

SOUTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

I N T E R N A L M E M O R A N D U M

**To: Daniel Callis
Development Management**

**From: Paul Brunige
Strategic Housing Team**

Date: 6th April 2020

Application No: S/2020/0385/MAR

Proposal: Application for consent of 127 units (parcels H16 and H18) and the surrounding strategic landscaping (part phase 1,2 and 3). (Approval of reserved matters pursuant to outline planning permission S/2007/0374/OUTWNS). The outline application was accompanied by an Environmental Statement

Location: Towcester Vale London Road Towcester

Dear Daniel

Please find below my comments regarding this application. In summary, the Strategic Housing Team **supports** this application.

Strategic Fit

This application relates to a proposal to obtain a 'reserved matters' planning permission on one parcel of land which forms part of a wider development on land to the south of Towcester which already has outline planning consent.

South Northamptonshire Council's 5 Year Priorities 2014–19 include the commitment to '*work with partners to deliver a mix of high-quality affordable housing in appropriate locations to meet local need*' (C7). Within the annual business plan 2019-20 one of the key actions to make South Northamptonshire '*a great place to live, work, visit and invest*' is to deliver affordable housing and promote health and wellbeing. The Council's Housing Strategy 2019-2022 builds on this and identifies the first housing priority is to '*build the homes that people need and can afford to live in*'. This proposal could contribute to these aims.

Housing Needs

The West Northamptonshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 2010 highlights the increasing shortfall of affordable housing across West Northamptonshire. A more recent update to the SHMA demonstrates a district wide requirement of 3300 affordable dwellings by 2029. The SHMA and local housing needs indicate that between 173 and 182 new affordable homes are required per annum.

The council's Housing Register is a "live" list which is constantly updated; this shows a continuing strong need for affordable rented housing in Towcester. The council's register does not include those interested in shared ownership housing, however, the local HomeBuy agent register shows significant interest in shared ownership properties locally.

Overall, the highest local need is from single people/couples of all ages and small families. However, there is also an increasing need for some larger types of accommodation, for example 4 bed houses.

Housing Mix

The housing schedule comprises 127 dwellings, 11 of which are affordable dwellings as follows:

<u>Rent</u>	<u>Shared Ownership</u>
5 x 2 bed houses	3 x 2 bed houses
3 x 3 bed houses	

The council's Affordable Housing Policy (West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy, Policy H2 & emerging Part 2 Local Plan, Policy LH8) states that a minimum of 40% of residential development in our market towns should be provided as affordable housing. Ordinarily, therefore this would equate to 51 affordable dwellings for a scheme total of 127 dwellings.

Following completion of a viability assessment relating to this site, it was agreed that the maximum on-site affordable housing provision achievable across the whole development is 10%. The 11 affordable dwellings proposed for this development parcel are slightly lower than the 10% quota required, but no doubt this will be adjusted across the remainder of the development in due course. I have reviewed the affordable house types/sizes proposed and confirm that I am broadly satisfied with the mix.

However, I do note that there is no bungalow provision included in this application. When I commented on the previous planning application for parcels H10 (July 2019) & H4 (February 2020), I did mention that this is something that the Strategic Housing Team will be asking the applicant to address on future development parcels, to meet a need for older person's accommodation. We also have ongoing demand for 4 bed properties which is not being met by existing provision. I understand that there is likely to be an opportunity to consider this request on future development parcels and I would ask that the Housing team is kept informed accordingly and included in any meetings with the applicant where the affordable housing mix is discussed. In this way, we can ensure that the right balance of affordable housing dwellings is provided to meet future demand.

The tenure mix of the affordable housing dwellings should be provided as 75% rented accommodation and 25% intermediate products, based on current policy. The council's emerging Part 2 Local Plan recommends a re-adjustment of the tenure mix to 70% rental and 30% intermediate accommodation. The affordable housing mix for this proposal is 73% rented and 27% shared ownership accommodation. I am happy with this tenure mix.

Site Layout

On a mixed tenure development, ordinarily, the affordable dwellings should be dispersed throughout the development in groups of no more than 10 (WNJCS, Policy H2 & emerging Part 2 Local Plan, Policy LH8). The affordable housing is configured in one group of 7 dwellings and one group of 4 dwellings and therefore this arrangement is acceptable.

Any development should also be designed to ensure that the outward appearance of all the dwellings and tenure of individual units is indistinguishable from one another ('tenure blind'); this should include the parking arrangements for each property.

The materials schedule submitted with the application shows a range of materials is proposed in the construction of both the affordable and market dwellings. A mix of different coloured stock brick and either artificial slate or plain roof tiles are intended for the affordable dwellings. In addition, a mixture of 'courtyard' parking spaces and on plot provision is provided across all tenures and therefore the overall scheme can be considered 'tenure blind'.

Design Standards

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) stresses the importance of design to the built environment with good design being "... a key aspect of sustainable development, indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people".

The government has created a new approach for setting technical standards. We would expect that this development has standards that accord or are equivalent to the new national technical standards set out in the Housing Standards Review.

The new standards include minimum size specifications for individual units which we would expect to be met. Whilst this is not currently a material planning consideration, the applicant might have difficulty in contracting with a registered provider if these standards are not met. Having reviewed the affordable housing plans submitted with this application, I can confirm that the individual layouts are acceptable. However, the plans do not indicate the number of bed spaces for each unit type. We expect these to be as follows:

- 1 bed house – 2 persons
- 2 bed house – 4 persons
- 3 bed house – 5 persons

Based on these assumptions, all the affordable dwellings conform to the HQI (2007) minimum space standards, but only house type meets the Housing Standards Review guidance (2014). I would recommend that the applicant check with the Registered Provider regarding the affordable dwellings to ensure that they are happy with these unit sizes.