
Planning Statement

Land off Trowbridge Road, Bradford on Avon

Savills on behalf of Waddeton Park Ltd

Planning Statement

Land off Trowbridge Road, Bradford on Avon



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1. Introduction

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Savills on behalf of Waddeton Park Ltd ('the Applicants') in support of an outline planning application, with all matters reserved except access, for a residential-led development at Land off Trowbridge Road, Bradford on Avon.
- 1.2 The proposed development represents an exceptional opportunity to deliver a high quality new development as part of the sustainable expansion of Bradford on Avon; providing up to 224 dwellings including 50% affordable homes, a 72-bed care home, community sports pitch provision, mobility hub, 12 hectare country park, allotments, landscaping and new public open space.
- 1.3 The Application Site is 31 ha in size and is located to the east of Bradford on Avon, Wiltshire. Details of the Application Site and Proposed Development are provided in Section 2 and 4 of this Planning Statement, and in the Design & Access Statement (DAS) which accompanies this application submission.

Site Promotion

- 1.4 The Application Site has been actively promoted over a number of years by the Applicants within the emerging Wiltshire Local Plan prior to confirmation that the draft plan will need to be withdrawn. It represents an entirely suitable and deliverable site to meet the housing needs of Bradford on Avon and the wider Wiltshire authority area. This planning application presents the vision for this new neighbourhood, and is supported by a range of technical assessments which confirm the deliverability of the site, and the opportunity it creates to bring forward a sustainable and accessible new neighbourhood.

Environmental Impact Assessment

- 1.5 The Proposed Development has not been subject to a formal Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening process. Therefore, a response from Wiltshire Council on whether it is agreed that the planning application would not require an EIA has not yet been received.

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1.6 However, to assist in the Council's screening assessment which will be undertaken upon receipt of this planning application, the applicant has prepared an EIA Screening Note with all of the necessary information contained for this assessment.

1.7 Whilst this has been provided to assist officers in their assessment and to enable a screening opinion to be formally issued, it is not considered, based on the proposals and work undertaken on behalf of the applicant, that the proposals amount to EIA development.

Planning Statement Structure

1.8 This Statement comprises 9 sections. Section 2 provides the context to the proposals, including a description of the Application Site and surrounding area, and sets out the relevant planning history. Section 3 sets out the pre-application and engagement process which has supported the development proposals. Section 4 outlines the details of the proposed development.

1.9 Section 5 contains a review of the relevant planning policy context, Section 6 sets out how the development proposals accord with this policy framework and Section 7 outlines the tilted 'decision making framework'. Section 8 provides a summary of the benefits associated with the proposed development. Finally, Section 9 considers the planning balance.

Planning Application Documentation

1.10 In addition to this Statement, the planning application is supported by a number of technical documents and plans. These documents should be considered in conjunction with this Statement in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of the proposed development and the benefits it will deliver.

- Design and Access Statement (incorporating Sustainable Energy Strategy and Waste Audit);
- Affordable Housing Statement;
- EIA Screening Opinion Request;
- Flood Risk and Drainage Strategy;
- Heritage and Archaeological Assessment;
- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment;
- Transport Assessment, Travel Plan and Active England Travel Audit;
- Ecological Impact Assessment and Biodiversity Net Gain Metric;

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- Arboricultural Assessment;
- Ground Conditions Assessment;
- Air Quality Assessment; and
- Care Home Needs Assessment

1.11 The following plans are submitted for approval as part of this planning application:

- Site Location Plan (250310 L 01 01 B);
- Parameter Plan (250310 PP 02 01 C);
- Concept Site Access Layout (250372-RAP-XX-XX-DR-TP-3200 P03)

1.12 An Illustrative Masterplan (250310 L 02 03 E) has also been prepared to show how the development could be delivered within the proposed parameters. This Illustrative Masterplan is submitted for illustrative purpose, and not for approval as part of this planning application.

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2. Site, Surroundings and Planning History

2. Site, Surroundings and Planning History

- 2.1. The application site is situated off Trowbridge Road, on the eastern periphery of Bradford on Avon, Wiltshire. The land is currently in agricultural use, characterised by open fields, and is situated outside of, but adjacent to the defined settlement boundary to the west.
- 2.2. The application site comprises approximately 31 ha of agricultural land that is relatively flat, with hedgerow boundaries and intermittent tree cover, offering potential for sensitive integration into the surrounding landscape. The site is undeveloped, although there is a small compound area comprising hardstanding and a single storey hut used by the Bradford on Avon sailing club for boat storage. The Site is part of the Avon Valley landscape, with the northern edge of the Site formed by the Avon River with areas of mature tree planting along the banks.
- 2.3. To the immediate west of the site are existing residential properties forming the edge of the town, with the residential properties characterised by detached and semi-detached homes with rear gardens backing onto the site's western boundary. To the north, the site is bounded by the former neighbouring Bradford on Avon Golf Club and River Avon, supporting leisure and recreational activities. Dense woodland surrounds the site to the south east and along the southern boundary, known as Widbrook Wood, a designated nature reserve site managed by Wiltshire Wildlife Trust.
- 2.4. Access to the site fronts directly onto Trowbridge Road (A363) to the south west, a primary route connecting Bradford on Avon with Trowbridge and Bath. The A363 also links to the A46 corridor, offering onward access to the M4 motorway and regional centres such as Bath, Bristol, and Swindon.
- 2.5. Bradford on Avon is well connected to surrounding settlements via road, rail, and canal towpaths. The Kennet and Avon Canal provides a scenic and functional corridor linking the town to Bath and beyond, supporting both recreational and sustainable transport modes.
- 2.6. Public transport provision is also well established, with bus services operating along Trowbridge Road, including the D1 and D1X routes, offering regular connections to Bath, Trowbridge, and Warminster. Bradford on Avon railway station is located approximately 1.45km to the west of the site and provides direct services to Bath Spa, Bristol Temple Meads, Westbury, and Salisbury.

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- 2.7. Given the site's close proximity to the town centre, it is well within walking distance of a range of amenities and services, including shops, healthcare facilities, and recreational spaces, whilst is situated approximately 6 miles south east of Bath. The Town also offers a wide range in the quality and quantity of employment services and opportunities within the established business centre known as White Horse Business Park located approximately 4.8km from the site. This is one of the principal employment areas in the district.
- 2.8. The nearest primary school is Fitzmaurice Primary School, located approximately 1.3km to the west of the site, while St Laurence School, a secondary school with academy status, lies just over 2km away.
- 2.9. The site is extremely well situated to deliver sustainably located new homes with a wide range of services and facilities available within walking and cycling distance. The range of services and facilities and walking / cycling distances are set out in Chapter 7 of this Statement.
- 2.10. The application site is located outside the defined settlement boundary and falls within the Bath and Bristol Green Belt.
- 2.11. The site is not located within any National Landscape (formerly – Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)). The Cotswolds National Landscape is the closest to the site, and is located approximately 1.15km to the west on the other side of Bradford on Avon.
- 2.12. The Environment Agency's (EA) flood map for planning illustrates that the majority of the site is located in Flood Zone 1, which is at the lowest risk of flooding, meaning that there is low probability of fluvial and tidal flooding (land having less than 1 in 1,000 annual probability of river or sea flooding). Small sections of the north eastern part of the site, nearest the River Avon, are located in Flood Zones 2 and 3 however only areas of public open space and landscaping are located in these areas.
- 2.13. The site does not contain any known designated heritage assets. There is a Grade II listed 'Milestone', approximately 150m north-west of Widbrook Bridge, Trowbridge Road A363' which lies adjacent to the proposed site access. The Grade II listed 'Widbrook Bridge, Trowbridge Road' is situated approximately 50m to the most southern corner of the site.

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- 2.14. In terms of the site itself, an initial Geophysical Survey has confirmed that there may be potential for some remains, including prehistoric features within the corridor of the Avon in the area. This includes two large ring-ditches/enclosures. There is no clear evidence of a domestic settlement however, but it has been agreed with the County Archaeologist that some trial trenching will be undertaken prior to determination of the application in order to provide more certainty.
- 2.15. In addition to heritage, Public Right of Ways (PRoW's) 'BRAD18' and 'HOLT62' run along the site from the northwest to the southeast, south of the River Avon, connecting Widbrook Wood to a wider network of PRoW's in the town. While on the north western boundary, PRoW's 'BRAD19' and 'BRAD80' connect Trowbridge Road to the former golf club site to the north west.
- 2.16. A review of the Coal Authority's Interactive Map indicates that the Site does not fall within a Coal Mining Reporting Area and is therefore not located within a high risk development area.
- 2.17. The site is identified as a mixture of Urban, Grade 3 and 4 agricultural land on Natural England's Agricultural Land Classification Map South West Region.

Planning History

- 2.18. There is no relevant planning history relating to the site itself.
- 2.19. However, it is important to note the relevant planning history for the surrounding area, and specifically the former golf course site to the north west.
- 2.20. The former golf course site ceased operation in 2007. With its closure, the Site became the subject of interest for residential development, including an application submission in 2008.
- 2.21. This included an Outline Planning Application (Ref: W/08/01715/OUT), for the development of up to 194 dwellings. The application was refused on 10 September 2008 for several grounds, including the Site's historic former use as the town refuse Site, the inadequacy of the proposed access arrangements, including anticipated increases in traffic through the existing residential estate and the potential pollution risks to the River Avon.

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- 2.22. A subsequent Outline Planning Application (Ref: W/09/02628/OUT), by the same applicant was then submitted in 2009, proposing up to 195 dwellings on the former Golf Course. However, the application was withdrawn on 18 November 2009, due to the need for additional work to be undertaken in connection with the contamination issues on the parcel of land.
- 2.23. The former golf course site had been included as a 'reserve site' in the draft Wiltshire Local Plan submitted for examination, but besides the issues faced by the Local Plan, resulting in the Inspector's recommending it's withdrawal, the former golf course site also faced significant local opposition on the basis it is perceived as unsuitable for development. The applicant considers that this only further strengthens the fact that the application site is well placed to deliver housing now as it does not face the same issues and challenges compared to some other alternatives.

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3. Public and Stakeholder Engagement

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Bradford on Avon Town Council

- 3.1 Meetings have been held with Bradford on Avon Town Council to inform the emerging masterplan for the site. Indeed, three separate in-person meetings were held on 12 May 2023, 17 November 2023 and 23 April 2026, albeit meetings were also held over a number of years prior to this.
- 3.2 The meeting on 12 May 2023 was attended by representative from the Applicants, Savills and TFA, as well as a number of members from the town council.
- 3.3 The applicant team explained the intention to promote the site supported by an emerging masterplan which seeks to accommodate not only new homes but also some facilities to help address local shortfalls within the town.
- 3.4 A number of comments were raised in the meeting including:
- Concerns from councillors over some of the sites which had been assessed by Wiltshire Council as part of the emerging Local Plan to potentially accommodate future growth;
 - Significant concerns from councillors about the former golf course site which in their view is highly constrained and unsuitable for development;
 - Councillors considered that the town is suffering from shortfalls in local facilities, including for example a lack of sports pitches and associated facilities, with a specific need for junior pitches;
 - Suggestion from councillors that the potential access into the site from Trowbridge Road may be better served through a new roundabout rather than a more traditional junction arrangement;
 - Discussed whether the site could potentially accommodate a budget foodstore. Concluded that alternative sites might be better suited for that particular use;

- Councillors stated that the current health centre in the town is under ‘incredible pressure’, and massively oversubscribed. Whilst Wiltshire Council have tried to upgrade and increase size of current health centre, this hadn’t progressed.
- Reference to a review of the Neighbourhood Plan, and that being a good opportunity to promote the site for future development. Councillors confirmed at that time that the neighbourhood plan review was reliant on the Local Plan Review commencing first. Applicant agreed to fully engage in the neighbourhood plan process.

3.5 A further meeting was then held with the town council on 17 November 2023. A number of comments were raised in the meeting including:

- An update on the neighbourhood plan was provided, specifically that the Steering Group had launched a ‘call for sites’ to inform the review of the neighbourhood plan. The applicant subsequently made a submission for the site through this call for sites process;
- Councillors expressed their deep disappointment and frustration that the former golf course site had been included in draft Wiltshire Local Plan as a ‘reserve site’. Councillors made reference to a series of petitions which had been launched, including by the town council, and that the local community were highly opposed to the development of that site. The applicant and town council were aligned in the meeting in relation to the significant constraints relating to the former golf course site, and why it is both unsuitable and unsustainable;
- Discussion over whether the application site could potentially accommodate a new health centre, albeit councillors expressed concern that it may only help to serve residents on the eastern side of the town;
- Councillors confirmed in principle support for the ‘vision’ for the application site which was presented at the time as an opportunity to deliver a mix of new homes, care home and local facilities to help address local shortfalls. Councillors did make reference to the principle planning obstacle of the green belt designation.

- Applicant explained in the meeting that the application site presents a significant opportunity to plan for the growth of the town beyond the short term need. Indeed, it should be seen as the most suitable site capable of accommodating new homes to address the local requirement beyond the current plan period. In doing so it would help to avoid the pressure of other undesirable sites around the town being needed to deliver homes on less sustainable sites. It was also emphasised that the application site is the only potential site capable of delivery the required local infrastructure alongside the new housing;
- Councillors asked whether affordable housing could be provided on the site over and above the policy required level of 40% to help address the significant local affordable housing shortfall.

3.6 The most recent meeting with the Town Council was held on 23 April 2026 was positive, and enabled a further discussion about the emerging scheme, the likely concerns of local residents, to discuss the feedback received through the consultation and door knocking exercise and to discuss the community benefits of the scheme and how they may be delivered and managed.

Bradford on Avon Neighbourhood Plan

- 3.7 The applicant has engaged in the emerging Neighbourhood Plan for Bradford on Avon, the process for which commenced with a 'call for sites' in late 2023.
- 3.8 The applicant submitted information through this call for sites, including a site location plan, indicative masterplan and completed call for sites form.
- 3.9 The steering group more recently undertook a series of consultation events in the town to engage members of the public on the vision for the Neighbourhood Plan Review. As part of this the applicant completed a questionnaire issued by the steering group to assist with the development of the plan.

Public Engagement

- 3.10 Engagement with local residents took place prior to the submission of the planning application.
- 3.11 A leaflet was created and delivered to properties within Bradford on Avon close to the site. Leaflets were also hand delivered to neighbouring properties, undertaken specifically by a director of Waddeton Park Ltd

and a director of TFA. Whilst leafleting, conversations were undertaken with as many of those residents as was possible. This focused on existing dwellings next to the site, on the edge of the town.

- 3.12 This was also supported by a dedicated website, set up to show details of the proposals, the considerations made and of the benefits associated with them. The website was then publicised through leaflets. The purpose of this website was to present the proposals to the community. Members of the public were also invited to submit their views for consideration. The website feedback survey is included within the Statement of Community Involvement which supports this planning application.

Response to Stakeholder Engagement

- 3.13 In response to a number of points raised by the town council and local residents prior to the submission of this planning application, the following components of the submitted masterplan should be noted:

- The planning application will incorporate 50% affordable housing, equating to 112 affordable homes on-site. Not only will this help to address the ongoing local affordable housing shortfall, but it addresses the town council's previous request that the site explores the potential to deliver more than the policy required affordable housing level of 40% for Bradford on Avon.
- The masterplan incorporates a variety of recreation facilities and green infrastructure to help address identified local shortfalls, including space with the potential for either one full size sports pitch or two junior sports pitches, country park, community orchards and allotments.
- Noting the previous comments made by councillors, the proposals do not include a new health centre.
- The applicant has engaged in the emerging Neighbourhood Plan process, including a submission through an initial 'call for sites' and completed questionnaire as part of consultation events undertaken in Spring 2025.
- The applicant has further developed the main access arrangements for the site onto Trowbridge Road, and this now comprises a 'right-left' staggered priority crossroads arrangement with Moulton Drive which includes a right turn ghost island lane to the proposed access on the eastern side of

the carriageway. The proposed access would be located to the south of Moulton Drive and therefore the right turn lane would be provided through extension of the existing ghost island further south and through widening of the carriageway to accommodate this.

- 3.14 Overall, the applicant has engaged with the town council and local residents, carefully considered all points previously raised, and the submitted masterplan has sought to address the majority of the comments raised, including helping to address identified local shortfalls in facilities through on-site provision.

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4. Development Proposals

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- 4.1. The application proposals have followed an iterative design approach guided by the technical and environmental work produced on behalf of the applicants. Indeed, the proposed development seeks to maximise the potential attributes of the site and deliver social, economic, environmental and sustainability benefits.
- 4.2. The masterplanning process has assessed the site's environmental condition and the constraints and opportunities that are afforded by the site.

Description of Development

- 4.3. The application proposals are for outline planning permission with all matters except vehicular access reserved, for the following development description:

“Outline application (with all matters reserved except for access) for the erection of up to 224 residential dwellings (Class C3), 72-bed care home (Class C2), with sports pitch provision, country park, allotments, landscaping and open space”

Plans / Drawings

- 4.4. The following plans are submitted for approval as part of this planning application:
- Site Location Plan (ref: 250310 L 01 01 B);
 - Parameter Plan (ref: 250310 PP 02 01 C);
 - Concept Site Access Layout (ref: 250372-RAP-XX-XX-DR-TP-3200 P03)
- 4.5. An Illustrative Masterplan (ref: 250310 L 02 03 E) has also been prepared to show how the development could be delivered within the parameters. But this plan is not submitted for approval.

Housing

- 4.6. The proposed development seeks permission for up to 224 new homes. The application is submitted in outline and as such, the detailed mix of sizes and types of housing will be determined as part of future detailed phases.
- 4.7. The proposals incorporate 50% affordable housing, which will deliver up to 112 affordable homes on the Application Site. The mix of these affordable dwellings will need to be discussed with the Council's affordable housing team, and determined at the reserved matters stage, based upon local need, national policy and the delivery of a mixed and balanced new community.
- 4.8. The residential site area covers approximately 7.56 hectares with an average housing density of approximately 29 dph. This will ensure the development responds appropriately to the immediate context, and is generally considered to be an appropriate response to this urban edge location.
- 4.9. It is anticipated that the land for the care home would accommodate a development of approximately 72 beds.
- 4.10. The breakdown of areas for the various uses is as follows:
- Residential development area – 7.56 ha
 - Care home – 0.65 ha
 - Public open space, including country park, allotments and sports provision – 22.55 ha
 - Access road and changing rooms – 0.19 ha
 - Existing track retained – 0.10 ha
- 4.11. In terms of heights, the Application proposes maximum building heights of up to 2 storeys across the Site (see submitted Parameter Plan).
- 4.12. The housing and care home is delivered within the western part of the site, closest to the existing settlement edge. The DAS further considers the character and appearance of this part of the site, setting

out the strategy for density, building height and design parameters which future detailed reserved matter applications will be required to comply with.

Access

- 4.13. The Parameter Plan shows one main proposed point of vehicular access from Trowbridge Road into the Site.
- 4.14. A preliminary access drawing has been submitted for approval for this main junction with Trowbridge Road. Access is proposed via a 'right-left' staggered priority crossroads arrangement with Moulton Drive which includes a right turn ghost island lane to the proposed access on the eastern side of the carriageway. The proposed access would be located to the south of Moulton Drive and therefore the right turn lane would be provided through extension of the existing ghost island further south and through widening of the carriageway to accommodate this.
- 4.15. In addition to the main vehicular access, good quality footways are already in place on both sides of Trowbridge Road along the western site frontage. The proposals will make use of these existing footways through connections into the existing network. This will include the provision of a direct cycle connection to Trowbridge Road, providing suitable transitions to the carriageway.
- 4.16. An informal pedestrian crossing will also be provided along Trowbridge Road, incorporating a refuge island to provide a safe crossing facility in accordance with the desire line to connect the site with the footways on the opposite side of the carriageway, the footways along Moulton Drive.
- 4.17. In addition, the proposed internal streets within the scheme have been designed to integrate with existing PRow on the north western boundary, facilitating connections through to Widbrook View, and onwards north west to the town centre. This includes the northern PRow which connects into Mythern Meadow.
- 4.18. This will ensure the provision of direct pedestrian and cycle routes towards the town, including an attractive route along the river.

- 4.19. A primary street will form a central spine through the development. The detailed internal road network will come forward as part of future reserved matter applications, but will be in accordance with the principles set out in the DAS.
- 4.20. The detailed reserved matter applications will confirm the levels of cycle and vehicular parking provision; which would comply with the relevant adopted Wiltshire Council standards at that time.

Green Infrastructure, Open Space and Recreation

- 4.21. The proposed development includes a substantial green infrastructure network, which responds to existing key features (for example the retention of key trees within the site and around the site perimeter), provides new landscape features: for example an extended area of woodland in the northern part of the site, urban-green corridors within the development parcels, and extensive new parkland in the eastern part of the site. The green infrastructure network is designed as multi-functional open space, meeting the recreational needs of the local community; alongside providing ecological, drainage and landscape functions.
- 4.22. The Parameter Plan identifies a number of the proposed green infrastructure proposals, and alongside the elements which are set out in the DAS, these will be secured, and its future management confirmed, through the S106 Agreement, and delivered through a Landscape and Ecology Management Plan; secured by planning condition.
- 4.23. Within the proposed green infrastructure is formal recreation space including a junior football pitch with associated changing facilities. These sit within the heart of the development and create a transition between the built development in the far western part of the site, and as part of that the positioning of a new settlement edge, and the extensive recreation and open space in the eastern part of the site.
- 4.24. Indeed, in addition to the sports pitch provision, the proposals include within the heart of the site community allotments.
- 4.25. The details in respect to this open space are set out in the DAS which accompanies this application, and shown on the Illustrative Landscape Masterplan. The proposals would deliver the following:

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Open Space Typology		Provision (ha)
Sports pitches		0.66
Allotments		0.68
Natural and amenity open spaces		19.59
Children and Young People play areas		0.05
Multi-Functional Spaces	Green	1.45

5. Planning Policy Context

5. Planning Policy Context and Relevant Material Considerations

- 5.1 This section of the Planning Statement provides details of the national and local planning policies and guidance relevant to the determination of the application proposals.

The Adopted Development Plan

- 5.2 As reaffirmed by the Framework, Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 directs local planning authorities to determine planning applications in line with the policies of the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

- 5.3 The adopted statutory Development Plan for the application site comprises:

- saved policies of the West Wiltshire Local Plan 1st Alteration (adopted June 2004);
- Wiltshire Core Strategy (adopted January 2015);
- Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Plan (adopted February 2020); and
- Bradford on Avon Neighbourhood (made October 2017)

Wiltshire Core Strategy

- 5.4 The Wiltshire Core Strategy was adopted January 2015. The following of the Core Strategy are relevant to the determination of the current planning application.

- **Core Policy 1** provides the 'settlement strategy'. The policy identifies four tiers of settlements: Principle Towns, Market Towns, Local Service Centres and Large & Small Villages. Bradford on Avon is defined as a Market Town and therefore falls within the second tier of the hierarchy. The settlement boundaries remain as established in the relevant adopted local plans.
- **Core Policy 2** establishes the minimum housing requirement for Wiltshire as a whole at 42,000 dwellings. This is disaggregated into the housing market areas, with a minimum of 24,740 dwellings proposed for the North and West Wiltshire HMA. Core Policy 2 also states that

development is generally supported within defined settlement limits, however outside settlement limits development is restricted and not normally permitted.

- **Core Policy 7** outlines the Spatial Strategy for the Bradford on Avon Community Area. The Policy and its supporting justification explain the important issues and considerations to address, including infrastructure requirements.

5.5 There are a number of other local plan policies which are relevant to the application proposals, notably **Core Policy 43** which requires development to deliver affordable housing on sites based on two affordable housing zones. Within this policy Bradford on Avon falls within the 40% zone, and therefore in normal circumstances the application proposals would be required to deliver 40% of the dwellings on the site as affordable housing. However, as explained later in this Statement, the proposals are brought forward on the basis the site is 'grey belt' and therefore the proposals will provide 50% on-site affordable housing in accordance with the NPPF 'golden rules'.

Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Development Plan Document

5.6 The Council adopted the Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Plan (WHSAP) on 25 February 2020. This Plan identifies land across Wiltshire to ensure delivery of the Wiltshire Core Strategy housing requirement and maintain a five year housing land supply up to the end of the plan period to 2026.

5.7 However, the WHSAP did not allocate any sites at Bradford on Avon and only sought to reinforce the planned distribution of housing across different parts of the authority area. Table 4.10 confirms that the indicative requirement for the town between 2006 and 2026 is 595 dwellings, with a total of 601 dwellings either delivered (up to 2017) or committed.

Bradford on Avon Neighbourhood Plan

5.8 The Bradford on Avon Neighbourhood Plan was made in October 2017. It is therefore now over 8 years old.

5.9 The made Neighbourhood Plan included no allocations for new residential development, demonstrated by objective 2 in the plan which states *"to provide for limited growth in the plan period to 2026 in accordance*

with the Wiltshire Core Strategy; and to provide for demonstrable local needs in sustainable locations to maintain a balanced community; all in accordance with the findings of the 2014 Housing Needs Survey".
(underlining our emphasis).

- 5.10 The only housing related policy in the plan is Policy H2 which relates to residential uses above shops.
- 5.11 The Neighbourhood Plan is in the process of being reviewed. There are yet to be defined timescales for the review but the steering group undertook a 'call for sites' process in December 2023, and consultation events were held in Spring 2025 offering residents the chance to submit comments in the form of a questionnaire.
- 5.12 However, progress has now stalled, and recent town council meeting minutes in relation to the Neighbourhood Plan refer to the government's spending review earlier this year, and make reference to the Matthew Pennycook announcement at the time, as follows:

"Following the Spending Review, my Department has announced that it is unable to commission new neighbourhood planning support services for 2025 onwards. Technical support which has already been awarded will continue to be provided but must be completed before the end of March 2026. The government remains of the view that neighbourhood plans can play an important role in the planning system. Communities can continue to prepare neighbourhood plans where they consider that doing so is in their best interests".

- 5.13 Whilst there is a 'made' Neighbourhood Plan for Bradford on Avon, this is now over 8 years old, includes no housing allocations and does not plan for the up to date housing need, in the context where there is significant pressure to increase housing provision generally. The Neighbourhood Plan is not up to date, does not reflect this housing pressure, and regardless did not include any housing allocations at the time it was made to enable future delivery. The Neighbourhood Plan should therefore carry limited weight in the determination of this planning application. As outlined in the following section, the application proposals offer an excellent opportunity to grant permission for a sustainable site now to meet the current housing shortfall.

Wiltshire Local Plan Review

- 5.14 Wiltshire Council submitted a draft Local Plan on 28 November 2024.
- 5.15 The Inspectors issued a letter on 27 February 2025 containing 'Initial Questions'. As part of this the Inspectors raised significant concerns relating to the soundness and inputs of the plan.
- 5.16 The issues raised included:
- Plan Period: concern about the Plan's ability to meet long-term housing and employment needs considering the lack of a 15-year forward look.
 - Highway Matters: required the Council to provide information on further modelling work commissioned in response to concerns raised by National Highways.
 - Housing Supply: request for updated evidence on housing land supply, including the exclusion of unavailable sites and updated housing figures.
 - Duty to Cooperate: request for Council to clarify discussions held under the Duty to Cooperate (DtC) and provide updated Statements of Common Ground (SoCG) with neighbouring authorities and prescribed bodies.
 - Proposed Salisbury Area New Community: concerns about the lack of substantive evidence supporting the inclusion of a new community north of Salisbury in the Plan.
- 5.17 A hearing session was then held on 24 June 2025 specifically to cover the duty to cooperate. This was then followed by a letter from the inspectors on 27 June 2025 concluding that the inspectors were satisfied that the examination could proceed to the next stage, to further consider the soundness and remaining matters of legal compliance of the draft plan.
- 5.18 However, after the stage 2 hearing sessions, the Inspector's issued a letter on 17 November 2025 confirming their concerns over matters such as the housing requirement and plan period and that all further hearing sessions would be cancelled to enable the Council to undertake further work. Then on 22

December 2025, the Inspector's confirmed in a letter that significant further work was required by the Council on a number of matters and that a programme for this work would be required by 20 January 2026.

- 5.19 Following a response from the Council on 30 January 2026, confirming they wished to proceed on the basis of the draft local plan without the full extent of work recommended by the Inspector's, the Inspectors issued a further letter on 27 February 2026 confirming that they would recommend that the draft Local Plan be withdrawn. The alternative would be for the Council to request that a report be issued, which the Inspectors have indicated would inevitably lead to a recommendation – which would be binding on the Council – that the Plan is not adopted. On 13 March 2026 the Council indicated that it would make a decision about which option to take in May 2026.
- 5.20 As a result, there is no longer an emerging local plan for Wiltshire to which any weight can be attributed as part of the decision making process for this planning application.

Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework

- 5.21 The NPPF was published on 12 December 2024 and is a material consideration in the determination of this planning application. We have summarised relevant sections of the NPPF below.

- **The Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development** – this confirms that Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 11 states:

“Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development ...

For decision-taking this means: ...

c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or

d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date⁸, granting permission unless:

- i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance⁷ provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or*
- ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to 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.”*

5.22 As set out further in the following section of this Statement, Wiltshire Council cannot demonstrate a five year housing land supply. As such the development plan policies relating to housing delivery are out-of-date by virtue of the housing land supply shortfall and Limb (d) of paragraph 11 of the Framework is therefore engaged.

- **Housing Need** – The NPPF seeks to significantly boost the supply of homes, particularly to meet the needs of groups with specific housing requirements (paragraph 61) and this can often be best achieved through larger scale development such as significant extensions to existing towns (paragraph 77). The ‘Maintaining Supply and Delivery’ section of the NPPF (paragraphs 78 – 81) set out requirements for the Council to maintain a 5YHLS and score above 75% on the Housing Delivery Test. Where Councils fail to achieve this then a presumption in favour of sustainable development should apply (paragraph 11d).

A revised Standard Method calculation has also been published with the new NPPF which increases Wiltshire’s minimum housing need from 1,917 dwellings per annum to 3,445 dwellings per annum.

- **Affordable Housing** - Paragraphs 63 - 65 state that where a need for affordable housing has been identified, it should be met on-site wherever possible and there is a specific emphasis on delivering an appropriate proportion of social rent. At least 50% of the total number of homes to delivered on a major development site within the Green Belt should be affordable (paragraphs 67 and 156).

- **Elderly Housing** – Paragraph 63 states that when establishing housing need for an area, the needs of older people (including retirement housing, housing-with-care and care homes) should be assessed and reflected in planning policies.
- **Green Belt** - Paragraph 153 of the NPPF states that inappropriate development is harmful to the Green Belt and substantial weight will be given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness (other than in the case of development on grey belt land, where development is not inappropriate). Paragraph 153 goes on to state that inappropriate development should not be approved except in very special circumstances. *“Very special circumstances’ will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations”.*
- **Grey Belt** – Annex 2 defines Grey Belt as *“land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143. ‘Grey belt’ excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development”.*

Paragraph 155 states that the development of homes in the Green Belt will not be considered inappropriate where it utilises Grey Belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes of the remaining Green Belt, there is a demonstrable unmet need, the development is in a sustainable location and the proposals meet the ‘Golden Rules’. The Golden Rules (paragraph 156) state that the scheme should deliver affordable housing which is 15% above the adopted requirement to a cap of 50% (paragraph 157), provide necessary improvements to local and national infrastructure and provide new or improved access to public open space in accordance with local standards, or national standards if there is no existing local standards (paragraph 159). Paragraph 158 states that *“development which complies with the Golden Rules should be given significant weight in favour of the grant of permission”* [underlining our emphasis].

- **Design** - Section 12 of the NPPF sets out the importance of creating high-quality developments which add to the overall quality of the area, are visually attractive, establish a strong sense of place, create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and optimise the potential of the site.

- **Healthy Communities** - Section 8 seeks to promoting healthy and safe communities. Paragraph 96 states that planning decisions can achieve this by creating places which promote social interaction, are safe and accessible and enable healthy lifestyles. Planning decisions should plan positively for the provision of shared spaces and community facilities (paragraph 98) and public open space (paragraph 103) . Public Rights of Way should be protected and enhanced, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users (paragraph 105).
- **Efficient Use of Land** - Section 11 refers to efficient use of land and states that development will be supported where it makes efficient use of land (paragraph 129). Paragraph 130 states that developments should optimise the use of land by increasing densities in areas with an existing or anticipated shortage of land.
- **Climate Change** - The NPPF seeks to ensure that the planning system supports the transition to a low carbon future by shaping places to minimise the impact on the climate (Section 14). Paragraph 164 states that new development should be planned for in ways that avoids increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change and can help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Paragraph 166 states that new development should comply with policies for decentralised energy and should take account of *“landform, layout, building orientation, massing and landscaping to minimise energy consumption”*.
- **Pollution** - Paragraph 187 states that planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the environment by preventing new development from contributing to or being at risk from unacceptable levels of soil, land stability, air and noise pollution. Planning decisions should ensure that a *“site is suitable for its proposed use taking account of ground conditions”* (paragraph 196). Paragraphs 198 and 199 go on to state that new development should be appropriate for its location and any potential adverse impacts from noise and air quality should be mitigated.
- **Agricultural Land** – the NPPF seeks to recognise the benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land (paragraph 187) and where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of a higher quality (footnote 65).

- **Heritage** - Section 16 seeks to conserve and enhance the historic environment. An applicant is required to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected by a development and where there are potential heritage assets with archaeological interest, then an appropriate desk-based assessment is required and where necessary a field evaluation (paragraph 207). *“When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be)”* (paragraph 212). Importantly, *“where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal”* [underlining our emphasis] (paragraph 215). A balanced judgement will be required when assessing the scale of harm or loss of a non-designated heritage asset (paragraph 216).
- **Flood Risk and Drainage** - Development should be directed away from area at highest risk of flooding (paragraph 170) and when determining any planning applications, local planning authorities should ensure that flood risk is not increased elsewhere (paragraph 181). Where appropriate, applications should be supported by a site-specific flood-risk assessment (paragraph 181). Paragraph 181 also states that major developments should incorporate sustainable drainage systems unless there is clear evidence that this would be inappropriate.
- **Highways** - Section 9 of the NPPF seeks to promote sustainable transport. All developments that will generate significant amounts of movement should be required to provide a travel plan, and the application should be supported by a transport assessment so that the likely impacts of the proposal can be assessed (paragraph 118). The NPPF encourages development to be located in accessible locations which offer a choice and range of transport modes (paragraph 110). Paragraph 117 states that developments should give priority first to pedestrian and cycle movements, facilitating access to high quality public transport, address the needs of people with disabilities and reduced mobility in relation to all modes of transport, allow for the efficient delivery of goods, and access by service and emergency vehicles; and be designed to enable charging of plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles in safe, accessible and convenient locations. Paragraph 116 states that *“development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative*

impacts on the road network, following mitigation, would be severe, taking into account all reasonable future scenarios”.

- **Ecology** - Paragraphs 187 – 195 sets out how planning decisions can conserve, protect and enhance habitats and biodiversity. Planning decisions should protect and enhance valued sites of biodiversity value and recognise the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services. Opportunities to incorporate biodiversity improvements in and around developments should be encouraged, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity. *“If significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused”* (paragraph 193). Paragraph 193c also states that *“development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists”.*
- **Landscape** - Paragraph 187 states that planning decisions should protect valued landscapes. Paragraph 135 states that developments should be visually attractive, have an appropriate layout and landscaping and should be sympathetic to local character and history, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities). Paragraph 136 also notes the important contribution that trees can make the urban environment and planning decisions should ensure that new streets are tree lined.

Planning Practice Guidance

- 5.23 On 6 March 2014 the Department for Communities and Local Government launched the PPG, which is an online resource that seeks to provide further guidance to the interpretation and application of the NPPF. The PPG is updated regularly, and as such reference is made to the date of any relevant guidance referenced.
- 5.24 The PPG is referenced within this Statement, and wider planning application documentation where relevant.

Housing Land Supply

- 5.25 The latest Wiltshire Housing Land Supply Statement was published in June 2025 (base date of April 2024), claiming a deliverable supply of 8,945 dwellings (2024 - 2029), amounting to a 2.42 years supply (9,561 dwelling shortfall).
- 5.26 Appeal decisions prior to June 2025 had quoted a housing land supply lower than 2.42 years, with as low as 2.03 quoted.
- 5.27 This was referenced in an appeal for Sutton Benger (APP/Y3940/W/24/3349828) which was allowed on 27 January 2025. Within the appeal decision the inspector stated:
- “the Council’s written evidence indicates that with the Framework’s reinstatement of the 5 year minimum requirement and necessary buffer, and the changes to the methodology for calculating housing need, it is now only able to demonstrate a 2.03 year housing land supply”.*
- 5.28 A more recent appeal at Woodrow Road, Melksham (Appeal Ref: APP/Y3940/W/25/3374421) reiterated the Council’s housing land supply shortfall, quoting 2.42 years. The appeal, which was allowed on 9 April 2026, confirmed that it was *“common ground that the most important policies for determining this appeal are out of date. Therefore, Framework paragraph 11d) ii says that permission should be granted ‘unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits’, and ‘Whilst the proposal does not accord with the development plan as a whole, in light of the above, I give limited weight to the spatial policy harm’.*
- 5.29 In relation to affordable housing need, the Council's latest published position is set out in the Wiltshire Local Housing Needs Assessment (February 2023). This was published as part of the Local Plan Review evidence base.
- 5.30 The Wiltshire Local Housing Needs Assessment (February 2023) confirms that around 10,451 households in Wiltshire will require affordable housing over the plan period 2020 – 2038. It states that *“this total includes 5,179 households unable to afford Affordable Rent without Housing Benefit, 1,883 households who are able to afford Affordable Rent without Housing Benefit, but unable to afford market rents, and 3,389 households who aspire to home ownership and require some form of discounted home ownership”.*

5.31 The 2023 assessment is not specific to Bradford on Avon but is nonetheless important in establishing the significant affordable housing need across the authority area.

5.32 Furthermore, the Council's Sustainability Appraisal published in September 2023 in support of the emerging Local Plan (Wiltshire Local Plan Review: Reg 19 Sustainability Appraisal Report) states the following specifically in relation to Bradford on Avon:

"The house price to earnings ratio has risen significantly in recent years yet delivery of affordable housing is the lowest. Provision of affordable housing should be prioritised to meet identified needs...."

"The town is also highly constrained by Green Belt, considerably limiting land available for housing development. This would lead to the conclusion that growth should be kept at lower levels. However, in terms of affordability, the house price to earnings ratio has risen significantly from 9.84 in 2008 to 14.04 in 2017; these are the highest in the HMA, yet delivery of affordable housing is the lowest. The SA recommends that provision of affordable housing at the town is prioritised to meet identified needs, perhaps through application of a specific affordable housing policy requirement for the town that is higher than for other parts of Wiltshire, subject to viability testing".

5.33 As referenced in the Affordable Housing Statement submitted in support of this planning application, there are a significant number of households on the local housing waiting list. This demonstrates the important points emphasised in the Council's won evidence base on the lack of affordability in Bradford on Avon, and the SA specifically recommending that affordable housing delivery is a focus for the town to help address the affordability issues.

5.34 Indeed, the Council's SA also recommends that in order to resolve the affordability issues at Bradford on Avon that:

"given the above, a further recommendation to make more land available might be a review of the Green Belt surrounding the town which could free up certain sites on the edge of the town that would not significantly affect the openness of the Green Belt but would have significant benefits for affordability".

- 5.35 Given the housing land supply shortfall across Wiltshire as a whole, including the significant ongoing affordable housing shortfall as demonstrated by evidence presented as part of recent appeals, suitable and sustainable sites are required to come forward now to address the land supply shortfall, particularly on sites which are generally free from constraint and policy obstacles (for which the application site is).

6. Decision Making Framework

6. Decision Making Framework

- 6.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 directs local planning authorities to determine planning applications in accordance with the policies of the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 6.2 The adopted statutory Development Plan for the determination of the application site comprises:
- saved policies of the West Wiltshire Local Plan 1st Alteration (adopted June 2004);
 - Wiltshire Core Strategy (adopted January 2015);
 - Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Plan (adopted February 2020); and
 - Bradford on Avon Neighbourhood (made October 2017).
- 6.3 Material considerations include national policy primarily expressed through the National Planning Policy Framework (Framework) and Planning Practice Guidance. For the reasons explained in the preceding section, there is no longer an emerging local plan for Wiltshire to which any weight can be attributed as part of the decision making process for this planning application.
- 6.4 In December 2024, the Government published a replacement Framework and Standard Method for calculating Local Housing Need. It is this version of the Framework and revised Standard Method upon which this application should be determination, and which are referenced throughout this Statement.
- 6.5 Paragraph 11 of the Framework states:

For decision-taking this means: ...

c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or

d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date⁸, granting permission unless:

- i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance⁷ provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or*
- ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to 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.”*

6.6 Footnote 8 of the Framework (2024) states that:

“This includes, for applications involving the provision of housing, situations where: (a) the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites (with the appropriate buffer as set out in paragraph 78); or where the Housing Delivery Test indicates that the delivery of housing was substantially below (less than 75% of) the housing requirement over the previous three years...”

- 6.7 The latest Wiltshire Housing Land Supply Statement was published in June 2025 (base date of April 2024), claiming a deliverable supply of 8,945 dwellings (2024 - 2029), amounting to a 2.42 years supply (9,561 dwelling shortfall).
- 6.8 This significant shortfall is supported by recent appeal decisions, including at Woodrow Road, Melksham (APP/Y3940/W/25/3374421) which also confirms the supply at only 2.42 years.
- 6.9 Indeed, given the clear and significant housing land supply shortfall, in terms of the decision making framework for this application, the local plan policies relating to housing delivery are out-of-date and Limb (d) of paragraph 11 of the Framework (2024) is therefore engaged.
- 6.10 It falls therefore to consider the subsequent two tests in paragraph 11. In relation to the first, it is our contention, that there are no protected areas or assets which provide a clear reason for refusing the development proposed. As such, planning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

Planning Statement

Land off Trowbridge Road, Bradford on Avon



6.11 The two subsequent sections of this Statement address the substantive matters which feed into the 'tilted balance' – the key planning considerations arising from the proposed development and the weight to be attributed to the public benefits arising from the development. A planning balance is also then provided in accordance with Section 38(6) of the 2004 Act and Paragraph 11d(ii) of the Framework.

Planning Statement

Land off Trowbridge Road, Bradford on Avon



7. Planning Considerations

7. Planning Considerations

- 7.1 This section of the Planning Statement outlines the planning considerations relevant to the determination of the planning application. In accordance with paragraph 38(6), this section assesses the application proposals against the relevant Development Plan policies, and identifies relevant material considerations for the determination of the planning application.

Principle of Development

Relevant Planning Policies

- Core Policy 1 (Settlement Strategy);
- Core Policy 2 (Delivery Strategy); and
- Core Policy 7 (Spatial Strategy for the Bradford on Avon Community Area).

Assessment of the Proposed Development

- 7.2 The application site is outside of the defined settlement boundary for Bradford on Avon and is not allocated for development in the adopted Development Plan. Since the site is not covered by one of the 'exception policies' listed in Paragraph 4.25, the development proposals do not accord with Core Policy 2 of the adopted Wiltshire Core Strategy. However, it is clear that the proposals only conflict with one element of Core Policy 2, specifically the restriction within that policy to development outside of defined limits of development (aka settlement boundaries).
- 7.3 Other than Core Policy 2, the application proposals are considered to accord with the other policies of the Core Strategy.
- 7.4 Whilst it is acknowledged that the proposed development conflicts with one element of Policy 2, and that there is as a result conflict with the Development Plan, the relevant Development Plan policies are demonstrably out of date for the reasons explained in the preceding section of this Statement and only limited weight should be attached to the conflict in such circumstances.

- 7.5 Instead, as confirmed in the previous section, the NPPF's 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' is engaged given the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date as a result of the absence of an up-to-date five year housing land supply (2.42 years).

Suitability of the Site for Residential Development

- 7.6 A key objective of the Government is seeking to significantly boost the supply of new homes (NPPF paragraph 61) and the new Standard Method identifies a revised minimum housing need of 370,408 dwellings per annum across England. As set out in the previous chapter of this Statement, there is a significant housing shortfall in Wiltshire, and therefore a clear need for suitable residential sites to be delivered in the short term to assist in addressing the unmet housing need.
- 7.7 There is currently no clear mechanism for addressing this substantial shortfall, particularly given the emerging Local Plan has recently failed with Inspectors confirming the plan should be withdrawn. Wiltshire Council will now need to prepare a new Local Plan which will take further years to prepare and adopt. In the meantime there will be an absence of plan-led allocations to boost housing delivery and as a result there is a need for suitable and available sites to come forward now to help deliver housing in the short term.
- 7.8 When looking at where residential development should be located, the adopted Wiltshire Core Strategy (Core Policy 1) identifies Bradford on Avon as one of the market towns, on the second tier of settlements within the spatial hierarchy behind the three principal towns of Chippenham, Trowbridge and Salisbury. As confirmed by Core Policy 1:

"Outside the Principal Settlements, Market Towns are defined as settlements that have the ability to support sustainable patterns of living in Wiltshire through their current levels of facilities, services and employment opportunities.

Market Towns have the potential for significant development that will increase the jobs and homes in each town in order to help sustain and where necessary enhance their services and facilities and promote better levels of self-containment and viable sustainable communities". [underlining our emphasis]

7.9 Therefore, despite being out of date, the adopted Development Plan is clear that Bradford on Avon is a suitable location for housing growth.

7.10 The application site is also in a demonstrably sustainable location, at one of the main towns in the authority area, and close to many of the services and facilities available in Bradford on Avon. Listed below are the distances from the site to a number of the key facilities within the local area:

- Nearest bus stops: opposite the site entrance
- Fitzmaurice Primary School:- 1,200 m walking distance (16 minutes);
- St Laurence School (secondary):- 2.8km walking distance (42 minutes);
- Bradford on Avon Health centre: 1,600 m walking distance (21 minutes);
- Dentist: 1,400 m walking distance (18 minutes);
- Sainsbury's Supermarket: 1,300m walking distance (18 minutes);
- Town centre: 1,400 m walking distance (18 minutes);
- Bradford on Avon Swimming Pool: 1,700 m walking distance (22 minutes);
- Bradford on Avon Train Station: 1,400 m walking distance (18 minutes);

7.11 Given its location, the range of services and facilities available within walking and cycling distance, and the opportunities for public transport, the application site is considered to represent an extremely suitable and sustainable location for residential development.

7.12 Further details of the public transport services available to future residents are provided in the Transport Assessment submitted in support of the outline planning application.

7.13 In light of the above, it is considered that the application site is a sustainable location suitable for residential development.

Grey Belt

- 7.14 The December 2024 Framework introduced into national planning policy the concept of 'Grey Belt'. This is defined in the Glossary at Annex 2 of the Framework as:

"For the purposes of plan-making and decision-making, 'grey belt' is defined as land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143. 'Grey belt' excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development."

- 7.15 Further guidance on the definition of 'Grey Belt' and how the Glossary is to be interpreted is provided in a related update to the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) – see paragraph reference: ID: 64-012-20250225.

- 7.16 Paragraph 155 of the NPPF states that, housing development should not be inappropriate in the Green Belt if:

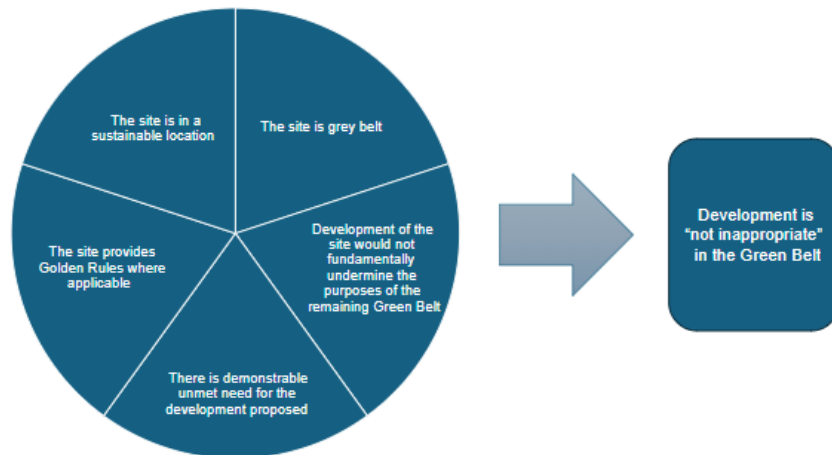
"(a) the development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan;

(b) there is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed;

(c) the development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 in this framework; and,

(d) where applicable the development proposed meets the 'Golden Rules' requirements set out in paragraphs 156-157".

- 7.17 These policy tests are captured beneath PPG Paragraph: 010 Reference ID: 64-010-20250225 in 'Figure 2 - When is development in the Green Belt not inappropriate under paragraph 155 of the NPPF?'



7.18 The following paragraphs explain why it is considered that the application site / proposals comply with all of these tests and why the proposed development is not considered 'inappropriate' in accordance with national planning policy and guidance.

7.19 The paragraph 155 tests (a)-(d) are considered in turn below.

(a) Will utilise grey belt land

7.20 Grey Belt is defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF:

"Land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143. 'Grey belt' excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development."

7.21 Footnote 7 relates to sites within designations such as SSSI, flood risk or designated heritage assets. None of these would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting the development. In relation to heritage assets specifically, whilst the supporting Heritage Assessment identifies a very small adverse effect on the adjacent Grade II listed Widbrook Bridge, when applying the test set out in paragraph 215 of the Framework, it is considered that the public benefits of the application proposals, as set out fully in this Statement, clearly outweigh the limited impacts on the bridge.

7.22 Wiltshire Council has not undertaken a Green Belt Review nor published any assessment of the contribution that the various green belt sites/parcels across the authority area make to the green belt purposes set out in paragraph 143 of the NPPF.

7.23 An assessment for the site against paragraph 143 has therefore been undertaken by the applicant. This is included in the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment and can be summarised as follows. This assessment has regard to the latest guidance set out within the PPG as of February 2025.

a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;

7.24 In relation to this purpose, the guidance clarifies that those sites likely to make a 'strong' contribution will involve sites next to large built up areas which are free of existing development and lack any physical features in reasonable proximity which could restrict and contain development.

7.25 Fundamentally, it is considered that Bradford on Avon should not be considered a 'large built up area', as it is instead a market town in the Council's adopted Core Strategy settlement hierarchy. Therefore, the site cannot be said to be checking the unrestricted sprawl of a 'large built up area'. As a result, it is considered to make **no contribution to Purpose A**.

7.26 If, contrary to this position, it is considered that Bradford on Avon should be treated as a large built up area, it is in any event clear that the application site, at most, makes a **weak to moderate** contribution to this purpose. In particular, it is considered that the application site is well contained between the settlement edge to the north west, Trowbridge Road and the canal to the south, dense woodland to the south / east and River Avon to the north.

7.27 The site therefore benefits from natural and physical features which would clearly prevent any further development beyond that proposed as part of this application. With particular reference to the PPG, the site includes the following required features which weakens the land's contribution to this purpose:

- having physical feature(s) in reasonable proximity that could restrict and contain development
- be partially enclosed by existing development, such that new development would not result in an incongruous pattern of development

7.28 Overall, having considered the context of the site and the guidance set out in the PPG, it is considered that the application site ranges makes ‘no contribution’ – if Bradford-upon-Avon is not considered to be a large built-up area – or a ‘weak’ – ‘moderate’ contribution to this purpose, if it is considered to be a large built-up area. It certainly does not make a strong contribution.

b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;

7.29 In relation to this purpose, the PPG clarifies that assessment areas that contribute strongly are likely to be free of existing development and include features such as land which forms a substantial part of a gap between towns, and development of which would be likely to result in the loss of visual separation of towns.

7.30 With particular reference to the PPG, it is considered that the **contribution of the application site to purpose B is weak** on the basis that the application site *“forms part of a gap between towns, but only a very small part of this gap, without making a contribution to visual separation”*.

7.31 In order to make a strong contribution to this purpose the site would need to *“form a substantial part of a gap between towns”*, or *“the development of which would be likely to result in the loss of visual separation of towns”*.

7.32 As set out in the supporting Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, the application proposals materially limit the extent to which the scheme contributes to any coalescence risk. Built form is proposed only on the two field parcels in the north-western corner of the application site, comprising approximately 8.21 ha immediately adjoining Bradford-on-Avon’s existing eastern settlement edge. The remaining 22ha of the wider site is proposed as publicly accessible open space, which would be secured in perpetuity.

7.33 This means that the development parcel in the western part of the Site does not extend into the mid-gap. Indeed, a substantial area of open land would remain between the buildings and the Trowbridge settlement boundary (c. 1.5-2.0km), indeed, the submitted illustrative masterplan shows that a scheme can be delivered which would not intrude further into the gap that the existing housing on the southwest side of Trowbridge Road, and importantly, someone moving along Trowbridge Road towards Trowbridge would not experience built form any closer to the Town than they currently do. The westernmost fields are closely related to the existing urban edge and are influenced by adjacent residential development, infrastructure, and urban edge characteristics. This substantial area of open land would remain between the buildings and

the Trowbridge settlement boundary, and would be secured in accordance with the submitted Parameter Plan.

7.34 Overall, given the context of the site, it is considered that the site would make a ‘weak’ contribution to this purpose rather than strong.

d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

7.35 In relation to this purpose, the PPG clarifies that assessment areas that contribute strongly are likely to be free of existing development and to include all of the following features:

- form part of the setting of the historic town
- make a considerable contribution to the special character of a historic town. This could be (but is not limited to) as a result of being within, adjacent to, or of significant visual importance to the historic aspects of the town

7.36 For the purposes of this assessment, it is recognised that Bradford-on-Avon is a historic town, and one of considerable architectural and townscape significance. However, it is the case that many parts of the town are not historic, and have limited architectural or heritage interest.

7.37 As set out in the supporting Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, whilst the site forms a part of the setting of the town’s conservation area, as it is part of the surroundings in which the heritage asset is experienced, between the Site and the Conservation Area is a large area of residential expansion. Due to the presence of these areas, there is very limited visibility between the conservation area and the site, and as a result, the site is a part of the setting of the area of special architectural or historic interest which makes a very limited contribution to its special interest.

7.38 The strength of this contribution is also not uniform across the site. The western part of the site, which lies closest to the existing settlement edge, is more strongly influenced by the adjacent built form and exhibits characteristics of an urban fringe landscape. In these areas, the relationship with the historic core is more indirect, and the contribution to the appreciation of the town’s special character is correspondingly reduced. By contrast, the eastern parts of the site are more closely associated with the wider valley landscape and

are likely to contribute more meaningfully to the setting of the town, particularly in views from the surrounding countryside where the transition from settlement to open land is more apparent.

- 7.39 Overall, the supporting Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment confirms that the site performs a moderate role in preserving the setting and special character of Bradford-on-Avon. While it contributes to the perception of the town as a settlement contained within a rural valley landscape, this contribution is moderated by the site's partial containment by existing development and the extent to which parts of the land read as urban edge rather than open countryside. This is also assisted by the fact that the proposed 'development area' will be contained on the western parcels of the site, next to the settlement edge.
- 7.40 The submitted application plans show development limited to the two westernmost fields, and for these parcels, the site's contribution to Green Belt Purpose D is materially reduced. These fields are closely related to the existing settlement edge and are influenced by adjacent built form, infrastructure, and urban edge characteristics.
- 7.41 Overall, the supporting Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment confirms that **when considered in the round, with development only proposed on western parcels, the site's overall contribution to Purpose D is diminished, and the resulting impact on the setting of Bradford-on-Avon is reduced to a Moderate - Weak Contribution to Purpose D.** On that basis, the site would make, at most, a weak-moderate, contribution to purpose (d)
- 7.42 **Taking the above assessment in the round, and having considered the site against purposes (a), (b) and (d) set out in paragraph 143, it is considered that the application site quite clearly falls within the definition of Grey Belt.**
- (aii) the development would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan
- 7.43 It is not considered that the proposed development will undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt in the Development Plan.

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- 7.44 The PPG is clear that *“in reaching this judgement, authorities should consider whether, or the extent to which, the release or development of Green Belt Land would affect the ability of all the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan from serving all five of the Green Belt purposes in a meaningful way”*.
- 7.45 The Council has published no evidence, given the absence of a Green Belt Review or assessment, to confirm that the release of the application site from the green belt would have an impact on remaining green belt in the authority area as referenced in the PPG.
- 7.46 Indeed, for the reasons set out as part of our assessment of the site against the relevant green belt purposes, the application site is naturally and physically contained and offers an excellent opportunity to release green belt land without having wider impact on the green belt.
- 7.47 Overall, for the reasons explained above, in the circumstances pertaining to Bradford on Avon and in the context of the emerging Local Plan, it is considered that there would be limited harm to the purposes of the Green Belt as a consequence of development on the application site. Embedded within that conclusion is the ameliorating effects of the inherent features of the proposals for the site, in particular the potential to provide significant areas of open space between the developed part of the site and the natural barrier of the woodland to the east. With that in place and an inherent part of the proposals for the site, the impact of the development on the purposes of the Green Belt is reduced to the lowest practicable extent. It is therefore concluded that there would be limited harm resulting from the practical application of the Green Belt purposes.

(b) there is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed

- 7.48 As set out in the previous chapter of this Statement, Wiltshire Council cannot demonstrate a five year housing land supply, with the latest agreed land supply standing at only 2.42 years.
- 7.49 There is therefore an undeniable housing land supply shortfall and unmet need for the development proposed as part of this planning application. This includes the market and affordable housing proposed.
- 7.50 There is currently plan-led solution for addressing this substantial shortfall in the short-medium term, particularly given the emerging Local Plan has recently failed with Inspectors confirming the plan should be withdrawn. Wiltshire Council will now need to prepare a new Local Plan which will take further years to

prepare and adopt. In the meantime there will be an absence of plan-led allocations to boost housing delivery and as a result there is a need for suitable and available sites to come forward now to help deliver housing in the short term.

- 7.51 In terms of affordable housing need, this is set out in the Wiltshire Local Housing Needs Assessment (February 2023). This was published as part of the Local Plan Review evidence base. This confirms that around 10,451 households in Wiltshire will require affordable housing over the plan period 2020 – 2038. It states that *“this total includes 5,179 households unable to afford Affordable Rent without Housing Benefit, 1,883 households who are able to afford Affordable Rent without Housing Benefit, but unable to afford market rents, and 3,389 households who aspire to home ownership and require some form of discounted home ownership”*.
- 7.52 Whilst the 2023 assessment is not specific to Bradford on Avon, the Affordable Housing Statement in support of this planning application sets out the local affordable need figures. This confirms that there are currently 3,783 households within Wiltshire on the housing waiting list. Of these households, 83 households have expressed a preference to either stay or be located in Bradford on Avon. The number of households on the Council's housing register has risen to 3,999 households as of 2025, a significant increase from 1,325 households since 2015, from when the Council's Core Strategy was adopted.
- 7.53 In addition, the delivery of affordable housing across Wiltshire and the Bradford on Avon Community Area in recent years have been very low. Across the district, just 319 affordable units were built in 2024-2025 and only 10 affordable units were built in 2024-2025 in the Bradford on Avon Community Area (information from Wiltshire Council's Housing Register, received on 20 January 2026). As set out in the supporting Affordable Housing Statement, the annual affordable housing completions across Wiltshire and Bradford on Avon from 2014/15 to 2024/25 highlight a persistent shortfall and decline in affordable housing delivery.
- 7.54 It is considered that the local affordable housing position is stark when considering this coupled with the Council's Sustainability Appraisal published in September 2023 in support of the emerging Local Plan (Wiltshire Local Plan Review: Reg 19 Sustainability Appraisal Report), which states the following specifically in relation to Bradford on Avon:

“The house price to earnings ratio has risen significantly in recent years yet delivery of affordable housing is the lowest. Provision of affordable housing should be prioritised to meet identified needs”...

“The town is also highly constrained by Green Belt, considerably limiting land available for housing development. This would lead to the conclusion that growth should be kept at lower levels. However, in terms of affordability, the house price to earnings ratio has risen significantly from 9.84 in 2008 to 14.04 in 2017; these are the highest in the HMA, yet delivery of affordable housing is the lowest. The SA recommends that provision of affordable housing at the town is prioritised to meet identified needs, perhaps through application of a specific affordable housing policy requirement for the town that is higher than for other parts of Wiltshire, subject to viability testing”.

7.55 As referenced in the Affordable Housing Statement submitted in support of this planning application, there are a significant number of households on the local housing waiting list. This demonstrates the important points emphasised in the Council's own evidence base on the lack of affordability in Bradford on Avon, and the SA specifically recommending that affordable housing delivery is a focus for the town to help address the affordability issues.

7.56 Indeed, the Council's SA also recommends that in order to resolve the affordability issues at Bradford on Avon that:

“given the above, a further recommendation to make more land available might be a review of the Green Belt surrounding the town which could free up certain sites on the edge of the town that would not significantly affect the openness of the Green Belt but would have significant benefits for affordability”.

7.57 Given the housing land supply shortfall across Wiltshire as a whole, including the significant ongoing affordable housing shortfall as demonstrated by evidence presented as part of recent appeals, suitable and sustainable sites are required to come forward now to address the land supply shortfall, particularly on sites which are generally free from constraint and policy obstacles (for which the application site is).

7.58 With reference to the provision of the 72-bed care home on the site, the planning application is supported by a Care home Needs Assessment. This confirms that based on 2029, the earliest the proposed care home could be delivered, this indicates a net need for 454 full market standard bedrooms in the market catchment and 1,177 in the Wiltshire Council local authority area. Shortfalls of full market standard

dedicated dementia beds, based on 2029, are 158 and 770 in the two catchments, respectively. The Assessment also states that the undersupply of dedicated dementia beds is significant, at 154 and 611 bedrooms in the two catchments, respectively, indicating a considerable under-provision of care bedrooms best suited for this form of care. Also, by 2039, the undersupply of full market standard care bedrooms is projected to be 675 in the market catchment and 2,801 in the local authority (including 256 and 1,454 dedicated dementia beds in the two assessed catchments, respectively).

- 7.59 In response, the proposed 72- bedroom care home will be specifically designed for purpose and best suited for caring for residents, including those who require dementia care within a specialist unit, with spacious, flexible, infection control-compliant care accommodation to enable care to be administered most efficiently and effectively. The proposal will assist in meeting the existing and increasing shortfall of full market standard care bedrooms in both the market catchment and the Wiltshire Council local authority area.
- 7.60 Overall, based on Wiltshire Council's substantial housing land supply shortfall, and the evidence submitted in support of this planning application, it is clear that there is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed.

(c) the development would be in a sustainable location

- 7.61 As set out at the beginning of this chapter, Bradford on Avon is one of the main towns in the authority area and therefore one of the most sustainable settlements accommodating a range of regional services and facilities.
- 7.62 NPPF paragraphs 110 and 115 seek to direct development to locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel, offering a genuine choice of transport modes, providing safe and suitable access to the site for all users and mitigating any significant impacts from the development on the transport network or highway safety. The submitted Transport Assessment clearly demonstrates that the Site complies with national requirements relating to highways and accessibility. The site is within easy access of a range of services and facilities and is well served by public transport including a mainline railway station in the town centre.

- 7.63 Indeed, as set out earlier in this chapter, the site is within acceptable walking distance of the full range of services and facilities in the town. This also includes access to the train station offering mainline rail links within a 17 minute walk of the site.
- 7.64 The existing pedestrian and cycle connectivity is good and the proposals would facilitate connection to both the existing footways and public rights of way for connectivity to local services and facilities.
- 7.65 In addition, a Mobility Hub is proposed within the scheme which will provide further opportunities for both existing and new residents to access low carbon, active and sustainable travel modes. The Mobility Hub will incorporate the latest services and technology being delivered within the area, but could include, for example:
- Shared E-bike hire and charging facilities
 - Secure cycle parking
 - Access to improved bus stops
 - E-Car Club vehicle and charging facility
 - Public E-vehicle charging
- 7.66 In terms of public transport, the public transport corridor that passes through Bradford on Avon will provide future residents with an excellent opportunity to travel via bus to a range of destinations within the area, including Bath. The public transport strategy for the site ensures that routes to this corridor will be desirable and legible on foot from within the development.
- 7.67 Future residents, staff and visitors of the development site will benefit from a well-connected and frequent public transport services that currently utilise bus stops within close proximity of the site. The nearest southbound bus stop to the site is the 'Canal Bridge' stop, which is located on the site frontage immediately south of the site access, whilst the nearest northbound bus stop is the 'Moulton Drive' stop, which is located immediately adjacent to the north-western site boundary. Both the Canal Bridge and Moulton Drive bus stops are sheltered with live and printed bus time information. Both bus stops are served by the 98, D1

and D1X bus services, which provides direct bus connections to prominent local destinations, such as Bradford on Avon, Bath, Trowbridge, Westbury and Warminster.

7.68 Overall, the application site is located in an undeniably sustainable location. This, coupled with the additional improvements proposed as part of the application will further improve opportunities for residents to travel sustainably to and from the development.

(d) where applicable the development proposed meets the 'Golden Rules' requirements

7.69 The Golden Rules are set out in paragraph 156 of the NPPF and these require major development on Green Belt sites to provide the following contributions:

- a) *"affordable housing which reflects either: (i) development plan policies produced in accordance with paragraphs 67-68 of this Framework; or (ii) until such policies are in place, the policy set out in paragraph 157 below;*
- b) *necessary improvements to local or national infrastructure; and*
- c) *the provision of new, or improvements to existing, green spaces that are accessible to the public. New residents should be able to access good quality green spaces within a short walk of their home, whether through onsite provision or through access to offsite spaces."*

7.70 The adopted affordable housing requirement for Wiltshire is 40%. NPPF Paragraph 157 states that the affordable housing should be 15% higher than the adopted requirement at a cap of 50%. The proposed development incorporates 50% affordable housing and therefore accords with this requirement.

7.71 The Applicant is committed to provide the necessary infrastructure improvements which will be achieved through agreeing a S106 Agreement with Wiltshire Council.

7.72 The proposed development will deliver over 22 hectares of public open space which is significantly more than the standards required in the West Wiltshire, Leisure and Recreation Development Plan Document (January 2009) and national Fields in Trust guidance (NPPF paragraph 159). The 22 hectares of open space also represents 70% of the total site area and therefore represents a substantial overprovision of

open space across the site. The proposed areas of open space will also be good quality and accessible to both new and existing residents.

- 7.73 The plans and documentation submitted as part of this application demonstrate that the proposals will comply with the Golden Rules. Paragraph 158 states that significant weight in favour of permission should be given where development complies with the Golden Rules.

NPPF, para 155 Summary

- 7.74 The Site is considered to be Grey Belt land, and meets the requirements of NPPF, para 155. In accordance with paragraph 155 of the NPPF, the proposed development should not be inappropriate in the Green Belt as Wiltshire Council cannot demonstrate a five year housing land supply, the Site is in a sustainable location and the scheme will comply with the Golden Rules set out in Paragraph 156.
- 7.75 The proposals should therefore be considered appropriate development in the Green Belt and significant weight in favour of permission should be applied, in accordance with paragraph 155 of the NPPF.

Very Special Circumstances

- 7.76 Despite the above Grey Belt assessment, should Wiltshire Council consider that the proposal does not comply with paragraph 155 of the NPPF, then this Statement also clearly demonstrates that Very Special Circumstances (VSC) exist to justify the proposed development. It is to be emphasised that this argument is advanced in the alternative to our primary position that the site is grey belt and the proposal constitutes appropriate development pursuant to paragraph 155 of the NPPF. For 'inappropriate development' in the Green Belt, VSCs must be demonstrated in order for the application to be approved (NPPF Paragraph 153). Substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness and very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt is clearly outweighed by proposed benefits (paragraph 153). The harm to the Green Belt - which would only apply if the proposal is considered to be inappropriate development¹ - is addressed further below. Notwithstanding the VSCs test,

¹ In *Mole Valley District Council v Secretary of State for Housing, Communities* [2025] EWHC 2127 the High Court confirmed that development which is not inappropriate cannot give rise to harm to the openness or purposes of the Green Belt

the proposals clearly constitute sustainable development against the 3 objectives outlined in the NPPF (as set out in Section 5.11 below).

7.77 There are no adopted Development Plan policies specifically relating to green belt to consider here.

7.78 Paragraph 145 of the NPPF states that *“once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified through the preparation or updating of plans. Strategic policies should establish the need for any changes to Green Belt boundaries, having regard to their intended permanence in the long term, so they can endure beyond the plan period.”*

7.79 Despite not undertaking a Green Belt Review or any green belt assessment work, the Council's Sustainability Appraisal (SA) supporting the Local Plan Review confirmed that:

“In/around Bradford, in order to reduce significant adverse effects, small-scale development may be locally appropriate. The town nevertheless features a wide range of designated and non-designated heritage assets. Development-led increases on traffic flows would put pressure on assets within the historic core. It is possible that a strategy for accommodating proposed development might be a reappraisal of the green belt that surrounds the town”.

“For Bradford on Avon the house price to earnings ratio has risen significantly from 9.84 in 2008 to 14.04 in 2017. The town is also highly constrained by Green Belt, considerably limiting land available for housing development. Overall the number of homes delivered has been broadly as planned in the WCS but only 22.8% of homes built during the period 1/4/09 – 31/3/18 were affordable homes, substantially below that required under Core Policy 43”.

7.80 There is no evidence to suggest that despite the recommendation of the Council's SA, the Council asked itself whether 'exceptional circumstances' exist which justify a review of the Green Belt. Rather, the Sustainability Appraisal clearly indicates an alternative strategy should have been taken; and that Green Belt Review should have been considered.

7.81 Whilst the Framework does not explicitly define 'exceptional circumstances', there is a clear framework for applying the test derived from legal precedent. The planning judgement that this involves is intrinsically

linked to, and must be made in the context of, the over-arching statutory obligation to plan for the delivery of sustainable development.

7.82 Indeed, as Mrs Justice Patterson confirmed in *IM Properties Development Ltd v Litchfield* [2014] P.T.S.R. 1484, “*the only statutory duty is that in Section 39(2)*” to promote the achievement of sustainable development. The obligations placed upon local planning authorities by the Framework when reviewing Green Belt, are clear and explicit. Consistent with Section 39(2) of the Act, and also paragraph 11 of the Framework, the overarching objective or golden thread, of the planning system is to promote sustainable development.

7.83 Mrs Justice Patterson continued in *IM Properties* by stating:

“That is clear advice to decision makers to take into account the consequences for sustainable development of any review of Green Belt boundaries. As part of that patterns of development and additional travel are clearly relevant.”

The Calverton Judgement² draws many of the proceeding case law and guidance together, with Mr Justice Jay stating that:

“The issue is whether, in the exercise of planning judgment and in the overall context of the positive statutory duty to achieve sustainable development, exceptional circumstances existed to justify the release of Green Belt.” [emphasis added]

7.84 Paragraph 51 of the Judgement goes on to provide a very helpful framework for the assessment of ‘exceptional circumstances’:

“In a case such as the present, it seems to me that, having undertaken the first-stage of the Hunston approach (sc. assessing objectively assessed need), the planning judgments involved in the ascertainment of exceptional circumstances in the context of both national policy and the positive obligation located in section 39(2) should, at least ideally, identify and then grapple with the following matters:

- *the acuteness/intensity of the objectively assessed need (matters of degree may be important);*

² *Calverton Parish Council v Nottingham City Council* [2015] EWHC 1078 (Admin)

- *the inherent constraints on supply/availability of land prima facie suitable for sustainable development;*
- *(on the facts of this case) the consequent difficulties in achieving sustainable development without impinging on the Green Belt;*
- *the nature and extent of the harm to this Green Belt (or those parts of it which would be lost if the boundaries were reviewed); and*
- *the extent to which the consequent impacts on the purposes of the Green Belt may be ameliorated or reduced to the lowest reasonably practicable extent.”*

7.85 Although the “exceptional circumstances” test – applicable in plan-making – applies a different threshold to the VSC test – applicable in decision-taking - the same considerations are capable of being relevant to both. These considerations are considered below in the context of the current application.

(i) The acuteness / intensity of the objectively assessed need (matters of degree may be important)

7.86 It is well established that need, and in particular the need for housing, can be of particular relevance to the very special circumstances test.

7.87 As already covered above, Wiltshire Council cannot demonstrate a five year housing land supply, with the latest agreed land supply standing at only 2.42 years.

7.88 There is therefore an undeniable housing land supply shortfall and unmet need for the development proposed as part of this planning application. This includes the market and affordable housing proposed, as well as care home provision.

7.89 In addition, specific to Bradford on Avon, there is an acute need and one which cannot be accommodated with the existing urban area.

(ii) The inherent constraints on supply/availability of land prima facie suitable for sustainable development

7.90 The Council's available evidence demonstrates that land outside of the Green Belt at Bradford on Avon is both the subject of environmental and access constraints. As the SA acknowledged, it is therefore necessary to consider whether reasonable alternative locations for development exist in the Green Belt.

(iii) (On the facts of this case) the consequent difficulties in achieving sustainable development without impinging on the Green Belt.

7.91 For the same reasons as explained in relation to step (ii) it is not possible to achieve sustainable development without impinging upon the Green Belt.

(iv) The nature and extent of the harm to this Green Belt (or those parts of it which would be lost if the boundaries were reviewed)

7.92 The nature and extent of harm to the Green Belt as a result of the application proposals has already been assessed in this Statement, noting covering the main green belt purposes of:

- *to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;*
- *to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;*
- *to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns*

7.93 As concluded earlier in this chapter under the 'grey belt' section, the site makes a limited contribution to the main green belt purposes. When undertaking such an assessment on a green belt basis it is concluded that there would be limited / negligible harm resulting from the application proposals on the main green belt purposes. This includes impact on openness given that whilst it is acknowledged that the proposals would result in the reduction of the current sense of openness by introducing more overtly urban characteristics, this reduction would be limited to the first two fields in the western part of the site. The scheme will retain a substantial open component across the eastern half of the site which forms the majority of the total site area.

(v) The extent to which the consequent impacts on the purposes of the Green Belt may be ameliorated or reduced to the lowest reasonably practicable extent

7.94 For the reasons explained above, in the circumstances pertaining to Bradford on Avon and in the context of the emerging Local Plan, we conclude that there would be limited harm to the purposes of the Green Belt as a consequence of development of the application site. Embedded within that conclusion is the ameliorating effects of the inherent features of the proposals for the site, in particular the potential to provide significant areas of open space between the developed part of the site and the natural barrier of the woodland to the east. With that in place and an inherent part of the proposals for the site, the impact of the development on the purposes of the Green Belt is reduced to the lowest practicable extent. Indeed, it is concluded that no harm to the practical application of the Green Belt purposes would arise.

Very Special Circumstances Conclusion

7.95 Having considered each element of the five step framework established in Calverton, and having taken account of the specific and substantial benefits of the scheme, we are now in a position to answer the over-arching question of whether 'very special circumstances exist to justify the grant of permission if (contrary to the primary position) the proposal is considered to be inappropriate development in the Green Belt).

7.96 The evidence demonstrates that there is an acute need for housing which the currently identified sources of supply will not address. The Council's own evidence in the SA demonstrates that there are inherent constraints to the supply of land suitable for sustainable development. As a result, there are consequent difficulties in achieving sustainable development without impinging upon the Green Belt.

7.97 An evaluation of the proposed development on the application site demonstrates that development broadly in accordance with the illustrative masterplan would result in no greater harm to the purposes of the Green Belt than development on greenfield land outside of the Green Belt. The illustrative proposals ameliorate the impact on the Green Belt to the lowest reasonably practicable extent through the design and landscaping of the proposals. This includes the fact that impact on openness is limited to the western part of the site given that a reduction of the current sense of openness, through the introduction of more overtly urban characteristics, would be limited to the first two fields in the western part of the site. The scheme will retain a substantial open component across the eastern half of the site.

7.98 The benefits of the proposals are clear and substantial, which include:

- Up to 224 residential dwellings providing a significant source of housing land supply for Wiltshire to address the current housing shortfall;
- The delivery of 50% affordable housing, equating to up to 112 affordable homes at a town which continues to suffer from acute affordability issues and an ongoing significant affordable housing need;
- Provision of a 72 bed care home to address an identified shortfall;
- A range of economic benefits including operational and construction jobs, as well as additional local expenditure and CIL / Council Tax revenue;
- Community sports pitch provision to help address local need;
- Substantial areas of green infrastructure and open space, with a total of 22ha of open space is identified on the application site; including a country park incorporating recreational walking routes; natural green space; allotments; community orchard and a range of play spaces including LAPs and LEAPs.
- Biodiversity net gain through the retention and enhancement of existing habitats, and creation of new habitats alongside delivery of a range of ecological mitigation and enhancement measures.
- Improvement works to Trowbridge Road as a result of the provision of the new access.

7.99 There are a considerable number and range of benefits associated with delivery of the application proposals. Whilst these individual benefits will have different weights, the overall benefit is deemed to be substantial.

7.100 For these reasons, it is concluded that very special circumstances exist for the grant of planning permission in this case.

Design, Layout and Density

- 7.101 The application site is well related to the existing form and pattern of development in Bradford on Avon. The nature of the site is such that the development of the site would not result in an extension into the open countryside, or have an adverse impact in landscape terms.
- 7.102 The proposals have been developed with careful consideration to the local landscape constraints and incorporates mitigation where necessary. The accompanying Heritage Statements and Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment provide further information.
- 7.103 The planning application is supported by a Design & Access Statement (DAS). The DAS provides information at the outline stage in terms of the main urban design principles for the proposed development and it will be used to assist the detailed design of a subsequent reserved matters application.
- 7.104 The DAS provides a 'vision' for the development. This is conveyed through design principles, illustrative sketches and an indicative layout. The indicative layout provides an illustration of how the development could look and is based upon the areas that are shown on the Parameter Plan.
- 7.105 The proposals will provide a well-considered environment delivering a variety of new housing types enabling Wiltshire Council to meet the local housing need. The scheme will enable the delivery of a high quality series of open spaces including a large parkland and several pedestrian connections into the wider neighbourhood. The development area is contained in the western part of the site and the proposed residential density is considered appropriate at 29 dph. The parameter plan govern the quantum and amount of development, but future applications should follow the coherent pattern of spaces defined by buildings and there typology and placement.
- 7.106 Overall, it is considered that the proposals represent a positive development in an established and sustainable location with many facilities on its door step. It will provide much needed new housing as well as many identifiable, tangible and long lasting benefits for the local area and the town.
- 7.107 Please refer to the Design and Access Statement for further information.

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7.108 Overall, it is considered that the proposals represent a high quality framework to guide future detailed plans, and are in accordance with policies 51, 52, 57 and 58, of the adopted Core Strategy, and paragraphs 131 – 141 of the NPPF.

Access and Highways

7.109 The accompanying Transport Assessment confirms that a safe and appropriate access can be provided for the development.

7.110 The forecast traffic impact from the proposed development is considered to be minimal with no more than 149 two way vehicle trips in the AM peak hour (08:00 – 09:00) and 147 two way vehicle trips in the PM peak hour (17:00 – 18:00). While in terms of the care home trip rates specifically, the proposed development will only introduce 9 two way vehicular trips in the AM peak hour and 16 two way vehicular trips in the PM peak hour.

7.111 The TA concludes that the results of the junction modelling indicate that the modelled junctions within the study area are forecast to operate well within capacity with the addition of development traffic, with minimal increases in queuing, delay or Ratio of Flow to Capacity, even under a robust assessment scenario. This assessment has therefore demonstrated that there would be 'no unacceptable' impact on highway safety.

7.112 The Transport Assessment also confirms that the site is well located to facilitate sustainable travel to key local facilities on foot or by cycle or travel further afield via public transport facilities and services. There are a wide range of local services and amenities available in Bradford on Avon, which includes employment, education, leisure and retail facilities that are within a short walking and cycling distance of the development. The distance from a range of local services and facilities within walking distance is as below:

Service / Facility	Approximate distance from site
Widbrook Wood (Wiltshire Wildlife Trust)	Adjacent to the Site
Bradford on Avon Marina (Sailing Club)	
St Aldhems Play Area	500m

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Spencer Moulton Bowls Club	550m
The Boathouse	575m
Bradford Town FC	650m
Poulton Recreational Ground	950m
Texaco, Central Convivence Store	1.0km
Trowbridge Road Post Office	1.05km
The Plough (Pub)	1.1km
Fitzmaurice Primary School	1.2km
Treenwood Industrial Estate	1.3km
Domino's Pizza	1.3km
Sainsbury's Supermarket	1.3km
Harris, Hill and Gibbons Veterinary Group - Bradford on Avon	1.3km
Bradford on Avon Youth & Community Centre	1.3km
Westview Day Nursey	1.4km
Bradford on Avon Town Council	1.4km
St Margarets Surgery	1.4km
Bradford on Avon Railway Station	1.45km
Bradford on Avon Health Centre	1.6km
Bradford on Avon Cricket Club	1.6km
Bradford on Avon Swimming Pool	1.7km
St Laurence School	2.8km

- 7.113 In addition, the development proposals include a new mobility hub, community sports pitches and allotments, which are within easy walking distance of new residents on the site, as well as the wider community.
- 7.114 Future residents, staff and visitors of the development site will further benefit from a well-connected and frequent public transport services that currently utilise bus stops within close proximity of the site. The nearest southbound bus stop to the site is the 'Canal Bridge' stop, which is located on the site frontage immediately south of the site access, whilst the nearest northbound bus stop is the 'Moulton Drive' stop, which is located immediately adjacent to the north-western site boundary. The site is therefore well served by frequent bus services that provide connections to prominent local destinations which offer an additional range of employment, education and retail facilities.
- 7.115 Overall, the Transport Statement concludes the site accords with paragraphs 110 and 115b of the NPPF, whereby the development will provide safe and suitable access for all users. It is therefore the case that the proposals are consistent with adopted policies 60, 61, and 62 of the Core Strategy.
- 7.116 For further information on the Transport related impacts of the development, please refer to the accompanying Transport technical documents.

Flood Risk and Drainage

- 7.117 The majority of the application site is located in Flood Zone 1 as shown by the Environment Agency's (EA's) Flood Zone mapping, meaning the land is assessed as having a 1 in 1,000 annual probability of river or sea flooding in any year. A small part of the site falls within flood zone 2 and 3 but those areas are proposed for public open space and landscaping, not accommodating built development.
- 7.118 The accompanying Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy assesses the baseline conditions of the site, quantifying the risk sources and extent in relation to flooding and from all sources. The assessment confirms that the proposals will meet national and local requirements for the management of surface water runoff, which will be achieved through principles of SuDS, taking into account climate change.

- 7.119 As such, the proposals make appropriate provision for the management of surface water and foul drainage within the scheme, ensuring the new and existing properties are properly protected against any increased risk of flooding while delivering an overall betterment.

Ecology

- 7.120 The NPPF seeks to protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity. Policy 50 of the Core Strategy states that development proposals must demonstrate how they protect features of nature conservation and geological value as part of the design rationale, with there being an expectation that such features shall be retained, buffered, and managed favourably in order to maintain their ecological value, connectivity and functionality in the long-term.
- 7.121 The application is supported by an accompanying Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA), setting out how appropriate surveys have been undertaken to provide a robust assessment of the potential for the development to impact upon protected and priority species and habitats alongside an assessment of the potential impacts on biodiversity of the proposed residential development.
- 7.122 The EclA confirms that the Site is considered to be of 'moderate' ecological interest. As a result, avoidance, mitigation and compensation measures have been incorporated into the design to ensure that the proposals have minimal adverse impacts on designated sites, habitats and protected species. Enhancement features have also been provided with the aim of providing an increase in wildlife opportunities on site post-development, contributing to the aims of the NPPF and local policy.
- 7.123 Please refer to the accompanying ecological reports for further information.

Heritage and Archaeology

- 7.124 The application site is not located within a Conservation Area or National Landscape, and does not in itself include any known heritage assets. It also benefits from strong existing boundary treatment which screens it from the surrounding area and a good proximity to the built up area of Bradford on Avon.
- 7.125 The accompanying Heritage Desk-Based Assessment confirms that the historic landscape character of the Site comprises 'amalgamated fields'.

7.126 The analysis of the significance and 'setting' of the Grade II listed Widbrook Bridge, adjacent to the proposed site entrance, has identified that a small degree of harm to a part of its setting which contributes to its overall special interest as a Grade II listed building will occur. This will arise from the alteration in the established views to Nos 213-219 Trowbridge Road and the 19th century building group at the bridge as one approaches the bridge, and from it (looking north-west).

7.127 The supporting Heritage Assessment confirms that this will result in a very small adverse effect upon the overall special interest of the Grade II structure (at the lowest end of 'less than substantial'), but that there will be no adverse effects upon any other designated heritage assets.

7.128 When applying the test set out in paragraph 215 of the Framework, it is considered that the following public benefits will be delivered as part of the application proposals:

- Up to 224 residential dwellings providing a significant source of housing land supply for Wiltshire to address the current housing shortfall;
- The delivery of up to 112 affordable homes (50%), in the context of a significant demand locally for affordable housing;
- Provision of a 72 bed care home to address an identified shortfall;
- Economic benefits arising from the development (including the creation of permanent jobs);
- Community sports pitch provision / Mobility Hubs;
- Substantial areas of public open space over and above planning policy requirements;
- Biodiversity improvements, including a net gain of 46.63% habitat units, and 33.91% hedgerow units;
- Highways improvements

7.129 These benefits are set out in more detail in Chapter 8 of this Statement, but clearly outweigh the very limited adverse effects identified upon Widbrook Bridge when assessing under paragraph 215 of the Framework.

- 7.130 In addition, the proposals have had regard to the identified heritage assets and the provisions of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 ('the Act') (CD3.8). Under Section 66 of the Act it is required that 'In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any feature of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses'.
- 7.131 The Heritage Assessment has also reviewed the potential for archaeological remains in the application site and their significance. A geophysical survey has identified two clear 'ring-ditches' which may well comprise prehistoric funerary and ritual features. These potential features lie within the large area of green space comprising the east and central areas of the Site and will not be physically impacted upon by the proposals.
- 7.132 In addition, two irregular linear anomalies were identified by the geophysical survey. The anomalies are not clearly characteristic of a specific archaeological feature, but they may possibly represent a contemporary prehistoric feature such as an enclosure. This interest again would be archaeological and largely 'evidential', due to its potential to provide further information on the nature of prehistoric occupation and funerary practices in the region. These anomalies are also within the area of green space and will not be impacted by the Proposed Development.
- 7.133 The geophysical survey did however detect the potential for a very small prehistoric ring-ditch, such as a former barrow. It lies just outside of the nearest area of residential development in the eastern zone of the Site. However, it lies on the course of a new access road, and thus any associated remains would be impacted by the construction works. The Heritage Assessment confirms however that this potential ring-ditch is not a designated heritage asset, not identified as a 'non-designated heritage asset', and is instead possibly of prehistoric date, and potentially a heritage asset of archaeological interest.
- 7.134 On the basis of the above, a Written Scheme of Investigation for a programme of archaeological evaluation trenching has been approved by the Wiltshire Council Archaeology Service, and the evaluation trenches will be carried out in the determination period of the application, with the results provided once available.
- 7.135 Overall, the proposed development would result in a limited degree of harm, including at the lower end of less than substantial when assessing the impact on the Grade II listed Widbrook Bridge. However, when

applying the tests set out in paragraph 215 of the Framework the public benefits of the application proposals, as set out fully in this Statement, clearly outweigh the very limited adverse effects identified upon Widbrook Bridge.

- 7.136 The proposals are therefore compliant with adopted policy 58 of the Core Strategy, as well as paragraphs 212 and 215 of the Framework.

Energy, Sustainability and Climate Change

- 7.137 Information on how the proposals address energy and sustainability is contained within the supporting Design and Access Statement.
- 7.138 This sets out the potential strategies for resource efficiency that could be implemented within the scheme, given the outline nature of the proposals which means the precise details will need to be agreed at the reserved matters stage.
- 7.139 In terms of low energy design, there is an opportunity to develop an innovative and sustainable scheme with low energy dwellings. The illustrative masterplan has been designed so that individual houses can be designed to maximise their solar efficiency and ensure a good foundation for achieving low energy use. Specific energy efficient solutions will need to be explored at the detailed reserved matters stage.
- 7.140 The submitted masterplan has also been designed to maximise the opportunity for development of south facing houses and south facing gardens. This means that at the detail design stage passive solutions using a 'fabric first' approach to low energy design will be easier to achieve. It also means that the use of renewable energy technologies such as photovoltaic panels will be easier to implement because most buildings will have south facing roof slopes.
- 7.141 Overall, as supported by the accompanying Design and Access Statement, the proposals accord with adopted policies including Core Policy 41.

Landscape, Recreation and Open Space

- 7.142 The provision of open space within the proposed development has been considered in the context of the adopted development plan and the most relevant supporting evidence base prepared by Wiltshire Council.

- 7.143 Core Policy 52 sets out the Council's commitment to the planning, delivery and management of 'Green Infrastructure' including accessible open space in order to support sustainable communities and contribute to the wider green infrastructure network.
- 7.144 The relevant green infrastructure and open space standards are guided by Policy LP4 of the West Wiltshire Leisure and Recreation Development Plan (January 2009) which establishes the provision of open space associated with new residential development. Although, notwithstanding its adopted status, the document is now dated and reflects an evidence base prepared over a decade ago. In light of this, this Statement also makes regard to the more recent evidence prepared by Wiltshire Council in the form of the Wiltshire Open Space Assessment Update (2020). The Open Space Assessment provides the future green infrastructure and open space provision and need across the authority area. This assessment replaces and updates the Draft Open Space Study undertaken in 2015 and the previous open space assessments undertaken for the four former districts of Wiltshire (before Wiltshire became a unitary authority in 2009) which the current local plan policy is based.
- 7.145 Whilst the Open Space Assessment Update (2020) does not form part of the statutory development plan, it nevertheless represents the most up to date and robust evidence base for assessing open space provision throughout the district. It had also been used by Wiltshire Council to inform decision making and to support the conclusions of open space policies in the emerging Wiltshire Local Plan.
- 7.146 For the purposes of this Statement, it is therefore appropriate and reasonable to assess the proposal against the most recent local evidence, namely the Wiltshire Open Space Assessment Update (2020). However, for consistency, the proposed development has also been considered against the historic open space standards previously applied within Wiltshire.
- 7.147 Provision of new off-site open space or enhancement of existing off-site open space will be funded through the Community Infrastructure Levy if considered necessary.

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Form of provision	Quantity (sq m/person)
Allotments	1.5
Bowling greens	0.2
Equipped play	0.5
Multi-functional greenspaces	12
Sports pitches and courts	10
Teenage facilities	0.25
Urban parks	1.3
Sports halls	0.08
Swimming pools	0.05

Extract from the adopted West Wiltshire Leisure and Recreation Development Plan (January 2009)

Typology	Quantity standard (ha/1000 population) Existing Provision	Quantity standard (ha/1000) New Provision	Access Standard
Allotments	0.25	0.25	480 metres straight line or 10 minutes' walk time
Amenity Green Space	0.9	0.9	480 metres straight line or 10 minutes' walk time
Parks and Recreation Grounds	1.1	1.1	600 metres straight line or 12-13 minutes' walk time
Play Space (Children)	0.25	0.25	480 metres straight line or 10 minutes' walk time
Play Space (Youth)	0.30	0.30	600 metres straight line or 12-13 minutes' walk time
Natural Green Space	N/A – use access standards to identify key gaps.	1.8 (incouding SUDs)	720 metres straight line or 15 minutes' walk time (for sites above 0.2ha) Natural England ANGSt
Total Multi-functional Open Space		4.6	

Extract from the Wiltshire Open Space Assessment Update (2020)

7.148 The tables below outlines the on-site open space and green infrastructure requirements prescribed by Policy LP4 (Table 7) of the West Wiltshire Leisure and Recreation Development Plan Document (January 2009), and section 6.2 (Table 18) of the Wiltshire Open Space Assessment Update (2020), alongside the amount of open space to be delivered within the application proposals. As the application is only in outline form, the Open Space Assessment is based on the average household size of 2.3 persons per household, meaning an application of up to 224 homes would provide 515 people.

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Amount of Open Space to be provided as part of the application proposals against the West Wiltshire Leisure and Recreation Development Plan (January 2009)

Open Space Typology	Quality Standards (sqm/person) – West Wiltshire Leisure and Recreation (January 2009)	Amount Required (based on 515 people (sqm))	Amount to be provided as part of the application proposals (sqm)
Allotments	1.5	772.5 sqm	6,800 sqm
Bowling Greens	0.2	103 sqm	N/A
Equipped Play	0.5	257.5 sqm	500 sqm*
Multi-Functional greenspaces	12	6,180 sqm	196,000 sqm (incl. Natural and Amenity Open Space including drainage features)
Sport Pitches and courts	10	5,150 sqm	6,600 sqm
Teenage Facilities	0.25	128.75 sqm	500 sqm*
Urban parks	1.3	669.5 sqm	N/A
Sport halls	0.08	41.2 sqm	N/A
Swimming Pools	0.05	25.75 sqm	N/A
Total	25.88	13,328.2 sqm	209,900 sqm

*Includes 400 sqm of Local Equipped Area of Play and 100 sqm of Local Area of Play

Amount of Open Space to be provided as part of the application proposals against the Wiltshire Open Space Assessment (2020)

Open Space Typology	Quality Standards (ha/1000 population) New Provision – Wiltshire Open Space Assessment (2020)	Amount Required (based on 515 people (sqm))	Amount to be provided as part of the application proposals (sqm)
Allotments	0.25	1,288 sqm	6,800 sqm
Amenity Green Space	0.9	4,635 sqm	196,000 sqm*
Parks and Recreation Grounds	1.1	5,665 sqm	6,600 sqm
Play Space (Children)	0.25	1,288 sqm	100 sqm
Play Space (Youth)	0.30	1,545 sqm	400 sqm
Natural Green Space	1.8 (including SUDs)	9,270 sqm	196,000 sqm*
Total	4.6	23,690 sqm	209,900 sqm

*Including areas of Natural and Amenity Open Space and drainage features

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7.149 From the two assessments above, it is clear that the proposals will deliver areas of on-site green infrastructure and open space far in excess of the policy required level of whether against the older 2009 requirements or the more recent 2020 requirements. This will result in a 'significant benefit' to future residents and the local community.

7.150 The application proposals are therefore clearly compliant with Core Policy 52 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy, Policy LP4 of the West Wiltshire Leisure and Recreation Development Plan and the most recent evidence base, the Wiltshire Open Space Assessment (2020).

8. Public Benefits

8. Public Benefits

- 8.1 The preceding sections of this Statement assess the application proposals against the policies of the development plan and other material planning considerations. Many policies are framed in the negative and it is inevitably therefore the case that the assessment focuses on the 'harm' caused by the development and how this can be avoided or mitigated. As important are the benefits that development can have on the social, economic and environmental sustainability of a community. This section of the Statement explains the benefits that would arise through delivery of the proposed development. These benefits are all material considerations and must feature in the planning balance when the application is determined.
- 8.2 Indeed, Paragraph 8 of the Framework explains that the planning system has three overarching economic, social and environmental objectives. These objectives are independent but need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways so that net gains can be secured across all three. The application proposals would achieve net gains across each of these objectives and would represent sustainable development.
- 8.3 The preceding section explained the key planning considerations arising from the proposed development. Many of these considerations demonstrate that the development would make a positive or neutral contribution towards the delivery of sustainable development, however, in some instances the development would, despite mitigation, result in a residual adverse impact. This section explains the other side of the balance – the public benefits that will be delivered if planning permission is granted. In order to undertake this exercise as transparently as possible, and to provide clarity and a degree of consistency in the weighing of public benefits, the following weighing has been applied to the benefits arising from the development:
- Limited weight;
 - Moderate weight;
 - Significant weight; and
 - Substantial weight.

8.4 All of the public benefits proposed in this Statement are attributed one of these four categories. The overall public benefit arising from the proposed development is the cumulative weight of all these benefits.

8.5 These benefits are summarised below:

- Golden Rules - NPPF paragraph 156 states that where development complies with the Golden Rules, significant weight in favour of the grant of permission should be applied. The applicant's interpretation is that this is with or without the Site being defined as Grey Belt or not. The proposed development will deliver 50% affordable housing, provide necessary improvements to infrastructure as part of the S106 Agreement and will deliver significant areas of public open space well in excess of local and national standards. In accordance with the NPPF, compliance with the Golden Rules should be afforded **significant weight**;
- Up to 224 residential dwellings providing a significant source of housing land supply for Wiltshire to address the current housing shortfall. **Substantial weight**;
- The delivery of 50% affordable housing, equating to up to 112 affordable homes at a town which continues to suffer from acute affordability issues and an ongoing significant affordable housing need. In this context, the delivery of an additional 112 affordable dwellings will significantly increase the level of supply and thereby deliver a planning benefit of substantial weight. **Substantial weight**;
- Provision of a 72 bed care home to address an identified shortfall. **Significant weight**;
- There are a range of economic benefits which would be delivered through the development proposals. These comprise the following:
 - It is anticipated that a total of 60-70 operational jobs will be created by the development on-site comprising workers from the proposed care home;
 - Construction and Supply Chain Job Creation – According to research by Lichfields on behalf of the Home Builders Federation¹, approximately 778 new construction jobs,

including 9 apprentices, graduates or trainees would be created directly and indirectly through the supply chain from a development of 224 dwellings;

- Increased Footfall and Expenditure in Bradford on Avon - Once operational, the development would sustain indirect economic benefits as a consequence of the increased population within Bradford on Avon due to the additional footfall that this would generate within the commercial premises in the town and elsewhere. An estimate using the calculator on the HBF website puts this at £450,000 in council tax revenue;
- Estimated CIL revenue for the local authority of £894,880 million (based upon 112 market homes at national average property size of 94m²); and
- £199,136 in additional council tax revenue per annum once fully operational (Band D, 2018 rates, market housing only).

These economic benefits arising from the development proposals should collectively be afforded **significant weight**;

- Community sports pitch provision (0.66 hectares) to help address local need. **Moderate weight**;
- The proposals provide for the substantial provision of green infrastructure and open space. A total of 22ha of open space is identified on the application site; including a country park incorporating recreational walking routes; natural green space; allotments; community orchard and a range of play spaces including LAPs and LEAPs. The new housing is linked to the open space through a network of safe pedestrian routes, and cycle links, which will encourage its use as a recreational resource, and supporting healthy lifestyles. There are public rights of way which provide attractive options for walking and cycling from the site, both for pleasure and in accessing further transport connections. **Significant weight**;
- The proposals will result in a net biodiversity gain through the retention and enhancement of existing habitats, and creation of new habitats alongside delivery of a range of ecological mitigation and enhancement measures. An indicative Biodiversity Metric has been supplied which

shows that the development as proposed will deliver a substantial 46.63% net gain for habitats and a 33.91% net gain for hedgerows. **Moderate weight;**

- Improvement works to Trowbridge Road as a result of the provision of the new access . These improvements include the following.
 - The proposed vehicular access will provide multi-modal access into the site, with 2-metre wide footway continuing internally into the site along the internal road network. An informal crossing arrangement in the form of dropped kerbs and tactile paving will also be provided at the proposed site access.
 - Whilst the proposed site access supports multi-modal access, an additional pedestrian access point will be provided on Trowbridge Road, located immediately north of the site access and catering for the desire line into the site. This pedestrian connection will route into the site connecting to the pedestrian network. The pedestrian access and footpath connection will be 2-metres wide.
 - To connect future residents, visitors and staff to the western desire line to Moulton Drive, an uncontrolled pedestrian crossing arrangement is proposed directly between the proposed site access and Moulton drive junctions. The proposed crossing arrangement will be supported by a refuge island, dropped kerbs and tactile paving.
 - It is also proposed to widen the existing footway on the northeastern side of Trowbridge Road to 2m. The footway is currently narrower than this, albeit this is predominantly due to vegetation and with increased maintenance a 2m could be provided. This will enhance connectivity and the appeal of this route for pedestrians. **Moderate weight;**

8.6 There are a considerable number and range of benefits associated with delivery of the application proposals. Whilst these individual benefits will have different weights in the planning balance, the overall benefit is deemed to be substantial.

9. Conclusions and Planning Balance

9. Conclusions and Planning Balance

- 9.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Savills on behalf of the Applicants in support of an outline planning application for a residential-led development at Land off Trowbridge Road, Bradford on Avon. The proposals comprise the development of up to 224 residential dwellings (of which 50% - 112 dwellings, will be affordable, a 72 bed care home, community sports pitch provision, mobility hub, 12 hectare country park, allotments, landscaping and new public open space.
- 9.2 The development represents an exceptional opportunity to deliver a high quality new development as part of a sustainable expansion of Bradford on Avon, and this planning application confirms the suitability and deliverability of the proposals.
- 9.3 The Site is located within a sustainable location that is accessible by a range of sustainable transport modes. The Site is located immediately adjacent to one of the most sustainable settlements in Wiltshire, and one of the market towns which the adopted Core Strategy confirms has potential for *“significant development that will increase jobs and homes in order to help sustain and where necessary enhance their services and facilities and promote better levels of self-containment and viable sustainable communities”*.
- 9.4 The adopted Development Plan is severely out of date and there is a significant unmet housing need (market, affordable, and elderly) across the Wiltshire authority area. Indeed, the authority can only demonstrate a housing land supply of 2.42 years. The proposed development will assist in meeting this unmet need in the short term.
- 9.5 Indeed, there is currently no clear mechanism for addressing the housing land supply shortfall, particularly given the emerging Local Plan has recently failed with Inspectors confirming the plan should be withdrawn. Wiltshire Council will now need to prepare a new Local Plan which will take further years to prepare and adopt. In the meantime there will be an absence of plan-led allocations to boost housing delivery and as a result there is a need for suitable and available sites to come forward now to help deliver housing in the short term.
- 9.6 In terms of the Development Plan, the application proposals will support the delivery of the overall strategic housing requirement contained within the adopted Core Strategy at a sustainable location and in a

sustainable manner. It is therefore consistent with the 'Delivery Strategy' of Core Policy 2. However, at the present time the land is unallocated and falls outside of the defined settlement boundary. In this respect it is therefore contrary to the component of Core Policy 2 which applies to application proposals on land 'outside the defined limits of development'.

9.7 Other than Core Policy 2, the application proposals are considered to accord with the other policies of the Core Strategy. Indeed, given the identified conflict is limited to one aspect of Core Policy 2, it is considered that the application proposals are compliant with the Development Plan when read as a whole. This is supported by the fact that there are no adopted Development Plan policies relating to development in the Green Belt.

9.8 Notwithstanding, these policies are demonstrably out of date for the reasons explained in the preceding section of this Statement and only limited weight should be attached to the conflict in such circumstances. Instead, as confirmed in the previous section, the NPPF's 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' is engaged given the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date as a result of the absence of an up-to-date five year housing land supply (2.42 years).

9.9 For this application these include:

- Core Policy 1 (settlement strategy)
- Core Policy 2 (delivery strategy)
- Core Policy 7 (Spatial Strategy: Bradford on Avon Community Area)
- Policy H1 (Neighbourhood Plan)

9.10 The implication of the policies not being 'up to date' is that the weight attributed to these policies in the decision-making process is significantly diminished and Paragraph 11 of the Framework is engaged. The application should therefore be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development and paragraph 11(d).

9.11 The Applicant has demonstrated within this Statement that the Site is Grey Belt land. The NPPF (paragraph 155) is clear that residential development of Grey Belt land is not inappropriate in the Green

Belt where there is a need for housing, the site is in a sustainable location and the Golden Rules are met. The proposed development will deliver 50% affordable housing, provide necessary infrastructure and provide a significant amount of public open space (around 70% of the Site will be green and blue infrastructure). It is therefore considered that the development complies with the Golden Rules and significant weight in favour of the grant of permission should be applied.

9.12 Should Wiltshire Council not agree that the Site is Grey Belt land and NPPF paragraph 153 is triggered, then this Statement has demonstrated how VSCs exist to clearly outweigh harm to the Green Belt.

9.13 However, for the reasons explained in this Statement, it is our contention that there are few adverse effects arising from the development and that post-mitigation there would be only limited adverse impacts arising from the grant of planning permission. These are:

- traffic impacts, the results of the junction capacity assessment have demonstrated whilst there will be an increase in traffic flows at surveyed junctions as a result of the proposed development, that the site access and the traffic generated by the proposed development on the highway network will not result in a severe cumulative residual impact on the operation of junctions, this adverse impact is also therefore attributed only **limited weight**.
- a change in the landscape character, inherent in the development of greenfield land. Since the land is not subject to any landscape or heritage designations, and the landscape led nature of the scheme means there is significant mitigation to soften the impact of built form on the surrounding area, this adverse impact is also therefore attributed only **limited weight**.
- Grade 3 and 4 agricultural land – the proposals will result in the loss of some grade 3 agricultural land as well as some grade 4 land. This should be attributed **limited weight** in the planning balance.
- Impact on heritage assets. – no impacts on the adjacent Grade II listed milestone, and very small adverse effect upon the special interest of the Grade II listed Widbrook Bridge (at the lowest end of 'less than substantial'), When applying the test set out in paragraph 215 of the Framework, it is considered that the public benefits of the application proposals, as set out fully in this Statement, clearly outweigh the very small adverse effects identified upon Widbrook Bridge. In addition, a Written Scheme of Investigation for a programme of archaeological evaluation trenching has been approved by

the Wiltshire Council Archaeology Service, and the evaluation trenches will be carried out in the determination period of the application, with the results provided once available. Overall, even taking account of the great weight to be afforded to the conservation of designated heritage assets, the adverse impacts should be attributed **limited weight**.

9.14 On the other side of the tilted balance are the benefits of the proposed development which are summarised in this Statement. These benefits are considered to be wide-ranging and significant, and in many cases inextricably linked to the sustainability of the proposed development. They include:

- Compliance with the Golden Rules – **Significant weight**;
- Delivering the housing requirement for Wiltshire and contributing to achieving a five year housing land supply – **Substantial weight**.
- The delivery of up to 112 affordable homes (50%), in the context of a significant demand locally for affordable housing - **Substantial weight**.
- Housing for the elderly – **Significant weight**;
- Economic benefits arising from the development (including the creation of permanent jobs) – **Significant weight**;
- Community sports pitch provision / Mobility Hubs – **Moderate weight**;
- Public Open Space – **Significant weight**;
- Biodiversity improvements, including a net gain of 46.63% habitat units, and 33.91% hedgerow units.– **Moderate weight**; and
- Highways improvements - **Moderate weight**

9.15 The development would result in a sustainable form of development which would make a significant contribution towards meeting the housing needs of Wiltshire and it is evident from this evaluation that the public benefits arising from the proposed development would in fact outweigh the adverse impacts rather

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than *vice versa*. On that basis, and in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development, planning permission should be granted without delay.