

# ATLAS

PLANNING GROUP

## PLANNING STATEMENT

Land at Rowan Oak, Over Wallop, SO20 8LA

November 2023

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## INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Statement has been produced by Atlas Planning Group seeking outline planning permission for the creation of two self-build plots and associated hard & soft landscaping at Land at Rowan Oak, Over Wallop.
- 1.2 The statement will assess the development proposal in the context of adopted national and local planning policy, found within the National Planning Policy Framework and Test Valley Borough Council's Revised Local Plan 2011-2029 respectively.

## SITE DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 The application site, which measures approximately 1,906m<sup>2</sup> is located on the corner of King Lane and Claydown Lane, which lies to the north of the settlement of Over Wallop.
- 2.2 The application site comprises a parcel of open and undeveloped paddock land which has been well maintained by the present owner.
- 2.3 The site is bounded by a dwelling (Rowan Oak) developed under 20/00810/FULLN immediately to the north, by agricultural land to the east and south, and by a small cluster of residential development along King Lane to the west.

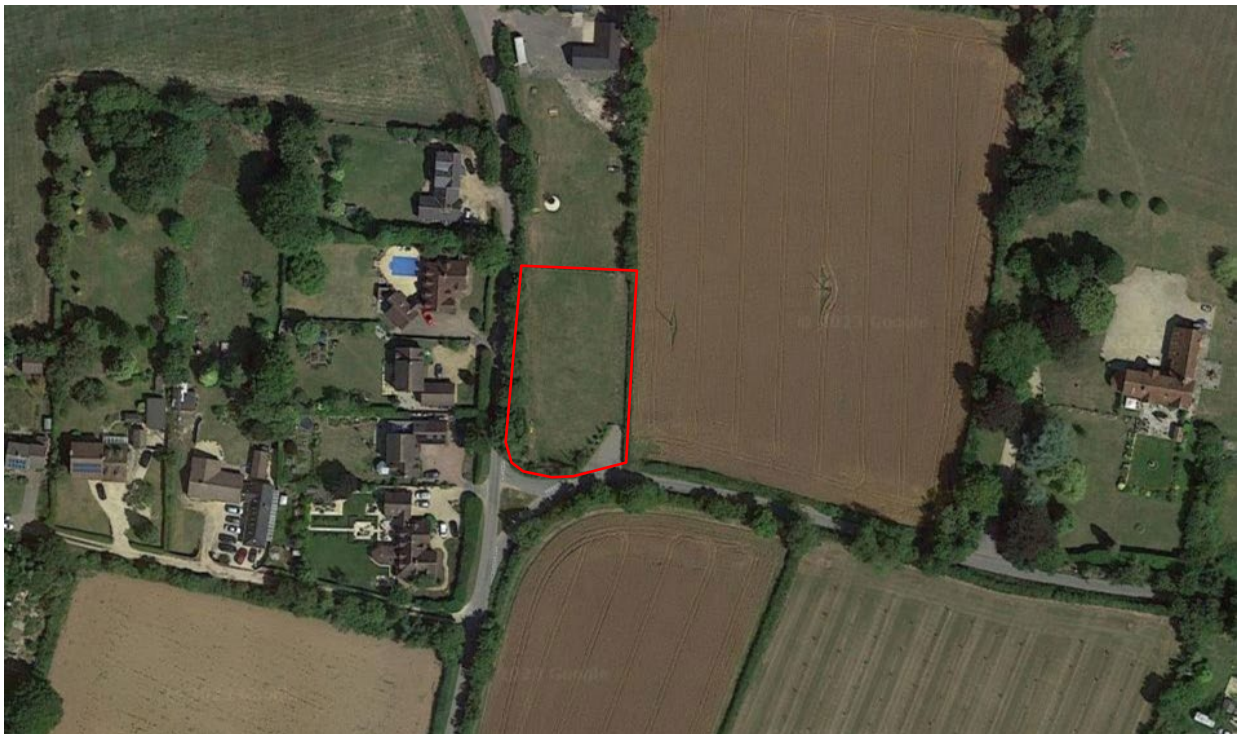


Figure 1 – Aerial View of the Application Site

## PLANNING HISTORY

### FULL APPLICATION - 16/03003/FULLN

- 3.1 This application for the construction of an access onto the application site from Craydown Lane was submitted November 2016.
- 3.2 Permission for the site access was granted February 2017.

### PRE-APPLICATION 23/01136/FULLN

- 3.3 In June 2023, pre-application advice was received regarding the proposal for the creation of 2 serviced plots for self-build dwellings.

## THE PROPOSAL

- 4.1 This application seeks outline permission for the provision of two self-build residential plots and associated hard & soft landscaping (access and landscaping).
- 4.2 The intention is for the site to be divided into two equal sized serviced plots; a site plan has been prepared which identifies indicative locations where the new dwellings are to be positioned where they would best integrate with the character of the area. An existing access drive extends along the eastern boundary of the site and would connect the plots and their associated parking/manoeuvring areas to the highway. The remainder of the plots would be retained as green amenity space for the properties.
- 4.3 Whilst layout, scale and appearance are matters to be approved at a later stage, it is envisaged that the proposed dwellings would be 1.5 storeys and constructed in materials which reflect the local vernacular.
- 4.4 It is the applicant's intention to service the plots and sell them with outline planning permission. Section 1 of the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 (amended) states:

"1(A1) In this Act "self-build and custom housebuilding" means the building or completion by:-

- a. Individuals
- b. Associations of individuals, or
- c. Persons working with or for individuals or associations of individuals, of houses to be occupied by those individuals.

(A2) But it does not include the building of a house on a plot acquired from a person who builds the house wholly or mainly to plans or specifications decided or offered by that person.”

4.5 The Planning Practice Guidance (201, paragraph 16) states that initial occupants must have a primary input into the final design and layout of the home. As such, the applicants are proposing to commission the servicing of 2 plots of land in accordance with section 1 and 5 of the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015. After achieving outline planning permission, each plot of land will be sold to an initial occupant, who will secure reserved matters permission for the design of the houses.

4.6 The application is supported by a draft Heads of Terms confirming that the development is for custom and self-build housing. The proposal is therefore a genuine proposal to deliver self-build plots in Test Valley.



Figure 2: Proposed Site Plan

## PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 Test Valley's Revised Local Plan is the Council's primary Development Plan Document, and the starting point for determining planning decisions within the Borough, in accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- 5.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provides a national tier of policy and decision-making guidance for the planning system and is a material consideration for all planning decisions.
- 5.3 The policies and guidance contained within the statutory DPD, and all other relevant material considerations have been consulted to ensure that the proposed plots are an appropriate form of development for the site.

## PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

- 5.4 The application site lies within the open countryside for the purposes of the Revised Local Plan.
- 5.5 Policy COM2 outlines the settlement hierarchy for the Test Valley authority area, placing restrictions on development within the countryside. The policy states:

*“Development outside the boundaries of settlements in the hierarchy (as identified on map 1 - 55) will only be permitted if:*

- a) it is appropriate in the countryside as set out in Revised Local Plan policy COM8-COM14, LE10, LE16- LE18; or*
- b) it is essential for the proposal to be located in the countryside”*

- 5.6 Within pre-application advice, Officers advised that *“there are no policies within part a) that allow for new dwellings in the countryside, and it is not considered essential for the proposal to be located in the countryside, therefore the principle of the development is not acceptable and would be contrary to policy COM2.”*
- 5.7 However, the proposal is not for conventional open market dwellings in the countryside. Rather, it is proposed to create two self-build dwellings, which meet the definition as set out within the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015.

- 5.8 The Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 received Royal Assent on the 26<sup>th</sup> March 2015. The accompanying Self-build and Custom Housebuilding regulations 2015 came into force on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2016. The purpose of this Act is to help diversify the housing market and increase consumer choice. The Act is a key element of the Government's agenda to increase supply and tackle the housing crisis.
- 5.9 Test Valley Borough Revised Local Plan (2011-2029) was adopted on the 27 January 2016 and was well-advanced in its preparation when the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act came into force. Consequently, there are no development plan policies that directly address self-build and custom house building.
- 5.10 The Officer confirmed within pre-application advice that *"there are no specific policies within the RLP that refer to self-build plots."*
- 5.11 Paragraph 11 d of the NPPF states that for decision making, where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:
- i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear 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.
- 5.12 There are no policies within the NPPF that protect areas or assets of particular importance for this site and this Statement demonstrates that no harm will arise from the development.
- 5.13 Within pre-application advice, Officers highlighted a recent dismissed appeal for a development, with self-build in its description, to argue that the proposal would similarly conflict with Policy COM2 and therefore, should not be considered acceptable (Appeal Decision APP/C1760/W/22/3303109). However, there are material differences between the dismissed appeal and this proposal put forward.
- 5.14 For example, the Inspector dismissed the appeal because they were not satisfied that imposing a condition could ensure that the development would be a self-build plot, as it was unlikely to satisfy the test for planning conditions. Moreover, despite the appellant indicating they would enter into a legal agreement, one was not submitted as part of the appeal. Therefore, even if the Inspectorate was to accept

the appellants' intentions on this matter, they noted that there was no mechanism that would provide certainty that the proposal would be a self-build plot.

5.15 The Inspector further highlighted that their attention was drawn to several appeal decisions where significant weight was attached to securing self-build plots. However, in all cases, legal agreements were provided to ensure that the development meet the self-build definition. Since there was no legal agreement to confirm that these would in fact be self-build plots, the Inspector considered the policies most important for determining the appeal were not out-of-date and therefore the tilted balance was not applicable to that case.

5.16 In comparison to this proposal, a draft Heads of Terms has been submitted with the application to ensure that the plots would in fact be self-build. Therefore, significant weight should be given to this matter in favour of the proposal.

5.17 Indeed, planning law does require applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, **unless material considerations indicate otherwise**. In considering other appeals within the Test Valley authority area, Inspectors have confirmed that where there is conflict with Policy COM2, the degree of harm which arises from this conflict should be weighed against any other material considerations in the planning balance. (APP/C1760/W/17/3170081; 3179932; and 3192351).

5.18 An Inspector commented *“there is an in-principle conflict between the proposed development and Policy COM2. However, before determining the appeal, it is necessary to consider what if any other harm would be caused by the development and whether, as at Abbotsford, there are any material considerations that may outweigh that conflict with the development plan.”* (Appeal Decision APP/C1760/W/17/3179932)

5.19 A material consideration to this application is the fact that Policy COM2 does not address the need for Self-Build and Custom House building. Therefore, it is inconsistent with National Policy, Guidance and Legislation as it does not address the Council's legal obligation to maintain a three-year rolling supply of Self-Build and Custom House build.

5.20 Having regard to the provisions of the Self-Build and Custom Housing building Act 2015, the accompanying Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding (Register) Regulations 2016 obligate all councils in England to keep a register of individuals (and associations of individuals) who are seeking to acquire serviced plots of land in their area for this purpose. Each authority that is required to hold a register has a 'Duty to grant planning permission' for enough suitable serviced plots of land in order to meet the demand



for self-build and custom house building in their area (as stipulated by the Housing and Planning Act 2016). This level of demand is based on the number of entries added to the authority's register during a base period. The base period runs from 1<sup>st</sup> November to the 30<sup>th</sup> October each year.

5.21 When assessing the 'demand' for Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding, there are two components – the total number of entries on the register and the number of entries with a local connection.

5.22 Test Valley Borough Council have confirmed the number of entrants on public register for the last 3 'base periods' as follows:

*31<sup>st</sup> October 2019 – 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020: 30*

*31<sup>st</sup> October 2020 – 30<sup>th</sup> October 2021: 53*

*31<sup>st</sup> October 2021 – 30<sup>th</sup> October 2022: 35*

5.23 The Council also provided data relating to the number of permissions for self-build plots granted during the corresponding base periods:

*31<sup>st</sup> October 2019 – 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020: 31*

*31<sup>st</sup> October 2020 – 30<sup>th</sup> October 2021: 22*

*31<sup>st</sup> October 2021 – 30<sup>th</sup> October 2022: 15*

5.24 However, it was subsequently confirmed that these figures were derived from the **self-build exemption CIL forms**. With regards to CIL self-build exemption forms, there are two components - CIL Part 1 Exemption is submitted to the Council by the applicant indicating that the property is exempt from the CIL Charging Schedule because it is for the purposes of Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding, prior to the commencement of development. However, CIL Part 2 Exemption is sought upon occupation of the dwelling. Since there will always be a time delay between the grant of permission (CIL Part 1) and its occupation (CIL Part 2), and every permission may not be implemented and thus occupied, it is Part 2 exemptions that would determine the actual supply.

5.25 Given this, Inspectors (APP/H1840/W/19/3241879) have noted that it is inappropriate to rely on CIL information when calculating the number of permissioned serviced plots, as developments that qualify for CIL self-build relief may not be self-build plots for the purposes of the 2015 Act.

5.26 At a recent appeal within Test Valley, the Council relied upon Part 1 CIL exemption form data to support their case. However, the appellant undertook detailed analysis of the self-build forms to see whether they related directly to the relevant base period and could count towards self-build for the purposes of the Act. (APP/C1760/W/22/3293740).

5.27 It was found that although Part 1 forms received could be a useful start point in assessing the number of self-build permissions, the conclusions of the detailed analysis show that only around 61% of the Council's purported self-build permissions should actually be counted (38 out of 62). The Inspectorate confirmed the analysis to be detailed and appeared reasonably accurate.

5.28 Accordingly, it was confirmed that *“overall, the evidence before me indicates the Council has not delivered as many self-build permissions as it suggests. It is plausible that an under provision of around 33 plots could have occurred between October 2017 and March 2022. Thus, the appeal scheme would make a useful contribution towards addressing this, which is a matter of significant weight in its favour given the duty on the Council to grant enough permissions.”*

5.29 This under provision of self-build plots should therefore weigh in favour of the proposal and the shortfall should be given significant weight to the planning balance. Indeed, as confirmed by numerous appeal decisions<sup>1</sup>, where an LPA fails to perform its duty to grant planning permission under Section 2A of the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015, Inspectors routinely attribute significant weight to the benefit self-build schemes bring in meeting the shortfall.

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## CONCLUSIONS ON MATTERS OF PRINCIPLE

5.30 The proposed site lies outside a settlement boundary and is thus in open countryside. The appellant recognises that the application does not conform to Policy COM2, which seeks to locate new housing to the most sustainable locations. Nonetheless, it must be acknowledged that Policy COM2 does not make any reference to self-build and custom house building. Therefore, the policy is inconsistent with both national policy and the Self-Build and Custom Housing building Act. Therefore, moderate weight should be afforded to this policy and a planning balance should be undertaken.

5.31 In this regard, the LPA is legally obliged to maintain a rolling delivery of plots for self-build and custom house building. Paragraph 62 of the NPPF states that the size, type and tenure of housing needed for

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<sup>1</sup> APP/W0530/W/19/3230103, APP/G2435/W/18/3214451, APP/W0530/W/19/3227065 & APP/V3120/W/20/3265465

different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies (including, but not limited to, those people wishing to commission or build their own homes).

5.32 Paragraph 62 of the NPPF, along with the Self Build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015, places considerable expectation for taking a positive approach towards self-build and custom build development. However, as confirmed at appeal in 20222, there is a shortfall of available plots for self-build and custom house building.

5.33 The proposal therefore seeks to provide two self-build plots to assist with the shortfall, which will be secured through a legal obligation. It is the applicant's intention to sell the site with permission to self-builders who will complete the reserved matters stage and establish the design of the dwellings. A draft heads of terms supports this application showing the applicant's genuine attempt to provide self build dwellings.

5.34 Since the Council is legally obliged to maintain a rolling delivery of plots and are underdelivering (as confirmed at appeal), the provision of two new self-build dwellings should be afforded significant weight in the planning balance.

5.35 Therefore, drawing all threads together - since the weight afforded to self-build should be greater than the conflict with COM2, the principle of development is considered acceptable subject there being no other harm. An assessment of all other material considerations, as set out below.

## IMPACT UPON THE CHARACTER & APPEARANCE OF THE AREA

5.36 High quality design is encouraged by the LPA within all development proposals. Policy E1 of the Adopted Local Plan states:

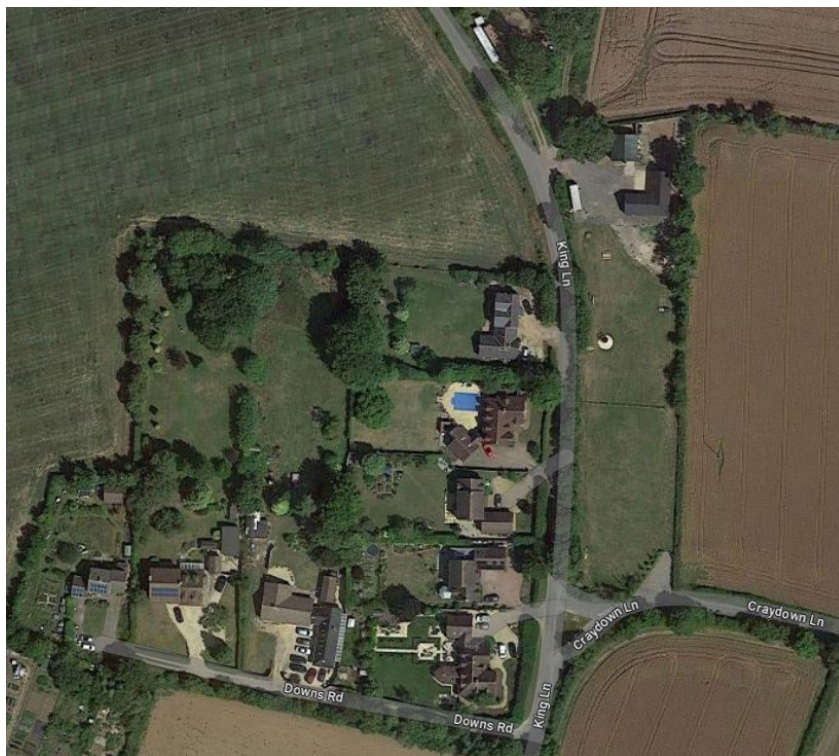
*“Development will be permitted if it is of a high quality in terms of design and local distinctiveness. To achieve this development:*

- a) should integrate, respect and complement the character of the area in which the development is located in terms of layout, appearance, scale, materials and building styles;*
- b) should not detract from the dominance of, or interrupt important views of, key landmark buildings or features;*
- c) should be laid out to provide connectivity between spaces and a positive relationship between public and private spaces; and*

*d) makes efficient use of the land whilst respecting the character of the surrounding area and neighbouring uses. Development will not be permitted if it is of poor design and fails to improve the character, function and quality of the area.”*

5.37 Policy E2 states that to ensure protection, conservation, and enhancement of the landscape of the Borough, development will be permitted provided that it does not have an impact on the appearance of the immediate area and the landscape character of the area within which it is located.

5.38 The application site is positioned to the east of King Lane, sat amongst a cluster of residential dwellings, to the north of the village of Over Wallop. The site is currently open improved grassland positioned south of the dwelling, Rowan Oak. The site is well contained and screened from public view by a boundary vegetation.



**Figure 3: Character of the area**

5.39 The proposal seeks to erect two dwellings, essentially infilling the gap between the small group of dwellings. The proposed site plan is shown below:



Figure 4 – Proposed Site Plan

5.40 To ensure that the proposal does not impact the character and appearance of the area, a Landscape and Visual Appraisal accompanies the application. Within this assessment, viewpoints were selected to represent the experience of visual receptors from the area in which views of the proposed site are likely to be gained. However, it notes that the site is screened by hedgerows and trees and the properties surrounding the site also limit visibility in the wider landscape.

5.41 The Landscape and Visual Appraisal outlines that the effect of the proposal upon views is likely to be Negligible to Minor and Neutral or Beneficial from locations on King Lane and the bridleway to the north and west of the proposal site. The proposal would be obscured beyond the existing dwelling at Rowan Oak and the hedgerow that lines the line. The proposal would comprise a Beneficial effect where improvements would be made to the boundary hedgerow and new trees planted.

5.42 At pre-application, it was argued that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area. However, the LVA shows that this would not be the case.

5.43 Indeed, the hedgerows are to be repaired, and new trees will be planted, which would affect Views 5-11 within the LVA positively. (Rowan Oak has good materiality and blends in well with landscape, better than dwellings west of King Lane).

5.44 There would also be no loss of important local features. That is because 9 new trees are proposed, and new native hedgerows (with trees) are provided along the east boundary and around plots. View 9 effect is described as adverse, but only because of change in massing and loss of longer view. Other effects on views are neutral or beneficial and there will be a general enhancement to the appearance of area.

5.45 Moreover, where visible, the proposal would not have a significant impact on the character of the appearance of the area because the proposal would be read in conjunction with the existing built development. The proposal follows a precedent of detached dwelling in large plots. The site is not in arable use. Rather it is maintained grassland. The site is enclosed by the driveway to east and hedgerow to west. There would therefore be no harm to field pattern or rural character and whilst the site is not entirely bounded by hedgerows, it would be.

5.46 In summary, the development would be appropriate in this location with a sensitive building design of rural vernacular (such as Rowan Oak). The LVA shows the proposal would generally conserve and enhance landscape character and visual amenity and therefore, it is considered that the proposal does accord with Policy E1 and E2 of the RLP.

## IMPACT UPON RESIDENTIAL AMENITY

5.47 The potential siting and scale of any new dwellings has also been carefully considered, to ensure the amenity of both existing and proposed residents will not be adversely affected by the proposed development.

5.48 Policy LHW4 states:

*“Development will be permitted provided that:*

- a) it provides for the privacy and amenity of its occupants and those of neighbouring properties;*
- b) in the case of residential developments it provides for private open space in the form of gardens or communal open space which are appropriate for the needs of residents; and*

c) *it does not reduce the levels of daylight and sunlight reaching new and existing properties or private open space to below acceptable levels.”*

5.49 The proposed siting of the dwellings would generally maintain the amenity of existing dwellings along King Lane by retaining the established vegetation and would not result in any dwellings in direct view of any immediately neighbouring windows.

5.50 The proposed gardens for the new homes will be well-screened and will provide the future occupiers of the development with a satisfactory level of residential amenity, thus meeting criterion (b) of Policy LHW4.

5.51 Due to the generous spacing and the likely 1 ½ storey heights of the proposed dwellings, the property would receive a good standard of sunlight and daylight and would not adversely impact any neighbour in this regard. Criterion (c) of Policy LHW4 is therefore also met in full.

## HIGHWAYS IMPACTS

5.52 The proposed dwellings will utilise the existing access point onto Craydown Lane.

5.53 Policy T2 states:

*“Development (including change of use and conversions) will be required to provide parking in accordance with the standards set out in Annex G.*

*Parking provisions should be well designed and appropriately located so as to be convenient to users.”*

Dwelling Size	Minimum Car Parking Requirement	Cycle Storage Provision
1 bedroom unit	1 space per unit*	1
2 bedroom unit	2 spaces per unit*	2
3 bedroom unit	2 spaces per unit*	2
4+ bedroom unit	3 spaces per unit*	2

\*Visitor parking of at least 1 space per 5 dwellings, for schemes of 5+ dwellings, will be required in addition to these figures.

5.54 The indicative site plan shows 4 spaces within each of the plots, however only it is considered there is more than enough room for 2 vehicles to park and safely manoeuvre within the curtilage of the new properties and so the requirements of T2 are met for dwellings up to 3 bedrooms. Cycle parking will also easily be provided within the plots.

5.55 With regards to visibility, the access has been regularly used for agricultural machinery and is an established access. Good visibility can be achieved due to the presence of a highway verge to the west of the access.



Figure 5: Highway verge ensuring good visibility

## ECOLOGY

5.56 Policy E5 of the RLP seeks to ensure that development would not adversely impact upon local biodiversity.

5.57 A preliminary ecological assessment has been carried out on site. This concludes

*The extended phase 1 ecological assessment has confirmed that the site supports habitats that are considered common and widespread and as such of low botanical value. However, there are opportunities for a range of protected species including badgers, breeding birds, reptiles and foraging and commuting bats. Given the scale of the proposal, it is possible to deliver the scheme with a range of measures which avoid impacts on the identified ecological receptors and also deliver biodiversity enhancements at a site level.*



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## NITRATE NEUTRALITY

- 5.58 As the proposed development is within the River Test catchment the proposed additional accommodation would likely result in an increase of nitrates entering the catchment. The application is accompanied by nutrient budget calculations.

## PLANNING BALANCE & CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 This statement has been prepared for an application seeking outline planning permission for the proposed creation of two self-build plots and associated hard & soft landscaping at Land at Rowan Oak, Craydown Lane, Over Wallop.
- 6.2 While there is an identified conflict with development plan policy COM2, planning law requires applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 6.3 Self-build and Custom Housebuilding legislation form a key element of the government's agenda to increase supply and tackle the housing crisis. This came into force after the adoption of the Test Valley Revised Local Plan and therefore, there are no development plan policies that directly address Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding.
- 6.4 The Council is legally obliged to maintain a rolling delivery of plots and this Statement has demonstrated that there is a shortfall of available plots for self-build and custom house building. Though the Revised Local Plan policies do not specifically cover this matter, national policy and guidance weighs heavily in favour of granting planning permission for such schemes in suitable locations to maintain a rolling delivery of plots. Given that there is a shortfall in the provision, this should be given significant weight in the determination of this application. The weight afforded to Policy COM2 should be reduced.
- 6.5 Indeed, this Statement has demonstrated that the proposed development would provide much needed self-build plots at a time where the LPA have not been able to uphold the duty to grant sufficient planning permissions for such development. The applicant is sincerely attempting to bring forward these plots with an aim to provide an opportunity to two families who are seeking to build their own home: this a significant benefit of the proposed scheme. The application is accompanied by a draft head of terms which strengthens the weight the provision of self-build plots can be afforded.

- 6.6 Therefore, with reference to the planning balance, whilst the scheme does not comply with the COM2 in that the site is positioned within the countryside, this policy should only be afforded moderate weight due to it not being consistent with national policy on Self build and Custom build schemes. The proposal would provide 2 self-build and custom housing building dwellings, which will help the Council meet its legal obligation to maintain a rolling supply of plots when it is evident there is a significant shortfall. Significant weight should be given to this factor.
- 6.7 Taken together, along with the fact that the proposal complies with all other policies within the development plan, on balance, the proposal is considered acceptable, in line with paragraph 47 of the NPPF. The proposal is considered a sustainable form of development, where no harm would demonstrably outweigh the benefits, as required by paragraph 11d where there are no relevant policies, or the policies are considered out of date.
- 6.8 After all, whilst the facilities within the local area are limited (as to be expected in a rural village), this does not mean that the application site is an unsuitable location for new development. The application site is not 'isolated' in terms of NPPF 80 (previously 55), and the court judgement in *Braintree District Council v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Greyread Limited & Granville Developments Limited* explains why a dearth in facilities within rural settlements should not be justification for restricting development opportunities:

*"NPPF 55 cannot be read as a policy against development in settlements without facilities and services since it expressly recognises that development in a small village may enhance and maintain services in a neighbouring village, as people travel to use them. The PPG advises that "all settlements can play a role in delivering sustainable development in rural areas", cross-referencing to NPPF 55, "and so blanket policies restricting housing development in some settlements and preventing other settlements from expanding should be avoided....". Moreover, in rural areas, where public transport is limited, people may have to travel by car to a village or town to access services. NPPF 17 penultimate bullet point identifies as a core planning principle to "actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable". But as the PPG states, **NPPF 29 and 34 recognise that the general policy in favour of locating development where travel is minimised, and use of public transport is maximised, has to be sufficiently flexible to take account of the differences between urban and rural areas. The scale of the proposed development may also be a relevant factor when considering transport and accessibility.** As Mr Dagg rightly pointed out, the policy in NPPF 17 in*

*favour of focusing development in locations which are or can be made sustainable applies in particular to "significant development".*" [our emphasis added]

- 6.9 Further to this, the presence of many existing properties in the immediate area indicates that residential development should be considered in-keeping with the area's established character. The occupiers of the new dwelling would be faced with the same travel options as those other properties along the road, and the development of new housing would support the existing local facilities in the local area, contributing to the local economy and providing social benefits.
- 6.10 The proposal for the development of the application site is clearly not the type of "significant development" which is described within NPPF 105. An increased reliance on the private car is to be expected within more rural areas, but this does not disqualify the application site (or any other residential property in the area) from being suitable for residential development. Therefore, the application site is considered to be a suitable location for new residential development.
- 6.11 Having regard to potential harm to the countryside setting and environment, it is apparent that the application site is suitably located for residential development. As with many other plots along the road, the presence of built development when looking at the site in context and the already carefully managed grass gives the application site a domestic feel and appearance. The site is located with developed parcels of land on two boundaries, with an existing fence and planting dividing the site and agricultural land to the east. The result of this is that the application site appears visually distinct from the surrounding areas of open countryside. Therefore, at present the application site is not considered to contribute to the wider countryside.
- 6.12 The proposed development would introduce two built footprints on the application site and views of new dwellings may be achievable when at the corner of King Lane and Craydown Lane or from the domestic curtilage of the dwelling immediately to the north. However, as the proposals would either be hidden by vegetation or appear as a continuation of the existing building line along the road and the spacing between dwellings would reflect that of the surrounding area, the development would not be harmful to the surrounding countryside. Indeed, as they would sit within an obvious gap between the existing building line and the end the road (the southern boundary hedge).
- 6.13 Additional vegetative screening along the boundaries of the application site will be planted in order to provide the application site with a verdant character. Both dwellings will have garden space, with no physical encroachment towards the countryside to the east.

6.14 For the reasons identified the proposals would not give rise to harm to the environment, particularly as there are no ecological impacts and nitrate neutrality can be secured with third party credits.

6.15 For these reasons, we commend this sustainable form of development to you. There would not be any harm that would demonstrably outweigh the benefits of providing self-build plots and, the development is considered to be in general accordance with the development plan when read as a whole, despite not meeting the defined location criteria. Therefore, this policy conflict should be attributed reduced weight, similar to the approach taken by the Inspector in appeal 3170081.