

Planning Statement

LAND AT MILL LANE, COLWALL

Prepared on behalf of
LOCKLEY HOMES

SEPTEMBER 2024

BLACKBOXPLANNING.CO.UK

Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Site and surrounding area	3
3	The proposed development	5
4	Planning policy context	6
5	Assessment of the proposed development	9
6	Planning balance and conclusion	15

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Black Box Planning on behalf of our client Lockley Homes ('the Applicant') in support of an application for full planning permission to Herefordshire Council for the erection of 15no. new dwellings plus associated access and landscaping at land north of Mill Lane, Colwall.

- 1.2 The proposed description of development is as follows:

"Full planning application for 15 dwellings, including 5 affordable properties, with access provided via Mill Lane, Colwall; associated landscaping and new public open space; community growing area with outdoor education space"

- 1.3 This Planning Statement is accompanied by a range of plans and documents as follows:

Plans:

- 3970-01 Site Location Plan (BHP Architects)
- 3970-23A Proposed Site Sections (BHP Architects)
- 3970-30E Proposed Site Plan (BHP Architects)
- 3970-33A Proposed Parking Strategy Plan (BHB Architects)
- 3970-34C House Type Key Plan (BHP Architects)
- 3970-36A Proposed Boundaries Plan (BHB Architects)
- 3970-37 House Type A (BHP Architects)
- 3970-38 House Type B (BHP Architects)
- 3970-39B House Type C [Render] (BHP Architects)
- 3970-40B House Type C [Brick] (BHP Architects)
- 3970-41A House Type D (BHP Architects)
- 3970-42A House Type E (BHP Architects)
- 3970-43 House Type F (BHP Architects)
- 3970-44A House Type G (BHP Architects)
- 3970-45 House Type F [Brick] (BHP Architects)
- 3970-46A House Type D [Brick] (BHP Architects)
- 6723-1901 Levels Strategy (Structa)
- 6723-1910 Drainage Strategy (Structa)

Documents:

- Arboricultural Method Statement, Tree Survey and Tree Protection Plan (Dr Stefan Bodnar)
- Biodiversity Impact Assessment and BNG Metric 4.0 Calculation (DJOGS Ltd)
- Design and Access Statement (BHP Architects)
- Flood Risk Assessment (Structa)
- Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment (Orion Heritage)
- Landscape and Ecological Enhancement Scheme (DJOGS Ltd)
- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment + Appendix A (Peter Richards Partnership)
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (Dr Stefan Bodnar)
- Transport Technical Note (Rappor)

- 1.4 The Planning Statement considers the proposed development in the context of the adopted Development Plan, having regard to relevant policies and other material considerations. It demonstrates that the principle of development is acceptable in this location, seeking to provide

high quality homes, including affordable homes, in a highly sustainable location with associated landscaping, parking and access. In doing so the proposed development constitutes sustainable development in accordance with the Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

- 1.5 Formal pre-application advice was initially provided by Herefordshire Council in January 2023, with follow up advice provided by officers in response to subsequent amendments made by the applicant. Pre-app advice comprises an informal opinion only, though it provides a helpful steer as to the key matters to consider and respond to through the preparation of a planning application.

THE APPLICANT

- 1.6 Lockley Homes has been delivering high quality new homes in the rural settlements and market towns of Herefordshire, the Cotswolds, Worcestershire and Warwickshire for a number of years and has built a reputation for quality. Lockley Homes strive to build developments which people can be proud of, which promote healthy and sustainable living, and which respect and enhance nature.
- 1.7 Lockley Homes knows the settlement of Colwall well, having previously delivered 9no. new homes at Colwall Gardens in 2017 (planning permission reference P170278/O and P174166/RM). The high quality of the design and materials of the Colwall Gardens scheme was recognised by the case officer at the time.
- 1.8 Lockley Homes has undertaken the same considered landscape-led and design-led approach to preparing the current application scheme, drawing upon its knowledge of the settlement and its landscape setting.

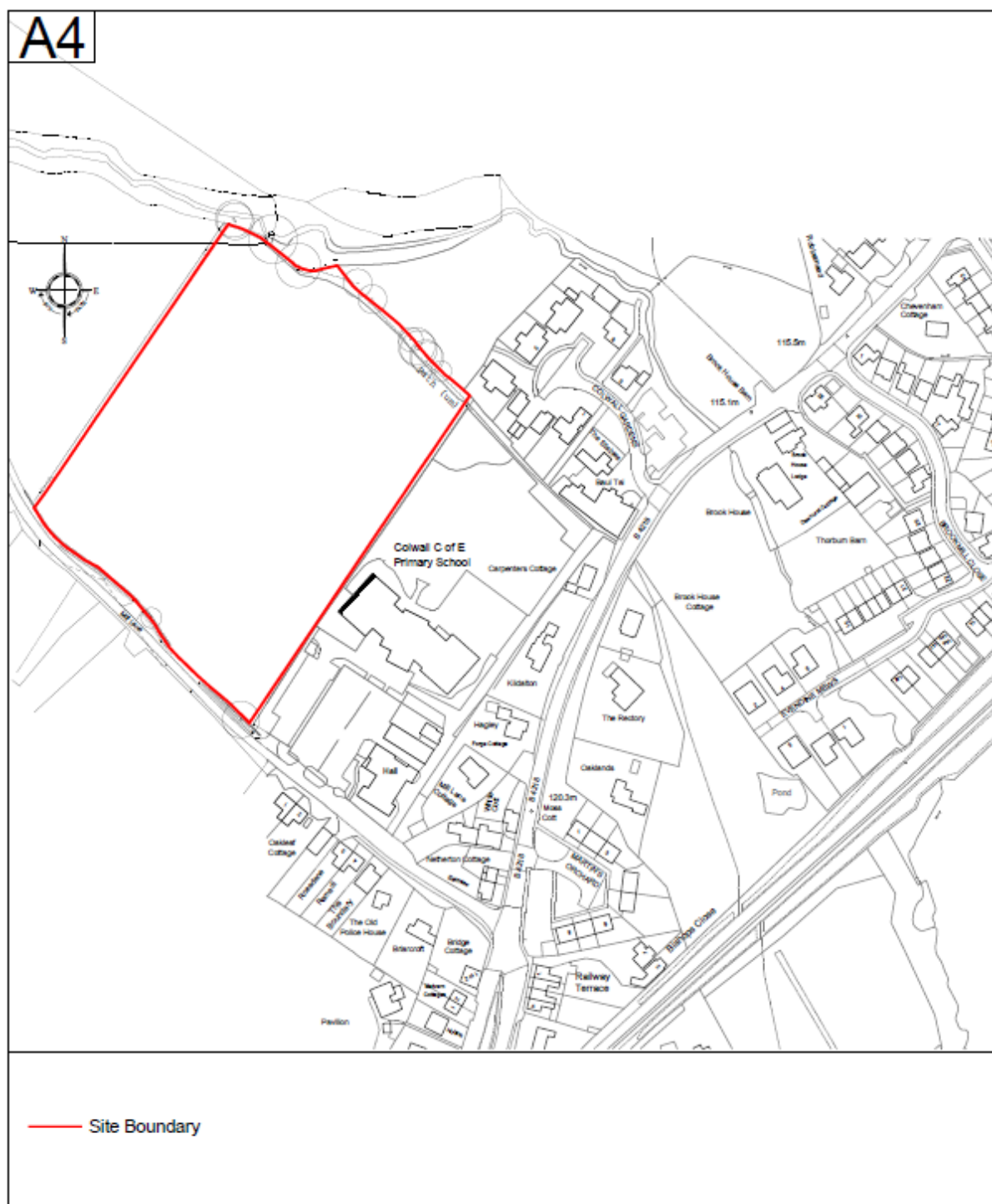
2 Site and surrounding area

- 2.1 The site is approximately 2.6ha in size, located at Mill Lane at the south west of the settlement of Colwall Stone, immediately west of Colwall C of E Primary School. The site is currently in arable agricultural use and is largely flat and open. It is well defined by features on the ground, with the southern boundary formed by Mill Lane, the western boundary formed by an existing planted field boundary, the northern boundary formed by dense established trees and hedging and the eastern boundary formed by the Primary School premises.
- 2.2 The site is adjacent to the settlement boundary, which was expanded to include the Primary School site having previously fallen further to the east. The site's eastern boundary with the Primary School therefore abuts the settlement boundary.
- 2.3 The entire settlement of Colwall is washed over by the Malvern Hill AONB and the site therefore falls within the AONB.
- 2.4 The site is relatively unconstrained in respect of other environmental considerations. It is distant from the settlement's historic core and associated conservation area, it is in Flood Zone 1 and is distant from any local, national or European biodiversity designations. The Agricultural Land Classification indicates the site is within an area of Grade 3 agricultural land, though it is not clear whether this is 3a or 3b. The site falls within a wider area of abundant agricultural land, to which it makes a relatively limited contribution in isolation.
- 2.5 The settlement of Colwall includes a range of key services and facilities in addition to the primary school, including a range of shops and hospitality, along with higher tier services including primary healthcare via Colwall surgery and a mainline railway station.

PLANNING HISTORY

- 2.6 One planning application has previously come forward for residential development at the site, submitted in early 2020, detailed below:
- **P200156/O** 'Outline planning application for the erection of up to 37no. dwellings and associated works (all matters reserved except for means of access'.
- 2.7 The application sought permission for 37no dwellings within the same red line boundary as the current application site, at a density of around 14 dwellings per hectare. The application was refused at committee in accordance with the officer recommendation. The main reasons for refusal were the adverse impact and harm to the character, appearance, setting and enjoyment of the Malvern Hills AONB, as well as an adverse impact on the character, appearance and setting of Colwall. The decision was subsequently upheld at appeal. This application seeks to provide a smaller scale development and landscape led design approach which provides a much more sensitive response to the local character and site context.
- 2.8 In addition, there are two nearby planning applications of relevance to the proposed development:
- **P161407/F** 'Proposed 1 form entry primary school with nursery and parking provision'.
 - **P183135/F** 'Proposed demolition of existing house and redevelopment of the site to provide 3no. two-story 4 bedroom Passivhaus dwellings'.

2.10 The site boundary is shown below:



3 The proposed development

- 3.1 The proposed development comprises the following:

“Full planning application for 15 dwellings, including 5 affordable properties, with access provided via Mill Lane, Colwall; associated landscaping and new public open space; community growing area with outdoor education space”.

- 3.2 The proposed development comprises a total of 15no. dwelling of a range of sizes and includes 5no affordable dwellings. The proposed housing schedule is as follows:

No of bedrooms	Tenure	No. of units
2B	Affordable	3no.
2B	Market	2no.
3B	Affordable	2no.
3B	Market	2no.
4B	Market	4no.

- 3.3 Vehicle access would be achieved via a new access point from Mill Lane at the south of the site. This would take the form of an adoptable standard approach road from Mill Lane which traverses an area of landscaped buffer, with the built area of the site focussed to the north closest to the existing built form of the village. An extensive area of soft landscaping and tree planting will be delivered to the south and west of the built area of the site, to provide an appropriate transition between the existing built area of the village to the east, and the countryside to the west.
- 3.4 The design, layout and amount of the proposed development responds to its edge of settlement location in the National Landscape. The dwellings are located closer to the existing built area of the settlement where the massing of the new primary school buildings impart a more urban character, leaving the rest of the site open and preserving views to and from the Malvern Hills. The primary school buildings currently provide an abrupt edge to the settlement, and the proposed landscaping at the west of the site, coupled with the arrangement of the dwellings, will help soften the transition and round off the settlement in a more organic form.
- 3.5 At the southeast of the site adjacent to Colwall Primary School it is proposed that a nature space and outdoor education area is delivered for the exclusive use of the school and its pupils. This proposal has been developed in consultation with the school, and it is understood that the school would warmly welcome the opportunity to make use of additional outdoor space given the relatively limited extent of its existing outdoor facilities. Access to the space will be secured via either a community use agreement or transfer of the learning space to the school, the mechanism for which can be confirmed by way of planning condition.

4 Planning policy context

- 4.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires all planning applications to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 4.2 The adopted Development Plan in this instance comprises the following:
- Herefordshire Core Strategy 2011-2031 (adopted 2015)
 - Colwall Neighbourhood Development Plan (adopted 2021)
- 4.3 Herefordshire Council is in the process of updating the Core Strategy via preparation of the emerging Herefordshire Local Plan. The emerging plan has undergone several iterative rounds of consultation – Spatial Options (Jan-Feb 2022); Policy Options (Apr-May 2022); Place Shaping (Jun-Jul 2022); and most recently, the Draft Plan (Mar-May 2024). We submitted representations promoting our client's site through this iterative consultation process, as well as to the 2022 Call for Sites.
- 4.4 Whilst the weight attaching to emerging Local Plan policies is commensurate to the stage of the Plan's preparation, it provides an important indication of the Council's direction of travel in response to the evidence base which underpins plan preparation. The evidence base itself which sits behind the emerging plan attracts full weight where it provides an update to the existing evidence base.

HEREFORDSHIRE CORE STRATEGY 2011-2031

- 4.5 The key policies of the adopted Core Strategy of relevance to the proposed development are summarised below.
- 4.6 Policy SS1 – 'Presumption in favour of sustainable development' – echoes national policy, stating that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Local Plan and other Development Plan documents will be approved, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 4.7 Policy SS2 – 'Delivering new homes' – seeks delivery of a minimum of 16,500 homes in Herefordshire to 2031, with 5,300 of those coming forward across the rural settlements.
- 4.8 Policy SS3 – 'Releasing land for residential development' – states that a sufficient supply of housing land will be maintained to ensure the delivery of the housing target set out in Policy SS2, with various mechanisms proposed to increase supply if completions drop below the cumulative target. These mechanisms include partial review of the Local Plan Core Strategy.
- 4.9 Policy SS4 – 'Movement and transportation' – seeks that new developments are designed and located to minimise the impacts on the transport network and, where practicable, facilitate a genuine choice of transport modes including walking, cycling and public transport.
- 4.10 Policy SS6 – 'Environmental quality and local distinctiveness' – seeks that Development proposals should be shaped through an integrated approach to planning the following environmental components from the outset.
- 4.11 Policy SS7- 'Addressing climate change' – seeks resilient design approaches including the use of passive solar design for heating and cooling and tree planting for shading; minimising the

risk of flooding and making use of sustainable drainage methods; and, use of water efficiency measures.

- 4.12 Policy RA2 – ‘Housing in settlements outside Hereford and the market towns’ – states that housing proposals will be permitted where certain criteria are met, including:
- (1) Their design and layout should reflect the size, role and function of each settlement and be located within or adjacent to the main built up area. In relation to smaller settlements proposals will be expected to demonstrate particular attention to the form, layout, character and setting of the site and its location in that settlement and/or they result in development that contributes to or is essential to the social well-being of the settlement concerned;
 - (4) They result in the delivery of schemes that generate the size, type, tenure and range of housing that is required in particular settlements, reflecting local demand.
- 4.13 Policy H3 – ‘Ensuring an appropriate range and mix of housing’ – seeks development to provide a mix of housing that can contribute to balanced and inclusive communities.
- 4.14 Policy OS1 – ‘Requirement for open space, sports and recreation facilities’ – seeks all new residential development to make appropriate open space provision.
- 4.15 Policy MT1 – ‘Traffic management, highway safety and promoting active travel’ – states that development proposals should incorporate various principle requirements including:
- (4) ensure that developments are designed and laid out to achieve safe entrance and exit, have appropriate operational and manoeuvring space, accommodate provision for all modes of transport, the needs of people with disabilities and provide safe access for the emergency services;
 - (6) have regard to with both the council’s Highways Development Design Guide and cycle and vehicle parking standards as prescribed in the Local Transport Plan - having regard to the location of the site and need to promote sustainable travel choices.
- 4.16 Policy LD1 – ‘Landscape and Townscape’ – states that development proposals should, amongst other matters:
- demonstrate that character of the landscape and townscape has positively influenced the design, scale, nature and site selection, protection and enhancement of the setting of settlement and designated areas.
 - incorporate new landscape schemes and their management to ensure development integrates appropriately into its surroundings; and
 - maintain and extend tree cover where important to amenity, through the retention of important trees, appropriate replacement of trees lost through development and new planting to support green infrastructure.
- 4.17 Policy LD2 – ‘biodiversity and geodiversity’ requires development proposals to conserve, restore and enhance the biodiversity and geodiversity assets through;
- (2) restoration and enhancement of existing biodiversity and geodiversity features on site and connectivity to wider ecological networks; and
 - (3) creation of new biodiversity features and wildlife habitats.
- 4.18 Policy LD3 – ‘Green Infrastructure’ – encourages development proposals to preserve existing and deliver new green infrastructure.

4.19 Policy SD1 – ‘Sustainable design and energy efficiency’ – sets out a range of requirements for new development including:

- new buildings should be designed to maintain local distinctiveness through incorporating local architectural detailing and materials and respecting scale, height, proportions and massing of surrounding development, while making a positive contribution to the architectural diversity and character of the area including, where appropriate, through innovative design;
- safeguard residential amenity for existing and proposed residents;

COLWALL NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN

4.20 Policy CSB1 – ‘Colwall Settlement Boundary’ – supports the provision of “at least” 70 new houses over the plan period at site allocations and other areas within the settlement boundary, where proposals accord with other policies in the NDP.

4.21 Policy CD1 – ‘Protecting Exceptional Key Views’ – seeks the protection of views identified in the 2019 Colwall Village NDP Visual Study Report to preserve the landscape character, sense of place, local distinctiveness and visual amenity of Colwall. Proposals which could affect an identified Exceptional Key View (EKV) will require a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, whilst proposals which have a high degree of impact on an EKV will be refused.

4.22 Policy CD5 – ‘General Design Principles for Development in the Wider Countryside’ – requires proposals in the wider countryside – i.e. outside the settlement boundary – to respond positively to the design principles relevant to the local landscape character type.

4.23 Policy CH1 – ‘Range and Mix of Housing’ – requires residential development to contribute towards a range and mix of housing to support balanced and inclusive communities in Colwall, with particular focus on providing a range of house types and sizes, housing capable of being adapted for people with additional needs, and housing capable of meeting specific needs of the elderly, including bungalow accommodation.

EMERGING HEREFORDSHIRE LOCAL PLAN

4.24 The site is proposed for allocation for up to 45 dwellings through Policy RURA3 of the emerging Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan (‘Colwall, Land west of Colwall Primary School’). We have submitted representations to the Reg 18 consultation in support of this proposed allocation.

4.25 It is clear that the proposed allocation indicates the Council’s support in principle both for growth at the settlement of Colwall, and specifically growth to the west of Colwall Primary School. We are in full agreement that this is a highly suitable settlement for growth in principle, and that the site is the strongest available option within the village at which to deliver this growth.

Notwithstanding this, the application to which this planning statement relates is for a smaller red line area than the full site allocation. However, the proposed scheme is designed so as not to prejudice the remainder of the site coming forward should its allocation be considered upon adoption of the Local Plan in due course.

5 Assessment of the proposed development

- 5.1 This chapter presents an assessment of the proposed development in relation to the key policies of the development plan. The assessment is arranged under the following headings:
- Principle of development
 - Housing mix
 - Design and appearance
 - Landscape
 - Ecology and biodiversity
 - Drainage and flood risk
 - Historic environment

PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

- 5.2 The key policies in respect of the principle of development are Core Strategy Policies SS2, SS4, RA1 and RA2, plus Neighbourhood Plan Policy CSB1.
- 5.3 Policy SS2 sets the strategic quantum and distribution of housing growth across the district, identifying a total housing target of at least 16,500 dwellings, of which a minimum of 5,300 are directed to the rural settlements, including Colwall. The spatial strategy set out in the supporting text directs this growth towards those settlements which are “considered sustainable due to their existing range of services, together with those settlements where some future development will offer the potential for them to become more sustainable”.
- 5.4 Policy RA1 disaggregates the 5,300 minimum target between Herefordshire’s seven rural Housing Market Areas (HMA). Colwall falls within the Ledbury HMA which is expected to deliver around 14% of the overall rural settlement growth, i.e. around 565 dwellings. There are no settlement-specific targets provided, though the policy text states that the appropriate scale of development will be determined by local evidence and environmental factors.
- 5.5 It is therefore significant that Colwall is identified as the most sustainable rural settlement in the whole district through the 2022 Rural Settlement Hierarchy Background Paper (RSHBP)¹, reflecting its excellent range of services and facilities, as well as the fact it is the only rural settlement in the district with a mainline railway station. Notwithstanding the fact that Colwall is within the Malvern Hills National Landscape (considered in more detail below), it follows that Colwall is demonstrably a sustainable location in principle for residential development, and should make a meaningful contribution to housing delivery.
- 5.6 Colwall’s high sustainability score contrasts with its low housing delivery over the Core Strategy period. Since the base date in 2011 there have been only 73 completions in the settlement (as per the 2024 Rural Areas Background Paper [RABP]²), albeit with a further 55 commitments in the pipeline. Nevertheless, this is a low contribution in the context of the overall rural settlement target of 5,300 and represents under-delivery in the most sustainable rural settlement in the district. In light of this, and the settlement’s high sustainability score, it follows that the village

¹ <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/23884/rural-areas-settlement-hierarchy-background-paper-june-2022>

² <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/26361/rural-areas-background-paper>

could and should deliver more housing. Therefore, the principle of growth in Colwall accords with, and draws support from, Policy SS2 and RA1.

- 5.7 The application site is adjacent to the built area of the settlement, and adjacent to the settlement boundary established through the Neighbourhood Plan. Policy RA2 identifies Colwall as a settlement at which “sustainable housing growth will be supported in or adjacent” to the existing built area, in order to maintain and strengthen locally sustainable communities. The supporting text says that such growth should be ‘proportionate’, though this is not quantitatively defined. Regardless, RA2 provides support in principle for proposals in Colwall which:
- Are of a design and layout which reflect the size, role and function of each settlement and are located within or adjacent to the main built area (emphasis added);
 - Make best and full use of brownfield sites wherever possible;
 - Result in high quality, sustainable schemes appropriate to their context and make a positive contribution to the surrounding environment and landscape setting;
 - Generate the required size, type, tenure and range of housing, reflecting local demand.
- 5.8 The RA2 criteria are considered in turn. For the first limb, Colwall’s role and function must be viewed through the lens of its performance in the RSHBP assessment, in which it was found to be the most sustainable rural settlement in the district. Spatially, the application site is outside but immediately adjacent to the built area of the village, and within a short walk of key village services. As such, the first limb of RA2 is satisfied.
- 5.9 The second limb is not engaged, as it is not possible to make use of brownfield land at the site.
- 5.10 The third limb is satisfied by virtue of the scheme’s bespoke design, high build quality, and high fabric efficiency, together with the carefully considered scheme of planted landscape mitigation which responds positively and comprehensively to the landscape setting within the Malvern Hills National Landscape.
- 5.11 The fourth limb is satisfied as the proposed housing mix of 35% 2-bed, 40% 3-bed and 25% 4-bed is in broad accordance with the 2021 Housing Market Area Needs Assessment for the Ledbury HMA³.
- 5.12 In the context of a housing waiting list of over 1,500 households (as per figures published in June 2024), it is clear that the provision of housing in principle should attract support where it can be demonstrated to be in a sustainable location, as with land at Mill Lane. There is a significant and growing level of people in urgent housing need and housing insecurity, and the five proposed affordable homes will help contribute to meeting these needs.⁴
- 5.13 Overall, the principle of development in Colwall – and on the application site specifically - draws full support from the relevant policies of the development plan, including CS Policies SS2, SS4, RA1, RA2 and NDP Policy CSB1.

Proposed changes to the Standard Method for calculating housing need

- 5.14 The Government recently consulted on proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework, including significant changes to the standard method for calculating housing need.

³ <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/22548/herefordshire-housing-market-area-needs-assessment-july-2021>

⁴ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66798f5bc7f64e234208ff3c/Live_Table_600.ods

Under the proposed new standard method, Herefordshire's housing need would increase significantly from 773 dwellings per annum (dpa) to 1,375 dpa, i.e. an increase of nearly 80%. The consultation only recently closed on 24 September and so the new standard method is not yet adopted policy, but it signals the direction of travel under the new Government. Herefordshire Council's Local Development Scheme timetables submission of the emerging Local Plan for Summer 2025, which would mean the plan would not benefit from the transitional arrangements and would need to provide for the new uplifted housing need figure.

- 5.15 In light of the above, the very significant proposed increase in Herefordshire's housing need figure is considered to be a material consideration, and lends support to the principle of development at the sustainable location proposed through this application.

HOUSING MIX

- 5.16 The proposed mix of housing types and tenures includes policy-compliant affordable housing, and a range of 2-bed, 3-bed and 4-bed dwellings, with the tenure and size split set out as per the table at paragraph 3.2 of this Planning Statement. The proposed housing mix broadly reflects the recommended housing mix identified in the 2021 Housing Market Area Needs Assessment (i.e. the most recently published iteration).
- 5.17 As such, it is considered to be in accordance with Policy H3 and Policy CH1 of the NDP.

DESIGN AND APPEARANCE

- 5.18 Colwall as a settlement has an attractive character without having a clear prevailing architectural vernacular or style, reflecting that it has evolved and grown in piecemeal fashion over time. Accordingly, the Neighbourhood Plan describes the village as a "characteristic mix of buildings from successive decades". Colwall's townscape character is informed to a large extent by its picturesque setting at the foot of the Malvern Hills, which form the eastern backdrop to the village.
- 5.19 Similarly, whilst there are several designated historic assets in the village, these do not collectively provide a coherent sense of historic identity. The Colwall Stone/Upper Colwall conservation area is designated at the furthest northern extent of the village, and beyond this many small clusters and individual listed buildings are pepper-potted across the village.
- 5.20 In this context Policy LD1 requires development proposals to demonstrate that they have been "positively influenced" by the landscape and townscape character of the village. The scheme has been carefully designed to respond positively to this requirement, demonstrated by the exceptionally low housing density of just 6 dwellings per hectare.
- 5.21 The design and appearance of the proposed development reflects a traditional style which will sit comfortably alongside this existing character, using materials such as brick and timber to ensure the new homes read appropriately within the wider aesthetic of the village and its landscape setting.
- 5.22 The layout, with its generous provision of open space, tree planting and soft landscaping, ensures the scheme will be characterised by its shared green spaces and pedestrian-friendly pathways. Additionally, the substantial new boundary planting, new orchard and outdoor education area have all been designed to ensure an attractive settlement-edge character, appropriate to the site's edge of settlement location within the National Landscape.

- 5.23 For the reasons given, the proposal is considered to accord with the relevant limbs of Policy LD1 and Policy CD5 of the Neighbourhood Plan in respect of design and appearance

LANDSCAPE

- 5.24 The settlement of Colwall is entirely washed over by the Malvern Hills National Landscape (formerly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty). As such, the site falls within the National Landscape, where national planning policy requires great weight to be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty. National planning policy requires that the scale and extent of development in National Landscapes should be limited. That is not to say that the National Landscape cannot accommodate development growth, but rather that it needs to be suitably sensitive in character, scale and appearance to respond to the site specific landscape context.
- 5.25 In this context it is important to recognise that as the settlement as a whole is washed over the by National Landscape it is not the case that every part of the settlement exhibits the intrinsic scenic qualities for which the National Landscape designation is made. In practice, there is a spectrum of sensitivity within and around the settlement.
- 5.26 The site itself comprises an open field with no internal partitions or other features. It is bounded by mature hedgerow to the south and west, modern chainlink fencing with additional hedgerow planting to the primary school to the east, and by mature trees and a public footpath to the north. The site's open character means it supports views toward the Malvern Hills to the north, which form the distinctive northern backdrop to the village as a whole. The existing built form of the village, adjacent to the east, is clearly visible from the site and provides an urbanising influence. Mill Lane runs to the south of the site, with further existing development beyond in the form of 3no. recently completed dwellings at Fishleys Orchard.
- 5.27 Given the site's location within the National Landscape, and the view corridors across it the Malvern Hills, the site design is landscape-led. A detailed Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment has been prepared by the Peter Richard Partnership which identifies the landscape and visual features of potential sensitivity, the potential impact upon them from the proposed development, and the mitigation proposed accordingly.
- 5.28 The key Development Plan policies in respect of landscape are Core Strategy Policies LD1 and LD3, as well as Neighbourhood Plan Policy CD1. Specific view corridors are identified by CD1 in particular, and the scheme has been specifically designed to respond positively to these, as detailed in the accompanying Design and Access Statement.
- 5.29 The accompanying LVIA undertakes a rigorous assessment of landscape and visual impacts. Accordingly, the LVIA concludes in respect of landscape effects that "it would be possible for this development to assimilate into its surrounding landscape without giving rise to an longer term, undue adverse effects on the wider landscape character of the area" and in respect of the visual effects that "With the exception of views within the site itself, or in the immediate vicinity, it would represent a relatively small change to the component of the view and would not interrupt views to the Malvern Hills ridge".
- 5.30 Overall, the LVIA concludes that despite the site's proximity to the Malvern Hills, and its location within the National Landscape, "notable adverse landscape and visual effects would be limited to the site itself and its immediate surroundings where they would quickly dissipate with

distance, not extending to the wider area. The landscape and visual effects experienced in the wider area would be very small, including those relating to the Malvern Hills ridge”.

- 5.31 As such, it is considered that the proposed development is consistent with the LD1 requirement to conserve and enhance the scenic beauty of National Landscape and to ensure development integrates appropriately into its surroundings.

ECOLOGY AND BIODIVERSITY

- 5.32 The site comprises a field in intensive arable use, which in recent years has include the production of rapeseed and barley. The field itself is internally open, reflecting its intensive agricultural use, but is surrounded by hedgerow. The enclosed Biodiversity Impact Assessment (BIA) identifies that to the south along Mill Lane, this hedgerow comprises native varieties, and also supports individual native trees. The hedgerows to the west and east are not identified as native.
- 5.33 Against this baseline the scheme will deliver significant ecological enhancement. This will include the planting of an orchard comprising local heritage fruit trees to the west and south of the site, native woodland planting along the northern boundary to enhance the existing woodland buffer, new native hedgerow planting to the west, new standard tree planting around the site, and sewing species rich grassland managed to promote biodiversity.
- 5.34 Overall, the BIA and statutory BNG metric identify that these measures will deliver a 157.98% increase in linear habitat, and a 33.77% net gain in area habitat. This is well in excess of the statutory requirement for 10% net gain. On this basis, and on the basis that the scheme creates and enhances biodiversity features and wildlife habitats, the proposed development is in accordance with Core Strategy Policy LD2.

TRANSPORT AND ACCESSIBILITY

- 5.35 Policy SS4 requires new developments to be designed and located to minimise impacts on the transport network, including by facilitating a genuine choice of travel modes. Colwall's mainline station means is uniquely well placed amongst the rural settlements to enable a genuine modal choice. Colwall benefits from half-hourly train services to Hereford and Great Malvern, hourly services to Birmingham and daily direct services to London Paddington. Colwall station is around a 15-minute walk from the site.
- 5.36 The settlement is also served throughout the day by the 675 bus service between the higher tier settlements of Ledbury and Great Malvern, where a wider range of goods, services and employment opportunities can be easily accessed. The nearest bus stops in each direction are around a five minute walk from the site. In terms of travel within the settlement, the site is well placed to support walking and cycling access to a good range of local services. The village school is immediately adjacent to the site, whilst services including local shops, the library, Doctor's surgery, pharmacy, café and the village pub are all within a comfortable 15-minute walk of the site. As such the site's location will enable a wide range of needs to be met via sustainable transport modes and the proposed development draws very clear support from SS4.
- 5.37 Policy MT1 sets out requirements in relation to traffic management and highway safety, as well as active travel. The accompanying Transport Technical Note, prepared by Rappor, identifies the relevant traffic management and highway safety measures accordingly. As per the

Technical Note, the access arrangements to the site have been designed in accordance with the Council's Highways Design Guidance, and include visibility splays onto Mill Lane based on 85th percentile speeds, suitable access for fire tenders and refuse vehicles, a 15mph design speed on all internal roads, provision of 2m-wide footways within the site, plus improvements to a PRoW where it passes through the site. It is considered that the proposed development draws support from the relevant limbs of MT1.

- 5.38 Parking standards in Herefordshire are presented as maximum provision not minimum. The quantum and mix of proposed housing generates a maximum provision of 34 spaces, and in relation to this the scheme delivers 32 spaces. All dwellings will be provided with electric vehicle charging facilities. Secure cycle parking will be provided within the curtilage of each dwelling at a ratio of once bicycle storage space per bedroom. In light of the above, parking provision will be in full accordance with Herefordshire parking standards. Overall, the proposed scheme is considered to accord with the policies of the development plan most relevant to transport and accessibility.

DRAINAGE AND FLOOD RISK

- 5.39 The site is located within Flood Zone 1, i.e. the area of lowest risk of flooding from rivers or the sea. A corridor of Flood Zone 3 follows the alignment of the unnamed watercourse to the north of the site but does not affect the developable area of the site itself.
- 5.40 The application is accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA), prepared by Structa. The FRA concludes that there is no risk of flooding from the watercourse for the life of the development, or from groundwater, sewers or reservoirs.
- 5.41 There is a near-zero risk of surface water flood risk within the site, based on the Government's flood map tool – only a very small sliver of low risk is evident within the red line boundary. The surface water drainage design for the development is designed to accommodate the 1 in 100 year return period storm event plus a 40% allowance for climate change, in accordance with the recommendations of the Flood Risk Assessment.
- 5.42 The submitted FRA is considered to meet the requirements of Policy SD3 (Sustainable water management and water resources) and to therefore draw support from the relevant policies of the development plan.

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

- 5.43 The site has no direct sensitivity in relation to designated historic environment assets. Isolated listed buildings are pepper-potted throughout the village, but none are in close proximity to the site. A small cluster of 2no Grade II* and 1no Grade II listed buildings are around 190m to the east of the site, but a combination of intervening built form and dense planted screening means the site does not fall within the setting of any listed buildings.
- 5.44 The site could be adjudged to fall within the wider setting of the Colwall Stone/Upper Colwall Conservation Area which is around 325m to the north of the site at its closest point. However, for reasons of distance and intervening planting there is no intervisibility between the site and the Conservation Area and there is not considered to be any potential for the proposed development to give rise to harm to the setting or significance of the Conservation Area in practice.

- 5.45 In terms of non-designated assets, the application is accompanied by a Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment (HEDBA) prepared by Orion Heritage Ltd. The HEDBA identifies only low potential for archaeological remains from all past periods, and although a small number of non-designated buildings of historic interest are identified nearby, the HEDBA concludes that no harm will arise in relation to any of them.
- 5.46 In light of the above, it is considered that the proposed development is in full accordance with the relevant policies of the development plan in respect of the historic environment.

6 Planning balance and conclusion

- 6.1 This Planning Statement has provided an overview of the proposed development and summarised the national and local planning policy context of particular relevance in the assessment of this application. An assessment of the proposed development in relation to the policies of the Development Plan has found that the proposal is in accordance with the key policies of the Development Plan, and with the Development Plan when read as a whole except in respect of Neighbourhood Plan Policy CSB1 which establishes the settlement boundary.
- 6.2 For the reasons given in this Planning Statement, the evidence base underpinning the adopted Development Plan and the emerging Local Plan is very clear that Colwall is the outstanding rural settlement in the county in terms of sustainability, and the settlement should be working much harder to contribute to sustainably meeting the housing needs of the county as a whole, and of the Ledbury Housing Market Area. The evidence base underpinning the emerging Local Plan, including the Sustainability Appraisal, is clear that the site is the most suitable in the settlement at which to deliver this growth, and this is reflected by the Council's proposed allocation of the site through the emerging Local Plan.
- 6.3 Notwithstanding the direction of travel in plan-making in Herefordshire, it is also the case that the proposed development draws support from the key policies of the adopted development plan. It is recognised, however, that the site's location outside the identified settlement boundary means there is technical conflict with Neighbourhood Plan Policy CSB1 which establishes the boundary and presumes against development outside of it. However, it is material to this application that the Council's own evidence base supports growth at the site, and it follows that the degree of weight attaching to this conflict is reduced accordingly.
- 6.4 To assist officers, a planning balance table is provided below.

Weighing in favour	Weighting	Weighing against	Weighting
Provision of housing	Significant positive	Technical spatial harm arising from development outside the settlement boundary	Limited negative

Provision of affordable housing	Significant positive	Landscape Impact (local views within the site)	Limited negative
Provision of outdoor education space for Colwall Primary School	Moderate positive		
Biodiversity Net Gain of 33.77%	Moderate positive		
Enhancement to PProW CW29c	Limited positive		

- 6.5 In light of the above it is considered that the planning balance indicates that the limited technical negative weight arising from the technical conflict with CSB1 is decisively outbalanced by material considerations, such that the application should be determined other than in accordance with the adopted Development Plan.
- 6.6 Accordingly, we look forward to working collaboratively with officers to ensure a positive determination.