



# Land West of Kidmore End Road, Oxfordshire

Planning and Affordable Housing Statement

**Boyer**

Prepared on behalf of Fairfax (Reading) Ltd and RGC (SODC) Ltd | April 25

REPORT CONTROL

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## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

|                                                       |           |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>1. Introduction</b>                                | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>2. Site and Surrounding Context</b>                | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>3. Proposed Development</b>                        | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>4. Pre-Application Engagement</b>                  | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>5. Policy Context</b>                              | <b>9</b>  |
| <b>6. Planning Assessment</b>                         | <b>17</b> |
| <b>7. Proposed s106 Heads of Terms</b>                | <b>31</b> |
| <b>8. Conclusion</b>                                  | <b>32</b> |
| <b>Appendix One – Off Site Landscape Concept Plan</b> | <b>34</b> |

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Planning and Affordable Housing Statement has been prepared by Boyer on behalf of Fairfax (Reading) Ltd and Reading Golf Club (SODC) Ltd in support of an outline planning application with all matters reserved, save for access, for development proposals at Land West of Kidmore End, Oxfordshire ('the Site').
- 1.2 This planning application seeks outline planning permission for the erection of up to 70 new homes together with associated access, car parking, open space and landscaping.
- 1.3 The proposal includes the delivery of up to 42 market homes and up to 28 affordable homes (40%), the delivery of a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) significantly in excess of that required by the Environment Act, new areas of publicly accessible open space and provision of economic benefits in relation to construction of the development and longer-term spending and jobs.
- 1.4 This Planning Statement assesses the proposal against the development plan and other material considerations relevant to the consideration and determination of the application and demonstrates why planning permission should be granted. The Statement is structured as follows:
  - Section 2 – describes the Site and the surrounding context;
  - Section 3 – provides details of the proposed development;
  - Section 4 – summarises pre-application engagement;
  - Section 5 – provides an overview of relevant planning policy and guidance;
  - Section 6 – assesses the proposal against the development plan and material considerations; and
  - Section 7 – sets out the proposed S106 heads of terms;
  - Section 8 - provides a summary and conclusion.
- 1.5 The following documents are submitted to support the planning application:
  - Design and Access Statement – prepared by Paul Hewett Architects;
  - Air Quality Assessment – prepared by Pinnacle;
  - Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment – prepared by Ecology Co-op;
  - Ecological Impact Assessment – prepared by Ecology Co-op;
  - Landscape Masterplan– prepared by Fabrik;
  - Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment – prepared by Fabrik;
  - Landscape Maintenance Management Specification – prepared by Fabrik;
  - Landscape Statement – prepared by Fabrik;

- Energy Statement – prepared by Pinnacle;
- Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy – prepared by Aqua Terra;
- Land Quality Desk Study- prepared by Aqua Terra;
- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment – prepared by Fabrik;
- Transport Assessment – prepared by SDP;
- Framework Travel Plan – prepared by SDP;
- Tree Survey/ Arboricultural Impact Assessment – prepared by Arbotrack;
- Archaeological Assessment - prepared by UCL;
- Geophysical Survey Report - prepared by Sumo;
- Statement of Community Involvement – prepared by Fairthorn.

1.6 The submitted drawings for approval are as follows:

- Site Location Plan (ref: 2507-PL01 revB)
- Parameters Plan (ref: 2507-PL03 revA)
- Site Access Arrangements (ref: DR-D-353 P1)

1.7 In addition to the above we have prepared an illustrative layout which is contained within the supporting Design and Access Statement.

## 2. SITE AND SURROUNDING CONTEXT

- 2.1 The Site, which totals approximately 5.9 ha, is situated immediately to the west of Kidmore End Road. The Site forms part of the land formerly occupied by Reading Golf Club (which ceased operations in 2020). However, whilst forming part of the former Reading Golf Club the Site is situated within the administrative boundary of South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC). The district boundary with Reading Borough Council forms the southern edge of the Site.
- 2.2 The area to the south of the Site is within Reading Borough Council (RBC) and comprises a large part of the former Golf Club where planning permission was granted for 223 new homes in 2022 (refs: 21/1843, 22/1312 & 22/0390).
- 2.3 This permission is currently in the process of being implemented and is particularly relevant in relation to the proposed development, since it would serve as the proposed means of access (and emergency access) to the Site. Therefore, duplicate planning applications have been submitted to SODC and RBC in order to obtain planning permission for the proposed access (which falls within RBC) as well as the residential development itself (which is situated within SODC).
- 2.4 To the west and east of the Site is existing residential development, characterised primarily by two storey low density housing. The Site is therefore bounded on three sides by residential development. To the north of the Site is Cucumber Wood, an area of Ancient Woodland, which forms part of a Conservation Target area.
- 2.5 The Site is located on the northern edge of Reading and is within easy walking distance to bus stops on Kidmore End Road and Grove Road, which is served by bus routes that provide connections to Reading town centre and Reading railway station. Reading Town Centre offers a range of services and facilities whilst the railway station provides regular connections to a range of destinations including London Paddington, Bristol Temple Meads, Oxford, Southampton Central, and Birmingham New Street.
- 2.6 There are also a range of services and facilities within walking distance to the Site. These include a primary school, a youth and community centre, a doctor's surgery, open spaces, various shops, restaurants and pubs. Further information on the proximity of local services and facilities is set out within the supporting Transport Assessment.
- 2.7 In respect of heritage, the Site does not contain any statutorily or locally listed structures and is not located within a Conservation Area. The closest heritage assets are to the southwest of the Site and include the Grade II Listed Old Grove House and a Grade II listed Barn to the northeast of Old Grove.
- 2.8 The Site is located within Flood Zone 1, which carries the lowest risk of flooding.

### 3. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 3.1 The Proposed Development seeks outline planning permission for up to 70 new homes (40% affordable) together with associated access, car parking, open space and landscaping.
- 3.2 The rationale of the proposed design is explained fully in the accompanying Design and Access Statement (DAS). However, the key considerations are summarised below, with further information shown on the accompanying Illustrative Site Masterplan (included within the DAS).
- 3.3 Vehicular access will be provided to the south of the Site through the new housing development currently under construction. The proposed development would provide additional pedestrian and cycle connections, the detail of which would be set out within the subsequent reserved matters application. These connections would improve access to the National Cycle Network and the wider countryside beyond the Site.
- 3.4 An Illustrative Masterplan has been prepared which illustrates that the Site is capable of accommodating 70 new homes. It is envisaged that this will comprise a mix of tenures and sizes, however the proposed mix and tenure split of the market and affordable housing will be secured at the Reserved Matters stage.
- 3.5 Open space, including an equipped play area, is proposed within the eastern part of the Site. A landscaped buffer is proposed along the southern and western edges of the Site (as well as along the edge of the Ancient Woodland) with the proposals capable of delivering a 40% increase in biodiversity net gain.
- 3.6 In summary, the proposals comprise the following elements which will deliver several benefits, namely:
- Delivery of up to 70 new high-quality homes, comprising a mix of housing types, which will make a valuable contribution to the supply of housing in the borough and help to remedy the current housing shortfall in the area;
  - Provision of up to 28 affordable homes (40%) of various tenures that will provide local people with an opportunity to get on the housing ladder, either to rent or to buy;
  - Biodiversity and landscaping enhancements that will enable the development to deliver a 40% biodiversity net gain;
  - Provision of new publicly accessible open space including a new landscaped play area;
  - Enhanced pedestrian and cycle permeability and improved accessibility to the National Cycle Network;
  - Economic benefits including increased spend from new residents and new constructed related employment opportunities.

## 4. PRE-APPLICATION ENGAGEMENT

- 4.1 In accordance with best practice, pre-application engagement with planning officers, key stakeholders and the local community has been undertaken which has informed the evolution of the scheme proposals. This engagement is summarised below.

### **Pre-Application Engagement with South Oxfordshire District Council**

- 4.2 A pre-application request was submitted to SODC in September 2022 and a meeting between SODC and the applicant was held on site and over teams in October 2022 (P22/S3394/PEJ). The proposals during the pre-application stage were based on a scheme of 100 homes with vehicular access taken from Kidmore End Road.
- 4.3 In respect to the principle of development, planning officers raised concern that the proposed development of up to 100 dwellings would conflict with policies STRAT1 (The Overall Strategy) and H1 (New Homes) within the South Oxfordshire Local Plan, as well as Policy LCI of the Kidmore End Neighbourhood Development Plan. It is relevant to note that at the time of the pre-app SODC was able to demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply which no longer is the case, a matter which we consider further in the planning assessment section of this statement (which also addresses issues associated with the conflict with the Neighbourhood Plan).
- 4.4 Officers also raised concerns with the scale of proposed development along with the proposed means of access and the impact that this would have on landscape character. Following the pre-application feedback, the layout of the scheme has been revised to reduce the amount of proposed new homes whilst the proposed means of access via the development to the south has allowed for the eastern part of the site to remain open. In general, officers considered that the other technical matters were capable of being addressed through detailed design. All of these matters are considered further in the planning assessment section.

### **Community Engagement**

- 4.5 As the proposals were being developed, a programme of public consultation was undertaken to engage the local community and relevant stakeholders, as summarised below. Residents and other important local stakeholders were given the opportunity to provide feedback regarding the proposals via a host of different channels. To support this application, a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) has been prepared by Fairthorn.
- 4.6 The SCI sets out that residents and stakeholders were given the opportunity to submit comments on the proposals through a freephone information line and project email address. A virtual consultation was also available on the project website, which had all the features of a traditional 'drop-in session', along with a feedback form for visitors to complete. This consultation was promoted by a community flyer, which also provided details of how to receive paper copies of the information if residents or stakeholders were unable to access the internet. In total, 77 responses were received; 63 forms were submitted via the project website along with 14 email responses. The issues identified within the comments are set out in detail in the SCI and summarised below.

- 4.7 Several respondents acknowledged positive elements, particularly the focus on environmental and sustainability initiatives. However, concerns were also expressed primarily regarding the fundamental suitability of developing the land, the potential for increased traffic congestion, and whether existing infrastructure could effectively support a larger population.
- 4.8 In relation to the suitability of developing land, concerns were raised in regard to the loss of the natural green space and the encroachment into the countryside, as well as whether there is a need for the residential development. As assessed in further detail the proposed development is considered to constitute a logical extension to the existing residential development which surrounds the Site; the Site is surrounded on three sides by existing or partly completed built form and represents a parcel of undeveloped land with no current functional use. In terms of housing need, as will be explained SODC are unable to demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply.
- 4.9 Feedback concerning the potential for increased traffic congestion was also received with comments showing concern about the local road network being able to sustain additional development. The Transport Assessment which has been submitted as part of this application provides an assessment of the traffic impact of the proposal and finds that the proposed development can be accommodated without any significant detrimental impact on the local transport network.
- 4.10 The suitability of existing infrastructure was a theme within the feedback, with comments stating that investment in local services is required. If planning permission were to be granted, then contributions would be secured through Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) which would mitigate the impact on existing infrastructure.

## 5. POLICY CONTEXT

- 5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) requires that planning applications are determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.2 The Statutory Development Plan for SODC comprises the following documents:
- South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011-2035 (Adopted December 2020)
  - Kidmore End Neighbourhood Plan (Made September 2022)
- 5.3 The Council have submitted their emerging Joint Local Plan (with Vale of White Horse) to the Secretary of State (Regulation 22) in December 2024 with examination hearing sessions due to commence in June 2025. However, as there are many unresolved objections and the Plan has not yet been examined, it is considered that policies within this Plan currently hold no more than limited weight. On this basis, the Planning Assessment section below focuses only on policies contained within the adopted Development Plan.
- 5.4 Additionally, the Statutory Development Plan for RBC council comprises the following Documents:
- Reading Borough Local Plan (Adopted November 2019)

### National Planning Policy

#### National Planning Policy Framework (2024)

- 5.5 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was updated in December 2024 and sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It forms part of the overall framework of national planning policy and is a material consideration in decisions on planning applications. The NPPF aims to achieve sustainable development with paragraph 8 stating that there are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental.
- 5.6 Paragraph 11 states that LPAs should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development which means that, where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out of date, permission should be granted unless any adverse impact of doing so would significantly outweigh the benefits. Footnote 7 sets out that the presumption could be disengaged for protected areas, including habitats sites and Sites of Special Scientific Interest, which provide a strong reason for development to be refused (none of which apply to the site).
- 5.7 Paragraph 14 sets out that in cases where the presumption in favour of sustainable development applies to housing-related applications, the negative impact of approving development that conflicts with the neighbourhood plan is likely to clearly and significantly outweigh the benefits, provided the following conditions are met: a) the neighbourhood plan became part of the development plan no more than five years before the decision date; and b)

the neighbourhood plan includes policies and allocations to address its identified housing needs.

- 5.8 In respect to housing, paragraph 61 sets out that to support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes; it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed. Paragraph 64 states where a need for affordable housing is identified, planning policies should specify the type of affordable housing required and expect it to be met on-site.
- 5.9 Chapter 8 seeks to promote healthy and safe communities and highlights the importance of promoting social interaction, including through mixed-use developments and for street layouts that allow for easy pedestrian and cycle connections within and between neighbourhoods. It also seeks to enable and support healthy lifestyles, for example through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure.
- 5.10 Chapter 9, entitled 'Promoting Sustainable Transport', highlights that transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making and development proposals, using a vision-led approach to identify transport solutions that deliver well-designed, sustainable and popular places (Para 109). Paragraph 110 emphasises the need for significant developments to be situated within sustainable locations, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport.
- 5.11 Paragraph 115 requires sustainable transport modes to be prioritised; safe and suitable access for all users; the design of streets, parking areas, other transport elements and the content of associated standards to reflect current national guidance; and any significant impacts from the development on the transport network (in terms of capacity and congestion), or on highway safety, can be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree through a vision-led approach.
- 5.12 Chapter 11 seeks to make effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions. Paragraph 125(a) encourages multiple benefits from both urban and rural land, including through mixed-use schemes and taking opportunities to achieve net environmental gains, such as development that would enable new habitat creation or improve access to the countryside.
- 5.13 Paragraph 131 sets out that the creation of high-quality buildings and places is fundamental, and good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Paragraph 135 states that planning decisions should ensure developments will function well and add to the overall quality of the area; are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping; are sympathetic to local character and history; establish or maintain a strong sense of place; optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development; and create places that *are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being*.
- 5.14 Paragraph 136 emphasises the importance of trees in making an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments and also helping to mitigate and adapt to climate

change. It encourages opportunities to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments and that existing trees are retained wherever possible.

- 5.15 Chapter 14 seeks to meet the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change. Paragraph 170 directs development away from areas at highest risk of flooding (existing or future).
- 5.16 Chapter 15 is concerned with conserving and enhancing the natural environment. Paragraph 187 advises that decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment, including through minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, and establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures and incorporating features which support priority or threatened species.
- 5.17 Part (C) of Paragraph 193 outlines 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.

## Local Planning Policy

### South Oxfordshire District Council

#### *South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011-2035 (SOLP)*

- 5.18 The relevant policies within the Local Plan are considered to include:
- 5.19 Policy STRAT1 (The Overall Strategy) states that the strategy for growth in South Oxfordshire is to focus development at Science Vale and sustainable settlements within the district. The strategy also includes meeting the unmet housing needs of Oxford City on sites near to where that need arises.
- 5.20 Policy STRAT2 (South Oxfordshire Housing and Employment Requirements) sets housing and employment requirements across the plan period. It seeks to deliver 23,550 homes, including 4,950 homes to address Oxford's unmet housing need, and the provision of 39.1 hectares of employment land. The policy specifies annual housing targets and includes provisions for monitoring and reviewing progress every five years.
- 5.21 Policy STRAT5 (Residential Densities) outlines that planning permission will only be granted where it can be demonstrated that the proposal optimises the use of land and potential of the site. This policy requires developments to include a mix of uses, support local facilities and transport networks. It further sets out that development density should consider site capacity, efficient land use, high-quality design, local constraints, accessibility to services, and minimising impacts on neighbouring properties.
- 5.22 Policy H1 (New Homes) outlines that residential development sites not allocated in the Development Plan will only be permitted under specific conditions, such as affordable housing, specialist housing for older people, development within built-up areas, infilling, brownfield sites, being brought forward through a Community Right to Build Order, or exceptional designs that

enhance the surroundings. Additionally, the Council will support development which provides for the residential needs of all parts of our community, including Gypsies, Travellers, Travelling Showpeople, caravan dwellers and boat dwellers

- 5.23 Policy H9 (Affordable Housing) sets out that the Council requires 40% affordable housing on sites with a net gain of 10 or more dwellings, or 5 or more in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and 50% on sites adjacent to Oxford City. Proposals where affordable housing is required must consider viability, tenure mix, and should meet required standards and be of a size and type which meets the requirements of those in housing need. Additionally, Affordable housing should blend with market housing and be evenly distributed.
- 5.24 Policy H11 (Housing Mix) aims to promote a mix of dwelling types and sizes to meet the needs of current and future households will be sought on all new developments.
- 5.25 Policy INF1 (Infrastructure Provision) sets out that new development must be served and supported by appropriate on-site and off-site infrastructure and services, either already in place or provided within an agreed timescale. Developers must contribute to infrastructure needs through planning obligations, conditions, or funding mechanisms like the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Existing infrastructure must be considered, and early engagement with providers is necessary to address any required changes.
- 5.26 Policy TRANS2 (Promoting Sustainable Transport and Accessibility) details that the Council will collaborate with Oxfordshire County Council and others to enhance public transport services near new developments, plan rail improvements, encourage walking and cycling, and support sustainable transport measures. The Council aims to improve safety and air quality through the encouragement of sustainable modes of transport, manage car parking effectively, and ensure accessibility for all users, including those with impaired mobility.
- 5.27 Policy INF4 (Water Resources) mandates all development proposals must demonstrate that there is or will be adequate water supply, surface water, foul drainage and sewerage treatment capacity to serve the whole development.
- 5.28 Policy ENV1 (Landscape and Countryside) outlines that South Oxfordshire's landscape, countryside and rural areas will be protected against harmful development. Development will only be permitted where it protects and, where possible enhances, features that contribute to the nature and quality of South Oxfordshire's landscapes.
- 5.29 Policy ENV2 (Biodiversity - Designated Sites, Priority Habitats and Species) that development that may directly or indirectly harm Local Wildlife Sites, Nature Reserves, Priority Habitats, Protected Species, Geological Sites, Ecological Networks, important hedgerows, ancient woodlands, or veteran trees will only be permitted if the benefits outweigh the adverse effects, no alternative site is feasible, and mitigation or compensation measures are provided.
- 5.30 Policy ENV3 (Biodiversity) supports development that conserves, restores, and enhances biodiversity, requiring a net gain where possible and no net loss as a minimum.

- 5.31 Policy ENV5 (Green Infrastructure in New Developments) outlines that development will be expected to contribute towards the provision of additional Green Infrastructure and protect or enhance existing Green Infrastructure.
- 5.32 Policy ENV11 (Pollution - Impact from Existing and/ or Previous Land Uses on New Development (Potential Receptors of Pollution) states that development proposals should be appropriate to their location and should be designed to ensure that the occupiers of a new development will not be subject to individual and/or cumulative adverse effect(s) of pollution.
- 5.33 Policy ENV12 (Pollution - Impact of Development on Human Health, the Natural Environment and/or Local Amenity (Potential Sources of Pollution) outlines that Development proposals should be located in sustainable locations and should be designed to ensure that they will not result in significant adverse impacts on human health, the natural environment and/or the amenity of neighbouring uses.
- 5.34 Policy EP1 (Air Quality) aims to protect public health from poor air quality by requiring development to follow the Council's guidance and national air quality standards.
- 5.35 Policy EP4 (Flood Risk) aims to minimise flood risk by directing development to areas with low flood probability, managing all sources of flood risk, and ensuring development does not increase flooding elsewhere.
- 5.36 Policy DES1 (Delivering High Quality Development) mandates that all new developments must be of high-quality design.
- 5.37 Policy DES2 (Enhancing Local Character) states that all new development must be designed to reflect the positive features that make up the character of the local area and should both physically and visually enhance and complement the surroundings.
- 5.38 Policy DES3 (Design and Access Statements) requires applications to include a Design and Access Statement that demonstrates adherence to the South Oxfordshire Design Guide. The statement should be proportional to the proposal's scale and complexity, detailing the design evolution, constraints and opportunities, implementation phases, and community consultation.
- 5.39 Policy DES4 (Masterplans for Allocated Sites and Major Development) states that for outline applications for major development proposals must be accompanied by an illustrative masterplan.
- 5.40 Policy DES5 (Outdoor Amenity Space) requires all new dwellings to have private or shared outdoor amenity spaces, appropriately sized based on the dwelling and surrounding development. These spaces should not be overlooked by adjacent rooms or compromised by shading from buildings or trees. Proposals must integrate the design of gardens and outdoor spaces from the outset, ensuring they are not affected by parking areas or garages.
- 5.41 Policy DES6 (Residential Amenity) sets out that development proposals must show they won't significantly harm neighbouring amenities, considering factors like privacy, daylight, visual intrusion, noise, emissions, pollution, and external lighting.

- 5.42 Policy DES7 (Efficient Use of Resources) states that new development proposals are required to make provision for the effective use and protection of natural resources.
- 5.43 Policy DES8 (Promoting Sustainable Design) promotes sustainable design in new developments by minimising carbon and energy impacts and enhancing resilience to climate change. Proposals must demonstrate adaptability and functionality, and the Council supports outstanding or innovative designs that raise sustainability standards.
- 5.44 Policy DES9 (Renewable and Low Carbon Energy) supports renewable and low carbon energy generation at all scales, including domestic schemes, and encourages their incorporation in all developments.
- 5.45 Policy DES10 (Carbon Reduction) requires residential developments to achieve a 40% reduction, increasing to 50% by 2026 and 100% by 2030. An energy statement is required to be submitted for all new build residential developments to demonstrate compliance with this policy.
- 5.46 Policy CF5 (Open Space, Sport and Recreation in New Residential Development) mandates that new residential developments provide or contribute to inclusive and accessible open spaces, play facilities, and sport and recreation amenities, following current standards and guidelines. It also requires on-site delivery of these facilities and ensures long-term maintenance and management plans are agreed upon during the planning application process.

*Kidmore End Neighbourhood Development Plan (KENDP)*

- 5.47 The relevant policies within the Neighbourhood plan include the following:
- 5.48 Infill Policy (LCI) supports infill development within the villages of Kidmore End, Gallowstree Common and Tokers Green, provided that development proposals adhere with design and development management policies within the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan. Proposals for infill development proposals should conserve the character of the relevant village and be designed to reflect the positive features that make up the character of the relevant village.
- 5.49 Additionally, Policy LCI outlines that Proposals for development outside of the built-up area of these villages will only be supported if they are appropriate to a countryside location and are consistent with the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan.
- 5.50 Separation of Settlements Policy (LCSS) states that development proposals in the KENDP should demonstrate that the character of any particular settlement is retained, and that a physical and visual separation is maintained between the different settlements.
- 5.51 Quiet Lanes Policy (LCQL) outlines that development proposals should preserve, and where practicable enhance, the rural character of the lanes and roads linking the settlements in the Separation of Settlements Policy (LCSS). It further states that Development proposals will be supported subject to other development plan policies provided that, individually or cumulatively, they would not result in an extended linear form of development along a road which would be out of keeping with the historic nucleated development form of the settlements.

- 5.52 Local Valued Landscape Policy (LPLV) makes reference to the Kidmore End Parish Local Valued Landscape in Map 4 of the KENDP. The policy states that Development proposals should protect and where practicable enhance the physical and visual attributes of the character, quality and appearance of this valued landscape.
- 5.53 General Design Principles Policy (LCDPG) outlines that proposed development should complement, reinforce and where practicable enhance the local distinctiveness of the relevant settlement. Where appropriate, development proposals should be designed to enhance the landscape setting of these settlements.
- 5.54 Safety for All Road Users Policy (LTSRU) outlines that Proposed developments should not cause an unacceptable reduction in road safety including that of pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders and other road users. Development proposals should consider their impact on traffic, road safety, and the existing road system, ensuring any mitigation measures are in harmony with the rural character of the parish.
- 5.55 Preservation of Footpaths, Bridleways and Tracks Policy (LTPFBT) sets out that proposed development should protect the existing rights of way network and their ambience and provide enhancements, where possible, to the existing network.
- 5.56 Safe Access & Parking Policy (LTSAP) sets out that development proposals should provide off-road parking by delivering innovative and attractive arrangements which complement the character of the area, and which meet the County Council's standards. In particular, car parking provision should be designed to take account of the continuing lifecycle of the development.

#### *Supplementary Planning Documents*

- 5.57 SODC have several planning guidance documents, the documents of relevance to this application are listed below:
- Landscape Assessment SPG (2003)
  - Affordable Housing SPD (2004)

#### **Reading Borough Council**

##### *Reading Borough Local Plan (Adopted November 2019)*

- 5.58 The relevant policies within the Local Plan are considered to include:
- 5.59 Policy TR1 (Achieving the Transport Strategy) states that proposed developments must align with the objectives of the latest Local Transport Plan or its successors, including sub-strategies, specific projects, and local action plans. Major development proposals will only receive planning permission if they commit to enhancing sustainable transport facilities, such as promoting walking, cycling, and public transport, and implementing agreed travel plans and safe routes to local amenities.
- 5.60 Policy TR3 (Access, traffic and highway-related matters) states that in determining proposals involving a new or altered access onto the transport network, improvement works to the

transport network, the creation of new transport infrastructure or the generation of additional trips on the transport network, consideration will be given to the effect on safety, congestion and the environment. Proposals for new site access or increased use of existing access onto the Classified Highway Network will be unacceptable if they encourage short local trips or compromise traffic flow and safety.

- 5.61 Policy TR4 (Cycle Routes and Facilities) outlines that developments will be expected to make full use of opportunities to improve access for cyclists to, from and within the development and to integrate cycling through the provision of new facilities. Where opportunities exist, improvements to cycle routes, including the provision of connecting routes, and/or cycling facilities will be sought within developments within developments or through planning contributions.
- 5.62 Policy TR5 (Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging) states that Development should provide car parking and cycle parking that is appropriate to the accessibility of locations within the Borough to sustainable transport facilities, particularly public transport. Additionally, the policy promotes the provision of electric vehicle charging points.

## 6. PLANNING ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 This chapter assesses the development proposal against the relevant development plan policies and other material considerations. It addresses in turn the two key issues, with the first relating to the principle of development, and secondly other technical and development management considerations.

### Principle of Development

#### *Location of Development*

- 6.2 Policy STRAT1 (The Overall Strategy) states that the strategy for growth in South Oxfordshire is to focus development at Science Vale and sustainable settlements within the district. It was noted in the pre-application feedback that since the proposal would extend the neighbouring town of Reading, it would not fall within the strategy for growth outlined within this policy.
- 6.3 The strategy for housing within SODC is expanded on within Policy H1 (New Homes). This policy specifies that residential development will be permitted at sites allocated or carried forward by the SOLP, or those that are allocated within a Neighbourhood Plan. For residential development sites not allocated in the Development Plan, this policy outlines that this will only be permitted under specific conditions, such as affordable housing on a rural exception site, specialist housing for older people, development within built-up areas, infilling, brownfield sites, being brought forward through a Community Right to Build Order, or exceptional designs that enhance the surroundings. Whilst the proposed development would be capable of achieving a high-quality design it would not meet any of the exceptions set out in this Policy. On this basis, there would be conflict with Policy H1.
- 6.4 Additionally, Policy LCI of the KENDP states that development proposals located outside the villages of Kidmore End, Gallowstree Common, and Tokers Green will only be supported if they are suitable for a countryside setting and align with the SOLP. Since the Site lies beyond these village boundaries, it does not comply with this Policy.
- 6.5 On this basis, we acknowledge that there would be conflict with Policies STRAT 1, Policy H1 and Policy LC1. The weight to be attached to this conflict is considered below.
- 6.6 In determining the weight to be afforded to this non-compliance it is necessary to consider paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF which states that where the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date planning permission should be granted unless the application of policies in the NPPF that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusal or the adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.
- 6.7 The NPPF, at footnote 7, identifies protected areas and assets of particular importance whilst footnote 8 clarifies policies are out of date in circumstances where an LPA is unable to demonstrate a 5-year supply of deliverable sites or has a Housing Delivery Test result of less than 75%.

- 6.8 None of the protected areas or assets of particular importance identified by footnote 7 are applicable or adversely impacted by proposals whilst SODC cannot currently demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply. The most recent Housing Supply Position Statement (January 2025) identifies that the Council is only able to demonstrate a 4.5-year supply for the 2024-29 period.
- 6.9 In light of the above, as the Council are unable to demonstrate a sufficient housing land supply this means that the presumption in favour of sustainable development, as set out in paragraph 11(d)(ii), is applicable.
- 6.10 In light of the above, given that Policies STRAT 1, Policy H1 and Policy LC1 relate to the location and supply of new housing means that they can be considered out of date and as a consequence only limited weight can be attached to the conflict with these policies.
- 6.11 Notwithstanding the above, paragraph 14 of the NPPF outlines that in situations where the presumption applies (which it does in this case), the adverse impact of allowing development that conflicts with the neighbourhood plan is likely to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, provided the following apply:
- the neighbourhood plan became part of the development plan five years or less before the date on which the decision is made; and
  - the neighbourhood plan contains policies and allocations to meet its identified housing requirement.
- 6.12 Kidmore End Neighbourhood Plan was 'made' in September 2022 and so is currently less than 5 years old. As the Plan includes one housing allocation (which does not include the application site) means that it does benefit from the protection afforded by paragraph 14.
- 6.13 The following section carries out an assessment of other relevant material considerations and sets out a summary of the scheme benefits to reach a view on the presumption in favour in this case.

### **Material Considerations/ Scheme Benefits**

- 6.14 Notwithstanding the limit weight that should be attached to conflict with Policies STRAT 1, Policy H1 and Policy LC1, it is necessary to consider the implications of paragraph 14 of the NPPF. In the first instance it is relevant to consider the language of paragraph 14 which is not definitive i.e. the use of the word 'likely' is evident that there are circumstances whereby planning permission can be granted even where the tests of paragraph 14 are met. For the reasons set out below we consider that there are circumstances that, collectively, represent strong material considerations in favour of the proposed development.

### **Site Context**

- 6.15 The former Reading Golf Club straddles the Reading Borough and South Oxfordshire administrative boundaries whilst the landscape character differs across the different parts of the former golf course.

- 6.16 The part of the former golf course within Reading Borough and much of the application site is broadly level and heavily influenced by the existing urban area of Reading. This part of the former Golf Club is separated by Cucumber Wood (which is Ancient Woodland) from the remaining parts of the Club which has a distinct rolling topography and a stronger connection with the wider countryside beyond (as is set in detail within the supporting LVIA). The part of the Club within Reading has planning permission for residential which is in the process of being implemented. On this basis, the application site is surrounded (or will be) on three sides by residential development, is broadly level and separated by woodland from the wider countryside and has no current functional use. In all intents and purposes, development at the site would be seen as a modest extension to the already approved residential development and represent a natural rounding off of the existing urban area of Reading. This is reinforced by the fact that vehicular access will be from the south via the approved development.
- 6.17 Given the Site's proximity to existing residential development, whilst not located within the settlement boundary, the Site is within a sustainable location, with various local amenities in close proximity to the Site. Located at the end of Kidmore End Road is Emmer Green Local Centre which offers a range of services including a Post Office, pharmacy, supermarket, convenience store, hair salon/barbers, as well as cafés and takeaways. In addition, key facilities such as a GP surgery, primary schools, and the Highdown Secondary School and Sixth Form Centre are all within walking or cycling distance.
- 6.18 In regard to public transport, the Site is well-connected with three nearby bus routes. Bus service 25 links central Reading to Peppard Common, passing along Kidmore End Road and Courtenay Drive. Furthermore, pedestrian and cycling routes would be provided to Kidmore End Road and Highdown Hill Road providing easy access to the wider area. The sustainability of the site is considered to have been established by the fact that planning permission for major development was granted immediately to the south.
- 6.19 Overall, it is considered that the site characteristics and location means that it is distinct and separate from that of Kidmore End Parish as a whole and more closely aligned to that of Reading. As such, the proposed development would be entirely logical and would form a natural rounding off of the existing urban area. These characteristics are specific to the site meaning that development at the site would not set the precedent for future development elsewhere within the Parish. On this basis, it is considered that significant weight should be attached to these factors.

### **Need for Housing**

- 6.20 The delivery of housing is supported at all levels of policy. Paragraph 61 of the NPPF sets out the Government's objective to significantly boost the supply of homes. Local Plan Policy STRAT2 'South Oxfordshire Housing and Employment Requirements' sets out that that a total of 23,550 homes are required to be delivered over the plan period which translates into an annual housing requirement of 900 homes up to 2025/26 and 1,120 homes per annum for 2026/27 to 2031/32. It is important to highlight that these are minimum figures and so represent a floor, not a ceiling.

- 6.21 As set out above, SODC can only demonstrate a 4.5-year housing land supply meaning that the presumption in favour of sustainable development is applicable. This position is different to that when pre-application discussions took place and when Kidmore End Neighbourhood Plan was prepared. Kidmore End is identified as a Smaller Village and Gallowstree Common and Tokers Green are identified as Other Villages in the adopted Local Plan. On this basis it is acknowledged that housing allocations were not required in the neighbourhood area. Paragraph 4.37 of the Local Plan provides a context to Policy H8 (Smaller Villages). It sets out that:

*‘Smaller Villages, as defined in the settlement hierarchy (Appendix 7), have no defined requirement to contribute towards delivering additional housing (beyond windfall and infill development) to meet the overall housing requirement of South Oxfordshire. **There is a sufficient supply of housing from strategic allocations and from existing planning permissions**, which means that the less sustainable settlements will not be required to offset the housing requirement’ (our emphasis).*

- 6.22 In light of the current supply of new housing it is evident that there is not a ‘sufficient supply’ from other sources. In addition, and as outlined in paragraphs 6.16-6.19 the proposals would be seen as an extension of Reading and would be in a sustainable location. Furthermore, as part of the Government’s stated desire to deliver 1.5m new homes in the current Parliament alongside the publication of the new NPPF, changes were made to the methodology of the standard method which based on this increases the annual housing requirement within SODC to 1,242 new homes per annum (an increase from 579 new homes per annum under the previous iteration of the standard method). As it currently stands, the current Local Plan will be more than 5 years old from December 2025 (and so out-of-date) meaning that the standard method will form the basis of calculating whether the Council has a 5-year housing land supply. Whilst it may be the case that the Council is in a position to adopt its new Local Plan in the interim, the direction of travel is clear in that housing requirements will increase which reiterates the need to deliver new housing on appropriately located sites.

- 6.23 Overall, SODC has a housing land shortfall which is adversely affecting the availability and affordability of housing. It is considered that a rigorous application of the spatial strategy would undermine attempts to remedy this situation, especially on a site which constitutes a logical extension to existing approved residential development. The delivery of proposed new market housing will make a valuable contribution to the supply of housing in SODC which should attract substantial weight in the decision-making process. Furthermore, as set out below the proposals would deliver a number of scheme benefits.

#### *Affordable Housing*

- 6.24 There is a pressing need for new affordable homes in the District which is identified by the Council’s Joint Housing Needs Assessment (JHNA)(2024) which set out the affordable housing need within the District (and the Vale of White Horse).

- 6.25 The JNHA assessed various different scenarios and identified that for the draft Local Plan period (2021-2041) there was a need for between 2,332 and 10,082 new homes<sup>1</sup> which constituted between 20% and 87% of the standard method housing requirement (as it was at that time). It is acknowledged within the Council's Local Plan Topic Paper that the Council will need to balance the aspiration of addressing the full need alongside how other aspirations of the Plan are met. In short it is accepted by the Council that affordable housing needs are significant and will remain unmet in full.
- 6.26 The Council's current Housing Delivery Strategy<sup>2</sup> reiterates the need to deliver additional affordable housing and underlines the increasing unaffordability of housing and accepts that buying a house in the area will be out of reach of most households on average earnings. Whilst somewhat dated the Strategy illustrates that as of 2020 the District had an affordability ratio of 12.07 (for a mid-point average cost of purchasing a home) which increased to 12.55 (for the lowest quartile of earnings seeking to purchase the lowest quartile of homes). A ratio of more than 4 is typically considered to be unaffordable. It is noted in the Strategy that the trend for these ratios is to increase as house prices continue to rise faster than earnings.
- 6.27 This level of unaffordability highlights that the supply of new homes has not kept pace with demand which underlines the importance of delivering new affordable homes on appropriate sites. Another key metric to understand demand is the number of households currently on the Council's housing register.
- 6.28 We are aware that in respect to other proposals for residential development in the District<sup>3</sup>, Freedom of Information requests<sup>4</sup> have been submitted to the Council to understand the number of households currently on the Council's housing register. The results of these requests are set out in the tables below:

| Current Bedroom Need | On 1 September 2023 | On 1 September 2024 |
|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 1                    | 1,727               | 1,910               |
| 2                    | 729                 | 757                 |
| 3                    | 428                 | 488                 |
| 4                    | 158                 | 170                 |
| Total                | 3,042               | 3,325               |

- 6.29 The above table highlights the significant unmet need for affordable homes across all sizes, particularly smaller properties, all of which have continued to increase. The average waiting times for the following types of affordable housing across the District were as follows:

<sup>1</sup> Table 2, Joint Local Plan Housing Topic Paper

<sup>2</sup> [Housing Delivery Strategy](#)

<sup>3</sup> Land north of New Road, Shillingford, Wallingford

<sup>4</sup> FOI 23/646 SOUTH & FOI 24/906 SOUTH

|                  | On 1 September 2022 | On 1 September 2023 | On 1 September 2024 |
|------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 1 bed dwellings  | 321 days            | 515 days            | 671 days            |
| 2 bed dwellings  | 609 days            | 333 days            | 459 days            |
| 3 bed dwellings  | 774 days            | 1,025 days          | 646 days            |
| 4+ bed dwellings | No data             | 842 days            | No data             |

- 6.30 The data above confirms that there is a significant number of people on the housing register in South Oxfordshire and that over the last three years the wait to get into a property has increased for one bed dwellings and has fluctuated but remains at around two years for families trying to access three bed properties.
- 6.31 In summary, there is a significant identified need for new affordable homes which will continue to be unmet whilst housing within the District is increasingly unaffordable. As a consequence, the number of households on the Council's housing register continues to increase with significant wait times for suitable housing to become available. It is evident that the mismatch between supply and demand continues to widen with real world implications around the ability of residents to be able to access safe and secure homes.
- 6.32 The proposed development, which will deliver up to 28 affordable homes (40%), in accordance with Policy H9 of the Local Plan, will make a positive contribution towards addressing this shortfall. This provision should be seen as a significant benefit of the scheme, supporting the delivery of much-needed affordable housing in the district and therefore be afforded very substantial weight.

#### *Biodiversity and Landscaping Enhancements*

- 6.33 The proposals have been landscape led and together with forming a natural rounding off the urban area seeks to provide new publicly accessible open space (the golf course having been previously private) together with landscaping enhancements. New equipped areas of play will be provided for a variety of age groups whilst new recreational routes and connections to the wider area will be delivered.
- 6.34 Alongside the provision of this open space, it is intended that to achieve biodiversity net gain an area to the north of the site, within the ownership of the applicant, will be planted with a variety of species type whilst at the same time providing new recreational opportunities (i.e. through the creation of new footpaths). This will provide an opportunity for both existing and new residents to formally access this land whilst providing connections between Highdown Hill Road and Kidmore End Road providing a circular route and encourage active lifestyles. It is envisaged that an obligation of the s106 agreement will be the preparation and agreement of a Landscape and Management Plan for this area which will set out the detail of how this area will be laid out and managed in the long term. Notwithstanding this, an initial concept plan has been prepared, a copy of which is attached at [Appendix 1](#).

- 6.35 In light of the above and as set out in the Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment, prepared by Ecology Co-Op, the proposals are capable of delivering a biodiversity net gain of 40% which exceeds that sought or required by national or local policy, SPD guidance or the Environment Act (10%). In addition, the scheme will retain mature trees and hedgerows where possible, alongside new planting which will enhance biodiversity, as well as generate visual interest. Together, these measures will create an attractive, green, and sustainable environment for future residents and the wider community.
- 6.36 Overall, the proposed development along with off-site mitigation will vastly improve the biodiversity, open space and landscaping offering in excess of policy standards and therefore in our view would represent a planning benefit of the scheme that should be afforded significant weight.

#### *Transport and Sustainability*

- 6.37 The proposed development is located in a sustainable location and is able to encourage access by non- car modes, with good levels of pedestrian connectivity to nearby amenities. The development has been designed to prioritise pedestrian movements and will ensure improved connectivity throughout the Site, enhancing east–west connectivity and providing improved access to the National Cycle Network for both existing residents and future occupants. As set out in the accompanying Transport Statement, prepared by SDP, a Travel Plan will be implemented to encourage the use of sustainable transport modes, aiming to reduce reliance on private car use by at least 10% compared to baseline estimates.
- 6.38 Additionally, as set out in the accompanying Energy and Sustainability Statement, prepared by Pinnacle, the development seeks to significantly reduce regulated carbon emissions targeting an improvement of over 70% above the 2021 Part L standard. This could be achieved through a combination of measures including high-performance insulation, the use of air source heat pumps for heating and hot water, roof-mounted photovoltaic panels, and the integration of smart grid infrastructure to manage peak energy demand. Additionally, low carbon construction techniques and materials could be used to minimise embodied carbon, ensuring that sustainability is embedded in both the construction and operation of the scheme.
- 6.39 Overall, the proposals are capable achieving a significant measurable carbon reduction over building regulations and have been designed to encourage active travel, representing a benefit that should be afforded moderate weight.

#### *Economic Benefits*

- 6.40 The proposal would generate economic benefits, both short term during the construction phase, and during the lifetime of the schemes. There would also be further economic benefit arising due to future residents spending in local shops and facilities. Collectively we consider that the economic benefits should be afforded moderate weight.

- 6.41 Overall, in addition to the delivery of new market housing it is considered that the proposals will deliver multiple benefits that individually should be afforded between moderate and very substantial weight in the decision-making process.

### **Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development: Summary**

- 6.42 The Council is unable to demonstrate a sufficient housing land supply meaning that the presumption in favour of sustainable development, as set out in paragraph 11(d)(ii) is engaged.
- 6.43 The Kidmore End Neighbourhood Plan is less than 5 years old and includes a housing allocation. On this basis, it benefits from the protections afforded by the NPPF. Notwithstanding this, there are a number of material considerations that weigh in favour of the proposals, namely the site's individual characteristics, the increasing need for new housing, along with the various benefits with the proposals (that individually should be afforded between moderate and very substantial weight in the decision-making process).
- 6.44 In light of the above we do not consider that, in this case, conflict with the Neighbourhood Plan would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the numerous benefits. In order to inform a view as to whether the proposals would result in any other adverse impact, a comprehensive suite of technical assessments has been undertaken which is summarised in the following section before a final view is reached in the conclusions.

### **Technical Considerations**

#### **Design**

- 6.45 Chapter 12 of the NPPF emphasises the importance of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings which is a key aspect of sustainable development. This is echoed in SOLP Policy DES1 'Delivering High Quality Development' and KEDNP Policy LCDPG 'General Design Principles' which set out that development must be of a high-quality design that uses land efficiently while respecting the existing landscape character and aligning with the surrounding properties.
- 6.46 As the application is outline, detailed matters relating to the layout, appearance, landscaping and scale of development will be the subject of a separate reserved matters application. Notwithstanding this, an illustrative layout has been prepared to illustrate how the Site could be developed to accommodate 70 new homes. This layout has evolved following the various technical assessments and demonstrates that the scale of the development proposed is deliverable and acceptable.
- 6.47 As set out in the Design and Access Statement, the proposed residential development has been carefully designed to ensure it integrates harmoniously with its surroundings, presenting a modest scale that does not negatively impact neighbouring properties or the existing landscape features. While specific design details will be addressed in the Reserved Matters application, it is anticipated that the new homes will predominantly be two storeys in height to the eaves, maintaining consistency with the character of the surrounding area. Each dwelling will benefit from appropriately sized private amenity space and will meet Part M compliance

standards, ensuring accessibility and a high quality of living. The design is expected to reflect the local vernacular, with indicative materials referenced on page 33 of the Design and Access Statement.

- 6.48 Overall, the proposed design is considered to be acceptable, respecting its context and contributing positively to the character of the area in accordance with SOLP Policy DES1 and KENDP Policy LCDPG.

### **Arboriculture**

- 6.49 Policy ENV1 'Landscape and Countryside' of the SOLP sets out that development must protect and enhance features that contribute to the nature and quality of SODC's landscapes, including trees. Reiterating this, Policy NH3 'Trees and hedgerows in the landscape' sets out that development should seek to retain, protect and enhance existing trees, woodlands and hedgerows and that where retention is not possible, and a proposal seeks their removal; compensatory planting should provide a net gain in canopy cover.
- 6.50 An Arboricultural Impact and Method Statement has been prepared by Arbortrack and is submitted as part of this outline application. This sets out that to facilitate the proposed development, a total of 45 individual trees or tree groups will need to be removed. This includes four category 'B' trees (moderate quality), thirty-nine category 'C' trees (low quality), and two category 'U' trees (unsuitable for retention). It is also noted that Tree 131, located within Cucumber Wood, shows significant basal decay and its removal is recommended on arboricultural grounds. Given that these trees are of a low quality and do not currently make a valuable contribution to the area, their loss is considered to represent a low and acceptable level of impact.
- 6.51 Importantly, the more ecologically valuable woodland areas of Cucumber Wood to the north and an unnamed woodland to the southeast will be retained and protected. The proposed development offers strong potential for new tree planting, which will help to mitigate tree loss and ensure the landscape impact is neutral or potentially positive. Further details on landscaping and replacement planting will be provided either at the Reserved Matters stage or through the discharge of a condition attached to any future planning approval.
- 6.52 Overall, given that the trees to be removed are of poor quality, there is strong potential for replacement tree planting and there will be no adverse impacts on Cucumber Wood, the proposed development is considered to accord with Policies ENV1 and NH3.

### **Ecology and Biodiversity**

- 6.53 Policy ENV2 'Biodiversity - Designated Sites, Priority Habitats and Species' of the SOLP sets out that development that may directly or indirectly harm Local Wildlife Sites, Nature Reserves, Priority Habitats, Protected Species, Geological Sites, Ecological Networks, important hedgerows, ancient woodlands, or veteran trees will only be permitted if the benefits outweigh the adverse effects, no alternative site is feasible, and mitigation or compensation measures are provided.

- 6.54 Additionally, Policy ENV3 'Biodiversity' of the SOLP seeks to ensure that development will conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity, requiring all development to provide a net gain in biodiversity where possible.
- 6.55 An Ecological Impact Assessment (ECIA), prepared by the Ecology Co-op, has been submitted as part of this application. This sets out that there are a number of non-statutory designated sites located within 2km of the Site. However, the proposed development does not involve the direct loss of designated site habitats and a minimum 15m buffer will be maintained from Cucumber Wood Ancient Woodland, with no development occurring within this zone. A Construction Environmental Management Plan will be secured to protect sensitive features during construction, alongside a landscaping scheme to support biodiversity. Although a small section of hedgerow will be lost and this will have an impact on the ancient woodland, this will be compensated through the planting of a new native hedgerow to enhance and restore the Site's hedgerow habitat resource.
- 6.56 The ECIA also sets out that whilst there will be some construction and operational impacts on the designated sites associated with the development, these will be mitigated by various measures, such as a Habitat and Visitor Management Plan for the country park will be required to manage to recreational pressure on the designated sites and Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan. With these suitable mitigation measures it is considered that the proposed development could result in a possible permanent positive effect on designated sites at a local level.
- 6.57 In terms of Biodiversity Net Gain, the Biodiversity Impact Calculation Report, also prepared by Ecology Co-op, concludes that there will be a likely increase of 8.97 habitat units (+40%). This exceeds the 10% mandatory net gain value.
- 6.58 Overall, with these mitigation and compensation measures in place, the development is compliant with Policy ENV2 and is expected to deliver a very positive effect on local biodiversity in the long term.

### **Flood Risk and Drainage**

- 6.59 SOLP Policy EP4 'Flood Risk' sets out that all new development must address the effective management of all sources of flood risk. SOLP Policy INF4 'Water Resources' states that all development proposals must illustrate that there is or will be adequate water supply, surface water, foul drainage and sewerage treatment capacity to serve the whole development.
- 6.60 A Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy has been prepared by Aqua Terra and submitted as part of this application. This sets out that the Site lies entirely within Flood 1 and that the risk of flooding from fluvial sources, surface water, groundwater, sewers, and extreme events is considered low. Due to the low flood risk identified, no specific flood mitigation measures are deemed necessary, aside from the implementation of a Sustainable Drainage Strategy (SuDS) to address any potential increase in off-site flood risk.
- 6.61 In terms of the SuDS strategy, this includes a detention basin, a large, lined swale, and a large unlined swale, all situated in the lower areas of the Site. The underlying geology is considered

suitable for the infiltration of stormwater, as confirmed by permeability testing conducted in the site's chalk substrata. A preliminary performance assessment of the proposed drainage system was carried out for the 1 in 1 year, 1 in 30 year + climate change allowance (CCA), and 1 in 100 year + CCA storm events. Results indicate that the SuDS components are capable of managing and infiltrating the anticipated volumes of stormwater runoff. Long-term management and maintenance arrangements will be established to ensure the continued effectiveness of the SuDS throughout the lifetime of the development.

- 6.62 Overall, the proposed development is considered to be acceptable in flood risk terms and therefore is in compliance with SOLP Policies EP4 and INF4.

### **Sustainability**

- 6.63 SOLP Policy DES9 'Renewable and Low Carbon Energy' sets out that the Council encourages the incorporation of renewable and low carbon energy applications with all development, whilst Policy DES10 'Carbon Reduction' requires at least a 40% reduction in carbon emissions. SOLP Policy DES7 'Efficient Use of Resources' sets out that new development is required to make provision for the effective use and protection of natural resources where applicable.
- 6.64 As mentioned above, the accompanying Energy and Sustainability Statement, prepared by Pinnacle, sets out that the development seeks to significantly reduce regulated carbon emissions targeting an improvement of over 70% above the 2021 Part L standard. This could be achieved through a combination of measures including high-performance insulation, the use of air source heat pumps for heating and hot water, roof-mounted photovoltaic panels, and the integration of smart grid infrastructure to manage peak energy demand. Additionally, low carbon construction techniques and materials could be used to minimise embodied carbon, ensuring that sustainability is embedded in both the construction and operation of the scheme. These details will be set out in the subsequent Reserved Matters application.
- 6.65 Overall, the proposed development accords with SOLP Policies DES7, DES9 and DES10 and represents a positive, policy-compliant approach to delivering high-quality, low-carbon housing.

### **Landscaping and Open Space**

- 6.66 SOLP Policy EN9 'Provision of Open Space' sets out that all new development should make provision for appropriate open space based on the needs of the development.
- 6.67 In regard to landscaping, Policy ENV5 'Green Infrastructure in New Development' outlines that development will be expected to contribute towards the provision of additional Green Infrastructure and protect or enhance existing Green Infrastructure.
- 6.68 A Landscape Statement and Landscape Maintenance Management Specification have been prepared by Fabrik and submitted to support this application. These provide further details of the landscape proposals at the Site. The design approach seeks to retain and enhance the Site's existing natural features, building upon these assets through sensitive management and additional planting to reinforce local character. A key principle of the scheme is to locate

development parcels within the most visually discreet areas of the Site, aligning them carefully with the existing and emerging settlement edge to ensure a well-integrated and contextually appropriate form of development. As set out on the Illustrative Masterplan, the landscape proposals comprise a varied network of green open spaces, including areas for formal and informal recreation.

- 6.69 A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment has also been prepared by Fabrik and submitted as part of this application. This sets out that the Site is largely enclosed by existing vegetation and surrounding built form, resulting in a well-contained and visually discreet development area. While some minor landscape and visual effects are anticipated, as is typical with any greenfield development, these impacts have been carefully mitigated through sensitive design and are limited to the Site and its immediate context. Over time, as the proposed planting becomes established and matures, any residual effects are expected to reduce further and will not be significant.
- 6.70 The proposed development will therefore cause a negligible level of harm with the proposals being capable of being delivered in a manner that is both respectful of the existing landscape character and which incorporates high-quality design, green infrastructure, and open spaces. In light of the well contained nature of the proposals and the fact that they would not extend the existing built up edge of Reading northwards (given existing development to the west and east) means there would be no perceived or actual reduction in separation with other settlements in the neighbourhood plan area, consistent with the aims of Policy LCSS of the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 6.71 Overall, it has been demonstrated that the proposals will deliver high- quality landscaping and open space provision in accordance Policy EN9 and ENV5 and the impact of the proposed development will result in negligible landscape harm.

### **Highways and Transport**

- 6.72 Access to the Site is to be provided to the south of the Site through the housing development which is currently being implemented. As this is located within RBC, this aspect of the development will be assessed primarily against Reading's Development Plan.
- 6.73 Policy TR1 'Transport Strategy' sets out that major developments must commit to implementing measures to promote and improve sustainable transport facilities, such as to encourage walking and cycling. Policy TR4 'Cycle Routes and Facilities' states that developments will be expected to make full use of opportunities to improve access for cyclists. SOLP Policy TRANS2 'Promoting Sustainable Transport and Accessibility' also seeks to ensure that new development encourages walking and cycling.
- 6.74 Policy TR3 'Access, traffic and highway-related matters' of the Local Plan states that in determining proposals involving a new or altered access onto the transport network, consideration will be given to the effect on safety, congestion and the environment. Proposals for new site access or increased use of existing access onto the Classified Highway Network will be unacceptable if they encourage short local trips or compromise traffic flow and safety.

- 6.75 As set out above, the proposed development is located in a sustainable location and is able to encourage access by non- car modes, with good levels of pedestrian connectivity to nearby amenities. The development has been designed to prioritise pedestrian movements and will ensure improved connectivity throughout the Site, enhancing east–west connectivity and providing improved access to the National Cycle Network for both existing residents and future occupants. A Framework Travel Plan has also been prepared by SDP, this aims to reduce reliance on private car use by at least 10% compared to baseline estimates through measures to encourage walking and cycling, such as the provision of maps and cycle storage. Therefore, the development accords with Policy TR1 and SOLP Policy TRANS2.
- 6.76 In regard to access, in accordance with Policy TR3 the Transport Assessment confirms that the proposed development can be safely accessed and serviced from the existing highway network via the Site access junction. The Assessment also provides an evaluation of the traffic impact of the proposal and finds that the proposed development can be accommodated without any significant detrimental impact on the local transport network.
- 6.77 In terms of car parking and cycle parking, as set out under TR5 ‘Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging’, the development will ensure car and cycle parking is appropriate to the accessibility of locations within the Borough. The details of this will come forward at the Reserved Matters stage.
- 6.78 Overall, the proposal will accord with the aims of Policies TR1, TR3 and TR4; it is well-served by a range of transport modes and will provide safe and convenient access and links through the Site.

### **Air Quality**

- 6.79 SOLP Policy EP1 ‘Air Quality’ seeks to ensure that development does not adversely impact air quality.
- 6.80 An Air Quality Assessment has been prepared by Pinnacle to evaluate the potential impacts associated with the proposed redevelopment of the Site. The findings indicate that the development would not result in any significant adverse effects on local air quality, with the impact considered "negligible," though still marginally beneficial. While some emissions of dust and PM10 are expected during site activities, the risk of dust soiling and any associated health impacts to nearby residents has been assessed as Low.
- 6.81 Overall, the proposed development will not generate any adverse impacts in relation to air-quality in accordance with SOLP Policy EP1.

### **Contamination**

- 6.82 In accordance with SOLP Policy ENV12 ‘Pollution- Impact of Development on Human Health, the Natural Environment and/ or Local Amenity’ a Land Quality Desk Study has been prepared by Aqua Terra to support this application.
- 6.83 This sets out that no significant on- Site sources of contamination have been identified and that off-site risks are limited to historic chalk pits nearby. Although the area may contain natural

or man-made cavities, ground conditions suggest a low risk to development. The preliminary assessment indicates very low to low risk to human health and the environment.

### **Archaeology**

- 6.84 An Archaeological Desk- Based Assessment has been prepared by UCL and a Geophysical Survey Report has been prepared by Sumo, to support this application. The Archaeological Desk- Based Assessment concludes that the Site has moderate to high potential for early prehistoric (Palaeolithic) and Romano-British remains, with high potential for Bronze Age deposits. There is low potential for medieval to post-medieval features, except for late post-medieval field boundaries and tracks, which are considered high potential. Although earlier geophysical surveys to the south showed limited results, later investigations revealed significant archaeological activity, including Middle Bronze Age pits and cremations, and a small Romano-British farmstead.
- 6.85 The Assessment concludes that development is likely to impact any surviving deposits, so a trial trench evaluation is recommended. This can be secured through a planning condition which can inform a mitigation strategy if required.

### **Technical Summary**

- 6.86 The supporting technical work has informed a detailed understanding of the current site conditions along with likely impacts of new development. In regard to the landscape impact, it is considered that the landscape harm resulting from the proposed development will be negligible whilst all other impacts are able to be mitigated. On this basis, it is considered that the benefits associated with the proposed development would outweigh any harm. Overall, it has been demonstrated and confirmed that the proposed development of 70 new homes is deliverable.

## 7. PROPOSED S106 HEADS OF TERMS

7.1 Subject to confirmation during the course of the application, the following heads of terms are proposed as part of the development:

- Provision of 40% affordable housing;
- Provision of a residents 'Travel Information Pack' to the first occupants of each dwelling;
- Appropriate financial contributions towards Travel Plan monitoring; and
- Details around the management of open space within the Site (and details of the management of the Biodiversity Net Gain beyond the Site).

## 8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 This application seeks outline planning permission for the erection of up to 70 new homes, along with associated access, landscaping and parking.
- 8.2 The proposals comprise the following elements which will deliver several benefits, namely:
- Delivery of up to 70 new high-quality homes, comprising a mix of housing types, which will make a valuable contribution to the supply of housing in the borough and help to remedy the current housing shortfall in the area;
  - Provision of up to 28 affordable homes (40%) of various tenures that will provide local people with an opportunity to get on the housing ladder, either to rent or to buy;
  - Biodiversity and landscaping enhancements that will enable the development to deliver a 40% biodiversity net gain;
  - Provision of new publicly accessible open space including a new landscaped play area;
  - Enhanced pedestrian and cycle permeability and improved accessibility to the National Cycle Network;
  - Economic benefits including increased spend from new residents and new constructed related employment opportunities.
- 8.3 It is considered that the site characteristics and location means that it is distinct and separate from that of Kidmore End Parish as a whole and more closely aligned to that of Reading. As such, the proposed development would be entirely logical and would form a natural rounding off of the existing urban area
- 8.4 The Council is unable to demonstrate a sufficient housing land supply meaning that the presumption in favour of sustainable development, as set out in paragraph 11(d)(ii) is engaged.
- 8.5 The Kidmore End Neighbourhood Plan is less than 5 years old and includes a housing allocation. On this basis, it benefits from the protections afforded by the NPPF. Notwithstanding this, there are a number of material considerations that weigh in favour of the proposals, namely the site's individual characteristics, the increasing need for new housing, along with the various benefits with the proposals (that individually should be afforded between moderate and very substantial weight in the decision-making process).
- 8.6 In light of the above we do not consider that, in this case, conflict with the Neighbourhood Plan would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the numerous benefits.
- 8.7 The supporting technical work has informed a detailed understanding of the current site conditions along with likely impacts of new development. In regard to the landscape impact, it is considered that the landscape harm resulting from the proposed development will be negligible whilst all other impacts are able to be mitigated.

- 8.8 Overall, it has been demonstrated and confirmed that the proposed development of 70 new homes is deliverable and that the many benefits would outweigh the adverse impacts of development. As such the proposals would generate significant economic, social and environmental gains consistent with the objectives of the NPPF and the statutory development plan. We therefore consider that in line with the presumption in favour of sustainable development we would urge the Council to grant planning permission without delay.

## **APPENDIX ONE – OFF SITE LANDSCAPE CONCEPT PLAN**



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Legend

--- Site boundary

--- LPA boundary

1. Main pedestrian access points from surrounding areas
2. Pedestrian links back to red line area
3. Footpath links - mown path with wayfinding signage and edge markers
4. Public accessible open space predominantly calcareous and other wildflower grassland
5. Woodland planting expanding western boundary of Cucumber Wood

6. Woodland edge planting used to connect Cucumber Wood to surrounding woodland areas and to create extensive habitat spaces
7. Additional planting to hedge priority habitat to eastern boundary of site
8. Orchard tree planting used to create loose tree belts and canopy linkages

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Project: Kidmore End Road, Reading

Drawing Title: Colour Masterplan - Off-site Habitat Area

Issued for Planning Approval

Drawing Number: D3456-FAB-00-XX-DR-L-2002

Client: Fairfax Properties

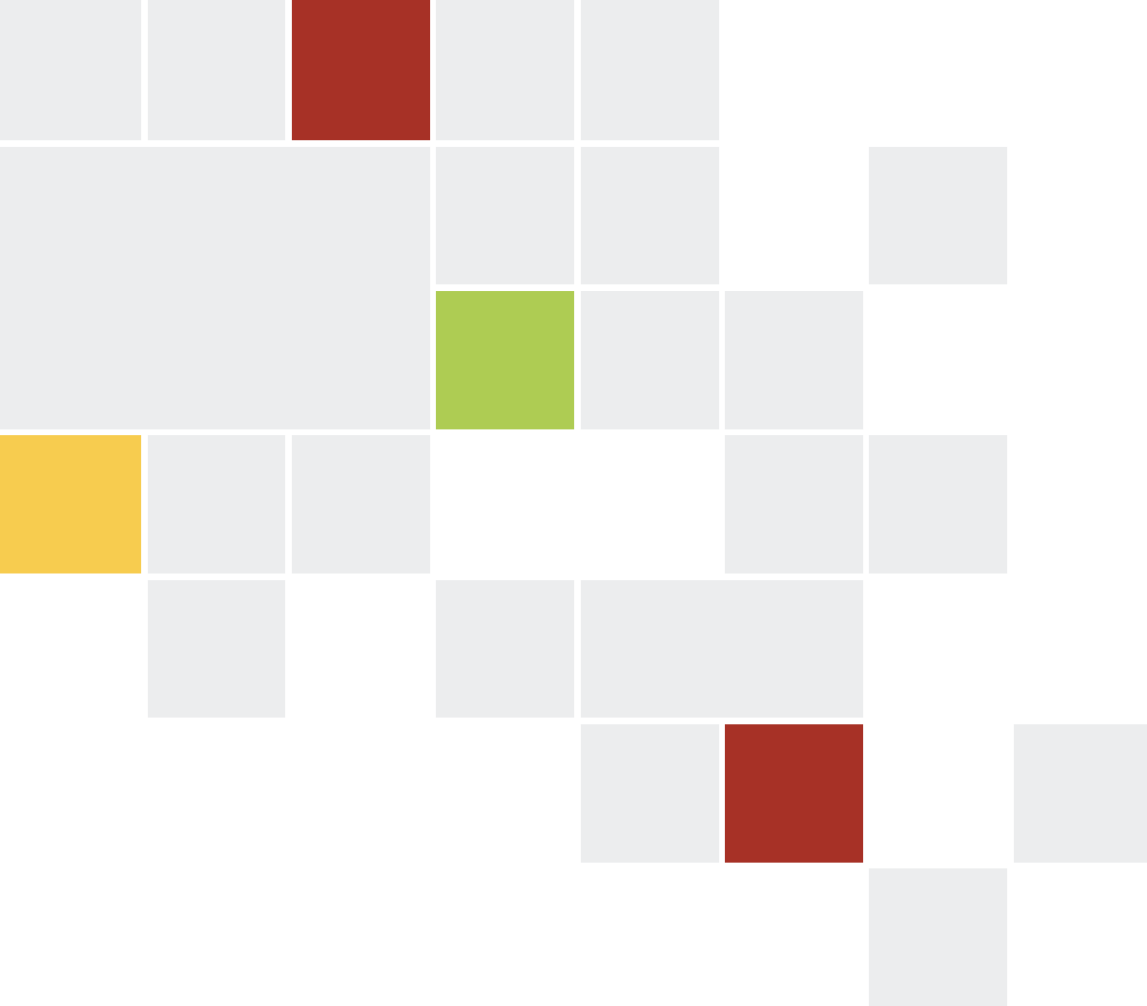
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