
Planning Statement inc. Statement of Community Involvement

16-18 Oatlands Drive, Weybridge

December 2022

On behalf of The Ridge(Oatlands) LLP



Planning Statement

16-18 Oatlands Drive, Weybridge, KT13 9JL



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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Savills in support of an application for full planning permission submitted to Elmbridge Borough Council (EBC) on behalf of The Ridge (Oatlands) LLP (“the applicant”) in support of a planning application concerning proposals at 16-18 Oatlands Drive, Weybridge (“the site”).

Description of Development

- 1.2 This Planning Statement is submitted in support of an application which seeks full planning permission for the following:

“Demolition of two existing dwellinghouses followed by the erection of two residential buildings (Use Class C3) over three and four storeys respectively, provision of vehicular access, residents’ car parking, cycle storage, refuse storage and amenity areas, hard and soft landscaping, and all associated engineering, infrastructure and works”

Supporting Documents

- 1.3 This Planning Statement should be read in conjunction with the plans and drawings and other technical reports submitted in support of the planning application. The full list of submitted materials is set out below:
- Planning Application Forms & Certificates, prepared by Savills;
 - CIL Additional Information Form 1, prepared by Savills;
 - Site Location Plan, prepared by MAYD Architecture;
 - Planning Application Drawings, prepared by MAYD Architecture;
 - Planning Statement including Statement of Community Involvement, prepared by Savills;
 - Design and Access Statement, prepared by MAYD Architecture;
 - Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy, prepared by Lanmor Consulting;
 - Archaeological Desk-based Assessment, prepared by L-P Archaeology;
 - Transport Statement, prepared by Lanmor Consulting;
 - Travel Plan and Impact Assessment, prepared by Lanmor Consulting;
 - Tree Survey and Impact Assessment, prepared by Keen Consultants;
 - Tree Protection Plan, prepared by Keen Consultants;
 - Tree Constraints Plan, prepared by Keen Consultants;

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- Landscape Masterplan, prepared by Keen Consultants;
- Ecological Report, including BNG Technical Note, prepared by AA Environmental;
- Financial Viability Appraisal, prepared by S106 Management Ltd; and
- Sustainability and Energy Statement, prepared by Envision.

Structure of the Statement

1.4 The structure of this planning statement is as follows:

- **Section 2** provides the background to the site and its context within the surrounding area;
- **Section 3** sets out an overview of the planning history of the site;
- **Section 4** provides a summary of the proposed development;
- **Section 5** sets out the relevant planning policy framework for the site and the proposed development;
- **Section 6** provides an assessment of the proposed development against the Development Plan policies and any other material considerations; and
- **Section 7** provides the Statement of Community Involvement
- **Section 8** provides a conclusion in respect of the proposed development.

2. Site and Surrounding Area

- 2.1 This section of the Planning Statement provides a description of the site and the immediate surrounding area.
- 2.2 The site comprises two existing residential dwelling houses, 16 and 18 Oatlands Drive, and their plots including land to the front, sides and rear. The site, which is comprised of both existing plots, is broadly rectangular in shape and fronts on to Oatlands Drive, plots are both currently serviced via separate vehicular accesses from Oatlands Drive. An extract of the submitted Site Location Plan is provided at Figure 2.1 below.



Figure 2.1 Site Location Plan

- 2.3 Figure 2.2 below shows the Proposed Site Context Plan, which also includes the forthcoming development at 8-14 Oatlands Drive to the northeast of the site. Works have already begun on 8-14 Oatlands Drive.

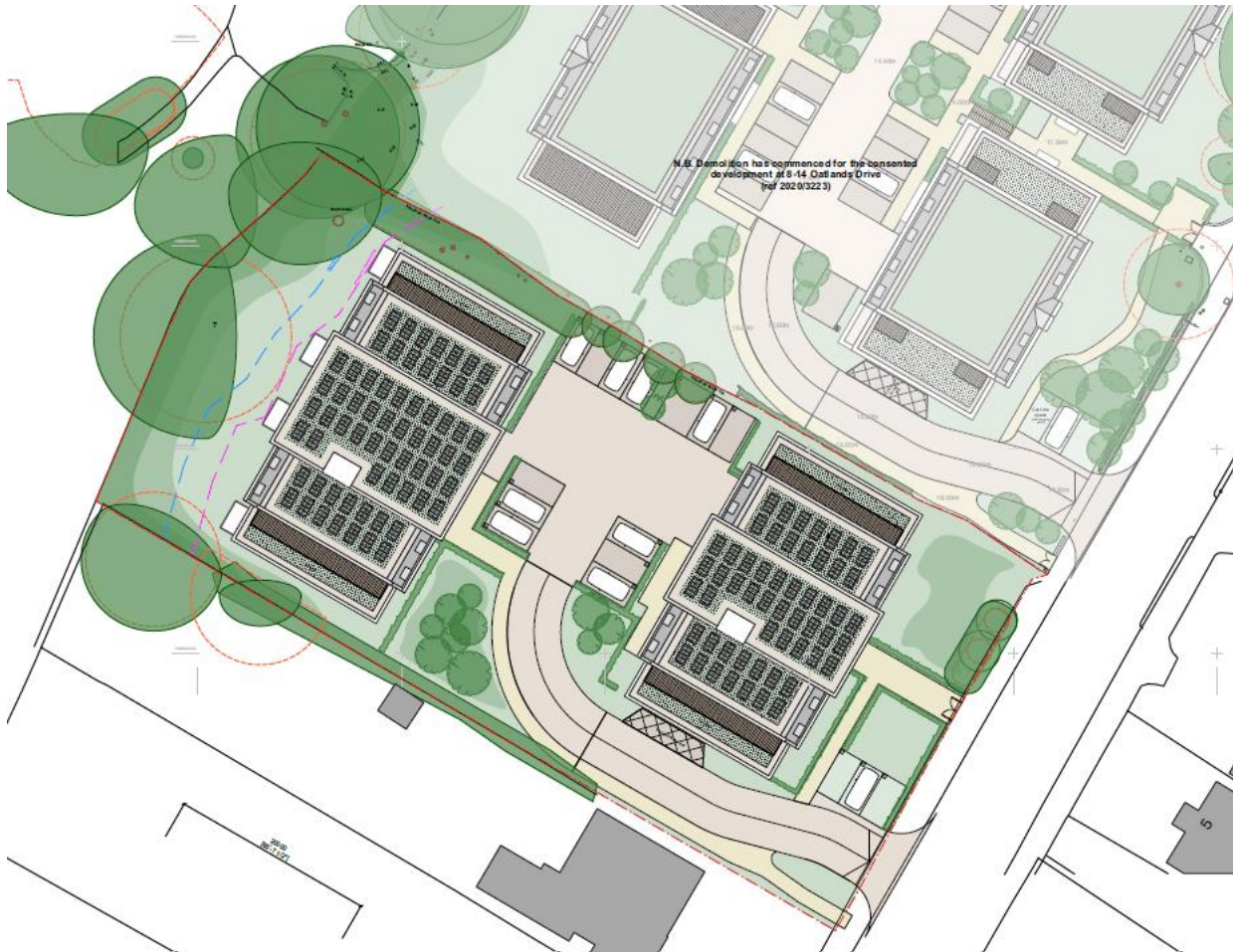


Figure 2.2 Proposed Site Context Plan

- 2.4 The site measures approximately 0.35 hectares in area. No 16 Oatlands Drive (furthest north) is a substantial 4 bedroom bungalow with a pitched roof, set back from Oatlands Drive behind a driveway. No 18 Oatlands Drive, to the south, which is the larger of the two properties, is a two storey 6 bedroom house with a garage, set back again from the highway behind a driveway. Both properties maintain the consistent building line found in this part of Oatlands Drive. The gradient of the site falls away steeply from Oatlands Drive towards the rear boundary of both gardens. Neither of the two buildings are listed and the site is not located within a Conservation Area. On the opposite side of Oatlands Drive, number 1 and 3 Oatlands Drive are Grade II Listed Buildings.
- 2.5 To the north of the site lies 8-14 Oatlands Drive, a site which previously contained four individual dwellinghouses, which is currently being redeveloped to provide 51 units of residential accommodation in the form of a flatted scheme. To the rear of the site on the northwest and western side, lies the Engine River, a branch of the Thames. The Engine River is located within the River Thames Policy Area, although

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the site itself falls outside of this designated area. Beyond the river is a green space known as Cowey Sale, which is designated Metropolitan Green Belt. Beyond this lies the River Thames, approximately 260m to the west of the site.

- 2.6 Along the north and the western edges of the site, there are several mature trees which reduce the site's visibility from the public realm and the adjacent site at 8 -14 Oatlands Drive. Some of the trees contained within the site are subject to Tree Preservation Orders (TPO's). Any necessary works to trees within the site, including those which are subject to TPO, are described within the accompanying arboricultural reports.
- 2.7 The site is located within the 'WALL11: Oatlands Park' sub area of the Elmbridge Design and Character (2012) SPD which describes the area as *"predominantly mixed residential 20th Century two-storey houses at a low to medium density on medium to large plots with some post-war three-storey flatted development interspersed throughout"*. The site is predominantly located within Flood Risk Zone 1, however a small area of land to the rear of the site also falls within Flood Risk Zones 2 and 3.

Surrounding Context

- 2.8 The immediate context is witnessing a change in character with a densification of the townscape.
- 2.9 Adjacent to the site to the northeast lies 8-14 Oatlands Drive, which has recently received planning permission for the redevelopment of existing dwellings to provide 51 flats. Works have already started on the site at 8-14 Oatlands Drive. The emerging character in this locality therefore includes flatted development of a formal design. The image below shows how this application site sits in context with the adjacent development.





Figure 2.2 Aerial Plan

- 2.10 Standing at the junction of Oatlands Drive and Bridge Street to the north, a number of much larger buildings are visible to the north and east, indicating the transitional nature of the end of Oatlands Drive at the edge of the town centre. These include the two-storey office buildings, 80 and 70 Bridge Street, and the Aston Martin garage, located at the entrance to New Zealand Avenue. Beyond this, to the north east, the Wellington Close flats (ground plus nine storeys above) are also readily visible.
- 2.11 New Zealand Avenue extends eastwards from the Oatlands Drive and Bridge Street junction, providing a main thoroughfare through the town centre. The site is located close to the edge of the town centre. Other significant buildings in this location include the Heart Shopping Centre multi-storey car park and Sainsbury's supermarket. Further eastwards along New Zealand Avenue, the Heart development includes a mixed use building facing New Zealand Avenue of ground plus six storeys, featuring restaurants at ground, with residential accommodation above.
- 2.12 Opposite the Heart development, planning permission has been granted for the redevelopment of the former Homebase site, for a retirement living scheme providing 222 accommodation units with associated community facilities, in a building rising to a maximum height of eight storeys. The Inspector's decision notice, granting permission for the retirement living development, described the part of Walton in which the scheme is located, as a "*distinctly urban, town centre location*". The town centre, which is within walking distance of 16 - 18 Oatlands Drive, has a good range of shops and services and other facilities necessary for day-to-day living.

3. Planning History

3.1 This section provides a brief summary of the relevant planning application history of the site at 16-18 Oatlands Drive, and that of adjacent 8-14 Oatlands Drive and 4-6 Oatlands Drive, which were recently the subject of applications for planning permission. 4-18 Oatlands Drive was also the subject of a historic planning application and appeal, detailed below.

16-18 Oatlands Drive (The Site)

3.2 Number 16 Oatlands Drive has been subject to one previous planning application dating back to 1962 according to Elmbridge Borough Council's online planning register. However, this is considered to be historic and of no direct relevance to the submitted proposals.

3.3 Number 18 Oatlands Drive has been subject to a number of planning applications. This includes most recently an application to install vehicular gates, which was approved in 2016. An application was also approved in 2015 for extensions to convert the existing single storey house into a two storey house. There have been no planning applications that have sought the comprehensive redevelopment of the site.

8-14 Oatlands Drive

3.4 Adjacent to the site (extending northwards), 8-14 Oatlands Drive is a site which previously contained four similar plots containing individual residential dwelling houses, numbered 8 – 14 Oatlands Drive. This site was recently the subject of two separate planning applications (2020/0691 & 2020/3223) which sought to demolish the existing dwelling houses to facilitate a comprehensive redevelopment the site to provide new residential buildings containing 51 apartments.

3.5 Both schemes proposed 51 apartments split between four separate blocks (2020/3223) and three separate blocks (2020/0691) in a courtyard arrangement, both schemes rising to two and a half storeys in height. The applications were refused by Elmbridge Borough Council for reasons mainly related to the overall design, scale and appearance proposed.

3.6 Appeals were submitted against both refusals and in June 2021, the Planning Inspectorate issued a single decision letter, overturning the decisions of Elmbridge Borough Council, and granting detailed planning permission for both applications. The Inspector's decision establishes a number of important principles which are relevant to the consideration of the current application proposal at 16 – 18 Oatlands Drive. These will be referred to in more detail at the appropriate stages later within this statement.

3.7 The development approved under application 2020/3223 at 8 – 14 Oatlands Drive has since been commenced on site through the demolition of all four of the existing dwelling houses. The development is currently at an advanced stage of construction and once complete will form part of the character of the immediate area in which the current proposals at 16 – 18 Oatlands Drive must be considered.

4-6 Oatlands Drive

3.8 Further north, beyond the site at 8 – 14 Oatlands Drive, Number 4 Oatlands Drive has been the subject of a number of planning applications, however these are considered to be historic and of no direct relevance to the submitted proposals. Most recently, in 2012, planning permission was granted for the erection of a two-storey rear extension. The permitted extension has since been constructed. Number 6 Oatlands Drive on its own has no planning history according to the Elmbridge Borough Council online planning register.

3.9 However, an application was submitted in July 2022 for the comprehensive redevelopment of 4-6 Oatlands Drive to provide two residential flatted buildings containing 27 dwellings (LPA Ref. 2022/2118). The proposals include the provision of car parking, cycle parking, refuse storage and amenity areas, hard and soft landscaping and all associated engineering, infrastructure and works. This application was not determined by Elmbridge Borough Council therefore at the time of writing, an appeal has been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate under Section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against the non-determination of a planning application. At the time of writing, the appeal has not been determined.

4-18 Oatlands Drive

3.10 In 2007 an application to redevelop the site containing the above dwellings was submitted. This was refused and dismissed at appeal in the same year. The application and appeal are of limited relevance to the proposals given their age and content, however they are referred to in this statement briefly.

4. The Proposed Development

- 4.1 The proposed development for which planning permission is sought, is described as *“Demolition of two existing dwellinghouses followed by the erection of two residential buildings (Use Class C3) over ground plus two storeys (plus lower ground basement), provision of vehicular access, residents’ car parking, cycle storage, refuse storage and amenity areas, hard and soft landscaping, and all associated engineering, infrastructure and works”*
- 4.2 Following demolition of the two existing dwellings, the site would be re-developed to provide a pair of residential buildings containing 33 dwellings. Building A, located at the front of the site facing Oatlands Drive, is set over ground, first and second floors and contains 15 dwellings. Parking spaces are provided at the lower ground floor level.
- 4.3 Building B, being located to the rear of the site, respects the hierarchy of Building A. Due to the site levels which fall away steeply to the rear of the site (westwards), despite being set over four floors Building B is shorter than Building A and appears as only 3 storeys from the front. Building B is 4 storeys from the rear view as a result of the sloping levels. It contains basement, lower ground floor, ground floor and first floor. Building B contains 18 dwellings. This stepping down is also seen in the neighbouring example of 8-14 Oatlands Drive and other flatted developments along Oatlands Drive, which also slope down towards the rear of the properties.
- 4.4 In total there are 33 dwellings proposed in the following mix:
- 3 X 1-bed dwellings
 - 28 X 2-bed dwellings
 - 2 X 3-bed dwellings
- 4.5 Located between both buildings is a courtyard area containing surface level car parking. In total, 32 car parking spaces are provided for the residents of the proposed dwellings, including 3 wheelchair accessible parking spaces. In addition, 40 cycle parking spaces are provided for the occupants in two secure cycle parking units.
- 4.6 A single vehicular access from Oatlands Drive, to replace the two existing separate accesses, is proposed.
- 4.7 All of the proposed dwellings either meet or exceed the Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS), and a mixture of private and shared amenity spaces are provided. The land surrounding the proposed buildings will be enhanced via sensitive landscaping, including new tree planting and enhancements to the site’s biodiversity.

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- 4.8 The design approach respects the style of the flatted development being developed adjacent. It comprises a formal architectural approach, with regular fenestration, projecting and stepped elements to provide for variation in the bulk, mass and overall appearance. The proposed buildings are dressed in heritage stock facing brick and off-white ashlar render. The windows will be timber double glazed vertical sliding sash windows with dark grey GRP dormer with profiled fascia. A wetcase reconstituted stone banding / detailing is proposed as well as slate roof tiles. The overall architectural composition has due regard to both the immediate locality and that found in the wider area.

5. Planning Policy Framework

- 5.1 The proposed development has taken account of the Development Plan covering the site as well as other material considerations. This section of the Planning Statement sets out a summary of the relevant planning policy and guidance documents, whilst the following section demonstrates compliance with the policies contained within.
- 5.2 In accordance with Section 38(6) of The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004), the planning application should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless other material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.3 In this case the Development Plan comprises the adopted Core Strategy (2011) and the Development Management Plan (2015). The Core Strategy is the principal, strategic document that sets out the vision, spatial strategy and core policies which apply to developments within the council's administrative area. The Development Management Plan contains more detailed policies and standards.
- 5.4 In addition to the Development Plan documents listed above, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021) and associated Guidance, are material considerations in the determination of all planning applications in England. They provide the Government's latest policy direction for local planning authorities and applicants to follow. Paragraph 218 of the Framework states that policies in the Framework are material considerations which should be taken into account in dealing with applications from the day of publication. Plans may also need to be revised to reflect policy changes which the Framework has made.
- 5.5 The local planning authority's Core Strategy was adopted prior to the publication of the original NPPF in 2012, and the Development Management Plan was adopted prior to the publication of the revised NPPF in 2018. However, the NPPF at paragraph 219 states that existing policies should not be considered out of date simply because they were adopted prior to the publication of the Framework. Due weight should be given to them, according to their degree of consistency with the policies within the Framework.
- 5.6 Elmbridge are in the process of preparing a new Development Plan. On the 22nd March 2022, at a Special Council meeting, the council agreed to publish the New Local Plan for Regulation 19 consultation in June 2022. The Regulation 19 Consultation closed in the summer and Elmbridge are currently collating the responses received. It is considered that the policies within it contain extremely limited weight due to the emerging Development Plan's early stage and the current application falls to be assessed against the adopted policies within the Development Plan.

Elmbridge Borough Council's Housing Land Supply Position

5.7 Of relevance to the consideration of the proposed development is the local planning authorities current housing land supply. Paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF, provides that where there are no development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining applications are out of date, decision takers should grant permission unless:

- The application of policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed (i.e. the site is located within the Green Belt, or other protected landscape area); or
- Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework when taken as a whole.

5.8 As footnote 8 to Paragraph 11(d) makes clear, where applications involving the provision of housing are proposed, then planning policies are considered out of date in circumstances where the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites (with the appropriate buffer) or where the Housing Delivery Test indicates that the delivery of housing was substantially below (less than 75% of) the housing requirement over the previous three years.

5.9 The appeal decision at 8 – 14 Oatlands Drive in June 2021 confirmed the council's agreement, at that time, to the fact that it could not demonstrate a five year housing land supply. The Annual Monitoring Report for 2019-2020 which the Inspector referred to set out a position of only 3.93 years at that time. The Inspector also commented on the Housing Delivery Test score published in January 2021, which showed a score of 58% of homes delivered against the total required. The Inspector concluded "*these figures indicate a consistent and significant underachievement in relation to housing supply.*"

5.10 Due to this persistent under-delivery of housing, the council is required to add a 20% buffer to its 5 year housing land supply figure. The latest Annual Monitoring Report for 2020 – 2021, published in January 2022 since the appeal decision, puts the current supply at 4.88 years. Whilst the supply has improved, this now takes into account the 51 homes consented at 8 – 14 Oatlands Drive. The latest Housing Delivery Test results published in January 2022 (repeated below) show a score of 70% of homes delivered against the total required, confirming that *the presumption* is still engaged. As LPAs should be delivering *at least* 95% of their target, the table shows that Elmbridge are still consistently and significantly underachieving.

Housing Delivery Test Results January 2022								
Number of homes required			Total required	Number of homes delivered			Total Delivered	HDT Score
2018/19	2019/20	2020/21		2018/19	2019/20	2020/21		

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623	573	421	1,618	427	396	310	1133	70%
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5.11 Whilst this statement will demonstrate that the proposed development is acceptable in its own right, having regard to the Development Plan and all other material considerations, it is relevant to note at the outset that the proposed development should be assessed by the council with the 'titled balance' engaged. The proposed development is a deliverable housing site located in a sustainable location and will make a meaningful contribution to Elmbridge's immediate housing supply.

6. Planning Considerations

- 6.1. This section of the Planning Statement will provide an assessment of the proposals against the relevant policies contained within the Development Plan, and refer to any other material considerations which exist.
- 6.2. The assessment considers the proposal against the requirements of the NPPF, NPPG and the Development Plan for EBC as a whole.

Principle of Development

- 6.3. The site is previously developed land located within a built-up area, on the edge of the town centre in Walton-on-Thames. Policy CS1 of the Core Strategy provides that new development will be directed towards previously developed land, within the existing built up areas, taking account of other factors such as flood risk. Walton and Weybridge are identified as the most sustainable locations within Elmbridge, since they provide a broad range of uses and services, as well as opportunities to accommodate new development. Policy CS1 states that town and village centres will be the focus for new development. Walton-on-Thames town centre is identified as the sequentially preferred location for development.
- 6.4. Policy CS2 encourages appropriate housing development on previously developed land within the urban area, by, inter alia, ensuring effective use of urban land for housing by delivering high-density housing developments in the most sustainable locations. Policy CS3 concerning Walton on Thames, states that outside of the town centre, new development will be promoted through redevelopment of previously developed land, taking account of relative flood risk, in way that integrates with and enhances local character.
- 6.5. The proposed development concerns the redevelopment of previously developed land, located on the edge of Walton-on-Thames, within the settlement boundary. The proposal is consistent with policies CS1, CS2 and CS3, which seek to direct new development towards Walton-on-Thames, prioritise the redevelopment of previously developed land, and locate new development within, and on the edge of, the town centre where higher density housing can be supported by the numerous existing facilities, services and other infrastructure. In terms of directing new development to the most sequentially preferable locations, it is also relevant to note that the site is outside of both the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area, and the buffer zones.
- 6.6. The latest Annual Monitoring Report confirms that the annual housing requirement within the Core Strategy, 225 homes per year, is out of date. Using the December 2020 version of the Standard Methodology, the council's housing need is almost three times the figure, i.e. 641 dwellings per annum. As previously discussed, the council has consistently for a number of years been failing to deliver sufficient homes within the administrative area, when assessed against the Housing Delivery Test.

- 6.7. As a consequence of the above in July 2020, the council published its Housing Delivery Test Action Plan. Whilst it is recognised that the council's administrative area is heavily constrained by Green Belt, it is also the case that much of the existing borough could be densified in order to achieve an increase in homes on brownfield land, whilst protecting the Green Belt. The Action Plan acknowledges this confirming "*Much of the borough is characterised by low density developments*".
- 6.8. The Action Plan at paragraph 3.59 comments on the increased role that small sites must play in meeting Elmbridge's housing need. "*The borough is heavily constrained by land designations which means much of the housing land is severely limited. The LAA (2018) showed there were a limited number of large sites in the borough and the housing land supply comprised mainly of small sites. Small sites will continue to play an important role in the delivery of new homes in the future.*"
- 6.9. As early as 2018 the council published a Development Management Advice Note on optimising development land. This states that "*The Council does not accept that smaller units and higher densities detrimentally affects character of an area. To enable the optimisation of land and to respond to local housing needs development schemes will need to be innovative and utilise higher densities while respecting the local character.*"
- 6.10. The latest Housing Delivery Test outcomes are from 2021 where Elmbridge scored 70% and therefore the presumption in favour of sustainable development is applied. EBC have not yet published an updated Action Plan since 2020.
- 6.11. Therefore, to continue to develop within the borough at low densities consistent with the historic character is not a realistic option, given the constrained supply of available land for housing, and the requirement to protect the Green Belt from encroachment of development. The approach within the council's own New Local Plan, just published, advocates this approach in order to avoid the need for any Green Belt release for new homes.
- 6.12. The development capacity of available small sites such as 16 – 18 Oatlands Drive must therefore be optimised. In recognition of this principle, the Action Plan at paragraph 3.45 also states that "*Given the high need for new homes and the constrained housing supply, it will be crucial that new developments coming forward make the most efficient use of land.*"
- 6.13. In recognition of Paragraph 59 of the NPPF which sets out the Government's objective of "*significantly boosting the supply of homes*", the Inspector at 8 – 14 Oatlands Drive confirmed the location is sustainable and suited to a higher density housing scheme. He noted that "*as much of Elmbridge is subject to Green Belt designation, and in view of the ongoing shortfall in housing delivery, such sites need to be released for development if the Council is to meet its housing targets.*"

6.14. Overall the principle of the redevelopment and intensification of this previously developed site to provide new homes in a sustainable urban location is supported by national and local planning policy. Elmbridge cannot demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply and have had to produce an Action Plan to deliver more needed homes. The principle in favour of sustainable development is engaged and this should be the cornerstone of decision making for this application.

Approach to Site Layout and Density

6.15. Policy CS17 concerns Local Character, Density and Design. On local character, it states that new development will be required to deliver high quality and inclusive sustainable design, which maximises the efficient use of urban land whilst responding to the positive features of individual locations, integrating sensitively with the locally distinctive townscape, landscape and heritage assets, and protecting the amenities of those within the area.

6.16. On density, policy states that in order to promote the best use of urban land, and to protect the borough's green spaces, the council will promote well designed, high quality and sustainable developments which contribute towards the achievement of an overall housing density target of 40 dwellings per hectare. The site measures 0.35 hectares and is currently developed at a low density. The proposal is for 33 dwellings therefore the resultant density is 94 dwellings per hectare. This density is broadly similar to that of the consented scheme at 8-14 Oatlands, which has a density of 92.7 dph. This density was considered acceptable by the Inspector for 8-14 who claimed that this density allowed for an efficient use of land.

6.17. Although this density exceeds the figure given in policy CS17, it should be noted that the density figure is expressed as a target, i.e. a minimum requirement, not a maximum limit. It is inherent therefore that schemes should not be developed at a density lower than 40 dwellings per hectare, however there is nothing within policy which prevents housing development being delivered at a higher density than the target figure.

6.18. In the context of the council's policies which seek to prioritise the redevelopment of previously developed land in sustainable locations first, combined with the limited amount of housing land supply, it would be perverse to think that the density target is intended to be interpreted in this way.

6.19. In part, the resultant density is driven by the proposed approach to the site layout, featuring a front and rear building. At 8 – 14, the appeal decision confirmed the council did not object to the principle of residential redevelopment or to the approach with a second tier of development on the rear part of that site. The Inspector added, *"I have no reason to disagree with this as a strategy."* Accordingly, the same layout principle is proposed here.

6.20. Whilst it has been demonstrated that the principle of the site's redevelopment is consistent with the relevant policies, it is also relevant to acknowledge that the proposed residential intensification and resultant density

is encouraged by the relevant policies also. Since the development will make efficient use of this brownfield site and deliver much needed housing, the principle of its intensification is also supported by adopted policy. The Development Management Advice Note mentioned previously sets out that proposals should be design-led and high quality that respect local character; and the council will resist development proposals that do not optimise the capacity of the development land.

Approach to Height and Scale

- 6.21. The proposed density is also a consequence of the scheme's approach to building height. The Inspector at 8 – 14 acknowledged that the area immediately surrounding the site is characterised by single dwellings, and a development of flats at a higher density, in order to make more effective use of the land, would inevitably result in buildings of a greater scale and form and some change in character.
- 6.22. However he found this to be acceptable and stated that the proposals at 8 – 14 would reflect the scale and form of flatted developments elsewhere along Oatlands Drive on wider sites. He judged the proposals' scale would be compatible with the Elmbridge Design and Character Guide SPD (2012) Companion Guide which describes this area as *"Predominantly mixed residential 20th Century two-storey houses at a low to medium density on medium to large plots with some post-war three-storey flatted development interspersed throughout"*.
- 6.23. The proposal at 16-18 builds upon this principle. The height of Building A at the front of the site rises to two storeys above ground and one lower ground floor level. The proposed height is considered acceptable in this location given the scale and form of flatted developments along Oatlands Drive and Bridge Street, which now includes the directly adjacent scheme at 8 – 14. It is considered the proposed height of Building A successfully mediates between the adjacent scheme at 8 – 14, and the remainder of Oatlands Drive to the south. This is illustrated within the Design & Access Statement and the proposed street scene drawing submitted
- 6.24. The proposed buildings take cues from the appearance of the consented development at 8 – 14, including the horizontal emphasis given to the pattern of windows, which line up with the nearest building within the adjacent consented scheme. Both schemes feature mansard roofs with dormer windows which are of the same size and rhythm within both schemes.
- 6.25. For these reasons, it is considered the proposed height and scale of the buildings, which are a consequence of the requirement to optimise the site's development capacity at an appropriate density, are acceptable. As the Inspector who determined the appeals for the developments at 8 – 14 Oatlands Drive remarked, *"The area immediately surrounding the site is characterised by single dwellings, and a development of flats at a higher density to make more effective use of the land would inevitably result in buildings of a greater scale and form and some change in character."*

Impact on the Character of the Area

- 6.26. Development Management Plan Policy DM2 concerns design and amenity. It states that the council will permit development proposals which are based on an understanding of the local character including any specific local designations, and take account of the natural, built and historic environment. Development proposals are expected to take account of the relevant character assessment companion guide in the Design and Character SPD.
- 6.27. In terms of character, the site is located within the WAL11: Oatlands Park character sub area, although the companion guide actually confirms that the character sub area which should be consulted is WEY09: Oatlands Park, York Road and Oatlands Chase environs. The guide states that the area is characterised by a mix of predominantly two-storey houses at a low to medium density on medium to large plots with some post-war three storey flatted development interspersed throughout.
- 6.28. The guide recognises that all houses are set back from the roadside in gardens and the building line is generally consistent with roads giving an often uniform and pleasing rhythm to the layout of streets. In terms of opportunities, the guide acknowledges that development is likely to take the form of both sub-division of larger plots and replacement of houses with flatted development.
- 6.29. The proposals are for the replacement of two existing houses with a flatted development, which the guide acknowledges is suitable in principle. Within Oatlands Drive, there is not considered to be any predominant architectural style which contributes to the general character of the street, however there are some consistent characteristics such as the continuous building line, set back from the highway, and the use of brick and other traditional materials. Roofs are typically pitched rather than flat, albeit there are examples of flatted schemes which flat roofs, however these are the exception.
- 6.30. The Inspector at 8 – 14 commented on the approach noting that the detailed design of the frontage buildings (at 8 – 14) would be symmetrical, with a mansard type roof and architectural elements not typified by immediately surrounding buildings. Nonetheless, he found there are examples of more formal approaches to flatted developments with a greater horizontal emphasis in the wider area. The Inspector went on to comment that *“the buildings would have a balanced and well-articulated design approach that would be attractive in its own right.”* The proposed development at 16-18 includes a design that is similar to the neighbouring property and should be considered attractive, well-articulated and appropriate.
- 6.31. Whilst he found that the proposed frontage buildings at 8 – 14 *“would contrast with the hipped pitched roofs to adjacent housing”* he noted there are variations in the design of buildings in this part of Oatlands Drive. *“There would be ample separation to adjacent dwellings and the two buildings would fit it with the rhythm of building blocks and spaces between them in the street scene.”* As the architectural approach proposed at 16-18 mirrors this, the same conclusions should apply.

The proposed buildings comprise a formal symmetrical design approach with recessed top floors albeit with a more prominent central feature to the front block fronting Oatlands Drive. This overall approach provides a coherent architectural composition albeit with recesses and features to break up mass and bulk and provide visual interest. Overall the architectural approach respects the immediate and wider character and will provide a high quality development that accords with the relevant policy provisions.

Impact on Heritage Assets

- 6.32. 1 and 3 Oatlands Drive located across Oatlands Drive to the east of the site are Grade II Listed Buildings and 11 and 13 Oatlands Drive to the south-east Grade II Listed. Sections 16 and 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 convey a statutory requirement upon the local planning authority to ensure that any planning application which has the potential to affect a listed building or its setting pays special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting.
- 6.33. The proposed development is visually separated from the listed buildings at 1 and 3 Oatlands Drive by Oatlands Drive. The setting of the Listed Buildings is considered to be primarily restricted to their own grounds, and that even if it does extend beyond this, it does not extend across the road to the application site. On this basis, when officers assessed the scheme at 8 – 14, they found that the proposal would not result in harm to the setting of the Listed Buildings. It is considered the same conclusions are reached in respect of the second relevant application concerning at 16-18 and there would be no impact on the designated heritage assets arising. The proposals therefore preserve the buildings including their setting, and meet the statutory tests and other policy requirements.

Impact on Residential Amenity

- 6.34. Policy DM2, amongst other criteria, also states that the council will permit development proposals which protect the amenity of adjoining and potential occupiers and users, are designed to offer an appropriate outlook and provide adequate daylight, sunlight and privacy. The proposed development has been designed having regard to these criteria.
- 6.35. The proposed development is located between the consented buildings currently under construction at 8-14 Oatlands Drive and an existing residential dwelling at 20 Oatlands Drive. The side abutting 20 Oatlands Drive, which is a two storey detached dwelling, is two storeys in height to reduce the impact on neighbouring amenity, and to provide an appropriate transition in height and scale. The proposed development will therefore have no impact upon the daylight and sunlight received by those surrounding residential dwellings, and their amenity spaces will not be overshadowed. The distance between Building A and the existing 20 Oatlands Drive is in excess of 10m, there is also a significant distance between Building A and the forthcoming buildings at 8-14 Oatlands Drive.

6.36. The continued enjoyment of the neighbouring properties is paramount in the shaping of the proposed development. The design seeks to limit or remove any potential overlooking issues or changes in the privacy that is already enjoyed. The scheme also recognises the emerging context with the development at 8-14 Oatlands Drive. There are no windows proposed to the flank elevations facing toward the neighbouring property at 20 Oatlands Drive or the emerging scheme at 8 – 14 Oatlands Drive. Both blocks have some setback secondary glazing on the upper levels. These windows are a considerable distance from the parapet wall and care has been taken to limit access to the side elevation for maintenance purposes only. The residential amenities of the occupiers of the closest buildings at 8 – 14 and 20 will be adequately protected under this arrangement, ensuring the compatibility of the proposed schemes with its neighbours.

Quality of Residential Accommodation

6.37. In this regard the residents of the proposed scheme at 16-18 would also have access to appropriate outlook and there would be daylight and sunlight received internally. The separation distance between the rear elevation of Building A and the front elevation of Building B would be 21.65m. This is a greater separation distance than what was considered acceptable by the Inspector at 8-14, which was 20m. Therefore a greater separation distance between Building A and Building B at 16-18 Oatlands should be considered acceptable.

6.38. For the appeal scheme at 8-14, the Inspector confirmed the following was acceptable:

“The separation between front and rear buildings would be approximately 20m, a little below the Council’s preferred back to back distance of 22 metres to maintain privacy between occupiers. Such optimum separation cannot always be achieved in higher density urban developments. Future occupiers would be aware of this relationship prior to making a commitment to any flat. In my judgement the siting of frontage and rear buildings makes effective use of the land and is acceptable in regard to the appearance in the street scene and in providing sufficient set back from the Engine River whilst achieving adequate separation to safeguard the privacy of future occupiers.”

6.39. All the proposed dwellings would meet or exceed the Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS). Due to the proposed layout of each building, all units would have appropriate outlook, levels of privacy and receive good daylight and sunlight. The Development Plan does not contain prescriptive standards in terms of private or communal amenity provision, however a number of the proposed dwellings would benefit from access to balconies or roof terraces. In addition, there is a substantial amount of communal amenity space to the rear of Building B that totals 40m wide and 14m deep. The site is also located within the site is located within close proximity to the Cowey Sale, River Thames and Ashley Park, which is considered to provide additional external amenity for the future occupiers of the development.

Approach to Residential Mix

- 6.40. Policies CS19 and DM10 seek to secure a range of housing types and sizes on developments across the Borough in order to create inclusive and sustainable communities reflecting the most up to date SHMA in terms of the size and type of dwellings. Housing development on sites of 0.3 hectares or more should promote house types and sizes that make most efficient use of land and meet the most up to date measure of local housing need, whilst reflecting the character of the area.
- 6.41. The SHMA identifies the need within Elmbridge is for smaller 1, 2 and 3 bedroom units. Since the proposal seeks to provide a range of unit sizes including 1-beds (3no), 2-beds (28no) and 3-beds (2no), the proposed dwelling mix would both make efficient use of land and meet the most up to date measure of local housing need. The mix proposed is broadly reflective of the mix which was proposed at 8 - 14, which the council's officers supported in terms of dwelling size mix, and therefore it is considered the proposed mix is acceptable.

Approach to Affordable Housing

- 6.42. Policy CS21 requires that on sites proposing 15 dwellings or more, 40% of the gross number of dwellings should be provided as affordable housing, always subject to viability. This application is accompanied by a Financial Viability Appraisal which assesses the scheme's ability to contribute towards affordable housing.

Approach to Car Parking

- 6.43. Policy CS25 directs new development that generate a high number of trips to previously developed land in sustainable locations within the urban area. These include town centres and areas with good public transport accessibility. Policy states that the council will apply maximum parking standards to all uses, including the consideration of zero parking for certain town centre developments. Policy DM7 concerns access and requires that access to and from the highway is safe and convenient for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists.
- 6.44. As previously discussed, the proposal includes 32 car parking spaces at a ratio of almost 1:1 for the 33 dwellings. There is therefore one space per dwelling. This aligns with the approach within the Development Plan which seeks to direct new development to sustainable locations within the urban area. Since the council's car parking standards are expressed as maximum standards, the level of provision proposed is compliant with policy requirements. In addition, 40 cycle parking spaces will be provided which exceeds Elmbridge's requirements. The design includes integrated, secure, dedicated cycle storage. A residential Travel Plan is also submitted.

Approach to Site Access

- 6.45. The proposals seek to remove the existing four access to the existing properties and replace it with a dedicated single new access point at the southern end of the site off Oatlands Drive to allow for vehicular entrance and exit to the site. This will provide access to the 32 car parking spaces. The proposed access will have a width of 6.0m, the radius of the access into the site are 4.0m. The access has been designed to allow 2 cars to pass one another.
- 6.46. The submitted Transport Statement provides more detail on this and concludes that the trip generation that would arise would be acceptable. The assessment finds that only a small increase in additional trips during the peak period would arise from the scheme at 16-18 and therefore the arrangement will not be detrimental to the junction capacity.

Impacts upon Trees

- 6.47. The application is supported by a Tree Survey & Impact Assessment, a Tree Constraints Plan and a Tree Protection Plan and a Landscape Masterplan. The proposed development includes the loss of very few trees, all of which are of low quality and value and the proposed planting would result in a net gain of trees. The scheme includes new and replacement tree planting, and can be accommodated within the site whilst adequately protecting those retained trees, both during construction and occupation. The proposals therefore comply with policies CS14 and DM6.

Impacts on Ecology and Biodiversity

- 6.48. The application is supported by an Ecological Report and an associated Biodiversity Net Gain technical note. There are no statutory or non-statutory designated sites that would be directly or indirectly affected by the proposals. The site is of limited ecological value, with the species recorded described as common or abundant and are found in similar places across much of Britain, with no evidence of protected species recorded. Overall the findings of this ecological appraisal would indicate that there are no over-riding ecological constraints to the redevelopment proposals to preclude planning permission being granted at this stage, subject to suitably worded conditions.
- 6.49. In addition, the proposal will result in a Biodiversity Net Gain of 5.64%%. By providing a net gain on site the proposals comply with the national policy requirement at the present time contained within the NPPF and the requirements within the Development Plan under policies CS15 and DM21.

Impacts on Archaeology

- 6.50. The site is located within an area of high archaeological potential. Policy DM12 requires that proposals protect, conserve and enhance the borough's historic environment. The application is supported by an archaeological desk-based assessment. The desk-based assessment concludes that the proposed

development is likely to have an adverse impact on surviving archaeology and some further archaeological work would be necessary and could be conditioned as part of the planning permission.

Impacts on Flood Risk & Drainage

6.51. The majority of the application site is located within flood risk zone 1, however areas of the site are also within zones 2 and 3. A Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) is submitted with the application. The FRA finds the proposals will be safe at a low risk of flooding from all sources. The proposals would not result in an increase in flood risk to the site or surrounding area. The FRA concludes that the site is suitable for development in terms of flooding.

Approach to Climate Change & Sustainability

6.52. The scheme's approach to sustainability is summarised within the Design & Access Statement. The proposed buildings will adopt a fabric-first approach, to reduce the scheme's energy requirements. The dwellings will benefit from natural ventilation and MVHR with heat recovery.

6.53. The submitted Sustainability and Energy Statement sets out that the scheme will incorporate a range of energy-saving measures, including Air Source Heat Pumps, PV's and electric vehicle charging points as shown on the application drawings. More broadly, measures are also incorporated to minimise pollution, reduce the embodied carbon footprint of the development and reduce water use. The combination of these measures will deliver a 91.1% saving in carbon emissions ahead of current Building Regulations. The proposals achieve a carbon saving well in excess of EBC's Energy and Sustainability Policies.

Summary – Compliance with the Development Plan

6.54. In summary the appeal proposals are considered to comply with the adopted Development plan's policies insofar as they are applicable to the proposals

Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

6.55. As noted earlier in this statement the presumption in favour applies to this proposal, and if harm is found, that harm must be demonstrable and significant to warrant a refusal, and weigh this against the planning benefits that would result.

6.56. The appeal proposals would provide 33 new residential units in a sustainable location, within a built-up area of Walton-on-Thames, which is one of two settlements in the Borough where notable growth is directed. The proposed mix is in full accordance with the Council's housing requirements. The proposals would make a strong contribution to the Borough's housing supply that should be applauded given their acute housing

shortage. A sustainable development is proposed in a sustainable location, it meets the three strands of sustainable development under NPPF paragraph 8:

- it serves an economic role in providing direct and indirect employment during construction, and post construction economic benefits would result to the area through greater spend in the local economy;
- a social role through the provision of a range of homes that meet an identified need;
- an environmental role through providing a high quality and sustainable design, in a landscaped setting that also includes biodiversity measures.

6.57. The presumption in favour of sustainable development therefore applies and as set out under paragraph 11 of the NPPF, the development should be approved without delay unless any harm identified significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the scheme.

Benefits of the Scheme Proposals

6.58. The benefits that would result are notable, and include:

- Delivering 33 residential units that will clearly contribute in a significant way to the Council's housing land supply in a sustainable urban location. This should be given substantial weight given the Council's low housing land supply and very poor track record in housing delivery;
- Delivering the size and mix of smaller units sought in the Borough. This should be given substantial weight given the identified housing need for smaller units in the Borough;
- Making efficient use of a previously developed site in a sustainable location. This should be given moderate weight given the environmental constraints in the Borough which mean that the delivery of such numbers of residential units in these locations is infrequent.
- Providing a highly sustainable development that would provide a 91.1% carbon saving beyond Part L of the Building Regulations 2021. This is well in excess of policy requirements and should be given substantial weight given the climate crises.
- Having direct and indirect economic benefits through the construction of the development and after through spending within the local economy. This should be given moderate weight, especially given the current economic climate and the need to boost the economy.
- Providing electric charging points to encourage the use of electric cars. This should be given a low degree of weight.

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- A notable contribution towards CIL, which will help fund wider infrastructure improvements in the Borough. This is given modest weight as this is a notable contribution towards the Council's CIL fund.

7. Statement of Community Involvement

- 7.1. The applicant undertook a virtual public consultation event, which was hosted in November 2022. The decision to run a 'virtual' consultation was influenced by ongoing safety considerations in the backdrop of Covid, and to provide ease of access to the information.
- 7.2. They wrote to 378 local addresses within the vicinity of the site. The correspondence contained a flyer which described the proposals and provided more information. The flyer also directed the recipient to a dedicated website (<https://www.mjgroup.co.uk/>). The website contained the same information as the flyer. The website and the flyer both directed feedback via a dedicated email address.
- 7.3. The applicants also left 100 copies of the flyer in the local newsagents within Oatlands Village, of which 58 were taken. They also wrote directly to local amenity groups The Friends of Oatlands Drive, who did not comment on the proposals, and the Weybridge Society who published the proposal on their social media page. The responses received all objected to the development raising various issues such as the scheme's size, design and density, lack of car parking, suitability of access, lack of information on affordable housing, and impact on the character of area.
- 7.4. The applicant also had direct contact with local councillors, who requested the consultation be extended by 10 days, which the applicant did.
- 7.5. The applicant has reviewed the feedback and responded to this where possible. The proposals which are now submitted for planning have also been amended from those which were consulted upon. The changes include:
 - Reduction in Quantum of proposed units
 - Reduction in overall bulk and scale of the proposal
 - Improved parking ratio
 - Reduction in massing to Oatlands Drive
- 7.6. It is considered that the applicants have fulfilled their responsibilities to consult with the public in advance of the submission of the planning application.

8. Summary and Conclusion

- 8.1. This planning statement is submitted in support of an application for 33 new dwellings on a previously developed site close to the edge of Walton-on-Thames town centre, a built-up area and one of two settlements in the Borough where notable growth is directed. This is a location where planning policy directs new development because it makes more effective use of urban land and is more sustainable than other locations, and to protect the Green Belt from development. The council recognises that *“Given the high need for new homes and the constrained housing supply, it will be crucial that new developments coming forward make the most efficient use of land.”*
- 8.2. The approach to the development of the site has been influenced by the Planning Inspector’s comments when determining a pair of appeals for the redevelopment of a nearby site. The comments of planning officers and the council’s consultees, as summarised within the officer reports to planning committee, have also been taking into consideration. Therefore, it is considered that the proposals should be viewed as acceptable given that many of the adopted principles remain consistent.
- 8.3. The application is supported by a full suite of technical reports which demonstrate that there are no technical reasons as to why planning permission should not be granted. Should the council consider that there are conflicts with policy, it must be recognised that the tilted balance is engaged and therefore permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would *significantly and demonstrably* outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole.
- 8.4. The proposals represent a high-quality, sustainable and contextual development. The proposed mix of residential accommodation is in accordance with the Council’s housing requirements. In this respect the proposals would make a strong contribution to the Borough’s short-term housing supply and this should be given substantial weight, given the council’s acute shortage of available development land, which it recognises.
- 8.5. On the basis of the above, it is respectfully requested that the application is allowed, and planning permission is granted.