LAND AT DOWNLANDS FARM, UCKFIELD

PLANNING STATEMENT

On Behalf of
Gleeson Land

By Barton Willmore, now Stantec

June 2022

BARTON WILLMORE now Stantec

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Project Ref:	29565
Status:	FINAL
Issue/Rev:	02
Date:	17 June 2022
Prepared by:	AW/SC/JM
Checked by:	JM/JF
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Ref: 29565/A5
Date: 17 June 2022

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared on behalf of Gleeson Land (the Applicant) in support of a Hybrid Planning Application submitted in respect of Land at Downlands Farm, Uckfield (hereafter referred to as the Site), as shown on the Site and Location Plan (Drawing No. 1309.01).

1.2 The proposed description of development is as follows:

Hybrid Planning Application comprising:

(1) Outline Application (with all matters reserved except for access) for the erection of up to 424 residential dwellings including affordable housing, the provision of vehicular, pedestrian and cycle access and separate emergency access from the Uckfield Bypass (A22), pedestrian and cycle access from Snatts Road, open spaces including children's play space, sustainable urban drainage systems, associated landscaping, infrastructure and earthworks.

(2) Full Application comprising creation of a Strategic SANG, associated landscaping and car parking, and demolition of existing residential property and other buildings and provision of pedestrian and cycle access from Rocks Road, associated landscaping, infrastructure and earthworks.'

i) Preparation and Submission of Supporting Documents

1.3 In order to prepare a comprehensive and thorough assessment to support the planning application, a number of specialist technical advisors and consultants have been appointed by the Applicant.

Supporting Plans and Drawings

1.4 The 'Full' planning application is supported by a number of drawings which provide detail of how this element of the proposed development would come forward. A schedule of these plans is included in the Covering Letter.

1.5 The Outline element of the planning application is supported by Parameter Plans which seek to fix parameters for subsequent Reserved Matters applications. Further, plans are provided for approval showing the proposed access into the site. For the purpose of clarity, the following drawings are submitted for approval as part of the Outline element:

- Site and Location Plan (Drawing No. 1309.01, **Appendix A**);
- Parameter Plans (**Appendix B - D**):
  - Land Use and Access (Drawing No. 1309.3);
  - Green Infrastructure (Drawing No. 1309.4);
  - Scale (Drawing No. 1309.5);
- Dark Areas Map (Drawings No. 1309.7);
- Site Access Roundabout (Drawing No. 2001061-101 Rev A, **Appendix E**); and
- Proposed Emergency Access (Drawing No. 2001061-102 Rev B, **Appendix F**).

1.6 An Illustrative Masterplan has been prepared based on the established parameters demonstrating how a development could come forward on Site (Drawing No. 1309.2, **Appendix G**). It should be noted that the description of development seeks permission for up to 424 dwellings. This figure has been tested by the Environmental Statement.

Environmental Statement

1.7 Following a Scoping Direction adopted by Wealden District Council (WDC) on 30 November 2020 (See Environmental Statement Appendix 2.2), the Hybrid Planning Application is supported by an Environmental Statement (ES) and technical appendices.

1.8 The ES comprises the following:

- **Chapter 1 Introduction**;
- **Chapter 2 EIA Methodology;**
- **Chapter 3 Site and Development Description**;
- **Chapter 4 Alternatives and Design Evolution;**
- **Chapter 5 Construction Methodology and Programme;**
- **Chapter 6 Landscape and Visual Effects;**
- **Chapter 7 Biodiversity;**
- **Chapter 8 Water Resources and Flood Risk;**
- **Chapter 9 Cultural Heritage;**
- **Chapter 10 Land Contamination; and**
- **Chapter 11 Summary and Residual Effects**

1.9 Alongside the Environmental Statement, a stand-alone Non-Technical Summary has been prepared and is submitted.

Other Supporting Statements / Technical Reports

1.10 In addition to the Environmental Statement and Non-Technical Summary, the following have been prepared:

- Design and Access Statement;
- Planning Statement (including Affordable Housing Statement);
- Economic Benefits Statement;
- Transport Assessment;
- Framework Travel Plan;
- Lighting Impact Assessment;
- Arboricultural Submission, including Tree Survey, RAVEN Veteran Tree Identification, Proposed Tree Retention and Removal, and Tree Protection Plan and Arboricultural Method Statement; and
- Downlands Woodland Park – SANG and Woodland Management Plan.

ii) Scope and Purpose of the Planning Statement

1.11 The purpose of this Planning Statement is to assess the planning merits of the development against adopted planning policy and guidance, and to assess the proposed development in the light of any other relevant material planning considerations. This Planning Statement, along with the Environmental Statement and accompanying reports justifies the Hybrid Planning Application presently submitted.

1.12 The Planning Statement therefore:

i) Describes the site and the surrounding area (Section 2);
ii) Details the planning history (Section 3);
iii) Summarises the pre-submission consultation undertaken (Section 4);
iv) Describes the proposed development (Section 5);
v) Identifies the relevant adopted or emerging National, Regional and Local planning policy framework (Section 6);
vi) Provides a planning analysis of matters relating to the Development (Section 7); and
vii) Concludes by summarising the key implications of the proposed development and sets out the reasons why this application should be approved (Section 8).

2.0 SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

i) The Application Site

2.1 The Site comprises several parcels of land which combine to provide a total area of circa. 46 hectares (ha) to the north-west of Uckfield. It comprises a mixture of woodland and agricultural land, alongside the residential property of Chicory Cottage and its associated curtilage.

2.2 The Site is located on the north western edge of the urban area of Uckfield Town. The A22 forms the north western boundary of the Site, and Snatts Road bounds part of the south eastern boundary extending to London Road. To the south is Lake Wood (owned and managed by the Woodland Trust) with Rocks Road beyond. Further south is West Park Local Nature Reserve and West Park neighbourhood area.

2.3 The majority of the woodland on the Site, with the exception of the woodland within the north and southeast, is classed as Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodland.

2.4 The agricultural land is largely confined to the south of the Site. With reference to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) online Magic Map tool, the agricultural land on the Site comprises a mixture of Grade 3b and Grade 4 (i.e. not Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land).

2.5 There are no public rights of way within the Site itself, albeit one adjoins the eastern boundary of the Site with Snatts Road, and there are no public access rights across the Site.

2.6 The Site slopes downwards towards the north-west and the A22 and is located within Flood Zone 1. Therefore it is at low risk of flooding from River or Sea.

2.7 There are no statutory ecological or landscape designations located on the Site, nor are there any historical designations.

ii) The Surrounding Area

2.8 The Site is bound to the west by the A22, the principal road within the District which connects Uckfield to Crowborough and Tunbridge Wells (both via the A26) and East Grinstead to the north and Hailsham and Eastbourne to the South. The A22 provides a

physical barrier to the settlement of Uckfield, which is located to the east of the Site. Land to the west of the Site beyond the A22 is predominately rural.

2.9 To the east / south east and south of the Site is the existing built-up area of Uckfield, including residential properties of Snatts Road, Hunters Way, and the West Park Neighbourhood area, beyond which are the services and facilities of Uckfield Town Centre and the significant employment area of Bellbrook Industrial Estate.

2.10 Uckfield is located centrally in the district. It has the largest town centre in the district, and acts as a hub and service centre serving both its residents and a wider catchment area of the surrounding villages and settlements. The Town Centre has a wide variety of shops, including a Tesco Superstore and a Waitrose, a variety of cafes and restaurants, a cinema, and a Civic Centre.

2.11 The town boasts good public transport services including a centrally located bus station and rail station, providing connections to neighbouring towns and villages, and London (via rail).

2.12 Other services and facilities of Uckfield, including educational facilities of Uckfield School and Uckfield College, leisure facilities at Uckfield Leisure Centre, West Park Recreational Ground and Luxford Playing Fields, and health facilities at The Meads Surgery, are all within reasonable walking and cycling distance of the Site.

2.13 The Medieval settlement site at Buxted Park, a Scheduled Monument, is located approximately 1.5km to the east of the Site. The nearest Listed Buildings to the Site are the Grade II Listed Oast Cottage and Barn at Downlands Farm, located immediately to the east of the Site. The Grade II Listed Buckwood Grange is located approximately 150m to the south of the Site. The Site is not located within a Conservation Area. The nearest Conservation Area to the Site is Maresfield Conservation Area, located approximately 900m to the north of the Site.

2.14 High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), is located approximately 3km to the north of the Site. Rock Wood SSSI is located approximately 2.5km to the north of the Site and Ashdown Forest Special Protection Area (SPA), Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and SSSI is located approximately 3.5km to the north of the Site.

3.0 PLANNING HISTORY

3.1 The Site has historically been used for agricultural purposes but has the below relevant planning history:

- WD/2006/2855/MEA – Residential development for 750 dwellings; employment development for 9,600sqm of B1 and B8 uses; neighborhood centres with primary school, community hall, land for community facilities; creation of new vehicular access from Black Down Roundabout (A22) and emergency and bus only accesses from Snatts Road; construction of estate roads and new cycle footway connections; provision of managed country park with warden's lodge/information point and education/interpretative facility, public and amenity open space, playing fields and associated development and changes of use – Refused 22 February 2007 and Dismissed at Appeal 24 February 2009.

- WD/2020/6507/SO – Request for Screening Opinion for proposed residential development of up to 550 dwellings – EIA Required.

- WD/2020/6511/SCO – Request for Scoping Opinion for development of up to 500 residential dwellings with associated parking, infrastructure, landscaping and access – Determined, Scope of EIA agreed.

3.2 Application ref. WD/2006/2855 submitted in October 2006 was refused planning permission by WDC on 22 February 2007 for 6no. Reasons for Refusal:

1) The development would be an unjustified and unacceptable development on a site in open countryside outside of the defined Uckfield development boundary;
2) The development would lead to a loss of Ancient Woodland and wetland habitats and lead to fragmentation, isolation and disturbance of natural habitats that support protected wildlife species and other flora and fauna;
3) Insufficient information has been submitted to enable a proper assessment of the archaeological implications of the development;
4) It has not been demonstrated that adequate provision will be made to facilitate walking and cycling and reduce dependency on private car usage;
5) It has not been demonstrated that there would not be an unacceptable impact on the surrounding highway network, particularly Uckfield Town Centre; and

6) The applicant has failed to demonstrate how necessary infrastructure improvements can be secured to meet the additional needs arising from the development.

3.3 The subsequent Appeal (ref. 2046982) was recovered by the Secretary of State and considered as part of a conjoined Inquiry process alongside other housing-led development sites adjoining Uckfield (Bird In Eye North, WD/2006/2173/MEA, and Bird in Eye South, WD/2006/3564/MAO) which were similarly refused consent by WDC.

3.4 All 3no. sites were Dismissed at Appeal, with the Inspector and Secretary of State concluding (in respect of general matters and the Site):

- WDC could, at that time, demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply against the South-East Plan requirement for 2007 – 2012 (3,194 dwellings);
- The proposals would result in an adverse and harmful landscape impact;
- The ecological balance of the proposals would be somewhere between potentially adverse impacts and potential benefits;
- The proposals have potential to impact the long-term integrity of Ancient Woodland assets and
- The proposals would potentially be car dependent, without a deliverable and direct pedestrian/cycle route between the Site and Town Centre.

3.5 The proposed as now submitted have been prepared in the context of these decisions, as discussed later in this Planning Statement.

4.0 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

i) The Project Vision

4.1 The Project Vision is to take a fresh approach to the Site, it's constraints and opportunities, to develop a new high quality and sustainable neighbourhood set within a mature landscape framework with high quality open and recreational spaces. Existing landscape features and woodland would be retained, protected and managed for future generations to enjoy.

ii) The Hybrid Planning Application

4.2 This submission is a Hybrid Planning Application comprising 2no. elements, these being the 'Outline' and the 'Full' (or Detailed) parts. The description of development is as follows:

> **Hybrid Planning Application comprising:**
>
> **(1) Outline Application (with all matters reserved except for access) for the erection of up to 424 residential dwellings including affordable housing, the provision of vehicular, pedestrian and cycle access and separate emergency access from the Uckfield Bypass (A22), pedestrian and cycle access from Snatts Road, open spaces including children's play space, sustainable urban drainage systems, associated landscaping, infrastructure and earthworks.**
>
> **(2) Full Application comprising creation of a Strategic SANG, associated landscaping and car parking, and demolition of existing residential property and other buildings and provision of pedestrian and cycle access from Rocks Road, associated landscaping, infrastructure and earthworks.'**

4.3 The Outline element is applied for with all matters reserved except for access, which is to be determined. Matters relating to layout, scale, appearance and landscaping would be the subject of future Reserved Matters. Parameter Plans (**Appendix B - D**) are submitted, for approval, which establish the parameters to which future Reserved Matters would follow.

4.4 The Full element is accompanied by a range of plans for approval providing detail on how this element would come forward, specifically the SANG, associated landscaping and car parking, and the pedestrian and cycle access from Rocks Road.

4.5 An Illustrative Masterplan (Drawing No. 1309.2, **Appendix G**) is submitted which demonstrates how the proposed development could come forward in the context of the Site's location, the detailed proposals (including the SANG) and in accordance with the identified parameters.

iii) The Outline Application

4.6 The Outline element of the application relates to the areas where built development is proposed across the Site comprising the housing, access and road infrastructure, as well as green infrastructure provision.

4.7 To enable an assessment of the Outline element of the proposal and to control and limit the form and design of development that could be progressed at the Reserved Matters stage, the Parameter Plans demonstrate the following overarching principles of the development:

Land Use Parameter Plan

- Proposed vehicular and emergency access to A22;
- Proposed cycle / pedestrian accesses to A22, Rocks Road and Snatts Road;
- Development areas within the body of the Site, to include residential uses (up to 424 residential dwellings), roads, parking, open spaces, sustainable urban drainage system and landscape and associated infrastructure; and
- Green infrastructure areas, to include existing landscape, landscape buffers, planting, public open spaces, sustainable urban drainage system, SANG and pedestrian and cycles routes, and associated infrastructure.

Green Infrastructure Parameter Plan

- Boundary of SANG;
- Natural Green Space; and
- Amenity Open Space.

Scale Parameter Plan

- Areas of 2-storey housing with a maximum of 10% of buildings up to 2.5 storeys;
- Areas of 2-storey housing with a maximum of 2.5% of buildings up to 2.5 storeys.
- Maximum building heights 11.5m above existing ground level.

4.8 The proposal has been shaped through detailed technical and environmental consultant input, alongside community consultation with local stakeholders.

Built Form and Layout

4.9 Whilst layout and scale are reserved for determination at a later date, the Illustrative Masterplan demonstrates one way in which the development could be progressed at the detailed design reserved matters stage.

4.10 The Illustrative Masterplan has been prepared to demonstrate how a high-quality development could be delivered at the Site given the Site's opportunities and constraints.

4.11 The Illustrative Masterplan demonstrates that the development parameters applied for would allow for a development that delivers up to 424 residential dwellings, built at an appropriate density of circa. 35 dwellings per hectare that makes the most effective use of the land while reflecting the character of the Site and its surroundings.

4.12 The Illustrative Masterplan shows the following layout and key principles:

- Buildings which are up to two and a half storeys in height with the potential for landmark buildings at key locations within the site to assist in providing legibility;
- A variety in size and shape of plots with detached, semi-detached and terraced housing distributed evenly throughout the Site;
- Retention of high-quality hedgerows and trees to create distinctive character/structure whilst protecting the existing habitat and facilitating Biodiversity Net Gain;
- A focus on pedestrian and cycling through the provision of a network of cycle/foot ways and a pedestrian focused spine road; and
- A varied building line with a strong definition of the street maintained through boundary hedges and walls.

Landscaping and Open Space

- Retention of important trees and hedgerows within the Site and on its boundaries;
- New hard and soft landscape features within the development;
- New areas of amenity public open space including areas of play including potential for formal sports pitches; and

- Appropriate green edges to the development providing buffers to Ancient Woodland.

Movement

- A new primary vehicular access from the A22 in the form of a roundabout with an emergency access at the northern end of the site also linking to the A22;
- A new strategic cycle link to the town centre from the site on the eastern side of the A22;
- Provision of new routes through and from the Site which have potential to provide cycle and pedestrian links to the surrounding area and town; and
- A hierarchy of streets, shared surfaces and footpaths which aim to encourage pedestrian / cycle priority;

4.13 The Design and Access Statement accompanying this application explains the design concept of the proposal in further detail.

4.14 The design approach adopted has ensured a comprehensive high-quality development can be delivered on the Site in a way that responds to the character and setting of the Site and its surroundings.

Design and Appearance

4.15 While the matter of appearance is reserved for determination at a later date, the Design and Access Statement details the design concept and principles which underpins the illustrative masterplan and proposals for the Site, informed by an analysis of local character.

4.16 A range of design principles and strategies are identified including:

- A strong form that aids legibility and creates character;
- A clear street hierarchy with priorities focusing on non-vehicular movement;
- A healthy mixture of building types ranging from smaller homes to larger detached houses;
- Varied dwelling sizes to create contrast in scale, detailing and materials as well as interesting streetscapes and elevational interest;
- Parking provided predominantly on plot or within well designed streets in front of plot;

- Open spaces throughout the development designed and located to be usable and overlooked from neighbouring dwellings to encourage safe and secure usage by residents; and
- A proposed material palette to reflect local character references and vernacular to create a well-integrated development.

Landscape

4.17 While the matter of appearance is reserved for determination at a later date, an Illustrative Landscape and Ecology Strategy Plan (Figure 6.2 of the Environmental Statement) illustrates how landscape measures could be incorporated within the scheme to take into account the wider context of the Site by:

- Retaining the key boundary vegetation including all areas of Ancient Woodland, with relevant buffer zones provided;
- Creation of a Central Park with multi-functional community green hub accessible across the site via green routes;
- Provision of open spaces and street planting throughout the development area including attractive opportunities for sociability and play;
- Management of existing woodlands for nature conservation;
- Establishment of orchard providing informal recreational opportunities; and
- Utilisation of sustainable drainage features for landscape and biodiversity improvements.

4.18 Landscaping proposals provide coherent green infrastructure which would provide an attractive green framework which would assist in breaking up the bulk and scale of the development and successfully integrating it within the wider landscape.

4.19 The measures allow for the proposed development to maximise contributions towards biodiversity net gain whilst also providing significant new opportunities for recreational and leisure, including through provision of cycle and pedestrian routes and children's play area.

Dwelling Mix

4.20 The development would provide up to 424 homes of which 35% would be affordable dwellings.

4.21 While the housing mix is not fixed at this stage due to the Outline nature of the application, the final mix would respond to design and market considerations at any subsequent Reserved Matters stage.

4.22 However, informed by WDC's Local Housing Needs Assessment (2021) and likely market requirements, the Illustrative Masterplan demonstrates how the following dwelling mix could be delivered at the site:

Table 4.1: Indicative Housing Mix

	Total	**Market**	**Affordable**
Total No.	**424**	**276**	**148**
1 bed apartment	102	28	74
2 bed apartment	64	26	38
2-bed house	96	80	16
3-bed house	113	98	15
4-bed house	33	28	5
5-bed house	16	16	0

Access and Parking

4.23 Access to the Site would be achieved via a new roundabout junction with the A22, alongside an access into the SANG car park on Snatts Road and an emergency access to the A22.

4.24 New pedestrian and cycle access would be provided the Site to the A22, via a new strategic route, Rocks Road, via a new boardwalk through Fir Tree Grove, and Snatts Road.

4.25 Improvements are proposed to existing pedestrian routes towards Uckfield Town Centre including those along Rocks Road and the public right of way along Hunters Way. This includes improvements to the existing steps along this route.

4.26 The illustrative masterplan demonstrates parking provision in accordance with East Sussex County Council Standards, including a total of 886 spaces including 141 unallocated / visitor spaces. Electric Vehicle (EV) charging facilities would also be provided for all homes with on plot parking.

4.27 Cycle parking would be provided in accordance with East Sussex County Council standards to be provided in sheds in gardens or garages for houses, and secure covered communal areas for apartments.

Energy and Sustainability

4.28 Whilst layout and design remains a matter for future Reserved Matters application, this Outline application seeks to set high-level principles for how development on the Site would address sustainability, with a focus on energy and waste management.

4.29 This includes a commitment, through the submission of an Energy, Waste and Sustainability Statement (Appendix 3.1 of the Environmental Statement), that the proposed development would:

a) Include homes that are highly energy efficient, adopting a fabric first approach and with specifications above current Building Regulations for insulation. Where possible, homes would be orientated to maximise solar gain.

b) There would be no burning of fossil fuels on site, with no natural gas supplied; it is the intention that heating would be via highly efficient air source heat pumps;

c) Fixtures and fittings which reduce energy and water use would be specified throughout;

d) EV charging points would be provided to every property with on-plot parking;

e) Construction and operational waste would be managed according to the principles of the Waste Hierarchy with a focus on waste prevention, re-use and recycling;

f) Buildings would be designed and specified to adapt to a changed climate; overheating would be managed through good design and solar glazing; the retention of existing and planting of new native trees would provide more comfortable microclimates in warmer weather; the landscape design would provide multi-functional benefits supporting increased biodiversity, promoting opportunities for improved health / wellbeing and enhancing the overall aesthetic.

Drainage

4.30 Whilst detailed drainage design would be addressed at Reserved Matters stage, the Flood Risk Assessment (May 2021) submitted with the application details the proposed drainage

strategy for the Site. This seeks to mimic the existing hydrological regime, discharging into existing watercourses.

4.31 Attenuation would be provided in strategic detention basins as well as permeable paving sub-base storage within the development plots. Swales are proposed throughout to provide conveyance of runoff into the strategic Sustainable Drainage Systems. Surface water would discharge into the woodland brooks, permitted to flow freely overland as per the existing situation.

4.32 Foul drainage would be connected to the existing public sewer network within 2no. on Site pumping stations proposed.

iv) The Full Application

4.33 The Full element of the application relates to areas of the Site proposed for SANG (Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace), the areas of Ancient Woodland proposed for management including the land at and surrounding Chicory Cottage (including the woodland of Fir Tree Grove) where a new pedestrian and cycle access is proposed

The Proposed New SANG

4.34 The Site is within the proximity of Ashdown Forest SPA and SAC (circa 3.4km and 3.7km north of the Site respectively) and therefore mitigation, in the form of SANG, is required to avoid potential effects arising on the SPA as a result of an increase in recreational use associated with the residential development.

4.35 The SANG area is located immediately to the north and north east of the development Site, and would occupy an existing open former pasture field, as well as Budletts Wood and part of Shermanreed Wood (which are both Ancient Woodlands) and areas of non-Ancient Woodland in the woodland corridor alongside the A22.

4.36 The key objectives of the SANG are to provide an attractive area for recreational use in its own right, to both offset visitor pressure on the SPA arising from the development of Downlands Farm as well as to attract existing residents through the provision of car parking facilities.

4.37 The SANG would cover an area of 18.1 hectares and would include:

- A 2.3km circular walk,
- A new community orchard,
- Circa. 1.7 hectares of new woodland planting,
- 2no. car parks providing a total of 25 spaces.

4.38 Based on Natural England's guidelines, the proposed SANG would provide sufficient capacity for 848 homes (including a discount of 10% due to existing informal use of the Site by members of the public). The SANG therefore mitigates the potential impacts arising from the proposed development, as well provides capacity for an additional 424 dwellings from other developments.

4.39 In addition to the SANG, other areas of woodland, both Ancient and Non-Ancient, including Longwood Gill, part of Shermanreed Wood and Fir Tree Grove, not suitable for inclusions within the SANG are proposed to be brought into woodland management to bring them into favorable conservation status.

4.40 The application is accompanied by a "Downlands Woodland Park" SANG and Woodland Management Plan (May 2022) which details how the SANG would be created and how the SANG and other woodland areas would be managed.

The Proposed Pedestrian and Cycle Access via Chicory Cottage and Fir Tree Grove

4.41 Detail of the proposed pedestrian and cycle route through Fir Tree Grove, connecting the residential development to Rocks Road, is also submitted as part of this Full application including:

- Overview of Fir Tree Grove Pedestrian / Cycle Route (Drawing 2001061-135 Rev E);
- Fir Tree Grove Proposed Ramp / Steps Arrangement (Drawing 2001061-1356 Rev B);
- Fir Tree Grove Proposed Boardwalk (Drawing 2001061-137 Rev B);
- Pedestrian / Cycle Route Long Sections (Drawing 2001061-138);
- Pedestrian / Cycle Route Cross Sections (Drawing 2001061-139); and
- Pedestrian / Cycle Route Earthworks Cut and Fill Feasibility (Drawing 2001061-140).

4.42 The detailed design is submitted to demonstrate how a direct and attractive route for pedestrians and cyclists would be installed and operate without loss of Ancient Woodland

utilising an elevated boardwalk, alongside a stepped / ramp arrangement outside of the Ancient Woodland.

4.43 Detailed soft landscape plans are submitted (Drawing edp6170_d024 Rev A) which demonstrate how the new pedestrian and cycle route from Rocks Road would be planted to create a high-quality gateway to the Site.

v) Comparison to Appeal Scheme

4.44 As detailed in Section 3, the Site has previously been subject to a dismissed Appeal in 2008. There are significant material differences between that scheme and the one now proposed.

4.45 The 2008 proposal was submitted for:

> **Residential development for approximately 750 dwellings; a neighbourhood centre with employment uses (Class B1); community hall, land for community uses and small retail facilities; a primary school; creation of new vehicular access from the A22 and emergency and bus only accesses from Snatts Road; construction of estate roads and new cycle and footway connections; provision of a managed country park with warden's lodge/information point and education/ interpretative facility; public and amenity open space, playing fields and associated development and changes of use.**

4.46 The 2008 proposals included up to 750 residential dwellings alongside a 1.2 hectare employment site and a 1-form entry primary school, proposed to be distributed across the entirety of the Site (including land now proposed to comprise designated SANG land). A density of circa. 40 dwellings per hectares was also proposed, with development up to 4 storeys in height.

4.47 Primary access to the scheme was to be taken from Blackdown Roundabout through the Ancient Woodland of Budletts Wood, requiring significant areas of woodland clearance, as well as Ancient Woodland removal required to facilitate an internal road link through Shermanreed Wood. No consistent site-wide buffers were shown between development and Ancient Woodland.

4.48 In contrast, the proposals now seek to focus development on areas of the Site which are considered least sensitive in landscape, ecological and arboricultural terms, to create a lower density and more sensitively design scheme of up to 424 homes.

4.49 The proposed access (internal and external) arrangement delivers safe and secure routes whilst avoiding loss of or deterioration to areas of non-Ancient Woodland. In addition, appropriate buffers to Ancient Woodland are provided throughout the development.

4.50 The previous scheme was considered in the context of WDC having an up-to-date housing land supply. As detailed later in this Planning Statement, this is not currently the case with the Council having a significant deficit against its housing requirements. The pressing need to address the housing shortfall through the delivery of both market and affordable housing is a significant material consideration.

5.0 PRE-SUBMISSION CONSULTATION

5.1 The Applicant has, prior to submission, gone through a thorough process of liaison and consultation with WDC and the local community, including a pre-application meeting and a public consultation exercise. These are discussed in turn below.

i) Pre-Application Engagement

5.2 A pre-application meeting was held virtually with Wealden District Council on 09 December 2022 to discuss the principle of development on the Site and the emerging proposals. A prior iteration of the illustrative masterplan was submitted for consideration to inform those discussions.

5.3 At the meeting the Officer confirmed in light of a current absence of 5-year housing land supply, the presumption in favour of sustainable development applies.

5.4 A formal pre-application response was provided on 27 November 2020 re-confirming the presumption in favour of sustainable development which can be applied in light of the current housing land supply situation and that WDC anticipates it would be able to positively conclude an Appropriate Assessment of effects of development on the Ashdown Forest SPA and SAC (NPPF Para 177).

5.5 The response highlighted the previous appeal context remains relevant, albeit recognising both the national and local planning context has changed significantly in the intervening period. Further detail was identified as needed through the application for full consideration of landscape, ecological and transport matters, however it was appreciated that the scheme was a considerable reduction in size and scale from that previously considered.

5.6 The Officer highlighted that the previous shortcomings of the Appeal in respect of accessibility to the Town Centre had not, at the time of the pre-app, been resolved. This would need to be materially addressed as part of the proposals.

5.7 Subsequent to the pre-application meeting, the proposals have evolved taking into account feedback provided from those pre-application discussions with Officers at WDC, as well from incorporating changes resulting from the further technical / environmental work undertaken since that time. Notably, additional land relating to the residential property of Chicory Cottage and its associated curtilage (including Fir Tree Grove) has

been included in the proposals to be provide a new direct pedestrian and cycle route between the proposed development and the Town Centre.

ii) EIA Screening and Scoping

5.8 The proposals have been the subject of a scoping exercise to identify the likely significant effects on the environment that may arise from the demolition and construction and operational phases of the Development.

5.9 A request for an EIA Scoping Opinion was submitted to WDC on 13 October 2020. The scoping exercise identified the topics considered likely to require assessment within the ES and those topics for which there would not be likely significant effects, that could therefore be scoped out of the ES. A copy of the EIA Scoping Report is attached at Appendix 2.1 of the Environmental Statement.

5.10 WDC adopted a scoping opinion on 30 November 2020 alongside further clarification on 11 December 2020 (Appendix 2.2 and 2.3 of the Environmental Statement).

5.11 The application has been prepared in the context of this, as detailed in the Environmental Statement.

iii) Public Engagement

5.12 WDC's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI, 2020) highlights the importance of engaging the community in planning matters and identifies a requirement for development proposals considered 'significant development' to undertake consultation with the local community (para 8.8). The proposals are not considered to be significant development in the context of the SCI, however, at the outset the Applicants were committed to ensuring the community was informed and consulted on the proposals prior to submission. The purpose of this section of the Planning Statement is to provide an overview of the consultation undertaken.

Consultation Process

5.13 The consultation process to date has included:

- Public Exhibition in the form of a website and online consultation;
- Distribution of public consultation leaflet; and

- Pre-application meeting with Wealden District Council.

Online Public Exhibition

5.14 Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic it was not possible to undertake a public exhibition in person. As such, a project specific website was launched for the Site to provide a platform for setting out the proposals and asking the community for their views. The website included a page for feedback and dedicated project email address for any queries.

5.15 The website, www.downlandsfarm.co.uk, provided detail on:

- The background to the proposals, including Site context and planning background;
- The opportunities of the Site;
- The Masterplan and Green Infrastructure Strategy;
- The SANG and its purpose within the development, including details of the different types of habitat creation;
- The interrelation of ecology, trees, landscape and drainage within the proposals;
- The way in which the proposals would be accessed by pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles, with links to the town centre; and
- How to comment on the proposals.

Distribution of public consultation leaflet

5.16 In combination with the online consultation website, a consultation leaflet was considered suitable for informing the community of the emerging proposals and seeking their views. This was considered particularly appropriate to seek views of those who may not have access to a computer in light of the inability to undertake a normal public consultation event.

5.17 The leaflet set out details of the proposed development alongside planning background the Site and a copy of a draft illustrative masterplan. Alongside contact details for feedback (email address), a tear-off feedback form was provided alongside a freepost return address. A copy of the leaflet is included in **Appendix H.**

5.18 The leaflet was distributed to circa. 4,200 addresses within proximity to the Site, as shown below:



Consultation Feedback

5.19 The public consultation exercise undertaken resulted in a total of 648 written responses, comprising 280 leaflet feedback forms received (using the freepost address) and 368 responses via website.

5.20 A review of the responses to specific questions as set out in the consultation leaflet are set out below. Numbers may not round due to some respondents not responding to all questions:

Q1) Do you support the provision of new homes, including affordable housing?

5.21 This question was designed to identify whether respondents felt they could support the provision of new homes in this location or were against the principle of development on the Site.

Table 5.1: Response to Question 1

	Quantitative no. of Comments
Yes	85
No	545
Don't know	12

Q2) Do you support the provision of a new woodland park?

5.22 This question sought to understand whether respondents felt the woodland park is an important aspect of the proposal.

Table 5.2: Response to Question 2

	Quantitative no. of Comments
Yes	191
No	401
Don't know	30

Q3) What would you like to see included as part of the proposal?

5.23 This question was open ended to enable respondents the chance to provide feedback on what they would want to see as part of the development and gave opportunity to see if there are any services or facilities that had not been considered that would be of benefit the community.

Table 5.3: Response to Question 3

Topics	Quantitative no. of Comments	Summary of Suggestions
Highways	255	• Need more Parking • Public transport – improved railway/train service • Safe cycle and pedestrian routes • Solution for extra traffic – additional cars • Electric Charging Points • Access issues

Topics	Quantitative no. of Comments	Summary of Suggestions
Social Infrastructure	188	• School places • Healthcare • Retail
Affordable Housing	47	• Significantly increased affordable housing provision
Open Space	156	• Woodland • Safe play areas for children • Keeping old trees • A BMX track for teenagers • Parking for access to the woodland • Sports facilities
Sustainability	87	• Solar Panels • Heat Pumps • Consideration of wildlife • Electric Charging Points • More trees
Water and Sewage	7	• Improved water and sewage services
Use of brownfield sites	15	• Brownfield sites should be considered first
Employment	6	• Need for employment for new residents to reduce commuting

Q4) Do you have any other comments?

5.24 In addition to the above, Question 4 asked for any further comments.

Table 5.4: Response to Question 4

Topics Raised	Quantitative no. of Comments	Summary of Responses Made
Highways	88	• Traffic and additional cars in Uckfield • Parking • Desire to see no vehicular access into the development from Snatts Road • Question the adequacy of the pedestrian / cycle connections

Topics Raised	Quantitative no. of Comments	Summary of Responses Made
Social Infrastructure	136	• Schools (impacts on) • Healthcare (GP Provision and Dentists) (lack of) • Potential need for convenience retail provision • Welcome additional open spaces, especially in the context of recent COVID lockdowns
Principle of Development	247	• Object to the principle of development • No need for more houses • Need to protect open spaces / wildlife areas • Outside of Development Boundary • Previous Appeal decision • (positive) Welcoming of additional homes and affordable homes
Affordable Housing	31	• Need for more affordable housing provision • Affordable homes are not truly affordable
Ecological Impact	24	• Climate Change • Loss of Green Belt • Increased Flood Risk impact • Impact on Ancient Woodland • Significant ecological assets on the Site • Runoff from Site has potential to pollute streams / woodland

Response to Consultation Feedback

5.25 As identified by the consultation exercise, a majority of responses object to the principle of development on the Site. Key perceived issues also related to the technical and environmental capacity of the Site to accommodate development, most specifically matters relating to highways and the local provision of social infrastructure (e.g. schools and GPs), alongside an in-principle objection to development in Uckfield.

5.26 However, support was also received in response to both the overall scheme and the provision of the woodland park. Numerous responses welcomed additional housing including affordable homes, as well as the provision of additional high-quality public open spaces for existing and future residents.

5.27 This Hybrid Planning Application is accompanied by a full suite of technical and environmental reports, alongside an Environmental Statement, which are summarised in detail in Section 7 of this Planning Statement, which collectively confirm the Site's suitability for the development proposed. These fully address relevant comments / concerns raised through this consultation exercise, alongside the consideration of the principle of development undertaken as part of this Planning Statement.

5.28 Where comments were received in respect of the concept masterplan / emerging scheme / SANG proposals, the proposals have sought to incorporate these where practicable, albeit noting that matters of layout, scale, appearance and landscaping (for the Outline application) would be the subject of future Reserved Matter application/s and therefore these would be considered in detail at that time. Notably the following comments raised by respondents are identified as being included as part of the illustrative masterplan / proposals:

- Parking provided throughout the Site in accordance with ESCC standards, including visitor parking and 2no. car parks for SANG;
- No vehicular access into the residential development site from Snatts Road;
- On-site shuttle bus providing connections to key locations in Uckfield including Uckfield Station;
- A variety of safe and attractive pedestrian and cycle routes, including a new route through Fir Tree Grove;
- Significant open space provision alongside provision of SANG with potential for both formal and informal areas for play and recreation;
- Retention and protection of Ancient Woodland and retention of vast majority of non-Ancient Woodland;
- Electric vehicle charging points provided for each dwelling with on-plot parking;
- Policy complaint affordable housing provision; and
- Provision of heat pumps to avoid the need for gas boilers.

6.0 PLANNING POLICY

6.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 provides that the determination of a planning application must be in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicated otherwise. In this context the Development Plan of relevance to the proposals comprises:

- Wealden Core Strategy Local Plan (CSLP - 2013);
- Wealden Local Plan (WLP - 1998) 'Saved' Policies; and
- Wealden Affordable Housing Delivery Local Plan (May 2016).

6.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021) and National Planning Practice Guidance (various dates) set out the Government's planning policy and guidance. These are important material considerations in the determination of this application.

6.3 WDC is preparing a new Local Plan for the District. It is in the early stages, with the Direction of Travel consultation running from 23 November 2020 until 08 January 2021. It is anticipated future consultations on the Draft Local Plan would be carried out through 2022 and 2023, with adoption in Winter 2023 at the earliest.

i) National Planning Policy

a) National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021)

Achieving Sustainable Development

6.4 Paragraph 8 of the NPPF identifies that there are three overarching objectives to be pursued through the planning system in order to achieve sustainable development: **an economic, social** and **environmental** objective. It is recognised that these objectives are not criteria against which every decision can or should be judged but planning decisions should guide development towards sustainable solutions whilst taking account of local circumstances, including the character, needs and opportunities of each area.

6.5 Paragraph 10 of the NPPF states that 'so that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development'.

6.6 Paragraph 11 confirms that, for decision-taking, the presumption in favour means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date Development Plan without delay or where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed or any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

Delivering a sufficient supply of homes

6.7 To support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed and that land with permission is developed without unnecessary delay.

Promoting Healthy and Safe Communities

6.8 Paragraph 92 identifies that planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places where social, recreational and cultural facilities and services are provided. Developments should provide attractive, well-designed, clear and legible pedestrian and cycle routes, and high quality pubic space, to encourage active and continual use of public areas.

Promoting Sustainable Transport

6.9 Section 9 Promoting sustainable transport should be considered from the earliest stages of a development proposal so that:

- The potential impacts of development of transport networks can be addressed;
- Opportunities from existing or proposed transport infrastructure, and changing transport technology and usage, are realised;
- Opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use are identified and pursued;
- The environmental impacts of traffic and transport infrastructure can be identified, assessed and taken into account; and
- Patterns of movement, streets, parking and other transport considerations are integral to the design of schemes and contribute to making high quality places.

6.10 In addition to this, Paragraph 105 acknowledges that 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.

Making Effective Use of Land

6.11 Paragraph 119 states that planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, whilst safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions. Paragraph 120 identifies that decisions should support the development of underutilised land and buildings, especially if this would help to meet identified needs for housing where land supply is constrained.

Achieving Well-designed Places

6.12 The NPPF attaches importance to good design which is considered synonymous with sustainable development. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments (as set out at Paragraph 130):

a) Function well and add to the quality of an area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
b) Are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
c) Are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
d) Establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;
e) Optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and
f) Creates places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change

6.13 Paragraph 159 identifies that inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk (whether existing or future). Where development is necessary in such areas, the development should be made safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere.

Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment

6.14 The NPPF sets out at paragraphs 174 to 178 a framework for conserving and enhancing the natural environment. Paragraph 174 confirms that impacts on biodiversity should be minimised and net gains provided through development. Paragraph 176 notes that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing the landscape and scenic beauty of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Development within the setting of the AONB should be sensitivity located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated area. Paragraph 180 identifies that development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as Ancient Woodland) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists.

Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment

6.15 Para 194 clarifies that applications should consider the significance of heritage assets affected with the level of detail proportionate to the assets' importance. Significance of heritage assets should be taken into account when considering proposals. Para 202 confirms that when a development proposal leads to less than substantial harm to the significance of a heritage asset, this should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

Decision-making

6.16 The NPPF directs that Councils should approach decision making in a 'positive way' (paragraph 38). Councils should therefore work positively with applicants to find solutions and to deliver sustainable developments that secure improvements to the economic, social and environmental conditions of an area.

b) Planning Practice Guidance

The **Planning** Practice Guidance (PPG) builds on the principles within the NPPF and provides further detailed technical guidance to complement the NPPF. Relevant sections of the Guidance which relate to the planning application are listed below.

Design – The Design section of the PPG re-iterates the importance of Good Design advocated by the NPPF, this being an integral part of achieving the fundamental objective of sustainable development. As a core planning principle, decision takers should always seek to secure high quality design. Paragraph 15 [Reference ID: 26-015-20140306] advises that well designed new places should:

- Be functional;
- Support mixed uses and tenures;
- Include successful public spaces;
- Be adaptable and resilient;
- Have a distinctive character;
- Be attractive; and
- Encourage ease of movement.

Natural Environment – Section ID8 [Reference ID: 8-036-20190721] of the PPG seeks that planning authorities should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. The PPG notes that Green Infrastructure is important to the delivery of a number of planning goals including achieving well-designed places, promoting healthy and safe communities and mitigating climate change, flooding and coastal change. Green Infrastructure should be a key consideration in planning decision where relevant [Reference ID: 8-006-20190721

c) National Design Guide

6.17 The National Design Guide, published October 2019, sets out guidance on how new developments should adopt characteristics to create well-designed places and demonstrate good design.

6.18 The Design Guide builds upon the policies contained within the National Planning Policy Framework and forms part of the collection of planning practice guidance, to be read alongside other relevant sections of this on the design process.

6.19 The Design Guide introduces 10no. characteristics which would work together to create well-designed places, comprising Context, Identity, Built Form, Movement, Nature, Public Spaces, Uses, Homes and Buildings, Resources and Lifespan.

ii) The Development Plan

a) Wealden Local Plan (December 1998) 'Saved' Policies

6.20 The Wealden Local Plan was adopted in 1998 (24 years ago) and set out the planning strategy and policies for the plan period 1994 – 2004. It is therefore increasingly out-of-date.

6.21 Upon the enactment of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, some of the policies of the adopted Wealden Local Plan were 'Saved' for a three year period under the terms of the Act. Any policies that were not 'Saved' by the Secretary of State's Direction have been deleted and no longer comprise part of the Development Plan.

6.22 The following 'Saved' policies are relevant in the context of this application, albeit are increasingly out-of-date, especially in the light of the content of the NPPF:

- **Policy GD2** sets out that outside of development boundaries, as defined on the Proposals Map, development will be resisted unless it is in accordance with specific policies in the Plan i.e. essential for agriculture or forestry needs or has some other similar justification for a rural location.
- **Policy EN1** states that WDC will pursue sustainable development, having regard to the principles contained in Government guidance, in considering the design, layout and location of development, renewable energy and waste management proposals and in assessing the effects of the proposal on the environment.
- **Policy EN2** seeks to maintain settlement patterns and ensure that major new development generating significant traffic movements are located efficiently in relation to existing development and to public transport.
- **Policy EN12** seeks to retain and enhance the contribution of trees and woodland areas to the landscape character of the District. This includes giving weight to proposals that help to sustain and manage forestry and woodland areas when considering them against other policies of the Plan.
- **Policy EN27** refers specifically to design, noting criteria when proposals will be permitted, notably that:

- The scale, form, site coverage, density and design of development and the use of materials and landscaping should respect the character of adjoining development;
- The proposed development should not create unacceptable adverse impacts on the privacy and amenities of adjoining developments and the neighborhood by reason of scale, height, form, noise and traffic movements;
- The proposed development should provide a satisfactory environment for the future occupants, including adequate provision for daylight, sunlight, privacy, garden space and/or appropriate landscape amenity areas;
- The proposed development should not constitute an unacceptable backland or 'tandem' form of development; and
- Regard has been paid to crime prevention measures whenever possible and appropriate.

- **Policy EN29** seeks to minimise external lighting.
- **Policy DC17** states that housing development will not be allowed outside development boundaries, as defined on the Proposals Map, unless it conforms with other policies in the Plan.
- **Policy HG5** seeks to provide a mix of dwelling size and types.
- **Policy TR3** notes that planning applications for new development will be permitted provided the proposed development does not create or perpetuate unacceptable traffic conditions, it provides a satisfactory means of access to meet Local Authority and Highway Authority Standards, and, where appropriate, provides suitable public transport facilities.
- **Policy TR16** sets out the requirement for on-site vehicle parking, including for dwellings of 2 spaces per unit, plus 1 space per 3 units for visitors.
- **Policy HA1** directs new residential development on Hailsham to specific allocation sites and other land within the development boundary, subject to conforming to other relevant policies in the plan.

b) Wealden District Council Core Strategy Local Plan (2013)

6.23 WDC'S Core Strategy Local Plan (CSLP) (February 2013) covers the plan period 2006 – 2027. However, whilst the Planning Inspector who examined the CSLP found it to be "sound", this was on the proviso that it be subject to an early review by 2015.

6.24 This, in part, was due to the fact that the housing target set out in the CSLP does not reflect objectively assessed need (OAN), as required by the NPPF. Notably, WDC advised that the housing target in the Core Strategy (2012 – at the time) was restricted due to:

- Limited capacity at Hailsham Waste Water Treatment Works (WWTW), which discharges to the Pevensey Levels SSSI. This was considered to limit development in the south of the District; and
- Nitrogen deposition, which was considered to result in potential for significant effects on the Ashdown Forest SAC, SPA and SSSI. This was considered to limit development in the north of the District.

6.25 **Policy WCS1** of the CSLP states:

> **The strategy shall be reviewed in 2015 or when a preferred solution to the capacity issues associated with Hailsham North and Hailsham South Wastewater Treatment Works has been identified, whichever is the earlier, in order to ensure that there is an adequate supply of development land in the longer term.**

6.26 Policies of relevant to this application are listed below, however it is noted that a number of these policies are increasingly out-of-date and do not seek to meet current housing needs.

6.27 **Policy WSC1 Provision of Homes and Jobs** states that land will be identified in subsequent Development Plan Documents (DPDs) for the provision of some 4,525 new additional dwellings to provide a total of 9,440 dwellings over the Plan period (2006 – 2027) i.e. 450 dwellings per annum (dpa).

6.28 **Policy WCS2 Distribution of Housing Growth** states that land would be allocated to meet the housing provision in accordance with the following distribution:

Table 6.1: WDC Proposed Housing Distribution

Town/Settlement	Built/ Committed	New Allocations	Total (2006-2027)
Uckfield	742	1,000	1,742
Hailsham and Hellingly	1,645	1,300	2,945
Polegate and Willingdon	565	700	1,265
Stone Cross and Westham	42	650	692
Crowborough	632	300	932
Heathfield and Waldron	292	-	292

Adjacent to Tunbridge Wells boundary (within Frant Parish)	53	120	173
Rural Villages	918	455	1,373
Total Wealden	4,889	4,525	9,414

6.29 Strategic Development Areas (SDAs) are then allocated in **Policy WCS4** and shown as insets on the Key Diagram. At Uckfield, this includes provision of around 1,000 dwellings at 'Land at West Uckfield'.

6.30 **Policy WCS5 Managing the Release of Housing Land** states that the release of land for housing will be managed so that it will deliver the level and broad distribution of development set out in Policy WCS2.

6.31 The Strategy for Uckfield is set out in Paras 6.3 to 6.11. WDC proposed significant further housing growth in Uckfield as part of its strategy for the town. In support of this it wishes to ensure that the town reaches its full potential to provide the essential range of services and facilities required, in an attractive environment that is easily accessible. The aim is to provide the support and infrastructure needed to plan, manage and promote the town in a positive way, and ensure the aspirations of the local community can be realised.

6.32 **Policy WCS7 Effective Provision of Infrastructure** sets out that the release of land for development will be conditional upon there being sufficient capacity in the existing local infrastructure to meet the requirements generated by the proposed development. As detailed below, WDC will seek contributions in line with the adopted Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule.

6.33 **Policy WCS8 Affordable Housing** requires 35% affordable housing on sites of 5 or more dwellings or on sites of 0.2 ha or more. The policy states that the provision should incorporate a mix of tenures and that WDC will negotiate the exact tenure split on each site.

6.34 **Policy WCS12 Biodiversity** states that in order to contribute to biodiversity targets provided in the Sussex Biodiversity Action Plan, WDC will prevent a net loss of biodiversity.

6.35 With regard to the Ashdown Forest SPA, SAC and SSSI, the policy seeks to reduce recreational impacts of visitors resulting from new housing development within 7km of the Forest. This includes the creation of an exclusion zone of 400m for new increases in

dwellings as well as provision for Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANGs) and contributions to on-site visitor management measures as part of developments referred to and including SD8, SD9 and SD10. The details for this were proposed to be set out in the Strategic Sites/Allocations DPD.

6.36 The reference to the 7km 'zone of influence' and the specific mitigation detailed in WSC12 were removed following a Judgment handed down from the Court of Appeal in connection with *Ashdown Forest Economic Development LLP v. Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and Wealden District Council* (10 July 2015), whereby the Judge considered that the imposition of the 7km zone did not meet the duty under Regulation 12 of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Regulations relating to the assessment of 'reasonable alternatives'.

6.37 **Policy WCS13 Green Infrastructure** requires all new residential development to contribute to the green infrastructure network and where appropriate to make provision for new or enhancement of existing open space.

6.38 **Policy WSC14 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development** notes a positive approach, reflecting the presumption in favour contained within the NPPF, will be taken when considering development. Where there are no relevant policies or such policies are out of date, WDC will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

c) Affordable Housing Delivery Local Plan DPD (February 2016)

6.39 The Affordable Housing Delivery Local Plan was submitted to examination in March 2015 and underwent Examination in May 2015, with a further examination hearing in January 2016.

6.40 The Inspector's report concludes that the Affordable Housing Delivery Local Plan provides an appropriate basis for planning of the district providing a number of Main Modifications are made. The document contains one policy on affordable housing provision (Policy AFH1). Given the scale of the Site, the requirement for 35% affordable housing in the District remains consistent with CSLP requirement.

iii) Other Material Considerations

a) WDC's Draft Outdoor Playing Space Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) (2003)

6.41 The SPG seeks a total of 2.4ha of outdoor playing space per 1,000 population, based on the assumed occupancy rates (dwelling size) set out in the SPG. **Table 5.2** below provides a breakdown of open space typologies required to achieve overall open space requirements. The requirement for Children's Play Space (Informal/Equipped) reflects Policy LR3 of the 1998 Local Plan.

Table 6.2: Open Space Typologies (SPG, 2003)

Type of Play Space	Standard of Provision per 1,000 population
Youth/Adult Play Space	1.6-1.8ha
Casual/Informal Children's Play Space	0.4-0.5ha
Equipped Children's Play Space	0.2-0.3ha

b) Wealden Design Guide, Supplementary Planning Document (November 2008)

6.42 The SPD provides further guidance on the interpretation of Local Plan 'Saved' Policies EN1 and EN27. As discussed previously the Local Plan (1998) was adopted 19 years ago, prior to the publication of the NPPF and is therefore increasingly out-of-date. Consideration should therefore be given to the relevant policies' degree of consistency with the NPPF.

6.43 This document seeks to achieve a high standard of design for development within the District, albeit recognising that flexibility will need to be applied.

6.44 Chapter 2 lists the key principles to be addressed in the design of development proposals:

- Early and appropriate surveys of the assets associated with the Site and its immediate environs;
- Implications of the Site's intended use and the intensity of such uses for the landscape and wildlife;
- The scale, massing and design detail of the proposed scheme;
- Use of practical and innovative design which reflects both local distinctiveness, landscape quality and sustainability;
- The integration of the proposals and enhancements into the existing landscape setting;
- Linking between sites to achieve an ecological green network/chain/wildlife corridor;

- Potential for sustainable enhancements to the landscape and wildlife of the Site and its surroundings;
- Provision of necessary facilities for public amenity;
- Use of appropriate boundary treatments; and
- Long-term management and maintenance of the Site's landscape and wildlife.

6.45 Chapter 7 of the SPD refers specifically to new residential development and lists the following key objectives:

- Establishing a unified 'Vision';
- Defining local character;
- Creating continuity and enclosure;
- Providing quality in the public realm;
- Ensuring legibility;
- Facilitating use of movement;
- Including access and servicing;
- Establishing private amenity and privacy;
- Addressing environmental issues; and
- Following 'Secured by Design' principles.

6.46 The SPD requires new developments to ensure that sufficient public amenity and recreation space is provided within a residential scheme, as well as providing opportunities for recreation and leisure.

c) Housing Land Supply Position

6.47 WDC acknowledges it does not have a 5-year housing supply. WDC's Five Year Housing Land Supply Statement (December 2021) identifies a supply of 3.66-years, a deficit of circa. 2,000 homes within the 5-year period.

6.48 It is therefore evident that WDC cannot currently demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply against its Standard Method requirement and, despite pro-actively seeking to increase supply, is unlikely to achieve a 5-year deliverable supply of housing land in the short-term.

d) Emerging Wealden Local Plan

6.49 WDC prepared and submitted a new Local Plan (2019) to the Secretary of State for independent examination on 18 January 2019. Following an extensive Stage One examination process in the spring/summer of 2019, including public hearing sessions, the appointed Inspector provided WDC with a letter on 20 December 2019 setting out the conclusions from the hearing sessions. The letter concluded that the submitted Plan cannot proceed further in the examination process and should be withdrawn.

6.50 Wealden DC are currently in the process of producing a new Local Plan which will replace the current Core Strategy. The new plan will provide policies to shape our places, plan and manage growth in the district and guide development over a 15-20 year period.

6.51 A Direction of Travel Consultation took place between November 2020 and January 2021 and WDC have reviewed the responses to the consultation and have undertaken further evidence gathering and engagement to inform and shape the production of a Regulation 18 consultation, which is expected to be released in the summer 2022.

7.0 PLANNING APPRAISAL

7.1 This section of the report sets out an assessment of the proposed development against the issues raised in the relevant planning policy and guidance. A topic-based approach is taken in respect of the prevailing planning considerations, with due regard to the earlier rehearsed planning polices at National and local level.

7.2 In compiling this application submission, it has been possible to identify the following overarching planning considerations:

i) Principle of Development;
ii) Design Quality;
iii) Green Infrastructure and Public Open Space;
iv) Housing Mix and Affordable Housing Statement;
v) Landscape and Visual;
vi) Transport and Traffic;
vii) Flooding and Drainage:
    a) Surface Water;
    b) Foul Water.
viii) Ecology
ix) Arboriculture
x) Heritage and Archaeology;
xi) Lighting;
xii) Contamination and Ground Conditions; and
xiii) Planning Obligations.

i) Principle of Development

7.3 The NPPF is clear in paragraph 59 that it is the Government's objective to 'significantly boosting the supply of homes' considering that it is important that a 'sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed and that land with planning permission is developed without delay'.

7.4 WDC's housing requirement is set to significantly increase from its adopted Local Plan requirement to provide a total of 9,440 dwellings over the Plan period (2006 – 2027) i.e. 450 dwellings per annum (dpa), to 24,420 (i.e. 1,221 dpa) dwellings to be delivered across the plan period (2020 to 2040) in the emerging new Local Plan.

7.5 WDC accepts in its Five Year Housing Land Supply Statement that it only has a 3.66-years supply of deliverable housing sites as of 01 April 2021. The housing land supply position has not improved over recent years and is unlikely to be resolved until such time WDC adopts a new Local Plan. In the meantime, WDC is reliant on and continues to approve development on greenfield sites outside of existing development boundaries.

7.6 Further to the 5-year housing land supply position, the policies which are most important for determining the application (Saved Policies GD2 and DC17) are out-of-date. WDC acknowledge that very limited weight should be attributed to these taking account that:

a) These settlement boundaries are out of date, considering that were based on an assessment of settlements carried out in 1998;
b) These policies restrict the supply of housing and prevent local housing needs being met; and
c) WDC has a lack of 5-year housing land supply.

7.7 In addition, WDC acknowledges that the adopted Core Strategy recognises that settlement boundaries will have to be breached to deliver housing requirements.

7.8 The adopted Core Strategy identifies Uckfield at the top of the settlement hierarchy of settlements in Wealden District, alongside the other District Centres.

7.9 In this context, the Site is located in a sustainable location and would make a valuable contribution towards housing supply and the principle of the proposal is considered to be in broad alignment with the objectives and policies of the adopted Plan, including the overarching Spatial Strategy.

7.10 It should also be noted that the development proposal would bring forward a number of immediate economic benefits alongside wider social and environmental benefits, fully according with the policy objectives of the NPPF, and that further weigh in favour of the proposals, including:

A Social Role:

- The delivery of up-to 424 much needed homes, supporting the creation of strong, vibrant and healthy communities;
- Delivering valuable affordable housing to help reduce inequalities;
- Creation of additional choice and opportunity in the housing market including a variety of unit types;
- Improvements to health and well-being, for new residents as well as those existing in the surrounding area, through the provision of a variety of high-quality accessible open spaces and new opportunities for recreation throughout the Site;
- New play space for children provided in an accessible and secure area within public open space; and
- Creation of a new strategic SANG with capacity to support the proposed development alongside an additional 424 dwellings from other developments.

An Economic Role:

- Provision of an estimated 130 direct jobs during construction alongside an additional 126 indirect jobs supported over the construction phase, totalling £74.9 million in economic output (Gross Value Added);
- The growing workforce would deliver an estimated £16.9 million per year in terms of economic output (Gross Value Added);
- An estimated £11.4 million per year increase in spending on convenience goods, comparison goods and expenditure on leisure goods and services in the local area;
- A one-off benefit for WDC through the provision of £856,700 in New Homes Bonus payments;
- An estimated £1.2 million per annum in Council Tax receipts; and
- Additional employment opportunities through the provision of SANG and its ongoing management / maintenance.

An Environmental Role:

- The Site is not within a designated site of international or national importance and development on the Site would reduce pressures on more sensitive locations elsewhere in the Borough;
- The Site is an accessible location and would provide additional connections and improvements to pedestrian and cycle routes and highway improvements;
- The proposed development is not located within an area of flood risk;

- Through the delivery of a high-quality sensitive scheme development provides the opportunity to enhance the natural environment in terms of both landscape and ecology;
- The protection of ecological habitats during construction through tree and hedgerow protection and mitigation measures and use of site safeguards for specific species; and;
- Creation of new habitat features including new landscape planting, and new habitats opportunities for specific species groups providing significant net gains to biodiversity, including (based on the illustrative masterplan) a 27.12% net gain for habitat biodiversity units and a 86.41% net gain in hedgerow biodiversity units.

7.11 Accordingly, the principle of the proposed development is considered to be acceptable, representing a sustainable form of development in a logical location for growth.

7.12 For decision-making, NPPF Para 11 d) confirms that, in the absence of relevant or up-to-date development plan or where a LPA cannot demonstrate a five year supply of housing, planning permission should be granted unless:

> **i. The application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or**
>
> **ii. Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.**

7.13 To this extent, it is clear that WDC cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of land, and that there is an absence of a relevant policies in an up-to-date development plan.

7.14 Moreover, and as detailed in the remainder of this section, it is considered that the proposals do not trigger the application of any policies of the Framework that provide a clear reason for refusing the development proposed, including those relating to Ancient Woodland.

7.15 Accordingly, for decision-making purposes, the 'tilted balance' at NPPF para 11d) is engaged whereby it is considered that planning permission should be granted because, as will be demonstrated below, any adverse impacts of doing so would not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the clear and compelling benefits of the proposal.

ii) Design Quality

7.16 The accompanying Design and Access Statement (DAS, May 2022) establishes the quality of the proposed development and describes the careful design process that has taken place including a detailed consideration of the constraints and opportunities of the Site and surrounding area.

7.17 In terms of layout, the development would provide for an appropriate range of densities across the Site, with medium densities in the central parts of the site and lower density on the edges to provide a transition between development and boundary features. In line with the prevailing character of the area, the average net density across the Site would be circa 35dph.

7.18 In addition, the Parameter Plans and details provided would ensure that key features within the Site, including high quality ecological and landscape features, are retained and incorporated within the proposals, delivering a landscape-led scheme which ensures development can integrate sensitively into its context.

7.19 Moreover, the Design and Access Statement highlights key place making principles to be achieved as part of the proposals, including:

- Well overlooked streets and public spaces;
- Pedestrian focused streets that are also social spaces;
- A high-quality landscape led approach through the retention of existing trees and hedgerows as well as new planting;
- Utilising a palette of materials reflecting local vernacular, responding positively to the character of the area.
- A mix of hedges and low walls at boundaries to properties;
- Mostly 2 storey dwellings but with the occasion use of 2.5 storeys along key frontages or for key buildings;
- A shallow and deeper mix of setbacks to dwellings from street frontages where houses are facing public open spaces; and,
- Subtle variations in density to provide a transition in building forms with lower densities towards the development edge and higher densities towards main routes.

7.20 In this way, the proposal responds appropriately to the design requirements of the Development Plan and the relevant design provisions of the NPPF, NPPG and National Design Guide.

iii) Green Infrastructure, Public Open Space and SANG Provision

7.21 The Land Use Parameter Plan (**Appendix B**) identifies circa. 28.7 hectares of the Site (roughly 66%) for Green Infrastructure including existing landscape, landscape buffers, planting, public open spaces, SANG and sustainable urban drainage systems. This includes the following key elements:

- All areas of Ancient Woodland retained and protected with a minimum 15m buffer to development areas;
- A new woodland park (circa. 21.3ha) incorporating an area of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (18.1ha);
- Additional areas of landscape planting, natural greenspace and SuDS outside of the woodland park, on the edges of the site and used to provide new ecological linkages through the residential areas;
- 1.6ha of amenity open space in the centre of the site with potential to incorporate a sports pitch and natural areas of play for young children; and
- 0.9ha of amenity space / community orchard area to the south of Downlands Barn.

7.22 WDC's guidance for open space provision is contained within its Draft Outdoor Playing Space SPG (2003) which identifies a total of 2.4ha of outdoor play space per 1,000 population, reflecting Policy LR3 of the 1998 Local Plan. Based on a household size of 2.225 persons per household this would equate to an overall requirement of 2.26 hectares for the proposed development. The proposal responds positive to this requirement with circa. 8.6 hectares of provision shown on the illustrative masterplan, in addition to the SANG, including a combined LEAP / LAP for children's play central to the residential development.

7.23 The SANG, part of Downlands Woodland Park, would secure public access to existing privately owned woodland and grassland, providing a significant area of recreational opportunity for the existing and future community. The Park would retain its informal, naturalistic character and include:

- A 2.3km circular walk;
- Grassland enhancement to create species rich meadow;
- Woodland enhancement to improve accessibility in balance with biodiversity;
- Mature trees managed for longevity;
- Provision of a community orchard;
- New tree and shrub planting to contribute further to visual and wildlife diversity;

- Enhanced access, including car parking, signage, and footpaths;
- Seating and information boards to take advantage of views and provide information to contribute to the enjoyment of the site.

7.24 A Downlands Woodland Park – SANG and Woodland Management Plan has been prepared which provides a management and monitoring regime for the SANG and other non-SANG woodland assets across the Site. This seeks to create a highly desirable country park experience which would be highly attractive to visitors, secured in perpetuity.

7.25 The proposed development therefore provides a significant level of public open space and recreational opportunities, in excess of policy requirements. This is a significant benefit of the scheme and would assist in delivering a well-designed scheme which benefits both existing and future residents of the area.

iv) Housing Mix and Affordable Housing Statement

7.26 The proposed development seeks approval for up to 424 new homes. In line with the Development Plan requirements, 35% of the proposed new homes would comprise affordable housing, which would be located in small clusters throughout the Site to ensure they are integrated with market housing.

7.27 The specific housing mix is not fixed at this stage due to the Outline nature of the application. The final mix would respond to design and market considerations at any subsequent Reserved Matters stage.

7.28 However, informed by WDC's Local Housing Needs Assessment (2021) and likely market requirements, the Illustrative Masterplan demonstrates how the following dwelling mix could be delivered at the site:

Table 7.1: Indicative Housing Mix

	Total	Market	Affordable
Total No.	**424**	**276**	**148**
1 bed apartment	102	28	74
2 bed apartment	64	26	38
2-bed house	96	80	16
3-bed house	113	98	15
4-bed house	33	28	5
5-bed house	16	16	0

7.29 The affordable housing mix can be agreed with WDC Housing Development Officer during the course of the application, including any need for First Homes. However, the affordable mix as shown on the illustrative layout is in accordance with WDC's evidence base in respect of affordable housing needs.

7.30 Is therefore considered that the proposal would provide for a suitable mix of new homes, with the aim of creating a mixed and balance community, in line with the requirements of the NPPF.

v) Landscape and Visual Effects

7.31 Chapter 6 of the Environmental Statement considers the likely effects of the proposed development on landscape and views. It is supported by a Landscape and Visual Baseline (May 2022) and Assessment of Effects Schedule (May 2022), which considers the landscape and visual characteristics of the Site, recommendations for mitigation, and predicted effects likely to arise from the proposals.

7.32 The landscape work identifies the Site is visually very well contained due, primarily, to the surrounding woodland and the well wooded gently undulating nature of the wider context, which provides few opportunities for views into the Site beyond the distant elevated tops and facing slopes of the AONB over 6km from the Site.

7.33 Mitigation measures are proposed to enable the proposed development to be suitably integrated within its surroundings. As demonstrated on the parameter plans and illustrative masterplan, these mitigation measures include retention of, or minimization of changes to, characteristic landscape features and habitats across the Site, including through:

- Retention of woodland at the site periphery;
- Provision of substantial new tree planting along contours within the residential areas of the development; and
- Limiting the development across more elevated slopes to 2-storeys with developenmt elsewhere limited to 2.5-storeys.

7.34 The assessment concludes that whilst the Site itself would experience landscape character changes arising from the proposed development, key landscape elements would be retained including all Ancient Woodland and the vast majority of other woodland areas, hedgerows, trees, streams and ponds. Where residual effects have been identified, for

example to adjacent properties who currently have uninterrupted views into the Site, these would be mitigated through design, siting and landscaping where practicable. Any residual significant adverse effect on views would therefore be avoided following the maturation of any necessary mitigation.

7.35 The proposed development is considered capable of being able to successfully integrate into the Site and wider landscape as a sympathetic extension to the town, thereby according with the landscape and landscape-related design requirements of the NPPF and the Development.

vi) Transport and Traffic

7.36 The accompanying Transport Assessment (TA, May 2022) considers the highway and transport matters associated with the proposed development, in particular, the effect of the proposals on the highway network. The TA has been prepared in accordance with the scope agreed at the pre-application stage with the Highways Authority, alongside relevant national and local transport / highway guidance.

Access

7.37 Vehicle access to Site would be taken from a new access to the A22 via a conventional roundabout arrangement. This access would also provide pedestrian and cycle access to the development, along with two further points of pedestrian/cycle access to Rocks Road and Snatts Road. Additional emergency-vehicle only access would be provided to the A22 and a separate access servicing one of the SANG car parks from Snatts Road.

7.38 The proposed access arrangements have been subject to a Stage 1 Road Safety Audit which confirm safe and suitable vehicular access in accordance with relevant design guidance can be achieved.

Accessibility

7.39 As detailed in Section 2, this Site is sustainably located, with a wide range of services and facilities located within proximity to it and that are accessible by sustainable modes of transport.

7.40 The proposals are supported by a Sustainable Transport Strategy, within the TA, which details how sustainable transport links between the Site and these services and facilities

would be achieved to enable future residents to make more active and sustainable transport choices. This includes:

- **Completion of a Non-Motorised User (NMU) audit which has informed the provision of new connections to the existing footpath network and identified enhancement works to existing routes including installation of new crossing facilities, replacement of existing steps at the end of Downland Copse and resurfacing of existing public footpath, and widening of existing routes;**
- **Provision of a new strategic link for pedestrians and cyclists along the A22 and Bellfarm Road;**
- **Creation of new pedestrian and cycle connection to Snatts Road, linking to existing public right of way network along Downland Copse;**
- **Creation of new pedestrian and cycle connection to Rocks Road, including provision of boardwalk with associated ramp and steps through Fir Tree Grove;**
- **Funding and operation of a community bus service serving the residential development with connections to the rail station, local employment, schools and the town;**
- **Provision of an on-site car club with dedicated space located in prominent position; and**
- **Implementation of a Travel Plan and appointment of a Travel Plan Coordinator.**

Car and Cycle Parking Provision

7.41 Car parking would be provided on-site in accordance with East Sussex's parking calculator which, based on the illustrative housing mix, equates to 746 allocated and 142 unallocated parking spaces (as shown on the illustrative masterplan). The final quantum of parking would be determined as part of future Reserved Matters application/s. It is intended that each dwelling with on plot parking benefit from an electric vehicle charging point.

7.42 Appropriate safe and secure spaces would be provided for the storage of cycles, either accommodated within garages or rear garden stores / sheds for homes or communal shelters for flats.

Highways Effects

7.43 The TA includes an assessment of the effect of the development on the highway network. It has identified that the proposal would generate circa. 225 vehicle movements during the weekday morning and afternoon peak hours. An assessment of the effect of these vehicle movements on all relevant junctions during peak hours has been undertaken, using modelling software. This assessment demonstrates that all relevant junctions would

continue to operate within capacity following implementation of the proposed development.

7.44 The TA also considers the cumulative impact of the proposed development and other emerging schemes at Bird in Eye (North), Bird in Eye (South) and Land at Horsted Pond Farm and demonstrates that all but two of the assessed junctions are able to support the additional traffic generated by these schemes. Mitigation works may be required to support all four developments, should they all be approved, however illustrative mitigation schemes have been presented which can be delivered within the adopted public highway.

Summary

7.45 The detailed highways work completed confirms the proposed development would not result in a severe impact, as defined by the NPPF, on the operation of existing junctions. In addition, no unacceptable road safety impacts are expected to occur.

7.46 The proposed development therefore fully complies with relevant transport policy contained within the NPPF and Development Plan and is acceptable in transport and highway terms.

vii) Flooding and Drainage

7.47 Chapter 8 of the Environmental Statement considers the likely significant effects of the proposed development on water resources and flood risk, and is accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment (May 2022) that includes proposed drainage strategies for both surface water and foul water.

a) Surface Water

7.48 The Site is located within Flood Zone 1 and therefore is at low risk of flooding from river or sea. The vast majority of the Site is at 'very low' risk of surface water flooding, however there are identified flow paths through the Site predominately associated with existing brooks in woodland areas. The risk of flooding from all sources is therefore considered to be low.

7.49 The existing site currently drains via overland surface water flows into the existing on-site watercourses, which ultimately discharge into the Shortbridge Stream on the opposite side of the A22.

7.50 The proposed drainage strategy includes the provision of attenuation provided in strategic detention basins, as well as permeable paving sub-base storage within the development plots. Swales are also proposed throughout to provide conveyance of runoff into the strategic Sustainable Drainage Systems. Appropriate treatment of surface water runoff would be provided with the detention basins, permeable paving, and swales, in line with the CIRIA Sustainable Drainage System Manual.

7.51 Surface water flows would be restricted to the greenfield runoff rate designed to the 1 in 100 year event plus a 45% allowance for climate change, and would discharge into the existing on-site watercourses. Drainage outfalls into the woodland brooks would be constructed using a directional drilling technique (trenchless technology) and pre-fabricated headwalls (if necessary) so as not to disturb the Ancient Woodland.

7.52 This method would not require excavation in the form of a trench, reception pit, nor for the installation of the headwall which would be pinned to the woodland floor. This would allow the natural hydrology of the woodland to remain unaffected, and not result in any loss or deterioration of Ancient Woodland.

7.53 The Flood Risk Assessment demonstrates the risks and impacts of the proposed development can be managed to an appropriate level, with the adoption of mitigation measures to be employed. The development therefore complies with the requirements of the NPPF and relevant Development Plan policies for flood risk and drainage.

b) Foul Water

7.54 Foul water arising from the proposed development would be discharged along public highways into the nearest public foul sewer. Avoiding areas of Ancient Woodland, this connection is likely to be via Rocks Road or potentially via Snatts Road where public sewers currently exist.

7.55 Due to topography at the Site, foul water would need to be pumped off Site. Two adoptable pump stations are proposed within the development as shown on the Illustrative Masterplan and the drainage strategy plan (Appendix H of the Flood Risk Assessment).

7.56 Where necessary, existing public foul infrastructure would be upgraded or reinforced to accommodate the proposed flows in accordance with Southern Water's legal obligation to provide foul drainage infrastructure. Any upgrades / reinforcement would be funded through the infrastructure charge levied on each new dwelling.

7.57 It is therefore anticipated there would be no foul water constraints to development of the Site.

viii) Ecology, Biodiversity and Ancient Woodland

7.58 Chapter 7 of the Environmental Statement considers the likely significant effects of the proposed development on Biodiversity, including ecology and nature conservation with regard to Ancient Woodland and Veteran Trees, supported by a Baseline Ecological Appraisal (May 2022).

7.59 The Site has been subject to numerous habitat and species-specific surveys over the period 2019 – 2022, allowing habitat information to be gathered within optimal periods for surveys. The results of species-specific survey work is as set out in the below.

Faunal Species Survey Results

Faunal species	**Survey Results**
Bats (roosting)	One building within the site was identified as having 'low' potential for roosting bats, although emergence/re-entry surveys did not confirm any roost. A low number of trees within the Site have been identified as providing bat roosting potential, largely associated with wooded vegetation and hedgerows, although a small number are present within the grassland. No evidence indicating the likely presence of a substantial bat roost was recorded although it is possible that bats may utilise trees within the site on at least an occasional or temporary basis.
Bats (foraging and commuting)	Overall, low to moderate levels of activity were recorded within the Site, with at least seven species (or species groups) recorded during the surveys. Common Pipistrelle and Soprano Pipistrelle were most frequently recorded, with sustained foraging activity by a moderate number of bats throughout the Site, particularly along the woodland edges and within and around the semi-improved species-rich grassland in the east of the site. Myotis sp. Bats and Big bats (Noctule and Serotine) were recorded fairly frequently. The remaining species were recorded infrequently and in very low numbers, indicating that the Site is used sporadically and is unlikely to be of high importance for these species.

Badger	No active Badger setts have been identified within the Site, however, a number of disused setts and other field signs were recorded. In terms of foraging habitat, habitats across the Site are likely to provide good foraging opportunities for Badger in the form of wooded vegetation, hedgerows and grassland. However, limited evidence of foraging activity was recorded across the site, and such areas may be subject to only relatively low levels of foraging activity.
Dormouse	Suitable habitat is present in the form of woodland within and surrounding the site. Dormouse were found to be widespread throughout the study area during surveys, with the majority found in Woodland adjacent to A22 – south, on the edge of Lake Wood with occasional evidence found on the edge of Longwood Gill and around the edges of the clearing within Budletts Wood. Dormouse is relatively widespread within Sussex.
Other mammals (including Hedgehog)	The Site provides potential opportunities for Hedgehog, which is listed as a priority species under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006, albeit this species remains common and widespread in England, whilst habitats within the site are unlikely to be of importance in a local context.
Birds	The Site offers a range of opportunities for bird species, particularly in the form of wooded habitats, hedgerows, and grassland margins, which offer foraging areas and potential nesting areas for a range of bird species. Being dominated by mature deciduous woodland, the site supports a large population of breeding birds that is generally typical of the habitat, without being especially diverse, and resulting in a very high percentage of species that are definitely or probably breeding. In contrast, the open grassland areas were devoid of birdlife. RSPB Red or Amber List species breeding in woodland or scrub at the site include stock dove, song thrush, mistle thrush, dunnock and bullfinch, with mallard on a woodland pond. All these species remain common and widespread in both a local and national context, as are all the other species recorded breeding at the site.

Great Crested Newt	A number of ponds are present at the Site and its immediate surrounds, whilst suitable terrestrial habitat is present at the Site in the form of areas of wooded vegetation and rough grassland. Great Crested Newt was recorded as being present within one pond in the southern central part of the Site.
Reptiles	The Site supports a range of potential habitats for reptiles, although the majority of opportunities are likely to be limited to the edges of the large grassland fields. A peak count of 10 Common Lizard was recorded scattered at low densities throughout the field margins of the site, The area of suitable reptile habitat at the site is estimated to be c.4.5ha and therefore the peak count equates to a population of two Common Lizard per hectare, which would be classified as a 'low' population under standard guidance. A peak count of 11 Slow-worm was also recorded at low densities throughout the site. Taking an area of c.4.5ha of suitable habitat, the peak count equates to a population of two Slow-worm per hectare, which would also be classified as a 'low' population. One grass snake was recorded on the edge of Budletts Wood – West. As such it is considered that a 'low' population of Grass Snake is present at the Site, whilst this species typically ranges over a wide habitat area indicating only occasional use.
Invertebrates	No evidence for the presence of any protected, rare or other notable invertebrate species was recorded within the Site during the survey work undertaken, whilst the majority of the Site, dominated by species-poor grassland, supports few micro-habitats that would typically indicate elevated potential for invertebrates. However, ponds, watercourses, hedgerows and other wooded vegetation within the Site are likely to provide some opportunities for common and widespread invertebrates.

7.60 The ecological work has shown the Site supports protected species, albeit generally limited in population.

7.61 The proposed development has been sensitively designed in response to current ecological condition of the site, and in this context of NPPF 179 has sought ensure that opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity have been pursued.

7.62 In this context, whilst the secondary legislation of the Environment Act 2021 requiring proposals to secure a mandatory 10% biodiversity net gain is yet to come into force, the proposals include mitigation during construction and enhancements post construction to ensure that impacts upon biodiversity assets are avoided where possible, minimised where necessary and gains promoted in the long-term.

7.63 To this extent a Biodiversity Net Gain calculation has been submitted to demonstrate the capability of the proposal to deliver a significant net gain to biodiversity. Due to the proposal being in Outline a number of reasonable assumptions have been made as to the breakdown of habitats within the Site.

7.64 However, on the basis of the illustrative masterplan and associated indicative landscaping a 'net gain' of 27.12% and 86.41% in respect of area habitat and hedgerow habitat units respectively would be achieved, through the creation of significant new habitats within the SANG and public open spaces of the Site and including:

- Substantial native tree and shrub planting within areas of open space, forming new blocks of woodland and shrubs, scattered wooded vegetation and treelines benefiting woodland species such as Song Thrush and Brown Long-eared bat;
- Tree and shrub planting also provided within built development areas, providing additional resources for wildlife such as fruits or nectar;
- A new orchard, providing habitats for a range of bird and invertebrate species;
- Scrub habitat along existing woodland edges and within grassland areas creating scrub mosaics and forming valuable ecotone habitats for a range of wildlife, including amphibians, reptiles, small mammals and invertebrates;
- Large areas of wildflower grassland, subject to a varied management regime to provide a range of sward types. Larger blocks would be managed as hay meadow, subject to cutting 2-3 times a year to promote a flower rich sward, whilst areas of rough, tussocky grassland would be established along woodland and hedgerow margins with dead stems retained in places during winter to provide a hibernation resource for invertebrates. Grassland areas would provide a rich habitat resource for invertebrate species, in turn providing increased foraging opportunities for wildlife including birds and bats;
- New lengths of hedgerow planting along boundaries of green spaces and along the edges of existing woodland to create opportunities for dormice and other species; and
- A variety of wetland habitats created as part of the proposed drainage strategy, designed to be of benefit to biodiversity where possible, benefiting a range of

wetland species including birds and aquatic invertebrates and provide 'stepping-stones' through the Development and contribute to the potential breeding resource for Great Crested Newts.

7.65 In addition to the above, a number of woodland areas located across the Site are currently in poor condition resulting from a lack of management, which has resulted in a lack of age structure and diversity of woodland and presence of detrimental factors, such as the presence of non-native invasive plant species.

7.66 The introduction of an enhanced woodland management package within areas of existing woodland areas (amounting to 21.6ha) would be brought forward in order to bring them into a favourable conservation status. These measures are set out in the SANG and Woodland Management Plan (May 2022).

7.67 Following the implementation of these measures, woodland areas (including Ancient Woodland) would be significantly improved in terms of their ecological functionality and resilience.

7.68 Accordingly, the quantitative assessment has demonstrated that the development parameters are capable of delivering biodiversity net gains in respect of area and hedgerow habitats. The proposals therefore accord with the requirements of the NPPF to deliver 'a gain' alongside the forthcoming requirements of the Environment Act.

Ancient Woodland and Veteran Trees

7.69 Significant areas of the Site are identified as Ancient Woodland, including Shermanreed Wood, Longwood Gill and Fir Tree Grove. Detailed woodland botanical survey and historic landscape study work has been completed to appreciate and understand these habitats, as detailed in Chapter 7 of the Environmental Statement.

7.70 In addition, a number of veteran trees were recorded within the Site within areas of Ancient Woodland.

7.71 Paragraph 180 of the NPPF states that:

> **development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists**

7.72 There would be no direct loss of Ancient Woodland or Veteran Trees proposed as part of the development.

7.73 All built development is proposed within non-Ancient Woodland areas of the Site, including the proposed main access and secondary emergency access through areas of non-Ancient Woodland.

7.74 During the construction phase, a buffer of 15m from Ancient Woodland would be applied to provide sufficient root protection areas to avoid damage to roots and understory and compaction of soil. Where construction is necessary within this buffer, for example the emergency access and boardwalk through Fir Tree Grove, this would be undertaken using sensitive construction techniques such as road forming above ground, and use of supporting pillars mounted on stainless steel screw piles (respectively).

7.75 With respect to the boardwalk through Fir Tree Grove, a detailed design for the boardwalk is submitted as part of the Full element of this application. It demonstrates how this elevated boardwalk would be installed and operate without loss of Ancient Woodland. Where the boardwalk has potential to overshade existing ground flora (e.g. bluebell) this would be translocated to a suitable location within the same woodland thereby avoiding any deterioration effects.

7.76 As detailed in the above Flooding and Drainage sub-section, the drainage strategy proposes to discharge surface water into the on-site watercourses to mimic the existing hydrological regime, including into areas of Ancient Woodland. This would allow the natural hydrology of the woodland to remain unaffected, and not result in any deterioration of woodland plant communities.

7.77 It is evident that certain parts of the woodlands are subject to a degree of current use by existing residents for recreation with the presence of informal paths throughout these areas. Outside of the Site, there are a number of further areas of Ancient Woodland where some existing recreational use also takes place.

7.78 The SANG proposals utilise some areas of Ancient Woodland within the Site, which are considered to be less sensitive to disturbance, including the northern parts of Shermanreed Wood, part of Budlett's Wood, and parts of Woodland adjacent to the A22. Within these areas it is proposed to formalise the existing informal pathways, and to create a small length of new path with some forming part of a proposed circular walk, and others being used to provide secondary connecting pedestrian routes.

7.79 Within the residential development parcel, all Ancient Woodland areas would be provided with a 15m buffer zone, within which semi-natural habitats would be allowed to develop, and parts of which would also be planted with native woodland and scrub planting. This would prevent access directly from residential areas into the surrounding woodlands. These buffer zones have been designed to conform to the current Natural England/Forestry Commission standing advice.

7.80 Where necessary, fencing would be used to prevent pedestrians (within the SANG) or residents (outside of the SANG) from straying into Ancient Woodland.

7.81 It is therefore considered that the presence of Ancient Woodland and Veteran Trees within the Site has been appropriately and sensitively responded to in the design of the proposals. In accordance with Paragraph 180 of the NPPF, detailed mechanisms have been proposed that would ensure that there is no loss or deterioration of Veteran Trees or irreplaceable Ancient Woodland habitat. Moreover, through the implementation of the Woodland Management Plan the prosperity of these habitats would be secured for the long-term.

Lake Wood Local Wildlife Site

7.82 Lake Wood Local Wildlife Site (LWS) is located adjoining the Site. Managed by the Woodland Trust, Lake Wood LWS comprises a large man-made lake with sandstone outcrops, and is known to have aquatic ecological features (including invertebrates and micro-organisms) which are sensitive to recreational disturbance.

7.83 The LWS has public open access with two existing access points off Rock's Road to the south. Informal access also exists between the Lake Wood area and the southern part of the Site. There is a well-established informal track originating from the south-west corner of the development site, and a further informal access in the south-east of the site, but neither constitute a public right of way.

7.84 To avoid an increase in recreational pressure on Lake Wood LWS arising from the development the proposals include a 15m buffer zone and the installation of a new fence along the boundary of the Site with LWS. In addition, the proximity of the SANG also has the potential to mitigate any effects on Lake Wood, with visitors drawn to the new facility.

7.85 The impact arising from the proposed development upon Lake Wood LWS is therefore considered to be negligible.

Habitat Regulations Assessment

7.86 In light of the nearby Ashdown Forest SAC, Pevensey Levels SAC/Ramar Site and Lewes Downs SAC, a Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Stage 1 and Stage 2 exercise has been completed to inform the Council's HRA process, as detailed in the submitted Report to Inform a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) (May 2022), contained within the Environmental Statement.

7.87 As detailed in the report, in the absence of mitigation there is potential for a likely significant effect in relation to in-combination increases in traffic and associated air quality on the identified designations, alongside the potential for a likely significant effect to the Ashdown Forest SPA in relation to recreational disturbance, as such an Appropriate Assessment (Stage 2) is required.

7.88 The Appropriate Assessment has concluded, in view of the view of the designations' conservation objectives and following the implementation of mitigation measures, notably creation of SANG and provision of SAMM contributions, the proposed development would have no effect on the integrity of the surrounding European designations either alone or in-combination with other plans and projects.

Summary

7.89 The proposed development therefore seeks to minimise effects on biodiversity through appropriate avoidance, mitigation and compensation measures. Moreover, through the delivery of the ecological enhancements the proposals would lead to a quantifiable gain across the Site (as detailed below). As such the proposals accord with the requirements of the NPPF and ecology policies of the Development Plan.

ix) Arboriculture

7.90 The application is supported by an Arboricultural report (May 2022), which encompasses details of a Tree Survey, RAVEN Veteran Tree Identification, Proposed Tree Retention and Removal and a Tree Protection Plan and Arboricultural Method Statement.

7.91 The survey work has informed the proposed development, such that development impacts upon tree assets have been avoided where practicable including the avoidance of tree root protection areas.

7.92 The majority of woodland habitats are retained. However, the proposals would result in the removal of small areas of (non-Ancient) woodland to create the main site access, secondary emergency access, and to create a SuDs feature. In addition, individual tree removal (non-Ancient woodland) is proposed to facilitate the pedestrian and cycle access from Rocks Road.

7.93 Nevertheless, as detailed in the report, over 90% of individual trees within the Site are maintained, predominately low-quality trees with all but 1 of the 129 identified 'high quality' trees retained, and 99.2% of woodland areas are to be preserved. No Ancient Woodland is proposed for removal.

7.94 Mitigation measures are proposed for construction to protect retained tree assets, including implementation of root protection zones.

7.95 Tree cover would be enhanced post development, including an increase in tree planting through new orchard creation, and retained woodland brought into management, as detailed previously in this section.

7.96 The residential development element of the scheme is Outline in nature at present and would be subject to ongoing arboricultural detail at reserve matters stage. However, the work completed demonstrates the proposed development could be successfully delivered on Site according with the NPPF and Arboricultural and Green Infrastructure requirements of the Development Plan.

x) Heritage and Archaeology

7.97 Chapter 9 of the Environmental Statement considers the effects of the proposed development on Cultural Heritage, supported by an Archaeological and Heritage Assessment (May 2022).

7.98 The Site does not contain any designated heritage assets, such as Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, registered Historic Parks and Gardens or registered Battlefields; nor is it located within a Conservation Area.

7.99 There are Listed Buildings within 1km radius of the Site, the closest of which are the Grade II listed Barn at Downlands Farm and Grade II listed Oast Cottage, both located immediately east of the Site within the former Downlands Farm complex off Snatts Road, alongside the non-designated Partridges Oast.

7.100 The Heritage Assessment identifies that whilst the agricultural land within the Site has a historical association with the Listed Buildings and non-designated buildings that form part of the former Downlands Farm complex, the proposals have been formulated to not dimmish their setting.

7.101 This is achieved as the southern portion of the Site has been sensitively designed to maintain a spatial gap between the Listed Buildings, which would be buffered by a generous provision of open space around the farm complex within which these buildings sit. This includes a woodland park to the north, and enhanced orchard planting to the south, both of which would be in keeping with the historical agricultural character of the setting of the farmstead. These measures ensure that there would be no adverse change to the current experience of the Listed Buildings from within their historical farmstead setting.

7.102 The Assessment however finds there to be a very limited degree of harm to the Maresfield Conservation Area through a change to a single view south from this designated area. The harm would arise from the loss of rural character to a single field through the introduction of new built form, which would be visible in the distance in an important view from Maresfield Recreation Ground.

7.103 The impact would be contained to only a very small location within what is an expansive heritage asset, and therefore it is concluded that there would only be a very minimal loss of significance to the Maresfield Conservation Area, equating to the very low end of 'less than substantial harm', in terms of the NPPF. This very low level of harm would be required to be balanced against the wider public benefits of the development proposals, in accordance with Paragraph 202 of the NPPF.

7.104 In this instance, it is considered that the public benefits of the Proposed Development (as detailed earlier in this Planning Statement) would demonstrably outweigh the less than substantial harm to the setting of Maresfield Conservation Area.

7.105 As such, it is considered the Proposed Development accords with the heritage requirements of the NPPF and Development Plan.

xi) Lighting

7.106 The application is supported by a Lighting Assessment, which provides an assessment of the effects of external lighting arising from all lit elements the proposed development,

comprising the street lighting associated with the new homes and the lighting proposed for the new Fir Tree Grove boardwalk.

7.107 The assessment is supported by daytime and night-time surveys and considers current lighting conditions within the Site and in the surrounding area. The Site is currently unlit with limited lighting influences.

7.108 The Proposed Development would require lighting for safety, amenity and security during the hours of darkness. External lighting and street lighting proposed for the development would be designed in accordance with industry standards, guidance and recommendations as far as possible in order to provide an adequate level of illuminance for security, safety and amenity throughout the site, whilst limiting obtrusive light and impacts onto ecological receptors.

7.109 No lighting is proposed to the car parks for the SANG, to the informal footpaths within the SANG, or to the separate emergency access from the Uckfield Bypass (A22).

7.110 Various areas within the site have been identified as being ecologically sensitive. As such, a Dark Areas Plan (Drawing 1309.07) has been prepared designating primary and secondary dark zones with targeted levels of illuminance for each zone. A dark crossing point is proposed to provide a dormouse hopover at the access to the A22. Levels of lighting at this point are to be minimised as far as possible.

7.111 An indicative lighting design has been prepared for the Fir Tree Grove boardwalk, to demonstrate how light spill would be minimised to the surrounding dark zone. Luminaires would be mounted at approx. 1.4m high on to the internal side of the boardwalk at approximately 5m spacings, with the proposed overlapping infill panelling on the opposite side of the boardwalk mitigating light spill into the Ancient Woodland

7.112 Subject to the proposed lighting strategy, the assessment concludes there would be no significant residual effects predicted for the operation phase of the proposed development. As such, it is considered the Proposed Development would not lead to significant light impacts and is therefore accordance with the NPPF and Development Plan policies.

xii) Contamination and Ground Conditions

7.113 Chapter 10 of the Environmental Statement considers the likely effects of the proposed development on the environment in respect of land contamination and ground conditions,

supported by a Phase 1 Geo-Environmental Desk Study (May 2022) and Geo-Environmental Site Investigate (April 2022).

7.114 The site-walkover and desk study identified potential contamination risks arising from overgrown chicken sheds in the southeastern portion of the Site, a small area of landfilling at the northern corner of the middle field (related to the infilling of part of a farm field in 1991) and site sources such as the nearby petrol station and fuel tanks.

7.115 Following this, ground investigations were completed, in the form of excavation of 28No. machine excavated trial pits and 23No. windowless sample boreholes across the open field areas together with 14No. hand dug sample points across the areas of woodland. This confirmed there is no significant contamination present on the Site.

7.116 However, prior to the construction works, further ground investigation would be undertaken at the Site in order to establish the extent of any contamination risks in the area of former chicken sheds. Extensive remedial measures are unlikely to be required, but there could be localised contamination in the form of asbestos fragments in the soils. If discovered, these would be removed from Site prior to construction under controlled conditions to prevent the generation of any hazardous dusts. Any other risks can be mitigated through design or implementation of a Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) during construction. On this basis, mitigation required is considered minimal.

7.117 The proposals therefore accord with the NPPF and Development Plan requirements in regard to contamination and creation of a safe living environment for future occupiers.

xiii) Planning Obligations

7.118 A Section 106 between the applicant and WDC would be entered into to secure the creation and ongoing management of the SANG, the provision of affordable housing, and the payment of SAMMs contributions.

7.119 CIL contributions towards the provision of physical and social infrastructure would be made at the Reserved Matters stage. WDC would be responsible for distributing CIL contributions towards relevant targeted improvements.

7.120 In the event that requests for commuted sums are made by statutory consultees during the application process these would be secured through a Section 106 agreement. The actual sums, triggers and precise wording is to be agreed prior to determination of the application. However, all contributions must be substantiated and justified in the context

of the NPPF and Regulation 122 and 123 of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended).

8.0 PLANNING BALANCE AND CONCLUSIONS

8.1 The application seeks to secure planning permission for up to 424 new homes, including affordable housing, alongside significant new open space and recreational opportunities, including the creation of a strategic SANG for north-west Uckfield.

8.2 The Site is sustainably located, being within reasonable walking and cycling distance to the services and facilities of Uckfield, the accessibility to which would be enhanced by the proposed new and improved pedestrian and cycle routes within the Site and in the surrounding area.

8.3 WDC currently cannot demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply, and there is therefore in principle a clear and compelling need for housing delivery across the District. Moreover, while the Site is located outside of the defined settlement boundary, WDC has acknowledge that, in the context of its out of date local plan, the policies which direct development to inside settlement boundaries are out of date.

8.4 The technical assessments submitted in support of the application, alongside the Environmental Statement, confirm that the proposal accords with a range of environmental considerations, including planning policies in respect of highways and transport, heritage, flood risk, trees, landscape and ecology, including Ancient Woodland. In addition, it has been demonstrated that the proposals deliver a wide range of social, environmental and economic benefits, including:

Social Benefits:

- The delivery of up-to 424 much needed new homes including affordable housing, supporting the creation of strong, vibrant and healthy communities and helping to reduce inequalities;
- Creation of additional choice and opportunity in the housing market including a variety of unit types;
- Improvements to health and well-being, for new residents as well as those existing in the surrounding area, through the provision of a variety of high-quality accessible open spaces and new opportunities for recreation throughout the Site;
- New play space for children provided in an accessible and secure area within public open space; and
- Creation of a new strategic SANG with capacity to support the proposed development alongside an additional 424 dwellings from other developments.

Economic Benefits:

- Provision of an estimated 130 direct jobs during construction alongside an additional 126 indirect jobs supported over the construction phase, totalling £74.9 million in economic output (Gross Value Added);
- The growing workforce would deliver an estimated £16.9 million per year in terms of economic output (Gross Value Added);
- An estimated £11.4 million per year increase in spending on convenience goods, comparison goods and expenditure on leisure goods and services in the local area;
- A one-off benefit for WDC through the provision of £856,700 in New Homes Bonus payments;
- An estimated £1.2 million per annum in Council Tax receipts; and
- Additional employment opportunities through the provision of SANG and its ongoing management / maintenance.

Environmental Benefits:

- The Site is not within a designated site of international or national importance and development on the Site would reduce pressures on more sensitive locations elsewhere in the Borough;
- The Site is an accessible location and would provide additional connections and improvements to pedestrian and cycle routes and highway improvements;
- The proposed development is not located within an area of flood risk;
- Through the delivery of a high-quality sensitive scheme development provides the opportunity to enhance the natural environment in terms of both landscape and ecology;
- The protection of ecological habitats during construction through tree and hedgerow protection and mitigation measures and use of site safeguards for specific species; and;
- Creation of new habitat features including new landscape planting, and new habitats opportunities for specific species groups providing significant net gains to biodiversity, including a 27.12% net gain for habitats and a 86.41% net gain in hedgerow habitats

8.5 In the context of NPPF Para 11 d) i. this Planning Statement has demonstrated that there are no policies of the Framework that provide a clear reason for refusing this application, and that no adverse impacts arise from the development that would significantly and

demonstrably outweigh the proposal's clear and compelling benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

8.6 It has therefore been demonstrated that the proposal comprises high quality sustainable development and, in accordance with the NPPF, the application should therefore be approved without delay.

APPENDIX A

Site and Location Plan

N

Site

DOWNLANDS FARM, UCKFIELD

Drawing

Site location plan

Scale

1:5000@A2

Date

30.05.22

Drawing ref 1309.**01**

0 50 100 150 200 250m

KEY

Site boundary

Other land within applicants control

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APPENDIX B

Parameter Plan - Land Use and Access

Site

DOWNLANDS FARM, UCKFIELD

Drawing

PARAMETER PLAN
Land use and access

Scale

1:2000@A1

Date

30.05.22

Drawing ref 1309.**03**

KEY

- Site boundary
- Development area including C3 residential uses, roads, parking, open space, Sustainable Urban Drainage System and landscaping and associated infrastructure **(Up to 15.1 ha)**
- Green Infrastructure including existing landscape, landscape buffers, landscape planting, public open space, SANGS, pedestrian and cycle routes and sustainable urban drainage systems and associated infrastructure
- Proposed vehicular access
- Emergency access
- Proposed cycle / pedestrian access

N

A22

A22

SNATTS ROAD

CLAREMONT RISE

LOT LANE

CAMBERE

DOWNLANDS RISE

HUNTERS WAY

ROOSS ROAD

0 20 40 60 80 100m

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APPENDIX C

Parameter Plan - Land Use Green Infrastructure

Site

DOWNLANDS FARM, UCKFIELD

Drawing

PARAMETER PLAN
Green Infrastructure

Scale

1:2000@A1

Date

30.05.22

Drawing ref 1309.**04**

KEY

- Site boundary
- Amenity open space
- Natural greenspace
- Boundary of SANG
- Protective fencing to Lake Woods boundary to prevent informal access

N

A22

A22

SNATTS ROAD

CLAREMONT RISE

LOT LANE

CAUSEWAY

SNATTS ROAD

HOWARD CRESCENT

HUNTERS WAY

SNATTS ROAD

HUNTERS WAY

RIDGE ROAD

0 20 40 60 80 100m

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APPENDIX D

Parameter Plan - Land Use Scale

Site

DOWNLANDS FARM, UCKFIELD

Drawing

PARAMETER PLAN
Scale

Scale
1:2000@A1

Date
30.05.22

Drawing ref 1309.**05**

KEY

- Site boundary
- 2 storeys with a maximum of 10% of buildings up to 2.5 storeys
- 2 storeys with a maximum of 2.5% of buildings up to 2.5 storeys

Maxmium building height 11.5m above existing ground level

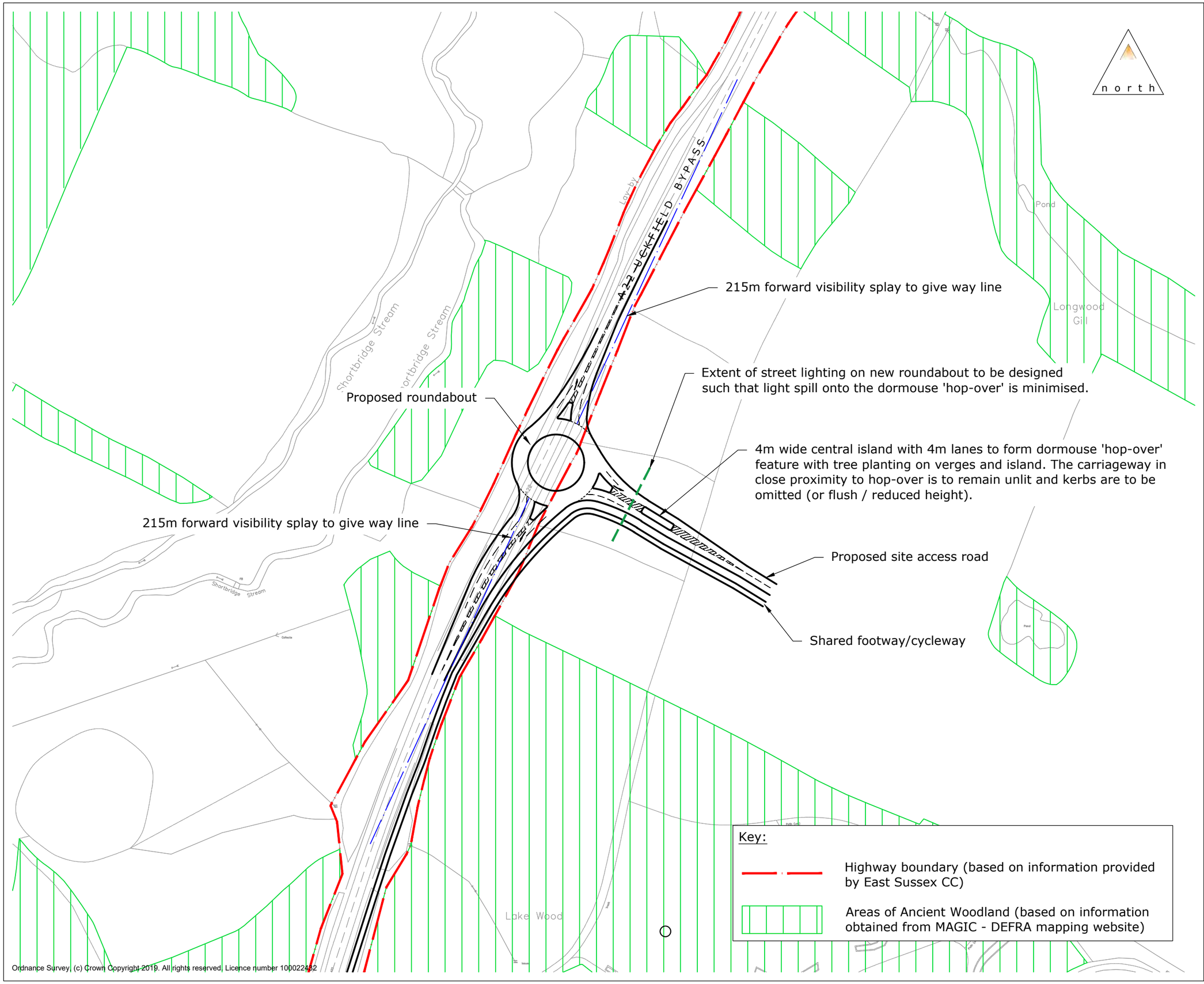
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APPENDIX E

Site Access Roundabout



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motion

84 North Street
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Surrey
GU1 4AU

T: 01483 531 300

Cargo Works
1-2 Hatfields
London
SE1 9PG

T: 020 8065 5208

www.motion.co.uk

Project:
Downlands Farm, Uckfield

Title:
Site Access Roundabout

Scale: 1:2,000 (@ A3)

Drawing: 2001061-101

Revision: A

APPENDIX F

Proposed Emergency Access

Key:

Highway boundary (based on information provided by East Sussex CC)

Areas of Ancient Woodland

2.4m x 215m visibility splay

Proposed dropped / splayed kerb for emergency vehicle use only

Removable barrier / bollards secured with FB14 type locks to prevent use by unauthorised vehicles

Existing layby to be retained

3.7

A22

LAYBY

ED & Ward Bdy

north

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Cargo Works
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www.motion.co.uk

Project:
Downlands Farm, Uckfield

Title:
Proposed Emergency Access

Scale: 1:1,000 (@ A3)

Drawing: 2001061-102

Revision: B

C:\Users\JulianSmith\OneDrive - Motion\gluckf 2001061\Drawings\2001061-102b [Emergency Access].dwg

APPENDIX G

Illustrative Masterplan



Site
DOWNLANDS FARM, UCKFIELD

Drawing
Illustrative masterplan

Scale
1:2000@A1

Date
30.05.22

Drawing ref 1309.**02**

KEY

Site boundary

richards urban design

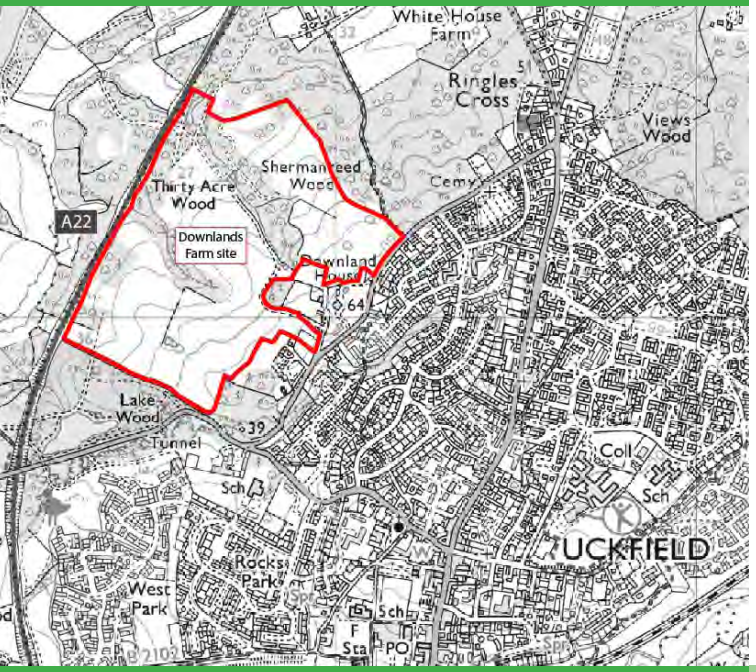
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APPENDIX H

Consultation Leaflet

LAND AT DOWNLANDS FARM, UCKFIELD

Proposed new homes, public open space and woodland park



COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

November 2020

Our proposals

Gleeson Strategic Land is preparing a planning application for new housing, public open space and a woodland park on land at Downlands Farm, Uckfield (edged red on the plan).

A draft illustrative masterplan has been prepared to demonstrate how the site could suitably provide up to 430 new homes, public open space incorporating a children's play area and sports pitch, a new 44 acre woodland park, additional landscape planting and areas for natural habitat/open green space to host wildlife/flora and fauna.

Opportunities to enhance local facilities and infrastructure will also be provided as part of the proposals, either within the site or via financial contributions to be delivered through the planning permission which will benefit the wider community.

It is envisaged that the development would comprise a mix of 1, 2, 3 and 4 bedroom homes to meet a wide range of housing needs in the community including provision of 30% affordable homes. The new homes will be of a high quality design, to complement and reflect the existing character of Uckfield and the wider area.

The vehicular access to the site would be provided from the A22 with new and improved links to the town centre for cyclists and pedestrians.

It is expected that a planning application will be submitted in early 2021. A dedicated web site has been set up which provides further information and to allow for feedback.

www.downlandsfarm.co.uk

Your comments

We value your views so please complete and return this freepost leaflet, visit our web site and fill in the form, or email your comments to consultation@mjgleeson.com

Please respond by **Sunday 3rd January** to enable us to consider your comments before finalising the proposals.

TO RETURN PLEASE CUT ALONG THIS LINE BEFORE POSTING

Feedback form

Q1. **Do you support the provision of new homes, including affordable homes?**

YES ☐ NO ☐ DON'T KNOW ☐

Q2. **Do you support the provision of a new woodland park?**

YES ☐ NO ☐ DON'T KNOW ☐

Q3. **What would you like to see included as part of the proposal?**

Q4. **Do you have any other comments?**

If you would like to be informed as the proposals emerge please leave your name and address and/or email. (Please put "Downlands Farm proposals" in the email header.) Your details will only be retained until the end of the planning process for the site, after which time they will be deleted. Please note that there is no obligation to provide your details.

Name: .....

Address: .....

.....

Email: .....

Business Reply Plus
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RTEH-XCSC-KHAG

Gleeson Strategic Land
Sentinel House
Harvest Crescent
Fleet
GU51 2UZ

DRAFT ILLUSTRATIVE MASTERPLAN



bartonwillmore.co.uk

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ARCHITECTURE
LANDSCAPE PLANNING & DESIGN
SUSTAINABLE VALUE
INFRASTRUCTURE & ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING
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