

<b>APPLICATION NO.</b>	<a href="#">P16/S3611/FUL</a>
<b>APPLICATION TYPE</b>	FULL APPLICATION
<b>REGISTERED</b>	9.11.2016
<b>PARISH</b>	BENSON
<b>WARD MEMBER(S)</b>	Felix Bloomfield Richard Pullen
<b>APPLICANT</b>	CALA Management Ltd
<b>SITE</b>	Land North of Littleworth Road, Benson
<b>PROPOSAL</b>	Erection of 187 dwellings plus formation of vehicular access and car parking. Provision of landscaping and open space and other associated work.
<b>AMENDMENTS</b>	As clarified by revised tracking details shown on drawing no8160737-6201A and PL.02C (BCP details) accompanying Agent's email dated 7 December 2016 and as amended by drawing no PL02 rev E, PL48 rev A, PL49 rev A, PL68 rev A, PL76 rev A, PL78 rev A, PL82 and 83 rev A, PL97 rev A, PL100C, PL101 rev A, PL102 rev A, PL103 rev A, PL104 rev A, PL105 rev A, PL06 rev A and engineering drawings accompanying Agents email dated 3 February 2017. As further revised by updated schedule of materials received 21 February 2016.
<b>GRID REFERENCE</b>	461586/191972
<b>OFFICER</b>	Sharon Crawford

1.0 **INTRODUCTION**

1.1 The application has been referred to the Planning Committee at the discretion of the Planning Manager.

1.2 The site is some 7.8 hectares in size. The northern boundary of the Benson Conservation Area runs along the southern edge of Littleworth Road to the south of the site. The built up area of Benson lies beyond the site to the east and southern boundaries. To the north and west is open countryside, with the McDonald's Services Station to the west beyond the B4009 which links to the A4074.

1.3 The site is identified on the Ordnance Survey Extract **attached** at Appendix 1.

2.0 **PROPOSAL**

2.1 The application seeks full planning permission for a residential development of 187 dwellings along with access, landscape, open space and other associated work.

- The mix of housing is as follows;
- Open Market Housing: 112 units
  - Affordable Housing: 75 units
  - Total: 187 units

The proposed housing mix includes a range of dwelling types from 1 bed flats to 5 bed family homes. The dwelling heights are mostly 2 storey and 2.5 storey at key locations to add variety and visual interest to the street scene. The density is circa 23 dwellings per hectare

2.2 The application submission includes the following documents;

- Design and Access Statement
- Agricultural Land Classification Report
- Arboricultural Report
- Archaeological Update Report
- Heritage Statement
- LVIA
- Statement of Community Involvement and Sustainability Assessment (included within this Planning Statement)
- Habitat Survey
- Transport Assessment and Travel Plan
- Flood Risk Assessment

Additional information has also been submitted in tracking for waste vehicles. Amended plans have been submitted to overcome the concerns of the urban design officer.

2.3 Reduced copies of the plans accompanying the application are **attached** at Appendix 2. Full copies of the plans and consultation responses are available for inspection on the Council's website at [www.southoxon.gov.uk](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk)

### 3.0 SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS

Full responses can be found on the Council's website but are summarised below.

3.1 Benson Parish Council **Original plans.** It was understood by the Committee that an amended application and set of plans was due. However, Members unanimously resolved to object to the current application on the grounds of:

- i. Retirement bungalows should not be removed
- ii. 3 storey flats overlook current residents and 2.5 storey dwellings overlook Littleworth Road
- iii. E.I.A should be required
- iv. Plots 100, 106, 112 have an overbearing impact on properties in Sunnyside
- v. Open space is on the outside of the development with none centrally
- vi. Lack of car parking space.

**Amended plans.** No objection. At the Benson Parish Council Meeting on 23rd February 2017, members discussed the planning application; 8 members had no objections, 1 member objected to the application and there were 2 abstentions.

OCC (highways) The original highway objection has been removed as a result of negotiations on the S278 scheme. No objection subject to conditions.

OCC (Archaeology) No objection subject to conditions.

Conservation Officer This application is for development on the land to the north of Littleworth Road in Benson. There is an extant scheme for development here. The site is adjacent to the designated conservation area although there are no designated heritage assets on the site. This submission differs from the approved scheme in that the number of proposed units has increased and the position of buildings along the

eastern end of Littleworth Road have been altered. This alteration appears to align with the slightly higher density of existing development at the eastern end of Littleworth Road. It appears from the proposed site layout plan that the areas of open space and small view cones from the Littleworth Road that were identified in the appeal scheme as positive have been retained. Overall, the alterations from the approved scheme do not alter the level of harm that the previous scheme was judged to have. As such, I consider the heritage impact to be equal to the extant approved scheme. Recommendation: If you are minded to approve this application, any relevant conditions not already discharged should be carried over to this application.

Environmental Protection	I have strong concerns that the noise from the nearby RAF Benson airbase will have a detrimental impact on the amenity of the proposed housing project. However, planning permission already exists on the site for new residential development and the impacts on this proposal are no worse. In the circumstances, a condition should be applied to the development seeking an additional report in respect of noise and mitigation measures.
Defence Infrastructure Organisation	The application site falls within the statutory birdstrike safeguarding zone surrounding RAF Benson. Therefore, DIO Safeguarding maintains no objection to this application subject to design requirements in respect of open water on the site.
Monson (drainage)	Thames Water advice should be sought in respect of foul drainage. Surface water drainage should also be submitted for approval.
Community Infrastructure Officer	Standing advice on S106 and CIL contributions.
Waste Management Officer	Standing advice on waste and bins.
Neighbours Objections (38)	<p>This is an unwelcome and unnecessary increase in total units on the site. The village cannot sustain this size of development. Strong objections to this new application on two fronts. Firstly, that the new application increases the number of houses but reduces the provision of lower cost affordable housing and the provision of retirement houses.</p> <p>The number of one and two bedroom houses has been greatly reduced and replaced by more 3 and 4 bedroom properties. The size of this development and the others that have planning or are being proposed do not take into account the infrastructure of the village. Concerns about the sewer drainage. The drain serving Littleworth Road is already inadequate.</p> <p>The design of the 3 storey blocks will appear far short of the historic quality set by the few and very fine 3-storey historic buildings in the core of the village. There are none elsewhere. They will just appear as unusually tall, large and out-of-keeping, and will detract from the distinctive low and rural character of the village.</p> <p>In considering the rural character of the village and its landscape setting, existing developments tail down in height towards the edge of</p>

the built-up area and for the most part present simple outlines to the adjacent fields, with bungalows or plain unbroken roof pitches over two-storey buildings. This allows a relatively soft and unassertive edge, and the village appears to lie low and quietly in the surrounding rural landscape. The rear boundaries of Sunnyside, and its low bungalows at the corners, conform with this pattern. By contrast the submitted scheme proposes 2.5 storey houses with outward looking dormers and high ridge heights of 10 or 10.5 metres along the western boundary with the open green space that is to be retained. Such houses will appear intrusive and harmful to the low rural character of Benson and should not be approved. Proposed tree planting is thinly clustered rather than consistent or dense.

The application on this site for which permission was won on appeal just over a year ago promised one thing that would have been advantageous to the village: the retirement houses and apartments (two storeys), a need for which was demonstrated by the recent housing needs survey. This new application replaces these with three storey flats scattered through the development, as well as an increased number of four and five bedroom houses and three storey town houses. The height of the flats (towers 14 meters and roofs 12 m) and town houses and their urban design is alien and inappropriate on this site on the edge of the village, harming the Conservation Area of Littleworth Road opposite and overshadowing the Sunnyside bungalows.

Section 40 of the Natural Environmental and Rural Communities Act, 2006 places a duty to minimise impacts on biodiversity and provide net gains in biodiversity where possible. The revised design of this development, with so many properties squeezed into the area, makes this difficult to achieve when compared to the original layout and cannot be supported.

Loss of retirement flats and bungalows.

#### 4.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

4.1 [P17/S0423/SCR](#) - Screening opinion request for erection of 187 dwellings plus formation of vehicular access and car parking. Provision of landscaping and open space and other associated work.

[P15/S3922/DIS](#) – Request to discharge conditions 3 (archaeological work), 4 (contamination), 5 (Construction method statement), 6 (safety sightlines), 7 (pedestrian crossing), 8 (drainage) 10 (water supply), 11 (parking bike & storage), 13 (secured by design), 14 (hard & soft landscaping) and 16 (landscape management). Conditions 5, 6, 7 and 11 will be considered discharged once the development has been constructed in accordance with approved plans. Conditions 3, 4, 10, 13 and 14 still require further work to be discharged as per a letter received from the LPA as per the 20th October 2016.

[P15/S3916/O](#) – Resolution to approve subject to a S106 – 29 June 2016  
Littleworth phase 2

Outline application (with all matters reserved except access) for the erection of 241 dwellings (40% of which will be affordable) with associated access, public open space, landscaping, nature park and woodP15/Sand; Up to 230 sq.m retail space; Provision of community facilities including relocated school playing fields, youth facilities hut, skate park and play space. (As amended by drawings and accompanying letter from agent dated 26 February 2016 and minor amendment received 24 March 2016).

[P14/S2564/FUL](#) WITHDRAWN - (06/12/2016)

1) The erection of 125 dwellings with associated access, open space and landscaping;  
2) 41 retirement flats and 11 retirement bungalows with associated parking and car share facilities. (associated community facilities falling within the blue line which will be subject to a separate planning application following consultation with Benson Parish Council.)

[P15/S3923/FUL](#) - Approved (13/06/2016)

Variation of conditions 2 (changes to layout) & 13 (secured by design) of planning permission P14/S0673/FUL

As amended by plans received 24 March 2016

(1) The erection of 107 dwellings with associated access, open space and landscaping;  
(2) 41 retirement flats and 11 retirement bungalows with associated parking.

[P14/S0673/FUL](#) - Approved (02/06/2015) - Approved on appeal (02/06/2015)

1) The erection of 125 dwellings with associated access, open space and landscaping;  
2) 41 retirement flats and 11 retirement bungalows with associated parking and car share facilities. Associated community facilities fall within the blue line which will be subject to a separate planning application following consultation with Benson Parish Council.

5.0 **POLICY & GUIDANCE**

5.1 South Oxfordshire Core Strategy policies

CS1 - Presumption in favour of sustainable development

CSB1 - Conservation and improvement of biodiversity

CSEM1 - Supporting a successful economy

CSH1 - Amount and distribution of housing

CSH2 - Housing density

CSH3 - Affordable housing

CSH4 - Meeting housing needs

CSI1 - Infrastructure provision

CSR1 - Housing in villages

CSS1 - The Overall Strategy

5.2 South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 policies;

C10 - Landscape Features

C4 - Landscape setting of settlements

C6 - Maintain & enhance biodiversity

C8 - Adverse affect on protected species

C9 - Loss of landscape features

CON13 - Archaeological investigation recording & publication

D1 - Principles of good design

D10 - Waste Management

D2 - Safe and secure parking for vehicles and cycles

D3 - Outdoor amenity area

D4 - Reasonable level of privacy for occupiers

D7 - Access for all

EP1 - Adverse affect on people and environment

EP2 - Adverse affect by noise or vibration

EP3 - Adverse affect by external lighting

EP6 - Sustainable drainage

G2 - Protect district from adverse development

- G3 - Development well served by facilities and transport
- H4 - Housing sites in towns and larger villages outside Green Belt
- T1 - Safe, convenient and adequate highway network for all users
- T2 - Unloading, turning and parking for all highway users

South Oxfordshire Design Guide 2016

### 5.3 National Planning Policy Framework

National Planning Policy Framework Planning Practice Guidance

Paragraph 216 of the NPPF allows for weight to be given to relevant policies in emerging plans, unless other material considerations indicate otherwise, and only subject to the stage of preparation of the plan, the extent of unresolved objections and the degree of consistency of the relevant emerging policies with the NPPF.

#### **Emerging South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2032**

The council carried out a consultation on the Preferred Options of the Local Plan 2032 in the summer of 2016. This proposes to allocate housing in rural communities through the neighbourhood plan process.

#### **Emerging Benson Neighbourhood Plan.**

Benson are working towards the adoption of a neighbourhood plan but the plan carries limited weight at this stage

South Oxfordshire Section 106 Supplementary Planning Document 2016

### 5.4 **Environmental Impact.**

The proposal constitutes Schedule 2 (category 10(b) urban development projects) and exceeds the indicative threshold criteria (5ha). However the site is not within a sensitive area. Having regard to the characteristics of the development, it is not considered that there is potential for significant environmental effects. The cumulative impact has also been assessed taking into account other development proposals in the area and the extant planning permission on the site. This scheme proposes 28 dwellings more than the extant permission. The application has been supported by sufficient documents for these aspects of the scheme to be considered in full. Thus, it is considered an Environmental Statement is not required for this proposal. This recommendation holds when considering the impact of this development cumulatively with the permitted sites in the village and area. A formal screening opinion was issued on 3 February 2017.

#### **Other Relevant Legislation**

- Environmental Impact Regulations, as amended 2015
- Community & Infrastructure Levy Legislation Human Rights Act 1998
- Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006
- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Equality Act 2010 section 149
- CIL Regulations 2010 (as amended)

### 6.0 **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

6.1 **Background.** In June 2015 a scheme for 159 homes was granted full planning permission subject to conditions by an Inspector at appeal. The scheme included the following:

- 107 residential dwellings
- 41 retirement flats and
- 11 retirement bungalows.

As part of this permission highway changes were secured through a legal agreement. This involved changing Littleworth Road to a two way road where previously it had been one way. The approved masterplan is attached at Appendix 3.

6.2 Revisions to the layout approved at appeal were approved under application P15/S3923/FUL. These were;

- material amendments to the internal road layout including the re- location parking bays, changes to landscaping from original scheme on western edges and minor alterations to driveway arrangements for plots 33, 34, and 35; and
- inclusion of additional Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP) of 0.26ha to be included within the approved Phase 1 within part of the area originally shown as open space
- additional off site highway works to those originally proposed. These are shown on drawing numbers 32385\_5501\_016A, 32385\_5501\_017 and 32385\_5501\_018. These plans shows all the works proposed including works already agreed through the original permission e.g. making Littleworth Road 2-way. The main alterations relate to changes to the pedestrian crossings and inclusion of a footpath on the northern side of Littleworth Road.

The current application seeks a number of revisions to the original scheme, primarily increasing the number of units on the site from 159 to 187 – an additional 28 units.

6.3 The principle of residential development on this site has already been established by the extant planning permission that was allowed on appeal. The mains issue is to assess the changes proposed in terms of changes to policy landscape, highway, neighbour impacts and any other technical issues including the following.

- The principle of the development, including:
  - Development Plan
  - Neighbourhood Plan.
- Matters of detail / technical issues, including:
  - landscape impact,
  - design and layout,
  - highway safety and traffic impact,
  - affordable housing,
  - neighbour amenity and amenity of future residents,
  - flood risk and surface / foul drainage,
  - noise, and
  - mix
- Infrastructure requirements, including:
  - on-site infrastructure to be secured under a legal agreement,
  - off-site contributions pooled under the Community Infrastructure Levy

6.4 **The Principle of Development.** The principle of residential development on this site has already been established by the extant planning permission that was allowed on appeal. Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the

development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Section 70 (2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 provides that the local planning authority shall have regard to the provisions of the development plan, so far as material to the application, and to any other material considerations. In the case of South Oxfordshire, the most relevant parts of the Development Plan are the Core Strategy which was adopted in December 2012, the saved policies of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 and any relevant neighbourhood plans. Development which is not in accordance with an up-to-date development plan should be refused unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

- 6.5 Benson is designated as a 'larger village' in the Core Strategy. Policy CSS1 sets out an overall strategy for the District, which seeks, among other things, to support and enhance the larger villages as local service centres, while focusing 'major new development' at Didcot and supporting the roles of Henley, Thame and Wallingford.
- 6.6 Policy CSH1 identified the distribution of housing within South Oxfordshire including housing in the 12 larger villages. Policy CSR1 indicates that housing provision in the villages will be achieved through allocations, infill development and rural exception sites for affordable housing and that there would be no limit on infill development in these settlements.
- 6.7 The application site falls beyond the built up limits of the village. It is not closely surrounded by buildings or a small gap in an otherwise built-up frontage. It does not represent an infill development. It is also not a site allocated for housing in an adopted / made plan. The development therefore conflicts with the development plan, insofar as it does not meet with the policy CSR1 criteria against which proposals for development beyond the built-up limits of larger villages are assessed. However, the site area is the same as the extant planning permission site and this is a material consideration.
- 6.8 To significantly boost the supply of housing, the NPPF requires local planning authorities to identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years' worth of housing against their housing requirements. This supply should include an additional buffer of 5% to ensure choice and competition in the market for land. Alternatively, where there has been persistent under delivery of housing, the buffer should increase to 20% to provide a realistic prospect of achieving the planned supply.
- 6.9 The most recent evidence base that informs the council's housing requirements is the 2014 Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). To meet the identified housing need for the district, the SHMA committed economic growth housing forecast is 750 homes per annum. This is a sizable uplift from the requirement for 547 homes per annum set out in the SOCS.
- 6.10 Based on the evidence in the SHMA and past delivery, the council has a housing land supply in the region of 3.8 years (including the 20% buffer for under delivery). Therefore the council cannot currently demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply. In these circumstances, Paragraph 49 of the NPPF states that relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up-to-date if the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing land and the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' should be applied. Policy CSR1 clearly relates to housing supply and is not up to date.
- 6.11 Paragraph 14 of the NPPF advises that there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision-taking this means approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay; and where the

development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, **granting permission unless:**

- any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole; or
- **specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted.**

Footnote 4 (formerly footnote 9) of the NPPF introduces the specific policies in the NPPF that indicate development should be restricted. Amongst these are policies relating to an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty designated historic assets such as conservation areas.

- 6.12 The NPPF does not suggest that populations of settlements should be limited in some way or not be expanded by any particular figure. It expects housing to be boosted significantly. Additional housing can help support and secure local services and it may be possible to address infrastructure deficiencies through planning conditions or through a legal agreement.
- 6.13 The Core Strategy housing supply policies are out of date and are given less weight in our decision making. In addition, the council's high court challenge of appeal decisions in Chinnor concluded that the council is silent on CSR1 in relation to housing in larger villages due to the lack of the Site Allocations DPD. Therefore, paragraphs 49 and 14 of the NPPF are also applied to CSR1 regardless of the current five year land supply position.
- 6.14 Sustainable development should now be permitted unless there is planning harm that outweighs the benefit of providing new housing. Applications for housing should now be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development and should be permitted unless there is planning harm that outweighs the benefit of providing new housing. It is in this context that the application will be assessed. The impacts of the development are considered below and the planning balance weighed up in the conclusion of this report.
- 6.15 **Benson Neighbourhood Plan.** Paragraph 216 of the NPPF allows for weight to be given to relevant policies in emerging plans, unless other material considerations indicate otherwise, and only subject to the stage of preparation of the plan, the extent of unresolved objections and the degree of consistency of the relevant emerging policies with the NPPF. These are not applicable in the case of this Benson site as the site has no special designation.
- 6.16 Benson Parish are working towards the adoption of a neighbourhood plan. The emerging neighbourhood plan is now in its final phase of production. Consultation on the pre-submission version is likely to commence in March 2017 and the referendum will take place soon after. The village proposes the development of approximately 340 dwellings (excluding those already approved on BEN1) across the BEN2, BEN3 and BEN4 sites. This approach is underpinned by two parallel objectives. The first is to provide an appropriate number of new dwellings to ensure that Benson is a vibrant and sustainable community in the medium and long term. The second is to provide a developer-funded Edge road around the north of the village and which will provide significant traffic relief from the existing issues in the village centre. The NP has some weight but it is limited. The Benson Neighbourhood Plan accepts residential on this site (BEN1).
- 6.17 The question is, therefore, is whether the proposed development constitutes sustainable development.

At paragraph 7, the NPPF identifies three dimensions to sustainable development which include **economic, social and environmental** considerations. It states that these roles should not be undertaken in isolation as they are mutually dependent.

6.18 *Economic Dimension –*

The proposal will provide additional housing where there is an identified requirement to increase housing targets and boost housing supply. This scheme proposes an additional 28 dwellings over the extant scheme which will make a small contribution to the overall supply of housing and this cannot be dismissed out of hand. The associated construction jobs and local investment during its build out as well as longer term expenditure in the local economy will be of economic benefit to the local area.

The proposal will also help meet the requirements under Policy CSS1 for larger villages by facilitating growth which supports the provision and retention of local services. The proposal therefore has economic benefits and no significant and demonstrable adverse impacts.

6.19 *Social Dimension –* Benson is a larger village, which is identified as a sustainable location for housing within the core strategy policy CSS1. Taking a midpoint from the site it is situated some 0.4 kilometre from village centre facilities which contains a range of facilities including doctor's surgery and shops. It is also around 0.2km from the primary school, Benson is relatively well located for public transport. The site is in easy walking distance of bus stops is for the 139 which operates between Wallingford and Henley on Thames operating on an hourly frequency in both directions during the day. In addition, the x39/x40 bus service providing direct services to Oxford, Wallingford and Reading. The site is also well connected via public footpaths to the countryside beyond. I consider this site to be in a sustainable location.

The development will provide housing and increase housing choice and availability in a sustainable location where there is an identified requirement to increase housing targets and boost housing supply.

6.20 *Environmental dimension - Landscape and conservation area impact.* The site has no special designation but does lie adjacent to the Benson conservation area. This submission differs from the approved scheme in that the number of proposed units has increased and the position of buildings along the eastern end of Littleworth Road have been altered. This alteration appears to align with the slightly higher density of existing development at the eastern end of Littleworth Road. It appears from the proposed site layout plan that the areas of open space and small view cones from the Littleworth Road that were identified in the appeal scheme as positive have been retained. Overall, I consider the landscape and heritage impacts to be equal to the extant approved scheme.

6.21 **Conclusion in respect of the principle of development –**

In your officers view the location of the site, the proximity to existing services within the village and availability and access to public transport to the wider county and region in conjunction with the social, environmental and economic benefits mean that this proposal does constitute a sustainable form of development. **Therefore unless there are significant and demonstrable adverse impacts from the development the presumption is in favour of granting permission for the development and the principle of housing on this site is acceptable.**

The remaining sections of this report consider the proposal in detail in terms of whether there are adverse impacts generated from the development that would outweigh the benefits that it would bring.

6.22 **Matters of detail / technical issues**

6.23 **Design and layout.**

The application is a full application with all details for consideration. The application follows pre-application discussions which sought to identify and resolve any urban design issues with the layout. There has been a significant improvement as a result of these discussions. Key design parameters for the scheme include;

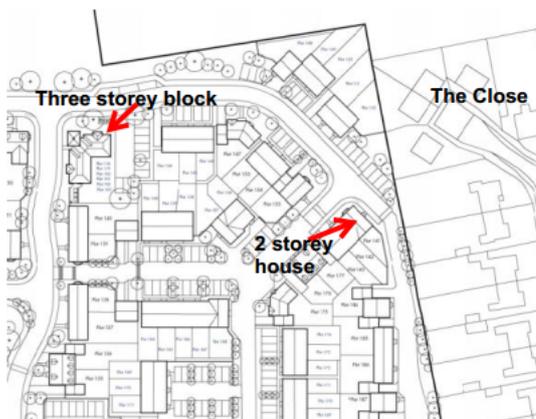
- Higher density in the central areas of the site and towards the eastern boundary where there is existing residential development
- Lower density towards western and northern boundaries which front onto the open countryside, reflecting their sensitive location
- Alignment of the development to the south to integrate with Littleworth Road through the use of built frontages
- The main (approved) spine road through the site which creates a sense of legibility and orientation through the development with other roads designed according to their hierarchy across the layout and to create variety and a sense of place across the development
- A suitable level of parking for all plots on site
- The village green at the front of the site to encourage pedestrian access to the existing “cut through” to the local primary school and village centre services and facilities –

6.24 A number of concerns have been further resolved with the submission of amended plans;

- Tree planting has been added to the parking areas for plots 52-59 to improve and break up areas for parking.
- Use of resin bound gravel for parking areas to plots 106 to 109 to improve outlook.
- Clarification of neighbour impact from Plots 100, 105 and 112
- Revisions to blocks of flats – to reduce height. Some concerns remain that the heights still appear a little uniform.
- Repositioning of three storey block to improve neighbour impact on The Close and Sunnyside properties – see below

6.25

**Amended scheme.**



**Original submission**



6.26 **Highway safety and traffic impact.** Vehicular access into the site is via Littleworth Road and has already been approved as part of the extant permission, which includes

significant S278 works to mitigate the impact of the development. The proposal would generate additional traffic compared to the extant scheme and the approved access would be suitable to accommodate the anticipated trips as justified in the accompanying Transport Assessment. A number of mitigation measures are proposed to ensure the site is accessible, sustainable and promotes road safety. These measures are outlined in further detail in the Transport Assessment but they include a zebra and raised pedestrian crossing, new pedestrian footways and a shared drive reserved for vehicle manoeuvring.

- 6.27 In the circumstances, The County Highways Officer has raised no objection to the application subject to the imposition of conditions and the completion of a legal agreement to secure a contribution towards the enhancement of local public transport infrastructure. In coming to this conclusion, the highways officer has considered the suitability of the access, level of parking provision provided within the site, the accessibility of the site for sustainable modes of travel, and trip generation.
- 6.28 **Affordable housing.**  
Policy CSH3 of the core strategy seeks to achieve 40% of affordable housing on sites where there is a net gain of 3 houses. 40% of the total of 187 dwellings equates to 74.8 units. The applicant has offered 75 units for the affordable element which meets the requirement and will be secured through a variation to the existing or a new S106 as appropriate. The affordable units will be provided in 5 or 6 clusters pepper potted throughout the development with each being no more than 15 dwellings, which meets the council's standards and is acceptable.
- 6.29 **Neighbour amenity and amenity of future residents.**  
There was some concern with the original submission about proximity and potential overlooking from one of the block of flats in relation to bungalows and dwellings in The Close and on Sunnyside. However, the amended plans have relocated the block of flats more centrally on the site. Based on the layout and the separation that is achieved between the proposed dwellings and neighbouring properties, I am of the opinion that the development of the site will not now have any adverse impacts on neighbours in terms of light, outlook and privacy. The distance between dwellings on Sunnyside and the new dwellings is over 30m. These distances are in excess of the minimum back to back distances recommended in the Design Guide and are acceptable in my view.
- 6.30 I am also satisfied that the proposed layout ensures that there would be no adverse overlooking, or loss of light and outlook, between plots.
- 6.31 **Flood risk and surface / foul drainage.**  
The application site is within Flood Zone 1 (least probability of flooding) and as such, there are no objections to the development in relation to flood risk.
- 6.32 The site is known to be susceptible to surface water flooding in some areas and a detailed scheme for the site would need to incorporate a Sustainable Urban Drainage (SUDS) compliant strategy to ensure that all surface water run-off is accommodated within the confines of the site and discharged in a controlled manner. As advised by the council's drainage consultant, the details of this could be secured by condition. Details of foul drainage are also to be secured by condition.
- 6.33 **Noise. Amenity of occupants.** All residential properties in Benson suffer from noise disturbance from noise impacts from aircraft from the Benson RAF airfield. All applications for new residential development in Benson must now include a noise assessment to ensure that there is specific consideration for indoor and outdoor

amenity in accordance with BS8233:2014. The noise assessment helps to ensure that an appropriate scheme for protecting the proposed dwellings and future residents is put forward for consideration. In this case a noise assessment was not submitted with the application and given the extant planning permission on the site could not be required.

- 6.34 The current noise climate for the proposed properties is poor and any prospective occupants will suffer some adverse effect of loss of amenity in their gardens and varying levels of sleep disturbance from noise produced by the passing helicopters from the nearby RAF Benson airbase. As the number of night time flight movements varies greatly how much sleep disturbance occurs is impossible to quantify precisely. However, this is consistent for most of the existing inhabitants of Benson. It has been accepted that Benson must provide new sites for housing and this site performs no worse than the existing housing stock. Sites which are closer to the RAF base or where noise is worse than for the existing housing stock will not be supported. Sites for housing will need some noise mitigation measures to address noise issues as much as possible.
- 6.35 In this case, planning permission already exists on the site for new residential development where noise impacts were not considered to be material. However, since the appeal decision noise impacts have been considered in more detail. The evidence base justifies a changed approach. In the circumstances, a condition should be applied to the development seeking an additional report in respect of noise and mitigation measures.
- 6.36 **Housing mix.** Policy CSH4 of the Core Strategy requires a mix of housing to be provided to meet current demand. The district currently has two published documents for considering housing mix - the Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 2014 and the South Oxfordshire Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) 2012.

The **HNA** was a more thorough assessment than the SHMA and is based on original survey data and 2001 census data using the ODPM model and Guide to Good Practice.

The **SHMA** uses secondary data from the 2011 census and GL Hearn demographic projections. It suggests that councils should have regard to other up to date evidence of need and the existing mix and turnover of properties at a local level.

*Market housing*

The districts Housing Needs Assessment provides detail on the recommended mix of housing type and size. The assessment found a shortfall of smaller units, especially two bedroom properties, in both the market and affordable sectors. The HNA indicated 50% 1 and 2 bedrooms and 50% 3 bedrooms plus.

The SHMA also found a shortfall in smaller units but recommended for most units to be 2 and 3 bedrooms. The findings from both are summarised below.

Market homes (%)	1 bed	2 bedrooms	3 bedrooms	4+ bedrooms
HNA	50		50	
SHMA	6	27	43	24

The mix should be informed by this evidence but should also respond to the character of the setting and the layout of the scheme to help develop distinct character areas and variety within the development.

In this case, the mix of units proposed is illustrated below.

- 42 x one and 2 bed units, (23%)
- 105 x three bed units (56%)
- 34 x four bed units (18%)
- 6 x five bed units (3%)

It proposes an acceptable mix of size of dwellings in two storey and 2.5 storey forms.

House Type	No. of Private	No. of Affordable	No. of Private and Affordable
1 Bed Flat	0	9	9
2 Bed Flat	0	9	9
2 bed (Corbrook)	0	18	18
2 bed (Gusdonbrook)	0	6	6
3 bed (Hambrook)	0	28	28
3 bed (Himscot)	20	0	20
3 bed (HT1)	1	0	1
3 bed (HT2)	1	0	1
3 bed (HT3)	0	3	3
3 bed (HT4)	1	0	1
3 bed (HT5)	15	0	15
3 bed (HT6)	2	0	2
3 bed (HT7)	3	0	3
3 bed (Hulsfield)	8	0	8
3 bed (Hurwick)	7	2	9
3 bed (Lickhurst)	14	0	14
4 bed (Keelcroft)	4	0	4
4 bed (Madeley)	9	0	9
4 bed (Oatvale)	16	0	16
4 bed (Pebworth)	5	0	5
5 bed (Solville)	4	0	4
5 bed (Tilhurst)	2	0	2
SUM	112	75	187

### 6.37 Infrastructure requirements

#### On-site infrastructure to be secured under a legal agreement

6.38 In accordance with the council's S106 Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document, the following additional financial contributions would also be required towards on-site infrastructure:

- Affordable housing
- Street naming and numbering
- Provision of recycle bins
- Management of public open space
- Monitoring fee

6.39 As advised by the County highways officer, the following site specific highways contributions would also need to be secured under a S106:

- Public transport contribution – the enhancement of local public transport infrastructure, £187,000 (index-linked RPIX December 2016)
- Travel plan monitoring fees of £1,240
- £25,000 (index-linked Baxters December 2016) for infrastructure improvements at the northbound Benson Marina bus stop.

6.40 I consider that these contributions / obligations would accord with policy CS11 of the SOCS, which requires new development to be supported by appropriate on and off-site infrastructure and services. They would also accord with the relevant tests in the NPPF as they are necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms, are directly related to the development and are fair and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development. In the absence of a completed S106 legal agreement, an additional reason for refusal would need to be attached to be added to the decision notice as the necessary contributions / obligations have not been secured.

**6.41 Off-site contributions pooled under the Community Infrastructure Levy**

The council adopted a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) on 1 April 2016. With the exception of the affordable housing, any additional floor space is usually CIL liable at a rate of £156 per sq.m. The money collected can be pooled with contributions from other development sites to fund a wide range of off-site infrastructure to support growth, including schools, transport, community, leisure and health facilities.

6.42 Under the CIL regulations, the Parish Council would receive a proportion of CIL money. This could be spent on infrastructure projects that are priorities for the community. If the Neighbourhood Plan is made prior to the commencement of development, it would receive 25 percent of the CIL money collected from the development (as opposed to 15 percent without a Neighbourhood Plan) to spend it on local projects or contribute towards strategic infrastructure.

**7.0 CONCLUSION**

7.1 Your officers recommend that planning permission is granted because the proposal needs to be assessed against the presumption in favour of sustainable development at paragraph 14 of the NPPF. This is because the Core Strategy Policy CSR1 has been found to be silent on housing in larger villages by the High Court and the district also does not currently have a five year housing land supply. The report describes the proposals in full and assesses the proposal against the relevant material planning considerations. The three strands of sustainable development are set out at paragraph 7 of the NPPF as economic, social and environmental. All these have been considered and the conclusions against each of the strands is summarised below.

*Economic role*

The Government has made clear its view that house building plays an important role in promoting economic growth. In economic terms, the scheme would provide construction jobs and some local investment during its build out, as well as longer term expenditure in the local economy supporting the ongoing vibrancy of the village. I consider that moderate weight should be afforded to this benefit.

*Social role*

The proposal helps to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing a net gain of 28 dwellings (over the existing extant permission) towards those required to meet the needs of present and future generations. It also does this by creating an acceptable built environment, in a sustainable location with accessible local services close by for new residents to use. I consider moderate weight should be given to these social benefits.

*Environmental role*

In environmental terms, there are no landscape objections to the scheme. In addition, given the very substantial area of the district that is covered by protected landscapes or Green Belt, the opportunity to provide new dwellings on a suitable site that is not within these designations weighs significantly in favour of the proposal.

Although some local residents have identified concerns in terms of highway safety and capacity of facilities there is no evidence of harm that cannot be mitigated. There are no objections from Oxfordshire County Council subject to the delivery of the mitigation measures for highways and CIL contributions for education and no other infrastructure providers have raised objections. There is no demonstrable evidence that there is a cumulative impact of allowing the additional 28 homes in addition to the extant planning permission on the site. The Local Plan and the NDP plan are at an early stage of preparation and can be given limited weight in accordance with paragraph 216 of the NPPF.

Taking into account the benefits of the development and weighing these against the limited harm, I consider that the proposal represents a sustainable development consistent with Para.14 of the NPPF and Policy CS1 of the South Oxfordshire Core Strategy and the emerging BNP. The proposal would contribute towards the objective to boost the supply of housing, consistent with Para.47 of the NPPF. Therefore, placing all of the relevant material considerations in the balance I conclude that the limited adverse impacts would not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposal and recommend the application for approval, subject to the prior completion or variation of the relevant S106 Planning Obligation.

8.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

8.1 **To authorise the Head of Planning to grant planning permission subject to the prior variation/completion of the Section 106 agreement and the following conditions:**

1. **Commencement three years - full planning permission.**
2. **Approved plans.**
3. **Materials as on plan.**
4. **Noise.**
5. **Surface water drainage works (details required).**
6. **Foul drainage works (details required).**
7. **Archaeology.**
8. **New vehicular access.**
9. **Vision splay details.**
10. **New estate roads.**
11. **Estate accesses driveways and turning areas.**
12. **Parking and manoeuvring areas with plan of car parking provision.**
13. **Construction traffic management plan.**
14. **Travel plan and residential travel pack: The submitted travel plan will be revised in light of comments received and resubmitted for approval by the Local Planning Authority before first occupation of the site.**
15. **Travel information pack.**
16. **Safe routes to school study.**
17. **Landscaping.**

**Any other conditions deemed necessary after negotiation on S106**

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