having a predicted value of 18.23 habitat units delivered, based on the Illustrative Masterplan proposals.
- 7.120 The Applicant is committed to achieving 10% net gain, with opportunities on site maximised where possible, and any off site BNG provision achieved in the vicinity through off site credits.
- 7.121 Assuming the implementation of recommended mitigation measures, no significant adverse ecological effects are predicted. The proposed development is therefore in accordance with relevant national and local planning policies, in relation to nature conservation (Policies CP1, CP3, CP7 and CP8) and relevant wildlife legislation.

Arboriculture

- 7.122 Policy CC03 seeks the protection and retention of existing trees, hedges and other landscape features. As such, a 'Tree Survey and Arboricultural Integration Report' has been prepared and is submitted in support of the planning application.
- 7.123 The primary arboricultural strategy is to retain and protect those trees that make the most outstanding positive contribution to the character and appearance of the site and the surrounding landscape, conserving the arboreal appearance of the site's character. The development does however necessitate some tree removals.
- 7.124 In this respect, of the 210 individual trees on site, 28 are expected to be removed. Removals will comprise 1 category 'A' oak (T208) 1 category 'B' silver birch (T61), in addition to 22 category 'C' and 4 category 'U' trees. Of the 20 groups of trees and 8 hedges on site, 9 category 'C' groups and 2 category 'C' hedges will be removed, in addition to a section of category 'C' hedges.
- 7.125 Tree removal has been limited to that which is necessary to facilitate the development and its access arrangements. Significant numbers of new trees will also be provided throughout the scheme. This will include street trees and planting within areas of public open space, and details of which will be provided at the reserved matters stage. The requirements of Policy CC03 and NPPF Section 15 are therefore addressed.

Agricultural Land

- 7.126 Policy CP1 sets out the principles for sustainable development which includes seeking to avoid development on areas of best and most versatile agricultural land (BMV). However, the policy also notes that consideration should be given to the quantity of BMV land available within the area and the significance of the development.
- 7.127 An Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) report has been prepared by Kernon Countryside Consultants Ltd and is submitted in support of the application. This indicates that a detailed survey was carried out at the site in January 2024. The survey found that the Site comprised of Grade 2, Subgrade 3a, Subgrade 3b and non-agricultural land. It is therefore acknowledged that part of the site (2.1ha) comprises best and most versatile land (BMV).
- 7.128 The report considers whether the proposed development subject of this application, is 'significant' and concludes that based on the threshold for consultation with Natural England, set at a loss of 20ha of BMV, at 2.1ha, the quantum of BMV is under 11% of the threshold and is therefore not considered to be significant development in agricultural land terms.
- 7.129 As the proposal is not significant development of BMV land, the requirement to consider if poorer quality land is available under footnote 62 of the NPPF is not triggered. However, for completeness this was also assessed within the supporting ALC report. The report concluded that *"Land in the area is therefore generally a mixture of BMV and non-BMV quality. The evidence shows that the mix of quality on the site, with about 30% BMV, is similar to the surrounding area."*
- 7.130 Therefore, while the loss of a small amount of BMV agricultural land is a material consideration, the proposed development forms part of a strategic allocation envisaged in the emerging Local Plan.
- 7.131 The requirements of Policy CP1 and NPPF Section 15 are therefore addressed.

Air Quality

- 7.132 An Air Quality Assessment has been prepared by AQC to support the application, with an assessment of the potential impacts undertaken within the Environmental Statement technical chapter.
- 7.133 The assessment demonstrates that future residents and users of the proposed development will experience acceptable air quality, with pollutant concentrations below the air quality objectives.
- 7.134 The proposed development will generate additional traffic on the local road network, but the assessment has shown that there will be no significant effects at any existing, sensitive receptor.
- 7.135 During the construction works, a range of best practice mitigation measures will be implemented to reduce dust emissions and the overall effect will be 'not significant'; appropriate measures have been set out in the report, are to be included in the Dust Management Plan for the works.

- 7.136 Overall, the construction and operational air quality effects of the proposed development on the land East of Easthampstead Road are judged to be 'not significant' and as such the proposals address the requirements of Policy CP1.

Heritage and Archaeology

- 7.137 Policy TB24 indicates that developments will be required to conserve and, where possible, enhance the important character and special architectural or historic interest of the building.
- 7.138 As detailed in the Heritage and Archaeology ES Chapter and the site-specific Archaeological and Heritage Assessment, the application site does not contain any designated (above ground) heritage assets but lies within the immediate vicinity of three Grade II Listed buildings. These comprise Pearces Farmhouse (1319141), together with an associated barn (1118118) and granary (1135768). These three heritage assets lie outside the redline plan but are positioned centrally on the site, north of Easthampstead Road.
- 7.139 The proposals, therefore, consider the significance of these above-ground heritage assets and seek to respond positively to their situation. In this respect, the proposed development provides appropriate buffers between the heritage assets and the proposed development. This ensures the setting of these buildings is both protected and enhanced via soft landscaping and, therefore, adheres to Policy TB24.
- 7.140 Any harm to these heritage assets is to their setting and falls within the 'less than substantial' category. The measures described above further mitigate the degree of harm. Any residual harm is outweighed by the benefits of the proposals in the wider planning balance, not least the provision of new homes and infrastructure in accordance with the policies of the emerging Local Plan.
- 7.141 Regarding below-ground heritage, Policy TB25 states that where development is likely to affect an area of high archaeological potential or an area likely to contain archaeological remains, the presumption is that appropriate measures shall be taken to protect remains by preservation in situ. Where this is not practical, applicants shall provide for excavation, recording, and archiving of the remains.
- 7.142 As detailed in the ES Chapter and the site-specific Assessment, available baseline information has identified a single archaeological feature within the application site. This feature comprises a former unrecorded infilled post-medieval field boundary, which is evaluated as being of 'low significance'.
- 7.143 In addition, a 'low potential' for Prehistoric to Early Medieval remains has been identified within the site. Meanwhile, a moderate potential for Medieval to Modern remains has been identified. Any remains, if present, within the site would likely comprise agricultural features (i.e. infilled field boundaries, drainage ditches or furrows). The Assessment suggests that such remains would have a 'very low' to 'low' significance and not merit preservation in situ.
- 7.144 In line with consultation advice received from the Archaeological Advisor, further investigative works could be secured through an appropriately worded planning condition. As such, it is considered that the presence of such remains would not pose a constraint to the site's

development proposal. The proposals, therefore, comply with Policies TB24 and TB25, as well as NPPF Chapter 16.

Contamination

- 7.145 A Phase 1 Ground Condition Assessment and Environmental Statement chapter has been prepared by Omnia and submitted in support of the proposed development.
- 7.146 Historically the site comprised open land (assumed agricultural) with three (3no.) different waterbodies situated on site, one (1no.) of which has now been infilled. The southern extent of the site has historically contained several small structures, associated with Pearces Farm which has been situated immediately south of the site.
- 7.147 BGS mapping indicates that the site is underlain by River Terrace Deposits (sand and gravel) within the central-eastern extent of the site only. This is a Secondary A Aquifer with medium vulnerability. The Report notes the site is entirely underlain with bedrock deposits of the London Clay Formation (clay, silt and sand) which is classified as unproductive strata.
- 7.148 The site is not located within a Source Protection Zone (SPZ) and there are no active or historical water abstraction licenses within 250m of the site. Where the River Terrace Deposits are mapped on-site, the risk of groundwater flooding is designated as low. Where there is an absence of superficial deposits, and the site is underlain directly by the London Clay Formation, the risk of groundwater flooding is negligible.
- 7.149 This Conceptual site model undertaken identified the presence of a series of potentially active pollution linkages associated with the previously recorded use of the site and surrounding areas, which are considered to have the potential to present a risk to identified receptors at the site based on the proposed development.
- 7.150 The report has recommended an intrusive site investigation be undertaken on the historic Made Ground on site, as well as the potential off-site sources to investigate the potential pollution linkages identified by the conceptual site model and determine the potential risks posed to future site users. Further testing of ground conditions, including intrusive ground investigations, can be secured via planning conditions, and if any contamination is found to be present, then suitable mitigation measures can be identified and secured.

Energy & Sustainability

- 7.151 Energist has prepared an Energy Statement for the proposed development, which outlines a specification of measures which demonstrates how the development can comply with reducing annual, regulated (in-use) carbon emissions from the proposed buildings.
- 7.152 The report confirms the proposed development will:
- Exceed the minimum standards of Building Regulations Approved Document Part L (2021), with an improvement of over 80%.
- 7.153 In order to achieve this and ensure a suitable improvement in energy performance over the baseline the proposed development will adopt the following:

- Energy efficient building fabric and insulation to all heat loss floors, walls and roofs.
- High efficiency double glazed windows throughout.
- Quality of build will be confirmed by achieving good air tightness results throughout.

7.154 Low and zero carbon devices can also be used to improve the energy performance of a building. The proposed development also looks to incorporate the following to ensure a suitable improvement in energy performance over the baseline:

- Photovoltaic panels
- Air source heat pumps
- Waste water heat recovery

7.155 These proposals go beyond the requirements of the local plans policies which set a minimum improvement target of 10%. The proposed development therefore complies with Local Plan policies CP1 and CC04.

8. DRAFT HEADS OF TERMS

- 8.1 The proposals will deliver a sustainable residential development which will contribute to the proposed spatial strategy and to meeting housing needs within the Borough. Consistent with legislation and the NPPF, the development's impacts can be mitigated by planning obligations (to be contained within an S106 Agreement) or appropriately worded planning conditions.
- 8.2 Whilst the majority of the infrastructure associated with the development will be funded through CIL receipts, the draft Heads of Terms for the S106 associated with the proposed development are expected to include affordable housing, open space and SANG, and potentially education.
- 8.3 The actual sum, triggers and precise wording for any financial contributions are to be agreed upon during the application process. However, all contributions must be substantiated and justified in the context of the NPPF and Regulation 122 of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended).

9. SUMMARY & PLANNING BALANCE

- 9.1 The preceding sections of this Statement have described the residential development proposed on Land East of Easthampstead Road / Pearces Farm, Wokingham.
- 9.2 The submitted outline planning application follows extensive engagement with officers at WBC, structured through a PPA, and meetings were also held with other relevant stakeholders, such as the Parish Council, Ward Members and the neighbouring Holme Grange School.
- 9.3 The wider community was engaged through a public consultation and existing residents were given the opportunity to voice their opinions and to shape aspects of the design, as will be considered further and fixed through future reserved matters submissions.
- 9.4 NKH and Lightwood have collaborated closely to develop a coherent approach to development. This means that both parties can bring forward their separate planning applications at approximately the same time. These submissions, taken together fully encompass the SDL extension area.
- 9.5 The NKH application seeks outline planning permission for up to 180 homes, with detailed consent only being sought for access. However, an Illustrative Masterplan has been submitted to convey the emergent design. Likewise, the accompanying DAS describes the evolution and rationale of the proposals.
- 9.6 The application is further supported by three accompanying parameters plans. These will allow WBC to determine key aspects of the design, notably land use, storey heights and access. It should also be recognised that the applicant (NKH) intends to build-out this site and that the layout (although illustrative) is expected to be a close reflection of what will be taken forward at the reserved matters stage.
- 9.7 In addition, the proposals are supported by an extensive suite of technical surveys, assessments and reports. Discussions have been had with officers and consultees on many technical aspects of the proposals during the PPA stage and they have been refined to account for the advice provided. The submitted reports confirm that the development will not give rise to any unacceptable impacts that cannot be successfully mitigated.
- 9.8 Whilst separate planning applications are submitted for the NKH and Lightwood sites, a joint Environmental Statement (ES) has been prepared. This ensures that the overall impact of development within the wider SDL extension has been assessed, and can be mitigated, comprehensively.
- 9.9 Consistent with PPA discussions, NKH's planning application and those prepared by Lightwood are submitted in advance of the Regulation 19 Local Plan consultation, which expected to take place in September 2024.
- 9.10 Consequently, the application will be 'in the system' before the future Local Plan Examination commences. The intention is for technical and design considerations to be thoroughly

addressed via the development management process, thereby confirming the proposed allocation's deliverability and suitability, to assist the Local Plan Inspector.

- 9.11 Although the applications are interrelated, they have been prepared in such a way that they do not necessarily need to be determined together. NKH's proposal on Land at Easthampstead Road is comparatively small-scale (up to 180 homes) compared to that progressed via Lightwood, and it can be delivered as a discrete standalone proposal.
- 9.12 Additionally, NKH's application also includes key road infrastructure, the early implementation of which would facilitate the delivery of the SDL extension as a whole. As such, there may well be a case for planning approval to be granted ahead of the adjoining Lightwood submission.

Planning Benefits

- 9.13 This Planning Statement, together with the accompanying reports and drawings, demonstrate that the site is not subject to prima facie constraints. The application documents also confirm that the proposals would not give rise to any unacceptable impacts, which cannot be effectively mitigated.
- 9.14 As set out in Section 7 of this statement (and within the Transport Chapter of the ES) the site is sustainably located, next to an existing settlement which provides a range of local services and public transport options. The provision of committed and further planned services, supported by new transport and active travel infrastructure, will significantly enhance the range of facilities accessible to the site,
- 9.15 Conversely, the proposed development will deliver planning benefits which carry commensurate weight in the planning balance. These are summarised under the headings below.

Social Benefits

- 9.16 The proposals provide a wide range of new homes (a mixture of types and sizes) to address needs across the community. The mix includes apartments, terraces, semidetached and detached properties. The proposals will create a high-quality environment with a distinct character that positively responds to its surroundings and with a particular emphasis on integrating positively with the Pearces Farm complex.
- 9.17 The provision of up to 180 new dwellings in this location will support existing community facilities and create an opportunity for future residents to develop new communal and social interactions. Indeed, new safe and attractive open and play spaces will be provided for all residents, with the central green space around Pearces Farm providing a focal point.
- 9.18 In addition, new walking and cycling routes through the site will be provided, connecting into the wider network. This will afford future residents with the opportunity for everyday trips to take place on foot or by bicycle and facilitate easier access to natural green spaces and the countryside.

- 9.19 Beyond the above, the provision of up to 180 homes (of a mixture of types and sizes) would make a material contribution to the 5YHLS position within the Borough. 35% of the new dwellings (approximately 63 homes) will also be affordable, with this helping to address the recognised need for increased affordable housing provision (and the significant shortfall in delivery that has accrued in the Borough).

Environmental Benefits

- 9.20 The proposed development makes provision for new landscape planting and includes a number of measures intended to generate new habitats and promote biodiversity at the site. Such measures are integrated within a holistic scheme of public open space, and multifunctional SuDS and Green Infrastructure.
- 9.21 In addition, the proposals will deliver energy efficient new homes that also comply with WBC's energy and water efficiency standards. In this respect, the proposals will contribute towards WBC's declared Climate Emergency and related actions to reduce carbon emissions.

Economic Benefits

- 9.22 The construction of new homes will support employment in the construction sector and within the wider supply chain. These will range from direct construction roles, professional positions, as well as jobs in logistics and manufacturing. House building is an important driver of economic growth and construction contributes 7% to UK GDP and employs over 9% of the workforce. The economic benefits of the development therefore carry commensurate weight, particularly during the ongoing period of economic uncertainty.
- 9.23 The proposed development incorporates significant highway improvements designed to integrate and benefit from the infrastructure of the South Wokingham Distributor Road (SWDR) providing a route from the site towards the London Road corridor and Wokingham town centre. The improvements include:
- A priority junction onto Easthampstead Road, south of Heathlands Road to the west;
 - A safeguarded route through the site to the north also allows for a potential future connection directly onto the SWDR;
 - New paths across the site, both next to roads and through the green spaces;
 - A Primary Street that can be used as a bus route linking Wokingham and Bracknell complementing the strategy already development for the South Wokingham SDL.
- 9.24 Financial contributions will also be provided through Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) payments and S106 obligations. This will ensure that further infrastructure can be delivered locally and across the wider Borough.

The Planning Balance

- 9.25 It is necessary to consider the proposed development (including its benefits and impacts), as part of an overall planning balance. The balancing exercise, as applied below, would apply should the application be determined in the current planning context, prior to the adoption of the new Local Plan. Notwithstanding this approach, we reserve the right to provide an

addendum to this Planning Statement in future, including to account for the progress of the emerging Local Plan and the increasing weight that its policies will attract over time. Likewise, we would also expect to provide further details following the conclusion of the Government's consultation on the revised NPPF and Standard Method.

9.26 Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that regard is to be had to the Development Plan and confirms that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

9.27 The correct procedure for determining a planning application has also been considered by the Courts on numerous occasions. This was set out particularly clearly in the High Court Ruling, 'Moulton Parish Council and Rt Hon The Earl of Derby Vs SoS'. This states that;

"In determining a planning application, the SSCLG must;

- i) Have regard to the statutory Development Plan (see s 70(2) TCPA 1990);*
- ii) Have regard to material considerations (s 70(2) TCPA 1990);*
- iii) Apply national policy unless he gives reasons for not doing so;*
- iv) Consider the nature and extent of any conflict with the Development Plan (Tesco vs Dundee [2012]);*
- v) Consider whether the development accords with the Development Plan, looking at it as a whole (Edinburgh vs SoS [1997]);*
- vi) Determine the proposal in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise (S38(6) PCPA 2004)"*

9.28 Consistent with the above, it is acknowledged that there is some conflict with the adopted Development Plan, in so far as the proposed development is on land that is currently situated within the countryside, outside of Wokingham's Development Limits. However, from analysis of the planning issues in the preceding sections of the Statement, it is clear that there exist a number of compelling material considerations and benefits that outweigh this conflict and indicate the application should be approved.

9.29 In this regard, it should be recognised that the adopted CS is dated and does not accurately reflect the level of housing need now identified within the Borough. In contrast, the emerging Local Plan seeks to address current housing needs, through the allocation of a number of sites for development. This includes at emerging Policy SS12, where it is proposed to allocate Land South of Waterloo Road as part of the South Wokingham SDL Extension which includes the site. These circumstances reduce the degree of conflict and harm that arises from the site's current location within the countryside.

9.30 It is also highly relevant that in the current Core Strategy the site is identified as falling within the extent of the South Wokingham SDL boundary, with flexibility being taken by WBC where proposals come forward within the existing SDL's, even if proposals do not accord with the SPD.

- 9.31 Some small degree of harm arises from the loss of BMV agricultural land, but this is tempered by the limited scale of the development and site in question and the importance of meeting housing needs, as part of the proposed SDL Extension. Some landscape and visual impacts would also arise, but these are ameliorated by the extent of the site's enclosure, and the proposed open space and landscaping, which is embedded in the scheme design. The site is also regarded as being sustainable in locational terms, with it having been recognised as such (by WBC) in the emerging Local Plan and the associated evidence base.
- 9.32 The level of harm arising from the proposed development is therefore not substantial enough to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits described, particularly the provision of market and especially affordable housing.
- 9.33 Therefore, having regard to the benefits of the proposals and accounting for the fact the site is proposed for allocation in the emerging Local Plan, it is considered that the planning application merits approval if determined in the prevailing planning context. To this, it is added that the weight applied to the policies of the emerging Local Plan will continue to increase, as the Plan progresses towards adoption. Therefore, it is expected that the planning balance will, over time, become ever more weighted in favour of approval.
- 9.34 As such, when taking the Development Plan as a whole, it is considered that planning permission for this sustainable and high-quality development should be granted.

APPENDIX 1. LOCATION PLAN



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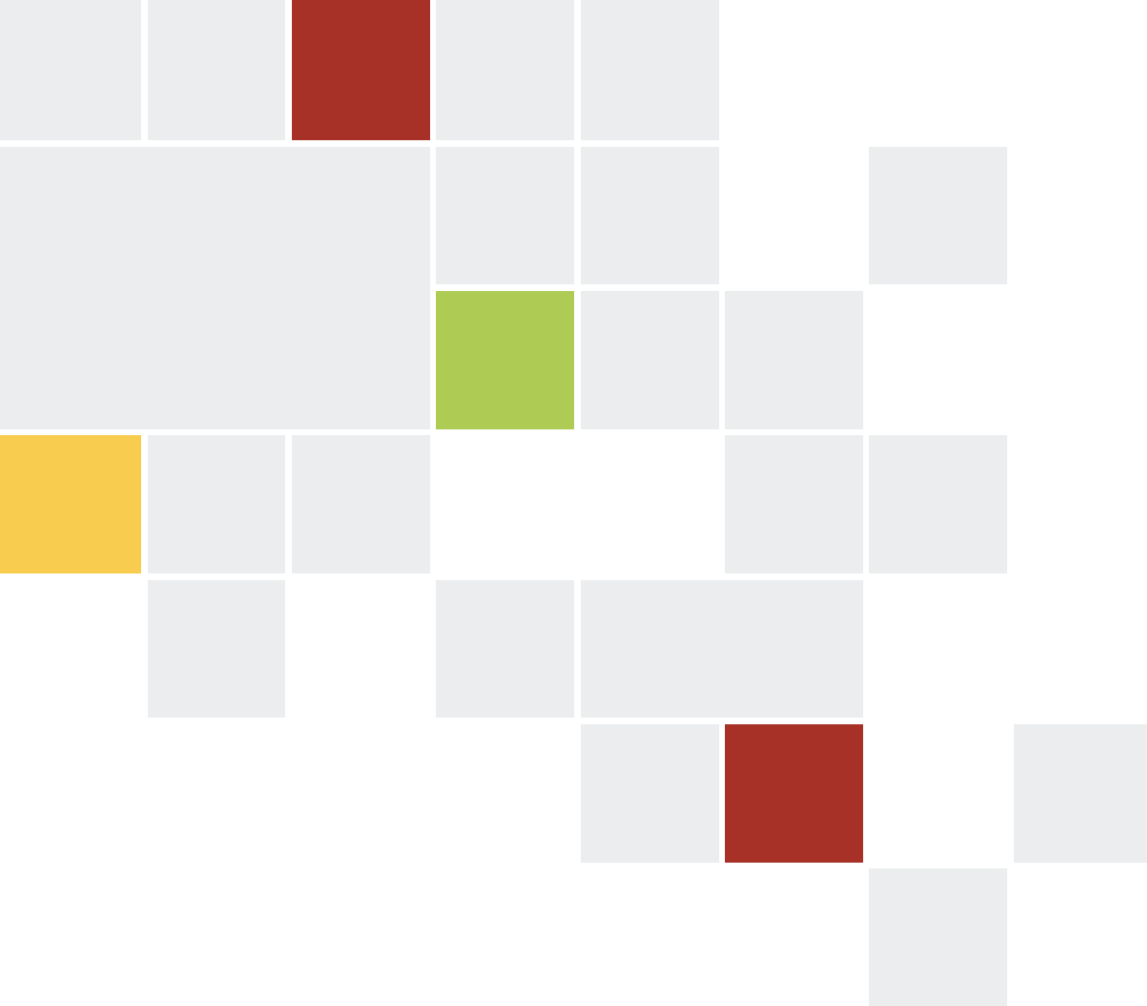
Rev	Description
P1	Preliminary Issue

Date	Au	Ch
02.07.24	NN	AB

Project	Land at Pearce's Farm, Wokingham
Drawing	Site Location Plan

Client	Nicholas King Homes	Date	06.03.24
Job no.	NICH210436	Rev.	P1
Dwg no.	SLP-02	Author	NN
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