

Berinsfield – Planning Statement of Intent

1. This Statement reiterates existing planning policies relating to Berinsfield and clarifies the Council's intention to undertake options appraisal work in relation to regeneration of the village.
2. The South Oxfordshire Core Strategy 2012 provides in Policy CSEN2 that a local review of the Green Belt will take place at Berinsfield, and paragraph 7.21 of the Core Strategy explains that there are exceptional circumstances justifying a review of the Green Belt at Berinsfield because:
 - areas of Berinsfield are in need of regeneration and the current Green Belt policy is inhibiting this;
 - some further land may be needed around Berinsfield to improve the mix of housing and to provide further opportunities for employment and service provision; and
 - Berinsfield is a local service centre and some further development would be consistent with the overall strategy.
3. These issues have been considered in part in the Local Green Belt Study for South Oxfordshire District Council (September 2015) and through the drafting of the Berinsfield Neighbourhood Development Plan. .
4. A number of studies have been undertaken by the Council which indicate that Berinsfield would benefit from investment and regeneration. In light of this, the Council has decided to commission work to evaluate potential options for the regeneration of Berinsfield.
5. At present no decision has been made about the expansion of Berinsfield and any such expansion will only be contemplated by the Council if it will lead directly to the regeneration of the village and the funding of substantial new social infrastructure facilities and environmental improvements.
6. In the meantime, the whole village remains washed over by the Green Belt and subject to the strongest planning policy protection.
7. The principal purpose of the recent district wide Green Belt study was to assess the extent to which the land within the Green Belt meets the five purposes of the Green Belt set out in paragraph 80 of the NPPF in the context of the current need to identify additional land for housing in the District to meet local and Oxford based demand.
8. The study itself clearly notes that the findings of the Study should; *“not be considered in isolation. As a technical piece of work it will be used in conjunction with other evidence to inform future planning policy in South Oxfordshire.”* That other evidence will include the work being commissioned by

the Council and all other necessary work that will be undertaken in preparation of future planning policy.

9. The intention is that in due course, up to date planning policy for Berinsfield will be reviewed and set out in revised, up to date planning policy. In the meantime, the purpose of this note is to reiterate the adopted planning policy position for Berinsfield.
10. Accordingly, it is the Council's policy that:
 - i. Land at and around Berinsfield is in the Green Belt and it will not be released from the Green Belt except through a formal development plan process;
 - ii. The Council has not yet decided that land at or around Berinsfield will be proposed for release from the Green Belt – if such a proposal was to be made it would only be after detailed study and on the basis that such Green Belt release is able to show exceptional circumstances for such a release - to be consistent with the NPPF.
 - iii. The need for housing, alone, at Berinsfield, is not considered by the Council to meet the test of exceptional circumstances and neither would a residential planning application meet the test of very special circumstances if it was to be submitted in advance of a revision to planning policy;
 - iv. The test of exceptional circumstances could only be met (consistently with the Core Strategy) if its consequences were satisfactory to the Council in all respects and if the development proposed as a result met at least the following criteria:
 - development formed part of an agreed, comprehensive masterplan for the regeneration of Berinsfield; and
 - development funded the entire cost of the necessary regeneration of Berinsfield's physical, social, sporting, housing, environmental and public services infrastructure in accordance with an agreed masterplan for the village; and
 - the development of land is no greater than is necessary to deliver the necessary regeneration.
11. The Council is commencing options appraisal work to see if a strategy and potential masterplan could be prepared that would deliver a full scale regeneration of the village. If it could be, the Council will consider promoting a proportionate Green Belt release at Berinsfield through local planning policy and promoting policies that tie any Green Belt release strictly to meeting and delivering these criteria. If it cannot, the Council will not consider there to be a case for development in the Green Belt at Berinsfield.