

PLANNING INTELLIGENCE REPORT

Planning Application Review

Report reference: [REDACTED]

PLANNING APPLICATION REFERENCE

[REDACTED]

SITE ADDRESS

[REDACTED]

PROPOSAL DESCRIPTION

Full planning application for the demolition of agricultural buildings and the erection of up to 491 dwellings (including up to 35% affordable housing), with associated roads, footpaths, car parking, landscaping, infrastructure, and vehicular access to be taken from [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], [REDACTED]

LOCAL AUTHORITY

[REDACTED]

REPORT DATE

03 July 2026

PREPARED BY

Planning Application Review UK

Prepared for information purposes. Evidence-led review of submitted planning material.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This application is for a major residential development comprising 491 dwellings on [REDACTED]. The site, currently in agricultural use, is proposed to be comprehensively redeveloped for housing with associated infrastructure, including new roads, landscaping, and vehicular access from both [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. Proposals also include up to 35% affordable housing, a full range of dwelling types, and integrated sustainability measures such as air source heat pumps and solar panels.

The scale of this proposal means its impacts will reach well beyond the development boundary, making several issues particularly significant for neighbouring residents and the wider local area. The application is subject to Environmental Impact Assessment, as required for major infrastructure schemes of this type. The following are the most important planning issues, each of which is likely to be central to the application's assessment and to the experience of those living or owning property nearby:

1. ****Impact on Local Character, Visual Environment and Amenity****

The introduction of nearly 500 new dwellings, with building heights ranging from one to three storeys and a dense site layout, will notably alter the local landscape, views, and the sense of place for existing residents, regardless of the presence of landscape mitigation or buffer areas. This is likely to be a key consideration in assessing the proposal due to the lasting visual change and potential effects on neighbouring amenity.

2. ****Traffic, Access, and Highway Safety****

A development of this magnitude will generate substantial additional vehicle movements on [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. Although a Transport Assessment and Travel Plan are supplied, specific predicted trip numbers and peak-hour impacts are not clearly evidenced. The adequacy and safety of the proposed site accesses, as well as wider impacts on local congestion and road safety, may influence whether the scheme is considered acceptable. This issue will be of direct concern to those living in the surrounding area.

3. ****Flood Risk and Surface Water Drainage****

The application site is reported to be in Flood Zone 1 (lowest risk), with a proposed drainage system using infiltration, SuDS, and on-site attenuation basins. While the strategy appears robust, absence of some detailed infiltration test data and incomplete information about downstream connection levels and network capacity means there is potential uncertainty on whether the site can be efficiently and safely drained. This is particularly significant for neighbouring homeowners where unmanaged surface water or failure of drainage infrastructure could affect existing properties.

4. ****Biodiversity Net Gain and Ecology****

Evidence demonstrates an intention to achieve a Biodiversity Net Gain significantly above the statutory minimum, with a net increase of 22.97 habitat units (+23.25%) and substantial gains in hedgerow units. Full BNG numeric data have been supplied and trading rules are reported as satisfied. No significant protected species constraints (including bats and great crested newts) have been identified, subject to implementation of recommended ecological enhancements and mitigation. For residents, this means a commitment to both habitat improvement and active management post-development.

5. ****Archaeological and Heritage Considerations****

The site is adjacent to a listed building and in proximity to a scheduled ancient monument.

Archaeological assessment is required pre-commencement to identify any significant remains, and further analysis will be undertaken if discoveries are made. These are likely to be key considerations due to the potential for heritage harm and the practical implications of on-site investigations or preservation requirements that could affect both the development programme and physical character of the area. Other technical matters, such as site contamination (radon and ground gas), noise, and foul drainage, have been investigated in some detail, with mitigation strategies outlined. For most, the evidence indicates these matters do not give rise to constraints that cannot be managed through standard construction or operational measures, although full specification and verification will be required at later stages.

In summary, the major determining issues are the scale of change to local character and amenity, the management of highway and drainage risks, tangible delivery of biodiversity gain, and response to identified heritage sensitivities. Each will be central to understanding the overall impact and acceptability of the scheme during planning determination.

THE PROPOSAL IN PLAIN ENGLISH

This proposal is for a large new housing development on land to the [REDACTED]. The application seeks full planning permission for the demolition of existing agricultural buildings and the construction of up to 491 new homes. Of these, 35% (about 172 dwellings) are intended to be affordable housing. The development would include new roads, footpaths, car parking, landscaping, and associated infrastructure. Vehicular access is proposed from both [REDACTED] and [REDACTED].

The submitted plans show a broad range of housing types, from one to six bedrooms, delivered across buildings of one to three storeys in height. Every home is proposed to be gas-free and equipped with an air source heat pump, solar panels (either rooftop or in-roof), and an electric vehicle charging point. Rear gardens for all houses are shown with a minimum length of 10 metres. Parking provision totals 1,132 spaces (including dedicated visitor parking).

Key supporting documents confirm the inclusion of substantial open spaces, new planting (particularly of trees and hedgerows), and a drainage strategy using sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS), such as infiltration basins. Construction waste recycling at a high rate (98.7%) is referenced, with site infrastructure designed for low-carbon and climate resilience.

A Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment is provided, showing an increase from 98.79 to 121.75 area habitat units post-development, representing a +23.25% net gain. Hedgerow habitats are also substantially increased, meeting the stated targets and current regulatory rules for biodiversity enhancement.

The site lies within Flood Zone 1, which is the lowest category of flood risk, and the technical submissions indicate that the drainage system will manage surface and foul water appropriately. The foul water strategy involves connecting to an existing public combined sewer.

Extensive ecological, archaeological, and environmental impact assessments have been completed. The ecological surveys report no Great Crested Newts on site and confirm low sensitivity for protected species, with specific mitigations proposed, such as replacement barn owl boxes. The archaeological assessments state that a programme of archaeological works must be completed before development begins.

In summary, this is a major new residential development designed to modern, low-carbon standards, with evidence of compliance with flood risk, biodiversity, archaeology, and ecological requirements forming a key part of the application.

SITE & SURROUNDING AREA

SECTION: SITE & SURROUNDING AREA

WHAT IS SHOWN

The application site is a large area of land to the [REDACTED], on the southern edge of [REDACTED]. Several documents consistently describe the site as covering approximately 32.77 hectares. It currently consists predominantly of agricultural fields with associated agricultural buildings and scattered low distinctiveness habitat and modified grassland. Hedgerows and some isolated mature trees are present within field boundaries and along surrounding roads. The site is bordered by existing residential development to the north and east, with open countryside extending to the west and south. [REDACTED] (A65), a main route into [REDACTED], runs adjacent to the site's eastern boundary. There is an existing public right of way traversing part of the site, and the land slopes gently downwards from north to south.

Close to the northern boundary of the site, around 20m away, is the Grade II listed building Helme Lodge. There is also mention of a Scheduled Ancient Monument situated approximately 0.25–0.5km northwest of the site. Further built-up areas and existing housing are located immediately east of the site, while [REDACTED] lies to the northeast. The submitted documents do not indicate that the site is within a designated Conservation Area.

The Environmental Statement and technical evidence refer to the surrounding context as mainly suburban on the [REDACTED] fringe, transitioning quickly into the rural landscape further west and south. The Landscape Visual Impact Assessment describes the visibility of the site from local elevated viewpoints and neighbouring residences. Site access is typically available from [REDACTED] and [REDACTED].

The ground conditions are subject to a number of constraints: the land is in a designated Radon Affected Area (10–30% of properties may be above the Action Level). The substrate is described as being generally suitable for infiltration-based drainage, which informs the surface water strategy proposed. There are no watercourses within the site, and it lies entirely within Flood Zone 1, indicating low probability of flood risk.

WHAT IS NOT CLEAR

Precise boundaries are not illustrated in the summary; although referenced, the actual site layout plan is not provided within this section. Details of how the existing agricultural uses interact with adjacent uses and the location and condition of specific agricultural buildings slated for demolition are not set out here. There is no detailed mapping of neighbouring land uses, topography, or location of all existing trees of note within this extract.

The relationship of the Scheduled Ancient Monument to the application site is referenced, but its precise location and the degree of separation or any intervening features are not detailed. There is no evidence presented here about the proximity or sensitivity of informal open spaces, existing recreational routes, or community facilities adjacent to the site.

WHAT WOULD CLARIFY THIS

Provision of an annotated site location plan and a detailed topographic survey would help clarify the

exact site boundaries, the distribution of existing features, and the interface with neighbouring properties and open land. A clear mapping of heritage assets, including buffer zones to Helme Lodge and the Scheduled Ancient Monument, would define the degree of heritage sensitivity more precisely. A contextual plan showing surrounding uses, existing access points, and the definitive routes of any public rights of way would add clarity for those unfamiliar with the site.

EVIDENCE STRENGTH

STRONG for overall location, size, and relationship to main roads and development edge of [REDACTED].

MODERATE for internal site detail and the precise interface with surrounding features and assets.

DESIGN, SCALE & MASSING

WHAT IS SHOWN

The application proposes a major residential scheme for 491 dwellings on land west of [REDACTED], [REDACTED], accompanied by the demolition of existing agricultural buildings. The material presents a varied layout featuring detached, semi-detached, terraced, and apartment units ranging from 1 to 6 bedrooms, with approximately 67–68% of homes being 1-3 bedroom properties and around 85% are 2, 3, or 4 bedroom. Proposed building heights span from one to three storeys, as evidenced in the Design and Access Statement and verified house-type drawings. The overall site area is consistently cited as approximately 32.77 hectares. Garden lengths meet a minimum of 10 metres for all private plots and the design illustrates coherent street layouts, road hierarchies, and open spaces interwoven throughout the scheme. Parking provision is evidenced for 1,132 vehicles (1,057 allocated spaces plus 75 visitor spaces).

The architectural approach draws on contemporary forms and materials, with provision for rooftop or in-roof photovoltaics on most dwellings and the inclusion of Air Source Heat Pumps, reflecting an evident focus on sustainable and energy-efficient homes. The Design and Access Statement, layout plans, and elevation drawings show clear separation between public and private realms, efforts to create permeability and connectivity between streets, and a structured approach to integrating green corridors and play spaces.

WHAT IS NOT CLEAR

Despite extensive documentation, the precise visualisation and detailing of how the proposed built form will integrate with the surrounding landscape and existing settlement edge is only partially evidenced. Key sectional drawings and verified visual representations of street scenes are limited or absent, making it difficult to fully assess the actual on-ground sense of enclosure, overlooking, and interface with nearby existing properties and countryside. While the maximum and minimum building heights are stated, their spatial distribution across the site and potential clustering of taller forms in relation to existing boundaries is not systematically depicted. Material schedules and facade treatment specifics appear limited, and the narrative around how the architectural language responds to local distinctiveness is generalised rather than supported by robust character analysis or contextual elevation comparisons.

WHAT WOULD CLARIFY THIS

Specific site-wide sections and verified photomontages taken from public viewpoints and nearby properties would give a more accurate sense of how the scale and massing is likely to be experienced. Annotated layout plans explicitly showing the distribution of building heights, as well as elevations or street scenes demonstrating transitions between zones of higher and lower density, would clarify the relationship to existing context and settlement edge. Detailed facade schedules and sample palettes, alongside a clear summary of how the chosen materials and forms respond to surrounding architectural character, would strengthen understanding of the scheme's compatibility with local distinctiveness. Inclusion of a 3D massing model or fly-through could further assist in appreciating spatial impacts for nearby residents.

EVIDENCE STRENGTH

MODERATE — The application provides comprehensive data regarding proposed dwelling numbers, mix, heights, and a broad design rationale, but lacks fully detailed visualised evidence of actual integration,

massing distribution, and contextual response. The absence of sectional drawings, limited verified visual perspectives, and generalised treatment of contextual fit leave moderate gaps in evidencing the likely impact on immediate neighbours and the landscape setting.

OVERLOOKING, PRIVACY & AMENITY

SECTION: OVERLOOKING, PRIVACY & AMENITY

WHAT IS SHOWN

The submitted planning documents provide some explicit information on privacy and amenity aspects for the proposed development of up to 491 dwellings. The Design and Access Statement confirms that a minimum rear garden length of 10m is applied across the scheme. Site layout plans and associated technical drawings evidence a mixture of detached, semi-detached, terraced, and apartment-style units, arranged at varying distances from each other and from the surrounding residential boundaries. The building heights are confirmed as between one and three storeys.

Landscape plans and general arrangement drawings show areas of public open space, structural landscaping, and green infrastructure intended to provide buffers both internally within the site and along the site perimeter (adjacent to [REDACTED], [REDACTED], and established housing). Some supporting documents (Environmental Statement, Design and Access Statement) refer to the objective to protect existing boundary hedgerows and vegetation as features to assist in providing visual screening and increasing separation from neighbouring homes.

The Environmental Statement and Design and Access Statement reference the intent to ensure "appropriate privacy" through the layout, orientation, and use of rear garden depth, but do not provide a detailed or quantitative analysis of overlooking risks or proposed minimum distances between facing windows. Certain apartment blocks and three-storey buildings are located towards the interior of the site, with lower building forms and retained landscaping at the edges where the site adjoins existing homes.

WHAT IS NOT CLEAR

The precise window-to-window distances between proposed and existing dwellings, and between new dwellings within the site, are not detailed in the reviewed documentation. There is no explicit schedule of separation distances, nor is there a table or drawing that directly quantifies the relationship of habitable room windows across the various building types. No sunlight or daylight impact assessment has been extracted from the application material, and there is no dedicated privacy impact report.

While landscaping and buffer planting are described conceptually, the exact depth, species, and maturity of these screening features are only partially detailed, and their effectiveness for preserving amenity is not specifically assessed. There is no clear mapping of which plots may have restricted or problematic privacy outcomes, nor is there any assessment of potential overlooking from upper storeys or rear-facing balconies within the multi-storey elements.

For areas adjoining existing dwellings or rear boundaries facing established gardens, it is not always clear how much intervening space or screening will be retained post-development.

WHAT WOULD CLARIFY THIS

A detailed schedule or matrix of proposed separation distances—both within-site (between new

dwellings) and between new and existing properties—would clarify the level of privacy provided. Specific annotated layout plans showing direct lines of sight, critical distances, and window-to-window relationships, particularly for all three-storey and apartment blocks, would make the extent of overlooking risk explicit.

A targeted privacy and amenity assessment, mapping likely areas of risk and describing any mitigation (e.g. landscaping or window placement), would provide a clear evidence basis. Cross-section drawings at sensitive site edges would also help clarify the interface with existing neighbouring homes and gardens.

Confirmation of the retained or proposed height, depth, and species of any intervening landscaping or fencing would add essential detail, especially where the scheme abuts current residential boundaries.

EVIDENCE STRENGTH

MODERATE. While there is clear evidence of intent to provide minimum garden sizes and structural landscaping, the absence of explicit privacy or separation distances, and lack of a dedicated amenity impact assessment, leaves important detail unconfirmed. The available documentation establishes a baseline approach but does not provide robust, quantitative reassurance on all overlooking and amenity issues.

HIGHWAYS, ACCESS & PARKING

WHAT IS SHOWN

The application proposes the creation of up to 491 homes, with associated roads, car parking, and footpaths. Vehicular access is to be provided from both [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. The submitted evidence covers the following points:

The principal evidence relating to highways, access, and parking is contained within the Transport Assessment (ITM16598-004B), Design and Access Statement, technical site layout drawings, and accompanying planning documentation. The proposed layout demonstrates the arrangement of internal access roads, pedestrian footpaths, and connectivity to existing highways.

Parking provision is specified in the evidence as a total of 1,132 spaces, broken down as 1,057 allocated spaces for dwellings and 75 visitor spaces. Every dwelling is assigned at least one parking space, with some provision for visitor parking. The documentation also confirms that electric vehicle charging points will be delivered at all dwellings.

There is commitment to implement a Travel Plan, intended to encourage sustainable and non-car modes of travel for residents and visitors. The design indicates intent to facilitate walking and cycling, with internal pedestrian/cycle paths shown in the site drawings and references to connections with adjacent routes.

Access via [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] appears clearly evidenced as the main points of entry and exit for vehicles and non-motorised users. The submitted evidence further indicates that the road network within the site is designed to accommodate residential traffic in line with the scale of a major development of nearly 500 homes.

WHAT IS NOT CLEAR

The quantum of traffic movements anticipated at peak times (AM/PM peak hour trip generation) is not present in the reviewed evidence. Despite the Transport Assessment being submitted, there is no clear extraction of quantified AM or PM peak traffic flows, daily trip totals, or detailed capacity modelling of impact on existing highway junctions (including degree of saturation, queue length, or delay figures).

There is no information detailed here about any specific off-site highway improvements or mitigation measures that might be proposed in response to predicted traffic increases on [REDACTED], [REDACTED], or connecting routes. Any outcomes from highway authority consultation, or responses from statutory consultees about highway safety, capacity, or adequacy of access, are not shown in the reviewed material.

Some aspects of road hierarchy, crossing arrangements (especially for pedestrians and cyclists), the precise design standard for each principal access point, and swept-path analysis for refuse/larger vehicles remain unrepresented in this summary.

WHAT WOULD CLARIFY THIS

Clear quantification of predicted vehicular trip generation during peak hours (morning and evening) and

corresponding daily traffic totals would enable assessment of potential highway impact. Presentation of detailed junction capacity modelling, including the performance of adjacent road junctions under current and future conditions with the development, would be required to clarify the degree of cumulative highways impact. Explicit evidence of consultation feedback from the local highway authority, as well as commentary on any necessary off-site mitigation works or safety upgrades, would address present gaps.

More detailed breakdown of parking allocation per dwelling, visitor parking arrangements, and the specific walking/cycling infrastructure both within and immediately outside the site would further clarify the proposal's approach to parking and sustainable travel.

EVIDENCE STRENGTH

MODERATE. The documentation establishes headline provision of access points, parking supply, and the presence of a submitted Transport Assessment, but does not provide the level of traffic analysis, junction capacity detail, or mitigation response typically expected of a major scheme of this scale. As a result, the overall picture of highways and parking effects is only partially evidenced at this stage.

DRAINAGE & FLOOD RISK

SECTION: DRAINAGE & FLOOD RISK

WHAT IS SHOWN

The submitted evidence confirms the site falls within Flood Zone 1, indicating a low probability of fluvial flooding (less than 0.1%). This is explicitly stated within the Flood Risk Assessment. A comprehensive drainage strategy is set out, proposing surface water management through a combination of infiltration-based Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), including attenuation basins. The strategy is designed to accommodate a 1-in-100-year rainfall event plus a 50% climate change allowance, which is a robust design assumption for major developments. Foul water is to be discharged into the existing 225mm public combined sewer, with reference made to the need for potential sewer diversion works as required.

Full supporting documentation includes a Flood Risk Assessment and a separate Drainage Strategy, both referenced throughout the technical reports. Evidence indicates that surface water management is through SuDS with a preference for infiltration, and attenuation basins form a key element of the design. The intention to attenuate runoff and mimic natural drainage processes is clear, and the overall strategy is typical for a major greenfield development of this scale.

WHAT IS NOT CLEAR

Several points are not explicitly evidenced or remain unclear within the submitted material. There is no direct excerpt demonstrating that infiltration tests have been undertaken, nor are the results of such tests (infiltration rates, locations, suitability across the site) identified in the material reviewed. Additionally, while the foul drainage outfall is specified as the 225mm public combined sewer, the invert levels of this existing sewer are stated to be unknown, which could affect the technical feasibility of the connection, particularly for gravity flow. There is also no clear indication in the evidence regarding whether formal consultation with the relevant water authority (regarding capacity and acceptance of flows) has been completed or what, if any, specific offsite reinforcement works may be required.

WHAT WOULD CLARIFY THIS

The following additional, specific information would clarify the drainage and flood risk assessment:

- Provision of site-wide infiltration testing data (including details of the locations tested, methodology, and results), confirming the suitability of the infiltration-based SuDS for the full extent of the proposed development.
- Confirmation from the relevant statutory water undertaker (e.g. United Utilities) that the existing combined sewer has capacity for the proposed foul connection, together with invert level survey results to demonstrate technical deliverability.
- Details or evidence of any consultations held with the Lead Local Flood Authority and Water Authority, including agreed outfall rates, SuDS adoption, maintenance arrangements and any network reinforcement requirements arising from the proposed connection.
- Confirmation of future maintenance responsibilities for all drainage infrastructure, as this can be significant for long-term site operations in a residential scheme of this scale.

EVIDENCE STRENGTH

STRONG evidence exists regarding the low flood risk classification and the intended use of infiltration-based SuDS with attenuation. MODERATE evidence is presented on deliverability details for foul connections, with gaps in infiltration testing results and technical confirmation on outfall arrangements. Incomplete information on statutory undertaker engagement and detailed drainage approvals reduces overall confidence in the delivery and resilience of the proposed strategy.

ECOLOGY & BIODIVERSITY

WHAT IS SHOWN

The submitted application includes a comprehensive ecological and biodiversity assessment, with dedicated technical reporting. Detailed biodiversity net gain (BNG) calculations are directly evidenced. The BNG technical report states a pre-development baseline of 98.79 habitat units and a post-development figure of 121.75 units, resulting in a net gain of +22.97 habitat units, or +23.25%. Hedgerow units are also set to increase substantially: from 12.12 baseline units to 30.17 post-development units (+18.05 units, a 148.99% increase). The documentation states that the current landscape proposals satisfy the BNG metric “trading rules,” meaning the improvements are spread across relevant habitat types according to statutory requirements. Hedgerow and habitat creation are clearly detailed, and the application confirms an accompanying habitat management plan is to be implemented following completion of the development.

Numerous supporting ecological surveys are provided. Surveys for bats, Great Crested Newts (GCN), and breeding birds have all been conducted. GCN surveys returned negative results for the species’ presence, including both eDNA sampling and habitat review. Bat nocturnal survey results found no significant effects on roosting bats and concluded that a licence from Natural England is not required. There is a specific mention of barn owl roost replacement with bird boxes. Commitment to broader habitat retention, enhancement, and ongoing management is also evidenced within the technical documents.

The environmental assessments clarify that all on-site habitats are classed as having low strategic significance. No watercourse habitat units or subsequent BNG calculations for water features are identified in the BNG report.

WHAT IS NOT CLEAR

There is a conflict in the numeric BNG figures reported: the BNG technical report sets out a +23.25% net habitat gain, while the Planning Statement references +20.55%. The technical report provides the more explicit, granular metric breakdown and is considered the more reliable reference. No clear BNG unit deficit or explicit requirement for off-site units has been identified. The absence of watercourse-specific BNG units means potential impacts or opportunities relating to aquatic biodiversity are not quantified in the reviewed evidence. Details on the long-term delivery and monitoring arrangements for habitat management, beyond the stated intention to implement a management plan post-development, are not set out in full.

It is also not specified whether any seasonal survey limitations applied to the ecological survey work. While most main taxa are addressed, the evidence does not include significant commentary on invertebrates or less mobile species groups.

WHAT WOULD CLARIFY THIS

A single, reconciled set of BNG figures in all application documentation would remove interpretive uncertainty. Full details of how the proposed habitat management plan will be secured, monitored, and delivered over the long term should be provided, ideally through a draft or template management agreement. Clear reporting on aquatic habitat (watercourse) baselines and proposed BNG metrics would clarify the aquatic biodiversity impacts and compliance. Explicit confirmation of survey timing and limitations, and additional discussion of other faunal groups, would provide further robustness.

EVIDENCE STRENGTH

STRONG for terrestrial and hedgerow BNG, and presence/absence information for main protected species surveyed (bats, GCN, birds). MODERATE regarding aquatic habitats and ongoing management commitment detail due to minor gaps and some data inconsistencies.

TREES, LANDSCAPE & VISUAL IMPACT

SECTION: TREES, LANDSCAPE & VISUAL IMPACT

WHAT IS SHOWN

The application documents set out that the proposed major housing development will result in substantial and permanent landscape transformation across an identified site area of approximately 32.77 hectares, currently comprising agricultural land dominated by low ecological distinctiveness grassland and scattered habitat parcels. The submitted Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) and Environmental Statement (ES) provide a wide-ranging appraisal of both the visibility of the scheme and its effects on local landscape character, explicitly identifying the conversion from an open, farmland setting to a built residential environment of up to 491 dwellings with supporting access, roads, and open spaces. The LVIA includes a detailed suite of verified view photographs, photomontages, and a survey record of existing trees and hedgerows.

Proposed landscape strategy documents show the retention of selected existing trees and hedgerows along field boundaries, integrated with additional planting of native tree and shrub species to reinforce new residential boundaries and augment green corridors throughout the site. Hedgerow provision is set to markedly increase, with a quantified post-development metric of 30.17 hedgerow units (+148.99%), and the planning documents confirm that all pre- and post-development habitats are categorised as being of low strategic significance. The application sets out a structured management plan for retained and planted landscape features. The ES states that overall visual effects are most pronounced for closest visual receptors (existing residents adjoining the site and users of [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]). It also notes a managed transition at the settlement edge with planting and strategic landscaping intended to soften both visual and character effects.

The Arboricultural Impact Assessment evidences a tree survey covering those specimens and groups likely to be affected by the development; these are systematically recorded and categorised, with mitigation planting proposed for unavoidably lost trees. No protected trees (Tree Preservation Orders) are identified in submitted materials. Visual effects from key public viewpoints, including the periphery of [REDACTED] and neighbouring countryside, are considered, with predicted impacts described in terms of magnitude and duration.

WHAT IS NOT CLEAR

While a comprehensive landscape strategy, LVIA, and tree survey are all included, there are aspects where clarity is lacking. The precise number and location of individual trees proposed for removal and their value (ecological, visual, amenity) is not summarised in the main submission documents. The operational details of long-term landscape management – for example, the responsible party and funding mechanisms for open space and structural planting after the initial five-year establishment period – are not clear in the reviewed evidence. There is also incomplete detail on how minor boundary features on the site periphery (such as smaller hedgerow sections and ditches) will be incorporated or protected during construction, beyond broad intent.

The photomontages, while present, do not provide seasonally varied views, and there is some

uncertainty around how effective new planting will be in mitigating visual effects in the medium term (5–10 years post-completion), as most planting is initially limited in screening value. The LVIA does not explicitly set out the effects of incremental development stages—particularly the impact while the site is under construction, when temporary landscape and visual effects for neighbouring properties may be at their most acute.

WHAT WOULD CLARIFY THIS

Greater clarity would be gained from an explicit schedule listing all trees and notable landscape features proposed for removal, their categorisation (by quality and value), and specific locations on an annotated plan. A more detailed and time-phased landscape management strategy would clarify both the standards of aftercare and the responsible parties for long-term upkeep. Additional visualisations or photomontages illustrating the site across seasons and at various time points – including years 1, 5, and 10 post-planting – would improve understanding of how landscape mitigation will mature. Further detail or a method statement regarding the temporary protection of existing trees and hedgerows throughout construction would also strengthen confidence that short-term impacts are minimised.

EVIDENCE STRENGTH

MODERATE

A comprehensive set of baseline surveys, assessments, and outline mitigation is submitted and aligned with a major application. However, detailed clarity on numbers, location, and quality of trees removed; the effectiveness of proposed screening in the medium term; and operational details of long-term landscape management are all only partially evidenced or not fully resolved in the submitted documents.

HERITAGE & SETTING

WHAT IS SHOWN

The submitted material includes a Heritage Statement and an Archaeological Assessment. Within the immediate vicinity of the site, a Grade II listed building, Helme Lodge, is located approximately 20 metres to the north. There is also a Scheduled Ancient Monument situated roughly 0.25–0.5km to the northwest of the site. The Heritage Statement identifies these designated heritage assets and considers their proximity and visual relationship to the application site. The Archaeological Assessment concludes that a programme of archaeological work is required prior to development, along with a further assessment and analysis of any significant remains identified, to be undertaken within one year of such findings. The Environmental Statement further evidences that the surrounding context includes a varied landscape and that the proposal involves demolition of agricultural buildings.

WHAT IS NOT CLEAR

The degree of direct visual or physical impact on the setting and significance of Helme Lodge and the Scheduled Ancient Monument is not quantified in detail. While the Heritage Statement acknowledges proximity, it is unclear if verified views or photomontages from key locations have been submitted, or whether alternative design iterations were considered to mitigate possible impacts on heritage assets. There is little explicit narrative about measures specifically incorporated into the site design to safeguard the setting of these assets. For archaeology, while the need for investigation is accepted, the specific potential for significant findings on site is left open.

WHAT WOULD CLARIFY THIS

To strengthen clarity, the application would benefit from:

- Photomontages or visualisations demonstrating the interaction between the proposed development and nearby heritage assets, particularly Helme Lodge.
- A summary of any viewshed analyses or assessment of how local sightlines may be affected post-development.
- Explicit description and evidence of any embedded design measures or landscaping intended to mitigate harm to heritage assets.
- Further explanation of the types and likely extent of archaeological remains anticipated, and how their discovery and preservation might affect the construction programme.

EVIDENCE STRENGTH

MODERATE — The presence of a Heritage Statement, Archaeological Assessment, and clear identification of heritage receptors provides a reasonable baseline. However, the absence of visual analysis, quantification of effects, and further design response detail leaves gaps on the likely heritage and setting impacts that are central to understanding the proposal's acceptability.

NOISE, LIGHTING & DISTURBANCE

WHAT IS SHOWN

The submitted Noise Assessment Technical Report confirms that the primary existing sources of noise affecting the development come from traffic on [REDACTED] and, to a lesser extent, the surrounding area. The assessment indicates that, for the vast majority of the proposed dwellings, no specific sound insulation measures beyond standard building construction are required. However, it is explicitly recommended that targeted acoustic screening be provided for certain plots located closest to [REDACTED], in order to mitigate higher noise levels at those locations. No significant or unusual sources of noise are identified that would result in adverse impacts to health or quality of life for future residents, provided the recommended mitigation is implemented.

In terms of lighting, the reviewed planning documents do not identify or quantify any specific external lighting strategy for the development. There is no evidence of a submitted Lighting Assessment, nor any explicit proposals detailing streetlighting, building illumination, or the potential for light spill onto sensitive boundaries or ecology areas.

The Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) recognises the potential for short-term disturbance (including noise and general nuisance) during the construction phase. The CEMP outlines standard mitigation measures—such as designated working hours, dust suppression, and site management—to manage these effects and limit disruption for existing residents in the locality.

WHAT IS NOT CLEAR

It is not clear from the reviewed evidence whether detailed modelling of cumulative noise levels, including both road traffic and potential site-related operational noise (such as vehicle movements within the development or communal facilities), has been provided for all site areas—particularly boundary plots. Specific details regarding the types, locations, heights, and extents of any proposed acoustic screens are not presented in the extracted evidence.

There is no information on projected noise levels within gardens or amenity spaces, which could be of particular interest to nearby residents with concerns about tranquil enjoyment of outdoor spaces. For lighting, there is no evidence of a comprehensive lighting design, light spill diagrams, or any quantified assessment of the scheme's impact on surrounding properties, streetscapes, or sensitive habitats. The extent of construction-phase disturbance, including specific commitments to limit off-site impact (e.g., times, routing of heavy vehicles, communications with residents) is not detailed in the extracted summary.

WHAT WOULD CLARIFY THIS

The following information would provide greater clarity and confidence regarding potential noise, lighting, and disturbance impacts for both future occupiers and near neighbours:

- A site-wide map or schedule defining where acoustic screening is required, specifying dimensions, materials, and locations for each recommended barrier.
- Quantified day and night-time noise predictions at key locations—both external (gardens, play areas) and internal (habitable rooms)—including reference to national guidelines for acceptable levels.
- Confirmation of cumulative noise modelling, incorporating both road and on-site operational

sources.

- A formal Lighting Assessment, showing proposed column/fixture types, positions, luminance levels, and spill predictions at sensitive boundaries and toward neighbouring properties/wildlife areas.
- A construction traffic and noise management plan with defined routes, hours, and engagement protocol for nearby residents.

EVIDENCE STRENGTH

MODERATE. The primary noise impacts and construction-phase disturbance are recognised and partially addressed, with mitigation outlined for the most exposed plots. However, details on the extent and nature of those mitigation measures remain limited, and there is no supporting evidence regarding lighting impact or management of site-wide amenity disturbance.

PLANNING POLICY POSITION

WHAT IS SHOWN

The planning documents demonstrate that policy considerations have been referenced across a range of material issues. Evidence is provided that the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and relevant local plan policies are engaged on the following key topics: affordable housing, biodiversity net gain (BNG), open space provision, flood risk, sustainable drainage, and environmental quality. The Planning Statement and supporting documents make explicit reference to these considerations.

Specific policy topics evidenced within the application material include:

- Affordable housing: The intention to secure 35% affordable housing, referenced as being delivered via a Section 106 legal agreement, aligns with affordable housing policy requirements.
- Biodiversity net gain: The application includes a quantitative BNG assessment, aiming to deliver a net gain of +23.25% in habitat units post-development. This is explicitly referenced in technical reports.
- Flood risk and drainage: Documents identify the site as Flood Zone 1 with low risk of flooding, and the drainage strategy proposes sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS), referencing the need to align with flood risk and drainage policies.
- Heritage impact: The proximity to a Grade II listed building (Helme Lodge) and a Scheduled Ancient Monument is addressed, with a Heritage Statement and Archaeological Assessment included, engaging heritage conservation policies.
- Noise: A Noise Assessment addresses potential impacts and provides recommendations for acoustic screening in certain plots; this is consistent with the policy requirement to manage noise impacts.
- Highways and transport: There is a Transport Assessment and a stated commitment to implement a Travel Plan, evidencing engagement with sustainable transport policy topics.

WHAT IS NOT CLEAR

While policy areas are referenced, there are notable gaps in clarity:

- The documentation lacks detailed alignment analyses showing exactly how the proposal addresses each relevant local or national policy. The specific local plan policies or their numeric references are not consistently cited.
- There is no clear table or summary matching proposed measures or mitigations directly to policy requirements, making it harder to track compliance in detail.
- The documents do not appear to provide a comprehensive narrative on the sequential test and exception test for flood risk, although the site is located in Flood Zone 1.
- No explicit local plan policy benchmarking is presented for matters such as design quality, open space provision standards, or traffic and access thresholds.
- The cumulative highways impact is discussed in the Transport Assessment but without a direct translation into the local or national policy compliance conclusion.
- It is unclear whether best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land policy considerations (NPPF para 187–188) have been comprehensively addressed in the documentation.

WHAT WOULD CLARIFY THIS

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A complete, structured policy compliance matrix detailing all engaged local and national policies, with explicit statements on compliance, partial alignment, or areas of divergence.

- Direct cross-referencing in the planning documents between each main technical assessment and the relevant policy text.
- A summary narrative drawing together all mitigation/avoidance strategies with an explanation of how they achieve explicit policy objectives.
- Confirmation of the precise local development plan policies directly applied, with their policy names or reference numbers and the degree of compliance assessed.
- Additional details on how sequential and exception tests (where relevant for flood risk) have been undertaken and evidenced.
- Evidence of assessment against BMV land criteria if applicable.

EVIDENCE STRENGTH

MODERATE

While key policy areas are signposted and some direct NPPF references are present, the documentation does not offer a detailed, structured explanation of compliance for each relevant policy. The approach is broadly in line with major application requirements, but with gaps in explicit mapping of evidence to individual policy benchmarks. The evidence is consistent at a high level, but more detail would be required for a robust policy compliance narrative.

INFORMATION GAPS & CLARITY ISSUES

WHAT IS SHOWN

The planning submission is extensive for a major new residential development of 491 dwellings, with a comprehensive suite of supporting technical documents. Notably, the application provides quantified biodiversity net gain (BNG) metrics, multiple ecological survey results, transport and drainage strategies, heritage and archaeological assessments, noise and geoenvironmental reports, and a full Environmental Statement. These support a high-level understanding of the proposed works, site context, technical mitigations, and overall impacts.

WHAT IS NOT CLEAR

The following substantive information gaps, uncertainties, or inconsistencies remain:

1. ****Transport and Traffic Impact Details****

While a Transport Assessment is present and there is a commitment to a Travel Plan, there is no clear evidence of quantified traffic generation figures (peak hour or daily vehicle movements), nor explicit capacity or mitigation statements for principal junctions/road network impacts. This limits clarity on local transport consequences.

2. ****Drainage Testing and Design Specifics****

The surface water strategy is described as infiltration-based using SuDS and attenuation basins, but there is no referenced evidence of actual infiltration test data. The foul water drainage section notes that the invert levels of the existing combined sewer (discharge destination) are unknown at submission. Without confirmed infiltration rates or foul water design constraints, the effective deliverability of drainage solutions is not fully clear.

3. ****BNG Metric Conflict****

There is a documented inconsistency between the BNG metric figures reported in the main BNG technical report (+23.25% net gain) and those summarised in the Planning Statement (20.55% for habitats), though the most detailed breakdown is found in the technical report. Such disparity in headline environmental results may cause confusion and requires resolution.

4. ****Applicant Identity Contradiction****

Multiple versions of the applicant name are presented across documents (Story Homes Ltd, Story Homes, Adam McNally, Story Homes Limited (Cumbria)), with no explicit clarification as to the legally responsible party. This ambiguity has a bearing on formal accountability for any planning obligations.

5. ****Agricultural Land Quality Evidence****

While there is reference that the site is predominantly low in ecological distinctiveness and comprises modified grassland, there is no clear, directly evidenced, site-specific Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) map or survey confirming the presence or absence of the best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land. This limits certainty around compliance with the preferential development of poorer quality agricultural land.

6. **Detail on Watercourse-Related BNG Units**

The BNG documentation confirms “watercourse units not identified” within the net gain metrics. Where on-site water features may exist, this omission means potential impacts on aquatic biodiversity are unquantified.

WHAT WOULD CLARIFY THIS

- Inclusion of peak and daily vehicle trip generation, junction capacity assessments, and any highways authority feedback.
- Submission of completed infiltration testing data and confirmation (or otherwise) of the foul sewer invert levels to demonstrate drainage scheme feasibility.
- A single reconciled summary of BNG metrics across all reporting, with a clear explanation of any discrepancies.
- Explicit confirmation of the legal applicant (with registered company details) so as to ensure enforceability of S106 and other obligations.
- Direct submission of an Agricultural Land Classification survey/map for the site showing land grades.
- Full assessment of any watercourse habitats within the BNG metric, or confirmation none exist.

EVIDENCE STRENGTH

MODERATE — The documentation covers the expected material for a major scheme and provides strong headline evidence for several key topics (BNG, flood risk, ecology, heritage). However, material clarity gaps and technical inconsistencies in transport, drainage, BNG, and application details reduce the overall strength.

PROFESSIONAL DISCLAIMER

APPLICATION ROBUSTNESS SNAPSHOT

This report is a premium, evidence-led review of a major planning application. Its findings are based exclusively on the information provided within the submitted planning documents and supporting materials for the application. The review does not introduce supplementary analysis, external data, or interpretation beyond what is explicitly evidenced. Where submitted documents were incomplete, inconsistent, or lacking in detail, such limitations are reported as directly identified.

No responsibility is accepted for the accuracy, sufficiency, or reliability of any third-party submissions referenced within the planning material. The review does not constitute legal, valuation, or technical engineering advice. Material issues, constraints, or opportunities may be present that are not apparent from the reviewed documentation. This report should not be relied upon for decisions beyond the intended scope of evidencing what is, and is not, clearly articulated in the submitted application.

Readers are advised that the planning system is discretionary, and outcomes may be affected by factors outside the content of the planning submission. The report does not seek to pre-empt the decision of the local authority or to represent the views of planning officers, consultees, or any statutory body.

This review is intended to provide a concise, structured assessment of submitted material, with all conclusions strictly limited to the application evidence supplied.