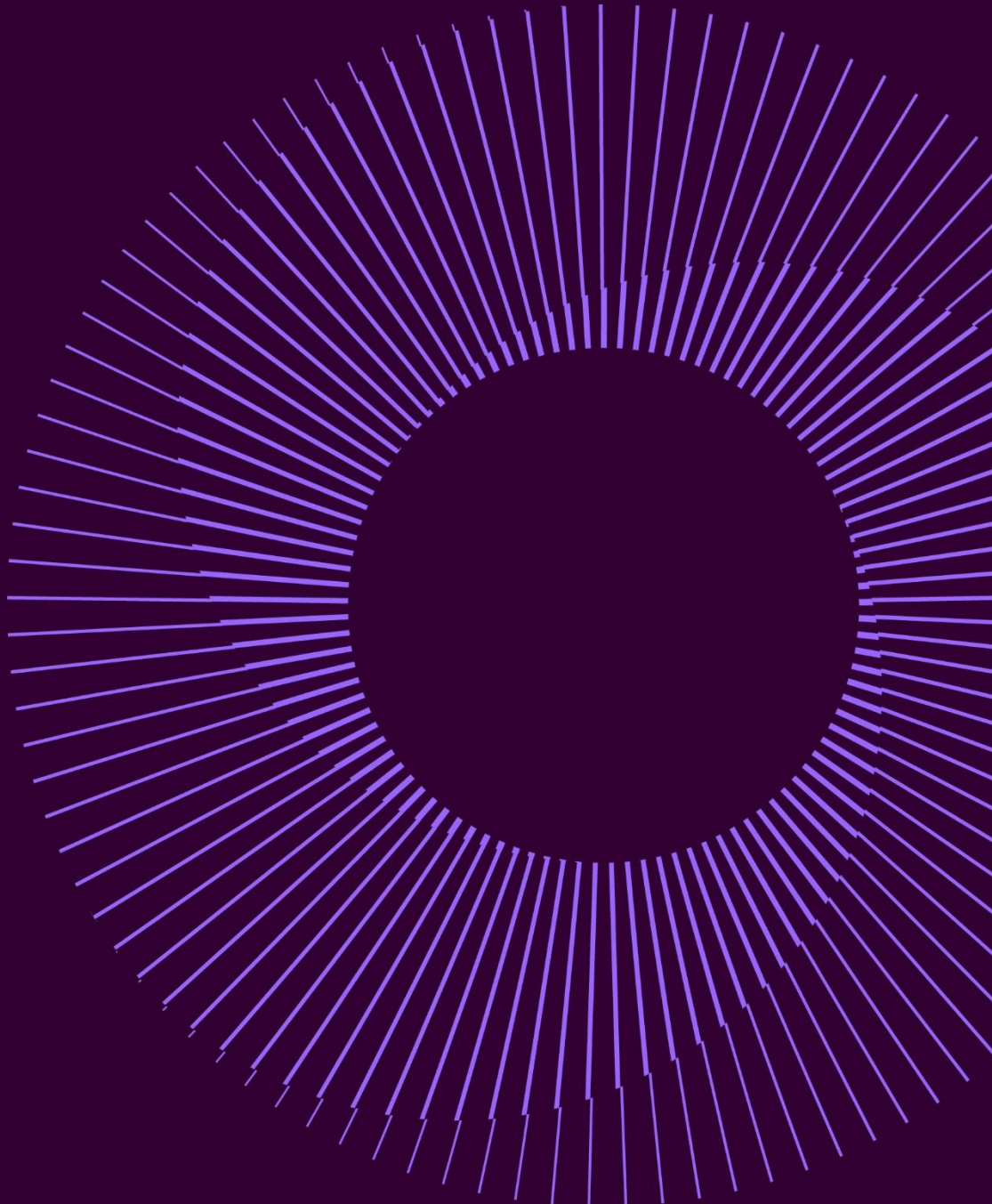


Neil Marshall – Rebuttal Proof of Evidence – Transport & Highways

Colwell Farm, Haywards Heath

Appeal Reference: 6005786

LPA Planning Reference: DM/25/0445 / AP/26/0023



Project Reference

Ref: NM/ITL19597-013b

Date: 14 July 2026

Client: Miller Homes Limited

Quality Management

Report	Comment	Date	Author	Authorised
ITL19597-013	1st draft	08/07/2026	NM	NM
ITL19597-013a	2nd draft	10/07/2026	NM	NM
ITL19597-013b	Final	14/07/2026	NM	NM

File Ref: L:\PROJECTS\19000 SERIES\19597 - North Colwell Farm\ITL19597-013b Rebuttal Proof of Evidence of Neil Marshall (Transport and Highways).docx

Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	The Local Highway Authority and Local Planning Authority Positions	3
3	Overall Sustainability Conclusion	4
4	Walking Distances and Everyday Facilities	6
5	Public Right of Way (PRoW) Footpath 29CU	8
6	Pedestrian Infrastructure and Mitigation	9
7	Cycling	11
8	Public Transport	13
9	The Department for Transport’s Connectivity Tool	15

1 Introduction

1.1.1 This Rebuttal Proof of Evidence responds to the Proof of Evidence of John Russell (John Russell Transport Planning) on behalf of Protect Colwell Farm Action Group (PCFAG).

1.1.2 My qualifications and experience, and background to my involvement in this case are set out in detail in my main Proof of Evidence and are not repeated here.

1.2 Statement

1.2.1 The evidence that I have prepared and provide for the Appeal in this proof of evidence is true and has been prepared and is given in accordance with the guidance of my professional institutions and I can confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional opinions.

Main Topics

1.2.2 I shall address the following eight topics within the Proof of Evidence by Mr Russell in the following Sections:

- 1) Areas of Common Ground and Weight to the Local Highway Authority and Local Planning Authority Positions (Section 2)
- 2) Overall Sustainability Conclusion (Section 3)
- 3) Walking Distances and Everyday Facilities (Section 4)
- 4) Public Right of Way (PRoW) Footpath 29CU (Section 5)
- 5) Pedestrian Infrastructure and Mitigation (Section 6)
- 6) Cycling (Section 7)
- 7) Public Transport (Section 8)
- 8) The Department for Transport's Connectivity Tool (Section 9)

1.2.3 In preparing this Rebuttal I have not addressed every matter raised by PCFAG in their proofs but that does not mean I am in agreement with all other matters raised by PCFAG's witnesses.

1.2.4 Many of the points raised in Mr Russell's Proof have already been addressed in the Transport Assessment and Transport Plan and other planning documents submitted with the Planning Application, the Appeal Statement of Case and/or my Proof of Evidence.

1.2.5 The majority of my Rebuttal covers points that were not explained in the Rule 6 Party Statement of Case or other documents until exchange of evidence. The Rule 6 Party were asked to comment upon the Statement of Common Ground agreed with the LHA, identifying any specific disagreements, and they declined to do so before the Proofs of Evidence were issued.

Errata

- 1.2.6 I also wish to correct an error in the signed Transport and Highways SoCG in respect of the Appeal site's Connectivity score. In paragraph 5.15 it states that ***"The site access has a Connectivity score of 43 and a Local Authority Banding of "B"."*** This should actually state that the site access has a Connectivity score of 53 and a Local Authority Banding of "B". This is a matter of fact rather than interpretation, as is shown in paragraph 5.5.14 and Image 5.1 of my Proof. This change does not change my overall conclusions on the appeal scheme.

2 The Local Highway Authority and Local Planning Authority Positions

- 2.1.1 It is important at the outset to identify the matters that are not in dispute. It is common ground between the Appellant and the Rule 6 Party that the Appeal Proposal is acceptable in terms of highways safety and residual cumulative traffic impact.
- 2.1.2 At paragraph 1.9 of his Proof, Mr Russell confirms that he does not dispute West Sussex County Council's (WSCC), as the County Highway Authority, findings in relation to highway safety or residual cumulative traffic impact. However, he then notes that the WSCC's position does not "conflict" with RfR2 on transport sustainability.
- 2.1.3 That is not a correct statement on WSCC's position. Whilst highway safety, residual cumulative impact and transport sustainability are distinct matters, WSCC's position of support is a highly material factor in this case. As my Proof explains at paragraphs 3.1.3 to 3.1.8. WSCC is the relevant statutory consultee in respect of all matters of highway safety, operation, and sustainability for applications in Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC). They have reviewed the transport submissions, agreed the relevant mitigation, and confirmed that there are no matters of disagreement on transport and highways matters. They have confirmed this point in the agreed topic specific Transport and Highways Statement of Common Ground (CD 8.5)
- 2.1.4 My Proof also records at paragraphs 3.4.2 to 3.4.3 that MSDC has agreed that the proposed development is in an appropriate location in terms of transport and accessibility with the Master Statement of Common Ground Addendum (MSoCGA) which was concluded with MSDC on [16 June 2026] setting out [in para 3.12] that ***"It is agreed that the proposed development is in an appropriate location in terms of transport and accessibility."***
- 2.1.5 Those positions adopted by the two relevant Councils are highly relevant. Mr Russell's conclusion that the site is not sustainable in transport terms, runs contrary to the professional judgement of the Local Highway Authority and the Local Planning Authority's current position.
- 2.1.6 The only area of dispute between the Appellant and the Rule 6 Party therefore concerns transport sustainability only: whether the Appeal Site is in a location where future residents would have a genuine and realistic choice of sustainable travel modes, taking account of the site's location, the type of development proposed, the available routes and services, and the mitigation secured by the Appellant, within the context of NPPF 110 and 115(a) and Policy DP21.

3 Overall Sustainability Conclusion

- 3.1.1 My Proof of Evidence explains in detail why the site is sustainably located and how sustainable transport modes are prioritised. It builds on the earlier detailed work in the Transport Assessment and the Transport Plan. My approach is in accordance with NPPF 110 and 115(a) and the development plan.
- 3.1.2 Throughout his Proof, Mr Russell seeks to argue that the Appeal Site cannot be considered a sustainable location for new development. However, Mr Russell's conclusion is based on an unduly restrictive interpretation of transport sustainability, which fails to have regard to the range of facilities, the actual distances and the quality of the routes, and applies the wrong approach to the national policy test.
- 3.1.3 Most notably, in paragraph 1.7 of his Proof, Mr Russell states that journeys to and from the Appeal Site for most everyday purposes are "excessive" in terms of travel distance and are not supported by infrastructure that is safe and suitable for sustainable modes.
- 3.1.4 That is clearly not borne out by the evidence. As my Proof clearly explains at paragraph 5.3.8, the Appeal Site is within easy walking distance of a range of day-to-day facilities, including primary education, leisure facilities, convenience retail, a pharmacy and a GP surgery, with distances measured from the site access and agreed through the Transport and Highways Statement of Common Ground (CD 8.5)
- 3.1.5 Equally, at paragraph 1.12 of his Proof, Mr Russell concludes that the Appeal Site cannot be considered a sustainable location for new development and that it fails to comply with paragraphs 110 and 115(a) and (b) of the NPPF. My Proof reaches the opposite conclusion at paragraph 5.6.6, where I confirm that the Appeal Site prioritises sustainable travel opportunities, benefits from realistic walking, cycling and public transport choices, and satisfies the first transport test in paragraph 115 of the NPPF.
- 3.1.6 In my view, Mr Russell's conclusion is both based on an unduly restrictive interpretation of transport sustainability, and fails to properly consider the range and extent of services and the relevant distances and routes. He does not have proper regard to the site's relationship with the local facilities around the Walnut Park area, as well as the location of Princess Royal hospital (employment and health services), and Haywards Heath town centre, to which the agreed off-site improvements will further enhance access (for both the new and existing community). He also provides no evidence relating to the need to travel for everyday purposes, and therefore having such a range of facilities in such close proximity to the site inherently makes the site sustainable.
- 3.1.7 NPPF paragraph 115 requires a judgement to be made having regard to the vision for the site, the type of development and its location. Mr Russell's approach to the sustainability of the site is far too narrow. He has not engaged with the positive improvements to be delivered which will ensure there is an opportunity for people to choose from a variety of travel modes for everyday purposes.

-
- 3.1.8 At paragraphs 2.3 and 2.4 of his Proof, Mr Russell states that a genuine choice of transport modes must be sufficiently attractive that most people could reasonably be expected to use them. That is not the national policy test.
- 3.1.9 My Proof explains at paragraph 2.4.4 that the NPPF requires a judgement to be made in context, recognising that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions vary between locations. That is reinforced at paragraph 5.6.1 of my Proof, where I explain that sustainable transport modes must be prioritised taking account of the vision for the site, the type of development, and its location.
- 3.1.10 The NPPF does not require that all everyday destinations must be within an 800m walk, nor does it require every sustainable mode to be equally attractive for every journey purpose. The relevant question is whether the development is in a location which is, or can be made, sustainable and whether it offers a genuine choice of transport modes in the context of that location. My Proof of Evidence (building on the Transport Assessment and Travel Plan) has demonstrated that it does.

4 Walking Distances and Everyday Facilities

- 4.1.1 At paragraph 2.6 of his Proof, Mr Russell refers to the National Design Guide and the 800m walkable neighbourhood concept.
- 4.1.2 My Proof clearly explains at paragraphs 9.4.11 that walking guidance should not be treated as a rigid upper limit. In particular, paragraph 5.3.4 of my Proof quotes Manual for Streets, which identifies 800m as a walkable neighbourhood benchmark but expressly notes that this is not an upper limit and that walking has the greatest potential to replace short car trips under 2km.
- 4.1.3 The 800m reference should therefore not be applied as a rigid pass/fail threshold. Relevant guidance identified in my Proof at Table 9.1 identifies a range of walking distances, and the acceptability of walking depends on journey purpose, route quality, local context and individual circumstances. I conclude at paragraph 9.4.10 that all dwellings will be within a realistic walking distance (based on an upper threshold of 2km) walking distance of a range of everyday facilities, including Northlands Wood Primary Academy, Walnut Park, Tesco Express, a pharmacy and a GP surgery. The Appeal scheme itself will also provide public open space, play areas and informal recreation space, further reducing the need to travel for some leisure trips
- 4.1.4 Paragraph 4.2 of Mr Russell's Proof introduces Table 4.1 which appears to present the walking distances to the local facilities which are provided in Table 1 of the THSoCG. Certain distances are different, albeit mostly to a limited degree. Mr Russell has not explained why the distances are different to those which have been agreed between the Appellant and WSCC.
- 4.1.5 At paragraphs 4.18 and 4.19 of his Proof, Mr Russell adds 305m to the walking distances from the site access, based on an assumed midpoint between the first and furthest indicative dwellings. My Proof clearly states at paragraphs 5.3.5 to 5.3.6 that the distances used in the Transport Assessment and THSoCG are measured from the site access to the entrance of the relevant facility, using actual available walking and cycling routes. That is the appropriate basis for an outline application where all matters are reserved except access.
- 4.1.6 Moreover, in Table 9.2 of my Proof, I have provided the relevant distances from a potential first dwelling and last dwelling in the Appeal scheme, based on the outline parameter plan. My Proof further explains at paragraphs 9.4.9 to 9.4.10 that, even when considering the indicative first and last dwelling positions, a wide range of facilities remain within relevant walking or cycling parameters. In addition, cycling can provide an additional active travel connection for many, as detailed in a later section of this Rebuttal.

-
- 4.1.7 In paragraphs 4.10 of his proof, Mr Russell claims that the reasonable walking distances provided in the CIHT Guidelines for Providing Journeys on Foot, which state that people would walk a distance of up to 2km for commuting are from home to a place of work, and not from home to an intermediate location to change to another mode. I have reviewed the document in detail, and can find no such reference. I can see no reason to infer that a 2km walk for commuting cannot be either a first or last leg of a multi-modal journey. Indeed, Manual for Streets, as I quote in paragraph 5.3.4 of my Proof, confirms that walking has the greatest potential to replace short car trips, particularly those under 2km. Again, there is no qualifying criteria that suggest that this is just for home to destination. In addition, the National Travel Survey data that I quote in paragraph 5.3.2 of my Proof confirms that over a third (36%) of journeys between one and two miles are on foot; again further evidence that for many people, walking distances of well beyond 800m are not just acceptable, but part of everyday life.
- 4.1.8 Therefore, contrary to Mr Russell's assertion at paragraph 4.29 that he would expect that very few, if any journeys would be made by foot from the Appeal site, I would expect that many, if not all, of the trips for primary education, leisure, and top-up convenience retail (which is 59% of all trip purposes (paragraph 5.3.10 of my Proof)) would be undertaken by foot. The alternative route by car is about 2.5km as the road route is not as direct. In addition, the Princess Royal Hospital is just a 15 minutes acceptable walk from the site's access, providing a significant local employment (as well as health) opportunity, without the need for on-site parking (which is managed by paid for permits based on a needs based assessment).

5 Public Right of Way (PRoW) Footpath 29CU

- 5.1.1 At paragraph 4.24 of his Proof, Mr Russell states that Footpath HAH-29CU is unsurfaced, unlit and not overlooked. At paragraph 4.28 he states that it is unknown what any improved surfacing of Footpath HAH-29CU would entail.
- 5.1.2 As my Proof explains at paragraph 5.3.14, WSCC has confirmed that PRoW Footpath 29CU is suitable for year-round use and that the Appellant has agreed with WSCC to fund an upgrade to provide all-weather use. My Proof also states at paragraph 6.2.13 that a rolled stone (Limestone type 1) surface improvement is proposed, that WSCC's PROW Team would be responsible for future maintenance, and that the improvement would be secured through the Section 106 Agreement.
- 5.1.3 Mr Russell appears to discount the mitigation on the basis that he does not know the detailed surfacing specification. However, the delivery mechanism will be agreed with the Local Highway Authority, and the works would be secured through the Section 106 Agreement. The route, with secured mitigation, will provide a realistic and suitable walking connection to local facilities. In my view, it will clearly be an appropriate route.

6 Pedestrian Infrastructure and Mitigation

- 6.1.1 Mr Russell accepts at paragraph 4.26 that a package of pedestrian improvements is proposed, going on to list them. He has made several comments on (1) Lewes Road lighting (2) the need to cross Lewes Road and (3) the condition of Footpath 29CU and Snowdrop Lane.
- 6.1.2 Mr Russell fails to highlight the benefits to be gained for both future occupiers of the Appeal site and the range of existing pedestrians (including school children) that I have observed walking along Lewes Road and crossing in locations where dedicated provision is not currently available. The Appeal scheme includes a comprehensive and targeted package of pedestrian improvements, based on a site walking audit presented in the TA, including the site access crossing, Lewes Road footway improvements, Snowdrop Lane improvements, Birch Close crossing improvements, Walnut Park area crossing improvements and the surfacing of Footpath 29CU. These measures have been reviewed and agreed with West Sussex County Council who has agreed that this is suitable to accommodate the demand, and they are able to maintain as part of the adopted highway.
- 6.1.3 Mr Russell's evidence fails to reflect the role of these improvements in integrating the site into the existing pedestrian network. The mitigation is not incidental; it is specifically designed to address identified gaps and improve the continuity and quality of walking routes to nearby facilities.
- 6.1.4 In my view, the agreed package of works provides a proportionate and effective response to the site's local context and supports the conclusion that safe and suitable access will be provided for pedestrians. In paragraph 4.29 of his Proof, Mr Russell concludes that very few, if any, journeys would be made on foot because of long walking distances and pedestrian infrastructure deficiencies. I disagree. My Proof clearly states at paragraph 5.6.2 that the key local facilities are accessible via existing pedestrian routes, including Footpath 29CU and the Snowdrop Lane route, and that the Appellant has committed to improvements to enhance those routes.
- 6.1.5 Mr Russell also contends that provision is insufficient for all round use, with intermittent street lighting. Having viewed Mr Russell's photographs at 4.25, I consider that he has been selective in his use of photograph locations. My own observations indicate that there is consistent street-lighting along Lewes Road, rather than in small, focused areas. In Image 6.1 I show a view of Lewes Road, looking east from the PRow towards the proposed site access location. This shows continuous street-lighting is present, including a street-light outside the site access. At present, this street-light is slightly obscured by tree leaf foliage, which creates shadow from the modern LED lights. The street is part of the adopted highway network, and therefore WSCC has the responsibility to ensure these are cut back, either directly or through discussions with adjacent landowners.

Image 6.1: Night-time view of Lewes Road (approx. future site access shown in red)



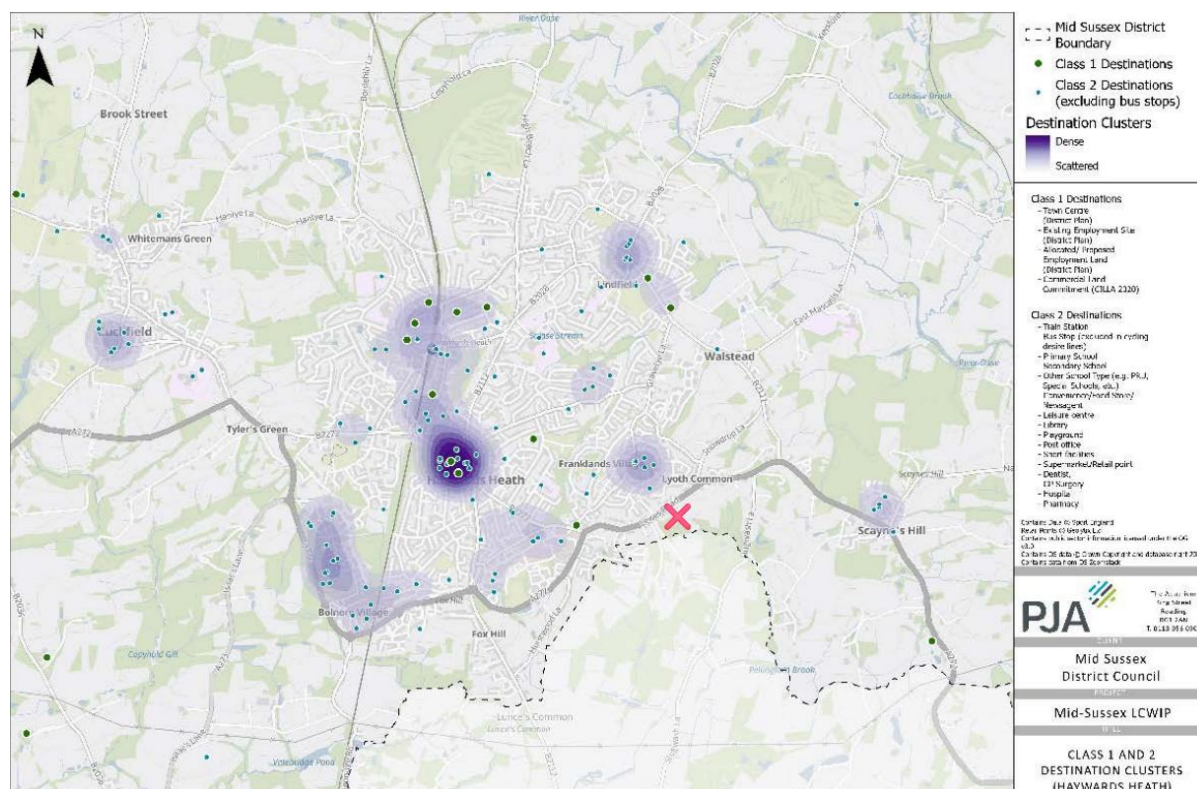
Note: Image brightness enhanced for clarity, but light and shadow from street lights are clear.

- 6.1.6 Public Footpath 29CU is not street lit. It is an adopted footpath, so WSCC can choose to add streetlighting in the future, should demand increase (as the northern end of the footpath towards Beech Hill is lit). Many people now carry mobile phones with built in lights, and I have observed (dog) walkers on the footpath with such provision. Alternatively, pedestrians (and cyclists) can use the alternative, but longer, route via Lewes Road, Snowdrop Lane, and Marlow Drive to access the Walnut Park area, all via street-lit footway connections.
- 6.1.7 It is therefore clear that reasonable provision for pedestrians to travel year round from the site to the services and facilities (incl. bus stops) around Northlands Avenue/Walnut Park, as well as towards the Princess Royal hospital (for health, employment, and bus connections) are available via continuous, paved footways and footpaths, following upgrades delivered by the Appeal site.

7 Cycling

- 7.1.1 In paragraph 4.35 of his Proof, Mr Russell acknowledges that there is a wide range of everyday facilities and amenities within reasonable cycling distance of the Appeal Site. That is consistent with my Proof, which states at paragraphs 5.3.3 that cycling is a potential mode for journeys under five miles, and that relevant local parameters identify cycling opportunities within approximately 5.3km.
- 7.1.2 In particular, paragraph 5.4.5 of my Proof explains that Haywards Heath railway station is approximately 3.3km, or a 12 to 13 minute cycle, from the site access, and paragraph 5.4.7 explains how linked cycle-and-rail trips provide sustainable access to wider destinations.
- 7.1.3 Whilst Mr Russell accepts that a wide range of everyday facilities and amenities are within reasonable cycling distance of the Appeal Site, he concludes that cycling would not be attractive or realistic for most users because there is no continuous protected cycle infrastructure on key routes.
- 7.1.4 I do not agree that cycling can only be treated as a realistic sustainable option where fully protected infrastructure is provided along all routes. National policy requires a judgement as to whether sustainable transport modes are prioritised, taking account of the type of development and its location.
- 7.1.5 The site is within reasonable cycling distance of Haywards Heath town centre, Princess Royal Hospital, local schools, shops, health facilities and the railway station. The County's LCWIP document (CD 6.16) confirms that there are significant destination clusters of services and facilities in the vicinity of the site, the majority of which are to the eastern side of the railway line. I provide an extract of this, in Image 7.1 below, highlighting the site's location.

Image 7.1: Extract from MSDC LCWIP



Source: MSDC LCWIP Figure 6-14

- 7.1.6 Haywards Heath railway station is approximately 3.3km from the site access and provides extensive cycle parking. A linked cycle-and-rail journey is therefore a realistic option for a proportion of future residents.
- 7.1.7 Mr Russell's approach attempts to treat the absence of ideal cycling infrastructure as determinative. That is inconsistent with a balanced, location-specific assessment of sustainable travel opportunities.
- 7.1.8 In paragraphs 4.36 to 4.41 of his Proof, Mr Russell concludes that, because there is no continuous protected cycle infrastructure, most potential cyclists would be excluded and very few cycle journeys would be made.
- 7.1.9 The NPPF test does not require new cycle infrastructure to be installed from all sites. As my Proof explains at paragraph 5.6.6, the NPPF requires a contextual judgement, taking account of the site's edge-of-town location and the range of sustainable travel opportunities available. Cycling should therefore be considered as part of the overall sustainable travel choice, rather than dismissed solely because the existing network does not provide continuous segregated infrastructure. As confirmed in paragraph 1.1.4 of my Proof I have myself cycled around all of the local roads, including Lewes Road, and found drivers to be courteous and unthreatening. That is not to say that all cyclists would feel the same, but the existing routes will certainly be attractive to some (and I have observed cyclists riding in the carriageway on Lewes Road during my various day and night time site visits). It is therefore clear that a lack of dedicated infrastructure does not prevent cyclists choosing to use the route.

8 Public Transport

8.1 Bus

- 8.1.1 In paragraphs 5.5 to 5.7 of his Proof, Mr Russell concludes that the nearest bus stops are beyond acceptable walking distances and that bus provision would not be conducive to promoting bus travel.
- 8.1.2 My Proof explains at paragraph 5.4.1 that the Appeal Site is located just over 700m (or around nine minutes' walk) from the Northlands Avenue bus stops, which provide access to route 31/31A. My Proof also notes that the southbound stop includes shelter, seating, timetable information and real-time passenger information, and that further services are available from Lewes Road and Franklynn Road.

8.2 Rail

- 8.2.1 In paragraphs 5.8 to 5.15 of his Proof, Mr Russell accepts that Haywards Heath railway station provides a high level of connectivity and at paragraph 5.12 in agrees that that travel by rail will be a genuine travel choice for residents living at the Appeal site. However, he concludes that it is too remote to be reasonably accessed on foot and that most rail users would travel to the station by car.
- 8.2.2 However, my Proof does not rely on the railway station as an everyday walking destination for all residents. Paragraph 5.4.5 of my Proof explains that the station is within reasonable cycling distance, provides frequent and fast services to Brighton, Gatwick Airport, Crawley and London, and has step-free access, 312 cycle parking spaces and 1,069 car parking spaces. The point is that the station materially improves the overall range of realistic travel choices available to future residents.
- 8.2.3 In addition, the station can be accessed by private car, and has a large station car parking to facilitate such demand. The DfT's recent "Better Connected, A Strategy for Integrated Transport" (April 2026) (CD19.14) supports park-and-ride schemes with **"cars, motorcycles or cycles being used for first and last mile journeys where needed"** (pg 18). Further, there is an ambition within the strategy to simplify payment systems to link parking with rail tickets **"to make park-and-ride journeys easier"**, specifically so travellers can **"drive to a station, park and continue their journey by train."** (pgs 20-21). It is therefore clear that very recent Government guidance supports the use of driving a private car to a railway station as part of a first leg of a longer distance journey.
- 8.2.4 The station's significance is that it provides an exceptional level of rail connectivity and is accessible by cycle, by bus and by car. Its availability materially improves the sustainable travel choices available to residents, particularly when considered as part of linked trips. This also aligns with NPPF's paragraph 110 as the location of the Appeal site clearly limits **"the need to travel and offer[s] a genuine choice of transport modes"**. The Appeal site's easy access by cycle, bus, and private car to a railway station with such a high frequency of near 24 hour services ensures that there is a genuine choice of sustainable transport opportunities available for all occupiers.

8.2.5 Furthermore, as set out in paragraph 5.1.3 of my Proof, ultra-low and zero emission vehicles are recognised in the NPPF as sustainable travel modes. In accordance with Building Regulations Part S, all new residential units with car parking must have access to electric vehicle charging points. Therefore all occupiers of the Appeal site will have the opportunity to own and run an EV (ultra low or zero emission vehicles) such that a full journey from door to destination, via a car-train journey can be fully sustainable.

9 The Department for Transport's Connectivity Tool

- 9.1.1 In paragraphs 3.8 to 3.10 of his Proof, Mr Russell refers to the national Connectivity Tool score and states that a sustainable modes score of 43 places the Appeal Site within the lowest 20th percentile nationally. My Proof explains at paragraph 5.5.8 that national scores must be understood in context and that the Tool also includes a local authority banding function. It effectively recalibrates a national scoring of percentiles (broken down into 10%iles groups) into a series of bands more relevant at the local level (again with connectivity broken down into 10 bands).
- 9.1.2 Mr Russell's use of the national score in paragraphs 3.14, 3.16 and 3.18 of his Proof (for walking, cycling and public transport respectively) to conclude at paragraph 3.19 that the Appeal Site is poorly located with regard to transport connectivity by sustainable modes. In paragraph 3.30 of his Proof, Mr Russell concludes that the national metric is the appropriate measure for assessing individual development sites and that the local authority score is primarily a plan-making tool. This is an incomplete and potentially misleading use of the Tool.
- 9.1.3 At paragraph 3.29, Mr Russell highlights that in the Written Ministerial Statement of 11 December 2025, the Secretary of State (SoS) for Transport stated that the development of the Tool was a response to the absence of a commonly agreed evidence base for assessing connectivity. The SoS stated that the Tool is intended to serve as a "national metric of connectivity". From this, Mr Russell concludes that the national score is the appropriate metric.
- 9.1.4 This is clearly incorrect. The first paragraph of the Minister's statement states that **"Achieving sustainable development is a core aim of the UK's planning system, but has been hindered by the lack of a clear way of measuring what is a 'sustainable location' for development in transport terms"**. It continues, at the second paragraph **"To tackle this problem the Department for Transport has created a new Connectivity Tool which combines transport and land-use data in an innovative way to generate a 'connectivity score' for every location across England and Wales at a resolution of 100 metre by 100 metre squares. This score measures people's ability to get where they want and need to go, using walking, cycling and public transport to reach jobs, shops, schools, healthcare and other essential services."** It is therefore clear that the tool has been produced to set a national methodology for assessing the connectivity of a location, but it does not confirm how that information should be applied or utilised, nor that sites should be judged at a national level.
- 9.1.5 As I set out in paragraph 5.5.10 of my Proof, the tool is just a starting point. It is not a pre-requisite for determining how well connected a site is. It is a tool to be used, alongside other qualitative measures and site audits, to determine overall levels of connectivity in the real world. This is confirmed in the guidance to the Connectivity Tool, that states: **"the score should always be used alongside local evidence, professional judgement and other material considerations"**.

-
- 9.1.6 This is also confirmed in the draft NPPF from December 2025, which states at Policy TR3 that the tool ***“should be used alongside other relevant evidence is assessing the connectivity of particular locations proposed for development”***.
- 9.1.7 My Proof explains at 5.5.14 that when that local authority banding is applied, the site access is in Band B for all journey purposes by all sustainable modes, and is also Band B for walking, cycling and public transport (paragraph 5.5.15). My Proof further explains (paragraph 5.5.16) that the site is Band A for walking to employment and health opportunities and Band B for walking to retail, leisure and education opportunities. The Tool, when applied in its appropriate local context, supports rather than undermines my conclusion that the Appeal Site is well connected relative to realistic development choices in Mid Sussex. My Proof also explains at paragraphs 5.5.7 to 5.5.8 that focusing solely on the national score gives limited assistance for edge-of-town sites outside major city centres and risks misapplying the Tool.
- 9.1.8 Since the time of writing my Proof, the DfT has issued an update (on 3rd July 2026) (CD 19.15) on how to interpret the Connectivity Tool and its scores. It does not change the source data, nor the scores or banding. The updated advice maintains the need for it to be used as a tool, alongside other sources and professional judgement. For this reason, and in agreement with my evidence, it states that ***“the local authority view should not be used on its own to inform decision or draw firm conclusions”***. It suggests measuring the score against 2011 rural-urban classifications of locations, but again states that ***“Users should therefore treat the classification as a useful guide, rather than a definitive judgement, and use it alongside local knowledge when interpreting connectivity scores”***.
- 9.1.9 As the Connectivity Tool is new in its use, the number of locations where its acceptability has been tested by the Planning Inspectorate is limited. However I am aware of two recent appeal decisions where it is referenced. Whilst I do not seek to directly attribute the conclusions made in those Appeals to this site, as all locations should be considered on their own individual basis, it is useful to consider these recent precedents in terms of the broader principles and the practical limitations of the Tool.
- 9.1.10 Langho South Ribble. Appeal ref: 6002485 Decision date: 11th June 2026 (CD 12.24). Paragraph 14: ***“I am also mindful of the evidence associated with the ‘Connectivity Tool’. This is a population-based tool, which indicates that 80% of the UK population is based in a location which is more accessible than the appeal site. In the context of the UK’s highly populated urban areas and bearing in mind the site’s rural location, this is unsurprising. Nonetheless, the evidence suggests that, for a rural area, the site’s score of 50 performs reasonably well in terms of connectivity. This too is unsurprising given the existing nearby bus and rail services.”***
-

-
- 9.1.11 Maldon, Essex. Appeal ref: 6004910 Decision date 6 July 2026 (CD 12.25). Paragraph 41 ***“Both the Council and appellant have referred me to the Department for Transport’s connectivity tool, although have interpreted it in different ways. On the one hand, the appellant has pointed to the site being one of the more accessible locations in the district, while the Council has highlighted that in its current form the site is less well connected than 80% of the existing population of England and Wales. I find neither interpretation very helpful as my assessment of accessibility is focused on the site rather than a comparison with other land in the district, and includes the accessibility improvements proposed as part of the scheme which do not feature in the connectivity tool output.”***
- 9.1.12 It is therefore clear that the nature of a given location is one factor in how to determine the connectivity of a site, and that comparison with other locations is not fully useful, with the site being considered on its own merits.
- 9.1.13 Both of these appeal decisions support my position that the location of a site is important to determine a site’s overall connectivity, whilst the actual need to travel and where to, on an individual basis is critical to understanding the connectivity and sustainability of a location.

