



Heathlands Riding School

Demolition of buildings and the subsequent construction of 10 dwellings, with associated infrastructure, landscaping and parking.

Planning and Design Statement

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This statement is produced to support a planning application for the redevelopment of Heathlands Riding Centre, providing 10no. residential units, along Hatch Ride, Wokingham, RG40 3AS.
- 1.2 This planning statement will cover the background to the application and provide the necessary information to enable its determination by officers at the Council. It will consider the proposal in light of relevant planning policies and other material considerations. The conclusion reached is that key material considerations and the wider objectives of National and Local planning policy support the grant of permission.
- 1.3 In addition to this planning statement, the application is accompanied by the appropriate planning application forms and ownership certificate, duly signed and completed.
- 1.4 The relevant application fee will be submitted by the applicant separately.

2. Site Location and Description

- 2.1 Heathlands Riding School is located along Hatch Ride, which adjoins Heathlands Road linking Wokingham to Crowthorne.
- 2.2 The site is approximately 1.47ha, with built form concentrated to the centre and across the site. The site is therefore considered to be Previously Developed Land (PDL).
- 2.3 In terms of the surrounding area, large, traditional farmhouse dwellings, of 3 to 5 bedrooms characterise the area. Additionally, Heathlands Court is 150m west of the site, which comprises multiple townhouse dwellings.
- 2.4 North of the site is primarily undeveloped agricultural land. To the south of the site is less extensive agricultural land. The settlement of Crowthorne is located to the south, with Wellington College and Crowthorne Train Station both accessible by foot. Bus stops are located at St Sebastians Roundabout, c400m from the site, which provides frequent travel to and from Wokingham and Crowthorne.
- 2.5 In terms of pedestrian and cycle access, Hatch Ride is a designated Public Right of Way and a recognised cycle route from Wokingham to Crowthorne which is shown on MyJourney and the LPA has acknowledged this when granting residential development for similar applications along Heathlands Road, Hatch Ride and St Sebastian's Close.
- 2.6 The site is not located in a settlement boundary, and the nearest settlement boundary (Pinewood/ Crowthorne) is 400m southeast. Consequently, the site is located within the countryside.

3. Planning History

3.1 Relevant Planning History of the Site:

3.2 **Application Ref 181134** Application for a certificate of existing lawful development for the mixed use of land for the storage of equipment and parking of vehicles for hire (sui generis) and the stationing of storage containers related to a commercial contracting business in addition to the storage of equipment, vehicles and materials associated with the existing equestrian use. Approved 31/07/2018.

3.3 **Application Ref 173544** Retrospective planning application for the erection of an essential rural worker's dwelling. Application withdrawn 10/05/2018.

3.4 **Application Ref 173427** Application for a certificate of existing lawful development for the sue of land for the storage and supply of equipment and vehicles related to the business. Application refused 18/01/2018.

3.5 **Application Ref 172226** Application for a certificate of lawfulness for continued occupation of dwelling without compliance with condition 8 of planning permission F/2003/9796. Planning permission F/2003/9796 is for the erection of a dwelling, condition 8 restricts occupation to a manager of Heathlands Riding School. Application approved 22/22/2017.

3.6 **Application Ref 163607** Retrospective planning application for the erection of a rural workers dwelling. Application refused 09/03/2017.

3.7 Planning History of Surrounding Sites:

3.8 **Application Reference 241539** Full application for the proposed erection of 2 detached dwellings, associated landscaping and parking.

Following demolition of existing buildings at Kimberdale, Heathlands Road, Wokingham. Approved in 2024.

- 3.9 This site is also located at the entrance to Hatch Ride off Heathlands Road. The LPA considered the application compliant with planning policies with strong “accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development as set out in the NPPF”. (p.6, Decision Notice).
- 3.10 **Application Reference 221685** Full application for the proposed erection of 2 no. three bedroom detached dwellings with associated parking and landscaping, following demolition of existing building at Diesel House, Honey Hill, Crowthorne, Wokingham, RG40 3BL. Approved in 2022.
- 3.11 **Application Reference 240442** Full application for the proposed erection of 1 no. two bedroom detached dwelling with associated bicycle store and access following demolition of the existing garage blocks at Garages at Heathlands Road, Heathlands Road, Wokingham, Berkshire, RG40 3AY. Approved in 2024, with 19 conditions.

4. Development Proposal

- 4.1 The proposal seeks planning permission for the erection of 10no. residential dwellings (comprising of both market and affordable housing), following the demolition of the existing horse-riding facilities. The plans have incorporated open space and associated infrastructure in order to produce a policy-compliant scheme.
- 4.2 The existing vehicular access off Hatch Ride would be utilised through this planning application, and this is discussed in more detail later on in this planning statement.
- 4.3 The site is located in a sustainable location, in close proximity to several facilities including transport links, schools and Wokingham Town Centre. These facilities can all be reached in a 30-minute walk.
- 4.4 The proposal for 10no. residential dwellings is a positive addition to the local housing stock and offers a much-needed solution to the current housing shortage in the area. The inclusion of open space and associated infrastructure further enhances the development, providing residents with ample recreational spaces and essential amenities.
- 4.5 The layout proposed is both functional and attractive, considering factors such as offset distances and private amenity. The layout also incorporates necessary infrastructure, such as footpaths and pedestrian/ cycle connections to existing green spaces, to promote a healthy and sustainable living environment.
- 4.6 The National Design Guide (2019) identifies that *"well-designed homes and buildings are functional, accessible and sustainable. They provide internal environments and associated external spaces that support the health and well-being of their users and all who experience them. They meet the needs of a diverse range of users,*

taking into account factors such as the ageing population and cultural differences. They are adequate in size, fit for purpose and are adaptable to the changing needs of their occupants over time” (para 120-121).

- 4.7 Regarding the requirements of NPPG Paragraph: 029 Reference ID: 14-029-20140306 in respect of Design and Access Statements, the proposal is described as follows:
- 4.8 **Use and Amount:** The proposal provides the site with 10 dwellings ranging from 3 to 5 bedrooms. These dwellings will be of two storey and comprise a range of detached and semi-detached properties.
- 4.9 **Housing Mix and Affordable Housing:** The proposed housing mix comprises 5x 3-beds, 3x 4-beds and 2x 5-bed properties. The proposed scheme will achieve a policy compliant level of affordable housing through on-site provision and a commuted sum.
- 4.10 **Scale and Height:** The scale of the existing buildings at Heathlands Riding School is between 1-2 storeys in height. The scale of development proposed will therefore only increase modestly to 2.5 storeys. The height of the proposed properties has been designed sympathetically to neighbouring dwellings, allowing for amenity of both future occupiers and neighbouring dwellings. The footprint of built development remains similar to the existing buildings on the site.
- 4.11 **Landscaping:** The site would be redesigned to incorporate some additional landscape features, such as tree planting between the plots of the proposed development. Landscaping details can be secured by condition in the event of a grant of planning permission if this is deemed necessary.

- 4.12 **Appearance:** The proposal alters the appearance of the site from the viewpoint off Hatch Ride, although the footprint of development remains the same. The exterior of the properties will be similar to the neighbouring properties incorporating design cues and architectural detailing from the surrounding homes.
- 4.13 **Access & Parking:** The proposal will not impact the existing access arrangements and will continue to utilise access off Hatch Ride. Each dwelling will have its own private parking area and garage, in accordance with Wokingham's standards.

5. Planning Policy Context and Policy Assessment

- 5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and Section 70 (2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 requires that applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.2 Wokingham Borough Council ('WBC') adopted their Core Strategy (CS) in January 2010 and the Managing Development Delivery (MDD) was adopted in February 2014. The site is within the Wokingham Without Neighbourhood Area, although there is no 'made' Neighbourhood Plan. Therefore, at the current time, the Core Strategy and Managing Development Delivery Documents comprise the Development Plan for the borough.
- 5.3 At a national level, the National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF') constitutes guidance which the Local Planning Authority must have regard to. The NPPF does not change the statutory status of the Development Plan as the starting point for decision making but is a material consideration.
- 5.4 Several Supplementary Planning Documents ('SPDs') have also been created which link to specific policies within the Development Plan and provide additional detail.
- 5.5 The Council have also decided to review and update their existing Local Plan. The most recent Local Development Scheme ('LDS'), published in September 2024, sets out the expected timeframe for reviewing and updating the Local Plan, with adoption of the new Local Plan expected to be achieved by April 2026.
- 5.6 The NPPF also requires Local Planning Authorities to maintain a five-year housing land supply position. The adopted Core Strategy was

adopted in 2010, and the Managing Development Delivery was adopted in 2014. As a result, the NPPF requires calculations of housing land supply to be measured against the local housing need using the new Standard Method.

- 5.7 **National Guidance:** The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a relevant material consideration to the application.
- 5.8 The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 39 of the NPPF states that *"Local planning authorities should approach decision on proposed development in a positive and creative way"* and *"at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible"*. Paragraph 124 of the NPPF comments that planning should *"promote an effective use of land"* in *"meeting the need for homes and other uses, whilst safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions"*.
- 5.9 Paragraph 61 confirms the Government's objective to boost the supply of housing, and paragraph 8 identifies the three objectives of sustainable development, as economic, environmental and social.
- 5.10 Paragraph 73 of the NPPF states that: *"Small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area, are essential for Small and Medium Enterprise housebuilders to deliver new homes, and are often built-out relatively quickly."*
- 5.11 Paragraph 131 identifies that *"Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities"*,

whilst paragraph 139 states that significant weight should be given to *"outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings."*

5.12 The National Design Guide builds on the above, and clarifies that *"well-designed neighbourhoods need to include an integrated mix of tenures and housing types that reflect local housing need and market demand. They are designed to be inclusive and to meet the changing needs of people of different ages and abilities. New development reinforces existing places by enhancing local transport, facilities and community services, and maximising their potential use"* (para 109).

5.13 **Relevant Local Plan Policies:** The relevant Development Plan documents are:

- Core Strategy (CS) adopted in 2010
- Managing Development Delivery (MDD) adopted in 2014

5.14 It is considered that the following policies of the Core Strategy are relevant to this proposal:

- Policy CP1 – Sustainable Development
- Policy CP2 – Inclusive communities
- Policy CP3 – General Principles for Development
- Policy CP4 – Infrastructure Requirements
- Policy CP5 – Housing mix, density and affordability
- Policy CP6 – Managing Travel Demand
- Policy CP7 – Biodiversity

- Policy CP8 – Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area
- Policy CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals
- Policy CP11 – Proposals outside Development Limits (including countryside)
- Policy CP17 – Housing Delivery

5.15 It is considered that the following policies of the Managing Delivery Local Plan are relevant to this proposal, although some aspects may be conditioned and considered in more detail at the Reserved Matters stage:

- Policy CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- Policy CC02 – Development Limits
- Policy CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping
- Policy CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction
- Policy CC07 – Parking
- Policy CC09 – Development and Flood Risk (from all sources)
- Policy CC10 – Sustainable Drainage
- Policy TB05 – Housing Mix
- Policy TB07 – Internal Space Standards
- Policy TB08 – Open space, sport and recreational facilities standards for residential development
- Policy TB21 – Landscape character
- Policy TB23 – Biodiversity and Development

- 5.16 **Five Year Housing Land Supply Statement – August 2025:** The Council published their latest Five Year Housing Land Supply Statement which is dated August 2025. This confirms that the Council are currently only able to demonstrate a housing land supply position of 2.5 years. As the Council are currently unable to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply position the presumption in favour of sustainable development (the tilted balance) as set out within the paragraph 11d) of the NPPF would apply. NPPF paragraph 11(d) provides that, where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, the presumption in favour of sustainable development requires permission to be granted unless either:
- i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed [7]; or
 - ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.
- 5.17 It is considered, for the reasons set out below, that the application scheme would meet the requirements of paragraph 11d and therefore the titled balance would therefore be engaged.
- 5.18 **Principle of Development:** Policies CP1, CP9, CP11 of the Core strategy and Policies CC01 and CC02 of the Managing Development Delivery are relevant to this application. Given the fact that the adopted Local Plan is out-of-date, the NPPF is also a relevant material consideration of significant weighting.
- 5.19 Notwithstanding, the above it should be noted that Policy CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development (of the MDD) states that:

"Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision then the Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise – taking into account whether:

a) Any adverse impacts of planning permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) taken as a whole; or

b) Specific policies in the National Planning Policy Framework indicate that development should be restricted".

5.20 In the case of the above it should be noted that Policies CP9 and CP11 were created to deliver a housing target of 13,230 dwellings (CP17) between 2006 – 2026. This figure no longer represents the Local Housing Need of Wokingham Borough, being more than 5 years old (as per paragraphs 34, 78 and 232 of the NPPF) and the increase in the Standard Method. As such, the settlement boundaries and policies that influence the delivery of development within and outside them can no longer be considered to be in date for the purposes of decision making.

5.21 This approach is consistent Richborough v Cheshire East Supreme Court case (UKSC/2016/0078) which confirmed that: *"Relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up-to-date if the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites."* Wokingham can only deliver a 2.5 year supply of housing sites.

5.22 It is also clear that the adopted Core Strategy was adopted prior to the first publication of the Framework in 2012, which introduced a shift in approach to boost significantly the supply of housing.

5.23 Furthermore, in a recent appeal decision in Blagrove Lane, Wokingham, the Inspector concluded that they "*consider CS Policies CP9, CP11, CP17 and MDD Policy CC02 frustrate the delivery of housing at the level that is required. They are therefore inconsistent with the Framework's objective to meet an area's identified need*".

5.24 The Development Plan's approach to the delivery of housing therefore does not follow the Framework's method, and it has not been reviewed since it was adopted. For the purposes of this application, the policies relating to housing delivery and the spatial strategy are therefore considered to be out-of-date and inconsistent with the Framework when taken as a whole.

5.25 For the purposes of establishing the principle of development for this application, paragraph 11d of the NPPF therefore sets the precedent for the presumption in favour of sustainable development and tilted balance exercise.

5.26 Paragraph 11d states:

"where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:

*i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance **provides a strong reason for refusing the development** proposed; or*

*ii. **any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits**, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and*

providing affordable homes, individually or in combination”
[emphasis added].

5.27 Part i) of paragraph 11d relates to protected assets set out in footnote 7 of the NPPF. The proposed development would not be located within any of the assets listed under footnote 7 and therefore part i) does not apply. Therefore, footnote 7 is not engaged and the tilted balance applies.

5.28 Part ii) of paragraph 11d assesses the impact of the proposed development against the Framework as a whole and confirms that the tilted balance is only disengaged if *“any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits”*. It is clear that a scheme could be designed to sensitively respond to the site constraints and that the delivery of housing on this site would be a benefit that would attribute substantial weight, considering that it is a PDL site and makes efficient use of land, in accordance with paragraph 125 of the NPPF. The harms would therefore clearly not *“significantly and demonstrably”* outweigh the benefits.

5.29 The tilted balance under paragraph 11d of the NPPF therefore applies.

5.30 **Planning Balance**

5.31 It is considered the proposed development would comply with the Development Plan in principle, however for the sake of completeness relevant material considerations and a planning balance has been undertaken below.

5.32 As previously mentioned, it is noted that Policy CP17 of the Core Strategy seeks to deliver 13,260 dwellings and this provision does not include any sites in the countryside. Specifically, the policy currently seeks to deliver 623 dwellings per annum.

- 5.33 The targets set within Policy CP17 were created with the intention of achieving development within the settlement boundaries defined by Policy CP9 and development outside of limits set out under Policy CP11.
- 5.34 The Local Plan therefore seeks to deliver a lesser need when compared to the current Standard Method calculation of 1,334 dwellings per annum. Therefore, the spatial strategy (the settlement boundaries designed to guide development in terms of scale and distribution, and the area of countryside which CP11 applies to) is out-of-date. Should the Council consider any non-compliance with Policy CP11 exists, this should only be afforded **limited weight against the development.**
- 5.35 Notwithstanding, the above, when using the new Standard Method figure the Council is only able to demonstrate a housing land supply of **2.5 years.**
- 5.36 As the Council are currently unable to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply position, the presumption in favour of sustainable development (and the tilted balance) as per paragraph 11d of the NPPF (and Policy CC01) applies.
- 5.37 In relation to part ii) of paragraph 11d, paragraphs 110 and 115 of the NPPF confirm that development in rural locations have differing opportunities for sustainable transport modes. The Transport Assessment concludes that, in accordance with paragraphs 110 and 115 of the NPPF, the Site is within a sustainable location. As such, it is considered the proposed development would comply with paragraphs 110 and 115.
- 5.38 As such, the adverse impacts of the development would not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits and the tilted

balance under paragraph 11d is engaged. It is considered this would attract **very significant weight in favour of the development**.

- 5.39 In terms of the proposal specific benefits of the scheme it is considered the provision of 10 dwellings would attract **significant weight** in favour of the development in the context of the LPAs shortfall of supply. In addition, the development is considered to make an important contribution towards meeting the housing requirements in the area. As per paragraph 73 of the NPPF, this seeks to support the development of windfall sites through acknowledging they can be built out relatively quickly. In the context of the Wokingham's housing needs and the emerging Local Plan Update not being adopted in the short term, it is considered that the ability of a small site to be built-out relatively quickly should attract **significant weight**.
- 5.40 Paragraph 124 of the NPPF states that decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses and goes on to state that strategic policies should make as much use of previously developed land as possible. Likewise, paragraph 125d seeks to promote and support the development of 'under-utilised' land especially where it helps to meet identified needs for housing. As such, the re-use of previously development land and optimisation to deliver dwellings across the site should attract **moderate weight in favour of the development**.
- 5.41 The proposed development would have economic benefits in terms of temporary construction jobs however; the LPA will also receive monies for contribution to the Community Infrastructure Levy and Council Tax receipts in the long term. However, being a development of 10 dwellings, this could only attract **limited weight in favour of development** at most.

- 5.42 **Character and Appearance:** CS Policy CP1 requires amongst other things that development maintains or enhances the high quality of the environment (criterion 1).
- 5.43 CS Policy CP3 at criterion a states that planning permission will be granted for proposals that are of an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area together with a high-quality of design.
- 5.44 MDD Policy CC03 at criterion 2 states that development proposals should demonstrate how they have considered and achieved the following criteria within scheme proposals:
- a) Provide new or protect and enhance the Borough's Green Infrastructure networks, including the need to mitigate potential impacts of new development
 - b) Promote accessibility, linkages and permeability between and within existing green corridors including public rights of way such as footpaths, cycleways and bridleways
 - c) Promote the integration of the scheme with any adjoining public open space or countryside
 - d) Protect and retain existing trees, hedges and other landscape features
 - e) Incorporate high quality, ideally, native planting and landscaping as an integral part of the scheme
- 5.45 MDD Policy TB21 requires proposals to 1) address the requirements of the Council's Landscape Character Assessment and 2) retain or enhance the condition, character and features.
- 5.46 The proposed dwellings would be 2.5 storeys in height and cover the approximate footprint of the existing buildings on the site. The scale

of the existing buildings at Heathlands Riding School is between 1-2 storeys in height. The scale of development proposed will therefore only increase modestly to 2.5 storeys. The height of the proposed properties has been designed sympathetically to neighbouring dwellings, allowing for amenity of both future occupiers and neighbouring dwellings.

- 5.47 In addition, Hatch Ride comprises a residential road with dwellings of varied design, and examples of these features can be seen in the streetscene. The proposed development has however sought to take design cues from the properties in the area, in order to replicate the local vernacular of the site.
- 5.48 Adjacent to the site, Heathlands Court, a development comprising of 17 flats, garages and wider landscaping has been developed which shows that residential development is acceptable in this location.
- 5.49 Whilst indicative details of materials have been labelled on the proposed plans, it is the applicant's desire for the final details of the external materials to be secured by condition.
- 5.50 As a consequence, and in view of making an efficient use of land, the quantum of development proposed is therefore considered to be proportionate to the site and the wider area, in accordance with the relevant Development Plan policies.
- 5.51 **Density and Size of Dwellings:** Policy CP5 of the Core Strategy requires an appropriate mix of dwelling types, tenures and sizes so that the housing needs of the community are met. Policy TB05 of the MDD Local Plan requires an appropriate housing mix which reflects a balance between the underlying character of the area and both the current and projected needs of households.

- 5.52 Policy CP5 of the Core Strategy and Policy TB05 of the MDD Local Plan require an appropriate dwelling density. In addition, R10 of the Borough Design Guide SPD seeks to ensure that developments achieve an appropriate density in relation to local character.
- 5.53 The proposed mix seeks to respond to the local character of the area, as well as the surrounding density grain of development, which is predominantly 3+ bedroom dwellings to reflect the edge of settlement location. The proposed mix of dwellings comprise 5x 3-beds, 3x 4-beds and 2x 5-bed properties.
- 5.54 In terms of affordable housing, this will either be provided through on-site provision and/or an commuted sum in order for it to meet policy requirements.
- 5.55 **Residential Amenity – Internal Space:** Policy TB07 of the MDD and R17 of the SPD require adequate internal space to ensure the layout and size achieves good internal amenity. In accordance with the Technical Housing Standards – Nationally Described Space Standards all dwellings would meet the technical housing standards.
- 5.56 In terms of privacy, visual impact/amenity and overlooking distances, each dwelling would be designed to ensure privacy is respected. The new dwellings will have a reasonable distance to those in the surrounding locality and be in compliance with the separation distances as outlined in the Borough Design Guide SPD (2012).
- 5.57 The proposal is considered to comply with policies TB07 of the MDD and R17 of the SPD.
- 5.58 **Residential Amenity – External Space:** Policy TB08 of the MDD Local Plan relates to the provision of onsite open space, sport and recreational facilities within residential development. The policy requires that open space, indoor or outdoor play and sport and

recreational facilities should be provided on-site. The policy then sets out that proposals for residential development will need to demonstrate how they meet the standards (ha per 1,000 population) of the relevant standards.

5.59 Each dwelling would have their own dedicated garden, which would have at least 11m depth which is noted as the Council's minimum accepted garden length in accordance with the Borough Design Guide SPD (2012).

5.60 With regards to outdoor and amenity space, the proposed standards are outlined below:

- Parks/public garden – 1.1
- Natural green space – 2.84
- Amenity greenspace – 0.98
- Play provision – 0.25
- Outdoor sports facilities – 1.66

5.61 Given the size of the site and the proposed scheme, financial contributions will be sought towards the provision of offsite public open space.

5.62 **Landscape:** Policy TB21 of the MDD states that proposals should demonstrate how they have addressed the requirements of the Council's Landscape Character Assessment, including the landscape quality, strategy, sensitivity and features that contribute to the landscape.

- 5.63 Wokingham have undertaken a Landscape Character Assessment in both 2004 and 2019. The 2004 LCA classifies the character area as having a high quality landscape quality, moderate landscape sensitivity and low landscape capacity, whilst the 2019 study notes a high landscape quality high, high landscape sensitivity and low landscape capacity.
- 5.64 The site is located within Finchampstead Forested and Settled Sands (landscape type M: forested and settled sands) as per the Landscape Character Assessment which is situated in the far southeast of the borough. It notes that this character area has an undulating landscape marked by a distinctive ridgeline. This terrain is characterised by large expanses of mixed forests interspersed with open heathland, with a linear settlement pattern following historic 'rides'.
- 5.65 Accordingly, an Landscape and Visual appraisal has been prepared by Land Arb Solutions and submitted alongside this application. The report concluded that the site lies in a sensitive edge-of-settlement location, but its enclosure by vegetation reduces wider visibility into the landscape beyond.
- 5.66 The appraisal also notes the presence of the existing development at the Riding School and how the proposed development would only introduce some minor localised change, predominantly through the change of use, but with appropriate design and mitigation, it would not result in significant adverse landscape or visual effects.
- 5.67 Consequently, the appraisal concludes that the proposal is acceptable in landscape and visual terms and therefore meets the requirements of Policy TB21.
- 5.68 **Ecology and Trees:** Policy CC03 of the MDD Local Plan aims to protect green infrastructure networks, retain existing trees, and

establish appropriate landscaping. Furthermore, Policy TB21 requires consideration of the landscape character. R14 of the Borough Design Guide SPD requires well-designed hard and soft landscaping that complements housing.

- 5.69 Policy CP7 of the Core Strategy relates to biodiversity and seeks to conserve and enhance sites designated as of importance for nature conservation at an international or national level. It also seeks to protect biodiversity, habitats and other species.
- 5.70 Policy TB23 of the MDD Local Plan requires the incorporation of new biodiversity features, buffers between habitats and species of importance and integration with the wider green infrastructure network.
- 5.71 A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and BNG Assessment has been undertaken by Collington Winter to support the application. In addition, Tree Surveys and accompanying plans have been produced by Land Arb Solutions.
- 5.72 The surveys conclude that one tree (T3-B1) will need to be removed to accommodate the proposed development. No-dig construction methods would also be utilised where some of the proposed built form sits within the root protection areas of the proposed dwellings and road infrastructure. Land Arb Solutions have also prepared a Landscape Strategy plan which includes the introduction of new hedges and planting, as well as applying robust protection measures during demolition and construction, ensuring the site evolves into a landscape-led development that safeguards existing natural assets while enhancing ecological value. This will help to protect the rest of the trees on site.
- 5.73 In terms of ecology, the site was found to be suitable for some protected species, including reptiles and bats. Further surveys would

need to be undertaken to inform the mitigation works necessary at the site. It is however considered that the following mitigation measures would be appropriate for the extent of development proposed:

- Bat and bird boxes could be placed on retained buildings and trees. A plan to show the locations of these boxes and the specifications should be produced by a suitably qualified ecologist.
- The inclusion of 'hedgehog highways' to facilitate movement across the site. This includes holes of 13 x 13cm at the bases of fences, leaving a sufficient gap beneath gates and/or leaving brick spaces at the bases of brick walls.
- Hibernacula, which may provide cover for amphibians, reptiles, and small terrestrial mammals, could be incorporated into the site to replace any lost habitats which fulfil this function.

5.74 Paragraph 174(d) and 179(b) of the National Planning Policy Framework seek to ensure that development delivers a net gain in biodiversity. The Environment Act 2021 sets out that biodiversity net gain should be 10% of the baseline. The Environment Act 2021 has now passed, and it is mandatory for major sites to be able to provide 10% biodiversity net gain.

5.75 The BNG Assessment submitted with this application concludes that a net gain of 20.41% can be achieved on site through the proposed development. This meets the mandatory requirement of 10% biodiversity net gain.

5.76 Through appropriate mitigation for protected species informed by further surveys, it is considered that the proposal would comply with Policies CP7, CC03, TB01 and TB23.

- 5.77 **Transport:** P2 of the Borough Design Guide SPD requires that parking is compatible with the local character and NR10 requires that it is to be unobtrusive and landscaped.
- 5.78 Core Strategy Policy CP6 aims to manage and reduce the demand for travel in a sustainable way. Development schemes that want planning permission must meet specific criteria. These include providing sustainable forms of transport, such as public transport, walking, or cycling. The location of the scheme should have existing or planned transport choices available to minimise travel distances. The scheme should also enhance infrastructure, facilities for pedestrians, cyclists, and other users, and provide appropriate vehicular parking. The adverse effects on local and strategic transport networks should be mitigated, and the scheme should not cause any road safety or traffic-related environmental problems. The overall goal is to encourage sustainable transportation, improve infrastructure, and minimise the negative impacts of development on transportation and the environment.
- 5.79 A Transport Statement has therefore been prepared by Motion to accompany this planning application. The statement concludes that the site has good accessibility to sustainable travel options and adequate parking proposed meeting Wokingham's policy requirements. It was found that both a fire tender and a WBC refuse vehicle can enter, turn within, and exit the site safely in forward gear. Additionally, the development would result in a net increase of only 4 vehicle movements compared to current site use, meaning there is no negative impact on existing traffic flow or highway operations.
- 5.80 In addition, Policies CP6 and CP9 permit development where it is based on sustainable credentials in terms of access to local facilities and services and the promotion of sustainable transport. The site offers good links and is within walking distance of public transport,

services and facilities and is considered to be in a sustainable location adjacent to the settlement area of Pinewood (Crowthorne).

- 5.81 The proposed development therefore aligns with national and local transport policies, can be safely integrated into the local transport network, and will not cause harm to traffic capacity or flow.
- 5.82 Moreover a Travel Plan Statement has all been prepared by Motion. This report summarises that the site is well-connected to sustainable transport options and promotes the use of it along with other modes, like walking and cycling.
- 5.83 The Travel Plan established that there would be no significant highway safety issues from the development, and consequently the proposed development would meet the aims of both national and local transport policies.
- 5.84 **Drainage and SuDS:** The Site is located within Flood Zone 1 with no known historic flooding on site. Policy CP1 states that planning permission will be granted for schemes that in criterion 4) ensure the provision of adequate drainage.
- 5.85 Policy CC09 states the guidelines for considering flood risk in the planning application process. It states that all sources of flood risk should be taken into account and that proposals should align with the guidance provided. Development proposals in Flood Zones 2 or 3 should consider the vulnerability of the proposed development. The sequential approach should be used to guide development to areas with the lowest flood risk, unless certain exceptions apply. In exceptional circumstances, development in areas of flood risk may be supported if it provides wider sustainability benefits and incorporates flood resilient measures. Planning applications may require a Flood Risk Assessment if there is evidence of a risk from flooding.

- 5.86 A SuDS Design Statement and accompanying plans by Paul Nicholson Design, has been prepared to support this application. The statement concluded that the scheme ensures surface water is managed sustainably, reducing flood risk and pressure on sewers.
- 5.87 The proposed scheme would incorporate rainwater harvesting, permeable surfacing, and attenuation tanks.
- 5.88 To conclude, the proposal is considered to comply with policy CP1 and CC09 and will not cause any additional flood risk within the site or the surrounding area. The scheme is therefore compliant with national and local planning requirements for sustainable drainage management.
- 5.89 **Energy and Sustainability:** Paragraph 8 of the NPPF supports the transition of development to a low carbon future. The national Code for Sustainable Homes has now been abolished, however it is proposed that the development would conform to Part L of the Building Regulations which as of 2022 requires a 30% reduction than current standards. By way of contributing to the reduction in carbon, the proposal would also achieve current building construction standards with added sustainability measures through;
- A. The limitation of the amount of inherent material, structure and embodied energy through the employment of good building standards to create an excellent SAP rating;
 - B. Use of locally sourced, recycled materials and labour where practicable;
 - C. Reduced internal water consumption of 110 litres per person per day through the incorporation of water efficient sanitary fittings, including low flow toilets and water efficient taps for wash basins;

- D. Refuse, recycling and composting facilities to be provided to work with the Council's existing waste and recycling collection service;
- E. Secure cycle provision to encourage sustainable modes of transport;
- F. 'A' rated electrical appliances and energy saving light fittings;
- G. 'A' rated double glazed windows with natural cross ventilation provision;
- H. Water butts fitted to the rainwater down pipes for watering the garden;
- I. Recycling of waste construction materials where practicable;
- J. Permeable driveway/parking spaces to avoid increase in surface water runoff;

5.90 In terms of building sustainability, Policy CC05 of the MDD requires residential proposals of more than 10 dwellings to deliver a minimum 10% reduction in carbon emissions through renewable energy or low carbon technology.

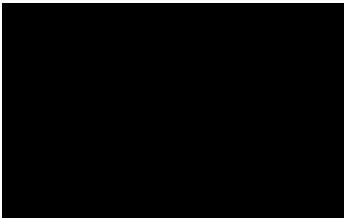
5.91 A Sustainability Statement has been prepared alongside this application by Paul Nicholson Design. This report found that the proposal would deliver low-carbon, energy-efficient homes in line with UK Future Home Standard (2025) targets. The proposal places a strong emphasis on renewables, water efficiency, and biodiversity protection. The scheme overall aims to provide comfortable, sustainable and affordable family dwellings while enhancing the ecological value of the site.

5.92 The proposal is therefore considered to comply with Policy CC05 and the relevant sustainability objectives in this respect.

- 5.93 **Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area:** The Site falls within 5 km of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (TBHSPA). Residential development will be required to provide avoidance and mitigation measures, in accordance with Policy CP8 of the Core Strategy (2010).
- 5.94 WBC require proposed developments that are located within the SDL's to provide new SANG at a minimum of 8ha per 1,000 new residents for any dwellings within 5km from the TBHSPA.
- 5.95 It is understood WBC commonly use a persons per dwelling multiplier of 2.4. Financial contributions towards offsite SANG/ SAMM mitigation would need to be entered into at the S106 stage in order to satisfy the requirements of Policy CP8.
- 5.96 **Community Infrastructure Levy:** The relevant forms are submitted alongside the application. WBC adopted their Community Infrastructure Levy in February 2015. For residential development, a charge of £365 per square metre is applicable.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 This statement has demonstrated that the proposed development is acceptable in principle and makes efficient use of land, particularly given the site qualifies as previously developed land.
- 6.2 Material planning considerations have been carefully considered and analysed, as evidenced in this statement alongside the supporting plans and documents. It is considered the proposed development would contribute to meeting the housing supply requirements of Wokingham in the short term, without adverse effects on the character of the area or the amenity of surrounding land uses.
- 6.3 It is considered that the tilted balance is engaged and there are no significant or demonstrable reasons to refuse the development proposed. Therefore, it is respectfully requested that planning permission is granted.

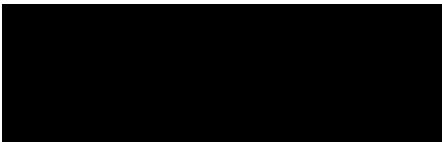


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