

Land North of A507, West of A10 Buntingford

784-B077665

Proof of Evidence of Peter Blair on Sustainability and Accessibility from a Highways and Transportation Perspective updated to reflect NPPF August 2026

In Respect of 'Outline planning application for development of up to 600 dwellings (C3), up to 60 units of elderly accommodation (C3), Mixed Use Local Centre (including flexible use E, F and Sui Generis), First School, informal and formal open space, associated works and infrastructure including a new access from the A507 and pedestrian bridges over the A10, with all matters reserved except for access.'

At Land North of A507, West of A10 in Buntingford

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On behalf of Hallam Land Management Ltd

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Preamble

- 1.1.1 This Highways and Transport Proof of Evidence has been prepared by Peter Blair, Head of Transport North at the international consultancy Tetra Tech. It describes my Highways and Transport evidence, considerations and findings, focusing on the areas of Sustainability and Accessibility.

1.2 Experience of Witness

- 1.2.1 My name is Peter Blair. I have a degree in Civil Engineering and a diploma in Industrial Studies, both from the University of Ulster. I am a Chartered Engineer, a Fellow of the Institution of Civil Engineers and a Fellow of the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation.
- 1.2.2 I am Head of Transport North at the international consultancy Tetra Tech (TT). I have over 35 years' experience of working in the field of traffic engineering, acting both for Public Authorities and Private Clients.
- 1.2.3 I am familiar with the development site and the highways, transport and active travel conditions in the local area.
- 1.2.4 My evidence is given in accordance with the requirements of my professional bodies. I can confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional opinions, irrespective of by whom I am instructed.

1.3 Appointment

- 1.3.1 I am instructed on behalf of Hallam Land Management Ltd, thereafter referred to as the appellant, to present evidence relating to the sustainability and accessibility aspects of Highways and Transportation matters in respect of the appeal, submitted pursuant to Section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, concerning development of Land North of the A507 and West of the A10 in Buntingford ("the appeal site").
- 1.3.2 My evidence should be read in conjunction with the Highways and Transportation evidence of Mr Duffy and other evidence prepared by the appellant.

2.0 Scope

2.1 Background to the Appeal

- 2.1.1 A full summary of the background to the appeal is set out within the appellant's planning Statement of Case (SoC).
- 2.1.2 The site is currently agricultural land north of the A507 and west of the A10 in Buntingford. The whole extent of the scheme is located within the administrative boundary of East Herts District Council.
- 2.1.3 A comprehensive suite of technical reports and plans were submitted with the application in line with East Herts District Council's validation requirements. The documents submitted during the course of the application are scheduled in the Core Documents List. The highways and transportation work which accompanied the application was undertaken by the consultancy Jubb, who were later acquired by Ridge. From this point onwards in my Proof, I will refer to 'Jubb' as 'Ridge', for consistency. The Ridge work has been led by Mr James Duffy, who also provides evidence to this appeal on the transport matters related to the traffic impact and highway design elements of the proposals.
- 2.1.4 The outline planning application for the site was received and validated and given the planning application reference 3/24/0966/OUT. The case officer at the Local Planning Authority (LPA) prepared a report for the planning committee and recommended that the application should be refused.
- 2.1.5 This appeal follows the refusal by East Herts District Council (EHDC), the LPA, with regard to the application for planning permission for the following Proposed Development ("the appeal scheme"):
- 'Outline planning application for development of up to 600 dwellings (C3), up to 60 units of elderly accommodation (C3), Mixed Use Local Centre (including flexible use E, F and Sui Generis), First School, informal and formal open space, associated works and infrastructure including a new access from the A507 and pedestrian bridges over the A10, with all matters reserved except for access.'*
- 2.1.6 The case officer's report to committee cites concerns over the site's physical distances and quality of active travel routes to Buntingford, and considered that even with the proposed sustainable measures, this would remain a deterrent for non-motorised users (NMU). The case officer also refers to routes between the site and Buntingford as unsuitable for a range of people, including children and mobility impaired. The case officer states that the proposals amount to significant development at a location which cannot be made sustainable.
- 2.1.7 Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) are the Local Highway Authority (LHA). The LHA object to the proposals, citing that the site is fundamentally unsustainable and that no special circumstances exist to allow a new access from the 'A' road network. Mr Duffy's evidence addresses that latter point.

2.2 Review of Submitted Information

- 2.2.1 Ridge produced the highways and transport information which accompanied the application.
- 2.2.2 They submitted a Transport Assessment (TA) (CD 1.12), Technical Note (TN) (CD 2.10) and Framework Travel Plan (FTP) (CD 1.13) and the LHA were consulted through the process and have provided consultation responses, to which Ridge have prepared further technical work.
- 2.2.3 Many matters have been agreed between the appellant, the LPA and the LHA. These are documented within the Planning and Highways Statements of Common Ground (PSoCG and HSoCG) (CD 15.1 and CD 15.3).
- 2.2.4 In respect of highways matters, the HSoCG confirms that access to the A507 is technically achievable and the traffic impact related tests in the NPPF are satisfied by the proposals. The NPPF has been updated as of 17th August but the traffic impact tests are substantially the same.
- 2.2.5 The Inspector did not raise highway capacity or traffic impacts as a main issue.
- 2.2.6 My evidence does not therefore address traffic impact, highway operation or matters of detailed design.

2.3 Focus of my Evidence

- 2.3.1 My evidence relates to the topics of accessibility and sustainability from a highways and transportation perspective.
- 2.3.2 I interpret the transportation points between the appellant and the LPA to be basically whether or not the proposals constitute sustainable development and whether the site is acceptably accessible.
- 2.3.3 My evidence refers to the PSoCG and HSoCG to identify the points either where the parties have reached agreement or where points of contention remain.
- 2.3.4 My evidence seeks to address those remaining unagreed points, the Main Issue (ii) as set out by the Inspector at the Case Management Conference (CMC), and the sustainability and accessibility points raised within the Reasons for Refusal.
- 2.3.5 Separate evidence has been prepared by Mr Duffy of Ridge, which covers matters related to the traffic impact and highway design elements of the proposals.

3.0 Overarching Context

3.1 Weight to be given to Policies

- 3.1.1 The PSoCG (CD 15.1) in Paragraphs 5.4, 5.5 and 5.6 describes the most important policies in terms of determining this appeal, and the fact that they should be given reduced weight due to the Council being unable to demonstrate a 5-year supply of deliverable housing sites. I leave the weighing and attributing of weight in relation to each policy to the Planning Professionals and the Inspector but note this agreed position as relevant context.

3.2 Reasons for Refusal and Cited Policy Conflicts

- 3.2.1 I have reviewed the Decision Notice (CD 6.1) which refuses outline planning permission for the application.

- 3.2.2 Reasons for Refusal (RfR) 1, 3 and 4 contain reference to the sustainable travel and accessibility aspects of the proposals:

- 3.2.3 RfR1 states:

“Due to its siting, the proposals would be isolated and physically severed from the rest of Buntingford by the A10, with poor quality active travel connections to services within the town. As such the proposals are likely to be car dependent and result in increased vehicle trips and pressure upon the highway network. The proposals represent an unsustainable form of development, and residents and visitors would be heavily reliant on the private car to access employment, main food and comparison shopping elsewhere. The proposals fail to provide a genuine choice of alternative travel modes and would not amount to sustainable development (in accordance with the NPPF) and would result in a form of development outside of the settlement boundary that amounts to a significant conflict with the Development Strategy within the District Plan and objectives of the Buntingford Community Area Neighbourhood Plan. The proposal would be contrary to Policies DPS2 and TRA1 of the East Herts District Plan (2018), policy HD1 of the Buntingford Community Area Neighbourhood Plan and paragraphs 110 and 115 National Planning Policy Framework.”

- 3.2.4 RfR3 states:

“The harms and policy conflicts identified are considered to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposals in terms of delivery of new housing and other public infrastructure, having regard to NPPF paragraph 11d. As such the proposals fail to constitute sustainable development and would therefore conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework and Policies INT1, DPS2, GBR2, TRA1 and TRA2 of the District Plan (2018) and Policies BE2, ES1, HD1 and HD2 of the Buntingford Community Neighbourhood Plan (2017).”

- 3.2.5 RfR4 States:

“In the absence of a completed legal agreement the application fails to secure appropriate financial contributions to infrastructure to off-set the impact of the development on local infrastructure or to provide any affordable housing, custom/self-build housing, or active travel provisions and public transport improvements. As such the proposal is contrary to policies TRA1,

DPS4, DEL1, DEL2, HOU3, CFLR1, CFLR7, CFLR9 and CFLR10 of the East Herts District Plan 2018, policies of the Buntingford Community Area Neighbourhood Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.”

The NPPF has been updated as of 17th August and this Proof text has been updated accordingly.

3.3 Inspectors Main Issue (ii)

3.3.1 Following the CMC, the Inspector confirmed that a main issue was as follows;

“(ii) Whether the development would be in a sustainable location with convenient access by all to a choice of sustainable modes of transport including socially safe and quality pedestrian and cycling routes to reach day to day amenities, facilities and services, including employment and food/comparison shopping facilities further afield, and the extent to which the proposed cycle and pedestrian route connections and bus improvements would make a suitable modal shift towards reducing car usage.”

3.3.2 To address those reasons and issues, my evidence is produced with a focus on accessibility and sustainable travel. In relation to the latter part of the Inspector’s main issue (modal shift), I say that sustainable accessibility is not just about mode shift to pedestrian, cycling and public transport modes.

3.3.3 The objective is to reduce unsustainable car usage, noting that various forms of car usage are in fact sustainable, e.g. car sharing, taxis, zero and ultra-low emissions vehicles. A mode shift away from the unsustainable private car can also be achieved by aspects which help reduce the need to travel such as digital connectivity and working from home and will also be achieved by the increasing switch to sustainable car use.

3.4 Views of the Local Highway Authority

3.4.1 The LHA provided three consultation responses, (CD 4.9, CD 4.35 and CD 4.42) which responded to the appellant having successively introduced additional information and updated proposals. It can be seen from reading those 3 responses that issues were being resolved.

3.4.2 In the final Consultation response of September 2025 (CD 4.42 page 1), the LHAs final position was:

“The Highway Authority recommends refusal of the planning application owing to concerns with respect to traffic generation, road access and local and national policy.”

3.4.3 Since the appeal commenced, the LHA and the LPA appear to have extended their transport and highways case both from the position stated in the LHA consultation and from the position stated in the RfR. As can be seen from the HSoCG, they have cited various other aspects such as whether the active travel routes can be considered socially safe, whether the Road Safety Audit is comprehensive and has been finalised to the satisfaction of the LHA, whether the central proposed active travel bridge is safe and suitable for cyclists.

3.4.4 The HSoCG sets out the areas of agreement and disagreement but as context for the consideration of my evidence it is pertinent to note that the following points in relation to

sustainable development (from a highways and transport perspective) have been agreed with both the Planning and Highway Authorities who are both signatories to the HSoCG;

- The cumulative access proposals demonstrate that access for pedestrians, cyclists and road users can be achieved cumulatively for the proposed development and proposed employment development to the south.
- A suitable on-site layout (addressing the needs of NPPF 117) featuring pedestrian and cycle facilities can be delivered subject to the details in the reserved matters application. This contains a reference to the superseded NPPF but I consider the point is equally sound if referenced to the development design policies of the NPPF such as TR4, CC2 and DP3(2).
- The proposed bus strategy and on-site mobility hubs encourage sustainable travel by bus for future residents of the site.
- Bus service upgrades and traffic calming infrastructure will bring benefits for public transport users.
- The future on-site layout, the connections to the adjacent network and the opportunities for onward travel to services and facilities, will present additional choices of sustainable travel modes.
- The proposed active travel corridor on A507 / B1038 Baldock Road can be secured by condition and delivered through a section 278 agreement and will provide a route between the site and Buntingford town centre which accommodates pedestrians and cyclists.
- The northern bridge crossing is safe and appropriate for people on foot, and that the central proposed active travel bridge is safe and suitable for pedestrians and the mobility impaired.
- Enhancements to Public Rights of Way (PRoW) 35, and 36 will provide benefits to existing and future residents of Buntingford and the development.
- Speed limit reductions will enhance safety for all users on the existing road network.
- There are facilities within Buntingford accessible within a 2km walking distance from the centre of the proposed site.
- In terms of walking, there are three publicly accessible routes connecting the site across the A10 and then multiple routes to and through the town.
- The proposed and existing cycle infrastructure, speed limit reductions and traffic calming make provision for cycling.
- The enhancements to public transport arising from the proposals will enhance accessibility by bus.
- Residents of the proposed development will have the option to travel sustainably to other nearby towns, local facilities and employment centres by bus.
- The modal shift targets set out in the Framework Travel Plan suggest a reduction in the reliance on the private car is achievable.

3.4.5 It is the case therefore that residents of this future development will have multiple safe and sustainable travel choices to facilities which are accessible on site, in Buntingford and further

afield. The infrastructure and funding promoted by the proposals will benefit existing active travel movements, public transport users and vehicular traffic.

3.5 Rural Nature of the Site

- 3.5.1 The proposals are located in a rural area. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (paragraph 110 now superseded) advises that planning decisions should recognise that developments in rural areas are likely to exhibit fewer opportunities for sustainable accessibility. The new NPPF policy S5 paragraph 1 part J (S5 1(j)) relates to development outside settlements and the principles of being well related to a settlement and of a scale which can be accommodated by infrastructure.
- 3.5.2 Although the site is rural, it is clearly not remote, and as rural locations go, it must be at the higher end of rural accessibility with it being located directly adjacent to an existing settlement which benefits from existing non-car modes of travel infrastructure, services and facilities.
- 3.5.3 The DfT Connectivity Tool, which I describe in detail below, confirms that to be the case, as set out in Section 5 of my proof. The site is well connected (45% as well connected as central London) in overall terms (excluding the driving mode). When benchmarked against the East Herts area, it is in the second band of connectivity, Band B i.e. the second best category on a scale of A to J (1 to 10) in terms of non-car travel.
- 3.5.4 As an increasing number of private cars are also forms of sustainable travel, it is also relevant to consider the connectivity of the site by driving. The site is adjacent to the A507 and A10 so clearly is accessible by key road routes. My evidence in Section 5 describes that the site has a connectivity score of 71 by driving, which means that it offers a good level of connectivity for sustainable travel by driving.
- 3.5.5 The evidence of Mr James Duffy and indeed the HSOCG record that the development can be accommodated in terms of infrastructure.

3.6 East Herts District Plan – BUNT3 Allocation

- 3.6.1 In the context of the RfR which criticise the accessibility and sustainability of the site location, I consider the BUNT3 Allocation to be of relevance.
- 3.6.2 Policy BUNT3 of the East Herts District Plan states “3 hectares of land located to the north of Buntingford Business Park has been allocated as an extension to the existing Employment Area.”
- 3.6.3 The BUNT3 allocation is also situated to the west of the A10 and is adjacent to the Appeal site.
- 3.6.4 Paragraph 3.2.8 of the East Herts District Plan 2018 (CD 5.1) states that “In order to help support jobs growth in the District, this Plan seeks to ensure sufficient provision of land and premises for office, industrial and warehousing uses (B1, B2, B8 uses) in **sustainable locations** which meet the needs of local businesses.” (PB Bolding)
- 3.6.5 The (BUNT3) allocation, (3 hectares to the north of Buntingford Business Park), is included in the list of suitable locations.

- 3.6.6 To enable the allocation of this location, I would expect that the LPA and Inspector must have been satisfied that;
- The location of the development is not severed by the A10, and/or that severance would not amount to a significant harm which would prevent future development;
 - There can be an acceptable level of pedestrian and cycle accessibility between the site and Buntingford, to comply with the safe and suitable access for all users requirements of local and national policy;
 - The site location can be acceptably accessible via public transport;
 - Future employees and customers would not be unacceptably reliant or dependent on the unsustainable private car to access the site; and
 - The site is or can be made sustainable.
- 3.6.7 Those seem like logical and reasonable expectations and if that is the case, at least the same conclusion should follow for the Appeal site. Of course, the appeal site offers 3 routes and connections to Buntingford, active travel infrastructure, provides facilities on site and enhances public transport.
- 3.6.8 The Appeal Site is located adjacent to the BUNT3 sustainable location and given that the Appeal Site would additionally deliver infrastructure in terms of active travel, public transport, facilities on site and safe and suitable access, I consider that the Appeal Site location, is (and can be made) sustainable in travel terms.
- 3.6.9 In addition to the BUNT3 site, there is a current application on the Buntingford Business Park site (planning application ref: 3/25/1986/FUL) for the *‘Erection of 4 x light industrial units (use classes B1, B2 and B8) with associated parking and external works...’*.
- 3.6.10 Those proposals offer no improvements to existing active travel connectivity or crossing of the A10 and it is notable that the LHA do not object to those proposals. Indeed, within their Consultation Response from February 2026, they comment that the site *“benefits from a footway connection into Buntingford, providing links to the local bus network and access to nearby amenities...”*.
- 3.6.11 The Core Documents include the application form (CD 10.35), the red line boundary (CD 10.36), site plan (CD 10.37) and the LHAs consultation response (CD 10.28) to aid the Inspector.
- 3.6.12 The Appeal Site proposals further enhance that connection into Buntingford by providing a 4m wide shared foot/cycleway on the western side of the A10, in addition to providing a controlled crossing facility across the A10 and providing a shared 3m foot/cycleway on the eastern side of the A10 into Buntingford and the town centre.

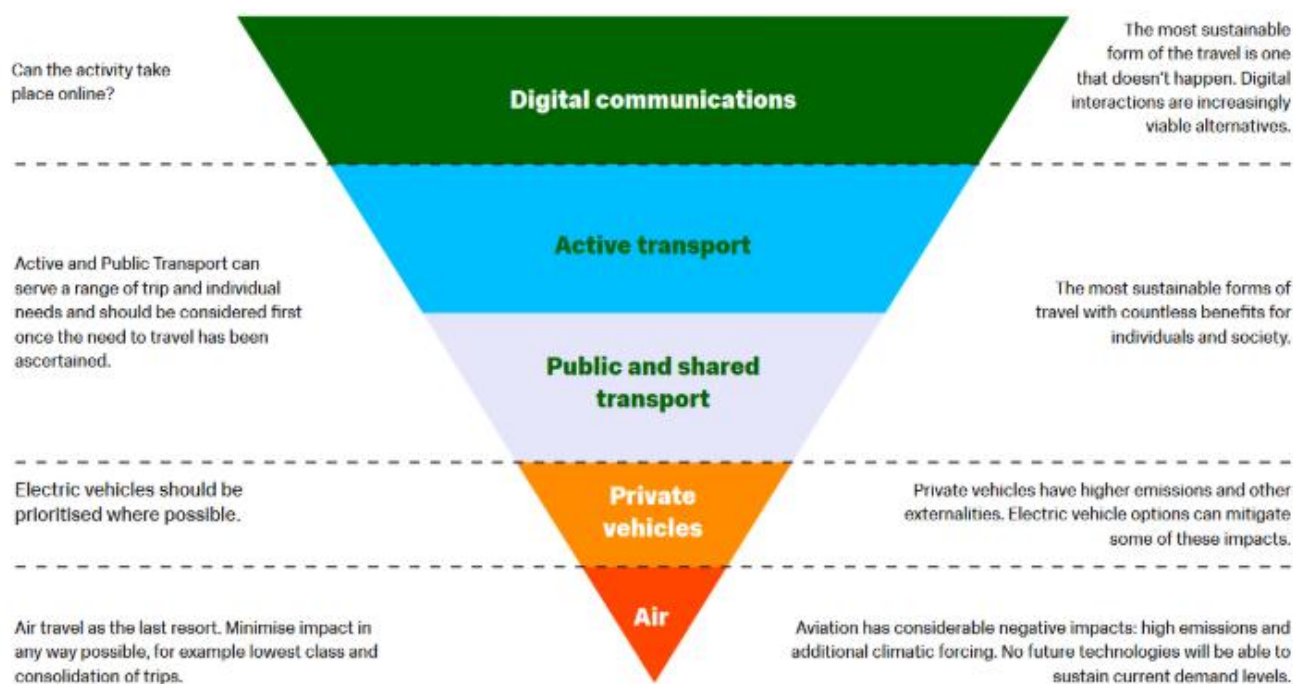
3.7 Sustainability and Sustainable Modes of Transport

- 3.7.1 Considerations of what constitutes sustainable development often recognise that there are 3 strands to sustainability, which are social, economic and environmental. That is reinforced in paragraphs 16 and 17 of the NPPF. Travel is directly related to the environmental strand, but it can also be linked to the social strand. The point to make is that travel is just one aspect of many aspects which make up the three strands in the consideration of whether a development

is sustainable. It is not therefore appropriate to declare the development to be unsustainable solely on the grounds of travel.

3.7.2 In considering modes of sustainable travel, it is useful to have the sustainable travel hierarchy in mind. I present an example from Imperial College London¹ below in **Figure 3.1**.

Figure 3.1 – Sustainable Travel Hierarchy



3.7.3 Air travel is not relevant to this case, however it is relevant to consider the category of private vehicle travel more closely. The Glossary of NPPF previously defined sustainable modes of travel to include car sharing and ultra-low / zero emission cars. The current NPPF does not include those specific descriptions but instead refers to “any efficient, safe and accessible means of transport with overall low impact on the environment...” NPPF policy CC2 directs that proposals should provide infrastructure to support the transition to zero emission vehicles. Those are a rapidly increasing proportion of the UK car fleet. Car sharing has also long been regarded as a sustainable form of travel and is encouraged as such in Travel Plans.

3.7.4 It is therefore incorrect to regard all car travel as being unsustainable. Many of those trips are expressly defined as sustainable modes of travel.

3.7.5 In a Vision Led system it is also relevant to look to the future. From 2030 it will not be possible to buy a new car which only has an internal combustion engine, (ICE). Over the lifespan of a housing development, the ICE car will be a quickly diminishing mode of travel.

3.7.6 It follows then, that even in the one strand of sustainability which relates to travel, it is incorrect to equate an alleged “reliance on the private car” as something which renders a development unsustainable.

¹ Sustainable travel | About | Imperial College London

- 3.7.7 In the case of this development, and as later sections show, the development is sustainable and enhances sustainable accessibility for existing travel by non-development persons too.

3.8 Points of note from the Local Transport Plan and Local Cycling Walking Infrastructure Plan

- 3.8.1 When considering the travel and locational sustainability issues of this case there are several points from the Local Transport Plan (LTP) (CD 10.3) which are pertinent. Of particular note are:
- The LTP definition of Accessibility, Page 55 states “*Accessibility is defined as people being able to access key services at a reasonable cost, in reasonable time and with reasonable ease.*”
 - It goes on to say “*Typically key services include employment, education, health and food shopping. Users may be unable to access the key services because of a lack of passenger transport, or because they have mobility problems, a lack of private transport or are unable to afford the costs of travel.*” The LTP definition of accessibility recognises the role of the private car in providing accessibility.
 - The Public Right of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) (CD 10.9) sets out Core Actions for the LHA and others to upgrade routes and increase user types on rights of way and to fund those works through financial contributions. The Hertfordshire.gov.uk website states that information from across the county is gathered to help the HCC decide how to improve the Rights of Way network. This includes information on who uses the paths, why the paths are used, whether people know where to go on the paths, how to get to them and how easy they are to use. A live database is maintained with this information and is viewable on HCC’s ROWIP webmap. The webmap shows that RoW 36, between the proposed active travel bridge and Bowling Green Lane, is suggested as such a route for an improvement to include cycling. Extracts from the webmap and HCCs Rights of Way webpages are included in **PoE Appendix A**.
- 3.8.2 The East Herts Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) was adopted in June 2026 (CD 10.10) and shows the direct route between Buntingford and the site along Baldock Road and the A507 to be a primary, and then a secondary cycling route. The designation changes where the route crosses the A10, in the same location where the proposals offer a toucan crossing. The proposals therefore directly align with and help deliver components of the LCWIP. Further north, the LCWIP shows primary cycling routes connecting directly onto the A10 carriageway. Bowling Green Lane is on the primary walking network, and Baldock Road is on the secondary walking network. Extracts from the LCWIP are also included in **PoE Appendix A**.
- 3.8.3 The reason for setting out this LTP and LCWIP context is to highlight that despite the LHA and LPA raising issues with the proposed walk and cycle routes and proposed improvements, their own Plans and Core Actions identify the same routes to be their key active travel routes and those for future infrastructure upgrades. Their plans identify the same crossing point of the A10 and how they see financial contributions as a delivery mechanism. The infrastructure delivered by the proposals will therefore deliver elements of the LTP infrastructure.

3.9 Development Trip Rates and Reliance on the Private Car

- 3.9.1 The HSoCG records that all parties are agreed that the traffic impacts of the development have been assessed in detail based upon accepted modelling and that they are acceptable.
- 3.9.2 A criticism of the proposals has been that they are reliant / heavily reliant on the private car. The first point to note is that “reliant upon” in this case is not “reliant upon” or “dependent upon” since there are other travel choices, facilities on site and on-line access. I have also highlighted how many forms of car travel are sustainable modes of travel, so a reliance upon those is not a valid criticism.
- 3.9.3 As the RfR uses the term “reliant upon” to suggest that use of the private car is somehow unacceptable or too high in respect of the appeal site location, then it is pertinent to compare what the level of expected private car use might be at other typical development locations.
- 3.9.4 The TA Appendix I (CD 1.12.ii) sets out the vehicular trip rates for the residential element of the proposals. There are elderly accommodation and community facility uses too, but for the purpose of the “reliant on private car” point, residential trip making is the relevant aspect.
- 3.9.5 I have utilised the TRICS database to derive vehicle trip rates for ‘Edge of Town’, ‘Suburban’ ‘Edge of Town Centre’ site across England and Wales, excluding London. The outputs are attached in **PoE Appendix B**.
- 3.9.6 The vehicle trip rates for these TRICS sites location types, and for the Appeal Site are set out in **Table 3.1**.

Table 3.1: Comparison of Vehicle Trip Rates

Area Definition	Vehicle Trip Rates per Dwelling
	12-hour Trip Rate
Appeal Site	4.409
Edge of Town Sites	4.542
Suburban Sites	5.344
Edge of Town Centre Sites	3.802

- 3.9.7 These rates show that residential development in all locational categories would generate car traffic to a broadly similar extent. If the Council consider the existence of car use to equate to a “reliance” on the private car, then all the above categories exhibit similar levels of “reliance” and that level is normal. A normal level of reliance on the private car should not of itself be a point of objection to a residential development. What is important is whether the site would be solely reliant on the unsustainable private car and whether residents have a genuine choice of transport modes. It is not, and they will.
- 3.9.8 A further, more localised comparison can be made by reviewing the journey to work census statistics for the areas in which the site is located and for East Hertfordshire. **PoE Appendix C** sets out the Census 2011 journey to work by driving a vehicle, percentages for East Hertfordshire MSOAs 001 and 002. It also presents the equivalent statistics for East Hertfordshire as a whole. At 69% and 62% respectively (in 2011), there is little difference. Those numbers will have reduced significantly since 2011.

- 3.9.9 Irrespective of whether these statistics suggest an extent of reliance on the private car, they actually just show the baseline journey to work statistics at the time of the Local Plan. East Herts is not required to deliver housing in cities with low car use such as London, Birmingham or Manchester. They are required to deliver it in East Herts where the starting position is a level of journey to work car driving in the mid 60's%. A proposal can hardly be criticised in terms of reliance on private car, when it is located in an area which exhibits similar levels of car use to the district average. Not least, when one considers that the purpose of the Travel Plan is to improve that position further.

4.0 Policy and Plan Context

4.1 Local and National Policy

- 4.1.1 The policies relevant to the consideration of this appeal are set out in the Transport Assessment, in the RfR and the PSoCG. Those policies are derived from;
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
 - The December 2024 NPPF which was current at the time of the planning decision and
 - Evidence has been updated as of the 17th August 2026 NPPF update.
 - Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan (2018-2031)
 - East Hertfordshire District Plan (2011-2033) (Adopted 2018)
 - Buntingford Community Area Neighbourhood Plan (2014-2031) (Adopted 2017)
- 4.1.2 The PSoCG (CD 15.1) sets out the policies most important to the determination of the appeal. In respect of the transport policies, the following policies are listed;
- TRA1, TRA2, and DPS2 of the East Herts District Plan
 - HD1 and HD2 of the Neighbourhood Plan
- 4.1.3 It is agreed that DPS2 of the Local Plan and Policy HD1 of the Neighbourhood Plan are not transport policies and are out of date.
- 4.1.4 The RfR also alleges non-compliance with the superseded NPPF policies 110 and 115.
- 4.1.5 In Section 9 and 11 of my Proof, I review these policies and those of the new NPPF against the RfR and the Inspectors Main Issue (ii) and set out whether the proposals comply with the policies cited in the RfR and their closest current NPPF equivalents.
- 4.1.6 In addition, I consider the following to have relevance to the proposals.
1. East Herts Council Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP).
 2. Hertfordshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

4.2 East Herts Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)

- 4.2.1 LCWIPs are a strategic approach to identifying cycling and walking improvements required at a local level. Initially, the areas and routes considered in the plan are those with the greatest potential for cycling and walking, and where targeted improvements could help generate the greatest number and types of new active travel trips. The key outputs from the LCWIP include identification of the primary and secondary walking and cycling networks, scheme concepts and a prioritised list of interventions.
- 4.2.2 Within **PoE Appendix A**, I present extracts from the Local Walking and Cycling Network Plans from the LCWIP Appendix F: Combined Network Mapping (CD 10.17) adopted in June 2026 and the East Herts LCWIP ARCGIS². With regards to the Walking Network Plans, Primary routes are shown in red and defined as *“Those with the most demand. They are often on main roads, busy*

² walking_network_east_herts | East Hertfordshire Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (https://east-herts-lcwip-hertscscc.hub.arcgis.com/pages/walking_network_east_herts)

routes to train stations or other main destinations.” Secondary routes are shown in orange, which are defined as “complementary routes that help to join primary routes to residential areas and other destinations.”

- 4.2.3 It is notable in relation to the proposals that Baldock Road, east of the A10, is shown as a Secondary route between the A10 and Monks Walk, and a primary route between Monks Walk and High Street. Bowling Green Lane is also a Primary route. Both of those identified routes will also serve as key active travel routes from the proposed site into the town of Buntingford.
- 4.2.4 Within the Cycling Network Plans, Primary routes are shown in a dark blue colour and are defined as *“those with the most demand. They are often on main roads, busy routes to train stations or other main destinations.”* Secondary routes are shown in a lighter blue colour and are defined as *“complementary routes that help to join primary routes to residential areas and other destinations.”*
- 4.2.5 Baldock Road to the east of the A10 is defined as a primary cycle route, and the A507 Baldock Road to the west of the A10 is defined as a secondary cycle route. In addition, Bowling Green Lane is a primary cycle route. These routes carry the Councils designation of importance and intention, are also the routes which the proposals upgrade and connect, and which active travel trips from the proposals will use to access Buntingford. Given this, the appeal scheme is aligned with the LCWIP and delivers improvements along sections of the LCWIPs key routes.
- 4.2.6 Neale Drive, which connects the A10 with Ermine Street, is identified as a Primary Cycle Route. This is notable in that it shows the intention / acceptance by the Council for a primary Cycle route to lead onto the A10 at a 60mph section, even in the absence of any intended crossing or existing cycle infrastructure on the A10 in either direction. I note this in contrast to the Councils’ concerns regarding the proposed toucan crossing over the A10 further south.
- 4.2.7 Paragraph 7.4.1 and 7.4.3 of the LCWIP state that HCC will explore opportunities to apply for funding from external sources, such as any future Government capital grants or funding competitions for active travel infrastructure.
- 4.2.8 Additionally, it states *“All walking and cycling networks and infrastructure schemes identified, whether prioritised or listed as primary or secondary on the full LCWIP maps, are integral to delivering sustainable transport options and must also be considered in the context of development related funding. This includes opportunities to secure financial contributions via Section 106 agreements and other planning obligations”*.
- 4.2.9 The proposals provide walking and cycling infrastructure to enhance sections of the primary and secondary walking and cycling networks identified within the LCWIP, which can be delivered or funded by the appellant.

4.3 Hertfordshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) (2017/18-2027/2028)

- 4.3.1 The ROWIP (CD 10.9) is part of Hertfordshire’s LTP. It helps local councils make local paths better for walkers, cyclists, equestrians and people with mobility impairments. There are a

number of ‘Core Actions’ presented within the RoWIP that I find to be particularly relevant to the development proposals. These include;

Core Action 1: Develop routes that cater for the needs of people with limited mobility and visual impairment

- 4.3.2 Core Action 1.2 states that the Councils Rights of Way and Highways departments will “*Provide new routes that meet the specific needs and demands of users with limited mobility*” which can potentially be funded by a Section 106 (S106).

Core Action 3: Reduce the number of physical barriers on the network, e.g.; improve surfacing, remove or improve structures

- 4.3.3 Core Actions 3.1, 3.4 and 3.5 state that the Councils Rights of Way and Highways departments will;

- “*Positively seek the least restrictive option in relation to access onto and along RoW.*”
- “*Adopt a proactive approach to removal of all other unnecessary barriers.*”
- “*Improve surfacing on routes that provide important links in the network, that are currently in poor condition and where improvement would bring significant public benefit.*”

- 4.3.4 These actions are for all current and potential users including cyclists, young and old people and users with a disability. The RoWIP states that these actions can be funded through a S106.

Core Action 4: Promote ROW and the health benefits of physical activity in the natural environment

- 4.3.5 Core Action 4.3 states that the District, Borough Council and the Rights of Way departments will “*Where potential demand exists work to remove social or cultural barriers that currently prevent people from ethnic minority groups accessing the countryside.*”

Core Action 5: Develop links into the countryside from towns

- 4.3.6 Core Action 5.2 states that the District, Borough Council and the Rights of Way departments will “*Promote routes through clear local signing and information boards.*”

Core Action 6: Create off-road routes linking communities with places of work, schools and other local facilities.

- 4.3.7 Core Action 6.2 states the Councils Rights of Way and Highways departments will “*Identify opportunities to improve walking routes linking homes with key services by improvements to signing and safety especially at road crossings.*”

- 4.3.8 Core Action 6.3 states that the Councils Rights of Way and Highways departments will “*Identify opportunities to improve connections for cycle journeys using an integrated on and off-road network by improvements to:*

- *Surfacing (making it suitable for all types of bikes)*
- *Safety especially at road crossings*”

Core Action 7: Extend the network for cyclists, horse-riders and horse & carriage drivers.

- 4.3.9 Core Action 7.1 states that the Councils Rights of Way team will *“Develop off-road cycling routes with suitable dry surfacing that complement the unclassified highway network especially where traffic volumes are relatively low and there is evidence of demand.”*

Core Action 9: Ensure the off-road network is protected, extended and enhanced through development proposals.

- 4.3.10 Core Action 9.1 and 9.2 state that the District and Borough Councils Rights of Way team will
- *“Support the development of District Local Plans in order to ensure that improvements to the non-motorised network are identified and incorporated in all new developments.”*
 - *“Promote RoW in development Travel Plans”*

- 4.3.11 It states these can be funded by a S106 contribution.

Core Action 10: Work to improve the safety and attractiveness of the network affected by busy transport routes

- 4.3.12 Core Action 10.1 states that the District Borough Council and Rights of Way team will *“Identify where well used sections of the off-road network are crossed by the primary road network and develop solutions suitable for pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders, carriage drivers and disabled users as appropriate.”*

- 4.3.13 This again can be funded by a S106 contribution.

- 4.3.14 It is clear that the development proposals align well with these core actions and will assist in delivering some of these Council aspirations. It is also clear that on the basis of the ROWIP, the Council should be proactive in promoting upgrades to RoW 36 and RoW 35.

5.0 Existing Accessibility

5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 This section of my evidence reviews the existing accessibility characteristics of the appeal site, and existing connectivity and distances to local facilities, services and amenities.

5.2 Connectivity Tool

- 5.2.1 The Department for Transport (DfT) have recently launched their “Connectivity Tool”. The NPPF advises that it be used.
- 5.2.2 I have undertaken a review of the appeal site, in its existing form, using the Connectivity Tool, and the results are presented within **PoE Appendix D** and also within the HSoCG.
- 5.2.3 The DfT’s ‘Applying Connectivity Tool’ guidance document, included in **PoE Appendix D-2** states that the Connectivity Tool “*combines transport and land use data to generate a national measure of connectivity for any location in England and Wales. This connectivity score measures people’s ability to get where they want to go*”.
- 5.2.4 The Connectivity Tool considers not just the ways in which people can travel, but also what services, facilities and destinations are available for them to travel to.
- 5.2.5 To summarise the findings presented within **PoE Appendix D**, the DfT’s Connectivity Tool presents a connectivity score (for all modes of travel except driving) of 45, for the existing site. This means that the site, in its existing form, is 45% as connected as the best-connected location in England and Wales (Tower Hamlets, London).
- 5.2.6 The Connectivity Tool also has a function which allows the connectivity score for the site to be expressed in comparison to the connectivity scores for East Hertfordshire.
- 5.2.7 When compared using the ‘Local Authority Banding’ function, the area on which residential units are proposed sits in Band B, i.e. in the second-best connected tier (in a 10-tier scale) within East Hertfordshire.
- 5.2.8 It is apparent from the extracts presented in **PoE Appendix D** that Buntingford is also the most connected location in the northern half of the district.
- 5.2.9 It is also possible to run the connectivity tool to assess the connectivity of the site by driving. When that is done, unsurprisingly the site has a very high level of connectivity (71). I appreciate that the councils have cited negative aspects arising due to the two A-roads, but it is important to also recognise the excellent connectivity by road which the site enjoys. That assists sustainable car journeys, taxis, public transport, deliveries, emergency services etc.
- 5.2.10 Remembering that the DfT tool seeks to provide a single reproducible comparison across England and Wales, a score equivalent to 45% (excluding driving) of the connectivity of Central London clearly conveys a good level of connectivity particularly in the context of rural site.
- 5.2.11 East Herts District Council are required to deliver homes within East Hertfordshire. It is clear from the Connectivity Tool extracts presented in **PoE Appendix D**, that Buntingford, including

the appeal site, is well connected, is one of the best-connected areas within the district, and is the best-connected area within the northern half of the district.

- 5.2.12 That connectivity will be enhanced further by an on-site layout which provides facilities and which will be designed to prioritise pedestrians, cyclists and public transport. Connectivity will be further improved by the provision of, off site footways, cycleways, speed limit reductions, pedestrian and cycle crossings, traffic calming, enhancement to PROWs, provision of and enhancements to public transport and Travel Plan measures.

5.3 Active Travel Distances to Employment, Services and Facilities

- 5.3.1 It has long been recognised that walking has the greatest potential to replace short car journeys, particularly those under 2km. This is referenced in Manual for Streets (MfS) (CD 10.1) paragraph 4.4.1.
- 5.3.2 The development proposals include facilities on site to which walking distances will be short. Employment is also accessible by a short walk at Buntingford Business Park located adjacent to the site and (in the future) to allocation site BUNT3.
- 5.3.3 In addition to those near-by facilities and employment areas, there are a large number of facilities located within Buntingford which are accessible from the site. That is agreed in the HSoCG. I have undertaken a review of walking distances from the centre of the proposed residential area of the site to these existing services and facilities, as of June 2026.
- 5.3.4 Whilst the individual routes to each facility will ultimately use the existing town network of footways, footpaths etc, those will be accessed via 3 primary active travel route choices from the site. Those 3 routes can be laid out to modern standards on site and are shown within **PoE Appendix E**. Route 2 has been shown as splitting into two options Route 2a and 2b once east of the A10. The route options then can be described as follows:
- 5.3.5 **Route 1;** South through the site, joining the A507, a new pedestrian/cycleway will be introduced from the site access into Buntingford, including a new Toucan crossing on the A10. West of the A10 the pedestrian/cycleway will be 4m wide and to the east of A10 it will be 3m wide. That route provides safe and suitable access for all users.
- 5.3.6 **Route 2a and Route 2b;** These both share a common route eastward from the site and both offer the option of using either the existing footbridge over the A10 which will be upgraded or the new active travel bridge over the A10. Route 2a and 2b together provide safe and suitable access for all users. Once east of the A10, Route 2a follows a straight line, due east along Footpath 36 which is to be improved, whereas route option 2b turns south and connects to Skipps Meadow which leads to Baldock Road and the active travel infrastructure along Route 1.
- 5.3.7 **Route 3;** emerges from the northern part of the site to use the new pedestrian footbridge over the A10 and footpath 35. Route 3 provides safe and suitable access for pedestrians. It is agreed within the HSoCG that the proposed footbridge crossing is safe and appropriate for people on foot, and that enhancements to RoW35 as shown within Appendix H of the HSoCG will provide benefits to existing and future residents of Buntingford and the development.

- 5.3.8 There are 45 off-site local services and facilities within a 2km walk catchment from the centre of the site. Within **PoE Appendix F**, I attach my review of distances to existing services and facilities, by each of these 4 routes. I have also included aerial imagery showing the routes taken and measured to each facility by each route. There are many more route options depending on which local network routes are taken through the town.
- 5.3.9 To summarise, **PoE Appendix F** shows that within a 2km walk catchment from the centre of the site, the following services and facilities are accessible on foot or by cycle;
- | | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1x Church | 1x Florist | 1x Petrol Station |
| 1x Community Centre | 13x Food and Beverage | 1x Post Office |
| 1x Dentist | 2x Hair & Beauty | 10x Retail (shops) |
| 4x Education Centres | 2x Leisure | 1x Social Club |
| 2x Employment Parks | 4x Medical/Health Practitioner | 1x Veterinary Practitioner |
- 5.3.10 I have identified 45 off-site local services and facilities accessible within a 2km walk catchment from the centre of the site. Of these, the two employment parks each contain a further number of local businesses in which future residents of the site could seek employment. There is an additional employment industrial estate located 2.4km from the centre of site which some future residents may wish to walk to and which is within an accessible cycle distance.
- 5.3.11 The whole of Buntingford is within a 5km cycle distance from the centre of the site, and as such I consider that all areas of employment, facilities and services within the town are accessible from the site via cycle.
- 5.3.12 Those described above are existing facilities, and future residents of the proposals will also have direct access and short walk/cycle journeys to the new facilities on site that are described in **Section 6**.
- 5.3.13 Even if the site was not adjacent to the facilities in Buntingford it would still provide access on foot to the adjacent employment area and allocated employment site, to services and facilities which will be provided on site and access to services by public transport and through digital connectivity.
- 5.3.14 The Appellant has a refused application for employment to the south of the A507 (planning reference 3/24/1255/OUT). That refusal has been appealed. If approved, that development would further bolster the local employment opportunities within walking distance of the site.

5.4 How Far are People Willing to Walk and Cycle?

- 5.4.1 There is further evidence which corroborates a 2km walk catchment. I present published research on how far people do actually walk to services. Research from the National Travel Survey (NTS) data for the UK as a whole, undertaken by Gareth Wakenshaw and Nick Bunn (2017) (attached as **PoE Appendix G**) shows the distances that people do walk and cycle to access public transport, employment, services and facilities.
- 5.4.2 Excluding London, their work confirms that a distance of 1,950 metres, (around 2 km), represents an acceptable maximum walking distance for the majority of land uses. That distance of 1,950m is cited as the appropriate catchment distance which a residential

development should use as in terms of accessibility to services and facilities. In that regard the 1950m is more conservative than the usual 2km catchment approach.

5.4.3 **PoE Appendix F** has been colour coded to illustrate the services and facilities which are accessible within 1,950m from the centre of the site using the four routes shown in **PoE Appendix E**.

5.4.4 To summarise, the number of existing services and facilities that are accessible within 1950m via the 4 routes are outlined below:

- 43 existing services and facilities are accessible via Route 1.
- 43 existing services and facilities are accessible via Route 2a.
- 45 existing services and facilities are accessible via Route 2b.
- 42 existing services and facilities are accessible via Route 3.

5.5 Social Safety in Buntingford

5.5.1 The Authorities contend that RoW 36 may be socially unsafe. An initial point to make is that RoW 36 is not the only route between the site and the town and that pedestrians will have a choice of route.

5.5.2 There is also Route 1 along Baldock Road and the A507 and Route 2B along Skipps Meadow, both of which post development will be surfaced and street lit for their full length. There is also a surfaced and lit route along Greenways and through the recreation ground.

5.5.3 In relation to RoW 36, a starting point would be to consider whether the existing route is socially unsafe. The existing route connects playing fields, the town centre and schools to residential properties, streets and to the development site. On my site visits I have observed it to be well used.

5.5.4 I have sought to investigate the recorded crime statistics for the Buntingford area and describe those in relation to how safe Buntingford fares in National terms and then how safe the existing right of way is in comparison to the Buntingford area.

5.5.5 Statistics for deprivation (referred to as English indices of deprivation 2025) have been downloaded from <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2025> showing levels of deprivation under the category of crime. I include the data as **PoE Appendix H**.

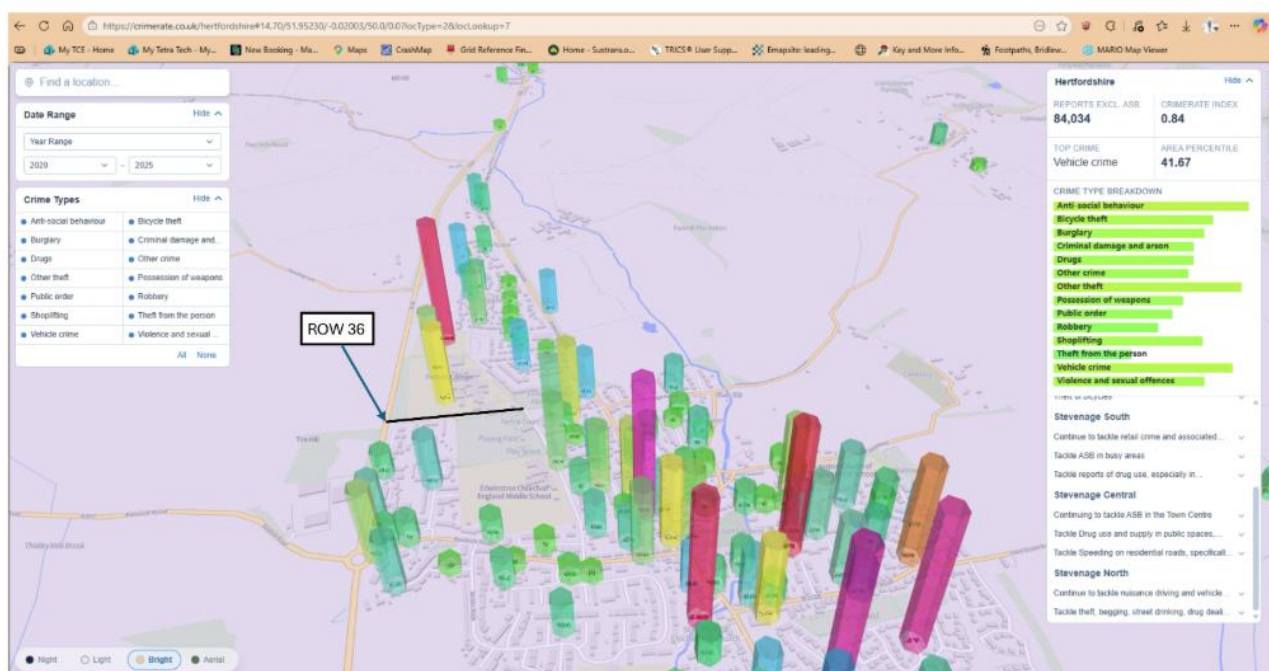
5.5.6 Crime in these statistics represents a measure of the risk of personal and material victimisation at a local level. Within these statistics, different LSOAs are ranked based on crime. A rank of 1 represents the most deprived (area of higher crime rates) and a rank of 33,755 least deprived.

5.5.7 The data is then also ranked in decile terms which allows comparison between other areas in the UK. The area across which RoW 36 passes is on the boundary between lower output areas C&D. One of those is reported within 60th decile and one at the 80th decile meaning that they are in the bands where 60% and 80% of the country report higher levels of crime. If we took the

average of those two readings i.e 70% then the RoW 36 path lies between two areas which are safer than 70% of the UK.

- 5.5.8 I then sought to consider how the route of RoW 36 fares in terms of those average census areas. In order to illustrate that, I have reviewed police crime websites and the clearest indication that I have found can be derived from the website <https://crimerate.co.uk/hertfordshire>. **Excerpt 5.1** below from that website shows recorded crimes between 2020-2025 in graphical form across the Buntingford area. I have highlighted RoW 36.

Excerpt 5.1 – Recorded Crimes in Buntingford (2020-2025)



- 5.5.9 **Excerpt 5.1** shows that recorded crime in Buntingford is focused in the town centre, across residential areas and at the schools. There is no recorded crime along RoW 36.
- 5.5.10 It would appear therefore that RoW 36, which based on my site observations is well used and which connects residential areas to the town and schools, has a track record of no crime between 2020-2025. That is based on the existing situation, and the proposals seek to improve the quality of that route.
- 5.5.11 It is my view therefore that the route at present and in the future will not be socially unsafe and furthermore if anyone does not wish to walk along it at certain times of night or in certain circumstances, then there are other suitable routes by which they can undertake their journey to and from the proposed development site.

5.6 Existing Public Transport Accessibility

By Bus

- 5.6.1 Bus stops and services will be provided on site. In terms of existing facilities, the nearest existing bus stop to the site is located on B1038 Baldock Road (opposite Greenways), located approximately 805m walking distance from the centre of the site. The research undertaken by

Bunn and Wakenshaw presented in **PoE Appendix G** shows that people are willing to walk 810m to a bus stop, and so services from this bus stop present a realistic travel choice for future residents. Of the buses tabulated below, services 18, 331 and 37 are also diverted onsite as part of the proposals. Section 7.5 of my evidence discusses the proposed accessibility via public transport further.

5.6.2 **Table 5.1** below shows the existing services which operate from these bus stops. Copies of the existing bus timetables and bus routes are provided within **PoE Appendix I**.

Table 5.1 - Existing Bus Frequencies at Bus Stops opposite Greenways

Service No.	Route	Frequency		
		Mon to Fri	Sat.	Sun.
Existing Bus Services from Greenways Bus Stops				
18	Buntingford – Reed – Barley - Royston	6 per day	5 per day	No services
	Royston – Barley – Reed – Buntingford	5 per day	4 per day	No services
331	Buntingford – Puckeridge – Standon – Wadesmill – Ware - Hertford	17 per day	14 per day	7 services
	Hertford – Ware – Wadesmill – Standon – Puckeridge – Buntingford	14 per day	14 per day	6 services
36/36A	Buntingford – Puckeridge – Standon – Bishops Stortford	2 per day services	1 service services	No services
	Bishops Stortford – Standon – Puckeridge - Buntingford	2 per day	No services	No services
37	Buntingford – Baldock – Letchworth – Hitchin - Stevenage	5 per day	6 per day	No services
	Stevenage – Hitchin – Letchworth – Baldock – Buntingford	6 per day	6 per day	No services
37x	Buntingford – Cottared - Stevenage	2 per day	No services	No services
	Stevenage - Cottared - Buntingford	1 per day	No services	No services

5.6.3 **Table 5.2** outlines the journey times via bus from Buntingford to these key nearby towns and villages.

Table 5.2 – Bus Journey Times

From	To	Duration (Mins)
Buntingford	Baldock	18
	Hertford	48
	Hitchin	43
	Letchworth	24
	Puckeridge	12
	Royston	28
	Stevenage	30 (Bus 37x) 70 (Bus 37)
	Ware	35

5.6.4 **Table 5.2** shows that all of the key towns and villages nearby are accessible within 48 minutes on the existing services.

5.6.5 In addition to those existing services, the HertsLynx service, which is Hertfordshire County Council's Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) service is available to residents of Buntingford. The LHA have confirmed that a financial contribution to the HertsLynx service is not required from the proposals. Users can choose a variety of pick up and drop off locations across Hertfordshire, by booking on the HertsLynx app. This service currently operates with 7 buses and averages over 5,000 passengers per month³. This service provides further access to areas in which the existing services listed above do not cover.

5.6.6 Furthermore, the Buntingford Community Area Transport (BCAT) Bus provides a weekly shopping service which future residents of the proposals can benefit from. This bus service runs twice a week on Tuesdays and Thursdays, to Brookfield Farm (which contains a Marks and Spencers and Tesco) and Royston (which contains an Aldi, Marks and Spencers and Tesco). These services operate from The Crown Pub in Buntingford. The proposals commit £500 per dwelling (i.e. up to £330k) towards maintaining and improving this service for use by residents of the development.

By Rail

5.6.7 Royston Railway Station is the closest railway station to the site, located c. 11.9km from the proposed Throcking Lane access and 13.2km from the proposed A507 access. It is accessible within a 33-minute bus journey via the 18 bus service, or in 15-25 minutes (according to Google Maps) by vehicle. It is important to note that the 18 bus service will serve the development site as part of the bus strategy agreed with the PTU.

5.6.8 The online source nationalrail.co.uk advises that the station has a 517-space car park with 9 accessible parking spaces and a pick-up/drop-off point, making park and ride a feasible option

³ About HertsLynx - Intalink

for residents of Buntingford. The station also has step-free access and is accessible for those with mobility impairments.

5.6.9 Royston Railway Station provides services to Cambridge, Brighton and London Kings Cross on the following frequencies between 07:00-08:00 and 08:00-09:00 (i.e. typical AM peak times for commuting to work):

- Cambridge – 3/4 services per hour
- Brighton (via Baldock, Letchworth, Hitchin, Stevenage, London) - 2 services per hour
- London Kings Cross (via Letchworth) – 4/5 services per hour

5.6.10 Baldock Railway Station is located c. 12.9km to the east of the development. The railway station is accessible from Buntingford, within an 18-minute bus journey via the 37-bus service which stops at Market Place in Baldock and then a c.7-minute walk. Alternatively, the railway station is accessible within a 14–20-minute vehicle journey (according to Google Maps). It is important to note that the 37-bus service will serve the development site as part of the bus strategy agreed with the PTU.

5.6.11 The online source nationalrail.co.uk advises that the station has an 85-space car park and a pick-up/drop-off point, making park and ride a feasible option for residents of Buntingford.

5.6.12 The station operates along the same rail line as Royston and so benefits from those same services. Given this, I consider rail travel to further afield areas of employment, retail and leisure is a possibility for residents of Buntingford from Royston Railway Station or Baldock Railway Station, which is accessible via bus journey a private vehicle within a reasonable journey time.

6.0 Description of the Proposals, Access and Accessibility Improvements

6.1 Description of the Proposals

On-Site

6.1.1 Key elements of the proposed scheme on-site include;

- Up to 600 dwellings, and up to 60 elderly accommodation units, of which 264 dwellings (40%) would be affordable housing);
- A Mixed-Use Local Centre and Community Hub, comprising commercial units to meet the day-to-day retail/service needs of residents of the development, potential health facility (if required), residential uses, mobility hub, and public realm;
- The provision of land for a 2 Form Entry First School (including nursery provision);
- Green infrastructure including formal sports (including pavilion building), children's play area, and natural and semi-natural green space;

Access Strategy and Proposed Sustainable Travel Improvements

6.1.2 The key elements of the proposed access strategy include;

- Vehicular access off the A507 Baldock Road to the south of the site, and off Throcking Lane to the north;
- Significant funding to enhance public transport provision, including bringing services into the site, increased service frequencies, contributions to the BCAT service and funding for public transport passes or cycling equipment;
- On site layout designed to modern standards to prioritise active travel and public transport;
- Active travel improvements along the A507 and Baldock Road, including a Toucan crossing of the A10 and provision of a shared use footway / cycleway from the Site access and towards the town centre with associated raised crossings to improve safety and prioritise sustainable transport modes for the benefit of residents of the development and existing pedestrians and cyclists;
- An active travel bridge (including via suitable ramped access) to be constructed immediately adjacent to the existing pedestrian bridge over the A10, which is also to be improved, linking Public Rights of Way (PROW) 36 and 40, including improvements to the PROW in terms of lighting, surfacing and width; and
- A new pedestrian footbridge bridge over the A10 which will connect Public Rights of Way 41 and 35 and PROW improvements.

6.1.3 Mr James Duffy, for the Appellant, has been dealing with matters of highways and active travel design. As the S106 and conditions discussions have progressed, the Appellant has requested that an additional potential enhancement be drawn up to improve the walking route to Millfield First School. That is to improve the existing facilities for pedestrians to that school, prior to a school being provided on site.

- 6.1.4 The potential enhancements to that route can be seen in Section 4.5 and Appendix M of Mr Duffys evidence.
- 6.1.5 As the school provision point has not yet been concluded, those potential enhancements do not feature in my assessment of sustainable improvements as detailed within the following section, nor have they informed my considerations on the acceptability of the proposals.
- 6.1.6 It is clear however, that if those enhancements are delivered, they would improve the walking environment between Baldock Road and Millfield First School for development and existing pedestrian trip making.

6.2 Assessment of the Proposed Sustainable Travel Improvements

- 6.2.1 As I set out in a matrix, included as **PoE Appendix J**, the proposals (excluding the potential improvements on the route to Millfield First School) offer 33 elements of sustainable travel improvements and 18 elements of sustainable travel measures / funding. In the interests of brevity and to assist cross referencing, I refer to that matrix. Many of those elements will also deliver benefits in accessibility for existing residents, workers and visitors in the wider area and that is agreed in the HSoCG. Those additional benefits for others should also inform considerations on the subject of sustainability and promoting sustainable travel.
- 6.2.2 The matrix of infrastructure delivery, improvement and funding shows how the proposals will serve the objectives of:
- Pedestrian infrastructure enhancements
 - Cyclist enhancements
 - Bus travel enhancements
 - Vehicle driver safety
 - Non-Motorised User Safety
 - A reduced need to travel
 - A reduced need to travel by private car
 - Benefit to the wider public
 - Sustainable travel improvements; and
 - Accessibility improvements.
- 6.2.3 These sustainable travel improvements and sustainable travel measures / funding should be noted in terms of addressing the comments in the Officers Report to Committee, Reasons for Refusal and objection of the LHA.
- 6.2.4 I consider that the substantial list of sustainable travel improvements demonstrates that the proposals will enhance the connectivity and accessibility of the site, will promote sustainable travel and will address the requirements of the NPPF (previously paragraphs 110, 115, and now also NPPF policies CC2, S5 1(j), TR3, TR4, TR6 (ref the evidence of James Duffy), TR8, DP3 2(a, c, d &f) and Policy TRA1 of the East Herts District Plan.

7.0 Considerations on the Accessibility of the Proposals

7.1 Introduction

- 7.1.1 When considering accessibility and sustainable travel it is helpful to consider four categories:
1. digital, replacing the need to travel;
 2. on site layout and facilities;
 3. at the interface between the site and the external networks; and
 4. onward connectivity to facilities and services.
- 7.1.2 As the following sections describe, the proposals are suitably accessible across all 4 categories. In terms of the points agreed between the parties, suitable accessibility is not contested in respect of the first three categories above and facilities within 2km are agreed to be accessible.

7.2 Digital Communications and Reducing the Need to Travel

- 7.2.1 Considering the sustainable travel hierarchy presented in Section 3, a significant point to make relating to accessibility is the increasing and very significant trend to access services, shopping, work and to maintain social contact online. As a modern development, the proposals will feature efficient broadband connectivity which facilitate this.
- 7.2.2 From the residents/origin part of a journey, many people now choose to work from home and access facilities such as shopping, banking, medical appointments, chemist prescriptions, news, literature, entertainment (such as movies) and social interactions online. That digital accessibility is complimented and reinforced by the rise of the logistics and delivery industry, and service providers reciprocating through providing the facilities and infrastructure to host online access.
- 7.2.3 Physical accessibility to services and facilities (particularly the workplace) is important but being able to have online access to most aspects of life, where travel was traditionally necessary, has reduced isolation and the need to travel.
- 7.2.4 **PoE Appendix K** presents general statistics gleaned on the subject.
- 7.2.5 On-line access presents a great sustainability benefit and a further accessibility choice. In a Vision- led planning system and with Government and Local Authority strategies seeking to reduce vehicular travel, that trend is likely to increase.
- 7.2.6 Every home and business on site will have modern broadband connection, and so 100% of the development will have the option to access services and facilities by the most sustainable mode, which is digital connectivity.

7.3 On-Site Layout and Facilities

- 7.3.1 In terms of the site layout, the planning application is in outline. It can be ensured at detailed planning stage that the site will be laid out to modern standards, putting pedestrians and cyclists to the fore. It will be designed to incorporate public transport services and properties

will have modern broadband. Facilities and services will be present on site, including on site education and a mixed-use local centre which can internalise employment, education and daily retail trips. It should therefore be accepted that the Site will be delivered with an accessible internal layout, in line with the requirements of the NPPF. The HSoCG acknowledges that (for the superseded NPPF but should remain valid under the new NPPF.

7.4 Accessibility at the Interfaces between the Site and the External Networks

- 7.4.1 A third aspect of site accessibility is the nature of the accesses to the site and the modes of travel which they can support. Unlike many developments, the site will have four access points / connections (five, if the active travel bridge and existing footbridge are counted separately), to the wider networks.
- 7.4.2 A new, all modes access (the main site access) is proposed off the A507. It forms a three-arm roundabout, designed with flexibility to allow access for future employment development on land south of the A507. The proposals include a shared pedestrian/cycle path.
- 7.4.3 A second vehicle (including bus) access is proposed to the north of the site off Throcking Lane, with accompanied speed limit reductions. This access provides for vehicles, including buses and the HSoCG records agreement that it is safe.
- 7.4.4 Three further active travel connections between the site and Buntingford are also delivered by the proposals;
- The first is a new footbridge over the A10, towards the north of the site, including enhancements to FP35.
 - The second and third include enhancements to the existing A10 footbridge along with a new proposed active travel bridge running parallel to the existing footbridge and linking RoW 40 with RoW 36. The existing enhanced footbridge and the proposed active travel bridge enter the site at the same location but provide two options to cross the A10.
- 7.4.5 The provision of four access locations, (5 connections) with associated improvements to existing PRowS and active travel infrastructure provides a choice of active travel connection, and together with the on-site layout design, is a clear demonstration that the site would be well connected and accessible to the surrounding networks.

7.5 Onward Accessibility to Services and Facilities (Public Transport)

- 7.5.1 The fourth category of accessibility is off-site to onward facilities. The following two sections consider those opportunities, by public transport and by active travel. As the connectivity tool shows, the site is very well connected for travel by driving, including by the sustainable private vehicle. In respect of onward travel to facilities and services, I have also reviewed the potential for travelling by other sustainable modes. In considering the above points, it is useful again to have the sustainable travel hierarchy in mind. I presented that in Section 3.

Public Transport Accessibility

- 7.5.2 If some future residents find they cannot access services in Buntingford on foot or that the services they wish to access do not exist in Buntingford, they have the public transport sustainable travel option by which to access those Buntingford services and services further afield. The HSoCG confirms agreement between the parties that *“Residents of the proposed development will have the option to travel sustainably to other nearby towns, local facilities and employment centres by bus”*.
- 7.5.3 A key aspect which makes accessing facilities from any rural site a realistic option is whether there are towns or villages nearby where those services can be found. Baldock, Letchworth Garden City, Royston, Ware, Hertford and Stevenage, amongst others, are sizeable towns than can be reached within a reasonable bus journey.
- 7.5.4 I have provided a review of the existing bus services within Section 5 of my evidence.
- 7.5.5 The proposals promote bus travel by diverting existing bus services 18, 331 and 37 into an on-site mobility hub towards the south of the site, which will include bus shelters and real time bus information boards. Although the site layout is a matter for detailed design, there will also be a mobility hub west of the spine road further north, and bus stops on the spine road to reduce walk distances to bus stops, as set out in the Ridge TN11 (CD 2.10.i) Appendix D.
- 7.5.6 The LHAs Public Transport Unit (PTU) have agreed the details of bus routes which may serve the development, and initial costs have been agreed in principle. The LHA’s June 2025 consultation response (CD 4.35, page 2) states that *“HCC’s Public Transport Unit has also agreed the details of bus routes that may serve the development. An initial cost of providing such services has been agreed in principle with the applicant.”*
- 7.5.7 A significant contribution of £1.5m will be made by the Appellant to allow the bus service 331 between Buntingford and Hertford to be delivered at a 30-minute frequency (with evenings and Sunday services) with further complimentary service provided by bus service 18 and 37. The funding towards the bus services during the early years of the development has the potential to establish sustainable travel habits among new residents, encouraging long-term use of public transport and reducing reliance on private cars. The triggers for implementation will be agreed within the S106 Agreement. The initial subsidy allows patronage to grow as the development becomes occupied, aiming towards a self-sustaining bus service.
- 7.5.8 As part of the separate proposals for the approved Land to the East of the A10 Buntingford (Planning Reference 3/23/1447/OUT)⁴, (Appeal Ref: 3340497) (CD 7.1, para 11), it is understood that a financial contribution has been agreed to enhance the existing 18 service from a service every two hours, to a service every hour.
- 7.5.9 Future residents of the site therefore will benefit from bus connectivity, at good frequencies and acceptable journey times to Buntingford and to the towns and villages, and the many other small centres of population in which these bus routes pass through.

⁴ Appeal Ref: APP/J1915/W/24/3340497: LAND TO THE EAST OF THE A10, BUNTINGFORD, HERTFORDSHIRE, Proof of Evidence – Transport & Highways

- 7.5.10 The total length of the site from Throcking Lane to the north, to the A507 to the south is c. 900m. The proposals will provide a mobility hub which buses will service in the southern half of the development, and a bus stop connection in the northern half. The onsite layout is a matter for detailed design, and so the exact locations of those facilities are not yet fixed, however provision of those bus stop facilities say 300m and 600m in from the south of the development will ensure that all dwellings will be located within 400m of a bus stop, as recommended by Active Travel England. The Bunn and Wakenshaw research provided in **PoE Appendix G** finds that people are willing to walk 810m to a bus stop. With this in mind, I consider that all dwellings will be located within a convenient walking distance to both bus stop facilities.
- 7.5.11 It is clear that residents of the site will have access to good frequency bus services, to a range of local towns and villages including Buntingford. The improvements to bus service frequencies should also be considered as a benefit to existing residents of Buntingford, and other populations along the bus routes who may choose to take advantage of the better service provision and travel by bus rather than a private vehicle.
- 7.5.12 When considering the onsite bus provision, as well as other bus services described within Section 5 of my Proof, (including the HertLynx Service and the BCAT bus service), it is clear that residents and employees on the site will have a genuine opportunity to travel by bus.
- 7.5.13 The proposals provide a £500 per dwelling contribution towards the improvement of the BCAT service for use by residents of the development. This will provide residents with access, via a sustainable mode of travel, to supermarkets and comparison shopping within Brookfield Farm (which contains a Marks and Spencers and Tesco) and Royston (which contains an Aldi, Marks and Spencers and Tesco). The service currently operates twice a week, however the financial contribution could be used towards increasing the frequency of the service.
- 7.5.14 The points above are supported by several of the agreements outlined within the HSoCG in relation to bus travel, more specifically:
- The enhancements to public transport arising from the proposals will enhance accessibility by bus;
 - Residents of the proposed development will have the option to travel sustainably to other nearby towns, local facilities and employment centres by bus;
 - The proposed Bus Strategy, including diversion of existing services into the proposed site will support users to travel to and from the site via a sustainable mode of transport;
 - The proposed bus strategy and on-site mobility hubs encourage sustainable travel by bus for future residents of the site.
- 7.5.15 At the time of finalising this proof of evidence, further discussions between the Appellant and HCC have been undertaken to confirm the details of future public provision and funding. Given that a genuine choice to travel by bus is provided, and significant financial contributions have been agreed to improve public transport usage and services, in addition to the travel plan measures to raise awareness and rerouting of buses on-site, I consider the proposals suitably promote bus usage.

7.6 Onward Accessibility to Services and Facilities (Active Travel)

- 7.6.1 It has long been recognised that walking has the greatest potential to replace short car journeys, particularly those under 2km. This is referenced in MfS paragraph 4.4.1. (CD 10.1). The catchment for cyclists is further at 5km and 10km for e-bike. In England, children of compulsory school age qualify for free school transport if they are under 8 years old and the school is over 2 miles away (over 3 miles away if over 8 years old).
- 7.6.2 My evidence within Section 5 demonstrated that there are many facilities accessible within 2km distance from the centre of the site. That is agreed in the HSoCG. There are a number of route choices from the site to access Buntingford town centre, employment opportunities, services and facilities, and the distances to those facilities are tabulated in **PoE Appendix F**.
- 7.6.3 The primary active travel route choices leading from the site, via the connection points to the external network for pedestrians and cyclists include:
- Route 1) Via the A507 and Baldock Road; Main access which provides dedicated footway cycleway facilities along the A507 and a toucan crossing of the A10
 - Route 2a) Via the upgraded pedestrian and proposed active travel bridges over the A10 and then along RoW 36;
 - Route 2b) Via the upgraded pedestrian and proposed active travel bridges over the A10 and then along Skipps Meadow; and
 - Route 3) The proposed stepped bridge over the A10 towards the north of the site.
- 7.6.4 As each of those routes join the existing local network, there are then multiple choices of onward route options. One such is where Routes 1 and 2b join Greenways and lead to a surfaced and lit footway through the recreation ground to Edwinstree Middle School, Freeman College and Bowling Green Lane. I have produced a table in **PoE Appendix L** which sets out a summary of the routes and how they fare in terms of accessibility and in the context of the LCWIP and ROWIP.
- 7.6.5 Below, I provide a more detailed review of each route. Each of the routes are also shown on **PoE Appendix E**.
- Route 1**
- 7.6.6 The proposals include provision of a segregated, shared foot/cycleway from the site along the northern side of the A507 carriageway, to the A10/A507 junction. The proposals also include a raised table across the A507/Buntingford Business Park access to aid crossing at that junction. This section of the route will be designed and delivered to modern standards and will be suitable for pedestrians and cyclists.
- 7.6.7 At the A10/A507 Roundabout, the proposals include a toucan crossing facility on the northern arm of the roundabout, providing an improvement on the existing uncontrolled crossing of the A10. Baldock Road to the east of the A10 is classified as a secondary walking route within the LCWIP. The toucan crossing will also serve existing pedestrians. The final location of the toucan crossing is currently being discussed with the LHA, as described within Mr Duffy's evidence. A

minor shift in location would not have a material impact on accessibility and walking distances between the site and the town centre.

- 7.6.8 It is notable that the LHA have not raised an objection to a current planning application on Buntingford Business Park (Ref: 3/25/1986/FUL), as referenced within Section 3.6 of my evidence. That application offers no physical off-site mitigations for active travel users, and the LHAs consultation response states that the application benefits from an existing footway connection into Buntingford. The LHA have also not raised an objection against the lack of any improvements at the A10 crossing. Whilst it is accepted that this application would generate fewer pedestrian and cycle trips than the Appeal site, the topic of highway safety was not raised by the LHA in their consultation response. The Appeal site would improve that existing footway connection further in terms of infrastructure and highway safety at the A10 crossing, which would also benefit users of the Buntingford Business Park development, should that be approved.
- 7.6.9 To the east of the A10, the proposals include a continuation of the shared foot/cycleway along the northern side of the carriageway between the A10/A507 roundabout and the Baldock Road/Greenways junction. At this point, a raised table crossing is proposed across Baldock Road, and the shared use path continues along the southern side of the carriageway into Buntingford. Improvements to crossings, which include raised tables and coloured surfacing, are proposed across the minor arms of all junctions which the shared use path crosses. Traffic calming is also proposed, creating a slower vehicle speed environment to enhance the safety and attractiveness of active travel along the route.
- 7.6.10 Route 1 and Route 2b (as described later in this section) would also benefit from the potential enhancements on the route to Millfield First School.
- 7.6.11 The proposals therefore provide both new and improved existing infrastructure, which will serve both development and existing pedestrians and cyclists (such as to the existing employment use west of A10). The proposals will also help East Herts deliver part of their LCWIP by improving a route which is identified as a secondary walking route and a primary and secondary cycle route.
- 7.6.12 The route is suitable for all walking and wheeling trips. The footway/cycleway is designed to 4m in width to the west of the A10 and 3m in width to the east of the A10. These widths comfortably allow pedestrians (including those with a pram) and cyclists to safely pass each other. The route is direct into Buntingford and offers safe crossing of the A10 and will be street lit along its extent.
- 7.6.13 I consider that the route will a safe and suitable route from the development into Buntingford.
- 7.6.14 The LHA in their latest consultation response (September 2025) (CD 4.42, page 2) indicated they are “*broadly supportive of the proposals*”, and state that they would “*seek to develop the proposed enhancements should planning be approved*”.
- 7.6.15 This is a clear indication that the proposals would be acceptable to the LHA if the appeal was allowed. Even if no other active travel route existed, this Route 1 would still provide an acceptable level of connectivity.

Route 2: 2a and 2b

- 7.6.16 Route 2 connects the site (from around its mid-point) via the existing footbridge, and via the proposed active travel bridge (suitable for pedestrians and cyclists) over the A10. The proposed bridge on Route 2 will have a ramped access at either side and will be accessible for all users. Both bridges provide a route into Buntingford that has no conflict with vehicles on the A10.
- 7.6.17 Once on the east side of the A10, users have two onward route options. Route 2a via RoW 36, which is a well-used existing footpath which runs in a straight line from the A10 bridge and Skipps Meadow, to Bowling Green Lane. Alternatively, Route 2b is available for pedestrians and cyclists along Skipps Meadow. Skipps Meadow has a surfaced footway and street lighting and connects to the proposed infrastructure improvements on Route 1. It should be noted that Greenways between Skipps Meadow and Baldock Road also has a footway, with an uncontrolled crossing facility connecting to the bus stops on Baldock Road. The most recent Google Street View imagery of this section of Greenways is from 2010 which is before Greenways was subject to significant improvements to enable the Skipps Meadow development.
- 7.6.18 Paragraph 7.1.1 of LTN 1/20 (CD 10.4) sets out that most people, especially younger children, will not feel comfortable cycling on the carriageway with more than 2,500 vehicles per day and speeds of more than 20mph. A review of the number of properties along Skipps Meadow suggests there are in the region of 30 properties which use the road for access. Assuming a robust two-trip rate of 6 vehicle trips/dwelling/per day, this amounts to c. 180 vehicles on Skipps Meadow per day, significantly less than the 2,500 vehicles quoted in LTN 1/20.
- 7.6.19 In absence of a speed survey, I note that the road has a 30mph limit, however there are speed humps along Skipps Meadow and the majority of parking appears to be on-street, which reduces the carriageway width to c. 3.7m in sections. It is reasonable to assume that vehicle speeds are not likely to exceed 20mph on a short, cul-de-sac residential road with these characteristics.
- 7.6.20 At the southern end of Skipps Meadow, it connects with the proposed shared use path on Baldock Road, which is also part of the primary cycle route in the LCWIP, and therefore can be considered a suitable route for cyclists.
- 7.6.21 Whilst Route 2b is longer in terms of distance to some services and facilities, it provides access to 45 existing services and facilities within a 1.95km walk distance.
- 7.6.22 Route 2a is a Footpath but appears to also accommodate infrequent vehicular access to the school playing fields as evidenced by a de-mountable bollard where it joins Bowling Green Lane and the double gated access to the playing fields mid-way along the route. It is proposed to upgrade RoW 36, over this 310m length. Enhancements are proposed in the form of vegetation maintenance, surfacing and bollard lighting.
- 7.6.23 I note that some properties on the southern side RoW 36 have gated accesses onto ROW 36 which demonstrates that those residents saw the benefit of having access to this route.
- 7.6.24 The improvement works can be required by condition. The Appellant is content to either enter into a S278 agreement, or fund the LHA through a Section 106 contribution should they wish to progress via an alternative mechanism.

- 7.6.25 The appellant is also keen to provide a financial contribution to enable HCC to make the necessary application to change the designation of RoW 36 to provide for cycling.
- 7.6.26 Upgrades to RoW 36 would accord with Hertfordshire's ROWIP Core Actions in particular;
- Core Action 3.4 – *“HCC to adopt a proactive approach to removal of all other unnecessary barriers.”*
 - Core Action 3.5 – *“HCC to improve surfacing on routes that provide important links in the network, that are currently in poor condition and where improvement would bring significant public benefit.”*
 - Core Action 5.2 – *“Promote routes through clear local signing and information boards.”*
 - Core Action 6.2 – *“Identify opportunities to improve walking routes linking homes with key services by improvements to signing and safety especially at road crossings.”*
 - Core Action 10.1 – *“Identify where well used sections of the off-road network are crossed by the primary road network and develop solutions suitable for pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders, carriage drivers and disabled users as appropriate.”*
- 7.6.27 Should the RoW be redesignated to allow for cyclists, this would also accord with ROWIP Core Actions:
- Core Action 6.3 – *“Identify opportunities to improve connections for cycle journeys using an integrated on and off-road network by improvements to:*
 - *Signing*
 - *Safety, especially at road crossings*
 - *Surfacing (making it usable for all types of bikes)”*
 - Core Action 7.1 – *“Develop off-road cycling routes with suitable dry surfacing that complement the unclassified highway network especially where traffic volumes are relatively low and there is evidence of demand.”*
- 7.6.28 RoW 36 connects with Bowling Green Lane on the eastern side of the A10, which is identified as a primary walking route within the LCWIP, i.e. a pedestrian route with the most demand. Bowling Green Lane provides access to a number of existing properties and facilities, including a school, college and a recreation ground and playing fields, and has street lighting and footways along the majority of its extent. The road is also traffic calmed with speed humps.
- 7.6.29 From Bowling Green Lane, there are a number of residential streets which connect with High Street, where the majority of facilities and services are located. Both Norfolk Road and Freeman Drive have footways on either side of the carriageway which are of an acceptable width. Bowling Green Lane also connects with the proposed enhancements on Baldock Road, should pedestrians wish to walk this way.
- 7.6.30 I consider that Routes 2a and 2b demonstrably offer accessible routes for pedestrians and cyclists from the site to the many facilities and services within Buntingford and will be enhanced through improvements which would be in line with the Authorities objectives. I consider that in the future, RoW 36 could be enhanced further by the Authorities to provide for cycling using S106 funding and that such improvements would also align with HCCs objectives in the RoWIP.
- 7.6.31 I consider that Route 2a offers a suitable route choice for pedestrians to/from the development and the facilities in Buntingford. It is already well used and could be further upgraded to

accommodate cyclists. It provides a convenient route to the educational facilities on Bowling Green Lane, and onward connections through residential streets to High Street. Route 2b offers an alternative route should any users prefer to route via the residential street of Skipps Meadow, rather than the public footpath. This connects with the improvements which will be made to Route 1, which provides a surfaced and street lit alternative route to the town centre.

Route 3

7.6.32 Route 3 connects the site with Buntingford via a proposed footbridge on the alignment of an existing RoWs 41 and 35. The existing situation does not provide any formal crossing facilities across the A10 and steps are present on the eastern side.

7.6.33 I recognise that the proposed footbridge is also stepped and therefore would be unsuitable for some pedestrians (noting that the existing route features steps too), however it does provide a feasible route for many users and offers a significant improvement on the existing situation, which currently offers no crossing provision over the A10 between RoWs 41 and 35.

7.6.34 Route 3 then traverses RoW 35 on which the proposals offer mitigation including resurfacing and bollard lighting, and then onto the existing town infrastructure on Bowling Green Lane, which is a LCWIP primary route and serves educational establishments and sports and recreation facilities. There are connecting onward routes via residential streets and public footpaths off Bowling Green Lane which users could choose to route by to access the many facilities High Street. Once again, this is a viable option for journeys between the site and Buntingford on foot.

Active Travel Summary

7.6.35 There are 4 active travel routes from the site, connecting into Buntingford. They will be designed to modern standards on site and will utilise primary and secondary LCWIP walking and cycle routes off site. The proposals offer safe and suitable connections between the site and the adjacent network. The proposals upgrade Footpaths 35 and 36 and provide a new active travel scheme along the A507 and Baldock Road, including a new Toucan crossing of the A10. Routes 1 and 2b provide surfaced, overlooked and lit routes between Buntingford and the site at all times. RoW 36 will be surfaced and lit but is not overlooked for some of its length. It is used at present and is safe as demonstrated in Section 5 of my evidence.

7.6.36 There are 45 destinations (services, shopping, facilities, schools etc) within a 2km walk which are agreed to be accessible, and there will be services and facilities on site where the on-site layout will be designed to promote walking and cycling.

7.6.37 The A507 proposals are not in dispute between the appellant and the council. Under the proposals, RoWs 35 and 36 will be enhanced in terms of surfacing, lighting and vegetation maintenance. These enhancements also align with the objectives of Hertfordshire's RoWIP and will enhance connectivity between the site and Buntingford via Bowling Green Lane.

7.6.38 Given that Bowling Green Lane and Baldock Road are part of the Primary and Secondary walking network, all four active travel routes to and from the site provide connections to the town centre which link via primary and secondary walking routes identified in the LCWIP, i.e. the routes with the most demand from existing residents of Buntingford.

- 7.6.39 The active travel infrastructure to be provided along the A507 and Baldock Road will enhance Primary and Secondary cycle routes within the LCWIP. The only route sections from the site to Buntingford that are not on an LCWIP primary/secondary walking or cycling route are RoWs 35, 36 and Skipps Meadow. Upgrades to RoWs are identified within the Core Actions of the ROWIP, and the proposals include improvements to RoWs upgrades in line with the council's plan. Skipps Meadow is a residential street suitable for pedestrians and cyclists.
- 7.6.40 To increase the uptake in cycle journeys, the appellant will provide £500 per dwelling (up to £330k) for bicycles / bicycle equipment. This contribution can alternatively be used towards public transport tickets to increase public transport.
- 7.6.41 Given the above, I consider that genuine pedestrian and cyclist accessibility by a choice of routes has been provided for future residents of the development.
- 7.6.42 The LHA, in their September 2025 consultation response [CD 4.42, page 2) stated that they are *"broadly supportive of the proposals as detailed within the resubmission, including the active travel corridor on Baldock Road to the east of the A507/A10 junction"* and also stated that should planning be approved, they *"would seek to develop the enhancements to pedestrian and cyclist connectivity as detailed on these plans."* (i.e. the submitted plans).
- 7.6.43 With respect to the RoW network, the LHA, in their June 2025 consultation response (CD 4.35) comment that satisfactory corridor to/from Buntingford has been achieved.
- 7.6.44 The Officers Report to Committee (CD 6.2) states *"It is accepted that the active travel routes from the site to Buntingford, such as footway / cycleway connections along Baldock Road, with toucan crossing points over the A10, as well as the additional bridge and enhancements to PROW35 have been proposed to be upgraded as much as is feasible, in a cost effective way that is proportionate to the development."*
- 7.6.45 Further to my consideration that there is a genuine choice for journeys on foot and by bicycle, it is clear from the previous few paragraphs that the LHA have also provided some positive comments in relation to the proposed enhancements and improvements to the NMU infrastructure associated with the appeal site.

7.7 Accessibility Summary

- 7.7.1 The proposed development is considered to be highly accessible and sustainable across four key areas: digital connectivity, on-site design, connections to external networks (including by Public Transport), and access to services and facilities beyond the site. All homes and businesses will be provided with modern broadband, enabling residents to access work, shopping, healthcare and social services online, reducing the need to travel.
- 7.7.2 The development will be designed to prioritise walking, cycling and public transport, while also providing on-site facilities including education provision and a mixed-use local centre that will reduce the need for external trips. The site will benefit from four access points (five if we count the two bridges leading to ROW36 separately) to the surrounding network, including two vehicular access points, a new active travel bridge over the A10, enhancements to an existing

- footbridge, a new footbridge and improvements to RoWs. These connections provide multiple safe and convenient routes between the site and Buntingford.
- 7.7.3 Significant investment is proposed in public transport, including the diversion of existing bus services through the site, the creation of a mobility hub, enhanced bus frequencies supported by £1.5 million of funding, and additional contributions towards community transport services. As a result, future residents will have access to frequent bus services connecting to Buntingford and to surrounding towns and employment centres, providing a realistic alternative to car travel.
- 7.7.4 The proposals also deliver a comprehensive active travel network, including new segregated walking and cycling infrastructure along the A507 and Baldock Road, upgraded RoWs, improved crossings of the A10, enhanced links into Buntingford and potential improvements on the route to Millfield First School. There are 45 services and facilities within a 2km walking distance of the site, and residents will benefit from a range of route choices for walking and cycling.
- 7.7.5 Overall, my evidence concludes that the development provides a genuine choice of travel, is not wholly reliant on the private car, (noting that a significant number of private car trips are sustainable) and that active travel and public transport have been prioritised as a mode of travel. The proposed enhancements are aligned with the LCWIP and ROWIP and will benefit existing trip makers too.
- 7.7.6 Given the above, I consider that the proposals exhibit suitable accessibility by a wide choice of modes of travel and for all users.

8.0 Land off Longsight Road, Langho (Appeal Ref: 6002485)

8.1 Introduction

- 8.1.1 Before addressing the RfR, the Main Issue identified by the Inspector, and the points identified in the HSoCG as “not agreed”, I wish to refer to a recent appeal decision on a case in which I was involved. The case particulars, the evidence and the Inspector’s findings on that case are relevant to this case and should help inform considerations. The appeal decision is included as **PoE Appendix M-2**.
- 8.1.2 The appeal reference is 6002485 and the application was for the development of 300 dwellings, located outside the settlement of Langho in the Ribble Valley.

8.2 Comparison between Cases

- 8.2.1 The case has many similarities with this Appeal.
- 8.2.2 The application was refused, with Reason for Refusal 2 relating to transport, which stated “*The proposed development, by virtue of the quantum of development, would result in a large-scale development in a rural location resulting in future users being reliant on a private motor vehicle...*”
- 8.2.3 Following the Inquiry, the Appeal was allowed with the balance of issues being strongly in favour of the development. The Council could not demonstrate a 5-year housing supply, and so the tilted balance, as described within the then NPPF Paragraph 11d, was engaged.
- 8.2.4 The Appeal site was rural, adjacent to the village settlement but separated from the village by a railway line.
- 8.2.5 The LPA contended that there were very few and poor facilities within the village of Langho and that the active travel routes to the village were unsuitable for all users. The next nearest facilities were in towns along the valley such as Whalley and Clitheroe.
- 8.2.6 With the evidence before him, the Inspector considered the matters and conveyed in his decision:
- “Acceptance that appropriate access, rather than ideal / high quality access, is the appropriate test;
 - Acceptance that constrained access by some modes for some residents is not incompatible with the test of requiring safe and suitable access for all, including the mobility impaired;
 - Acceptance of travelling to further destinations by bus to access key facilities;
 - Acceptance that mitigation doesn’t need to fully resolve shortcomings;
 - Acceptance that whilst not ideal, the development offered a range of transport options and so was not reliant on private car; and
 - That the proposals had an acceptable effect on sustainable modes and patterns of transport (which was the specific test the Inspector set at the CMC) and that the proposals were in accordance with the Framework.”

- 8.2.7 With those findings in mind, it is then pertinent to gauge how the Buntingford proposals compare to the Langho proposals. For ease of cross reference, I have set those out in **PoE Appendix M-1.**
- 8.2.8 It is evident that the Buntingford site fares considerably better in every aspect compared to the Langho site, apart from having a slightly lower (existing) connectivity score, with the Buntingford appeal site having a Connectivity Score of 45 and the Langho site having a score of 50.
- 8.2.9 I would make 3 comments in relation to the slightly lower connectivity score. First, a connectivity score of 45 still means that the site is 45% as connected as the Tower Hamlets area in Central London.
- 8.2.10 Secondly, East Herts are not required to deliver homes in better connected boroughs; they are required to deliver them in East Herts, and as East Herts goes, the site is located within band B of 10 bands of connectivity in the Borough (where A is the most connected, and 10 the least).
- 8.2.11 Thirdly, the score of 45 is for the existing site and facilities. The site will be better connected when the new bridges, active travel infrastructure and bus service penetration of the site and service frequency improvements are in place. It will also improve further when facilities are delivered on site.
- 8.2.12 The Buntingford proposals are better in terms of sustainable accessibility, provision of mitigation, road crossings, range of services and facilities, access to facilities and safe and suitable access, than the Langho proposals which were approved through a very positive Decision.
- 8.2.13 It is apparent from the Langho Decision that the Buntingford Proposals should be deemed to be sustainable development in line with the Framework.

9.0 Assessing the Proposals against Policy Requirements

9.1 Introduction

- 9.1.1 At the time of preparing my evidence for the submission deadline, a Draft NPPF was being consulted upon and I noted that although it was not in effect in policy terms, it perhaps indicated the direction of travel in which the NPPF was moving. In addition to reviewing the case against the policies of the NPPF which was current at that time, I therefore also reviewed the case against the policies which had been offered for Consultation in the Draft NPPF.
- 9.1.2 Post submission of my Proof the new NPPF was published, and the Inspector has asked that Proofs be updated to refer to it.
- 9.1.3 The approach which I took in my original Proof was to tabulate the relevant policies along with my considerations on how the proposals might comply. Those tables contained the policies cited within the RfR 1, 3 and 4, the key policies within the then NPPF and the policies within the Draft NPPF. They were presented as pages 261 to 274 of my Proof appendices. I have now introduced the watermark “Superseded” across all those pages.
- 9.1.4 Likewise, I have struck through the text below which relates to the review against the superseded NPPF. This approach retains visibility of the previous considerations. The new NPPF is different to the 2024 NPPF and in part to the Consultation Draft, but it is of note that the proposals comply with all those variants.
- 9.1.5 The new NPPF is not much changed from the Consultation Draft against which I reviewed the proposals. I have updated my evidence to describe the extent and nature of the changes and my evaluation of how the proposals fare when gauged against the new NPPF policies. I have set out my review of each transport and accessibility aspect of the new NPPF, again in **PoE Appendix N** of my Proof (pages 275 to 284).
- 9.1.6 The local policies are as previously presented, however the page numbers within **PoE Appendix N** are now pages 285 to 296.

9.2 Compliance with Policy

- 9.2.1 To comprehensively demonstrate how the proposals comply with the policies cited in RfR1, RfR3 and in the NPPF, I have tabulated those policies and cross referenced the various elements of the proposals against them. I present those tables as **PoE Appendix N**.
- 9.2.2 The tables in **PoE Appendix N**, demonstrate the comprehensive way in which the proposals comply with the requirements of TRA1 and TRA2 of the East Herts District Plan. Even if it was held that the proposals do not comply, it is the case that those policies should be given reduced weight, as agreed within Paragraph 5.5 of the PSoCG. That would of course be a matter for the planning professionals, but I mention it as it is a point which is agreed. In addition, when weighing up the benefits and dis-benefits of the proposals, the fact that the proposals seek to use and improve key routes for cycling and walking in the LCWIP and ROWIP, should be seen as a benefit.

- 9.2.3 **PoE Appendix N** also illustrates my assessment of the components of the proposals against the requirements of the NPPF. Again that demonstrates the comprehensive way in which the proposals comply with the transport access and accessibility aspects, (Paragraphs 110 and 115, 116, 117, 118). Those policy compliances are important in addressing the Inspectors Main Issue and the Reasons for Refusal, as I set out in Section 11 of my evidence.
- 9.2.4 I have also reviewed the transport and accessibility aspects of the case against the '*NPPF Plan-making and National Decision-Making Policies (December 2025) - Draft Text for Consultation*'. I have set out my review in **PoE Appendix N**, pages 268 to 274. Those have been marked with a draft watermark and I now additionally describe the extent and nature of the changes and my evaluation of how the proposals fare when gauged against the new NPPF policies in the following section. My comments against the new NPPF are tabulated in **PoE Appendix N** pages 275 to 284.
- 9.2.5 Having now received direction from the Inspector to update Proofs with reference to the implications and consequences of the newly published NPPF, I have undertaken the following actions:
1. Reviewed the Proposals against the new NPPF (pages 275 to 284 in **PoE Appendix N**) and compared the Published policies to the Consultation Draft policies, to identify changes.
 2. Specifically addressed the areas of the new NPPF which the Inspector has directed the parties to, i.e. Reviewing my position, reference to policy S5 and particularly, whether the proposed scheme would be physically well related to the settlement and whether it would be of a scale which could be accommodated taking account the existing or proposed availability of infrastructure.
 3. Considering whether any conflict with relevant national policies would in fact mean a refusal of planning permission.
 4. I have also identified other references in the new NPPF which are of relevance to Highways and Transportation Matters

9.3 Compliance with the NPPF and Changes to the Consultation draft Polices as evaluated in P Blair Proof Appendices pages 268 to 274

Policy S5 Paragraph 1 part J in Section 4 'Achieving Sustainable Development'

- 9.3.1 The overarching Policy S5 is unchanged and continues to advise that various listed categories of development should be approved, unless adverse effects substantially outweigh benefits. In relation to S5 1(j), i.e. development to address evidenced unmet need including housing, a minor change has been made to the draft, to now include the word "physically" into the sentence "Be physically well related to...."
- 9.3.2 Whilst the addition of the word physically may seem to heighten the locational aspect of the test, the Settlement east of the A10 is just a few tens of metres from the site boundary and the proposals provide significant physical infrastructure in 4 locations, linking the site to Buntingford. The site also abuts an allocated site. The NPPF requires use of the DfT Connectivity Tool and as set out in my Proof para 3.5.3 and section 5.2, the Connectivity Tool shows the site

even in its current circumstances to be well connected and in the second highest band (of 10 bands) of connectivity. The proposals improve that situation.

9.3.3 S5 1(j) also requires a scale of development which can be accommodated by existing and proposed infrastructure. The development proposals can be and that is agreed in the HSOCC.

9.3.4 In respect of policy S5 1(j), my commentary and position on compliance is set out on page 275 of my Appendices. As with the draft policy as set out on page 268 of my Appendices this position is unchanged. i.e the proposals comply with policy S5 1(j).

Plan Making Policy TR1 in Section 15 ‘Promoting Sustainable Development’

9.3.5 TR1 is a Plan making policy, but I have reviewed it again as I referred to it in my original Proof. The only changes from the draft TR1 are that the published NPPF in Paragraph 1(b) adds the words “*quantitative and qualitative*” so it now reads “*alongside other relevant quantitative and qualitative evidence;*”

9.3.6 It also adds the categories of electric vehicle charging and bus and rail depots into the draft list of transport facilities in paragraph 1(e).

9.3.7 My position (see page 276 and 277 of my Appendices) is that the policy is substantially unchanged from the draft and my comments on how the proposals align with it as set out on page 269 of my Appendices are still valid. Although the Policy is for Plan Making rather than a Decision-Making policy, the proposals comply with it.

Decision Making Policy TR3 in Section 15 ‘Promoting Sustainable Development’

9.3.8 The overarching policy is unchanged from that in the draft, i.e that “*.....development proposals should reflect the following principles, taking into account the vision for the site, the type of development and its location*”

9.3.9 In comparison to the draft policy TR3, against which I evaluated the proposals on page 271 of my Proof Appendices, the published NPPF introduces a new paragraph 1(c);

“c. Any significant adverse impacts from the development on the transport network (in terms of capacity and congestion), or on highway safety, should be mitigated to an acceptable degree using a vision-led approach;”

9.3.10 As stated elsewhere in my main proof, it is agreed that impacts on the transport network are acceptable. Matters of highway safety are being dealt with by Mr James Duffy.

9.3.11 The published NPPF also makes amendments to TR3 sub paragraph 1(a) and repeats the forementioned edit to include the words “*qualitative and quantitative*” in TR3 paragraph 2 in relation to the Connectivity Tool.

9.3.12 An edit to TR3 sub paragraph 1(a) is in relation to development being in locations which are sustainable (or which can be made so, taking into account planned improvements, including any provided for as part of the development itself), and adds the line “*This means the location should limit the need to travel, particularly by private car, and offer a genuine choice of transport modes for residents and users, unless the nature of the development would make this impractical;*”

9.3.13 The clarification is welcomed and refers to the location, where that location is the development, considered in the context of planned improvements and improvements delivered by the development. In relation to the proposals, the location will be sustainable and private car travel will be reduced by the facilities on site, the availability of public and dial up transport, active travel infrastructure and the Travel Plan. There will be a genuine choice of transport modes.

9.3.14 In relation to TR3, my position as set out on page 271 of my Proof Appendices is unchanged, and I additionally confirm compliance with the new TR3 paragraph 1(c).

TR4: Street design, access and parking in Section 15 ‘Promoting Sustainable Development’

9.3.15 TR4 is a Decision-Making Policy and the overarching Policy is unchanged from the draft, i.e. *“To contribute to creating well-designed places, transport considerations should be integral to the design of development, proposals for which should:....”*

9.3.16 My commentary on how the proposals complied with the draft Policy TR4 are set out on page 272 my Proof Appendices.

9.3.17 In the published NPPF, there have been a number of minor edits, e.g, changing “pedestrians” to “walking”, changing “Make sure” to “Ensure” and an extension to TR4 sub paragraph 1(e) to now cover customer parking.

9.3.18 There has also been an extension to sub paragraph 1(c) in which, to the requirement to *“Ensure that the arrangement of streets and other routes help to create places that are Safe inclusive and attractive for all users”* now adds; *“(particularly for women and girls, for other groups who may be vulnerable to crime or the fear of crime, and for those with limited mobility). This includes reflecting relevant aspects of policy DP3(2), as well as employing measures to:...”*

9.3.19 In both the draft and the published NPPF, 3 points follow (i, ii and iii). In the new NPPF, those points are unchanged from how they appeared in the draft policy against which I reviewed the proposals. My position has therefore not changed on policy TR4.

9.3.20 It is agreed that the development layout can be designed to modern standards, so this test is satisfied. In relation to onward routes out-with the development street design, the infrastructure improvements will *“..help to create places that are Safe inclusive and attractive for all users”*

9.3.21 The reference to DP3(2) is now a more focused reference than in the draft NPPF which referred more widely to DP3.

9.3.22 DP3(2) states that development proposals should reflect relevant aspects of 7 principles (as appropriate to the nature of the development and the location) in order to create well designed places. Paragraphs c, d and f could be said to relate to movement, access and accessibility and it is my view that the proposals comply in those regards.

9.3.23 Again, it is agreed that the development layout can be designed to modern standards, so these tests are satisfied.

- 9.3.24 I therefore consider that my previous position that the proposals comply with draft NPPF policy TR4 is maintained in respect of NPPF Policy TR4. I now extend that to the additional details now present in para 1(c).

TR6: Assessing Transport Impacts in Section 15 ‘Promoting Sustainable Development’

- 9.3.25 The published NPPF TR6 features edits to the draft NPPF paragraphs 2, 3, and 4 which add further detail. Whilst I reviewed the proposals against the draft Policy TR6 in my Appendices page 273 and found compliance, (and do so again for the published Policy TR6 – page 281 of my Appendices), I am mindful of two points. The first is that the matter of assessing transport impacts is not in contention at this Inquiry. The second is that matters of traffic impact, highway capacity etc are being dealt with by Mr James Duffy.

TR8: Public Rights of Way in Section 15 ‘Promoting Sustainable Development’

- 9.3.26 I reviewed the draft NPPF Policy TR8 on page 274 of my proof Appendices and found that the policies complied. Upon re-reading that page I see that I only chose one of the four potential objectives within TR8 paragraph 1(b) against which to record the compliance of the proposals. Incidentally, compliance is only required in respect of one objective, but in fact the proposals achieve all four.
- 9.3.27 The Published NPPF TR8 is almost unchanged, apart from replacing the phrase “*Maintain the network....*” with the phrase “*Protect and enhance the network....*”.
- 9.3.28 The latter is a stronger requirement than the former, but since the development improves the rights of way and achieves all four of the paragraph 1(b) objectives, my view is that the proposals fully comply with TR8.

9.4 Consideration of Policies which could recommend refusal

- 9.4.1 The Inspector has asked the Parties for their considerations of whether any conflict with relevant national policies would in fact mean a refusal of planning permission (Noting that there are only some national planning policies that refer to a refusal of planning permission were such conflict to exist).
- 9.4.2 In my reading of the Published NPPF I have found numerous Policies under which a refusal of permission should be warranted in cases of non-compliance, e.g. for inefficient use of land, flood risk, biodiversity, environment and heritage impacts. My Proof focuses just on the transport and accessibility aspects.
- 9.4.3 I have found only two which relate to transport and which say that proposals should be refused if not compliant;
- DP3 (3), Refuse if (without justification) proposals conflict with DP3 (1) or relevant parts of DP3 (2) or with any explicit design standards in the development Plan.
 - TR6 (4) Refuse if there are severe adverse transport impacts or an unacceptable impact on highway safety.

- 9.4.4 The text in the preceding sections which reviewed compliance with the draft and published NPPFs shows that the proposals are not in conflict with policy DP3 (3) and so the proposals should not be refused on that basis.
- 9.4.5 Mr James Duffy is dealing with the TR6 traffic impact and highway safety issues. I am aware however that it is agreed that the proposals do not have an unacceptable impact on the highway.
- 9.4.6 I consider that the proposals are not in conflict with any Transport or Accessibility criteria which would warrant a refusal.

9.5 Other references within the New NPPF which are of relevance to Highways and Transportation Matters

- 9.5.1 Within chapter 1 (Introduction) paragraphs 16 and 17 in the new NPPF refer to the various strands which together constitute a sustainable development. They span wider than just the travel aspects related to the environmental strand and encompass social progress, economic, well-being and environmental protection. Fundamentally there are still the 3 main strands of Sustainability which are; Economic, Social and Environmental and that endorses the approach taken in my Proof.
- 9.5.2 There is also policy CC2: Mitigation of climate change:
- “1. In order to contribute to climate change mitigation and the transition to net zero, development proposals should, where relevant to the proposal:*
- a. Accord with policies TR3 and TR4 so that sustainable patterns of movement are prioritised, opportunities are taken to improve walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport, and infrastructure is provided to support the transition to zero-emission vehicles;*
- b. Support good access to facilities in order to limit the need to travel, whether through the development’s location, through development densities which improve catchment populations for local services, or by incorporating community facilities and premises to support local employment opportunities;...”*
- 9.5.3 The proposals do comply with TR3 and TR4, do introduce charging infrastructure to support the transition to zero-emission vehicles and they do introduce community facilities, and so comply with CC2.
- 9.5.4 Policy DM3 paragraph 1(b) requires authorities to take a proportionate approach to the consideration of the planning matters raised by the proposals, in a way that reflects their scale, complexity and potential impact.

9.6 Summary

- 9.6.1 My review of the transport and accessibility aspects of the proposals against the new NPPF is tabulated in **PoE Appendix N** pages 275 to 284. In my original Proof I concluded that the proposals complied with the NPPF Consultation Draft and having reviewed the published NPPF, I consider that the proposals comply with that too.

9.6.2 I consider that the proposals comply with the requirements of local policy and the NPPF, in relation to the highways, transportation, accessibility and travel related sustainability aspects.

9.6.3 My evidence on Policy concludes that;

- The proposals are not contrary to the cited local policies, nor to the NPPF;
- The proposals in fact comply with and positively deliver the requirements of those policies; offering safe and suitable access for all users and promoting active travel.
- The proposals positively support LTP LCWIP and ROWIP objectives.

10.0 Responding to the Matters Not Agreed as listed in the HSoCG

10.1 Introduction

- 10.1.1 From the evidence presented thus far, I consider that the development proposals should be considered acceptable in accessibility and sustainability terms. For completeness, I have sought to apply my considerations, the evidence which I have presented, and the approach taken in other decisions to address the points which the LHA and LPA would not agree with the appellant at the time of negotiating the HSoCG. I have left the points of disagreement on highway design and road safety issues to Mr Duffy and so focus only on the points of disagreement which relate to sustainable travel and accessibility.

10.2 Matters Not Agreed

- 10.2.1 The matters not agreed and my considerations against those points are set out below.

- 10.2.2 Matter 1:

“Whether the proposal offers a walking and cycling route to the east of the site which can be considered socially safe at all times of day (including at night), suitable for all users.”

- 10.2.3 There will be facilities on site. That aside, the proposals offer four choices of active travel routes to Buntingford, of which all four are suitable for pedestrians, two are suitable for cyclists (three if RoW 36 can be upgraded to a cycleway) and three are suitable for the mobility impaired. Two are overlooked or adjacent to a main highway and street lit for their full length. The gradient of the ramp on the eastern side of the proposed active travel bridge is 1:20 (i.e. 5%), in accordance with Active Travel England guidance⁵. This, however, is a matter for detailed design, and will be designed to be suitable for all users.

- 10.2.4 I have also reviewed crime statistics within Buntingford in Section 5 of my evidence, which sets out that the RoW 36 path lies between two areas which are safer than 70% of the UK. My evidence also shows that recorded crime in Buntingford between 2020-2025 is focused in the town centre, across residential areas and at the schools. There is no recorded crime along RoW 36.

- 10.2.5 These are statistics based on the existing situation, and the proposals seek to improve the quality of that route further, including measures to improve safety such as bollard lighting. The increased use of these routes post development by future residents of the site and existing residents of Buntingford will increase to the feeling of safety. However should any residents not wish to route via the PRow network, walking or cycling is possible along the lit and surfaced routes along the A507 or the residential street of Skipps Meadow, which is street lit and offers better natural surveillance.

- 10.2.6 To address the point of disagreement, not only does the proposal offer a safe and suitable active travel route which is socially safe, it offers several.

⁵ <https://www.activetravelengland.gov.uk/planning-active-places/gradients>

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- 10.2.7 If anyone does not wish to use those routes, they still have the options of bus travel, sustainable car travel including taxis, online accessibility and access to facilities on site.
- 10.2.8 Given that people will have access to facilities and services in addition to those in Buntingford, access to the specific town of Buntingford should not be the sole test of whether the site is located in a way which offers a genuine choice of travel modes for day-to-day journeys. Many of those journeys will take people beyond Buntingford where access to services, facilities and employment are accessible via sustainable modes.
- 10.2.9 Matter 2:
“Whether significant physical barriers prevent active travel connections to and from the town centre/key facilities within the town.”
- 10.2.10 Two of the active travel routes to Buntingford (3 if we count the upgraded pedestrian bridge and the active travel bridge separately) pass over the A10 with no interaction with traffic. The route along the A507 features provision for active travel and a new Toucan Crossing. I have identified 45 facilities in Buntingford. Approaching each individual location will require using the existing footways, crossing points and routes as is the case currently for existing trip making. Currently, those routes, as in any town are of varying standard, but they exist so there are no significant barriers to prevent active travel connections.
- 10.2.11 Matter 3:
“Whether the proposed development will be isolated and severed from the main town of Buntingford.”
- 10.2.12 This is a development adjacent to the town of Buntingford. Residents of the development will certainly not consider themselves isolated in a site with 659 other neighbouring homes and with on-site facilities. As the two previous points demonstrate, the site is not severed by the A10, or in terms of active travel. Highway connections and operation are accepted so the site is certainly not severed if travelling by bus or via a sustainable vehicle. On-site facilities, community buses and on-line services contribute to social interaction and reduce isolation. The online-services, public and community transport and excellent highway connectivity ensure that the site is not isolated or severed from other towns either.
- 10.2.13 Matter 4:
“Whether the active travel connections and routes are or can be made acceptable in consideration of best practice set out in Active Travel England Guidance or Local Transport Note LTN1/20, including the design of dedicated infrastructure and on-carriageway and traffic management measures.”
- 10.2.14 This point has been added by the LHA.
- 10.2.15 As far as I am aware the designs of the active travel enhancements have been developed mindful of the design guidance in LTN 1/20. They can and will be designed to those standards on site. Off site, the identified improvements offer suitable enhancements to support walking and cycling. LTN 1/20 sets out a process which local Authorities should follow in order to secure funding for Cycle schemes. It is notable however that with reference to the Cycling Level of

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- Service Toolkit in Appendix A of LTN1/20 (CD 10.4), the few criteria which could be considered as “critical” fail points in any scheme all relate to interactions with traffic and those do not apply to the off-site proposals. Moreover, against the multiple assessment criteria, the proposals fare well.
- 10.2.16 Shared use pedestrian/cycle facilities are proposed and LTN1/20 notes that a recommended minimum width for routes carrying up to 300 pedestrians and 300 cyclists per hour is 3.0m. The pedestrian/cycleway proposed along the A507 is 4m wide west of the A10, and 3m wide east of A10.
- 10.2.17 In their June 2025 consultation response (CD 4.35, page 2), the LHA commented that *“In terms of improvement to the Rights of Way network, the Highway Authority is generally content that a satisfactory corridor to/from Buntingford has been achieved, although there remain some residual concerns with respect to distance from the town centre and more poorly surveilled points on the route.”* As set out within my evidence, should residents not wish to route via the PRoW network, other options are available, i.e. to walk/cycle along the surfaced and lit residential street of Skipps Meadow or along the A507/Baldock Road route.
- 10.2.18 The LHA, in their September 2025 consultation response (CD 4.42, page 2), have commented that they *“would seek to develop the enhancements to pedestrian and cyclist connectivity as detailed on these (submitted) plans.”*
- 10.2.19 The HSoCG records that the mitigations and enhancements will benefit existing pedestrians and cyclists alike and will encourage active travel. It confirms agreement that the facilities in Buntingford are accessible from the site.
- 10.2.20 These are all clear indications that the proposals are suitably acceptable.
- 10.2.21 Matter 5:
- “Whether the financial contributions towards bus improvement measures and proposed route extensions and diversions will make a significant or meaningful difference to the modal shift towards reducing car use.”*
- 10.2.22 It is agreed in the HSoCG that the target set out within the FTP suggests a reduction reliance on the private vehicle is achievable. The FTP (CD 1.13) Table 11.1 records that actual targets will be agreed following a review of the baseline survey monitoring report. It is agreed that the FTP, which includes a 15% reduction target in single occupancy unsustainable vehicles, is suitable in principle.
- 10.2.23 In sustainable travel terms it does not matter whether the reduction in unsustainable car travel is taken up by any particular sustainable transport mode. In terms of whether the bus contribution will be successful there is no reason to suggest that it would not.
- 10.2.24 There would also be trips associated with the care home and facilities on site, but the dominant trip generating element is the residential component.
- 10.2.25 My evidence in **PoE Appendix O** sets out that to achieve the 15% target reduction in unsustainable vehicle trips, if offset evenly across the modes of walking, cycling, public

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- transport and car sharing that would mean an uptake of just 53 trips per day for each of those modes.
- 10.2.26 It is notable that the shift to sustainable vehicle use will also mean that the mode shift targets will quickly be achieved and then significantly bettered.
- 10.2.27 The proposed bus enhancements bring 7 buses to site in the peak hours. That level of service seems appropriate for the scale of potential and intended use and route coverage. What is important is that the services will be available and that the Travel Plan will encourage their use.
- 10.2.28 For the Authority to request a public transport contribution it is a requirement that their request satisfies the Planning tests. The level of contribution has been requested through discussions with the LHA, who must therefore be satisfied that their request is necessary, related to the development and reasonable in all other respects.
- 10.2.29 Matter 6:
- “That the promoting of bus, walking, cycling, and sustainable travel, through providing infrastructure, funding and implementing a Travel Plan prioritises the use of sustainable modes for all users.”*
- 10.2.30 Sustainable travel has been prioritised throughout the proposals and is the objective of the Travel plan. It is agreed within the HSoCG that the proposals will provide access to bus, walking, cycling, and sustainable travel, through providing infrastructure, funding and implementing a Travel Plan which seeks to prioritise the use of sustainable modes for all users. Homes will be equipped with charging facilities to encourage ultra-low and zero emission vehicle use.
- 10.2.31 A final observation is that the agreed and unagreed texts in the HSOCG are remarkably similar, which may suggest that the inclusion of the text in matters unagreed section may be in error. The proposed measures serve to prioritise sustainable travel.
- 10.2.32 Matter 7:
- “In travel terms, the site could not be regarded as being isolated or locationally unsustainable from an access or social perspective.”*
- 10.2.33 Refer also to matter 3 above. My view is that the site could not be considered isolated, being located in a well-connected area within walking distance of Buntingford and in a development with 600 dwellings and 60 elderly accommodation units. It is not locationally unsustainable given that residents will have access to facilities on-line and on site and can access Buntingford on foot, by cycle, by bus or by sustainable car, the latter two of which modes can also be used to access services further afield.
- 10.2.34 Matter 8:
- Whether the proposals comply with policies TRA1 or TRA2 of the EH District Plan or the relevant policies in Local Transport Plan 4.*
- 10.2.35 My evidence in **PoE Appendix N** has demonstrated compliance with TRA1 and TRA2. Appendix N of my proof illustrates how the proposals comply with LTP4 Policy 5.
- 10.2.36 Matter 9:

“The weighting given to the significance of any harm identified (in respect to RfR1 and RfR3) where it relates to the above issues.”

10.2.37 This is a matter for the Inspector to weigh and for the Planning experts to address.

10.2.38 I consider however that there is no policy conflict in respect of the RfR1 and RfR3. I also note that moderate, positive weight is agreed within the PSoCG for the financial contributions towards bus services and sustainable travel initiatives in the town, of benefit to the wider community.

10.2.39 Matter 10:

“Whether the connections to the adjacent network and the opportunities for onward travel to services and facilities, will present realistic choices of sustainable travel modes.”

10.2.40 The connections to the adjacent road and active travel networks are very good and travel to multiple and various services and facilities is available by realistic choices of sustainable travel modes, whether that be on foot, on cycle, by bus or by sustainable car. There is also a realistic choice to access services and facilities by the two most sustainable modes, i.e. on-line and by walking to facilities on site and near-by. Section 11 of my Proof and **PoE Appendix O** demonstrates the extent of mode shift necessary to achieve the Travel plan targets and how that level of mode shifts is entirely possible.

10.2.41 Matter 11:

“Whether the off-site proposed toucan crossing, speed limit reductions, and traffic calming infrastructure will bring benefits for existing pedestrians and cyclists and public transport users.”

10.2.42 The A507 is designated in the LCWIP as a secondary cycle route. Baldock Road is designated as a primary and secondary walking route to the west and east respectively, and as a primary cycling route. Those designations relate to the routes which experience highest pedestrian and cyclist demands and they cross the A10 in the location of the proposed modern toucan crossing. That crossing will therefore bring benefits for existing pedestrians and cyclists on that route, including those to the existing employment area and to the allocated site Bunt 3.

10.2.43 As the route and crossing in question are both key routes in the LCWIP and ROWIP, the delivery of the proposed improvements there, will assist the Authorities in delivering their Plan objectives.

10.2.44 Reference to Public Transport users in this point seems to be a hangover from an earlier and more expansive version of the draft text. The works seek to provide safety benefits for pedestrians and cyclists by removing and reducing conflict with traffic, but are unlikely to benefit public transport users, except for when they are crossing the roads.

10.2.45 Matter 12:

“Whether the central proposed active travel bridge is safe and suitable for cyclists.”

10.2.46 There is a pedestrian bridge already in place. The sole reason for providing another bridge is to provide a compliant design to accommodate the mobility impaired and cyclists. If for any reason the design needs to be varied, then that is possible through the S278 and RSA stages.

The active travel bridge has been subject to an RSA which did not raise safety concerns for cyclists using the bridge.

10.2.47 Matter 13:

“Whether the delivery of works on RoW 36, delivered through a section 278 agreement, are subject to landowner being identified and party to any agreement.”

10.2.48 This is a legal matter. The improvement works can be required by condition. The Appellant is content to either enter into a S278 agreement or fund the LHA through a Section 106 contribution should they wish to progress via an alternative mechanism. The core actions in the ROWIP identify that the Authorities will seek to improve routes and increase the user types (e.g. increasing footpaths to bridleways etc) and can secure funding for that via developer contributions, i.e S106 contribution.

11.0 Addressing the Inspectors' Main Issue (ii) and the Reasons for Refusal.

11.1 Introduction

11.1.1 This section marshals the evidence that I have presented thus far, to address the Inspectors Main Issue (ii) and the points against the development as outlined within RfR1, RfR 3 and RfR 4.

11.1.2 Dealing with RfR 3 and RfR 4 first; it is agreed within Paragraph 5.26 of the Planning Statement of Common Ground (CD 15.1) that if a signed and executed Section 106 Agreement (or Unilateral Undertaking) is submitted prior to the inquiry, that will overcome Reason for Refusal 4, subject to the satisfaction of the Inspector. Work is underway to put that agreement in place.

RfR3 states: "The harms and policy conflicts identified are considered to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposals in terms of delivery of new housing and other public infrastructure, having regard to NPPF paragraph 11d. As such the proposals fail to constitute sustainable development and would therefore conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework and Policies INT1, DPS2, GBR2, TRA1 and TRA2 of the District Plan (2018) and Policies BE2, ES1, HD1 and HD2 of the Buntingford Community Neighbourhood Plan (2017)."

11.1.3 Whilst the RfR mentions various policies, I have dealt with those which relate to transport and accessibility already. Fundamentally RfR 3 describes the weighing of benefits and dis-benefits, which is now a matter for the Inspector. For avoidance of doubt, I do not provide any comment on the overall planning balance.

11.1.4 As such, the following sections of my evidence focus upon addressing the Inspector's Main Issue (ii) and the Reason for Refusal 1.

11.2 Inspectors Main Issue (ii) and Reason for Refusal 1

11.2.1 For ease of reference, I set out below the Inspectors Main Issue (ii).

11.2.2 The Inspector's Main Issue (ii) states "*Whether the development would be in a sustainable location with convenient access by all to a choice of sustainable modes of transport including socially safe and quality pedestrian and cycling routes to reach day to day amenities, facilities and services, including employment and food/comparison shopping facilities further afield, and the extent to which the proposed cycle and pedestrian route connections and bus improvements would make a suitable modal shift towards reducing car usage*".

11.2.3 In addressing the Inspectors comment of whether the development would be located in a sustainable location, I first refer to the East Herts District Plan which declares the adjacent site (BUNT3 allocation) to be in a sustainable location. The main access to both the BUNT3 allocation and the appeal site are both onto the A507, and the proposals will introduce a pedestrian/cycleway leading into Buntingford and a Toucan crossing which will further improve sustainable accessibility for both sites and the existing employment park.

11.2.4 In addition, the LHA have not objected to a current planning application for the erection of four light industrial units on Buntingford Business Park, adjacent to the appeal site. Those proposals do not offer offsite mitigations to active travel infrastructure, and the LHA in their consultation

response have commented that the site would benefit from an existing footway connection into Buntingford. The appeal site proposals further enhance that connection for both pedestrians and cyclists, including crossing provision over the A10.

- 11.2.5 The DfT Connectivity Tool demonstrates that the appeal site is well connected for travel modes excluding driving and lies in the second highest of 10 bands of connectivity in East Hertfordshire. In addition to these existing “well connected” and “sustainable” designations, the appeal site proposals also upgrade the existing footbridge over the A10, deliver another footbridge over the A10 and deliver an Active Travel bridge over the A10 which is suitable for all users. Connections between the site and the existing travel networks and infrastructure will be safe, suitable and of high quality.
- 11.2.6 On site, the proposals will deliver bus and active travel infrastructure to modern standards (high quality infrastructure and routes), which will prioritise active travel. The proposals will provide funding to bus services to improve frequency and bring bus services into the site.
- 11.2.7 The proposals include facilities and services on site which will reduce the need to travel and additionally there are over 40 services and facilities including employment, retail, schools and medical facilities which are agreed to be accessible within a 2km walk catchment. Footpaths will be upgraded and a footway / cycleway scheme will be introduced along the A507 and Baldock Road. Those provisions also deliver objectives of the LCWIP and ROWIP on routes already designated by the Authority as primary and secondary. Potential improvements have been identified for the route to Millfield First School, which can be secured by condition. Additional facilities further afield are also accessible by cycle. There will be convenient access and a genuine choice of sustainable transport modes for all.
- 11.2.8 I have shown that Buntingford does not have a high incidence of crime and that no recent crime has been recorded on the RoW 36, which is currently used by walkers between the countryside and residential areas, to the schools, recreation ground, employment on Bowling Green Lane and to the centre of Buntingford. That route will be upgraded with surfacing and lighting and will be socially safe, as will the routes throughout the site. If anyone is trepidatious about using RoW 36 in the hours of darkness, due to its lower level of natural surveillance, they have the choice of using other surfaced, lit and overlooked routes, such as those along the Baldock Road and Skipps Meadow, still enabling a sub 2km journey. The site will have safe and suitable access and there are routes into town which are socially safe at all times of day and night.
- 11.2.9 In Section 5 of my proof, I describe how existing public transport and community bus services provide sustainable access to facilities in towns further away and I also highlight how many forms of car travel are in fact sustainable modes of travel and how that proportion will continue to increase. Over the lifetime of the development the Internal Combustion Engine (unsustainable) vehicle will be a rapidly diminishing mode of transport.
- 11.2.10 The Inspectors Main Issue (ii) queries the extent to which the proposed cycle and pedestrian route connections and bus improvements would make a suitable modal shift towards reducing car usage. **PoE Appendix O** shows how these mode shift targets can be derived.

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- 11.2.11 The FTP sets out a target 15% reduction in single occupancy vehicle trips. In reality, that target will seek to reduce unsustainable car trips. It is agreed within the HSoCG that the Framework Travel Plan is suitable in principle and that the modal shift target set out in the Framework Travel Plan suggest that a reduction in the reliance on the private car is achievable.
- 11.2.12 Appendix I of the Ridge Transport Assessment (CD 1.12.ii) sets out the vehicular trip rates for the residential element of the proposals, derived from TRICS. There are care home and community uses too, but for the purpose of the “reliant on private car” point, residential trip making is the most relevant.
- 11.2.13 Using those TRICS outputs, the development is forecast to generate 2,645 two-way vehicle trips within which there are 1309 passengers across a 12-hour period. Those are without any of the adjustments that are set out within the TA, and as such, this presents a robust estimate of vehicle trips.
- 11.2.14 Assuming each multi occupancy vehicle will have either 1, 2 or 3 passengers, an average of 1.5 has been adopted, which means that a multi occupancy vehicle would have an average occupancy of 2.5 persons per vehicle, (1.5 passengers + driver.) Spreading 1,309 passengers across vehicles at an average of 1.5 per vehicle would give 873 multi occupancy cars. That would then leave 1,773 single occupancy vehicle trips. Those 873 car sharing trips are a sustainable mode of travel.
- 11.2.15 Of course, a further proportion of vehicles will also be sustainable (ultra-low and zero emission) and that number is increasing. Even if only 20% was assumed to be sustainable by say 2030, that would leave 1,418 unsustainable car trips. A target which seeks to reduce unsustainable car trips by 15% over the lifetime of the Travel Plan (say 5 years) would seek to shift 213 trips per 12 hour day to sustainable modes.
- 11.2.16 If those mode-shifted trips were distributed evenly across car sharers, public transport users, pedestrians and cyclists, those modes would attract an uptake of 53 trips each across the day. As an average, this is 4.4 additional journeys per hour for each of those modes of travel. I would consider this to be a reasonable and achievable target for the development.
- 11.2.17 This also does not consider the increasing rise of sustainable vehicles over the first 5-years of the development, which will be heightened by the Government Strategy reinforced by taxing of internal combustion engine vehicles and a ban on the sale of new ICE vehicles by 2030. To assist that, that all dwellings will be provided with EV charging facilities, something which residents who move to the site may not have had access to previously. In terms of the extent to which the mode shift target will be met, the presence of the unsustainable car will continue to decline and over the lifetime of the development the ICE car will be a quickly disappearing mode of travel.
- 11.2.18 There is no reason to doubt that those mode shifts will not occur. The level of contribution to bus services is the level that the Public Transport Authority identified as being necessary and the other financial contributions in the S106, the FTP and the infrastructure provisions are likewise appropriate. My view is that such a target will be achieved but will then be increasingly bettered.

- 11.2.19 It does not matter to which particular sustainable mode the unsustainable trips shift, just that they shift. In addition to the travel modes mentioned in the Inspectors point, “*cycle, pedestrian and public transport improvements*”, other measures and trends will also contribute to the shift to sustainable modes. In addition to the increase in ultra-low and zero emission vehicles, the implementation of the travel plan, the increasing trend to work from home and access services on-line and the provision of modern efficient broadband will all facilitate that. Reductions in unsustainable travel will also accrue from any existing trip makers who choose to take advantage of the new and improved footways, cycleways, crossings and improved public transport, all of which are agreed to benefit those trip makers.
- 11.2.20 I consider therefore that the proposals do satisfy the points in the Inspector’s Main Issue (ii) and that view is reinforced by my review of the proposals against policy, which demonstrated compliance against those tests too.
- 11.2.21 The Inspector had regard to RfR 1 when formulating his Main Issue (ii), so many of the points expressed in RfR1 are encompassed within that issue, i.e. sustainable location, access by all to choice of sustainable travel modes, safe and suitable routes to facilities. As I have already responded on those points, I will not repeat my evidence under this RfR heading. RfR 1 does however express several other discreet points, and I do seek to address those here for completeness.
- 11.2.22 For ease of reference, the Reason for Refusal 1 states:
- “Due to its siting, the proposals would be isolated and physically severed from the rest of Buntingford by the A10, with poor quality active travel connections to services within the town. As such the proposals are likely to be car dependent and result in increased vehicle trips and pressure upon the highway network. The proposals represent an unsustainable form of development, and residents and visitors would be heavily reliant on the private car to access employment, main food and comparison shopping elsewhere. The proposals fail to provide a genuine choice of alternative travel modes and would not amount to sustainable development (in accordance with the NPPF) and would result in a form of development outside of the settlement boundary that amounts to a significant conflict with the Development Strategy within the District Plan and objectives of the Buntingford Community Area Neighbourhood Plan. The proposal would be contrary to Policies DPS2 and TRA1 of the East Herts District Plan (2018), policy HD1 of the Buntingford Community Area Neighbourhood Plan and paragraphs 110 and 115 National Planning Policy Framework.”*
- 11.2.23 RfR 1 outlines that due to its siting, the development would be ‘isolated’ and ‘physically severed’ from the rest of Buntingford.
- 11.2.24 The NPPF does not provide a definition for ‘isolated’ or ‘isolation’. The only reference to isolated homes within the previous NPPF is within Paragraph 84, which refers to the development of individual dwellings. Similarly, NPPF policy S5 paragraph 3 now describes isolated homes as those lying outside settlements or groups of houses.
- 11.2.25 The Cambridge English Dictionary provides three definitions for the word isolated. Two of those definitions could be used in the context of the RfR1 wording. One can be applied to a location or place, and the other can be applied to an emotion. These include;

1. “not near to other places”; and
2. “feeling unhappy because of not seeing or talking to other people”.

- 11.2.26 Re definition 1, it is inaccurate to say that the development is not near to other places. There will be facilities on site, employment and allocated employment adjacent, and all the services, facilities and residences of Buntingford which are accessible within a 2km walk from the centre of the site. The DfT connectivity tool results (in the HSoCG) for East Herts, shows that the site is in a relatively well-connected part of the Borough and equally as connected as near-by recently approved sites. The site is 45% as connected as central London for travel modes except driving and very well connected by driving.
- 11.2.27 With regards to definition 2, I do not consider that future residents of the development would consider themselves to feel isolated. In addition to benefiting from the connectivity and accessibilities described above, they will have 659 neighbour households, facilities on site, modern broadband connectivity with which to access work, retail, social interaction, entertainment and services. The homes will not be outside groups of houses.
- 11.2.28 It is my view that the development and its residents will not be isolated.
- 11.2.29 RfR1 also states that the site is physically severed from the rest of Buntingford. Neither the previous nor the current NPPF provide a definition for ‘severed’ or ‘severance’. The claim is at odds with the designation of the adjacent BUNT3 allocation as being sustainable, and with the agreed position that facilities in Buntingford are accessible. Moreover, the site has good existing connectivity, benefits from one existing bridge connection and will provide 2 additional bridge connections which avoid conflict with A10 traffic, and a signalised crossing which halts traffic. The development site is not severed.
- 11.2.30 That aside, the cited severance from Buntingford is not the test. Residents of the development will have access to online facilities, on site facilities, adjacent employment, public transport services, as well as to the facilities in Buntingford.
- 11.2.31 I acknowledge that at ground level, traffic on the A10 presents a barrier between the site and Buntingford for pedestrians, just as would that sort of linear feature such as busy roads, rail lines, canals, large private sites and watercourses which are present in many towns. However, the proposals provide conflict free routes over the A10 and provide a controlled crossing facility. The A507 carries a secondary cycle route designation, and Baldock Road carries a primary cycle route designation. Baldock Road is also designated as primary and secondary walking routes to the west and east respectively in the LCWIP, confirming the Authority view that it is a well-used and important route. The proposals provide active travel infrastructure along it and a controlled crossing to improve that route not just for development users, but for existing users too, and that is agreed in the HSoCG.
- 11.2.32 The proposals also include PRoW enhancements on either side of each bridge crossing, improving the existing accessibility and attractiveness of these routes. The LHA are generally content that a satisfactory corridor using the PRoW network to/from Buntingford can be achieved as part of the proposals as documented in their June 2025 consultation response.

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- 11.2.33 The site certainly cannot be considered severed by the A10, if travelling in a vehicle or on a bus to/from the site. A typical vehicle journey from the point of the proposed site access to the centre of Buntingford is achievable within c. 2 minutes.
- 11.2.34 The RfR1 equates the location of the site and its active travel connections to a reliance on a private car, and then a reliance on a private car to a failure to comply with policies promoting sustainable patterns of development. Both of those suppositions are incorrect, principally around the concept and definitions of reliance and sustainable development. Notably, the LTP4 recognises that accessibility can be limited due to a lack of private transport, as referenced in Section 3.8.1 of my proof.
- 11.2.35 Residents will have a choice of how to access employment, facilities and services so they will not be “reliant” on a private car. These choices include digital, walking, cycling, public transport and sustainable car travel.
- 11.2.36 Another aspect of the use of the term “reliant upon” is to consider whether some level of use of car could be said to amount to a “reliance”. If that is held to be the case then surely that position is normal and is to be expected, so should not be a critical fail point for proposals. My evidence provides a comparison by reviewing the baseline journey to work census statistics for the site and the district. It shows there is little difference between the journeys by vehicle at the location of the appeal site (69%) and East Hertfordshire as a whole (62%), and those numbers will have reduced significantly since 2011.
- 11.2.37 Those show the baseline journey to work statistics at the time of the Local Plan, for the areas in which East Herts is required to deliver housing. A proposal can hardly be criticised in terms of reliance on private car, when it is located in an area which exhibits slightly higher levels of car use than the district average. Not least, when one considers that the purpose of the proposed infrastructure and the travel plan is to improve that position further.
- 11.2.38 Even when some residents do choose to use a car, if that car is used by more than one person, then it is a sustainable form of travel as are trips by ultra-low emission and zero emission vehicles. Some use of a private car (never mind reliance on a private car) does not therefore necessarily equate to a development which is inherently unsustainable.
- 11.2.39 Both active travel and sustainable travel options, together with ever-increasing on-line accessibility options, combine to ensure that residents will not be “reliant” or “dependent” on an unsustainable private motor vehicle. It is therefore incorrect to state that residents will be heavily reliant on the private car to access employment, main food and comparison shopping, as a choice of travel modes, and a choice to not travel at all, is clearly provided.

11.3 Summary

- 11.3.1 To summarise this section, I conclude that:
- I consider the location of the site to be well connected and sustainable;
 - I do not consider the site to be severed or isolated from Buntingford;
 - I consider that residents will have a genuine choice of travel by a range of sustainable transport modes;

- I consider that residents would not be heavily on the private car to access day to day amenities, facilities and services, including employment and food/comparison shopping facilities further afield; and
- The targets to reduce unsustainable private car trips as set out within the FTP are realistic and achievable.

12.0 Summary and Conclusions

12.1 Summary

- 12.1.1 My Proof of Evidence relates to the accessibility and sustainability of the proposals, both of which are points of contention within the Reasons for Refusal and are outlined within the Inspectors Main Issue (ii). I have also now considered the additional point raised by the Inspector pursuant to the recent publication of the NPPF, i.e the tests in NPPF Policy S5 1(j) and whether there are policies which would suggest refusal of the application.
- 12.1.2 I have entered into a joint Highways Statement of Common Ground with Ridge, the Local Highway Authority (Hertfordshire County Council) and the Local Planning Authority (East Herts District Council). Many points have been agreed, including:
- There are facilities within Buntingford accessible within a 2km walking distance from the centre of the proposed site;
 - Enhancements to RoWs 35 and 36 will provide benefits to existing and future residents of Buntingford and the development;
 - The enhancements to public transport arising from the proposals will enhance accessibility by bus for development users and existing trip making;
 - Zero and Ultra-low emission vehicles are a sustainable mode of transport. The development will facilitate the use of these vehicles through providing charging facilities in accordance with standards;
 - The modal shift targets set out in the Framework Travel Plan suggest that a reduction in the reliance on the private car is achievable; and
 - It is agreed that the traffic impact related tests in the previous NPPF are satisfied by the proposals and those tests in the latest NPPF are similar.
- 12.1.3 The matters not agreed relating to sustainability and accessibility are addressed within my evidence.
- 12.1.4 The Planning Statement of Common Ground describes the most important policies in terms of determining this appeal, and the fact that they should be given reduced weight due to the Council being unable to demonstrate a 5-year supply of deliverable housing sites. I leave the weighing and attributing of weight in relation to each policy to the Planning Professionals and the Inspector but note this agreed position as relevant context.
- 12.1.5 I have reviewed the connectivity of the site using the DfT's Connectivity Tool, which by definition "*generates a national measure of connectivity for any location in England and Wales. The connectivity score measures people's ability to get where they want to go.*"
- 12.1.6 My review found that the Appeal site at present, has a connectivity score of 45 for all modes except driving. Applying guidance from the DfT, this means that the site is 45% as connected as the most connected area of England and Wales (Tower Hamlets in Central London). A more

localised comparison of the appeal site against other areas within East Hertfordshire shows that the site is categorised as Band B in a 10-tier banding scale from A to J (with A being the most connected), i.e. the appeal site is located within the second highest banding of connectivity in the district. The site also has a connectivity score of 71 by driving. This demonstrates the excellent connectivity by road which the site benefits from, which assists sustainable car journeys, taxis, public transport, deliveries and emergency services. Those scores will be further enhanced under the proposals.

- 12.1.7 The site is located adjacent to the BUNT3 Employment allocation in the East Herts District Plan. The District Plan defines the location of that allocation as being sustainable. Given that the appeal site will additionally deliver infrastructure in terms of active travel, public transport, facilities on site and safe and suitable access, I consider that the appeal site location, is (and can be made) sustainable in travel terms.
- 12.1.8 In addition to the BUNT3 allocation, there is a current application (Ref: 3/25/1986/FUL) for the erection of four light industrial units with associated parking on the Buntingford Business Park site, which is adjacent to the appeal site. Those proposals do not propose any off-site active travel improvements to existing pedestrian or cycle infrastructure. Whilst that application is undecided, the LHA have not objected to the proposals, and in their consultation response comment that the site benefits from a footway connection into Buntingford. That connection will be enhanced for pedestrians and cyclists as part of the appeal site proposals, and the existing uncontrolled A10 crossing will also be enhanced with a toucan crossing facility.
- 12.1.9 To consider the subject of reliance on the private car I have reviewed trip rates for all residential sites across England and Wales, excluding London. My review shows that residential developments in all locational categories would generate car traffic to a broadly similar extent. I have also undertaken a more localised check by reviewing the journey to work census statistics for the areas in which the site is located and for East Hertfordshire as a whole. Those vehicle driver percentages are 69% and 62% respectively. The proposals can hardly be criticised in terms of reliance on private car, when practically all residential sites exhibit car use and it is located in an area which exhibits similar levels of car use to the district average. Moreover, the purpose of the travel plan and active travel improvements is to reduce that position further.
- 12.1.10 The on-site layout of the proposed development is a matter for detailed design, and it can be ensured that it is designed to modern standards to prioritise pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users. The proposals include facilities on-site which offer future residents a reduced need to travel off site, for day-to-day retail needs, and potentially for education/escort education journey purposes. Connections to those facilities will be safe and suitable for all users. A further reduced need to travel is enabled through the provision of modern and efficient broadband, which provides access to work, retail, entertainment social engagement and services.
- 12.1.11 Safe and suitable access will also be provided onto the site. There are two safe and suitable vehicular access junctions, and three active travel access locations. The proposed site will benefit from an all-modes roundabout, 2 pedestrian footbridges and a new active travel bridge, suitable for pedestrians and cyclists.

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- 12.1.12 It is agreed by all parties that services and facilities within Buntingford are accessible within a 2km walking distance of the site. My review has identified 45 existing facilities and services within that catchment. These include leisure, retail, employment and education facilities. All facilities and services within Buntingford will be accessible within a 5km cycle catchment.
- 12.1.13 The proposals are connected by four key active travel routes from the site to Buntingford. These include providing a 4m wide shared foot/cycleway on the northern side of the A507, connecting to an improved 3m shared foot/cycleway on Baldock Road via a new toucan crossing facility across the A10. The proposals promote a traffic speed reduced and street lit environment along that route. Two additional routes are available via the upgraded existing footbridge and proposed active travel bridge. These provide an unconflicted crossing of the A10, and connect with Skipps Meadow (a naturally surveilled, residential street suitable for walking and cycling) and RoW 36, which the proposals will upgrade. The fourth route is via the proposed footbridge across the A10, connecting with RoW 35. This route is suitable for many pedestrians and offers a significant improvement on the existing situation where no crossing facilities are provided across the A10 between RoW 35 and 41. RoW 35 will also be enhanced.
- 12.1.14 The four routes connect to the primary and secondary walking and cycling network as identified in the LCWIP. The proposed active travel infrastructure and mitigations serve to improve key routes identified in the East Herts Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) and Hertfordshire's Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP).
- 12.1.15 In addition to the multiple sustainable improvements and measures as set out in my PoE Appendix J, as the S106 and conditions discussions have progressed, the Appellant has requested that an additional potential enhancement be drawn up to improve the walking route to Millfield First School. That is to improve the existing facilities for pedestrians to that school, prior to a school being provided on site.
- 12.1.16 As the school provision point has not yet been concluded, those potential enhancements do not feature in my PoE Appendix J matrix of sustainable improvements, nor have they informed my considerations on the acceptability of the proposals.
- 12.1.17 It is clear however, that if those enhancements are delivered, they would improve the walking environment between Baldock Road and Millfield First School for pedestrians from the development and for existing trip making.
- 12.1.18 I have reviewed crime statistics within Buntingford between 2020-2025, which shows no recorded crime on RoW36, in which the existing footbridge and proposed active travel bridge connect the site with. The improvements involved resurfacing, widening, maintenance and lighting which can be delivered through a number of mechanisms. The appellant is also keen to provide funding towards allowing the authorities to make the necessary application to change the designation of the footpath to allow for cyclists. Should any user not wish to travel to Buntingford via the PRow network, there are alternative, surfaced route choices via the A507 and Baldock Road which will be overlooked by a main highway and street lit, and also via the residential street of Skipps Meadow which offers natural surveillance from housing and is street lit.

- 12.1.19 With regards to public transport accessibility, there will be two onsite bus stop facilities, (one at a travel hub) which will ensure all residential dwellings are within 400m of a bus stop. Existing bus services 331, 18 and 37 will be diverted onto the site and a financial contribution of £1.5m will be made by the appellant to run the service 331 at a 30-minute frequency. These buses provide future residents with access to Buntingford, as well as Royston, Hertford and Stevenage amongst other towns and villages within reasonable journey times. It is agreed in the HSoCG that residents of the proposed development will have the option to travel sustainably to other nearby towns, local facilities and employment centres by bus. HCC have identified timetabling and routing improvements for the future services.
- 12.1.20 Hertfordshire County Councils Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) service, HertsLynx service, will also be available on site and the LHA have confirmed that a financial contribution towards this service is not required. The appellant is contributing £500 per dwelling towards improving and maintaining the Buntingford Community Transport Scheme, for use of future residents. The BCAT and HertsLynx services, along with existing and improved bus services, provides access to employment, large supermarkets and comparison shopping located in towns and villages outside of Buntingford.
- 12.1.21 I have compared this Appeal case with a recent Appeal decision in Langho, Ribble Valley, a case with very similar attributes in which I was involved. The inspector in that case found:
- Acceptance that appropriate access, rather than ideal / high quality access, is the appropriate test;
 - Acceptance that constrained access by some modes for some residents is not incompatible with the test of requiring safe and suitable access for all, including the mobility impaired;
 - Acceptance of travelling to further destinations by bus to access key facilities;
 - Acceptance that mitigation doesn't need to fully resolve shortcomings;
 - Acceptance that whilst not ideal, the development offered a range of transport options and so was not reliant on private car; and
 - That the proposals had an acceptable effect on sustainable modes and patterns of transport (which was the specific test the Inspector set at the CMC) and that the proposals were in accordance with the Framework.
- 12.1.22 The Inspector took a realistic view and confirmed that the test should be whether facilities are generally appropriate, not ideal.
- 12.1.23 Whilst the two cases are similar in many respects, I consider that accessibility and sustainable travel credentials are better at the Appeal site than was the case in the Langho appeal.
- 12.1.24 I have reviewed the proposals against the cited policy conflicts named within the RfR, including cited conflicts with the previous NPPF, East Herts District Plan, Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan and Buntingford Community Neighbourhood Plan. I have also reviewed the proposals against other relevant policy, including the NPPF Draft and now the August 2026 NPPF. My

evidence demonstrates that the proposals are not in conflict and indeed accord with the relevant travel and transport related policies.

12.1.25 I have reviewed the mode shift targets as set out within the Framework Travel Plan, and my evidence shows that if offset evenly, an uptake of 53 daily pedestrian, cycle, public transport and car sharing trips respectively across a 12-hour period would be required to achieve a 15% reduction in unsustainable car trips. My evidence concludes the targets are suitable, realistic and will be achieved. I also consider that they will be significantly bettered with the increasing shift to sustainable car travel.

12.1.26 I have reviewed the proposals against the points of contention within the Inspectors Main Issue, and the Reasons for Refusal and from the recent NPPF. In considering those points, my evidence has shown that:

- The development is proposed in a sustainable location and accessibility will be improved further;
- The proposals provide convenient access, for all users, by a range of sustainable travel modes, giving access to a range of local facilities and services, employment and food/comparison shopping further afield;
- There are socially safe routes between the site and Buntingford;
- The proposals provide modern and safe pedestrian and cycling routes between the site and Buntingford;
- That the proposed active travel connections and bus improvements will make a suitable modal shift towards reducing car usage, and that the modal shift targets are realistic and achievable;
- The site is well related to the settlement and not isolated or severed from Buntingford; and
- Users of the site will not be unacceptably reliant upon the private car, and that many forms of vehicle trips are in fact sustainable. If a level of car use is held to amount to a “reliance” upon the car, then that is a typical situation, to be expected in almost all developments across the UK.
- In relation to the NPPF policies which relate to transport and which say that proposals should be refused if they are not compliant (i.e DP3 (3), and TR6 (4)) I consider that the proposals are not in conflict with any Transport or Accessibility policy which would warrant a refusal.

12.1.27 In transport terms, the proposals are accessible and sustainable and the increasing prevalence of sustainable vehicles and the reducing need to travel, along with the provision of on-site facilities, modern active travel infrastructure, high level of bus accessibility, and promotion of sustainable travel within the Travel Plan, all align with vision-led aspirations for a sustainable and accessible development.

12.2 Conclusions

12.2.1 In consideration of my evidence, I conclude the following:

- The site is sustainable;
- The site in its existing form is well connected, and that connectivity will be enhanced by the proposals;
- The proposals provide safe and suitable access for all modes of travel;
- The proposals prioritise, encourage and provide for sustainable transport journeys on foot, by cycle, by bus travel and by sustainable vehicles.
- Bus, highway, cycle and pedestrian improvements and contributions have been developed in conjunction with the authorities and are appropriate;
- The improvements additionally serve to deliver LCWIP and ROWIP objectives and will improve conditions and encourage sustainable travel from the existing population too.
- The development offers a reduced need to travel through providing digital connectivity and onsite facilities.
- Residents will not be reliant on the private car, and a genuine choice of travel has been provided including walking, cycling and public transport;
- The site is physically well related to the settlement and not isolated or severed from the town of Buntingford in terms of trip making.
- The proposals comply with national and local policy;
- The proposals offer a socially safe active travel connection between the site and Buntingford.
- The Mode shifts identified in the FTP are realistic, will be achieved and will be bettered in recognition of the quickly reducing presence of unsustainable private vehicles.

12.2.2 I conclude that the development proposals should be considered to be acceptable in terms of travel and transport accessibility and sustainability.