

Supplementary Papers



Listening Learning Leading

FOR THE MEETING OF

Cabinet

on Thursday 1 December 2016 at 6.00 pm

held in the Meeting Room 1, 135 Eastern Avenue, Milton Park, Milton, OX14 4SB

Open to the public including the press

- 5 Removal of Section 157 restriction** (Pages 2 - 7)
To consider the report of the head of HR, IT and technical services.
- 6 Berinsfield community investment scheme** (Pages 8 - 36)
To consider the report of the interim head of development and regeneration.

Cabinet Report



Listening Learning Leading

Report of Head of HR, IT & Technical Services

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Wards affected: those in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

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To: CABINET

Date: 1 December 2016

Removal of s157 restriction

Recommendation

That Cabinet decides whether to remove the restrictions arising from the application of section 157(3) of the Housing Act 1985.

Purpose of Report

1. Cabinet members have proposed the removal of historic covenants restricting the sale of former council houses in the district's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). This report sets out the arguments in order for the Cabinet to make a decision on its policy.

Corporate Objectives

2. There is a corporate objective of "homes and jobs for everyone". The availability and market value of former council houses in the AONBs is affected by the council's policy on the existing s157 restriction.

Background

3. Since the advent of the Housing Act 1985 Right to Buy (RTB) provisions (including s19 of the Housing Act 1980 which pre dates the 1985 Act), the council has imposed covenants pursuant to s157(3) of that Act with the intention that it would operate to ensure that ex council houses situated in the council's AONBs would remain to be occupied or owned by people who could demonstrate that they live or work in the area and that they would not become second or holiday homes.

4. These covenants work so that the buyer of the house gives a covenant to the council that it will not dispose of the house by way of a sale, a tenancy or a licence except to a qualifying person. Each time the house is disposed of, consent will be needed from the council before a transaction can complete.
5. A qualifying person is a person who (if the disposal is to more than one person then at least one of those), has throughout the period of three years immediately preceding the application for consent
 - had his place of work in the designated region; or
 - had his home in such a region; or
 - has had one or the other concurrently.
6. The designated region is found in the Housing (Right to Buy) (Designated Regions) Order 1980. The designated region is
 - the area of outstanding natural beauty; and
 - so much of the county in which the house is situated but which is not in the area of outstanding natural beauty.
7. The current policy of the council is to enforce the restriction described in the previous paragraphs.
8. The council's application of this restriction has been inconsistent over the long term. In recent years, a more rigorous approach has revealed that the existence and enforcement of the restriction has had, among others, the following effects on the ability of vendors to sell their properties:
 - most lenders are unwilling to offer a mortgage on properties subject to the restriction
 - the pool of prospective purchasers is limited by the qualifying conditions described in paragraph 5
 - the market value of properties subject to the restriction is reduced.

Mortgage lenders

9. Officers contacted a local mortgage broker to obtain advice on the willingness of lenders to offer loans on properties subject to the s157 restriction. The broker contacted 34 lenders, of which:
 - 27 stated that they would not consider funding any lending where a s157 restriction applies
 - four would consider s157 cases favourably but would require an easing of the restriction such that properties could be sold on the open market in the event of a sale proving impossible within a prescribed period

- two would consider s157 cases but only with a severe restriction on the loan to value ratio, requiring that purchaser provide a very substantial portion of the equity
 - one national lender is willing to offer mortgages but applies tight criteria regarding the borrower's age, credit history and employment status.
10. Officers also have anecdotal evidence from recent cases, supporting the view that obtaining a mortgage to purchase a property subject to the s157 restriction is for many prospective purchasers an insuperable barrier. Of eight properties which have been considered in 2016, mortgage difficulties have been cited in three instances to our knowledge.

Qualifying persons

11. Since 2013 the council has been applying the qualifying criteria more stringently than had previously been the case. The effect of the criteria is to limit the sale of former council houses to people with a strong local connection. This reduces to an extent the pool of potential purchasers and this acts as a barrier to sale.
12. Officers have dealt with eight cases in the past three years in which prospective purchasers have been refused consent on grounds of non-qualification, from a total of 25 properties on which consent has been sought.

Market value

13. Officers have limited evidence of the reduction in market value of properties subject to the s157 restriction. Based on two specific cases, the District Valuer assessed a lowering of value at 3.8 per cent. Estimates from estate agents suggest a greater lowering of value.
14. Whatever the amount, it seems that there is a genuine reduction in value of the property arising from the existence of the restriction, although there is no evidence that the reduction is sufficient to permit someone to buy who would not otherwise be able to.

Consultation

15. Cabinet has considered whether to leave the restriction in place or to remove it. In order to inform its decision, officers undertook a public consultation for six weeks commencing in May 2016, asking members of the public for their views on a proposal to remove the restriction.
16. 186 people responded to the public consultation, of whom 23 lived in ex council houses. The findings from the consultation can be summarised as follows:
- Nearly three out of every four respondents disagreed with the proposal to remove the rule. One in five respondents said they agreed.
 - Respondents who said they live in ex council houses were more likely to agree with the proposal to remove the rule.

- The majority of comments expressed concern with the proposal. Many people said s157 covenants should be retained to prevent local housing stock being used as second homes and ensure availability to local people. These comments appear to be driven by a concern that there is not enough affordable housing in the local area.
- Nine comments referred to experience of difficulties selling houses where there is a s157 covenant.
- Those in favour of the proposal felt that removing the rule would help owners of affected properties sell their homes. Their views were driven by a sense that the policy was either outdated or represented unwanted intervention in the property market.

Process for removing the restriction

17. It will not be possible to remove the restriction from all the affected houses at once. The restriction can only be removed in writing. The council does not have records of all the houses affected by it as these records were destroyed by the fire at Crowmarsh in January 2015.
18. Instead, the restriction would have to be removed gradually over a long period. This would be done each time a house is sold and application to the council is made for consent. The council would then provide the necessary Land Registry documents to allow the restriction to be removed. If home owners wish to regularise the position in any event, the council will also provide the necessary documents on request.
19. In the meantime, the council would make reasonable efforts to inform affected home owners and the market by altering its website and publicising the decision amongst local estate agents and the external professionals who helped with officers' evidence gathering. In that way, in the event of a policy change, affected home owners who wish to sell will be able to market their homes unfettered.

Options

Do nothing

20. The council could choose to leave the restriction and the current policy in place. It is likely that purchasers will continue to have difficulties in a tight mortgage market, and vendors will argue that the restriction is making their homes more difficult to sell.

Relax the application of the policy

21. The council could leave the existing policy in place but relax its application. This might be administratively easier but would be confusing to residents and would further exacerbate the historic inconsistency in enforcement. Policy and practice should be aligned, and this option is therefore not recommended.

Change the policy

22. The council could change its policy so that the restriction is removed and residents are no longer affected by the difficulties outlined in paragraphs 8 to 14.

Financial Implications

23. There are no immediate financial implications arising from a change of policy.

Legal Implications

24. Officers have obtained external legal advice on this matter. As with all policy decisions, Cabinet in exercising its discretion to change policy must take into account all material considerations, omit immaterial ones and have a sound basis for making the decision to ensure the decision is lawful. This matter is no different. This report sets out the considerations in favour of a policy change. Cabinet will have to evaluate all evidence available to them.
25. There are two forms of restrictive covenant in the council's transfers. Those covenants entered into when s157 was in its original unamended form will only restrict a disposal of the freehold interest or a grant of a lease of more than 21 years for a nominal rent. Those entered into after s157 was amended also restrict disposals by way of a tenancy or a licence. The proposed change of policy would need to release all forms of the restriction.

Risks

26. There is some risk that a change of policy will result in complaints or claims from residents who have previously sold properties which were subject to the restriction and consider that they have incurred financial loss. In the event of such claims, each case would have to be considered on its own merits. However, any vendor who has suffered from a possible loss of value at sale time is likely to have benefited in the same way from a reduced price at the time of purchase. The volume of transactions is small at around eight to ten per year.
27. Complaints might also come from people who have been prevented from buying or selling by virtue of the policy that has been in place until now. This risk is mitigated by the fact that the council has discretion to change its policy on this matter, within the framework of the law.
28. There is a risk that a change of policy will be seen as contradictory to the outcome of the consultation, described in paragraph 16. Cabinet will need to weigh up the size of the response in considering how much weight to attach to this point.

Other implications

29. Officers will also contact Soha to discuss whether it wishes to amend its approach to houses sold since the 1997 large scale voluntary transfer.
30. The communications team has prepared a statement which can be used in response to any media enquiries.

Conclusion

31. Cabinet members have previously expressed a desire to remove the s157 restriction on the basis that it is no longer meeting its original purpose and is placing obstacles in the way of the sale of former council houses.
32. This report has set out arguments supporting the removal of the restriction, and has described the risks of so doing. Cabinet is now invited to make its final decision.

Background Papers

- None

Cabinet Report



Listening Learning Leading

Report of Head of Development and Housing

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Wards affected: Berinsfield

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To: CABINET

Date: 01 December 2016

Berinsfield Community Investment Scheme – preferred option

Recommendations

- (a) To authorise commencement of Berinsfield Community Investment Scheme Stage 2 including preparation of a detailed masterplan, design and strategy for the delivery of social, environmental and economic improvements sought by the community of Berinsfield, and;
- (b) To carry out a survey among local people to decide on which of the following (i-ii) will become the preferred option for level of improvement and scale of development:
 - i) either 2,000 to 2,100 new homes to make viable a range of improvements including an all-through (primary and up to 14 years) school
 - ii) or 1,700 to 1,999 new homes to make viable a range of improvements including refurbishment of current primary school and provision of a new primary school.

Purpose of Report

1. To seek agreement from Cabinet to progress the Berinsfield Community Investment Scheme from Stage 1 to Stage 2.
2. To update Cabinet on recent engagement in Berinsfield, which asked local people to tell us the range of community investment projects they want carried out in Berinsfield and the scale of new housing development they would accept to pay for these projects.
3. To seek a decision from Cabinet on the 2 scenarios for potential scale of development to be put to a local survey to ask people to express a preference for development options.

Corporate Objectives

4. This proposal achieves the council's objectives of support for communities and effective management of resources. The outcomes of the work will contribute to improving health and well-being in Berinsfield.

Background

5. On 07 April 2016 the Cabinet authorised a comprehensive regeneration strategy and delivery plan to be carried out in the most cost effective and expedient manner. The council's own project team and a strong team of consultants led by AMEC Foster Wheeler have met the requirements for completion of stage 1. Stage 1 was for scoping and options analysis, which resulted in consideration of a range of scenarios for consideration by local people.
6. Through Stage 1 the team has had direct contact with more than 12 local businesses and organisations to gain a full understanding of their concerns and ambitions for the future. The public engagement in Berinsfield event 15-17 September 2016 was attended by approximately 190 local people and the Interim Feedback Report describes the types of improvements that local people told us they would want.
7. Views expressed at the September event and financial modelling by the consultant team, resulted in presentation of a range of viable scenarios on display boards at the public engagement event attended by 142 local people on 3-5 November 2016. These scenarios and the feedback from local people are summarised in Appendix 1.
8. Stage 2, the detailed masterplan, design and strategy is the major element of the commission and will cover the following key areas of technical activity:
 - complete all technical studies and surveys
 - engage with landowners and their agents to negotiate land acquisition
 - develop detailed cost plans for all components of the project
 - carry out appropriate market testing analysis for housing and other components
 - financial modelling and risk analysis including scenario testing
 - complete specific planning, housing and economic strategies
 - develop briefs and specifications for new community facilities and open space
 - provide delivery options
 - carry out governance and funding proposals
 - develop masterplan suitable to support planning application(s)

Reasons for decision

9. We are seeking Cabinet support to go forward to Stage 2. Having completed scoping and options in Stage 1 the team considers they have the support of local people in going forward in a cost effective and expedient manner to Stage 2 to establish the preferred option and carry out detailed masterplanning, design and strategy.
10. Notice of the November event, with details to cover purpose, venue and times, went to every household in Berinsfield and other stakeholders but a turnout of 142 for a village with 1,100 households is not high. However, because of the advance publicity for the event, the team is satisfied that we have captured the views of a large proportion of local people with an interest in expressing a view. The feedback forms show the greatest percentage wanting up to 1,700 new homes and development options

modelling data (see para 20 b, Appendix 1), shows the greatest number wanting 2,000 new homes. As the most residents (i.e. 68% of those who attended) favoured the higher levels of facilities provision and associated larger numbers of new housing, it is proposed to test which of the two high level development scenarios would be regarded as a “preferred option” by local residents.

11. The 2 development scenarios suggested for the survey are in the ranges shown below in i) and ii):

i.) 2,000 to 2,100 new homes and:

- viable all-through school for primary and up to 14 year olds
- large community hub (with health centre)
- protection and enhancement of green space
- street and parking upgrades
- new sports and leisure centre

ii.) 1,700 to 1,999 new homes and:

- new primary schools – refurbish current school and provide 1 new primary
- large community hub (with health centre)
- protection and enhancement of green space
- street and parking upgrades
- new sports and leisure centre.

12. Subject to approval, the team intend to carry out the survey as early as possible in 2017. This work will be undertaken by a specialist survey contractor under existing framework agreements.

Financial Implications

13. Approval to progress to Stage 2 of the scheme will allow draw-down from the overall £1.5 million budget already allocated for the Berinsfield Community Investment Scheme – to commission ongoing work by our consultancy team led by Amec Foster Wheeler. Arrangements to pay for any the proposed specialist survey work will be agreed through variations to the agreed ESPO contract with Amec Foster Wheeler, and may result in a reduction of fees to existing members of our consultancy team.

14. The council has not set aside further budget other than the £1.5 million at this stage. Budgets will need to be created based on the findings and recommendations of this study if required. This would be a full council decision.

Legal Implications

15. As discussed, this report is seeking approval to go to Stage 2 only, which is the detailed strategy, not including any actual land acquisition. The current framework draw down contract covers both stages 1 and 2 and enables the council to instruct the contractor to proceed with the Stage 2 work if it elects to do so.

Communications implications

16. Prior to publishing the consultation we will agree a communication handling plan with the council's communication team to ensure that our messages about the proposals and how we are engaging residents in shaping future plans for Berinsfield are released in an effective and timely way. This will help to inform local people about the proposals

and the consultation and reduce the risk of negative and speculative comments in local press/broadcast and on social media.

Other implications

17. The Berinsfield Community Improvement Scheme is about what the community as a whole wants and therefore it is essential that we take every opportunity, for example through the proposed survey, to consult with the widest possible range of local people at every incremental decision.

Risks

18. The principle risk related to Phase 2 are as follows;

- That the survey is inconclusive or unrepresentative of wider opinion in the village.
 - *This will be mitigated by employing a professional, specialist survey company to undertake this survey and the resulting analysis and by using social media and other communications channels to encouraging as many local residents as possible to participate in the survey*
- The ability to secure continued support from local residents, if a hitherto unheard section of local residents decides that they do not want such high levels of new development. This could result in the district council facing difficulties in delivering promised improvements.
 - *This will be mitigated by maintaining close dialogue with the whole community, through local events, direct mail and social media channels, and by explaining proposals in a straightforward, open and transparent manner.*
- The ability to produce a master plan that can be funded and is acceptable to all stakeholder i.e. the District Council, residents and developers.
 - *This will be mitigated by ensuring that the master plan is thoroughly tested by our technical advisers and that it is produced through a collaborative effort involving all stakeholders and potential funder.*

Conclusion

19. Progressing to Stage 2 of the Berinsfield Community Investment Scheme and allowing people to choose a preferred option, through a professionally designed survey would benefit local people in the village of Berinsfield.

Background Papers

- Interim Feedback Report – issues and opportunities stage, Berinsfield Investment Scheme. Prepared for South Oxfordshire District Council, 4 October 2016, by

Appendix 1: Berinsfield engagement event feedback 3-5 November 2016

20. At the 3-day event in November it was explained that housing development would be needed to pay for improvements and local people were given an indication of the amount of housing needed to pay for different scenarios as summarised in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Scenarios presented to public in November 2016

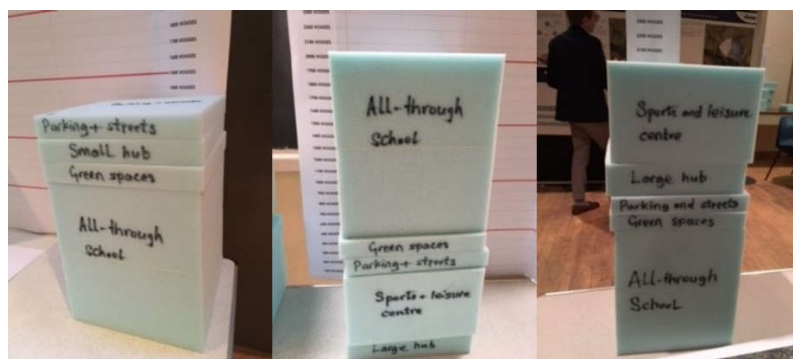
	A4704 Crossing	Green and open space	Parking and streets	Small Scale Community Hub	Additional Community Hub Provision	2 Form Entry Primary School	3 Form Entry Primary School	4 Form Entry Primary School(s)	All Through 5 Form Entry School	Small Scale Retail Offering	Medium Additional Retail Offering	Large Additional Retail Offering	Sports/Leisure Centre
Scenario A: 500 - 600 Dwellings	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Scenario B: 750 - 900 Dwellings	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗
Scenario C: 1,500 - 1,700 Dwellings	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓
Scenario D: 1,900 - 2,100 Dwellings	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓

✓ = improvement available in this scenario ✗ = improvement not available in this scenario

21. The team captured the views of local people on the balance between improvements and scale of housing in two ways at the event:

- feedback forms with tick boxes for the improvements people want and another box to select preferred scale of housing development
- determining possible development options using foam blocks, sized to reflect the comparative costs of different improvement options, for people to stack together all their preferred improvement options, and measure against a 'scale of housing' numbers.

Figure 2: photos of foam block stacks



22. Maps on display showed the approximate extent of different scenarios at a standard 30-35 homes per hectare plus infrastructure to inform discussion. Some people completed forms and stacked foam blocks and others just responded through one or the other. Photos of each individual foam stack against the scale of housing measure where collated alongside data from the feedback forms. Consultants and staff present at the event conformed that results from both methods reflected general discussion held with the 142 local people over the 3 days.

23. From 67 feedback forms we saw that:

- 93% want new school provision or refurbishment
- 85% want a community hub - shared services

- 79% want green space protection and enhancement
- 69% want parking and street improvements
- 54% want a new sports and leisure centre

24. From 27 foam stacks we saw that:

- 100% want parking and street improvements
- 100% want a community hub - shared services
- 96% want new school provision or refurbishment
- 89% want green space protection and enhancement
- 70% want a new sports and leisure centre

25. A clear majority of those completing feedback forms or stacking foam blocks for school improvements want an all-through school. And a majority of those wanting a community hub want a large hub that might for example include a new health centre.

26. The highest percentages want large scale improvements even when this was set against large scale of housing development. The feedback forms showed the most popular choice was for the range 'up to 2,100 homes'. Please see figure 3.

27. The preferred numbers of homes selected by the foam block stacking process was less clear-cut but the most popular choice, 10% of those attending the event, was for up to 1,700 homes. Please see figure 4.

Figure 3 – housing scale data from feedback forms

Scale of housing	Number of selections	% of returns	% of all attendees
Up to 2,100	9	18%	68%
Up to 1,700	14	28%	
Up to 900	11	22%	
As many as needed for 'my choice'	6	12%	12%
Up to 600	6	12%	20%
Up to 500	0	0%	
Minimum	4	8%	

Figure 4 – housing scale data from foam block stacks

Scale of housing	Number of selections	% of returns
2100	1	3.7%
2000	11	40.7%
1900	1	3.7%
1600	2	7.4%
1400	2	7.4%
1300	3	11.1%
1200	1	3.7%
1000	2	7.4%
800	2	1.4%
700	1	3.7%
200	1	3.7%

28. The purpose and details of the November event went to every household in Berinsfield and other stakeholders but a turnout of 142 for a village with 1,100 households is not high. However, because of the advance publicity for the event, the team is satisfied that we have captured the views of a large proportion of local people with an interest in expressing a view. The feedback forms show the greatest percentage wanting up to 1,700 new homes and the foam blocks data shows the greatest number wanting 2,000 new homes. However because the majority, 68% of those who attended, appear to favour the higher levels of facilities provision and scale of new housing it is proposed to present two high level development scenarios from which local people may choose a 'preferred option'.

1. The 2 development scenarios suggested for the survey are in the ranges shown below in i) and ii):

iii.) 2,000 to 2,100 new homes and:

- 29. viable all-through school - (primary and up to 14 year olds) 5 Form Entry
- 30. large community hub (with health centre)
- 31. protection and enhancement of green space
- 32. street and parking upgrades
- 33. new sports and leisure centre

iv.) 1,700 to 1,999 new homes and:

- 34. new primary schools – refurbish school to 2FE and provide 1 new 2FE
- 35. large community hub (with health centre)
- 36. protection and enhancement of green space
- 37. street and parking upgrades
- 38. new sports and leisure centre.



Prepared for South Oxfordshire District Council

***Interim feedback report – issues
and opportunities stage***

Berinsfield Community Investment Scheme

Thursday 13th October 2016

Table of contents

Executive summary	3
Introduction and background	5
Feedback channels and response	6
Community and stakeholder feedback summary	7
Appendix A – Comment form responses	15
Appendix B – Village map responses	17

Executive summary

This document provides an interim summary of feedback from the issues and opportunities stage of engagement for the Berinsfield Community Improvement Scheme.

As part of this stage, more than 20 stakeholder groups have been engaged or interviewed, around 180 people attended a community event in September 2016, and over 360 written representations have been received – from feedback forms to comment labels on a map of the village.

The purpose of this report is to draw together this feedback to provide **a clear picture of local priorities**. The contents of the report will inform the development of a series of masterplan options for Berinsfield.

As such, the summary of feedback below is organised around key issues – those things people consider to be important or would like to see improved and addresses – and opportunities for positive change.

Because of the different type of feedback received, this report aims necessarily balances the views and priorities expressed by residents alongside those provided by stakeholders, many of whom are service providers in the village.

We recognise that while there are common themes in the feedback, there are a great many individual problems, concerns or reflections that residents have identified. These are summarised in full in the attached appendix.

Key feedback themes

The five most prominent issues raised in the feedback from the village community are set out below. These reflect the issues most commonly raised in feedback from the public at or following the community events.

1. **Protection and improvement of green spaces** within the village, in particular the central green space, was the most common feedback topic. It is clear that the vast majority of respondents did not wish to see any development of the central green space. There were a variety of suggestions as to how the central green space and other green areas could be improved, including new sports facilities, more social spaces and more/better play facilities for younger children.
2. **Retail** is a key issue and there is a strong desire for improvement of the ‘bottom shops’ to the south of Fane Drive. Suggestions included improving the quality of Berinsfield’s retail offer, new larger shops, and a café or food and beverage offer. There was support for a new ‘village hub’ combining local services and potentially a café and/or shops in one place.
3. **Transport and parking** are important to village residents. A key suggestion was the introduction of a crossing over the A4074 to improve access to the bus stop and safety for pedestrians. Residents are unhappy about the cancellation of the T2 bus service and would like to see better public transport provision in the village. Car parking was a very common issue and residents would like to see parking improved in the village, but there were a range of diverse suggestions on where and how to do this.
4. **The need for more housing** was recognised and there was a range of suggestions on the type of housing that people would like to see delivered and where.

5. **Education** and improving local provision was also a commonly raised issue. There was some support for a secondary school in the village. Local people like having a primary school in Berinsfield, but there were suggestions that it needs to improve.

Local stakeholder groups reiterated many of these comments, but there were a number of further key themes which stakeholders highlighted as particularly important:

- **A number of local services are at risk.** The health centre, the Children's Centre, the Employment Action Group and Berinsfield Information and Volunteer Centre are all – to some a greater or lesser extent – services which are at risk of closure in the future. For all of these services and potentially others, there are unresolved issues or uncertainties around their premises and future funding / viability.
- **Employment, skills and adult education** are particularly important to local stakeholder groups, many of whom encounter challenges in either employing local residents or supporting them into training or employment. Different stakeholders identified different challenges, and the range of issues included the level of qualifications, skills and experience among the local working population; levels of literacy and numeracy; and finding affordable childcare to allow residents to engage in training or work.
- **Stakeholder feedback on housing, transport, retail and school education** was broadly in line with feedback from residents.

It should be noted that from both stakeholder groups and the wider community, there was a wide range of individual perspectives, specific suggestions and new ideas. Full details of these are provided in the feedback appendix.

Introduction and background

The communications, consultation and engagement programme for the Berinsfield Community Investment Scheme is well underway. In line with the agreed strategy, the project team has been progressing the 'issues and opportunities' stage of consultation, now running July to October. The key activities in this stage have included:

- Stakeholder mapping
- Developing the messaging
- South Oxfordshire District Council briefings
- **Wide-ranging local stakeholder engagement**
- Initial communications to residents
- **The first community engagement event**
- Feedback analysis

After internal preparation and planning, the project team has successfully engaged with a wide range of stakeholders through meetings and conversations. These groups include:

- Berinsfield Parish Council
- Soha (South Oxfordshire Housing Association)
- Sovereign Housing Association
- Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) education
- Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group
- Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership
- Berinsfield Employment Action Group
- Berinsfield Information & Volunteer Centre
- Berinsfield Community Business
- Berinsfield Boxing Club
- Businesses based in Berinsfield including:
 - Williams Tenders
 - Knowles
 - Jennings
 - Pearce Private Hire
- The vicar of St Mary and St Berin Church
- Berinsfield Parochial Church Council
- Berinsfield Community Association and Social Club
- South Oxfordshire District Council leisure team
- South Oxfordshire District Council economic development team

Following these discussion, the first community engagement events for the Berinsfield Community Investment Scheme took place on **14, 15 and 16 September**. These events focused on involving local people in the scheme and seeking feedback on their ideas, aspirations and issues in Berinsfield – what local people like about the village and what they would like to see change.

A key part of the approach was to reiterate previous feedback from previous local engagement exercises, for example, the Berinsfield Neighbourhood Development Plan 2015, the Community-Led Plan 2013 and the Parish Plan 2009. We asked the community to confirm where this previous feedback reflected their views and what additional issues and opportunities they wished to see considered.

The September events were supported by a programme of publicity and creative activities to encourage as many people as possible to participate in the events. Over the three days of the events, more than 180 people attended.

Feedback channels and response

Feedback channels

Stakeholder interviews: Feedback from the **19 stakeholder interviews** was captured in meeting notes, prepared by the project team.

Community comment forms: Two types of comment form were available at the community events. A short form asked four questions:

- 1) Do you agree with the issues and challenges presented at the community drop-in events?
Are there any others you want to add to the list?
- 2) What do you think are the top three priorities for Berinsfield?
- 3) What do you think we should do about them?
- 4) Do you have any other comments?

A second, extended form asked a wider range of questions, reflecting the issues and questions posed on the display materials at the events.

27 comment forms were returned during the three days of the events (26 short forms and one extended form).

The Berinsfield Map: A large map of Berinsfield was available at the community events for attendees to attach pins and labels providing their feedback. Different coloured pins were provided for different types of comment: green pins to identify aspects that attendees liked, red pins to identify aspects that attendees did not like, and blue pins for general comments or ideas.

A total of **337 labels** were attached over the three days of the events.

Website: A project website was launched at www.southoxon.gov.uk/berinsfield to provide information about the Community Investment Scheme and to allow people to give their feedback, either via an online survey or a downloadable form (asking the same questions as the community comment forms available at the events).

To date (13 October), the website has had 27 unique visits and no online forms have been completed.

Community and stakeholder feedback summary

The section summarises the comments received from the community through the different feedback channels. Specific comments raised by stakeholders are also included where relevant, in particular where the stakeholder has specific knowledge or operational responsibilities. The summaries are organised thematically and are not ranked by importance or number of comments.

Green space, development and new homes

Green space

Eight-eight map labels and six comment forms provided feedback on green space and open public areas. There was **widespread agreement that the village's central green space should not be developed**. There was mixed feedback on the development of smaller green spaces within the village – interventions in these smaller green spaces may need to be the subject of individual 'micro consultations'.

Eight labels requested more sports facilities in the central green space and there was a wide range of other suggestions for improvement. Most of these attracted fewer than five comments and, by way of example, included: more social space, play facilities, improvements to the skate park, wildlife walks and increased litter picking.

Full details are provided in the feedback appendices, including the full list of individual suggestions from the community.

Stakeholder comments: The vicar of St Mary and St Berin Church emphasised that the central green space in the village should remain undeveloped.

Housing and supporting infrastructure

Housing was raised on 12 labels, in 16 comment forms and by seven local stakeholders. Only five of these responses raised concerns about new housing and among the other respondents there was **consensus that Berinsfield needs to deliver new homes**.

However, there was a range of varied views on what type of housing would be appropriate and where new housing should be located. Previous local consultations have also reflected this mixed feedback on whether the village needs more small homes (in particular two-bedroom houses) or large homes (four-bedroom houses), and more affordable or more private housing. There was no specific written feedback on how many new homes would be appropriate for Berinsfield.

Stakeholder comments: In general, all stakeholders interviewed were supportive of positive change in the village, including the delivery of new homes.

Members of Berinsfield Parish Council have emphasised the need to **review the village's current sewerage and drainage infrastructure**. Sewerage was also mentioned in three map labels. A number of stakeholders highlighted that housing can be a challenge for young people and families who wish to buy a home in the village, but there are currently limited opportunities to do so. The Parish Council and Berinsfield Community Association stated that they would like to see development to the east of the existing village.

Two stakeholders reflected on the challenges that new housing could pose to integration of the village community, highlighting that steps should be taken to prevent new housing from dividing the village in two, between new and old. As noted above, the vicar of St Mary and St Berin emphasised that the

central green space in the village should remain undeveloped. The vicar also stated his view that the number of homes planned for Berinsfield would depend on those planned for the sites at Chalgrove and Grenoble Road.

Two stakeholders noted the challenge of homelessness in the village, something that particularly affects young men. Williams Performance Tenders noted concerns that new housing may impact its business, if it continues to operate from the northern industrial site, Vogue Business Park (owing to service vehicles passing through the village).

Flooding

Flooding is a key issue for Berinsfield Parish Council and this was also raised in 10 map labels and two comment forms. Most of the labels were placed at the south of Fane Drive, close to the junction with Burcot Lane.

Highways, transport and parking

Local buses

Ten feedback forms, eight map labels and eight stakeholder groups provided comments on bus services, with all comments noting that **public transport provision was poor / requires improvement or requesting that local services should be re-provided** (specifically the recently cancelled T2 service). A number of other individual suggestions on public transport are captured in the appendices.

Stakeholder comments: Of the eight stakeholder groups which mentioned bus services, several noted that the cancellation of the T2 has been a major loss and has left the village “isolated”. Stakeholders including Soha, the EAG, BIVC and Berinsfield Community Association stated that the impact of the cancellation had been under-estimated and would exacerbate a number of social problems including mental health (see below), employment and isolation of younger people (eg students and children), single parents, and older people (some of whom used the T2 service to travel within the village, including to the doctor’s surgery).

Crossing at the A4074

Twenty map labels, three feedback forms and one stakeholder group provided comments on road crossings and safety, with 22 of these comments requesting a crossing on the A4074 to provide **access to the northbound bus stop**. This is clearly a priority for respondents, especially in the context of the cancellation of the T2 service.

Parking

Twenty map labels and two feedback forms referenced the need for **improved parking in Berinsfield** (in particular off-street parking). Generally, comments referenced the need for more parking spaces and the problems that current parking arrangements can cause for the movement of vehicles.

While there was no single ‘hotspot’ identified by respondents, a range of individual locations were highlighted as presenting challenges or requiring improvement, ranging from Colwell Road to Wey Road. Full details of individual locations are provided in the appendix.

Highways

Thirteen labels and one comment form provided feedback on highways, identifying a range of individual comments and issues. These issues are provided in full in the appendix, but include, for example, concerns about industrial traffic passing through the village, the need for traffic calming measures along Fane Drive, and a suggestion to provide roundabout access to Drayton Road.

Cycling

Nine map labels and one comment form referenced cycling, offering various suggestions made on cycling infrastructure which respondents would like to see introduced and one complaint about cyclists' speed in the village. These suggestions are provided in full in the appendix, but include, for example, introducing cycle racks in the village or at A4704 bus stop and providing an east/west cycle route through the village.

Retail, community facilities and local services

Retail

Retail was the second most common issue raised by respondents, with 28 map labels, nine comment forms and one stakeholder group providing feedback. The vast majority of this feedback focused on **improving Berinsfield's retail offer and in particular the 'bottom shops'** at the south of Fane Drive, with individual suggestions including comprehensive improvement or demolition of these shops.

Five respondents suggested that Berinsfield should have a café or new food and beverage outlet. Five respondents also suggested that Berinsfield needs greater retail choice in the village, while examples of individual suggestions – listed in full in the appendix – included larger shops, a Tesco, and a charity shop.

Stakeholder comments: The idea of a 'village hub' was supported by a number of stakeholder groups, including, Berinsfield Information and Volunteer Centre, Soha, the Children's Centre and Williams Performance Tenders – though it was not discussed with all stakeholders. Berinsfield Community Association noted that more retail choice was important. Williams also noted that a new 'entrance' or gateway to the village would be positive.

Local services

Most respondents – both stakeholders and other members of the community – considered local services in the context of several existing organisations and feedback is categorised as such below. Two map labels supported the idea of a 'village hub'.

- Berinsfield Children's Centre

Nine comment forms and four labels referenced the Children's Centre. All were supportive of its work and ten respondents wanted to see the Children's Centre receive support or funding from the Council. Three comments were in favour of providing new premises for the Children's Centre while two wanted to see the existing facility remain.

Stakeholder comments: The project team receive feedback from the Children's Centre manager, as well as other stakeholders involved in the future of this local service. The Children's Centre confirmed that Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) is cutting funding for children's services and **the centre is scheduled to close at the end of March**. A local steering group – comprising the centre, Employment Action Group (EAG), Soha, Oxfordshire Communities Foundation and a representative of the Parish Council – is working together to develop a strategy for the future of the centre and its funding.

The Children's Centre building is owned by OCC and some stakeholder believe that the Council may wish to dispose of the asset. Any new centre would need to provide facilities that are appropriate to the centre's services and continuity of service is desirable. The Children's Centre supports a potential new community hub, describing it as a "dream" and "the way forward".

The steering group is currently working on a plan to bring the centre under the remit of the EAG, potential re-launching the centre as a Family Centre. The steering group may run consultation on this potential change. The group is applying to OCC for funding from a limited transitional fund.

Full details of this feedback – and more information about the Children’s Centre and its services – are provided in the stakeholder contact minutes.

- Berinsfield Information and Volunteer Centre (BIVC)

Five map labels referenced BIVC, all of which supported the organisation and wanted to see it continue operating in the future, with one respondent noting that it may benefit from a larger facility.

Stakeholder comments: Detailed comments about BIVC were received directly from the organisation’s manager and treasurer, as well as from Soha and the EAG. Other stakeholders gave more limited comments. BIVC provides support to residents in a similar way to the Citizens Advice Bureau – the most common issues its clients face include literacy challenges, accessing benefits, housing, tax, bills, debt and pensions. It runs coffee morning and organises the village fête and *Village Voice* magazine.

BIVC has concerns about its future funding and believes that it may be at risk of closure. Its current building is owned by OCC and the county provides funding to BIVC which covers its rent. Its principal funding comes from South Oxfordshire District Council.

Discussing whether BIVC should relocate or become part of a potential ‘village hub’, BIVC noted that there are different views within the organisation. Other stakeholder groups support the ‘hub’ approach and BIVC’s involvement.

Full details of this feedback – and more information about BIVC and its services – are provided in the stakeholder contact minutes.

- Berinsfield Employment Action Group (EAG)

Stakeholder comments: No labels or comment forms referred specifically to the EAG, but its work was considered important by a number of stakeholders. The project team received feedback directly from the EAG, as well as from other service providers and partners, such as Williams Performance Tenders. The EAG provides a range of services to support residents into employment, including a job club, computing support, training opportunities (provided largely by Abingdon and Witney College, which runs Berinsfield Adult Learning Centre) and other advice and support. It has recently has a management change and this has led to a number of initiatives being re-started. The EAG also works with a number of local employers.

There is uncertainty about the future of the EAG. Currently, its principal funding stream is rent paid by fellow occupiers of Dorchester House. When Dorchester House is redeveloped, there will be uncertainty about both the EAG’s future premises and its funding. It is developing a strategy for its future and may consider expanding its remit to include Benson and Stadhampton. The EAG may bring the Children’s Centre into its remit as a Family Centre and this could create opportunities for more joined-up services (eg child-minding courses which provide employment, childcare and enable people to go to work).

Health care

Eight labels and eight comment forms discussed health care in Berinsfield. Generally, residents were supportive and protective of the services provided from the health centre in the village and raised a variety of individual comments on how they could be improved. The most common concern about healthcare – raised in seven comments – was that the doctor’s surgery is at risk of closure. Individual

comments are detailed in full in the appendix and these included that the health centre was short staffed, that health care was expensive, and that the health centre is under-staffed.

Stakeholder comments: A representative of the Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), who is also a former partner and part-time GP at Fane Drive Health Centre, provided comments on health care in the Berinsfield.

The CCG representative confirmed that **the continued operation of the existing surgery is at risk**. This is partly due to the impending expiry of the lease on the premises (through NHS Property Services) but also because the practice is struggling to recruit additional partners to run and manage it. This is a problem that is not specific to Berinsfield and is being seen across the county particularly in smaller practices. These comments were reiterated by two other stakeholder groups.

Over the years, a number of specialist services have been withdrawn from the practice, owing to either a lack of viability or purpose-built facilities. The CCG representative highlighted that in terms of the physical condition of the practice there are some concerns and shortcomings, a number of which were flagged up in the recent Care Quality Commission inspection. However, the representative states that these are not major problems and they could be resolved through refurbishment rather than wholesale re-provision of the premises.

There may be challenges for the health centre in the near future because of plans among the current three GPs to retire or relocate. There has been no interest from external parties in managing the facility remotely. Several other local practices are facing similar challenges. A merger approach would be unpopular but may prove necessary. One alternative is for a GP federation to take over the practice, but this is a very complex process.

The representative noted that the health centre is important because the village has a large elderly population and high levels of social deprivation. Key health problems include diabetes, obesity, cardio-vascular disease and respiratory diseases. The village also has a high number of children on child protection registers. The Berinsfield practice also looks after residents of a nursing home in Burcot and also a home which provides accommodation for young disabled people.

Mental health was raised by just two community respondents, but emphasised as a significant challenge by four stakeholder groups (not including the CCG representative). Some of the stakeholder groups provide services to support people suffering with mental health challenges, but recognise that additional or improved support would be valuable.

Leisure and sport

Eleven map labels referred to local leisure and sport facilities. Five respondents reflected positively on the existing facilities, while five respondents suggested that local facilities need to be improved (four of whom referred to the swimming pool).

Stakeholder comments: The project team has not yet been able to hold a meeting with the operator of Abbey Sports Centre and this is a priority in the next stage of work. The OCC leisure team provided detailed information on the nature of the facility and its history in Berinsfield. It confirmed that there is political will to retain a leisure centre in Didcot, though there are plans for substantial new centre in Didcot and a longstanding desire for a public swimming pool in Wallingford.

OCC confirmed that there are concerns about the quality of some of the existing facilities. It was confirmed that plans to redevelop and improve the existing centre had been explored previously in some detail, but ultimately stalled. These plans included the potential co-location of other village facilities and services, though OCC noted that it would prefer to see these co-located facilities in adjacent buildings, rather than within the leisure centre.

Other stakeholders – in particular Berinsfield Information and Volunteer Centre – also noted that Berinsfield residents has previously been consulted on plans for improvements / redevelopment of the sports centre and were disappointed that this had never been progressed. OCC provided outline details of what it saw a desire

The OCC meeting notes provide initial details of OCC's aspirations should a new facility be delivered – this broadly focuses on re-providing existing facilities, but improving the quality. Its external appearance should also be improved. The county is assembling a Local Plan evidence base which will include looking at usage patterns for the existing leisure centre. Another stakeholder noted that while the leisure centre was popular, it was not necessarily viewed as a facility for people living in the village and, for some, any cost for activity was prohibitive.

Specific comments in relation to Abingdon Gymnastics Club can be found in the notes of the conversation with a director of Jennings. These provide background to the club's history in Berinsfield.

Education and young people

Fifteen map labels and five comment forms discussed education and a variety of feedback was provided by stakeholder groups. Nine comments supported provision of a secondary school in the village, though two opposed this. Seven comments were provided on the primary school, providing a mix of positive and negative feedback and, overall, suggesting that improvements would be supported.

While it was an important issue for stakeholders, only three comments were received from the community on adult education in Berinsfield. Two of these suggested improving the quality of the centre and one suggested that it should be relocated.

Stakeholder comments: The project team has not yet been able to hold a meeting with Abbey Woods Academy and this is a priority in the next stage of work. OCC's education team confirmed that the school is currently in special measures. Despite the school operating under its 1.5 FE capacity, there is there is significant pupil leakage from the village and many children leave Berinsfield to go to school. The roll fluctuation causes problems for staffing and other resourcing. The school has requested to reduce its intake to 1 FE. According to forecasts, pupil numbers in Berinsfield are expected to decline significantly in future years and this could have an impact on funding for the school and therefore its ability to address performance issues.

OCC is not aware of any major issues with the buildings at Abbey Woods Academy. The site is considered large enough to accommodate a 2 FE school. OCC were open to the idea of an 'all-through' school.

Literacy and numeracy levels, alongside other adult education issues, were highlighted as challenges by the Children's Centre, BIVC and Soha.

Four stakeholder groups – BIVC, the Boxing Club, Williams Performance Tenders and Berinsfield Community Association – commented that the village does not provide sufficient facilities or activities for young people. A number of stakeholder noted that the cancellation of the T2 services would impact young people, in particular students attending college outside the village.

Library

Four labels and one comment form provided feedback about Berinsfield Library. Four reflected positively on the service, stating that it was important and should remain open. One respondent noted that it was important to ensure a 'quality service'.

Business, employment and training

Commercial space

Seven labels provided comments on commercial uses within the village. Five respondents recommended developing land to the south west of the village, across the A4074, for commercial use. There were also individual suggestions that the telephone exchange site be improved and that the employment site to the north of the village be developed for residential use.

Stakeholder comments: The project team engaged with Williams Performance Tenders, a key employer in the village. Williams employs a number of local people and has run a successful apprenticeship scheme. The business noted that improving employment opportunities for local residents within the village is key to raising aspirations. Generally, other stakeholder reflect very positively on the business and its management.

Williams intends to double in size over the next five years, subject to overcoming key constraints. This growth would require new floorspace and would create approximately 30-40 new jobs. The key challenges are: i) recruitment, which has provided difficult in the past, particularly for experienced professionals; and ii) premises, as the business would need more space than its current factory at Vogue Business Park and smaller space at Queensford Lakes.

Proximity to the Lakes was a key reason Williams is located in Berinsfield. In an ideal world, Williams would like to move to a bespoke manufacturing facility next to the lake as this would provide them with long-term security of tenure, space to grow and direct access to the lake without having to navigate roads through the village. Williams stated that it could not afford to develop this new facility as a standalone venture owing to the infrastructure costs (in particular sewerage and road access). As such, Williams would have to rely on a significant element of this being paid for as part of a wider commercial development on the Queensford Lakes site.

There were only four comments on Queensford Lakes from the wider community. These variously suggested developing a community facility at the Lakes, avoiding housing development and ensuring the scheme “takes advantage” of the Lakes.

The Council will be holding a further meeting with Williams and will also engage with Knowles in relation to the Dorchester House site.

Employment

Employment was a prominent issue for stakeholders, but was mentioned in only two labels and two comment forms. These responses all suggested that more local job opportunities should be available, with individual comments highlighting that opportunities could be created around Dorchester House and that low-skilled work should be prioritised.

Stakeholder comments: See above details of feedback in relation to Berinsfield Employment Action Group. One local employer highlighted their past experience of challenges in employing people from the village, such as poor behaviour and other social issues. The redevelopment of Dorchester House is likely to cause disruption for some employers in the village, though this does not appear to be a significant concerns and the landowner (Knowles) appears to be working collaboratively with current tenants.

Miscellaneous comments

A full summary of comments within each of the above categories is provided in the appendices. However, there were a number of issues which attracted multiple comments which are not addressed in the above categories. These are summarised below and full details are provided in the appendix:

- Garages – four map labels highlighting four specific ‘problem areas’ in terms of garages
- Footpaths and pavements – four map labels suggested improvements to footpaths / pavements, with three referencing over-grown hedges on particular streets
- St Mary & St Berin Church – three maps labels gave miscellaneous comments on the Church and Church Hall (eg the latter should be extended to create storage space)
- Rubbish and litter – three map labels provided suggestions on how to address this concern on specific streets
- Alleyways – three map labels identified specific problems with three specific alleyways within the village
- Sports clubs – two map labels references the gymnastics club (one stating it was popular and one suggesting it should be renamed ‘Berinsfield Gymnastics Club’) and one map label reflected positively on Berinsfield Boxing Club
- Concerns about delivery – in tone, a number of respondents expressed concerns about delivery of the investment scheme
- Sense of community – two map labels reflected on Berinsfield as a positive place to live

Appendix A – Comment form responses

Two types of comment form were available at the community events. A short form asked four questions:

- 1) Do you agree with the issues and challenges presented at the community drop-in events?
Are there any others you want to add to the list?
- 2) What do you think are the top three priorities for Berinsfield?
- 3) What do you think we should do about them?
- 4) Do you have any other comments?

A second, extended form asked a wider range of questions, reflecting the issues and questions posed on the display materials at the events.

27 comment forms were returned during the three days of the events (26 short forms and one extended form).

The issues raised in these forms are summarised by category below.

Housing

Housing was an issue for the majority of the people who responded, with **16 respondents** referring to this subject (59 per cent).

People stated the need for more housing, with a sentiment that it was “time to get on with it”.

Of the 16 who mentioned housing:

- Three people mentioned the need for four-bedroom family homes
- Three people mentioned the need for affordable housing
- One person mentioned the need for two-bedroom housing
- One person felt that it would be better to renovate existing housing rather than building new houses in the village

Transport

Transport was the second most common issue raised, with **12 respondents** (44 per cent) commenting on it. Of these:

- 10 people explicitly wrote of their unhappiness at the poor bus service. Some of these people said they felt the return of a more frequent service ought to be a priority
- Three people mentioned the need for improved crossings – and explicitly supported plans to introduce these
- Two people mentioned the need for better parking
- One mentioned the need for a better school bus
- One suggested the possibility of introducing a minibus service
- One called for better quality roads with new tarmac
- One individual felt the village needed another road entrance

Shopping provision

Nine respondents (33 per cent) mentioned the shops in the village. Of these:

- Several spoke of the need to both improve the quality of the shops and the space in which they are located – especially the “bottom shops” including the former Costcutter
- Two people mentioned the need for bigger shops
- Three requested cheaper shops such as Tesco
- Two people mentioned the need for a new café and places to eat

- One person mentioned that a charity shop would be welcomed in the village

Health

Improving the health of Berinsfield residents was a relatively common theme, with **eight respondents** (30 per cent) referencing health-related concerns.

- Seven people were concerned about the potential closure of the doctor's surgery and/or emphasised its importance in the village
- Two people mentioned the poor state of mental health in Berinsfield, with one respondent stating that this was an issue that ought to be addressed if individuals are to succeed in the labour market

Green space

The village's central green space was mentioned explicitly by **six respondents** (22 per cent) – all of whom felt it was important to preserve this area.

- Two people proposed the idea of an outdoor gym/exercise area
- One comment referred to the need for "open spaces"
- One suggested increases in allotment space
- One supported the general upkeep of these spaces through increasing litter picking and clamping down on dog fouling
- One comment mentioned the need for improved seating
- One stated that improving lighting should be a priority for the communal areas in the village

Education and youth

- **Five respondents** had concerns relating explicitly to schools, with three mentioning the need for a secondary school. One person stated that the village was currently "overloaded" in terms of educational demand
- Respondents were split when it came to whether the village would benefit from a new children's centre – two supported this and two opposed it
- Generally, the suggestion of creating a new community hub where community services would co-locate was well received
- Two people mentioned the need for improved adult learning facilities and one person mentioned the need for a quality library

Delivery concerns

- There appeared to be a general sense that some residents had "heard it all before". One individual mentioned that the village needed an MP who is "available to the residents of Berinsfield". Others questioned how they could trust that the development would go ahead.
- However, the project appeared to be supported by the majority. While a certain level of scepticism is apparent, almost all respondents backed the community investment scheme

Miscellaneous

- Two people mentioned the need for more jobs in the village, with one calling for more low-skilled positions
- Two people mentioned the need to protect against flooding in the village
- One person asked for improved bike sheds
- One individual asked for a more active police force
- One person felt the village could benefit from a food bank
- One person felt that the number of HGVs that pass through the village is an issue, especially to those on bikes

Appendix B – Village map responses

A large map of Berinsfield was available at the community events for attendees to attach pins and labels providing their feedback. Different coloured pins were provided for different types of comment: green pins to identify aspects that attendees liked, red pins to identify aspects that attendees did not like, and blue pins for general comments or ideas.

A total of **337 labels** were attached over the three days of the events:

- 123 on Thursday 15 September
- 103 on Friday 16 September
- 111 on Saturday 17 September

The comments are summarised by category below. These comments have also been indexed in relation to their location on the village map – Camargue can provide this database on request.

Green and open space

88 comments were received relating to green and open space, with the majority of these relating to the central green space, which is clearly seen as an important asset to the village. Most of the pins used were either green or blue, suggesting that residents mainly wish to protect and enhance the central green space.

Of these comments:

- 27 comments specifically opposed development on open space, particularly on the central green space
- Nine comments expressed general support for the green space, particularly the main central area
- Two comments requested improved facilities at the play park at the northern end of the village, while another requested more care be taken of it
- Two comments requested improvements to the skate park
- Two comments requested better upkeep of the central green space, while another requested more bins
- Two comments requested planting fruit trees and herbs at the central green space
- Two comments supported the trees at the entrance to the village
- Two comments supported the cemetery, while another requested that it be expanded
- Two comments requested providing more facilities for horses using the Roman Road as a bridleway
- Two comments noted that more facilities for teenagers could be provided at the central green space
- One comment supported the local football club
- One comment suggested allocating space for wildlife walks
- One comment requested that the council improve the fencing at the central green space
- One comment requested more trees
- One comment supported the village fete held on the green
- One comment raised concerns about flooding on the central green space
- One comment requested a dog exercise area
- One comment raised flooding as an issue
- One comment raised concerns about motorbikes being ridden on the green
- One comment raised concerns about fly-tipping

Retail

28 comments were received relating to retail. Most of these were negative comments related to the 'bottom shops', but several also referred to the other retail facilities at the west of Fane Drive.

Of these comments:

- 19 requested the improvement of the bottom shops
- Five requested cafés or places to eat and drink
- Four requested that the bottom shops be demolished
- Three requested more shops or greater choice in the village
- One stated that there were some good shops in the area

Parking

20 comments raised parking as an issue, with the vast majority identifying the need for more and better off-street parking, often referring to the existing parking pressures in the village and the difficulties this creates for the movement of vehicles.

Of these comments:

- Four noted that parked vehicles can block the line of sight on roads
- Two comments raised parking on Colwell Road as an issue
- Two comments suggested replacing some green space with parking
- One comment raised concerns about cars parking too close to junctions
- One comment suggested removing parking from main thoroughfares
- One comment requested more parking in front of houses
- One comment noted that parking on Wey Road made it dangerous for emergency vehicles
- One comment noted that parking at the 'top shops' can often be difficult
- One comment requested two parking spaces for each house, while another requested that each house be allowed no more than two cars
- One comment raised parking as an issue near Ock Drive
- One comment suggested more off-road parking, while another requested a funding scheme to provide more driveway space
- One comment suggested lay-bys at the school, while another suggested replacing the green space near the school with parking

Road crossing

20 comments were received relating to road crossings and safety, with the vast majority red or blue pins placed around the existing bus stop on the A4074. Of these:

- 18 requested a crossing on the A4074 to provide safe access to the northbound bus stop
- One requested a lower speed limit around bus stop area
- One said the bus stop was currently too far away

Education

15 comments were raised regarding education, with the majority placed around the existing Abbey Woods Academy. Of these:

- Seven comments requested a secondary school
- Three comments supported the primary school
- Two comments criticised the primary school, while two others requested that it be improved
- One comment suggested relocating the Adult Education Centre

Highways

13 comments raised general points about highways. Most were general comments, placed along the main roads in the village (Wimblestraw Road and Fane Drive). Of these:

- Two comments raised concerns about industrial traffic going through the village
- Two comments requested traffic calming measures along Fane Drive
- One comment suggested an extra exit on the roundabout on the A4074 for Dayton Road, while another requested a roundabout on the Queensford Farm Road, and a third requested another exit to the Drayton Road

- One comment requested resurfacing of roads in the village
- One comment noted that Burcot Lane is very busy
- One comment requested a 30mph speed limit around the village
- One comment noted that plant growth can obstruct visibility on roads
- One comment stated that £70,000 investment in tarmac paths was not necessary on the A4074

Residential

12 comments were received relating to new homes. Most were attached to blue pins, and many were placed in areas to suggest that they could be sites for residential development, such as the employment area to the north of the village or fields to the east of the village. Of these:

- Three supported new homes in the eastern fields
- Three requested larger four bedroom houses for families
- Two complained of areas being overcrowded
- Two identified the employment area at the north of the village as an appropriate location for new homes
- One supported housing on the village green
- One raised concerns about housing in the eastern fields
- One supported housing near Dorchester House
- One supported housing in the north west

Leisure and sport

11 comments were received relating to the leisure and sports facilities in the village, particularly around the sports centre and central green space. Many used green pins, suggesting that facilities are well-liked, while most of the remainder used blue 'comment' pins. Of these:

- Five requested improved facilities, with four of these relating to the pool
- Four were positive about the existing facilities
- One stated that the swimming pool is useful
- One complained facilities were underused

Flooding

10 comments were received relating to flooding, mostly using blue 'comment' pins placed at the south of Fane Drive. Of these:

- Six comments complained about flooding
- Three complained about sewer systems
- One comment said the fields in the north-west do not flood

Cycling

Nine comments were received relating to cycling in Berinsfield. Of these:

- Two requested cycle hoops/racks at the A4074bus stop
- Two requested an east-west cycle route across the central green
- One complained about cyclists being too fast and expecting priority on pathways on the central green
- One requested a cycle path along the main road into the village
- One requested bike racks at the bottom shops
- One requested/supported a cycle route to Cowley

Children's centre

Nine comments were received regarding the children's centre. Of these:

- Eight supported it and proposed improved funding or support from the council
- One commented that the centre is aesthetically unpleasant

Health

Eight comments were received relating to health. Of these:

- Three supported the presence of health services in the town
- Two complained that the health centre was short staffed
- One complained of expensive healthcare
- One requested a bigger surgery
- One requested that the pharmacy stays open on Sundays

Public transport

Eight comments were raised relating to public transport. Of these:

- Two comments requested public transport within the village itself, while another suggested approaching Pearce's to run a bus service for the village
- One comment generally noted the lack of affordable transport
- One comment noted that visitors should prioritise public transport
- One comment requested additional stops for buses to Oxford and Wallingford
- One comment requested train services to the village
- One comment noted that connections to schools are poor

Commercial buildings

Seven comments were received relating to commercial buildings. Of these

- Five requested the development of the fields to the south-west of the village across the A4074, suggesting offices and/or industrial development
- One requested the improvement of the Telephone Exchange site
- One requested that houses were built on the employment area to the north of the village

Berinsfield Information and Volunteer Centre (BIVC)

Five comments were received relating to BIVC. Of these:

- Three requested it stays open
- One emphasised its importance
- One said it was 'vital' but might benefit from moving to a bigger site

Pavements

Four comments were raised regarding pavements in the village. Of these:

- Two comments noted that hedges were impacting on pavements
- One comment noted that bars across some pavements can block prams
- One comment asked which group was responsible for the upkeep of hedges along the pavement of Kennet Close

Lakes

Four comments were made relating to the Queenford lakes to the south of the village. Of these:

- One comment suggested delivering a community facility at the lakes
- One noted that the scheme should 'take advantage' of the lakes
- One comment requested that no housing be developed there
- One comment noted that the lakes should be more prominently-featured on the map

Library

Four comments were received relating to the local library. Of these:

- Two stated that the library was important/useful

- Two requested the library remains open

Garages

Four comments were received relating to garages. Of these:

- One complained about the lack of communication from the council regarding using a space in Wetlands Garages, off Fane Drive
- One commented that the Wetlands Garages are too narrow for modern cars
- One commented that the garages on Glyme Drive are falling down
- One commented generally on ownership of the garages on Windrush Road

Church

Three comments were received relating to the church. Of these:

- One requested the church hall is extended to create storage space
- One was generally positive about the church
- One requested the church be considered as a community space

Rubbish and waste

Three comments were received relating to rubbish or waste collection. Of these:

- One complained of the waste pick-up route on Wey Road
- One called for a dog waste bin at the 'top shops'
- One requested people take more care with rubbish on Evenlode Road

Alleyways

Three comments were received relating to alleyways. Of these:

- One complained of drug use on Evenlode Road
- One complained of bike racing on Lay Avenue
- One called for lights on Wetland Gardens

Employment

Two comments were received relating to employment in the village. Both requested new opportunities around Dorchester House, with one specifying these should be for young people.

Sports clubs

Three comments were received relating to sports clubs. Of these:

- One supported the club, stating it is popular and attracts people from outside of the village
- One commented the club should be called 'Berinsfield Gymnastics Club'
- One comment supported keeping the boxing gym in Berinsfield

Village hub

Two comments were received relating to a 'village hub', with proposed locations at the existing school or the fields to the east of the village. Of these:

- One supported a hub to keep services viable
- One supported merging education services together into a single location in the eastern fields

General comments

Two comments were received relating to Berinsfield generally. Of these:

- One commented on the strong sense of community in the village
- One person stated they liked living in Berinsfield

Other general comments include:

- One comment supported keeping the water tower in Berinsfield
- One comment mentioned 'Pokestops' in the north-west field