

3. SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

3.1 Site Description

3.1.1 The application site (see Site Location Plan at Figure 3.1) comprises approximately 93 hectares of undulating arable land located approximately 1.0km north of Winchester railway station and 2.0km from the City centre. The land within the application site comprises a development area of 87 ha which is owned by CALA Homes, the balance being existing roads which are owned the Council as Highway Authority. A right-of-way beneath the main Southampton to London railway line, which defines the eastern boundary of the site, is included within the red line boundary. A right-of-way exists across this land, although the land is within the ownership of Network Rail.

3.1.2 The site is bounded to the west by the residential areas of Weeke and Harestock, to the east by the London to Southampton railway line, which runs along an embankment for the majority of the length of the eastern boundary; and to the north by open farm land that gently rises upwards from Well House Lane. The northern boundary of the site is clearly defined by Well House Lane and the mature evergreen hedgerow that adjoins the highway. The western boundary of the site is formed by the western edge of Andover Road, while the southern boundary is marked by the residential development on Park Road.

3.1.3 The application site excludes the two isolated groups of buildings contained within the site, which are not owned by CALA. Barton Farm and the associated buildings, which are located to the south of the ridgeline are excluded along with Well House Cottage/Well House Farm, on the northern site boundary.

3.1.4 The application site includes the entire length of Andover Road/Andover Road North between the southern boundary of the site and the junction with Harestock Road and Well House Lane in the north. Sections of Harestock Road and Well House Lane are included within the application site to facilitate the proposed access strategy, which involves a re-routing of Andover Road through the site and the partial re-routing of a section of Well House Lane.

3.1.5 As indicated by the Site Location Plan (Figure 3.1) the applicants, CALA Homes, own approximately 38 ha of agricultural land to the east of the railway line. With the exception of a corridor of land to provide a public right of way running from the railway underpass eastwards to Worthy Road, this land is not included within the application site. The land is identified as falling within the ownership of CALA, but excluded from the application site only because the application proposals do not include any plans for development of this land. Discussions have been held with Officers of the District Council and with representatives of the Hampshire Wildlife Trust regarding the future treatment and management of this area for supportive uses/green infrastructure. There is no need to include the land because there are no plans to alter the land in any way that would require planning permission to be obtained. The boundary of the South Downs National Park abuts land on the other side of Worthy Road further to the east.

3.1.6 Consideration to the site description has been given in individual Chapters as relates to specific topics.

3.2 Topography

3.2.1 A ridgeline running east to west across the site divides it broadly into two similarly sized parcels of land. To the south of the ridgeline the land is relatively enclosed, while to the north of the ridge the aspect is far more open and visible on approach from the north.

3.2.2 A public footpath crosses the site along the line of the ridge from Andover Road in the west to the railway line on the eastern boundary. At the point the path meets the railway it strikes southwards along the line of the embankment to the point where it then turns east beneath the rail line before running northwards on the other side of the embankment to a point where it meets Well House Lane within the village of Headbourne Worthy.

3.3 Landscape Character

3.3.1 The past and present use of the site as arable farmland has significantly influenced the character of the land. The land is generally open with few hedgerows or landscape features.

3.3.2 The site comprises part of an area of chalk downland countryside that stretches northwards from Winchester. Due to extensive arable cultivation of the land within the site, there are no significant woodland areas or tree cover within the site. Vegetation is generally confined to isolated hedgerows, trees and copses and shelterbelts, mainly of beech and exotic conifers. The ridgeline comprises a shelterbelt of mature beech trees at its eastern end and a section of mature hedgerows with young copper beech trees to the west. Along Andover Road, an established avenue of mature sycamores extends along the eastern verge of the highway to its junction with Well House Lane.

3.3.3 A discontinuous hedgerow demarcates the boundary of the site along Well House Lane. The vegetation on the railway embankment comprises native scrub vegetation that forms a dense screen to the embankment and railway line.

3.4 Surrounding Area

3.4.1 To the west of the site are the residential districts of Harestock and Weeke. To the south of the site is the existing residential area of northern Winchester. To the east of the site, on the other side of the railway line, is approximately 38ha of agricultural land. To the north of the site is open farm land that gently rises upwards from Well House Lane.

3.4.2 Further details of the site's proximity to services are set out in Chapter 7 (Transportation).