

SUBJECT DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION REPORTS ITEM 7

REPORT OF Head of Planning & Building Control

APPLICATIONS NO.	P08/W1028/O and P08/W1029/O
APPLICATION TYPE	Major
REGISTERED	5 September 2008
PARISH	Crowmarsh Gifford
WARD MEMBER(S)	Mr Felix Bloomfield Mrs Susan Cooper Mr Nicholas Odd
APPLICANT	JS Bloor (Northampton) Ltd and Hallam Land Management Ltd
SITE	Land east of Benson Lane, Crowmarsh Gifford
PROPOSAL - P08/W1028/O	Outline application for the erection of 420 dwellings (including affordable housing provision), associated landscaping and arboricultural works, parking, public open space provision and sports pavilion, together with a new vehicular and pedestrian access from Benson Lane and link road to the A4074.
PROPOSAL - P08/W1029/O	Outline application for the erection of 200 dwellings (including affordable housing provision), associated landscaping and arboricultural works, parking and public open space provision, together with a new vehicular and pedestrian access from Benson Lane and link road to the A4074.
GRID REFERENCE	461927/189662
OFFICER	Ms C D Scotting

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Two outline planning applications have been submitted for residential development on land situated off Benson Lane, Crowmarsh. The first of these applications - (P08/W1028/O) is for 420 dwellings. The second application (P08/W1029/O) is for 200 dwellings. Site plans are **attached** showing both application sites.
- 1.2 The site is agricultural land and is not allocated for development in the adopted Local Plan. The applications have been advertised as a departure from the Development Plan. An Environmental Statement accompanies both applications.
- 1.3 In view of the strategic importance of these proposals the planning manager has decided that these applications should be considered and determined by the Planning Committee.

2.0 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

- 2.1 Crowmarsh Gifford is a village of around 600 dwellings and 1440 people. Within the village is a primary school, 2 pubs, a church, village hall, a shop (which formerly included the post office) plus some commercial uses e.g. Jewsons builders merchants

and Lister Wilder (agricultural machinery hire service) and the SODC Council offices. The Institute of Hydrology and Howbery technology park are situated further north off Benson Lane and incorporate employment land of some 30 ha. The village also has some allotments at Thamesmead, playing fields, a pavilion and play area behind Lister Wilder, accessed from The Street.

- 2.2 Crowmarsh Gifford lies between Oxford and Reading off the A4074. The majority of the village lies west of the A4074 and east of Wallingford separated by the River Thames. The Wallingford Bridge connects the settlements of Crowmarsh and Wallingford and access can also be gained via the bypass to the south and west of Wallingford and Didcot beyond. The distance from the site to Wallingford town centre is approximately 1.2km.
- 2.3 The site area for the larger scheme is 19.71 ha and the smaller scheme is 11.02 ha. The smaller scheme is a reduced version of the larger scheme and does not include land on the eastern side of the larger site except for land required for the highway works and link road. Both sites include agricultural land forming two fields between Benson Lane to the east and the A4074 to the west. The southern field is bounded by residential development along The Street and Lane End to the south. The north of this field is bounded by Marsh Lane, a restricted byway that is wooded and for the most part sunken and lower than the surrounding fields. Marsh Lane is included in both sites. The larger site extends further north by approx 150m to the proposed link road and on both sites strips of land alongside the east and west field boundaries are to provide highway and drainage works. The northern field tapers to a woodland at the northern end of Benson Lane. Just outside the site in the far south eastern corner is land designated AONB, and to the east of the A4074 the land rises and is also within the AONB.
- 2.4 At present there is only a farm vehicle access on to the site from the A4074 and Marsh Lane. The only other existing vehicular access is from Lane End (affecting the larger site). In addition to Marsh Lane (Restricted Byway 181/ 4), there are public footpaths crossing the site. Footpath 181/ 2 runs east - west along the rear of back gardens in the Street and through a narrow alley to Benson Lane; 181/ 3 runs north south from Marsh Lane and meets 181/2 behind residential properties numbers 99/101 The Street. A further footpath 181/5 crosses the (larger) site just north of Marsh Lane in the south west corner of the northern field.
- 2.5 The site is a mixture Grade 2 and 3a agricultural land. Both the southern and northern fields are known to have archaeology. Along the Benson Lane boundary and Marsh Lane are mature trees. An unconfirmed TPO has been placed upon a large number of trees. Along the A4074 are significant hedgerows. There are no known protected species and the agricultural land is of little ecological value. However the trees and hedgerows are important for biodiversity in general and the woodland at very north of the northern field is of local and district importance for nature conservation.

3.0 **PROPOSAL**

3.1 The documents accompanying each application are:

- 1) Supporting Planning Statement
- 2) Design and Access Statement
- 3) Topographical Survey
- 4) Sustainability Statement
- 5) Energy Statement
- 6) Public Consultation Report
- 7) Traffic and Transport Assessment

- 8) Environmental Statement – Volume I
- 9) Environmental Statement – Volume II - Appendices
- 10) Non Technical Summary - Environmental Statement

3.2 Both applications are in outline with access to be determined. Other matters: layout, scale, appearance and landscaping are reserved. Although in outline guidance in Circular 01/06 advises that as a minimum, the following information is necessary to determine the principle of the development:

- Use—distinct development zones
- Amount of development
- Indicative layout
- Scale parameters
- Indicative access

3.3 The illustrative masterplan is **attached** for both applications. The details accompanying the applications are described below:

3.4 Access: The highway proposals include a new roundabout on the A4074 and a road crossing the northern field to link with a further roundabout proposed on Benson Lane. The site would be accessed further south from Benson Lane with a two point access forming a crescent within and fronting the site. To the south—east via Lane End pedestrian and cycle access is proposed and only emergency vehicular access (P08/W1028 only). Pedestrian access can also be gained via Benson Lane (footpath 181/2) and Marsh Lane (byway 181/4). This highway design has been proposed for both the larger 420 dwelling scheme and the 200 dwelling scheme.

3.5 Use and Layout: All the residential development is proposed south of Marsh Lane. In the south west corner adjoining the village hall some open space and a play area is proposed. Both applications propose playing fields to the north of Marsh Lane and the larger scheme includes a pavilion and MUGA (multi use games area) in this location. On the larger scheme a landscaped green corridor is shown along the eastern boundary adjoining the A4074. On the smaller scheme the residential development is set back some 160m (minimum) from this boundary leaving a large area (some 6 ha) of open land. The layout shows perimeter blocks within a large cul de sac layout and housing fronting the external blocks. The line of existing footpath 181/3 is altered and a green route is proposed to link it with footpath 181/2 at the existing connection.

3.6 Scale: The Design & Access statement indicates that development would be up to 2 ½ storeys at several points throughout the site, in particular fronting Benson Lane, in the middle fronting Marsh Lane, adjoining the open space in the s.w corner and at other junctions within the site. The remaining housing would be 2 storey except for dwellings on the eastern frontage alongside the green corridor which would be 1 ½ storey.

3.7 Amount: The larger scheme proposes 420 dwellings. The indicative mix comprises 252 market dwellings and 168 affordable (40%). The 200 dwelling scheme also proposes 40% affordable housing (140 market/ 80 affordable). The detailed mix of bedrooms is set out under Housing Mix below. An average density of 39 dwellings per hectare (dph), ranging between 35 and 45 dph is proposed.

4.0 **CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS**

4.1 Comments from consultees are summarised. The detailed comments can be viewed on the website under the planning application ref number and hard copies are available to view in the reception of the Council offices.

Crowmarsh Gifford Parish Council - Object

The development is contrary to the Local Plan and Structure Plan and contrary to Crowmarsh Gifford's Parish Plan. The application is a gross over-development of the village which has a good community structure but limited facilities. It is not part of the 'Wallingford urban area'. Object on the following grounds:

- Serious traffic implications for Crowmarsh, Benson and Wallingford
- The increased traffic using the Wallingford Bridge would undermine the current imperative to reduce air pollution levels in Wallingford
- The site is Grade 2 agricultural land
- The development is not an eco development and would increase pollution.
- It fails to consider the needs of local residents and puts great pressure on Crowmarsh primary school and local secondary schools , electricity, doctors and dentists and the sewerage system
- The PC already provides recreational facilities and a further pavilion and facilities would be unbearable financial burden

Benson Parish Council - Object

Object on the following grounds:

- The Local Development Framework is not in place
- Crowmarsh and Wallingford schools do not have spare capacity for extra pupils
- Increased traffic along Benson Lane and across Wallingford Bridge
- Wilders Yard has permission for housing, Carmel College might take more housing – these are plenty for Crowmarsh
- Existing infrastructure not adequate e.g. sewage works need upgrading

Wallingford Town Council - Object

Development of this scale is entirely inappropriate as it will overwhelm the existing facilities within the village and have a negative impact on its character and setting. It will lead to unacceptable increase in traffic over Wallingford Bridge, cause problems with car parking and exacerbate air quality problems. Houses will result in pressure on schools. The loss of arable land is also of concern.

Neighbours On each application 185 objections have been received. Detailed comments can be viewed on the website or in a folder available in reception. The comments have been summarised and are in Appendix A **attached** to this report. The principal reasons for objecting to the development are:

- *Policy* - This proposal is not allocated in the Local Plan and is contrary to policies within the Local Plan. As the LDF is not yet complete the application is trying to exploit a weakness in the current planning system. This application is premature and must be compared alongside all others in the site allocations document.
- *Green Field Development* - The green fields define the village character and give breathing space between the road systems. Following government guidance Brownfield sites should be developed first. There are plenty of Brownfield sites within the district.
- *Traffic* - There are already significant traffic problems along The Street with queuing for Wallingford Bridge. This proposal would further exacerbate this problem by creating a rat run through the village, reducing highway safety and increasing pollution.
- *Loss of Agricultural Land* - This proposal is on prime agricultural land which is ideal for local food production, particularly given the current wheat crisis.

- *AONB* - These proposals would have a detrimental impact on the openness and character of the adjacent AONB.
- *School* - The current school is full to capacity and does not have room for further growth. A development of this scale would ruin the small, intimate village school and have a detrimental impact on surrounding primary and secondary schools.
- *Village Character*- Crowmarsh is a separate settlement with the Thames as a natural barrier, it is not part of Wallingford. Other sites have already been put forward at Wilders and Carmel College, a development of this scale would completely destroy the character of this village.
- *Sustainability* - The loss of the village shop and growth of Howbery Park has already added to the number of car journeys. This development is not sustainable and will not encourage a low carbon footprint.
- *Pollution*- We already have an AQMA area designated in Wallingford, as this fails to meet EU air quality regulations. Increased traffic along the Street will only exacerbate existing air quality issues to the detriment of the environment and human health.
- *Wildlife* - The importance of this site has been played down in the applications. This site has home to many species of flora and fauna, some of which are protected. The important hedgerows and wildlife corridors would be removed or obstructed which is likely to result in habitat deterioration, compromising the sites ability to support existing flora and fauna.
- *Pavilion* - The village already has a pavilion and sports ground, we do not want or need another one. This will have to be maintained by the Parish Council, resulting in an increase in Council tax.
- *Services* - We only have one shop and no post office. There are not sufficient services to support this increase in population, with existing schools, roads, doctors, dentists and sewerage systems all ready under pressure.
- *Flooding* - Building on fields would lead to an increase in flood risk with the shallow water table. Building too close to the floodplain unacceptable.
- *Impact on Other Settlements* – These proposals would not only damage Crowmarsh but the surrounding villages. Wallingford needs development to help the town centre revival.

Other Interested Parties

The Governors of Crowmarsh School have written to clarify that the governors of the school have not had any communication with the developers. They highlight the following points:

- All the infrastructure of the (200 pupil) school is overstretched
- The school could not be built upwards without substantial underpinning and structural works
- The site is too small to accommodate required sports and play facilities
- The Reading Road could not safely accommodate increased traffic
- Disruption to pupils during works

HR Wallingford (the Howbery Park employment site) objects on the grounds that it cannot be right to allow such a large development in isolation from the forward planning of Wallingford and Crowmarsh. All opportunities on brownfield sites should be taken before releasing greenfield land.

The owners of the land adjoining Lane End in the far south east corner of the field (outside the site) have written (through Christopher Strang Associates) to support the principle of the site as they believe it will comply with the emerging LDF. However, they wish to ensure that any future development on this site does not prejudice any development on the land in the south east corner. The form of any proposal should ensure that this area could be satisfactorily developed in the future.

OCC Highways - Holding objection

Highway Design: The proposed roundabout on the A4074 and link road would provide a convenient route to the A4074 and greater highway network. With these proposals the highway authority would like to see the closure of the northern end of Benson Lane. Benson Lane needs considerable alterations to discourage traffic going west over the Wallingford Bridge, in view of traffic delays and also air quality. The site access arrangements from Benson Lane are considered unsuitable. Further details are necessary on the design of the highway access and infrastructure.

Public Transport: The application proposes to divert the express routes (X39 and X40) along the proposed link road and Benson Lane. Further surveys are required to determine the existing level of use along The Street, where it is envisaged that buses would not traverse. A minimum of 3 stops both ways along Benson lane are required. The X services are premium routes and an upgrade to 4 services an hour is required requiring a developer contribution.

Sustainability: The site is crossed by a number of public rights of way, which should be accommodated in the layout. Additional permeability is also required. The distance from the Wallingford town centre (1.2 – 1.4km) is within the limits of a shopping area to residential development under PPG13. The site has good access to cycle ways. An enhanced link between Cholsey Station and Wallingford is required and a contribution to this is sought.

Travel Plan: Further work is required. Information on travel choices needs to be given to all new residents and a travel plan co-ordinator must deliver personalised plans and advice.

OCC Structure Plan - Holding Objection

General Strategy / Housing

The District is best placed to assess if the scale of development proposed is required to meet local needs in the light of their housing needs. Concern that the scale of development would be able to create a cohesive, balanced and integrated community. The location is relatively sustainable in that it is next to local employment opportunities and new residents would have access to facilities in Crowmarsh and Wallingford by walking, cycling and public transport.

Suitability for Housing

The proposed site is located on gravel bearing land. The quantity could be around 1 million tonnes (gross) but geological information is limited. As Minerals and Waste Authority the Council would object as it would sterilise the mineral deposit, contrary to Policy SD10 of the Minerals and Waste Local Plan. Permission should not be granted unless SODC are satisfied that the need for housing at this location outweighs the economic and sustainability considerations relating to this resource.

Infrastructure and Services

The school site cannot be expanded further to meet the extra pupils that would be generated by the development. Applicants need to contribute to the acquisition of land in addition to improvements to the existing school.

OCC Archaeology

The site is located within an area of archaeological potential and has been the subject of a desk based assessment and geophysical survey. Roman features have been recorded within 500m of the site. If approving a condition will be required to ensure the applicant implements a staged programme of archaeological work in accordance with PPG16.

OCC Countryside Service

Highlight a number of existing public rights of way within the site. Development must carefully consider implications of this to accommodate routes without any encroachment.

OCC Developer Contributions

For education, contributions and land are required. Contributions are also required in respect of transport, including bus services, cycle links and a travel plan co-ordinator, library, waste recycling centre, museum resource centre, social and health care – day resource centre and extra care housing.

Environment Agency

No objections - subject to conditions requiring a detailed drainage proposal, including natural drainage patterns and source control.

Thames Water

Initial investigations show an inability of the existing waste water infrastructure to accommodate the needs of this application. Require a condition to ensure that on and off site drainage works are completed prior to commencement. The developer should make provision for surface water drainage. Any surface water discharge to a public sewer will the need the prior approval of Thames Water. The existing water supply infrastructure has insufficient capacity to meet the additional demands for the proposed development. Require a condition to study the existing water supply infrastructure and identify a suitable connection point.

Natural England

No Objection – however as the application site is visible from local viewpoints and parts of the AONB, development should follow guidance given in the Chilterns AONB Building Design Guide, pattern of landscape features should be maintained and strengthened by further planting and the views of the Chilterns AONB unit are taken into account. It would appear that the field margins could support reptiles and the developer should carry out surveys to determine their presence or otherwise and proposed mitigation if necessary.

Chilterns Conservation Board

No Objection – The proposed development would not cause unacceptable harm to the natural beauty of the AONB and its setting, subject to conditions to mitigate any adverse impacts on the AONB and help assimilate the development into the surroundings.

CPRE - (Rights of Way)

Object - These public rights of way form a circular walk, would be swamped with development and ruin these public rights of way. These cannot simply be displaced as other paths are considerably further away and do not provide a viable alternative. Were the development to go ahead these paths should be retained as segregated routes, providing access to village facilities. We would also urge the preservation of hedges which would screen some of the development.

Chairman of Wallingford District branch of CPRE

Object: 420 houses is an inappropriate scale of addition to the population of a community this size, is inappropriate to propose any addition to Crowmarsh when there are brownfield sites in the parish, area is greenfield, area is not in Councils Issues and Options Paper. Any interference with traffic flow along A4074 is to be deplored due to disturbance and precedent for development along A4130 west of Wallingford, massive addition to population of Crowmarsh would add to traffic flow over Wallingford bridge, adding to noise and pollution.

Countryside Officer

Holding objection – The Environmental Assessment provides a fair assessment of the current ecological value of the site and likely impacts. The site is generally of low ecological importance when assessed against recognised national criteria. A development of this scale would result in a significant loss of habitat and I would expect far more compensation by the way of enhancing and buffering the existing natural features and creation of new hedgerows and habitats. The plan to connect the new ditch to the existing watercourses will damage the woodland to the north. No indication of the extent of damage or any mitigation methods is proposed.

Forestry Officer

The trees within the curtilage of the development are the subject of a tree preservation order. The proposal does require the removal of a significant number of trees, however the trees marked for removal are of low quality as individuals but do have screening value. Their loss could be mitigated by a substantial landscaping scheme. There are issues with buffer areas to The Street and Marsh Lane and the proposed drainage channel to the protected woodland at the north of the site (W1). A substantial landscaping scheme will be needed to mitigate proposed tree removal and to ensure the development is in keeping with the surroundings of rural agricultural land and village boundary. It should include hedgerow and tree planting. All landscaping submissions should include a very detailed aftercare and protection schedule to ensure the planting is sustainable.

Air Quality Officer

The air quality assessment is based on the results of the traffic assessment and the robustness of some of the assumptions is questioned as some appear optimistic. Because of the direct links between the conclusions of the traffic assessment and the air quality assessment, a full appraisal on the impacts on air quality is not possible. Furthermore, the methodology of the air quality assessment is inappropriate to use for the prediction of levels within the Air Quality Management Area. Further information is required to ensure that air quality impacts can be mitigated.

Environmental Health

No objections subject to conditions:

- Contaminated land study
- Hours of operation for construction work
- Noise and dust management plan
- Noise levels for dwellings
- Lighting Scheme

Monson (Drainage)

Detailed drainage conditions necessary. A separate system discharging the sewerage to the north is likely to be required.

Ministry of Defence

No safeguard objections to this proposal.

Police Liaison (Crime Prevention)

Encouraged that the master plan uses 'secure by design' principles. Require a condition to ensure that all proposed properties meet Part 2 of the Secure by Design standards. Some concerns with the footpath that runs along the back of the properties along The Street. Particular attention must be given to this area to ensure natural surveillance is provided to reduce opportunities for crime and disorder.

Housing Services

The suggested amount (40%) of affordable housing and bedroom mix is currently acceptable. This site offers the potential for an older persons 'extra care' housing scheme. The detailed provision may need to be subject to a future site viability study.

5.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

5.1 In 1988 outline permission for residential development on half of the southern field was refused permission (P88/W0736/O).

5.2 More recently planning permission was refused for 4 houses on land east of Lane End (adjoining but not within the current application site) and an appeal dismissed in April 2004. The development was unacceptable as it would have extended development into the countryside and detracted from the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

6.0 POLICY & GUIDANCE

6.1 Draft South East Plan - Policies SP1, SP3, H1, H3, C3, CO1 and CO3.

Under the new planning system, the South East Plan will replace the Oxfordshire Structure Plan, to form part of the development plan. It will provide a vision for the region up to the year 2026. The draft SE Plan has identified central Oxfordshire as a sub region which is to accommodate growth. The majority of new housing in the South Oxfordshire part of the sub-region is to be in Didcot, however the rest of the sub region also has to accommodate more housing. Between 2006 and 2026 the draft South East Plan requires a minimum of 2200 dwellings to be built in the Central Oxfordshire sub-region (excluding Didcot). Taking into account completions from 2006, existing allocations and development we know that provision needs to be made for approximately 1450 additional dwellings. Larger settlements in the central Oxfordshire sub region include Wallingford, Crowmarsh, Benson, Cholsey, Berinsfield and Wheatley.

- 6.2 Planning Policy Guidance :
PPS1 Delivering sustainable development
PPS 3 Housing
PPS 7 Sustainable Development in Rural Areas
PPS 9 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation
PPS12 Local Spatial Planning
PPG13 Transport
PPG16 Archaeology and Planning
PPG17 Sport and Recreation
PPG 24 Planning and Noise
PPS 23 Planning and Pollution Control
PPS 25 Development and Flood Risk
- 6.3 Oxfordshire Structure Plan
Policies - G1, G2, G3, G5, G6, T1, T2, T5, T8, EN2, EN6, H1, H3, H4, R1, R2 and M1.
- 6.4 South Oxfordshire Policy Documents
The South Oxfordshire Local Plan (SOLP) was adopted January 2006 and covers a 5 year period up until 2011. The relevant SOLP policies are:
- General: G1, G2, G3, G4, G5, G6
 - Protecting Natural and Built Environment C1, C2, C4, C5, C6, C7, C8, C9
 - Environmental Protection: EP1, EP2, EP3, EP6, EP7
 - Encouraging sustainable and high quality development: D1, D2, D3, D4, D6, D7, D8, D10, D11, D12
 - Housing: H2, H4, H6, H7, H8, H9
 - Recreation R1, R2, R3, R6, R7, R8
 - Transport T1, T2
- 6.5 Supplementary Planning Guidance
- South Oxfordshire Design Guide - July 2008
 - Affordable Housing - Sept 2004
 - South Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment - April 1998
- 6.6 Local Development Framework (Core Strategy)
- 6.7 The Council is in the process of preparing a Core Strategy as part of the Local Development Framework. This will identify a strategy for new development and strategic site allocations for the period to 2026 to meet the requirements of the South East Plan. In November 2007 the Council consulted on the Core Strategy: Issues and Options Paper and this suggested Wallingford as an appropriate location to accommodate housing growth. A number of alternative directions of growth were put forward at Wallingford but this location was not included as it adjoining a Crowmarsh village. Submissions were received on a wide number of other sites in the Central Oxfordshire sub region including the application area. The Core Strategy will appraise all the alternatives and put forward for allocation sites that are the most sustainable and meet the Council's objectives for housing.
- 6.8 The next stage of the Core Strategy is due to be published in Spring 2009. This will indicate the Council's preferred strategy including strategic allocations for development in the central Oxfordshire sub region. To meet the requirements in the draft South East Plan land approximately 1450 additional dwellings need to be identified. The Council, as yet, has not decided on its strategy for future housing

allocations in this district. In the absence of an adopted or significantly progressed core strategy, which advises on the Council's housing objectives, this application needs to be determined in relation to the existing Development Plan and other material planning considerations as required by Section 38 of the Town and Country Planning and Compensation Act.

7.0 **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

7.1 The matters to consider are:

- i) Principle of the development, in light of the adopted policies in the development plan and other material considerations
- ii) Principle of development – Sustainability and Environmental Considerations including location, loss of agricultural land, archaeology, sterilisation of mineral reserve, biodiversity, flood risk, landscape and character.
- iii) Design and layout including sustainable design
- iv) Transport – including the effect on the highway network, the opportunity for sustainable travel and effect on air quality
- v) Housing Mix
- vi) Affordable Housing
- vii) Infrastructure and Services

(i) Principle of development- Policy

7.2 Crowmarsh is identified in the adopted Local Plan as a larger village outside the Green Belt in the adopted Local Plan. The proposed sites, approx 19 ha and 11 ha, are in the countryside and adjoin the built up area of Crowmarsh. The application site is not an allocated site (Policy H2) and the size and location of the site are such that they do not meet the requirements of Policy H4. Policies G4 and H6 state that planning permission will not be granted for development in the countryside or on the edge of settlements where the built up area of the settlement would be extended. Development of these sites is contrary to the Development Plan. It is not sufficient, however, to only consider the Development Plan. The Council needs to consider other material considerations such as Government Guidance and other policy, such as the draft South East Plan and PPS3 Housing.

7.3 PPS3 states that where Local Planning Authorities cannot demonstrate an up to date five year supply of deliverable sites, for example where Local Development Documents have not been reviewed to take into account policies in PPS3 or there is less than five years supply of deliverable sites, they should consider favourably planning applications for housing, having regard to the policies in PPS3. This Council does not have a five year supply of housing. The 'Assessment of 5 year supply of deliverable sites 2008' (as of April 2008) shows that the Council has a shortfall of 466 dwellings for the period 2008/09 to 2012/13. There is therefore a need for the Council to provide an increased supply of housing land.

7.4 PPS 3 makes it clear that not all development will be acceptable and it states (para 69) that in deciding planning applications Local Planning Authorities should have regard to:

- Achieving high quality housing
- Ensuring developments achieve a good mix of housing
- Using land effectively and efficiently
- Suitability for housing including environmental sustainability
- Development is in line with housing objectives

These issues are discussed further under the Planning Considerations below.

(ii) Principle - Sustainability and Environmental Considerations

Location

- 7.5 The site is on the edge of Crowmarsh, a larger village with some facilities and is situated some 1.2km from the centre of Wallingford, a town with a wide range of facilities. A distance of 1.2km is considered an acceptable walking distance (PPG13) and in this case it is an attractive route across the bridge, which is more likely to encourage walking. The site is also close to a major employment site, Howbery Park, and is located between Oxford and Reading, served by a regular express bus route. The sites' proximity and access to employment, facilities and services and public transport routes do present, in principle, a sustainable location for new housing development. Balanced against this, is the effect on the environment, discussed below, and also the social impact of the development including the demand on infrastructure and services (discussed under Infrastructure and Services).

Agricultural land

- 7.6 The site is a mixture Grade 2 and 3a agricultural land and forms part of a substantial arable farm operated from Cold Harbour Farm which extends to over 400 hectares. PPS 7 states that the loss of best and most versatile land will not be permitted unless there is an overriding need for development that cannot be accommodated on previously developed land. Given that the sites in the Core Strategy Issues and Options report also would involve the loss of such land there is not in principle objection to the loss of agricultural land on this site. However the details of this proposal are such that adverse effects on agriculture and the environment generally are not minimised. The highway infrastructure, is considered excessive in terms of land take will encroach significantly into the northern agricultural field. The smaller scheme isolates an area of approximately 7ha on the eastern half of the southern field, which is not optimal for farming.

Archaeology

- 7.7 Although there are known archaeology remains in both fields there is no objection subject to conditions.

Mineral reserve

- 7.8 The site is not allocated for working in the Minerals and Waste Local Plan. As with many other areas in the Thames Valley the geology is sand/gravel which has the potential to provide mineral reserve. These fields are in close proximity to residential and employment land and it is doubtful whether mineral working in this location would be acceptable; a minimum buffer to residential of 300m is normally required which is likely to render extraction uneconomic. In view of this and the overriding need for housing it is not considered that an objection on the sterilisation of reserve is justified.

Biodiversity

- 7.9 The site is in agricultural use and there are no known protected species. Natural England has suggested that the boundaries of the site might support reptiles and require surveys to be carried out. The trees and hedgerows are of general biodiversity value but these are situated along the boundaries and with a different design more hedgerow could be retained and enhanced by further planting. There is concern in relation to the effect on trees from proposed drainage works in the northern woodland but again this is a matter of detail, rather than an in principle objection on grounds of biodiversity.

Drainage – Flood Risk

- 7.10 The site is not within an area of flood risk. The surface water drainage for the site should be based on SUDS (source control principles), i.e. to seek initially to drain runoff into the ground via permeable surfaces, soakaways, swales etc. Channels/culverts and attenuation areas can be employed, but as a backup system for such features. The scheme incorporates such a design but there are concerns as highlighted in the responses from the Countryside and Forestry officers. Thames Water has advised that the foul waste system has insufficient capacity requiring new infrastructure. The Environmental Statement proposes a new pumping station at the existing sewage works at Benson, although no details on this are provided. Provided satisfactory details are agreed, there is no in principle objections on the grounds of drainage.

Landscape

- 7.11 The site is not within the Chilterns AONB although it adjoins a small area in the south east corner of the southern field, which has been fragmented from the remaining AONB area on the eastern side of the A4074. It is inevitable that development of these fields will impact on the open landscape and urbanise the rural setting of the village. Parts of the site are distantly visible from public view points within the AONB however much of it is screened and is viewed against the backdrop to existing development. There is no objection from the Chiltern Conservation Board provided existing planting is retained as much as possible and is supplemented and enhanced with new planting. The Board considers that development could be mitigated and the new housing assimilated into the wider landscape. This of course will depend upon the scale of development and the larger the development the more difficult it will be to assimilate.
- 7.12 The proposed development incorporates heavily engineered highway proposals that are extensive and dominant parts of the scheme and will require the removal of significant amounts of hedgerow. The development north of Marsh Lane will be visually intrusive in the local landscape and detrimental to the setting and enjoyment of Marsh Lane, an important landscape feature and right of way. The details of this proposal are therefore unacceptable due to the adverse effect on the environment. However there would not be an overriding objection in principle on landscape grounds, if an appropriate smaller development came forward. Such development must not require extensive and intrusive highway works, it must protect the setting and enjoyment of Marsh Lane and be carefully screened and landscaped to integrate with the surrounding area.

Character

- 7.13 The proposed development of 420 houses represents a 70 % increase in housing and population of the existing village. In terms of land take and the extent of residential development the application site (including infrastructure) is increasing the village residential land by around 50%. These increases are significant and it will be impossible for a development of this size to respect existing settlement patterns and the character of the village. A proposal for this many dwellings will overwhelm the village and cannot be satisfactorily integrated. Furthermore it will put pressure on existing facilities and services, which is discussed further below. Although the smaller scheme has fewer dwellings it has been over designed to accommodate the larger scheme and therefore is also unacceptable. The more detailed issues with the masterplan are explained below however the root of the problems lie with an excessive amount of development being proposed in relation to the scale and character of the existing village.

Conclusion – Principle: Sustainability and Environmental Considerations

- 7.14 In strategic terms the site performs well against sustainability considerations and complies with Policy G3. It is well located in relation to facilities, services, employment and public transport. The main issue is the scale of the development in relation to the existing village and the overwhelming effect on the character and distinctiveness of the area. The current proposals also raise objections in respect of landscape, biodiversity and loss of agricultural land, however these are not in principle objections.

(iii) Design and Layout

- 7.15 Good design is fundamental to the development of high quality housing. Proposals should be well integrated and complement neighbouring buildings and the local area in terms of scale, density, layout and access. Development should enhance or create distinctive character.
- 7.16 The site is rural in character and framed by loose knit two storey residential development to the south. The other boundaries are lined by hedgerows and trees and Marsh Lane, in particular, is an important landscape feature and public right of way. There are other right of way crossing the site and potential for linkages to Benson Lane and The Street. Given the site's advantages in terms of connectivity, non-vehicular access to shops and services and bus routes, the site has the potential to offer good amenity and integrate with the surrounding area. However the proposed layout and design does not protect and reinforce local distinctiveness and is not of a scale that is appropriate to its surroundings.
- 7.17 The proposed design is dominated by the access arrangements including the two new roundabouts and a link road fragmenting the northern field. This layout produces an isolated piece of land north of Marsh Lane where open space and sports facilities are proposed. The highly engineered highway proposals for this development require extensive removal of hedgerows, substantially reduce the northern agricultural field and result in facilities isolated and un-integrated from the rest of the development. It would be difficult to screen these works. Fundamentally these works detrimentally affect the rural setting of Marsh Lane, are intrusive in the local landscape and detrimental to the setting of the village.
- 7.18 The site is partially visible but not prominent from public viewpoints in the AONB (excluding the small area in the south east corner of the field). In terms of wider landscape impact from the AONB the proposals, whilst having some impact, are not considered to be unacceptable in principle. In design terms, were the principle of housing permitted, it is considered that there should be no development north of Marsh Lane. This would leave this part of countryside intact including a complete agricultural field, the setting of Marsh Lane preserved and the ability to landscape and screen the development from wider views. It would also prevent the segregation of facilities from the development.
- 7.19 In terms of permeability and linkages the site offers good potential. The layout does propose some open space and play area in the south west corner and the potential to link through to Benson Lane from the village hall, which is a strong focus to the development. However other linkages and permeability are not optimised. The circular cul de sac layout does not mesh well into the village and the routes within the site do not lead to useful points. Desire lines out of the development, in particular the school and shops need safe, direct and attractive routes. Breaks are proposed through Marsh Lane (to access the proposed facilities) and these will fragment and undermine this attractive landscaped corridor.

- 7.20 In looking at character and distinctiveness the layout also needs to consider the grain and form of the village. The proposed layout including the crescent entrance and cul de sac layout does not reflect the linear grain and street frontages of Crowmarsh Gifford, and would announce a separate entity, segregated from the village. The area behind the properties in The Street needs careful attention so as to not overlook and affect privacy, particularly the properties which are set further back in their plots, close to the development site. The scheme refers to gateways, entrances, landmarks and focal points, where storeys of 2.5 are proposed at these points. Their positioning seems random in urban design terms and does not relate well to the distinctive features and character of the site and surroundings.
- 7.21 The development needs to provide a high quality sustainable design. Sustainable and Energy Statements accompany the applications and all housing is to meet Code Level 3 which complies with the Council's Design Guide. It is also proposed to provide 10% of the site's energy demand on site. This may well mean that some development exceeds Code Level 3. A sustainable drainage system is proposed however the design and layout could be more integrated with the development and designed to prevent an adverse effect on important landscape features.
- 7.22 PPS 3 and Policy H8 require that housing is developed at a minimum density of 30 dwellings per hectare unless it would adversely affect the character of the area. A density of 40 dph or higher is considered appropriate in town centres. The schemes indicate an average net density of 39 dph ranging from 35 to 45. Although the density complies with using land efficiently it is considered that the proposed density could be too high given that the density of the adjoining development along the Street is around 11 dwellings per hectare. The proposed layout is unacceptable for the reasons given above however were development pursued on this site more detail would be required to ensure that the proposed density would not be adverse to the character of the area.
- 7.23 In conclusion, the layout does not propose a high quality design as advocated by PPS1 and PPS3. The indicative masterplan is unsatisfactory in terms of character, integration, links, permeability, landscaping, biodiversity, drainage and relationships with surrounding properties.

(iv) Transport and Air Quality

- 7.24 The highway authority have no objection, in principle, to housing at this location provided the design and adequate infrastructure are in place. There are issues relating to connections via footpaths and cycleways and proposals for enhancement as described above. Traffic calming measures to Benson Lane and the desired closure (by the highway authority) of the northern left turn to the A4074 has not been detailed in the applications. There is concern that the highway proposals including a diversion of buses would detrimentally affect access to services from other parts of Crowmarsh. Until further information is received and details to secure acceptable there is a holding objection.

- 7.25 The highway works that would be required for this site are crucial in determining what level of development might be acceptable on this site. The current applications propose extensive and highly engineered highway works for both schemes including the smaller scheme of 200 houses. It is unlikely that this amount of development would warrant such works but as this particular scheme has clearly been designed as a first phase of the larger scheme this explains the same proposals for each application. Such works are considered unacceptable in landscape terms and only development that could be served without intrusive works would be acceptable, in terms of the landscape and character of the area.
- 7.26 Wallingford is an Air Quality Management Area. There is concern that the proposals could lead to a worsening in air quality and more information is required on trip generation predictions. The methodology of the air quality impact assessment is inappropriate and further information is required on predictions and proposed mitigation.

(v) Housing Mix

- 7.27 The mix of market housing proposed compared to the policy requirements are set out below in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1: Application P08/W1028/O: Mix – Number of Bedrooms

Number of bedrooms	Amount - Market (percentage)	Policy (percentage)
1 bedroom	12 (5%)	7.5%
2 bedroom	73 (29%)	48.5%
3 bedroom	76 (30%)	24%
4 bedroom	71 (28%)	20%
5 bedroom	20 (8%)	
Total	252 (100%)	

Table 2: Application P08/W1029/O: Mix – Number of Bedrooms

Number of bedrooms	Amount - Market (percentage)	Policy (percentage)
1 bedroom	6 (5%)	7.5%
2 bedroom	35 (29%)	48.5%
3 bedroom	36 (30%)	24%
4 bedroom	33 (28%)	20%
5 bedroom	10 (8%)	
Total	120 (100%)	

- 7.28 In terms of the market mix Policy H7 requires that a mix of dwelling types and sizes to meet the needs of current and future households will be sought. The South Oxfordshire Housing Needs survey (updated 2004) shows that a high proportion of smaller dwellings are required and the policy text advises that at least 45% of the mix should be 2 bedroom dwellings unless it would adversely affect the character of the area. As can be seen from Table 1 the proposed mix incorporates 29% 2 bed dwellings which is significantly lower than the policy requirements. The mix for 3 beds and particularly 4

plus beds is significantly higher than the identified needs. This site will also need to provide housing for older people, which has not been specified. The proposal does not meet the requirements of Policy H7 and there has been no justification given to depart from the requirements of this policy. The scheme is therefore unacceptable on grounds of housing mix.

(vi) Affordable Housing

- 7.29 The Council's policy (H9) requires that 40 % affordable housing is provided and the detailed mix, tenure and type should be in accordance with the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance. The applications propose 40 % affordable housing and a mix of sizes which is broadly acceptable to the Council. However details on the type of provision e.g. tenure, numbers of flats or houses and cluster numbers have not been agreed. As such the applications are contrary to Policy H9, however the completion of a legal agreement acceptable to the Council would overcome this objection.

(vii) Infrastructure and services

- 7.30 All development will impact on existing infrastructure and services and on the environment generally. Policies in the Development Plan outline examples of various types of services and facilities that may require further provision or improvements due to increased pressures from development. Some facilities can be provided on site but others will need to be provided off site and contributions are necessary to secure these works. The Council will be producing a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which will tie in with the strategic site allocations in the emerging LDF. Until SPD is prepared the Council has approved Interim Planning Guidance which is mainly aimed at smaller proposals. Large developments may have particular requirements and each case needs individual examination. The difficulty in assessing the needs for this development in isolation from the emerging LDF sites is that the Council are not able to assess requirements strategically and it may mean that some of the infrastructure improvements required to accompany growth in Wallingford become un-viable. For instance provision towards an expanded school in Crowmarsh could undermine the provision of a new primary school in Wallingford.
- 7.31 The developers have indicated that they would be willing to contribute towards services and facilities and have also proposed facilities on site. The proposed location of the playing fields, pavilion and MUGA is not acceptable as it is segregated from the development, will be less accessible and raise security issues. The Parish Council consider the existing playing fields (behind Lister Wilder) have sufficient capacity to support some new development and do not support the proposed location and increased management responsibility of dispersed facilities.
- 7.32 Officers have assessed the type of facilities and services that would be required in connection with these applications. A list of general headings for planning obligations is provided in Appendix B **attached**. Until such matters are satisfactorily agreed and secured by way of a legal agreement the Council objects to the development due to the increased pressure on services, facilities and infrastructure and the lack of provision to mitigate the needs of the development.
- 8.0 **CONCLUSION**
- 8.1 The proposed applications are contrary to the Development Plan in that this large site is not allocated for strategic development. The development would undesirably extend into and encroach upon the open countryside and is contrary to SOLP policies H2, H4 and H6. Although the Council has not an adequate housing land supply required by PPS3 the need to provide further housing is outweighed by the objections relating to

design, sustainability and mix of housing. The scale of the development will impact adversely on the character and distinctiveness of Crowmarsh Village. The masterplan does not produce a high quality design and will result in adverse impacts on the environment. The proposals fails to achieve a mix of housing to meet current and future households. The application also fails to secure affordable housing and an adequate provision of infrastructure and services. Without further information on transport and air quality the development could have adverse impacts on air quality and the safety and convenience of pedestrians, cyclists and drivers. The proposal is also contrary to policies G2, G4, G6, D1, D11, D12, H7, H9, C1, C4, C5, C6, C9, R2, R3, R6, R8, T1 and EP1 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan.

9.0 **RECOMMENDATION – Refuse**

9.1 **P08/W1028/O**

1. **That the proposed development is contrary to the Development Plan. This development for 420 dwellings and associated infrastructure is on land outside of the built up area of Crowmarsh Gifford and in the open countryside. The site is not allocated for strategic development and the location and size of the development is contrary to Policies H2 and H4 of the adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan. The development would undesirably extend into and encroach upon the open countryside contrary to Policy H6 of the adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan. The need to provide further housing in line with PPS3 is outweighed by the objections detailed in the reasons for refusal set out below.**
2. **Development of this site at the current time would undermine the ability to provide essential services and infrastructure to mitigate the cumulative impacts from new housing required by the draft South East Plan contrary to PPS12 and Policy G3 of the Oxfordshire Structure Plan.**
3. **The proposed development for 420 houses in a village of 600 houses would not assimilate and integrate with its surroundings. The amount and extent of development would overwhelm and significantly alter the rural character of Crowmarsh Gifford to the detriment of the distinctiveness and character of the village contrary to PPS3 and Policies G2, G4, G6, C1, C4 and D1 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan.**
4. **That the masterplan fails to provide a high quality design and does not minimise the adverse effects on the environment. The design including the access and layout does not integrate well with the village and the surrounding area. The application fails to provide good links and permeability, enhance and provide adequate landscaping and biodiversity, minimise the loss of best and most versatile agricultural land and does not respect the character of the landscape and existing settlement patterns. The development would be harmful to the rural character and distinctiveness of Crowmarsh Gifford and the surrounding countryside, contrary to PPS1, PPS3, PPS 7 and Policies G2, G4, G6, D1, C1, C4, C5, C6, C9, and R8 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan.**

5. **The proposed highway infrastructure and development north of Marsh Lane would urbanise this rural location, be visually intrusive in the landscape and fail to protect Marsh Lane, an important public right of way. The development would detrimentally affect the landscape character of the area, the setting of the village and the enjoyment of the countryside, contrary to PPS1, PPS3 and PPS7 and Policies G2, G4, G6, C1, C4, R8, EP3 and D1 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan.**
6. **That the proposal fails to provide an appropriate mix of housing to meet current and future housing needs, in accordance with PPS3 and Policy H7 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan.**
7. **That the proposal fails to provide affordable housing in accordance with PPS3 and Policy H9 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan.**
8. **That the proposal fails to provide adequate facilities and services to meet the needs of the development contrary to PPS12, policy G3 of the Oxfordshire Structure Plan and Policies C6, R2, R3, R6, D11, D12 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan.**
9. **That the proposal fails to provide sufficient justification on the impacts on traffic generation. The detailed proposals do not demonstrate that the highway layout is safe and convenient to highway users and that sustainable travel choices by walking, cycling and public transport are optimised. The application is therefore contrary to Policy T1 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan.**
10. **That the proposal fails to provide sufficient justification on the impacts on traffic generation and the consequent effects on air quality. The methodology is inappropriate for the air quality assessment. Further information is required to demonstrate what impacts are likely and mitigation measures that will be necessary. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policy EP1 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan.**

9.2 **P08/W1029/O – Refuse**

1. **That the proposed development is contrary to the Development Plan. This development for 200 dwellings and associated infrastructure is on land outside of the built up area of Crowmarsh Gifford and in the open countryside. The site is not allocated for strategic development and the location and size of the development is contrary to Policies H2 and H4 of the adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan. The development would undesirably extend into and encroach upon the open countryside contrary to Policy H6 of the adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan. The need to provide further housing in line with PPS3 is outweighed by the objections detailed in the reasons for refusal set out below.**
2. **Development of this site at the current time would undermine the ability to provide essential services and infrastructure to mitigate the cumulative impacts from new housing required by the draft South East Plan contrary to PPS12 and Policy G3 of the Oxfordshire Structure Plan.**

- 3. This application for 200 houses has been designed as a first phase of the application for 420 houses (P08/W1028/O). The design of this development is inappropriate for the amount of housing proposed. It would overwhelm and significantly alter the rural character of Crowmarsh Gifford to the detriment of the distinctiveness and character of the village contrary to PPS3 and Policies G2, G4, G6, C1, C4 and D1 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan.**
- 4. That the masterplan fails to provide a high quality design and does not minimise the adverse effects on the environment. The design including the access and layout does not integrate well with the village and the surrounding area. The application fails to provide good links and permeability, enhance and provide adequate landscaping and biodiversity, minimise the loss of best and most versatile agricultural land and does not respect the character of the landscape and existing settlement patterns. The development would be harmful to the rural character and distinctiveness of Crowmarsh Gifford and the surrounding countryside, contrary to PPS1, PPS3, PPS 7 and Policies G2, G4, G6, D1, C1, C4, C5, C6, C9, and R8 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan.**
- 5. The proposed highway infrastructure and development north of Marsh Lane would urbanise this rural location, be visually intrusive in the landscape and fail to protect Marsh Lane, an important public right of way. The development would detrimentally affect the landscape character of the area, the setting of the village and the enjoyment of the countryside, contrary to PPS1, PPS3 and PPS7 and Policies G2, G4, G6, C1, C4, R8 and D1 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan.**
- 6. That the proposal fails to provide an appropriate mix of housing to meet current and future housing needs, in accordance with PPS3 and Policy H7 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan.**
- 7. That the proposal fails to provide affordable housing in accordance with PPS3 and Policy H9 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan.**
- 8. That the proposal fails to provide adequate facilities and services to meet the needs of the development contrary to PPS12, policy G3 of the Oxfordshire Structure Plan and Policies C6, R2, R3, R6, D11, D12 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan.**
- 9. That the proposal fails to provide sufficient justification on the impacts on traffic generation. The detailed proposals do not demonstrate that the highway layout is safe and convenient to highway users and that sustainable travel choices by walking, cycling and public transport are optimised. The application is therefore contrary to Policy T1 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan.**

- 10. That the proposal fails to provide sufficient justification on the impacts on traffic generation and the consequent effects on air quality. The methodology is inappropriate for the air quality assessment. Further information is required to demonstrate what impacts are likely and mitigation measures that will be necessary. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policy EP1 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan.**

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