

APPLICATION NO.	P16/S3707/O
APPLICATION TYPE	OUTLINE
REGISTERED	8.11.2016
PARISH	SONNING COMMON
WARD MEMBERS	Will Hall Paul Harrison
APPLICANT	T A Fisher and Sons Ltd
SITE	44 Kennylands Road, Sonning Common
PROPOSAL	Outline application for residential development of 30 dwellings with matters of access and layout for consideration and scale, appearance and landscaping reserved (alterations to position of dwellings and parking spaces, housing mix changed, vehicle tracking and arboricultural impact assessment updated, biodiversity calculator, daylight and sunlight study and indicative landscaping provided as shown on amended plans and supporting documents received 8th May 2017 and width of footway and parking spaces to Plots 7, 10 & 11 enlarged as shown on amended plan received 21st June 2017 and reference to floor areas removed as shown on amended plan received 6th July 2017 and additional footway and updated refuse vehicle tracking as shown on amended plan received 17th July 2017).
OFFICER	Paul Lucas

1.0 **INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Officers recommend that planning permission is granted. This report explains how officers have reached this conclusion. This application is referred to the Planning Committee as officers' recommendation conflicts with the views of Sonning Common Parish Council.
- 1.2 The application site **attached** at Appendix A is located on the southwestern edge of Sonning Common. The majority of the site sits behind the frontage dwellings No's 34-52 Kennylands Road, with access gained from a narrow strip of land between No's 42 and 44. This gives the site an approximate "T" shape and it measures 1.52 hectares in total.
- 1.3 On the whole, the boundaries of the site are defined by trees and mature hedgerows of various species and ages. The majority of the site is used as a paddock, with one existing stable building on the site, otherwise it is an open undeveloped area. A small portion of the site is the rearmost part of the garden of No.44. There is a noticeable slope from east to west and other uneven hollows, the largest of which is located in the northern corner of the site. An electricity line runs across the site, with a substantial pylon located in the north-eastern "leg" of the site close to Kennylands Road and another in the adjacent field close to the south-western boundary of the site. A group of protected trees sit along the south-eastern site boundary with land at the rear of No.54 Kennylands Road (Alpen Rose).
- 1.4 To the north of the site lies Kidby's Yard, a small scale commercial site. The land to

the west lies within the Chilterns AONB. The western boundary of the site marks the boundary of the Chilterns AONB. The land to the west is largely agricultural and although initially at a lower level than the application site, it then slopes up towards Kidmore End. Kidmore End Public Footpath 10 (PROW 350/12) runs across this field, and then passes to the northwest of Kidby's Yard. Kennylands Road enjoys a wide variety of housing. However, this particular part of the road is characterised by detached dwellings in spacious plots. The road has a verdant character.

- 1.5 The entirety of the site has been allocated as site SON5 in the made Sonning Common Neighbourhood Development Plan (SCNDP). Policy HS3 allocates the site for 22 dwellings.

2.0 PROPOSAL

- 2.1 The application seeks outline planning permission for the erection of 30 dwellings. The application seeks full approval of the access and layout of the scheme. Appearance, scale and landscaping are matters reserved for future determination.

- 2.2 In response to the initial consultation response from the Council's Housing Development Team, the applicant has adjusted the mix of dwellings as follows:

- 6 x 2 bedroom market units
- 8 x 3 bedroom market units
- 4 x 4 bedroom market units
- 9 x 2 bedroom affordable units
- 3 x 3 bedroom affordable units

- 2.3 Vehicular access would be taken from Kennylands Road. As the means of access is to be determined as part of this application, the application is accompanied by relevant plans and a Transport Assessment. From the main access drive in the narrow part of the site, the site opens up with the main area of public open space to the north of the access drive, some of which sits in an existing depression within the site. The highest density part of the site is the central area, where the majority of the affordable units are located. The majority of the larger residential plots are located closest to the boundary with the Chilterns AONB. The proposed layout includes a five metre planted buffer zone between the western site boundary and the edge of the access drive. 30 units on the total site represents a gross density of 19.7 dwellings per hectare. 30 units on the developable site area of 1.2 hectares gives rise to a net density of 25 dwellings per hectare. The electricity line would be buried underground across the site, coming back above ground at the existing pylon in the north-eastern end of the site, which would be retained.

- 2.4 Although landscaping is a reserved matter, an indicative planting schedule has been provided to demonstrate the retention of existing hedgerows and supplementary new planting designed to help assimilate the new dwellings into their surroundings. Some of the plans submitted with the application show roof heights for the proposed dwellings, however, these are only illustrative as scale is not a fixed matter under this application.

- 2.5 During the course of the application process, amended plans were received to:
- alter the position and size of some of the dwellings and their associated parking spaces;
 - make changes to the housing mix;
 - adjust waste vehicle tracking details and the extent and width of public footways;
 - provide an updated arboricultural impact assessment, indicative landscaping scheme for boundaries and areas within the site and biodiversity calculator;
 - submit additional daylight and sunlight study; and
 - remove references to dwelling heights and specific floor areas from the site plan.

- 2.6 Copies of the plans to be approved at this stage and additional illustrative plans are **attached** at Appendix B whilst other documentation associated with the application can be viewed on the Council's website:
<http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/ccm/support/Main.jsp?MODULE=ApplicationDetails&REF=P16/S3707/O>

3.0 **SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS**

- 3.1 **Sonning Common Parish Council** – Comment on original and amended plans – The application should be refused on the following grounds:
- contrary to the SCNDP in terms of the excessive housing numbers proposed 30 instead of 22 (over a 36% increase), which would not address the site specific sensitivities and complexities
 - the SCNDP Examiner's comments should be qualified as he had no requirement to examine the planning history of the site
 - net developable area is less than one hectare
 - site coverage and gross internal area of development should be restricted at this stage
 - unacceptable design and layout on the site
 - would cause permanent and serious harm to the landscape setting of village as seen from the public footpath by locating large two storey houses next to the Chilterns AONB and through lack of a sufficient landscaped planting and root zone buffer along the western boundary as previously requested by a landscape consultant
 - more of the proposed housing should be located within the southern corner of the site instead of the turning head, which could facilitate access to the adjoining land in the future
 - similar sized housing should be placed closest to the existing low density housing instead of the high density buildings
 - ridge heights should be limited to 7 metres at the eastern end of the site
 - adverse impact on the privacy and amenity values of existing residents
 - refrain from building two storey dwellings close to existing residential occupiers
 - insufficient pepper-potting of affordable housing throughout the site
 - inadequate size of affordable housing
 - objection to indicative dwelling sizes
 - land previously mined with sinkholes and solution pipes presenting subsidence risks
 - developer has gone back on agreements made when discussions took place on including site within SCNDP

Kidmore End Parish Council – Comment on original and amended plans: The application should be refused, because it does not accord with adopted Sonning Common Neighbourhood Development Plan – too many dwellings.

Chilterns Conservation Board – Comment on original plans: The AONB setting is highly material and the current scheme will need to take this into account. The layout plan tends to avoid any great depth to the western boundary planted buffer. A lesser number of dwellings would logically permit greater flexibility in the design of this buffer.

- Comment on amended plans:

Following on from our earlier comments CCB recommended the submission of a more detailed landscape mitigation plan. The indicative landscape plans KR003A and landscape strategy notes 206-7, dated April 2017 indicate the levels involved and the planting of 50 native trees and their under planting by native scrub planting. These

additional details and the associated dialogue to improve this relationship and to provide for a longer term management strategy do set out to strengthen the boundary treatment. CCB welcome this and associated further discussions surrounding the management of this landscaping.

Oxfordshire County Council Transport – Deficiencies in the original layout addressed by amended plans – No objection subject to the imposition of several highways related planning conditions.

Oxfordshire County Council Archaeology – No objection subject to conditions.

Oxfordshire County Council Education – Funds are required from the CIL charging authority to mitigate the impact of the development.

Oxfordshire County Council Property – Funds are required from the CIL charging authority to mitigate the impact of the development and fire hydrant condition and sprinkler informative recommended.

Landscape Consultant – Comments on original plans: In principle this site could accept 30 dwellings without unacceptable harm to views but detailed design of the buildings and landscape will be critical to ensure that an overall enhancement of the settlement edge is created and that the effect on views from the AONB is acceptable. I have recommended an increase in tree planting and the inclusion of large species and this may result in a reduced number of dwellings.

-Comments on amended plans: I welcome the indication of internal trees such Prunus padus, Acer campestre and Sorbus aucuparia subject to favourable planting conditions being secured in the detailed design. The proposed planting to the south-western boundary is slightly unclear as the outline of existing hedge and proposed planting overlap to a large degree. However, assuming there is sufficient space to allow the full area of new planting, the proposed planting would create a strong and long-lasting edge with a good mix of species – albeit requiring management and thinning in the medium-long term.

Forestry Officer (South Oxfordshire District Council) – Objection to original layout overcome by amended plans and indicative landscaping scheme. Site inspection revealed that there would be sufficient space to achieve the proposed planting.

Countryside Officer (South Oxfordshire & Vale of White Horse) - No objection subject to conditions.

Urban Design Officer (South Oxon & Vale of White Horse DC) – Concerns with original layout have been addressed, no objection subject to further consideration of details related to scale, appearance and landscaping at the reserved matters stage.

Housing Development – Support increase in the number of 2-bedroom affordable dwellings and confirmation that minimum internal space standards would be met. Although integration of affordable housing could be improved, the linked location of the affordable dwellings would make it easier for Registered Providers to manage them.

Waste Management Officer (District Council) - No objection to revised waste vehicle tracking and subject to bin collection points being identified for each dwelling.

Drainage Engineer (South Oxfordshire - MONSON) - No objection subject to surface water drainage and foul drainage conditions.

Health & Housing - Contaminated Land - No objection.

Health & Housing – Environmental Protection Team - No objection subject to conditions to control hours of construction and dust.

Health & Housing - Air Quality - No objection subject to a condition to secure air quality mitigation.

Thames Water Development Control - No objection subject to informatives.

Neighbours – 64 representations of objection and concern, reiterating points made by Sonning Common Parish Council and also the following:

- Makes a mockery of the effort put into the SCNDP by the local community where 94% of 48% of the electorate voted in favour of the plan
- SCNDP has made provision for 195 dwellings rather than the 138 required
- Developable site area is disputed 0.976 hectares rather than 1.2 hectares
- Lack of detail with an outline application, rather than a full application
- Back gardens to No's 46-52 are not well screened, leading to overlooking from Plots 17 & 18 & 26-29
- Overlooking from Plots 5 & 6
- Loss of light and view to existing dwellings as a result of 3 metre deep planting buffer along eastern boundary
- Light spillage from street lighting and vehicles
- Plots 18-22 & 26-29 should be moved to south-eastern and north-western ends of the site and turning head to the eastern boundary
- Affordable homes too dense and conflict with No's 46A – 50
- Minimal visitor parking resulting in on-street parking on Kennylands Road near entrance
- Increase in traffic and congestion in the village
- Proximity of access to bus stop
- Lack of footpaths along Kennylands Road
- Additional eight dwellings would put strain on village infrastructure and facilities
- Proposed planting does not extend to north-western corner of the site
- South-eastern boundary hedge threatened by turning head
- Landscape maintenance questioned
- Loss of wildlife habitat
- Reduces the gap between Sonning Common and Kidmore End
- Increased run off of rainwater onto road
- Kennylands Road sewer system cannot cope
- If outline planning permission is granted, reserved matters would be agreed behind closed doors
- Precedent for increasing numbers of dwellings on other allocated sites
- Cumulative impact on traffic congestion, pollution and quality of life in Caversham and Reading

All consultation responses can be read in full on the Council's website.

4.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

4.1 [P14/S3230/O](#) - Refused (14/05/2015)

Outline Planning Application for erection of 33 dwellings including means of access and layout.

Reasons:

1. The application site lies beyond the edge of the settlement of Sonning

Common, it is not a site allocated for development in a Development Plan, including any Neighbourhood Plan and is not considered an infill site within the built up limits of the settlement. Furthermore, the application does not accord with the district's strategy for growth and necessary infrastructure. The proposed development is therefore contrary to policies CSS1, CSR1, CSH1 and CSI1 of the adopted Core Strategy. The development would extend into and encroach upon the adjacent countryside contrary to policies G2, G4 and C4 of the adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011.

2. That the proposal fails to secure affordable housing to meet the needs of the District contrary to policies CSH3 of the adopted Core Strategy and wider guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework. It is acknowledged this reason for refusal could be overcome through the provision of a suitable Section 106 legal agreement.
3. The proposal fails to provide adequate services and facilities to meet the needs of the development contrary to policies C6, R2, R3, R6 and D12 of the saved policies of the adopted South Oxfordshire Plan 2011 and policies CSG1 and CSI1 of the adopted Core Strategy. It is acknowledged this reason for refusal could be overcome through the provision of a suitable Section 106 legal agreement.

The layout plan for this application is **attached** at Appendix C.

4.2 [P11/E0667/O](#) - Refused (23/08/2011) - Appeal dismissed (20/03/2012)

Application for outline planning permission (access for determination) for the erection of up to 50 dwellings, associated landscaping, parking and open space, together with a new access from Kennylands Road. Demolition of existing building and removal of trees, where necessary.

This application was refused for a number of reasons, particularly the principle of residential development on the land, the impact on the landscape and AONB, the poor quality of the development and the amenity of neighbours and future occupiers. At appeal, the Inspector dismissed the appeal, agreeing with the council on the impact on the landscape and the quality of the development.

The illustrative layout plan for this application is **attached** at Appendix D.

5.0 **POLICY & GUIDANCE**

5.1 South Oxfordshire Core Strategy (SOCS) Policies;

- CS1 - Presumption in favour of sustainable development
- CSS1 - The Overall Strategy
- CSB1 - Conservation and improvement of biodiversity
- CSEN1 - Landscape protection
- CSG1 - Green infrastructure
- CSH1 - Amount and distribution of housing
- CSH2 - Housing density
- CSH3 - Affordable housing
- CSH4 - Meeting housing needs
- CSI1 - Infrastructure provision
- CSM1 - Transport
- CSM2 - Transport Assessments and Travel Plans
- CSQ2 - Sustainable design and construction
- CSQ3 - Design
- CSQ4 - Design briefs for greenfield neighbourhoods and major development sites

5.2 South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 (SOLP 2011) policies;

- G2 - Protect district from adverse development
- G4 - Protection of Countryside
- C4 - Landscape setting of settlements
- C6 - Maintain & enhance biodiversity
- C8 - Adverse affect on protected species
- C9 - Loss of landscape features
- D1 - Principles of good design
- D2 - Safe and secure parking for vehicles and cycles
- D3 - Outdoor amenity area
- D4 - Reasonable level of privacy for occupiers
- D6 - Community safety
- D10 - Waste Management
- D12 - Public art
- EP1 - Adverse affect on people and environment
- EP2 - Adverse affect by noise or vibration
- EP3 - Adverse affect by external lighting
- EP4 - Impact on water resources
- EP6 - Sustainable drainage
- EP7 - Impact on ground water resources
- EP8 - Contaminated land
- H4 - Housing sites in towns and larger villages outside Green Belt
- R2 - Provision of play areas on new housing development
- R6 - Public open space in new residential development
- T1 - Safe, convenient and adequate highway network for all users
- T2 - Unloading, turning and parking for all highway users

5.3 Sonning Common Neighbourhood Development Plan October 2016

- HS3 - SON5 Allocation – Kennylands Paddock
- H1 – Housing Distribution
- H2 – Housing Mix
- D1 – Design
- D1a – Design - Storeys
- D1b – Design on Infill and Allocated sites
- ENV1 – Protecting the AONB
- ENV2 – Environment – Landscape Setting
- ENV2a – Green Environment – Pre-existing trees
- ENV2b – Green Environment – New planting
- ENV2c – Green Environment - Maintenance of common areas including buffers and planting
- ENV3 – Green and Wildlife Movement Corridors

5.4 Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents

- South Oxfordshire Design Guide 2016 (SODG 2016)
- South Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment – Character Area 10
- Chilterns Buildings Design Guide – Chapter 3

5.5 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- National Planning Policy Framework Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)
- The policies within the SOCS, the SOLP 2011 and the SCNDP of relevance to this application are considered to be in general conformity with the provisions of the NPPF and NPPG and therefore this application can be determined against the relevant policies above.

6.0 **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

6.1 The planning issues that are relevant to this application are whether the development would:

- be in accordance with the Council's strategy for housing development in rural areas;
- result in the loss of an open space or view of public, environmental or ecological value;
- conserve the landscape setting of this part of the village, bearing in mind the site's location adjacent to the Chilterns AONB and the existence of important trees around the site boundaries;
- safeguard the living conditions of neighbouring residential occupiers and would provide adequate living conditions for future occupiers of the development;
- demonstrate safe and convenient access and adequate off-street parking provision for the development;
- secure affordable housing of an appropriate mix and tenure;
- provide an appropriate mix of market housing; and
- give rise to any other material planning considerations

6.2 Principle of Development

Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires applications for planning permission to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The development plan currently comprises the South Oxfordshire Core Strategy (SOCS), the saved policies of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 (SOLP 2011) and the made Sonning Common Neighbourhood Development Plan (SCNDP).

6.3 The determination of this application is to be based on its accordance with the development plan. Paragraph 185 of the NPPF states that neighbourhood plans will be able to shape and deliver sustainable development in their area. The Sonning Common Neighbourhood Plan was made on 13 October 2016 and forms part of the development plan. Paragraph 198 of the NPPF states that where a planning application conflicts with a neighbourhood plan that has been brought into force, planning permission should not normally be granted.

6.4 The ministerial statement on Neighbourhood Planning states that relevant policies for the supply of housing in neighbourhood plans should not be deemed out of date (under Paragraph 49 of the NPPF) where (i) the ministerial statement is less than two years old, (ii) the neighbourhood plan allocates sites for housing, and (iii) the local authority can demonstrate a three year supply of deliverable housing sites. These circumstances exist (the Council can demonstrate 4.1 years of deliverable housing land supply). As such, full weight is to be applied to the neighbourhood plan policies that relate to housing supply.

6.5 The SCNDP allocates sites to provide for 195 dwellings, with reserve sites to provide an additional 44 dwellings. This was the subject of robust public consultation. The SOCS does not allocate a target number of homes to Sonning Common, but in setting out the spatial vision for the district it requires the 'Larger Villages' (within which Sonning Common is classified) to provide for 1,154 dwellings. In September 2013, the Council's Cabinet Committee approved a draft housing distribution for the Larger Villages, which included 138 homes to be allocated to Sonning Common.

6.6 This figure is based on the SOCS housing requirement for 11,487 homes in the District to 2027. The Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2014 (SHMA) and Oxford City's unmet housing need could lead to a requirement for more housing in the

neighbourhood area, although this has yet to be adopted in policy requirements as part of the emerging South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2033. This is recognised in the neighbourhood plan, which allocates sites to accommodate more than 138 dwellings.

- 6.7 Policy HS3 of the neighbourhood plan allocates SON5 for 22 dwellings. As the proposal is for 30 dwellings, officers must consider whether the 8 additional dwellings represents a material conflict with Policy HS3 and the overall spatial strategy of the neighbourhood plan. The key principle for the spatial strategy of the neighbourhood plan is to maintain the separate village of Sonning Common within the AONB landscape. To take account of development opportunities within the neighbourhood plan boundary, development sites are focused on land towards the southern and north western parts of the village. This enables a spread across several smaller sites as opposed to being concentrated on larger sites.
- 6.8 The application site exactly follows the boundaries of the allocated site SON5 within this spatial strategy. In the submission version of the SCNDP, Policy H1 introduced the phrase “up to” for some of the allocations, including SON5, so Policy HS3 stated “up to 22 homes”. However, in the SCNDP Examination Report the Independent Examiner commented that “...no detailed justification for this approach is provided. The precise number of homes on each allocation will only emerge at the detailed planning stage. It is premature and potentially, unduly restrictive to limit housing numbers prior to detailed master-planning. I find that such an approach could prevent the achievement of sustainable development and there is no substantive evidence to the contrary.” As a result, the Examiner recommended that the phrase “up to” was deleted from Policies H1 and HS3. He also recommended that Table 2.2, which contained references to housing densities on the allocated sites, should be deleted, commenting that “the actual densities on the allocated sites will be determined at the planning application stage.”
- 6.9 Some of the third party objectors disagree with the applicant as to what is the developable site area, from which the site’s net density is calculated. The applicant says this is 1.2 hectares, but the objectors maintain that it should be 0.976 hectares, which is referred to in Policy HS3. The 0.976 hectares figure is derived from Map 4.7 on the submission version of the SCNDP. This map identified a developable area shaded blue within SON5. However, the Examiner stated in his report that “Map 4.7, which is referred to in Policy HS3, is illegible and is therefore inappropriate for inclusion as the main reference plan for site SON5.” He recommended that this was replaced with a clear red line plan. The made version of Policy HS3 still refers to an area shaded blue on Map 4.8, but on that map the blue shading covers the entire site and is therefore 1.52 hectares and does not accurately reflect the developable site area.
- 6.10 Sonning Common Parish Council consider that the Examiner may not have been aware of the SCNDP’s evidence base therefore his comments in relation to SON 5 should be qualified accordingly. However, there was an opportunity through Regulations 12 and 13 to not accept the modifications. However, in accordance with Regulation 12, SODC considered the Examiner’s modifications and accepted the recommendation to remove the reference to “up to” 22 dwellings from Policy H1 and HS3 in the Neighbourhood Plan. The other modifications in respect of the landscape buffer were also made. Therefore, despite provisions within legislation to not accept modifications recommended by an Examiner in respect of a Neighbourhood Plan, the recommendations of the Examiner were accepted, changes were made, and the plan proceeded to referendum on that basis.
- 6.11 Although the allocation of the site for development indicates that this is a sustainable location, officers have considered whether the number of dwellings proposed would represent sustainable development in line with local and national definitions. As a larger

village, the Core Strategy is clear that Sonning Common is a local service centre where new housing can be accommodated through a plan-led process. The Core Strategy is clear the village has the facilities to support an expansion of the population in a sustainable manner.

- 6.12 Relative to the village, this site is in a sustainable location for new housing. There are good existing pedestrian footways linking the site to the remainder of the village, with shops and the local school in reasonable walking or cycling distance along a relatively flat topography through existing residential areas. Kennylands Road is served by a number of local bus services, which link the village particularly with Reading. Sonning Common Parish Council had accepted that the development of the site with 22 dwellings would be a sustainable form of development. Many third party objectors have raised the issue that the additional eight dwellings would result in an unacceptable strain on infrastructure and facilities in the village.
- 6.13 In relation to education, Oxfordshire County Council have commented that the proposed development will increase the demands placed on local infrastructure and services. There is sufficient capacity at primary, secondary and special schools in the area at this time to meet the demands arising from the development, but insufficient capacity for early year's provision. To mitigate the impact of these demands, funds will be required from the CIL charging authority. In terms of youth support and adult learning, libraries and museums, fire and rescue service infrastructure, household waste recycling centres and health and well-being (adult day care) facilities, these are also listed among the infrastructure types or projects that are to be funded from CIL. Oxfordshire County Council has not identified that any of these would not be adequately supported through the CIL funding. On this basis, there is no evidence that the additional eight dwellings would place an unacceptable strain on local infrastructure and facilities, leading officers to the conclusion that the proposal would represent a sustainable form of development.
- 6.14 In the light of the above analysis, officers consider that Policy HS3 does not restrict the number of dwellings allocated to 22 and the current application would not depart from the overall spatial strategy of the SCNDP. The application density is therefore found to be acceptable in principle. Whether the development of SON 5 with 30 dwellings is appropriate is therefore to be determined through an assessment of the site specific impact of development.
- 6.15 Loss of Open Space
Criterion (i) of Policy H4 of the SOLP 2011 requires that an important open space of public, environmental or ecological value is not lost, nor an important public view spoilt. Policy ENV3 of the SCNDP explains that the conservation and enhancement of ecological networks will be supported. Where appropriate, development proposals should seek to connect existing wildlife corridors and provide new ones to enhance biodiversity and provide for freedom of movement for species through the site.
- 6.16 The allocation of the site for housing means that the principle of the loss of this open space is accepted. The site is presently undeveloped, apart from a stable building, but there is no public access to it. Public viewpoints from Kennylands Road would be restricted to the entrance point and through gaps between frontage dwellings. Views towards the countryside from the road are therefore limited. The key public viewpoints are from along the public footpath to the west of the site where the site is seen in the context of existing residential plots fronting onto Kennylands Road. Officers are satisfied that the proposed layout would allow for dwellings of an appropriate scale and appearance with suitable landscaping to be secured at the detailed design stage to prevent these public views from being spoilt.

- 6.17 The Council's Countryside Officer has commented that the revised impact calculator shows that the proposals would lead to a net loss of 2.24 biodiversity units when compared to the current value of the site. However, there are certain enhancements which cannot be factored into the impact calculator which are described in the addendum including the provision of six bird boxes within retained trees on the site and the provision of six bat roosting sites on the new houses. In addition, since the calculations were done there have been some amendments to the illustrative tree planting scheme which has resulted in some additional tree planting within the site and in particular adjacent to the south-western site boundary. Taking account of the proposed enhancements which have not been factored into the impact calculator a small net loss is still likely. Policy CSB1 of the Core Strategy requires development proposals to avoid a net loss of biodiversity and only requires a net gain where certain protected or priority habitats are impacted. The proposals on this site although resulting in a small net loss do not impact any important habitats or species and it is possible that further ecological enhancements can be incorporated into the scheme at the detailed design stage to reduce that loss yet further. On balance, therefore due to the very small level of loss and potential for further enhancements the Countryside Officer has raised no objections to the proposals subject to the imposition of two ecological-related planning conditions. On the basis of the above assessment, the above policies would be satisfied.
- 6.18 Landscape Impact
Policy CSEN1 of the SOCS is clear that the district's distinct landscape character and key features will be protected against inappropriate development. It goes on to confirm that high priority will be given to conservation and enhancement of the districts AONBs. This is echoed by Policy ENV1 of the SCNDP consistent with the NPPF, where Para 115 confirms AONBs have the highest status of protection. Whilst this site does not fall within the Chilterns AONB, it is immediately adjacent and the impact of this proposal on the enjoyment of this protected landscape is a crucial aspect of officers' assessment. This is particularly the case given the previous appeal on this site, where a scheme of 50 units was dismissed in part due to the harm to the AONB landscape. Policy C4 of the SOLP 2011 aims to safeguard the landscape setting of the District's settlements.
- 6.19 Policy ENV2 of the SCNDP states that Development proposals should take account of the locally valued landscape setting of the village and include landscape buffers where this would enhance the setting and help integrate the development into its surroundings. Policy C9 of the SOLP 2011 seeks to ensure that important landscape features are protected. Policy ENV2a of the SCNDP reflects this in relation to existing trees and Policies ENV2b and ENV2c reflect this in relation to new planting and its ongoing maintenance. Policy HS3 includes the following criteria:
- A Landscape Visual Impact Assessment should be prepared and submitted with the planning application;
 - A significant and structured landscape boundary, to supplement the existing hedgerow and outside of the gardens of the new homes, which will screen the AONB to the west alongside SON 4, with particular consideration for wildlife corridors;
 - A root protection zone and understorey planting to complete the screen and protect the visual context of the Chilterns AONB
- Criterion (ii) of Policy H4 of the SOLP 2011 requires that the design, height, scale and materials of the proposed development are in keeping with its surroundings and criterion (iii) requires that the character of the area is not affected.
- 6.20 Full consent for the proposed layout is sought as part of this outline application, although landscaping is reserved. Thus, the landscaping shown on the submitted information can only be considered indicative. Nonetheless, the layout of the 30 units is

fixed and so a full assessment of the likely impact of the layout on the AONB can be undertaken. The key viewpoint of the site is from a public footpath linking Sonning Common to Kidmore End, which passes to the north and west of the site.

- 6.21 The key area of the layout in landscape terms is the western boundary, which marks the edge of the AONB. The Design and Access Statement and Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal accompanying the application both identify this boundary as a key constraint. Consequently, the layout proposed attempts to limit the amount of development close to the western boundary. This has been achieved in part by concentrating the most densely arranged semi-detached and terraced housing in the centre of the site and positioning larger detached plots closest to the western boundary. Whilst third party objectors consider that the large two storey houses that would be located around the western edge of the site would be harmful to the Chilterns AONB, officers are of the opinion that these detached units would serve to soften the transition between the development and the countryside beyond. The scale and appearance of the dwellings are reserved matters and officers are satisfied that at the detailed design stage the visual impact of the dwellings on the landscape setting of the village could be minimised through securing appropriate massing and high quality materials to reflect the sensitive location and comply Policy CSQ3 of the SOCS, Policy D1 of the SOLP 2011 and Policies D1, D1a and D1b of the SCNDP and advice contained within the SODG 2016.
- 6.22 Sonning Common Parish Council and some other third party objectors consider that the density and layout of the proposed dwellings precludes the provision of a 15 metre landscaped buffer and as a consequence this would fail to conserve and enhance the village setting next to the Chilterns AONB. However, the reference to a depth of 15 metres is taken from the submission version of the SCNDP. The Examiner commented that “No detailed evidence is provided in respect of why the landscape boundary needs to be precisely 15 metres in depth or why root protection zones need to be *“of some 5 metres.”* These are matters to be determined at the detailed application stage and their inclusion in Policy HS3 appears overly prescriptive without justification.” He therefore recommended that both references to 15 metres and 5 metres were deleted and these changes were carried forward into the made version of the SCNDP.
- 6.23 The proposed site plan identifies a five metre wide landscape buffer along this edge of the site. It should be noted that the distance from the western site boundary to the verge of the proposed access drive would be greater than 5 metres along about 60% of the western boundary, up to around 9 metres. This means that the scope for a variety of large long-lived species and smaller understorey planting would in reality extend beyond the 5 metre buffer along much of the boundary, as indicated on the illustrative landscape strategy notes plan. The landscape strategy also identifies two other key areas for landscaping, namely, the boundary with No’s 46A – 52 and the frontages of Plots 18 – 22, although at the detailed design stage, new planting would not only be restricted to these areas. The units within the western part of the site have been aligned so no part of the landscape buffer falls within their curtilage.
- 6.24 A clearly defined boundary for each unit is proposed. This would allow the buffer to establish and thereafter be maintained properly, so that it provides the screening necessary to assimilate this development into its surroundings. The Council’s Landscape Consultant and the Chilterns Conservation Board have both raised no objections to the amended layout on the basis of the illustrative landscaping information. The Council’s Forestry Officer has confirmed with an on-site inspection that the illustrative landscaping would be achievable at the detailed design stage. As landscaping is a reserved matter, this is sufficient to satisfy officers that an appropriate landscape buffer can be accommodated within the site, and the precise make up of this

buffer would be for a later application.

- 6.25 A number of objectors have highlighted that the density of the site is at odds with the surroundings. It is true that the density of this development is higher than the very low densities that characterise this part of Kennylands Road. However, current planning guidance requires new development to make an efficient use of land and this is reflected in Core Strategy policy CSH2 which requires new developments to achieve 25 dwellings to the hectare unless character considerations suggest otherwise. Policy HS3 reflects the spatial strategy of the SCNDP to preserve the relationship between Sonning Common and the Chilterns AONB by requiring development of SON5 to respond to the site specific constraints. As confirmed by the Examiner, Policy HS3 does not set a specific maximum density. Officers consider that in the light of the lack of objections from landscape specialists, the proposed gross density of 19.7 dwellings per hectare and a net density of 25 dwellings per hectare would achieve an acceptable balance between efficient use of land and respecting the character of the area.
- 6.26 A criterion of Policy HS3 states that particular consideration should be given to the ridge heights of the proposed dwellings at the highest part of the site. The adjoining residents are particularly concerned that the higher density units of the proposal would be located close to their boundaries. However, through this approach the proposed layout would enable a significant portion of the development to be surrounded by other residential plots, rather than backing onto open countryside. This helps to limit the impact of the higher density elements on important public views. The Council's Urban Design Officer is satisfied that remaining areas of concern relating to design, boundary materials, overlooking and planting could be dealt with successfully at the reserved matters stage. It would also be possible to use differing materials such as block paving to break up the larger areas of hardstanding as part of a future hard landscaping submission at the detailed design stage. The eastern end of the site is at the highest level and concerns about the proposed dwellings in this location being excessively high and therefore visible over the top of existing boundary foliage and proposed planting are understood. However, this is again a matter that could be addressed through scale and appearance at the detailed design stage and through the imposition of a planning condition requiring details of floor and ridge levels to be agreed.
- 6.27 In relation to tree protection, the Council's Forestry Officer is satisfied that the revised layout would lead to an acceptable relationship between Plot 29 and the off-site Pine tree T39, which is subject to a Tree Preservation Order. Pressure to prune or fell the tree would be avoided as a result of preventing nuisance from shading and needle litter and anxiety from branches swaying in inclement weather. He is also content that the proposed layout would enable the tree protection measures shown on the tree protection plan submitted with the applicant's revised Arboricultural Impact Assessment to be secured through an implementation planning condition to safeguard other trees that are worthy of retention. A lighting condition is also recommended to ensure that there would be no excessive light spillage into the Chilterns AONB.
- 6.28 In the light of the above assessment, officers consider that the proposed layout would have an appropriate density to allow for retention of existing important landscape features and appropriate scale and appearance of the proposed dwellings and landscaping to be accommodated at the detailed design stage to conserve the landscape setting of the village adjacent to the Chilterns AONB.
- 6.29 Residential Amenity Impact
Criterion (iv) of Policy H4 of the SOLP 2011 requires that there are no overriding amenity objections. Policy D4 of the SOLP 2011 requires that all new dwellings should be designed and laid out so as to secure a reasonable degree of privacy for the

occupiers. Adjoining residents are concerned about the relationship between their rear aspect and the location of Plots 17 & 18 and 26 – 29. Whilst officers appreciate that the outlook from the existing residential properties along Kennylands Road will change, in allocating the site there has already been an acceptance that the site is suitable for residential development in principle and that there will be houses visible from the rear gardens of those existing properties. The scale and appearance of these Plots is not for consideration under this application. However, what is clear at this stage is that the back to back distances between Plots 26 – 29 and No's 48 to 52 would range from 44 to 53 metres, comfortably in excess of the minimum recommended standard of 25 metres set out in Section 7 of the SODG 2016. The distance to the shared boundary would be in the region of 15 to 17 metres, which would also exceed the relevant garden depth standard of 10 metres as set out in Section 7 of the SODG. These distances would be sufficient to maintain privacy. The application layout allows for a three metre wide landscaped buffer along the boundary with the rear of the Kennylands Road dwellings, as required by one of the criteria of Policy HS3 of the SCNDP. This screening would help to soften the appearance of the development from the perspective of adjoining residents.

- 6.30 The side boundaries of Plots 17 and 18 would be positioned about four to five metres from the rear boundaries of No's 46, 46A and 48. Officers consider that, on balance, this relationship would not result in significant loss of light or outlook, given that the distance to the rear windows of the neighbouring dwellings would range from 31 to 36 metres. Plots 17 and 18 would not sit directly alongside the entire rear boundary of any of these neighbouring dwellings, thereby allowing some open aspect from the back of the adjoining rear gardens to remain. In addition, it would be reasonable to restrict any first floor windows serving habitable rooms in the north-east elevations of Plots 17 and 18 at the detailed design stage, to ensure that no direct overlooking of and loss of privacy to the neighbouring gardens would occur. Furthermore, it is a material planning consideration that a similar relationship was proposed for Plots 15, 16 and 27 with the adjoining dwellings in the previous planning application [P14/S3230/O](#) (refer to **Appendix C**). Whilst outline planning permission was refused, neighbour impact was not a reason cited. The levels planning condition would also help to ensure that any first floor accommodation is at an appropriate height so as to not be unneighbourly. The proposed layout generally accords with the aforementioned minimum recommended back to back and back to side distances and garden depths between properties. The garden areas for the proposed dwellings would also accord with the relevant recommended minimum standard of 50 square metres (for 2 bedroom dwellings) or 100 square metres (for 3 – 4 bedroom dwellings). On the basis of the above assessment, officers consider that the proposed development would give rise to acceptable levels of residential amenity for existing and future occupiers.

6.31 Access and Parking

Criterion (iv) of Policy H4 of the SOLP 2011 also requires that there are no overriding highway objections. Policy T1 seeks to ensure that development would not be prejudicial to highway and pedestrian safety. The single point of access to the site would be at Kennylands Road, forming a simple T junction. Pedestrian footways would be provided on both sides of this access drive, linking into the existing footway network on Kennylands Road. Full consent is sought for this point of access. Some third party objectors have raised concerns that the development would lead to increased traffic congestion and that there would be a lack of visitor spaces leading to on-street parking on Kennylands Road. However, the Highway Liaison Officer has raised no objections to the revised layout plan, subject to the imposition of several highway-related planning conditions. As such, the proposed development would be acceptable in relation to traffic generation, visibility, parking provision, pedestrian access and manoeuvring of large vehicles within the site, such as not to result in the severe harm required by

Paragraph 32 of the NPPF in order to refuse planning permission on highway safety grounds.

6.32 Affordable Housing

The application as submitted confirms that 12 affordable homes would be provided, equating to 40% of the total provision. Of this, 75% of the affordable provision (nine units) would be rented and 25% (three units) would be shared ownership. This proposed mix and tenure accords with Policy CSH3 of the Core Strategy and would be secured through a Section 106 legal agreement. The provision of the affordable units in one central area of the site has attracted some criticism, but the Council's Housing Development Team has confirmed that a cluster of 12 units is considered appropriate from a management perspective. In any event, the frontages of affordable Plots 9, 26 and 27 would be viewed in the context of adjacent market housing.

6.33 Market Housing Mix

The proposed market mix of dwellings is in general conformity to that recommended in the SHMA, with the majority of dwellings having three bedrooms and smaller proportions of two and four bedroom dwellings. The mix also complies with Policy H2 of the SCNDP which requires that the majority of dwellings comprise one, two and three bedroom homes, through 78% of the market dwellings being two and three-bedroom homes. An appropriate mix can be secured via a planning condition to inform the reserved matters application.

6.34 Other Material Planning Considerations

Matters related to ground conditions surveys, surface water drainage, foul drainage, construction hours and dust prevention, archaeology, waste collection points, air quality mitigation and fire hydrants could be dealt with through pre-commencement planning conditions. Officers are also seeking to impose a planning condition to withdraw certain permitted development rights from some of the plots. This is to enable the Council to retain control over future householder development that might otherwise compromise the landscape setting, protected trees or residential amenity.

6.35 Some of the third party objectors consider that a proposal involving a reduced density and dwellings concentrated at the north-western and south-eastern ends of the site with a turning head backing onto Kennylands Road properties would represent a more acceptable layout. Whilst such a layout might be possible, this is not what officers have been asked to assess. As the above assessment against the relevant considerations has concluded that the proposed layout is acceptable, it is not reasonable to request that the applicant redesigns the layout. As the proposed development would not extend beyond the SON5 allocation, it would not further erode the gap between Sonning Common and Kidmore End. The issue of precedent has been raised in relation to this application leading to increases in dwellings on other allocated sites. However, it is an accepted planning principle that each application has to be assessed on the basis of its individual merits. A loss of a private view of the countryside is not a material planning consideration.

6.36 Community Infrastructure Levy

The proposed development would be CIL liable at a charge of £150 per square metre (index linked) at the reserved matters stage. This would exclude the floor space of the affordable homes provided in the site as relief from the charge can be claimed against these dwellings. As Sonning Common has a made neighbourhood plan, 25% of the funds collected by CIL from the proposed development would be passed to the parish council.

6.37 Section 106 Legal Agreement

A Section 106 Legal Agreement will be required to be completed before outline planning permission can be issued, to secure the following:

- delivery of the affordable housing (as set out at Paragraph 6.33)
- delivery of the on-site open space, representing 10% of the gross site area
- specification and delivery of a Local Area for Play (LAP)
- a contribution of £170 per dwelling towards wheeled bins for each house
- a contribution of £134 per 10 dwellings towards street naming
- a contribution of £300 per dwelling towards public art
- The sum of £985 towards the Council's S106 monitoring fee

7.0 CONCLUSION

7.1 The application proposal would comply with the relevant Development Plan Policies and Government guidance and therefore would be a sustainable form of development and acceptable in principle. It is also considered that, subject to the attached conditions, the proposed development would conserve the landscape setting of Sonning Common adjacent to the Chilterns AONB and safeguard important trees and would not be prejudicial to highway safety. The proposed development could also be designed in a manner that would not materially harm the residential amenity of adjoining residents, result in satisfactory living conditions for future occupiers of the development, and provide an acceptable mix and tenure of affordable housing and an appropriate mix of market housing.

8.0 RECOMMENDATION

8.1 **To delegate authority to grant planning permission to the Head of Planning subject to:**

- i. **The prior completion of a Section 106 legal agreement to secure the affordable housing, other obligations and financial contributions listed in Paragraphs 6.32 and 6.37 of this report; and**
- ii. **The following conditions:**
 1. **Commencement of development – outline with reserved matters.**
 2. **Development to be carried out in accordance with the approved plans.**
 3. **Levels details to be agreed prior to the commencement of development.**
 4. **Market housing mix to be secured.**
 5. **Withdrawal of certain permitted development for extensions.**
 6. **Details of waste collection points to be agreed prior to the commencement of development.**
 7. **Details of fire hydrants to be agreed prior to the commencement of development.**
 8. **Access arrangements to be agreed.**
 9. **New residential streets to be carried out in accordance with highway specifications.**
 10. **Parking and manoeuvring areas to be provided in accordance with the approved plans.**
 11. **Bicycle parking to be agreed.**
 12. **Construction method statement to be agreed prior to the commencement of development.**
 13. **Travel information pack to be provided to new residents to be agreed prior to the occupation of the development.**
 14. **Garage accommodation to be retained.**
 15. **Off-site highway works to be agreed prior to the commencement of development.**
 16. **Tree protection to be carried out in accordance with the agreed details.**
 17. **Updated badger surveys to be carried out.**

18. Biodiversity enhancement plan to be agreed prior to commencement of development.
19. Hours of operation in relation to construction.
20. Dust prevention measures to be agreed prior to the commencement of development.
21. Archaeological evaluation to be carried out.
22. External lighting to be agreed prior to the commencement of the development.
23. Surface water drainage details to be implemented in accordance with details to be agreed.
24. Foul drainage works to be implemented in accordance with details to be agreed.
25. Air quality mitigation to be agreed prior to the commencement of development.
26. Ground conditions reports and mitigation to be agreed prior to the commencement of development.

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