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Transport Hearing Statement on behalf of Obsidian Strategic Asset Management Ltd.

Mockbeggars Farm, London Road, Budletts Common, Uckfield, TN22 2EA

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1 QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

1.1 OVERVIEW

1.1.1 My name is Simon Andrew Moon. I have a Master of Science degree in Transport from Imperial College London / University College London. I am a Chartered Member of the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport and a Member of the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation. I have 20 years' experience in the field of highways and transportation, within transport development engineering and planning consultancies.

1.1.2 I am a Director at DHA Transport, consultants in transport and development planning, where I have worked for 13 and a half years. Prior to this I worked for Ardent Consulting Engineers and Millard Consulting.

2 BACKGROUND AND SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

2.1 BACKGROUND

2.1.1 The site is located to the east of London Road in north Uckfield, between the residential areas of Budletts to the north and Ringles Cross to the south and is approximately 1.3km to the north of Uckfield town centre. To the north the villages of Five Ashdown and Maresfield are around 900m and 1.4km from the site respectively.

2.1.2 The site is currently accessed via a farm track off London Road, located to the north, which leads to Mockbeggars Farm. The site currently comprises of two agricultural fields primarily used for grazing.

2.1.3 The western boundary includes an existing hedge adjacent to London Road. To the east, north and south are residential dwellings with Mockbeggars Farm itself located to the north, beyond which is a Caravan showroom and used car dealership. To the west of London Road is more agricultural land and to the southwest is a large area of woodland.

2.1.4 The Proposed Development comprises the construction of a new residential development of 60 dwellings including a new access on London Road and an internal spine road. A detailed description of the proposals is provided in the Planning Statement (CD3.2) and Design and Access Statement (CD3.3).

2.1.5 Vehicular access to the site will be derived from a new priority junction with London Road. A carriageway width of 5.5 metres will be provided on the site spine road and kerb radii at the proposed access will be 8 metres to accommodate larger vehicle movements. A two metre wide pedestrian footway is proposed on the southern side of the access junction, linking to a proposed new pedestrian crossing and southbound bus stop on London Road. The crossing will be provided with a refuge island, tactile paving and drop kerbs.

2.1.6 Whilst the above application was recommended for approval by the Head of Planning and Environmental Services, it was refused at Wealden's Planning Committee North on 15th June 2023. In summary, this was due to the perceived harm to landscape character, potential biodiversity impacts, and the inefficient use of land. There was no highways reason for the refusal and no outstanding objections from East Sussex County Council (ESCC) Highways. The Decision Notice was subsequently issued on 22nd June 2023 (CD4.1), and this has led to this appeal.

2.1.7 However, on 1st December 2023, the Council took the decision to withdraw from the appeal, and to not defend it. The Appellant and PINS were notified of this decision by the Council's Head of Planning Mr Stacey Robins.

2.2 SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

2.2.1 As the reasons for refusal do not include any highway specific matters this Hearing Statement looks to focus on the saliant aspects which have been raised through the planning process, along with points by third parties. Given this, the remaining sections of this Hearing Statement are as follows:

- Section 3 sets out the local highway context within the vicinity of the site;
- Section 4 provides details of local pedestrian and cycle connections;
- Section 5 outlines the proposed site access and highway works;
- Section 6 sets out the estimated trip generation from the proposed development;
- Section 7 looks at the impacts of the proposed development on the local highway network;
- Section 8 assesses points raised by third parties; and
- Section 9 provides a conclusion.

3 LOCAL HIGHWAY NETWORK

3.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE LOCAL HIGHWAY NETWORK

3.1.1 To the north London Road joins with the A26 at the Budletts Roundabout before continuing north to Maresfield. The A26 is a primary road that links Newhaven in the south with Maidstone in the north via Lewes, Uckfield, Tunbridge Wells and Tonbridge.

3.1.2 Just before the roundabout, the A272 meets London Road from the east at a limited movement priority junction. The A272 links Petersfield and the A3 in the west with the A267 in the east via Billinghurst and Haywards Heath, albeit it stops for a short distance near Maresfield.

3.1.3 Just to the south of the Budletts Roundabout the A26 joins with the A22 at a further roundabout allowing the A22 to serve as a bypass for Uckfield. The A22 broadly runs from north to south from the A23 and Purley in the north to Eastbourne in the south via East Grinstead, Uckfield and Hailsham. The A26, which stops for a short distance near Uckfield, re-joins the A22 at a roundabout further to the south.

3.1.4 To the south of the site, London Road leads to Uckfield town centre and High Street. High Street then leads to New Town which meets Lewes Road and Eastbourne Road. Lewes Road heads south to meet the A22 and A26, whereas Eastbourne Road heads southeast and meets the A22.

3.1.5 The London Road junction with the A272 does not permit right turn movements from London Road. As such, any journeys heading east along the A272 from this location would route via Coopers Green Road. London Road meets Coopers Green Road at a simple priority junction to the south of the site. Coopers Green Road runs in a general north / south alignment and meets the A272 at a signalised crossroads junction with Five Ash Down.

3.1.6 London Road is formed of a single carriageway directly adjacent to the site and the speed limit in this location is 60mph. This reduces to 40mph as the road reaches Ringles Cross. At its junction with the access to Mockbeggars Farm London Road has a carriageway width of approximately 6.8m and is maintained to a good standard. Currently no parking restrictions are present in this area.

4 CONNECTIVITY TO UCKFIELD

4.1 EXISTING PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLE INFRASTRUCTURE

4.1.1 London Road currently has a continuous footway on the western side of the carriageway that leads to Budletts Roundabout in the north and Uckfield town centre in the south. As the footway passes the site it is set back from the carriageway via a grass verge which is around 1.5m in width. At Ringles Cross there is a footway on both sides of the carriageway, and these continue onwards south into Uckfield town centre.

4.1.2 Several Public Rights of Way (PRoW) can be found near to the site. These are illustrated in Figure 4-1 below. Footpaths (purple lines) and a Restricted Byway (green line) provide access to other locations within the surrounding area. The Wealdway is located to the northeast and is a promoted route (yellow line).

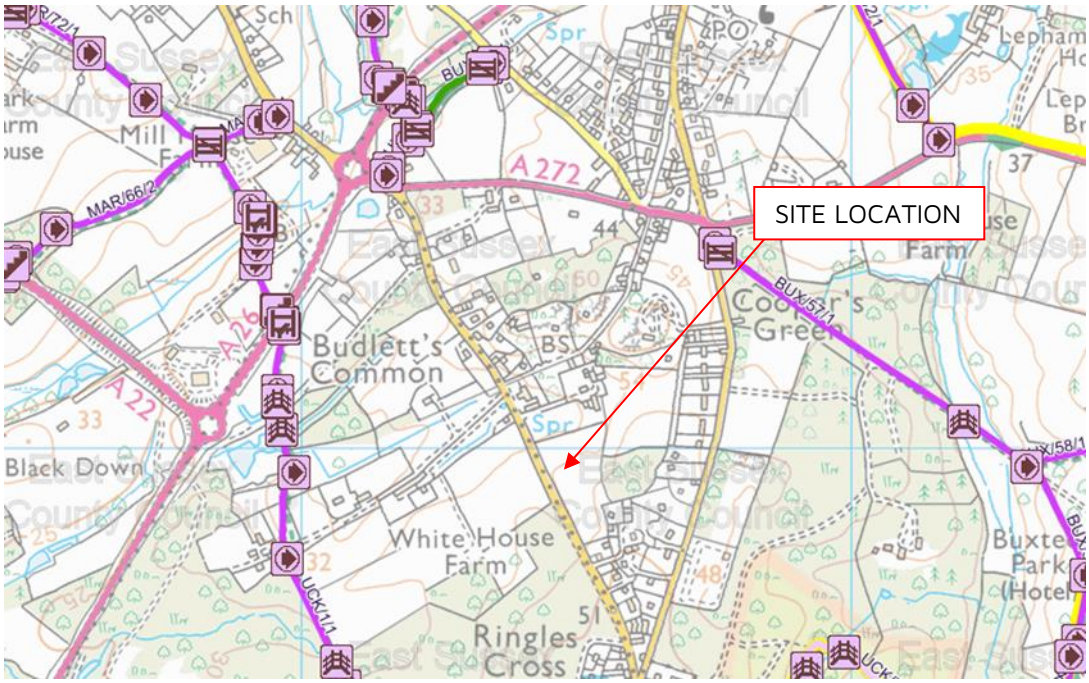


FIGURE 4-1: LOCAL PROW NETWORK (COURTESY OF EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL)

4.1.3 The nearest National Cycle Route (NCR) is NCR 21 to the east of the site which passes through Heathfield as shown in Figure 4-2 below. This is a long-distance route connecting Greenwich and Eastbourne.



FIGURE 4-2: LOCAL CYCLE NETWORK (COURTESY OF SUSTRANS)

4.2 WALKING AND CYCLING DISTANCES TO SERVICES AND FACILITIES

4.2.1 In terms of services and amenities there is a public house within close proximity, some 400m to the south, with a good range of facilities located within Uckfield. The nearest convenience store is 1.1km to the south on London Road and can be accessed via the existing and improved footways set out in Section 5 below.

4.2.2 Although the existing bus stops are located over 300m from the site, as is also set out in the section below, it is proposed that additional stops will be provided within approximately 30m and 100m of the development for southbound and northbound services respectively. As per the existing stops on London Road the proposed stops will be served by routes which call at least twice hourly.

4.2.3 The nearest railway station to the site is Uckfield, located approximately 2.2km to the south. The station is operated by Southern and provides on average an hourly service to London Bridge via Crowborough and Edenbridge. The station is accessible by foot, taking approximately 28 minutes. However, this journey can also be made via the above bus routes, taking around 10 minutes depending on the time of day. Furthermore, cycle parking is available at the station.

4.2.4 A summary of walking and cycling routes to local services and facilities is provided below in Table 4-1.

Service / Facility	Distance	Walk Time	Cycle Time
Bus Stop	100m	1 minutes	0.5 minutes
Public House	400m	5 minutes	2 minutes
Convenience Store (fuel station)	1,100m	14 minutes	5 minutes
Veterinarian	1,100m	14 minutes	5 minutes
Tesco Express	1,200m	15 minutes	5 minutes
Fish and Chip Shop	1,200m	15 minutes	5 minutes
Dentist	1,400m	18 minutes	6 minutes
Takeaway	1,500m	19 minutes	6 minutes
Secondary School	1,500m	19 minutes	6 minutes
Uckfield Town Centre	1,600m	20 minutes	7 minutes
Primary School	1,700m	21 minutes	7 minutes
Leisure Centre	1,700m	21 minutes	7 minutes
Church	1,800m	23 minutes	8 minutes
Railway Station	2,200m	28 minutes	9 minutes

TABLE 4-1: DISTANCE TO LOCAL SERVICES AND FACILITIES

4.2.5 The walk times provided above are based on a walk speed of 80 metres per minute, a figure which is widely used to estimate walk times and used within the London based Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL) analysis. It aims to provide a typical average value that estimates it takes five minutes to walk 400 metres, 10 minutes to walk 800 metres and so on. The cycle times are based on a cycle speed of 14km per hour (approximately 233m per minute), which is referred to in the Department for Transport (DfT) guidance.

4.2.6 Given the details outlined above it is noted that the proposed development site provides the opportunity for everyday trips to take place without a high reliance on car travel. Future residents of the site will be able to purchase groceries, take their children to school and access local shops without the need to use private transport.

4.2.7 To promote walking, cycling and bus trips to and from the site it is proposed that a Travel Plan Statement will come forward as part of the proposals (CD3.19). This will look to promote alternative modes to the private car and will provide new residents with an information pack setting out details on local facilities, services, footways and bus stops.

5 PROPOSED ACCESS AND HIGHWAY WORKS

5.1 ACCESS

5.1.1 As noted, vehicular access to the site will be derived from a new priority junction with London Road. Although this section of road is subject to a 60mph speed restriction, in order to determine the actual vehicle speeds that occur, a weeklong Automatic Traffic Count (ATC) survey was completed commencing 10th June 2021. Data associated with this is attached to the DHA Transport Assessment (TA) dated January 2022 (CD3.12).

5.1.2 The recorded 85th percentile speeds were 50.3mph and 52.10mph in the northbound and southbound directions respectively. Visibility splays were therefore calculated in accordance with the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) for the observed 85th percentile road speeds.

5.1.3 A calculation using the DMRB stopping distance formula and a reaction time of 2.0 seconds together with a deceleration rate of 2.45m/s^2, showed that the above 85th percentile speeds would require Stopping Sight Distances (SSDs) of 148.11 metres to the south of the access and 157.23 to the north.

5.1.4 It is possible to achieve in excess of these visibility requirements, providing visibility sight lines of 171 metres to the south and in excess of 215 metres to the north, both from a position of 2.4 metres back from the edge of the carriageway. Although this will require the removal of a section of the existing hedge within the site frontage, this will be reinstated behind the proposed visibility splays.

5.1.5 Notwithstanding that the necessary splays can be achieved with respect to the current recorded speeds on London Road, as per discussions with ESCC at the post application stage, it is proposed that the existing 40mph speed limit to the south be extended northwards to include the site frontage. It is proposed that the 40mph speed limit will commence approximately 90 metres south of the Budletts roundabout.

5.1.6 The new speed limit will commence with a roundel and section of buff surfacing. Repeater signs will also be present on London Road until the speed limit reduces to 30mph to the south. The inclusion of the bus stop (detailed below), refuge island and crossing point will act to reinforce the new speed limit.

5.1.7 To assess the suitability of the extended speed limit a second ATC was completed to the north of Chichester Caravans, the results of which are attached to the DHA Technical Note dated January 2023 (CD3.15). The survey showed 85th percentile speeds of 43mph in a northbound direction and 48mph in a southbound direction. The mean speeds were recorded at 37mph in a northbound direction and 40mph in a southbound direction. As the recorded speeds are not dissimilar to the target speed limit there are no concerns over the reduction in speed limit.

5.1.8 An independent stage 1 Road Safety Audit (RSA) was completed at the pre application stage and then this was updated at the post application stage as the above proposals changed and developed. The latest version was completed in October 2022 and is appended to the DHA Technical Note dated November 2022 (CD3.14). With respect to the proposed access the RSA only raised one point, which is in connection to the gradient of the access road as it leads into the site.

5.1.9 It was noted that a relatively flat dwell area should be designed into the access road near the give way line. To address this point the Designers Response outlined that gradients will be reviewed at the detailed design stage, where a gradient of 1:25 will be targeted for the first section of the access road to provide a dwell area.

5.2 HIGHWAY WORKS

5.2.1 A number of improvements are proposed as part of the development. These include the widening of the footway to the west of London Road, in a location where it currently 'pinches' adjacent to Ringles Cottages. The widening will continue south from this location to the junction with Snatts Road. The result of this will be a footway which does not reduce below 1.9m in width, a width which is considered acceptable with respect to both Manual for Streets (MfS) and the Inclusive Mobility document.

5.2.2 The footway widening would not have a detrimental effect on the highway in this location, with the carriageway not reducing below 6.4m in width, a width which has been accepted by the aforementioned RSA. Furthermore, it is proposed that the hedge in this location be trimmed back to prevent it from oversailing the highway.

5.2.3 To ensure this new widened section of footway remains unrestricted it is proposed that bollards will be provided within the vicinity of the cottages. This is acceptable given that the footway width of 1.9m is sufficiently wide to allow for this street furniture, without it restricting the flow of pedestrians. Coupled with the bollards a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) has been offered through a suitably worded condition to enforce no parking in this location.

5.2.4 To address concerns over how the bollards and TRO could displace any existing parking it is proposed to provide a layby some 60 metres to the north of the footway widening. This will provide an alternative place for up to four vehicles to park. Residents using the layby will be able to access it via the proposed widened footway.

5.2.5 Given the layby spaces are only 60 metres away from the existing properties, when combined with parking restrictions it is considered that residents will choose to park in the spaces provided. Indeed, the layby will offer parking away from the running lane of the carriageway which will be seen as an attractive incentive to use it.

5.2.6 To ensure the proposed layby is of a sufficient size to cater for demand, parking beat surveys were completed on three weekdays (30th and 31st January and 1st February 2023) and two weekend days (28th and 29th January 2023) at roughly 04:30 in the morning, on the stretch of London Road that fronts Ringles Cottages.

5.2.7 These surveys, which are included in the DHA Technical Note dated February 2023 (CD3.17), showed that a maximum of four vehicles parked in front of the cottages on all five nights. Given this the proposed layby will be suitable to accommodate any vehicles which may be displaced by the proposed footway widening and parking restrictions.

5.2.8 With respect to the Snatts Road junction, consideration has been given to how pedestrian visibility can be improved in this location. It is proposed that the northern radius will be tightened to 6.0 metres to allow for pedestrian visibility splays in excess of 2 x 25 metres, which equate to a speed of 20mph. This is the maximum speed that vehicles will be approaching the junction give way line on the minor arm. Dropped kerbs and tactile paving will be provided on either side of Snatts Road to aid pedestrian movements.

5.2.9 These proposals have been assessed with swept path analysis with two 7.5t box vans passing one another at the junction, as this is the weight limit on Snatts Road. This analysis has shown that these vehicles can pass one another without concern. Furthermore, vehicle swept path analysis has also been completed using an 11.97 metre refuse vehicle to show a worst case. This analysis has shown that the junction can suitably accommodate this size of vehicle.

5.2.10 In addition to the above footway improvements, it is proposed to enhance the existing bus stop provision. As outlined above, it is proposed that a southbound bus stop will be located just to the south of the proposed access and this will be accessible by the new footway provision. This will take the form of a bus cage, flag and pole.

5.2.11 A northbound bus stop is proposed within the existing layby to the north of the site. This will be accessible via the new crossing point and the existing footway to the west of London Road. The stop will consist of a flag, post and a bus cage, to secure a bus being able to access the kerbside.

5.2.12 As with the access design the above proposals have been subject to the same RSA process. The latest version of the audit only raised two further points regarding the offsite works, one, that a bus stop clearway should be installed at the proposed stop in the layby, and two, the carriageway at the footway widening should not narrow to less than 6.4m. Both of these have been taken into account in the final highway proposals, which can be seen attached to the DHA Technical Note dated January 2023 (CD3.15).

6 TRAFFIC GENERATION

6.1 OVERVIEW

6.1.1 The estimated vehicle trip generation from the proposed development was calculated within the TA. This was completed using the national TRICS trip rate database for both the likely affordable and private dwellings proposed.

6.1.2 Survey sites outside of London, in England, Scotland and Wales, were considered within the software, with dwelling numbers ranging between four and 200 in *'Suburban Area'* and *'Edge of Town'* locations. These location types were considered most appropriate, in accordance with the TRICS Good Practice Guide, however only sites with lower populations in the surrounding area were selected in order to ensure that a robust forecast was provided.

6.1.3 Weekday periods were assessed to provide a robust consideration of peak traffic conditions. A summary of the resulting trip generation is provided in Table 6-1 below.

TIME	ARRIVALS	DEPARTURES	TOTAL
0800-0900	8	22	30
1700-1800	20	11	31
0700-1900	136	140	276

TABLE 6-1: TOTAL VEHICLE TRIP GENERATION (60 DWELLINGS)

6.1.4 Table 6-1 demonstrates that the proposed development has the potential to generate 30 vehicle trips in the AM traffic peak hour, 31 vehicle trips in the PM peak traffic hour and a total of 276 vehicle trips across the day – an average of 23 trips per hour.

6.1.5 In the context of existing vehicle movements on the local highway network, the above level of additional movements is not considered to represent a 'severe' impact, with reference to NPPF paragraph 115. Notwithstanding this, as part of the work completed within the TA, further detailed capacity impact assessments were completed, as set out in the following section of this Hearing Statement.

7 IMPACTS ON THE HIGHWAY

7.1 OVERVIEW

7.1.1 This section of the Hearing Statement does not look to recreate the work completed within the TA, but to provide a summary of the work and the subsequent findings.

7.1.2 Initially to understand the impacts on the local highway network, a trip distribution assessment was undertaken using Census 2011 *'Location of usual residence and place of work by method of travel to work WU03EW'* data. Using this information in tandem with the Google real-time journey planner it was possible to ascertain the likely routing options of those travelling to and from the proposed development.

7.1.3 In order to establish a traffic baseline, manual traffic counts were undertaken on Wednesday 24th of November 2021. The counts were then converted into Passenger Car Units (PCUs) based on the relevant conversion factors and used to produce baseline 2021 traffic data.

7.1.4 To allow for the assessment of future traffic on the local highway network, traffic growth factors were applied to the existing traffic flows. These were calculated using the industry standard software TEMPro v.7.2. In order to assess the proportional impact of the proposed development a *'Do Minimum'* scenario was then developed, which includes vehicle movements forecast to be generated by the development in addition to all existing and projected traffic.

7.2 JUNCTION CAPACITY ASSESSMENTS

7.2.1 Junction capacity modelling was undertaken for local junctions using industry standard software, namely ARCADY, PICADY and LinSig. Below is a summary of the performance of the junctions considered.

7.2.2 London Road / Coopers Green Road priority junction – this junction is forecast to operate well within its design capacity in all future year assessment scenarios with and without the development traffic added to the network.

7.2.3 A272 / Coopers Green Road / Five Ash Down signalised crossroads – this junction is forecast to operate within its design capacity in all future year assessment scenarios with and without the development traffic added to the network.

7.2.4 London Road / A272 priority junction – one arm at the junction is expected to operate over its practical capacity in the am peak hour in the future year scenario. However, the vehicle movements generated by the proposed development are shown to have minimal impact, with a change in queue length of just 0.4 vehicles.

This degree of change is not considered to represent a severe residual impact with reference to the NPPF Paragraph 115.

7.2.5 Budletts Roundabout – this junction is forecast to operate well within its design capacity in all future year assessment scenarios with and without the development traffic added to the network.

7.2.6 London Road / site access priority junction – this junction is forecast to operate well within its design capacity in all future year assessment scenarios with development traffic added to the network.

8 THIRD PARTY ISSUES

8.1 OVERVIEW

8.1.1 This section of my Hearing Statement reviews the position of third parties, namely The Mockbeggars Residents' Steering Group, in respect to highways and transportation matters. To understand the issues at hand, a review has been completed of the Statement of Case of the aforementioned group dated December 2023.

8.1.2 Within this document it has been stated that the proposed development will be unsustainable due to the fact that the residents will be predominantly reliant on cars. It is noted that this view is based on, in part, the community's experience of the area, and the distance and accessibility issues between the proposed development and key infrastructure - shops, schools, surgeries, supermarkets etc.

8.1.3 In response to this point the information provided in Section 4 of this Hearing Statement has shown that a number of services and facilities are within a reasonable walking and cycling distance. Guidance from the Institute of Highways and Transportation, titled *'Providing for Journeys on Foot'* outlines acceptable walk distances. Although the report is now somewhat elderly, being dated 2000, it does provide useful guidance where other documents are silent.

8.1.4 Within this report it is stated that the preferred maximum walk distance to a town centre, commuting facility / school and elsewhere is 800m, 2,000m and 1,200m respectfully. This shows that where the infrastructure is provided people are prepared to walk the distances set out in Section 4 to access local facilities. Furthermore, the proposed improvements to the bus stop facilities and the provision of the Travel Plan Statement will act to encourage the use of modes other than the private car.

8.1.5 The residents group go on to state that the inhospitable nature of London Road means that it is not conducive for those on foot or bicycle, especially for families with small children and the elderly. Furthermore, with one entrance the residents group claim the development will be isolated with no immediate access to the local communities.

8.1.6 In response to this, Section 5 of this Hearing Statement has set out how the existing footway provision on London Road and the crossing point on Snatts Road will be materially improved as a result of the proposed development. These improvements will provide a wider pedestrian link, with better visibility where necessary, promoting a safer environment. As the footway to the west of London Road is segregated from the carriageway as it passes the site, via grass verge, this provides additional comfort to those on foot.

8.1.7 The proposals are provided with a single point of access to limit conflict points on London Road and this is appropriate for the size of development proposed. The

improved footway and crossing provision will however aid its integration into the local community.

9 CONCLUSIONS

9.1 OVERVIEW

9.1.1 I am retained by Obsidian Strategic Asset Management Ltd. to provide independent expert transport planning advice in relation to the proposed residential development at Mockbeggars Farm, London Road, Budletts Common, Uckfield, TN22 2EA.

9.1.2 My Hearing Statement has demonstrated that in highways and transportation terms the proposed development will not lead to unacceptable or severe impacts on the local highway network, as defined by the National Planning Policy Framework, and should proceed without delay. It is therefore respectfully requested that the Appeal be allowed.