



Planning Statement

GVA
3 Brindleyplace
Birmingham
B1 2JB

Outline Planning Application for Residential Development and Associated Works

Land at Tidbury Green Farm, Tidbury Green, Solihull

October 2013

Lioncourt Homes

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1. Introduction and Instructions

- 1.1 GVA is instructed by Lioncourt Homes (Lioncourt) to prepare, submit and manage an outline planning application for residential development on land at Tidbury Green Farm. Lioncourt controls approximately 25.5 hectares of land at Tidbury Green Farm. The land under Lioncourt's control was previously promoted by the landowners, who made representations to the previous and current versions of the Development Plan for Solihull.
- 1.2 Lioncourt is also promoting the site through the emerging Local Plan.
- 1.3 GVA is responsible for preparing the town planning inputs to the application and for its management. A team of technical consultants has been assembled which has prepared the documents submitted in support of the application. The consultant team and its input to the scheme is summarised as follows:

Consultant	Documents Prepared
GVA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning Statement
Define	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and Access Statement
Cooper Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscape Appraisal
The Waterman Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecological Appraisal • Protected Species Report • Arboricultural Survey Report • Heritage Desk Based Assessment
Atkins Consulting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport Assessment • Framework Travel Plan • Flood Risk Assessment
SLR Global Environmental Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability Appraisal
PPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Consultation Statement

- 1.4 The technical reports are summarised in subsequent sections of the Planning Statement.

Contents of Planning Statement

- 1.5 Section 2 includes a description of important features on the site and the area that surrounds it.
- 1.6 Section 3 considers the planning history for the site, which is very limited. It also considers a planning application for residential development made recently on another "safeguarded" site in Tidbury Green.
- 1.7 Section 4 considers the consultation exercises that have been carried out prior to the submission of the application. These have included, broadly:

- engagement with local residents and stakeholders to canvas their opinion on the proposals; and
 - engagement with officers from Solihull Borough Council in order to ensure the preparation of a robust application that meets the Council's requirements.
- 1.8 Section 5 considers the proposals in detail and explains which matters are to be considered now and which are reserved for subsequent approval by the local planning authority.
- 1.9 Section 6 considers adopted development plan policy, which is limited to those policies in the Solihull Unitary Development Plan (UDP) which have been "saved" until replaced by policies in the emerging Local Development Framework.
- 1.10 Section 7 considers other material considerations and in particular the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework).
- 1.11 Section 8 considers the emerging Solihull Local Plan and concludes on the weight that can be attached to the specific provisions in the plan which relate to the application site.
- 1.12 Section 9 considers the site's sustainability credentials, the relevance of which is significant to subsequent sections.
- 1.13 Section 10 considers the planning merits of the proposals and addresses these firstly as a matter of principle and then as matters of detail.
- 1.14 Section 11 considers the package of planning obligations which will accompany the proposals and confirms that this is to be refined and agreed with the local planning authority during the determination of the application and pending the outcome of an appeal.
- 1.15 Section 12 sets out our conclusions on the proposals.

2. The Site and Surrounding Area

Site Description

- 2.1 The site lies immediately to the east of Fulford Hall Road on the eastern side of the settlement of Tidbury Green. Tidbury Green is approximately 300 metres to the east of Grimes Hill / Wythall and approximately 800 metres to the south west of Dickens Heath. Shirley town centre is approximately 3km to the north and Solihull town centre is approximately 6km to the north east.
- 2.2 Lioncourt Homes controls approximately 25.5 hectares of land at Tidbury Green Farm. This is divided into two broad parcels. The western parcel is excluded from the Green Belt and has an area of approximately 11.5 hectares. The eastern parcel is within the Green Belt and has an area of approximately 14 hectares. Residential development is proposed on the western parcel (outside the Green Belt) only. Approximately 3 hectares of land from the eastern parcel is included within the red line boundary for the site. However, no built development is proposed on this land.
- 2.3 The planning application site is bounded to the north by the Tidbury Green Farm buildings, which include the farmhouse and its associated outbuildings, and by the Tidbury Green School and Nursery. To the north east of the site is Dickens Wood which is an Ecosite, parts of which are also a Local Wildlife Site (LWS) comprising Ancient Woodland. This is considered in more detail in subsequent sections of this statement. To the east of the site application boundary are two fields which were planted with native trees in the late 1990s. These trees have grown significantly during the intervening years. To the south east the site boundary adjoins an open field, beyond which is a mature hedge adjacent to Rumbush Lane.
- 2.4 To the south of the site are the rear gardens of properties on Norton Lane. To the west the site adjoins Fulford Hall Road, beyond which are the front gardens of residential properties. The developable area of the site is separated from Fulford Hall Road by a belt of mature trees which include various native, and deciduous species.
- 2.5 The site is broadly flat and was last used for grazing. It comprises several fields which are separated by mature hedgerows. These hedgerows include native hedgerow species, such as hawthorn and blackthorn as well as mature, native, deciduous tree species.
- 2.6 There are no public rights of way across the site.

The Site Context

- 2.7 The main developed area of Tidbury Green comprises a triangle formed by Fulford Hall Road, Norton Lane and Lowbrook Lane. Urban development extends beyond this triangle to the north, along Tilehouse Lane, and to the south east along Norton Lane. The ribbon of development to the south east extends beyond Rumbush Lane. The village is characterised by large detached and semi detached residential properties which are typically set well back from adjacent roads and within large plots. There are a relatively small number of older buildings (pre 1900) in the village. The majority of buildings were constructed between the 1920s and the late 1950s. There are numerous mature, deciduous trees throughout the settlement.
- 2.8 Tidbury Green has a primary school which is attended by children from 3 to 11 years old. The school buildings are modern and are well served by hard and soft surfaced play areas and other associated land.
- 2.9 On the same site as the school is the Tidbury Green Village Hall. This comprises a main hall, smaller hall, and associated facilities. The Village Hall is used by various community groups.
- 2.10 The nearest settlement to Tidbury Green is Wythall / Grimes Hill. Facilities in the settlements include:
- the railway station
 - post office
 - GP surgery
- 2.11 Also close to Tidbury Green is the new settlement of Dickens Heath. The village has a new village centre which incorporates the following facilities:
- a library
 - a medical centre
 - a dental practice
 - a "Tesco Express" convenience / food store
 - Londis news/convenience store
 - a primary school

- 2.12 Dickens Heath is characterised predominantly by modern development.
- 2.13 Public transport opportunities in Tidbury Green include a bus service and two railway stations (Wythall and Whitlocks End). These opportunities are described in detail in the Transport Assessment and Design and Access Statement.

3. Planning History

- 3.1 There is no planning application history for the site which is of relevance to the proposals. However, the site has been considered in various versions of the Development Plan for Solihull over many years and details of this and the preparation of the emerging Solihull Local Plan are set out in Section 8.
- 3.2 Also of relevance to the proposals is a planning application, and subsequent appeal, in respect of residential development on the other "safeguarded" site in Tidbury Green – referred to as "land at Lowbrook Farm". This is considered in subsequent paragraphs.
- 3.3 On 18 October 2012 the controllers of land at Lowbrook Farm, Lowbrook Lane, in Tidbury Green submitted an outline application for a maximum of 200 dwellings, highways infrastructure, open space and associated works. All matters were reserved for subsequent approval by the local planning authority with the exception of means of access. The application was given the reference 2012/1627/S.
- 3.4 Following an extensive determination period, the application was presented to Solihull MBC's Planning Committee on 16 January 2013. The application was deferred from that meeting and was presented again on 31 January 2013. The application was refused and, due to an administrative error, the Council subsequently issued two different notices in respect of its decision.
- 3.5 An appeal against the Council's decision(s) to refuse the application was subsequently lodged and was transacted by means of a Public Inquiry which sat in July and September 2013. The Inspector's decision in respect of the appeal is expected in December 2013.
- 3.6 It is not necessary to consider in detail the Council's reasons for refusing the application or the Appellant's case made at the Inquiry. This is because, in due course, the Inspector will issue a decision which, legal challenges aside, will clarify the situation. At the time of writing, the Appeal Inspector has not reached his conclusions, but is expected to by the end of the year.
- 3.7 The Appeal Inspector's conclusions on Lowbrook Farm could be material considerations in the determination of the planning application (or appeal) in respect of land at Tidbury Green Farm. Accordingly, this statement has been prepared without prejudice to the outcome of the Inspector's decision. We reserve the right to submit additional information to the Council if appropriate to do so in due course.
- 3.8 In the meantime, it is appropriate to consider those aspects of the application at Lowbrook Farm which are of relevance to the application under consideration and which were not

disputed by the local planning authority. This is done by reference to the committee report for the planning application and the "Statement of Common Ground" which was agreed between the Borough Council and the Appellant prior to the opening of the Public Inquiry. Agreed matters of relevance include:

- The planning application was accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment. The committee report establishes that the Environment Agency and Borough Council's Drainage department had no objections and that there are no substantiated flood risk issues in Tidbury Green.
- The Borough Council accepted that the application considered sustainability "in the round" and raised no reasons for refusal on the grounds of sustainability.
- The accessibility of the site was considered using the Borough Council's standard methodology. Whilst the site was not considered to be in an accessible location, the planning obligations package proposed included measures sufficient to mitigate any issues. The Council did not advance a reason for refusal on the grounds of accessibility.
- The planning application considered highway capacity and concluded that development is acceptable and would not result in a situation in which queuing at nearby junctions on the network would frequently occur. Highway safety was considered. The Borough Council concluded that traffic generated by the development could be safely accommodated on the surrounding highway network.

3.9 The conclusions reached by the Appellant and local planning authority in respect of the supply of housing land in the Borough and the planning policy designation of the site are considered in subsequent sections.

4. Consultation

Consultation with Local Residents

- 4.1 Lioncourt has instructed a firm of consultants, PPS, to carry out a consultation exercise with residents and other interested parties. The exercise carried out by PPS is summarised in the "Public Consultation Statement" which is submitted in support of the planning application.
- 4.2 PPS' work is summarised as follows:
- Preparation of a draft version of a consultation plan, which was subsequently presented to, and agreed by, planning officers at Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council;
 - Contacting key community stakeholders, including Parish Councillors and Ward Members;
 - Drafting and sent a letter to community stakeholders, which introduced the proposals and invited them to an exhibition preview;
 - Organising a mailshot, which involved sending letters to all residents within one mile of the site introducing the proposals and inviting them to a public exhibition;
 - Issuing a press release informing local media of the proposals and the consultation exercise;
 - Constructing a project web site with information on the proposals on the consultation exercise. The website remained live during the consultation exercise;
 - Organising a stakeholder preview, which allowed key community stakeholders to view the public exhibition of the proposals in advance of it opening to residents;
 - Organising a public exhibition of the proposals on 4 June 2013. The exhibition was held at the Earlswood Methodist Church Hall and was attended by representatives of Lioncourt and its project team.
- 4.3 The consultation exercise carried out sought to publicise the proposals as widely as possible to interested parties and was designed with the objective of generating responses.
- 4.4 The responses to the proposals from local residents, and Lioncourt's response to these, are included in the Public Consultation Statement.

Consultation with Officers from Solihull MBC

- 4.5 In June 2013 GVA wrote to Solihull MBC to request a screening opinion on the need for Environmental Impact Assessment in respect of the scheme. The Borough Council wrote back on 25 June 2013 to confirm that an Environmental Impact Assessment is not required and the application does not need to be accompanied by an Environmental Statement.
- 4.6 GVA wrote to Solihull Borough Council in April 2013 and sought to engage officers through the Council's "Pre Application Advice" procedures. A meeting between officers and Lioncourt's team was held in May 2013. That meeting discussed the following topics:
- design;
 - ecology;
 - landscape;
 - highways and transportation;
 - flood risk and drainage.
- 4.7 The Council's officers subsequently issued a written response which was dispersed throughout the project team and informed amendments to the proposals.
- 4.8 The technical specialists within Lioncourt's team have discussed the parameters and scope of the information to be submitted with the application on an on-going basis with the relevant officers at the Borough Council.
- 4.9 A representative of Lioncourt and its team met with officers from the Council's Forward Planning department to discuss the principle of the development proposed.

5. The Proposals

- 5.1 The planning application is made in outline. All matters are reserved for approval by the local planning authority, with the exception of the means of access into the site. The various elements of the scheme are explained below.
- 5.2 The application proposes a maximum of up to 190 dwellings on a developable site area of approximately 7.5 hectares. The proposed developable area (7.5 hectares) excludes structural landscaping and other proposed features. The density of development is approximately 25 dwellings per hectare. It is anticipated that development on the edges of the site would be in the range of between approximately 15 and 20 dwellings per hectare with higher density areas, of between 30 and 35 dwellings per hectare, towards the centre of the site. This mix of densities would allow the development to reflect the prevailing character of the area, but would also make best use of land.
- 5.3 The proposed access into the site would require the removal of two trees. The location of the proposed access has been chosen carefully in order to ensure the removal of the smallest possible number of lower quality trees. The layout of the proposed access is shown on drawing number 5117672/TP/GA/001 which is included within the Transportation Statement.
- 5.4 The grant of outline planning permission would establish various important principles which would be carried forward into the reserved matters submission. These are considered in turn.

Retention of landscaping adjacent to Fulford Hall Road – This area contains mature, native, deciduous trees which make a significant contribution to the character and appearance of the settlement. With the exception of the two trees that must be removed in order to create the access, all other trees would be retained. The development framework plan and illustrative layout (included within the Design and Access Statement) show a large standoff area between the trees and adjacent roadways and other built development which would ensure their preservation in perpetuity.

Village Green and Childrens Play Area – It is proposed that a large part of the central area of the site would be used to create public open space for use by residents of the proposed development as well as by existing residents of the village. This open space would include a village green and an equipped childrens play area.

Structural Landscaping – It is proposed that an area of structural landscaping, which would include new trees and other vegetation, would be created along the southern boundary of the site, between the rear gardens of properties on Norton Lane and proposed development within

the site. A strategic landscaping area would also be created between proposed development and the school to the north.

Retention of Mature Existing Trees and Hedgerows – There are numerous mature trees across the site and within the hedgerows which currently sub divide it. These hedgerows and trees would be retained as part of the proposals and would create a semi-rural character. Existing mature trees would be supplemented by additional planting of native species.

Sustainable Drainage – The surface water runoff from the site must be attenuated to ensure that it does not exceed existing surface water runoff rates. This would be achieved using above ground Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS). A balancing pond is proposed in the southern corner of the site which would be shallow and surrounded by reed beds and wet/marshy grassland. This would create a new habitat on the site for the benefit of ecology and biodiversity.

Informal Recreation Area – It is proposed that land to the east of the built up area would be used as an informal “kick about” area with a significant amount of open space and structural planting.

Footpaths and Access to Adjacent Woodland Areas – A comprehensive network of footpaths is proposed through the site. This would also include links through existing woodland to the east.

Ecological Mitigation Measures – The application proposes the enhancement of existing habitats and the creation of new ones, including; a wetland habitat created in association with the SUDS scheme; wild flower meadows and bunds within areas of amenity grassland; rough grassland (leading to existing rough grassland habitats around the site); additional habitats for species including wood piles, basking sites for reptiles, floating islands for nesting water fowl and the erection of bat and bird boxes.

- 5.5 It is proposed that the majority of the dwellings constructed on site would be available for sale on the open market. In addition, the scheme would deliver affordable housing in accordance with the Council’s Development Plan policies and Supplementary Planning Guidance. It is proposed that the percentage and mix of affordable dwellings will be discussed and agreed with the local planning authority during the determination of the planning application.
- 5.6 Other works to be carried out on site will include the provision of surface and foul water drainage, the details of which will be submitted to the local planning authority at the reserved matters stage.

5.7 In addition to the works carried out on site, some "off site" works will also be required including in particular works to the highway which would be carried out under Section 278 of the Highways Act (1980). These works are likely to include:

- drop curbs / tactile paving at pedestrian crossing points adjacent to the site;
- road re-surfacing adjacent to access points;
- new length of footway adjacent to the site;
- new length of verge adjacent to the site; and,
- new road markings and a crossing on the junction between Fulford Hall Road and Lowbrook Lane.

5.8 These works are shown on drawing number 5117672/TP/GA/002 which is included within the Transportation Statement.

6. Development Plan Policy

- 6.1 Section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 provides that planning applications must be determined in accordance with the provisions of the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Regional Spatial Strategy for the West Midlands has been revoked and no longer forms part of the Development Plan. Therefore, the Development Plan for Solihull currently comprises only the saved elements of the Solihull Unitary Development Plan 2006.

Solihull Unitary Development Plan 2006

- 6.2 The first version of the Solihull Unitary Development Plan (UDP) was adopted in 1997. The 2006 UDP is a full replacement of the 1997 plan. The plan period for the 2006 UDP runs from 2001 until 2011. As such, the plan period has expired and the plan is out of date.
- 6.3 Many of the policies in the UDP have been “saved” until such time as they are replaced by the Council’s emerging Local Development Framework and in particular it’s Local Plan.
- 6.4 Notwithstanding this, many elements of the UDP, and in particular policies relating to the delivery of housing are now out-of-date when considered under the provisions established by the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) this is expanded upon in more detail in Section 10.
- 6.5 UDP policies which are of relevance to the proposals are: H1, H2, H2/1, H3, H4, H5, T1, T2, T3, T5, T13, T16, T17, ENV2, ENV3, ENV8, ENV11, ENV13, ENV14, ENV17, ENV18, ENV23, C1, C2, R4 and IM1.
- 6.6 These policies are considered in the following paragraphs.
- 6.7 **Policy H1** considers the provision of housing land and refers to the Regional Spatial Strategy housing target of 4,000 new homes to be delivered during the plan period of 2001 to 2011. The policy is “out-of-date”, literally, because the time period it covers has passed. The policy is when considered against the provisions of the Framework.
- 6.8 **Policy H2** considers the provision of safeguarded land to meet long term housing needs. A total of 12 sites, with a total area of 76.8 hectares, are identified as safeguarded. This list includes 11.2 hectares at “Tidbury Green Farm” (reference H2/1(b)).
- 6.9 The proposals map and the notes that accompany the policy confirm that the Tidbury Green Farm site is excluded from the Green Belt. This remains the case regardless of whether the plan

is considered to be "out of date" either under the terms of the Framework or because the time period covered by the plan has passed.

- 6.10 The provisions of the policy establish that strong development control measures will apply which will limit any development on the safeguarded site to development which would otherwise be allowed in the Green Belt when considered against Green Belt policies. Development which would prejudice the long term use of the site for housing is to be resisted. The policy states that the possible future designation of the land for housing will be determined through subsequent reviews of the UDP. The status of this part of the policy is considered in subsequent paragraphs.
- 6.11 **Policy H3** considers the type of dwellings to be delivered by new residential development and requires developers to provide a range of sizes and types. In particular, developers are obliged to consider the projected increase in single person households.
- 6.12 **Policy H4** considers the provision of affordable housing and sets thresholds for site size and proposed unit numbers above which a percentage of affordable dwellings is expected. The Tidbury Green site is above the threshold for the delivery of affordable housing.
- 6.13 The policy establishes that the Council expects 40% of units delivered on sites to be affordable. This can be achieved either through provision on site or, in exceptional circumstances, by means of financial or other contributions towards provision elsewhere. The second part of the policy considers negotiations on the suitability of the sites and the amount of affordable housing to be delivered.
- 6.14 **Policy H5** considers the design, density and quality of development. The Council expects a density of between 30 and 50 dwellings per hectare, which reflects Government guidance which was extant at the time the UDP was prepared. Greater intensity of development can be considered in locations where public transport services are accessible. The policy obliges developers to consider character, local distinctiveness and the design quality of adjoining areas when designing schemes. Finally, the policy emphasises the importance of design and layout and in particular in respect of public health, crime prevention, community safety and energy efficiency. The Design and Access Statement which accompanies the application considers these issues in detail.
- 6.15 **Policy T1** sets the Council's agenda for the delivery of an integrated and sustainable transport strategy. All proposals for development are expected to contribute positively towards the safe, efficient and easy movement of people and goods through the Borough. The requirement that Transportation Assessments should accompany larger development schemes is confirmed. A Transport Assessment (TA) is submitted in support of the application.

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- 6.16 Criteria which the Council expects new developments to satisfy, and which are of relevance to the proposals, include:
- minimising the need to travel;
 - locating development where easy access can be gained by a choice of means of transport
- 6.17 **Policy T2** considers accessibility to new developments. Applicants for proposals which may have significant transport and sustainability implications are obliged to include an analysis of the need to travel and of how this need can be accommodated in a sustainable manner.
- 6.18 **Policy T3** considers the range of different types of travel, including car, walking, cycling and public transport and establishes that the design of new development must take all of these into account.
- 6.19 **Policy T5** considers green travel and the need for planning applications to be accompanied by travel plans where appropriate. The planning application is accompanied by a Framework Travel Plan.
- 6.20 **Policy T13** considers car parking provision and obliges developers to meet the Council's car parking standards as set out in its Supplementary Planning Document.
- 6.21 **Policy T16** considers cycling and establishes that the Council will continue to promote the Solihull Strategic Cycle Network. Developers are obliged to make proper provision for cycling in new development schemes. Such provision may include links to the strategic cycle network where appropriate.
- 6.22 **Policy T17** considers walking and obliges developers to recognise that this is an appropriate mode of travel in many circumstances. Accordingly, new development should provide safe, secure, attractive routes for pedestrians as an alternative to car use for short journeys. This will include links to the footpath network where appropriate.
- 6.23 **Policy ENV2** considers urban design and establishes eight criteria against which proposals for development will be assessed. The Design and Access Statement submitted in support of the application demonstrates that the proposals comply fully with the policy.
- 6.24 Similarly, **Policy ENV3** considers the prevention of crime and obliges developers to minimise the potential for crime and anti-social behaviour. The indicative proposals contained within the Design and Access Statement demonstrate how this is to be achieved.

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- 6.25 **Policy ENV8** considers ancient monuments and archaeological sites. The policy is aimed principally at archaeological remains of national importance. A Heritage Assessment is submitted in support of the application which satisfies the requirements of the policy.
- 6.26 **Policy ENV11** seeks to conserve and enhance biodiversity in the Borough. Developers will be expected to consider the nature conservation value of land outside designated sites and to maximise the potential for habitat creation and enhancement. The planning application is accompanied by detailed information in respect of ecology and this is considered in more detail in Section 10 of the Statement.
- 6.27 **Policy ENV13** considers protected species in the Borough and establishes that these must be taken into consideration when preparing development proposals. If appropriate, the Council will impose planning conditions, or will seek to enter into planning obligations, to secure the appropriate compensatory measures which might be necessary to either protect such species, reduce disturbance to a minimum or provide alternative habitats to sustain or enhance the population. The proposals are accompanied by detailed information in respect of ecology and protected species and this is considered in more detail in Section 10.
- 6.28 **Policy ENV14** considers trees and woodlands and establishes that the Council will seek to safeguard these where appropriate. The site has various trees of significance around its perimeter and in the hedgerows which subdivide it. The indicative design proposals submitted in support of the application consider these in detail. Further information is included in Section 10.
- 6.29 **Policy ENV17** considers the protection of ground and surface water resources in the Borough. The planning application is accompanied by comprehensive information on this issue and is considered in more detail in Section 10.
- 6.30 **Policy ENV18** considers noise and establishes that the Council will seek to minimise the impacts of this. The site is not close to any existing sources of significant noise.
- 6.31 **Policy ENV23** considers renewable sources of energy.
- 6.32 **Policy C1** relates to the designation of the Green Belt in Solihull. The boundaries of the Green Belt are shown on the Proposals Map. The policy confirms that, when defining Green Belt boundaries, account has been taken of the need to relate housing proposals to a longer timescale than that of the UDP (i.e. beyond the plan end date of 2011). This reflects the guidance contained within PPG2, which was extant at the time the plan was prepared. The majority of the guidance in respect of Green Belts contained within PPG2 has been carried forward into the Framework. The notes that accompany the policy refer to the specific purposes for including land in Green Belt. Also referred to in the notes is the strategic

significance of the “Meriden Gap” which is the area of Green Belt between the major urban areas of Solihull and Coventry. The site is outside the Meriden Gap.

- 6.33 **Policy C2** considers the control of development in the Green Belt and broadly reflects guidance previously contained within PPG2 and now included in the Framework. The policy confirms that the Council will permit “*Development for the purposes of outdoor sport and recreation ...*” in the Green Belt without the need to demonstrate very special circumstances.
- 6.34 **Policy R4** considers the provision and maintenance of appropriate open space and recreational facilities in association with new housing development. The provision of outdoor playing space and children’s play areas must be in accordance with the National Playing Field Association’s minimum standard of 2.4 hectares per 1,000 population (commonly referred to as the Six Acre Standard). The Council will seek the provision of new open space as part of the proposals. Where appropriate, the maintenance of such facilities will be sought through the use of legal agreements made under Section 106 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (Section 106).
- 6.35 **Policy IM1** considers planning obligations and confirms that, where appropriate, the Council will seek to enter into agreements with developers under Section 106. The purposes of such agreements as identified by the Council include the provision of affordable housing.

7. Other Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework) March 2012

- 7.1 The Framework was published on 27 March 2012 and immediately replaced all of the Government's Planning Policy Statements and Guidance Notes (except for PPS10 "Waste Management") as well as Circular 05/2005 "Planning Obligations" and various other advice notes issued by the Government.
- 7.2 Underpinning the Framework, and described as the golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking, is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. This reflects the Government's desire for the planning system to positively and proactively support sustainable economic growth rather than act as an impediment to it.
- 7.3 Paragraph 14 states that, for decision taking, the presumption in favour of sustainable development means that proposals which accord with the Development Plan should be approved without delay. Paragraph 14 goes on to say that where the plan is absent, silent or where relevant policies are out-of-date, permission should also be granted, unless the adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the Framework taken as a whole, or specific policies in the Framework suggest development should be restricted.
- 7.4 When considering housing, the Framework aims to "*boost significantly*" the supply of new homes. Paragraph 47 confirms that local planning authorities must meet the full requirements of market and affordable housing in their housing market area.
- 7.5 The requirement for local authorities to identify and maintain a five year supply of deliverable housing land, which was previously a requirement of PPS3, remains. However, the Framework requires an additional buffer of 5% to be moved forward from later in the plan period in order to ensure choice and competition. Furthermore, local planning authorities with a persistent record of under delivering housing are required to increase their buffer to 20%.
- 7.6 Whilst the Framework encourages a positive, plan led, system, it is clear that the failure of LPAs to prepare and adopt local plans will neither constitute a reason for delay, nor prevent sustainable development from coming forward. The Framework states in paragraph 49 that:

"Housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up to date if the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites."

- 7.7 This means that where there is a shortfall in the five year supply, policies relevant to the supply of housing should be considered out-of-date. This applying not just to policies setting the housing supply targets, but to other policies that restrict housing supply and delivery in the context of a specific planning application. For example, the part of Policy H2 which states that the possible future designation of safeguarded sites for housing will be determined through subsequent reviews of the Unitary Development Plan, is out-of-date in the absence of a five year housing land supply.
- 7.8 In such cases, the tests established in the later part of paragraph 14 will apply, i.e. it must be demonstrated by the LPA that the adverse impacts of granting planning permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the Framework taken as a whole, or specific policies in the Framework suggest development should be restricted.
- 7.9 Paragraphs 214 and 215 of the Framework consider the weight to be given to existing development plan policies. Twelve months have now passed since the publication of the Framework. Therefore, paragraph 214 is no longer relevant.
- 7.10 Paragraph 215 advises that the weight which can be attached to policies in existing plans will now depend on the degree of consistency with the framework, i.e. where policies are inconsistent with the Framework the weight to be afforded to them will be reduced. Policy H2 is an example of such a policy.
- 7.11 In respect of highways matters and sustainable transport, the Framework encourages locations that benefit from sustainable transport options but recognises, at paragraphs 29 and 34, that opportunities for maximising sustainable travel options will vary from urban to rural areas.
- 7.12 Paragraph 32 states that, in respect of highways matters, decisions should take account of three factors:
- opportunities for sustainable transport;
 - whether the access to the site (i.e. any new junction that links the site to the existing network) is safe;
 - the implications of the proposals for the wider highway network beyond the site access.
- 7.13 In respect of the last point, the Framework states:

"Development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts for development are severe."

- 7.14 It is noted that the Framework requires the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside to be recognised. However, the Framework does not seek to impose any ban on, or presumption against, development in the countryside. Indeed, to do so would clearly prevent delivery of the Framework's housing supply objectives. This indicates that there remains a need to assess the value of any particular part of the countryside on which development is proposed against the Framework. In this regard it is noted that the Framework offers no support for extensive local landscape or other such designations, but relies instead on existing nationally recognised designations.
- 7.15 In respect of planning obligations, the Framework advises that these should only be used where it is not possible to address unacceptable impacts through a planning condition. Obligations should, in addition, meet all of the following tests, which mirror those in the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010: i.e.;
- necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;
 - directly related to the development; and
 - fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.

Planning for Growth

- 7.16 This statement outlines the coalition Government's approach to securing growth and promoting sustainable economic development. It is a statement of Government planning policy and continues to be afforded significant weight by the Secretary of State, and Inspectors, notwithstanding the publication of the Framework. The strategy set out in the document represents a deliberately bold and positive approach to planning for new development. The second paragraphs confirms that:

"The Government's top priority informing the planning system is to promote sustainable economic growth and jobs. The Government's clear expectation is that the answer to development and growth should wherever possible be "yes", except where this would compromise the key sustainable development principles set out in National Planning Policy.

The statement encourages local planning authorities to "press ahead without delay in preparing up-to-date development plans".

- 7.17 It also, however, sets out a clear strategy for considering development where LPAs have not progressed their local plans:

"The Chancellor has today set out further detail on our commitment to introduce a strong presumption in favour of sustainable development in the forthcoming national planning policy framework, which will expect the local planning authorities to plan

positively for new development; to deal promptly and favourably with applications that comply with up-to-date plans and national planning policies; and wherever possible to approve applications where plans are absent, out of date, silent or indeterminate."

8. The Emerging Solihull Local Plan

- 8.1 In order to reach conclusions on the weight that can be attached to emerging Development Plan policy in respect of the designation of the site it is necessary to consider previous plans and the stage in the adoption process reached by the emerging plan.
- 8.2 In October 1977 the Borough Council published the Solihull Green Belt Plan. The site was identified as within an area of "Interim Green Belt" in the plan. The Interim Green Belt area broadly included land to the south of the settlement of Shirley. The Interim Green Belt boundaries were not considered in detail as the designation was intended only to identify a broad area rather than to rigorously assess which land should be within and outside the approved Green Belt boundaries, which were to be drawn in due course.
- 8.3 The status of the land was next considered in the preparation of the first Solihull UDP, which was adopted in 1997. The 1997 UDP was first deposited in 1990 and was the subject of two Public Inquiries. The first of these was held in 1991 and the second in 1995. The suitability of the site as a location for long term housing needs was considered during both Inquiries. The site was subsequently designated as "safeguarded land" as part of the adoption of the UDP in 1997. That designation confirmed that the site was excluded from the Green Belt.
- 8.4 The status of the site was considered again at the Inquiry which preceded the adoption of the current Solihull UDP in 2006. When summarising the site's exclusion from the Green Belt the Inspector stated:
- "... I am generally satisfied that these areas [including the Tidbury Green site - our clarification] are appropriately excluded from the Green Belt, particularly in view of the permanent and enduring nature of such boundaries."*
- 8.5 The above quote confirms the site's status outside the Green Belt. Nevertheless, the Inspector also advised the Council to carry out an "urgent review" of the suitability of the site to meet long term housing needs. This recommendation was made in recognition of Regional Planning Guidance for the West Midlands. That guidance has subsequently been revoked and no longer exists.
- 8.6 The urgent review of the sites requested by the Inspector was not carried out by the Borough Council. The status of the Tidbury Green site, and the other safeguarded parcels of land, was not considered again until the commencement of work on the draft Solihull Local Plan.

The Emerging Solihull Local Plan

- 8.7 The development plan making process which has culminated in the emerging Solihull Local Plan commenced with the preparation of a Core Strategy. Early incarnations of this considered various concepts for new growth in the Borough. Later versions of the plan chose a strategy which relies upon:
- an overall housing target for the Borough which is lower than it's objectively assessed needs;
 - the allocation of new sites for housing in numerous locations around the Borough.
- 8.8 The proposed allocations vary in size but all are extensions to existing settlements. None are large enough to constitute either a "sustainable urban extension" or a new settlement.
- 8.9 In respect of the safeguarded sites, some of these are identified as proposed allocations in the emerging Local Plan. Others have had planning permission granted for development at appeal (despite the Council's intention not to allocate them in the emerging plan) and are identified in the emerging Local Plan as commitments as a result.
- 8.10 The emerging Local Plan states that the two remaining safeguarded sites, land at Lowbrook Farm and Tidbury Green Farm, are not suitable for development on sustainability grounds. The emerging plan seeks to place the sites into the West Midlands Green Belt.
- 8.11 The owners/controllers of both sites in Tidbury Green have consistently objected to the Council's proposals to place them into the Green Belt. Both parties submitted robust and comprehensive representations at all relevant stages of the Local Plan preparation process. Both parties were represented at the EiP sessions which considered the safeguarded land.
- 8.12 Furthermore, both parties, and numerous others, have made extensive representations in respect of the overall housing target for the Borough.
- 8.13 The first round of EiP hearings for the emerging Local Plan concluded on Friday 1st March 2013. On 5th April 2013 the Local Plan Inspector published his "Interim Conclusions". These consider the legal and procedural requirements for the adoption of the emerging plan and the test of soundness.
- 8.14 The Interim Conclusions also consider the overall housing target for the Borough. However, paragraph 19 of the document confirms that the elements of supply which will contribute to that overall target will be addressed in the final report.

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- 8.15 Paragraph 19 confirms specifically that the Inspector has not reached any conclusions on the Council's reasons for placing the two remaining areas of safeguarded land into the Green Belt. Furthermore, it is important to note that, at paragraph 26, the Inspector confirms that the document provides interim conclusions, made without prejudice, on some specific aspects of the Local Plan. The Inspector cannot rule out the need for further changes to the plan when he publishes his final conclusions.
- 8.16 The Interim Conclusions invited the Borough Council to publish a series of "Main Modifications" to address the issues raised.
- 8.17 The Council's Main Modifications were published for consultation in July of this year. The consultation process generated numerous further comments, including representations in respect of the Lowbrook Farm and Tidbury Green Farm sites.
- 8.18 Following receipt of the consultation responses in respect of the Main Modifications the Local Plan Inspector has scheduled two days of "Resumed Hearings" which are due to take place on Thursday 10th and Friday 11th October. The resumed hearing sessions will consider, amongst other matters, housing policies in the emerging Local Plan. The additional hearings are required partly in response to the implications of some of the proposed modifications but also in order to consider the revocation of the Regional Spatial Strategy and the implications of a recent legal case on the status of the Council's proposed housing land supply target.
- 8.19 In summary we conclude that, whilst significant progress has been made on the preparation of the emerging Local Plan, the status of the Lowbrook Farm and Tidbury Green Farm sites remains in dispute. Objections to the Council's proposals are unresolved. At the time of writing, the Inspector has not provided his independent opinion on the status of the two safeguarded sites. Accordingly, when determining this planning application, the Council cannot attach significant weight to the provisions of the emerging Local Plan in respect of the Green Belt status of the site.

9. Sustainability

- 9.1 The Framework establishes a strong presumption in favour of sustainable development. In order to engage the provisions of the Framework set out at paragraphs 14 and 49 the proposals under consideration must constitute sustainable development. The Framework does not include a precise definition of sustainable development but does establish that it has three dimensions:
- economic
 - social
 - environmental.
- 9.2 The Framework confirms that these roles are not performed in isolation, but are interrelated and mutually dependent on each other. When assessing sustainability it is common practice, and a requirement of the Framework, to consider whether development is broadly or generally sustainable when considered against the provisions of the Framework and taking into account other factors such as the nature of the area in which the site is located. Furthermore, it is necessary to consider whether more sustainable options would be preferable under the circumstances. The following paragraphs consider sustainability in the round as required by the Framework.
- 9.3 The location of a site is a very significant factor in an assessment of the sustainability of development proposals on it. The location of the land at Tidbury Green Farm is significant in this regard.
- 9.4 The Transportation Assessment (TA) which accompanies the application considers the site's location in respect of walking, cycling and public transport as a means to access local services, facilities and employment opportunities.
- 9.5 The TA confirms, in Section 3, that the site is well placed in terms of access to local amenities. Tidbury Green School and Nursery is adjacent to the site and hence would be a short walk from all of the dwellings proposed. The site is approximately 1.3km from the centre of Dickens Heath (albeit some parts of it would be closer). This distance equates to an average walking time of 16 minutes and an average cycling time of 5 minutes. There are numerous facilities within Dickens Heath Centre, including a doctors surgery, convenience/food retail, dentist and library.
- 9.6 An assessment of the quality of walking routes is included in Appendix B of the TA. This concludes that routes in the area are generally good, with continuous footpaths of appropriate width.

- 9.7 It is relevant to note that the proposals for development at Lowbrook Farm include upgrades to the footpath between that site and the centre of Dickens Heath. These upgrades include additional lighting. For the purposes of this application we assume that the appeal at Lowbrook Farm will be allowed and that the resulting permission will be implemented within a reasonable timeframe. As such, the upgrades to the footpath between the site and the centre of Dickens Heath would be carried out. If this assumption is not correct then this matter can be revisited during the determination of the planning application.
- 9.8 We conclude that the location of the site relative to facilities and amenities presents significant opportunities to access those facilities by walking and cycling.

Buses

- 9.9 The site is served by the S7 bus service which runs along Dickens Heath Road and Fulford Hall Road. The service stops at the site hourly during Mondays to Saturdays. The S7 service runs between Wythall, Whitlocks End, Shirley and Solihull. Bus times and details are included within the TA. In addition to S7, a limited daily service (SW5) runs between Solihull, Knowle, Dickens Heath, Maypole, Barnt Green and the King Edward the Sixth Five Way school and stops on Fulford Hall Road.
- 9.10 The services present significant opportunities for residents of the site to access key facilities by bus. In particular, the bus service could be used by children living at the site to access secondary schools in Shirley.
- 9.11 It is important to note that proposals for development on the Lowbrook Farm site include a contribution towards additional journeys on the S7 route. In particular, an earlier "first bus" which would enhance the usefulness of the service for commuting. Again, we assume that, for the purposes of preparing this report, the Lowbrook Farm appeal will be allowed and the enhancement to the bus service delivered. However, if this is not the case we can discuss this with officers during the determination of the planning application.

Rail

- 9.12 Wythall Railway Station is 1.1km from the site. This equates to either a 14 minute walk or a 4 minute cycle journey. The station is operated by London Midland Railways and provides direct, hourly, train services between Stourbridge Junction and Stratford upon Avon. All services stop at Birmingham Snow Hill and Birmingham Moor Street stations. These stations are within the Central Business District of Birmingham and are a short walk from thousands of shops, offices, businesses and other amenities. There is no car park at Wythall Station. However, this is not an

impediment to its use by the residents of the site given the ease with which residents could walk or cycle to it.

- 9.13 Services from Wythall Station run hourly Monday to Friday. The first train is at approximately 7 o'clock in the morning and the last train is at approximately 9 o'clock at night.
- 9.14 Whitlock Ends Railway Station is 1.6km from the site which equates to either a 20 minute walk or a 6 minute cycle ride. The station is also operated by London Midland Railways and provides direct train services between Kidderminster, Worcester, Birmingham and Stratford upon Avon. The station has a free car park with approximately 275 spaces and comprehensive cycle storage. Service frequency from Whitlocks End station is every 20 minutes with the first train into Birmingham at approximately 6.30 and the last train back at approximately 9 o'clock.
- 9.15 We conclude that the proximity of the two railway stations to the site and the frequency of services which operate from them present very significant opportunities to use the railway as an alternative to the private car. The stations provide significant opportunities for commuter journeys as well as for leisure travel. Walking distances to railway stations of 15 and 20 minutes is a very positive element of the site's sustainability credentials. Indeed, many urban sites, including some proposed as housing allocations in the emerging Solihull Local Plan are not within such easy walking distance of a railway station.
- 9.16 It is important to note that the proposals for development at Lowbrook Farm include a contribution towards upgrades to Wythall Railway Station. Again, for the purposes of preparing this planning application it is assumed that development at Lowbrook Farm will go ahead and that the obligations promised will be delivered. If this is not the case this can be discussed with officers in due course.
- 9.17 We conclude that the site's location and the ease with which important facilities can be accessed by walking, cycling and public transport confirm that development performs an economic, social and environmental role.

Environmental Sustainability

- 9.18 The environmental role of sustainable development envisaged by the Framework includes a contribution towards protecting and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment and in doing so helping to improve biodiversity and the use of natural resources prudently. In addition, minimisation of waste and pollution and mitigation and adaption to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy, are encouraged.
- 9.19 The Landscape and Ecological appraisals which accompany the application confirm that the site has relatively little ecological interest at present. Nevertheless, the proposals would mitigate

any harm to ecology and indeed would include measures to enhance the natural environment through increased biodiversity. Such measures include the creation of new habitats, for example the marshland area around the proposed balancing pond.

- 9.20 The Framework seeks to preserve the best and most versatile agricultural land for farming use. The site is categorised as “Poor” quality (category 4). Its development, for housing which is needed to achieve both national and borough wide requirements, would reduce pressure on land which is either more ecologically diverse or of higher agricultural value.
- 9.21 Subsequent sections demonstrate the site has no landscape designations on it and that the landscape and visual impact of the proposals would be negligible. Therefore, the development of the site would ease pressure for development on sites which are designated and, when development would impact on landscape and amenity.

Construction / Operation Sustainability

- 9.22 The sustainability appraisal which accompanies the application provides significant detail on how both the construction and operation of the development proposed would minimise waste and pollution and would maximise the use of natural resources. The appraisal contemplates a variety of different types of renewable and sustainable energies which could make significant contribution towards meeting the needs of the site.

Design and Community

- 9.23 The social role envisaged by the Framework encourages the support of strong, vibrant and healthy communities which is to be achieved by providing the supply of housing required and by creating high quality built environment with accessible local services that reflect the community’s needs and support its health, social and cultural wellbeing.
- 9.24 The site would make a significant contribution towards meeting the Borough’s open market and affordable housing requirements. The Design and Access Statement (which is explained in detail in subsequent paragraphs) creates a framework for the preparation of reserved matters which would lead to a very high quality built environment.
- 9.25 At present Tidbury Green has very limited amounts of public open space. There are no equipped public play areas for children or young people within the village. There is no informal recreational space on which to play sports/games.
- 9.26 The proposals would deliver significant amounts of recreational and open space for use by all. The proposals would also provide access to areas of woodland surrounding the site.

9.27 In summary, the proposals constitute sustainable development when assessed against all reasonable criteria.

10. Planning Merits

The Principle of Development

- 10.1 The starting point in the determination of the application is the Development Plan. In this case the Development Plan comprises saved policies in the Solihull UDP of 2006 only. However, the weight that should be attached to the provisions of the Development Plan is influenced significantly by the provisions of the Framework. Before considering the provisions of both documents it is important firstly to consider and confirm a number of relevant tests and parameters. These are as follows.

Housing Land Supply

- 10.2 The representations to the Local Plan EiP made in support of residential development at Tidbury Green Farm consider, in detail, the existing and proposed housing land supply position in Solihull Borough. However, there is no requirement to consider the emerging housing target for the Borough in this application because, at the time of writing, it is not directly relevant to the proposals.
- 10.3 In respect of its current supply of housing land, the Council has acknowledged in various recent appeal proceedings, and most recently in the Statement of Common Ground prepared for the Lowbrook Farm appeal, that it cannot demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites. The Council has confirmed that it will not be able to demonstrate a five year supply until the Local Plan is adopted.

Green Belt

- 10.4 Our overview of the site's designation and status in previous, adopted and emerging Development Plans confirms that the part of the site on which residential development is proposed is not included within the West Midlands Green Belt.
- 10.5 When considering applications and appeals for residential development on other "safeguarded sites" in recent years the Green Belt status of these sites has been considered and concluded on by independent Planning Inspectors. In both the "Moat House Farm" and "Leys Lane" appeals it was confirmed that Green Belt policy does not apply to safeguarded land. It is appropriate to note also that these two decisions confirm that safeguarded sites can be released for development outside the UDP review process. This is confirmed by the fact that two different Inspectors both allowed appeals, and hence granted planning permission, on safeguarded sites in such circumstances.

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- 10.6 Having clarified the above matters it is appropriate to return to the provisions of the Development Plan and the weight to be attached to it by virtue of the provisions of the Framework.
- 10.7 Policy H1 considers the provision of housing land in the Borough. The policy is “out-of-date” in all senses of the phrase as it relates to a time period which has now elapsed and is based on a housing target within a Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) which has long since been superseded. The RSS which replaced it has since been revoked.
- 10.8 Policy H2 relates to the provision of sites to help meet long term need, i.e. post 2011. We are now in that post 2011 period. Therefore, this first part of the policy could be considered to be consistent with the Framework as it refers to the present time. Furthermore, this part of the policy acknowledges the need to deliver housing in the future and in that sense it accords with the provisions of the Framework.
- 10.9 The second part of Policy H2 states that safeguarded land cannot be released unless through a subsequent review of the UDP. This is clearly of relevance to the supply of housing land. As such this part of the policy is out-of-date when considered against Para. 14 of the Framework. This is due to the accepted absence of a five year supply of deliverable housing sites. The acceptability of the release of sites in such circumstances has been confirmed by two recent, and directly comparable, appeal decisions.
- 10.10 Policy C1 relates to the designation of Green Belts and confirms that the boundaries of these are shown on the proposals map. On the basis that the site is outside the Green Belt the policy, is of little direct relevance to the Council’s consideration of the application. Nevertheless, the policy does confirm that the existing Green Belt boundaries, including the exclusion of the Tidbury Green Farm site from the Green Belt, take into account the need for housing proposals to come forward beyond the timescale of the UDP, i.e. post 2011.
- 10.11 Policy C2 considers control of development in the Green Belt. On the basis that the residential development proposed is outside the Green Belt, provisions 1 to 8 of the policy are not relevant to the determination of the application.
- 10.12 The final part of the policy establishes that development which would be conspicuous from the Green Belt must not harm the visual amenities of the Green Belt by reason of siting, materials or design. In the absence of a five year housing land supply, this part of the policy (which might constrain the delivery of new housing) is out-of-date by virtue of Para. 14 of the Framework. Furthermore, the Framework does not refer to harm to the visual amenities of the Green Belt caused by development adjacent to it. As such, the final part of Policy C2 is out of date on the basis that it does not accord with the provisions of the Framework.
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- 10.13 Regardless of the above, it is important to note that the UDP proposed both the safeguarding of the Tidbury Green Farm land and the part of Policy C2 which is considered above. Therefore, the Borough Council must have concluded, when drafting the plan, that the development of the Tidbury Green site would not harm the visual amenities of the adjacent Green Belt. We conclude that this remains the case.
- 10.14 We conclude that Policy H1 of the Local Plan is out-of-date. The proposals benefit from significant support from parts Policy H2, the rest of which is out – of - date.
- 10.15 The restrictive elements of Policy C2 which seek to prevent inappropriate development in the Green Belt are of no relevance to the determination of the application because the site is not within the Green Belt. The Borough Council has previously considered the impact on the Green Belt of development on the site and found it to be acceptable when identifying the site as safeguarded land.
- 10.16 Furthermore, the proposals constitute sustainable development for housing in a Borough which is unable to demonstrate a five year supply of housing land. This, and the Framework's broad objective of boosting significantly the supply of housing land, offer very strong support for the development proposed.

Landscape and Visual Impact

- 10.17 The planning application is accompanied by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (L&VIA) prepared by Cooper Partnership and completed in September 2013. The assessment has been prepared using a methodology that was agreed with the Borough Council at a pre application meeting.
- 10.18 The starting point for the assessment is the identification of the extent of the study area. This extends to several miles in all directions around the site. Figure "L1" submitted with the L&VIA shows the topography around the site and identifies the viewpoints from which the photographs included within the document were taken.
- 10.19 Figure L2 in the L&VIA identifies the site and the landscape character and landscape planning designations in the area around it. The drawing identifies that the site is excluded from the West Midlands Green Belt and has no other designations on it. There are no national landscape designations close to it.
- 10.20 Figure L4 is an aerial photograph of the site and the surrounding area. The drawing shows that the site is visually contained behind; existing development on Norton Lane; a belt of existing, mature trees on Fulford Hall Road; Tidbury Green Farm and the Tidbury Green School and

Nursery to the north; Big Dickens Wood and the area of younger tree planting to the north and north east; and by agricultural fields between the site and viewpoints on Rumbush Lane.

- 10.21 The L&VIA includes a suite of photographs taken from the 12 identified viewpoints surrounding the site. The presence of snow in the photos confirms that they were taken during winter time when screening of the proposed site by existing vegetation was minimal. This is the “worst case” scenario. Nevertheless, the document demonstrates that the site can only be seen from a small number of viewpoints immediately adjacent to it i.e. from the site access and from a narrow viewpoint adjacent to Tidbury Green Farm. Development on the site could not be viewed from the wider area. The document concludes that the development would not give rise to any significant visual impacts. The absence of any visual impacts is due primarily to the fact that the site is visually contained by existing development, is flat and low lying.
- 10.22 We conclude that the proposals comply fully with landscape and environmental policies contained within the adopted Solihull UDP and with the relevant provisions of the Framework.

Urban Design

- 10.23 The planning application is accompanied by a Design and Access Statement prepared by Define in September 2013. Whilst the application is made in outline, with all matters except means of access reserved for subsequent approval, it is appropriate for the application to demonstrate how the site could be developed in a way which would comply with Development Plan policy and other relevant guidance and material considerations.
- 10.24 The starting point when considering the urban design proposals is an understanding and appreciation of the existing topography of the site and the landscape and settlement character of the surrounding area.
- 10.25 The Design and Access Statement (D&AS) considers the historic development of Tidbury Green and establishes that prior to the 1920s the area remained relatively undeveloped. Between 1920 and the mid 1950s the area within and to the north, south east and west of the triangle formed by the three roads was developed. Relatively little additional development has taken place since the late 1950s. Much of what has occurred has been infilling and the replacement and extension of existing dwellings.
- 10.26 The settlement character of Tidbury Green is explored in detail in the D&AS. The features identified include large detached and semi-detached properties set back from the road with wide grass verges and a proliferation of mature trees.
- 10.27 Having considered the wider area, the D&AS considers facilities close to the site. Important ecological, recreational, educational and social facilities within the data identified. Key

infrastructure, including roads, sub-stations and sewage pumping / treatment plant is also limited.

10.28 The next stage in the design evolution process is the development of a basic design concept for the development of the site. This is included on Figure 9 of the D&AS. The concept proposed includes seven blocks of development which broadly follow the existing field patterns and allow the retention and enhancement of existing hedges which currently sub divide the site. A single access point is proposed on Fulford Hall Road. The introduction of an access in this position introduces the opportunity to create a central green core which runs from east to west. It is proposed that this core area would include a village square, village green, and an equipped children's play area. It would also provide an open link through to an informal play area and additional area of landscaping proposed on the eastern side of the site.

10.29 Subsequent figures in the D&AS develop and refine the concept plan and add detail on how various important requirements for a successful residential layout would be achieved. These include:

- a road hierarchy within the site including primary roads, lanes, shared private drives and courtyard/mews areas;
- the location of the entrance square, village green and children's play area; and,
- pedestrian circulation routes and links through the site and to areas beyond.

10.30 The urban design work carried out concludes with an illustrative layout of how the site could be developed to deliver the number of dwellings proposed by the outline application. The drawing (Figure 11) shows how the proposals would reflect the prevailing character of the village whilst also making best use of the site by achieving densities which comply with the Framework.

10.31 In order to explain the urban design concepts proposed in more detail the later pages of the D&AS explain the various proposed character areas proposed within the layout. These include:

- the "Fulford Hall Road edge" which seeks to reflect the character at that part of the site;
- "Primary Avenue Edge" which is intended as a development of the Fulford Hall road edge;
- "Parkland Edge" which is intended to reflect the parkland character of the central open space that runs through the site; and,

- “Rural Edge” which has been designed to complement the eastern edge of the site which adjoins open countryside.
- 10.32 Other area types within the proposed layout include the “Farm Edge” which is proposed adjacent to the Tidbury Green Farm buildings and “Mews Edge” which is intended to introduce an element of higher density housing in the proposed scheme whilst maintaining the overall character.
- 10.33 Illustrative material obtained within the D&AS seeks to demonstrate how various parts of the site would look and includes 3D sketch illustrations of the central green corridor and the primary avenue. In addition, illustrative sections are provided which show the juxtaposition of trees, roads, open space and buildings in various parts of the site.
- 10.34 In addition to design, the D&AS considers access and confirms that a hierarchy of pedestrian and cycle routes is proposed, as well as access for vehicular traffic.
- 10.35 Finally, the D&AS considers the scheme against the twelve criteria established in the “Building For Life” standard.
- 10.36 In summary, the application is made in outline, with all matters except means of access reserved for subsequent approval by the local planning authority. Nevertheless, the importance of achieving an exemplary design solution for the site is acknowledged. The D&AS demonstrates robustly how the site could be developed, to a very high visual and environmental standard, at the density proposed by the application. It is anticipated that the concepts and proposals established by the D&AS will be carried through to the reserved matters stage. It is anticipated that the Council will attach conditions in order to ensure this is the case.

Ecology, Protected Species and Arboriculture

Ecology

- 10.37 The application is accompanied by an Ecological Appraisal which was produced by The Waterman Group during the spring, summer and autumn of 2013. The purpose of the appraisal is to understand the nature conservation value of the site and to establish whether the proposals for the development might give rise to any significant ecological effects.
- 10.38 The appraisal was carried out in several phases which included:
- extended “phase 1” habitat survey, carried out in February 2013 to identify habits and potential for protected species within the site; and

- ecological data search of records to identify designated sites, and species identified as “protected” or included within relevant Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs).

10.39 In addition, the ecological appraisal identified that further surveys were required in order to understand the ecological value of the site. These are:

- badger walkover survey;
- bat activity surveys;
- building and aerial tree inspections for bats;
- great crested newt survey;
- breeding bird survey;
- water vole scoping survey; and
- reptile survey.

10.40 The appraisal concludes that the site comprises a number of habitats which include:

- built structures;
- semi improved grassland;
- hedgerows;
- trees;
- ponds;
- ditches; and,
- scrub.

10.41 These habitats have been assessed using the relevant criteria which has identified that their status sits between “negligible” and “of local ecological value”. There are no statutory or non-statutory designated sites for nature conservation within the site boundary. To the north east of the site is the non-statutory designated site “Dickens Wood”. Dickens Wood is designated as an Ecosite, with areas comprising Ancient Woodland also designated as a Local Wildlife Site (LWS). A component of Dickens Woods LWS, known as “Big Dickens Wood”, is outside the site, adjacent to the north east boundary. An area of woodland planted by the site’s owners in the

late 1990s also falls within the Dickens Wood Ecosite designated and is again adjacent to the north east boundary. At the time the preparation of the application commenced, part of the site (a 1 hectare field in the north eastern corner) was included as part of the original Dickens Wood Ecosite designation. However, it has since been agreed that this was made in error and the designation has been removed.

- 10.42 The appraisal concludes that there is potential for the non-statutory designated Dickens Wood (adjacent to the site) to be affected as a result of the proposed development. Accordingly, recommendations to negate and reduce any potential adverse impacts are included in the appraisal. Recommendations would also negate/reduce any potential for adverse impacts on other habitats adjacent to the site.
- 10.43 The conclusions of the various surveys are summarised in a separate report which is considered in subsequent paragraphs.
- 10.44 In summary, the ecological appraisal concludes that, notwithstanding the findings of the protected species and other surveys, the development proposed would not have any significant adverse impacts on ecological resources. Mitigation proposals have been put forward and are included in the urban design work that has been carried out for the site.

Protected Species Report

- 10.45 In accordance with the conclusions of the ecological appraisal, protected species as well as additional surveys comprising NVC grassland and hedgerow assessments have been carried out for the site. The results of these are contained within a "Protected Species Report" prepared by The Waterman Group. The protected species surveys carried out are as previously listed:
- 10.46 The results of these surveys are considered in turn in the following paragraphs.
- 10.47 **Badger Walkover and Activity Survey** – Evidence of badgers was recorded during the site walkover surveys and during monitoring visits. It has been requested that information in respect of badgers remains confidential. Accordingly, further information and recommendations in respect of badgers is provided under separate cover.
- 10.48 Nevertheless, in summary, the surveys conclude that the presence, or otherwise, of badgers on or adjacent to the site should not prevent the grant of planning permission for the development proposed.
- 10.49 **Bat Activity Surveys and Building / Aerial Tree Inspections for Bats** – The building inspections revealed evidence of the presence of bats at Tidbury Green Farm. It is anticipated that, given roosting opportunities present, there are likely to be other roosts in the area. Aerial tree

inspections found trees with high, moderate and low bat roosting potential. However, no evidence of bats was recorded within any of the trees or within the structures within the site boundary.

- 10.50 The proposals would retain the vast majority of habitats of greatest value to bats i.e. the hedgerows and mature trees. Other important habitats for bats, including the Tidbury Green Farm buildings would be retained. The proposals present opportunities to enhance roosting opportunities through the introduction of bat boxes. The lighting strategy for the site must be carefully designed at the reserved matters stage in order to minimise disturbance to light sensitive bats.
- 10.51 In summary, the proposals would not unacceptably compromise the use of the site by bats and the proposed mitigation measures would offset any potential impacts.
- 10.52 **Great Crested Newt Surveys** – No Great Crested Newts were recorded within any of the pond surveys. Accordingly, it is likely that they are none present on the site and hence none would be affected by the proposals. The surveys have identified a low population of smooth newts within one of the ponds adjacent to the site and a low population of common toads also present within the same pond.
- 10.53 The proposals would retain the majority of habitats of greatest value to amphibians. The ponds surveyed would be retained, as would the ditch along the southern site boundary. Proposals for new and enhanced habitats on the site would enhance terrestrial opportunities for amphibians due to the introduction of habitat types which are of benefit to them.
- 10.54 In summary, we conclude that there are no protected amphibians (i.e. great crested newts) on site. The attractiveness of the site for other amphibians would be enhanced as a result of the proposals.
- 10.55 **Breeding Birds** – The survey reveals that the site supports a modest variety of breeding birds, all of which are typical of its setting within an “urban fringe”. With the exception of swallows, no declining farmland bird species were recorded during the survey. The survey concludes that the site does not support any bird species or populations that are of significance. The presence of suitable breeding and foraging habitats in the area suggest that birds are not dependent on the site for foraging and breeding. The proposals present opportunities to enhance nesting through the introduction of bird boxes.
- 10.56 **Reptile Surveys** – A total of seven survey visits were carried out, during which no reptiles were recorded. There were no other sightings during further survey visits undertaken on land adjacent to the site. The nearest record of a reptile is a grass snake approximately 1.22km south. Therefore, it is considered unlikely that reptiles are present on the site.

- 10.57 The site is considered to be of negligible ecological value for reptiles. Nevertheless, as a matter of best practice, provision for reptiles is proposed in order to allow them to colonise the site in the future. Details of this to be agreed at the reserved matters stage.
- 10.58 **Water Vole** – No evidence of water voles was recorded during the scoping survey. The nearest records of water voles are approximately 7km to the north west of the site. The ditches on site lack lush vegetation typically favoured by the species. Furthermore, optimal water vole habitat comprises a water depth of over 1 metre combined with little or no significant fluctuations in water level. None of the ditches or other watercourse on the site provide these.
- 10.59 We conclude this site is of negligible ecological value in relation to water voles.
- 10.60 **NVC Grassland** – The grassland on the site was found to support semi-improved neutral grassland, areas of which showed affinities with MG6b / MG5a grassland communities. However it should be noted that no grassland compartments were considered to be a close match to the latter. Consequently, the preliminary valuation of the grassland on site made in the ecological appraisal was raised to reflect the grassland as having “local ecological value”.
- 10.61 The proposals would result in the replacement and enhancement of those higher quality areas of grassland which would be lost as a result of built development. Details of which would be agreed at the reserve matters stage.
- 10.62 **Hedgerow Assessment** – An assessment of the hedgerows on the site against the ‘Wildlife and Landscape’ criteria of the Hedgerow Regulations (1997) found two hedgerows on the site to qualify as ‘important’. However, notwithstanding this, the hedgerows on the site were still considered to be of ecological value within the context of the site.
- 10.63 The proposals would retain the majority of the hedgerows on the, however, small sections of those hedgerows considered ‘important’ would be removed. The loss of these sections would be compensated for elsewhere within the proposals through the creation of new species rich hedgerows and enhancement of those hedgerows which are to be retained.
- 10.64 In summary, we conclude that following the implementation of appropriate mitigation the impacts of the development proposals on habitats and protected and other species has been considered robustly and found to be negligible. Furthermore, the proposals present opportunities to enhance the site for biodiversity.

Arboriculture

- 10.65 An Arboricultural Survey Report of the site has been carried out by the Waterman Group. The report summarises the results of a detailed on site tree survey which was carried out on 11th and

12th March and 22nd April 2013. Each of the trees present on the site was assessed in accordance with the relevant British Standard. The survey includes a location plan and records for all trees present on site.

- 10.66 Two groups of trees on the site are the subject of a Tree Preservation Order (TPO). TPO number 180 relates to the belt of woodland along the western boundary of the site, adjacent to Fulford Hall Road. This TPO was confirmed in 1989. The other TPO, number 1000, was made on 8 July 2013 and is still subject to confirmation (at the time of writing). The Order relates to the whole site and repeats the trees contained within TPO 180.
- 10.67 The tree survey identifies that the majority of trees present are in “fair” to “good” condition. Most of the trees within the hedgerows on the site have not been managed in the past. These trees would require a certain amount of work in order to reduce dead wood and canopy size to encourage regrowth and to reduce the likelihood of limb loss. There are a number of exceptions to this, including trees which have recently been managed by contractors to allow access to overhead power lines. In addition, trees growing in the landscape belt to the west of Fulford Hall Road have been managed due to their location adjacent to the highway and residential properties.
- 10.68 The application proposes the retention of the vast majority of trees on the site. The location of the access point has been chosen carefully in order to ensure that the minimum number of trees would be lost in its creation. Two trees, of moderate quality and value, would be lost at this point. Substantial additional planting was proposed elsewhere on site as part of the proposals.

Heritage

- 10.69 The Heritage desk based assessment has been prepared by the Waterman Group. In summary, the assessment considers the presence of heritage assets around the site and the potential for archaeological remains beneath it.
- 10.70 Neither Tidbury Green, nor the site, is within a designated conservation area. There are no listed buildings on the site or close to it. The nearest listed buildings are over 1km away. As such, the proposals would not have any impact on known designated heritage assets.
- 10.71 The assessment notes the potential for the development to harm the setting of the cluster of buildings at Tidbury Green Farm. These are considered to be non-designated heritage assets, albeit of low significance. Any potential impacts can be minimised by sympathetic design of future proposals. The Design and Access Statement shows a development typology which would deliver this objective.

- 10.72 Other non-designated heritage assets include planned enclosure fields dating from 18th Century, which include field boundaries and historic hedgerows. The effect on these assets can be minimised by retaining the hedgerows as far as possible. The proposals seek to deliver this objective as development is proposed mainly within the areas enclosed by the hedges.
- 10.73 Finally, the effect of sub surface heritage assets such as ridge and furrow and crop marks can be mitigated by a programme of archaeological evaluation to be carried out at the reserved matters stage. We anticipate that a condition will be attached to an outline planning permission to address this issue.

Highways and Transportation

Point of Access

- 10.74 A single point of vehicular access is proposed into the site from Fulford Hall Road. The location has been chosen carefully to provide a safe means of access, but also to minimise the number of trees that must be removed in order to achieve this. Details of the proposed access are shown on drawing number 5117672/TP/GA/001. The drawing demonstrates that two small trees will need to be removed. One of the trees is within the access. The other is within the visibility splay. Neither are mature or significant.
- 10.75 The proposed access complies with the relevant guidance for new access formed to / from rural roads.
- 10.76 In addition to the vehicular access, the Design and Access Statement proposes two pedestrian accesses to the north and south of the vehicular access also on Fulford Hall Road. It is proposed that these accesses could be used in emergencies if necessary.

Transport Assessment

- 10.77 The planning application is accompanied by a Transport Assessment and Framework Travel Plan, both of which have been prepared by Atkins Limited. The documents have been prepared in accordance with a scope which was agreed with the Borough Council's officers prior to the submission of the application.
- 10.78 The opportunities for walking, cycling and using public transport by residents are considered in Section 9 of the statement which considers sustainability. Those provisions are not reiterated in this section.
- 10.79 The starting point for the preparation of the Transport Assessment is to establish the existing situation. Traffic counts and speed surveys have been carried out in order to do so. Junctions

on the network which are to be assessed were also identified. An analysis of personal injury accidents has been carried out and is appended to the TA. The analysis demonstrates that, whilst all accidents are regrettable, there are no significant patterns which emerge from the data and there is no undue concern that the traffic related to the proposed development would increase numbers of accidents in the local area.

- 10.80 The TA considers proposed and committed development in the area in accordance with the Borough Councils requirements. The traffic generated by committed schemes has been added to the background traffic count. In addition, it is noted that further traffic will be added to the network from three strategic sites identified in the draft Local Plan (sites 17, 18 and 20). Furthermore, additional traffic generated by the Lowbrook Farm site needs to be taken into account on the assumption that that scheme will be allowed. This is achieved by way of a sensitivity test.
- 10.81 The traffic generated by the proposals has been assessed using the latest traffic generation database (TRICS). The distribution of that traffic on the network has been assessed using existing turning decisions recorded at local junctions. On the basis that the site is within an established residential area this method of assignment is preferred to the use of journey to work census data.
- 10.82 Having established the level of traffic growth proposed, and its distribution on the network, an assessment of its impact has been carried out. The assessment year used is 2020. A sensitivity test has then been applied to the assessment of impact.
- 10.83 The TA concludes that the traffic generated by the proposals could be accommodated satisfactorily on the surrounding network without compromise to either its operation or highway safety. As such, no major highways infrastructure improvement works are proposed in support of the application. Minor highway improvement works in the vicinity of the proposed access and at the junction between Fulford Hall Road and Lowbrook Lane / Dickens Heath Road / Tilehouse lane are shown on drawing number 5117672/TP/GA/002.

Framework Travel Plan

- 10.84 The Framework Travel Plan (FTP) is included within the TA and details a series of measures to promote sustainable travel to the site. Central to the success of the Travel Plan is the appointment of a Travel Plan Coordinator for the site who would be appointed as the scheme is occupied. The coordinator would provide a focal point for all parties and would carry out the following roles:
- provide information to residents on sustainable travel choices;

- liaise with contractors to ensure infrastructure required (for example cycle and pedestrian linkages) is provided;
- liaise with local bus operators and local retailers with regard to promotions and incentive schemes for walking and cycling;
- liaise with Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council during the review and development phases of the FTP;
- promote and raise awareness of the Travel Plan to residents; and,
- develop the site travel information welcome pack.

10.85 The Travel Plan includes measures to minimise single occupancy car based travel patterns. The initiatives would cover all modes of travel including car sharing, public transport, walking, cycling and travel demand management (for example promoting homeworking and home retail delivery) for residents. The Travel Plan would comprise five separate strategies as follows:

- Public transport strategy – with the intention of encouraging and incentivising residents to use the S7 bus service and the Wythall and Whitlocks End Railway Station;
- Walking and cycling strategy, with the objective of encouraging residents to walk and cycle to local amenities;
- Car management strategy, with the objective of promoting car sharing as a means of reducing trips;
- Monitoring strategy – which would be used to assess performance against the criteria established in the FTP.

10.86 The effectiveness of the Travel Plan would be monitored annually with resident surveys. If targets identified in the plan have not been achieved the Travel Plan coordinator would revise the plan and will prepare an action plan for Travel Plan delivery.

Flood Risk and Drainage

10.87 A Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) has been prepared by Atkins Limited. The assessment considers the risks of the site flooding and of it causing flooding problems elsewhere in its catchment. The assessment also includes strategies for the disposal of surface and foul water. The conclusions of the document are explained in subsequent paragraphs.

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- 10.88 The site is located in Flood Zone 1 as shown on the Environment Agency's Flood Risk Maps. This means that the site is in the lowest category flooding risk. Calculations carried out in the preparation of the FRA indicate that at present the watercourse which runs along the southern boundary of the site can contain storm water from the "1 in 100 year" flood event. This represents a worst case scenario because the run off created from the site after development has been carried out would be lower than existing. The application site is at low risk of surface water flooding.
- 10.89 The proposals would incorporate Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) which would control the flow of water from the site and would treat the water before it is discharged into water courses off site. The final choice of SUDS to be used is to be confirmed at the detailed design stage. Nevertheless, it is proposed that a storage pond would be integrated into the landscape to the south east of the proposed development area. The pond would provide the primary surface water storage as well as providing ecological benefits. The total volume of the pond (approximately 3,000 cubic metres) is sufficient to achieve the required discharge rate.
- 10.90 There are two options for the disposal of foul water from the site. One option is to use gravity to take foul water to the existing pumping station on Rumbush Lane. Alternatively, foul water could be pumped from the site into the existing public foul sewer within Fulford Hall Road. There are known to be capacity issues in the local foul water sewage network in the area. Accordingly, Severn Trent Water is currently undertaking a sewer capacity assessment (at the applicants cost). The assessment will confirm any upgrades that may be required to the sewage system and will also confirm the outfall location from the site.
- 10.91 It is anticipated that all parts of the foul water drainage system would be offered to Severn Trent Water for adoption. The SUDS system would be offered to Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council for adoption.
- 10.92 We conclude that there are no technical reasons why, in respect of surface and foul water, planning permission should not be granted for the development proposed.

11. Planning Obligations

- 11.1 The Solihull UDP is accompanied by supplementary planning guidance which establishes the Council's policy in respect of planning obligations made in association with permissions for residential development. The applicant is willing, as a matter of principle, to enter into a legal agreement to deliver a package of obligations which complies with development plan policy and other material considerations, including the CIL regulations.
- 11.2 It is proposed that detailed negotiations on the obligations package will be carried out during the determination of the application. This is necessary as there is currently uncertainty over the provision which is expected to come forward in association with the Lowbrook Far scheme. The outcome of that decision is not yet known.
- 11.3 In respect of affordable housing, we note that the Councils overall target is 40%. However, we note that this is not achievable in all cases and that the affordable housing SPG permits the payment of contributions in lieu of affordable housing in some circumstances. We would like to explore this possibility with the Council during the determination of the application.
- 11.4 Other matters which may form the basis of the obligations package are as follows:
- education provision;
 - landscape / public open space and adoption maintenance payments; and,
 - highway works / enhancement.
- 11.5 These can be discussed and agreed in due course.

12. Conclusions

12.1 The previous sections of the Design and Access Statement and the technical information submitted with the application comprise a comprehensive suite of information in support of the proposals. The information provides all of the detail required to allow the local planning authority to rigorously assess the application. The merits of the proposals are summarised in the following paragraphs.

- The site has been identified as a suitable location for residential development in the Borough Council's Development Plan for more than 15 years.
- The site is not in the West Midlands Green Belt. Green Belt policies in the Solihull UDP and the Framework do not apply to proposed development on it.
- The site is in a sustainable location which is particularly suitable for residential development. There are significant opportunities to walk and cycle to existing amenities in the surrounding area.
- The site is well served by an existing bus service, which could be expanded in the future. The site's location close to two railway stations provides genuinely attractive opportunities for residents to use public transport for leisure and commuting journeys.
- The Framework introduces a strong presumption in favour of sustainable development. The Framework also seeks to boost significantly the supply of land. The proposals benefit significantly from these provisions.
- The Borough Council is unable to demonstrate a five year housing land supply. Accordingly, the Framework establishes that policies in the adopted UDP which seek to restrict the supply of housing land should not be considered up-to-date. Nevertheless, the proposals comply with the majority of housing land supply policies in the UDP as the site is identified as a suitable location for residential development.
- It has been established, in the determination of appeals on similar sites, that safeguarded land can be released for residential development without a review of the UDP.
- The proposals would have minimal impact on the landscape surrounding the site. An indicative design solution has been proposed which would deliver a high quality form of development which would be compliant and reflect the character of existing development in the surrounding area.

- The impact of the proposals on existing ecology, trees and protected species has been assessed in detail. The proposals have been designed to incorporate all relevant and appropriate mitigation measures.
- The proposed means of access into the site would operate safely. The traffic generated by the proposals could be satisfactorily accommodated on the surrounding highway network without compromise to either highway safety or the smooth operation of the network.
- All other technical matters, such as surface and foul water drainage and the risk of flooding, have been considered robustly as part of the application. Technical solutions are available to address these matters and details of these will be submitted at the reserved matters stage.
- The proposals would make a significant contribution towards the supply of housing in the Borough and would help to address the existing shortfall.
- The proposals would deliver much needed affordable housing in the Borough and would help to address the significant under provision of affordable houses.

12.2 We conclude that the proposals comply with, and benefit from the support of, adopted UDP policy, the Framework and all other relevant planning guidance in respect of both the principle and detail of the proposals. In the absence of any material considerations which weigh to the contrary, we conclude that there are overwhelming grounds on which to grant planning permission for the development proposed. Accordingly, we request that planning permission is granted at the earliest convenience.

GVA

October 2013