

SOUTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

INTERNAL M E M O R A N D U M

**To: Samuel Dix
Development Management**

**From: Paul Brunige
Strategic Housing Team**

Date: 8th September 2020

Application: S/2020/1376/MAO

Proposal: Outline application for up to 69 dwellings, with associated access including access, landscaping, open space, and drainage infrastructure (all matters reserved other than access)

Location: Land South of Blakesley Hill Greens Norton

Dear Sam,

Please find below my comments in response to this outline application. In summary, the Strategic Housing Team has **no objection** to this proposal.

If outline planning permission were to be granted, we would want early discussions with the applicant on all aspects of affordable housing provision to inform their reserved matters application.

Strategic Fit

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.

The site is in open countryside (adjacent to village confines), and ordinarily residential development in this location would not be allowed.

No doubt Planning Policy colleagues will comment on the suitability (or otherwise) of this site for residential development. Notwithstanding this, my comments that follow assume that the site is considered acceptable in Planning Policy terms.

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 a minimum of 183 new affordable homes are required per annum.

A parish level housing needs survey for Greens Norton was completed in 2007. This identified a need for 32 units of affordable housing; 31 rent and 1 shared ownership. New development has been completed in Greens Norton since this time and has included an element of affordable housing which has helped to meet some of this need. In addition, I consider that the 2007 survey results are now too old to be relied upon.

I have also looked at the council's Housing register to give an indication of current affordable housing need from applicants approaching the council for re-housing. The register includes those eligible for rented housing, but not those interested in shared ownership. This is a "live" register which is constantly updated. As of 2nd September 2020, it shows 32 applicants have indicated that they would consider Greens Norton as a place to be re-housed, of which 3 have a local connection to the parish. These numbers will fluctuate as applicants are re-housed and other households join the Housing Register.

Overall, there is a broad mix of need from single people/couples of all ages, small families and an increasing need for some larger accommodation, including 4 bed houses. The need for 4 bed accommodation is particularly critical currently as relatively low stock levels and low turnover (re-lets) in the district of this property type means that families in need of this type of accommodation are waiting a long time to be re-housed; this is likely to continue unless steps to increase new provision are taken.

The register held by the Government appointed Homebuy agent for this region shows strong demand for shared ownership housing in the South Northamptonshire district, although this does not record demand for individual parishes.

Housing Mix

On developments of 10 dwellings or more there is a requirement for affordable housing provision (National Planning Policy Framework, paragraph 63).

This proposal is for mixed tenure residential development comprising up to 69 dwellings in total. West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (Policy H2) and policy LH8 of the council's Part 2 Local Plan require 50% of the total dwellings to be affordable in this instance. The applicant has stated that *'this proposal will commit to at least 35 of the proposed dwellings being affordable in nature. This represents a provision of 51% affordable dwellings which exceeds local planning policy requirements.'* (Design and Access Statement, paragraph 5.6).

Part 2 Local Plan (Policy LH8) sets out the requirement for the affordable housing tenure mix; 70% social/affordable rented provision and 30% as other affordable routes to home ownership. Our preference would be for the home ownership (intermediate) element to be provided as shared ownership.

The final affordable housing mix should be a balance of house types and reflect the overall housing need for this area of the district. We welcome early discussion with the applicant to agree the most appropriate affordable housing mix should outline planning approval be granted.

Design

Site Layout

On a mixed tenure development, West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (Policy H2) and the council's Part 2 Local Plan (Policy LH8) states that affordable housing should be integral part of the development to promote community cohesion. Affordable housing should be dispersed throughout the development in groups of no more than 10. The site layout should reflect this requirement by having small clusters of affordable housing pepper-potted throughout the scheme.

The scheme should also be tenure blind in all other aspects, including external appearance of individual dwellings and parking arrangements; with a mixture of on-plot and courtyard parking across tenures. I note the applicant's intention to address these requirements in their Indicative Layout plan and commentary (Design & Access Statement, paragraphs 6.29 & 6.30).

Design/Space 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 any development has standards that accord or are equivalent to the new national technical standards set out in the Housing Standards Review 2015.

The new standards include minimum size specifications for individual affordable housing units which we would expect to be met. Whilst this is not currently a material planning consideration, the applicant might encounter difficulty in contracting with a registered provider if these standards are not met.

Accessibility

Policy LH10 (as modified) of the Part 2 Local plan seeks to secure high quality accessible homes to meet people's changing circumstances over their lifetime. Policy LH10 requires that 50% of developments of 10 or more dwellings (market or affordable) should be constructed to meet the optional accessibility standards set out in Part M of the Building Regulations.

The accessibility standards are as follows:

- Accessibility Category 1: (Mandatory requirement – the current Building Regulation standard
- Accessibility Category 2: Accessible and adaptable dwellings – Optional; comparable to Lifetime homes
- Accessibility Category 3: Wheelchair user dwellings – Optional, equivalent to wheelchair accessible standards

The policy continues to explain that where the Local Authority are responsible for allocating and nominating people to live in the affordable homes, 10% of the 50% requirement should be constructed to meet Category 3 with the remainder to Category 2. As such the proposed units should be constructed as follows:

Market – 34 units total

- 50% units to Cat 1 – 17 units
- 50% units to Cat 2 – 17 units

Affordable – 35 units total (25 rent and 10 intermediate)

- 50% of Intermediate tenure units to Cat 1 – 5 units
- 50% of Intermediate tenure units to Cat 2 – 5 units
- 50% of Rent units to Cat 1 – 12.5 units
- 40% of Rent units to Cat 2 – 10 units
- 10% of Rented units to Cat 3 – 2.5 units

I recommend that Building Control are consulted should this application proceed to reserved matters stage, to ensure that the proposed designs meet these standards.

Climate Change

We would also strongly encourage applicants to design in resilience to climate change in order to ensure acceptable living conditions are provided for future occupiers and help the development to mitigate its impact on the climate. This would link to policy H1 of the JCS and policy SS2(g) of the emerging Part 2 Local Plan along with chapter 14 of the NPPF.

Paragraph 148 of the NPPF is particularly clear in its instruction, stating that the planning system should *'help to shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience'* and *'support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure'*.