



Planning

Planning Statement

Client:

Devtec Properties

Firs Farm

Copthorne Common Road, Copthorne, Crawley, RH10 3LF

Conversion of Storage Building (Use Class B8) to provide 2 x single family dwellinghouses (Use Class C3) with associated amenity space and parking provision

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**Appendix 1 – APP/D3830/W/24/3340329 –
Willowbrook, Danworth Lane, Hurstpierpoint, West
Sussex BN6 9LW**

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This statement is produced to support a planning application for the conversion of a storage building to form two dwellinghouses (2 x Use Class C3 Residential) at Firs Farm, Copthorne Common Road, Copthorne, Crawley, UK RH10 3LF.
- 1.2 This planning statement will cover the background to the application and provide the necessary information to enable its determination by officers at the Council. It will consider the proposal in light of relevant planning policies and other material considerations. The conclusion reached is that key material considerations and the wider objectives of National and Local planning policy support the grant of permission.
- 1.3 In addition to this planning statement, the application is accompanied by the appropriate planning application forms and ownership certificate, duly signed and completed, and the following documents:
- 1:1250 Site Location Plan
 - 1:500 Block Plan
 - 1:100 Existing Plans and Elevations
 - 1:100 Proposed Plans and Elevations
 - Structural Survey
 - Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
 - Nocturnal Bat Survey Report
- 1.4 The relevant application fee will be submitted by the applicant separately.

2. Site Location and Description

- 2.1 The application site comprises a single storey one brick building sited to the south/south-east of the dwelling at Firs Farm (accessed via the vehicular access on the southern side of Copthorne Common Road (A264). The building has a lawful storage use serving the on-site landscaping business (Use Class B8).
- 2.2 The application site is within the countryside, there are no other significant policy designations to consider for the site.

3. Planning History

The Council's planning register provides a significant amount of planning history for the site and neighbouring sites. For the sake of brevity only the applications relevant for the determination of this application have been provided:

LPA Application Reference	Development Description	Decision (Date)
DM/24/2053	Conversion of two buildings to 1 x single family dwellinghouse (Use Class C3) with associated amenity space and parking provision. (Additional Bat Survey 22.10.2024).	Pending consideration
DM/24/1234	Proposed Lawful Development Certificate application to resume the lawful uses of a number of buildings at Firs Farm	Approved (11/07/2024)

4. Development Proposals

- 4.1 The proposal relates to the conversion of a storage building (Use Class B8) to form two dwellings (Use Class C3). These are identified as plot one and plot two on the proposed plan.
- 4.2 Plot one is a one bedroom (1b2p) unit with a GIA of 68.04 m². It comprises of a kitchen, lounge/diner, bathroom and bedroom. Plot two is a two bedroom (2b4p) unit with a GIA of 72.11 m². It comprises an open plan kitchen/living space, bathroom and two bedrooms.
- 4.3 The proposal will retain the existing access from Copthorne Common Road and seeks to provide three parking spaces.
- 4.4 The conversion also seeks to provide private amenity space for future occupiers of the dwelling to the front and rear of the site. This would coincide with the removal of hardstanding.

5. Policy Assessment

- 5.1 **Principle of Development:** Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.2 In this instance the Development Plan comprises:
- Mid-Sussex District Plan 2014 – 2031 ('MSDP')
 - Copthorne Neighbourhood Plan 2021 – 2031 ('CNP')
- 5.3 On 8th July 2024 the LPA submitted a Local Plan Update to the Inspectorate with Stage 1 hearings having taken place on 31/10/2024. Owing to there being no date for Stage 2 proceedings which will assess relevant policies of the Draft Local Plan it can only be given **limited weighting** in the determination of applications.
- 5.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (2024) ('NPPF') is a material consideration of **significant weighting**.
- 5.5 **Policy DP4** of the MSDP seeks for the 876 dwellings per annum to be delivered until 2023/24, thereafter, an average of 1090 dwellings per annum is required until the end of the plan period in 2031. The Plan seeks to deliver 16,390 dwellings across the plan period.
- 5.6 The application site is not within a defined settlement boundary and is therefore within the countryside. **Policy DP12** of the MSDP states the countryside will be protected in recognition of its intrinsic character and beauty. 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 is supported by a specific policy reference elsewhere in the plan (or a Neighbourhood Plan).

- 5.7 **Policy DP13** of the MSDP states provided it does not conflict with DP12 development will be permitted if it does not result in the coalescence of settlements which harms the separate identity and amenity of settlements and would not have an unacceptable urbanising effect on the area between settlements. Likewise, **CNP1.5** of the CNP states development should be laid out to maintain the perception of separation between Copthorne Village and other surrounding settlements.
- 5.8 Whilst to be further subject to compliance with DP12, it is considered the proposal would not result in the coalescence of settlements as it does not seek to introduce any new built form (converting existing buildings). The site itself lies beyond the eastern settlement boundary of Copthorne. However, it should be noted that there is existing development to the east of the site and Local Green Space to the west (immediately adjacent the settlement boundary of Copthorne). Therefore, the proposed development would in no way contribute to the coalescence of settlements.
- 5.9 **Policy DP15** of the MSDP pertains to new homes in the countryside and states in relation to the re-use and adaptation of rural buildings for residential use in the countryside will be permitted where it is not a recently constructed agricultural building which has not been or has been little used for its original purpose and:
- ***The re-use would lead to an enhancement of the immediate setting and the quality of the landscape character is maintained.***
- 5.10 It should be noted that unlike other policy requirements in DP15 'the re-use and adaptation of buildings' does not require compliance with DP12 nor 'special justification' (this is reflected in Annual Monitoring Reports with the success of DP12 being measured by the percentage

of new and converted dwellings being on previously developed land – which is not a 'special justification').

- 5.11 As per the site history and the approved certificate of lawfulness the building has an established B8 storage use.
- 5.12 A structural survey has been provided which confirms that the building can be converted into a residential dwelling(s). The report highlights that there are no signs of subsidence and the existing roof rafters are capable of supporting additional loads from the residential dwelling roof.



Figure 1. Photograph showing the exterior condition of the existing building

- 5.13 The structural survey confirms that the building can be converted into dwelling units with some improvements to the existing building. The facilitative works include:

- Installation of timber cladding to improve the appearance of the building (See Proposed Elevations).
- Adding 100 mm thick wall with a cavity between the existing and the new wall to create a cavity wall.
- Replacing asbestos with a residential roof covering material.
- Adding a new timber truss next to the existing one to support the load from the residential dwelling roof.
- Replacement of doors and windows (and installation of new opening for rear door to unit 2).

5.14 The final part of DP15 requires the development to enhance the immediate setting and maintain the quality of the landscape character. This is to be largely addressed later in this report however, it should be noted the development itself would improve the setting the building is within by improving the appearance of the buildings themselves. The existing building provides a negative contribution principally owing to weathered white façade. The existing corrugated metal roof will also be replaced with a tiled roof and a uniform timber cladding will be provided on the external appearance of the dwelling.

5.15 A recent appeal decision appendix 1 (APP/D3830/W/24/3340329) within the LPA also confirms the application of DP15 to include the enhancement of the building to be satisfied via improvements to the building itself. In any event it should be noted that the scheme includes soft landscaping to the front and rear of the proposed dwellings further enhancing its appearance.

5.16 As such, it is considered the conversion of the buildings would comply with DP15 (and ergo DP12), should further enhancement of the immediate setting be required this can be addressed by condition. It is acknowledged DP15 seeks to also maintain the quality of landscape

character, this is to be addressed under a separate consideration, but in short, the development would not increase the built form across the site and would result in the same footprint (there is no removal of any landscape features).

- 5.17 Notwithstanding compliance with the above policies, paragraph 83 of the NPPF seeks to locate housing where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. The location of the proposed dwelling would be circa 500m from the settlement boundary of Copthorne Village, and circa. 1.3km from Crawley Down as such, a dwelling in this location would support the vitality of two rural communities at a minimum. As such, the development would also be supported by national policy via paragraph 83 of the NPPF.
- 5.18 **Impact to the Character and Appearance of the Area and the Landscape: Policy DP26** of the MSDP seeks for all development to demonstrate it is of high quality design and layout and includes appropriate landscaping and greenspace; addresses character and scale of surrounding buildings and landscape; protects trees that contribute to the character of the area and the separate identity and character of towns and villages and optimises the potential of the site to accommodate development.
- 5.19 **Policy DP37** states development that will damage or lead to the loss of trees, woodland or hedgerows, and encourage new planting.
- 5.20 **Policy CNP1** of the CNP states proposals will be supported where they sustain or reinforce the positive aspects that make up the individual character and distinctiveness of each character area. The CNP defines multiples character areas, and **the application site is within the CA3: Copthorne Common and Woodland CA. Policy CNP11** of the CNP states proposals must sustain or reinforce the positive aspects of the CA3.

- 5.21 The wider site of Firs Farm comprises industrial/commercial and residential uses accessed to the south of Copthorne Common Road. The wider site comprises Previously Developed Land and does not contribute to or provide any of the positive characteristics outlined in CNP11.
- 5.22 Trees are present across the wider site and are proposed to be retained by the development and as such, the backdrop of trees in the limited view would be retained as part of the proposal.
- 5.23 The development would not result in any new buildings being provided nor increase the footprint of built form. As such, the scale of the development is not new nor incongruous to the area. The cladding and tile roof would no doubt provide an improved appearance.
- 5.24 The provision of private amenity space would not be inappropriate to a site that already features residential development. Notwithstanding this the majority of the garden space is hidden from public view to the rear of the dwellings, should it be required a landscaping condition to provide specific species to provide further visual enhancement can be provided to the front and rear of the site.
- 5.25 It should be noted that in appendix 1 when considering the test of DP15 that the LPA had raised that the conversion of said building would not be the only way of securing relevant improvements (i.e landscaping and external alterations). However, the Inspector unequivocally stated (with ET Planning emphasis): *"I note the Council's view that a residential conversion would not be the only way of achieving improvements to the barn's appearance and function. Whilst this may be the case, my consideration is necessarily limited to the scheme before me. As set out above, the proposal*

would be an appropriate means of restoring the building and would be consistent with the rural character of the surrounding area”.

- 5.26 This is particularly relevant as the LPA has raised concerns on these grounds from the pending application DM/24/2053 (adjacent site) where it was stated the improvements to the building alone would not be sufficient to gain policy support from DP15 – and the accompanying landscaping could not be considered despite being part of the scheme (as it could theoretically be done without planning permission).
- 5.27 To sustain such an approach for this application would in effect make DP15 unworkable as to gain support from the policy the development is required to be a conversion. For any development to maintain being a conversion it cannot significantly alter the building and physical relationship of the existing built form – there is only so much work that can be done to provide a conversion. It is commonplace for additional landscaping to accompany conversions to provide amenity space as it is part and parcel of the development (converting to a residential use). To exclude any part of the visual improvements of the scheme as proposed is to fail to assess the scheme in front of the LPA.
- 5.28 Finally, it should be noted the conversion would be adjacent to two residential units (the main dwelling of Firs Farm and the smaller dwelling immediately adjacent). The provision of residential uses would therefore be consistent with the spatial pattern of development.
- 5.29 As such, it is considered the conversion and provision of private amenity space would be acceptable and serves to enhance the immediate setting of the site. The development is in accordance with DP15, DP26 or CNP1 of the Development Plan.

- 5.30 **Impacts to Residential Amenities: Policy DP26 of the** MSDP requires development to demonstrate it does not cause significant harm to the amenities of existing nearby residents and future occupants of new dwellings (accounting for privacy, outlook, daylight and sunlight, and noise, air and light pollution). Policy **DP27** seeks for dwellings created through conversion will achieve minimum Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS).
- 5.31 **Policy CNP1.2** of the CNP states proposals for new development should not cause unreasonable harm to the amenity of existing and future occupants, both on site and nearby.
- 5.32 No new built form is to be introduced that would not already exist and as such there would be no impacts to neighbouring residential amenities as a result of overshadowing or loss of light.
- 5.33 As stated above, the building would comprise 1b2p and 2b4p. The proposal significantly exceeds the minimum requirements of 39m² and 70m² respectively (As set out in the NDSS). The living space of each property includes a dining area and lounge space which is served by windows on both side of the property.
- 5.34 Each habitable room is served by windows. As such an adequate means of light and outlook are provided to all habitable rooms.
- 5.35 The development also seeks to propose private amenity space for future occupiers which provides ample space for general enjoyment of the garden area. This is located to the rear of the barn and therefore doesn't affect public amenity.
- 5.36 As such, it is considered the proposed development complies with DP26 and DP27 of the MSDP and CNP1 of the CNP.
- 5.37 **Transport and Parking: Policy DP21** of the MSDP seeks for development proposals to account for: being sustainably located to

minimise the need for travel noting there might be circumstances where development needs to be located in the countryside; appropriate opportunities to facilitate and promote the increased use of alternative means of transport to the private car; the scheme is designed to adoptable standards providing adequate car parking and avoids severe additional traffic congestion.

- 5.38 The application being a conversion and complying with DP15 would mean the locational requirement of DP21 would be met as it explicitly accounts for the circumstances of other policies as it pertains to housing in the countryside.
- 5.39 Regardless, it should be noted the site is 500m from the settlement boundary of Copthorne Village itself, this is within 'walking distance' (800m) and a pedestrian footpath exists on the southern side of Copthorne Common Road. It is noted that access to further services within Copthorne Village would be beyond this distance however, it should be noted that directly outside the main access to Firs Farm is a bus stop served by multiple bus routes into the centre of Copthorne Village to the west. Within a circa. 250m walk from the site is a bus stop for east bound routes.
- 5.40 In any case, there is a petrol station within 250m of the site which provides groceries such as food and drink to allow for short ad hoc trips on foot when required. The site can by no means be considered to be 'isolated' owing to being amongst other dwellings and proximity to the settlement.
- 5.41 The site access is to remain the same as existing, it should be noted the lawful uses of the industrial/commercial buildings utilise this access to access the rear of the site. Three parking spaces have been provided council's parking standards. Should any change to parking layout be required this can be addressed via condition of a revised

site plan (in tandem with a landscaping plan). The provision of two dwellings would in no way result in a severe impact to the highway network.

- 5.42 Finally, it should be noted paragraph 110 of the NPPF acknowledges that opportunities to maximise sustainable public transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas and this should be taken into account in decision making. The sustainable transport options available to the site are by no means limited with access to services and bus routes being within walking distance of the site. However, should further solutions be required a condition can be attached to any permission to provide cycle storage for the occupants of the dwelling (this is able to be sited in the rear garden of the dwelling). This would maximise sustainable public transport solutions.
- 5.43 As such, it is considered the proposed development complies with Policy DP21 of the MDSP and paragraph 110 of the NPPF.
- 5.44 **Refuse Provision:** The existing arrangement for refuse collection as the main Firs Farm dwelling is to remain for the proposal. On collection days bins will be brought to the designated collection point and returned to the garden of the proposed development at all other times. This can be secured by condition.
- 5.45 **Drainage and SuDS:** The site is within Flood Zone 1 and is at low risk of flooding. Details of surface and foul water connections can be secured by condition.
- 5.46 **Ecology:** A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal has been undertaken for the site. It has confirmed that one of the buildings has 'low bat roost' suitability. Additional emergence surveys have been undertaken and confirm that no bats are present within the building.

- 5.47 Appropriate Ecological enhancement such as the installation of bat boxes can be secured by condition.
- 5.48 **Contamination:** There is no known contamination on the site. However, it is considered that any additional information can be secured by planning condition if required.
- 5.49 **Planning Balance and Material Considerations:** It is considered the development complies with the Development Plan and therefore planning permission should be granted without delay.
- 5.50 However, should it be required it is considered there are a number of material considerations that weigh in favour of the development.
- 5.51 The most obvious benefit is the provision of two dwellings which count towards the council's housing land supply. In light of recent changes to national planning policy, it is worth noting that the new Standard Method has increased the LPAs Local Housing Need to **1,356** new dwellings per annum.
- 5.52 This is particularly relevant for Policy DP4 of the Local Plan which states that the spatial strategy will deliver 1,090 dwellings between 2024/25 and 2030/31. **Under the new Standard Method the LPA will need to deliver the equivalent of 24,408 homes across the plan period¹.** It is therefore considered in the context of increased need that the provision of two dwellinghouses would be a material consideration in favour of the development.
- 5.53 However, the weight applied to these units should be further enhanced as it should be noted that the fact dwellings are being provided utilising PDL as supported by paragraph 124.d of the NPPF. It should also be noted paragraph 135 of the NPPF states that

¹ Across an 18 year period (in line with Draft Local Plan period 2018 – 2041 notwithstanding any Main Modifications)

decisions should optimise the potential of a site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount of development. Whilst of a small scale the development would make the most effective use of existing buildings, this is particularly pertinent owing to the fact the lawful use of the stables is storage. As per other submissions, the need for storage on site has significantly declined owing to the on-site business seeking to vacate the site. The conversion would facilitate not only visual improvements but functional improvements in utilising an under-utilised building and PDL. It should also be noted that the location of the dwellings whilst not within the settlement boundary of Copthorne are within 500m of the settlement and are not 'isolated', they would comply with paragraph 110 and 115 of the NPPF. It is considered therefore the delivery of housing in this location this carries **significant weight** in favour of the proposal.

- 5.54 Notwithstanding the material considerations listed above (to be weighed in the balance), **it is apparent the current Local Housing Need and the need within the Local Plan do not match.** This is relevant owing to the fact paragraph 231 of the NPPF requires plans to be revised to reflect policy changes. Paragraph 34 is clear that: *"Policies in local plans and spatial development strategies should be reviewed to assess whether they need updating at least once every five years, and should be updated as necessary...Relevant Strategic Policies will need updating at least once every five years, if their applicable local housing need figure has changed significantly..."*.
- 5.55 **Paragraph 232 of the NPPF** is particularly relevant for decision making which states: *"...existing policies should not be considered out-of-date simply because they were adopted or made prior to the publication of the Framework. **Due weight** should be given to them, according to their degree of consistency with this Framework (the closer the policies in the plan in the Framework, the greater the*

*weight that may be given). Where a local planning authority can demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites (with the appropriate buffer as set out in paragraph 78) and where the Housing Delivery Test indicates that the delivery of housing is more than 75% of the housing requirement over the previous three years, **policies should not be regarded as out-of-date on the basis that the most up to date local housing need figure (calculated using the standard method set out in planning practice guidance) is greater than the housing requirement set out in adopted strategic policies, for a period of five years from the date of the plan's adoption**".*

- 5.56 The existing adopted Local Plan was adopted on March 2018 and therefore would have ceased to benefit from the protection of paragraph 232 of the NPPF in March 2023. It is apparent that Policy DP4 is therefore out of date as it does not seek to deliver current Local Housing Need (as of December 2024), likewise the Policies DP4 informs, such as DP6 (supporting development within settlement boundaries in principle) and DP15 (limiting the circumstances where new housing is to be supported outside of settlement boundaries) are also out of date.
- 5.57 It is also considered that policy DP15 has a degree of inconsistency with the Framework as the Framework only seeks to limit 'isolated homes' in the countryside not all homes. Therefore, it is considered that the 'tilted balance' (Paragraph 11 of the NPPF) is engaged.
- 5.58 It is acknowledged that paragraph 14 of the Framework states the tilted balance is unlikely to fall in favour of development where a Neighbourhood Plan has been adopted in the past 5 years **and** the neighbourhood plan contains **policies and allocations to meet its identified housing requirement**. The Copthorne Neighbourhood Plan is silent on the matter of allocations and housing policies

explicitly stating this has been left to the Local Plan. In any event the Local Plan does not identify a specific need for the Copthorne Neighbourhood area and therefore paragraph 14 is not engaged.

- 5.59 As such, were there to be any non-compliance with the Development plan it is considered that material considerations exist to grant planning permission for the development.

6. Conclusion

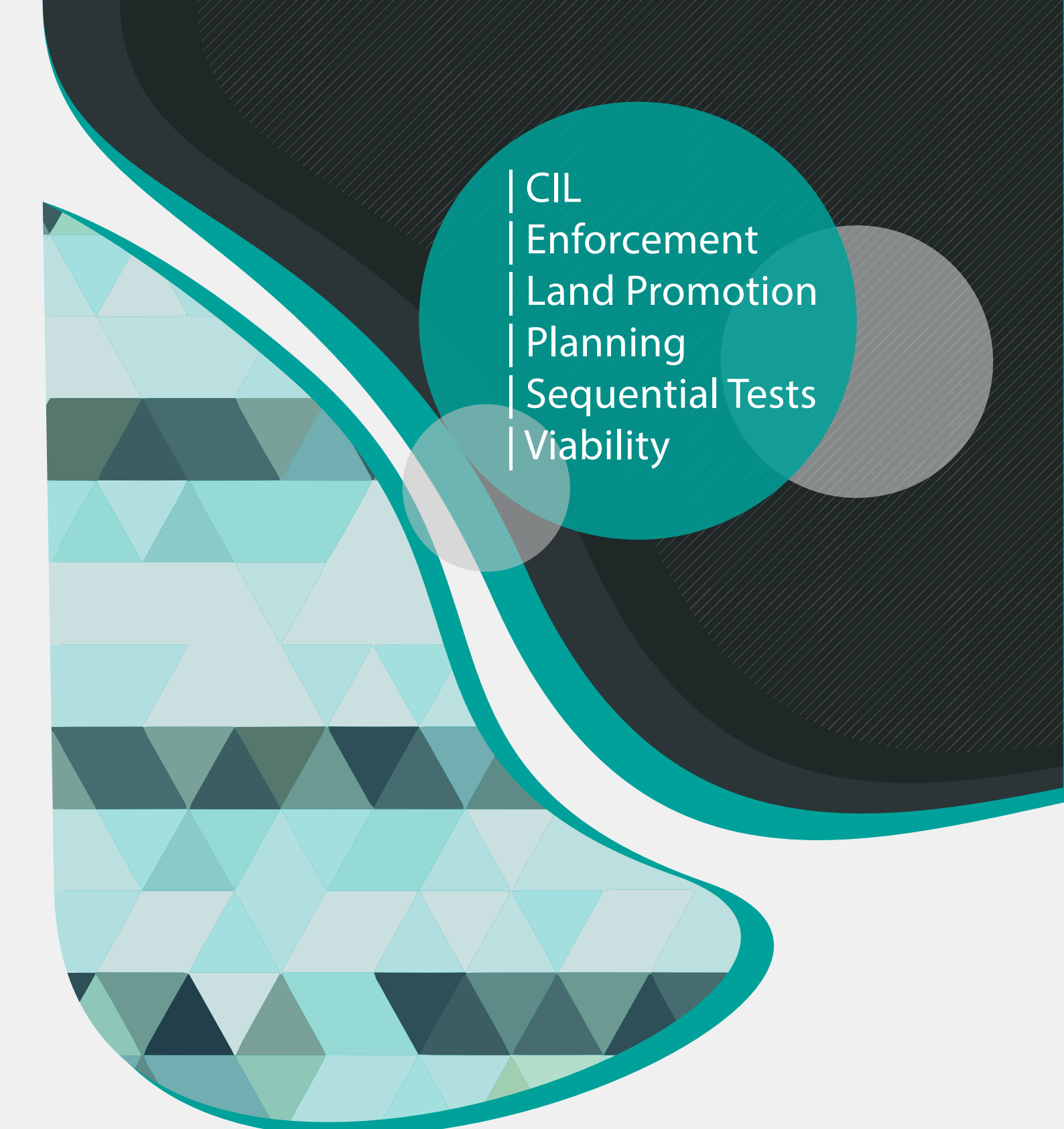
- 6.1 This statement has demonstrated that the proposed development is acceptable in principle and makes an efficient use of land.
- 6.2 Material planning considerations have been carefully considered and analysed, as evidenced in section 5 of this statement and the supporting plans and documents. It is considered the proposed development would contribute to the Borough's housing supply, without adverse effect on the character of the area nor the amenity of neighbouring residents.
- 6.3 It is considered that the proposed scheme complies with relevant Development Plan Policies and is further supported by National Guidance. Therefore, it is respectfully requested that planning permission is granted.

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