

APPLICATION NO.	P20/S4693/FUL
APPLICATION TYPE	FULL APPLICATION
REGISTERED	14.1.2021
PARISH	THAME
WARD MEMBER(S)	Pieter-Paul Barker David Bretherton Kate Gregory
APPLICANT	Thame Town Council & Thame Community Land Trust
SITE PROPOSAL	Land to the West of Windmill Road, Thame Development of an existing greenfield site for 31 new affordable homes to include 4 x 1B maisonettes, 18 x 2B4P houses and 9 x 3B5P houses. The homes are to remain affordable in perpetuity under the community land trust mechanism and are to provide homes to people with a local connection to Thame. The masterplan includes on-site parking and shared green spaces for residents and the wider community. The proposed design also includes proposed upgrades to local infrastructure where the Phoenix Trail meets Windmill Road.
OFFICER	Nicola Smith

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND PROPOSAL

- 1.1 This application is referred to the Planning Committee at the request of Councillor Gregory due to concerns about the access to the site across the Phoenix Trail.
- 1.2 The application site (which is shown on the Site Location Plan attached as **Appendix A**) is located on the southern side of Thame and comprises an open field of approximately 1.27 hectares, currently in use as a paddock.
- 1.3 The site is located south of properties on Arnolds Way and Corbetts Way and is accessed via Windmill Road at the north eastern corner of the site. At this location Windmill Road currently downgrades into an access track for the allotments to the east of the site and to Meadow Brook House at the south eastern side of the site. A strip of retained green land separates the application site from the Phoenix Trail, which passes the site on the northern side. The access to the site from Windmill Road crosses the Phoenix Trail. To the west of the site is Moreton Lane, which serves a small number of farms and dwellings, no vehicular access to the site is proposed from Moreton Lane, but a pedestrian access is proposed. To the south of the site and beyond Moreton Lane to the west is open countryside.
- 1.4 The application proposes development of this site to provide 31 affordable homes including a mix of 1, 2 and 3 bedroomed properties with associated parking and green spaces. The design also includes upgrades to local infrastructure where the Phoenix Trail meets Windmill Road. The homes are proposed to remain affordable in perpetuity under the community land trust mechanism and are to provide homes to people with a local connection to Thame.

- 1.5 The proposed layout plan, landscape masterplan and street scenes and are attached as **Appendix B, C and D** respectively. The application is accompanied by several supporting documents, including a Design and Access Statement. Additional technical information has been submitted at various times and amendments were made in June and September 2021. Through the application process concerns have been raised by technical consultees, such as the removal or retention of the walnut trees and the biodiversity of the site, together with design and layout issues, including the access to the rear of properties. The full set of documents are available on the council’s website www.southoxon.gov.uk under the planning reference P20/S4693/FUL.
- 1.6 The applicant for this scheme is a Community Land Trust (CLT), is a not for profit organisation providing community-led housing. The Design and Access statement explains that Thame CLT was founded in 2018 by a group of Thame residents with the goal of building genuinely affordable housing to buy or rent which meets the needs of local people, homes which make it easier to live well on less. The accompanying Planning Statement sets out the mechanism for ownership and securing the homes as affordable in perpetuity.
- 1.7 As a Community Land Trust, the applicant will need to access grant funding to build the properties in order to be economically viable. The Design and Access Statement explains that the scheme does not need to generate a profit but does need to be viable. The number of dwellings has been arrived at as a minimum to allow the scheme to be both socially sustainable and economically viable.

2.0 **SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS**

- 2.1 A summary of the latest responses received to the proposal is below. A full copy of all the comments made including those in respect of previous iterations of the proposals can be seen online at:

<https://data.southoxon.gov.uk/ccm/support/Main.jsp?MODULE=ApplicationDetails&REF=P20/S4693/FUL>

Thame Town Council	<p>Supports the application and makes the following comment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The development should incorporate additional tree planting where possible, particularly towards the southern boundary of the site which will need to provide a suitable transition to the countryside.”
Neighbour Representations	<p>A total of 68 responses were received to the original plans, 5 were in support of the proposal to deliver affordable homes, however 63 raised objections.</p> <p>Support: Those supporting the application identify the benefits of affordable housing for young people and families, with some expressing their interest in being able to purchase or rent one of the proposed properties.</p> <p>Objections: Many of the objectors expressed support for the provision of affordable homes within the town but raised concerns over the location of the site, particularly the crossing of the Phoenix Trail. The concerns can be summarised as follows:</p>

	<p>Principle of development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The site is located on a greenfield site outside the built-up area of Thame and on land that would be deemed to be open countryside. - The site is not allocated for development in the Development Plan and the adopted policies of the Council seek to resist development outside the built-up areas of towns and villages this scale of development should be considered through the Development Plan process - Affordable homes should be provided in a way that is integrated into other developments as required by both the Thame and SODC plans - The Thame Neighbourhood Plan can better consider proposals of this size in the context of the broader housing needs of the town - The town does not have the facilities for any more developments- doctors, dentists, schools or shops - If this ‘exception site’ is permitted, there would be few grounds for refusal of further ribbon development along the Phoenix Trail. <p>Road safety and the Phoenix Way:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Access would include crossing the Phoenix Trail. There would be dangers associated with this as the pathway/cycleway is used by lots of people, including children, walkers, joggers and cyclists. - It would undermine the Green Living Plan and prioritise vehicles - Windmill Road is already congested with car parking especially around the junction with Corbetts Way where people park at the weekend, this causes problems, further increased traffic will cause greater risk to users. - Nelson Street, Rooks Lane and Southern Road are all poorly maintained and not fit for the increased traffic <p>Other planning matters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Surface water flood risk - Impact on bats - Reducing privacy for local residents in Windmill Road, Southern Road, Arnold Way, Corbetts Way, Windmill Place and others in the vicinity <p>Consultation on the revised plans has resulted in ten responses, eight re-iterating concerns, mostly about the crossing of the Phoenix Way and two adding support to the application.</p>
<p>Countryside Officer</p>	<p>No objections subject to conditions requiring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a construction management plan for biodiversity (CEMP), • a biodiversity enhancement plan and • biodiversity offsetting
<p>Drainage Officer</p>	<p>No objections subject to conditions requiring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • detailed surface water drainage strategy to be submitted • a SUDS compliance report to be submitted • a foul drainage scheme to be submitted
<p>Lead Local Flood Authority</p>	<p>No objections subject to conditions requiring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the drainage to be carried out in accordance with the Flood Risk Assessment • SUDS maintenance details

Forestry Officer	<p>No objections subject to conditions requiring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscaping scheme to be submitted • Tree protection during construction • Protection of hedges during construction
Air Quality Officer	<p>No objections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing the mitigation measures outlined in section 3.3 of the report (Aether, April 2021) are adhered to
Contaminated Land Officer	<p>No objection.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The submitted report satisfactorily addresses the requirements for submission of a Phase 1 contaminated land preliminary risk assessment and Phase 2 comprehensive intrusive investigation. • No significant contamination has been identified. • The application site would appear to be suitable for the proposed development.
Housing Development	<p>Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This community-led development will contribute towards meeting the needs of individuals and young families in Thame for both rent and low-cost home ownership. • The property types being proposed are acceptable and in accordance with the housing needs survey that was carried out recently in Thame, on which basis this application has been submitted.
Landscape Architect	<p>No objection.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The majority of the comments raised by the Landscape Officer in February 2021 have been addressed • Subject to conditions requiring hard and soft landscaping details to be submitted • Management and maintenance details to be submitted
Oxfordshire County Council Highways	<p>No objection subject to conditions requiring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cycle parking, • A construction management plan • The roads and footpaths to be laid out • Parking areas retained
County Archaeologist	<p>No objection</p>
Oxfordshire County Council Education	<p>No objection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject to 106 contributions
Urban Design Officer	<p>No objection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfied that the issues and/ or further explanations that were requested have now been addressed.
Energy Consultant	<p>No objections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complies with policy DES10

Crime Prevention & Design Officer	<p>No objection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerns raised over the rear garden area and security of rear boundaries have been removed
South Oxfordshire District of CPRE	<p>Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Committee of CPRE Oxfordshire South Oxfordshire District fully supports the provision of affordable housing in perpetuity delivered through the community land trust mechanism. However, we are disappointed that the development will not provide as many homes as the site has capacity for.
Sustrans South	<p>No objection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our designers are satisfied with the crossing design as presented at present, and with the amendments to the Moreton Lane connection and opportunity for further input on the details of crossing at the detailed design stage I can remove my objection to the scheme. However if we find the improvements to visibility prove to be insufficient once implemented and we discover drivers are failing to give way to pedestrians and cyclists at the crossing, I would require the 'Give Way' signage and markings upgraded to 'Stop' signage and marking to give additional primacy to the crossing, and would be grateful if this could be conditioned.

3.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

3.1 [P20/S0447/PEJ](#) - Advice provided (18/03/2020)

Community-led scheme for 30 new dwellings, access road, landscaping and community amenity space.

[P04/E0297](#) - Approved (05/05/2004)

Construction of a path for walkers and cyclist on former railway land (as amended by drawings accompanying letter from Agent dated 23 March 2004).

[P00/N0606](#) - Approved (01/11/2000)

Conversion of disused railway track to a shared path for walkers, cyclists and horse riders from Thame Park Road to Moreton Lane (variation of Condition 2 of planning permission P00/N0238 "That the development hereby approved shall not commence until such time as planning permission has been granted for the extension of the cycle track to Lord Williams's Upper School").

[P00/N0238](#) - Approved (09/08/2000)

Conversion of disused railway track to a shared use path for walkers, cyclists and horse riders. (As amended by drawing nos. 8 and 9 accompanying agent's letter dated 16 June 2000).

4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

4.1 This proposal does not exceed 150 dwellings, the site area is under 5 hectares and is not within a 'sensitive area' as defined by the EIA regulations. Consequently, the proposal is beneath the thresholds set in Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017. An Environmental

Impact Assessment is not required as the majority of issues are considered to be of local significance only and can be examined through the normal planning process.

5.0 **POLICY & GUIDANCE**

5.1 **Development Plan Policies**

South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 (SOLP) Policies:

STRAT1 – The Overall Strategy

STRAT2 – Housing and employment requirements

STRAT5 – Residential Densities

TH1 – The Strategy for Thame

H1 – Delivering new homes

H3 – Housing in the towns of Henley-on-Thames, Thame and Wallingford

H9 – Affordable Housing

H10 – Exception Sites and Entry level housing schemes

H11 – Housing mix

INF1 – Infrastructure Provision

TRANS2 – Promoting sustainable transport and accessibility

TRANS4 – Transport Assessments, transport Statements and Travel Plans

TRANS5 – Consideration of development proposals

ENV1 – Landscape and Countryside

ENV3 – Biodiversity

ENV5 – Green Infrastructure in new developments

EP1 – Air Quality

EP3 – Waste Collection and recycling

DES1 – Delivering High Quality Development

DES2 – Enhancing Local Character

DES3 – Design & Access Statements

DES5 – Outdoor Amenity Space

DES6 – Residential Amenity

DES7 – Efficient Use of Resources

DES8 – Promoting Sustainable Design

DES10 – Carbon Reduction

CF5 – Open Space, sport and recreation in new residential development

5.2 **Neighbourhood Plan**

Thame Neighbourhood Plan:

H5 – Integrate windfall sites

H6 – High quality design

H7 – Provide new facilities

H8 – Provide affordable housing

H9 – Provide a mix of housing types

H10 – Provide a specific mix strategy

GA1 – Pedestrian & cycle connections

GA2 – Pedestrian & cycle strategy

GA6 – Parking

ESDQ4 – Public open space on windfall sites

ESDQ11 – Sustainable urban drainage systems

ESDQ12 – Drainage strategy

ESDQ13 – Code for sustainable homes

ESDQ14 – Green living plan

ESDQ15 – Design & Access Statement

ESDQ16 – Development must relate well to its site and its surroundings

ESDQ17 – Positive contribution to the distinctive character of the town as a whole

ESDQ18 – Contribute to local character

ESDQ19 – Sufficient detail for proposals to be properly understood
ESDQ21 – Development must maintain visual connections with the countryside
ESDQ22 – Minimise visual impact on the countryside
ESDQ23 – Streets in new developments
ESDQ24 – Pedestrian & cycle routes
ESDQ26 – Reflect the three dimensional qualities of traditional buildings
ESDQ27 – Design in the ‘forgotten’ elements from the start of the design process
ESDQ28 – Provide good quality private outdoor space
ESDQ29 – Parking design

5.3 Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents

South Oxfordshire Design Guide 2016 (SODG 2016)
Developer Contributions SPD

5.4 National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance

5.5 Other Relevant Legislation

Human Rights Act 1998

The provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998 have been taken into account in the processing of the application and the preparation of this report.

Equality Act 2010

In determining this planning application the Council has had regard to its equalities obligations including its obligations under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010.

6.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The relevant Development Plan policies are outlined above.

The relevant planning considerations are the following:

- **Current policy**
- **Design and character**
- **Residential amenity**
- **Access, Transport and Parking**
- **Carbon reduction and compliance with DES10**
- **Biodiversity and Trees**
- **Drainage**
- **Infrastructure**

Current Policy

6.2 Policy STRAT1 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 sets out the overall strategy for the District. It seeks to focus most major new development at the growth point of Didcot as well as the Strategic Allocations. The towns of Henley, Thame and Wallingford are also focus points for development and regeneration.

6.3 Policy TH1 sets the strategy for Thame specifying that the Council will support development proposals that deliver homes in accordance with policy H3, which requires that Neighbourhood Development Plans for the market towns should seek to meet demonstrable local needs, for example for specialist or affordable housing.

6.4 The Thame Neighbourhood Plan was made in 2013 and includes, in policy H1, allocations for 775 new homes across seven sites. This application site is not included

in the made Thame Neighbourhood Plan. Thame Town Council are seeking to meet the housing requirement set out in part 1 of SOLP Policy H3 in the review of their Neighbourhood Plan (NP). This policy requires Thame to deliver at least 1,518 homes within the plan period. The figure includes 1,179 completions and commitments therefore the remaining amount left to be delivered through the review of the Neighbourhood Plan is 339.

- 6.5 The strategy for delivering houses set out in Policy H3 of the SOLP focuses on allocation in Neighbourhood Plans. As the application site is not allocated in the made Thame Neighbourhood Plan, and the revisions to the new NP are in their early stages this site cannot be considered under Policy H3.
- 6.6 Policy H1 of the SOLP identifies that residential development will be permitted at sites allocated in the Development Plan (including Neighbourhood Plans). The policy, at part 3, goes on to state that residential development on sites not allocated in the development plans will only be permitted where i) it is for affordable housing on a rural exception site or entry level housing scheme. Furthermore, Part 1 of Policy H10 of the SOLP goes on to specify the requirements of exception sites:

Policy H10: Exception Sites and Entry Level Housing Schemes:

Small-scale affordable housing schemes will be permitted outside settlements, provided that:

- i) it can be demonstrated that all the proposed dwellings meet a particular local need that cannot be accommodated in any other way;*
 - ii) there are satisfactory arrangements to ensure that the benefits of affordable housing remain in perpetuity and that the dwellings remain available for local people;*
 - iii) they have no unacceptable impact on amenity, character and appearance, environment or highways; and*
 - iv) they do not form an isolated development and have access to local services and facilities.*
- 6.7 A Housing Needs Survey (HNS) was undertaken in September 2019 which can be found within the Supporting Documentation on the file. The HNS found that the need was largely for two bedroomed properties (51.8% of respondents) and 3 bed properties (28% of respondents) and the preferred tenure was “cheaper housing” (60.9% of respondents). The proposed scheme is closely aligned with the findings of the HNS, with the majority (27) of the units either two or three-bedroom and with the mix comprising 16 (51.6%) affordable rented units and 15 (48.4%) intermediate housing units (discounted market sale).
- 6.8 This mix of sizes and tenures has been identified as meeting the needs of the local area and this is supported by the Council’s Affordable Housing Team as it will contribute towards meeting the needs of individuals and young families in Thame for both rent and low-cost home ownership. Whilst it is acknowledged that other developments in Thame are contributing a policy compliant level of affordable housing (40% of each site), it is clear from the HNS that there is still a residual need for affordable homes and this site presents an opportunity for the community to determine their own response to this need. Officers consider that this proposal meets the requirements of policy H10 i) as it responds to the local need in a way that is not being

met elsewhere, providing a mix of affordable rented properties and discount market properties.

- 6.9 In accordance with criterion ii) above and also part 2 of policy H10, a S106 legal agreement is proposed to ensure that the dwellings will be affordable in perpetuity. In accordance with the aims and objectives of a CLT, the affordable units would be allocated to people with a strong local connection to Thame in accordance with the Council’s Allocations Policy.
- 6.10 With regard to the requirements of criterion iii) of Policy H10, set out above, these matters are discussed in separate sections of this report below.
- 6.11 Criterion iv) of policy H10 requires that proposals do not form an isolated development and have access to local services. From the edge of the application site, it is 500 metres to the town centre (junction of Nelson Street with Upper High Street) with schools, shops and facilities located within walking distance. The site is located adjacent to the edge of the built up area of Thame and would not be isolated from the remainder of the residential areas of the town. The proposal therefore complies with the requirements of criterion iv) and can be considered a sustainable location for development.
- 6.12 Officers consider the principle of an affordable housing scheme on this site is acceptable, subject to compliance with the remaining policies in the SOLP and Thame Neighbourhood Plan.

Design and character

- 6.13 The site is laid out around a road through the centre of the development from Windmill Road and a series of green spaces designed to act as focal points to create a sense of place and community within the development. The layout, as shown in the plan below, mainly uses terraces of four or five dwellings, together with two pairs of semi-detached properties. Terraces are proposed to minimise heat loss from the buildings in order to maximise the ability of the site to reduce carbon emissions.



- 6.14 The green spaces within the development are designed to respond to the required function and immediate context. The ‘natural play space’ at the entrance to the site contains a natural play area, retained walnut trees, native copse tree planting and a

pond, which also acts as a drainage feature. A footpath links the entrance to the site to the residential area, meaning that pedestrians do not have to use the same entrance point as vehicles. Further into the site the 'village green' provides a more formal green space at the centre of the development. This square shaped space is well overlooked by dwellings on three sides. No play equipment is provided here, but there is a shelter at the centre and footpaths through. At the far western end of the site the 'nature area' will be focused on biodiversity and is designed with a series of landforms and native planting. The green infrastructure in this development complies with the requirements of SOLP policy ENV5: Green Infrastructure in new developments.

- 6.15 Policy CF5 of the SOLP sets out requirements for new developments to provide or contribute towards open space and play facilities, referring to standards in the Open Spaces Study. These standards are for 1.4 hectares of general open space per 1000 population and 0.55 hectares of play space per 1000 population. In accordance with the standards this development of 31 houses would need to provide 0.102 hectares of general open space and 0.018 hectares of children's play space. The proposed layout provides a total of 0.206 hectares general open space and a further 0.019 sqm of natural play space is also provided (total 0.225 hectares). This does not include the ecology and drainage area which totals 0.08 hectares. This development is therefore providing open space which exceeds the standards required by policy CF5.
- 6.16 The design of the buildings utilises a contemporary style, creating a character distinctive to the site rather than looking to replicate the design of the recent development of Corbetts Way to the north. The Design and Access statement explains how the proposed material palette takes cues from the local context and presents it in a more contemporary manner. In particular, the cladding materials seek to replicate the salt glazed brick seen throughout the historic centre, complemented with references to the history of the old railway previously along the Phoenix Trail, through sleepers and weathered timber. Officers consider this approach is acceptable and appropriate given that the site is set on the edge of the town, it presents an opportunity to create a character of its own further emphasising the sense of place the designers are hoping to achieve. The design of the buildings is innovative and interesting, contemporary and practical for living.
- 6.17 Through the materials palette, and landscaping scheme as well as the layout and design of the buildings the proposal complies with the requirements of Policy DES1: delivering high quality development as well as Thame Neighbourhood Plan policies ESDQ17 and 18, making a positive contribution to the character of the location and Thame.

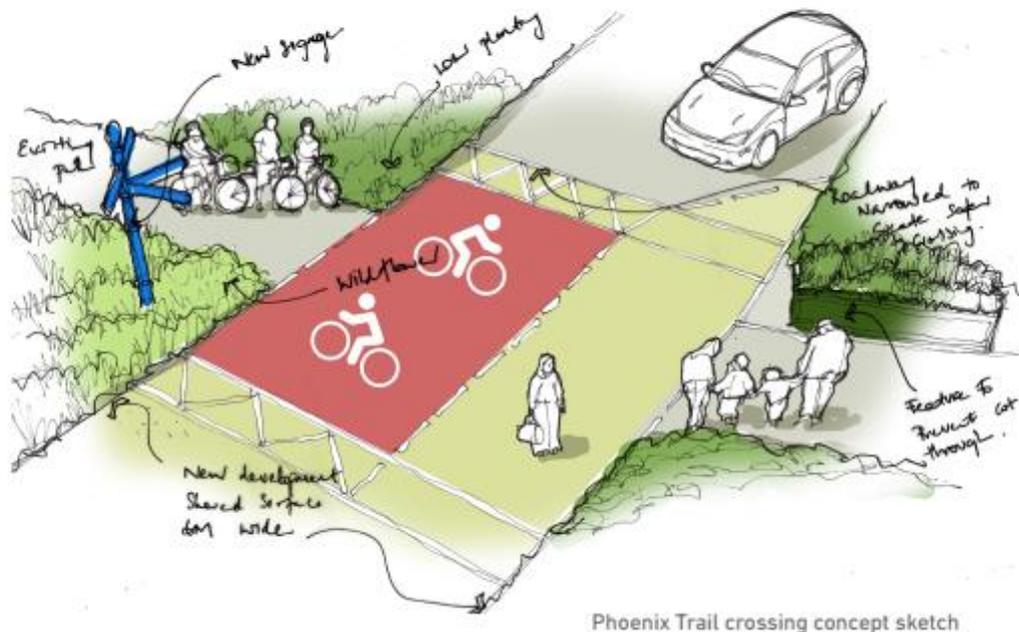
Residential amenity

- 6.18 Concerns have been raised by a number of occupiers of properties on Corbetts Way and Arnold Way that the proposed development would overlook them or impact on their privacy. Numbers 14 to 20 (evens) Arnold Way and numbers 41-45 Corbetts Way, together with the rear elevation of the older person's apartments at Windmill Place have their rear elevations facing south towards the site over the Phoenix Way. The distance between the rear of these existing properties and the rear elevations of the proposed properties ranges from 33 metres to 39 metres. This is in excess of the recommended minimum back to back distance of 25 metres set out in the Design Guide. Whilst it is acknowledged that the proposal will introduce an element of built form to the rear of these properties where there previously was none, the windows on the rear elevations and small balconies to plots 1, 3, 6 and 8 will not give rise to an unacceptable level of overlooking to the existing properties.

- 6.19 Within the site, the dwellings have been arranged in blocks, with the back to back distance between properties in the front block being 33 metres. All of the house types meet the Nationally Described Space Standard as a minimum, as well SOLP policy requirements. All homes are accessible for mobility impaired visitors and three of the homes will be specifically for wheelchair users. Gardens are provided for all properties, with the exception of the two upper floor maisonettes (plots 12 and 14), which have balconies of a sufficient size for the occupants to have private outdoor amenity space.
- 6.20 Officers consider that the proposal would have no adverse effect on the amenity of the existing or future residents and the site and has been designed to comply with the requirements of SOLP policies DES5 (Outdoor amenity space) DES6 (Residential amenity) and the South Oxfordshire Design Guide.

Access, Transport and Parking

- 6.21 Access to the site is proposed to be via Windmill Road and a new access into the site at the north eastern corner. To enable access, vehicles will be required to cross the Phoenix Trail. The Phoenix Trail is part of the National Cycle Network owned and maintained by Sustrans and is a largely car-free route from Princes Risborough to Thame. The path is well used by local people, including routes to local schools, as well as longer distance cyclists and walkers. Through Thame the route is flat and well-surfaced, following the line of the former railway. At present it is crossed by a vehicular access track at Windmill Road serving the allotments and Meadow Brook House, this forms one of only two vehicular crossings of the Trail, the other being Moreton Lane to the west of the application site. As part of the proposals this track will be upgraded to provide an access to adoptable standards into the development.
- 6.22 The safety of the users of the Phoenix Trail is of significant importance and this matter is raised in many objections. This trail is part of the National Cycle network and is promoted as being traffic-free in this location. It is used locally for leisure and as a route to school for many, with both the John Hampden Primary School and Lord William's School in close proximity to the trail. Conflict between vehicles using the access to the site and those on foot or cycle using the trail should be minimised. At present priority is given to vehicular traffic, however, the Transport Statement accompanying the application notes that *"on-site observations show that vehicle speeds are very low, primarily due to the level differences in the carriageway and restricted inter-visibility, and therefore drivers most often give priority to pedestrians and cyclists."*
- 6.23 Upgrade works to the junction at Windmill Road and the Phoenix Trail are included as part of the proposal. The design seeks to promote safe access to and from the site for the local community and residents. The proposed design for the crossing arrangement can be seen in the diagram below, taken from the Design & Access Statement. A more technical drawing is included at **Appendix E**. Where the carriageway crosses the Phoenix Trail, the width of the crossing reduces to 3.2m by way of a build-out and raised table section, this reduces the crossing width for pedestrians and cyclists and improves intervisibility. It is also proposed to slightly re-align the trail to the south to improve visibility. The Highway Authority are satisfied with the proposal and it is considered that, together with appropriate signage and road markings, this will provide a safe and suitable traffic-calming feature that is not over-engineered and is suitable to the location on the edge of the settlement.



- 6.24 The design has been subject to a Stage 1 Road Safety Audit, along with Designer's Response, all of which are to the satisfaction of the Local Highway Authority.
- 6.25 It should be noted that Sustrans initially objected to the detail of the proposal including the use of barriers. However, upon the submission of further plans, clarifying the detail of the crossing function and slight amendments to the alignment of the Phoenix Trail route they have removed their objection to the scheme stating, "Our designers are satisfied with the crossing design as presented at present". A condition is requested to ensure that the design is working as it should and, if not, further signage can be introduced. Officers have included condition 26 in the recommendation requiring a survey to be carried out once the development is completely occupied and any necessary changes to be approved by the Council.
- 6.26 A representative of the Community Land Trust who lives near to the development has conducted a survey of the current usage of the crossing point by all motorised and non-motorised traffic for one hour on three separate days. This informal survey found that there were 21, 11 and 8 motorised vehicle movements at each of the given times, accounting for 17%, 9% and 16.6% of movements on those occasions. Whilst this is not a formal survey and has not been verified by the Local Highway Authority, it is useful context from a local perspective. The letter is available to view on the Council's website at the following link:
https://data.southoxon.gov.uk/ccm/support/dynamic_serve.jsp?ID=1549027176&CODE=3A2791E3D38A2633696669D52218E993
- 6.27 Whilst not an adopted planning document account has been given to the local Thame Green Living Plan 2020, which seeks to (inter alia) encourage and support cycling and walking through improving links and routes around the town. This proposal would not conflict with the aims of the Thame Green Living Plan in this respect.
- 6.28 A number of comments to this application raise concerns about traffic congestion which is already experienced on roads to the north of this application site. It is noted that, although the submitted Transport Statement reports that here have been no recorded

collisions along Windmill Road or Nelson Street, many residents report in their comments “near misses” on these roads. The trip generation figures set out in the Transport Statement are lower than average, which would be 0.5 in the peak (for Oxfordshire); whereas figures less than 0.3 have been reported here. However, the Highways Officer has concluded that, given the small number of houses proposed this leads to a potential discrepancy of about 5 of such movements, even this level of trip generation, is likely to be within daily fluctuations for the context and he raises no concerns about the capacity of the surrounding roads.

- 6.29 The required number of parking spaces have been provided for the development, there are 52 spaces in total, with one on-plot space allocated to each dwelling and a further 21 spaces unallocated. This complies with the OCC Parking Standards for New Developments and is considered acceptable. Each dwelling will be provided with access to an electric car charging point, meeting SOLP Policy TRANS5.
- 6.30 The site is well located for non-motorised journeys, from the edge of the site it is a 6 minute walk to the Upper High Street, where a bus stop can be found. Also, schools are easily accessible with an 11 minute walk or 3 minute cycle to John Hampden Primary School and a 17 minute walk or 5 minute cycle to Lord Williams Upper School, all of which can be undertaken on pavements and designated cycle ways.

Carbon reduction and compliance with DES 10

- 6.31 The SOLP 2035 Policies DES8 & DES10 seek to ensure that all new development minimises the carbon and energy impacts of their design and construction and should be designed to improve resilience to the anticipated effects of climate change. The supporting documents accompanying this planning application includes an energy statement setting out how the 40% reduction of carbon emissions as required by policy DES 10 would be met.
- 6.32 The buildings have been designed to Passivhaus principles and use a fabric first approach. Passivhaus buildings provide a high level of comfort for occupants whilst using very little energy for heating and cooling. The Energy Statement sets out how the design of the site and buildings have been informed by Passivhaus principles, including orientation of buildings and ratios of glazing to solid walls. The dwellings have been arranged in small terraces to optimise the form factor (the ratio of heat loss area to useful floor area). The buildings have been designed with lower glazing ratios to reduce north facing loss; and higher ratios to optimise the southern facing solar gains.
- 6.33 Various options are discussed for how the 40% reduction can be achieved and a table is included in the Energy Statement showing how these options can be combined to result in a reduction of more than 40%. Submitted SAP calculations indicate that a reduction of 40% is achieved for all house types using a fabric first approach.
- 6.34 Furthermore, the Energy Statement also states that the space heating and domestic hot-water will be electric and no gas or other fossil fuel supply will be provided to the development. The application submission indicates that the design of the proposal has considered how the carbon and energy requirements of the proposal can be minimised, as such has achieved compliance with policies DES8 and DES10 of the SOLP.

Biodiversity and Trees

- 6.35 Initial comments from the Forestry Officer suggested that the two mature walnut trees on the site, located in the north east corner, were unsafe to be located close to proposed paths or play areas and should be removed – in favour of replacement tree planting. However, as the trees have a high potential to support roosting bats the Countryside Officer raised concerns about the removal of the trees without further

surveys to confirm the presence or absence of bats. Due to the time of year being inappropriate for bat surveys, the applicants were unable to commission a survey, so have redesigned the scheme to retain the trees in a safe way, removing the natural play area to a safe distance and moving the path away from the trees. The area around the trees has instead been identified as a biodiversity area, planted to discourage access by people, but to encourage wildlife. As described in paragraph 6.15 above, this area is not included in the open space requirement calculation.

- 6.36 The Forestry Officer has confirmed that, whilst the trees will require some management to ensure their safety, the layout is acceptable. The Countryside Officer agrees that the retention of the trees is preferable as there has been no bat survey to date. Conditions are recommended by both the Forestry and Countryside Officers to ensure the trees are managed appropriately and there is no loss of biodiversity.
- 6.37 A bat survey has been carried out on a Prunus tree in the centre of the site which was also identified for removal, but had shown potential to host bats. No evidence of bat activity was found in this tree and the Countryside Officer has confirmed that the removal of this tree is acceptable.

Drainage

- 6.38 The Council's Drainage Officer has confirmed that the submitted flood risk assessment indicates that the site is generally at low risk of flooding with the exception of a small area in the north east of the site which is at a higher risk of surface water flooding. It is considered that sustainable drainage systems can be used to ensure that flood risk is not increased elsewhere. The site is located in a suitable zone for development in terms of flood risk planning policy. Three conditions are recommended to ensure that the drainage design for both surface water and foul drainage are suitable for the site.

Infrastructure - S106 Agreement and Community Infrastructure Levy

- 6.39 The applicant has agreed to securing the following contributions and obligations by way of a S106 agreement. All contributions to be index linked.

District Council's financial contributions:

- Street naming and numbering £229 per 10 houses = £687
- Provision of recycling / refuse bins £186 per property = £5,766
- Monitoring and recording fees £820
- Affordable Housing monitoring fee £94

County Council's financial contributions (as set out in OCC consultation response):

- Public Transport £32,147
- Secondary Education £132,105
- Monitoring fee £3,750

Obligations (non financial):

- Highways works to include the crossing of the Phoenix Trail
- All dwellings to be affordable housing, to ensure that the benefits of affordable housing remain in perpetuity and the dwellings remain available for local people in accordance with the requirements of policy H10 including mobility standards
- Management and maintenance of open space

The development is CIL liable. As this is a development for affordable housing, the applicant would be able to apply for CIL relief.

Pre-commencement conditions

- 6.40 The applicant has confirmed that they agree to the suggested pre-commencement conditions as detailed below.

7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The proposal is for low cost affordable housing which is community led and is supported by evidence, meeting the requirements of Policy H10, Exception Sites and Entry level housing schemes. Whilst the site is not currently allocated for housing in the development plan, Thame Town Council are in the process of reviewing their Neighbourhood Plan and this site is indicated as suitable for development. The scheme represents a sustainable development in a suitable location for a small-scale housing site which is specifically providing low cost affordable homes for the residents of Thame.
- 7.2 Objections to the development of the site due to the increased vehicles crossing the Phoenix Trail have been made by many members of the local community. It is crucially important that the safety of the trail for non-motorised uses is maintained and the crossing has been designed to ensure that users of the trail take precedence over vehicular traffic. The design is to the satisfaction of the Local Highway Authority and Sustrans and a condition is recommended to ensure that the crossing operates as it is designed to, otherwise further mitigation will be required. Following the highway advice and comments from Sustrans, officers consider the proposed design of the crossing point to be acceptable in terms of safety and would not discourage users of the Phoenix Trail.
- 7.3 The NPPF states at paragraph 11 that a presumption in favour of sustainable development means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay. As discussed in the paragraphs above, the proposal complies with the development plan, particularly policies H10: housing exception sites, ENV5: green infrastructure in new developments; DES1: delivering high quality development, DES10: carbon reduction and TRANS5: consideration of development proposals; as well as other policies in the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan.
- 7.4 Finally, the approval of this site would make a small but important contribution to the Council's five year supply of housing land as the applicant has indicated that all 31 homes will be delivered within the next five years. The NPPF recognises that small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area and are often built-out relatively quickly.

8.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 **That planning permission is granted subject to:**

A) Completion of S106 a legal agreement to
i) secure the affordable housing and
ii) financial contributions and infrastructure as outlined in the report

B) The following conditions:

- 1 : Commencement within three years**
2 : Approved plans

Pre commencement

- 3 : Levels details of existing and proposed levels**
4 : Details of lighting, utilities and landscaping

- 5 : Landscaping Scheme
- 6 : Tree Protection
- 7: Sample materials
- 8 : Energy Statement Verification
- 9 : Refuse & Recycling Storage details required – prior to commencement above slab level
- 10 : Protect hedges during development operations
- 11 : Open Space and Play Areas
- 12 : Construction Environmental Management Plan
- 13: Biodiversity Enhancement Plan
- 14 : Biodiversity offsetting
- 15: Cycle Parking Facilities
- 16 : Construction Traffic Management Plan
- 17: Surface water drainage works
- 18 : Foul drainage works

Prior to occupation

- 19 : New estate roads
- 20 : Parking & Manoeuvring Areas
- 21 : Landscape Management Plan
- 22 : Tree pits design
- 23 : Surface Water Drainage
- 24 : Electric charging point – access for every house to an EVCP
- 25 : Air Quality mitigation measures
- 26 : Traffic Survey

Post completion

- 26: Traffic Survey (to establish if the crossing of the Phoenix Trail is effective, and implementation of post completion mitigation measures if required)

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