

APPLICATION NO.	P15/S4227/FUL
APPLICATION TYPE	FULL APPLICATION
REGISTERED	21.12.2015
PARISH	BENSON
WARD MEMBER(S)	Felix Bloomfield Richard Pullen
APPLICANT	Brim Developments
SITE	Rear of 22 and 24 Blacklands Road, Blacklands Road Benson, OX10 6NW
PROPOSAL	Demolition of no's 22 and 24 Blacklands Road and the erection of 17 no. dwellings, including 6 affordable homes.
AMENDMENTS	As amended by revised archaeological evaluation report dated January 2016. As amended by new application form, planning statement and additional drawings nos 1012 - 100, 101, 150B, 200, 201, 202 (house types C, D, E and F), 250 and 251 accompanying Agent's email dated 20 May 2016 to convert application from an outline to a full application. As clarified by swept path analysis shown on drawing no SK01 accompanying Agent's email dated 6 July 2016. As further amended by Agent's email dated 28 July 2016 agreeing to the provision of 6 affordable homes rather than starter homes.
GRID REFERENCE	462237/192033
OFFICER	Sharon Crawford

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The application was deferred from the Planning Committee on 10 August 2016 to allow for members to visit the site. The member site visit is scheduled for 5 September 2016.
- 1.2 The application has been referred to the Planning Committee because the recommendation to grant planning permission conflicts with the views of the Benson Parish Council. The Parish council object to the application; a summary of their comments is set out in paragraph 3.1 of this report.
- 1.3 The site is some 0.46 ha in size and lies on the edge of the built up limits of Benson in a backland location. The site is undeveloped and overgrown; it was previously part of an orchard/nursery. A public footpath runs across the proposed access road along the western boundary of the main part of the site. The footpath runs along the rear boundary of properties on the east side of Blacklands Road and currently demarcates the edge of the built limits of Benson. Beyond the site to the north and east there are open fields and countryside. The site has no special designation.
- 1.4 The site is identified on the Ordnance Survey Extract **attached** at Appendix 1.

2.0 **PROPOSAL**

2.1 The application has been amended to convert it from an outline application and now seeks full planning permission for the demolition of no's 22 and 24 Blacklands Road and the erection of 17 no. dwellings, including 6 affordable homes along with private amenity space, parking and bin and bicycle storage.

Access is proposed off Blacklands Road with 22 and 24 Blacklands Road being demolished to create the access.

2.2 The application submission includes the following documents;

- Planning Statement
- Design and access Statement
- Archaeological evaluation and desk top assessment
- Arboricultural Assessment
- Ecology appraisal
- plans

Additional information has also been submitted in respect of archaeology.

2.3 Reduced copies of the plans and documents accompanying the application are **attached** at Appendix 2. Full copies of the plans and consultation responses are available for inspection on the Council's website at www.southoxon.gov.uk.

3.0 **SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS**

Full responses can be found on the Council's website

3.1 Benson Parish Council Objection to original and amended plans
Members unanimously resolved to object to the application on the grounds of

- 1) Over development.
- 2) Concerns over Highways T1, T2.
- 3) Impact on wildlife.
- 4) Impact of additional housing on waste water drainage

3.2 OCC (Highways) **Original comments.** Provided that a swept path analysis can demonstrate that the road can accommodate refuse vehicles then no objection subject to conditions in respect of vision splays, access, travel plans, cycle parking, construction method statement, surface water drainage and vehicle turning and parking
No Objection subject to planning conditions

Amended plans. Vehicle path swept path analysis shown on Drawing SKO1, submitted with this amended full planning application, has now been provided. This drawing shows that an 11.347 metres in length four axle refuse collection vehicle can manoeuvre within the extent of the carriageway to access and egress the proposed development access in forward gear and manoeuvre within the extent of the new estate road carriageway and turn around within the proposed residential development. No objection.

3.3 OCC (Archaeology) No objection conditions recommended

3.4 OCC (Education and property) Provisions for education, library, waste management and adult day care infrastructure will be secured through CIL payments.

- 3.5 Countryside Officer The offsetting calculation has shown that the overall effect of this proposal is that it would lead to a net loss to biodiversity and it is therefore not in accordance with policy CSB1 or the NPPF. However, the aim of the offsetting scheme is to use the offset credits generated by the application for habitat creation and restoration projects offsite. The offsite works therefore provide compensation for the habitats lost to the proposal and meet the requirement of policy CSB1. I would therefore recommend that in order to achieve a no net loss of biodiversity in accordance with policy CSB1 and paragraphs 109 and 117 of the NPPF the developer is required to enter into a biodiversity offsetting agreement. The agreement would provide for off-site compensation to ensure that the overall result of the proposals is a no net loss for biodiversity.
- 3.6 CPRE As Benson FP12 follows a considerable length of the site boundary, we are concerned that the proposed development and vehicles and building materials used in its construction should not be allowed to obstruct or encroach upon the footpath and that the path should remain freely usable throughout construction. In addition, we are concerned that, where FP12 crosses the access road to the development, adequate mutual sightlines should be available for path users and motorists so that walkers can cross this road in safety.
- 3.7 Neighbour Object (22) Objections in respect of;
- Domestic traffic on Blacklands Road – there is already insufficient parking for residents
 - Impact on footpath due to traffic crossing path
 - Loss of wildlife
 - Loss of trees
 - Impact on rural setting of village
 - Noise and disturbance from use of access
 - Overlooking
 - Impact on drainage system that struggles already
 - Impact on existing services
- Many comments stated there is already too much proposed development in the village. By opening up the access into the big field behind nos 22 and 24 to build 19 houses now will only create a significant opportunity to develop the whole field once the access is granted.
- Whilst the vision angles shown on the plans show an open aspect this is not the reality of the situation, any visitors to numbers 1, 3, 5, 7, 20 and 26 Blacklands Road who are unable to park on their respective drives park on the road outside, which they currently do quite legitimately. If a road junction is introduced as described by the application it will bring the legitimacy of such parking into question, the Highway Code states that you should not park within 10 metres of a junction and not to park opposite one, whilst there isn't an official offence for parking too close or opposite to a junction.

4.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

- 4.1 [P12/S2055/O](#) - Refused (02/11/2012) - Refused on appeal (27/01/2014)

Demolition of two dwellings, 22 & 24 Blacklands Road, and erection of nine dwellings on the land to rear of Blacklands Road and Brook Street Benson. As clarified by Agent's email dated 8 October 2012.

This scheme was refused for three reasons;

- Extension of the village into the countryside contrary to H6
- Lack of information on archaeology, and
- Lack of affordable housing

5.0 **POLICY & GUIDANCE**

5.1 South Oxfordshire Core Strategy policies

CS1 - Presumption in favour of sustainable development

CSS1 - The Overall Strategy

CSR1 - Housing in villages

CSM1 - Transport

CSQ3 - Design

CSEN1 - Landscape protection

CSB1 - Conservation and improvement of biodiversity

CSG1 - Green infrastructure

CSI1 - Infrastructure provision

5.2 G2 - Protect district from adverse development

G4 - Protection of Countryside

T1 - Safe, convenient and adequate highway network for all users

T2 - Parking

C4 - Landscape setting of settlements

C9 - Loss of landscape features

R8 – Public rights of way

D1 – Good Design and Local distinctiveness

D2 - Vehicle and bicycle parking

D3 – Garden Areas

D4 – Privacy and daylight

CON12 – Archaeology

EP3 - Light pollution

South Oxfordshire Design Guide 2008

5.3 National Planning Policy Framework

National Planning Policy Framework Planning Practice Guidance

Emerging South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2032

Emerging Benson Neighbourhood Development Plan.

South Oxfordshire Section 106 Supplementary Planning Document 2016

5.4 Other relevant legislation

- Environmental Impact Regulations, as amended 2015
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Equality Act 2010 section 149
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act

5.5 Paragraph 216 of the NPPF allows for weight to be given to relevant policies in

emerging plans, unless other material considerations indicate otherwise, and only subject to the stage of preparation of the plan, the extent of unresolved objections and the degree of consistency of the relevant emerging policies with the NPPF.

Benson Parish are working towards the adoption of a neighbourhood plan and are at stage 1 in the process. The area has been designated and some early consultations including a local resident survey have been undertaken. However no sites have currently been proposed and as such the neighbourhood plan has limited weight at this stage.

6.0 **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

6.1 The main issues in this case are;

- Whether the principle of development is acceptable
- Sustainability – location
- Layout and design
- Residential amenity/ neighbour impact
- Highways/ parking
- Landscape
- Ecology
- Trees
- Drainage
- Affordable housing
- Housing mix
- Garden sizes
- Footpath
- CIL

6.2 **Principle of Development.** Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Section 70 (2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 provides that the local planning authority shall have regard to the provisions of the development plan, so far as material to the application, and to any other material considerations. In the case of South Oxfordshire, the most relevant parts of the Development Plan are the Core Strategy which was adopted in December 2012, the saved policies of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 and any relevant neighbourhood plans. Development which is not in accordance with an up-to-date development plan should be refused unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

6.3 Benson is designated as a 'larger village' in the Core Strategy. Policy CSS1 sets out an overall strategy for the District, which seeks, among other things, to support and enhance the larger villages as local service centres, while focusing 'major new development' at Didcot and supporting the roles of Henley, Thame and Wallingford.

6.4 Policy CSH1 identified the distribution of housing within South Oxfordshire including housing in the 12 larger villages. Policy CSR1 indicates that housing provision in the villages will be achieved through allocations, infill development and rural exception sites for affordable housing. Chapter 18 of the Core Strategy identifies the delivery mechanisms for allocating sites. These included further development plan documents produced by the district together with neighbourhood development plans.

6.5 The application site falls beyond the built up limits of the village. It is not closely surrounded by buildings or a small gap in an otherwise built-up frontage. It does not represent an infill development. It is also not a site allocated for housing in an adopted

/ made plan. The development therefore conflicts with the development plan, insofar as it does not meet with the policy CSR1 criteria against which proposals for development beyond the built-up limits of larger villages are assessed.

- 6.6 At present, none of the sites around Benson have been allocated for housing. We are proposing to allocate sites through the new Local Plan 2032. The refined options (July 2015) consultation for the Local Plan 2032 shortlisted a number of sites for growth in Benson. The application site is part of one of the shortlisted sites under reference BEN5.
- 6.7 A Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) is being prepared in Benson. The area has been designated and some early consultations including a local resident survey have been undertaken. No sites have currently been proposed. The NPPF at paragraph 216 outlines the weight that can be given to emerging policies. I consider the Benson NDP and Emerging Local Plan 2032 to be at an early stage of plan making and accord them limited weight in decision taking at the present time
- 6.8 The council has recently received three planning appeal decisions on major housing proposals; land at Winterbrook, Wallingford (P15/S0191/FUL), land north of Lower Icknield Way, Chinnor (P15/S0154/O) and Land to the east of Newington Road, Stadhampton (P14/S4105/O). These appeals were allowed and planning permission granted for the proposed housing development.
- 6.9 All three Inspectors assessing these appeals concluded that we should be applying a higher housing target as set out in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), which means delivering more housing than is currently planned for in our adopted Core Strategy. This led them to the conclusion that the district can no longer demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply, which means the presumption in favour of sustainable development in paragraph 14 of the NPPF is engaged.
- 6.10 Para. 49 of the NPPF specifies that relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up-to-date if the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites. Para.14 adds that where relevant policies are out of date, *planning permission should be granted unless:*
- *any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole; or*
 - *specific policies in the NPPF indicate that development should be restricted.*
- 6.11 The NPPF does not suggest that populations of settlements should be limited in some way or not be expanded by any particular figure. It expects housing to be boosted significantly. Additional housing can help support and secure local services and it may be possible to address infrastructure deficiencies through planning conditions or through a legal agreement.
- 6.12 The outcome of the recent appeal decisions means that the Core Strategy housing supply policies are given less weight in our decision making. In addition, the council's high court challenge of appeal decisions in Chinnor concluded that the council is silent on CSR1 in relation to housing in larger villages due to the lack of the Site Allocations DPD. Therefore, paragraphs 49 and 14 of the NPPF are also applied to CSR1 regardless of the current five year land supply position.
- 6.13 Sustainable development should now be permitted unless there is planning harm that outweighs the benefit of providing new housing. Applications for housing should now be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development

and should be permitted unless there is planning harm that outweighs the benefit of providing new housing. It is in this context that the application will be assessed. The impacts of the development are considered below and the planning balance weighed up in the conclusion of this report.

- 6.14 **Sustainability – Location.** Benson is a larger village, which is identified as a sustainable location for housing within the core strategy policy CSS1. Taking a midpoint from the site it is situated some 0.4 kilometre from village centre facilities which contains a range of facilities including doctor's surgery and shops. It is also around 0.7km from the primary school, Benson is relatively well located for public transport. The nearest bus stops to the proposed development are situated on Brook Street Benson within 400 metres of the proposed development, consisting of a bus stop flag and information cabinet at each bus stop. The bus service that serves these bus stops is 139 which operates between Wallingford and Henley on Thames operating on an hourly frequency in both directions during the day. In addition, the x39/x40 bus service providing direct services to Oxford, Wallingford and Reading. This development is around 0.9km walking distance from the existing pair of bus stops at Benson Marina to the edge of the development. This distance is not unreasonable for access to a high quality and high frequency bus service. The site is also well connected via public footpaths to the countryside beyond. I consider this site to be in a sustainable location.
- 6.15 **Layout and design.** The NPPF states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development and is important to plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design for all development, including individual buildings, public and private spaces and wider area development schemes (paras 56 and 57).
- 6.16 The scheme involves the demolition of 22 and 24 Blacklands Road, a pair of semi-detached bungalows, to create an access point to land at the rear. One detached bungalow is proposed at the entrance to the site fronting onto Blacklands Road. A mixed development of two x 4 bed houses, two x 2 bed bungalows, two x 1 bed flats above garages, four x 3 bed houses and six x 2 bed houses would be provided arranged around a cul de sac. However, the layout allows for the potential for access to the wider BEN 5 site providing important connectivity into the village. I consider the application acceptable in terms layout.
- 6.17 The design and form of the proposed dwellings is mixed with detached bungalows, detached, semi-detached and terraced two storey dwellings and two flats above garages. Blacklands Road is also a mix of semi-detached bungalows and semi-detached houses. The design and form proposed is not out of keeping with the general form or density of development on Blacklands Road, I consider the application acceptable in terms of design.
- 6.18 **Residential amenity/neighbour impact**
Protecting amenity is a core principle of the NPPF. As this site sits behind existing dwellings on Blacklands Road and Brook Street, the relationship to this site will be important in terms of residential amenity.
- 6.19 **Impact on properties in Blacklands Road.** The new bungalow on plot 1 adjacent to 26 Blacklands Road is sited in a similar location to the existing number 24 Blacklands Road, any additional impact on 26 will not be material in my view.
Impact on 20 Blacklands Road. The new access road will run down the side boundary of 20 Blacklands Road and will serve 16 houses. The use of the access road will have an additional impact on the residential amenity of the occupants of 20 but it will not be materially greater than the impact already experienced with the use of Blacklands Road

in my view.

Impact of flats above garages on 14 to 20 Blacklands Road. The proposed flats above garages on plots 16 and 17 lie to the east of 14 to 20 Blacklands Road and are separated by outbuildings in their own rear gardens and the public footpath. The distance between the buildings would be over 15 metres. The flats above the garages are not full two storey height as the first floor is partially in the roof space. There are two rooflights in the rear elevation of the flats facing towards the rear of the Blacklands Road bungalows but these are high level and do not allow for any overlooking. The flats would not benefit from permitted development rights and no further windows can be added to these properties without a further grant of planning permission.

Impact on 2, 4 and 6 Blacklands Road. 2, 4 and 6 Blacklands Road would back onto the side elevation of Plot 15 which would have a small first floor window serving a bathroom. The distance between the properties is some 30 metres and there would be no material overlooking.

- 6.20 **Impact on properties on Brook Street.** The properties on Brook Street benefit from much larger rear gardens and the new houses would not be oppressive or overbearing at the distances involved. Some neighbours have expressed concern about overlooking of private garden areas which is acknowledged. However, given the distances involved the impact on amenity is not so harmful to warrant a refusal of planning permission.
- 6.21 **Highways.** Policies D1, D2, T1 and T2 of the SOLP require an appropriate parking layout and that there would be no adverse impact on highway safety. With respect to highway safety matters, the advice in the NPPF is that *Development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of the development are severe.*
- 6.22 There has been some public concern has been around the highway impact of this development. Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) as the highway authority have considered the proposal in detail. They consider that the vehicular trip generation arising from the proposed development will not have a detrimental impact on the highway network and the new access will not create issues of highway safety. Subject to conditions and a Section 278 agreement to secure road improvements in connection with the access, there is no objection to the proposal.
- 6.23 **Parking.** Each property has two allocated parking spaces (some in garages) and there is provision for 4 visitor parking spaces. Subject to a condition to prevent the conversion of garages, the scheme meets the council's parking standards and I consider the scheme acceptable in terms of parking provision.
- 6.24 **Landscape.** The site is in a backland location and is screened from distance views by hedging on the boundaries. Whilst the site will be visible from the public footpath, the landscape impact of the site will be limited.
- 6.25 **Ecology.** Policy CSB1 seeks to ensure that there is a no net loss for biodiversity as a result of new developments and seeks to achieve a net gain. The NPPF supports this stance and at paragraph 109 calls for developments to minimise the impacts on biodiversity and provide net gains where possible contributing to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline of biodiversity. Many of the objectors have expressed concern about the loss of habitat and protected species on the site.
- 6.26 Various surveys have been conducted on the site in summer 2013 with update surveys for badgers in November 2015. The surveys have identified the main ecological constraints on the site and are sufficient for the purposes of determining this planning application. No evidence indicating the presence of significant populations of protected

species has been found on the site. Red Kites have been recorded roosting in one of the taller trees but the impacts of the proposals are unlikely to be significant for the local population of the species. The habitats present on the site are of relatively low value although the presence of a variety of fruit trees does elevate the value of the site to some extent. The fruit trees are thought to have been planted as part of the previous land use as allotment/private garden but do meet the criteria for Traditional Orchard habitats.

- 6.27 Whilst there are no significant biodiversity constraints present in terms of protected species or important habitats the site does clearly have a value to a variety of commoner species and is of local value for biodiversity. The areas of orchard, scrub, grassland and hedgerows collectively have a value to a number of species and this is evidenced by the number of comments from objectors concerned about the impacts on wildlife and the results of the surveys which have been conducted.
- 6.28 The current proposals for this site do not allow for any significant mitigation of the impacts on biodiversity due to the density of the proposed development and the lack of any public open space. There are limited opportunities for mitigation through the provision of bird and bat nesting/roosting boxes on a proportion of the houses but there is no scope for mitigation the loss of the other habitats to achieve a no net loss scenario. In order to achieve a no net loss of biodiversity in accordance with policy CSB1 and paragraphs 109 and 117 of the NPPF the developer is required to enter into a biodiversity offsetting agreement. The agreement would provide for off-site compensation to ensure that the overall result of the proposals is a no net loss for biodiversity. This off set can be achieved by condition (condition 5 –paragraph 8.2)
- 6.29 **Impact on trees.** There are no trees of arboricultural significance on the site that need to be considered as a constraint to development. Some of the hedge rows may need assessing against the hedgerow regulations and they may also have some screening values. The Forestry Officer has no objections to the proposed development of the land subject to a landscaping scheme.
- 6.30 **Archaeology.** The site is located in an area of archaeological interest identified by a field evaluation undertaken on the site. A programme of archaeological investigation will be required ahead of any development of the site. A condition is recommended that will require further investigation in advance of the development. Subject to these conditions, I consider the application acceptable in terms of archaeology.
- 6.31 **Affordable Housing.** In May 2016 the Court of Appeal effectively re-instated the Government’s ministerial statement on affordable housing from November 2014. This means that developments of no more than 10 homes (with a gross floorspace not exceeding 1,000 sq m) would be exempted from levies for affordable housing and tariff-based contributions. In this case the scheme is for a net gain of 15 dwellings and Policy CSH3 of SOCS requires 40% to be delivered as affordable housing. This which would equate to 6 units (4 of the units for rent and 2 for shared ownership).
- 6.32 The original scheme proposed 6 starter homes for the affordable element but this was not acceptable to your officers for the following reasons;
- Starter homes do not meet the need for affordable housing in this district;
 - Starter homes do not comply with policy CSH4 of the core strategy for 40% affordable housing. This percentage is based on the need in the district - in the main, 75% rent and 25% shared ownership

- Starter Homes are not in perpetuity (as far as we understand) and will not be meeting the needs of the majority of households identified in our ‘objectively assessed need’ as being unable to buy or rent on the open market
- The Ministerial Statement and the Planning Practice Guidance suggest that the starter homes exception site policy will only apply to “under-used or unviable commercial or industrial sites not currently identified for housing”. It is debateable whether green field sites will be included in the Regulations.

The applicant has recently confirmed that the starter home element will now be offered as affordable units in line with the council’s policy and this will be secured by means of a S106 agreement.

6.33 **Housing mix.** Policy CSH4 of the SOCS seeks an appropriate mix of dwelling types and sizes and on schemes of over 10 dwellings 10% should be designed to meet current lifetime home standards. This is to ensure that there is a satisfactory provision of smaller units across the district. The mix of units proposed is illustrated below. It proposes an acceptable mix of size of dwelling in bungalow and two storey forms.

- 1x 1 Bed Bungalow
- 2 x 4 Bed House
- 2 x 2 Bed Bungalow
- 2 x 1 Bed Coach House
- 4 x 3 Bed House
- 6 x 2 Bed House

6.34 **Garden sizes.** Minimum standards for new residential development are recommended in the South Oxfordshire Design Guide and in saved Policy D3 of the Local Plan. A minimum of 35 square metres, 50 square metres and 100 square metres is required for one, two and three/four (or above) bed dwellings respectively is required.

6.35 The one and two bed bungalows and four bedroom houses are over the minimum standards and most of the two bed houses meet the minimum 50 square metre requirement. The flats above the garages on plots 16 and 17 (approximately 27 square metres) and the mid terrace two bed units on plots 11 and 14 (approx. 45 square metres) are however below standard but not significantly so. Weighing other issues in the balance I do not consider the scheme to be an overdevelopment of the site. The under provision of gardens on 4 of the plots does not warrant a refusal of planning permission in my view particularly as there is an overprovision of garden space on 5 of the plots.

6.36 **Footpath.** Benson footpath 12 runs along the rear boundary of the Blacklands Road properties and the access road will cross the line of the footpath. The road will be traffic calmed at the crossing point and it is not unusual for a footpath to cross a road. Subject to adequate provisions to stop pedestrians running over into the road there is no objection to the scheme in terms of the footpath subject to a number of informatives in relation to keeping the footpath open and free from obstruction.

6.37 **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).** The council’s CIL charging schedule has been adopted and will apply to relevant proposals from 1 April 2016. CIL is a planning charge that local authorities can implement to help deliver infrastructure and to support the development of their area, and is primarily calculated on the increase in footprint created as a result of the development.

- 6.38 In this case CIL is liable for the market housing element of the scheme because it involves the creation of new dwellings (affordable units are not CIL liable). The CIL charge applied to new residential development in this case is £150 per square metre of additional floorspace (Zone 1). 15% of the CIL payment will go directly to Benson Parish Council (in the absence of an adopted Neighbourhood Plan) for spending towards local projects. If the Benson Neighbourhood Plan is made before commencement of development then 25% of the CIL payment will go to the parish.

7.0 **CONCLUSION**

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

Economic role

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

Social role

The proposal helps to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing a net gain of 15 houses towards those required to meet the needs of present and future generations. It also does this by creating an acceptable built environment, in a sustainable location with accessible local services close by for new residents to use. I consider moderate weight should be given to these social benefits.

Environmental role

In environmental terms, the scheme offers opportunities to offset the loss of biodiversity, which is a matter to which I afford moderate weight. The development would result in the loss of a former orchard and extend built development into open countryside. However, there are no landscape objections to the scheme and some loss will be inevitable in order to secure the delivery of the levels of housing required in South Oxfordshire over the plan period. In addition, given the very substantial area of the district that is covered by protected landscapes or Green Belt, the opportunity to provide new dwellings on a suitable site that is not within these designations weighs significantly in favour of the proposal.

Although the parish and local residents have identified concerns in terms of highway safety and capacity of facilities there is no evidence of harm that cannot be mitigated. There are no objections from Oxfordshire County Council subject to the delivery of the mitigation measures for highways and CIL contributions for education and no other infrastructure providers have raised objections. There is no demonstrable evidence that there is a cumulative impact of allowing the additional 15 homes in addition to other recent planning permissions in Benson. The site is part of one of the shortlisted site in the Local Plan Refined Options consultation document and there is a preference locally for housing to be spread around the village on smaller sites through their neighbourhood plan. The Local Plan and the NDP plan are at an early stage of preparation and can be given limited weight in accordance with paragraph 216 of the

NPPF.

Taking into account the benefits of the development and weighing these against the limited harm, I consider that the proposal represents a sustainable development, consistent with Para.14 of the NPPF and Policy CS1 of the South Oxfordshire Core Strategy. The proposal would contribute towards the objective to boost the supply of housing, consistent with Para.47 of the NPPF.

Therefore, placing all of the relevant material considerations in the balance I conclude that the limited adverse impacts would not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposal and recommend the application for approval.

8.0 RECOMMENDATION

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

A. The completion of a S106 agreement affordable housing; and

B. The following conditions:

- 1. Commencement three years - full planning permission.**
- 2. Approved plans.**
- 3. Sample materials required (all).**
- 4. Landscaping (including access road and hard standings).**
- 5. Biodiversity offsetting scheme to be agreed.**
- 6. Archaeology (submission and implementation of written scheme of investigation)**
- 7. New vehicular access.**
- 8. Vision splay details.**
- 9. New estate roads.**
- 10. Cycle parking facilities.**
- 11. Construction method statement.**
- 12. Travel information packs.**
- 13. No garage conversion into accommodation.**
- 14. Public rights of way.**
- 15. Surface water drainage works (details required).**

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