
**Supporting Planning and Affordable Housing
Statement**

**LAND AT BIRD IN EYE FARM, SOUTH OF BIRD
IN EYE HILL, (FRAMFIELD PARISH),
UCKFIELD**

OUTLINE PLANNING APPLICATION

FOR

**THE ERECTION OF UP TO 190 DWELLINGS,
WITH ASSOCIATED WORKS, PARKING,
LANDSCAPING, PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE
OPEN SPACE AND SANG PROVISION, WITH
ACCESS FROM THE B2102**

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On behalf of:

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croudacehomes

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1. INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Context

- 1.1. This Statement has been prepared by Woolf Bond Planning Ltd on behalf of Croudace Homes Ltd in support of an **outline planning application** proposing the development of Land at Bird in Eye Farm, south of Bird in Eye Hill, Uckfield for the erection of up to 190 dwellings, with associated works, parking, landscaping, publicly accessible open space and SANG provision, with access from the B2102.
- 1.2. The purpose of this Planning Statement is to summarise the findings of the various supporting technical documents (Section 3 refers) and to provide an overview of the proposed scheme, whilst setting out a justification for the development having regard to the relevant planning policy and material considerations.
- 1.3. The application is to be considered in the context of the new Government's aim to overhaul the planning system and to 'get Britain building again'. This includes the reinstated requirement for housing targets to be met, with those for Wealden increasing to 1,397dpa plus the imposition of a 20% buffer.
- 1.4. This outline planning application follows an earlier application (LPA ref: WD/2021/2198/MAO) for up to 290 dwellings on a larger area of land at Bird In Eye Farm (which scheme also included a strategic SANG). That application was the subject of an appeal (Appeal Ref: APP/C1435/W/22/3307820) against non-determination, which was dismissed in October 2023.
- 1.5. The appeal was dismissed on the grounds of harms identified in respect of ancient woodland, highway safety, flood risk, and heritage. Nevertheless, the principle of this site being a suitable and accessible location for housing development was established by this appeal.
- 1.6. Further to the appeal's dismissal, the applicant sought pre-application advice (LPA ref: PE/2024/0122/E) on a reduced scheme of 235 units on a smaller area of land (the northern part of the original application). The formal pre-application advice received from the Council raised key concerns relating to heritage (the

setting of a listed building (the 'Oast') within Bird in Eye Farm), the need to satisfy County Highways in relation to the access design, as well as ensuring an appropriate relationship between the scheme and impacts upon ancient woodland to the south and south west of the Site.

- 1.7. As is proposed in the application, the pre-application scheme removed the southern strategic SANG land, and removes the need for pathways through the ASNW. In addition, all built form lies outside the 50m buffer to the ASNW and the 15m buffer was explained to be respected for all other engineering works such as the SUDS basins.
- 1.8. In addition, the buffer area will be planted with landscaping that will seek to minimise intrusions from residents within the zones with recreation routes outside the 15m buffer and planting designed to 'prevent' easy access to the ASNW.
- 1.9. The application scheme has addressed the concerns raised by officers during the pre-application process, and provides for up to 190 dwellings, whilst removing previously proposed development and an access road to the west of the 'Oast', thus providing for an enhanced setting; addressing the previously reported heritage concerns.
- 1.10. This outline application is accompanied by a comprehensive suite of ecological reports and surveys compiled by the Ecology Partnership, confirming that the proposal would not have any significant adverse impact on a range of ecological matters, including the Ashdown Forest SPA. This is discussed in more detail below.
- 1.11. With regard to highway and transport matters, the accompanying Transport Assessment sets out the acceptability of the proposal with regard to sustainable transport, the proposed roundabout access design; and in relation to the impact of the scheme upon traffic flows in Uckfield.
- 1.12. Section 8 of the Transport Assessment refers to Junction Capacity Analysis including the potential impact of the proposed development on two particular town centre junctions that were specifically raised in the 2007 appeal. The following junctions were analysed:

- B2102 Bird In Eye Hill / Site Access – Proposed 36-metre 3-arm roundabout arrangement;
- B2102 Bird In Eye Hill / Framfield Road / Hospital Access;
- B2102 Framfield Road / Harcourt Road;
- New Town / New Place / Longbury; and
- B2102 Framfield Road / New Town / Bridge Farm Road;
- B2102 High Street / Bell Lane.

- 1.13. The Assessment demonstrates that both town centre junctions currently operate with spare capacity and will continue to do so in the case of a 2029 base traffic flow, plus the traffic generated by the development. Nevertheless, it is still proposed that a suitable contribution to enable the two High Street junctions to be linked using a MOVA be incorporated within the Section 106 Heads of Terms.
- 1.14. Although the site is located within Framfield Parish, the scheme is viewed as an extension to Uckfield. In this context, the Transport Assessment demonstrates that the site is located within an easy walking distance, 1.2km, of the centre of Uckfield. The centre of Uckfield provides residents with a wide range of services and facilities including educational, retail and leisure facilities.
- 1.15. Such facilities, in conjunction with the nearest bus stop being 115m from the site and Uckfield train station 970m from the site, ensure the site is accessible and sustainable and will offer future residents genuine opportunities for sustainable modes of travel.
- 1.16. Heritage represents a further consideration of particular importance in so far as there is a Grade II Listed Building on site known as The Oasthouse, or simply The Oast.
- 1.17. The proposed development has been modified in response to the dismissal of the earlier appeal by removing proposed housing from land to the west of The Oasthouse. Further changes have been made in response to pre-application advice received, including removing an access road from the same land to the west of The Oasthouse.

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- 1.18. The acceptability of the scheme in heritage terms is addressed in the accompanying Heritage Statement prepared by Motagu Evans, with paragraph 7.2 confirming that the proposed development could be seen as delivering a heritage improvement as the development of the site allows for opportunities to open up new views of the Oasthouse to the south and west.
- 1.19. The accompanying Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) by CSA Environmental considers the acceptability of the scheme having regard to landscape matters.
- 1.20. The LVIA is summarised in more detail below, however, due to the site's topography the potential impacts on the landscape have been an integral part of the schemes design and evolution from the outset.
- 1.21. Section 6 of the LVIA concludes that the proposals respond to the key landscape features and the sensitivities of the Site. The proposals will deliver landscape benefits in the form of new planting and environmental enhancements within the SANG and open spaces. Beyond the Site itself landscape / townscape effects will be very limited due to the Site's visual containment.
- 1.22. There are other comprehensive technical reports including arboriculture and drainage that are summarised below.
- 1.23. The technical information submitted with this application demonstrates the acceptability of the scheme having regard to the requirements of the Development Plan. Importantly, it confirms the acceptability of the illustrative design and quantum of development which is given further support due to the out-of-date policy that, together with the Council's inability to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply, further demonstrate that permission should be granted without delay.

Planning Policy Context

- 1.24. The presumption of sustainable development is applied on account of the development plan being 'out of date' having regard to the lack of consistency between the policies contained therein and the approach to development set

out in the NPPF (paragraphs 11, 77 and 225 refer).

- 1.25. In addition, the policy context is also informed by the Council's inability to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing land.
- 1.26. As set out above, the latest proposals for the site have been subject to pre-application discussions (LPA ref: PE/2024/0122/E). The final scheme design as now proposed is the product of several iterations of the masterplan process, informed by the earlier dismissed appeal and the advice received from the LPA and statutory consultees.
- 1.27. In locational terms, Uckfield is acknowledged as being one of the most sustainable locations for growth in the District. The site is within walking distance from local services and facilities, including job opportunities within the town.
- 1.28. Overall, the proposals for the development of land at Bird in Eye afford an opportunity to secure sustainable development that can be delivered expeditiously on the grant of planning permission.

EIA Screening

- 1.29. Pursuant to the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017, a previous request for a screening opinion was submitted to the Council; seeking confirmation that development of the site in the manner proposed (up to 290 dwellings) did not meet the threshold for an EIA.
- 1.30. In a response dated 17th March 2021 (LPA Ref: SR/WD/2021/6504/SO), the Council confirmed that a scheme of that size would not fall within Schedule 1 development although, as it proposed more than 150 dwellings on a site of more than 5.0 hectares, it would fall within Schedule 2 Urban Development Project.
- 1.31. The response further confirmed, having particular regard to the characteristics of the proposal and the site location, the scheme would not lead to significant

environmental impacts. As such an Environmental Statement was not required as the scheme would not constitute EIA development.

- 1.32. As this application is for fewer dwellings, on a smaller part of the Site, it is advanced without an EIA.

The Application

- 1.33. In so far as the planning application is in outline, only the principle of developing the site for up to 190 dwellings and the means of access are to be determined as part of the application. All other matters of detail, including appearance, landscaping, layout and scale are reserved for subsequent determination.
- 1.34. The application site is shown edged red on the accompanying Site Location Plan No. PRB/BIE/201C and extends to approximately 20ha.
- 1.35. Details of how the Site could be developed for the proposed quantum of housing is shown on Illustrative Site Plan No. PRB/BIE/202K. The scheme provides for up to 190 dwellings (including 35% affordable homes), associated parking, landscaping and access from Bird in Eye Hill.
- 1.36. The access arrangements are shown on the access plans included in the Transport Assessment ("TA") prepared by Milestone Transport Planning which includes Proposed Access Arrangement Drawing No. 23138/001 Rev A (Appendix 7 to the TA); Shared Footway/Cycleway – Indicative Vertical Design Drawing No. 23138/004 Rev A (Appendix 10 to the TA); and Overall Access Strategy Plan 2318/006 (Appendix 12 to the TA)
- 1.37. The site is currently in agricultural use as part of the Bird in Eye Farm which also has a number of commercial uses operating from the farm buildings within the central part of the site.
- 1.38. The Site is bound by B2102 Bird in Eye Hill to the north and northeast, and Haliwell farm to the east. There is a belt of ancient woodland to the south and further woodland running parallel with a tributary of the River Uck to the west. Within the middle of the site lies the main complex of buildings associated with

the Bird in Eye Farm within which the Oasthouse is located.

- 1.39. The site is located adjacent to but beyond the settlement boundary for Uckfield as defined in the Saved Policies of the Local Plan.
- 1.40. No part of the application site is within a Conservation Area and nor is it identified for any landscape 'value'.
- 1.41. As detailed in the Flood Risk Assessment that accompanies the application, the Site is classified as falling entirely within Flood Zone 1 (Figure 5-1 of the FRA explains).
- 1.42. The Council is not able to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing land, such that the granting of outline planning permission on the site for housing is considered to be acceptable. Additionally, development of the site will bring about economic and social benefits and the fact that there are no technical constraints to bringing the site forward for development, including in relation to the capacity of the local highway network, which position is agreed with County Highways means that there is no reason for the Council not to support this application.
- 1.43. As set out in the Transport Assessment ("TA") accompanying the application, the site is suitably located for future residents to make sustainable travel choices on foot, bicycle and public transport. The TA sets out the sustainable benefits of providing development at the site given its proximity to public transport including bus and rail services.
- 1.44. As to schematics, the scale parameters, paragraphs 3 and 4 in Article 4 of the Town and County Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010 were deleted by Amendment Order No.3 dated 31 January 2013 such that outline planning applications, where layout is a reserved matter, are no longer required to state the approximate locations of buildings; and where scale is a reserved matter they are no longer required to state the upper and lower height, width and length parameters.
- 1.45. Information shown on the supporting plans and particulars includes sufficient detail to evaluate and assess the general planning and layout principles that

are submitted in support of the proposal.

- 1.46. As set out in this Planning Statement, the benefits of the scheme include the provision of both market and affordable housing, in a sustainable location, within walking distance from local services and facilities, to help meet an identified housing need within the District.
- 1.47. The scheme will also bring about a betterment to the setting and appreciation of the listed Oasthouse, including by increasing public views of the building, which h=general approach is supported by paragraph 196 of the NPPF.
- 1.48. The scheme also secures additional local expenditure through an increased local population, council tax revenues, and new homes bonus as well as additional construction jobs.
- 1.49. Although the application is in outline, with only (i) the principle of developing the site for up to 190 dwellings and associated SANG provision; and (ii) the means of access to be determined at this stage, the illustrative site plan also provides for onsite landscaping and biodiversity enhancements, which mitigate the impact of the proposed development in landscape, visual and heritage terms.
- 1.50. As set out in this Statement, the scheme accords with relevant planning policy considerations, including the presumption in favour of sustainable development set out in the NPPF.

Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

- 1.51. In order to boost significantly the supply of housing, the NPPF in this instance requires Wealden District Council to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing land. However, the Council cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing land and has found it appropriate to grant planning permissions for schemes beyond the settlement boundaries defined in the Core Strategy. This approach is explained in greater detail below, but is illustrated by the approval of schemes at Crowborough, Hailsham, Eastbourne and Maresfield.

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- 1.52. In accordance with paragraph 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework (“NPPF”) NPPF, housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 11 also states that relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up to date if the LPA cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites.
- 1.53. In setting out the presumption in favour of sustainable development, paragraph 11 of the NPPF adds, in relation to decision-making at 11(c), that this means approving development proposals that accord with the development plan.
- 1.54. It adds at paragraph 11(d) that where there are no relevant development plan policies or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out of date, permission should be granted unless (i) policies in the NPPF provide a clear reason for refusing the development; or (ii) any adverse impact of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.
- 1.55. As noted above, this application has been informed by the assessment and findings in relation to the previous scheme for up to 290 dwellings, which was dismissed at appeal on the grounds of harm to ancient woodland, heritage and flood risk. This revised and reduced scheme for up to 190 dwellings addresses all of these concerns, noting as follows:
- The development no longer requires footpaths through the belt of ancient woodland (as it now forms the southern boundary of the reduced site, rather than dividing the development in two). Buffer zones have been created so that there is no built development within 50m of the ancient woodland (other than SuDS), and no footpaths within 15m. As a result, the potential for harm to the ancient woodland has been removed.
 - The application site boundary has been amended to include land around the listed oast house building to enable improvements to its setting to be made as part of this application. Buildings and access roads have been removed from the view corridor to the west of the oast house. As a result views of the oast house from Uckfield will be improved by the

implementation of this development, resulting in a heritage betterment, rather than heritage harm.

- The application site is now located wholly within Flood Zone 1. The proposals are consistent with the aims of the NPPF and the Planning Practice Guidance to the NPPF along with the aims of local flood risk policy. The Site will not be at significant risk of flooding or increase the flood risk to others.
- The anticipated highways impacts have been reduced to the point where key junctions will not exceed their capacity as a result of the proposed development. Nevertheless, it is proposed that these two junctions be linked to improve their efficiency. The proposed design of the junction providing access to the site is a significant improvement over that proposed in the 2021 Application and has been confirmed to be fit for purpose.

1.56. Including for the reasons set out in this Planning Statement, noting in particular the content at Sections 6 and 7, as well as for the reasons set out in the supporting plans and particulars, **the application scheme is submitted in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development.** The need for housing is further demonstrated by the results of the Housing Delivery Test (requiring the imposition of a 20% buffer).

1.57. This Planning Statement considers the relevant planning policy considerations and includes a planning balance which concludes that the benefits of the proposal weigh heavily in favour of the grant of planning permission.

Benefits of the Proposed Scheme

1.58. In assessing the merits of the application, the benefits of the scheme include:

- Provision of much needed housing in a sustainable location, helping to meet identified housing needs.
- Delivery of a significant proportion of affordable housing (35%).
- A high quality design-led development scheme.

- Provision of a substantial area of SANG land with significant biodiversity net gain.
- A form of development, including by means of the proposed landscaping strategy that can be assimilated into the character of the surrounding area and provide an improved landscape buffer to the existing urban edge.
- Increased local expenditure to sustain and support local services and facilities.
- Job opportunities and increased economic activity.
- Improvements to the setting of The Oasthouse listed building.

Content

1.59. This Planning Statement is set out as follows:

- Section 1:** Introduction and Executive Summary
- Section 2:** Planning History
- Section 3:** Summary of Supporting Material
- Section 4:** Description of the Site and Surrounding Area
- Section 5:** Description of the Proposed Scheme
- Section 6:** Planning Policy Framework
- Section 7:** Consideration of the Proposed Scheme
- Section 8:** Summary and Conclusions

2. PLANNING HISTORY

2006 Application

- 2.1 A previous outline application (LPA ref: WD/2006/3564/MAO) proposing development of the western part of this site for “the erection of 197 dwellings, including affordable housing, with associated access, structural landscaping and recreational space (including 4 LAPS and one LEAP)” was dismissed at appeal by decision letter from the Secretary of State (“SoS”) dated February 2009.
- 2.2 The 2006 application related to a smaller site than currently proposed with this application and nor did it include the provision of SANG.
- 2.3 Although the 2006 scheme was reviewed positively by the Inspector and SoS, the application was refused principally due to the lack of a need in housing land supply terms, given that the site was not allocated for development in the Local Plan.
- 2.4 The SoS and Inspector conclusions in relation to landscape, ecology and heritage are summarised below (our emphasis underlined).

Landscape

- 2.5 SoS Para 27 states, inter alia:

“...for the reasons given in IR689, that there are no cogent reasons to resist the BIES proposals purely on landscape grounds.”

- 2.6 IR Para 689 States:

“...any development on BIES would be very visible from the Community Hospital and nearby existing and approved residential areas off the Framfield Road, but it would not breach the skyline when looking eastwards, and could be designed (as shown by the DAS) to protect existing views of the listed oast house building at Bird In Eye Farm. Like BIEN, but unlike Downlands, it would appear as a natural and

logical extension to the town, and not significantly separated, much less divorced, from it by the Framfield stream. As with BIEN, I think that the landscape proposals would complement the form and layout of development shown in the DAS, and help provide a pleasing new urban edge to Uckfield. In sum, there are in my opinion no cogent reasons to resist the BIES proposals purely on landscape grounds.

Ecology

2.7 SoS Para 33 states:

“for the reasons given in IR731-738, the Secretary of State agrees with the Inspector that there is no sound case for rejecting the BIEN or BIES schemes on the grounds of any harm to ecological/nature conservation interests.”

Heritage

2.8 SoS Para 43 states:

“the Secretary of State notes that there is a Grade II listed oast house immediately adjacent to BIES. Like the Inspector, the Secretary of State is satisfied that the setting of this building would not be materially harmed by the BIES proposals (IR792).”

Appeal Decision Summary

2.9 On the basis of the foregoing, although the application was refused on the basis of a lack of demonstrable housing need, at that time, the scheme was not refused on technical grounds.

2021 Application

2.10 As mentioned at 1.3, above, an application on a larger site was made in 2021, but subsequently dismissed at appeal (LPA Ref: WD/2021/2198/MAO and PINS Ref: 3307820).

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- 2.11 This 2021 Application related to a larger site than either the 2006 application or the current proposal, as it comprised up to 290 dwellings, on a circa 41ha Site, which included land to the south of Bird in Eye Shaw as a strategic SANG.
- 2.12 Although the Appeal was dismissed, the Inspector found the Site to be a suitable location for development in terms of accessibility (paragraphs 49-53 of the Appeal Decision).
- 2.13 The Inspector dismissed the Appeal in relation to the following technical matters:
- Highway Safety (DL paragraph 39), principally relating to the junction design of the larger scheme.
 - Heritage (DL Paragraphs 54 – 62).
 - Ancient Woodland (DL Paragraphs 15-30).
 - Flood Risk (DL Paragraphs 40-45) in respect of the pedestrian and cycle access outside flood zone 1 and thus engaging the sequential test.
- 2.14 Notwithstanding, the Inspector concluded in relation to the public benefits secured by the Scheme at paragraph 63 of the Appeal Decision as follows:
- “...would include economic benefits derived from the provision of up to 290 homes of which 35% would be affordable housing and 5% self-build homes, in an area where there is an agreed and long-standing shortfall of housing land supply, the current figure being 3.92 years. These homes would drive economic growth in the area through the associated expenditure and job creation that new housing provides. Appropriate conditions also mean this development could come forward relatively quickly.”*
- 2.15 However, the Inspector concluded at paragraph 72 of the decision that *“the matters which weigh in favour of the proposal, whilst substantial, do not outweigh the totality of the harm that I have found.”*.

- 2.16 Although the Scheme was reviewed positively by the Appeal Inspector in terms of its sustainable and accessible location, the Appeal was refused principally due to the impact on the setting of the Grade II Listed Oasthouse, the technical design of the road junction was not acceptable, the impact on Ancient Woodland, and the need to consider sequential test matters.
- 2.17 The technical matters raised by the Inspector are considered in Sections 3, 5, and 7 below.

3. SUMMARY OF SUPPORTING MATERIAL

General

3.1. A number of technical studies and reports have been undertaken and prepared in support of the application and comprise as follows:

- Design and Access Statement (Paul Brown, RIBA, Chartered Architect)
- Air Quality Assessment (SLR)
- Heritage Statement (Montagu Evans LLP)
- Archaeological Desk Based Assessment (RPS)
- Geophysical Survey Report (SUMO Geophysics Ltd)
- Transport Assessment¹ (Milestone Transport Planning Limited)
- Framework Travel Plan (Milestone Transport Planning Limited)
- Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy (Ardent Consulting Engineers)
- Sequential Test (RPS)
- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (CSA Environmental)
- Landscape Strategy and SANG Design Plan No. CSA/2646/123B (CSA Environmental)
- Agricultural Land Classification Report (CSA Environmental)
- Ecological Impact Assessment (Ecology Partnership)
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Condition Assessment (Ecology Partnership)
- Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment and Matrices (Ecology Partnership)
- Biodiversity Checklist (Ecology Partnership)
- Outline Ecological Management Plan (Ecology Partnership)
- Report to Inform Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening Assessment (Ecology Partnership)
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Tree Survey (Barton Hyett Associates)
- Ground Conditions Desk Based Assessment (Land Science)
- Air Quality Assessment (SLR)
- Energy Statement (Energist)
- Statement of Community Involvement (Fairthorn Consultancy)

3.2. The content of the technical reports submitted in support of the application is summarised below:

¹ Including Proposed Access Arrangement Drawing No. 23138/001 Rev A (Appendix 7 to the TA), Shared Footway/Cycleway – Indicative Vertical Design Drawing No. 23138/004 Rev A (Appendix 10 to the TA) and Overall Access Strategy Plan 2318/006 (Appendix 12 to the TA)

Design & Access Statement

- 3.3. The Design and Access Statement (“DAS”) demonstrates how the technical team has analysed the characteristics of the application site and surrounding area and evolved the scheme following consideration of the technical assessment of the site and surrounding area.
- 3.4. The DAS also explains how the scheme has evolved pursuant to a review of the earlier dismissed appeal decision and proactive engagement with the LPA through the pre-application process, which approach accords with the principles set out at section 4 of the NPPF regarding pre-application engagement.

Energy Statement

- 3.5. The Energy Statement demonstrates how the Application Scheme accords with the requirements at Policy WCS14 of the Wealden District Core Strategy (2013). As explained, this is achieved by outlining the predicted energy demand and resultant carbon emissions of the development. It also shows how the proposals have incorporated energy efficiency measures informed by the Wealden Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document Section 4 Sustainability.
- 3.6. The development has improved upon the building regulation requirements through the use of high levels of insulation and energy efficient services. A 66% reduction in Carbon emissions and a 24.9% reduction in energy demand has been achieved.
- 3.7. Overall, the submitted information demonstrates exceedance of Policy WCS14 requirements and Part L1A of the Building Regulations; which matters can be secured by the imposition of appropriately worded conditions.

Air Quality Assessment and Emissions Mitigation Assessment

- 3.8. The Air Quality Assessment (“AQA”) assesses the impact of the proposed traffic to be generated by the scheme upon the air quality in the area and concludes that the impact will not be significant. Various mitigation measures

are proposed (primarily for the construction phase) which can be secured by condition and/or through the Legal Agreement.

Transport Assessment

- 3.9. As outlined in section 1 above, highways and transportation issues have been an integral part of the design process.
- 3.10. As demonstrated throughout the Transport Assessment ("TA"), the proposed development is submitted in accordance with national and local development policy regarding economic growth, sustainable development and travel.
- 3.11. The TA confirms that the site is well located to take advantage of the existing pedestrian network and public transport facilities in Uckfield, which will be enhanced through the extension of the public footpaths to the site itself. Furthermore, the TA confirms that the site is located within an accessible location as all the necessary day to day services including educational, retail and leisure facilities are located within Uckfield which is an easy walking distance from the site as shown on Table 3.2 of the TA.
- 3.12. Section 8 of the TA assess the numerous junctions within the town centre and the suitability of the proposed junction design at the site access.
- 3.13. The TA states that the two town centre junctions on High Street operate within capacity, and that the revised development proposals will have a negligible impact on the operational characteristics of junctions.
- 3.14. Nonetheless, it is still proposed that a suitable contribution to enable the two High Street junctions to be linked using a Microprocessor Optimised Vehicle Actuation (MOVA) be incorporated within the Section 106 Heads of Terms. This will improve the capacity of these junctions to accommodate the proposed quantum of development whilst also bringing about wider highway improvements to these junctions within Uckfield.
- 3.15. The changes to the town centre junctions together with the genuine opportunities for future residents for residents to use sustainable modes of travel to access Uckfield town centre and the safe and appropriate internal

highway layout will ensure the proposal is entirely appropriate in highway terms.

Flood Risk Assessment

- 3.16. Based on EA fluvial floodplain mapping, the application site is situated entirely within Flood Zone 1 (land assessed as having a less than 1 in 1,000 annual probability of river or sea flooding).
- 3.17. The Environment Agency's Risk of Flooding from Surface Water map indicates that most of the site is categorized as having a 'very low' risk of surface water flooding. The remaining potential sources of flood risk discussed in the report are considered low/ negligible.
- 3.18. The FRA demonstrates that the proposals are consistent with the aims of the NPPF and the Planning Practice Guidance to the NPPF along with the aims of local flood risk policy. The Site will not be at significant risk of flooding or increase the flood risk to others.
- 3.19. The surface water drainage strategy will reduce flood risk by restricting surface water flows in accordance with the East Sussex County Council's requirements. A sustainable drainage system has been designed to incorporate attenuation basins, swales and highway swales. Storm water attenuation is provided for all storms up to and including the 1 in 100-year critical event (including a 45% allowance for climate change).
- 3.20. In summary, the FRA concludes, inter alia, that the development is, in flood risk and drainage terms, safe, would not increase flood risk nor would it impact third parties.

Utilities and Foul Water Drainage

- 3.21. Foul water is expected to be discharge via gravity to the existing Southern Water public foul sewer within Bird in Eye Hill (B2102) north-west of the site.
- 3.22. Following confirmation of capacity or if reinforcement works are required, consent under S106 of the Water Industry Act 1991 to connect into the public sewer will be obtained from Southern Water.

Ecological Impact Assessment

- 3.23. The supporting Ecological Impact Assessment “(EcIA)” details the findings of the initial desk-based assessment of the entire site together with a follow up Site Surveys relating to a range of species including [REDACTED] dormouse and reptiles which were undertaken between 2019 and 2024.
- 3.24. The EcIA describes the Site as presently comprising modified grassland, mature treelines, hedgerows, off-site ancient woodland edge, scattered scrub and lowland deciduous woodland. The scheme seeks to retain hedgerows and other habitats wherever practicable, with compensatory planting provided within retained open space areas.
- 3.25. Grass snake and common lizard populations are present on-site and several species of bat have been recorded utilising the Site for foraging. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Dormice have also been confirmed present within suitable woodland habitats. Mitigation has been proposed to address potential impacts on these protected species and ensure compliance with applicable legislation.
- 3.26. The Site lies within 7km of the Ashdown Forest SAC and SPA, the zone within which proposed developments are identified as being likely to result in a significant effect on these designations. Provision of a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) as part of the proposed development and contributions to the Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategy (SAMMS) will serve to mitigate these impacts.
- 3.27. Opportunities for ecological enhancement may be secured by planning condition. New habitat creation is proposed to include new woodland and tree planting, nectar-rich grasslands, incorporation of dormouse, bat and bird boxes and new wildlife ponds and SUDs features.

- 3.28. The development area is anticipated to result in, a net gain in biodiversity (13%) through these on-site habitat creation and enhancement measures. Further biodiversity/habitat improvements will be delivered within the new SANG area.
- 3.29. The Illustrative Site Layout demonstrates the potential to deliver net benefits for wildlife in the form of additional habitats, with the opportunity to provide additional biodiversity enhancement measures alongside the new housing.
- 3.30. The necessary ecological mitigation and enhancement can be secured by condition, to include the following:
- Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP): In addition to wider environmental controls and best practice construction management, the CEMP will set out construction-phase impact avoidance measures with respect to dormice, nesting birds, [REDACTED] and reptiles.
 - Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP): The LEMP will detail the establishment and long term management of retained and newly created habitats to maximise benefits for wildlife. It will include a graphical Ecological Enhancement Plan, setting out the number, type and position of enhancement features.
 - Lighting Scheme: A sensitive lighting scheme will accompany the detailed layout, ensuring that dark corridors are maintained, and minimising light spill to retained and newly created habitats.
 - Reptile Mitigation Strategy: A mitigation strategy in relation to reptile populations on Site will be produced to detail working methods in relation to translocation and displacement of reptiles, including details of habitat enhancements and provision of log piles within areas of retained habitat.
- 3.31. Based on the successful implementation of avoidance, mitigation and enhancement measures proposed, the Scheme is considered to accord with all relevant nature conservation legislation and will result in an overall net gain in biodiversity of over 32% (13% within the development area and 159% in the SANG). This is significantly in excess of the national 10% target. As set out in the EcIA, the scheme accords with the provisions of Policies WCS12 and WCS13 of the Wealden District Adopted CS Local Plan (2013).

Outline Ecological Management Plan

- 3.32. The Outline Ecological Management Plan summarises the approach to the creation of the proposed Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (“SANG”), in seeking to mitigate the potential recreational impacts of the proposed residential development at Land at Bird in Eye Farm, South of Bird in Eye Hill, Uckfield on the Ashdown Forest Special Protection Area (SPA).
- 3.33. The purpose of this document is to describe the key objectives of the proposed strategic SANG and its delivery. Prescriptions are provided to guide future management for the benefit of biodiversity, as well as to establish the area as an important recreational resource for residents of the new development and the wider community. Details of habitat and visitor access enhancement measures and a clear management and monitoring schedule are also provided.
- 3.34. A Landscape Strategy and SANG Design Plan (CSA/2646/123 Rev B) has also been produced; which sets out the over-arching landscape principles of the SANG and should inform any detailed proposals produced subsequently to enable the final setting-out and installation of the SANG.
- 3.35. The proposals will provide mitigation on-site in the form of 8.69ha of SANG land, together with a walking route extending to circa 2.5km.
- 3.36. Applying 2.4 residents per dwelling factor to 190 dwellings gives 456 residents. Using the metric of 8ha of SANG per 1,000 population (which metric is applied by Natural England and Wealden District Council), the site would require 3.65ha of SANG provision. It is proposed that this site offer around 8.76ha of SANG land, with an additional 3.95ha of other open space.
- 3.37. The delivery of the SANG and future ownership of the land will be secured by means of a planning obligation(s) and/or through the imposition of appropriately worded conditions.

Statement of Information to Inform Habitats Regulation Assessment

- 3.38. This document provides information to assist the Wealden District Council, as Competent Authority, in their consideration of whether the proposed

development will have any likely significant effects on internationally designated sites (previously referred to as Natura 2000 / European sites), and in ascertaining any adverse effects on their integrity, as required under Regulation 63 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. The information provided in the document also has regard to the current legal context for Habitats Regulations Assessment.

- 3.39. Based on the information provided in the report, it is anticipated that the Wealden District Council, in their capacity as competent authority under Regulation 63 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, will conclude that the proposed development has the potential to result in likely significant effects on the Ashdown Forest SPA and SAC, when considered in combination with other plans or projects (in light of the definition of these terms in the 'Waddenzee' ruling of the European Court of Justice Case C-127/02).
- 3.40. Wealden District Council must therefore undertake an Appropriate Assessment of the implications of the proposed development on the qualifying features of the Ashdown Forest SPA and SAC in light of their published conservation objectives.
- 3.41. With consideration of the proposed measures intended to avoid or reduce effects (i.e. provision of bespoke SANG and SAMMs payments) it is anticipated that the Wealden District Council's Appropriate Assessment will conclude the following:
- that the proposed development will not have any adverse effect on the integrity of any internationally designated site alone;
 - that the proposed development will not have any adverse effect on the integrity of any internationally designated site in combination with other plans or projects; and
 - that suitable measures have been proposed to secure the viability of the proposed development within the context of Regulation 63 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017
- 3.42. Through submission of the information contain herein, it is considered that the applicants have discharged their duty under Regulation 63(2) to, *"provide such information as the competent authority may reasonably require for the purposes*

of the assessment.”

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

- 3.43. The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (“LVIA”) confirms that the neither the Site nor the immediate landscape is covered by any statutory or non-statutory designations for landscape character or quality. The western part of the Site lies on the west-facing valley slope facing the town, which exerts an urbanising influence on it and the site is considered to have an edge of settlement character.
- 3.44. Overall, the Site is assessed as being of medium landscape quality, value and sensitivity.
- 3.45. The visual assessment found that there are some opportunities for views from public vantage points in the near vicinity of the Site to the west and north. For the rest of the Site, and in the wider landscape, views are restricted by the closely undulating topography and the extensive woodland cover in the landscape.
- 3.46. The LVIA concludes that the proposed scheme has been sensitively designed to respond to the landscape character of the Site and to address guidance set out in the Council’s Landscape and Visual Appraisal. The steeper slopes in the west will remain open and views to the listed The Oast will be retained. The eastern part of the Site will be laid out as semi-natural SANG. The landscape structure of the Site, which includes plantation woodland, some hedgerows and trees will remain largely intact, and will provide a framework for the new homes and open spaces. This will be supplemented by extensive areas of new tree, woodland and meadow grassland creation which will add to the treed character of the Site and the local area and will soften views of the new homes from the neighbouring valley side to the west. The proposals will result in a substantial change in the character of the Site as farmland is replaced by a residential scheme. However, the proposals have responded to the key landscape features and sensitivities of the Site and will deliver landscape benefits in the form of new planting and environmental enhancements within the SANG and open spaces. Beyond the Site itself landscape / townscape effects will be very

limited due to the Site's visual containment.

Arboricultural Impact Assessment

- 3.47. The Arboricultural Impact Assessment ("AIA") identifies a total of 6 individual trees, 17 groups, 8 hedgerows and 2 (including ancient) woodlands within the survey area.
- 3.48. In addition to the area of ancient woodland the AIA survey has identified two veteran trees which are of significance both in heritage and ecological terms. The AIA confirms that the proposal will be able to respect the necessary buffer zones around these ancient woodland and veteran trees.
- 3.49. Furthermore, the AIA confirms that all trees of value can be retained, only those lower quality Category C trees would need to be removed in order to facilitate the development. Against an, at worst, minimal tree removal the AIA sets out a number of enhancement measures that will easily off set such a minimal loss of trees. Such enhancement measures include:
- Extensive woodland margin planting;
 - Adapting existing woodland management regimes;
 - Provision of extensive standard tree planting;
 - Tree and shrub planting across the SANG land; and
 - Proactive management of the younger areas of woodland.
- 3.50. Give the sensitive approach the masterplan and the retention of many of the tree specimens within the site, the AIA concludes that the proposed development is acceptable in arboricultural terms with trees of value being protected and retained. In addition, significant enhancement planting beyond that required to mitigate the losses will be provided.

Agricultural Land Circumstances and Quality Report

- 3.51. The Agricultural Land Classification ("ALC") system provides a framework for classifying land according to the extent to which its physical or chemical characteristics impose long term limitations on agricultural use. The ALC system divides agricultural land into five grades (Grade 1 'Excellent' to Grade 5 'Very Poor'), with Grade 3 subdivided into Subgrade 3a 'Good' and Subgrade 3b 'Moderate'.

- 3.52. Agricultural land classified as Grade 1, 2 and Subgrade 3a falls in the 'best and most versatile' category in Paragraph 180 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- 3.53. The Application Site comprises Subgrade 3b agricultural land. It does not fall within the 'best and most versatile' category and would its development for housing would not significantly harm national agricultural interests in terms of paragraph 180(b) of the NPPF (2023) or Development Plan policy.

Archaeology Desk-Based Assessment

- 3.54. The Archaeological Desk Based Assessment ("DBA") confirms that there are no designated archaeological assets, no World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Historic Battlefield or Historic Wrecks are within the study area nor is the site located within an Archaeological Notification area designated by the Council.
- 3.55. The site is considered to be of low archaeological potential for undated, Prehistoric, Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman, Anglo-Saxon and Medieval finds.
- 3.56. The DBA confirms that Uckfield did not emerge as a settlement until the Medieval period as did Framfield with the application site likely to have formed agricultural hinterland between the two settlements and as such there is the potential for medieval agricultural evidence. As such, any archaeological evidence is likely to be of low (local) significance only.
- 3.57. The site is considered to be of low archaeological potential for all other periods and that further works, a geophysical survey and targeted trial trenching can be secured by way of an appropriate condition imposed on any planning permission.

Heritage Assessment

- 3.58. The Heritage Assessment considers the potential impact of the development on Grade II Listed Building known as The Oasthouse which is located within the complex of farm buildings which are located within the middle of the site.
- 3.59. The supporting Heritage Report states that the setting to the Oasthouse has been compromised over time due to the degree of change to the traditional farmyard.
- 3.60. The main farmhouse has been extensively extended and altered and there are a number of large, many non-farming, activities around the site which detract from the rural character of the site and impact the setting of the listed building.
- 3.61. In terms of demonstrating the potential impact upon the building the report acknowledges that The Oasthouse is not like other rural or agricultural buildings that rely on the preservation of a large or legible landscape context in which it may be experienced. The significance in this case lies in its technological and architectural interest. It is also acknowledged that the immediate setting helps people to understand the original purpose of The Oast house, however the Heritages Statement notes that this setting is capable of improvement.
- 3.62. The application proposal incorporates an expanded open area to the west which allows for the appreciation of the building as a former agricultural building and should be considered as a heritage benefit.
- 3.63. Overall, the proposals are concluded to conserve the heritage significance of the listed building, such that there is no harm, and indeed offer some betterment to its setting.
- 3.64. As Section 7 of the Heritage Statement concludes, the inclusion of a large area of open space to the west of the Oasthouse in the masterplan; the setting relationship which contributes to the special interest of the Oasthouse, namely its proximity to the field in which barley was historically grown, ensures this would remain legible. The immediate setting of the listed building would be improved, and public access would be granted to allow for a greater

appreciation of the special interest of the Oasthouse.

- 3.65. As concluded in the Heritage Statement, there are no policy conflicts with national or local policy, or the provisions of s.66 of the 1990 Act. However, and were the Council to take the contrary view, and identify some negligible harm, that would not outweigh the many benefits of providing much needed market and affordable houses.

Assessment of Ground Conditions

- 3.66. The Phase 1 Geo-Environmental Assessment concludes that that there is potentially a very low to very high risk that significant pollutant linkage may be present due to the potential for made ground on site and the site being part of a working farm.
- 3.67. Land Science recommends that further work is undertaken to assess the potential extent of any contamination including shallow boreholes, trial pits, standpipes and soil samples. Such work would ensure the full extent and location of any contamination and the necessary remediation required. Such additional work can be secured by way of an appropriate conditions.

Statement of Community Involvement

- 3.68. This document summarises the extent of pre application engagement undertaken including in relation to the results of the public exhibition.

4. DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

Context

- 4.1. The Application Site is shown edged red on the accompanying Site Location Plan No. PRB/BIE/201C and extends to approximately 20ha (net).
- 4.2. The site is situated to the east of established residential development in the town, close to the recent housing development of 146 dwellings at Land North of Mallard Drive. The town has a typical form of development, with shops, services and the railway station centred around a high street.
- 4.3. The River Uck runs east-west through the centre of the town, and the Bellbrook Industrial Estate is located on its western side. From the centre, residential development is accessed off the main B2102 road, with progressively newer development towards the fringes of the town
- 4.4. The site is located within easy walking distance (within 1.2km) of Uckfield town centre and easy access can be gained to the local shopping facilities, health facilities, schools, nurseries, the train station and job opportunities. Accordingly, the site affords a highly sustainable location in seeking to meet identified housing needs

The Site

- 4.5. The site comprises a series of paddocks and fields. Ancient Woodland lies along the southern boundary and the southern part of the western boundaries, however, there is no longer any Ancient Woodland within the application site boundary.
- 4.6. The site surrounds Bird in Eye Farm, which lies to the south of the current access into the farm, approximately 90m from the B2102, Bird in Eye Hill. The farmyard contains a number of barns currently occupied by several small business units, areas of hard standing, a number of stable blocks, a manège and a dwelling.

- 4.7. The Site is bound by Bird in Eye Hill to the north, to the east lie Haliwell Farm and open agricultural fields with the village of Framfield beyond. To the south lies a band of ancient woodland with open land beyond. To the west lies the River Uck tributary with the Uckfield community hospital and residential development on the other side of the valley.
- 4.8. The site slopes down from northeast to southwest. No part of the site forms part of a Conservation Area and nor is it identified for any landscape 'value'.
- 4.9. The Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside Map ('MAGIC') and the Proposals Map (adopted March 2014) indicates that the site is not covered by any statutory or non-statutory designations for landscape character or quality.
- 4.10. The site surrounds the buildings at Bird In Eye Farm, but these are excluded from the application redline boundary.
- 4.11. The Oasthouse (Grade II listed building) at Bird in Eye Farm is located on the western side of the farmyard. It occupies an elevated aspect that affords a visual link between the building and the eastern edge of Uckfield. This application will therefore take the opportunity to improve the setting of this listed building and so the redline boundary includes some land adjoining The Oasthouse.
- 4.12. In accordance with section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the LBCA Act), the masterplan approach has paid special regard to the desirability of preserving those listed buildings potentially affected by the proposals. This includes their settings or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they may possess. Overall, there are no environmental or statutory designations that would otherwise serve to limit the development potential of the site.
- 4.13. As set out in the LVIA the proposal would comprise development on sloping and rising up from the valley associated with the Uck tributary which is characteristic of land to the west. As such the scheme represents a logical extension of Uckfield into largely unconstrained land.

- 4.14. As detailed in the Flood Risk Assessment that accompanied the application, the area where the development is proposed is classified as falling within Flood Zone 1. There are no further environmental constraints which would preclude the proposed development.

5. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED SCHEME

General

- 5.1. The outline application scheme has been developed and informed following the 2021 application and appeal, along with pre-application advice on an amended scheme.
- 5.2. Only the principle of developing the site for up to 190 dwellings and SANG, together with the means of access are to be determined as part of this outline application. (Unlike the 2021 application, the SANG that forms part of this application is not intended to perform a wider strategic function and so the provision of SANG parking is not considered necessary.)
- 5.3. Appearance, landscaping, layout and scale are reserved for subsequent determination.
- 5.4. The application proposes:
- “Outline planning application for the erection of up to 190 dwellings, with associated works, parking, landscaping, publicly accessible open space and SANG provision, with access from the B2102.”***
- 5.5. The proposals are set out on the following plans:

The Scheme

- i. Site Location Plan No. PRB/BIE/201C
- ii. Proposed Access Plan No. 23138/001 (Appendix 7 to the TA)
- iii. Shared Footway/Cycleway Plan No. 23138/004 (Appendix 10 to the TA)
- iv. Overall Access Strategy Plan 2318/006 (Appendix 12 to the TA)

Supporting Plans

- v. Illustrative Site Layout Plan No. PRB/BIE/202K
- vi. Opportunities & Constraints Plan No. PRB/BIE/203C
- vii. Parameter Land Use Plan No. PRB/BIE/204F
- viii. Indicative Streetscene Plan No. PRB/BiE/205D
- ix. Indicative Storey Heights Plan No. PRB/BiE/206
- x. Landscape Strategy and SANG Design Plan No. CSA/2646/123B

- 5.6. Plans (i), (ii), (iii), and (iv) comprise the application plans for the purpose of determining the application.
- 5.7. Plans (v) to (x) are submitted for illustrative purposes only.

Scheme Evolution

The 2021 Appeal Application Scheme

- 5.8. The 2021 appeal application scheme included land to the south of the ancient woodland at Bird-in-Eye Shaw, which was intended to provide strategic level SANG.
- 5.9. That scheme proposed up to 290 dwellings, and extracts from the submitted plans shown in figures 1 and 2 below.

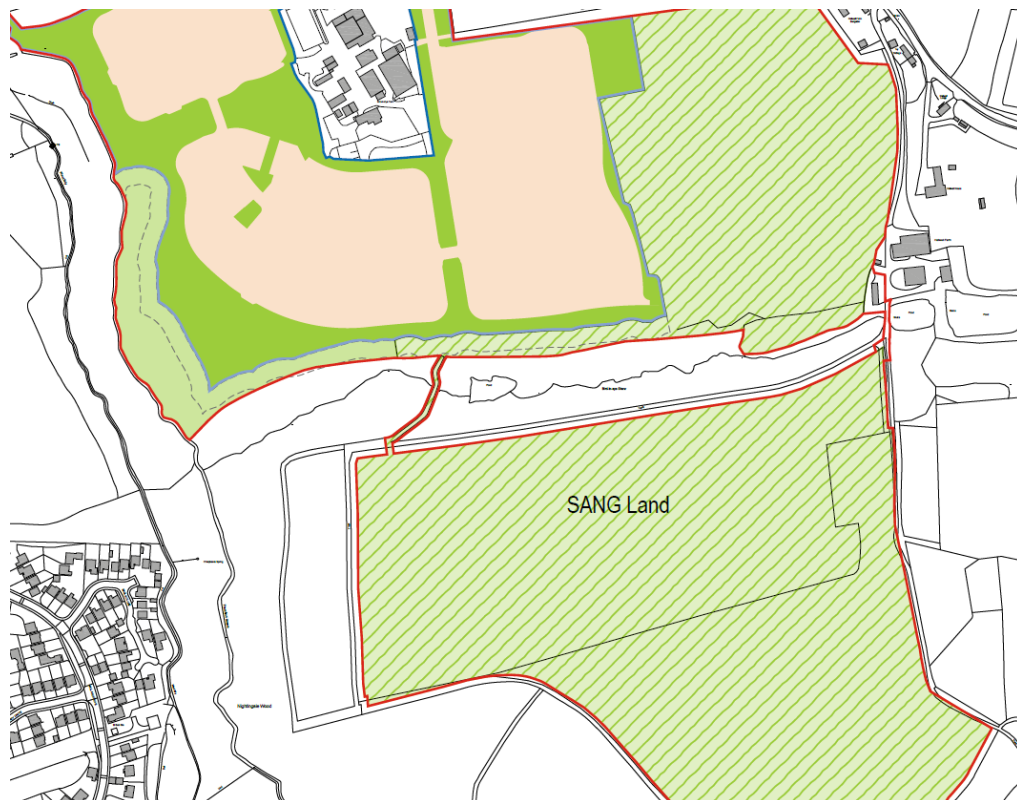


Figure 1: from drawing PRB/BIE/PA4C: Indicative Parameter/Land Use Plan for 2021 Application Scheme

- 5.10. The removal of this southern parcel of SANG Land from the scheme as now proposed removes the need for a footpath passing through the belt of ancient woodland that previously divided the site from the SANG Land. This greatly reduced the likelihood of the development causing any harm to that belt of woodland.



Figure 2: from drawing PRB/BIE/PA2N: Illustrative Site Layout Plan for 2021 Application Scheme

- 5.11. The other major change is in the scale and location of development proposed to the west of the Bird in Eye farm buildings.
- 5.12. The 2021 Application included a view corridor between The Oast and Uckfield in which it was proposed that a Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP) be located.

Pre-application Scheme for up to 235 Dwellings (March 2024)

- 5.13. Following the dismissal of the appeal relating to the 2021 application scheme (290 dwellings) pre-application advice was sought on a reduced scheme (235 dwellings) (LPA Ref: PE/2024/0122/E).

- 5.14. The layout proposed in the 2024 request for pre-application advice included a widened view corridor to preserve views of the listed building (The Oast) as seen from the west. The LEAP was again placed in this view corridor and the corridor was also crossed by an access road.
- 5.15. An extract from that scheme is included in Figure 3 below.



Extract 3: from drawing PRB/BIE/202: Illustrative Site Layout Plan for 2024 Pre-Application Scheme

- 5.16. The access for the 2024 Pre-Application Scheme went around the buildings of Bird in Eye farm from north to west to south, with only a footpath going around the northeastern side of the farm buildings.

The Application Scheme (July 2024)

- 5.17. Following receipt of the pre-application advice received from the LPA, the proposed quantum of development has been further reduced (from 235 to 190 units) and no housing is proposed on land to the west and southwest of the Bird In Eye Farm buildings and especially The Oasthouse listed building. The access road (with associated landscape planting) and the LEAP have also been

removed from this area. The main access is now on the east side of the Bird in Eye Farm buildings and the LEAP is located at the northeast corner of the main development area (also a point of entry into the SANG).

- 5.18. The only development now proposed in the expanded view corridor is a footpath that will serve as an important part of the pedestrian link from the development to the centre of Uckfield. With no landscape planting associated with this footpath, it will not impact on views of The Oasthouse. An extract from the Masterplan Layout is included in Figure 4 below.



Figure 4: Extract from drawing PRB/BIE/202K: Illustrative Site Layout Plan for 2024 Application

- 5.19. This illustrative layout shows that the proposed quantum of development can be delivered at an appropriate density, while preserving the view corridor to the west, the buffer from the ancient woodland to the south and delivering a significant SANG area to the east.

Masterplan Approach

- 5.20. Preparation of the Illustrative Site Plan has been informed by the technical studies summarised in Section 3, and assessment of relevant planning policy considerations summarised in Section 6.
- 5.21. In addition to the view corridor discussed above, key to the evolution of the layout of the proposed development was the identification of existing trees and hedgerows for retention. In particular, a line of existing hedgerow which bisects the site to the east of the existing farm buildings (seen on the right hand edge of Extracts 2-4 above) has been identified as an important part of the character of the site and is proposed for retention with a 5m buffer zone. This effectively creates a green corridor down the centre of the site. Furthermore, there are 15m minimum buffer zones provided to the ancient woodland to the south.
- 5.22. Analysis of the site's topography and drainage requirements has informed the siting of a large proposed balancing ponds towards the south-western corner of the site, outside the ancient woodland. Together with the constraint of the farm buildings, identification of these features to be retained and/or created results in parcels of land which can be developed for housing.
- 5.23. The Masterplan vision is to create a high-quality development that has a strong sense of character and identity whilst linking seamlessly and positively with the adjoining development of Uckfield to the west.
- 5.24. The Masterplan approach, including in relation to design, is underpinned by a thorough contextual appraisal of the site and its surroundings. Full details are set out in the accompanying Design & Access Statement.
- 5.25. The vision is to be achieved through the following design principles included in the masterplan design:
- The creation of a sustainable living environment with a mix of residential accommodation.
 - A place with a varied character that responds to the local vernacular and built context to provide a sense of place.

- A sustainable development which responds to best practice, with house type designs to be approved at the reserved matters stage that will seek to minimise energy use, sustainably manage water, responsibly source materials and manage waste and ecology.
- Opening up views of The Oasthouse a unique heritage asset thereby enhancing its significance and setting.
- Enhancing the landscape edge to the boundaries of the site, in particular the eastern boundary that will further enclose the development in conjunction with the ancient woodland to the south.
- A development which preserves and enhances biodiversity by retaining natural features on the site and reinforcing them by creating opportunities for new habitat areas, including tree planting.
- To encourage and enhance the opportunities for sustainable movement, through the provision of pedestrian and cycle linkages to neighbouring facilities and public transport routes within Uckfield.
- Creation of landscape rich SANG area together with numerous walking routes and footpaths for future residents and the wider community.

5.26. The principal elements of the scheme are summarised as follows:

- The scheme provides for up to 190 dwellings, to include an appropriate mix of house types, within a landscaped setting.
- The scheme will include a mix of housing tenures, together with 35% affordable housing provision.
- Buildings heights will be in conformity with existing dwellings in the vicinity of the proposal.
- Vehicle access is provided from Bird in Eye Hill.
- Increased public footpath to facilitate sustainable travel into Uckfield and the associated services, facilities and public transport links.
- SuDS.

5.27. The component parts of the scheme are summarised as below.

Access and Layout

- 5.28. Vehicular access to the proposed dwellings will be provided by a single means of access from Bird in Eye Hill. Details of the proposed access are provided in the access plans included at Appendices 7 to 15 of Milestone Transport Planning's Transport Assessment.
- 5.29. The DAS sets out consideration of the overall design approach.

Dwelling mix

- 5.30. As set out above, the scheme provides for a total of up to 190 dwellings, including the provision of up to 35% affordable dwellings (up to 67 dwellings).
- 5.31. The tenure mix is to be agreed through the determination of the application in consultation with the Council's Housing Officer.
- 5.32. The overall housing mix, including in relation to the market housing, is a matter to be determined at the subsequent reserved matters application stage. It will however provide for a mix of housing types to cater for all members of the community.

Design

- 5.33. The house type designs, to be considered at the reserved matters stage do not need to replicate any existing patterns of development or utilise particular materials but should achieve a cohesive appearance sympathetic to the properties within the eastern parts of Uckfield.
- 5.34. As shown on the Illustrative Site Plan, the overall layout and form of the development has been designed to be sympathetic to the urban edge location of the site. This includes the creation of a new landscape buffer to the western, southern and eastern boundaries of the site.
- 5.35. There is an opportunity for parts of the development to reflect the local area. For example, on the Illustrative Street Scenes the single-, and one-and-a-half-storey buildings in Section B:B draw inspiration from The Oasthouse listed building.

Density

- 5.36. The Illustrative Site Plan provides for up to 190 dwellings on a net developable area of circa 11.36ha, which equates to a net density of approximately 17dph.
- 5.37. This density will ensure the new dwellings integrate with, and complement the local area in terms of scale, massing and layout, whilst sympathetically responding to the site's edge of settlement location.

Landscaping Strategy and SANG

- 5.38. Although landscaping is a reserved matter, the accompanying Illustrative Site Plan provides for a landscaped buffer to the eastern boundary of the site. This is in conjunction with the areas of ancient woodland which will be retained and enhanced to ensure a visually enclosed development.
- 5.39. The SANG forms an integral part of the scheme, with the overarching landscape and design principles shown on Plan CSA/2646/123/B: Landscape Strategy and SANG Design.
- 5.40. The SANG proposals can be quantified as follows:
- 8.7ha of SANG land
 - A walking route extending to circa 2.5km
- 5.41. The SANG secures a significant recreational benefit for future residents whilst also securing biodiversity enhancements through additional habitat creation.
- 5.42. The delivery of the SANG and future ownership of the land will be secured by means of a planning obligation(s) and/or through the imposition of appropriately worded conditions.

Land Uses

- 5.43. On the basis of the foregoing, and having regard to the on-site opportunities and constraints informing the proposed development, proposed land uses are summarised in the land use table below.

Proposed Land Uses

Land use	Hectares (Ha) (Approx.)
Land for housing only (190 dwellings)	6.2ha
SANG	8.7ha
Other open space (including ancient woodland buffer)	5.2ha
Works within the highway	0.1ha
Total	20.1ha

Scheme Benefits

5.44. The key benefits of the proposed scheme can be summarised below:

- Provision of up to 190 new dwellings in a sustainable location.
- Contribution towards the provision of much needed market and affordable housing.
- Appropriate landscaping strategy throughout the site and proposed SANG which will contribute to a sense of place.
- Provision of new public footpaths.
- Improvements to the setting of the listed Oasthouse and creation of new vistas from which this heritage asset can be appreciated.

6. PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

General

- 6.1. This section summarises the planning policy position against which the acceptability of the scheme is determined.
- 6.2. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 sets out a requirement that planning applications are to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless other material considerations indicate otherwise. This represents the s.38(6) 'balance'.
- 6.3. In this instance the material considerations include:
- the publication of the Wealden Draft Local Plan (Regulation 18. March 2024);
 - the Council's acceptance that they cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing land; and
 - the significant need for housing (market and affordable).
- 6.4. Section 39 of the Act identifies the requirement for decision makers to exercise their functions with the objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development. These requirements must be considered in light of the NPPF, including the 3 roles of sustainability set out at paragraph 8 (economic, social and environmental). However, and as set out at paragraph 9 of the NPPF, the three roles are not a checklist and their values are considered below in light of that context.

The Development Plan

- 6.5. The Development Plan comprises the following:
- Wealden Local Plan Saved Policies (1998) (Saved 2007)
 - Wealden Core Strategy Local Plan (2013)

- Affordable Housing Delivery Local Plan (2013)

- 6.6. The Site is located adjoining, but ultimately beyond the settlement policy boundary as defined on the Local Plan Proposals Map. Accordingly, it is located in the countryside. In addition, the Site is not allocated for housing development. As such, the proposed development is technically contrary to the Development Plan.
- 6.7. Save for the location of the application site beyond the adopted settlement boundary for Uckfield, the proposal accords with the spatial and development management policies of the development plan.
- 6.8. However, and in so far as the settlement/development boundary relates to an out-of-date housing need, the weight to be attached to this policy conflict is significantly reduced.
- 6.9. The settlement boundaries as set out within the Proposals Map for the Wealden District were identified to meet the housing needs from Policy WCS1 of the Core Strategy.
- 6.10. The boundaries were drawn at that time to meet a need for at least 9,440 dwellings over the period 2006 to 2027. This equates to 450dpa within that part of the District outside of the SDNP. This was the level of growth set for the district in policy H1 of the former South East Plan (2009).
- 6.11. In so far as the Core Strategy is more than five years old, and in accordance with the requirements in paragraph 76 and footnote 39 of the NPPF, the housing requirement falls to be determined by the local housing need derived from the application of the standard method. However, as the Council has recently published a Regulation 18 draft Local Plan for consultation (until 10th May 2024), the provisions at paragraph 226 of the NPPF are engaged, requiring the LPA to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing land.

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- 6.12. Croudace has submitted a set of representations upon the consultation draft Local Plan, proposing the allocation of this sustainably located site for the development of up to 235 dwellings.
- 6.13. In ***Hopkins Homes Ltd v SSCLG*** [2017] UKSC 37 Lord Carnwath said [63] the Inspector was “clearly entitled” to reduce the weight to be attached to restrictive policies, such as countryside and landscape policies, can be reduced where they are derived from settlement boundaries that in turn reflect out-of-date housing requirements. There are obvious parallels with Wealden District.
- 6.14. It is acknowledged by the Council that the countryside and landscape policies are not meeting current housing needs based on the definition of built-up areas as defined in the development plan. On this basis, and as previously accepted by the Council, reduced weight applies to the conflict with saved Policies GD2 and DC17 of the Wealden Local Plan.
- 6.15. As an overarching assessment:
1. The spatial policies for the supply of housing do not meet current housing needs; and the Council has been granting planning permissions for the development of sites for housing beyond the settlement boundaries as defined in the Core Strategy.
 2. Accordingly, the settlement boundaries defined under GD1 and GD2 are not sufficient to meet current housing need and the weight to be given to the conflict with this policy is reduced.
 3. Although the site is within the countryside, it is not a valued landscape nor are there any other on-site constraints that would preclude such a development as proposed. As such, and although there is also some conflict with saved Local Plan Policy EN8, the weight attached to this minor policy conflict is reduced in so far as the policy is not consistent with the NPPF and greenfield sites beyond defined settlement boundaries are required to be developed to meet housing needs.

4. The presumption in favour of sustainable development (or 'tilted balance') is engaged on account of the inconsistency between the development plan and the NPPF. This includes in relation to the spatial application of its policies being out of date; and in relation to the lack of a five-year supply of deliverable housing land. Either issue separately triggers the presumption in favour of sustainable development.
 5. The Scheme provides a safe means of access.
 6. The Site is in a sustainable location.
 7. The loss of subgrade 3b agricultural land should be afforded no more than limited weight (as it is not best and most versatile ("BMV") land).
- 6.16. The only development plan conflict is the location of the Site adjacent to but beyond the settlement boundary for Uckfield, in a scenario where the policies for the supply of housing are out of date, and the presumption at paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF is engaged.
- 6.17. On the basis of the foregoing, development of the site for a sustainable form of development should now be considered favourably in accordance with the advice at paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF, having regard to the importance of the delivery of housing for meeting the District's market and affordable housing needs and the delivery of economic and sustainable growth noting that there is a significant deficit (in both market and affordable housing).
- 6.18. In the absence of an up-to-date Local Plan, there remains an ongoing need to seek to address the acute housing shortfall in sustainable locations, which must include the opportunity presented by the subject Site.

Core Strategy

- 6.19. The Core Strategy was adopted in February 2013 and covers the period 2006 to 2027.

- 6.20. Policy WCS1 (Provision of Homes and Jobs 2006 – 2027) makes provision for some 4,525 net additional dwellings within the district reflecting the findings of the 2007 Strategic Housing Market Assessment alongside the requirements of policy H1 of the former South East Plan². Policy WCS2 (Distribution of Housing Growth 2006 – 2027) seeks to allocate those additional dwellings throughout the district with Uckfield earmarked for 1,000 new allocations in addition to the 742 already committed or built).
- 6.21. Policy WCS4 set out a number of strategy development areas with SD1 (Land at West Uckfield) seeking to allocate the 1,000 dwellings in one strategic area.
- 6.22. It is nevertheless highly material that the housing provision figures within Policy WCS2, and subsequently WCS4, do not represent full objectively assessed need when assessed against the annual requirement set by the standard methodology which exceeds 1,200 dwellings a year as confirmed in the Council's Housing Land Supply Statement for April 2023³.
- 6.23. It is evident therefore that Policies WCS1, WCS2 and WCS4 are out of date and that significant additional housing is required on greenfield sites. This is confirmed in paragraph 5.8 of the Core Strategy, which states **"...it is inevitable that there will have to be a substantial use of greenfield land to meet existing and future housing needs...."** This has been further accepted in the decisions by the Council and through appeals on subsequent applications.
- 6.24. In so far as the housing requirement of Core Strategy Policy WCS1 is expressed as a minimum, the Appeal Scheme is in accordance with it.
- 6.25. Policy WCS2 sets out the spatial approach to the distribution of the housing requirement identified in WCS1. It indicates that at least 1,742 dwellings are to be delivered at Uckfield, including 1,000 dwellings on allocations. The allocations are set by policy WCS4.

² This required 450dpa within the district from 2006 to 2026

³ Paragraph 2.3 of the April 2023 Five Year HLS Statement indicates that the District's annual housing need is 1,200dpa (as a minimum).

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- 6.26. Policy WCS8 (Affordable Housing) ensures, inter alia, that new developments provide for a mix of dwelling size and tenure that meet the identified needs of a community and that on sites of 5 dwellings or more affordable housing should, where viable, be provided at a level of at least 35%.
- 6.27. Whilst the application is submitted in outline, with only the principle and means of access to be considered the scheme would provide for a mix of dwellings sizes to cater for both younger individuals, couples and families. In addition, the proposal would provide for up to 67 affordable houses.
- 6.28. The provision of affordable housing attracts very substantial weight where the Council can demonstrate a five-year housing land supply. However, in this case the Council acknowledge that it is **unable** to demonstrate a five-year supply of housing land against the requirements of the standard methodology set out in the NPPF.
- 6.29. Policy WCS12 (Biodiversity) refers to the targets set out within the Sussex Biodiversity Action Plan in that the Council will prevent a net loss of biodiversity; reference is also made to the Ashdown Forest.
- 6.30. The accompanying biodiversity reports demonstrate that whilst there may be some local impact as a result of the proposal the reports clearly state that subject to the mitigation measures being adopted the scheme would in fact bring about numerous opportunities for biodiversity net gain. Furthermore, the proposed SANG exceeds the area required for the proposed level of development and can facilitate additional development in the surrounding area thereby representing a further benefit of the application proposal.
- 6.31. The proposed SANG and the opportunities for biodiversity net gain demonstrates the scheme fully complies with the overarching aims of Policy WCS12. Additional reference is made to biodiversity matters below.
- 6.32. Policy WCS13 ensures the districts existing network of green infrastructure will be protected, improved and enhanced. As outlined above the site is bound on two sides by areas of ancient woodland as well as other existing hedgerows and trees.

- 6.33. The proposal has been carefully designed to ensure that there is no impact on the ancient woodland and that any tree and hedgerow removal has been kept to an absolute minimum. The proposal does not affect any ancient woodland or protected trees. Furthermore, the scheme proposes to strengthen the boundaries of the ancient woodland with substantial planting. With protection of and enhancement to the ancient woodland and additional landscaping providing for a net improvement to the green infrastructure it is evident the scheme complies with Policy WCS13.
- 6.34. Policy WCS14 states the Council will take a positive approach to the determination of applications that reflects the presumption in favour contained within the NPPF. Whilst additional reference is made to the potential impacts of the application scheme below it is clear from the above that there are no significant impacts that would outweigh the many significant benefits the proposal will bring when assessed against an un-tilted balance, let alone the tilted balance which applies in this case.
- 6.35. At this outline stage, it is considered that the proposed development accords with all of the relevant Core Strategy policies so far as they can be considered at this stage:
- WCS1 – Provision of Homes and Jobs
 - WCS2 – Distribution of Housing Growth
 - WCS4 – Strategic Development Areas
 - WCS5 – Managing the Release of Housing Land
 - WCS8 – Affordable Housing
 - WCS12 – Biodiversity
 - WCS13 – Green Infrastructure
 - WCS14 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- 6.36. When the above policies are considered against the aims of paragraph 11.d) of the NPPF they are to be considered out of date as the most important are not based on up-to-date housing requirements in accordance with the standard methodology and further as the Council cannot demonstrate an up to date supply of deliverable housing sites. This is discussed later in this statement.
- 6.37. In *Suffolk Coastal DC v Hopkins Developments Ltd* [2017] UKSC 37 Lord Carnwath's judgement confirms at paragraph 63 that the weight to be attached to restrictive policies, such as countryside and landscape policies, can be

reduced where they are derived from settlement boundaries that in turn reflect out of date housing requirements. In the Suffolk Coastal case the Inspector's findings were consequential upon their being no five-year housing land supply and on the basis that the Council could not deliver the housing to meet current needs. There are obvious parallels with Wealden District.

- 6.38. In the case of Wealden District, the Council have been granting planning permissions for housing development outside of settlement areas that are in breach of countryside and landscape policies in order to meet market and affordable housing needs and maintain a rolling five-year land supply⁴.
- 6.39. The Council's position in relation to the need to allow residential development on sites which are technically outside of settlement boundaries is clearly and helpfully set out in the Executive Summary of the Report to Committee relating to the proposed development of land at Park Farm East, Hellingly. This application (LPA ref: WD/2022/0294/MAO) was considered by the Council's Planning Committee South on 5th October 2023. The Executive Summary states:

"The application site lies within open countryside as defined by the adopted Local Plan and was advertised as a 'departure' application.

The site was originally identified as part of the proposed allocation site HN1D in the now Withdrawn Submission Local Plan. The adjacent land parcel which lies to the west (also a former HN1C allocation site in the withdrawn Submission Local Plan) was granted outline planning consent for 370 dwellings on 30th April 2021 under WD/2019/2542/MAO.

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that determination must be in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The current development plan for the area in which the application site is located comprises the policies of the Wealden Local Plan 1998 which were saved in 2007, the Core Strategy Local Plan, which was formally

⁴ Including since January 2020, resolutions of the Council with respect of applications off Walshes Road, Crowborough (WD/2020/0743/MAO and WC/2020/0596/MAO), At Straight Half Mile, Maresfield (WD/2017/0694/MAO), east of Benhall Mill Road, Tunbridge Wells (WD/2017/0143/MAJ), Friday Street Farm, Oak Tree Lane, Eastbourne (WD/2020/1391/MAO), land at Park Farm East, Hellingly (WD/2022/0294/MAO), and Hesmonds Stud, Waldron Road, East Hoathly (WD/2022/0341/MAJ)

adopted on 19 February 2013 and the Affordable Housing Delivery Local Plan adopted in May 2016 and the Hellingly Neighbourhood Plan (July 2021).

The Council cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing land and there is a clear need for housing within the housing market area, including a need for affordable housing.

The proposed development would provide up to 360 dwellings, 35% of which would be affordable (126 units based on 360 dwellings being constructed), meeting the policy requirements of AFH1 and 5% (18 units) self-build units meeting an existing demand for such accommodation on the Council's self-build register helping the Council fulfil its statutory duties in this respect. In view of the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, this would clearly be a benefit of the scheme. Moreover, the Council can currently demonstrate only 3.92 years (or 78.5) supply of specific deliverable sites for housing, falling short of the five-year requirement expected by the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) under Paragraph 74. In this context, the proposed housing constitutes a significant benefit that weighs very heavily in favour of the development in the planning balance.

Furthermore, the absence of a five-year housing land supply triggers the operation of Paragraph 11d of the Framework. Paragraph 11d (ii) applies for the reasons set out in the main body of the report (having regard to a positively concluded Appropriate Assessment). This sets out that that planning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole. This is known as the 'tilted balance' in consideration towards housing supply.

To conclude, the development accords with all the relevant planning policies in the adopted development plan with the exception of the two policies GD2 and DC17, which for the reasons set out in the report are given very limited weight. There are no adverse impacts of the development that would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the development proposal. Therefore, the presumption in favour of sustainable development is applicable.

- 6.40. A similar analysis was set out in the Executive Summary of the application for 205 dwellings Hesmonds Stud, Waldron Road, East Hoathly (LPA Ref: WD/2022/0341/MAJ), which application was reported to Committee on 11 August 2022. It includes the following assessment:

“The application site lies within open countryside as defined by the Local Plan and has therefore been advertised as a ‘departure’ application.

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that determination must be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The current development plan for the area in which the application site is located comprises the policies of the Wealden Local Plan 1998 which were saved in 2007, the Core Strategy Local Plan which was formally adopted on 19 February 2013 and the Affordable Housing Delivery Local Plan adopted in May 2016. The Council cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing land and there is a clear need for housing within the housing market area, including a need for affordable housing. There is also unmet need for custom and self-build housing...

...The site is contrary to Saved Policies GD2 and DC17 of the adopted Wealden Local Plan 1998, by virtue of its location outside the development boundary as set out on the proposals map of that plan. These policies, which restrict development in the countryside, were based on an assessment carried out in 1998 of the housing requirements up until 2004. In the absence of a five-year housing land supply the effect of these policies, which seek to restrain new development to land within the settlement boundaries, would be to restrict the supply of housing and prevent local housing needs being met. On this basis, the issue of housing delivery is considered to be a significant material consideration in favour of the application that outweighs the policy conflict with GD2 and DC17. On this basis, it is the officer’s view that very limited weight should be given to these two policies in the consideration of this application...

...The application is considered to accord with the three objectives of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. The development would bring economic benefits, delivering and supporting jobs on and off site. The economic benefits would also include linked benefits to other businesses in the area and supporting those local services within the locality. The proposals would help deliver much needed housing including affordable housing to meet housing requirements in the district and locally needed affordable homes. Ten units of custom and self-build plots would add further to the social role. The delivery of on site open space would provide additional recreation space for both existing residents in the locality and future residents of the development. The development will relate satisfactorily to surrounding built-form. It is considered that subject to appropriate detailed design which would be

determined through subsequent Reserved Matters application(s) and condition discharge that the development will provide a high quality and locally distinctive environment...

...To conclude, the development accords with all the relevant planning policies in the adopted development plan with the exception of the two policies GD2 and DC17, which for the reasons set out above, are given very limited weight. On heritage impacts, the less than substantial harm must be given substantial weight, but the NPPF says it can be outweighed. This is reflected in leading case law on the matter. The package of public benefits here, including much need market, affordable and bespoke homes (custom and self build) all secured on a deliverable site outside any protected landscape; is considered to outweigh the less than substantial harm to heritage assets. There are other benefits here too in regard to the social and economic dimensions of sustainable development add further to the consideration. More details are given in the main body of the report." (emphasis added)

- 6.41. Evident from the above is the countryside and landscape policies are not meeting current housing needs based on the definition of built-up areas as defined in the development plan. Therefore, consistent with the approach now followed by the authority, reduced weight applies to any conflict with saved policies GD2 and DC17 of the Wealden Local Plan. (The acknowledgement (underlined above) in the report on WD/2022/0341/MAJ that heritage impacts can be outweighed by public benefits is also highly relevant to this application and is revisited at paragraph 7.57, below.)
- 6.42. It is therefore concluded that the proposal is consistent with the aims of the development plan and that development would be in accordance with Saved Local Plan Policies and Core Strategy policies when considered on the whole, having regard to the Council's accepted approach that limited weight applies to the conflict with policies GD2 and DC17.
- 6.43. As with Saved Policies GD2 and DC17 of the Local Plan Policies WCS2 and WCS4 of the Core Strategy are also inconsistent with the requirement in the Framework to boost significantly the supply of housing land as they are based on housing projections which are out of date. As such, the weight given to these policies in the overall planning balance is significantly reduced, reflecting the position at paragraph 63 of the Suffolk Coastal judgment (Hopkins Homes).

Wealden Local Plan 1998 Saved Policies

- 6.44. Policy GD2 of the Local Plan states development outside the settlement boundaries will be resisted unless it accords with specific policies in the Plan. Policy DC17 states that housing development will not be allowed outside development boundaries unless it conforms with other policies in the Plan. As has been set out above, and acknowledged by the Council, these policies are to be afforded limited weight as they are inconsistent with the NPPF.
- 6.45. However, as summarised below the proposal does accord with certain policies in the plan.
- 6.46. Policy EN1 ensures the Council will pursue sustainable development with regard to the location, layout and design of development. As set out throughout this Statement and the accompanying technical reports the application scheme will bring about a sustainable form of development in relation to the location, layout and design of the proposal and when considered against the definition in paragraph 8 of the NPPF.
- 6.47. Policy EN7 refers to the specific requirements for protecting the Ashdown Forest.
- 6.48. The table below summarises the main Core Strategy policies and saved Local Plan Policies of relevance to the application proposal.

	Most important policies for the determination	Consistent with NPPF	Weight to be afforded	Scheme accords with policy
Wealden Core Strategy (2013)				
WCS1 – Provision of Homes and Jobs 2006 - 2027	✓	×	Limited	×
WCS2 – Distribution of Housing Growth	✓	×	Limited	×

	Most important policies for the determination	Consistent with NPPF	Weight to be afforded	Scheme accords with policy
WCS4 – Strategic Development Areas	✓	×	Limited	×
WCS5 – Managing the Release of Housing Land		×	Limited	×
WCS8 – Affordable Housing		✓	Full	✓
WCS12 – Biodiversity		✓	Full	✓
WCS13 – Green Infrastructure		✓	Full	✓
WCS14 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development	✓	✓	Full	✓
Wealden Local Plan (Saved Policies)				
GD2 – Development Proposals Outside Development Boundaries	✓	×	Limited	×
DC17 – Housing development in the countryside	✓	×	Limited	×
EN1 – Sustainable Development	✓	✓	Moderate	✓
Wealden Local Plan (Saved Policies)				
EN2 – Sustainable Locations	✓	✓	Full	✓
EN7 – Ashdown Forest	✓	✓	Full	✓
EN12 – Trees and Woodlands	✓	✓	Full	✓

	Most important policies for the determination	Consistent with NPPF	Weight to be afforded	Scheme accords with policy
EN13 - Ancient Woodland		✓	Full	✓
EN27 - Design		✓	Full	✓
HG5 - Dwelling Mix		✓	Full	✓
HG6 - Crime Prevention		✓	Full	✓
UC1 - Uckfield		×	Limited	×

Summary

- 6.49. The conclusions drawn from recent committee reports, and from a review of the current development plan policies are set out below:
- Countryside policy GD2 and housing policy DC17 of the Local Plan are too restrictive when considered against the requirements of the NPPF and as such should be afforded significantly less weight;
 - The Core Strategy Policies related to housing provision do not provide for an NPPF consistent objectively assessed housing need and as such the settlement limits set in the Saved Local Plan Policies are out of date.
 - The corresponding weight to be attached to such policies is therefore reduced.
 - The Council cannot currently demonstrate an up-to-date five-year housing land supply.
 - The Council's own Core Strategy accepts the need to use greenfield sites to accommodate additional housing needs; which is exacerbated because since the Core Strategy was adopted, the need for housing has increased further still.
- 6.50. The Council has accepted that limited weight applies to the conflict proposals with Development Plan policies GD2 and DC17. Furthermore, it has been established above that the suite of most important policies is to be considered out of date as they are inconsistent with the NPPF in conjunction with the lack of a deliverable five-year supply of housing land. It is considered that whilst the scheme does not strictly accord with certain countryside policies these are out of date and attract limited weight. As such, the numerous benefits, particularly in increasing the supply of market and affordable houses and enhancing the

setting of the unique Oasthouse heritage asset, clearly outweigh any minor disbenefit.

Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework (Dec 2023)

6.51. The current National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was updated in December 2023. It is a material consideration of particular standing in the determination of planning applications. A revised draft NPPF has been published for consultation by the new Government, with an emphasis on housing delivery. The content of the consultation draft NPPF is addressed at paragraph 6.80 (onwards) below.

6.52. The content of the NPPF as it relates to the proposed development of the application site is addressed in the order set below:

- The presumption in favour of sustainable development
- Decision making
- Delivering a sufficient supply of homes
- Promoting sustainable transport
- Achieving well-designed and beautiful places
- Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
- Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
- Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

6.53. Paragraph 8 of the NPPF identifies that there are three dimensions to sustainable development, comprising (a) economic, (b) social; and (c) environmental.

Economic Role

6.54. The economic role requires the planning system to, inter alia, ensure that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth. This is achieved with the application scheme on the basis that it is located within a sustainable location, within walking and cycle

distance to local services and facilities. The scheme also provides for housing development of the type and mix required to meet identified needs.

- 6.55. The scheme further addresses the economic role in terms of increased LPA Revenues, Construction impacts (increased GVA, jobs etc.) and increased expenditure in local area.

Social Role

- 6.56. The social role requires the planning system to provide the supply of housing required, creating a high quality, well-designed built environment, accessible to local services and reflecting the community's needs. All of these requirements can be achieved with the application scheme.

Environmental Role

- 6.57. The environmental role requires the planning system to protect and enhance the natural, built and historic environment. This can be achieved with the proposal in a location that will not result in any significant adverse effects upon the character of the surrounding area, including in landscape terms and lead to enhancements to both the natural and historic environment.

Decision Taking

- 6.58. In setting out the presumption in favour of sustainable development, paragraph 11 of the NPPF adds, in relation to decision-making at 11(c), that this means approving development proposals that accord with the development plan. It adds at paragraph 11(d), and of particular relevance to Wealden that where there are no relevant development plan policies or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out of date, permission should be granted unless (i) policies in the NPPF provide a clear reason for refusing the development; or (ii) any adverse impact of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.
- 6.59. It has been discussed earlier in this Statement, why it is considered that the policies for the supply of housing (both in terms of the housing requirement and the associated settlement boundaries), and further as the Council cannot demonstrate an up to date five-year land supply, are materially out of date.

6.60. Section 4 of the NPPF sets out the approach to decision-taking. Paragraph 38 makes it clear that decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.

6.61. The site is located in a sustainable location and will improve the economic and social conditions of the area. It will also help to provide an enhanced landscaped edge to the settlement and new biodiversity habitats as well as enhancing the setting to the Grade II Listed Oasthouse.

Delivering a sufficient supply of Homes

6.62. Paragraph 60 sets out the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes.

6.63. Paragraph 61 sets out the approach to determining the minimum number of homes needed, which should be informed by a local housing need assessment conducted using the standard method in national planning guidance – unless an alternative approach is justified. It is also added that any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas should also be taken into account in establishing the amount of housing to be planned for.

6.64. Paragraph 69 sets out the need to provide a five-year supply of deliverable sites for housing. It also requires sites for years 6-10 and beyond.

6.65. This application for up to 190 dwellings would make a material contribution towards the substantial shortfall in supply.

Promoting Sustainable Transport

6.66. Section 9 sets out the approach to providing for sustainable growth.

6.67. Paragraph 109 states as follows.

'The planning system should actively manage patterns of growth in support of these objectives. Significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. This can help to reduce congestion and

emissions, and improve air quality and public health. However, opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and this should be taken into account in both plan-making and decision-making.’.

- 6.68. The site is located adjoining an identified settlement, within walking distance to local services and facilities. The supporting TA demonstrates the acceptability of the scheme in sustainability terms. Accordingly, the scheme is consistent with paragraph 109.
- 6.69. Furthermore, the Transport Statement also sets out highway improvements through the proposed linking of the two town centre junctions which will bring about a betterment to the existing highways condition.

Achieving Well-Designed Places

- 6.70. Section 12 addresses design, with paragraph 131 stating: “...**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...**”
- 6.71. Many design details are reserved matters at this stage. Nevertheless, the principles set out in the NPPF have been adopted into the indicative layout, for example trees of value have been retained and new trees are proposed (as per NPPF paragraph 136). Meanwhile, The Design and Access Statement and Illustrative Street Scene identify the opportunity for new houses on the norther boundary to adopt a rural style, with some bungalows having steep pitched roofs to reflect The Oast listed building.

Metting the Challenge of Climate Change and Flooding

- 6.72. Section 14 sets out the approach to dealing with climate change, supporting the transition to a low carbon economy and taking account of flood risk. Section 4 of the supporting Flood Risk Assessment considered climate change. The FRA goes on to conclude that the proposals are consistent with the aims of the

NPPF and the Planning Practice Guidance to the NPPF and that the Site will not be at significant risk of flooding or increase the flood risk to others.

- 6.73. The Energy Statement sets out how the development will reduce energy demand and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Natural Environment

- 6.74. Section 15 sets out the approach to conserving and enhancing the natural environment.
- 6.75. The scheme is located within the wider zone of influence and as such proposes a substantial SANG that will ensure there are no direct effects on the Ashdown Forest from this development.
- 6.76. As to landscape considerations, the site is not located within any formal designations for the most valued landscapes. The accompanying LVIA confirms that the proposal would be similar in character to the existing residential development to the west, and the retention of the existing woodlands and trees will further mitigate the appearance of the scheme.
- 6.77. The proposal maintains the thick band of ancient woodland planting to the south and west. As a result, there is potential to not only screen the proposed houses, but also to enhance the existing settlement edge around the Hospital.

Historic Environment

- 6.78. Section 16 sets out the approach to conserving and enhancing the historic environment. Paragraph 205 states that great weight should be given to the conservation of heritage assets, irrespective of the degree of harm. Paragraph 208 acknowledges that less than substantial heritage harm can be outweighed by public benefit.
- 6.79. The supporting Heritage Statement concluded that the paragraphs in the NPPF relating heritage harm are not engaged as there is no “heritage harm”.

Consultation Draft NPPF (July 2024)

- 6.80. The Government has published a consultation draft NPPF, with an emphasis on housing livery in order to 'get Britain building again' and to 'grow the economy'.
- 6.81. Mandatory housing targets are to be reinstated, with Wealden's housing requirement increasing to 1,397dpa (plus the imposition of a 20% buffer).
- 6.82. The NPPF also requires housing land supply assessments to be tested against the need to show a five year supply of deliverable housing land.
- 6.83. The emphasis for the need to provide for sustainable development is retained.
- 6.84. The application scheme accords with the approach to development set out in the draft NPPF.

Housing Land Supply

- 6.85. The Council's December 2023 Housing Land Supply Statement indicates that as at 1st April 2023, the Council cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of housing land. The Council's position is that they are only able to demonstrate a 3.83 year supply, below the minimum five years obligated by the NPPF (paragraph 77).
- 6.86. As set out at Table 5 of the HLS Statement, the Council's position may be summarised as follows:

Five Year Requirement:	6,000
20% Buffer:	+1,200
Total Five Year Requirement:	7,200
Supply:	5,513
Shortfall:	-1,687
Yrs Supply:	3.83 years

- 6.87. As the figures show, the council is only able to demonstrate a 3.83 year supply of deliverable housing land, with a shortfall of 1,687 dwellings.

6.88. The shortfall will increase through the imposition of the revised housing requirement identified through the new approach to calculating the Standard Method as set out in the consultation draft NPPF.

6.89. The lack of a five year supply of deliverable housing land and the need to breach settlement boundaries in the adopted development plan in order to meet ongoing housing needs, separately and independently trigger the presumption in favour of sustainable development at paragraph 11 of the NPPF.

6.90. As explained below, the proposal accords with the thrust of the development plan for growth in and around Uckfield (including Bird-in-Eye) and therefore this provides further justification for approval of the scheme at the earliest opportunity.

Affordable Housing

6.91. The application proposes the on-site provision of up to 67 affordable dwellings⁵, thus achieving a policy-compliant 35% affordable housing provision.

6.92. There is an acute need for affordable housing within the District, which is confirmed in recent appeal decisions.

6.93. Paragraph 22 of the Old Orchard House, Horebeech Lane, Horam appeal (Appeal Ref: APP/C1435/W/22/3297371, 4 Aug 2022) states:

“The 35% affordable housing provided would comply with CS Policy WCS8. The appellant’s evidence over an acute need for affordable housing in Wealden, with affordability worsening, was not challenged. This is a specific social benefit to which I also attach very significant weight. Quite significant weight is attached to the provision of two plots for self-build homes, as this would help meet a demand for such opportunities.” (My emphasis underlined)

⁵ Assuming 190 dwellings are built

- 6.94. In the appeal scheme for up to 58 dwellings on land at Old Nursery House, The Street, Framfield (Appeal Ref: App/C1435/W/22/3301104, 5 Jan 2023) the Inspector concluded on affordable housing matters at paragraph 68 as follows:

“In addition, the evidence before me shows that delivery of affordable housing in the district has been substantially below the level of identified need for at least the last few years, and the main parties agree that there is an acute need for more affordable homes in Wealden. The proposal includes 35% affordable housing which would provide for up to 20 affordable homes, and I afford substantial weight to this benefit. I also give significant weight to the provision for 5% of dwellings as self-build or custom-build which would contribute to meeting needs.” (My emphasis underlined)

- 6.95. Paragraphs 20 and 63 of the NPPF sets a strong emphasis on the delivery of sustainable development including affordable homes, whilst paragraph 60 clearly sets out the Government’s aim to “boost significantly the supply of homes”.
- 6.96. The need for affordable housing and their importance in achieving sustainable development is emphasised in many government publications, including House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts – Planning and the Broken Housing Market (19th June 2019).
- 6.97. The provision of affordable housing is a key part of the planning system. A community’s need for affordable housing was first enshrined as a material consideration in PPG3 in 1992 and has continued to play an important role in subsequent national planning policy, including the NPPF (2012, 2018, 2019, 2021 and both 2023 versions).
- 6.98. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a material planning consideration. It is important in setting out the role of affordable housing in the planning and decision-making process. The NPPF sets a strong emphasis on the delivery of sustainable development, including affordable homes, at paragraphs 20 and 63.

6.99. The need for affordable housing and the importance of its provision is emphasised in many Government publications, including:

- Planning and the broken housing market, Committee of Public Accounts, House of Commons (June 2019)
- Reaffirmation of the Government support for affordable housing in press release of 6th July 2020⁶
- Planning White Paper – August 2020

6.100. Policy AFH1 of the Affordable Housing Delivery Local Plan sets out a 35% affordable housing requirement on schemes of 5 or more dwellings. The supporting text to Policy AFH1 (paragraph 2.2) notes that the Council's commissioned local housing needs survey in 2009 confirmed an annual need to 812 affordable homes.

6.101. Whilst the more recent Wealden District SHMA (2016) identified an annual need for 331 affordable homes from 2013 to 2033, this is still a significant need as illustrated in the Council's achievement of delivery.

6.102. This is shown in Table 1 below, alongside the extent provision has achieved that assessed in the Council's Local Housing Need Assessment (LHNA) (August 2021) which indicates that at least 519 affordable homes (social or affordable rent) are required annually 2019-39 (Table 7.16). Paragraph 7.78 of the LHNA also indicates that there is a further net annual need for at least 193 affordable homes for ownership in the District. This is consequently a total annual need for 712 affordable homes. This is reflected in Table 1.

6.103. As indicated in Table 1 below, the Council has delivered 1,555 affordable homes in the period April 2013 to March 2022. This is equivalent to an average rate of 172.8 affordable dwellings per annum since 2013.

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/jenrick-acts-to-safeguard-affordable-homes-during-pandemic>

Table 1: Affordable Housing Completions compared to SHMA and LHNA

Year	Affordable Delivery ⁷	Compared to SHMA (2016)		Compared to LHNA (2021)	
		331dpa	Annual Shortfall	712dpa	Annual Shortfall
2013/14	201	331	-130		
2014/15	193	331	-138		
2015/16	82	331	-249		
2016/17	81	331	-250		
2017/18	144	331	-187		
2018/19	130	331	-201		
2019/20	273	331	-58	712	-439
2020/21	275	331	-56	712	-437
2021/22	176	331	-155	712	-536
2022/23	218	331	-113	712	-494
Total	1,773	3,310	-1,537	2,848	-1,906

6.104. The delivery of affordable housing falls considerably short of the 331dpa or 712dpa requirements in the SHMA or the LHNA.

6.105. In addition to the under-delivery of affordable housing compared to that assessed within the SHMA and LHNA, it is also necessary to consider how the District's housing waiting list has also been affected by the under-delivery of affordable homes. This is shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Extent of housing waiting list in Wealden District⁸

	1/4/15	1/4/16	1/4/17	1/4/18	1/4/19	1/4/20	1/4/21	1/4/22	1/4/23
Households on waiting list	1,012	962	1,013	794	671	796	629	552	743
Households in reasonable preference category	506	388	537	407	347	448	371	252	430
Homeless	51	58	51	20	0	5	11	13	25

⁷ Sourced from AMR (indicators 3B & 3C). This does not indicate any differentiation within the affordable tenure i.e. shared ownership or social rent.

⁸ Data from Government data with respect to Local authority housing information.

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- 6.106. The Council's housing waiting list; especially those in a reasonable preference category; can be compared with the delivery of affordable homes as indicated in the authority's monitoring reports (see Table 1).
- 6.107. This shows that 1,773 affordable homes were delivered in the period April 2013 to March 2023. This is equivalent to an annual average rate of 177.3 affordable dwellings.
- 6.108. As Table 1 shows, the delivery of 1,773 affordable dwellings since April 2013 should be viewed in the context that this represents an under provision of 1,537 affordable dwellings as assessed by the SHMA to achieve the annual requirement of 331 affordable units.
- 6.109. It also represents an under provision of 1,906 affordable dwellings as assessed by the Wealden LHNA (2021) to achieve the minimum annual requirement of 721 affordable units.
- 6.110. On the basis of the available evidence, it is clear that there is a significant need for additional affordable homes and the delivery of affordable housing against the identified need has been woeful.
- 6.111. As the table above indicates, between April 2013 and March 2023, there has been a cumulative under-delivery of 1,537 affordable dwellings (when assessed against identified needs). This represents a 46% shortfall against assessed affordable housing needs during this period. Compared to the LHNA, there is a cumulative deficit of 1,906 dwellings (66.97% shortfall). These are very acute gaps in provision which affects Wealden District and how it functions in an economic, social and environmentally sustainable way.
- 6.112. On the basis of the available evidence, it is clear that there is a significant need for additional affordable homes and the delivery of affordable housing against the identified need has been woeful.
- 6.113. With its continued delays in delivery, this has the potential to make the situation even more severe not just for Wealden District's vulnerable position on

affordable housing land supply, but for the significant number of households currently on the Council's Housing Register.

6.114. As at April 2023 there were 743 households on the Council housing register. Accordingly, it is evident that there is a significant need for additional affordable homes.

6.115. Paragraph 60 of the NPPF requires that needs of groups with specific housing requirements to be addressed. Paragraph 63 confirms that one of the specific groups relates to those requiring affordable housing.

6.116. Although the Council publishes details of its planning commitments for housing, there is no information on the extent that those sites forming parts of its supply will deliver affordable housing to either address the current deficit of 1,537 affordable dwellings or ensure that this does not increase in the future.

6.117. The failure to meet the identified needs of affordable housing is a dire situation indicating that the Authority is not fulfilling the objectives in paragraph 60 of the NPPF.

6.118. A step change in the delivery of affordable housing is therefore required if the Council is to get anywhere near the identified need in the SHMA and begin to address the dysfunctions of the local housing market. Such a step change would be consistent with the thrust of paragraph 60 of the NPPF, to boost significantly the supply of housing.

6.119. The acute affordable housing need reinforces the merits of this Scheme with the on-site provision of 67 affordable dwellings⁹.

6.120. The Applicant considers substantial weight is attributable to the benefits associated with the provision of affordable housing.

⁹ Assuming 190 dwellings are built

7. CONSIDERATION OF THE PROPOSED SCHEME

General

- 7.1. This section of the Planning Statement deals with the detailed aspects of the application proposal.
- 7.2. In so far as the scheme is submitted in outline form, the following section of this Statement demonstrates, when considered against the main issues, that the scheme is entirely acceptable in planning terms. The main issues, noted below are summarised in corresponding order:
1. Principle
 2. Highways & Transport
 3. Drainage
 4. Housing Mix and Tenure
 5. Character and Landscape
 6. Heritage
 7. Ashdown Forest, SANG Provision and Ecology
 8. Agricultural Land Quality
 9. Energy and Sustainability
 10. Planning Obligations
- 7.3. These matters are addressed in turn below.

(1) Principle

- 7.4. As set out at paragraph 6.2 above, Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that planning applications must be determined in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 7.5. The current development plan comprises the saved policies from the Wealden Local Plan 1998, the Core Strategy Local Plan (Feb 2013) and the Affordable Housing Delivery Local Plan adopted in May 2016.

- 7.6. As set out in numerous officer reports to committee, and in various appeal decisions on schemes for housing across Wealden, the Council cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing land and there is a clear need for housing within the housing market area, including a need for affordable housing.
- 7.7. The lack of a five-year supply of deliverable housing land and the fact that the most important policies for determining the planning application are out of date triggers the presumption in favour of sustainable development at paragraph 11 of the NPPF.
- 7.8. Although the Site is contrary to Saved Policies GD2 and DC17 of the adopted Wealden Local Plan 1998, by virtue of its location outside the development boundary as set out on the Proposals Map, the policies, which restrict development in the countryside, were based on an assessment carried out in 1998 of the housing requirements up until 2004.
- 7.9. The effect of these policies, which seek to restrain new development to land within the settlement boundaries, serves to restrict the supply of housing and prevents local housing needs being met.
- 7.10. The identified housing need and the lack of a five year supply of deliverable housing land outweighs the policy conflict with policies GD2 and DC17.
- 7.11. In addition, the Application Scheme accords with the economic, social and environmental roles of sustainable development.
- 7.12. In addition, and having regard to paragraph 115 of the NPPF, it is not considered that the development would have an unacceptable impact on highway safety nor that the likely residual cumulative impact of development would be 'severe', and therefore the scheme is acceptable in highway terms.
- 7.13. In addition, and as set out below, any necessary planning obligations will be secured through a S.106 agreement, with additional CIL receipts secured as

part of the reserved matters stage.

- 7.14. Overall, the Scheme accords with all the relevant planning policies in the adopted development plan with the exception of the two policies GD2 and DC17, which conflict only attracts limited weight.
- 7.15. Accordingly, and although the Application is contrary to the development plan when taken as a whole, the presumption of sustainable development at paragraph 11d (ii) of the NPPF is engaged and there are no adverse impacts that could even be considered to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the many benefits arising from the proposal.

(2) Highways & Transport

- 7.16. The assessment of the scheme's highway impacts has been an integral aspect of the scheme from the outset, with pre-application meetings and discussions convened with the Highway Authority since September 2019 (in relation to the earlier 2021 Application).
- 7.17. In turning to the potential highway impacts, development of the site for up to 190 dwellings could generate in the region of 149 two-way movements during the morning peak hour, and 114 two-way movements during the evening peak hour.
- 7.18. Junction capacity assessments have been undertaken, including at two key junctions in the town centre. The Transport Assessment concluded that these junctions will not exceed capacity, even with the additional traffic generated by the development. Nonetheless, it is still proposed that a suitable contribution to enable these two High Street junctions to be linked using a Microprocessor Optimised Vehicle Actuation (MOVA) be incorporated within the Section 106 Heads of Terms. This will improve the capacity of these junctions to accommodate the proposed quantum of development whilst also bringing about wider highway improvements to these junctions within Uckfield.
- 7.19. Both the NPPF and Policy EN2 seek to ensure new development is located where it will encourage sustainable transport.

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- 7.20. National Travel Survey data reveals the majority of trips (80%) under one mile (1.6km) are undertaken on foot, and 15% of journeys between 1 and 5 miles (1.6 to 8km) are usually undertaken on foot.
- 7.21. Providing new homes on the application site, within 1.2km of the facilities available within Uckfield, gives a real opportunity for the majority of trips to be made on foot and by bicycle thereby contributing towards sustainable modes of transport and corresponding reduction in traffic emissions.
- 7.22. Access can be gained to local shopping facilities, health facilities, eating and drinking establishments, schools and nurseries.
- 7.23. A shared footway/cycleway link from the site will be provided to the existing footway on Bird in Eye Hill.
- 7.24. Bus stops and Uckfield railway station are located within easy walking distance from the site, providing access to frequent bus and rail services to the surrounding area.
- 7.25. A considerable package of measures is proposed to mitigate the impact of the development, which matters are summarised as follows:
- Extension to 30mph Speed limit to enhance sustainable modes of transport:
 - Bus stop improvements;
 - Bus service improvements;
 - Improvements to the on-street parking regime along Bird in Eye Hill, to improve vehicle flow and safety.
 - Provide shared footway/cycleway from the site to Bird in Eye Hill.
 - Framework Travel Plan
- 7.26. With the proposed mitigation measures in place, the scheme will not have a severe impact on highway safety and the flow of traffic along Bird in Eye Hill or within Uckfield town centre thereby complying with Policies EN2 and TR3 of the Local Plan and Section 9 of the NPPF.

(3) Drainage

- 7.27. As set out in the FRA, the Site is located within Flood Zone 1 and therefore has the lowest risk of flooding from rivers or the sea.
- 7.28. The Surface Water Drainage Strategy has been developed using best practice Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) techniques. Guidance on suitable techniques and methods has been obtained from the EA, the Non-Statutory Technical Standards for Sustainable Drainage Systems, East Sussex County Council's Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and '*The SuDS Manual*' (CIRIA C753) amongst other sources.
- 7.29. As set out in the outline drainage strategy the proposed development will manage surface water runoff utilising sustainable drainage methods including attenuation basins, swales and highway swales. The outfall is proposed into the existing watercourse with the discharge rate limited to match the existing greenfield runoff rates or less for the site.
- 7.30. The drainage strategy plan is included at Appendix C to the FRA.
- 7.31. Overall, the FRA demonstrates that the proposed development is safe and in accordance with the requirements of national and local planning policy.
- 7.32. Foul water, or effluent, flows from the site will be managed in a new sewer network, which is anticipated to connect into the existing public foul sewer network in Framfield Road/Bird in Eye Hill.

(4) Housing Mix and Tenure

- 7.33. Whilst submitted in outline form with only the principle of the development and means of access to be considered it is important nevertheless to consider the underlying need to provide for a range of house size, mix and tenure.
- 7.34. Whilst the emerging Local Plan was withdrawn from examination following concerns raised by the Inspector the evident base behind it is still important in

framing the latest up to date need for a range of house types within the District.

7.35. The Wealden Local Housing Needs Assessment (August 2021) states that the district needs predominantly 2 and 3 bedroom properties that together make up approximately 70% of total need for market housing. The breakdown is as shown below:

- 1 bedroom – 5%
- 2 bedroom – 30%
- 3 bedroom – 40%
- 4+ bedroom – 25%

7.36. The Application Scheme can provide for a range of dwelling sizes and types that reflects the findings of the latest up to date evidence to ensure it provides for dwellings that appeal to all members of the community. The proposal will also provide for a policy compliant quantum of affordable housing which is currently set at 35%. This would generate an additional 67 affordable houses, a significant benefit in its own right.

7.37. As with dwelling mix; the indicative block of development shown will allow for a series of smaller block which incorporate design elements such as natural surveillance to ensure the scheme is designed to reduce crime. The scheme, notwithstanding its outline nature, would comply with Policies HG5 of the Local Plan and the overarching aims of the Core Strategy.

(5) Character and Landscape

7.38. The application site comprises various fields and paddocks (currently used for horse-grazing) around Bird In Eye Farm, along with some patches of woodland. Within the application site lies Bird in Eye Farm, on which are located a number of commercial enterprises. The site overlooks Uckfield, from where the town can be seen rising up the opposite slope from Framfield Stream.

7.39. A band of dense woodland forms the southern boundary of the site and also extends along part of the western boundary, it is this which is classified as 'Ancient Woodland'. The site has three trees identified as veteran, a Common Ash tree, on the edge of the ancient woodland and two English Oak trees, close

to the eastern boundary. The ancient woodland and the veteran trees will be retained thereby respecting the existing characteristics of the landscape.

- 7.40. Importantly the landscape of the site is not designated for its landscape character or quality and as such the site is in this regard an unconstrained site. Views of the site are available from parts of the town to the west and for a short section of Bird in Eye Hill when adjacent to the site. There are no views of the site from the south (including along public footpath Framfield 65b), due to the intervening woodland.
- 7.41. The landscape-led design will provide housing in the central part of the site only, while protecting and retaining the vast majority of the existing woodland, trees and hedgerows. The layout provides a wide viewing corridor to the Grade II Listed Oasthouse from the west, with SANG provision and a children's play area to the east.
- 7.42. The new housing would be set away from the Ancient Woodland and veteran trees, beyond a buffer of at least 15m. Open, landscaped areas are to be retained either side of the retained hedgerow and tree belt. These areas will be part of the extensive new public open space around the housing parcels. Trees are proposed to be planted, for amenity value as well as for biodiversity benefits, within the open spaces. Street trees will provide visual and wildlife connectivity between the streets and public open space.
- 7.43. In addition, the large area of SANG, discussed in detail below, will provide a significant resource for the community and the larger area, as well as biodiversity benefits whilst respecting the character of the landscape through the retention of existing landscape features.
- 7.44. It is evident from the above that the landscape has been an integral element of the design process with the findings of the accompanying LVIA demonstrating this. As such the scheme complies with the aims of Saved Local Plan Policy EN12.

(6) Heritage

- 7.45. Bird in Eye Farm, is located in the centre of the site, and within the farmyard there is a listed building, The Oast.
- 7.46. The proposed development has been designed to avoid any harmful impact on these listed buildings and to enhance the existing experience of The Oast.
- 7.47. The Oast is listed Grade II and is located near the centre of the group of buildings that comprise Bird in Eye Farm, facing the west half of the application site. It is the only listed building within the farm and sits within a cluster of older farm buildings and is the only building that has escaped significant alteration or adaption.
- 7.48. The Oast is a rare and unique example of a hop kiln which included internal flues, with a furnace below, to heat the drying floor where the hop blossoms were laid out to dry. This design is different to the vast majority of kilns built in the 18th and 19th centuries.
- 7.49. The building is listed because of what it tells us about the development of hop production at this time, not because of its age or its architectural qualities.
- 7.50. This means that unlike other rural or agricultural buildings, The Oast is not considered important because of the way it is seen within the landscape like other agricultural buildings such as historic barns or granaries. The special interest of the building lies in its technical innovation, not the age of the building or its relationship to the landscape. However, the application proposals do provide an opportunity for the building to be seen and experienced within the landscape in a way that is not possible at present and in that way, to be better understood and appreciated.
- 7.51. In order to provide new and enhanced views of the listed building from within the application site, the proposed layout includes a significant area of public open space alongside the western boundary of the farm. This area is of a sufficient size to allow The Oast to be seen and understood as a former agricultural building and the development proposals would therefore provide

new opportunities to see and experience the listed building.

- 7.52. The way in which the proposed housing is laid out also provides new views from the south to the listed building where the top of the building would be visible, and its distinctive cowl seen and easily recognised.
- 7.53. The proposed layout provides for new, enhanced views of The Oast and improvements to its setting as part of the masterplan and these new views are considered a heritage benefit because they would open up and enhance the setting to the listed building within the south and west of the site.
- 7.54. At present, there are no public views of The Oast from within the fields around the building and so the proposals would provide an opportunity for an increased appreciation and understanding of the listed building within the application site itself.
- 7.55. Paragraph 208 of the NPPF ensures that where there is less than substantial harm to a heritage asset, such harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. In this case, the enhancements to the public views of and understanding of The Oast it is clear the scheme brings about a betterment to the setting and appreciation of the heritage asset.
- 7.56. Paragraph 205 of the NPPF places great weight to conserving an asset. It is evident that the proposal will bring about enhancements to setting of the listed building thereby representing a heritage benefit associated with proposal.
- 7.57. In addition, the LPA have already acknowledged in the committee report on application WD/2022/0341/MAJ (see paragraph 6.41 above) that less than substantial harm can be outweighed by other benefits, including the provision of market and affordable homes.

(7) Ashdown Forest, SANG Provision and Ecology

- 7.58. A circa 8.7ha SANG is proposed as an integral part of the scheme design, and secures mitigation for potential recreational impacts to Ashdown Forest Special Protection Area (SPA).

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- 7.59. The SANG proposals include areas of plantation woodland and grassland. Residents will be able to use this area for walking and dog exercising, with visitors and their dogs having open access over SANG land at all times without restriction.
- 7.60. There will be direct access to the SANG from the proposed development and direct access to existing footpaths, leading from the town of Uckfield, will allow residents to easily enjoy the SANG.
- 7.61. A circular walk of c. 2.5km will be created within the SANG, with additional shorter walking routes and access through woodland areas also being provided. Enhancement of existing habitats and creation of new areas of woodland and tree planting, wildflower meadows and new ponds will provide a varied walking experience as well as increasing habitat diversity and net gains for biodiversity. Two viewpoints at the highest elevations of the Site will provide open views of the countryside to the south and east with benches in these locations.
- 7.62. Interpretation boards will be incorporated containing information regarding habitats and species present as well as walking routes, in addition to pathway signage to guide users. Dog bins will also be provided at key access points.
- 7.63. In addition to the above, the accompanying ecology report acknowledges that it is best practice to avoid adverse impacts through the Mitigation by Design approach. Such an approach has been an integral aspect of the schemes dosing and evolution from the outset.
- 7.64. In this regard, the loss of trees and hedgerow has been kept to a minimum with only small sections being removed to facilitate vehicular access, the 15 m buffer zones to veteran trees and ancient woodland are in fact greater than the minimum required whilst such buffers will be subject to appropriate planting to strengthen the edges of the woodland.
- 7.65. Whilst there would be adverse impacts on a range of species that are found largely within the areas of ancient woodland, the ecological reports recommend a range of ecology mitigation measures.

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- 7.66. Such mitigation measures include the use of plant species of wildlife value, provision of bat roost facilities, dormouse nesting opportunities and barn owl hunting opportunities.
- 7.67. The ecology report concludes that subject to such mitigation measures and others including construction management plans the proposal will, in ecological terms comply with local policies, particularly WCS12 and WCS13 of the Core Strategy and the overarching aims of the NPPF.

(8) Agricultural Land Quality

- 7.68. Paragraph 180 of the NPPF ensures, inter alia, that planning policies and decisions recognise the benefits that the best and most versatile agricultural land can bring.
- 7.69. Whilst the site covers a large area, the accompanying Agricultural Land Classification Report concludes that the application site is comprised entirely of subgrade 3b agricultural land. As such the loss of such land would not compromise wider agricultural interests thereby complying with the aims of paragraph 180 of the NPPF.

(9) Energy and Sustainability

- 7.70. The Energy Statement demonstrates how the Application Scheme accords with the requirements at Policy WCS14 of the Wealden District Core Strategy (2013). As explained, this is achieved by outlining the predicted energy demand and resultant carbon emissions of the development. It also shows how the proposals have incorporated energy efficiency measures informed by the Wealden Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document Section 4 Sustainability.
- 7.71. The development has improved upon the building regulation requirements through the use of high levels of insulation and energy efficient services. A 66% reduction in Carbon emissions and a 24% reduction in energy demand has been achieved.
- 7.72. Overall, the submitted information demonstrates exceedance of Policy WCS14

requirements and Part L1A of the Building Regulations; which matters can be secured by the imposition of appropriately worded conditions.

- 7.73. The Application Site is also in a sustainable location and will provide for a significant number of social public and environmental benefits. This includes providing development within walking distance from the town centre, accessible by bus whilst also creating recreational opportunities as well as enhancements to the site's biodiversity through habitat creation.

(10) Planning Obligations

- 7.74. Matters of detail, including in relation to the likely financial contributions are to be agreed as part of the reserved matters application including, subject to meeting the necessary tests at paragraph 57 of the NPPF, it is considered that the following may be provided for/sought through any CIL charge and site specific obligations:

- i. Affordable Housing (up 35%) (up to 67 dwellings)
- ii. SANG land (as well as SAMM)
- iii. Footpath works
- iv. Highway improvements to Uckfield junctions
- v. Public open space provision
- vi. Sustainable Transport/Travel Plan

- 7.75. Additional details are set out in the supporting Draft Heads of terms Document, with the content to discuss be discussed with the Council during the determination of the Planning Application.

- 7.76. If a satisfactory legal agreement is completed securing the necessary contributions for on and off site provision of facilities and infrastructure, this would address the requirements of Core Strategy Policy WCS7.

- 7.77. Any education needs and or contribution(s) to local infrastructure will be met through CIL and secured at the reserved matters stage.

The Planning Balance: Assessing Sustainability

- 7.78. This section assesses the significant merits of the scheme in relation to the three sustainability tests set out at paragraph 8 of the NPPF and clearly shows that whilst there are considered to be some slight adverse impacts, these considerations are plainly incapable of outweighing, let alone significantly and demonstrably outweighing, the many benefits of the scheme.
- 7.79. Paragraph 9 of the NPPF states (amongst other things) the assessment of the sustainability roles should not be undertaken in isolation, because they are mutually dependent.
- 7.80. A planning balance exercise has been carried out in accordance with the guidance at paragraph 9 of the NPPF and sets out a combined analysis in relation to the sustainability roles (economic, social and environmental).

Economic

- 7.81. The Scheme satisfies the economic role of sustainability including through the provision of housing to support growth and the associated provision of infrastructure, to be secured through the necessary Community Infrastructure Levy and the preparation of the S106 agreement, where justifies, and by on-site provision of affordable housing of up to 67 dwellings.
- 7.82. The Scheme generates a series of local and Borough-wide economic benefits including through (i) construction of the scheme and the range of employment generated as a result; and (ii) the on-going expenditure from the households purchasing and occupying the new homes.
- 7.83. The principal economic benefits arising from the scheme are summarised below:
- Increased house building in an area where there is an acute need for new housing that in turn drives economic growth further and faster than any industry. In this regard the proposals will contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is being made available in the right place and at the right time to support growth.

- The provision of up to 190 new homes in the District where there is an established need housing given the demonstrable shortfall in the five year housing land supply position.
- The application scheme will deliver much needed affordable homes that will meet identified needs that are otherwise not being met.
- Meeting general housing needs is a significant benefit, consistent with the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of housing.
- In order for the economy to function, sufficient housing is required in the right locations and at the right time. This site represents a location where there would be no significant impact upon the landscape, historic environment nor on the amenity of neighbouring properties.
- Based upon a multiplier of 2.3 jobs per new home¹⁰, up to 190 dwelling Application Scheme is estimated to create approximately 437 new jobs.
- Increased expenditure in the local area will support local FTE jobs.
- Helping to deliver a significant boost to the local economy through 'first occupation' expenditure of £1.04m¹¹. This is expenditure on new furniture and other household goods that residents spend as 'one-offs' when moving into a new home.
- Generating a further significant economic boost of £1.8m from residents moving into the District's existing housing stock which were vacated so that the owners could move into the new homes proposed on land south of Bird in Eye, Uckfield. This is a result of the spending on renovations, household goods, removals, surveys, estate and legal fees that are associated with the purchase of existing rather than new homes within the District's housing stock¹².
- In terms of household expenditure, data from ONS Family Expenditure Survey 2019-20¹³ shows that the 'average UK household spend' is £585.20 per week (Table A33) (or £30,514 per year), whereas in South

¹⁰ See page 13 of the Homes Builders Federation "Economic Footprint of UK Housebuilding " (July 2018) - https://www.hbf.co.uk/documents/7876/The_Economic_Footprint_of_UK_House_Building_July_2018LR.pdf

¹¹ Research carried out by OnePoll on behalf of Barratt Homes (August 2014; <https://www.barratthomes.co.uk/the-buying-process/home-buying-advice/>) which shows an average of £5,462 per dwelling.

¹² Research by HBF and Knight Frank on "Economic Benefits of housing market activity" which shows a contribution per house sale/purchase transaction of £9,560 - https://content.knightfrank.com/research/2121/documents/en/knight-frankhbf-economic-benefits-of-housing-market-activity-2020-7616.pdf?pk_campaign=newsletter_4034. The 2011 Census indicates that 30.1% of owner occupied or shared ownership households in Wealden District that had moved within previous year, had lived within the authority.

¹³ [Family spending workbook 3: expenditure by region - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/physicalhealth/articles/familyspendingworkbook3/expenditurebyregion).

East England it is 19.4% higher than the UK average (Table A33). This means average weekly spend per household is £698.60 (or £36,427 per annum). For the application proposal at Bird in Eye providing up to 290 dwellings, the total gross expenditure is estimated to be £10.56m per year to the economy. A proportion of this household expenditure is anticipated to be spent in local shops and services and will help sustain the existing services in Wealden District including those in Uckfield. The expenditure will include that a proportion of that spent on areas including food & non-alcoholic drinks (£68.70 per week); alcoholic drinks (£12.70 per week); recreation and culture (£103.70 per week), household goods and services (£46.40) and miscellaneous goods and service i.e. hairdressing & beauty treatments (£54.10 per week).¹⁴ Given the current economic challenges facing the UK these are significant economic benefits.

- 7.84. By providing land of the right type, in the right place, and at the right time to support economic growth, the development of up to 190 dwellings on the site satisfies the objectives at paragraph 8 of the NPPF and assists in the aims of the NPPF in helping to build a strong and competitive economy.
- 7.85. This is further emphasised in the Government's November 2011 Paper 'Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England' where paragraph 11 states *"getting house building moving again is crucial for economic growth – housing has a direct impact on economic output, averaging 3 per cent of GDP in the last decade. For every new home built up to two new jobs are created for a year.*
- 7.86. In the Rectory Farm decision (APP/D0121/W/21/3286677), at paragraphs 149-151 of the Appeal Decision, Inspector Stephens found that paragraph 81 NPPF required "significant weight" to be attached to the economic benefits of any development at a scale such as this.
- 7.87. The economic benefits are to be accorded significant weight in the planning balance.

Social

- 7.88. The Application Scheme satisfies the social role, in helping to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, including through providing the supply of housing required to meet identified needs in open market and affordable

¹⁴ Figures based upon SE Regional data in Table A33

sectors. This is a substantial benefit. In addition:

1. Future residents will be in an easy walking and cycling distance to a wide range of other uses including the shops and services in Uckfield town centre.
 2. The Application Scheme will, to be agreed at the reserved matters stage, provide a range of housing types and size.
 3. The scheme secures high quality residential environment together with extensive SANG land, children's play park and other areas of open space consistent with development plan policy.
 4. The appeal scheme would deliver a policy compliant 35% affordable housing contribution.
- 7.89. The details of the layout and house type design are to be agreed through the determination of a subsequent reserved matters application, with the detailed scheme to reflect the particular need for housing at that time.
- 7.90. Any increased pressure upon local services will be mitigated through the planning obligation(s) and/or capital receipts secured through CIL.
- 7.91. Overall, the social benefits of the scheme can be afforded substantial weight in the overall planning balance.

Environmental

- 7.92. In terms of the environmental role, the Application Site is not located on land designated for its landscape value. The accompanying reports demonstrate that the scheme will not have any material impact on existing ecology and will in fact significantly enhance the biodiversity characteristics of the site, resulting in a significant biodiversity net gain. The development area will exceed the target of 10%, with a 13% net gain in habitat units, while the SANG area will benefit from a 159% gain in habitat units.
- 7.93. The Ashdown Forest Special Protection Area ("SPA") is designated for the presence of Dartford Warbler and Nightjar.
- 7.94. The SPA is vulnerable to recreational disturbance through damage to the qualifying species' habitat, and disturbance to ground nesting birds.

- 7.95. The Appeal Site is within a 7km radius from the SPA, which surveys have shown most visitors to the SPA originate from. Without sufficient SANG mitigation, the Appeal Scheme could continue to add additional visitors and recreational pressure to the SPA.
- 7.96. As set out at paragraph 3.36 above, using the metric of 8ha of SANG per 1,000 population (which metric is applied by Natural England and Wealden District Council), the delivery of an 8.76ha SANG has the capacity to provide mitigation for c. 1,095 new residents or 456 dwellings (using a 2.4 residents / dwelling factor).
- 7.97. Paragraph 174 of the NPPF ensures, inter alia, that planning policies and decisions recognise the benefits that the best and most versatile agricultural land can bring.
- 7.98. Whilst the Site covers a large area, the accompanying Agricultural Land Classification Report concludes that the application site is comprised entirely of subgrade 3b agricultural land. As such the loss of such land would not compromise wider agricultural interests thereby complying with the aims of paragraph 174 of the NPPF.
- 7.99. The retention of existing boundary trees and hedges, and the areas of ancient woodland, around the site and the sensitive set back of the development will ensure the proposed built form is subsumed positively into the landscape character of the area.
- 7.100. The improvement of the built environment in heritage terms, and the enhancement of the settlement edge through the introduction of a substantial woodland buffer is viewed as a significant benefit of the proposal; together with the enhancements to the setting and appreciation of the Grade II listed Oasthouse.
- 7.101. The proposals would deliver sustainable homes allowing the fulfilment of this important objective whilst at the same time moving to a low carbon economy and securing an environmentally sustainable form of new residential

development.

- 7.102. On the basis of the above, there are environmental benefits which would arise from the proposals, to which moderate weight should be attached to in the overall planning balance.

8. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

- 8.1. The application proposes a residential development scheme, in outline form, on land at Bird in Eye Farm, South of Bird in Eye Hill, Uckfield (Framfield Parish), for up to 190 dwellings, associated landscaping, informal open space and SANG, with access from the B2102.
- 8.2. The spatial policies for the supply of housing do not meet current housing needs; and the Council has been granting planning permissions for the development of sites for housing beyond the settlement boundaries as defined in the Core Strategy.
- 8.3. Accordingly, the settlement boundaries defined under GD1 and GD2 are not sufficient to meet current housing need and the weight to be given to the conflict with this policy is reduced.
- 8.4. Although the application site is within the countryside, it is not a valued landscape nor are there any other constraints on site that would preclude such a development as proposed.
- 8.5. The current application follows one for which an appeal was dismissed on the grounds of harm to highways safety, ancient woodland, heritage and flood risk. This revised and reduced scheme fully addresses all of these harms:
- The proposed site access has been redesigned to ensure all types of road user can manoeuvre safely when entering and leaving the site (without any conflict with through traffic on the B2102, Bird in Eye Hill). Key junctions in Uckfield will remain below capacity, however, it is still proposed that the applicant make a S.106 contribution towards improving these junctions.
 - The development no longer requires footpaths through the belt of ancient woodland (as it now forms the southern boundary of the reduced site, rather than dividing the development in two). Buffer zones have been created so that there is no development within 50m of the ancient woodland and no SANG footpaths within 15m. As a result, the potential for harm to the ancient woodland has been removed.

- The application site boundary has been amended to include land around the listed oast house building to enable improvements to its setting to be made as part of this application. Buildings and access roads have been removed from the view corridor to the west of the oast house. As a result views of the oast house from Uckfield will be improved by the implementation of this development, resulting in a heritage betterment, rather than heritage harm.
 - The application site is now wholly within Flood Zone 1, where there is a low probability of flooding. This means that a sequential test is no longer required. The supporting FRA demonstrates that the proposals are consistent with the aims of the NPPF and the Planning Practice Guidance to the NPPF along with the aims of local flood risk policy. The Site will not be at significant risk of flooding or increase the flood risk to others. Further, the surface water drainage strategy will reduce flood risk by restricting surface water flows.
- 8.6. There are a number of material considerations which still weigh significantly in favour of the application being permitted, including the Council's lack of a five-year supply of land for housing and with other policies are not seeking to deliver an NPPF consistent objectively assessed need.
- 8.7. It has been demonstrated in this Statement that whilst the application site is outside the settlement policy boundary for Uckfield as defined in the Local Plan, it is inevitable that the Council will have to use greenfield sites to provide for increased housing provision; with the Core Strategy itself seeking to provide a below compliant level of housing. Consequently, it is considered that those policies are to be afforded limited weight and, pursuant to the presumption in favour of sustainable development, the application scheme represents a sustainable form of development in its own right.
- 8.8. The Application will secure an extensive area of SANG that will ensure there are no indirect impact upon the integrity of the Ashdown Forest through increased visitor numbers.
- 8.9. In the planning balance it is considered that the material considerations in

favour of the scheme (provision of market and affordable housing, economic benefits, biodiversity benefits, landscape enhancement, heritage enhancement) outweigh the conflict with an out-of-date settlement boundary, and loss of Subgrade 3b agricultural land.

- 8.10. The Application Site provides a sustainable location for housing, within walking distance to local serves and facilities in Uckfield town centre.
- 8.11. It represents a sustainable location for housing development to meet identified needs and development of the site in the manner proposed would result in a well-designed scheme that would contribute positively to residents' social well-being.
- 8.12. The scheme, at the reserved matters stage, will provide for a mix housing types and tenures, including 35% affordable housing, helping to meet the identified need for new homes in Wealden district.
- 8.13. The scheme satisfies the economic, social and environmental roles of the NPPF and has been advanced following pre-application consultation with the Council and has been amended to respond to the advice received.
- 8.14. Importantly, the Application Scheme has addressed the issues raised by the previous Appeal Inspector, whilst also responding to the issues raised by the Council during the pre-application process.
- 8.15. There are no adverse impacts that could even be considered to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the many benefits arising from the proposal.
- 8.16. For the reasons set out above, the Application represents a sustainable form of development and should be supported, and planning permission granted.
