

**SOUTH WOKINGHAM STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT LOCATION
EXTENSION**

**APPLICATIONS FOR OUTLINE AND FULL PLANNING PERMISSION
FOR RESIDENTIAL AND RELATED DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING
SUITABLE ALTERNATIVE NATURAL GREEN SPACE**

PLANNING STATEMENT

PREPARED ON BEHALF OF

LIGHTWOOD STRATEGIC



Contents

1	Introduction	3
2	Site and Surroundings	6
3	The Development Concept	9
4	Relevant Planning History	16
5	Relevant Planning Policy	19
6	Planning Analysis	22
7	Planning Balance	94
8	Conclusion	98

Appendices

RA Ref: LIGH0003
LPA Ref: -
Office Address: Number One
Queen Square Place
Bath
BA1 2LL
Telephone: +44 (0)1225 433675
Date of Issue: August 2024

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Statement relates to two applications for planning permission which can be described as follows:
- Application A: A hybrid application seeking outline planning permission for mixed use development comprising up to 850 homes and community facilities, including a neighbourhood centre (Use Classes F and/or E), with all matters reserved (apart from means of access) and a full application for SANG land and associated facilities
 - Application C: A full planning application to provide a vehicular crossing of Byway 30 to allow access for two parcels of land comprising the South Wokingham SDL Extension, and active travel connections to the byway to the north from Application A.
- 1.2 A parallel application (Application B) for outline planning permission for up to 180 units is being made by Nicholas King Homes (NKH) on adjacent land to the west for the second parcel of land comprising the South Wokingham SDL Extension. Application C is to provide the vehicular connection between the development proposed in Applications A and B.
- 1.3 Collectively, these three applications may be taken to constitute Phase 4 of the South Wokingham Strategic Development Location (SWSDL).
- 1.4 Since Application A includes very small areas of land adjacent to Old Wokingham Road that are within the adjoining administrative area to the east, a duplicate of that application is also being submitted to Bracknell Forest Council.
- 1.5 Although separate applications are being made for parts of the SWSDL Extension area, the overall development, with associated supporting infrastructure, has been planned on a composite basis, as is reflected in the illustrative masterplan details accompanying the applications. The SANG provisions for which full planning permission is being sought under Application A are to serve the requirements of the residential development comprised in both applications A and B.

- 1.6 The applications are accompanied by an Environmental Statement (ES). For the purposes of assessment of the environmental impacts the proposals have been construed as a single project described as follows:

Mixed use development of up to 1,030 homes, community facilities including neighbourhood centre (Use Classes F and/or E), public open space, play areas, allotments and associated infrastructure and landscaping; proposed Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and access.

- 1.7 Since the ES relates to the entire project area, and therefore encompasses the environmental impacts arising from all three applications (A, B and C), the analysis contained within this Statement will, at times, consider the implications of the overall project area development. That is particularly so in relation to transportation impacts since the access strategy is indivisible from the wider project area.

- 1.8 The following summary information is provided for the applications to which this statement relates¹:

Application A	Summary Information	
Site Area	56.04 hectares	
Previous / Existing Land-Use(s)	Agricultural	
Residential		
Existing Units	None	
Proposed Units	Market	Up to 553 (65%)
	Affordable	Up to 297 (35%)
	Total	Up to 850
Proposed Density	35.78 dph	
Public Open Space	31.11 hectares	
Local Centre		
Classes E and / or F	Site Area (Market Square)	2,132m ²

¹ The final quanta may be subject to change as the applications progress, through subsequent reserved matters and other applications, and in response to market circumstances

	Floorspace	Up to 2,000m ²
--	------------	---------------------------

Application C	Summary Information	
Site Area	0.21	hectares
Previous / Existing Land-Use(s)	By-way	
Infrastructure		
Road crossing corridor	53.5 x 18.2	metres
Footway / Cycleway connection	6 x 3	metres

- 1.9 If planning permission is granted, it is anticipated that the development will proceed on a phased basis, and that the conditions of planning permission will permit accordingly.

2. Site and Surroundings

- 2.1 The site and its surroundings are described and analysed in some detail in the Design and Access Statement and Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment that accompany the application.
- 2.2 The site of Application A is broadly defined by Byway 30 to the north-west, Easthampstead Road to the south-west and south, and Old Wokingham Road to the east. To the north the site abuts land and buildings associated with the Claremont Equestrian Centre, which is currently the subject of an application for planning permission for redevelopment for residential purposes². An area of land abutting, and to the north of, Easthampstead Road, comprising land and buildings associated with Priors Farm, is excluded from the application site³.
- 2.3 However, the site also extends to the south of Easthampstead Road to accommodate a single land parcel extending to nearly 8 hectares on which it is proposed to provide SANG together with an area of allotments.
- 2.4 The site is generally level, with a gentle slope towards a watercourse that traverses it in an east-west direction at its approximate mid point. The main Emm Brook channel, to which the watercourse discharges, is to the south of the area proposed for SANG to the south of Easthampstead Road.
- 2.5 Other than a group of agricultural buildings, and associated mobile home, to the west of Priors Farm, north-east of Easthampstead Road and south of the watercourse, the site is largely devoid of built development.
- 2.6 Apart from trees and hedgerows that occupy the boundaries, and a small copse to the south of the drainage channel at its approximate mid-point, the site is largely devoid of vegetation or other landscape features and is in arable use.
- 2.7 There are a number of public rights of way (PROWs) within and adjacent to the application sites. These include BW30 Link 1 (Holme Green Lane), and FP6 (Link 1) within the southern

² Application ref. 211033 – see Section 4 of this Statement

³ Hereinafter referred to as the 'retained land'

part of the site to the north of Easthampstead Road. Byway 30, which provides a connection between Easthampstead Road to the west and Waterloo Road to the north east, separates the main site (Application A) from the site the subject of the parallel application by NKH (Application B).

- 2.8 Two PROWs are also located within that part of the site to the south of Easthampstead Road. These are FP7 Link 1 and FP8 Link 1.
- 2.9 The context for the site is currently semi-rural, with its northernmost extent being located approximately 500 metres to the south of the current built up edge of Wokingham. However, it is within an area of planned change, and its context and character will evolve significantly as the existing SWSDL with its committed development is built out as an urban extension to the town.
- 2.10 Although currently bordered by relatively rural (albeit well-trafficked) roads, significant new highway infrastructure is being brought forward to the north as part of the SWSDL⁴. Of particular note is the South Wokingham Distributor Road (SWDR) which bridges the Waterloo to Reading Railway Line to serve the existing SWSDL.
- 2.11 In relation to the wider context, at its closest point the site is approximately 900 metres west of the Jennett's Park development, which is the western extent of the town of Bracknell to the east. However, separation from Bracknell is maintained by the Peacock Meadow SANG, Easthampstead Park Hotel, a grade II listed building standing in extensive grounds, and the Downshire Golf Course.
- 2.12 The settlement of Crowthorne lies approximately 1 kilometre to the south of the site measured from its closest point, which is the southern boundary of the proposed SANG to the south of Easthampstead Road. The intervening area comprises land in agricultural use, areas of woodland, and sporadic commercial and leisure uses. These are distributed predominantly along Old Wokingham Road, in addition to the Johnson and Johnson facility (accessed from Nine Mile Ride).
- 2.13 To the west and south west of the site is the White Horse Public House and Holme Grange School, and several sporadic sites in commercial use. Additional land uses are predominantly equine and agricultural, including the large Hall Hunter fruit growing site at

⁴ See Section 4, Schedule 4.1



Grays Farm owned by Wokingham Borough Council, which is proposed to be developed for indoor and outdoor sports and community uses in the Local Plan Update, together with a School for Special Educational Needs.

3. The Development Concept

- 3.1 The development concept is reflected in the illustrative masterplan and other drawings accompanying the application. It essentially comprises a grid of three urban blocks (which can be designated as 'neighbourhoods') within two predominant character areas ('Wokingham Urban Edge' between the existing urban edge and the watercourse, and 'The Villages' to the south of the watercourse)⁵ set within a green infrastructure framework that permeates and envelopes the urban block structure.
- 3.2 The composition and distinctive characters of the three neighbourhoods is considered later in this statement. The majority of the built development is proposed in the two neighbourhoods to the north of the watercourse that bisects the site on an east-west alignment. The Western and Eastern neighbourhoods, together comprising the Wokingham Urban Edge character area, are contained between the watercourse and committed and proposed development coming forward as part of the existing SWSDL. They are proposed to have an urban character and density, which is reflected in the building height parameter plans. Each neighbourhood is intended to have a focal point, a market square hosting a neighbourhood centre in the case of the western neighbourhood, and a residential square at the heart of the Eastern neighbourhood.
- 3.3 The neighbourhood centre will comprise a mix of commercial and community uses within use classes E and F. The application seeks approval for up to 2,000m² of floorspace for purposes within Classes E and/or F2 and/or Sui Generis (Drinking Establishments). The final floorspace quanta and mix will be determined in response to market circumstances and demand. However, the following preliminary provisions are made for the purposes of this application⁶:
- Civic space (up to 2,132m²)⁷ in a market square typology, with 275m² of floorspace (first floor) for purposes within Class F2 (comprised within a building incorporating enclosed floorspace (first floor) and open-sided undercroft with a limited enclosed storage area (circa 50m²) (ground floor)) flanked by 1,169m² of floorspace (ground floor) for purposes within Class E / Sui Generis (Drinking Establishments);

⁵ See Design and Access Statement, p.44, Figure 63

⁶ Ibid, see Figure 33 and Section 9 for locations and typologies

⁷ Excludes highway land

- Up to 217m² of floorspace (ground floor) for purposes within Class E within the Eastern Neighbourhood Square;
- Up to 240m² of floorspace (ground floor) for purposes within Class E comprised within a building within the vicinity of the Park and Garden / Main Street in the Wokingham Urban Edge Character Area.

- 3.4 It is possible that any food retail element comprised within the proposals could fall within either Class E or F2. If it falls within the latter, then the quantum of floorspace for purposes within Class E would be adjusted downwards accordingly. However, at this stage it is necessary to maintain flexibility for both scenarios. Moreover, as is illustrated in the Design and Access Statement, there is the potential to incorporate some flexible units which could accommodate either commercial or residential uses at ground floor level, and also sporadic commercial uses elsewhere within the scheme.
- 3.5 The Western and Eastern neighbourhoods will be separated by a substantial linear park that runs north from the watercourse to the northern site boundary. It will provide a significant green spine to the development onto which each neighbourhood will have an outward face through 'green lanes', and a comprehensive network of pedestrian / cycle routes providing connectivity to them, as well as through the park itself. The park will support a variety of informal recreational uses, and will incorporate two formal play areas (a LEAP and a NEAP). There will be two vehicular crossings on an east-west alignment across the park, by the primary access route and by a secondary route to the north of it, both of which will be lined by avenue trees.
- 3.6 At the southern end of the linear park the green infrastructure framework broadens to envelope the southern margins of the two northern neighbourhood blocks. To the south, the parkland gives way to part of the formal SANG that continues to the south of the watercourse and to the east of west of the retained land at Priors Farm. To the south-west of the Market Neighbourhood is an area of proposed amenity green space either side of the watercourse, and which is proposed to contain a variety of wetland and other habitats.
- 3.7 Attenuation basins associated with the Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDS) that will support the proposed development are incorporated in the watercourse corridor – at the

southern extremity of the linear park, at the north-eastern extremity of the SANG where it abuts the southern limit of the Eastern Neighbourhood, and in the amenity green space (on both sides of the watercourse) to the south-west of the Western Neighbourhood. The basins will be softly engineered, blended into the topography to create natural landforms.

- 3.8 The SUDS system will be supported by additional features to convey surface water drainage to the attenuation basins. These will include roadside swales, including in the linear park adjacent to the green lanes as shown on the illustrative details accompanying the application.
- 3.9 The third urban block (the 'Village Neighbourhood') is to the south of the watercourse that crosses the site, and is contained within a green infrastructure framework that buffers it on all sides. This part of the site is currently occupied by a group of farm buildings, which are to be demolished. It is detached from the urban blocks to the north, and the access road from the Western Neighbourhood to the north will bridge over the watercourse. As is evident from the design documents, this neighbourhood is intended to have a more rural, village character due to its scale (in spatial terms and the buildings by which it will be composed) and looser urban form, with a village green defining its core.
- 3.10 The access arrangements to the proposed development, which are submitted for approval, are set out in some detail in the Transport Assessment, and can be summarised as follows:
 - Principal access from Old Wokingham Road to the east of the site via a three-arm roundabout located approximately 500 metres south of the junction with Waterloo Road / Peacock Lane and 900 metres north of the junction with Easthampstead Road.
 - Secondary access from Easthampstead Road to the west of the site comprising a priority junction located approximately 140 metres south of Holme Green Lane and 50 metres north of Redlake Lane.
 - Access point comprising a simple priority junction on the south side of Easthampstead Road approximately 300 metres east of the Redlake Lane junction to car parking associated with the proposed SANG and allotments.

- Access point comprising a simple priority junction on the north side of Easthampstead Road approximately 300 metres west of its junction with Old Wokingham Road to car parking associated with the proposed SANG.
- 3.11 The principal access from Old Wokingham Road is intended to form the primary route through the development parcel. The access strategy has been planned and assessed as a composite whole in conjunction with the adjoining NKH site to the west (Application B). The primary route is intended to continue westwards through the NKH site to a priority junction with Easthampstead Road approximately 110 metres south of the Heathlands Road junction, allowing onward connections to the Heathlands Link and the wider future South Wokingham Distributor Road (SWDR) network⁸.
- 3.12 The principal access has been designed as a 6.5 metre road to enable it to accommodate a future public transport route. Internally within the site it will incorporate both a 3 metre shared footway / cycleway, and a 2 metre footway.
- 3.13 The parallel application for the road crossing of Byway 30 (Application C) seeks full planning permission for the road connection between the two developments. It incorporates a 6.5 metre carriageway flanked by a 3 metre shared footway / cycleway and a 2 metre footway.
- 3.14 The secondary access from Easthampstead Road will be a lower order road comprising a 5.5 metre carriageway flanked by 2 metre footways on either side. The secondary access road will run north-east from Easthampstead Road to connect with the primary access road in the vicinity of the proposed neighbourhood centre.
- 3.15 The secondary access will enable a point closure on Easthampstead Road approximately 700 metres west of its junction with Old Wokingham Road. Upon implementation of this closure, Easthampstead Road will cease to provide a through route eastwards. Instead, vehicles travelling south on Easthampstead Road and seeking to travel south on Old Wokingham Road will need to route through the secondary access to the new primary access roundabout on Old Wokingham Road, and travel south from there. This is a short detour (less than one mile) and there will be alternative options via the new SWDR. The limited number of properties to the east of the point closure will continue to access the wider

⁸ NB: It is intended that a future connection will be made direct to the Heathlands Link once a deliverable connection can be established

highway network via the existing junction with Old Wokingham Road and will not be able to route westwards along Easthampstead Road.

3.16 The point closure will provide significant betterment to the operation of the Easthampstead Road / Old Wokingham Road priority junction. It will result in a significant reduction in traffic on the section to the south of the secondary access point, and facilitate pedestrian / cycle priority movements between the proposed SANG and allotments to the south of Easthampstead Road and the wider development area to the north.

3.17 Whilst not subject to approval at this stage, within the development itself a hierarchy of vehicular, pedestrian and cycle routes is proposed with multiple aims to encourage travel by sustainable modes, provide legible and safe routes, and deliver high quality and visually distinctive streets. The hierarchy, and indicative typologies, are detailed in the Design and Access Statement⁹, and can be summarised as follows:

- Primary: the principal vehicular routes through the development with tree lines and in part incorporating cycling provision
- Secondary: lower order roads forming the main accesses to residential areas away from the principal routes as well as the secondary access from Easthampstead Road, with closer flanked housing and some incorporating tree lines and cycling provision
- Tertiary: primarily residential streets, including shared surfaces and some on-road parking, with some trees but no dedicated provision for cyclists
- Courtyards: mews-style residential roads contained to the rear of residential streets with some tree planting
- Green Lanes: quiet, single-sided residential roads outward facing onto green infrastructure with some tree planting and hedge boundaries to plot lines

3.18 Both the Design and Access Statement¹⁰, and the illustrative drawings accompanying the application¹¹, detail active travel and dedicated cycling routes, both on-road and connecting through the green infrastructure provisions, in addition to the informal network that will be

⁹ Design and Access Statement, Section 6

¹⁰ Ibid, Figure 62

¹¹ Drawing ref. SK_02.3_G

available through the hierarchy of streets. They also demonstrate how those routes will connect with existing on- and off-road active travel infrastructure beyond the site.

3.19 In addition to means of access, the application seeks approval for the full details of the proposed SANG. The total extent of the SANG is 21.38 hectares (21.26 hectares net of car parking), of which 13.65 hectares is to be provided to the north of Easthampstead Road, and 7.73 hectares to the south. The proposed SANG extends from the ordinary watercourse that bisects the site on an east-west alignment, to the south and east as far as Easthampstead Road, enveloping the retained land at Prior's Farm, and continues to the south of Easthampstead Road. It will incorporate a variety of habitats and recreational environments including:

- Wetlands associated with the SUDS basins in the centre of the site where the watercourses converge.
- Woodlands
- Native shrub planting around the margins to the woodlands
- Wildflower meadows with specimen tree planting
- Areas of amenity grassland to the margins of the footpaths

3.20 The principal footpath routes through the SANG will comprise 2 metre wide, timber-edged paths surfaced with self-binding gravel. They will support a continuous circular route through the SANG connecting into a 3 metre wide path surfaced in buff tarmac towards the north-eastern periphery of the SANG, which itself will connect the parkland to the north with the footpath route to the east of Old Wokingham Road. Timber-decked bridges will provide dry access across the watercourses at the northern extremity of the SANG. More informal, mown grass paths will provide wider accessibility through the SANG, incorporating the existing public footpath that crosses the SANG land to the south of Easthampstead Road that will connect into the proposed SANG on adjoining land to the south¹².

¹² See Section 4, Application ref. 233185

- 3.21 The SANG footpath network will cross Easthampstead Road in two places to the west of the retained land at Priors Farm. The point closure will mean that the footpath crossings will be virtually traffic-free.
- 3.22 Two small car parks are proposed to serve the SANG, to the north and south of Easthampstead Road. The car park to the north, to the east of the retained land at Prior's Farm, will be to the east of the point closure and will be accessed via Old Wokingham Road. The car park to south will be to the west of the point closure, and will be accessed from Easthampstead Road, and the wider highway network associated with the proposed SWSDL Extension, to the north-west.
- 3.23 An area of allotments is also proposed to the south of Easthampstead Road, abutting the southern SANG car park, by which they will also be served. A community orchard is proposed within the SANG as a buffer to the allotments.
- 3.24 Wayfinding and interpretation boards will be provided at various locations within the SANG, together with litter and dog waste bins.

4. Relevant Planning History

- 4.1 There is limited planning history relating to the application sites themselves. However, the planning history of the wider area, and in particular the locations to the north, is important for the future context that it will provide for the application sites.

Schedule 4.1 Relevant Planning Applications

Appn. Number	Proposed Development	Decision
SWSDL Phase 1 (Montagu Park, formerly Buckhurst Farm)		
O/2010/1712	Outline planning permission for up to 650 dwellings with neighbourhood centre, SWDR from London Road to the railway and open space	Approved (18.12.2012)
VAR/2015/0342	Variation of conditions 3 (phasing), 56 (sustainable design and construction) and 62 (affordable housing) of Planning Permission ref. O/2010/1712	Approved (02.06.2015)
161963	Variation of Conditions 3 (phasing), 7 (neighbourhood centre development brief) and 62 (affordable and specialist housing provision) and removal of condition 63 (extra care dementia housing) of planning permission ref. O/2010/1712 as amended by planning permission ref. VAR/2015/0342	Approved (11.10.2016)
SWDR (south of the Railway)		
172934	Eastern Gateway: full planning permission for a single carriageway road between William Heelas Way and Waterloo Road, including a bridge over the Reading-Waterloo Railway line and connection to Waterloo Road	Approved (19.02.2018)
192928	Full planning permission for construction of SWDR between Finchampstead Road and Waterloo Road, including a link to Heathlands Road	Approved (24.05.2021)
SWSDL Phase 2		
190900	Full planning permission for SANG with associated landscaping on land South of	Approved (24.05.2021)

	Anne's Manor (to be read in conjunction with applications 190914 and 191068)	
190914	Phase 2a – outline planning permission for up to 215 dwellings on land adjacent to Bigwood and east of the SDL	Resolution to approve, subject to S106 Obligation (18.05.2021)
191068	Phase 2b – hybrid application for up to 1,434 dwellings (outline) and SANG (full) on land south of Waterloo Crescent	Resolution to approve, subject to S106 Obligation (18.05.2021)
192325	Phase 2c – hybrid application for up to 171 dwellings (outline) and SANG (full) on land south east of Finchampstead Road	Resolution to approve, subject to S106 Obligation (09.03.2022)
SWSDL Phase 3		
211033	Outline planning permission for up to 95 dwellings following demolition of existing equestrian buildings on land west of Old Wokingham Road and south of Waterloo Road	Undetermined
Other Relevant Applications		
233185	Full application for change of use of agricultural land to outdoor sport or recreation (Class F2(c)) for use as Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) with associated landscape, drainage works, car parking and access on land at Newlands Farm, Old Wokingham Road, Crowthorne	Undetermined

- 4.2 As is evident from the application history, the first phase of the SDL, to the north of the Railway line, was granted planning permission within three years following the adoption of the Core Strategy, in which the SWSDL was first allocated. That first phase, now known as Montagu Park, has largely been built out. The second phases, to the south of the Railway, have been much slower in coming forward, in part constrained by the lack of an eastern gateway incorporating a new railway crossing from Montagu Park.
- 4.3 The necessary road infrastructure to deliver the second phase of the SWSDL now benefits from planning permissions, with the Eastern Gateway providing a new bridge across the Railway from Montagu Park, having recently been completed. Moreover, there are



resolutions to approve outline planning permissions for residential development, and full planning permissions for supporting SANGs, across the residue of the development area. Grant funding has also recently been secured (March 2024) for delivery of the SWDR between the Eastern Gateway and Finchampstead Road.

5. Relevant Planning Policy

- 5.1 The policy framework that is considered to be relevant to the determination of the applications is set out below. It is likely to evolve prior to determination of the applications as it is anticipated that the Wokingham Local Plan Update will progress to Regulation 19 consultation stage by Autumn 2024.
- 5.2 Since the site includes land that is within the administrative area of Bracknell Forest, the provisions of the recently adopted Bracknell Forest Local Plan are also relevant.

Schedule 5.1: Relevant Policies

National		
National Policy	NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
Regional		
South East Area Plan (Saved)	NRM6	Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area
Local (Wokingham Borough)		
Wokingham Borough Local Development Framework Core Strategy DPD (WBCS) (Adopted January 2010)	CP1	Sustainable Development
	CP2	Inclusive Communities
	CP3	General Principles for Development
	CP4	Infrastructure Requirements
	CP5	Housing Mix, Density and Affordability
	CP6	Managing Travel Demand
	CP7	Biodiversity
	CP8	Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area
	CP9	Scale and Location of Development Proposals
	CP10	Improvements to the Strategic Transport Network
	CP11	Proposals Outside Development Limits (including Countryside)
	CP13	Town Centres and Shopping
	CP14	Growth and Renaissance of Wokingham Town Centre
	CP15	Employment Development

	CP21	South Wokingham Strategic Development Location
Wokingham Borough Development Plan Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (MDDLDP) (Adopted February 2014)	CC01	Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
	CC02	Development Limits
	CC03	Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping
	CC04	Sustainable Design and Construction
	CC05	Renewable Energy and Decentralised Energy Networks
	CC06	Noise
	CC07	Parking
	CC08	Safeguarding Alignments of the Strategic Transport Network and Road Infrastructure
	CC09	Development and Flood Risk
	CC10	Sustainable Drainage
	TB05	Housing Mix
	TB07	Internal Space Standards
	TB12	Employment Skills Plan
	TB15	Major Town, Small Town / District Centre Development
	TB16	Development for Town Centre Uses
	TB17	Local Centres and Neighbourhood and Village Shops
	TB20	Service Arrangements and Deliveries for Employment and Retail Use
	TB21	Landscape Character
	TB23	Biodiversity and Development
	TB24	Designated Heritage Assets
	TB25	Archaeology
Wokingham Local Plan Update (WLPU)	SS1	Spatial Strategy
Revised Spatial Strategy Consultation (November 2021)	SS7	South Wokingham Strategic Development Location
Supplementary Planning	BDG	Borough Design Guide

Documents (SPD)	SWSDL	South Wokingham Strategic Development Location SPD (2011)
	IDC	Infrastructure Delivery and Contributions SPD (2011)
	AH	Affordable Housing SPD (2011)
	SDC	Sustainable Design and Construction SPD + Companion Guide (2010)
Local (Bracknell Forest Borough)		
Bracknell Forest Local Plan (2020-2037) (BFLP) (Adopted March 2024)	LP 3	Sustainable Development Principles
	LP 23	Development of Main Town Centre Uses Outside of Designated Centres
	LP 25	Transport Principles
	LP 28	Design Principles
	LP 30	Green Infrastructure
	LP 32	Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area
	LP 35	Development in the Countryside
	LP 36	Landscape Character (Outside of Defined Settlements)
	LP 50	Design

- 5.3 Through the Planning Analysis in Section 6 the alignment of the proposals with the relevant national and local planning policies will be considered, and the weight to be given to the provisions of the Development Plan and other material considerations will be assessed.

6. Planning Analysis

Principle of Development

- 6.1 The NPPF establishes an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. Applications that accord with the Development Plan will be approved, unless material considerations indicate otherwise¹³.
- 6.2 The WBCS currently establishes the spatial vision for the Borough for the period 2006-2026, including a requirement to provide at least 13,847 new dwellings, with associated infrastructure¹⁴. The majority of this new residential development is to be accommodated in four Strategic Development Locations (SDLs), of which land to the south of Wokingham is one. The WBCS anticipates a comprehensively planned, phased urban extension of around 2,500 dwellings and associated infrastructure on 85 hectares of land within the South Wokingham SDL (SWSDL)¹⁵.
- 6.3 The allocation of the SWSDL is consistent with the locational strategy of the WBCS which identifies Wokingham as a 'Major Development Location'¹⁶, and therefore a top tier settlement in the hierarchy. The scale of development proposals that will be acceptable is intended to reflect the levels of facilities and services, together with the location's accessibility.
- 6.4 The WBCS requirements are amplified by the SWSDL SPD and the IDC SPD. In line with these documents the MDDLPP establishes the extent of the settlement of Wokingham¹⁷, including the limits of the SWSDL. However, WBCS Policy CC02 provides as follows:

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:

¹³ MDDLPP, Policy CC01

¹⁴ WBCS, Policy CP17

¹⁵ Ibid, Policy CP21

¹⁶ Ibid, Policy CP9

¹⁷ MDDLPP, Policy CC02

- a. *Comprehensive masterplan; and*
- b. *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.*

6.5 As is explained in the Officer's report relating to the Phase 2b application by Kier-Miller:

The land within the SDL boundary but outside development limits remains designated countryside. (Core Strategy Policy CP11 – Proposals outside development limits (including countryside)) and some parts are allocated as SANG (MDDL Policy SAL05 - Delivery of avoidance measures for Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area and section 9.1 of this report). However, recognising that masterplanning of the SDL was yet to take place, policies CC02 and SAL05 allow flexibility for alternative layouts, where they are accompanied by a deliverable SDL wide master plan and Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP).¹⁸

6.6 It is therefore evident that there is flexibility within the provisions of the existing Development Plan framework to bring forward alternative proposals for the SDLs involving land outside the existing SDL boundaries and development limits, on land that is designated as countryside, providing it is in accordance with a comprehensive masterplan.

6.7 The intended flexibility embedded in the provisions of the Development Plan relating to the SDLs is reflected in the deviations from the concept plan for the SWSDL included in the WBCS (see top right) of the proposals incorporated in the comprehensive masterplans accompanying the applications for Phase 2 of the SDL (see bottom right). The proposed SANG occupying the eastern and south-eastern margins of the SWSDL, the latter extending into the current application area, has been omitted. It has been relocated, in part, to an alternative location to the



¹⁸ Report to Planning Committee, 18 May 2021, Agenda Item 80, Application ref. 191068, para. 4

west of Easthampstead Road within the SDL, and in part to an alternative location south of St Anne's Manor on land to the north east that is outside the SDL.

- 6.8 The professional advice to Members when considering the application for the SANG on land south of St Anne's Manor in relation to the principle of such development outside development limits, was as follows:

SANG is essentially semi-natural public open space for walking and other informal, outdoor recreation. This constitutes a countryside based activity which contributes to recreation in and enjoyment of the countryside. As such, it is acceptable in principle under Core Strategy policy CP11 Proposals outside development limits (including countryside). The proposed use would also be consistent with the aim of protecting the separate identity of settlements. The new public open space would effectively form an extension to the existing SANG at Buckhurst Meadows, so is also consistent with MDDL policy CC03 Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping which requires development to provide new or protect and enhance the Borough's Green Infrastructure networks, including mitigation of the impact of new development.¹⁹

Use as a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) falls within class D2 assembly and leisure/F2 local community use, rather than being a use in itself. Therefore, its suitability for use as a SANG is not fundamental to the acceptability of the proposal, which is acceptable in principle.²⁰

- 6.9 The legacy from the extant planning permissions granted for the SWSDL is therefore that there is scope within the provisions of the adopted Development Plan to accommodate SDL-related development beyond both the settlement and SDL limits. Perhaps more importantly, the indicative distribution of built development and SANG shown on the concept plan for the SWSDL that is included in the WBCS, is not binding, and the relocation of SANG from the indicative locations enables the locations that it vacates to be replaced by built development.
- 6.10 A significant part of the current application sites is therefore already within the SWSDL²¹. The part within the SWSDL includes the majority of the area on which residential development is now proposed. The southern extremity of the existing SWSDL coincides

¹⁹ Report to Planning Committee, 18 May 2021, Agenda Item 78, Application ref. 190900, para. 12

²⁰ Ibid, para. 13

²¹ See Design and Access Statement, p.5, Figure 2

with the line of an existing ditch that crosses the site in an east-west direction. Only limited built development is proposed on the land to the south of the ditch that is beyond the limits of the existing SWSDL, which is physically separated by open space from the development area to the north, and is proposed to have a very different village character and form in contrast to the more urban development to the north. The built development will also replace an existing group of farm buildings, and has a less open character than land to the east which will be incorporated into the SANG provisions for the additional development.

- 6.11 As the evidence from the planning permissions granted for the SWSDL to date confirm:
- There is no objection in principle to residential development in locations indicated for SANG on the SWSDL concept plan contained in the WBCS.
 - There is no objection in principle to the provision of SANG to mitigate the recreational pressures arising from residential development within the SWSDL, on land outside the limits of the SWSDL and outside the defined settlement limits for Wokingham.
- 6.12 Following the above principles which have been established through the earlier permissions that have been granted, the only conflict in principle between the current proposals and the provisions of the adopted Development Plan is the village neighbourhood at Hambridge Farm adjacent to Easthampstead Road. This is the only built development that is proposed on land currently outwith the SWSDL
- 6.13 Whilst the proposals will result in an overall scale of development which exceeds that contemplated for the SWSDL in the WBCS²², the provisions of the Plan are minima. Moreover, a greater scale of development is consistent with the status of Wokingham in the settlement hierarchy as a 'major development location', and is not disproportionate to its role in that respect.
- 6.14 As is confirmed in the strategic policy that relates to the SWSDL²³, delivery of around 2,500 dwellings within the area identified is intended 'by 2026'. Therefore, the quantum of housing proposed is intended to meet needs arising between 2006-2026. The additional quantum now proposed will therefore contribute to meeting needs in the period beyond 2026 for which

²² WBCS, Policy CP21

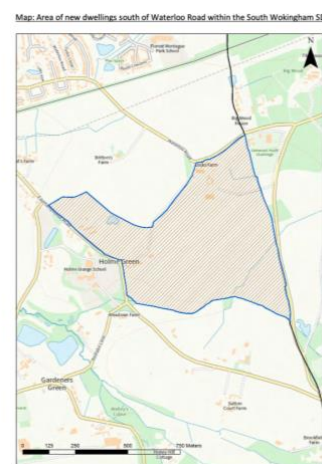
²³ Ibid

planned provision has yet to be confirmed notwithstanding that the current development plan is nearly 18 years time-expired, with less than two years of the twenty year time period that it covers, left to run. Moreover, the housing requirement underpinning the policies and provisions of the adopted Development Plan (623 dwellings per annum) is considerably below the current local housing need assessed in accordance with the national standard method (795 homes per annum).

- 6.15 The two Development Plan documents that comprise the current adopted Development Plan framework are both more than five years beyond the date of their adoption, but have yet to be subject to review and replacement. Given these circumstances, and irrespective of the position regarding the five year supply of deliverable housing land that is an 'other material consideration' which is considered later in this Statement, there is an urgent and compelling need to replenish the overall housing land supply with additional sites to accommodate the requirement beyond 2026 when the current plan period expires.
- 6.16 Progress on the Local Plan update was delayed following Regulation 18 consultation on an initial draft between February-March 2020. In that draft the strategic development and locational strategy was largely unchanged, with Wokingham continuing to be identified as a 'major development location'. Moreover, the SWSDL was maintained as an allocation to deliver around 2,500 dwellings in the period to 2026.
- 6.17 The principal new allocation to meet needs beyond 2026 was through a new garden town at Grazeley to deliver a minimum of 15,000 dwellings (10,000 within Wokingham Borough and 5,000 within West Berkshire District). It was anticipated that at least 3,750 dwellings would be deliverable within Wokingham Borough in the period to 2036.
- 6.18 The proposed new garden village at Grazeley was subsequently abandoned following an extension of the emergency planning zone around AWE Burghfield to include the location in which it was proposed. This means that the 10,000 dwellings to meet needs in Wokingham in the period beyond 2026 will have to be accommodated in other locations.
- 6.19 A further Regulation 18 consultation was undertaken between November 2021-January 2022 on a revised growth strategy for managing development across the borough up to 2037-38. The proposed strategic allocation at Grazeley was deleted and the strategy for future growth was summarised as follows:

... 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.²⁴

6.20 As part of this revised growth strategy a southern expansion of the SWSDL was proposed providing around 835 new dwellings. The proposed expansion was to be achieved through allocating the SANG land within the adopted SWSDL Concept Plan for residential development, and relocation of the SANG to the south of the drainage ditch (then assumed to be the Emm Brook), between the latter and Easthampstead Road.



6.21 Two alternative, higher growth scenarios were tested, which involved land to the south of the drainage ditch up to Easthampstead Road. However, the preferred option (below right) was selected on the basis that existing landscape features are used to define the limit of development, and the site could deliver a strategic scale of growth whilst meeting its own SANG and open space requirements.



6.22 The landscape 'feature' alluded to above is understood to be the assumed course of the Emm Brook that is cited in the concept rationale in the WBCS²⁵. However, through the further evidence base that has been compiled to support the current proposals it has been established that:

- The drainage channel that traverses the site in an east-west direction and currently defines the southern boundary of the SWSDL is not the Emm Brook but a drainage ditch that discharges to it beyond the site to the south-west.

²⁴ Wokingham Borough Council, Local Plan Update: Revised Growth Strategy Consultation, Nov 2021-Jan 2022, para. 4.9

²⁵ WBCS, Appendix 7, para A7.42(a)

- The drainage ditch is not a strong landscape feature and is therefore not a strong feature to define the southern limits of the SWSDL as originally assumed.

6.23 The current application proposals represent a refinement of the preferred option that was canvassed through the consultation on the revised growth strategy that is sensitive to the landscape and countryside context whilst optimising the development capacity of the location. The conceptual proposals have been developed and refined through the vehicle of a PPA incorporating engagement with a multi-disciplinary team²⁶. Through that process it has been demonstrated that:

- As outlined above, the drainage channel that bisects the site is not the Emm Brook itself, but little more than a drainage ditch that discharges to it to the south west of the site. Importantly, it is not a strong landscape feature on the ground as previously purported to be the case.
- Whilst that part of the site to the south-east of the drainage ditch has the perception of open countryside and is therefore best suited to SANG, the area at Hambridge Farm, between the drainage ditch and Easthampstead Road, is more enclosed and in a context of sporadic development, including existing buildings on the site itself. It therefore has scope for additional residential development that has a different, more ‘village-like’ character.
- There is scope to deliver a greater strategic scale of growth whilst meeting its own SANG requirements, including SANG provision to the south of Easthampstead Road that will provide a more rural ambience, as well as extensive green parkland infrastructure integrated with the more urban development to the north of the drainage ditch.
- Through optimisation of densities endorsed through careful and robust character analysis and strong design principles, the overall capacity of the extended SWSDL can be increased.

6.24 Therefore, to the extent that there is any conflict in principle with the provisions of the Development Plan at the present time, it is partial and limited. As has been confirmed

²⁶ Statement of Common Ground, paras. 3.2-3.6 and Table 1

through the planning permissions that have been granted and resolved to be approved for earlier phases of the SWSDL, there is no objection in principle to the development of SANG in countryside locations outwith development limits. Moreover, there is no objection in principle to residential development in locations indicated for SANG on the SDL concept plans linked to WBCS Core Policy 21. It is germane that the concept plans for the SDLs are incorporated in Appendix 7 (Additional Guidance for the Development of Strategic Development Locations) to the WBCS and therefore do not form part of the policy itself. As 'guidance' rather than policy, there is greater scope for flexibility.

- 6.25 The majority of the site on which built development is proposed is contained within the existing limits of the SWSDL. As has been confirmed through the earlier phases, there is no objection in principle to accommodating built development on the indicative areas for SANG by accommodating the SANG in an alternative appropriate location outwith the SWSDL.
- 6.26 There is no conflict with the scale of growth exceeding WBCS requirements since the proposals will deliver homes to meet needs in the period beyond 2026 for which planned provision has yet to be confirmed, notwithstanding that the current plan period is more than 18 years time-expired with less than two years remaining. Given that planning permissions have yet to be issued for the phase 2 sites, it is evident that the SWSDL will not deliver the homes that were intended in the period to 2026. The clear lesson is therefore the need to start the planning process much earlier, and in particular to facilitate the granting of planning permissions at a much earlier stage in the Development Plan period to ensure the delivery of homes to start in a timely manner.
- 6.27 To the extent that there is *prima facie* in principle conflict with the provisions of the Development Plan, it relates to the proposed village neighbourhood on land at Hambridge Farm that is currently outside both the development limits for Wokingham, and therefore in open countryside for planning policy purposes, and outwith the current limits of the SWSDL. However, given the outdatedness of the Local Plan, which is based on housing requirements that have been superseded by requirements set through the national standard method, and the delays in bringing forward the Local Plan Update, the weight that can be afforded to any conflict with WBCS Policy CP11 is reduced.
- 6.28 It is clear from the emerging Local Plan Update that the spatial strategy is unlikely to change, and therefore there will be a continued focus of growth at the 'major development locations'

that include Wokingham. The forced abandonment of a major new community at Grazeley has limited the options for future growth, with an inevitability that there will be an enhanced focus on the existing SDLs.

- 6.29 It is significant that, in the revised Sustainability Appraisal of the Revised Spatial Strategy Consultation in November 2021, an expanded SWSDL was included as a constant across all the spatial strategy alternatives that were tested. The reason given for this was that the South of Wokingham SDL extension was the ‘strongest performing’²⁷. There is therefore a certain inevitability that the extension of the SWSDL will be necessary to meet the requirement for homes in the period beyond 2026. The essential issue is therefore the quantum of additional growth that the extended area can accommodate.
- 6.30 The thoughtful and expert assessment and masterplan optioneering that has been undertaken by John Simpson Associates, that is set out in the design documents that accompany this application, and which has been informed by a detailed and robust evidence base that is contained in the EIA and other documents that also form part of the application, has demonstrated how the optimum capacity can be achieved through extending beyond the limits of the existing SDL, and through incorporation of additional SANG land that is available to the applicants. This did not appear to have been contemplated through the optioneering undertaken by DLA for the purposes of the 2021 consultation exercise.
- 6.31 The preferred masterplan has evolved through a process of engagement under a Planning Performance Agreement between the applicant teams and officers of the Council to progress the vision for the SWSDL Extension as a basis for inclusion in the Local Plan Update. It is understood that there is now a broad measure of consensus and agreement regarding the illustrative masterplan proposals, and that, subject to endorsement by Members, they are likely to form the basis for an extended SWSDL to be included in the Regulation 19 Plan when published for consultation purposes. It is anticipated that, by the time the current application is reported to the Planning Committee for determination, the provisions of the Local Plan Update will be confirmed, and that it will have reached a stage at which they can be afforded weight in the decisions.
- 6.32 Having regard to all of the foregoing circumstances it is considered that the application proposals give rise to an objection in principle when assessed against the provisions of the

²⁷ Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update, Interim SA Report, November 2021, p.76

current Development Plan, albeit limited to the proposed built development at Hambridge Farm outwith the boundary of the SWSDL as currently defined in the WBCS. However, given the outdatedness of the current Plan, the urgent need to bring forward land to deliver homes to meet needs arising from 2026, and the direction of travel of the Local Plan Update in relation to which the evidence indicates extension of the SWSDL to be the most sustainable of all strategic alternatives, the weight to be afforded to that limited conflict is diminished accordingly. Moreover, by the time of determination of these applications it is likely that the Regulation 19 Plan will have progressed to a stage at which it can be afforded greater weight.

- 6.33 Finally in relation to principle, as set out in Section 1, small areas of land adjacent to the Old Wokingham Road that are included within the application site, are within the adjoining administrative area of Bracknell Forest. The proposals for those small areas of land are therefore properly assessed against the provisions of the recently adopted BFLP.
- 6.34 First, there are no buildings proposed on land within the application site that falls within the administrative area of Bracknell Forest. Moreover, much of the land forms part of a buffer of semi-natural open space between the road and the residential blocks, and will therefore remain as open land.
- 6.35 The primary roundabout access into the site from Old Wokingham Road will encroach on land within Bracknell Forest. However, there will be no encroachment of road works beyond the eastern limits of the existing carriageway, and therefore into open countryside to the east of the existing road line. As is evident from the submitted access drawing²⁸ when compared with the drawing depicting land within the application site that is within the adjoining local authority area²⁹, the access works within Bracknell Forest will be within the limits of the existing highway. To the extent that there is change, it will be to restore land to the east of the southbound entry arm to the new roundabout to landscaping through deflecting the carriageway westwards.
- 6.36 Given the above circumstances, there is no conflict with BFLP Policy LP 35 that seeks to control development in the countryside outside the defined settlements, and the predominant focus of which is on limiting built development. Through the incorporation of green buffers adjacent to the Old Wokingham Road, the proposals recognise the intrinsic character and

²⁸ Ref. A218_028_P1

²⁹ Ref. LWP_1978_P01

beauty of the countryside, and are appropriate and sensitive to their surroundings, and in particular the open parkland to the east of the Old Wokingham Road. In this respect, the proposals are also compliant with the provisions of BFLP Policies LP 30 and LP 36.

Character and Amenity

- 6.37 WBCS Policies CP1 and CP3 establish an overarching requirement for high quality design that maintains or enhances the high quality environment. Development should be appropriate in scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character of the area, protecting amenity, and providing an attractive, functional, safe, secure and adaptable environment. Buildings and spaces should contribute to a sense of place in themselves in the way that they integrate with their surroundings, including the use of appropriate landscaping. The BDG provides more detailed guidance on general principles for good design³⁰, whilst WBCS Appendix 7 and the SWSDL SPD provides site specific advice on how high quality development will be achieved within the SDL.
- 6.38 Although the application for the built development has been made in outline, with matters of detailed design reserved for subsequent approval, it is accompanied by an illustrative masterplan that depicts a spatial arrangement of neighbourhoods, open spaces, and connectivity between them through a network and hierarchy of routes that gives primacy to active travel modes, that is the product of detailed contextual analysis and subsequent design evolution to ensure future places that will be both locally distinctive as well as exceptional places to live. The evolution of the spatial arrangement of neighbourhoods through the illustrative masterplan, which is abstracted through the parameter plans that are submitted for approval, has ranged quite extensively into considerations of the ‘third’ design dimension in terms of the elevational composition of buildings and streets. That detailed analysis is reflected in the Design and Access Statement accompanying the application.
- 6.39 As is evident from the Design and Access Statement, a high level of contextual assessment and design evolution and justification has already been undertaken and, as part of an iterative process, informed the conceptual layouts and parameter plans. A high degree of placemaking is therefore embedded in the application plans and documents, and through which it can be demonstrated that the objectives and principles set out in the policy documents have been upheld, and the outcome will be a beautiful place and townscape that

³⁰ Reference Section 4, in particular

is an exceptional twenty-first century contribution to the evolution of Wokingham that will inspire and provide a highly desirable place to live and visit.

- 6.40 It is anticipated that the high level of design evolution to date will be captured in Design Code documents that will be submitted for approval prior to determination of the applications. This will embed the design principles in the outline planning permission, if granted, and ensure that they are neither lost, nor diluted, through subsequent translation.

Distinct Neighbourhoods

- 6.41 The BDG establishes that, for large sites, a distinctive identity may be created by establishing a new character that relates well to the existing³¹. The SWSDL is considered to present such an opportunity. Both the WBCS³² and the SWSDL SPD³³ establish that development in the SWSDL should consist of a series of distinct neighbourhoods with recognisable centres. Whilst the extension of the SWSDL means that those neighbourhoods will assume a different form and complexion from those contemplated in the SPD, the current proposals incorporate the 'distinct neighbourhood' principle.
- 6.42 The spatial arrangement of the proposed development is based on two distinct character areas ('Wokingham Urban Edge' and 'The Village') incorporating three predominant neighbourhoods that can be broadly categorised as comprising the 'western' and 'eastern' neighbourhoods, occupying the north western and north eastern parts of the site to the north of the watercourse respectively, and together comprising the Wokingham Urban Edge character area; and the 'village neighbourhood' (comprising The Village character area) to the south of the western neighbourhood and the watercourse that traverses the site, and north of Easthampstead Road and the southern SANG. The neighbourhoods are separated by strategic green infrastructure to which all parts are well connected through the route network, and have distinctive squares as their focus.

Western Neighbourhood (Wokingham Urban Edge Character Area)

- 6.43 Extending to approximately 9.68 hectares and with an approximate capacity of 389 residential units, this neighbourhood accommodates the highest density of development (approximately 40.19 dwellings per hectare).

³¹ BDG, Principle R1.

³² WBCS, A7.52

³³ SWSDL SPD, Principle 2a

- 6.44 The market square that will form the heart of this neighbourhood is intended to incorporate a neighbourhood centre that will serve the overall development, most of which will be within five minutes walking time. At its heart is proposed a traffic free community space comprising both an external square and a building incorporating community floorspace on the first floor with covered external space beneath³⁴. It will be defined by a concentration of landmark buildings and the highest density of building across the development (up to three stories), with both densities and building heights declining to the north and west towards the site peripheries. A zone for the tallest buildings also continues southwards to define the western boundary to the central parkland that separates the western and eastern neighbourhoods where it broadens towards its southern limits³⁵.
- 6.45 The predominant character (defined as 'organic growth zones'³⁶) is intended to derive from the pre-18th century and Georgian period architecture found in Wokingham, including houses with ground floor shop fronts which can provide flexibility for street level commercial uses, and courtyard buildings behind those that define the street frontages. The predominant character is intended to yield to Victorian and post-Victorian architectural themes with increasing distance from the market square. The neighbourhood is also intended to incorporate smaller, lesser public squares with specific functions, notably an entrance square towards the western periphery of the development and a southern square at its southern limit demarcating the transition to the village neighbourhood beyond the strategic green infrastructure to the south, which will provide an outward focus towards the village³⁷.

Eastern Neighbourhood (Wokingham Urban Edge Character Area)

- 6.46 Spatially, this is the largest of the three proposed neighbourhoods extending to 12.08 hectares. Comprising approximately 398 units, the density (approximately 32.97 dwellings per hectare) is lower than the western neighbourhood.
- 6.47 At the heart of this neighbourhood, which forms the eastern sector of the 'Wokingham Urban Edge' character area, is another significant urban square, albeit more intimate than the market square and with more of a residential than commercial complexion with design

³⁴ Design and Access Statement, pp.85-93

³⁵ Design and Access Statement, pp. 31-32

³⁶ Ibid, pp. 61-72

³⁷ Ibid, pp. 83-84

themes deriving from the Georgian period³⁸. The high density core of this neighbourhood is spatially less extensive than the market neighbourhood. Its south western margin fronting onto the central parkland mirrors that of the western neighbourhood in incorporating taller buildings where the parkland broadens to the south of the spine road through the development.

- 6.48 The eastern margins of this character area, and the development area as a whole, where it is in closest proximity to the Old Wokingham Road and open countryside to the east, is intended to be at the lowest density and building heights incorporating post-Victorian design themes. An intimate square is proposed towards the south-eastern periphery of this neighbourhood that will be a local amenity and contribute to the reduction in density towards the south-eastern urban edge of the proposed SWSDL extension.

Village Neighbourhood (The Village Character Area)

- 6.49 As its designation suggests, this part of the SWSDL extension is intended have a distinct character of its own, breaking away from the more urban character of that to the north of the watercourse that bisects the site, to one deriving from a rural character base. Whilst an integral part of the SWSDL extension as a whole, the location of this neighbourhood towards the southern periphery of the development area at its rural interface, and its physical separation from the heart of the urban area to the north by green infrastructure corridors either side of the watercourse, affords it a rural settlement rather than urban character. This is reflected in its much smaller spatial extent (approximately 2.3 hectares) and scale of development (approximately 74 dwellings). It derives its inspiration from the Vale of Health in London, comprising an area of distinctly rural village character within a wider urban context.
- 6.50 The focus for this neighbourhood is a village green³⁹. The density and building heights will be predominantly at the lowest end of the spectrum, with localised uplift towards the village core. The concept allows for the incorporation of localised landmark buildings of greater scale in a rural (barn-like) aesthetic.

³⁸ Ibid, pp. 95-98

³⁹ Ibid, pp. 105-106

- 6.51 The proposals therefore incorporate distinct neighbourhoods within two overarching urban and rural character areas, with differing roles, characters and aesthetics, albeit physically and functionally integrated as part of a coherent whole.

Layout and Connectivity

- 6.52 The relevant design guidance requires development to be integrated with its surroundings, providing an integrated network of streets and spaces, and for residential areas to be organised around a robust, traditional pattern of perimeter blocks with a clear distinction between public and private areas with building frontages overlooking public areas, providing natural surveillance and generating activity.
- 6.53 The parameter plans and illustrative masterplan clearly demonstrate how it is proposed that the development will integrate with its surroundings. This includes connectivity with the existing SWSDL to the north, and the utilisation of the existing byway as an active travel route.
- 6.54 Through the Design and Access Statement, a significant level of detail is provided in terms of the proposed road hierarchy and active travel routes⁴⁰, together with design specifications for the routes⁴¹. The details include specification of street widths, landscaping, building lines and boundary treatments. This exceeds the level of detail that would normally be expected to accompany an application for outline planning permission. However, it confirms how a coherent, well-connected residential layout can be delivered, that has due regard not only to connectivity, but equally to placemaking and legibility.

Character Typologies

- 6.55 Through the SWSDL SPD three character typologies are identified that should be applied to reinforce the settlement structure and help create distinctiveness (urban residential / general residential / rural interface)⁴². The distinctiveness of each character area will derive from a combination of its layout, built form, density, block configuration, design and landscaping of the public realm, provision of parking and boundary treatments.

⁴⁰ See Section 3 above for summary of street hierarchy and typologies, para. 3.15

⁴¹ Design and Access Statement, pp.35–38

⁴² SWSDL SPD, Principle 3a

- 6.56 Once again, although exceeding the requirements that would normally be expected to accompany an application for outline planning permission, through the detailed assessment and design evolution that has been undertaken, each of these ingredients to the character typologies has been demonstrably addressed.
- 6.57 Although the work has been undertaken on the basis of first principles, starting with a Wokingham Architecture Character Study⁴³ to establish what it is about Wokingham that is locally distinctive and valued, the character typologies that have emerged broadly reflect those set out in the SPD.
- 6.58 The broad design principles established for the two Wokingham Urban Edge neighbourhoods reflect the 'urban residential' and 'general residential' character typologies in the SPD for the western and eastern neighbourhoods respectively. The 'rural interface' typology reflects the WBCS' expectation that development at the southern edges of the built-up area should respond to the rural context with less dense, lower rise residential development on wider plots with a more informal layout⁴⁴. Although establishing a new southern boundary for the SWSDL, the 'village character area' fully embraces this aspiration and takes it to another level through identifying a bespoke composite village design rather than simply a softer (urban) neighbourhood edge.
- 6.59 The character typologies embedded in the design principles for the identified neighbourhood areas are therefore coherent, appropriate and justified, and in full conformity with the provisions of the Development Plan and supplementary guidance. The identification of 'organic growth zones'⁴⁵, and associated design attributes, deriving from the townscape assessment and evaluation of valued design principles, and which will provide a template for the evolution of detailed design criteria through future design codes, represents a very high level of design evolution and specification for an outline application, and which has informed the illustrative masterplan principles that are presented with the application. It means that a high level of confidence can be afforded to the design principles, and that the scale of development proposed can be accommodated in a way that delivers an exceptional place that is both distinctive and complimentary to existing Wokingham and will reflect the valued environments that it comprises. That confidence is further enhanced through the high level

⁴³ Design and Access Statement, pp. 45-52

⁴⁴ WBCS, Appendix A7.52

⁴⁵ Design and Access Statement, pp. 61-72

of design evolution that has been undertaken for the public spaces⁴⁶ and strategic landscape areas which are central to the ambition to deliver exceptional places that underpins the illustrative masterplan⁴⁷.

Materials and Enclosure

- 6.60 Materials and enclosure are an important aspect of local character, and the SWSPD provides guidance on how these elements can be used to reinforce local character and assist with distinguishing the different character areas within the development⁴⁸.
- 6.61 The suggested palette of materials submitted with the application⁴⁹ acknowledges, and reflects the importance of, these elements which are integral to the details defined for each public square, and for each character zone.

Public Art

- 6.62 The WBCS⁵⁰ and SWSDL SPD⁵¹ establish that public art should be an integral component of the built environment and landscape framework.
- 6.63 This is a detailed matter that will be determined as part of any future detailed proposals that are to be submitted. However, the Design and Access Statement alludes to opportunities within the public realm associated with the various urban spaces that are proposed (for example, a water feature within the Market Square⁵²), and there may also be opportunities within the SANG provisions for which full planning permission is sought as part of this application. As with the earlier (Phase 2) applications, a condition can secure a strategy for the delivery of public art in conjunction with the proposed development.

Conclusion

- 6.64 For the reasons outlined above, the proposals are considered to be in full conformity with WBCS Policies CP1 and CP3, and also with Appendix 7, as well as the design principles set out in the BDG and the SWSDL SPD.

⁴⁶ Ibid, Section 9, pp. 83-108

⁴⁷ Ibid, Section 10, pp. 109-116

⁴⁸ SWSDL SPD, Principles 3a and 3d

⁴⁹ Design and Access Statement, pp. 117-120

⁵⁰ WBCS, Appendix A7, para. A7.52

⁵¹ SWSDL SPD, Design Principles 1e(iv) and 3(f)

⁵² Design and Access Statement, p. 93, Figures 154 and 155

- 6.65 Although no built development is proposed in the adjoining administrative area of Bracknell Forest, to the extent that the development will be perceived from the adjoining administrative area, it will incorporate the precepts of good design set out in BFLP Policy LP28.

Landscape and Visual Impacts

- 6.66 WBCS Policies CP1 and CP3 establish a requirement for high quality of design that respects its context and maintains or enhances the quality of the environment. This includes the way that development integrates with its surroundings and the use of appropriate landscaping.
- 6.67 As is acknowledged in the LVA:
- The site does not lie within a national or locally designated landscape; and
 - The emerging Local Plan⁵³ seeks to designate areas of ‘valued landscape’, none of which apply to the site or its immediate surroundings.⁵⁴

Landscape Character

- 6.68 MDDLDP Policy TB21 requires proposals to demonstrate how they have addressed the requirements of the Council’s Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) and respond positively to the local landscape context, retaining or enhancing features that contribute to the landscape, including topography, natural features (hedgerows / trees / watercourses etc), heritage assets, settlement patterns and the network of routes. New development is required to protect and enhance green infrastructure networks, promoting connectivity between different parts of the network and integrating with adjacent open space (MDDLDP, Policy CC03).
- 6.69 As is explained in the Landscape and Visual Baseline Assessment accompanying the application⁵⁵, the site falls across two Landscape Character Areas (LCAs), with the majority

⁵³ Regulation 19 Consultation Draft

⁵⁴ EIA, Chapter 11, para. 11.103

⁵⁵ EIA, Technical Appendix 11.1

falling within LCA N1 (Holme Green Pastoral Sandy Lowland), that is characterised as follows:

... 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.

6.70 As stated in the LVA, the assessment therefore acknowledges that, whilst sparsely settled, the site is influenced by the settlement edge of Wokingham⁵⁶.

6.71 The authors of the LVA comment on the assessment of the LCAs as follows:

Whilst the above-published assessment provide a helpful contextual appreciation of the wider landscape, none provide a sufficiently site-specific assessment to allow a reliable assessment to be made of the effects of the proposed development on the landscape. Published assessments tend to miss more localised influences on the landscape such as the effect of traffic or existing (and emerging) development on tranquility and visual character, especially in close proximity to settlements. This requires an appropriately detailed assessment of the site itself ...⁵⁷

6.72 Based on their detailed assessment of the site through site visits, review of aerial photography, mapping and field assessment from publicly accessible locations, the authors of the LVA conclude as follows:

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, the Emm brook bisects the site, along which can be found scrubby vegetation.⁵⁸

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

⁵⁶ Ibid, para. 4.6

⁵⁷ Ibid, para. 4.13

⁵⁸ Ibid, para. 4.15

published LCA, these mature and maturing landscape features serve to enclose the site and restrict views of the site to the local area. 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.⁵⁹

- 6.73 Overall, the landscape character is assessed to be ‘medium’, with a ‘medium’ sensitivity to proposed development⁶⁰. The site is not subject to any landscape or other constraint designations.
- 6.74 In terms of visual amenity, the main receptor groups are identified as being the users of the rights of way that cross the site; users of the highway network that are generally peripheral to the site, in particular Old Wokingham Road and Easthampstead Road and from only short sections of which are there open views of the southern portion of the site; and views from private residential properties which are sporadic and limited in number, and in any event are not protected through the planning system.
- 6.75 The key principles from the baseline assessment that helped to inform the evolution of the conceptual proposals for the site included:
- The provision of planting to provide visual filtering and help assimilate views of development at the southern edge of Wokingham;
 - Retention and enhancement of the alignment and vegetated character of the wet ditch that crosses the site;
 - Protection and enhancement of existing site boundary hedgerows and protection of vegetation beyond the site boundaries;
 - Retention and enhancement of existing hedgerow planting along field boundaries to assist biodiversity and filtering of views from the surrounding PROW network; and

⁵⁹ Ibid, para. 4.16

⁶⁰ Ibid, paras. 4.17-4.18

- Consideration of the private amenity of adjacent properties and the setting of heritage assets.

6.76 In the LVA itself the site is assessed to conform with the LCA description 'to a limited degree'⁶¹, with the overall character of the site considered to be 'urban/rural edge' and therefore the local landscape character of 'medium value and able to accommodate change as a result'⁶².

6.77 The summary of the visual appraisal of the site deriving from the baseline assessments⁶³ and illustrated in Figure 11.8 is that:

- The most significant visual effects consequential upon development would be limited to changes to views from receptors immediately adjacent to, or within, the site area itself;
- Most of the views are already affected by a number of detractors, including existing urban development and associated features such as power lines and road infrastructure; and
- The site is not readily visible from urban areas of Wokingham to the north.⁶⁴

6.78 Overall, the site is not considered to form part of a continuous open landscape, is considered to be well contained, and to have a strong relationship between the landscape fabric/land use, which together dictate differing perceptions of the southern limits of Wokingham:

The majority of the site will be set against a backdrop of urban development, which when viewed from key vantage points, highlight the role of woodland structure in integrating existing urban areas into the landscape⁶⁵.

6.79 With regard to the landscape impacts of the proposals, as is accepted in the assessment, the transition from a 'greenfield' to a 'developed' site invariably involves wholesale change, and therefore a very high magnitude of change in a medium sensitivity landscape⁶⁶. However, construction activities would not directly affect the wider landscape and can be

⁶¹ EIA, Chapter 11, para. 11.101

⁶² Ibid, para. 11.102

⁶³ Ibid, Technical Appendix 11.1

⁶⁴ Ibid, Chapter 11 para. 11.105

⁶⁵ Ibid, para. 11.107

⁶⁶ Ibid, paras. 11.113-11.114

contained through mitigation measures secured through a Construction and Environment Management Plan. As is acknowledged in the assessment, the critical issue in considering construction effects is their temporary nature, and thus the short time period for which landscape and visual amenities would be affected to a significant degree⁶⁷.

- 6.80 The operational impacts of the proposals would be of longer duration, and will result in a permanent change to the character of the site. The assessment finds as follows:

*Invariably, a development on a 'greenfield' site, and at the scale proposed, will result in the unavoidable loss of open farmland and necessary removal of some characteristic landscape features, in particular some hedgerows and/or hedgerow trees in order to create access into the site, or to allow for development of built form and infrastructure, at a level that has the potential to materially alter the character of the receiving environment. There will also be some level changes to allow for the Sustainable Drainage Scheme as described in Chapter 9 of this ES.*⁶⁸

*However, in the case of this site, few existing landscape features will be affected by the proposed development; indeed, the potential exists to deliver a net gain in the number of trees, and the quality of hedgerows, although at Year 1 these would not have achieved their full potential.*⁶⁹

*The assessment shows that, at Year 1, there would be major/moderate (significant) adverse, permanent effects across the Application Site, arising from a medium sensitivity and very high magnitude. **However, the effects would reduce very rapidly with distance and represent a small change to the setting of limited parts of the wider LCA context ...***⁷⁰

- 6.81 With specific regard to the impact on the LCAs that affect the site, the assessment found as follows:

The Proposed Development would inevitably extend the settlement of Wokingham into the agricultural landscape to the south of the city, and also along the main route

⁶⁷ Ibid, para. 11.136

⁶⁸ Ibid, para. 11.141

⁶⁹ Ibid, para. 11.142

⁷⁰ Ibid, para. 11.144, emphasis added

of approach from settlements in Bracknell Forest. This would tend to increase the perception of ‘urban character’, but the masterplan has been carefully conceived, as have the proposed landscape mitigation measures, to ensure the impacts are moderated, and retained as localised impacts.⁷¹

Whilst the Proposed Development will result in some indirect change to the perception of the LCA, the extent of change, both in terms of the perceived effects and the extent of the LCA indirectly affected, the overall effects on the host landscape character will be minor to moderate/minor adverse (not significant), and will decrease rapidly with distance from the Application Site boundary, and where intervening development, vegetation and landform provide screening.⁷²

*This limitation in effects results from the changes experienced within the Application Site boundary being limited geographically (beyond the site boundary) by the existing and proposed landscape mitigation, as well as the proposed layout, which attempts through good design to achieve a successful integration with the existing settlement pattern and the wider woodland landscape. **Essentially, the Proposed Development will only exert a limited influence on the wider LCA when considered as a whole.**⁷³*

- 6.82 The limited impact on the LCA as a whole is due to a combination of the visually contained landscape character of the site, and the mitigation embedded in the conceptual proposals, in particular the retention of the existing landscape framework that creates visual enclosure to the site, and its reinforcement though the juxtaposition between built development and strategic greenspace, including SANG. As is explained in the LVA:

The site currently comprises a series of medium to large scale irregular agricultural fields enclosed by a network of hedgerows and hedgerow trees, tree belts and woodland, and is influenced across its northern parts by the existing settlement edge of Wokingham.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Ibid, para. 11.146

⁷² Ibid, para. 11.147

⁷³ Ibid, para. 11.148, emphasis added

⁷⁴ Ibid, para. 11.153

Despite the unavoidable loss of some open farmland, the current condition and key characteristics of the landscape have been considered throughout the design of the Proposed Development and integrated into the layout where possible. For example, a hierarchy of hedgerows retained with preference for those of greatest value and connectivity, and woodland blocks are retained and incorporated into the wider landscape Infrastructure for the site.⁷⁵

The careful design of the Proposed Development and its interface with areas to the north, south and east, particularly in relation to views from the settlement approach, also provides for a distinct and legible urban edge, which has been designed to best use the land within the site, especially in relation to areas of open space.⁷⁶

The landscape and visual mitigation strategy is a key, and fully-integrated, component of the Proposed Development. As illustrated on the parameter plans, the Proposed Development incorporates public open space (both formal and informal) and other landscape enhancements, which include

:

- *An over-arching landscape strategy for the site;*
- *The provision of green spaces throughout the site, offering recreational value and a community resource; and*
- *The creation of surface water attenuation and detention features, incorporated within the areas of open space.⁷⁷*

In addition to these site-wide measures, along the eastern and southern site boundaries (i.e. adjacent to the open countryside), a large area of SANG will be managed and reinforced to contain the development, providing site security, screening and habitat enhancement, along with aiding the integration of the development into its landscape context when viewed from further afield.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Ibid, para. 11.154

⁷⁶ Ibid, para. 11.155

⁷⁷ Ibid, para. 11.158

⁷⁸ Ibid, para. 11.159

As part of the wider Green Infrastructure, as illustrated within the Green Infrastructure Parameter Plan, public open spaces, both formal and informal, will be designed to provide high quality and traffic free green space, which satisfies a number of objectives, including:

- *Public open space for formal and informal use;*
- *Amenity and recreational space, including Local Equipped Areas of Play (LEAP) and Neighbourhood Equipped Areas of Play (NEAP);*
- *Community uses, such as the provision of orchards and allotments;*
- *Contribution to green networks and enhance habitat connectivity; and*
- *Facilitated SuDS and connectivity with the existing blue network.⁷⁹*

In summary, the landscape elements specific to the detailed design of the proposals include enhancements that would provide:

- *Visual screening, containment and filtering of the proposed development;*
- *Public and private amenity; and*
- *Ecological value.⁸⁰*

6.83 The overall conclusions of the LVA in terms of the effects on the landscape resource, are as follows:

The Proposed Development will have direct effects on existing landscape resources including trees and hedgerows. Given the change in land use from agriculture/grazing to residential, the Proposed Development will have unavoidable significant effects on the landscape character of the site, but will not significantly alter

⁷⁹ Ibid, para. 11.160

⁸⁰ Ibid, para. 1.161

the character of the wider surrounding landscape, due to the discrete geographical area over which effects will be experienced.⁸¹

More important than the presence of what amounts to unavoidable significant landscape character effects is the retention of existing hedgerows, trees and woodland copses along the and throughout the site, and the provision of new public open space and planting (particularly along the southern site extent), which will help considerably in integrating the Proposed Development into the urban-rural context.⁸²

The relatively well-contained nature of the residual effects are driven, largely through the strategic planting incorporated at points around the perimeter and throughout the site, to ensure that effects are predominantly limited to within localised areas comprising the Application Site and its immediate context. Whilst there would be significant adverse effects on the Application Site and its immediate context, the effects reduce quickly with distance so that the overall effects on landscape character types are not significant. Over time, these effects will further reduce such that the development would become an accepted part of the southern edge of Wokingham.⁸³

6.84 With regard to effects on visual amenity, the overall conclusions are as follows:

Based on the assessed viewpoints, the overall visibility of the development is relatively well-contained in many directions, due to the strategic planting incorporated surrounding, and through the site, in addition to the contribution that woodland and urban form make to general intervisibility within the study area. The urban area of Wokingham to the north limits the distribution of effects dramatically to a narrow zone at the urban edge.⁸⁴

The visual effects predicted to arise as a result of the introduction of the Proposed Development follow a similar pattern to effects upon landscape character, in that significant effects are likely to occur only within and in very close proximity to the Proposed Development; the magnitude of change to views decreases rapidly with

⁸¹ Ibid, para. 11.196

⁸² Ibid, para. 11.197

⁸³ Ibid, para. 11.198

⁸⁴ Ibid, para. 11.200

distance from the Application Site, partly due to screening, and partly due to the masterplan layout, which is designed to respect close range and more distant views. Therefore, the receptors most likely to experience a potential significant effect at Year 15 following completion would be the roads and PRow within and in close proximity to the site.⁸⁵

- 6.85 As set out earlier in this Statement, the watercourse that bisects the site is not the Emm Brook itself, but no more than a drainage ditch that discharges to it beyond the site. The evidence from the LVA endorses the conclusion that the watercourse is not a strong and definitive landscape feature of the site, and diminishes the status that it appears to have been given as a logical and coherent boundary for the SWSDL in WBCS Policy CP21 and the SWSDL SPD, as well as in the Regulation 18 Plan. The more distinctive features in the landscape are to the south, and in the form of the tree-lined corridors of Easthampstead Road and Old Wokingham Road, which intersect adjacent to the south east site boundary.
- 6.86 The application proposals will contain built development between the limits of the existing urban area (including the proposed and committed SWSDL), and the definitive highway boundaries to the east and south. However, they respond to context in confining built development to the south of the watercourse to land to the west Prior's Farm that has a greater degree of enclosure in landscape and visual terms, is already developed with substantial buildings, and which is designed to have a 'village' character consistent with the more rural ambience of this part of the site. The location of SANG on the more open part of the site to the east and north of Priors Farm will protect and enhance more open and rural character of this part of the site. Through the strategic landscaping that is proposed in conjunction with the SANG, full details of which are submitted for approval as part of this application, a much stronger, robust and softer southern edge and new limit to the town will be created. It will also filter views of the new limits of built development on land to the north of the watercourse.
- 6.87 The strategic park and garden extending from the SANG northwards to permeate the new urban area for its full extent, will extend the countryside into the town, and provide a seamless and coherent connection between the future built environment and its countryside context. It will provide a different character to the existing and established urban area to the

⁸⁵ Ibid, para. 11.201

north, following garden community principles through the incorporation of the central parkland / garden bisecting and running through the entire urban grid, blended with the positive and celebrated architectural themes that are drawn from the established urban area and translated in a modern idiom through the design guidance. It will therefore blend exceptional architecture and urban design, with the site's leafy rural-urban context, responding positively and effectively to the landscape and visual character, and embedding, successfully, mitigation through design as reflected in the summary findings of the LVA outlined above.

- 6.88 The proposed SANG on land to the south of Easthampstead Road (now enhanced by the proposals for additional SANG on immediately adjacent land to the south), will reinforce the Easthampstead Road as the southern limit of Wokingham and contribute a further greening / screening effect of the new development to the north of Easthampstead Road. It will promote and facilitate significant and convenient access to the countryside beyond the town, and provide a very significant, usable and accessible asset for the benefit of existing and future residents alike, and that will function effectively for its essential purpose to divert recreational pressures away from the area requiring special protection to the south east. It will also cement the effective and permanent separation (both visually and perceptibly) between Wokingham and Crowthorne.
- 6.89 The application proposals will therefore optimise the development potential of the location whilst delivering a more robust and softer southern limit to Wokingham. Whilst, as is acknowledged in the LVA, there will inevitably be significant and enduring change to the character of the locality, which is universal and unavoidable in association with a development of up 850 homes (and 1,030 in total across the project area as a whole) on a greenfield site, the scale of adversity of the impact in the circumstances of this case is towards the lower end the scale, and the impacts are very limited beyond the boundaries of the site.
- 6.90 The overall evidence and conclusions from the LVA are that there are no significant overriding constraints on the application proposals on grounds of harm to the landscape and/or visual character of the area. On the contrary, for residential and related development of the scale proposed, the adversity of impacts is relatively low and localised.

- 6.91 For reasons outlined earlier, there will be negligible landscape impacts on those parts of the site within the adjacent administrative area of Bracknell Forest since the proposals comprise essentially green infrastructure or highway works within the existing highway, including restoration of some parts of the existing highway to landscape planting. The Old Wokingham Road provides a robust, eastern limit to the SWSDL extension. There will be no perceptible reduction in the separation between settlements given the open countryside and tree belts to the east of the Old Wokingham Road which precludes inter-visibility between the site and the western edge of Bracknell. Therefore, the proposals are not in conflict with BFLP Policy LP 36.

Ecological Impacts

- 6.92 WBCS Policies CP3 and CP7 establish that proposals should not have a detrimental impact on ecological features. Species and habitats of conservation value should be protected and the ability of a site to support fauna and flora, including protected species, should be maintained and enhanced. Where the need for development outweighs the need to safeguard nature conservation importance and there are no less harmful alternatives available, harm should be mitigated or compensated for. In addition, MDDL Policy TB23 requires proposals to enhance and incorporate new biodiversity features, provide appropriate buffer zones between development and designated sites as well as habitats and species of principal importance for nature conservation, and ensure ecological permeability.

Designated Sites

- 6.93 There are no statutory designated sites within the application site. There is one Local Nature Reserve (Heath Lake), three Sites of Special Scientific Interest (Heath Lake / Broad to Bagshot Woods and Heaths / Wykery Copse) and one Special Protection Area (Thames Basin Heaths) all within two kilometres, albeit more than one kilometre, from the site.
- 6.94 There are no non-statutory designated sites within the application sites, although there are eight Berkshire Local Wildlife sites within the two kilometre search radius.
- 6.95 Parcels of Ancient Woodland are found within a kilometre radius of the site, notably Easthampstead Park, Watley's Copse and Big Wood. Many parcels of deciduous woodland, comprising 'priority habitats', are located immediately adjacent, and close, to the site.

Habitats

- 6.96 The site comprises a network of grassland and arable fields, with areas of mixed scrub and sealed and unsealed urban habitats. The assessment confirms that the majority of the site is modified grassland that is dominated by ryegrass. There is a parcel of other neutral grassland in the west part of the site that is horse-grazed with minor poaching. It is not considered to be of particular nature conservation importance.
- 6.97 One parcel within the entirety of the Prior's Farm parcel comprises woodland with well established trees. The land to the south of Easthampstead Road that is proposed for SANG has most recently been ploughed and used for a maize crop.
- 6.98 None of the above habitats are considered to meet the criteria as habitats of principal importance, nor are they considered to be of particular nature conservation importance.
- 6.99 The wet ditch that crosses the site from east to west has been recorded in the surveys as being heavily shaded and overgrown. Neither the tributary, nor the Emm Brook itself that flows along the southern boundary of the SANG land, are habitats of principal importance, although they are considered to be of local importance for nature conservation. Similarly the ditch that runs north to south is only of local importance for nature conservation.
- 6.100 There are a variety of hedgerows within the site of variable composition. All of the hedgerows and lines of trees on the site qualify as habitats of principal importance and are assessed to be of local importance for nature conservation.

Impacts

- 6.101 The impact assessment confirms that, subject to mitigation, residual construction effects will be negligible in terms of the off-site designated habitats, with minor effects in terms of the on site watercourse, ditch and hedgerows, and on reptiles. However, there will be moderate effects during the construction phase on Brown Hare, Bats and Birds which are likely to be long term in duration.
- 6.102 The site is assessed to have 'potential' to support brown hare, with a risk of site clearance causing injury or mortality of those foraging or commuting, as well as disruption to

commuting across the site due to lighting. The potential impacts arising from the loss of suitable brown hare habitat would result in a long term, moderate adverse effect. The loss of habitat will not be compensated as part of the proposed development.

- 6.103 The assessment found that the site supports an assemblage of bats, predominantly of common and widespread species. They were found to be utilising the boundary hedgerows and watercourse for both foraging and commuting purposes, with the hedgerows in the north-west providing connectivity and feeding opportunities for long-eared bats roosting in the project area.

- 6.104 Of particular sensitivity are the proposed works to provide access to the by-way and the connection between the project area sites, resulting in the creation of gaps in the hedgerows that were assessed to support comparatively high levels of foraging and commuting activity compared to other boundary hedgerows. The gaps that will be created are considered sufficient to impede commuting and foraging activity. Without mitigation, the potential construction effects were assessed to result in a long-term moderate adverse effect on the site's assemblage of bats.

- 6.105 The key issue for bats leading to the assessment of long term adverse effects of the development related to the demolition of Building B3 that supports a brown long-eared bat maternity roost. Whilst that building is within the project area covered by the EIA, it is not within the current application site.

- 6.106 Finally, with regard to birds, the removal of ground nesting habitat in terms of the parcels of open grassland, the loss of foraging habitat for barn owls and the demolition of buildings that were found to support birds nests, are the key impacts. Similar to the findings in relation to brown hare, it is the permanent loss of ground nesting bird habitat that resulted in the assessment of moderate adverse effect of long term duration.

- 6.107 In relation to the operational impacts of the proposed development, the only moderate adverse impact again related to Brown Hare, with minor adverse effects in relation to bats. The uncompensated loss of suitable brown hare habitat is expected to result in brown hares no longer utilising the site. The minor adverse effect on bats is as a result of the requirement to light the byway crossing to in the interests of highway safety.

- 6.108 Subject to the mitigation measures identified in the assessment, the effects on all other biodiversity assets are assessed to be negligible, with the exception of hedgehogs in relation to which there is considered to be a minor beneficial effect.
- 6.109 Overall, the assessment found that significant residual effects are expected only for brown hare and ground nesting birds due to a loss of suitable habitat. Whilst any adverse effect is undesirable and to be avoided if at all possible, for a development of the scale proposed on a greenfield site, it represents a low degree of biodiversity impact and must be weighed in the overall balance against the imperative to deliver homes for people in sustainable locations.
- 6.110 Importantly, the assessment confirms that, with the benefit of the SANG mitigation, that will also afford opportunities for biodiversity enhancements compared with the current baselines for the part of the site to which it relates, the construction and operational impacts on the Thames Basin Heaths SPA and the other designated sites, will be negligible. The details of the SANG, including habitat creation and management measures, will be set out in a SANG management plan.
- 6.111 As is clear from the BNG Approach Document and associated metrics accompanying the application, considered overall, including the enhancements to be delivered through the SANGH provisions, the proposals will result in a significant net gain of 96.24 biodiversity units, equating to a biodiversity net gain of 107.01%.

Heritage Impacts

- 6.112 As is confirmed in the Archaeological and Heritage Assessment accompanying the application, the site itself does not contain any designated heritage assets⁸⁶.

Above-Ground Assets

- 6.113 The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, establishes a statutory duty to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings or their setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess. Consistent with this, WBCS Policy CP3 and MDDL Policy TB24 establish that development should not

⁸⁶ EIA, Technical Appendix 12.2, para 4.2

have a detrimental impact on important heritage features and works affecting heritage assets or their setting should conserve and, where possible, enhance their important character and special architectural or historic interest.

- 6.114 There are a number of buildings beyond the site boundaries that were identified for further assessment⁸⁷. Given that these buildings are beyond the site and there are no direct impacts on the assets themselves, any impacts are in terms of the effect on their settings. The findings of the assessment are set out in the summary assessment schedule below:

Schedule 6.1: Summary Assessment of Impacts on Settings of Off-Site Heritage Assets

Asset(s)	Grade	Contribution to / Impact on Setting
Designated Heritage Assets		
Lock's House (1118082) / Lock's Barn (1135838)	II* / II	Site is located c.175 metres to the south, beyond two well vegetated boundaries and large buildings comprising an equestrian centre, resulting in limited intervisibility. Therefore the site does not contribute to the appreciation of the asset. An impact assessment has been undertaken given the importance of Lock's House, and confirmed that the embedded design measures, including the strengthening of the northern boundary with additional tree planning, will ensure no overbearing effect of the proposed development, with only glimpsed views construed in the context of the modern, foreground equestrian buildings, and potentially intervening residential development, if approved. The overall conclusion is that the inclusion of the embedded design measures will ensure that the proposed development will have no impact on the significance of the designated heritage assets at Lock's House.
Pearce's Farmhouse (1319115) / Barn (1118118) / Granary (1135768)	II / II / II	Site is located c.275-300 metres east of the group of listed buildings, beyond an intervening field, tree lines and hedgerows, Holme Green Lane and its associated row of dwellings. There is no intervisibility between the site and the assets, and therefore the site makes no contribution to the setting and significance of the listed group. Therefore, development of the site would not adversely affect the significance of the assets.
Sutton Farm (1135841) / Court Stable Barn (1313124)	II	Site is located c.80 metres to the west at its nearest point, beyond intervening gardens, treelines and hedgerows, as well as modern buildings to the west and south. A large proportion of the site is located c.100 metres to the north east beyond Easthampstead Road. The site makes a negligible positive contribution to the significance of the listed buildings only through a former historical relationship.

⁸⁷ Ibid, para. 4.6

		An impact assessment has confirmed that embedded mitigation in the form of the proposed large area of SANG to the west of Sutton Court Farm will provide a substantial buffer from the proposed built form within the site, ensuring that the closest part of the site to the assets retains its sylvan character. As such, the proposed development will have no impact on the significance of the assets.
Garden House (1118079) / Holme Grange School (1319138)	II / II	Site is located c.200 metres east of Holme Grange School and c.300 metres east of Garden House, separated by intervening fields, tree lines, woodland plantation, and some built form adjacent to Holme Green Lane. Thickly wooded boundaries preclude intervisibility between the site and the assets. The proposals are not considered to harm the significance of the assets.
Easthampstead Park College and Attached Terrace with Retaining Wall and Steps (1390331) / Section of Wall with Wrought Iron Gates adjoining the Park (1390332)	II / II	The site is c.710 metres west of Easthampstead Park House, beyond intervening woodland plantation, field boundaries, fields and roads. Due to the location of the site beyond the parkland setting of the house, it provides a neutral contribution to the significance of the assets. However, the introducing of built form resulting from the change in land use and landscape character within the site has the potential to adversely affect the wider westward setting of the house. An impact assessment has confirmed that the site has never been an integral part of the country house's experienced parkland, and the western limit appears to have been the Old Wokingham Road. There is no visual intervisibility between the site and the assets, woodland plantations preventing long distance views. Overall the site is considered to provide a neutral contribution to the significance of the asset. The embedded mitigation will curtail any residual intervisibility that might exist, and the change in land use and landscape character will not impact on the ability to appreciate or experience the architectural and historic interest of the asset. Overall, the proposed development with its embedded design measures will result in no harm to the significance of the asset.
Non-Designated Heritage Assets		
The Old Farmhouse, Easthampstead Road	N/A	Part of the Sutton Court Farm complex located ca. 40 metres to the east of the site. No longer a working farm, currently in use as a car dealership and MOT centre that impact negatively on the significance of the Old Farmhouse. The principal positive contribution made by the setting is largely restricted to its own garden. Any historical associations between the site and the Asset have been severed with the alienation of landholdings and the institution of the commercial uses. Some limited glimpsed views of the asset are available from the site from the west, affording some limited appreciation of the asset in agricultural land, although it is no longer clear that it was associated making its interpretation as a farmstead limited. The conclusion is that the site makes a negligible positive contribution to the significance of the non-designated asset. The site shares the same relationship as that identified for the two designated assets as Sutton Court Farm. As such the embedded

mitigation in the form of the green spatial buffers to the west will ensure that the closest part of the site retains its green character, and its setting is thereby preserved. The assessment therefore confirms that the proposed development will have no impact on the non-designated asset.

Below Ground Assets

6.115 WBCS Policy CP3 establishes that development should not have a detrimental impact upon heritage assets. This is amplified by MDDL Policy TB25 which requires developments in areas of high archaeological potential to provide an assessment of the impact of the development upon archaeological remains and to secure preservation in situ or - where this is not practical - excavation, recording and archiving of remains.

6.116 The summary assessment of archaeological potential found as follows:

Overall, the potential for archaeological remains within the Site is moderate for Prehistoric remains, low for Roman, early medieval and medieval remains and moderate for post-medieval to modern remains.⁸⁸

Although stray scatters of archaeological objects have been recovered across the fields within the Site, potential previously unrecorded archaeological remains with the Site are most likely to comprise agricultural features, such as post-medieval field boundaries of low or local significance and/or post-medieval to modern drainage ditches and furrows of negligible or local significance, associated with past agricultural practices.⁸⁹

6.117 The impact assessment concludes that, based on the current evidence, no substantial or significant archaeological remains area known or anticipated to be present on the site which would merit preservation *in situ*. To the extent that remains may exist, and would be subject to complete loss occasioned by the development, they could be suitably mitigated through preservation by record.

⁸⁸ EIA, Technical Appendix, para. 4.156

⁸⁹ Ibid, para. 4.157

- 6.118 The overall conclusions from the assessment of the heritage impacts of the proposed development is that they will not occasion harm to heritage assets. As such the proposals are compliant with WBCS Policy CP3 and MDDL Policies TB24 and TB25. There are no on-site designated assets, and any impacts on off-site assets will be negligible due to minimal existing inter-visibility reflecting the contained nature of the site identified in the LVA, and the mitigation embedded in the design.
- 6.119 To the extent that there may be impacts on, as yet, unknown below-ground remains, the evidence indicates that the potential is limited, and can be satisfactorily mitigated through preservation by record rather than *in situ*. To the extent that any finds contribute to the understanding of the historic periods that they represent, the impacts of the proposals will be positive through contributing to an appreciation of assets that would otherwise remain undiscovered.
- 6.120 Overall, since there is no harm to heritage assets, there is no conflict with the provisions of national policy that seek to preserve and enhance the historic environment, and no obligation to demonstrate that there are public benefits that outweigh the harm⁹⁰.

Access and Movement

- 6.121 WBCS Policy CP1 requires consideration of the travel impacts of development, emphasising the importance of reducing the need to travel, particularly by private car. It is supported by Policy CP6 which seeks to manage travel demand through locating development and providing infrastructure that will facilitate and encourage sustainable travel modes. It is also supported by Policies CP10 and MDDL Policy CC08 that require development to make provision for a choice of sustainable forms of transport, including improvements to existing transport infrastructure, including road, rail, public transport and facilities for pedestrians and cyclists.

Accessibility

- 6.122 The baseline conditions set out in the Transport Chapter of the ES confirm that, by dint of its location, the site has good potential for accessibility by sustainable modes. Of particular

⁹⁰ NPPF, paras 207-208

note is the permeability provided by Byway 30 that routes along the western boundary of the site and provides a connection between Waterloo Road and Easthampstead Road, and currently accommodates predominantly recreational pedestrian and cycle journeys. The network of pedestrian and cycle routes to be included in the proposed development will connect into this existing route, and via which there is good accessibility to the existing SWSDL that is coming forward on land to the north.

- 6.123 Based on the evidence from the National Transport Survey, it is assumed that most people will walk to destinations up to 1 mile in distance, and for distances of up to 2 miles, walking is considered to be a realistic alternative to car use. The assessment confirms that there is a range of existing facilities available within the realistic alternative walking distance of two miles, including two schools, retail (including a Tesco Superstore), health facilities (including Wokingham Medical Centre and Wokingham Hospital), and community / leisure / recreation facilities.
- 6.124 Cycling is used for accessing a variety of different situations up to a distance of about 5 miles, although is also undertaken over much longer distances. There is a full range of facilities within a cycling distance of five miles, including Wokingham Town Centre and Wokingham Railway Station.
- 6.125 The accessibility of the site must be construed in the context of the proposed development that is coming forward on land to the north of the application site as part of the committed SWSDL. This will bring a range of new facilities within a distance of up to one mile when most people will walk, including a new neighbourhood centre, primary school, local shops, community facilities and leisure / sports facilities.
- 6.126 As has been detailed earlier in this statement, the proposals have been carefully conceived to ensure a very high degree of accessibility and permeability on foot and by bicycle. Active travel provision is incorporated in the road and street designs, and active travel routes widely permeate both the built environment and green infrastructure. Movement by active travel modes, both within the development itself and between it and the adjacent urban area of Wokingham, will be more commodious than by car.
- 6.127 Byway 30 provides a significant existing asset in this respect, and the proposed active travel connections to it via both the proposed road crossing and the pedestrian / cycle connection

adjacent to the north-west site boundary, will provide a strong and commodious active travel connection with the existing urban area and the future facilities associated with the committed SWSDL. There will be no direct vehicular connections northwards with the existing and future urban area.

- 6.128 The relationship of the site to the existing urban area is also reflected in bus accessibility, with existing service stops located on Waterloo Road to the north within the reasonable walking distance parameters. A larger range of services is also available from the Tesco Superstore to the west.
- 6.129 Once again, the development committed as part of the existing SWSDL will improve public transport accessibility. In particular, there are proposals to divert existing services to incorporate the planned SWDR, ultimately linking Bracknell and Wokingham Railway Stations. The active travel connection utilising Byway 30 will provide good accessibility to the future bus stop locations on the SWDR. Moreover, the primary street through the proposed development, which will run adjacent to the proposed neighbourhood centre at the heart of the development, has been designed to accommodate a future public transport route. A potential route is shown in the Transport Assessment accompanying the application⁹¹.
- 6.130 With regard to rail travel, Wokingham is on the national rail network, and there are regular services to Reading and London, providing opportunities for interchange for destinations across the UK, as well as to nearby towns and other locations in the south east, including Gatwick Airport.
- 6.131 Finally, the proposals themselves incorporate a neighbourhood centre that is intended to provide retail and other community facilities. Moreover, the physical infrastructure will facilitate accessibility by bus, as well as dedicated and commodious routes for pedestrians and cyclists. Overall, they will therefore facilitate and enhance accessibility by non-car modes to both existing and proposed new facilities.

Local Highway Network Safety

- 6.132 The Council's accident records indicate that there have been no vehicular accidents in the immediate vicinity of the proposed site access. However, there are clusters of accidents at

⁹¹ EIA, Technical Appendix 7.1, Figure 3

the Old Wokingham Road / Easthampstead Road Junction adjacent to the south east site boundary, and Old Wokingham Road / Waterloo Road Junction, close to the north east boundary.

- 6.133 The data indicates 52 accidents on the surrounding network over the most recent five year period, of which 8 resulted in serious injury and 44 in slight injuries. There were no fatalities. In relation to those resulting in serious injury, the majority were a consequence of driver error, with other contributory factors including weather conditions and wild animals in the road.
- 6.134 An analysis of the accident records associated with the local highway network therefore confirms that there is nothing inherently unsafe about the local highway network surrounding the site, and which is primarily influenced by the Old Wokingham Road and Easthampstead Road. Although there is no inherent layout deficiency of the Old Wokingham Road / Easthampstead Road junction, the proposed point closure will significantly reduce traffic using the junction, and will improve safety accordingly.

Traffic Impacts

- 6.135 Since the access arrangements and new highway infrastructure relate to the project area as a whole, and connect Old Wokingham Road to Easthampstead Road through the current application site and that the subject of the parallel application on land to the west submitted by NKH, the traffic impacts of the proposals have been assessed for the two developments combined (totalling 1,030 dwellings).
- 6.136 Construction is anticipated to commence in 2026, and the development is expected to be fully operational during 2038.

Construction Phase

- 6.137 Construction traffic will access the site via Old Wokingham Road, and possibly via Easthampstead Road in addition. Assuming a typical build out rate for a development of this scale (up to 100 dwellings per annum), this would typically generate 14 HGV movements per day, together with light vehicle movements from up to 78 construction workers. Overall, the

development is projected to result in up to 134 daily two-way construction movements, with 12 during the morning peak hour and 4 during the evening peak.

- 6.138 The 'link flow' analysis shows that the traffic flows in 2026 with construction traffic would not be significantly different from the baseline position without construction traffic. The change (no greater than 5.2% across the morning and evening peak hours as well as the 24 hour weekday period) would not be perceptible. However, the construction activity would generate HGV movements that would not occur in the baseline scenario, and which would have the potential to create a minor adverse effect in terms of pedestrian amenity along the surrounding network. However, the effects would be short term, and can be reduced through mitigation measures.
- 6.139 The construction of the access junction is anticipated to take place over a two month period, during which time local traffic management measures will be necessary along Old Wokingham Road. This is likely to result in a minor adverse effect in terms of driver delay, but will have no effect on the pedestrian and cycle networks in the area since there are no provisions for either cyclists or pedestrians along Old Wokingham Road.

Operational Phase

- 6.140 Once fully operational (projected to be 2038), the project area development as a whole is predicted to result in a total of 638 two-way trips during the morning peak hour, and 561 during the evening peak, with a weekly total of 7,433 trips. These trips have been assigned onto the local highway network using the 2038 Wokingham Strategic Transport Model (WSTM).
- 6.141 A total of 37 links were assessed, involving a comparison of the 2038 'forecast base' flows with the 2038 'with development' flows. This demonstrated that, with the exception of eight links, traffic flows in 2038 when the development is fully operational would not be significantly different from the 2038 baseline scenario. Traffic increases along most areas of the road network would be no greater than 8.9% across the morning and evening peak hours as well as the 24 hour weekday period. In accordance with the impact assessment guidance, changes in total traffic flows of less than 10% equate to no perceptible impact relative to baseline conditions. In some instances there will be a decrease in traffic flows

due to traffic adopting different routings in response to different traffic flows and highway network configuration.

6.142 With regard to the eight links where changes are predicted to exceed 10% compared with the baseline scenario, the summary position is set out in the schedule below

Schedule 6.2: Summary Schedule of Main Highway Impacts

Link Ref.	Links	Change (%)			Summary Assessment
		AM Peak	PM Peak	Daily (24 Hr)	
10A	London Road (West of SWDR)	+8.9	+88.2	+41.4	These links are all located along Easthampstead Road. Existing flows are low and, given the location of a school to the south, it is deemed to be a medium sensitivity receptor.
10B	Easthampstead Road (East of Site Access B)	-38.4	+16	-16.4	10A: affected by development traffic using accesses B and C as well as the redistribution of traffic resulting from the point closure of Easthampstead Road. The percentage increases, whilst defined as minor and moderate impacts, reflect the low existing traffic volumes and should be construed in the context of the other changes and benefits across the Easthampstead Road link as a whole.
13A	Easthampstead Road (East of Site Access C)	-24.6	+50.2	+15.3	10B: affected by the same traffic escalators as 10A during the PM peak, but with reductions during the AM peak and daily flows. Overall, the impact would be negligible having regard to the medium sensitivity of the receptor.
13B	Easthampstead Road	-93.6	-86.1	-91.1	13A: the increases in the PM peak / 24 hr daily result from background traffic re-routing west from the Redlake Lane priority junction due to closure of the eastbound route. The discernible increase in the PM peak reflects the low existing traffic volumes. As a medium sensitivity receptor, the change in flows on the link result in a minor adverse effect during the PM peak and a negligible effect during the other periods. 13B: highest change reflects the proposed point closure to prevent movements along the link. A reduction in flows is considered to be a major beneficial impact.
11	Heathlands Road	+16.2	+5.2	+6.8	Similarly to Easthampstead Road, a low traffic route with a school to the north east, and therefore a medium sensitivity receptor. The increased flows would be negligible.
19B	Old Wokingham Road (North of Site Access A)	+8.0	+7.4	+10.7	All links to the north of the proposed Site Access A.
20	Old Wokingham Road	+8.0	+7.3	+10.5	Given that both Old Wokingham Road and Waterloo Road are deemed to be low sensitivity receptors, the impacts of the predicted increases in traffic flows are considered to be negligible.

					Given the provisions for pedestrians / cyclists within the development, and the point closure of Easthampstead Road, the effects are predicted to be negligible in terms of pedestrian delay, severance and amenity.
21	Waterloo Road	+10.4	-1.0	+6.0	The proposed access and neighbouring junctions will operate within capacity and therefore the effect on driver delay is negligible. The accident data confirm that there are no significant safety issues associated with the existing network, and therefore the effect on accidents and safety will be negligible.

- 6.143 Whilst construction impacts are minor and essentially relate to pedestrian amenity on the surrounding network and driver delays during access construction, the impacts can be minimised through a Construction Environment Management Plan. This can include a routing plan for HGVs to avoid the more sensitive pedestrian routes.
- 6.144 The assessment indicates that the traffic effects of the development during the operational phase would be negligible. Moreover, point closure of Easthampstead Road to the east of Redlake Lane will provide a quiet route for pedestrians and cyclists.
- 6.145 As is evident from the illustrative masterplan and Design and Access Statement, a hierarchy of routes is proposed within the development, all of which are intended to promote safe and attractive routes for pedestrians and cyclists and to ensure low traffic speeds.
- 6.146 Considered overall, the proposed development has good potential to deliver a sustainable urban extension in transport terms. It is well related to the existing and future urban area of Wokingham with its associated facilities and public transport connectivity. Moreover, through the scheme design, to be secured through the parameter plans and future Design Code documents, primacy will be given to movement by active travel modes, both within the development itself, and between the development and other locations. The development will also be designed to accommodate public transport, and which will be routed through its core to integrate with the proposed neighbourhood centre.
- 6.147 With regard to the impacts of development traffic on the surrounding highway network, whilst some existing junctions are under stress, the assessment confirms that, at the 2038 forecast base, the residual impacts on the highway network as a result of the proposed development will not be severe. Indeed, in several instances, with the development in place, the

alternative routes that it provides, together with the point closure of Easthampstead Road, will result in betterment at key junctions compared with the 2038 'no development' scenario.

The summary conclusion of the Transport Assessment relating to the current application proposals, is as follows:

The proposed access arrangement onto Old Wokingham Road and Easthampstead Road works within capacity when accounting for all development traffic routing through the junction.⁹²

All junctions have been assessed in a 2038 future year scenario using demand traffic flows. This is a very robust assessment well in advance of the five years after submission required by national guidance.⁹³

Mitigation schemes have already been identified at the Old Wokingham Road / Peacock Lane junction and Peacock Lane / Vigar Way Roundabout as part of the South Wokingham SDL. Whilst accounting for those the residual impact of this development is negligible compared to the baseline situation. Furthermore, infrastructure in the form of the SWDR link is being delivered and this has shown that junctions on that have sufficient capacity to accommodate the development.⁹⁴

It is in this context that the proposed development is not considered to result in a 'Severe' highway impact on the operation of the local transport network therefore according with the third key transport test of the NPPF.⁹⁵

6.148 With regard to the cumulative impact assessment of the SWSDL extension as a whole (Applications A and B), the summary conclusions are as follows:

The proposed access arrangements onto Old Wokingham Road and Easthampstead Road work within capacity when accounting for all cumulative development traffic routing through the junctions.⁹⁶

⁹² Ibid, para. 6.65

⁹³ Ibid, para. 6.66

⁹⁴ Ibid, para. 6.67

⁹⁵ Ibid, para. 6.68

⁹⁶ Ibid, para. 7.56

All junctions have been assessed in a 2038 future year scenario using demand traffic flows. This is a very robust assessment well in advance of the five years after submission required by national guidance.⁹⁷

Mitigation schemes have already been identified at the Old Wokingham Road / Peacock Lane junction and Peacock Lane / Vigar Way Roundabout as part of the South Wokingham SDL. Further mitigation is proposed on a cumulative basis at the following junctions:

- *Old Wokingham Road / Peacock Lane Roundabout*
- *Peacock Lane / Sparrowhawk Way Roundabout*
- *Jennetts Park Roundabout⁹⁸*

Whilst accounting for those the residual impact of the cumulative development is negligible compared to the baseline situation. Furthermore, infrastructure in the form of the SWDR link is being delivered and this has shown that junctions on that have sufficient capacity to accommodate the cumulative development.⁹⁹

It is in this context that the proposed cumulative development is not considered to result in a 'Severe' highway impact on the operation of the local transport network therefore according with the third key transport test of the NPPF.¹⁰⁰

6.149 For all of the foregoing reasons the proposals are considered to be acceptable in terms of movement and accessibility. They incorporate robust provisions for sustainable and active transport, and will not give rise to highway safety concerns or residual traffic impacts on the public highway that would be severe. As is correctly acknowledged in the Transport Assessment, the NPPF:

... does not require development to address and resolve existing congestion issues. In this respect it is evident that the proposed development would not have any

⁹⁷ Ibid, para. 7.57

⁹⁸ Ibid para. 7.58

⁹⁹ Ibid, para. 7.59

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, para. 7.60

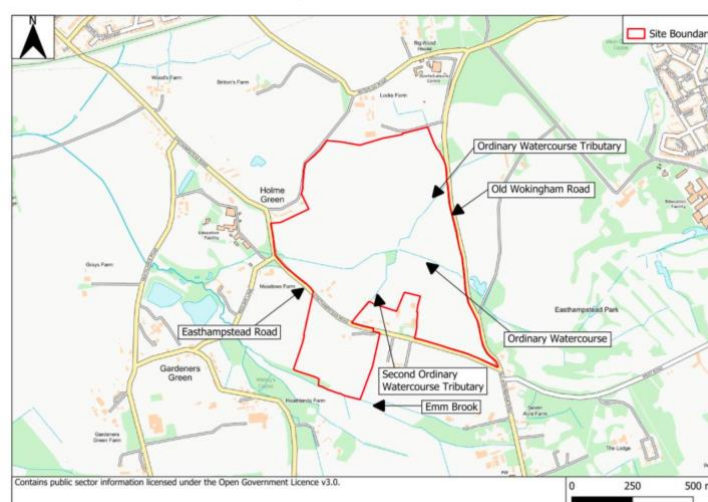
discernible effects on the operation of the junctions along the surrounding highway network and hence the resultant impact cannot be considered to be severe.¹⁰¹

- 6.150 The proposed development is therefore compliant with WBCS Policies CP1, CP6 and CP10, and MDDL Policy CC08. Since the proposals incorporate provisions to offer choice of modes of travel with minimal reliance on the car and that will provide accessibility and connectivity between the site and Bracknell, and the assessments confirm that there will be no severe residual impacts on the highway network in the adjoining borough, the proposals are also compliant with BFLP Policies LP 3 and LP 25.

Flood Risk and Drainage

- 6.151 The NPPF and Planning Practice Guidance establish a framework for assessing the probability of flooding and the suitability of land for different uses, depending on their level of vulnerability. Consistent with this, WBCS Policy CP1 and MDDL Policy CC09 require a sequential approach which directs development away from the areas at highest risk of flooding (from any source). Furthermore, development should incorporate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) to provide adequate drainage; avoid increasing, and where possible, reduce the risk of flooding, on the site and elsewhere; and limit adverse effects on water quality (including ground water). Flood modelling and drainage systems should be designed to accommodate a 1 in 100 year flood event plus an allowance for climate change: 40% surface water (pluvial) flooding and 70% for fluvial flooding.

- 6.152 The Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy (FRA) that accompanies the application confirms that ground levels across the site slope gently from north to south to a low area along an ordinary watercourse¹⁰². An ordinary watercourse flows in a westerly direction through the



¹⁰¹ Ibid, para. 9.23

¹⁰² FRA, para. 3.8

centre of the site, and a tributary flows from the north-eastern part of the site towards the ordinary watercourse¹⁰³. A second tributary flows from the southern boundary of the site in a northerly direction towards the ordinary watercourse.

- 6.153 There are three existing crossings of the ordinary watercourse within, and leading to, the site, all of which are culverted. The nearest main River, the Emm Brook, flows as an ordinary watercourse from the southernmost boundary of the site (abutting the SANG land) in a north westerly direction. The ordinary watercourse that crosses the site flows into the Emm Brook at Chapel Green, at the point where the latter becomes a main river.

Flood Risk

- 6.154 The FRA confirms that the majority of the site is in Flood Zone 1 and is therefore at 'low probability' of fluvial or tidal flooding. An area immediately adjacent to the ordinary watercourse is located within Flood Zones 2 ('medium probability') and 3 ('high probability'). The flood zone floodplain is shown on the EA Flood Zone Map to be between 25-55 metres in width¹⁰⁴. However, this does not appear to be consistent with either the observed situation or the topographical survey that confirms that the ordinary watercourse channel is well defined with steep sides. Moreover, the vegetation that has become established in the channel indicates that it is not frequently full.
- 6.155 In reality, not least due to the culvert under Old Wokingham Road acting as a control for flows entering the site, the flood extents across the site are likely to be much smaller than shown on the EA Flood Zone Map. Nevertheless, the EA Flood Zone has informed the preparation of the masterplan.
- 6.156 The EA's Flood Risk from Surface Water mapping indicates that the majority of the site is at a 'very low' risk of surface water flooding, although there is a flow route with 'low', 'medium' and 'high' risk associated with the flow route of the ordinary watercourse¹⁰⁵. There is also an area of 'low', 'medium' and 'high' risk associated with the ordinary watercourse tributary which flows from the north-east part of the site towards the ordinary watercourse. However, due to poorly defined channels of the tributary and the ordinary watercourse within the surface water mapping, it is considered that the width of the surface water flow route has

¹⁰³ Ibid, para. 3.11

¹⁰⁴ EIA, Technical Appendix , Figure 8

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, Figure 10

been overestimated. In addition, a ditch running along the northern boundary of the site is not represented in the mapping, and which would effectively intercept overland flow from the north and direct it to the north-eastern corner where flows would continue along the ditch line and into the ordinary watercourse tributary. The extent of surface water flooding in the north eastern corner of the site is therefore considered to have been over-estimated by the mapping. There is also an area of 'low' and 'medium' risk along the site's southern boundary associated with the Emm Brook which flows to the south of the site.

- 6.157 The risk of groundwater flooding across the majority of the site is considered to be 'low', although there are areas adjacent to the ordinary watercourse that could be considered to be 'high'.
- 6.158 Given the absence of sewer networks within the site, the risk of flooding from this source is considered to be 'low'. Moreover, the site is not at risk of flooding in the event of a reservoir breach, nor is it at risk from canals or other artificial sources.
- 6.159 Overall, the FRA deems the site to be at low risk of flooding, except for the corridor of the ordinary watercourse which is potentially affected by fluvial and surface water flooding. Some parts of the site also provide flow routes for surface water. It establishes that the design flood event should be taken as the fluvial 1 in 100 annual probability scenario, plus an allowance for climate change. However, since the available data does not include the 1 in 100 annual probability plus climate change scenario modelling for either fluvial or surface water flooding, the EA Flood Map for Planning has been used to inform the masterplan and a detailed, site specific analysis will be undertaken at detailed design stage, as necessary.

Sequential Test

- 6.160 The proposed development is predominantly for residential development, and is therefore categorised as 'more vulnerable' in the NPPF¹⁰⁶. Both the NPPF, and the provisions of the WBCS and MDDL, require a sequential approach which directs development away from the areas at highest risk of flooding.
- 6.161 As outlined earlier, the majority of the site, up to the ordinary watercourse that traverses it on an east-west alignment, is allocated for residential and related development in the adopted

¹⁰⁶ NPPF, Annex 3

Development Plan. It has therefore been tacitly accepted that there are no ‘reasonably available sites appropriate for the proposed development in areas at lower risk of flooding’¹⁰⁷.

6.162 In applying the sequential test in relation to the Phase 2b application by Kier Miller, the advice to Members was as follows:

*Consistent with the approach anticipated by the Core Strategy and South Wokingham SPD, the landscape and green infrastructure strategies identify the land along the Emm Brook corridor as open space for outdoor recreation, nature conservation and biodiversity. These water compatible uses are acceptable in all zones including the functional floodplain, providing they can remain operational and safe for users in times of flood; do not result in a net loss of floodplain storage; and do not impede water flows and not increase flood risk elsewhere.*¹⁰⁸

*The majority of land in residential parcels, the school and the neighbourhood centre would be within Flood Zone 1 where all uses are appropriate. Where tributaries would flow along the periphery of parcels, flooding would be confined to the route of the watercourse, which would be situated in a corridor of open space or – in the case of the neighbourhood centre - culverted.*¹⁰⁹

*Thus all more vulnerable and less vulnerable uses would be located outside the areas at risk of flooding (based on the post-SWDR mitigation and residual flood zones) and only water compatible uses would take place within Flood Zones 2 and 3. Furthermore, most of the development parcels would be accessed from the SWDR, which has been designed to be above any predicted flood levels (fluvial and surface) for all events up to the 1 in 1,000 year event and/or the 1 in 100 year event with a 70% climate change allowance for peak river flows. Hence, the sequential test would be met.*¹¹⁰

6.163 The same principles are incorporated in the masterplan accompanying the current application. All more vulnerable and less vulnerable uses are located outside the areas at risk of flooding, and only water compatible, green infrastructure uses are proposed within the

¹⁰⁷ NPPF, para. 168

¹⁰⁸ Report to Planning Committee, 18 May 2021, Agenda Item 80, Application ref. 190914, para. 253

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, para. 254

¹¹⁰ Ibid, para. 255

areas that are indicated on the EA Flood Risk Zone Map to be at higher probability of flooding, albeit considered to be a pessimistic portrayal of the actual situation.

- 6.164 Whilst, in conjunction with the current application, additional development is proposed to the south of the ordinary watercourse beyond the limits of the existing SWSDL, the extent of the residential zone is entirely within Flood Zone 1. Given that it is an integral part of the SWSDL Extension, it cannot be located elsewhere.

Flood Mitigation Strategy

- 6.165 Given the above circumstances, with the extent of the residential zones entirely within Flood Zone 1, there is no need to exceed the normal flood resilience requirements set out in the WBC SFRA. Moreover, there will be no impact on fluvial floodplain storage or conveyance consequential upon the residential development.
- 6.166 Whilst some parts of the road crossings may be located within the fluvial floodplain, they will be designed to ensure no off site impact on fluvial storage or flow routes.
- 6.167 Whilst some parts of the residential development are located within areas at 'high' and 'medium' risk of surface water flooding, these risks will be mitigated through the surface water drainage strategy and through ordinary watercourse corridors within the development to allow the storage and conveyance of flow.
- 6.168 Overall, the residual flood risk to the site is low.

Surface Water Drainage

- 6.169 The surface water drainage strategy is based upon sustainable urban drainage system (SuDS) principles as encouraged by national and local planning policies alike. This has combined benefits in terms of water quantity (controlling runoff aiding management of flood risk), water quality (managing the quality of runoff), amenity and biodiversity (the four pillars of SuDS design).
- 6.170 The underlying geology is not conducive to infiltration type techniques, meaning that the system will be designed for on-site attenuation with controlled discharge to existing local watercourses. This will ensure that downstream flood risks will not be increased, and will

potentially be improved through reducing existing on-site surface water flooding and uncontrolled discharge, and the quality of surface water runoff will also be improved.

- 6.171 The proposed scheme will include a network of trapped gullies, pipes and SuDS features to collect the surface water runoff, working in combination with features such as permeable paving, roadside swales and filter drains, within the residential parcels and green-blue corridors, to filtrate, store and transport water to attenuation storage with water quality benefits.
- 6.172 The attenuation basins will discharge, at a controlled rate, into the existing ordinary watercourse which traverses the site and flows under Easthampstead Road to the west.
- 6.173 The surface drainage water strategy therefore utilises the existing natural surface water drainage regime, and adapts it to accommodate and control any enhanced runoff rates from a built environment. Careful consideration will be given to the design of the necessary infrastructure and to ensure it both enhances the new urban landscape, for example through the creation of SuDS streets, and integrates seamlessly as part of an integrated blue and green infrastructure and landscape design.
- 6.174 The detailed design of the SuDS infrastructure will be determined at the reserved matters stage, and will be integral to the landscape design. Consideration will be given to the balance between source control techniques, such as swales, granular strips and permeable paving, and the scale of the larger attenuation features.
- 6.175 The strategy confirms that current, uncontrolled pluvial runoff during high rainfall events will be mitigated through the attenuation arrangements, which will be of benefit to downstream receptors.
- 6.176 Having regard to the foregoing considerations it is concluded that the proposals are policy compliant in that they will avoid placing vulnerable development in areas at risk of flooding, and will adopt SuDs drainage principles that integrate with the natural drainage regime and will deliver betterment in terms of attenuating existing greenfield runoff rates during significant storm events.

Community Infrastructure

- 6.177 WBCS Policy CP21, Appendix A7.53 and the supporting SPDs amplify the requirements of Policy CP4 setting out a range of education and community facilities to be delivered within the SDL. Whilst those facilities, and in particular the requirement for two primary schools, are specific to the SWSDL as allocated in the adopted Local Plan, and will be delivered through the associated planning permissions, the principle of delivering necessary community infrastructure in order to achieve sustainable communities will apply equally to the current application for the SWSDL extension.
- 6.178 WBCS Policy CP3 is supportive of complimentary uses to make the full potential of a site. Moreover, Policy CP13 seeks to maintain a hierarchy of shopping provision to meet the needs of local residents, and anticipates the provision of new or enhanced local centres within the SDLs in order to achieve sustainable patterns of development.
- 6.179 The current proposals incorporate a neighbourhood centre that is intended to provide local convenience shopping and other facilities for the day to day needs of the new community, and to nurture social interaction. This was foreshadowed in the Regulation 18 consultation documents, and is therefore taken to be an important ingredient of an expanded SWSDL. Although not part of an existing centre, the quantum of floorspace for town centre and related uses is proportionate to a neighbourhood centre. Whilst exceeding the current threshold of 500m² set in MDDL Policy TB16 above which sequential and impact tests are required outside identified centres, as a new centre that is anticipated will be a policy requirement in conjunction with the allocation of any future SWSDL Extension, it is anticipated that the need for sequential and impact tests will have been superseded by the time of determination of the current applications since the neighbourhood centre will be in accordance with the updated Development Plan. It is also germane that the total quantum of commercial floorspace included in the current application is below the default threshold (of 2,500m²) above which an impact assessment is required by national planning policy¹¹¹, confirming that it is unlikely to impact on any existing centre
- 6.180 As is confirmed in the Design and Access Statement¹¹², it will be within ten minutes walking distance for all future residents of the proposed development, as well as for many residents of the new communities coming forward in other parts of the SDL, including that part the

¹¹¹ NPPF, para. 94

¹¹² Design and Access Statement, pp. 27-28

subject of Application B submitted by NKH in parallel with the current one. Moreover, it is intended to incorporate a genuine mix of uses including retail, leisure, financial and professional services and community uses.

- 6.181 The design principles for the Market Square demonstrate how the floorspace can be provided in a coherent centre arranged around a public square which is free from vehicles¹¹³. It is intended to be framed by taller buildings of up to three storeys, with commercial space at ground floor level and an opportunity for commercial or other uses (including residential) above. It will be highly accessible by public transport with the potential for bus stops on the north side of the square, as well as by walking and cycling. Limited car parking will be available towards the north side of the square, with priority afforded to those with accessible needs.
- 6.182 The need for other community infrastructure will be subject to further discussions with the Council. With two new primary schools to be delivered in conjunction with the original urban extension, and which will be within walking distance of the proposed SWSDL extension, the need for a further primary school as part of the current proposals has yet to be determined. As with the earlier phases, secondary education requirements will be covered by CIL, and there is no requirement for a new secondary school within the current application site.
- 6.183 Other community facilities, such as community centres, libraries and indoor sports facilities are to be met through the CIL levy, although there is potential to incorporate floorspace that is available for community activities on the first floor of the proposed building in the Market Square.
- 6.184 Requirements for health care will be determined through the application process. However, again there is potential to accommodate clinics and surgeries within the commercial floorspace to be provided as part of the local centre, and/or outside the centre within identified locations of housing with shop fronts at ground floor level¹¹⁴.
- 6.185 Having regard to the above provisions, the proposals are considered to demonstrate compliance with WBCS Policies CP2, CP3 and CP13, the principles relating the delivery of a sustainable urban extension at south of Wokingham as set out in Policy CP21 and Appendix

¹¹³ Ibid, p.12

¹¹⁴ Design and Access Statement, pp. 85-90

A.7 and the SWSDL SPD, MDDL Policy TB16, and the Infrastructure Delivery and Contributions SPD

Housing Density, Mix and Tenure

- 6.186 The illustrative masterplan and accompanying design documents demonstrate the potential of the proposed development to deliver a mix and balance of densities, dwelling types, tenures and sizes. The precise details will be resolved through future reserved matters submissions. As with the earlier applications relating to the SWSDL, it is anticipated that a condition will be imposed to ensure phased delivery of an appropriate overall mix and distribution across the site. However, the construction of the illustrative masterplan proposals is based on a range of densities, house types and sizes.
- 6.187 The average density, at circa 37 per hectare overall, is consistent with that anticipated in the WBCS¹¹⁵ and SWSPD of 30-35 dwellings per hectare within the SWSDL, albeit with significant variation across different character areas¹¹⁶. The Design and Access Statement identifies two predominant character areas, to the north and south of the watercourse that bisects the site, comprised of organic growth zones reflecting the four key architectural typologies within central Wokingham, which correlate with variable building heights and are manifested in varying densities. The greatest scale and density of development is associated with the proposed local centre within the Western Neighbourhood of the Wokingham Urban Edge character area.
- 6.188 The lowest scale and density of development is proposed for the Village character area towards the south western periphery of the site, and therefore at its rural interface. This reflects the character of the proposed community in this location which is intended to be in a rural idiom rather than continuation of the urban area.
- 6.189 As is evidenced through the Design and Access Statement, the density is overtly design led and balances efficiency of land use through incorporating a range of densities and the accommodation of complimentary uses with the objectives to deliver a development that responds appropriately to the site's context and character.

¹¹⁵ WBCS, Appendix 7, paragraph A7.50

¹¹⁶ Design and Access Statement, pp. 31-32

6.190 For the foregoing reasons the proposals are compliant with WBCS Policies CP3 and CP5.

Affordable and Specialist Housing

6.191 WBCS Policy CP5, reinforced by SWSDL SPD Design Principle 2b and the IDC SPD, requires residential development to provide a mix of tenures, including a proportion of affordable housing. For developments on greenfield sites within the SDLs, the requirement is for 35% of homes to be affordable.

6.192 For the maximum of 850 dwellings proposed, this equates to up to 297 units. The proportion will be secured through a S106 Obligation.

6.193 In accordance with MDDL Policy TB05, an appropriate mix of affordable dwelling types and sizes will be required, assessed on a site by site basis and reflecting the Council's AH SPD. The aforementioned documents suggest a guide mix, to be considered in conjunction with the latest information from the Housing Register.

6.194 Given that both the MDDL and AH SPD are based on outdated evidence of housing need that is likely to have changed, then the guide mix that they suggest must be treated with caution. As with the earlier phases of the SWSDL, a flexible approach is therefore proposed. The indicative proportions shown in the schedule below will be a matter for negotiation and the final mix is likely to be resolved through future reserved matters submissions.

Schedule 6.3: Notional Housing Mix

Type	No. Beds of	Proportion (provisional)					
		Market		Affordable		Total	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Apartments	1	33	6	42	14	75	9
	2	88	16	68	23	157	18
Houses	2	66	12	89	30	155	18
	3	232	42	68	23	300	35

	4	133	24	30	10	162	19
Totals		553	100	297	100	850	100

- 6.195 The AH SPD also provides guidance on the tenure of on-site affordable housing, to be assessed on a site by site basis, but generally 70% social rented and 30% shared ownership. For a maximum of 297 affordable homes this equates to 208 social rented homes, and 89 shared ownership. Again, the final tenure split will be a matter for negotiation having regard to indices of need.
- 6.196 In relation to specialist housing, the design documents confirm that the masterplan provides scope for the incorporation of sheltered accommodation in close proximity to the neighbourhood centre. Such a location in close proximity to social and community facilities and amenities is optimal for those who may be of restricted mobility and/or not have access to a car.
- 6.197 As with the earlier phases of the SWSDL, it is anticipated that there will be a requirement for 5% of homes to be built to M4(2) standard (accessible and adaptable dwellings). These are matters that can be secured through conditions and/or a S106 Obligation.
- 6.198 Whilst these are essentially matters for negotiation and/or at reserved matters stage, there is no reason to conclude that that the proposals will not be compliant with WBCS Policies CP2 and CP5, MDDL Policy TB05, and the provisions of the relevant SPDs.

Public Open Space

- 6.199 WBCS Policy CP3 establishes an overall open space requirement of 4.65 hectares per 1,000 population within new development. This is amplified by MDDL Policy TB08 that identifies the requirements for different types of open space.
- 6.200 Following the principles of the comprehensive masterplanning approach for the SWSDL required by the WBCS and SPDs, the open space requirements for the SDL Extension have been considered together, in particular in relation to the delivery of useable SANG.

6.201 Consistent with the requirements of the WBCS (A7.42 (c), A7.45) and the Landscape Design Principles set out in the SWSDL SPD, much of the open space provision is provided in multi-functional, continuous corridors that permeate the proposed development from north to south and east to west. The essential components of the open space network are summarised below and on the land budget drawing accompanying the application¹¹⁷.

Parks and Gardens

6.202 A central parkland bisects the main areas of urban development in the Wokingham Urban Edge character area to the north of the drainage channel that traverses the site in an east-west direction. The parkland extends from the northern boundary of the site southwards running through the full extent of the (Eastern and Western) urban neighbourhoods comprising the Wokingham Urban Edge character area to its east and west. It reduces in width slightly towards its mid-point, before broadening towards its southern extremity where it connects with the SANG.

6.203 The areal extent of this continuous Park and Garden is 2.94 hectares. This is more than sufficient to meet the requirements of the current application (2.24 hectares), as well as any requirement arising from the SWSDL Extension as a whole inclusive of Application B (2.75 hectares), resulting in surplus provision of 0.19 hectares in this category.

Children's Play

6.204 Through the current application provision is made for three play spaces. Two play spaces are proposed in the central Parkland and Garden. A LEAP is proposed close to its northern extremity, with a NEAP where it broadens towards its southern extent. In addition a LAP is proposed to the south of the watercourse and north-west of Prior's Farm within the proposed SANG.

6.205 The total area of playspace provision within the current application area amounts to 0.45 hectares against a requirement for 0.51 hectares. Any requirements within the areas of the other live applications comprising the SWSDL Extension will fall to be met through those applications.

¹¹⁷ Ref. edp_7438_d032_D

Allotments

6.206 Three areas of allotments are proposed:

- Adjacent to the western site boundary south of the existing residential properties fronting onto Byway 30
- Adjacent to the north-western boundary of the SANG to the south of Easthampstead Road
- Adjacent to Old Wokingham Road on the south-eastern periphery of the proposed residential development.

6.207 The three allotment locations proposed extend to a combined area of 1.46 hectares, which is more than sufficient to meet the requirements of the current application and the other two live applications comprising the SWSDL Extension.

6.208 The number and distribution of the allotments is consistent with the policy expectation that allotment provision for the SWSDL should be split between at least three sites, in accessible locations where they can be integrated into the landscape¹¹⁸.

Amenity Greenspace

6.209 A significant area of amenity greenspace (4.33 hectares) is provided within the current application site between the south-western limit of the main urban extension (Western Neighbourhood), and the Village Neighbourhood to the south, which will contribute to the rural ambience and identity of the latter. Other, smaller areas are provided adjacent to Byway30, around the northern periphery of the development, and within the Eastern Neighbourhood flanking the ordinary watercourse tributary.

6.210 Overall provision across the SWSDL Extension area, including Application B, amounts to 6.82 hectares, which is considerably in excess of the requirement for 2.45 hectares.

¹¹⁸ SWSDL SPD, Design Principle 1(c)(iv)

Civic Space

- 6.211 A community space is proposed in the proposed neighbourhood centre, including a combination of internal, covered (undercroft) and open air space to provide for a range of uses and weather circumstances. The design documents accompanying the application confirm the aspiration to deliver a multi-functional market square within a tight-knit centre that reflects its position in the hierarchy of centres within Wokingham, and provides an intimate and comfortable space commensurate with its role and function and urban design aspirations.
- 6.212 The overall area of the civic space within the local centre extends to 2,132m², of which 275m² is internal floorspace at first floor level with undercroft space beneath that will function as an extension of the open area. Only 80m² at ground level is enclosed floorspace, meaning that the overall external space extends to 2,052m². Even if the covered outdoor space under the building is excluded, that leaves a minimum of 1,857m² of external civic space.
- 6.213 Based on a requirement for civic space of 0.01 hectares / 1,000 population, the requirement for the current application is 204m². This is less than the minimum threshold size of 400m² set by the Council. However, even excluding the external covered space, the civic space proposed through the current application exceeds the requirement by 1,457m².
- 6.214 The design documents illustrate the vision for a high quality space that is well defined by surrounding buildings and excludes through traffic. The intention is to provide a community hub for recreation and relaxation, and which will become a source of civic pride.
- 6.215 A number of smaller open squares / spaces are also proposed elsewhere within the development, including a green, residential square at the heart of the Eastern Neighbourhood and a village green within the Village Neighbourhood, that will further increase the provisions for civic space beyond the minimum requirements.

SANG / Semi-Natural Greenspace

- 6.216 A single area of SANG is provided to the south of the watercourse wrapping around each side of the excluded land adjacent to Priors Farm, and continuing to the south of Easthampstead Road. The total extent of the SANG is 21.38 hectares (21.26 hectares net

of car parking), of which 13.5 hectares is to be provided to the north of Easthampstead Road, and 7.7 hectares to the south.

- 6.217 WBCS Policy CP21, as amplified by Design Principle 1(c)(vi), requires provision of SANG at a minimum of 8 hectares per 1,000 population (calculated at a rate of 2.4 persons per household). The current application gives rise to a requirement for 16.26 hectares of SANG, and the SWSDL Extension as a whole (including Application B) has a requirement for 19.97 hectares. Therefore there is a surplus of 1.29 hectares within the provisions made through this application.
- 6.218 The SANG will incorporate a hoggin-surfaced, fully accessible, circular walking route extending to 2.5 kilometres (1.6 miles). Shorter walking routes will be available from the development parcels. Native shrub and woodland planting are proposed throughout, creating an attractive, natural landscape whilst promoting biodiversity. Open grassland areas contained within the framework of woodland planting will be punctuated, and defined by, specimen trees comprising a broad species mix, whilst swathes of wildflower meadows will be provided as transitional habitats from the watercourse incorporating mown footpaths as informal routes.
- 6.219 Car parking will be provided, north and south of Easthampstead Road, either side of the point closure, for those needing to visit by car, which will be clearly signposted and accessible. Community relationships within the SANG will be further strengthened through the incorporation of a LLAP with emphasis on natural and imaginative play for children up to 11 years; and allotments and a community orchard to provide healthy food sources, appreciation of an indigenous local landscape, and further enhance biodiversity.
- 6.220 Footpath connections will be provided between the SANG and the existing PROW network. In this regard it is also germane to note the recent application for 16.38 hectares of SANG on immediately adjoining land to the south¹¹⁹ with which the provisions of the current application will connect via the existing footpath network¹²⁰. If this is provided, it will deliver a more extensive, continuous area of SANG in this location, enhance the overall user experience, and increase its effectiveness as an alternative destination to the Thames Basin Heaths SPA that it is intended to protect.

¹¹⁹ See Schedule 4.1, Application ref. 233185

¹²⁰ FP WOKW8

- 6.221 Future residents of the SWSDL Extension would therefore have a choice of SANG locations, including those to the north that will be delivered as part of the original SWSDL, and those now proposed to the south as part of the current application and the contiguous area to the south for which a planning application has recently been made.
- 6.222 The proposals for the SANG have been submitted in full as part of this application. They have been prepared having careful regard to Natural England guidance, and will deliver substantial biodiversity enhancements as well significantly enhanced access to the countryside to the south of Wokingham.
- 6.223 The proposals therefore meet both the quantitative and qualitative requirements for SANG, and are compliant with WBCS Policy CP8, as well as the principle of Policy CP21(6) relating to the original SWSDL that requires necessary measures to avoid and mitigate the impact of development upon the Thames Basin Heaths SPA to meet the requirements of the Habitats Regulations and in accordance with Natural England's standards.

Schedule 6.4: Open Space Provision

Open Space Type	WBC Standard (ha /1,000 population)	Provision (hectares)	Standard of provision (ha/1,000 population)
Parks and Public Gardens	1.1	2.94	1.31
Natural/Semi-Natural Greenspace/SANG	2.84	21.2	3.66
Amenity Greenspace	0.98	6.52	3.26
Provision for Children / Young People (NEAPs/LEAPs/LAPs)	0.25	0.45	0.22
Civic Space	0.01	0.21	0.1

Environmental Health

Noise

- 6.224 WBCS Policy CP1 seeks to avoid development in areas where noise may impact on the amenity of future occupants, and MDDL Policy CC06 reinforces this, requiring proposals to demonstrate how noise impacts on sensitive receptors (both existing and proposed) have been addressed. Where there is no adverse impact, noise would not be a material consideration. Where a significant effect could arise, a sequential approach should be taken first, reviewing the layout of the site, then the internal layout of buildings, and finally physical mitigation measures such as barriers and mechanical ventilation. Where there is still a significant adverse impact planning permission would normally be refused.
- 6.225 The ES includes an assessment of the existing noise sources on prospective future residents of the site, and the potential impacts of both construction and operational noise on sensitive receptors within and adjoining the site.
- 6.226 The noise assessment identifies the primary noise sources with potential to impact on the site to be those arising from traffic on the Old Wokingham Road to the east, and Easthampstead Road to the south.

Construction Impacts

- 6.227 The assessment acknowledges the inevitability with any major development that some disturbance will be occasioned to nearby receptors. However, it is of a temporary duration of medium-term. It will also be intermittent and decrease in intensity over the duration of the construction period. It is also worth reiterating that, at present, there are few sensitive receptors within, or in close proximity to, the site, although that is likely to change as the existing SWSDL progresses, particularly in relation to its northern boundary.
- 6.228 The assessment acknowledges that safeguards exist to minimise the effects of construction noise that are embedded in legislation, and which can typically reduce noise levels from construction works by approximately 5-10dB. The necessary measures can be secured through a Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), including restrictions on working hours.

- 6.229 Since there is unlikely to be a significant increase in construction generated noise or traffic, the implementation of mitigation measures is not required.
- 6.230 Subject to the implementation of the identified measures through the CEMP, any residual impacts are considered to be only minor adverse and short term. Construction generated traffic noise impacts are considered to give rise to negligible residual effects, not least since any increase in noise levels is expected to be limited to daytime hours only.

Operational Impacts

- 6.231 There is predicted to be a negligible increase in road traffic noise consequential upon the development.
- 6.232 In terms of the impact of road traffic noise on future occupiers of the proposed development, internal habitable rooms can be suitably protected from adverse noise with the provision of alternative ventilation for dwellings located close to and/or within line of sight of the roads. Moreover, there is predicted to be negligible impact on noise sensitive receptors arising from the retained commercial units at Priors Farm given the dominance of road traffic noise at the receptors.
- 6.233 Mitigation of noise impacts can be embedded in the future development layout to be determined through reserved matters submissions. For example, exposed edges can be shielded by buildings so that all garden areas are enclosed within the development by the building envelopes of the dwellings, and barriers, such as walls and fences, can be used where access roads are perpendicular to the road. Incorporation of such mitigating measures would be consistent with the urban typologies foreshadowed in the Design and Access Statement.
- 6.234 Subject to mitigation, then the residual impacts of existing traffic noise in garden areas can be reduced to between negligible and minor adverse. Within internal habitable rooms, a negligible effect at the local level can be achieved through the use of glazing and alternative ventilation, where required.
- 6.235 Given all of the above, there are no significant adverse noise impacts arising from, or impacting upon future occupiers of, the proposed development. In consequence, there is no

conflict with the provisions of the Development Plan that seek to protect against adverse noise impacts.

Air Quality

- 6.236 WBCS Policy CP1 establishes that development should minimise the emission of pollutants into the wider environment. The ES includes an assessment of the impact on air quality, including NO₂, PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}.
- 6.237 There are three Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) within 1.5 – 2 kilometres of the site, relating to Wokingham town centre, Bracknell and Crowthorne. All three have been designated for exceedances of the NO₂ annual mean objectives. The proposed development will generate additional traffic on local roads, which has the potential to impact on air quality at existing properties along the affected road network.
- 6.238 Concentrations of NO₂, PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} have been predicted at a number of locations both within, and close to, the proposed development. Seventeen existing residential properties and one existing School were identified as receptors for the assessment. Three additional receptor locations were identified within the new development, which represented exposure to existing sources. All identified receptors were of high sensitivity.
- 6.239 The assessment of baseline conditions indicated that there are no exceedances of the relevant pollutant concentration levels in relation to objective targets within the study area at the present time.

Construction Phase

- 6.240 The potential for dust emissions from demolition, earthworks and construction is considered to be high, with medium potential for trackout emissions from vehicles accessing the site. Without mitigation, the risk of dust soiling from earthworks and construction is considered to be high, with medium risk from demolition and low risk from trackout. Impacts on human health arising from demolition are considered to be negligible, with low risks arising from earthworks, construction and trackout. The risk of impacts on ecology is considered to be negligible across all categories.

6.241 With mitigation through a dust management plan that reflects IAQM guidance, to be incorporated in the CEMP, the residual effects are not likely to be significant. However, it is acknowledged in the guidance that, even with the most rigorous guidance in a dust management plan, it is not possible to guarantee that dust mitigation will be effective all of the time, such as under adverse weather conditions, although the scale of annoyance during such events is not normally sufficient to change the conclusion that overall the effects will be 'not significant'.

Operational Phase

6.242 The baseline assessment confirms that the relevant pollutant levels are all well below the objective levels at all receptors. The percentage changes in NO₂ concentrations range from -1% to 1%, representing a negligible impact at all receptors. The decrease in concentrations at some receptors is attributed to the decrease in traffic flow on the new SWSLR, and on Easthampstead Road due to the proposed point closure.

6.243 Projected annual mean concentrations of PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} are well within the relevant criteria at all receptors with or without the proposed development. The percentage change in concentrations relative to the applicable criteria is 0%, corresponding to a negligible impact at all receptors.

6.244 With regard to predicted air quality conditions for future residents, predicted concentrations throughout the site are below the objective. In consequence, air quality for future residents within the development will be acceptable.

6.245 Overall, the operational air quality effects without mitigation are judged to be 'not significant' for reasons that can be summarised as follows:

- Pollutant concentrations at worst-case locations within the proposed development will all be below the objectives, ensuring future residents experience acceptable air quality;
- Pollutant concentrations at all of the selected worst-case existing receptors along the local road network will be well below the air quality objectives, and all of the impacts are predicted to be negligible; and

- The proposed development will not have a meaningful effect on whether or not the interim and long term PM_{2.5} concentration targets are met within the study area.

6.246 For the reasons outlined, measures to mitigate dust emissions will be required during the construction phase of the development to minimise effects upon nearby receptors. Subject to a dust management plan prepared in accordance with best practice guidelines issued by the IAQM, that can be incorporated in a CEMP, the emissions can be contained within acceptable limits.

6.247 Mitigation of road traffic impacts is unnecessary given that the overall air quality effects of the proposed development will not be significant. It will neither introduce any new exposure into areas of unacceptable air quality, nor will the development-generated traffic emissions have a significant impact on local air quality.

6.248 Overall, the residual effects of neither the construction nor the operational phases of the development are predicted to be significant. The impacts of the proposals on local air quality will therefore be acceptable, and there is no conflict with the provisions of either national or local planning policies that seek to protect air quality.

Residential Amenity

6.249 Although the residential element of the application is in outline, the broad locations of residential parcels are indicated in the parameters plans and through the illustrative masterplan. The general heights for the proposed buildings across the site are established in the Building Heights Parameter Plan¹²¹, and further illustrated in the Design and Access Statement. This allows for a high level assessment of the impact of the proposals on neighbouring properties outside the site, which will be subject to detailed consideration at the reserved matters stage.

6.250 There are very few existing residences within, or immediately adjacent to, the application site.

¹²¹ Ref. SK_02.6.2

- 6.251 There is a small group of dwellings fronting onto Holme Green Lane adjacent to the western boundary of the site. The site wraps around their rear (southern) curtilage boundaries and also around the side boundary of the easternmost dwelling. The properties have reasonable rear curtilages providing good separation distances from the site. In addition, the masterplan envisages the provision of allotments immediately adjacent to the rear curtilage boundaries contained between the latter and the road from the secondary access point on Easthampstead Road. As a result, there will be ample separation between existing and proposed dwellings to avoid any issues of overlooking or loss of privacy. Care will need to be taken in terms of the relationship with the easternmost dwelling where the site wraps around its eastern boundary. However, through careful siting of the proposed dwellings in relation to the side elevation of that property, there is no reason why satisfactory relationships cannot be achieved.
- 6.252 The only other dwellings immediately adjacent to the site are to the north and south of Easthampstead Road close to its southern boundary. These include the retained land at Priors Farm which is in the ownership of the co-applicants.
- 6.253 However, in this location the relationship is between existing dwellings and SANG, and full details of the SANG are submitted for approval, enabling the relationship to be fully assessed at this stage. The SANG drawings confirm that a combination of existing woodland and additional planting associated with the SANG will ensure that there are strong landscape buffers between the existing dwellings and the SANG to avert unacceptable harm to the amenities of their occupiers.
- 6.254 To the north, and north-west of the site, the relationship will be with future dwellings proposed as part of the live outline applications on the Pudner land, and the NKH site with which the current application is associated and has been planned on a composite basis. There is no reason why satisfactory relationships between future dwellings cannot be achieved, and that is a matter for consideration as part of any reserved matters submissions.
- 6.255 For a development of this scale, there will therefore be very limited impact on the residential amenities of existing residents, and the high level assessment confirms that satisfactory relationships can be achieved between existing and proposed dwellings.

Agricultural Land Quality

- 6.256 The principles for sustainable development set out in Policy WBCS CP1 seek to avoid development on areas of best and most versatile agricultural land (BMV).
- 6.257 The Agricultural Land Classification report submitted with the application indicates that the site is mostly comprised of land of BMV quality. However, the published maps indicate that the majority of the land comprised within the existing SWSDL is also classified as BMV quality. It is also germane that a significant proportion of the highest quality (grade II) land is located within the areas proposed for SANG / parkland, and therefore will not be lost to built development.
- 6.258 The site comprises five land parcels, and there will be no significant adverse effects on severance of any active farming business. In consequence there are no implications for any other remaining farmland.
- 6.259 In accordance with the NPPF, plans should allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, 'where consistent with other policies in the Framework'¹²², and where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be 'preferred' to those of a higher quality¹²³. It is clear from the emerging Local Plan that 'significant' development of agricultural land is necessary in order to meet housing and other needs, and that the preference to locate it on land of poorer quality would not be consistent with other policies of the Framework; in particular planning for larger scale development, such as significant extensions to existing towns, where they are well located and designed, and supported by the necessary infrastructure and facilities (including a genuine choice of transport modes)¹²⁴.
- 6.260 Therefore, whilst the loss of BMV agricultural land is a material consideration, it is contrary to a 'preferential' requirement that must be consistent with other policies, rather than an absolute constraint. As is acknowledged in the report accompanying the application, it is properly balanced against the overall benefits that the proposals will deliver.

¹²² NPPF, para. 175

¹²³ Ibid, footnote 58

¹²⁴ Ibid, para 74

Planning Obligations / Conditions

- 6.261 The proposed development will give rise to a substantial Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) payment that will contribute to delivering community and other infrastructure. Nevertheless, it is anticipated that a Section 106 Obligation will be required to secure the affordable housing and other contributions.
- 6.262 Any necessary planning obligations must satisfy the statutory tests set out in Regulation 122 of the CIL Regulations, and will be matter for negotiation and agreement between the applicant and the local planning authority. It is anticipated that Heads of Terms will be agreed prior to consideration of the application by the Planning Committee. Preliminary Heads of Terms have been prepared and appended to this Statement [\[Appendix 1_S106 Obligation_Heads of Terms_Preliminary Draft\]](#).
- 6.263 Similarly it is anticipated that any conditions of planning permission, if granted, will be the subject of discussion and, as far as possible, agreement between the parties having due regard to relevant Government policy and guidance relating to their use.

Other Material Considerations – Housing Land Supply

- 6.264 Whilst this application does not rely on the Council being unable to demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing land, it is a material consideration to be weighed in the overall planning balance alongside the provisions of the Development Plan. In its most recent published statement¹²⁵, the Council confirmed that the total supply of deliverable housing land for the period April 2023-April 2028 amounted to only 3.2 years, equating to a deficit of 1,430 dwellings assessed against the local housing need of 795 homes per annum.
- 6.265 Given these circumstances, the so-called ‘tilted balance’ is engaged and, in accordance with paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF, planning permission should be granted unless either the application of policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provide a clear reasons for refusing the development, or any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole. For reasons that are confirmed in the foregoing

¹²⁵ Wokingham Borough Council, Five Year Housing Land Supply Statement, 31 March 2023

analysis, the application of policies in the Framework that protect areas of assets of particular importance does not provide a 'clear reason' for refusing the development proposed. Consideration of the overall planning balance is undertaken in Section 7 below.

- 6.266 The Council's inability to demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing land is a reflection of the outdatedness of the adopted Development Plan and the considerable reliance placed on large strategic sites, some of which have not come forward as quickly as anticipated. It means that there is an urgent need to bring forward additional sites that can replenish the deliverable supply not only during the current five year period, but in future periods in order to improve, and maintain continuity in, the deliverable housing land supply. As is acknowledged in the Council's Statement, the benchmark lead-in times in Wokingham for sites of more than 250 dwellings from outline decision date to first house sales is 46 months¹²⁶.
- 6.267 Given the very significant shortfall in the five year deliverable supply, it is therefore imperative that further large sites that can make a significant contribution to improving and maintaining continuity in the supply are brought forward at the earliest opportunity, and in parallel with the provisions of the (delayed) Local Plan Update that will replenish the overall supply of housing sites to meet requirements for the period beyond 2026. Having regard to both the position as regards the five year supply, and the imminent expiry of the adopted Development Plan period, urgent action is now necessary, and it is imperative to progress applications in parallel with the emerging Local Plan Update.
- 6.268 Whilst the provisions of the adopted Development Plan remain the starting point for the consideration of the current application, the provisions of the NPPF are an important 'other material consideration' to be weighed in the overall planning balance. Given that the 'tilted balance' is engaged, then the presumption in favour of sustainable development is applied, and planning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts 'significantly and demonstrably' outweigh the benefits assessed in relation to the policies in the Framework (rather than the Development Plan) as a whole.
- 6.269 A summary assessment of the proposals in relation to the provisions of the Framework as a whole is set out in Schedule 6.5 below.

¹²⁶ Ibid, p.19

Schedule 6.5: Assessment of Proposals in Relation to the Framework

NPPF Policy (matter / paras)	Assessment	Impact ¹
Delivering a sufficient supply of homes (¶ 60-84)	The proposals are positively aligned with the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, and they will deliver homes of a size, type and tenure that is needed for different groups in the community, including affordable housing for which there is an acute need. The proposals will contribute positively to replenishing and maintaining the supply and delivery of new homes in the context of a plan period that is due to expire imminently without a replacement Plan being in place, and a deficiency in the five year deliverable supply, ensuring homes are available for occupation when they are needed.	✓
Building a strong, competitive economy (¶ 81-89)	The proposals will contribute indirectly, but positively, to this objective by ensuring homes are available at the right time and in the right places to support economic growth. They will also contribute directly to economic growth through construction and allied trades and associated employment, and through the future commercial uses for which provision will be made in the local centre and on other parts of the site. Given the proximity to Wokingham Town Centre, the scheme is also likely to contribute to sustaining and enhancing town centre businesses through generation of additional footfall and patronage. They will also contribute a considerable CIL Levy and additional Council Tax receipts and business rates that will generate additional expenditure for the local economy.	✓
Ensuring the vitality of town centres (¶ 90-95)	The proposals will contribute indirectly, but positively, to this objective through providing additional homes that will have good accessibility to the town centre, and which will increase patronage and contribute to sustaining local services and facilities, including nearby local centres and the proposed local centre on the site.	✓
Promoting healthy and safe communities (¶ 96-107)	The proposals are very positively aligned with this objective through the delivery of new, multi-functional green infrastructure, including the very substantial SANG which will afford access to the countryside in perpetuity for both the existing and future communities, where no legal or formal rights currently exist, as well as a substantial linear park, amenity greenspace focused around the blue corridors, and opportunities for Children's play. They will also benefit the wider social and community infrastructure through the proposed local centre and potential Planning Obligations.	✓
Promoting sustainable transport (¶ 108-117)	The location of the site will provide a genuine choice of transport modes, and together with the scheme design, will promote and prioritise opportunities for walking, cycling and public transport use, not least through incorporating the existing Byway as a key	✓

	sustainable transport asset. There are no unacceptable impacts on highway safety or severe residual cumulative impacts on the road network. On the contrary, through the new and alternative routes that will be provided through the site, traffic will be alleviated on some existing routes, and the associated point closure of an existing route will resolve an existing problematic junction on the primary route network.	
Supporting high quality communications (¶ 118-122)	The proposals will incorporate the necessary infrastructure for full fibre broadband connections.	✓
Making effective use of land (¶ 123-130)	The proposals optimise the capacity for the site through providing for a gradation in density, both within and between neighbourhoods, that responds appropriately to context, including the adjacent urban area and wider rural context. In so doing, they will avoid homes being built at unnecessarily low densities in circumstances where there is a shortage of land for meeting housing needs, whilst fully and appropriately respecting and responding to the site characteristics and context.	✓
Achieving well-designed and beautiful places (¶ 131-141)	Through the parameter plans that have been submitted with the proposals and which will be secured to any planning permission, if granted, the proposals will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, demonstrating understanding of, respect for, and empathy with, local character and the surrounding built environment and landscape setting. They have been informed by a very high level of townscape analysis and design evolution for an outline application, with the resultant detailed precepts of good design included in the Design and Access Statement, and which are likely to inform, and be consolidated through, Design Codes as the application progresses. The proposals will retain and enhance the existing landscape context into which they will fit, and which will contribute to establishing a strong sense of place. Through careful site assessment and appropriate response through the parameter plans and as illustrated through the masterplan, the proposals optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development and to support local facilities. Through the substantial provisions for green infrastructure, the proposals will provide an inclusive and accessible environment that will promote health and well-being and deliver a very high standard of amenity for existing and future users. Whilst detailed design is reserved for subsequent approval, the outline proposals provide the template for the creation of a high quality, beautiful and sustainable place.	✓
Protecting Green Belt land (¶ 142-156)	The Appeal site does not incorporate Green Belt land and will relieve pressure for land-take from the designation to accommodate housing and other needs.	±

Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change (¶ 157-179)	No buildings are proposed in an area of flood risk, and the scheme will incorporate appropriate measures for containing surface water runoff which will result in betterment of current greenfield rates and reduce localised off-site flooding.	✓
Conserving and enhancing the natural environment (¶ 180-194)	The proposals will not cause harm to valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value or soils. Potential negative impacts on sensitive sites will be averted through the SANG provisions which will provide alternative opportunities for existing as well as future residents, thereby contributing to the efficacy of existing measures to manage recreational pressures on the Thames Basin and Heaths. There are no constraints arising from existing ground conditions or pollution, and the proposed development will not create a pollution risk. However, to the extent that the proposals will change in the intrinsic character of the site from countryside to urban settlement, and result in the loss of best and most versatile agricultural land, an adverse impact is registered against these provisions of the NPPF.	×
Conserving and enhancing the historic environment (¶ 195-214)	The proposals will not occasion harm to either above- or below-ground heritage assets.	±
Facilitating the sustainable use of minerals (¶ 215-223)	The proposals will have no impact on this objective.	±
¹ Impact: ✓ = Beneficial; ± = Neutral; × = Adverse		

6.270 For the reasons summarised in the foregoing schedule, when considered in relation to the policies of the Framework as a whole, there are no adverse impacts that indicate ‘significant and demonstrable’ harm such as to supersede the tilted balance. Where the overall planning balance rests is considered in the next section.

7. The Planning Balance

- 7.1 The proposals will make a significant contribution to meeting housing needs within the borough, including both market and affordable housing. In the context of an acknowledged, significant shortfall in the five year supply of deliverable housing land, the evidence of escalated local housing needs compared with the requirements of the adopted Development Plan, an urgent need to replenish the overall supply to meet housing requirements beyond 2026, and evidence of a significant affordable housing need given the ratio of house prices to average incomes, those are benefits to which **substantial weight** is properly afforded.
- 7.2 The proposals will also deliver substantial new green infrastructure, including an extensive park and garden and substantial SANG, both of which will have good accessibility on foot and by bicycle. Whilst the provisions are to meet open space requirements arising from the proposed development, they will also be accessible to the wider community, in particular existing residents and future residents of both Wokingham and Crowthorne. The wider SANG options, and the cumulative advantages of co-location with other provision on land to the south, will enhance the benefits of the proposed SANG in terms of both its recreational value and effectiveness of relieving pressure on the sensitive Thames Basin and Heaths ecosystems that it is intended to protect. There are benefits that are properly afforded **significant weight**.
- 7.3 The proposals will deliver net gains in biodiversity, and as well as contributing positively to diverting recreational pressures from sensitive and vulnerable ecosystems. Whilst some trees will be lost, the loss will be more than compensated for by significant additional planting. These are benefits that are properly afforded **moderate weight**.
- 7.4 In addition to the extensive new green infrastructure, further new community infrastructure will be provided in terms of multifunctional community floorspace within the Market Square, and new shopping and related facilities within the proposed local centre. Given the connectivity of the site to the existing urban area, this will contribute to the range of local facilities that is available for the wider (existing and future) communities on the south side of Wokingham, and will contribute to promoting healthy and safe communities. This is properly afforded **moderate weight** in the decision.

- 7.5 Whilst the proposals will result in additional traffic generation, the evidence confirms that, through the new highway infrastructure that is proposed, including the new connections through the site between Old Wokingham Road and Easthampstead Road / Heathlands link together with the point closure on Easthampstead Road, there will be betterment on the existing highway network compared with the 2038 'no development' scenario. Moreover, through the extensive network of new public footpaths and cycleways that are proposed, the permeability of the site and safe accessibility to the countryside to the south of Wokingham and neighbouring communities, such as Crowthorne, on foot and by bicycle, will be greatly enhanced. In addition, the proposals will contribute positively to sustaining existing and proposed bus services associated with the SWDR through the additional patronage that they will generate, and potentially to extending public transport provision through the bus infrastructure that they will incorporate. These are benefits that are properly afforded **moderate weight**.
- 7.6 The direct and indirect economic benefits arising from the construction process, the significant CIL payment, and the Council Tax receipts once the development is occupied should also be afforded **moderate weight**.
- 7.7 On the negative side of the balance is the loss of currently undeveloped agricultural land to built development, with the associated negative impacts in terms of landscape and visual character. However, as is evident from the Regulation 18 Local Plan consultation, significant urban development on greenfield sites is unavoidable in order to meet housing and other future development needs, and a greenfield urban extension south of Wokingham is a constant alongside all other options, reflecting its sustainability credentials compared with all other options. Moreover, a large part of the site is already included in the SWSDL in the adopted Development Plan. It follows that an urban extension to the south is a least worst option, and therefore the landscape and visual impacts should only be afforded **limited weight** on the negative side of the balance.
- 7.8 Whilst some trees will be lost, the proposals have been carefully conceived to minimise the overall loss, and to avoid removal of the most important specimens. Moreover, the substantial additional tree planting that will be delivered, particularly in association with the SANG, will greatly exceed the limited number of trees to be lost and deliver substantially enhanced treescape and woodlands for the benefit of future generations. Therefore the loss of trees should only be afforded **limited weight**.

7.9 The loss of best and most versatile agricultural land is an irreversible loss to which **moderate weight** should be afforded on the negative side of the balance. However, it must be balanced against the sustainability benefits of delivering an urban extension in the optimal location in relation to Wokingham and that is best placed to take advantage of the substantial investment in new physical, social and community infrastructure to support the existing SWSDL, and to which it can contribute further. Not least in this latter respect is through the additional green infrastructure that will deliver benefits for the wider community, and in terms of diverting recreational pressures from the sensitive biodiversity assets which is the essential purpose of the SANG provisions.

7.10 A summary of the overall planning balance is set out in Schedule 7.1 below.

Schedule 7.1: Overall Planning Balance

Matter	Weight	
	Benefit	Disbenefit
Delivery of Market Housing	Substantial	
Delivery of Affordable Housing	Substantial	
Delivery of substantial Green Infrastructure, including SANG	Significant	
Improved Highway Functionality / Enhanced Sustainable Transport Connectivity / Accessibility	Moderate	
Biodiversity Net Gain	Moderate	
Delivery of Additional Social and Community Infrastructure	Moderate	
Loss of BMV Agricultural Land		Moderate
Landscape / Visual Change from Greenfield to Urban Development		Limited
Loss of Trees		Limited
Economic (Construction Jobs / CIL Contribution / Council Tax Receipts)	Moderate	

- 7.11 It follows from the above that, from a ‘flat balance’ starting point, the outworking of the overall planning balance results in a weight of benefits that substantially and unequivocally exceeds that of any disbenefits. When set against any limited conflict with the provisions of the adopted Development Plan, the clear balance of the evidence is that other material considerations should prevail.
- 7.12 However, given that the Council is currently unable to demonstrate the requisite supply of deliverable housing land, the tilted balance is engaged. Planning permission should therefore be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would ‘significantly and demonstrably’ outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the Framework. The balancing exercise set out in Schedule 7.1 above clearly confirms that, notwithstanding the negative impact in terms of ‘conserving and enhancing the natural environment’, when assessed against the policies in the Framework ‘taken as a whole’¹²⁷, there are no adverse impacts that ‘significantly and demonstrably’ outweigh the substantial benefits to which the proposals will give rise, and such as to tilt the balance back towards refusal. This is a very important material consideration that is properly afforded substantial weight against the limited conflict with the Development Plan that has been identified.
- 7.13 The situation is therefore not considered to be finely balanced in the circumstances of this case. Whether the starting point is a ‘flat’ or a ‘tilted’ balance, the end point is the same, and is one of a substantial weight of benefits that is not counterbalanced by any significant disbenefits arising from harm. To the extent that there may be harm, it is minor and relates to the inevitable change that will be occasioned by the replacement of green fields with residential and related development.

¹²⁷ See assessment in Schedule 6.5 above

8. Conclusion

- 8.1 For the reasons set out in this Statement the proposals are in the nature of sustainable development and should be approved.
- 8.2 The majority of the site is within the boundaries of the existing SWSDL. Moreover, it has been confirmed through the planning permissions that have been granted for earlier phases of development within the SWSDL that relocation of associated SANG onto land outside the boundaries is acceptable and not in conflict with the Development Plan.
- 8.3 The only built development that is currently proposed on land outwith the existing SWSDL boundaries is on land that already contains buildings, and which will be replaced with buildings of reduced scale and mass within a landscaped framework.
- 8.4 To the extent that there is any 'in principle' conflict with the Development Plan, it is therefore limited. Through the emerging Local Plan Update it has been confirmed that extension of the SWSDL is a priority option to meet future growth requirements. The assessment and optioneering / masterplanning work that has been undertaken in support of the current application proposals, which has also contributed to the Council's evidence base informing the Local Plan Update, confirm how the current proposals will result in a logical and coherent sustainable urban extension that can be accommodated without overriding harm.
- 8.5 The application proposals are therefore consistent with the direction of travel of the Local Plan Update. Whilst the Regulation 19 Plan has yet to be published, it has anticipated that it will have moved forward to a position where it can be afforded some weight by the time that the current application is determined.
- 8.6 Given that the current Local Plan covers the period until 2026, is therefore more than 18 years time-expired, and is based on a housing requirement that falls well short of the local housing need that is indicated by the national standard method, there is now a compelling and urgent need to bring forward additional housing land that can contribute to meeting needs in the period beyond 2026. The Council acknowledges the lead times for delivering housing from developments of the scale proposed. To ensure continuity in housing land supply, it therefore cannot await completion of the Local Plan Update, and there is an

imperative for applications to proceed in tandem with it to replenish the overall forward supply.

- 8.7 The Council's inability to demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing land, and the scale of the deficit that it acknowledges to exist on the basis of its own, uncontested assessment, simply compounds the urgency.
- 8.8 The overall planning balance confirms that, whether the starting point is a 'flat' or 'tilted' balance, the outcome is the same, and is that the substantial benefits of the proposals unequivocally outweigh any limited conflict with the Development Plan.
- 8.9 The application proposals will deliver, simultaneously, economic, social and environmental benefits, as follows:
 - **Economic:** the proposals will contribute to building a strong and competitive economy by delivering housing land of the right type in the right place and at the right time to support growth requirements, coordinated with the necessary infrastructure.
 - **Social:** the proposals will contribute to supporting a strong, vibrant and healthy community, by contributing to the supply of housing (including affordable housing) required to meet the needs of present and future generations; through the creation of a high quality built environment, with accessible local services to nurture a healthy community; and through the delivery of extensive SANG that will benefit both future residents of the development and provide choice and opportunities for the wider community.
 - **Environmental:** through avoiding designated areas, and through the proposed provisions for green infrastructure, the proposals will contribute to protecting and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment, as well as helping improve biodiversity and mitigate and adapt to climate change.
- 8.10 For the above reasons the proposals will further the three overarching objectives for the planning system towards achieving sustainable development, and will pursue them in mutually supportive ways. The presumption in favour of sustainable development applies, and there are no adverse impacts that outweigh the benefits.



- 8.11 For all of the foregoing reasons, and in accordance with paragraph 11 of the NPPF, planning permission should be granted.

List of Appendices

- 1 S106 Obligation_Heads of Terms_Preliminary Draft



APPENDIX 1

S106 Obligation_Heads of
Terms_Preliminary Draft



S106 Obligation

Heads of Terms (Draft)

July 2024

ROCKE ASSOCIATES

Site / Applicant Particulars

1	Site Details	Address	/	Land West of Old Wokingham Road and North and South of Easthampstead Road
2	Applicant Details			Lightwood Strategic Oak House Mews 43 The Parade Claygate Surrey KT10 0PD
3	Site Details	Ownership		TBC
4	Title Number			TBC
5	Agent Details			Rocke Associates Ltd Number One Queen Square Place Bath BA1 2LL T: 01225 433675; E: trocke@rockeassociates.co.uk
6	Legal Representative Details			TBC

Planning Obligations ¹		
7	Transportation Highways /	• Delivery, including phasing, of principal and secondary accesses, including the crossing of Byway 30, to secure the overall access strategy • Financial contributions: ➢ Public Transport Strategy ➢ Bus Stops ➢ Off-Site Highway Works, if necessary ➢ Traffic Regulation Orders, as necessary
8	Affordable Housing	• 35% of the total number of residential units to be provided
9	Open Space	• Delivery, including phasing, of on-site provisions: ➢ Parks and Gardens ➢ SANG ➢ Amenity Greenspace ➢ Provision for Children / Young People ➢ Civic Space • Financial Contributions: ➢ Outdoor Sports provision ➢ Commuted sums for the future management and maintenance of on-site public open space
10	Targeted Recruitment and Training	• Financial contribution towards Employment Skills Plan
11	Biodiversity Gain Net	• Financial contribution towards off-site biodiversity net gain if not secured on site

¹ NB: These are draft Heads of Terms to provide a basis for discussion and negotiation with the Local Planning Authority. They do not imply acceptance, agreement and/or commitment to them by the Applicants, which will only be secured through the detailed terms and conditions to be included in a formal Obligation that is executed as a deed under S106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)

