

**Planning Statement for the demolition of existing outbuildings, erection of 9 no. detached dwelling houses, creation of pedestrian access point onto Dickens Heath Road, and associated works.**

**Wharf Farm, 123 Dickens Heath Road, Dickens Heath, Solihull, B90 1QG.**

On behalf of Cameron Homes and Countrywide Tax and Trust Corporation Limited.

Date: August 2022 | Pegasus Ref: P22-1542

Author: ARG

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## Document Management.

Version	Date	Author	Checked/ Approved by:	Reason for revision
Version 1	20/07/2022	ARG	DO	-

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. This Planning Statement has been prepared on behalf of Cameron Homes and Countrywide Tax and Trust Corporation Limited (the "Applicants") and supports an application for full planning permission at land at Wharf Farm, 123 Dickens Heath Road, Dickens Heath, Solihull, B90 1QG (the "Site").

1.2. The Applicants are seeking full planning permission for residential development. The description of development is as follows:

*"Demolition of existing outbuildings, erection of 9 no. detached dwelling houses, widening of existing vehicular access and creation of pedestrian access point onto Dickens Heath Road, and associated works."*

1.3. This Planning Statement sets out the planning merits of the development when considered against relevant Development Plan policies, the NPPF, and material planning considerations. It draws on supporting documents provided as part of the application package and should be read in conjunction with them.

1.4. The material submitted in support of this application is as follows:

- Planning Statement (this document)
- Design and Access Statement
- Location Plan Rev F (101-979LIV/100)
- Proposed Site Plan (101 -979LIV/101 Rev F)
- Boundary Plan (101-979LIV/102A)
- Material Plan (101 -979LIV/103B)
- Street Scene (101-979LIV/104B)
- Heygate Plans (101-979LIV/200)
- Heygate Elevations (101-979LIV/201)
- Richardson Plans (101-979LIV/202)

- Richardson Elevations (101-979LIV/203A)
- Dearle Plans (101-979LIV/204)
- Dearle Elevations (101-979LIV/205)
- Webb Plans (101-979LIV/206)
- Webb Elevations (101-979LIV/207)
- Richardson Type 2 Elevations (101-979LIV/207)
- Ecological Appraisal & Protected Species Surveys
- Biodiversity Metric
- Engineering Appraisal (O10 Rev C)
- Drainage Statement
- Ground Investigation Report
- Built Heritage Assessment
- Built Heritage Assessment Appendix A: Wharf Farm Local List Assessment
- Site Access General Arrangement (DWG-04 Rev B)
- Tree Survey Schedule
- Tree Protection Plan (D17287-02)

- 1.5. This Planning Statement begins by setting out the context of the site and describing the proposal. It will then review the relevant planning policies (both local and national) and material considerations. The merits of the planning application are subsequently assessed, bringing together the additional supporting information accompanying the planning application.
- 1.6. It will be shown that the proposals are in accordance with national and local planning policies and constitute sustainable development. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that planning permission be granted.

## 2. SITE CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1. Wharf Farm (the site) is located on the eastern edge of Dickens Heath, which is a large, modern village situated to the south west of Solihull. The Site is a small farmstead, dating back to the early nineteenth century. Whilst on the edge of the village, the site is within the settlement, and is not in the Green Belt.
- 2.2. The site is shown on the submitted Site Location Plan (drawing number: 101-979LIV/100). It is 0.495 hectares in size and is irregularly shaped. It is bounded by the Stratford upon Avon canal to the north east, and Dickens Heath Road and the grounds of Wharf Farmhouse to the west. To the south west and south east, the site adjoins existing residential development, whilst to the north east it abuts an undeveloped area of land with mature trees. Overhead power cables run parallel to the north eastern boundary.
- 2.3. There is a group of six derelict outbuildings (comprising of sheds and pigsties) and hardstanding in the centre of the site. The rest of the site is open land, interspersed with trees and shrubs.
- 2.4. Dickens Heath contains a range of facilities, including Dickens Heath Community Primary School, a medical centre, and community, retail, and employment uses.
- 2.5. There is existing vehicular access into the site (a short driveway) off Dickens Heath Road. In addition, the site can be easily accessed by public transport, with the nearest bus stop (Tythe Barn Lane) being approximately 60 metres to the south from the proposed pedestrian access point onto Dickens Heath Road. This is served by buses 503, 884, A4, and A5.
- 2.6. The existing derelict outbuildings were added to Solihull's Local List of Heritage Assets in February 2022. The neighbouring farmhouse was also added to the Local List at the same time. The site is not within a conservation area, and there are no statutory listed buildings or other heritage assets in the vicinity.
- 2.7. The Site falls within Flood Zone 1, meaning that it is at low risk of fluvial flooding. However, the majority of the site is at a low-to-medium risk of pluvial (surface water) flooding.

### 3. PLANNING HISTORY

3.1. A planning review of the public access system on the Solihull Borough Council website reveals the following planning history for the Site:

- O/L residential part wharf farm (reference: PL/1959/12390/HIS). Refused on 24<sup>th</sup> August 1959.
- Agricultural house (reference: PL/1967/15421/HIS). Refused on 4<sup>th</sup> March 1968.
- 2m high garden wall (reference: PL/1997/00151/FULL). Approved on 9<sup>th</sup> September 1997.
- Erection of a two-storey, 4-BEDROOM detached dwelling and detached single-storey double garage (reference: PL/1997/01684/FULL). Refused on 15<sup>th</sup> January 1998.
- Approval of reserved matters for the erection of 3 units and 2 blocks of detached garages (reference: PL/1998/01002/RM). Approved on 30<sup>th</sup> July 1998.
- Erection of 5 x 2 storey 4 bedroom dwellings and garages with new access road (reference: PL/1998/00381/FULL). Withdrawn.

3.2. None of this planning history for the Site is considered relevant to this current planning application.

## 4. THE PROPOSAL

4.1. Pre-application advice was received from the Council on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2021 (reference: PL/2021/02542/PREAPC). The initial plans showed 18 dwellings on the site, but this number has now been halved in order to reduce the density of the development.

4.2. This application seeks full planning permission for:

*“Demolition of existing outbuildings, erection of 9 no. detached dwelling houses, widening of existing vehicular access and creation of pedestrian access point onto Dickens Heath Road, and associated works.”*

4.3. This section of the Planning Statement describes the key features of the proposed development and should be read in conjunction with the following drawings:

Drawing reference	Drawing title
101-979LIV/101 Rev F	Proposed Site Plan
101-979LIV/102A	Boundary Plan
101-979LIV/103B	Material Plan
101-979LIV/104B	Street Scene
101-979LIV/200	Heygate Plans
101-979LIV/201	Heygate Elevations
101-979LIV/202	Richardson Plans
101-979LIV/203A	Richardson Elevations
101-979LIV/204	Dearle Plans



101-979LIV/205	Dearle Elevations
101-979LIV/206	Webb Plans
101-979LIV/207	Webb Elevations
101-979LIV/207	Richardson Type 2 Elevations

### **Proposed Demolition**

- 4.4. The existing derelict outbuildings are proposed to be demolished to allow for the redevelopment of the site. Whilst they have recently been locally listed, it is important to note that they are not subject to any legal protections, and Cotswold Archaeology consider them to have a low significance.

### **Proposed Residential Dwellings**

- 4.5. The proposed development is for nine two-storey detached dwellings. These will be market dwellings, with no affordable units to be provided as the number of dwellings and site size falls below the threshold requiring affordable housing set out in the NPPF. There are four house types, as detailed in the accommodation schedule within Drawing No. 101 -979LIV/101. The proposed mix is as follows:

- 3 bed – 2 dwellings (33%)
- 4 bed – 1 dwelling (11%)
- 5 bed – 6 dwellings (two different house types) (66%)

### **Proposed Layout and Access Arrangements**

- 4.6. The proposed site layout is shown on Drawing 101-979LIV/101 Rev F. This is a low-density scheme, with dwellings distributed across the site. They share private driveways which stem from the main access point, and there is a mews-style streetscape.

- 4.7. Access into the site will continue to be taken from Dickens Heath Road via the existing site access point, which will be widened to accommodate two-way traffic. Each dwelling will have two off-street parking spaces.
- 4.8. A new pedestrian access point is proposed to be created in the south western corner of the site. This will connect to the existing pavement, enabling people to safely walk into Dickens Heath and to Tythe Barn Lane bus stop. This will reduce the need to use vehicles to travel short distances to destinations such as workplaces and schools.
- 4.9. All dwellings will have private gardens. These will be separated by 1800mm close boarded fences/gates.
- 4.10. A communal bin store is proposed in the south west of the site.

#### **Design and External Appearance**

- 4.11. The design of the dwellings seeks to strike a balance between the neighbouring farmhouse and other buildings throughout Dickens Heath, resembling the local vernacular and architecture. This will ensure that the local character of the area will be maintained.
- 4.12. Red bricks will be used to construct the dwellings, with each house type featuring full or partial rendering as part of feature façades. The submitted elevations show that there will be a variety of façades, avoiding the creation of an overly homogenous development. The dwellings will include attractive features, such as bay windows, creating a sense of charm, character, distinctiveness, and place.

#### **Trees and Landscaping**

- 4.13. Existing hedgerow and trees will be retained wherever possible.
- 4.14. Category C trees across the site will need to be cleared to accommodate the development. This loss will be compensated by new planting throughout the site. At least 12 new trees are proposed to be planted, as well as hedgerows bordering driveways (which will help ensure privacy for some gardens) and lawned areas. The development will feel green and spacious, which is appropriate given the site's location on the periphery of Dickens Heath and its history as a farmstead.



### **The Farmhouse**

- 4.15. The existing locally listed farmhouse is excluded from this application but will be retained, repaired, and extended via a separate planning application. This application is expected to be submitted following the submission of this proposal. The farmhouse has been vacant for over five years, and this application will provide it with a long-term future use and ensure it is retained. This will represent a benefit in heritage terms.

## 5. PLANNING POLICY

- 5.1. In accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.2. The statutory Development Plan at the time of the submission of this application comprises the Solihull Local Plan (Adopted December 2013).
- 5.3. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021) and the Council's Supplementary Planning Documents and Guidance are material considerations in determining individual planning applications.
- 5.4. The emerging Solihull Local Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State for examination on 13 May 2021, with inquiry hearings taking place between September and December 2021. Given the advanced stage of this emerging plan, some weight, but not full weight, can be given to its draft policies, in line with Paragraph 48 of the NPPF.
- 5.5. Relevant planning policies are set out in turn below, in so far as they are relevant to the determination of this planning application.

### **Development Plan: Solihull Local Plan (adopted December 2013)**

- 5.6. The site is within the settlement of Dickens Heath, but is not subject to any site-specific allocations.
- 5.7. Policy P4 (Meeting Housing Need) refers to affordable housing. A Court of Appeal judgement on 11th May 2016 endorsed Government policy (Ministerial Statement HCWS50, November 2014) to exempt sites of 10 dwellings or 1,000sqm or less from affordable housing contribution. The Council has therefore amended Council Plan Policy P4 a) as follows, in line with this government policy:

*"The Council will require developers of allocated and unidentified sites to make a contribution to affordable housing on residential sites of 11 units or more, or which have a maximum combined gross floor space of more than 1,000 sqm to meet the housing needs of the Borough".*

However, Policy P4 is inconsistent with the NPPF (See 5.25). Therefore, it is the latter that should take precedence on this matter.

5.8. Policy P5 (Provision of Land for Housing) sets out the Council's target to deliver 11,000 additional homes between 2006 and 2028. This provision will be phased, in order to ensure a continuous supply of housing. It is stated that new housing will be supported on unidentified sites in accessible locations where they contribute towards meeting identified housing needs and enhancing the distinctiveness and character of an area. Such new housing should not be in locations which have poor access to employment, centres, and services. It is noted that the density of new housing should make efficient use of land, and an appropriate mix of housing should be provided.

5.9. Policy P7 (Accessibility and Ease of Access) emphasises that developments should be in accessible locations and seek to enhance existing levels of accessibility. Housing should be:

- Within 800 metres of a primary school, doctors surgery, and food shop
- Within 400 metres of a bus stop
- Within 800 metres of a railway station

Access to developments should be safe, attractive, and direct for those travelling by foot, bike, and public transport, and safe for vehicles accessing the site.

5.10. Policy P8 (Managing Demand for Travel and Reducing Congestion) makes clear that proposals should have regard to highway safety and transport efficiency. Developments will not be permitted if it would lead to a reduction in safety, or an increase in delays for vehicles. Rather, travel demands should be managed to avoid any detrimental impacts on the highway network, and the need to travel should be reduced, with the use of sustainable modes of transport encouraged.

5.11. Policy P9 (Climate Change) says that, when considering the design and location of new developments, the Council will take into account the targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing the generation of energy from renewable and low carbon sources.

5.12. Policy P10 (Natural Environment) emphasises that the Council will seek to protect, enhance, and restore diverse landscape features, and it is made clear that developers should incorporate measures to protect, enhance, and restore the landscape and green infrastructure.

Likewise, biodiversity and geodiversity should be conserved, enhanced, and restored. It is said that a full ecological survey should be undertaken, and a net gain or enhancement to biodiversity should be delivered, unless it can be shown that this is not appropriate or feasible. If a development is to have an adverse impact on the natural environment, appropriate mitigation and compensation will be required to achieve a net gain in biodiversity, habitat creation, landscape character, and local distinctiveness. These enhancements can be either on site or in its vicinity.

- 5.13. Policy P11 (Water Management) requires sustainable urban drainage systems to be incorporated into developments. Enough space should be made for water within the layout of all developments.
- 5.14. Policy P14 (Amenity) seeks to protect and enhance the amenity of existing and potential occupiers in a location. Expectations for development proposals are listed, including:
- Consider visual and other amenities of occupiers of new developments close to overhead power lines and substations
  - Developments should be located and designed to minimise visual and other amenity impacts
  - Safeguard trees, hedgerows, and woodlands, and encourage new planting
  - Encourage better air quality
  - Minimise the adverse impact of noise
- 5.15. Policy P15 (Securing Design Quality) requires all development to achieve good quality, inclusive, and sustainable design. This should conserve and enhance local character and distinctiveness, whilst ensuring that the development's scale, massing, density, layout, materials, and landscape respect the natural, built, and historic environment. Moreover, new developments should achieve the highest standard of environmental performance (through sustainable design and construction), include a design which is flexible, robust, and future-proofed, and create attractive, safe, and uncluttered streets and public spaces. Developments should seek to create a sense of place, and residential developments should be built to the Lifetime Homes standard to demonstrate how they meet Building for Life 12.

- 5.16. Policy P16 (Conservation of Heritage Assets and Local Distinctiveness) recognises the importance of the historic environment to the character and distinctiveness of the Borough. Development should preserve and enhance heritage assets as appropriate to their significance, conserving local character, distinctiveness, and sense of place. Heritage assets can include those on the Local List or Historic Environment Record or could also be undesignated.
- 5.17. Policy P20 (Provision of Open Space, Children's Play, Sport, Recreation, and Leisure) states that the Council require provision for, and maintenance of, open space, sports and recreational facilities as a key part of new development.
- 5.18. Policy P21 (Developer Contributions and Infrastructure Provision) notes that development should provide or contribute towards provision of measures to mitigate any impacts of development and physical, social, and green infrastructure associated with the development. Where appropriate, site-specific measures will be secured by the Council through planning obligations.

### **Material Considerations**

#### National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021)

- 5.19. The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies and how these should be applied.
- 5.20. Paragraph 7 states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. This has three interrelated objectives that are set out at paragraph 8:
- An economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right place and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;
  - A social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and

- An environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

- 5.21. At the heart of the NPPF is the ‘presumption in favour of sustainable development’. Paragraph 11 sets out that for decision-taking, this means “approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay.”
- 5.22. Section Four covers decision-making and paragraph 38 clarifies that local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of an area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.
- 5.23. Paragraph 47 continues that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise and that decisions on applications should be made as quickly as possible, and within statutory timescales unless a longer period has been agreed.
- 5.24. Section Five addresses delivering a sufficient supply of homes and paragraph 60 reiterates the Government’s continued objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes and to develop a wide choice of high quality homes, widen opportunities for home ownership and create sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities.
- 5.25. Paragraph 64 states that affordable housing provision should not be sought for residential developments that are not major development, defined in the Glossary as where 10 or more homes will be provided, or the site area exceeds 0.5 hectares.
- 5.26. Paragraph 69 says that, in order to ensure a mix of sites, authorities should “support the development of windfall sites through their policies and decisions”, with “great weight [given to] the benefits of using suitable sites within existing settlements for homes”. Paragraph 70 goes on to note that “where an allowance is to be made for windfall sites as part of anticipated supply, there should be compelling evidence that they will provide a reliable source of supply”.



- 5.27. Section Eight is concerned with promoting healthy and safe communities. Paragraph 92 states that planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which promote social interaction, are safe and accessible, and enable and support healthy lifestyles.
- 5.28. Section Nine considers highways matters. Paragraph 111 states that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.
- 5.29. Section Eleven is concerned with making effective use of land in meeting the need for homes. Paragraph 124 continues that planning policies and decisions should support development that makes efficient use of land, taking into account:
- The identified need for different types of housing and other forms of development, and the availability of land suitable for accommodating it;
  - Local market conditions and viability;
  - The availability and capacity of infrastructure and services – both existing and proposed – as well as their potential for further improvement and the scope to promote sustainable travel modes that limit future car use;
  - The desirability of maintaining an area’s prevailing character and setting (including residential gardens), or of promoting regeneration and change; and
  - The importance of securing well-designed, attractive and healthy places.
- 5.30. Paragraph 125 notes that where there is an existing or anticipated shortage of land for meeting identified housing needs, it is especially important that planning policies and decisions avoid homes being built at low densities, and ensure that developments make optimal use of the potential of each site.
- 5.31. Section Twelve addresses design and sets out that the creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve and that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development.
- 5.32. Paragraph 130 sets out that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

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

5.33. Paragraph 197 states that, when determining applications, local planning authorities should consider the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, the positive contribution that conserving them can make, and the desirability of new development contributing towards the character and distinctiveness of an area.

5.34. Paragraph 199 emphasises that the more important the heritage asset is, the greater the weight that should be given to it.

5.35. Paragraph 201 states that if substantial harm would be caused to a heritage asset, planning consent should be refused unless it is demonstrated that substantial public benefits would outweigh the loss, or the nature of the heritage asset prevents reasonable uses of the site, no viable use of the heritage asset can be found, and the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.

- 5.36. Paragraph 203 states that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be considered when determining an application. If an application affects a non-designated heritage asset (either directly or indirectly), a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

Solihull Local Development Framework Vehicle Parking Standards and Green Travel Plan (adopted 2006)

- 5.37. The standards set out that there should be an average of two spaces per dwelling unit.

Planning Guidelines for Housing Development (adopted January 1994)

- 5.38. It is stated that developers should develop a landscape strategy in order to create an attractive environment, making best use of any landscape features which already exist. 1.5 trees per dwelling is an appropriate number, and it is suggested that existing trees should be retained.
- 5.39. Safety is the key consideration for new highways; entrances should be delineated by special treatment, such as gateway features.
- 5.40. The Guidance states that layouts should be interesting, varied and attractive, with judicious use of walls, hedges, and fences. Interest can be added through staggered building lines, and safety should be a key consideration.
- 5.41. It is noted that developments should have their own identity and character; this can be achieved through varied house type designs which respond to the local vernacular and architecture. An overprovision of large, detached dwellings risks leading to monotonous design and uninteresting layouts.
- 5.42. The length of a garden should not be less than 11 metres or 5 metres for every storey of the dwelling to which they relate (whichever is greatest). A distance of 1 metre should be left between the side of dwellings and the site boundary. However, the Council note that this guidance should be applied flexibly.
- 5.43. Crime prevention should be considered when designing residential developments.

Meeting Housing Needs (adopted July 2014)

- 5.44. In terms of market housing, the lowest proportion of 1- and 2-bedroom dwellings sought is applicable to Dickens Heath, Eaves Green, Meriden, and Temple Balsall (30%).
- 5.45. The Council recognise that it may not always be possible to provide for the household types which are in demand according to the evidence. This is most likely to be the case on smaller sites.

New Housing in Context Supplementary Planning Guidance (adopted November 2003)

- 5.46. The Council will seek to ensure that the character and local distinctiveness of the area is maintained; land should be used efficiently, and design should be high-quality, innovative, and contemporary. Key features in Solihull include strong building lines and repeated architectural motifs.
- 5.47. It is noted that the demolition of existing buildings can lead to the loss of character or distinctiveness of an area, for example, the development of isolated buildings.
- 5.48. It is important for the context of the proposal to be understood and respected by the development. New styles and materials can be used, providing that they complement their surroundings. If development is not in harmony with its context, it will only be permitted if it is of outstanding individual quality and located in an appropriate place.
- 5.49. Emphasis is placed on the importance of ensuring that a development does not have an adverse impact on amenity. Guidelines for overlooking and privacy will be applied to separate dwellings, car parking areas should not be situated to the rear of properties adjacent to private gardens and overlooking will be subject to the same controls which governing the consideration of development with facing windows.

Solihull Local Plan – Draft Submission Plan (dated October 2020)

- 5.50. Policy P4A (Meeting Housing Needs – Affordable Housing) requires developers to make a contribution towards affordable housing on sites of major development, or those with an area of 0.5 hectares or more.
- 5.51. Policy P4C (Meeting Housing Needs – Market Housing) states that, when considering the housing mix for market housing, the Council will consider the size of the site, current needs in the Borough, the existing mix of and demand for market housing, accessibility, the economics

of provision, and the need to ensure a range of house types and sizes to create mixed and socially balanced communities. The mix of market dwellings should be as follows:

- 1 or 2 bedrooms – 30%
- 3 bedrooms – 50%
- 4+ bedrooms – 20%

- 5.52. Policy P4E (Meeting Housing Needs – Housing for Older and Disabled People) emphasises that new developments should provide a mix of dwelling size and types to meet the needs of older people and those with disabilities and special needs. The subsequent points in this Policy specifically refer to major housing developments.
- 5.53. Policy P5 (Provision of Land for Housing) sets out the Council’s target to deliver 15,017 new homes between 2020 and 2036. It is stated that new housing will be supported on windfall sites if they are in accessible locations, would contribute towards meeting the housing need of the borough, and would enhance local character and distinctiveness. The Policy notes that homes should comply with the nationally described space standards, and that density will be influenced by the need to maximise the efficient use of land, the appropriate mix of housing, the need to respond to character and setting, and the scale, type, and location of development.
- 5.54. Policy P7 (Accessibility and Ease of Access) emphasises that development should be focussed in the most accessible locations; they should aim to enhance existing levels of accessibility and promote ease of access. The site should be able to be accessed sustainably, with a bus service within 400 metres of the site for minor developments. Access to developments should be safe, attractive, and suitable, with priority given to pedestrians and cyclists.
- 5.55. Policy P8 (Managing Travel Demand and Reducing Congestion) states that the Council will support developments that aim to reduce the need to travel, do not have an unacceptable impact on public safety, take an evidence-based approach to demonstrate appropriate car parking provision.
- 5.56. Policy P9 (Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change) states that development should be situated in locations where the need to travel is minimised, and opportunities to travel sustainably are maximised. Developments should enable a transition to a net zero economy. New dwellings should achieve a 30% reduction in energy demand/carbon reduction improvement, and dwellings should be net zero carbon from 2025. Energy should be supplied efficiently, and low carbon and sustainably sourced building materials should be used if

possible. For residential developments, there should be at least one charging point per dwelling. Meanwhile, the layout should enhance natural ventilation and lighting, minimising the need for heating and cooling, with green infrastructure integrated into the development.

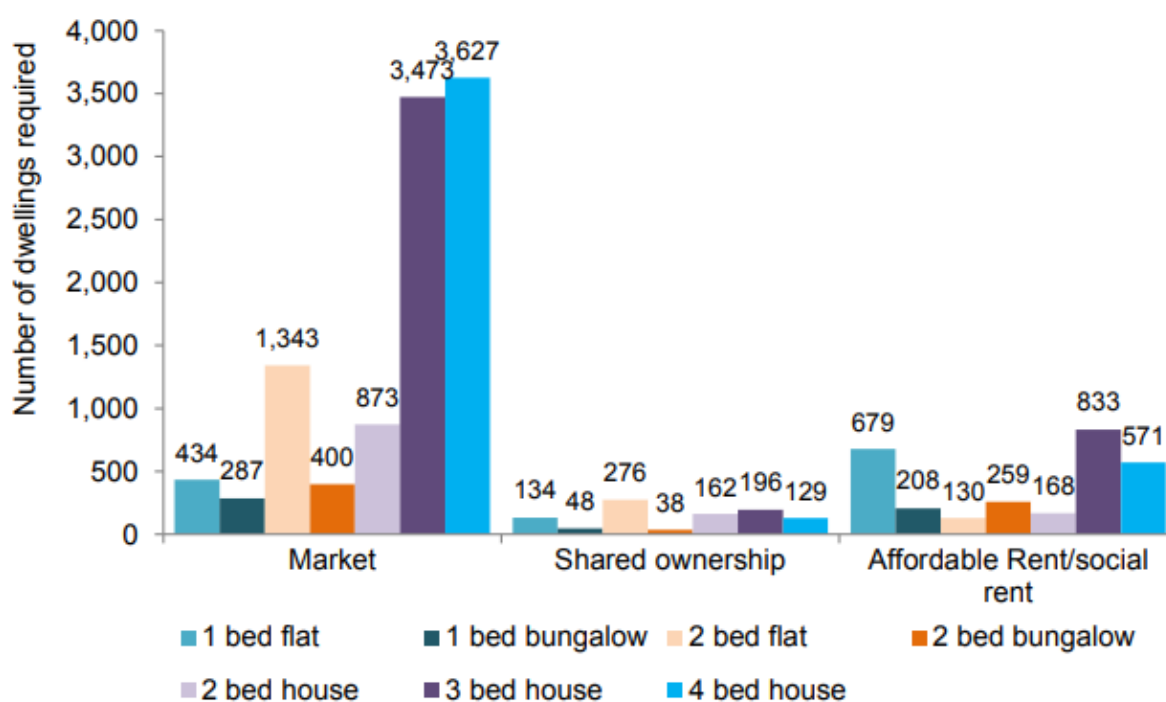
- 5.57. Policy P10 (Natural Environment) emphasises the Council’s desire to protect, conserve, enhance, and restore the natural environment, biodiversity, and geodiversity in the Borough. It is noted that developments will be required to demonstrate how a 10% biodiversity net gain can be achieved. Mitigation and compensation of impacts may be required to ensure that this is the case. If a development would have an adverse impact on the natural environment, developers should demonstrate that alternatives that would lead to less loss were considered and discounted.
- 5.58. Policy P11 (Water and Flood Risk Management) states that all development must include use of above ground sustainable urban drainage systems. Development in areas at risk of flooding will be permitted if it is demonstrated that there are no viable sites with a lower flood risk. Any such schemes should be designed to be safe from the effects of flooding, and minimise the risk of flooding on the site and elsewhere. The Policy also addresses water quality, water efficiency and disposal, recycling/reuse, infiltration, discharge to watercourses and sewers, and water quantity, as well as more on flooding.
- 5.59. Policy P14 (Amenity) requires new development to safeguard the amenities of existing and future occupiers. Development should only be permitted if the design is of a high standard, developments should be located and designed to minimise visual and amenity impacts, trees, hedgerows, and habitats should be protected or replaced, and there should be no adverse impact on air quality.
- 5.60. Policy P15 (Securing Design Quality) states that developments must have a high-quality design. They should conserve and contribute towards local character and distinctiveness, with a scale, massing, density, layout and materials that are sympathetic to its surroundings. There should be useable outdoor amenity space, future-proofed design and layout, and attractive, inclusive, safe, active, legible, and uncluttered streets and public spaces, which integrate with existing paths and streets. Developments should comply with urban design principles in existing guidance and meet Building for Life 12. The importance of efficiently using land and considering climate change are also reiterated as part of this policy.
- 5.61. Policy P16 (Conservation of Heritage Assets and Local Distinctiveness) emphasises the importance of the historic environment. Farmsteads are considered to make a contribution to

the character and distinctiveness of the Borough – any schemes which will have an impact on character and significance will have to demonstrate how this impact will be minimised. Heritage assets should be conserved according to their significance.

- 5.62. Policy P18 (Health and Wellbeing) states that environments should be high-quality, inclusive, and attractive, minimising harm from risks such as pollution, and promoting health, wellbeing, and interaction. There should be increased opportunities for active travel, supporting safe and inclusive design, promoting the energy efficiency of new housing, and retaining, increasing and enhancing green infrastructure within developments.

Solihull Strategic Housing Market Assessment (November 2016)

- 5.63. The below sets out the requirement for all new housing between 2014 and 2033. It indicates that there is a particular need for 3- and 4-bed market housing.



Requirement for all new housing in Solihull between 2014 and 2033. Source: [Solihull Strategic Housing Market Assessment Final report](#), page 49.

## 6. PLANNING ASSESSMENT

- 6.1. This section of the Planning Statement provides an assessment of the proposed development against the statutory development plan and material considerations, including the NPPF.
- 6.2. The key planning matters assessed are as follows:

- Principle of Development (including Accessibility and Heritage Matters)
- Design and Layout
- Housing Mix
- Ecology
- Trees
- Access and Highways
- Flooding and Drainage

### **Principle of Development**

- 6.3. The site is not allocated for development in either the Solihull Local Plan or Draft Local Plan. Therefore, this is a windfall site. The NPPF (Paragraphs 69 and 70) is clear that authorities should support the development of windfall sites, as they can contribute towards meeting the housing need of an area and boosting the supply of homes (Paragraph 60). The site is on the edge of the settlement of Dickens Heath, but within the settlement and outside of the Green Belt. There are existing outbuildings and hardstanding, and it is surrounded by residential development to the south west, south east, and north west. As it is within the settlement and not in the Green Belt, it is an optimal site to develop, and there are only benefits to doing so in such locations, as suggested by Paragraph 69(c) of the NPPF.
- 6.4. Solihull Local Plan Policy P5 notes that new housing on windfall sites in accessible areas will be supported. The site is in a highly accessible location, situated on Dickens Heath Road, which is the principal route into the village from the east. There is an established route running parallel to Dickens Heath Road for pedestrians and cyclists into the village, and a new pedestrian access point will provide a direct connection to this for residents, encouraging forms of active travel as per Local Plan Policy P7 and draft Policy P18. In addition, there is a bus stop just 60



metres away, meaning that it is also well-connected to the local public transport network. This is likewise in accordance with Policy P7, as it requires a bus stop to be located within 400 metres of a minor development. There is a primary school, doctor's surgery, and food shop all within 800 metres of the site, further demonstrating the accessible nature of the site. Taking this into account, it is considered that Policy P5 is complied with – the accessibility test is met, and this windfall site should therefore be supported for residential development.

- 6.5. The scheme would contribute towards maintaining and enhancing the distinctiveness and character of the area, as stipulated by Local Plan Policies P5 and P15, and the New Housing in Context SPG. The design of the dwellings and the materials proposed to be used resembles the vernacular and architecture of Dickens Heath, ensuring that the character of the village is maintained, and distinctiveness and a sense of place will be created through the variety of feature façades and house types across the site.

#### *Heritage*

- 6.6. The scheme proposes the demolition of the farmstead's existing outbuildings, which were recently locally listed, but they remain undesignated and have no legal protection. Policy P16 suggests that heritage assets should be conserved and enhanced, and Paragraph 203 of the NPPF states that the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account when determining applications. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement is required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset. The Built Heritage Assessment produced by Cotswold Archaeology found that the significance of the outbuildings is very low. They have limited evidential value (due to numerous alterations, which have modified their original appearance, affecting their character), and they are not considered to be good examples of their type and are in poor condition more generally. Meanwhile, outbuildings A, D, and E (as shown in Figure 7 of the Built Heritage Assessment) are not considered to have any heritage significance whatsoever. The outbuildings are small-scale and have not been surveyed structurally for conversion. In the absence of a viable conversion scheme, they will be left without a use and vulnerable to further damage and decay. The below benefits are considered sufficient to outweigh any perceived harm which could arise from the loss of the non-designated heritage assets:

- Provision of much-needed family homes to meet the demand highlighted in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (specifically for 3- and 4-bedroom market dwellings), in an optimal and sustainable location on the edge of Dickens Heath.
- Contribution towards the windfall housing supply.
- Introduction of new soft landscaping, planting of (replacement) trees, and opportunities to create habitats of greater value to achieve a net gain in biodiversity.
- The neighbouring farmhouse has been vacant for over five years, and the subsequent application referred to in 4.15 will ensure that it is retained and reused, which will be a heritage benefit.

6.7. In conclusion, having regard to:

- The site's location within Dickens Heath, and its accessibility
- The maintenance and enhancement of local character and distinctiveness
- The lack of significance of the locally listed outbuildings and the planning balance tilted in favour of the proposal given its benefits

The development is considered to be appropriate as a matter of principle in this location, subject only to technical considerations.

### **Design and Layout**

6.8. The Design and Access Statement explains the derivation of the design evolution and guiding principles of site layout, appearance, and character.

6.9. As discussed above, the vernacular and architecture of Dickens Heath, including that of the neighbouring farmhouse, is reflected in the design of the dwellings, which will ensure that the development is in keeping with the character and distinctiveness of the area, as per Local Plan Policies P5, P10, and P15 and Paragraphs 124 and 130 of the NPPF, as well as the New Housing in Context SPG. This will be achieved through the use of key materials and features found in other dwellings throughout the village such as red bricks, render, and bay windows. In line with Policy P15, the scheme would create a sense of place through its mews-style street scape and mix of feature façades, which will be unique on this side of the village – the Council's Planning

Guidelines for Housing Development say that developments should have their own identity and character. Overall, the design of the development complements its surroundings and would be in harmony with the rest of the village.

- 6.10. The low-density nature of the scheme makes it appropriate for an edge-of-village development and makes an efficient use of land in accordance with Local Plan Policy P5, Paragraph 124 of the NPPF, and the New Housing in Context SPG. The layout avoids the use of straight roads/driveways, with shared driveways meandering away from the site access point; this makes the layout varied, interesting, and attractive, as required by the Planning Guidelines for Housing Development.
- 6.11. Careful consideration has been given to the size of the proposed dwellings and scale of the development, in order to not have an impact on the setting and character of the farmhouse as it is locally listed – although it, like the outbuildings, only has a low heritage significance. Dwellings are all of a similar size in terms of footprint and height (two storeys) and they comply with the nationally described space standards as required by Local Plan Policy P5.
- 6.12. In terms of amenity, Local Plan Policy P14 specifically refers to power lines. The dwelling on Plot 4 is orientated so that there is only one window facing the powerlines, minimising the visual impact of them for residents, and Plot 4 is situated a sufficient distance away from them. The development is well-located on the edge of Dickens Heath, in a peaceful location that is not prone to noise, with the existing hedgerow providing a buffer between the plots 1, 8 and 9, and Dickens Heath Road. In line with the amenity requirements of the New Housing in Context SPG, car parking areas are located to the front of dwellings, and the orientation and situation of the dwellings ensures residential privacy.

### **Housing Mix**

- 6.13. As a minor development on a site of under 0.5 hectares, there is no requirement to provide affordable housing. This is made clear in Paragraph 64 of the NPPF and Draft Local Plan Policy P4A. Therefore, the fact that the proposal is solely for market housing is acceptable in policy terms. As the NPPF has been published more recently than the adopted Local Plan, it carries greater weight on the issue of affordable housing. This is reinforced by the draft Policy P4A of the emerging Local Plan.

- 6.14. It is acknowledged that draft Local Plan Policy P4C sets out a required mix for market housing which ranges from the smallest dwellings (1 bedroom) to those over 4 bedrooms. The Meeting Housing Needs study found that Dickens Heath is among the settlements in the Borough where the lowest proportion of small dwellings (1-2 bedrooms) are sought, suggesting that larger dwellings are desired here instead. The 2016 Strategic Housing Market Assessment found that there is pressing need for 3- and 4-bedroom market housing (7,100 units required) – this is twice as many as all the other types of market housing combined. The scheme accordingly seeks to provide two 3-bedroom dwellings and one 4-bedroom dwelling, as well as six 5-bedroom dwellings to ensure that larger family homes are being provided within the Borough to meet the evident need.

### **Ecology**

- 6.15. A preliminary Ecological Appraisal has been conducted by FPCR. The assessment found that the site has low ecological value, and therefore the loss of these habitats as a result of the development would not have a significant adverse impact on ecology. Moreover, no evidence was found of badgers, bats, or reptiles within the site. Whilst there are nesting birds on the site, the development will be able provide new habitats of greater value. Thus, any potential effects on biodiversity can be mitigated against, as required by Local Plan Policy P10. The assessment concludes that there is scope to minimise any impacts on ecology which may arise, and to achieve net gains in biodiversity, in line with Policy P10 and Paragraph 174(d) of the NPPF.

### **Trees**

- 6.16. The Tree Constraints Plan (drawing number: D17287-01 Rev C) and Tree Protection Plan (drawing number: D17287-02) show that most of the existing hedgerow along Dickens Heath Road, which is Category C, will be retained, along with the Category B trees on the north eastern boundary. This is in line with Local Plan Policy P14, which stipulates that trees and hedgerow should be protected wherever possible. However, in order to accommodate the development, Category C trees on the site will need be removed. These are poor-quality, small trees, which do not make a contribution to the area, and are therefore acceptable to remove. Their loss will be compensated, with approximately 12 new trees to be planted. Thus, there will be no net loss in the amount of trees on the site.

### **Access and Highways**

- 6.17. The existing site access from Dickens Heath Road will be widened to accommodate two-way traffic and for safety purposes. Drawing DWG-04 Rev B shows the site access arrangement, with visibility splays of 43m in accordance with the 30mph posted speed limit and Manual for Streets.
- 6.18. Each dwelling will have two off-street parking spaces, which is in accordance with the Solihull Local Development Framework Vehicle Parking Standards. Garage provision is as follows:
- Double Garage – Plots 1, 2, 4, 6, 8, and 9
  - Single Garage – Plots 3 (detached), 5, and 7
- 6.19. As this is a minor development, it is not anticipated that it will generate significant amounts of traffic or have an adverse impact on the road network or highway safety. Therefore, as per Paragraph 111 of the NPPF and Policy P8 of the Local Plan, there are no highways grounds on which to refuse the development.

### **Flooding and Drainage**

- 6.20. Most of the site is at a low-to-medium risk of pluvial (surface water) flooding, and the NPPF classifies dwellings as being 'More Vulnerable' to flooding. Notwithstanding this, the Drainage Statement confirms that there is enough flood storage upstream to prevent flooding on the site. Therefore, the risk of flooding on the site is negligible, and not a consideration given the Drainage Statement's conclusion.
- 6.21. As the soils are not suitable for infiltration, the development will be connected to the public sewerage network.

## 7. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

7.1. This Planning Statement has been prepared on behalf of Cameron Homes and Countrywide Tax and Trust Corporation Limited (the "Applicants") and supports an application for full planning permission at Wharf Farm, 123 Dickens Heath Road, Dickens Heath, Solihull, B90 1QG (the "Site").

7.2. The Applicants are seeking full planning permission for residential development. The description of development is as follows:

*"Demolition of existing outbuildings, erection of 9 no. detached dwelling houses, widening of existing vehicular access and creation of pedestrian access point onto Dickens Heath Road, and associated works."*

7.3. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) requires that planning applications are determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. As set out in the Assessment section of this Planning Statement, it has been established that the proposed development complies with the Development Plan, as well as the Draft Plan, and therefore should be approved without delay.

7.4. Whilst the site is unallocated in both the adopted and emerging Local Plans, it would make an excellent windfall site due to its optimal location within the settlement of Dickens Heath rather than in the Green Belt; it is considered that there is a strong argument in favour of the principle of development. The site is highly accessible, being adjacent to an existing pedestrian and cycle route (which a new access point would connect to), in close proximity to a bus stop, and near to schools, doctor's surgeries, shops, and even employment opportunities.

7.5. The scheme will involve the demolition of the existing outbuildings, which are locally listed. However, they are poor examples of their type, have been subject to alterations in the past, and have little-to-no significance, according to the Built Heritage Assessment. In formulating a balanced judgement, it is evident that any harm which would arise from removing the outbuildings – which would be extremely limited as suggested by the Built Heritage Assessment – would be outweighed by the benefits of the scheme. These include contributing towards meeting the demand for larger (3-4+ bed) family homes highlighted in the 2016 Strategic Housing Market Assessment, and the opportunities that new planting and landscaping will offer in achieving a net gain in biodiversity on the site.

- 7.6. The design of the dwellings is in keeping with the vernacular and architecture of Dickens Heath, meaning that the character and distinctiveness of the settlement will be maintained. The feature façades and mews-style streetscape will help to create a sense of place, and the low density of the development is appropriate given the edge-of-village location and the site's historic use as a farmstead.
- 7.7. The site is of a low ecological value, with no evidence found of badgers, bats, or reptiles, although there are breeding birds. The development will be beneficial as, through new planting and landscaping, it will be able to provide new habitats of value to compensate for all loss, and this could help to achieve a net gain in biodiversity, as suggested above. Among this new planting will be 12 new trees to replace the poor-quality Category C trees which will be removed to accommodate the development.
- 7.8. Overall, the proposal will deliver a high quality new residential development in a desirable location on a site on the edge of the village of Dickens Heath, which will contribute towards meeting the demand for larger family homes within the Borough. It will deliver sustainable development in a manner consistent with the Development Plan and it is therefore respectfully requested that planning permission is granted.

Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)  
Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

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