

**Planning Statement
(including Affordable Housing
and Planning Obligations)**

**Land West of London Road,
Handcross**

May 2026



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Summary

- 1 This Planning Statement, including Affordable Housing considerations and heads of terms for potential Planning Obligations, accompanies an outline planning application, with all matters reserved for subsequent approval except accesses from London Road, submitted by Welbeck Strategic Land III Limited (Welbeck) for the development of land west of London Road, Handcross. The application is for the erection of up-to 55 dwellings, including affordable homes, together with green and blue infrastructure, vehicular access from London Road, pedestrian/cycle access from London Road, the provision of utility services structures and demolition of an existing agricultural building.
- 2 Although within the High Weald National Landscape, Mid Sussex District Council has assed that the erection of elderly persons' accommodation on the Site (pursuant to the emerging Mid Sussex District Local Plan 2021-2039) would not be major development. Whether developed for elderly persons' accommodation or general housing the same assessment should be applied. Even if this is not the case, the exceptional circumstances required to justify the development within the National Landscape exist and, as such, the Site's location within the National Landscape alone is not a strong reason for refusing this application.
- 3 It is acknowledged that the Site is outside the defined Built-up Area Boundary for Handcross. The defined boundary also excludes the existing built forms of housing and community development located adjacent to the Site's southern boundary. However, the Built-up Area Boundary was established to deliver what is now an out-of-date spatial strategy. This is because Mid Sussex District Council cannot demonstrate a 5-year supply of deliverable housing land when assessed against the standard approach for calculating housing need.
- 4 As significant benefits, this application provides a meaningful opportunity to meet part of the housing land shortfall and deliver much needed affordable homes. The application scheme would provide economic and social benefits associated with the delivery of homes at Handcross, including delivering up-to 55 dwellings in around 24-months from the granting of reserved matters approval; delivering up-to 17 affordable homes in a location where demand exists; helping support local services and facilities; the creation of construction jobs; increasing available expenditure in the local economy and additional Council Tax income. The context of delivering the proposed dwellings also reflects the



failure of the housing allocations at St Martin Close, Handcross to come forward for development to meet the need for new homes in this location within the National Landscape.

- 5 The proposed development would also deliver important social and environmental benefits in the form of, amongst other matters, greenspace for use by existing and future residents and more energy efficient homes than the current housing stock.
- 6 Furthermore, local and national planning policies seek to direct development to the most sustainable locations in order to reduce the need to travel by private vehicles. Handcross is a Category 3 Medium Sized Village which possesses the essential services for the needs of the residents. In the case of Handcross, these essential services include a primary school, shops and recreation and community facilities, including a healthcare centre. This proposed development would represent an opportunity for Handcross to continue growing and thriving, thereby supporting local services.
- 7 The Site has good pedestrian and cycle infrastructure in the local vicinity and is located within reasonable walking and cycling distances of the necessary day-to-day local facilities and services available within Handcross. The nearest bus stops are located on London Road, about a 3 minute walk away, and are served by 4 bus services. These services provide public transport links to higher order facilities and services available in the nearby towns of Crawley and Haywards Heath, as well as Brighton to the south.
- 8 On the basis that the application scheme is not major development in the National Landscape, this is a case where there would be no adverse impacts associated with granting planning permission for the proposed development which would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework as a whole. Accordingly, and subject to appropriate Planning Obligations and necessary conditions, this is a case where the presumption in favour of sustainable development should apply and planning permission ought to be granted for the proposed housing development.
- 9 However, and as already stated, even if the application was determined to be major development in the National Landscape, there are the necessary exceptional circumstances



to justify that this matter alone would not be a strong reason to withhold planning permission for the proposed development of up-to 55 dwellings.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Statement, which also considers Affordable Housing and heads of terms for potential Planning Obligations, accompanies an outline planning application, with all matters reserved for subsequent approval except access, submitted by Welbeck Strategic Land III Limited (Welbeck) for the development of land west of London Road, Handcross (the Site) for:

Erection of up-to 55 dwellings, including affordable homes, together with green and blue infrastructure, vehicular access from London Road, pedestrian/cycle access from London Road, the provision of utility services structures and the demolition of an agricultural existing building.

- 1.2 The application is accompanied by the following documents:

- Application Form including ownership certificate
- Drawing No. 7671_PL-01 Rev A Location Plan
- Drawing No. 7671-PL-02 Parameters Plan
- Drawing No. ITB210283-GA-0 Rev B Proposed Site Access Arrangements
- Air Quality Assessment
- Arboricultural Assessment
- Biodiversity Net Gain Metric
- Biodiversity Net Gain Plan (draft)
- Design and Access Statement
- Ecological Impact Assessment
- Energy and Sustainability Statement
- Flood Risk Assessment and Surface Water Drainage Strategy
- Geo Environmental Assessment – Phase 1
- Historic Impact Assessment
- Landscape and Visual Appraisal
- Landscape Design Strategy
- Noise Assessment
- Planning Obligations Instructions Form



- Planning Statement (including Affordable Housing and draft Heads of Terms for Planning Obligations)
- Statement of Community Involvement
- Transport Statement
- Travel Plan Statement
- Utilities Report

1.3 An Illustrative Site Layout (Drawing No. 7671-PL-03 Rev B) accompanies the application. This identifies one way in which the Site could come forward for residential development. There is also an illustrative Landscape Design Strategy contained in the Landscape Design Strategy.

1.4 The proposals have been the subject of pre-application discussions with representatives of the local community. The engagement with the local community and the is set out in full in the accompanying Statement of Community Involvement.

2. Site Description and Surroundings

2.1 The application site (which includes the visibility splays) extends to around 2.84 hectares (about 7.02 acres) but the actual development Site extends to some 2.8 hectares (circa 6.92 acres). The Site is generally flat grazing land, with isolated, and is located to the north of Handcross, on the western side of London Road. To the west is a belt of deciduous woodland which forms the boundary with London Road. The eastern boundary is an area of woodland albeit this is primarily on the slope of a cutting associated with the A23 Crawley to Brighton road. A belt of hazel coppice extends along the southern boundary of the Site. The northern boundary is a hedgerow with individual mature trees abutting a private access road serving the Hyde Estate. Beyond this private road are agricultural fields.

2.2 Hyde Lodge is located to the north east but is outside of the Site. However, the modern barn to the south of Hyde Lodge is within the Site and is proposed to be demolished.

2.3 To the west of London Road is Handcross Park School and to the south is the built-up area of Handcross. Adjacent to the Site's southern boundary are Handcross Primary School, the Ouse Valley Medical Practice and housing. A range of local facilities and services are within walking or cycling distance of the Site.



Table 1: Distance of the Site to Local Facilities and Services

Journey Purpose	Destination	Distance (m)	Walking Journey Time (mins)	Cycling Journey Time (mins)
Education	Handcross Primary School	188	2	1
	Handcross Park School	650	8	2
Health	Ouse Valley Practice	360	4	1
	South Cliff Dental Group	360	4	1
Retail	Handcross Hardware and Craft Shop	850	10	3
	Church's - The Florist	900	11	3
	Handcross News	900	11	3
	Budgens	1000	12	4
	Handcross Village Butchers	1050	13	4
	National Trust - Nymans Git Shop & Café	1200	14	5
Employment	Brighton Road Industrial Estate	2200	26	8
	Pease Pottage Services	2800	33	11
Leisure	Handcross Recreation Ground	550	7	2
	Handcross Parish Hall	800	10	3
	Handcross Bowls Club / Green	800	10	3
	JO.CO Café	1000	12	4
	The Red Lion Handcross	1050	13	4
	Tamasha Handcross	1400	17	5
	Clip n Climb Crawley	2300	27	9
Bus Stops	Southbound Bus Stop - Handcross Primary School	180	2	1
	Northbound Bus Stop - Handcross Primary School	210	3	1
	Northbound Bus Stop - High Street	850	10	3
	Southbound Bus Stop - High Street	900	11	3

Source: Transport Statement

2.4 The nearest bus stops are located on London Road adjacent to the Primary School and they are approximately 180 to 210 metres (about a 3 minute walk) to the south of the Site. Four bus services (Nos. 273, 271, 4 and 6) operate from these stops providing links to the nearby towns of Crawley and Haywards Heath, as well as Brighton to the south. There is



access to a wide range of higher order employment, retail and leisure facilities at, in particular, Crawley. There are no Public Rights of Way within or adjoining the Site.

- 2.5 The Site is situated within the High Weald National Landscape (formerly the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty). The special qualities of the National Landscape in this area are the assorted field systems and Ancient Woodland. The Ancient Woodland includes High Wood which lies to the east of London Road.
- 2.6 The Site lies within a Natural England Impact Risk Zone for Cow Wood and Harry's Wood Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). This SSSI is located about 630 metres to the south east of the Site and comprises an Ancient Woodland that supports a rich community of breeding birds. The SSSI contains several steep sided stream valleys which contain plants with an 'Atlantic' distribution and are important feeding grounds for woodland butterflies.
- 2.7 The Site itself is not subject of any ecological, heritage or biodiversity designations, whether of national or local importance. There are no designated heritage assets adjoining the Site.

3. The Proposal

- 3.1 The planning application is in outline form with all matters reserved apart from access for subsequent approval. The proposed development includes the following elements:
- The erection of up-to 55 dwellings which would include 30% being for affordable housing purposes. The precise siting and design of all the homes would be a matter for reserved matters submissions.
 - An area for green and blue infrastructure, including an attenuation basin as part of the surface water drainage strategy and an equipped children's play area.
 - Vehicular access from London Road with separate pedestrian and cycle access also from London Road in the south east corner of the Site.
 - Ancillary structures typically associated with a residential development, including a pumping station.
 - Demolition of the existing building.
- 3.2 A detailed explanation of the proposals subject of this application is included in the Design and Access Statement (DAS) but is not repeated.



4. Relevant Planning History and Development Plan Policies

Planning History

- 4.1 There is no relevant planning history.

Development Plan

- 4.2 The development plan currently includes:
- Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031 (DP)
 - Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD)
 - Slaugham Neighbourhood Plan 2014-2031 (SNP)

Most Relevant Policies Related to the Principle of Development

- 4.3 DP Policy DP4 establishes the housing requirement for the plan period. However, because the DP was adopted more than 5-years ago the housing requirement is now established via the standard method set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF December 2024) and the associated Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). This matter is addressed further in Section 5.
- 4.4 The Site is outside the defined Built-up Area Boundary for Handcross (DP Inset 18b). The defined boundary also excludes the existing built forms of housing and community development located adjacent to the Site's southern boundary. Whilst the Site lies immediately adjacent to the existing built up area of Handcross (as opposed to what is shown on DP Inset 18b), the proposals have been carefully designed to successfully assimilate the proposed development into countryside setting of Handcross.
- 4.5 DP Policy DP6 established the Settlement Hierarchy and identifies Handcross as a Category 3 Settlement which are defined as being:

"Medium sized villages providing essential services for the needs of their own residents and immediate surrounding communities. Whilst more limited, these can include key services such as primary schools, shops, recreation and community facilities, often shared with neighbouring settlements."



- 4.6 The policy does not discount the growth at such settlements outside their defined built-up area boundaries albeit in specific circumstances, including scale of the scheme (less than 10 dwellings), meeting an identified local housing need, the site is contiguous with an existing built up area of the settlement and the development is demonstrated to be sustainable, including by reference to the settlement hierarchy. However, the weight given to DP Policy DP6 needs to be assessed against the context of the matters set out in Section 5.
- 4.7 DP Policy DP12 seeks to protect the countryside in recognition of its intrinsic character and beauty. However, development will be permitted in the countryside, provided it maintains or where possible enhances the quality of the rural and landscape character of the District, and it is supported by a specific policy reference elsewhere in the development plan. However, the weight given to DP Policy DP12 needs to be assessed against the context of the matters set out in Section 5.
- 4.8 In addition to statute and national policy set out below, the protection of the National Landscape is addressed in DP Policy DP16 whereby development will only be permitted where it conserves or enhances natural beauty and has regard to the *High Weald AONB Management Plan*. This particularly refers to the identified landscape features or components of natural beauty and their setting; the traditional interaction of people with nature and appropriate land management; the character and local distinctiveness, settlement pattern, sense of place and setting of the National Landscape; and the conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage. This approach is echoed in SNP Policy 1.
- 4.9 It is acknowledged that the Site is within the National Landscape but this is not an absolute bar to the application scheme coming forward for development in the circumstances set out in this Planning Statement.

Other Relevant Development Plan Policies

- 4.10 Other development management policies contained in the DP which are considered relevant to the assessment of the application comprise:
- DP Policy DP20: Securing Infrastructure
 - DP Policy DP21: Transport
 - DP Policy DP23: Communication Infrastructure
 - DP Policy DP24: Leisure and Cultural Facilities and Activities



- DP Policy DP26: Character and Design
- DP Policy DP27: Dwelling Space Standards
- DP Policy DP28: Accessibility
- DP Policy DP29: Noise, Air and Light Pollution
- DP Policy DP30: Housing Mix
- DP Policy DP31: Affordable Housing
- DP Policy DP37: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
- DP Policy DP38: Biodiversity
- DP Policy DP39: Sustainable Design and Construction
- DP Policy DP41: Flood Risk and Drainage
- DP Policy DP42: Water Infrastructure and the Water Environment Policy
- SNP Policy 2: Sustainable Development Measures
- SNP Policy 3: Green Infrastructure
- SNP Policy 5: Open Space

4.11 The detailed content of some of these policies is of greater relevance to the assessment of future reserved matters submissions rather than an outline planning application. However, they have been referenced to acknowledge that the matters raised have been considered at an 'in principle' level to confirm the ability to comply with the policies when the detailed proposals are assessed later. Compliance with these policies is considered in Section 6 of this Statement. However, where a policy possesses multiple criteria this is not necessary to comply with each criterion.

4.12 Also of relevance to the assessment of this application is the progress, or rather lack of progress, being made with delivering the housing allocations at St Martin Close, Handcross. These allocations are referred to in DPD Policies SA11 and SA27 and SNP Policies 9 and 10.

Statute, National Policies and Guidance

4.13 National policy and guidance contained in the NPPF and the PPG are a material consideration to the assessment of the application scheme. Appropriate references to the NPPF and PPG are included in this Statement, including the update in September 2025 concerning the approach to sites where surface water flooding has been identified by the Environment Agency.



- 4.14 The statutory purposes of National Landscapes are to conserve and enhance their natural beauty and increasing the understanding and enjoyment by the public of the special qualities of the area of outstanding natural beauty. These purposes are echoed in DP Policy DP16 and SNP Policy 1.
- 4.15 Section 245 of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 amended the duty on relevant authorities in respect of their functions which affect land in National Landscapes, (referred to as Protected Landscapes alongside other designations) in England. Relevant authorities must now seek to further the statutory purposes of Protected Landscapes. When seeking to further the purposes, relevant authorities should consider the information contained in a Protected Landscape's Management Plan (i.e. *High Weald AONB Management Plan*). Management Plans describe the natural beauty, special qualities and key characteristics of and targets and objectives for the designation. However, a relevant authority should take appropriate, reasonable, and proportionate steps to explore measures which further the statutory purposes of Protected Landscapes.
- 4.16 NPPF paragraph 189 refers to great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Landscapes which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited.
- 4.17 NPPF paragraph 190 refers to when considering applications for development within National Landscapes, permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest. The consideration of such applications should include an assessment of:
- a) the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy;
 - b) the cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and
 - c) any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.
- 4.18 Whether the application scheme is major development in the National Landscape is considered in Section 6.



- 4.19 In respect of development in the countryside, NPPF paragraphs 82, 83 and 110 helpfully identify that:

"In rural areas, planning policies and decisions should be responsive to local circumstances and support housing developments that reflect local needs, including proposals for community-led development for housing. Local planning authorities should support opportunities to bring forward rural exception sites that will provide affordable housing to meet identified local needs, and consider whether allowing some market housing on these sites would help to facilitate this.

"To promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. Planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services. Where there are groups of smaller settlements, development in one village may support services in a village nearby.

"The planning system should actively manage patterns of growth in support of these objectives. Significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. This can help to reduce congestion and emissions, and improve air quality and public health. However, opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and this should be taken into account in both plan-making and decision-making."
(emphasis added)

- 4.20 On 16 December 2025 and updated version of the NPPF was published for consultation purposes. Although limited weight can be afforded to this draft NPPF at the time of drafting this Planning Statement, it is expected that there will be a new NPPF against which the application would be assessed. However, the 'direction of travel' identified in the draft NPPF echoes various Ministerial Statements concerning planning reforms which are material considerations of significant weight. The key amendments included in the draft NPPF relevant to the assessment of the planning application are:

- A permanent presumption in favour of suitably located development.
- Building homes around stations.
- Securing a diverse mix of homes.
- Embedding a vision-led approach to transport.
- Streamlining local standards.

- 4.21 The Council has published a number of Supplementary Planning Documents (or Guidance) (SPD) which, by not being part of the development plan, can only be guidance for the assessment of the application. The relevant SPDs include the following:



- Affordable Housing SPD (2018)
- Mid Sussex Design Guide Guidance (2020)

4.22 The High Weald National Landscape Partnership has published:

- High Weald AONB Management Plan
- High Weald Housing Design Guide

4.23 Much of the content of SPDs and guidance are matters for detailed design at the reserved matters stage. However, the principles have been incorporated into the master planning of the Site and the proposed development.

Mid Sussex District Local Plan Review

4.24 The Council is undertaking a review of the extant DP, referred to as the Mid Sussex District Plan 2021-2039 (eDP) with Examination currently ongoing. The Council's stated intention is to adopt the new plan in late 2026. However, as will be known to the Council, there is a question still as to whether the eDP will be found sound because of currently failing to plan for the delivery of the required number of dwellings to meet the outcome of the standard approach over the plan period.

4.25 The Site is identified for development in the eDP under Policy DPA19: Land at Hyde Lodge, Handcross. This policy proposes the provision of older persons' accommodation to contribute towards the overall identified need, as set out in eDP Policy DPH4: Older Persons' Housing and Specialist Accommodation.

4.26 The emerging policy usefully includes technical and environmental criteria for the assessment of any future planning application, including:

- Provide an appropriate buffer to the priority habitat (deciduous woodland) within the Site on its western boundary.
- Explore and take opportunities to open up/daylight the culvert within the Site.
- Provide access from the B2114 London Road.
- Extend the 30mph speed limit northwards.
- Provide a pedestrian access in the south east corner of the Site where there is an existing gateway.
- Retain the existing rural character of London Road.
- Take a landscape-led approach to development.



- Undertake a LVIA to inform an appropriate layout, design and landscaping to conserve and enhance the High Weald National Landscape.
- The design, density and layout of the site should reflect the rural character of the settlement and area and avoid being urban or suburban in character. The site should reflect a transition from the built environment to the rural countryside.
- The building design including its character, grain, mass and height should be appropriate for this rural location on the edge of a settlement and in the High Weald National Landscape.
- Provide good acoustic design to address any impacts from noise and air quality associated with the A23.
- Investigate, assess and address any land contamination issues arising from former uses of the site or from uses, or former uses, of land in proximity to the site.
- Retain the character of Hyde Lodge and its gardens including in the design and layout of the proposed development.

4.27 This application essentially complies with these draft policy criteria.

5. 5-Year Housing Land Supply and Other Housing Considerations

5.1 NPPF paragraph 61 states that *"To support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed and that land with permission is developed without unnecessary delay."*

5.2 Examples of the importance placed on delivering homes can be found in recent speeches delivered by the Chancellor on 8 July 2024 and the Deputy Prime Minister's Ministerial Statement on 30 July 2024:

"And to take the urgent steps necessary to build the infrastructure that we need, including one and a half million homes over the next five years."

"We are in the middle of the most acute housing crisis in living memory. Home ownership is out of reach for too many; the shortage of houses drives high rents; and too many are left without access to a safe and secure home."

"First - that we're demanding too much from some places. To this I say: we have a housing crisis; and a mandate for real change."



"Local authorities will have to review their green belt if needed to meet housing targets."

"That for too long have been throttled by the insufficient and unaffordable housing."

5.3 More recent statements relating to the Government's intent towards the delivery of housing is set out in the letters from Baroness Taylor to Cotswold and Rochford District Councils on 18th August 2025. These letters highlighted the very significant national housing crisis and that all areas of the country must play their part in building homes. The response to Cotswold District Council is pertinent because some 80% of this district is within the Cotswolds National Landscape which is not identified as an absolute bar to delivering the housing need.

5.4 Therefore, it is clear Government via Ministerial Statements and the NPPF that local planning authorities should significantly boost the supply of housing because failing to do this has social and economic consequences for the community and the country as a whole. The NPPF has been (and is being) considerably strengthened to reflect the need to deliver more homes alongside the updated standard method to calculate housing need.

Housing Land Supply

5.5 Two recent appeal decisions have highlighted that the Council cannot, using the standard approach, demonstrate a 5-year supply of deliverable housing land.

5.6 In respect of the first appeal at Land off Mill Lane, Sayers Common (Ref APP/D3830/W/25/3361729) the Inspector identified at paragraph 26 that:

"The Council acknowledges that it cannot demonstrate a 5-year supply of deliverable housing sites. The reported supply is equivalent to 3.38 years. In these circumstances, paragraph 11d)ii of the Framework is applicable. Footnote 8 of the Framework is clear that the policies which are most important for determining the application are deemed out-of-date. Consequently, permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard for key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination."

5.7 At paragraph 96 of the second appeal at Scamps Hill, Lindfield (Ref APP/D3830/W/24/3350075) the Inspector stated:



"The Council suggest they have 3.38 years housing land supply, whereas the Appellant suggests it is 2.41 years¹⁰. The variation is due to the differences in anticipated delivery of various large sites. However, as both parties agreed to describe the shortfall as significant, the issue was not contested at the Inquiry."

- 5.8 Given this clear position tested on appeal there is not requirement to undertake any further detailed housing land supply assessments. At the time of drafting this Statement there is no more up-to-date housing land supply information published by the Council (i.e. March 2026). It may be that this becomes available prior to the determination of the application.
- 5.9 Ordinarily, the presumption in favour of sustainable development established at NPPF paragraph 11(d)(ii) should be applicable to the assessment of the housing schemes. However, it is recognised that National Landscapes are referred to at NPPF footnote 7 and, as such, to benefit from the presumption there is a requirement to demonstrate that this policy does not provide a strong reason for refusing this application (i.e. NPPF paragraph 11(d)(i)). This matter is addressed in Sections 6 and 8.
- 5.10 No other policies cited at NPPF footnote 7 are applicable to the Site. In terms of the Site being located outside a defined Built-up Area Boundary of Handcross, because of the housing land supply position then DP Policies DP6 and DP12 should be regarded as being out-of-date (NPP paragraph 11(d) and footnote 8).
- 5.11 The SNP was made in September 2019. Although including housing allocations at St Martin Close, the SNP is over 5-years old and, as such, any conflict with its policies does not disengage the presumption in favour of sustainable development (NPPF paragraph 14).

Other Housing Considerations

- 5.12 Housing land supply is not just an abstract matter. As the Government recognises, the failure to deliver the required dwellings has real life social consequences for those seeking a new home and wanting to live in the area. There are economic consequences with the lack of new homes for employees and potential exacerbation of house prices. These concerns can be seen in published "market signals" and "affordability" information readily available.



- 5.13 For Mid Sussex, the *Housing Affordability in England and Wales: 2025* (ONS, March 2026) show that the ratio median workplace earnings and house prices was 10.94. For context, the same ONS Dataset identifies that in 2025 the affordability ratio in England was 7.36. Affordability of housing in Mid Sussex District is worse than the national average.
- 5.14 The ONS assessment of house prices and rental in Mid Sussex District identified that¹:
- The average house price as at February 2026 was £438,000 up by 1.1% from February 2025.
 - For homes bought with a mortgage in February 2026, the average house price was £443,000 up 1.2% over a 12 month period.
 - The average price paid by first-time buyers was £332,000 in February 2026.
 - Monthly private rents rose to an average of £1,405 in March 2026, an annual increase of 3.3%.
- 5.15 The current requirement for 30% affordable housing provision on sites over 11 dwellings (DP Policy DP31) was based upon the *Northern West Sussex Affordable Housing Needs Update Report* (2014). The Report established an annual need of between 116 and 474 affordable homes being delivered from 2014 onwards. This represents an overall average of 295 dwellings per annum but this has not been consistency achieved since 2014 leading to a cumulative shortfall of some 660 affordable homes.

Table2: Affordable Housing Delivery in Mid Sussex District

Year	Net Affordable Homes Delivery ²	Annual Average	Difference
2014/15	229	295	-66
2015/16	79	295	-216
2016/17	82	295	-213
2017/18	178	295	-117
2018/19	73	295	-222
2019/20	139	295	-156
2020/21	197	295	-98
2021/22	398	295	130
2022/23	524	295	229

¹ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/housingpriceslocal/E07000228/>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-affordable-housing-supply>



Year	Net Affordable Homes Delivery ²	Annual Average	Difference
2023/24	338	295	43
2024/25	308	255	53
Total	2,545	3250	-660

- 5.16 In addition to this shortfall in delivery, as at April 2025³ there were 2,333 households on the Housing Register seeking an affordable home. There is a clear unmet demand for affordable homes which is a separate to the general housing land shortfall.

St Martin Close, Handcross

- 5.17 The SNP was made in September 2019 and included Policies 9 and 10 allocating land east St Martin Close for circa 65 homes with St Martin Close West being a reserve site. However, DPD Policies SA11 and SA27 confirmed the formal allocation of St Martin Close West in June 2022.
- 5.18 Neither of these allocations has come forward for development in the nearly 7-year period from when the SNP was made. There is, as yet, no clarity as to if and when any planning application may be submitted for the development of these allocations. In the meantime, despite there being a need for the homes as demonstrated by the allocations, this housing is not being delivered at Handcross. The application scheme offers the opportunity to deliver these new homes.

6. Material Policy Considerations

- 6.1 Consideration of the Site's location within the National Landscape is addressed below and Welbeck support the Council's assessment that the proposed residential development, which is envisaged pursuant to eDP Policy DPA19, would not comprises major development in the National Landscape. Welbeck consider that this assessment should equally apply to the application scheme which would still be a residential form of development. The application scheme would, potentially, yield less units than the emerging allocation and would only comprises houses and a 2-storey apartment building rather than, potentially, the materially larger footprint and height associated with a typical care home building.

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-authority-housing-data>.



- 6.2 The Site is outside the defined Built-up Area Boundary for Handcross (DP Inset 18b). The defined boundary also excludes the existing built forms of housing and community development located adjacent to the Site's southern boundary. As such, the proposed development would conflict with DP Policies DP6 and DP12.
- 6.3 However, the Built-up Area Boundary was established to deliver what is now an out-of-date spatial strategy. This is because Mid Sussex District Council cannot demonstrate a 5-year supply of deliverable housing land when assessed against the standard approach for calculating housing need.
- 6.4 Furthermore, local and national planning policies seek to direct development to the most sustainable locations in order to reduce the need to travel by private vehicles. Handcross is a Category 3 Medium Sized Village which possesses the essential services for the needs of the residents. In the case of Handcross, these essential services include a primary school, shops and recreation and community facilities, including a healthcare centre. This proposed development would represent an opportunity for Handcross to continue growing and thriving, thereby supporting local services.
- 6.5 It is acknowledged that eDP Policy DPA19 does identify the Site for elderly persons' accommodation. However, Welbeck has, through appropriate Agents, sought to identify a specialist developer of elderly persons' accommodation who would be prepared to develop the Site. No such specialist developers have expressed an interest in the Site for a care home, retirement scheme or similar. Welbeck is not discounting the idea of some of the proposed dwellings being suitable for occupation by elderly people but this would be as adapted dwellings.
- 6.6 In addition to the lack of demand for elderly persons' accommodation, and as set out in Section 5, there is a general housing land shortfall in Mid Sussex District. There is a shortfall in the delivery of affordable housing. There is a demand for affordable housing. The allocations at St Martin Close being relied upon to deliver new homes at Handcross have failed to be delivered. Put simply, there is a greater demand for general housing to be developed at this Site rather than homes suitable for elderly persons.
- 6.7 A further consideration is that number of dwellings proposed, coupled with the position reached with the eDP in its preparation, means that the granting of planning permission



for up-to 55 dwellings on the Site would not give rise to prematurity being a justifiable reason to refuse this application (NPPF paragraph 50).

- 6.8 As set out in the remainder of this Section, the assessments undertaken as part of this application confirm that the proposed development would comply with other development plan and national policies. The reported assessments undertaken to support this planning application conclude that there would be no adverse harm caused by the proposed development.

High Weald National Landscape

- 6.9 Contrary to popular belief, there is not a blanket refusal of housing schemes in the National Landscape. Indeed, at Handcross Hallam Land Management and the Hyde Estate successfully appealed resulting in permission being granted for major residential development to the south of the Site (Refs APP/D3830/A/13/2198213 and 2198214). In the Decision Letter dated 1 May 2014 at paragraph 21 it states

"...the Secretary of State agrees with his conclusion (IR94) that, alongside the relatively limited effect of the appeals proposals on the prevailing character of the AONB, there are adequate grounds to consider that the exceptional circumstances referred to paragraph 116 of the Framework and LP policy C4 arise in this case, and that there is not a substantial environmental reason to refuse the schemes. In common with the Inspector he agrees that they would not have an unduly harmful effect on the character and appearance of the locality and in particular the landscape quality of the AONB (IR94)."

- 6.10 Through the eDP process, the Council has already undertaken an assessment to demonstrate that the national planning policy on major development in the National Landscape has been fully considered (*Major Development in the High Weald AONB* (June 2024)). The conclusion of the assessment at page 18 is that the proposal for elderly persons' accommodation was "Not Major Development" in the National Landscape (emphasis added).

- 6.11 The assessment went on further to conclude that:

"Whilst the site does not appear to directly impact on the AONB character components, it would extend development to the north of Handcross away from the main village and historic settlement. It is, however, reasonably well-located to the settlement of Handcross and is on the B2114 London Road. It is also likely to be fairly small-scale given the size of the site, however, particular attention will need to be given to the design and layout of the site and buildings."



"Although the site is unlikely to be in the most tranquil and rural part of the High Weald AONB, opportunities to protect tranquillity and dark skies should be taken. The site needs to be developed as a landscape-led approach in accordance with draft District Plan Policy DPC4: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The High Weald AONB Management Plan, High Weald Housing Design Guide and associated documents such as the High Weald AONB Colour Study also need to be taken into account when designing the site."

- 6.12 Although the assessment was for elderly persons' accommodation, there would not be a material difference between this type of residential development and the housing being development being proposed. Welbeck consider that this assessment should equally apply to the application scheme. The application scheme would, potentially, yield less units than the emerging allocation and would only comprises houses and a 2-storey apartment building rather than, potentially, the materially larger footprint and height associated with a typical care home building.
- 6.13 On this basis the exceptional circumstances referred to at NPPF paragraph 190 do not need to be demonstrated (albeit Section 7 does consider the alternative as part of a separate balancing exercise). It is still appropriate, however, to consider matters related to the conserving and enhancing landscape which are addressed in the Landscape and Visual Appraisal.

Sustainable Location

- 6.14 Notwithstanding being in the National Landscape, the principle of housing growth of the scale proposed occurring at Handcross because of its locational sustainability credentials has been recognised by the unimplemented housing allocations at St Martin Close (DPD Policies SA11 and SA27 and SNP Policies 9 and 10). This recognition remains with the emerging allocation of the Site for residential development (eDP Policy DPA19).
- 6.15 Facilitating sustainable development is at the heart of both national and local planning policies (i.e. NPPF paragraphs 109 and 115) and the application scheme would contribute to achieving sustainable growth a Handcross. In this context, NPPF paragraph 110 identifies that significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. NPPF paragraph 110 also recognises that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and this should be taken into account in decision-making. DP Policy DP21 recognises this difference of



approach whereby a scheme should be sustainably located to minimise the need for travel noting there might be circumstances where development needs to be located in the countryside.

- 6.16 As has already been explained in Section 2, Handcross is a Category 3 Medium Sized Village which possesses the essential services for the needs of its residents. These essential services include a primary school, shops and recreation and community facilities, including a healthcare centre. This application would represent an opportunity for Handcross to continue growing and thriving, thereby supporting local services (NPPF paragraph 82).
- 6.17 The Site is well related to those facilities set out in Table 1. The Site is considered to have good pedestrian and cycle infrastructure in the local vicinity and, as such, is located within reasonable walking and cycling distances of the necessary day-to-day local facilities and services for the future residents to access by active travel modes.
- 6.18 Section 2 has also highlighted that bus services are available which provide access to higher order facilities available at, in particular, Crawley. The nearest bus stops are located on London Road adjacent to the Primary School, approximately 180 to 210 metres (about a 3 minute walk) to the south of the Site. Four bus services (Nos. 273, 271, 4 and 6) operate from these stops providing links to the nearby towns of Crawley and Haywards Heath, as well as Brighton to the south.
- 6.19 In terms of the Site's location, the application scheme would represent a sustainable form of development in accordance with DP Policy DP21 and the locational policies of the NPPF. The number of dwellings proposed would respect the scale of Handcross (i.e. up-to 55 dwellings at a village of over more than 1,000 residential properties) and reflect its existing role in the settlement hierarchy.
- 6.20 In addition to being at a sustainable location, the application scheme would deliver benefits related to the social and economic dimensions of sustainable development (see Section 8 for more details). These benefits can be summarised as:
- Meeting a housing need by providing a cross section of dwellings, including the affordable homes;



- A scheme delivered over an approximate 2-year period from commencement of development thereby making a meaningful contribution to meeting the housing needs of Mid Sussex District, whether market or affordable homes;
- The creation of local jobs during the construction period for specialist trades people;
- Although difficult to quantify, there would be expenditure by the employees during the construction period in the local shops;
- Increase in available expenditure at Handcross once the development is occupied which would support local services;
- The scheme would have the potential to annually benefit the local economy because of increased disposable income; and
- Increased Council Tax income to the County, District and Parish Councils.

Sustainable Construction

6.21 An Energy and Sustainability Statement has been prepared to demonstrate how the proposed development can address climate change through a range of initiatives ranging from the design of the proposed dwellings according with Future Homes Standards, incorporating renewable energy technologies, reducing potable water use, including a sustainable surface water drainage system, securing biodiversity and encouraging non-car modes of travel.

6.22 The energy efficiency of dwellings and potable water use are referenced in DP Policies DP39 and DP42. However, the design and construction of the proposed homes and how they would achieve national energy efficiency and water efficiency targets are for consideration at the reserved matters stage. The achievement of national space standards for each dwelling sought by DP Policy DP27 is also a reserved matter. As a matter of principle, the requirements of DP Policies DP27, DP39 and DP42 and SNP Policy 2 can be met, including:

- Adoption of national space standards;
- Minimise energy use through the design and layout of the scheme including through the use of natural lighting and ventilation;
- Use renewable sources of energy;
- Minimising waste and maximising recycling/ re-use of materials through both construction and occupation; and
- Limit water usage to 110 litres/person/day.



- 6.23 To provide reassurance renewable energy technologies could be deployed, the Energy and Sustainability Statement provides more details about the potential strategy which could be secured as part of a condition attached to any planning permission.
- 6.24 DP Policy DP28 requires developments of 5 or more dwellings to make provision for 20% of dwellings to meet Category 2 – accessible and adaptable dwellings under Building Regulations – Approved Document M Requirement M4(2). The policy also requires wheelchair friendly dwellings (Category 3 – Wheelchair-user dwellings under Building Regulations – Approved Document M Requirement M4(3)) for a reasonable proportion of affordable homes. The design of the dwellings is a reserved matter but, in principle, this policy can be complied with and would provide the opportunity for elderly persons to be able to live on this Site.

Housing Mix

- 6.25 DP Policy DP30 seeks a mix of dwellings on-site taking account of the evidence contained within the *Northern West Sussex Strategic Housing Market Assessment* (SHMA) which is now somewhat dated. Full details of the housing mix will be confirmed at the reserved matters stage albeit it is expected that a desired Affordable Housing mix will be included a Planning Obligation. A choice of housing sizes could be provided in accordance with the intent of DP Policy DP30, including homes built to a national standard suitable for elderly persons.
- 6.26 The application scheme and the Illustrative Site Plan are based upon the principles of creating a sustainable, inclusive and mixed community through providing a mix of house types and size at an appropriate density for this part of Handcross and reflecting local need. In considering the density of development, regard has been had to matters including the character of the Site and its immediate surroundings, as well as the wider locality; access to the Site; vegetation on the periphery of and within the Site; areas of surface water flooding; topography and ensuring there is proper planning for blue and green infrastructure. These are the types of considerations raised in DP Policy DP26 and in the *Design Guide SPD*.



Affordable Housing

- 6.27 DP Policy DP31 requires that schemes for 11 or more dwellings should contain a minimum of 30% affordable housing which is to be achieved by this proposed development. The tenure split indicated in DP Policy DP31 of approximately 75% social or affordable rented homes with the remainder being 25% intermediate homes is generally acceptable to Welbeck. It is expected that a preferred housing mix would be included as part of the affordable housing Planning Obligation.
- 6.28 The design, size and location of the affordable homes would be a matter for the reserved matters. However, as sought by the guidance contained in the *Affordable Housing SPD* the principle of providing in small clusters and their design being tenure blind are principles which would carry forward when a details scheme is produced.

Design Quality

- 6.29 It is not necessary for this Planning Statement to repeat the content of the DAS concerning the design quality that the proposed development could achieve and the fact it has been landscape led due to the Site's location.
- 6.30 The design, density and layout of the Site would reflect the character of the rural area to the north of Handcross and avoids the proposed development being perceived as being suburban character. The proposals would provide a transition from the built area of Handcross to the rural countryside to the north. The DAS demonstrates that the design of the scheme, including its character, grain, mass and height, would be appropriate for this rural location on the edge of a settlement and in the National Landscape.
- 6.31 It is evident that the principles of a high quality of development are established in the DAS and will form the basis for the preparation and assessment of the reserved matters. The design approach includes retaining the character of Hyde Lodge and its garden.
- 6.32 The Site is located within the National Landscape and it would be appropriate for a condition to be applied to secure the approval of an external lighting scheme to further the aims of maintaining dark skies, albeit the A23 and London Road are lit.



- 6.33 Accordingly, the overarching objectives of DP Policy DP28 and other similar design relate policies, including the guidance contained in the *Design Guide SPD* and *High Weald Housing Design Guide* the would be capable of being achieved, namely a high standard of layout and design.

Landscape and Visual

- 6.34 As with any built development on undeveloped land, the application scheme would result in a change to the landscape character and visual amenity of the surrounding area but, in this case, the degree of change would not cause significant harm. The natural beauty of the National Landscape would be conserved rather than harmed (NPPF paragraph 189). This judgement is set out in the Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) and supported by the Landscape Design Strategy.
- 6.35 The Site is located within the High Weald National Character Area and the High Weald National Landscape. The special qualities of the National Landscape surrounding the Site are assorted field systems and Ancient Woodland which would be maintained with no adverse effect. The LVA reflects the *Major Development in the High Weald AONB* assessment whereby “....*the site does not appear to directly impact on the AONB character components*”.
- 6.36 Following the recommendations of the LVA, which include diversification of grassland swards and control of invasive species, there would be a local positive contribution to the objectives of the *High Weald AONB Management Plan 2024-2029*. These recommendations would further the statutory purposes of the Protected Landscape.
- 6.37 At the district scale, the Site is located within the Worth Forest Landscape Character Area described as a heavily afforested, dissected plateau landscape enclosing a post-medieval rural landscape cut from the forest. Within the Site there is not a strength of expression of the distinctive qualities characterised within the Landscape Character Area.
- 6.38 Regarding settlement pattern and contribution to field pattern, the fields north of Handcross have been progressively subject to development throughout the late 19th, mid 20th and more recently 21st centuries. This has resulted in a continuous extension of settlement between London Road and the A23 up to the southern boundary of the Site.



There is a local contribution from the field to a pattern of 3 fields which extend north of Handcross along the western edge of London Road, which are historically characterised as resulting from formal enclosure. The Site, beyond its eastern and northern boundary vegetation features, does not have time depth within the landscape, having been separated from its former extent and association with woodland by the A23 in the 1980s.

- 6.39 Only a Moderate Adverse effect would result on local field pattern and semi-rural character from the substantial loss of the grassland area within the Site and replacement with the proposed dwellings. There would be a localised Minor Adverse effect on glimpsed views from London Road to the east, but without an overall adverse effect on the appearance of the area due to the density of the trees and under canopy of holly within the woodland shaw to the eastern edge of the Site.
- 6.40 Overall, there would be a relatively limited effect of proposed development on the prevailing character of the National Landscape and that there is not a substantial environmental reason to refuse this application. There would not be an unduly harmful effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding area and, in particular, the landscape quality of the National Landscape.
- 6.41 For these reasons which are explained more fully in the LVA, there would not be a conflict with DP Policies DP12 and DP16 and SNP Policy 1.

Green Infrastructure

- 6.42 Green Infrastructure would be provided on-site and an illustrative Landscape Design Strategy has been provided. This Green Infrastructure would include informal recreation areas for use by future and existing residents together with an equipped children's play area. Other areas of Green Infrastructure include incidental landscaped open areas, including within the proposed housing parcels.
- 6.43 Although the details of the Green Infrastructure and the nature of any play equipment are for consideration at the reserved matters stage, the DAS explains that the envisaged types of open space and how they would be suitable for a variety of uses. The opportunity exists to satisfy the requirements of DP Policies DP24 and DP26 concerning a high quality design



and layout which includes appropriate landscaping, greenspace and provision of play areas and SNP Policies 3 and 5 by providing additional Green Infrastructure and open space.

Heritage

- 6.44 There are no designated heritage assets within or adjacent to the Site which would be affected, including their settings, by the proposed development. The construction of the A23 has severed the Site from its historical context as part of the landholding to Nashlands Farm and The Hyde Estate to the west. By reason of the trees along boundaries, there are no clear views either into or of the Site from the west.
- 6.45 The Site formed part of the landholding to Hyde Lodge, an early 20th century lodge at the east entrance to the Hyde Estate, but the Heritage Impact Assessment concludes that it does not form a meaningful part of its heritage setting. The level of potential harm currently identified is considered to constitute no harm with regards to its setting.
- 6.46 The Site has been identified as having a negligible potential for the presence of significant archaeological features of any date, outside the probable Medieval ridge and furrow remains present on the Site. These remains are very poorly preserved, fragmentary and isolated in context and, therefore, the Heritage Impact Assessment has concluded that they are of negligible significance at best. Any potential harm to this non-designated heritage asset falls within the lowest range of less than substantial harm.
- 6.47 The available evidence suggests that the Site was in agricultural usage throughout the Medieval and Post-medieval periods and possibly comprising heathland in the early-mid 18th century. It has remained undeveloped to the present day. It is not possible to entirely rule out significant archaeology of earlier periods. However, the current evidence suggests that the likelihood of such archaeology is negligible. Accordingly, it is not considered that a programme of pre-determination archaeological trenching would be proportionate for this outline planning permission.
- 6.48 Accordingly, there would be no conflict with the local and national policies for the preservation or enhancement of designated heritage assets and their settings. Any harm to the only identified non-designated heritage asset would be part of the overall planning balancing exercise as set out at NPPF paragraph 216.



Flooding, Drainage and Hydrology

- 6.49 A Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy report has been prepared to support the application. The assessment of flood risk has been made in accordance with the policy requirements set out in the NPPF and PPG, together with other operational standards, including those of the Local Lead Flood Authority and Southern Water.
- 6.50 The risk of coastal flooding, flooding from reservoirs, river flooding or groundwater flooding is shown to be low risk. The majority of the Site is indicated to be at very low risk of surface water flooding. There is an area of low to high surface water flood risk in the south west corner of the Site but this would be mitigated through additional storage provided within the retention basin proposed.
- 6.51 In terms of the surface water flood risk and reflecting the approach identified in the PPG, the master planning of the scheme clearly demonstrates that the proposed layout, design and mitigation measures would ensure that future occupiers of the dwellings remain safe from current and future surface water flood risk for the lifetime of the development (taking climate change into account). There would also not be an increase in flood risk elsewhere. For this reason, the Sequential Test identified in the NPPF and PPG need not be applied to this application.
- 6.52 The proposed surface water drainage strategy for the development consists of a series of sustainable urban drainage (SuDS) features, such as porous paving, bioretention and 2 infiltration basins. The proposed SuDS Management Train provides sufficient pollution treatment minimising risk to water quality. The detailed design and maintenance of the SuDS Management Train are matters which can be addressed via suitable conditions.
- 6.53 Based upon the submitted FRA and suitable conditions to secure the SuDS, the proposed development would satisfy DP Policy DP41 concerning flood risk and sustainable drainage.

Ecology and Biodiversity Net Gain

- 6.54 The Site is not part of any national or local ecological or biodiversity designation which would preclude the proposed development. The Site lies within an Impact Risk Zone for Cow Wood and Harry's Wood SSSI. However, the Site is over 600 metres from the SSSI



with no direct link. No significant effects from recreational pressure are predicted given the relatively small size of the proposals and the lack of easy/direct access on foot. The provision of high quality Green Infrastructure and a children's play area would further reduce any potential increase in footfall through the SSSI.

- 6.55 Increased traffic associated with the operational stage of the application scheme would be unlikely to result in adverse effects on the SSSI via increased air pollutants. Further technical information on this matter is contained in the Air Quality Assessment.
- 6.56 Habitats of significant biodiversity value are restricted to the Site's margins, which would be largely retained and protected as part of the proposed development. There would be a limited loss of boundary vegetation to create the vehicular access from London Road.
- 6.57 Potential for habitats to support hazel dormouse, badgers and reptiles were initially identified on the Site. Further protected species surveys were carried out in 2025 to inform the master planning and incorporate suitable mitigation. Additional bat surveys are ongoing and should be completed before the application is determined. Multiple protected species were confirmed present and using the Site through these further surveys, including hazel dormouse, common lizard and badgers.
- 6.58 However, mitigation and enhancement measures are being proposed as an integral part of the proposals, including through retaining the hedgerows and trees (specifically including 15 trees with bat roosting potential); buffers to trees and hedges; planning of new/suitable habitats for protected species; log piles; sensitive lighting; and the erection of bat, bird and dormouse boxes. These measures are in addition to the removal of invasive species and a Construction and Environmental management Plan (CEMP) (secured by condition) to be implemented during the construction period.
- 6.59 Based on the current calculations, the application scheme would result in a net loss of 4.91% (-0.81) of habitat units but a net gain of 44.74% (0.61) of hedgerow units with trading rules not satisfied. As such, off-site provision will be required to ensure the proposed development would, overall, produce a 10% net gain for each unit category in line with the statutory requirements and local policy.
- 6.60 Based on this assessment, to achieve a 10% net gain and achieve trading rules in habitat units, 4.64 neutral grassland habitat units (or higher than medium distinctiveness) should



be purchased from a local habitat bank. The utilisation of a local habitat bank to purchase habitat units will result in an overall net gain in habitat units. The off-site provision can be secure via a planning Obligation. On-site, a draft Biodiversity Net Plan has been prepared and can be the subject an appropriate condition to secure implementation of the final version once the reserved matters details are known.

- 6.61 The approach proposed would comply with DP Policy DP38 in respect of not causing damage to the SSSI, retaining and protecting the important habitats along the Site's boundaries, retaining the trees within the Site and adopting appropriate measures to ensure that overall, there a net gain in biodiversity.

Living Conditions

- 6.62 To ensure that the construction of the proposed development would not have an adverse effect on the occupiers of neighbouring properties, including those living within Hyde Lodge, a condition requiring the submission of a CEMP is expected to be attached to any planning permission. The CEMP can be expected to cover, amongst other matters, the following:
- Hours of operation
 - Hours of delivery
 - Contractor parking
 - Types of equipment
 - Measures to control noise and dust
 - Storage of materials
 - Cleaning of roads
 - Ecological measures
- 6.63 In master planning the Site, regard has been had (as far as practicable at for an outline application) to the relationship between existing and existing residential properties, in particular Hyde Lodge. A buffer is proposed around the edge of Hyde Lodge. Further, at the reserved matters stage consideration can be given in more detail to the siting of individual dwellings, their height and the orientation of windows.



Pollution

- 6.64 The Phase 1 Geo-Environmental Assessment confirms there are no significant issues that could pose a risk to future occupiers of the proposed dwellings in terms of any existing contamination risk.
- 6.65 Public records indicate that radon gas protection measures are not required to facilitate the development.
- 6.66 The conceptual model which has been prepared demonstrates that there should be no significant geo-environmental issues that would prevent the Site from being developed for housing. An intrusive ground investigation may be carried out at the appropriate time to inform the design of buildings and on-site infrastructure (Phase 2). If these investigations reveal any potential contamination, then these will be dealt with as necessary at that time.
- 6.67 A Noise Assessment has been undertaken which has considered the constraints on the Site and the impacts from construction activities and development generated traffic.
- 6.68 The dominant noise source in the surrounding area is from the A23 and the broader highway network. Within the Site, façade noise levels have been calculated at the approximate locations of the proposed dwellings based upon the Illustrative Site Plan. Façades facing west towards the A23 are predicted to experience the highest noise levels primarily from the traffic noise associated with the A23. Those dwellings adjacent to the A23 and/or with an unobstructed view of the A23, noise levels are predicted to be above 50 dB during the daytime and 45 dB during the night time.
- 6.69 Accordingly, for good acoustic design reasons, mitigation measures are proposed to ensure internal noise levels meet BS 8233 *British Standard 8233 'Sound insulation and noise reduction for buildings – Code of practice' 2014*, WHO guidelines and DP Policy DP29. With the windows and doors closed, the internal night-time noise level would be achieved at all the proposed dwellings. Also achieved would be internal daytime noise levels for living rooms and bedrooms as recommended in *BS8233*. The use of double-glazed windows incorporating acoustically attenuated ventilation with comparable sound reduction would reduce internal noise to within guideline levels.



- 6.70 Within the proposed gardens the noise levels would be less than 55 dB and the majority of cases would be below 50 dB during the daytime. There is predicted to be a decrease in noise levels adjacent to the Site due to the screening effect of the proposed dwellings creating a noise barrier.
- 6.71 The Noise Assessment also calculates the potential worst-case impacts of construction noise at nearby sensitive receptors. Best practical means would be adopted to minimise construction noise in so far as possible via measures included in the CEMP. There would not be a conflict with DP Policy DP29.
- 6.72 An Air Quality Assessment has been prepared with the impact assessment. Following the completion of the development, estimated to be 2029, there is predicted to be an increase of 16.5% (or less) in 24-hour traffic flows along the links within the area assessed. The concentrations of NO₂ in 2029 are predicted to be well below the objective level of 40 µgm⁻³. The magnitude of change in annual mean concentrations at all the receptors due to the traffic generated by the proposed development is predicted to be 'Imperceptible' or 'No Change'. Therefore, the 'Significance' of change is considered to be 'Negligible' or 'No Change'.
- 6.73 Concentrations of PM₁₀ in 2029 are predicted to be well below the objective level of 40 µgm⁻³ resulting in 'Imperceptible' or 'No' Change" due to traffic associated with the application scheme. Therefore, the 'Significance' of change is considered to be 'Negligible' or 'No Change'.
- 6.74 Concentrations of PM_{2.5} in 2029 are predicted to be well below the objective level of 25 µgm⁻³ at the receptor locations and experience 'Imperceptible' due to traffic generated by the proposed dwellings. Therefore, the 'Significance' of change is considered to be 'Negligible'.
- 6.75 Within the development concentrations of NO₂, PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} are predicted to be well below the NAQO levels 40 µgm⁻³ (NO₂ and PM₁₀) and 25 µgm⁻³. For those cases where the risk category is 'Negligible' (i.e. ecological), no specific mitigation measures is required beyond specific legislation.



- 6.76 Construction impacts have been assessed using the method detailed in the Institute of Air Quality Management (IAQM) *publication Guidance on the assessment of dust from demolition and construction* (2024). During the construction phase, there is predicted to be a 'Medium Risk' of annoyance caused by dust soiling due to earthwork and a 'Low Risk' of health effects due to increase exposure in PM₁₀. There is predicted to be a 'Low Risk' of annoyance caused by dust soiling and a 'Low Risk' of health effects due to increase exposure in PM₁₀ during the construction phase. Controlling the potential effect of air pollution associated with the construction phase could substantially be address via the CEMP.
- 6.77 With appropriate mitigation during construction, air quality concentrations are acceptable for future residents of the proposed development and, as such, complies with DP Policy DP29.
- 6.78 In respect of external lighting and although the A23 and London Road are lit, a dark skies approach is supported by Welbeck, including for ecological reasons related to bats and because the Site is in the National Landscape. It would be appropriate for a condition to be imposed requiring an external lighting scheme to be approved and implemented. There would not be a conflict with DP Policy DP29.

Access and Mobility

- 6.79 The proposed development would be accessed via a simple priority junction from London Road. This will have a 5.5m wide carriageway with footway connections either side, connecting to the existing footway infrastructure. Visibility splays would be provided in accordance with the recorded speeds on London Road. A separate shared footway/cycleway is proposed in the south eastern corner of the Site, providing an alternative off road route for pedestrians and cyclists. This would connect with the footway infrastructure to along the frontage which would be widened to 2 metres (secured by condition).
- 6.80 An independent Stage One Road Safety Audit has been undertaken of the proposed vehicular access and the comments made have been incorporated into the final design and, as such, there are no residual road safety concerns.



- 6.81 As set out in the eDP Policy DPA19, Welbeck would be willing to fund a Traffic Regulation Order to extend the existing 30mph speed limit on London Road approximately 125 metres further to the north from its existing location to include the proposed access. The proposed junction and vehicular access do not require this change in the speed limited to be capable of implementation.
- 6.82 As already identified, the Site is in a sustainable and accessible location on the edge of Handcross within walking and cycling distance of a range of facilities. Pedestrian and cycle access from the proposed development towards the facilities in Handcross would be available via the proposed dedicated pedestrian/cycle access.
- 6.83 A Travel Plan Statement accompanies this application which seeks to promote non-car modes of travel. This reflects the requirements of DP Policy DP21 whereby appropriate opportunities to facilitate and promote the increased use of alternative means of transport to the private car are being promoted. The measures being proposed would encourage opportunities for access to active and sustainable modes of transport, including walking, cycling and public transport.
- 6.84 In addition to the location of the Site and the master planning promoting non-car modes of travel as part of the proposed development, other Travel Plan measures being proposed to encourage reduced reliance on single occupancy vehicular trips include:
- Secure cycle parking;
 - Travel Information Pack setting out the alternatives to travelling by car;
 - Personal Travel Planning supported by a Travel Plan Co-ordinator;
 - Promotion of the Subsidised Travel Voucher for each household for the purchase of bus tickets or cycles;
 - Leaflets and other printed materials;
 - Promoting the existing car sharing scheme operated by West Sussex County Council; and
 - Home working.
- 6.85 The Travel Plan Statement also includes details about the appointment and role of the Travel Plan Co-ordinator.
- 6.86 Although trips can be made on foot, cycle and public transport, there will be a residual number of trips by vehicle. The Transport Statement provides an assessment of the



potential impact of traffic generated by the proposed development on the highway network, including consideration of highway safety matters.

- 6.87 A detailed assessment of the likely traffic impacts of the proposed development has been carried out. Traffic surveys were undertaken across a number of junctions within Handcross, with the trip generation calculated using robust parameters and distributed across the local highway network using data from the 2011 Census (as being more reliable than the 2021 Census which occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic), coupled with a gravity model.
- 6.88 The proposed access junction with London Road provides ample capacity to serve the proposed development and would operate with negligible levels of queuing and delay. The operational assessments (via modelling) undertaken for key junctions on the local highway network demonstrate that there would be negligible increases to queuing and delay as a result of the proposed development.
- 6.89 Overall, there would be no unacceptable effects on the safety of other highway users and there would the residual cumulative impact on the road network would not be severe. The proposed development would comply with DP Policy DP21.

Trees and Hedgerows

- 6.90 As confirmed in the Arboricultural Assessment there are it trees on the boundaries of the Site and isolated trees within the Site. None of the trees are the subject of Tree Preservation Orders, they are not Veteran Trees and there is not a Conservation Area incorporating the Site.
- 6.91 The existing trees and hedgerow around the Site boundaries (with the exception 6 trees lost for the vehicular access which are category B and C) would be retained with new planning being proposed to augment what exists as part of the Landscape Design Strategy. This would improve the overall arboricultural value of the Site as evidenced by the increase in hedgerow units. These proposals include planting within the greenspace areas and there would be street trees.



- 6.92 As would be expected for an outline application, it is envisaged a condition would be imposed on any planning permission requiring the submission of tree and hedgerow protection works prior to the commencement of development. The strategy to protect the trees is identified in the Arboricultural Assessment.
- 6.93 There would not be a conflict with the requirements of development in respect of trees as set out in DP Policy DP37.

Utilities

- 6.94 DP Policy DP20 seeks to ensure that development is accompanied by the necessary infrastructure to ensure that it is adequately served without overstressing existing infrastructure and putting an unacceptable strain on the environment. It also aims to create sustainable communities. DP Policy DP42 refers to there being adequate potable water and arrangements for foul water disposal to be available for a development. A Utilities Report has been submitted with the application to consider servicing the proposed housing and to demonstrate DP Policies DP20 and DP42 could be satisfied.
- 6.95 It is proposed to discharge foul water via pumped connection to MHREF3101. This is part of the existing Southern Water foul sewer located to the south of the Site on High Street.
- 6.96 UKPN have identified a point of connection for electricity to be the existing Handcross Primary School substation which would, as is the case with most schemes, require upgrading.
- 6.97 South East Water has indicated that the point of connection to secure a water supply would be from a pipe in London Road. Some localised reinforcement works would also be required.
- 6.98 There is broadband connectivity via the fibre telecommunication network in Handcross provided by Openreach with download speeds of up to 80mbps. The delivery of superfast broadband would satisfy the aim of DP Policy DP23 concerning the incorporation digital infrastructure into residential developments.



- 6.99 Securing the provision of suitable links to the existing utility network is usually a statutory requirement but suitable conditions could be attached to any planning permission to secure foul water drainage and broadband connections for the proposed development.

7. Delivery and Conditions

- 7.1 It is envisaged that if outline planning permission is granted in mid-2026 then the housing development would start by mid-2027 allowing for reserved matters submissions. The construction period for would be circa 2-years (completion 2029).
- 7.2 The indicative Heads of Terms for Planning Obligations when justified against the statutory tests, these could include:
- a) Securing 30% Affordable Housing.
 - b) A financial contribution to education.
 - c) Funding travel planning.
 - d) Funding for the Road Traffic Order.
 - e) Management of the Green and Blue Infrastructure in accordance with the submitted details.
 - f) Securing off-site Biodiversity Units.
- 7.3 The suggested planning conditions include the following matters relating to the Site and the dwellings:
- a) Submission of reserved matters within a prescribed period.
 - b) Link between the reserved matters and the Parameters Plan and DAS.
 - c) Protection or retained trees and hedges during construction.
 - d) Restriction on works trees and hedges during bird nesting season unless specific approval has been obtained.
 - e) A Biodiversity Net Gain Plan including implementation mitigation for the protected species' habitats and as well as the delivery of BNG (the statutory BNG condition would also apply).
 - f) CEMP.
 - g) External lighting scheme with particular reference to addressing the needs of bats and dark skies.
 - h) Details of the renewable energy provision.
 - i) Full details of the sustainable surface water drainage system including future management.



- j) Travel Plan implementation.
- k) Implementation of the landscaping scheme.
- l) Erection of bird, bat and dormouse boxes.

8. Planning Balance and Conclusions

- 8.1 It is acknowledged that the Site is outside the defined Built-up Area Boundary for Handcross (DP Inset 18b). The defined boundary also excludes the existing built forms of housing and community development located adjacent to the Site's southern boundary. As such, the proposed development would conflict with DP Policies DP6 and DP12.
- 8.2 However, the Built-up Area Boundary was established to deliver what is now an out-of-date spatial strategy. This is because Mid Sussex District Council cannot demonstrate a 5-year supply of deliverable housing land when assessed against the standard approach for calculating housing need.
- 8.3 Furthermore, the stated purpose of DP Policy DP21 and national planning policies seek to direct development to the most sustainable locations in order to reduce the need to travel by private vehicles. Handcross is a Category 3 Medium Sized Village which possesses the essential services for the needs of the residents. In the case of Handcross, these essential services include a primary school, shops and recreation and community facilities, including a healthcare centre. This proposed development would represent an opportunity for Handcross to continue growing and thriving, thereby supporting local services.
- 8.4 The Council's assessment is that the unspecified elderly persons' accommodation proposed under eDP Policy DPA19 would not comprises major development in the National Landscape. Welbeck consider that this assessment should equally apply to the application scheme which would still be a residential form of development which would, potentially, yield less dwellings than the emerging allocation and would only comprises houses rather than, potentially, a large footprint associated with a care home. Accordingly, the exceptional circumstances sought by NPPF paragraph 190 do not need to be demonstrated.
- 8.5 Therefore, and in the absence of any policy constraint identified in footnote 7 (including National Landscape), the presumption in favour of sustainable development set out at NPPF paragraph 11(d) would apply as a significant material consideration in the determination of this appeal. The weight which should be given to policies which are most



important for determining the application are out-of-date (NPPF paragraph 11 and footnote 8) should be reduced which includes those seeking to control proposals for housing outside a defined Built-up Area Boundary. No other material conflicts with the remainder of the basket of development plan policies (which have been referenced in this Planning Statement) have been identified such that they would amount to a justification to refuse planning permission.

- 8.6 In undertaking the balancing exercise, the weight attributed to the benefits or other material consideration associated with the proposed development the following scale has been adopted:

Table 3: Planning Weight

Level	Definition
Significant Weight	Providing a wider benefit beyond the Site that otherwise may not be realised and having wider implications, including meeting an identified need. Making a significant contribution to delivering a sustainable form of development.
Moderate Weight	Providing a wider benefit beyond the Site which would be realised by the existing community. Making a positive contribution to delivering a sustainable form of development.
Limited Weight	Providing a benefit which would primarily be realised by the future occupiers rather than the wider community. Making a notable contribution to delivering a sustainable form of development.
Neutral Weight	Meeting an expected policy or regulatory requirement, or accordingly with an established national standard.

- 8.7 As already highlighted, because of the Site being at Handcross, the proposed housing would be being delivered at a sustainable location. There is a range of local facilities which can meet the day-to-day needs of the local community. There are public transport links to larger settlements with higher order facilities with bus services operating near-by.
- 8.8 The proposed development at Handcross would accord with the principles of sustainable growth at settlements within the rural area expressed at NPPF paragraphs 82, 83 and 110 and the accessibility requirements of NPPF paragraphs 109 and 115. Significant weight should be given to the application scheme according with national policy concerning by being at an accessible rural settlement.



- 8.9 The Site itself is well related on foot and cycle to facilities in Handcross, including the primary school, medical centre, bus services, village hall public house and shops. The Site is in a location which is accessible to the bus services. Significant weight should be given to the accessibility of the Site via active and sustainable modes to facilities in respect of delivering sustainable development.
- 8.10 The proposed development would predominately delivery the criteria identified by eDP Policy DPA19 in respect of residential development occurring on the Site.
- 8.11 The application scheme would provide economic and social benefits associated with the delivery of homes at Handcross:
- a) Up-to 55 dwellings would make a meaning contribution to addressing the housing land supply shortfall in Mid Sussex District at a sustainable location (significant weight);
 - b) Up-to 17 affordable homes would be provided in a location where a demonstrable need exists; (significant weight); and
 - c) The development would be delivered in around 24-months from the granting of reserved matters (significant weight).
- 8.12 The further set of considerations are the economic benefits associated with the proposed development (excluding the delivery of housing, including affordable homes):
- a) The creation of jobs during the construction period. Using HBF data, employment supported by house building is equivalent to between 2.4 and 3.1 direct, indirect and adduced jobs per new dwelling⁴. Between 132 and 170 jobs would be supported during the construction period (moderate weight);
 - b) Although difficult to quantify, there would be expenditure by the employees in the local area during the construction period (neutral weight);
 - c) Increase in available expenditure once the development is occupied. Based on the average weekly household spend of £623.30 per week⁵, it is estimated that annual expenditure into the local economy could amount to circa £1.78 million with some £0.25 million spent on food and non-alcoholic drink and further spending on

⁴ The Economic Footprint of UK House Building (2018), HBF

⁵ Family spending in the UK - Office for National Statistics April 2023 to March 2024



restaurants, recreation and leisure pursuits of around £0.21 million (moderate weight);

- d) Adopting the annual Average Disposable Household Income for the South East Region of £ £28,187 per head⁶, the scheme would have the potential to annually benefit the local economy by around £3.1 million (moderate weight); and
- e) Increased Council Tax income to the County, District and Parish Councils of some £1.1 million over 10-years based upon the 2025/26 figure for Band D properties in Slaugham Parish⁷ (neutral weight).

8.13 The following social and environmental benefits and considerations also apply:

- a) Delivering greenspace available to the local community (significant weight).
- b) Place making at the heart of the master planning approach with a safe and secure environment for the future occupiers (moderate weight);
- c) The availability for future occupiers to travel on foot, cycle and public transport to access local facilities (moderate weight);
- d) Provision of superfast broadband for future occupiers to promote virtual mobility (limited weight);
- e) The natural topography of the Site falling towards from north east to south west would encourage a layout able to maximise solar gain and the creation of appropriate microclimates, including urban cooling (moderate weight); and
- f) Sustainable drainage with associated biodiversity potential (limited weight).

8.14 Other environmental considerations and benefits in favour of the proposed development include:

- a) More energy efficient and healthier homes because the proposal would be the subject of the more stringent requirements of Parts F and L of the Building Regulations (neutral weight);
- b) Accord with national and local policies on low carbon homes with low water consumption and other related initiatives in accordance with relevant national standards (neutral weight);
- c) Retention of soils on Site and the use of local materials during construction (limited weight); and

⁶ Regional gross disposable household income, UK: 1997 to 2023 (September 2025) (ONS)

⁷ Council Tax Bands –Mid Sussex District Council



- d) Minimising waste during the constructional and operational phases of the development (limited weight).

- 8.15 As assessed by the Council, the residential development of the Site would not represent major development in the National Landscape. The LVA has established that there would be a relatively limited effect of proposed development on the prevailing character of the National Landscape and that there is not a substantial environmental reason to refuse this application. There would not be an unduly harmful effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding area and, in particular, the landscape quality of the National Landscape. There would not be a conflict statutes and national and local planning policies, including DP Policy DP16.
- 8.16 Applying the provision of NPPF paragraph 11(d)(ii), this is a case where there are no adverse impacts associated with granting planning permission which would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF as a whole. This is particularly the case where the most relevant policies, namely DP Policies DP6 and DP12, are out-of-date and there is no material conflict so as to justify refusal of planning permission.
- 8.17 Accordingly, and subject to appropriate Planning Obligations and necessary conditions, this is a case where the presumption in favour of sustainable development should apply and planning permission ought to be granted for the proposed housing development.
- 8.18 However, even if the application was determined where the exceptional circumstances applied to a major development in the National Landscape (i.e. NPPF paragraph 190), planning permission should still be granted because there are exceptional circumstances, including the public benefits of the application scheme. In addition to the specific benefits set out above, other public benefits include:
- a) The Government's objective of boosting housing supply.
 - b) The market signals on affordability in Mid Sussex District.
 - c) The affordable housing need in Mid Sussex District.
 - d) There is a need for the development and need for housing at Handcross is established in the DPD and SNP.
 - e) The lack of delivery of the housing allocations at St Martin Close to meet the housing need at Handcross notwithstanding the settlement is within the National Landscape.



- f) The allocation of the Site for residential development albeit for elderly persons' accommodation in the eDP.
- g) The ability for the Site to come forward for development in the absence of any technical objections.
- h) The lack of significant harm being caused to any interests of particular importance of the type identified in the NPPF, with the exception of National Landscape.

8.19 As stated, the LVA establishes that there would be a relatively limited, rather than detrimental, effect of the proposed development on the prevailing character of the National Landscape, and that there is not a substantial environmental reason to refuse the application. There would not be an unduly harmful effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding area and, in particular, the landscape quality of the National Landscape. Accordingly, there would be no strong reasons to withhold planning permission for this application.

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