

LAND TO WEST OF BESSELS WAY, BLEWBURY

PRE-APPLICATION REF P14/V2157/PEJ

MEETING ON MONDAY 17TH NOVEMBER 2014

These comments relate to the technical details of the proposal. The principle of housing development on the site will be an issue to be considered at the time of any application submission.

The site is outside the built up area and is not identified for development in the adopted Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011. Therefore the proposal is contrary to Policies GS2 which provides that new building will not be permitted on land outside the built up areas unless it has been identified for development and H11. However, these policies do not plan for the current or future housing needs of the district and therefore are out of date in the context of the NPPF, in so far as they restrict housing development.

Paragraph 14 of the NPPF indicates that where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, granting permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against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 Framework taken as a whole; or unless specific policies in the Framework indicate development should be restricted.

The footnote 9 to paragraph 14 gives examples of where policies in the Framework indicate that development should be restricted and identifies sites in the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) as one such circumstance.

Notes of Issues discussed at the meeting

1. THE COUNCIL'S CURRENT AND ANTICIPATED POSITION RE 5 YEAR HOUSING LAND SUPPLY;

The current position is as set out in the council's statement of August 2013: http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/sites/default/files/5YHLS_statement_FINAL_2013.pdf.

It may be that an updated position will be published later this year. The proposal is that Part 1 of the Local Plan will address the current housing land supply shortfall.

2. POTENTIAL TO SEEK AN ALLOCATION OF THE SITE AS PART OF THE ADOPTION OF THE EMERGING VOWHLP 2031 (PART 1 OR PART 2);

Part 1 only allocates strategic sites, i.e. sites of 200 dwellings or more. The process for allocating sites for Part 2 of the Local plan has yet to be decided.

However, it is possible to put a site forward for the SHLAA at any time. This will be part of the evidence base for the Local Plan.

Work has started on the preparation of a neighbourhood plan for Blewbury, and one of the first projects is to undertake a landscape assessment for the village. Therefore it is strongly recommended that contact be made with the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. It is likely that neighbourhood plan will progress more quickly than Part 2 of the Local Plan.

3. THE LANDSCAPE IMPORTANCE AND QUALITY OF THE EXISTING SITE AND THE POTENTIAL IMPACT OF THE DEVELOPMENT UPON THE LANDSCAPE SETTING/STRUCTURE OF THE VILLAGE AND ECOLOGY;

NPPF

As discussed at the meeting, before considering the site specific landscape issues, it is important to set out the planning policy implications of the site's location with the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Paragraph 115 of the NPPF sets out that "*great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty*". Paragraph 116 provides that applications for major development should be refused except in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated that they are in the public interest.

Landscape Impact:

The LVIA identifies that the most important landscape features on the site are the existing trees and hedgerows. The hedgerows are 'important' hedgerows according to the criteria set out under the Hedgerow Regulations (1997).

As shown in figure 6 of the LVIA, the development will be prominent and the mass of buildings would need to be broken up with landscaping. It is essential that the existing vegetation and drainage ditches are fully incorporated within any development to mitigate the landscape impact. These are also important habitats. Any trees to be removed should be subject to bat surveys to determine if bat roosting sites are present and provide mitigation if necessary.

The indicative layout plan shows development right up to the edge of all three hedgerows and this will need to be re-designed to provide adequate protection for the hedgerows as described above. Furthermore, existing vegetation is not fully incorporated within the scheme.

Urban Design:

As discussed, insufficient details and information have been submitted to fully assess the scheme. However, the following comments are made on the limited information that has been submitted:

- A character appraisal is required to identify the key qualities of the built form and spatial character of the existing village. A detailed site appraisal should also set out the specific

opportunities and constraints of the site and the analysis used to inform the layout.

- Important hedgerows and trees should be identified on the plans and should be retained within the public realm, this is essential for ecology, landscape mitigation and to establish a sense of place.
- Movement Network: The single road junction and isolated cul-de-sac does not integrate well with the existing village. There are local footpaths within the village that connect into the wider landscape along with more strategic paths. The layout does not take opportunities to link into this network or facilitate desire lines within the site to provide safe and convenient access routes for pedestrians and cyclists.
- It is essential that built form is orientated to overlook public footpaths and the public realm.
- Views out to the features in the landscape and landmark buildings in Blewbury should be accommodated within the layout to reinforce local distinctiveness.
- The development edge should present positive edges to external views and the rear garden fences of houses should be avoided.
- Layout and Block Structure: perimeter blocks and connected streets are the key ingredients of successful places and the analysis of the existing village structure can be used to inform the form and dimensions.
- The layout suggests that a perimeter block approach has not been adopted comprehensively as blocks have insufficient depth and undesirable dead-ends are indicated. Given the rural fringe location, an organic or distorted block is likely to be more in keeping with the village character.
- Public Open Space: the green corridors/POS along existing routes are welcome where they fit into the wider green framework. The POS illustrated at the Bessels Way entrance may be better relocated within the site to benefit more residents.
- Street Hierarchy: A coherent and legible hierarchy of streets should be incorporated into the design with the built form positioned to create streets that reflect the character of the area.

The Council's Residential Design Guide, Policies 37 and 38 of the emerging Local Plan Part 1 and the draft Vale Design Guide provide further advice on appropriate design.

4. DRAINAGE/FLOOD ISSUES AND MITIGATION POTENTIAL;

The site is affected by surface water and groundwater issues. The FRA will need to assess seasonal variations in groundwater and any impact on groundwater flows.

SuD's will be required for surface water management to greenfield runoff rate for all events up to the 1 in 100 year storm including an allowance for climate

change. Therefore, existing drainage ditches/watercourses should be retained and incorporated within the proposed layout. Thames Water should be consulted on available capacity in the existing wastewater infrastructure and the point of connection to the system. It is highly likely Thames Water will require a sewer impact study.

5. HIGHWAY SAFETY, CONNECTIVITY AND SUSTAINABILITY;

A full copy of Oxfordshire County Council's response was provided at the meeting. Specific issues discussed at the meeting included:

- The use of the existing access needs to be justified, there was some concern about the potential for conflict between cars and horses
- Connectivity will be a key issue, in particular, links into the existing village. A non-motorised users audit will be required.
- A speed survey for Bessels Way will be required to ensure that any application is supported by recent data
- Access roads will need to accommodate refuse vehicles with a maximum weight of 32 tonnes.

6. THE DENSITY OF DEVELOPMENT, MIX AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROVISION;

The requirements for a suitable scheme, as set out above, will have implications for the density of development that can be achieved at this sensitive site within the AONB.

For 80 units 40% affordable housing would be required, i.e. 32 affordable units comprising 75% rented and 25% intermediate (shared ownership). The required mix is likely to be:

24 Rented

1b x 4
2b x 11
3b x 6
4b x 3

8 Intermediate (shared ownership)

1b x 2
2b x 5
3b x 1

7. OPEN SPACE/RECREATIONAL PROVISION*; AND

As discussed at the meeting, it is recommended that the Parish Council and neighbourhood plan group be contacted for a view on local requirements for open space and recreation. Their views on the Church Moor land will be of particular interest. Local Plan Policy H23, requires 15% of the residential area

to be laid out as public open space and suitable arrangements be made for future management and maintenance.

Further advice is also contained in the Supplementary Planning Document: Open Space, Sport and Recreation Future Provision – adopted July 2008
file:///C:/Documents%20and%20Settings/McMahonM/My%20Documents/Downloads/SPD%20fin%20copy_tcm4-3597.pdf

8. CONTRIBUTIONS AND COUNCIL'S TIMESCALE FOR CIL ADOPTION.*

The Council is currently consulting on the first stage of CIL, Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule until 19 December 2014. The target date for adoption is currently October 2015 (appendix 1 of the Local Development Scheme provides more information)

Example of types of contributions requested for other developments include:

District Council

- Sports and Recreation -
- On Site public open space maintenance –
- Waste Collection -
- Police
- Street Naming –
- Parish Council requests –

County Council (some details of likely transport requirements have been provided by OCC)

- Public Transport Service Improvements: £795 per dwelling
- Science Vale strategic transport infrastructure: £2,737 per dwelling
- Provision of 2 bus stops along Bessel's Way
- Travel plan monitoring: £1240
- Primary School expansion - Blewbury Endowed CE Primary School is the catchment school for this development and has very limited spare places.
- Secondary school expansion - Site currently lies within Didcot Girls and St Birinus Academies
- SEN school expansion -
- Library Infrastructure -
- Day Care -
- Waste Infrastructure -
- Museum Resource Centre –
- Adult Learning –
- Administration - £5,000