

## 28<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2023 PLANNING COMMITTEE

6a PLAN/2022/0685

WARD: Canalside

**LOCATION:** Technology House, 48 - 54 Goldsworth Road, Woking, Surrey, GU21 6LE

**PROPOSAL:** Demolition of existing buildings and erection of a building of up to 25x storeys comprising 224x residential units, ground floor commercial units, landscaping, bin and cycle storage, public realm works and associated works and facilities (Amended Plans)

**APPLICANT:** Mr Fergus Cruikshank, Abri Group Ltd

**OFFICER:** David Raper

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### **REASON FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE**

Due to the scale of the proposed development and the planning issues it raises, the application has been referred to Planning Committee by the Development Manager.

### **SUMMARY OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT**

Site Area:	0.17ha
Existing units:	0
Proposed units:	224
Existing density:	0dph
Proposed density:	1,317dph

The proposed development is for the demolition of the existing buildings on the site and the erection of a building comprising:

- 25x storeys, including ground floor
- 81m Above Ground Level (AGL), 111.8m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD)\*
- 224x residential units (90x one bed, 129x two bed & 5x three bed)
- At least 40% on-site affordable housing provision (90x units) (see 'Affordable Housing' section)
- 369m<sup>2</sup> of ground floor commercial floor space
- 7x off-street parking spaces, including one 'car club' bay
- Bin and cycle storage

\*AOD refers to the height above Ordnance Datum, which is the height above a fixed point at mean sea level used as the basis of the national height system of Britain.

\*AGL refers to the height above the ground level measured from the ground level at the base of the building.

### **PLANNING STATUS**

- Urban Area
- Woking Town Centre
- Surface Water Flood Risk Area
- Within 100m of Rail Aggregate Depot (Surrey Minerals Plan)
- Adjacent to Employment Area
- Adjacent to High Density Residential Area
- Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Zone B (400m-5km)

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

REFUSE planning permission.

### **SITE DESCRIPTION**

The proposal site comprises Technology House and Poole House which occupy a corner site on Goldsworth Road and Poole Road in Woking Town Centre. Technology House is a 4x storey building dating from the 1980s comprising ground floor commercial units and office space on the upper floors. A surface car park separates Technology House from Poole House which is a smaller 2x storey commercial building to the rear dating from the 1980s.

Adjacent to the site to the east is Woking Fire Station (Greenwood House) which is a modern 5x storey building which includes a Fire Station and an associated yard to the rear and residential units on the upper floors. Beyond this to the east are large, vacant office buildings at No.20-32 Goldsworth Road. Planning permission has been granted for redevelopment of this site and land to the north of Goldsworth Road for a mixed use scheme comprising 929x residential units in five blocks of between 9x and 37x storeys ('Ecoworld' scheme; PLAN/2020/0568).

To the south, the site is bordered by a short section of road (Butts Road) leading to the rear of Woking Fire Station. Also to the south is the recently completed Poole Road Energy Centre and beyond this is the railway line. On the opposite side of the railway line is the rail aggregates depot operated by Day Aggregates.

To the south-west is the Poole Road Employment Area which is characterised by low level industrial buildings. To the west on the opposite side of Poole Road is Spectrum House, which is a 4x storey former office building which has been converted to residential use. Beyond this to the west along Goldsworth Road is Midas House and Scotia House which are 3-4x storey office buildings. Goldsworth Road has a mixed commercial character with buildings generally between 2x and 7x storeys.

To the north-west is No.65-77 Goldsworth Road which is a two storey Victorian terrace comprising commercial uses at ground floor level and residential accommodation above. Extending to the north-west is Oaks Road and Vale Farm Road which are characterised by two storey dwellings predominately dating from the Victorian/Edwardian era.

To the north of the site on the opposite side of Goldsworth Road is the single storey Coign Church building which has recently been extended. To the north-east is Birchwood Court which is a flatted development of up to 7x storeys which occupies a corner position on Goldsworth Road and Church Street West. Extending to the north-east are 3x storey office buildings along Church Street West, leading towards the 'Victoria Square' development which comprises residential towers of up to 34x storeys and a hotel tower of 23x storeys.

Immediately in front of the proposal site is a zebra crossing on Goldsworth Road and a mini roundabout at the junction of Church Street West.

The proposal site is within Woking Town Centre but the southern boundary of the site forms the southern boundary of this part of the Town Centre. The Town Centre boundary extends west along Goldsworth Road to No.131-135 Goldsworth Road approximately 300m to the west.

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### RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- PLAN/2009/0326 - Change of use of ground floor units 4/5 from A1 (retail) to A3/A5 (restaurant/hot food takeaway) – Permitted 18.06.2009
- PLAN/2020/0244 - Prior Approval for a Proposed Change of Use of a building from Office Use (Class B1(a)) to a Dwellinghouse (Class C3) to provide 42 one-bed apartments – Prior Approval Granted 29.04.2020
- 83/0033 – Erection of an industrial unit with ancillary office area over and parking – Permitted 29.03.1983
- 81/1136 – Erection of a four storey building with ground floor shop and offices over and the erection of an industrial building and parking – Permitted 26.01.1982

### CONSULTATIONS

#### Internal Consultees:

- **Environmental Health:** No objection subject to conditions.
- **Housing Services:** *“Housing Services welcomes and supports the proposal...Delivery of the total 225 units contained within the proposed development as affordable rent and shared ownership units provides a significant level of affordable housing that will contribute very noticeably to our attempts in addressing the well-known high demand for affordable housing in Woking... The Council will require, through a future S106 Agreement, a Nominations Agreement to be in place with Abri Housing Association that ensures access to the 100 affordable rent units for eligible persons from the Council’s Housing Register Housing Services will require any future S106 Agreement to allow for a “local connection” criterion for persons eligible for the shared ownership dwellings”*
- **Arboricultural Officer:** No objection subject to conditions.
- **Scientific Officer (Contaminated Land):** No objection subject to conditions.
- **Conservation Consultant:** No objection.
- **Waste Services:** No objection.
- **Town Centre Engineer:** No comments received.
- **Green Infrastructure Team:** No comments received.

#### Surrey County Council Consultees:

- **SCC Highways:** No objection subject to conditions.
- **SCC Minerals:** No objection subject to the submission of a Waste Management Plan and subject to Woking Borough Council being satisfied that the design of the development gives sufficient consideration and incorporates appropriate mitigation to prevent unacceptable amenity impacts to sensitive receptors and/or occupiers from the existing and future operation of Woking Rail Aggregates Depot as per the ‘agent

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of change principle' set out in paragraph 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021.

- **SCC Lead Local Flood Authority:** No objection subject to conditions.
- **SCC Archaeologist:** No objection.
- **SCC Planning:** No comments received.

### Other Consultees:

- **Health and Safety Executive:** No comments received.
- **Environment Agency:** No comments to make.
- **Natural England:** No objection subject to appropriate mitigation being secured.
- **Historic England:** No comments to make.
- **Surrey Wildlife Trust:** No objection subject to conditions.
- **Day Aggregates:** No objection subject to conditions.
- **Network Rail:**
  - *"We agree that the introduction of residential development, if not appropriately designed, could result in conflict that would prejudice the critical existing and future operations of the aggregate depot. Without the information outlined by WBM's report, we cannot fully assess the impacts of the development on the depot. As a result, NR objects to the application as it currently stands"*

(Officer note: the objection from the operator of the rail aggregates depot have been removed following submission of an updated Noise Assessment)
  - In addition to the above, Network Rail sent another consultation response expressing concern about the associated impact on the capacity Woking Train Station and requesting a financial contribution to address this. However, it is not considered that a financial contribution is justified and is not necessary in this instance to make the development acceptable in planning terms.
- **Crime Prevention Officer:** *There is insufficient information contained within the application for me to fully assess the security of the development.*
- **Surrey Fire and Rescue:** No objection.
- **Thamesway Energy:** No objection subject to condition.
- **Affinity Water:** No comments received.
- **Thames Water:** No objection subject to Piling Method Statement condition.
- **National Grid:** No comments to make.
- **South West Trains:** No comments received.

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### Aviation:

- **Civil Aviation Authority:** No comments received.
- **NATS Safeguarding:** No objection.
- **MOD Safeguarding:** No comments received.
- **Association of Air Ambulances:** No comments received.
- **National Police Air Service:** No comments received.
- **Fairoaks Airport:** No objection.
- **Heathrow Airport:** No comments received.
- **Farnborough Airport:** No comments received.
- **Gatwick Airport:** No objection.

### Neighbouring Authorities:

- **Elmbridge Borough Council:** No objection.
- **Runnymede Borough Council:** No objection.
- **Guildford Borough Council:** No comments received.
- **Surrey Heath Borough Council:** No comments received.

### REPRESENTATIONS

A total of 35x objections have been received raising the following summarised concerns:

#### *Height and Impact on Character:*

- Proposal is not in-keeping with the character of the area
- Proposal would dwarf surrounding buildings
- Buildings should be lower in height as they move away from the centre
- Proposal would not compliment the skyline and would abruptly drop to adjacent Victorian housing
- Proposal site is on the very edge of the town centre and is not the right place for a tall building
- Proposal would result in high-rise sprawl beyond the immediate town centre
- There is no guarantee that the 'Ecoworld' scheme would be built; it would be risky to approve a tower of this size in a low to medium rise area where there are no established tall buildings
- The proposal would be contrary to the Draft Town Centre Masterplan, which identifies an appropriate building height for this area of 4-6 storeys
- The Masterplan highlights a move away from tall buildings
- If the 'Ecoworld' development is built, Woking will have a wall of concrete tower blocks from east to west
- The developer has approval for a 3-4 storey scheme on Portugal Road which is viable, a lower building height should be viable here
- Proposal would be visually overbearing
- The proposed density is excessive for the proposal site

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### *Parking and Traffic Impact:*

- The area is already heavily parked and the proposal would add to parking pressure
- Proposal would lead to dangerous and illegal parking
- Proposal would provide insufficient parking
- There are not enough EV charging points
- Reliance on town centre car parks is unlikely to succeed given their distance from the site
- Proposal would increase noise and traffic along Goldsworth Road
- It is naïve to think that everybody can rely on public transport which is often poor
- Goldsworth Road is already heavily congested and the proposal would worsen this

### *Impact on Amenity:*

- Proposal would result in overlooking and loss of privacy
- Proposal would result in overshadowing and loss of light
- There is not enough green amenity space for residents
- Construction of the proposal would cause noise and disruption

### *Unit/Tenure Mix:*

- This level of affordable housing in one location is not the answer
- Proposal mostly provides smaller units which does not meet the aims of Policy CS11; or the need identified in the West Surrey Strategic Housing Market Assessment
- The housing mix is also not in line with the report to the Councils overview and scrutiny committee report (14 Sep 2020) which identified a significant need for 2 and 3 bed homes at 31% and 20% respectively
- Proposal would not provide for young or larger families
- The market is over-saturated with flats

### *Other concerns:*

- Proposal would add further pressure to local schools, nurseries and services
- Ivy's café is a great addition to the town and community
- Proposal could contribute to local flooding, sewerage and drainage issues
- Proposal would add to anti-social behaviour
- Few of the people in support of the application live nearby

In addition to the above, 40x representations in support of the proposal have been received raising the following summarised points

- Proposal would provide much needed affordable homes where there has been an under-provision
- Proposal site is currently under-utilised
- Proposed building is well-designed and would add to the emerging tall building cluster
- The proposed shops would be a benefit to local residents
- Proposal would enliven the street scene
- Proposal would provide sustainability benefits
- Proposal would benefit the local community and younger generations
- The lack of parking shouldn't be an issue
- The retail units would be better as residential units
- Support the application but also concerned for the potential future noise disturbance from the adjacent Poole Road Energy Centre on future occupants

**RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES**

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021):

- Section 2 - Achieving sustainable development
- Section 4 - Decision-making
- Section 5 - Delivering a sufficient supply of homes
- Section 6 - Building a strong, competitive economy
- Section 7 - Ensuring the vitality of town centres
- Section 8 - Promoting healthy and safe communities
- Section 9 - Promoting sustainable transport
- Section 10 - Supporting high quality communications
- Section 11 - Making effective use of land
- Section 12 - Achieving well-designed places
- Section 14 - Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
- Section 15 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
- Section 16 - Conserving and enhancing the historic environment
- Section 17 - Facilitating the sustainable use of minerals

Woking Core Strategy (2012):

- Spatial Vision
- CS1 - Spatial strategy for Woking Borough
- CS2 - Woking Town Centre
- CS7 - Biodiversity and nature conservation
- CS8 - Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Areas
- CS9 - Flooding and Water Management
- CS10 - Housing provision and distribution
- CS11 - Housing mix
- CS12 - Affordable housing
- CS13 - Older people and vulnerable groups
- CS15 - Sustainable economic development
- CS16 - Infrastructure delivery
- CS17 - Open space, green infrastructure, sport and recreation
- CS18 - Transport and accessibility
- CS19 - Social and community infrastructure
- CS20 - Heritage and conservation
- CS21 - Design
- CS22 - Sustainable construction
- CS23 - Renewable and low carbon energy generation
- CS24 - Woking's landscape and townscape
- CS25 - Presumption in favour of sustainable development

Woking Development Management Policies DPD (2016):

- DM1 - Green Infrastructure Opportunities
- DM2 - Trees and Landscaping
- DM6 - Air and Water Quality
- DM7 - Noise and Light Pollution
- DM8 - Land Contamination and Hazards
- DM16 - Servicing Development
- DM17 - Public Realm
- DM18 - Advertising and Signs
- DM19 - Shopfronts
- DM20 - Heritage Assets and their Settings

Surrey Minerals Plan Core Strategy Development Plan Document (2011):

- MC1 - Spatial strategy - location of mineral development in Surrey

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MC6 - Safeguarding mineral resources and development  
MC16 - Rail aggregate depots

### Supplementary Planning Documents:

Outlook, Amenity, Privacy and Daylight (2022)  
Parking Standards (2018)  
Design (2015)  
Affordable Housing Delivery (2014)  
Climate Change (2013)

### Other Material Considerations:

Site Allocations DPD (2021)  
Annual Monitoring Reports 2010-2022  
Draft Town Centre Masterplan (2022)  
Planning Practice Guidance  
National Design Guide (2021)  
Saved South East Plan Policy (2009) NRM6 - Thames Basin Heaths  
Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Avoidance Strategy (2022)  
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule (2015)  
Recycling and waste provision – guidance for property developers  
Heritage of Woking (2000)  
Historic England - The Setting of Heritage Assets (2015)  
Woking Character Study (2010)  
Surrey Landscape Character Assessment: Woking Borough (2015)  
Woking Economic Development Strategy 2012-2017  
Wind Microclimate and Buildings (2011) BRE  
Site Planning for Daylight and Sunlight (2011) BRE  
BS 8233: 2014 'Guidance on Sound Insulation and Noise Reduction for Buildings'  
'ProPG: Planning & Noise Professional Practice Guidance' (2017)  
Noise Policy Statement for England (2010)  
World Health Organisation Guidelines for Community Noise (1999)  
Acoustics, Ventilation and Overheating Residential Design Guide (2020)  
Woking Public Art Strategy (2007)

In addition to the above Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) places a statutory duty on decision makers to have '*special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses*' and Section 72(1) places a statutory duty on decision makers to have 'special regard' to preserving or enhancing the character of conservation areas and states that: '*with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, of any functions under or by virtue of any of the provisions mentioned in sub section (2), special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area*'.

## **PLANNING ISSUES**

### Background:

- Amended plans were received on 24.01.2023 which corrected annotation errors on some of the proposed floor plans
- Amended plans were received on 20.01.2023 which made the following amendments:



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- One three bedroom unit at Level 2 was omitted and replaced with a 75m<sup>2</sup> area of communal internal amenity space with a 42m<sup>2</sup> external roof terrace. As a result, one fewer residential unit is proposed (224x opposed to 225x).
  - The design of the top of the building was amended, simplifying the contrasting brick banding and removing a previously proposed crown feature
  - The internal ceiling height of the ground floor level was increased by 1m to 5m
  - The overall height of the building was increased by 1m
- A Heritage, Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment was received on 09.12.2022
  - An updated Noise Assessment was received on 09.12.2022
  - An updated Wind Microclimate Study was received on 25.11.2022
  - A Design Review Panel (DRP) meeting took place on 22.11.2022 and the DRP Report was issued on 06.12.2022
  - An updated Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy was received on 31.08.2022
  - An updated Fire Statement was received on 24.08.2022

The proposal has been assessed on the basis of the above amended plans and additional information.

### Principle of Development:

1. Section 2 'Achieving sustainable development' of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021) states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of 'sustainable development', which is summarised as meeting the needs to the present without comprising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The NPPF establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development; for decision-taking, this means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan 'without delay'. The NPPF goes on to state that where a planning application conflicts with an up-to-date Development Plan, permission should not usually be granted and that Local Planning Authorities may only take decisions that depart from an up-to-date Development Plan where material considerations indicate that the plan should not be followed. This reflects the provisions of Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) which requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
2. Woking Core Strategy's (2012) 'Spatial Vision' for the Borough states that "*Woking will be a regional focus of economic prosperity centred on a vibrant, enhanced town centre that provides a good range of quality shops, jobs, cultural facilities, services and infrastructure to cater for the Borough's needs...*". Policy CS1 seeks to direct most new development to previously developed land in in town, district and local centres which offer the best access to a range of services and facilities and states that:

*"Woking Town Centre will be the primary focus of sustainable growth to maintain its status as an economic hub with a flourishing, diverse and innovative economy and a transport hub which provides transport services, links and communication linking people to jobs, services and facilities. The town centre is*

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*designated as a centre to undergo significant change and the provision of a range of shops, cultural facilities, jobs and housing to meet locally identified needs and the needs of modern businesses will be encouraged. Main town centre uses as defined in the NPPF, will be acceptable in principle, subject to the requirements of the policies of the Core Strategy”.*

3. Policy CS1 ‘A spatial strategy for Woking Borough’ sets ambitious targets for new development in the Borough in the Core Strategy plan period up to 2027 including approximately:

- 4,964 net additional dwellings (2,180 of which in town centre)
- 28,000 m2 of additional office floorspace (27,000m2 of which in town centre)
- 93,900 m2 of additional retail floorspace (75,300m2 of which in town centre)

4. Policy CS2 ‘Woking Town Centre’ states that the ambitions for Woking Town Centre outlined above will be achieved through:

1. *Mixed-use high density redevelopment of existing sites*
2. *Refurbishment of outmoded sites*
3. *Intensification of existing sites*
4. *Change of use of existing employment uses where this will not undermine the delivery of the proposed development set out in the policy and the other objectives of the Core Strategy*
5. *Safeguarding of existing office floorspace where there is evidence to justify that.*

5. Core Strategy (2012) policy CS2 sets out the planning policies for Woking Town Centre and the reasoned justification for policy CS2 states that:

*“Woking Town Centre is an important centre of economic activity and key interchange on the rail network. It is the largest centre in the Borough and a primary centre in the context of the South East. The Core Strategy evidence base identifies potential for significant additional commercial and residential development in Woking Town Centre over the plan period, as set out in the policy. Investment of an appropriate level and scale will be promoted to enable the town centre to grow and evolve significantly, enhancing its retail offer and role as a thriving employment centre. Development of a dynamic and successful town centre is central to the achievement of sustainable development in the Borough”.*

6. The proposal site includes Technology House, which comprises 5x ground floor commercial units totalling approximately 361m2 and the upper three floors comprise office space. Along with Poole House to the rear of the site, there is a total of 1,696m2 of existing office floor space. The ground floor commercial units are all currently occupied and comprise a bike shop, funeral directors and café (Use Class E) and a hot food take away and tanning salon (sui generis). The proposed development would include 4x ground floor commercial units ranging in size from 62m2 to 124m2, totalling 369m2 of Class E floor space as set out below.

	<b>Existing</b>	<b>Proposed</b>
<b>Office floor space</b>	1,696m2	0
<b>Ground floor commercial uses (including Class E and sui generis)</b>	361m2	369m2

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7. The proposal would not result in an overall loss of ground floor commercial floor space and the proposal would maintain an active commercial frontage along Goldsworth Road. The commercial units are considered of an appropriate size and could be subdivided into smaller units. Overall, the proposal is considered consistent with the aims of policy CS2 and the proposal is considered to preserve the vitality and viability of Woking Town Centre.
8. The proposal would result in the loss of the existing office space. As set out above, policy CS2 seeks to safeguard existing office floorspace in Woking Town Centre and the proposed loss of office floorspace is considered contrary to this part of Policy CS2. However, the proposal would achieve the high density redevelopment of the proposal site and would provide 224x additional residential units in Woking Town Centre and would contribute towards the wider aims of Policies CS2. It is also borne in mind that Prior Approval has previously been granted for the conversion of the office space to residential (See Planning History). In this context, the loss of office space can be considered acceptable.
9. Overall, the proposal is considered acceptable in land use terms subject to the detailed material planning considerations set out below.

### Housing Mix:

10. Core Strategy (2012) policy CS11 'Housing Mix' requires proposals to address local needs as evidenced in the latest Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) which identifies a need for family accommodation of two bedrooms or more. The most recent published SHMA (September 2015) is broadly similar to the mix identified in policy CS11. However policy CS11 goes on to state that "*The appropriate percentage of different housing types and sizes for each site will depend upon the established character and density of the neighbourhood and the viability of the scheme*" and the reasoned justification for policy CS11 goes on to state that "*Lower proportions of family accommodation (2+ bedroom units which may be houses or flats) will be acceptable in locations in the Borough such as the town and district centres that are suitable for higher density developments*".
11. The proposed development would deliver the number and proportion of dwellings set out below.

Dwelling size	Proposed development	SHMA Need (2015)	
		Market	Affordable
1 bedroom	90 (40.2%)	10%	40%
2 bedrooms	129 (57.6%)	30%	30%
3 bedrooms	5 (2.2%)	40%	25%
4+ bedrooms	0% (0)	20%	5%

12. The majority of the proposed units would be two bedroom units (57.6%) followed by one bedroom units (40.2%). In the context of Policy CS11 and the town centre location of the proposal site, the proposal is considered to achieve an acceptable housing mix whilst delivering the efficient use of previously developed land.

### Density:

13. Woking Core Strategy (2012) policy CS10 'Housing provision and distribution' sets out an indicative density range of in excess of 200dph within Woking Town Centre, but states that the density ranges set out are indicative and will depend on the nature of the site and that higher densities will be permitted in principle where they can be

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justified in terms of the sustainability of the location and where the character of the area would not be compromised. The reasoned justification text to Policy CS10 sets out that Woking Town Centre is one of the broad locations for long-term residential development in accordance with the overall spatial approach of the Woking Core Strategy (2012), helping to minimise the impact on important biodiversity and landscape features and offers the greatest scope to reduce the need to travel by private vehicle because of the proximity to existing services, jobs and public transport. Furthermore, the use of Woking Town Centre sites will help minimise the amount of land that will be needed to be released from the Green Belt to meet housing need. However, paragraph 5.64 of the Woking Core Strategy (2012) emphasises that densities sought should not negatively affect the quality and character of an area and the general well-being of residents.

14. The proposed development would result in 224x dwellings on a site of 0.17ha, resulting in a density of 1,317dph. This is a very high density and far exceeds the densities of the approved Crown Place (PLAN/2019/1141) scheme (813dph) and 'Ecoworld' (PLAN/2020/0568) scheme (807dph) for example. By way of comparison, the proposal also far exceeds the densities of other refused tall building proposals elsewhere in Woking; for example;
  - PLAN/2019/0611 - 81 Commercial Way (Former BHS Store) - 816dph
  - PLAN/2020/1201 - Church Street West - 830dph
15. Whilst a high density is not a reason in itself to refuse a development proposal, it can be indicative of an overdevelopment of a site where the density has a knock-on impact on the bulk and massing of the development or the quality of accommodation for example. Given the very high density of the proposed development, the potential impacts on the character of the surrounding area and other considerations must be critically examined as set out below.

### Character and Design:

#### *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF):*

16. Section 12 'Achieving well-designed places' of the NPPF (2021) states that "*The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities*" and Paragraph 130 states that planning decisions should ensure that developments:
  - (a) *will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
  - (b) *are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;*
  - (c) *are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);*
  - (d) *establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;*

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*(e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and*

*(f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience”.*

### *Development Plan:*

17. Woking Core Strategy (2012) policy CS1 ‘A Spatial Strategy for Woking Borough’ establishes Woking Town Centre as the primary focus for sustainable growth and states that *“In the town centre, well designed, high density development that could include tall buildings and which enhances its image will be encouraged, but without comprising on its character and appearance and that of nearby areas”*. The reasoned justification for policy CS1 goes on to state that:

*“Whether a building is considered ‘tall’ will depend on the relationship between the building and the surrounding built form. In assessing a building’s suitability in terms of height, consideration will be given to the relative height of the building compared to neighbouring buildings, the building’s mass, the topography of the site and impact on the Borough skyline, and the context of the building’s location in terms of any historic, conservation or amenity constraints. Tall buildings can act as gateway and focal points in the Town Centre and they can represent the efficient use of land. Proposals should be of the highest architectural quality and enhance the street scene and character of the area”.*

18. Policy CS2 ‘Woking Town Centre’ places great weight on high quality development in the Town Centre and states that *‘New Development proposals should deliver high quality, well designed public spaces and buildings, which make efficient use of land, contribute to the functionality of the centre and add to its attractiveness and competitiveness’*.
19. Policy CS21 ‘Design’ states that tall buildings can be supported in the town centre where they are well designed and can be justified within their context and requires development proposals to *“respect and make a positive contribution to the street scene and the character of the area in which they are situated, paying due regard to the scale, height, proportions, building lines, layout, materials and other characteristics of adjoining buildings and land”*. Policy CS24 ‘Woking’s Landscape and Townscape’ requires development proposals to provide a ‘positive benefit’ in terms of townscape character.

### *Supplementary Planning Guidance:*

20. Section 4 of the Council’s ‘Design’ (2015) SPD sets out a Tall Buildings Strategy for the town centre, noting the emergence of a cluster of tall buildings on the southern part of Victoria Way, (Victoria Square) and to the south of the railway line. However, the strategy specifies that some areas with a predominantly low-rise character, outside the core of the town centre, are not considered suitable for tall buildings. The ‘Design’ (2015) SPD establishes the criteria against which tall buildings will be considered as set out below:

*“1. Be of exceptional design quality and subject to a formalised design review process during the evolution of the scheme;*

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2. *Not adversely affect the site's surrounds in terms of micro-climate, wind, overshadowing, glare, aviation navigation and telecommunications interference;*
3. *Contribute positively to the setting of identified heritage assets that might be affected by the proposal;*
4. *Take account of key views both across the site and long views towards the building itself. Design proposals will need to take into account the need for the building to be designed so it is seen in the round; and*
5. *Pay particular attention to the environment created at ground floor. Proposals must be appropriate to the streets and spaces they address and should exploit opportunities for improvement of existing and creation of new public spaces”.*

21. Sections 7A and 7B of the SPD set out more detailed guidance relating to high density developments and tall buildings. Section 7A gives detailed design guidance for elevation treatments, amenity space, access and servicing and states that account should be taken of the prevailing urban scale in terms of grain height and massing and that building heights should take account of local opportunities and constraints. Section 7B states that all tall building proposals must be supported by a detailed justification and states that *“Whilst the scale of a new tall building will by definition contrast with surrounding buildings, proposals must make a positive contribution to the townscape and skyline and help improve the legibility of the town...Proposals should have a positive relationship with topographical features and other tall buildings, with the virtue of clusters, as perceived from all directions, taken into consideration”.*
22. The Council has published a draft Town Centre Masterplan (July 2022) which includes a Townscape Strategy. The masterplan defines Character Areas and presents an evidence-based building heights framework for the town centre, identifying broad areas, and ‘urban blocks’ within those areas, that might be better or less well-suited for new tall buildings. The proposal site is within ‘Character Area 3 – Goldsworth Road’ and is within Urban Block ‘GW5’ where the Masterplan identifies an appropriate prospective height of 4-6 storeys. Consultation on the draft masterplan has recently been completed. In a recent appeal decision relating to a tall building proposal in the eastern part of the town centre (Crown Place; PLAN/2019/1141 APP/A3655/W/20/3259819); the Inspector commented on the status of the masterplan as follows:

*“...the Masterplan is at draft stage and currently undergoing public consultation. I am aware that there have been a number of responses, including an objection by the Appellant. At this stage it is therefore not known whether the current approach in the Masterplan will be carried forward or not. For that reason, it can be given very limited weight as a material consideration in this appeal.”*

23. Whilst this appeal relates to a different part of the Town Centre, the Inspector’s comments are considered relevant insofar as the weight which should be attributed to the Masterplan. In the context of the above, it is considered that very limited weight can be attributed to the contents of the Masterplan.

### *Design Review Panel:*

24. As set out above, the Council’s ‘Design’ SPD (2015) requires proposals for tall buildings to be subject to a formalised design review process during the evolution of the scheme. Paragraph 133 of the NPPF (2021) highlights the importance of the design review process:

*“Local planning authorities should ensure that they have access to, and make appropriate use of, tools and processes for assessing and improving the design*

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*of development. These include workshops to engage the local community, design advice and review arrangements, and assessment frameworks such as Building for a Healthy Life. These are of most benefit if used as early as possible in the evolution of schemes, and are particularly important for significant projects such as large scale housing and mixed use developments. In assessing applications, local planning authorities should have regard to the outcome from these processes including any recommendations made by design review panels”.*

25. The proposal has been subject to pre-application discussions and was subject to three Design Review Panels (DRP) chaired by Design South East, although one of these related to a larger scheme across two sites. The latest of these took place during the course of the application in November 2022, with the DRP report being published on 06.12.2022. Whilst the comments of the DRP are not considered determinative, they are considered a strong material planning consideration insofar as the design quality of the development, particularly in the policy context outlined above.
26. The DRP Report makes detailed comments on aspects of the scheme including the design, built form, height and massing and the quality of the internal spaces and amenity areas. The DRP summarised their comments as follows:

*“The very significant height and massing of this proposal are not yet justified, particularly given the changing emerging physical context. The elevations and internal spaces of the building are not of a high enough quality to mitigate the potential negative impact of a tall building in this location. We are pleased to have been able to see this proposal three times, and welcome the improvements made so far in response to our comments. The remaining issues must be resolved so that this significant development can contribute positively to both Woking and to the lives of its future residents”.*
27. The report goes on to make the following recommendations:
  1. *Demonstrate the need for demolition over retrofit with robust analysis and options testing.*
  2. *Undertake more analysis and testing to justify the height in townscape terms.*
  3. *Justify the unprecedented high density of affordable residential homes in this area, to ensure that all residents have sufficient amenity space and can become part of a community.*
  4. *Ensure the form of the building is more elegant, simpler and has a more defined top, to mitigate the bulk and mass.*
  5. *Make provision for the long-term stewardship and management of the building from the outset, to minimise the risk of future problems.*
  6. *Introduce more green and other amenity space, especially for families, such as on the south-west roof area of the first floor.*
  7. *Rearrange the entrance to allow for a more welcoming arrival sequence that encourages a sense of community.*
  8. *Reconsider the relationship between the bins and cycle storage to avoid problems with the adjacency of the two uses.*
  9. *Improve the corridors by making them lighter and shorter.*
28. Not all the DRP comments are considered strictly relevant and the comments of the DRP are not considered determinative. They nonetheless make useful comments on key aspects of the design which are considered relevant.

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29. In response to the DRP comments, amended plans were received during the course of the application which made the following summarised changes:
- One three bedroom unit at Level 2 was omitted and replaced with a 75m<sup>2</sup> area of communal internal amenity space with a 42m<sup>2</sup> external roof terrace. As a result, one fewer residential unit is proposed (224x opposed to 225x).
  - The design of the top of the building was amended, simplifying the contrasting brick banding and removing a previously proposed crown feature
  - The internal ceiling height of the ground floor level was increase by 1m to 5m
  - The overall height of the building was increased by 1m
  - A Heritage, Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment was also submitted during the course of the application

### *Relevant Planning History for Tall Buildings:*

30. There is an emerging 'cluster' of tall buildings centring around the recently completed Victoria Square development (up to 34x storeys) at the junction of Victoria Way and Commercial Way to the north-east. There are also other tall buildings in the Town Centre including the New Central development (21x storeys), the 'Centrium' development (16x storeys) and Export House (17x storeys).
31. Notwithstanding this, there have been several recent proposals for tall buildings in and close to the Town Centre which have been refused by the LPA, including in relatively close proximity to the proposal site, and some of these have been subject to appeal decisions. These appeal decisions and the decisions of the LPA are considered highly relevant in determining any tall building proposals in Woking Town Centre and are discussed below.

### *'Ecoworld'; Land To The North And South Of Goldsworth Road (PLAN/2020/0568)*

32. This scheme related to land to the north and south of Goldsworth Road to the east of the proposal site and comprises:
- 929x units
  - Five blocks of between 9x and 37x storeys
  - Tallest block 37x storeys (116.5m AGL; 147.825 AOD)
  - Block nearest the proposal site (T1) 12x storeys (46m AGL; 77.475m AOD), stepping up to 20x storeys (69m AGL; 100.5m AOD) to the railway line to the south.
33. The approved scheme comprises five blocks of between 9x and 37x storeys, generally stepping down from east to west and stepping down from the railway to the south to Goldsworth Road. This application was refused by the LPA, partly due to the bulk and massing of the development and its impact on the character of the surrounding area. The proposed development was subsequently allowed at appeal (APP/A3655/W/21/3276474). In reaching the conclusion that the proposal was an acceptable height for that location, the Inspector noted the following:

*"...The emerging cluster at Victoria Square is the immediate local context of the appeal site and if the 34 storey tower was to remain the westernmost tower of the cluster then, in important views of the town centre from the south on the A320 from Guildford, the cluster would be unbalanced; its left side would be a 'cliff edge'. A development of tall buildings on the appeal site, diminishing in height down to the fire station as required by the SADPD, would remedy this imbalance..."*



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*...In more distant views eastwards along the road the heights of the buildings would be apparent but they would be seen to rise up to the centre of the cluster either side of Victoria Way...*

*...Buildings T1 and T2 would rise up towards the railway line; Building T1 from 20 storeys to 29 storeys and Building T2 from 12 storeys to 21 storeys. But this is an appropriate response to maximising land use away from the public realm and to the existence of tall buildings on the south side of the railway line; the Centrium development of up to 16 storeys and New Central which includes a 23 storey tower. The massing of the proposed development has been carefully considered and modelled so that the evolving tall building cluster would have an appropriate and visually pleasing shape in both near and distant views from all directions”.*

34. It is clear that the Inspector felt that the 'Ecoworld' scheme contributed towards the emerging tall building cluster at the junction of Victoria Way and Goldsworth Road, with a logical stepping down in height both from east to west along Goldsworth Road and from south to north towards Goldsworth Road. The scheme incorporated allocated sites (UA10-13). Policy UA13 of the Site Allocations DPD (2016) sets out the requirements for development proposals on site UA13, one of which is that the development will be required to:

*“...be of a height informed by the local and wider town centre context, taking into account the local and long-distance views of the site, and the necessity to avoid adverse environmental effects in terms of microclimate, wind, light pollution, overshadowing and glare. In particular, development will need to carefully consider the transition in building heights from 34 storeys at Victoria Square, to five storeys at Woking Fire Station/Greenwood House”.*

35. The contents of this appeal decision in terms of the character of this part of the Town Centre and the effect of stepping down in height from east to west is considered highly relevant in the determination of the current application.
36. The 'Ecoworld' scheme was subject to the Design Review process and the Inspector made the following comments about the Design Review process:

*“The proposed development has been the subject of an iterative and extensive design process and has been reviewed by Woking Design Review Panel (DRP) on three occasions for Design South East...The first policy in the WCS, policy CS1, states that, in the town centre, well designed, high density development that could include tall buildings and which enhances its image will be encouraged, but without compromising its character and appearance and that of nearby areas. The WCS therefore encourages tall buildings in Woking town centre and the Appellant has responded to that encouragement by bringing forward a proposed development that has been considered, and has been applauded, by the DRP. This should not be underestimated because there is no point in appointing and supporting a DRP if the views of that panel are to be disregarded”.*

37. This appeal decision is considered to add weight to the importance of the Design Review process and how DRP comments are a significant material consideration.

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### Church Street West (PLAN/2020/1201)

38. This proposal comprised:
- 243x flats
  - 17x storeys
  - 60.9m AGL (91.2m AOD)
39. This site is approximately 33m away from the proposal site on the opposite side of the roundabout to the north. This application was refused partly for the following reason:
- 01. By reason of its excessive size, mass, bulk and housing density the proposed development would fail to respect and make a positive contribution to the street scenes and character of the area in which it would be situated and fail to make a positive contribution to the townscape of Woking Town Centre in which it would be partly situated. The proposed development is therefore contrary to Policies CS10 and CS21 of the Woking Core Strategy (2012).*
40. The LPA has therefore previously considered a tall building of a lower height (17x storeys compared to 25x storeys) to be unacceptable in close proximity to the proposal site.

### No.9-13 Poole Road (PLAN/2018/0633)

41. This proposal comprised:
- 247x student and co-living rooms above an energy centre.
  - 17x storeys
  - 62.6m AGL (100.62 AOD)
42. This site is very close to the proposal site on the opposite side of Butts Road immediately to the south, although this site falls just outside the Town Centre boundary. This application was refused partly for the following reason:
- 01. By cumulative reason of its excessive bulk and mass, and in failing to represent exceptional design quality, the proposal would fail to respect and make a positive contribution to the character of the area in which it would be situated and fail to make a positive contribution to the townscape and skyline of Woking Town Centre. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policy CS21 of the Woking Core Strategy (2012) and SPD Design (2015).*
43. This application was subsequently dismissed at appeal. In dismissing the appeal, the Inspector made the following remarks:
- “The appeal site lies immediately outside the designated town centre, with the buildings on the opposite side of Poole Road and Butts Road included within the centre, as well as land within the fire station car park and the railway. But the site’s closeness to the boundary does not necessarily mean that it has town centre character. The boundary has apparently been drawn to include the frontage buildings and curtilages along Goldsworth Road, which has the predominant character of a main town centre street with retail and leisure frontages and office or residential upper floors. Poole Road, which is included on the Local Plan map within an employment area and a high density residential area but is shown on the WCS key diagram as an employment area, has a different physical character as a minor road lined with a mix of low-rise commercial units and the rear of the Midas House office building. It is quite*

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*typical of many such zones on the fringes of town centres which often provide a transition between the centre and residential suburbs. The approved energy centre, although larger in scale than some of the nearby buildings, would be appropriate to this setting. The appeal proposal would, by contrast, contain a hybrid mix of uses, with the residential and communal elements grafted on above the energy centre.*

*It is clear that the policy framework outlined above offers no support in principle for tall buildings outside the town centre or within low-rise areas within the designated centre. Despite the appeal proposal's closeness to the town centre boundary and its acknowledged very good access to town centre facilities and public transport, there is a fundamental policy obstacle to a proposal for a building of this size"*

44. The appeal decision was made before the later 'Ecoworld' decision (PLAN/2020/0568). At the time of the appeal decision an earlier application to redevelop No.20-32 Goldsworth Road (PLAN/2016/0742), which included 560x residential units in towers of up to 34x storeys, was resolved to be granted but no decision had been made. This application was eventually withdrawn. In determining the appeal, the Inspector did not afford great weight to this on the basis that the scheme may not got ahead. The Inspector noted that:

*"Were this scheme to proceed, it would extend the town centre cluster of tall buildings significantly to the west and considerably alter the context for the appeal proposal. However, I agree with the Council that the lack of progress on the scheme since the approval was made must cast very substantial doubt on the likelihood of it going ahead... With the Goldsworth Road proposal left out of consideration, the appeal proposal would be seen much more as an isolated tall building, some considerable distance away from the central development at Victoria Square. The perception of the proposal as part of the 'emerging cluster' of tall buildings would be greatly reduced, and it would appear much more as a freestanding outlier. Its massing and bulk must be assessed on that basis. A 17 storey building in this location, surrounded by low-rise buildings on Poole Road and low/medium height development on Goldsworth Road, would appear very much taller and larger in scale than its context."*

45. The outcome of the appeal may have been different if the later 'Ecoworld' appeal decision had been in place. Nevertheless, the appeal was dismissed as the Inspector felt that the building would be a tall freestanding building in an area which was described as a low-rise and fringe site where the town centre transitioned to a more suburban area. In any case, this scheme would have resulted in a 17x storey building which is significantly lower in height than the current proposal, although it is acknowledged that this site is just outside the town centre boundary.

<i>Crown Place (PLAN/2019/1141)</i>
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46. This proposal comprises:
- 366x units
  - 28x storeys
  - 93.5m AGL (126.475m AOD)
47. The Crown Place scheme has recently been allowed at appeal (APP/A3655/W/20/3259819). The scheme was subject to an earlier appeal decision however this decision was quashed, and the appeal re-determined. The later appeal

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decision (APP/A3655/W/20/3259819) is therefore the most relevant. In allowing the appeal, the Inspector noted:

*“The 23, 25 and 28 storey towers proposed on the appeal site would undoubtedly represent a significant step change in terms of height within this location. However, the main question in terms of the development plan is whether this would be harmful in terms of its impact on exiting character...”*

*...I therefore agree...that the towers proposed on the appeal site would appear isolated from the main cluster around Victoria Square and in this respect would not mirror their existing surroundings.*

*On the other hand, the appeal site is in a gateway location when approaching the town centre from the east. At the present time this entrance to the town is relatively unremarkable with mid-rise developments in the foreground and the Victoria Square towers visible in the distance. The proposed towers would provide a landmark feature and a focal point to signal arrival at the town centre from the easterly approach. Indeed, the supporting text to policy CS1 refers to tall buildings in this very context...*

*...there was a great deal of pre-application discussion with the Council’s officers and the scheme was considered on several occasions by the Design Review Panel (DRP). Various changes were made as a result of their comments and those of other consultees during the design process...That the scheme was subsequently supported by the DRP, who are independent of the Council, seems to me to be a matter of considerable importance...*

*...The existing built environment within the eastern part of the town centre is generally uninspiring and has little to commend it. The proposal would introduce a development of high quality and distinction and a landmark at the easterly approach to the town centre”.*

48. Whilst the comments of the appeal Inspector are a material consideration, the location of the appeal site is in a different part of the Town Centre to the proposal site which has its own character and context. The Inspector felt that the development would deliver a high quality landmark building in a gateway location on the eastern approach to the Town Centre which differentiates this scheme from the proposal.

### *Townscape and Visual Impact:*

49. The application is accompanied by a Heritage, Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment. The approach of the assessment is to identify a number of Townscape Character Areas with common characteristics and to assess the townscape value of these different areas along with their susceptibility to change (categorised as high, medium or low). The magnitude of the impact of the proposed development on townscape character is assessed (categorised as high, medium, low, negligible or neutral). A similar assessment and methodology is applied to assess the visual impact on different specific views. The overall significance of townscape and visual effects are categorised as being ‘beneficial’, ‘adverse’ or ‘neutral’. The assessment includes 14x viewpoints around Woking, including long-distance views from Knaphill, Sutton Green and Guildford and the assessment considers both the proposed scheme in isolation and cumulatively with the consented ‘Ecoworld’ scheme.

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50. Whilst the contents of this assessment are a material consideration, they should not be seen as definitive as the resulting impact on the character of the surrounding area is subjective and open to interpretation.
51. Of the viewpoints which were assessed, 2x are identified as experiencing a 'negligible adverse' overall cumulative effect on views (Looking east from roundabout on Church Street West and the long-distance view from Sutton Green), 3x are identified as experiencing a 'minor adverse' overall cumulative effect (Morrisons roundabout looking east, York Road looking north-east and the long-distance view from The Mount, Guildford) and 1x as experiencing a 'moderate adverse' overall cumulative effect (view from junction of Vale Farm Road and Oaks Road). The remainder are identified as having neutral overall cumulative effects on views.
52. The assessment examines the townscape effects on Townscape Character Areas. The assessment concludes that there would be a 'negligible adverse' impact on one area (TCA7 - York Road) and 'neutral', 'moderate beneficial' and 'minor beneficial' impacts on the remaining 8x areas.
53. The assessment acknowledges that the proposed development would result in considerable change to the Town Centre Character Area and would bring the tall building context closer to the lower residential townscape to the west but also factors in the regeneration benefits of the scheme and its animation of the street scene for example in reaching the above conclusions.

### *Design, Bulk and Massing:*

54. The proposed development is identified as being finished in brick. Brick is a predominate material finish in Woking and this material is considered to respond to the local history and vernacular. This is considered an appropriate material choice in general for this location. A mixture of mixed brown and mixed white/brown bricks are proposed for different elements of the building. Floors are generally grouped in a double order demarcated with a contrasting band of lighter coloured brick every two floors and windows grouped in twos. Most flats would be served by projecting balconies which alternate between being enclosed with metal balustrades and partially enclosed with a brick finish. These are considered to result in well-considered and high quality elevations. The undersides of balconies are identified as being finished in an orange colour which is considered to add variety and interest to the building. The DRP Report noted the clear ordering of the facades and the approach to balconies as positive qualities of the design approach. The general design approach of the building is therefore considered acceptable.
55. The proposed building adopts an abstract shaped footprint above a single storey podium level which occupies the majority of the proposal site. The podium level adopts a more horizontal emphasis with horizontal elements marking the ground floor level and the bin and cycle stores at first floor level. The bulk and massing of the building steps-in to the rear (south) at Level 8 and again at Level 22 to the front (north). Whilst the building adopts a relatively large footprint, with the tower having an overall depth from north to south of 41m and an overall width of 27m, the varied footprint, building lines and heights of the building create a varied form and serve to break-up the overall bulk and massing of the building. The use of contrasting brickwork, projecting balconies and the double order grouping of floors are considered to add interest, definition and relief to the elevations and assist in breaking-up the bulk and massing of the building. Whilst the bulk and massing of the proposed building is considered acceptable in isolation, the impact of the height, bulk and massing on the wider area must also be considered.

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### *Height and Impact on Surrounding Area:*

56. As discussed above, Core Strategy (2012) policies CS1, CS2 and CS21 set out that tall buildings can be considered acceptable in Woking Town Centre where they are of high design quality and appropriate to their context. There is an emerging character in Woking Town Centre for high density developments and tall buildings established by the Victoria Square development, which includes towers of 34x, 30x and 23x storeys (originally approved under PLAN/2014/0014) and Woking is generally characterised by a modern and varied townscape. Other existing tall buildings in the Town Centre include the New Central development at 21x storeys, the 'Centrium' development at 16x storeys and Export House at 17x storeys.
57. The proposal site is within the Town Centre boundary but is located towards the western periphery of the Town Centre and borders the southern boundary of the Town Centre, as defined by the Woking Core Strategy (2012) Proposals Map. The location of the proposal site is considered important in determining whether a tall building is appropriate.
58. Woking Town Centre is a large geographical area, encompassing parts of Goldsworth Road to the west, up to Boundary Road to the east, and up to Quadrant Court on Guildford Road to the south. Different areas of the Town Centre have different characters and tall buildings are not necessarily appropriate in all areas of the Town Centre.
59. It is considered that the proposal site, although within the Town Centre, is in peripheral location which has a transitional character between the larger scale buildings in the core of Town Centre and the emerging tall building cluster, and the low to mid-rise development which characterises Goldsworth Road moving west towards the suburban and industrial areas which surround the Town Centre. Whilst Goldsworth Road is mixed in character, it is characterised by low to medium-rise buildings which are of appropriate heights and scales for this part of the Town Centre and which do not dominate the streetscape or wider townscape.
60. The proposal site is located adjacent to Woking Fire Station, which is 5x storeys and Spectrum House, which is 4x storeys; to the north-east is Birchwood Court, which is up to 7x storeys, with remaining buildings being typically 3-4x storeys. Further to the north-east is the Premier Inn hotel (10x storeys) with the Victoria Square development beyond. To the north-west is generally low-rise two storey development comprising Victorian/Edwardian housing. Goldsworth Road has a varied character however building heights are generally low rise, with building heights and scales generally decreasing travelling west away from the core of the Town Centre.
61. The extant 'Ecoworld' scheme to the east of the proposal site comprises blocks of between 9x and 37x storeys in height which step up in height from Woking Fire Station towards the highest point to the east at the junction with Victoria Way and the completed Victoria Square development, which comprises towers of up to 34x storeys. The approved scheme makes a logical step down in height, bulk and massing away from the Victoria Square development and contributes towards an emerging tall building cluster at the key junction of Goldsworth Road, Commercial Way and Victoria Way and the new key area or public realm at Victoria Square. The approved 'Ecoworld' scheme therefore contributes towards this emerging tall building cluster and a stepping down of height, bulk and massing towards the more low-rise area of the Town Centre to the west.

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62. As set out above, in determining the appeal for the 'Ecoworld' scheme, the Inspector noted the emerging tall building cluster and that the scheme would contribute towards a 'visually pleasing' shape in long distance views. The 'Ecoworld' scheme is considered to contribute towards an emerging tall building cluster and a 'bell curve' skyline in Woking.
63. The element of the approved scheme nearest the proposal site (T1) comprises a block of between 12x storeys and 20x storeys (including a three storey podium), stepping up in height from 12x storeys (46m AGL; 77.475m AOD) at the Goldsworth Road frontage, to 20x storeys (69m AGL; 100.5m AOD) to the railway line to the south.
64. In their report the current proposal, the Design Review Panel commented on the relationship with the 'Ecoworld' scheme: "...*Additionally, the approval of the EcoWorld development now means that height will be stepping down away from the town centre and towards this site. Counter to this pattern of development, this proposal steps back up again. A tall building on this site might be justifiable, but more analysis of how this proposal relates compositionally to the edge of Woking town centre must be undertaken and used to inform the approach*".
65. The proposed development would have 25x storeys with a height of 81m AGL (111.8m AOD). The proposed development would not only result in a sudden and pronounced uplift in height, bulk and massing compared to the adjacent 5x storey Woking Fire Station, but it would be 5x storeys and 12m taller than the tallest part of the 'Ecoworld' scheme closest to the proposal site (T1). Furthermore, 'T1' steps down from 20x storeys to 12x storeys (46m AGL; 77.475 AOD) where it meets Goldsworth Road, whereas the proposal site is located on Goldsworth Road with a height of 25x storeys. The proposed building would therefore be 13x storeys taller and 35m taller than the block fronting Goldsworth Road.
66. The proposal would result in a sudden and pronounced uplift in height, bulk and massing in the street scene along Goldsworth Road compared to 'T1' and compared to Woking Fire Station. This is contrary to the emerging 'bell curve' pattern of tall buildings in the Town Centre and is considered to result in a visually jarring significant uplift in height, bulk and massing and an uncomfortable and overbearing visual relationship between the proposed building and its neighbours, including the approved 'Ecoworld' scheme.
67. The proposed building would appear as a sentinel tower which contrasts starkly with its surroundings and appears out of scale with the finer grain and low rise buildings which surround it and is contrary to the emerging pattern of tall buildings in this part of the Town Centre. It is also borne in mind that whilst permission for the 'Ecoworld' scheme is extant, development has not commenced and there is no guarantee that the development would go ahead. In that scenario the proposed building would appear even more stark and out of place. The proposed development is therefore considered to fail to respond to its context and would fail to make a positive contribution to the character of the surrounding area or the wider townscape of Woking.
68. As set out above, a proposal for a tall building (17x storeys) in close proximity to the proposal site at Church Street West (PLAN/2020/1201) has previously been refused by the LPA partly due to the bulk and massing of the building and its impact on the character of the area. The current proposal is for a taller building in a similar location in the Town Centre.

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69. It is acknowledged that the Crown Place appeal decision discussed above allowed a building of up to 28x storeys in the east of the Town Centre which is currently relatively low-rise. However, the character of that part of the Town Centre is considered different to that of the proposal site; that site is surrounded by relatively large buildings, including Dukes Court and Enterprise Place. In allowing the appeal the Inspector felt that the development would deliver a high quality landmark building in a key 'gateway' location where development is currently 'uninspiring'. The Crown Place site also formed part of a Site Allocation and did not have the relationship with the 'Ecoworld' scheme to address. The approval of the Crown Place scheme is not therefore considered to justify a tall building on the proposal site which is in a different part of the Town Centre with its own character and context. The proposed development has been assessed on its own merits, taking account of its own context.
70. The proposed development, by reason of its height, bulk and massing and its location, would fail to respect the prevailing character and scale of development in the area and the emerging tall building context in this part of Woking Town Centre. The proposal would consequently result in a harmful impact on the character of the surrounding area, contrary to Woking Core Strategy (2012) policies CS1 'A spatial strategy for Woking Borough', CS2 'Woking Town Centre', CS21 'Design' and CS24 'Woking's Landscape and Townscape', Supplementary Planning Document 'Design' (2015) and the NPPF (2021).

### *Active Frontages:*

71. The proposal site occupies a prominent corner site and effectively has frontages on three sides; Goldsworth Road to the front, Poole Road to the side and Butts Road to the rear. The ground floor level would occupy a majority of the site and would include four commercial units fronting onto Goldsworth Road and Poole Road. The main residential entrance would feature prominently on the front elevation facing Goldsworth Road, with a secondary access onto Poole Road. The proposal is considered to achieve good 'active frontages' on Goldsworth Road and Poole Road. The Butts Road elevation features an inactive frontage with parking and servicing functions concentrated here, however Butts Road is a short and lightly trafficked section of road and this is the least prominent frontage of the development. Overall, the proposed development is considered to an appropriate level of active frontages and animation at ground floor level.

### *Public Realm and Landscaping:*

72. The proposal site currently incorporates a 5m wide section of pavement to the front of the building in addition to the public footpath and raised planter between the proposal site and Goldsworth Road. The proposal would maintain the current building line and would retain this 5m wide pavement as public realm. Part of the building footprint would be set-back from the highway, creating an area of public realm of approximately 56m<sup>2</sup> in area with indicative tree planting and street furniture identified on the plans. This is considered a positive aspect of the scheme which would create an additional area of public realm on Goldsworth Road.

### *Summary:*

73. The proposed development, by reason of its height, bulk and massing and its location, would fail to respect the prevailing character and scale of development in the area and the emerging tall building context in this part of Woking Town Centre. The proposal would consequently result in a harmful impact on the character of the surrounding area, contrary to Woking Core Strategy (2012) policies CS1 'A spatial strategy for



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Woking Borough', CS2 'Woking Town Centre', CS21 'Design' and CS24 'Woking's Landscape and Townscape', Supplementary Planning Document 'Design' (2015) and the NPPF (2021).

Affordable Housing:

74. Woking Core Strategy (2012) policy CS1 sets a target for new housing in the Borough between 2010 and 2027 of approximately 4,964 net additional dwellings. Policy CS12 'Affordable housing' identifies an overall target of 35% of all new homes delivered in this period to be affordable, which is equivalent to 1,737 affordable homes. Taking into account Annual Monitoring Report data from 2010 until 2022, the total amount of affordable housing completed in this period amounts to 627x new dwellings. There has therefore been an under-delivery of affordable housing in the Borough, particularly in Woking Town Centre.
75. As the proposal is for more than 15x dwellings, Core Strategy (2012) policy CS12 'Affordable Housing' states that 40% of dwellings should be affordable and this policy establishes a preference for on-site provision. The Council's 'Affordable Housing Delivery' SPD (2014) sets out more detailed guidance on the Council's approach to affordable housing provision and seeks 70% of new affordable units to be provided at Social/Affordable Rent levels, and 30% as intermediate housing (affordable market, including shared ownership).
76. The planning application proposes 40% (90x) of the units to be affordable. Of these, 70% (63x units) are proposed to be affordable rent and 30% (27x units) will be intermediate (shared ownership) as set out below:

<b><i>Proposed Affordable Housing Units (policy compliant 40% provision)</i></b>			
	<b>Affordable Rent (Floors 1-13)</b>	<b>Intermediate (Floors 14-24)</b>	<b>Total:</b>
<b>One Bed</b>	12x	15x	27x (30%)
<b>Two Bed</b>	46x	12x	58x (64.4%)
<b>Three Bed</b>	5x	0	5x (5.6%)
<b>Total:</b>	63x (70%)	27x (40%)	90x

77. The applicant represents a Housing Association and has indicated in their submission that their intention is to provide a 100% affordable housing scheme. The applicant is not formally proposing this as part of the application and Section 106 Agreement due to their need to protect the long-term asset value of the site in order to secure grant funding. The applicant indicates that of the remaining 134x units, 41x would be Affordable Rent and 93x would be intermediate. As the additional 134x units would not form part of a Section 106 Agreement, Officers attach only limited weight to this and there is no mechanism to ensure that the scheme delivered would be 100% affordable. The Council's Housing Services has been consulted and is supportive of the application, however this is in the context of a 100% affordable housing provision.
78. If the scheme were to be delivered as 100% affordable as suggested by the applicant, it would result in the following proportions of tenures:

<b><i>Affordable Housing Units if scheme is delivered as 100% affordable</i></b>			
	<b>Affordable Rent</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>	<b>Total:</b>
<b>Total:</b>	104x (46.4%)	120x (53.6%)	224x

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79. The tenure split outlined above would not align with the desired tenure split set out in the Affordable Housing SPD (2014) as the majority of the overall units would be intermediate housing rather than Affordable Rent.
80. In any case, the proposed development would provide 40% affordable housing through on-site provision in accordance with policy CS12 and the Council's 'Affordable Housing Delivery' SPD (2014). This is considered a substantial benefit resulting from the proposed development which weighs in favour of the proposal.
81. National Planning Practice Guidance, sets out a requirement for 25% of affordable units secured through planning obligations to be 'First Homes', which is a form of discounted market sale housing. This is reflected in the Council's recently published draft Affordable Housing SPD (2022) which establishes a preference for 71% of new affordable units to be social/affordable rent, 25% First homes and 4% as intermediate housing (e.g. shared ownership). However, the SPD is in draft form and is at consultation stage. Limited weight is therefore afforded to the requirements of the draft SPD. The applicant is not proposing any First Homes as part of the proposal. Whilst this does not accord with National Planning Practice Guidance, the proposal would deliver at least 40% on-site provision in the context of historic under-provision and the proposal is therefore considered acceptable in this regard.

### Impact on Surrounding Properties:

82. There are residential neighbours in the surrounding area and the proposed building would introduce extra height, bulk and massing on the proposal site. Core Strategy (2012) policy CS21 'Design' requires development proposals to "*Achieve a satisfactory relationship to adjoining properties avoiding significant harmful impact in terms of loss of privacy, daylight or sunlight, or an overbearing effect due to bulk, proximity or outlook*". In terms of potential overlooking and loss of privacy, the Council's 'Outlook, Amenity, Privacy and Daylight' SPD (2022) sets out recommended separation distances for different relationships and different building heights. For three storey development and above the SPD recommends a minimum separation distance of 15m for 'front-to-front' relationships and 30m for 'rear-to-rear' relationships to avoid undue overlooking however these standards are advisory and the SPD makes clear that the context of development proposals will be of overriding importance.

### *Overlooking and Loss of Privacy:*

83. In terms of potential overlooking, the proposed building would have habitable room windows and balconies on all elevations. The nearest neighbours are those at Spectrum House on the opposite side of Poole Road to the west; the proposed development would be located between approximately 13m and 20.5m from Spectrum House. Whilst this falls marginally short of the recommended minimum of 15m, considering the Town Centre context of the proposal site, the proposal is not considered to result in an unacceptable level of overlooking or loss of privacy to neighbours in Spectrum House.
84. The proposed building would be sited 7.9m from the flank elevation of Woking Fire Station (Greenwood House) however the windows in the flank elevation do not serve habitable rooms. Windows and balconies of the proposed development would have oblique views towards windows on the rear elevation of Greenwood House. However the oblique nature of the views and the Town Centre location of the proposal site means that the proposal is not considered to result in undue overlooking or loss of privacy to these neighbours.

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85. The proposed building would be located approximately 45m from the nearest element of the approved 'Ecoworld' scheme which is considered a sufficient distance to avoid undue overlooking or loss of privacy. Other neighbours in the surrounding area are considered a sufficient distance from the proposed development in order to not be unduly impacted on in terms of overlooking and loss of privacy.

### *Loss of Light:*

86. In terms of potential impact on daylight and sunlight, the Building Research Establishment (BRE) have set out guidelines for assessing such impacts. The latest guidance is the Third Edition published in June 2022; 'Site Layout Planning for Daylight & Sunlight. A Guide to Good Practice' and replaced the 2011 version. The applicant has provided a Daylight and Sunlight Report based on the 2011 guidance as the application was submitted before the June 2022 guidance was published. The guidance remains largely unchanged in terms of assessing the impact on surrounding neighbours but does change how daylight within a proposed development is assessed. Whilst the applicant has not assessed the proposed development against the latest BRE guidance, the submission nonetheless provides useful information on the potential daylight and sunlight impacts of the proposed development. It is also borne in mind that the above is guidance and compliance is not mandatory, since the actual effect can be influenced by other factors.
87. The BRE guidance states that *"If, for any part of the new development, the angle from the centre of the lowest affected window to the head of the new development is more than 25°, then a more detailed check is needed to find the loss of skylight to the existing buildings"*. Where the BRE guidelines are exceeded then daylighting and/or sunlighting may be adversely affected. The BRE Guide provides numerical guidelines although emphasizes that advice given is not mandatory and the BRE Guide should not be seen as an instrument of planning policy; the guidelines are to be interpreted flexibly since natural lighting is only one of many factors in site layout and design. The BRE Guide also sets out that in special circumstances the developer or Local Planning Authority may wish to use different target values. For example, in a historic city centre, or in an area with modern high rise buildings, a higher degree of obstruction may be unavoidable if new developments are to match the height and proportions of existing buildings. This is reflected in the National Planning Practice Guidance 'Effective Use of Land' which states that *"All developments should maintain acceptable living standards. What this means in practice, in relation to assessing appropriate levels of sunlight and daylight, will depend to some extent on the context for the development as well as its detailed design. For example in areas of high-density historic buildings, or city centre locations where tall modern buildings predominate, lower daylight and daylight and sunlight levels at some windows may be unavoidable if new developments are to be in keeping with the general form of their surroundings"* (Paragraph: 007 Reference ID: 66-007-20190722).
88. It is also a material consideration that Paragraph 125(c) of the NPPF (2021) states that *"local planning authorities should refuse applications which they consider fail to make efficient use of land, taking into account the policies in this Framework. In this context, when considering applications for housing, authorities should take a flexible approach in applying policies or guidance relating to daylight and sunlight, where they would otherwise inhibit making efficient use of a site (as long as the resulting scheme would provide acceptable living standards)"*.

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### *Daylight:*

89. The BRE guidelines set out several methods for calculating loss of daylight. The two methods predominantly used are those involving the measurement of the total amount of skylight available (the Vertical Sky Component (VSC)) and its distribution within the building (Daylight Distribution). VSC is the ratio, expressed as a percentage, of the direct sky illuminance falling on a reference point (usually the centre of the window) to the simultaneous horizontal illuminance under an unobstructed sky (overcast sky conditions). According to the BRE guidance, if the VSC measured at the centre of a window, is at least 27% then enough daylight should still reach the window of the existing building. If the VSC, with the new development in place, is both less than 27% and less than 0.8x its former value, occupants of the existing building will notice the reduction in the amount of light.
90. The Daylight Distribution method takes account of the internal room layouts of the rooms in question and indicates how well daylight is distributed within the room. Daylight Distribution relates to the area of the room, expressed as a percentage of the whole room area, that can see direct sky at the working plane (85cm above ground level). The BRE guidance states that daylight may be adversely affected if the daylight distribution figure is reduced to less than 0.8x its former value (i.e. no more than a 20% loss).

### *Sunlight:*

91. With regards to potential loss of sunlight; analysis is undertaken by measuring annual probable sunlight hours (APSH) for the main windows of rooms which face within 90° of due south. The BRE guidelines propose that the appropriate date for undertaking a sunlight assessment is on 21<sup>st</sup> March. Calculations of both summer and winter availability are made with the winter analysis covering the period from the 21<sup>st</sup> September to 21<sup>st</sup> March. Sunlight availability may be adversely affected if the centre of the window:
  - receives less than 25% of annual probable sunlight hours, or less than 5% of annual probable sunlight hours between 21<sup>st</sup> September and 21<sup>st</sup> March and;
  - receives less than 0.8x its former sunlight hours during either period and;
  - has a reduction in sunlight received over the whole year greater than 4% of annual probable sunlight hours.
92. The application is supported by a detailed Daylight and Sunlight Report which assesses the loss of light impact on surrounding neighbours. The report assesses the impact on a number of neighbours in the area and the neighbours which are classified as experiencing a noticeable loss of light are discussed below. The assessment includes the impact of the proposed development in isolation and cumulatively with the consented 'Ecoworld' proposal. The 'worst case scenario' has formed the basis of the below assessment which is typically the cumulative scenario. A summary of results from the Daylight and Sunlight Report for VSC, Daylight Distribution and APSH for the future cumulative scenario is set out below.

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*Summary of VSC, DD and APSH Results in future cumulative scenario*

Property	VSC Summary (Daylight)		Daylight Distribution Summary (Daylight)		APSH Summary (Sunlight)	
	Habitable Room Windows	Windows Compliant	Rooms	Rooms Compliant	Windows	Windows Compliant
Greenwood House, No.44 Goldsworth Road (Woking Fire Station)	52	41	16	16	16	16
	-	78.8%	N/A	100%	N/A	100%
Birchwood Court No.45-49 Goldsworth Road	71	57	38	38	35	30
	-	80.3%	-	100%	N/A	85.7%
Church Gate, Church Street West	32	32	27	27	27	27
	-	100%	-	100%	-	100%
No.65-67 Goldsworth Road	10	10	12	12	6	6
	-	100%	-	100%	-	100%
No.69-71 Goldsworth Road	9	9	5	5	5	5
	-	100%	-	100%	-	100%
<b>Total</b>	174	149	98	98	89	84
	-	<b>85.6%</b>	-	<b>100%</b>	-	<b>94.4%</b>

*Summary of ADF results for Ecoworld and Spectrum House*

Property	Average Daylight Factor (ADF)	
	Habitable Rooms	Rooms Compliant
'Ecoworld' (PLAN/2020/0568)	144	132
	-	91.6%
Spectrum House	57	53
	-	92.9%

*Greenwood House, No.44 Goldsworth Road (Woking Fire Station):*

93. This neighbour adjoins the proposal site to the east and comprises residential accommodation in the upper floors with habitable rooms on the front and rear elevations. Whilst all of the assessed windows would pass the 'Daylight Distribution' test for daylight and the APSH test for sunlight, 11x windows would fail the VSC test for daylight. These windows would therefore experience a notable reduction in daylight as a result of the proposed development. The scale of the proposed building and its relationship with Greenwood House means that the proposal is also considered to result in an overbearing impact on these neighbours.

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### *Birchwood Court:*

94. This is a 7x storey residential block of flats to the north-east. Whilst all of the assessed windows would pass the 'Daylight Distribution' test for daylight, 14x of the assessed windows would fail the VSC test for daylight and 5x would fail the APSH test for sunlight. These windows would therefore experience a notable reduction in daylight as a result of the proposed development. The scale of the proposed building and its relationship with Birchwood Court means that the proposal is also considered to result in an overbearing impact on these neighbours.

### *Spectrum House:*

95. This is a 4x storey former office building which has been converted to residential units with habitable rooms facing the proposal site. The submitted Daylight and Sunlight Report uses the Average Daylight Factor (ADF) method to assess the impact on these neighbours however this method is ordinarily use for measuring the quality of daylight within a proposed development. Of the 57x windows assessed, 4x would fail the ADF test for daylight.

### *'EcoWorld'*

96. The submitted Daylight and Sunlight Report uses the Average Daylight Factor (ADF) method to assess the impact on future neighbours of the 'Ecoworld' scheme which has not yet been built. Of the 144x windows assessed, 12x would fail the ADF test for daylight.

### *Summary:*

97. As set out above there would be a loss of light and overbearing impact on neighbours at Greenwood House, Birchwood Court and Spectrum House and to rooms in the approved 'Ecoworld' scheme. The proposal is considered to result in a relatively small number of breaches of the guidance when considering the overall scale of the development and number of neighbours involved and overall the proposal is considered to achieve a high degree of compliance with BRE guidance.
98. Balancing these points, along with the benefits of the proposal and the requirement to make efficient use of land as set out in Paragraph 125 of the NPPF (2021), overall the proposed development is considered to form an acceptable relationship with surrounding neighbours in terms of loss of light, overbearing and overlooking impacts in the context of the Town Centre location of the proposal site.

### Standard of Accommodation:

#### *Size of Units:*

99. The NPPF (2021) states that planning decisions should ensure that a 'high standard of amenity' is achieved for existing and future residents. The National Technical Housing Standards (2015) sets minimum standards for internal floor areas for dwellings. The minimum standard for a one bedroom, two person flat is 50m<sup>2</sup>, 61m<sup>2</sup> for a two bedroom, three person flat and 70m<sup>2</sup> for a two bedroom, four person flat. These standards are not formally adopted by Woking Borough Council but nevertheless provide a useful indication as to whether the flats would provide an acceptable standard of accommodation.

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100. The internal floor areas of the proposed dwellings range from 50m<sup>2</sup> to 75m<sup>2</sup>. All the proposed units would meet the recommended minimum standards set out in the National Technical Housing Standards (2015). The proposed development is therefore considered to deliver residential units of acceptable sizes.

### *Amenity Space:*

101. The Council's 'Outlook, Amenity, Privacy and Daylight' SPD (2022) sets out guidance for amenity space for different types of accommodation. The SPD states that there is no specific requirement for private amenity space provision for non-family accommodation but encourages all dwellings to achieve some modest private amenity space and states that balconies should generally be at least 1.5m in depth. For family dwellings (i.e. two bedroom flats over 61m<sup>2</sup>) the SPD states that a suitable sunlit area of predominantly soft landscaped private amenity space, appropriate in size and shape for the outdoor domestic and recreational needs of the family it is intended to support, is required. However, the SPD goes on to state that in the densest urban locations such as flatted developments in Woking Town Centre, alternative forms of on-site amenity provision may be permitted such as a communal amenity space or suitable area of landscaped roof garden or terrace.
102. 180x of the units (80%) would feature private balconies which are over 1.5m in depth. However, all the units would have access to shared external amenity spaces at Levels 22 and 23 which are 75m<sup>2</sup> and 112m<sup>2</sup> in area respectively. At Level 2 an internal play area is identified with an area of 75m<sup>2</sup> and an outdoor play space of 42m<sup>2</sup> in area. Whilst it is not clear how these spaces would be used or managed, they do provide a good level of internal and external communal amenity space and the proposal is considered to accord with the requirements of the SPD.

### *Daylight and Sunlight:*

103. The Daylight and Sunlight Report assess the quality of lighting rooms within the proposed development. The 2011 BRE guidance uses the Average Daylight Factor (ADF) as a method of measuring the quality of daylight within a proposed development. ADF measures the average illuminance at working plane height within a habitable room as a ratio of illuminance on a horizontal plane from unobstructed sky and is expressed as a percentage. BRE guidance states that an ADF of 5% will provide a predominately day-lit appearance without electric lighting and 2% with supplementary electric lighting. It is recommended that if supplementary electric lighting is provided, a minimum value of 2% for kitchens, 1.5% for living rooms and 1% for bedrooms should be attained. Where living room/kitchen/dining rooms are combined in an open-plan arrangement, it is common for a 1.5% to be adopted and this is considered a logical target criteria to adopt in this instance considering the open-plan layout of the proposed units.
104. When assessed cumulatively with surrounding proposals (i.e. a worst case scenario), the report identifies that all the assessed rooms would achieve the BRE target criteria of 1.5% figure outlined above. The proposal is therefore considered to achieve an acceptable level of daylight within habitable rooms.
105. With regards to sunlight; BRE guidance recommends that living rooms which face within 90° of south have an availability of 25% of Annual Probable Sunlight Hours (APSH) and with 5% available in the winter months. The report concludes that 86% of applicable living rooms would meet these targets. Considering the high density nature of the proposed development and the town centre location of the proposal site, the

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proposal is considered to achieve an acceptable quality of daylight and sunlight for future residents.

### Nosie and the Rail Aggregate Depot:

124. An existing rail aggregate depot, currently operated by the Day Group, is located on the south side of the railway which allows the importation of minerals such as crushed rock and marine-dredged aggregate into Surrey from other parts of the country. The site operates under permitted development rights applicable to rail sites and as such there are no restrictions on operating hours, limitations with regards to importation of material by rail or the exportation by road. The rail aggregate depot is identified on the Council's Proposals Map and the Surrey Minerals Plan (SMP) Core Strategy Development Plan Document (2011) applies to the land designated. Policy MC1 of the SMP states that "*sites...such as rail aggregate depots, will be safeguarded to enable supply of alternatives to land-won minerals*".
125. Policy MC6 of the SMP states that "*infrastructure and sites used, or proposed to be used, for minerals development - rail aggregate depots and sites for production of recycled and secondary aggregate - will be safeguarded. Local planning authorities will be expected to consult the mineral planning authority on proposals for non-mineral development in the consultation area around such sites*". Policy MC16 of the SMP states that "*the rail aggregate depots at Salfords and Woking will be safeguarded from development*".
126. Paragraph 187 of the NPPF states that "*Existing businesses and facilities should not have unreasonable restrictions placed on them as a result of development permitted after they were established. Where the operation of an existing business or community facility could have a significant adverse effect on new development (including changes of use) in its vicinity, the applicant (or 'agent of change') should be required to provide suitable mitigation before the development has been completed*".
127. Part of the proposal site is within the 100m consultation zone established by Surrey County Council's Minerals and Waste Consultation Protocol. SCC Minerals and the Day Aggregates have been consulted as the proposal would introduce a new sensitive land use (i.e. residential) within the vicinity of rail aggregate depot.
128. Day Aggregates initially raised an objection to the originally submitted Noise Assessment and the Council's Environmental Health Team also raised concerns with aspects of the Noise Assessment. During the course of the application an updated Noise Assessment was received on 09.12.2022 and discussions took place between the applicant and Day Aggregates.
129. The Noise Assessment identifies road traffic, the railway, the Poole Road Energy Centre and the rail aggregates depot as the primary sources of noise in the area. The Coign Church opposite the proposal site has been considered in the assessment but is not considered a significant source of noise. The site is assessed as a 'medium' risk site in terms of noise in the context of 'ProPG: Planning & Noise Professional Practice Guidance' (2017). Therefore, the noise impact must be considered, mitigated and reduced to a minimum.
130. BS 8233: 2014 'Guidance on Sound Insulation and Noise Reduction for Buildings' sets guidance for acceptable internal ambient daytime and night time noise levels for different room types. These are based on World Health Organisation (WHO) guidance 'Guidance on Community Noise'.



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131. The assessment concludes that rooms on the north and east facades can achieve acceptable internal noise levels with conventional double glazing. Rooms on the south and west facades would require a higher glazing specification. All of the dwellings would be served by a Mechanical Ventilation with Heat Recovery system (MVHR) in order to avoid the need for open windows to be relied upon for ventilation. Flats on the southern façade would have MVHR systems with comfort cooling so that windows would not need to be opened for cooling. However, it is not proposed that windows would be fixed shut and residents would have the option to open windows if they wish.
132. Subject to conditions requiring details of the glazing specification of windows, the proposal is considered to achieve an acceptable internal noise environment for future residents and the proposal is not considered to result in a prejudicial impact upon the existing and future operation of the safeguarded rail aggregates depot.
133. The Noise Assessment also examines the noise impact on the proposed balconies and communal external amenity areas. BS 8233 provides guidance for noise in external amenity areas and suggests that it is desirable that external noise levels do not exceed 50db  $L_{Aeq,T}$  with an upper limit of 55db  $L_{Aeq,T}$ . The guidance does however recognise the difficulty of providing 'ideal' acoustic conditions in all circumstances where it states: *'it is also recognized that these guideline values are not achievable in all circumstances where development might be desirable. In higher noise areas, such as city centres or urban areas adjoining the strategic transport network, a compromise between elevated noise levels and other factors, such as the convenience of living in these locations or making efficient use of land resources to ensure development needs can be met, might be warranted'*. According to BS 8233 balconies are considered less noise-sensitive than indoor spaces.
134. Some of the balconies in the proposed development would not achieve the abovementioned upper noise limit. However, the communal external amenity spaces at Levels 22 and 24 would have noise levels well below the above guidance. It is also borne in mind that notwithstanding their noise environment, private balconies can still offer amenity value to occupants.
135. Following the submission of the updated Noise Assessment and discussions with the applicant, Day Aggregates removed their original objections to the proposal subject to the application of suitably worded conditions relating to noise mitigation to balconies, details of noise testing of the proposed glazing specification, pre-completion noise testing and details of an overheating assessment of dwellings on the western façade and testing of the proposed comfort cooling of dwellings on the southern façade.
136. Subject to conditions, the proposal is considered to achieve an acceptable overall noise environment for future residents and the proposal is not considered to result in a prejudicial impact upon the existing and future operation of the safeguarded rail aggregates depot.

### Transportation Impact:

#### *Parking:*

106. The Council's Parking Standards SPD (2018) set minimum parking standards for residential development of 0.5x spaces per one bed flat, and 1x space per two and three bedroom flat. For the proposed development, this would equate to a minimum parking standard of 179x spaces.

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107. However, the SPD makes clear that on-site provision below the minimum standards will be considered for developments in Woking Town Centre and states that the application of the parking standards needs to be balanced with the overall sustainability objectives of the Core Strategy (2012).
108. Core Strategy (2012) policy CS18 seeks to direct new development to the main urban areas of the borough which are served by a range of sustainable transport modes in order to minimise the need to travel. The NPPF (2021) promotes sustainable transport through focussing significant development on sustainable locations, limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. Paragraph 111 sets out that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.
109. The proposed development includes a total of 7x parking spaces to the rear of the site accessed from Butts Road; 6x of these are identified as accessible spaces and one 'car club' space is proposed. The proposal is essentially therefore a car-free development. The County Highway Authority raises no objection to the level of parking proposed.
110. In support of the application the applicant has provided a Transport Statement. The Transport Statement sets out the site is well served by public transport and walking and cycle routes and Car Club bays. The proposal site is considered to be in a highly sustainable location in Woking Town Centre which is well-served by amenities and facilities and public transport links, including Woking Train Station, approximately 480m to the east.
111. The proposal site is within CPZ 'Zone 3' of Woking Town Centre in which on-street parking is restricted between 8:30am and 6:00pm Monday-Saturday. Residents Permits or vouchers would be required for on-street parking during these times. Residents parking permits may be granted for on-street parking or parking in the town centre car parks at the discretion of Parking Services.
112. Enterprise operates a car club scheme in Woking which is intended to provide a cheaper, greener and more convenient alternative to owning and using a private car. There are two car club vehicles currently available on-street on Goldsworth Road to the east and on Guildford Road at Quadrant Court. The applicant is proposing a dedicated car club bay to the rear. As with other schemes in the town centre, funding of a year's membership of the car club for residents of the scheme could be secured by S106 Agreement if the proposal were considered otherwise acceptable. The provision of a car club bay and funding of membership would contribute towards providing an attractive alternative to private car use and is considered an appropriate response to parking provision in a sustainable Town Centre location.
113. Considering the sustainable location of the proposal site and the on-street parking restrictions which exist in the area, and subject to conditions and a Legal Agreement securing the operation of a car club bay, on balance the proposal is considered acceptable in terms of parking provision.

### *Cycle Parking:*

114. Secure cycle storage for 231x cycles, including space for large cycles and lockers for folding bikes are proposed. This equates to at least one space per flat. Access would be via either stairs or a goods lift shared with the bin store. The level of cycle storage proposed is considered acceptable.

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### *Servicing:*

115. The proposal includes the formation of a loading bay on the Poole Road frontage to allow for bin collections to be carried out off the highway. The dedicated loading bay would also allow for day-to-day deliveries to the development. These servicing arrangements are considered acceptable, and the County Highway Authority raises no objection.

### *Impact on Highway Network:*

116. The submitted Transport Statement assesses the trip generation of the existing uses compared to the proposed uses. The assessment concludes that the proposal would result in a minimal increase in vehicle trips compared to the existing situation. The County Highway Authority has reviewed the proposal and raises no objection subject to conditions. The proposal is considered to result in an acceptable impact on the highway network.
117. Overall, the proposal is considered to have an acceptable impact transportation impact, subject to conditions and a Legal Agreement which could be applied if the proposal were considered otherwise acceptable.

### Impact on Heritage Assets:

118. The proposal has the potential to affect Heritage Assets in the form of locally and statutorily listed buildings, Conservation Areas and archaeology. The NPPF (2021) attaches great weight to the desirability of preserving and enhancing Heritage Assets and states that:

*“When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation...Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification...Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use”.*

119. With regards to non-designated Heritage Assets (e.g. Locally Listed buildings), paragraph 203 of the NPPF (2021) states that *“The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset”.*
120. Woking Core Strategy (2012) policy CS20 ‘Heritage and Conservation’ and Woking DMP DPD (2016) policy DM20 ‘Heritage Assets and their Settings’ seek to preserve and enhance Heritage Assets and their settings. Furthermore Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) places a statutory duty on decision makers to have *‘special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting...’* whilst Section 72(1) places a statutory duty on decision makers to have ‘special regard’ to preserving or enhancing the character of Conservation Areas.

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121. The application is accompanied by a Heritage, Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment and an Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment which assess the potential impact on Heritage Assets. The assessment describes the significance and value of Heritage Assets and their settings the potential impact on the significance of Heritage Assets (categorised as adverse, neutral or beneficial).

### *Conservation Areas:*

122. The proposal site is not within close proximity to a Conservation Area. Within 1km of the proposal site are 7x Conservation Areas; the Woking Town Centre, Basingstoke Canal, Mount Hermon, Wheatsheaf, Horsell, Ashwood Road/Heathside Road and Holyoake Crescent Conservation Areas. The nearest Conservation Areas are the Basingstoke Canal Conservation Area approximately 215m to the north and the Woking Town Centre Conservation Area which is approximately 365m to the north-east.
123. Whilst views of the proposed building would be possible from points within these and other Conservation Areas, it would be viewed in the context of other tall buildings and consented tall buildings and a modern townscape. The submitted Heritage, Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment concludes that there would be a neutral impact on Conservation Areas.
124. Overall, the proposal is considered to preserve the special character and setting of Conservation Areas.

### *Listed Buildings:*

125. The submitted Heritage, Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment identifies 4x statutory listed buildings within a 1km radius which the proposal has the potential to affect. Three of these are in Woking Town Centre; namely Christ Church (Grade II) and the Woking War Memorial (Grade II) in Jubilee Square and the Woking Signal Box on railway land to the south-west of Woking Train Station. The Railway Electrical Control Room (Grade II) is located adjacent to the railway on York Road approximately 425m to the south-west.
126. Christ Church (Grade II) is located on Jubilee Square approximately 460m from the proposal site at its nearest point to the north-east. The historic setting of Christ Church has changed significantly since it was built due to the significant urban change in the Town Centre from the mid-C20 and its setting is considered to be derived from its urban setting. The Woking War Memorial is also located in Jubilee Square and is viewed in the context of Christ Church; the setting of the War Memorial has also changed significantly over time and the setting is primarily derived from its immediate surroundings on Jubilee Square. The proposal is not considered to detrimentally impact on the setting of these listed buildings and would preserve their settings.
127. The Woking Signal Box (Grade II) is located approximately 355m to the east and the Railway Electrical Control Room (Grade II) is located adjacent to the railway on York Road approximately 425m to the south-west. The settings of these buildings are considered to be derived solely from the railway land which immediately surrounds them and the proposal is not considered to detract from the setting of these buildings.
128. The submitted Heritage, Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment concludes an overall neutral impact on listed buildings. The proposal is therefore considered to preserve the setting of these listed buildings.

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129. Other listed buildings in the wider area are considered a sufficient distance from the proposal site in order to not be unduly impacted upon by the proposal. The proposal would be visible in some longer distance views from other listed buildings, including in other Boroughs. However, the proposed development would be a considerable distance from these buildings and in longer distance views the proposal would be viewed in the context of the existing modern and varied skyline and townscape of Woking which already features tall buildings. The proposal is therefore considered to preserve the setting of other listed buildings in the wider area.

### *Locally Listed Buildings:*

130. In addition, there are numerous locally listed buildings within the Town Centre, predominately within the Woking Town Centre Conservation Area to the north-east of the proposal site. The proposed development is considered a sufficient distance from these locally buildings in order to not unduly impact on them. However, opposite the proposal site are locally listed buildings at No.65-77 Goldsworth Road which is a Victorian/Edwardian terrace of two storey buildings with accommodation in the roof space. The proposed development would be significantly greater in height, bulk and massing of these locally listed buildings and the building would consequently loom over these buildings. Notwithstanding this, these buildings sit within a varied urban townscape in Woking Town Centre and the pronounced difference in height, bulk and massing is not considered to unacceptably detract from the character of these buildings in heritage terms.

### *Archaeology:*

131. The proposal site is not within an area of High Archaeological Potential however the application is accompanied by a desk-based archaeological assessment which assesses the archaeological potential of the proposal site. The assessment concludes that the site is likely to have low archaeological potential and therefore no mitigation measures are recommended. The Surrey County Council Archaeologist has reviewed the assessment and raises no objection; the proposal is therefore considered acceptable in this regard.

### Waste Management:

132. Woking Core Strategy (2012) policy CS21 'Design' requires new developments to incorporate the provision of storage of refuse and recycling. Section 9A of the 'Design' SPD (2015), which covers medium to high density developments, states that when bin storage is not adequately integrated early in the design of a scheme, this can have a lasting detrimental impact on the impression of a place. The guidance goes on to state that storage for waste and recycling should be integrated into the design of a scheme to minimise street clutter. The Council's Waste Contractor (Joint Waste Solutions) has recently published their 'Recycling and waste provision – guidance for property developers' document which sets out bin storage and collection requirements for different types of development.
133. This guidance states that a flatted development of 90x one bed flats and 134x two and three bed flats would require a total of 35,100 litres of bin storage capacity for recycling and 35,100 for general waste. This equates to a total requirement of 32x 1,100 litre bins for recycling and 32x 1,100 litre bins for general waste (64x 1,100 litre bins). For food waste there is a separate requirement for 5,175 litres of food waste bin capacity, equating to a total of 37x 140 litre bins. Refuse and recycling collections in Woking are both on a bi-weekly basis and food waste is collected weekly.

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134. The proposed development includes bin storage at first floor level in the form of three separate stores. The residential bin stores are sufficient in size to meet the bin storage requirements discussed above.
135. The above guidance also establishes a strict maximum 10m 'pull distance'. Bins must be available for collection where refuse collection operatives are required to pull them no more than 10m from the collection point to the Refuse Collection Vehicle for health and safety reasons. A loading bay is proposed on Poole Road which could accommodate the refuse collection vehicle on collection days.
136. No basement is proposed, which means that space for servicing areas and plant at ground floor level is limited. Space is further limited by the relatively small and constrained nature of the site and the high density which is proposed. As a result, the residential bin stores would be located at first floor level. This means that bins would need to be taken down to ground floor level via a goods lift and presented for collection on Poole Road. Each week there would be a requirement to collect 32x 1,100 litre bins and 37x 140 litre food bins from the development in accordance with the above guidance. There is no space for the required number of bins to be stored inside the building at ground floor level and bins would therefore be presented outside the building on the Poole Road frontage on collection days. This would mean that 32x 1,100 litre bins and 37x 140 litre bins would be presented for collection outside the building.
137. The submitted plan shows the bins perfectly arranged outside the building so that they do not obstruct the pavement (a minimum 1m gap is identified). However, this is considered an unrealistic prospect. This number of bins having to be stored outside the building on a weekly basis is considered a visually harmful and incongruous arrangement. The visual impact of this number of bins needing to be stored outside the building in a prominent location and the limited space available inside and outside the building for the number of bins to be collected, is considered indicative of a contrived overdevelopment of the proposal site, to the detriment of the visual amenities of the area.

### Impact on Drainage and Flood Risk:

138. The proposal site is not within a designated Flood Zone however parts of the surrounding area are classified as being at risk of surface water flooding. The NPPF (2021) and Core Strategy (2012) policy CS9 state that Local Planning Authorities should seek opportunities to reduce flood risk through the appropriate application of sustainable drainage systems (SUDS). As per the guidance issued by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) all 'major' planning applications must consider sustainable drainage systems (House of Commons: Written Statement HCWS161 - Sustainable drainage systems).
139. The application is accompanied by details of a proposed sustainable drainage scheme. Amended drainage details were received during the course of the application following comments raised by the Lead Local Flood Authority. The additional information is considered acceptable by the Lead Local Flood Authority subject to conditions. The proposal is therefore considered to have an acceptable impact on drainage and flood risk subject to conditions.

### Fire Safety:

140. Section 9A of Part 3 of The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) Order (2015) (as amended) sets out that all planning applications involving

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residential buildings with seven or more storeys or over 18m in height must be accompanied by a Fire Statement which sets out the design principles, concepts and standards which have been applied to the proposed development. The Health and Safety Executive are a statutory consultee for such applications.

141. The application is accompanied by a Fire Statement. Two staircases and two lifts are proposed; one staircase and one lift are intended for firefighting use. A sprinkler system is also proposed. The Health and Safety Executive has been consulted but no comments have been received. Surrey Fire and Rescue Service has been consulted and raises no objection.

### Impact on Wind Microclimate:

142. The application is accompanied by a Wind Microclimate Study which assesses the likely impact on wind conditions on the site and its surroundings as a result of the proposed development cumulatively with the consented 'Ecoworld' scheme. The assessment categorises different wind conditions which are suitable for different activities such as walking and outdoor sitting.
143. The report identifies that in the majority of the assessed locations within and surrounding the site, the proposal would not result in a significant impact on the local wind environment with the exception of one point at the corner of Poole Road and Goldsworth Road which the report identifies could be addressed through mitigation measures. Overall, the proposal is considered to have an acceptable impact on the wind microclimate, subject to appropriate mitigation.

### Impact on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA):

144. The Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (TBH SPA) has been identified as an internationally important site of nature conservation and has been given the highest degree of protection. Policy CS8 of the Core Strategy states that any proposal with potential significant impacts (alone or in combination with other relevant developments) on the TBH SPA will be subject to Habitats Regulations Assessment to determine the need for Appropriate Assessment. Following recent European Court of Justice rulings, a full and precise analysis of the measures capable of avoiding or reducing any significant effects on European sites must be carried out at an 'Appropriate Assessment' stage rather than taken into consideration at screening stage, for the purposes of the Habitats Directive (as interpreted into English law by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (the "Habitat Regulations 2017")). An Appropriate Assessment has therefore been undertaken for the site as it falls within 5 kilometres of the TBH SPA boundary.
145. Policy CS8 of Woking Core Strategy (2012) requires new residential development beyond a 400m threshold, but within 5 kilometres of the TBH SPA boundary to make an appropriate contribution towards the provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM), to avoid impacts of such development on the SPA. The SANG and Landowner Payment elements of the SPA tariff are encompassed within the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), however the SAMM element of the SPA tariff is required to be addressed outside of CIL. The proposed development would require a SAMM financial contribution of **£159,588** based on the following:

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Size of dwelling	SAMM contribution per dwelling	Total
One bed	£583	90 x £583 = £52,470
Two bed	£790	129 x £790 = £101,910
Three bed	£1,040	5 x £1,040 = £5,200
		<b>Total: £159,580</b>

146. Subject to securing the provision of the SAMM tariff (through a S106 Legal Agreement) and an appropriate CIL contribution, and subject to the completion of an Appropriate Assessment (supported by Natural England), the Local Planning Authority would be able to determine that the development would not affect the integrity of the TBH SPA either alone or in combination with other plans and projects in relation to urbanisation and recreational pressure effects. However, no Legal Agreement in place as the proposal is recommended for refusal for other reasons.
147. In view of the above, and in the absence of an Appropriate Assessment and a Legal Agreement to secure contributions towards mitigation measures, the Local Planning Authority is unable to determine that the additional dwellings would not have an adverse effect on the integrity of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects in relation to urbanisation and recreational pressure effects, contrary to the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) (SI No. 1012 - the "Habitats Regulations"), saved Policy NRM6 of the South East Plan (2009), Policy CS8 of the Woking Core Strategy (2012) and the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Avoidance Strategy (2022).

### Sustainability:

148. Policy CS22 'Sustainable Construction' of the Woking Core Strategy (2012) seeks to require new residential development to achieve Code for Sustainable Homes Level 5 from 2016 onwards. However, a Written Ministerial Statement to Parliament, dated 25 March 2015, sets out the Government's expectation that any Development Plan policies should not be used to set conditions on planning permissions with requirements above the equivalent of the energy requirement of Level 4 of the (now abolished) Code for Sustainable Homes; this is equivalent to approximately 19% above the requirements of Part L1A of the 2010 Building Regulations. This is reiterated in Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) on Climate Change, which supports the NPPF.
149. Part L of the Building Regulations was updated in June 2022 and now requires an energy performance improvement for new dwellings of 31% compared to the 2010 Building Regulations. The current Building Regulations therefore effectively require a higher energy performance standard than what policy CS22 would ordinarily require. It is not therefore necessary to attach a condition relating to energy performance as more stringent standards are required by separate legislation.
150. The LPA requires all new residential development to achieve as a minimum the optional requirement set through Part G of the Building Regulations for water efficiency, which requires estimated water use of no more than 110 litres/person/day. This could be secured by condition.
151. Woking has an established Combined Heat and Power (CHP) network which comprises a gas-fired power station which generates electricity and hot and cold water in a more efficient manner than conventional power stations and serves buildings in



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Woking Town Centre. The Poole Road Energy Centre is located immediately south of the proposal site.

152. Woking Core Strategy (2012) policy CS22 states that all new development should consider the integration of CHP or other forms of low carbon district heating in the development and that all new development in proximity of an existing or proposed CHP station or district heating network will be required to be connected to it unless it can be demonstrated that a better alternative for reducing carbon emissions from the development can be achieved.
153. The applicant has submitted an Energy Statement which confirms that the development would connect to the CHP network and states that the development would exceed the carbon emission reductions required by Building Regulations. The proposed development is therefore considered to meet the sustainability aims of policy CS22.

### Ecology:

154. The application is accompanied by an Ecological Assessment which assess the potential for the presence of protected species on the site and the ecological value of the site. The report concludes that there is no evidence of bats or other species being present on the proposal site and overall ecological value of the site is recorded as being low.
155. The reports set out recommendations and precautions with regards to the clearance of the site and makes recommendations with regards to potential measures to enhance the biodiversity of the site. Specific details of biodiversity enhancement measures could be secured by condition. Overall the proposal is therefore considered to result in an acceptable impact on biodiversity and details of biodiversity enhancements could be secured by condition.

### Air Quality:

156. Policy CS21 of the Woking Core Strategy (2012) requires proposal for new development to "*be designed to avoid significant harm to the environment and general amenity, resulting from noise, dust, vibrations, light or other releases*". The Government has set out air quality standards and objectives which are set out in the Air Quality (England) Regulations (2000) and the Air Quality (England) (Amendment) Regulations (2002). The proposal site is not within an identified Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) however an AQMA was designated in May 2017 on Guildford Road approximately 430m to the south.
157. The application is accompanied by an Air Quality Assessment which assesses the likely impact of the surrounding area on the proposed development and vice versa. The assessment concludes that the proposed development is likely to have an insignificant impact on air quality due to the size of the proposed development and is unlikely to be impacted upon by surrounding air quality.
158. The demolition and construction phases are identified as medium risk in terms of dust generation however the report identifies that adequate mitigation would be possible.
159. Overall, the proposed development is considered to result in an acceptable impact on air quality.

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### Aviation:

160. The Town and Country Planning (Safeguarded Aerodromes, Technical Sites and Military Explosives Storage Areas) Direction (2002) identifies two officially safeguarded aerodromes within 20km of the site; London Heathrow and Farnborough Airport, which have been consulted and have not provided comments. The National Air Traffic Services (NTAS) has been consulted and raises no objection. The proposal is considered to have an acceptable impact in terms of aviation safeguarding.

### Contamination:

161. The application is accompanied by a contamination report and the Council's Scientific Officer has been consulted and raises no objection subject to conditions. The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in this regard.

### Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):

162. The proposal would be liable to make a CIL contribution in the region of £1,853,470. However, this figure may change due to indexation and may change if Social Housing Relief is applied for and granted.

### Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF):

124. Woking Borough Council has secured a Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) grant of £95 million from central Government agency, Homes England, which will finance the Victoria Arch scheme, the total cost of which is £115 million. The HIF recovery strategy seeks to bridge the gap between the total scheme cost (£115 million) and the HIF grant (£95 million).
125. At the Council meeting of 13 February 2020 Woking Borough Council agreed the principle of charging a bespoke Section 106 tariff of £2,000 per dwelling on development sites in the town centre which are likely to benefit from the HIF scheme to achieve sufficient funds to bridge the gap between the total scheme cost and the grant. For the application of the tariff to be defensible and to withstand any scrutiny if legally challenged, the Council intend to prepare a SPD to provide the policy basis for the day-to-day application of the tariff. The SPD will set out the amount to be charged per unit, how it will be calculated, how the amount will be secured and the action to be taken if the amount is not paid. Whilst preparing the SPD, the Council has published an interim guidance note (Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) Recovery strategy for Woking Town Centre: Section 106 tariff Guidance note) to encourage developers/applicants who are submitting planning applications prior to the completion of the SPD to pay the tariff.
126. The applicant has agreed in principle to make the required contribution subject to stipulations, including that that any contribution is used within three years and only for the Victoria Arch Scheme as originally intended. This is considered acceptable in the context of the above.

### **CONCLUSION – THE PLANNING BALANCE**

163. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. It is therefore necessary to identify any

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conflict with the Development Plan and any harm with any public benefits of the proposal.

164. The proposed development, by reason of its height, bulk, massing and its location and the proposed waste management arrangements, would fail to respect the prevailing character and scale of development in the area and the emerging tall building context in this part of Woking Town Centre and would result in a contrived overdevelopment of the proposal site. The proposal would consequently result in a harmful impact on the character of the surrounding area, contrary to Woking Core Strategy (2012) policies CS1 'A spatial strategy for Woking Borough', CS2 'Woking Town Centre', CS21 'Design' and CS24 'Woking's Landscape and Townscape', Supplementary Planning Document 'Design' (2015) and the National Planning Policy Framework (2021).
165. The proposal is therefore considered to result in conflict with the Development Plan. The resulting harm of the development must therefore be balanced against any public benefits of the proposal.
166. The proposed development would deliver a policy compliant level of at least 40% affordable housing (90x units). This provision is in the context of under-provision of affordable housing in the Borough in comparison to the aims of the Core Strategy. It is also acknowledged that Housing Services are in support of the proposal. The provision of 90x affordable units is considered a significant public benefit which weighs in favour of the proposal.
167. Whilst the applicant indicates that the scheme would be delivered as a 100% affordable housing scheme, Officers afford this limited weight as there is no mechanism to secure the remaining 60% to be affordable. It should also be borne in mind that if the scheme were delivered as 100% affordable as indicated, the resulting tenure mix would not reflect the Council's desired tenure split, with a majority being shared ownership (53.6%). Notwithstanding this, the provision of at least 90x affordable units is considered a significant public benefit.
168. The proposal would also deliver new housing in a sustainable location and would make efficient use of urban land, which also weighs in favour of the proposal.
169. However, harm has been identified with regards to the character of the area resulting from the height, bulk and massing of the development. The resulting harm is considered significant, particularly given the stark and far-reaching visual impact of a building of this height, bulk and massing in this location and the implications for Woking's townscape and skyline. The benefits of the proposal are not therefore considered to outweigh the harm identified and the conflict with the Development Plan.
170. The proposal is therefore recommended for refusal.

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

REFUSE planning permission for the following reasons:

01. The proposed development, by reason of its height, bulk, massing and its location and the proposed waste management arrangements, would fail to respect the prevailing character and scale of development in the area and the emerging tall building context in this part of Woking Town Centre and would result in a contrived overdevelopment of the proposal site. The proposal would consequently result in a harmful impact on the character of the surrounding area, contrary to Woking Core Strategy (2012) policies CS1 'A spatial strategy for Woking Borough', CS2 'Woking Town Centre', CS21 'Design' and CS24 'Woking's Landscape and Townscape', Supplementary Planning Document 'Design' (2015) and the National Planning Policy Framework (2021).
02. In the absence of an Appropriate Assessment and Legal Agreement or other appropriate mechanism to secure contributions towards mitigation measures, it cannot be determined that the additional dwellings would not have a significant impact on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area, contrary to Woking Core Strategy (2012) policy CS8 'Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Areas', the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Avoidance Strategy (2022) and saved policy NRM6 of the South East Plan (2009) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (SI No. 490 - the "Habitats Regulations").
03. In the absence of a Legal Agreement or other appropriate mechanism to secure affordable housing, it cannot be determined that the proposed development would make sufficient contribution towards affordable housing. The proposal is therefore contrary to Woking Core Strategy (2012) policy CS12 'Affordable Housing', Supplementary Planning Document 'Affordable Housing Delivery' (2014) and the National Planning Policy Framework (2021).

### **Informatives**

01. The plans and documents relating to the development hereby refused are listed below:

#### Location and Site Plans:

2107-SPP-TH-00-DR-A-PL-02-0001 Rev.P01 (Existing Location & Site Plan)

received 15.07.2022

2107-SPP-TH-00-DR-A-PL-00-0001 Rev.P02 (Proposed Location & Site Plan)

received 20.01.2023

#### Existing Plans:

2107-SPP-TH-0G-DR-A-PL-02-1000 Rev.P01 (Existing Ground Floor Plan) received 15.07.2022

2107-SPP-TH-01-DR-A-PL-02-1001 Rev.P01 (Existing First Floor Plan) received 15.07.2022

2107-SPP-TH-02-DR-A-PL-02-1002 Rev.P01 (Existing Second Floor Plan) received 15.07.2022

2107-SPP-TH-03-DR-A-PL-02-1003 Rev.P01 (Existing Third Floor Plan) received 15.07.2022

2107-SPP-TH-RL-DR-A-PL-02-1004 Rev.P01 (Existing Roof Level) received 15.07.2022

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### Existing Elevations:

2107-SPP-TH-ZZ-DR-A-PL-02-3001 Rev.P01 (Existing North Elevation) received 15.07.2022

2107-SPP-TH-ZZ-DR-A-PL-02-3002 Rev.P01 (Existing South Elevation) received 15.07.2022

2107-SPP-TH-ZZ-DR-A-PL-02-3003 Rev.P01 (Existing East Elevation) received 15.07.2022

2107-SPP-TH-ZZ-DR-A-PL-02-3004 Rev.P01 (Existing West Elevation) received 15.07.2022

### Demolition Plans:

2107-SPP-TH-0G-DR-A-PL-95-1000 Rev.P01 (Demolition Ground Floor Plan) received 15.07.2022

2107-SPP-TH-01-DR-A-PL-95-1001 Rev.P01 (Demolition First Floor Plan) received 15.07.2022

2107-SPP-TH-02-DR-A-PL-95-1002 Rev.P01 (Demolition Second Floor Plan) received 15.07.2022

2107-SPP-TH-03-DR-A-PL-95-1003 Rev.P01 (Demolition Third Floor Plan) received 15.07.2022

2107-SPP-TH-RL-DR-A-PL-95-1004 Rev.P01 (Demolition Roof Level) received 15.07.2022

2107-SPP-TH-ZZ-DR-A-PL-95-3001 Rev.P01 (Demolition North Elevation) received 15.07.2022

2107-SPP-TH-ZZ-DR-A-PL-95-3002 Rev.P01 (Demolition South Elevation) received 15.07.2022

2107-SPP-TH-ZZ-DR-A-PL-95-3003 Rev.P01 (Demolition East Elevation) received 15.07.2022

2107-SPP-TH-ZZ-DR-A-PL-95-3004 Rev.P01 (Demolition West Elevation) received 15.07.2022

### Proposed Plans

2107-SPP-TH-0G-DR-A-PL-20-1000 Rev.P02 (Proposed Ground Floor) received 20.01.2023

2107-SPP-TH-01-DR-A-PL-20-1001 Rev.P01 (Proposed Level 1) received 15.07.2022

2107-SPP-TH-02-DR-A-PL-20-1002 Rev.P02 (Proposed Level 2) received 20.01.2023

2107-SPP-TH-03-DR-A-PL-20-1003 Rev.P01 (Proposed Level 3-5-7) received 15.07.2022

2107-SPP-TH-04-DR-A-PL-20-1004 Rev.P01 (Proposed Level 4-6) received 15.07.2022

2107-SPP-TH-08-DR-A-PL-20-1008 Rev.P02 (Proposed Level 8) received 24.01.2023

2107-SPP-TH-09-DR-A-PL-20-1009 Rev.P02 (Proposed Level 9-11-13-15-17-19-21) received 24.01.2023

2107-SPP-TH-10-DR-A-PL-20-1010 Rev.P02 (Proposed Level 10-12-14-16-18-20) received 24.01.2023

2107-SPP-TH-22-DR-A-PL-20-1022 Rev.P01 (Proposed Level 22) received 15.07.2022

2107-SPP-TH-23-DR-A-PL-20-1023 Rev.P01 (Proposed Level 23) received 15.07.2022

2107-SPP-TH-24-DR-A-PL-20-1024 Rev.P01 (Proposed Level 24) received 15.07.2022

2107-SPP-TH-RL-DR-A-PL-20-1025 Rev.P02 (Proposed Roof Level) received 20.01.2023

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2107-SPP-TH-0G-DR-A-20-1030 (Proposed Ground Floor Plan – Waste Strategy) received 16.09.2022

### Facade Details:

2107-SPP-TH-ZZ-DR-A-PL-21-4001 Rev.P01 (Proposed Facade Typical Details - Sheet 01) received. 15.07.2022

2107-SPP-TH-ZZ-DR-A-PL-21-4002 Rev.P01 (Proposed Facade Typical Details - Sheet 02) received. 15.07.2022

2107-SPP-TH-ZZ-DR-A-PL-21-4003 Rev.P02 (Proposed Facade Typical Details - Sheet 03) received. 16.09.2022

2107-SPP-TH-ZZ-DR-A-PL-21-4004 Rev.P01 (Proposed Facade Typical Details - Sheet 04) received. 16.09.2022

### Proposed Elevations:

2107-SPP-TH-ZZ-DR-A-PL-25-3001 Rev.P02 (Proposed North Elevation) received 20.01.2023

2107-SPP-TH-ZZ-DR-A-PL-25-3002 Rev.P02 (Proposed South Elevation) received 20.01.2023

2107-SPP-TH-ZZ-DR-A-PL-25-3003 Rev.P02 (Proposed East Elevation) received 20.01.2023

2107-SPP-TH-ZZ-DR-A-PL-25-3004 Rev.P02 (Proposed West Elevation) received 20.01.2023

2107-SPP-TH-ZZ-DR-A-25-3011 Rev.P02 (Proposed North Elevation - Colour) received 20.01.2023

2107-SPP-TH-ZZ-DR-A-25-3012 Rev.P02 (Proposed South Elevation - Colour) received 20.01.2023

2107-SPP-TH-ZZ-DR-A-25-3014 Rev.P02 (Proposed West Elevation - Colour) received 20.01.2023

### Proposed Sections:

2107-SPP-TH-ZZ-DR-A-PL-26-2001 Rev.P02 (Proposed Section 1) received 20.01.2023

2107-SPP-TH-ZZ-DR-A-PL-26-2002 Rev.P02 (Proposed Section 2 & 3) received 20.01.2023

2107-SPP-TH-ZZ-DR-A-PL-26-2003 Rev.P02 (Proposed Section 4) received 20.01.2023

### Schedules:

2107-SPP-TH-XX-SH-A-PL-02-6001 Rev.P1 (Existing Area Schedule) received 15.07.2022

2107-SPP-TH-XX-SH-A-PL-XX-6001 Rev.P01 (Proposed Area Schedule) received 15.07.2022

2107-SPP-TH-XX-SH-A-PL-XX-6002 Rev.P02 (Proposed Accommodation Schedule) received 20.01.2023

2107-SPP-TH-XX-SH-A-PL-XX-6003 Rev.P02 (Proposed Residential Unit Schedule) received 20.01.2023

### Reports:

Noise Assessment dated 01.12.2022 ref: H3294 – NV – v7 prepared by Hawkins Environmental received 09.12.2022

Heritage, Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment prepared by Stephen Levrant Heritage Architecture Ltd dated December 2022 received 09.12.2022

Daylight and Sunlight Report ref: 2017/E rev01 prepared by Schrodgers Begg received 15.07.2022

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Internal Daylight and Sunlight Report ref: ref: 2017/E rev01 prepared by Schroders Begg received 15.07.2022

Aviation Risk Assessment prepared by Pagerpower received 15.07.2022

Air Quality Assessment ref: H3294 – AQ – v3 prepared by Hawkins Environmental received 15.07.2022

Ecology Report ref: 213319/JDT prepared by AA Environmental received 15.07.2022

Television and Radio Signal Survey & Reception Impact Assessment prepared by GTech Surveys Ltd received 15.07.2022

Ventilation and Extraction Statement prepared by Meinhardt received 15.07.2022

Energy Statement Issue P02 prepared by Meinhardt received 15.07.2022

Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy Technology House - Woking 14496 Issue 2 prepared by Tully De'Ath received 31.08.2022

Fire Statement dated 23.08.2022 prepared by OFR received 24.08.2022

Wind Microclimate Study Rev.C prepared by Wilde received 25.11.2022