



**APPEAL STATEMENT**

**APPEAL SUBMITTED UNDER SECTION 78 OF THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT  
1990**

**AGAINST SOUTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL REFUSAL OF APPLICATION REFERENCE  
S/2020/0930/MAO**

**OUTLINE APPLICATION FOR RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT FOR UP TO 35 DWELLINGS  
INCLUDING ACCESS WITH ALL OTHER MATTERS RESERVED**

**LAND SOUTH OF STATION ROAD, BLISWORTH**

**GRID REFERENCE: X472688, Y254016**

**Date: November 2020**

# Appeal Statement of Case

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## **1.0 Executive Summary**

- 1.1 AAH Planning Consultants have been commissioned by Land Allocation Ltd (“The Appellant”), to prepare and submit this appeal under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against South Northamptonshire Council’s refusal of outline planning permission for residential development of up to 35 dwellings, with means of access considered on land south of Station Road, Blisworth. All other matters are reserved for subsequent approval.
- 1.2 This statement sets out the appellant’s case in light of the Council’s refusal of Outline Planning Permission, application reference S/2020/0930/MAO for residential development on the appeal site. The appellant’s case is such that the submission is considered to constitute Sustainable Development in accordance with NPPF when taken as a whole despite conflict with the Development Plan on the appeal proposals location outside of development limits.
- 1.3 This appeal statement confirms that oversupply from previous years should not be deducted and therefore the 5-year housing land supply position is marginally above at 5.18 years. The requirement to maintain a 5-year housing land supply position is a minimum requirement and it has been upheld at numerous appeals that it is not a ceiling. The need to significantly boost the supply of housing (paragraph 59 of the Framework) is a further significant material consideration.
- 1.4 This appeal statement establishes that there are significant social, economic and environmental benefits of the proposed development and that these benefits are material considerations that should be given substantial weight. The appeal proposals comprise sustainable development in accordance with the NPPF taken as a whole and there are material considerations of sufficient weight to outweigh the conflict with the Development Plan.
- 1.5 The Inspector is, therefore, respectfully requested that the appeal is allowed.

## 2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 AAH Planning Consultants have been commissioned by Land Allocation Ltd ('The Appellant'), to prepare and submit this appeal under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against South Northamptonshire Council's refusal of outline planning permission reference S/2020/0930/MAO. This statement sets out the appellant's case in light of the Council's refusal of an outline planning application for residential development at the site.
- 2.2 AAH Planning Consultants are members of the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA). The submission is an Outline Planning Application for residential development with means of access considered on Land South of Station Road, Blisworth ('the site'). All other matters are reserved for subsequent approval.
- 2.3 The decision for the planning application was refused on 6<sup>th</sup> October (Appendix A), which gave the following reasons for refusal:

- 1. The application site lies outside Blisworth, beyond its established built-up limits and outside the settlement confines for the village as designated in the adopted South Northamptonshire Local Plan (Part 2). The site, therefore, lies within open countryside. The adopted Development Plan seeks to meet identified housing needs via an urban-focused distribution of development which concentrates development primarily in the rural service centres of Brackley and Towcester, whilst limiting development in the remainder of the rural areas in order to promote sustainable growth, reduce the need to travel and to protect the intrinsic character of the countryside and rural area. In this case, the application site is detached from the village and does not integrate well with the existing built form of the village, the site surrounds and the character of the area and would therefore result in moderate adverse landscape and visual effects.*

*The development proposed would therefore conflict with the adopted Development Plan as a whole, in particular, Policies SA, S1, S3 and R1 of the adopted West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy 2014 and Policies SS1, SS2, and LH1 of the adopted South Northamptonshire Local Plan (Part 2). In addition, it would conflict with paragraph 170 of the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Guidance. The Council can demonstrate a 5-year supply of deliverable housing sites (with the appropriate buffer), such that the policies which are most important for determining any application on this site, are not out of date and the presumption under Paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF does not apply. Given the Council's evidenced housing delivery, there is no overriding need to deliver 35 homes on this site in contravention of the Development Plan. Material planning*

*considerations sufficient to outweigh the provisions of the Development Plan in this instance have not been demonstrated.*

2. *The proposal will harm the setting of designated Heritage Asset (the Grade II Listed Building at 25-27 (Grafton Villas) Northampton Road due to the loss of the rural agrarian setting; this identified harm is significant, albeit less than substantial. The public benefits of the scheme are not considered to outweigh the harm to the setting of the Listed Building and the proposal is also contrary to Policies HE1, HE5 and HE6 of the adopted South Northamptonshire Local Plan (Part 2).*
3. *Policies INF 1 and INF 2 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy 2014 are concerned with infrastructure and developer contributions, and state that 'developers will be expected, in negotiation with the Local Planning Authority to make provision for related infrastructure and community facilities the need for which arises from the development'. This is consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework. In the absence of a signed legal undertaking the Council cannot be satisfied that the development proposal would make sufficient provision to mitigate the impacts of the development on existing community services and infrastructure serving the development including early years and primary education infrastructure; affordable housing; public open space; refuse/recycling infrastructure; libraries and primary healthcare infrastructure. The application is therefore contrary to Policies H2, INF 1 and INF 2 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy 2014, Policies LH8, INF1 and GS1 of the South Northamptonshire Local Plan (Part 2) and the adopted Supplementary Planning Document 'Developer Contributions' (December 2010).*

2.4 The key issues in respect of the appeal is the principle of housing within the open countryside and the perceived level of harm the development would cause to the landscape character of the local area. Further, the Council consider that the proposal would result in harm to the setting of designated heritage assets, albeit the harm is less than substantial. In addition, the Council consider the proposed development failed to secure provisions for affordable housing, education, refuse/recycling, public open space, libraries and healthcare contributions. Each of the reasons for refusal will be dealt with within this statement. The planning officers report is provided at Appendix B.

2.5 This appeal is supported by a heritage appeal statement (Lanpro) to address heritage matters raised as part of the outline planning application. The heritage appeal statement further justifies the development and concludes that the proposed development does not make any appreciable contribution to the significance of nearby heritage assets

### **3.0 Proposed Development and Site Description**

- 3.1 A description of the site and development proposed is contained within the Planning Supporting Statement submitted with the application and included within the appeal submission documents.

## 4.0 Planning Policy and Guidance

### Legislative Background

- 4.1 This section sets out the relevant planning policy relating to the matters that are before the Inspector for consideration in addition to some wider policy context which will assist in considering the appeal site and the role that it has in meeting overall Development Plan objectives.
- 4.2 The Appellant reserves their position to make a subsequent comment in the event that the Development plan position alters through the determination process, or the position of the LPA alters.
- 4.3 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This is reiterated in Paragraph 47 of the NPPF February 2019 in that it states that:
- “Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.”*
- 4.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published February 2019 sets out the government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. This guidance is a material consideration in determining applications.

### The Development Plan

- 4.5 In this respect, the Development Plan consists of those policies of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (compiled with Daventry District and Northampton Borough Councils, adopted 15th December 2014) and South Northamptonshire Part 2 Local Plan 2011-2029 (adopted July 2020). The saved policies of the South Northamptonshire Local Plan (1997) have been superseded by the newly adopted Local Plan.
- 4.6 South Northamptonshire District Council's spatial strategy and strategic objectives are set out at the beginning of its 2014 Joint Core Strategy. It states that the vision for South Northamptonshire District is one of sustainable growth, renewal and opportunity. The most relevant policies in relation to the appeal site are:

### West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (2014)

- Policy SA – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

- Policy S1- Distribution of Development
- Policy S3 – Scale and Distribution of Housing Development
- Policy S10 – Sustainable Development Principles
- Policy S11 – Low Carbon and Renewable Energy
- Policy C2 – New Developments
- Policy RC2 – Community Needs
- Policy H1 - Housing Density and Mix and Type of Dwellings
- Policy H2 - Affordable Housing
- Policy H4 – Sustainable Housing
- Policy BN1 – Green Infrastructure Connections
- Policy BN2 – Biodiversity
- Policy BN5 – The Historic Environment and Landscape
- Policy BN7 – Flood Risk
- Policy BN7A - Water Supply, Quality and Wastewater Infrastructure
- Policy INF1 - Approach to Infrastructure Delivery
- Policy INF2 - Contributions to Infrastructure Requirements
- Policy R1 - Spatial Strategy for the Rural Areas
- Policy R3 – A Transport Strategy for the Rural Areas

- 4.7 The West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy was adopted on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2014 and subsequently became 5 years old on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2019. As per Regulation 10A Town and Country (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended), local planning authorities are required to review local plans every five years, starting from the date of the adoption of the local plan, in accordance with section 23 of the Act. A review of the WNJCS Local Plan Part 1 Policies against the NPPF (February 2019) was supported by the West Northamptonshire Joint Planning and Infrastructure Board on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2020 and has subsequently been endorsed by Daventry District, Northampton Borough and South Northamptonshire Councils. This review is provided at Appendix C.
- 4.8 The majority of the policies with the WNJCS were considered to be up to date and consistent with the NPPF; some policies which were considered to be out of date have been replaced by the newly adopted Part 2 Plan.
- 4.9 In relation to housing need, the most pertinent policy is Policy S3, Scale and Distribution of Housing Development. As stated in Paragraph 73 of the NPPF, once a local plan becomes five years old, unless the policies within that plan have been subject to a review, the local housing need should be calculated using the standard methodology. As detailed in Paragraph 4.7 above, a review of the WNJCS policies against the NPPF was conducted in late 2019/early

2020. In relation to Policy S3, it was considered that the use of the standard method produces a local housing need requirement which is c.23% lower than the residual JCS requirement. Therefore, having regard to the NPPF objective of boosting housing supply, since the plan requirement exceeds that of the local housing need figure when using the standard methodology, it was considered that as per Paragraph 60 of the NPPF, this is a justification of exceptional circumstances in which the standard method should not be applied, despite the plan being more than five years old.

- 4.10 Furthermore, the WNJCS as a whole is currently subject to a review as part of the preparation of the West Northamptonshire Strategic Plan (WNSP) which will be jointly prepared by Daventry District, Northampton Borough and South Northamptonshire Councils. Once reviewed, and where appropriate, the emerging Plan will replace policies that address the strategic priorities for the area in the adopted WNJCS. In relation to Policy S3, the review and emerging plan will review the scale of housing provision using the national methodology to calculate the Local Housing Need as a starting point. An issues version of the West Northamptonshire Strategic Plan was subject to public consultation from August to October 2019. The most recent Local Development Scheme Timetable suggests that a Regulation 19 consultation of the draft plan was to take place in June 2020. It does not appear that the review and emerging plan have progressed as quickly as anticipated and are subsequently delayed. Due to the early stage of the plan, it cannot currently be given any weight in the determination of planning applications, or this appeal, although the weight that can be attributed to the emerging plan will increase as it comes further forward, per Paragraph 48 of the NPPF.

#### **South Northamptonshire Part 2 Local Plan 2011-2029**

- 4.11 The South Northamptonshire Part 2 Local Plan 2011-2029 was adopted on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2020 and replaced the remaining ‘saved’ policies of the 1997 South Northamptonshire Local Plan and WNJCS Policy H6: Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Show People and Policy H2: Affordable Housing. The Part 2 Settlements and Countryside Local Plan (Part 2 Plan) builds on the policies of the adopted West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy, further guides planning decisions in the area and will cover the whole of the administrative area of South Northamptonshire, including areas identified within the WNJCS as being required to meet Northampton’s needs. The following policies of the Part 2 Plan are considered pertinent to any application for the development of this site:

- Policy SS1 – The settlement hierarchy
- Policy SS2 – General development and design principles
- Policy LH1 – Residential development inside and outside settlement confines

- Policy LH8 – Affordable housing
- Policy LH10 – Housing mix and type
- Policy INF1 – Infrastructure delivery and funding
- Policy INF4 – Electric vehicle charging points
- Policy GS1 – Open space, sport and recreation
- Policy HE1 – Significance of Heritage Assets
- Policy HE5 – Listed Buildings
- Policy HE6 – Conservation Areas
- Policy HE7 – Non-Designated Heritage Assets
- Policy NE3 – Green Infrastructure Corridors
- Policy NE4 – Trees, woodlands and hedgerows
- Policy NE5 – Biodiversity and geodiversity

### **Supplementary Planning Guidance and Documents**

4.12 South Northamptonshire District Council produced Supplementary Planning Guidance up until 2004. Whilst they have been replaced with Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs), they remain a material consideration in planning decisions and have been taken into account when considering the proposed site and development:

- Listed Buildings
- Planning Out Crime
- Residential Design in the Countryside
- Trees and Development Part 1 and 2
- Design Guide

4.13 Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) are used to provide more detail and information about the policies and proposals found in Development Plan Documents (DPDs). Although SPDs are not part of the statutory Development Plan, they do however form part of the Local Development Framework (LDF) and are therefore a material consideration in determining planning applications. The following SPDs have been referred to and are considered relevant to the application:

- Air Quality (adopted September 2019)
- Developer Contributions (adopted March 2011)
- Energy and Development (adopted March 2007)
- Parking: Standards and Design (adopted 2018)

## **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**

- 4.14 The latest NPPF was published in February 2019 and sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. The NPPF 2019 provides the latest version of the document and reflects the most up to date position of the Government on a range of matters. Prior to the 2019 publication of the NPPF, it was preceded by a revised national policy in July 2018, some 6 years after its first publication in March 2012.
- 4.15 The Introduction to the NPPF 2019 reiterates that applications for planning permission should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise; that the NPPF is a material consideration in planning decisions; and that the Framework should be read as a whole.

### **The Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development**

- 4.16 The NPPF states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Paragraph 8 states that achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across the different objectives). These objectives are:
- an economic objective;
  - a social objective; and
  - an environmental objective.
- 4.17 Paragraph 11 of the NPPF provides the presumption in favour of sustainable development (replacing Para. 14 of the previous NPPF). For decision-taking, this states:
- c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or*
- d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:*
- i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or*
  - ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.”*

## **The Decision-Taking Process**

- 4.18 The NPPF further re-affirms the statutory role of the development plan and material considerations in decision-taking (paragraph 47). The Framework also clearly sets out that:

*“The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making.” (paragraph 12).*

- 4.19 The NPPF states at paragraph 38 that planning should be a creative exercise rather than being focused on scrutiny, stating that:

*“Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available, including brownfield registers and permissions in principle, and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.”*

## **Delivering a Sufficient Supply of Homes**

- 4.20 Paragraph 59 sets out the support for the Government’s objective to significantly boost the supply of homes and that land with planning permission is developed without delay.

- 4.21 Paragraphs 73 – 76 relates to ‘Maintaining supply and delivery’, with Paragraph 74 stating that a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites must be demonstrated. This is to ensure that a constant shorter-term supply of new homes is maintained by an authority. Where an authority cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing land, the presumption in favour of sustainable development applies.

- 4.22 The NPPF also sets out the policy framework surrounding a raft of considerations that need to be considered in regard to achieving sustainable development. The relevant policies are identified in the preceding paragraphs.

## **Developer Contributions**

- 4.23 Paragraph 34 states that plans should set out the contributions expected from development which should include setting levels and types of affordable housing provision along with other infrastructure (such as that needed for education, health, transport, flood and water management, green and digital infrastructure). Paragraph 56 then reiterates the statutory tests of Regulation 122 (2) of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 regarding securing planning obligations as in proposed contributions need to be:

- necessary;
- directly related to the development; and
- fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind.

### **Promoting Healthy and Safe Communities**

4.24 Section 8 of the NPPF states in paragraph 94 that it is important that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of new and existing communities with local planning authorities charged to take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meet this requirement. In regard to health provision, paragraph 92 sets out the need to provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community need setting out five criteria to consider including planning positively for the provision of community facilities and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments.

### **Promoting Sustainable Transport**

4.25 Sustainable transport is addressed in Section 9. Paragraph 108 seeks to ensure new development can:

- a) Create appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes, given the type of development and its location;*
- b) Provide safe and suitable access to the Site for all users; and*
- c) Mitigate any significant impacts from the development on the transport network (in terms of capacity and congestion), or on highway safety to an acceptable degree.*

4.26 Paragraph 109 then advises that development should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

### **Making Effective Use of Land and Achieving Well-Designed Places**

4.27 Section 11 of the NPPF seeks to ensure schemes efficiently uses land for development and this balanced with Section 12, which emphasises the need to provide well-designed places that function well and add to the overall quality of the area; maintaining a strong sense of place that is safe, inclusive and accessible.

- 4.28 Reading these together, this highlights the importance of ensuring developable land is not wasted but also that proposals should ensure they are designed appropriately for their setting and taking into account site-specific constraints.

### **Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change**

- 4.29 Paragraph 155 highlights that new development should avoid areas of high flood risk and that they should be made safe from flooding for their lifetime and not increase the possibility of flooding elsewhere.

### **Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment**

- 4.30 Protecting the natural environment is detailed in Section 15 of the NPPF. Paragraph 175, in particular, highlights the need to avoid ecological impact where possible and if this is not feasible, to undertake mitigation or seek relevant compensation. Paragraph 178 seeks to ensure that planning decisions establish that ground conditions are suitable for development proposals in terms of land contamination and stability and where issues are identified, land is made safe through appropriate measures.

- 4.31 Similarly, the NPPF in paragraph 180 outlines that planning decisions need to ensure new development is appropriate for its location taking into account factors such as noise impacts which would give rise to significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life.

- 4.32 To accompany the NPPF, Central Government has also published guidance on how to interpret and apply national planning policy. This is contained in the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) which is a live document which Central Government updates periodically. In relation to this application specifically, it provides information in relation to:

- Design – Emphasises the need to achieve a good quality design which responds in a practical and creative way to site-specific issues to create a sense of place.
- Housing – Points to the need for local planning authorities to take into account the definition of affordable housing provided in Annex 2 of the NPPF and to ensure needs are met in their area.

### **Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment**

- 4.33 Paragraph 189 of the NPPF states that:

*‘In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than*

*is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes or has the potential to include heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.'*

4.34 Paragraph 192 of the NPPF states that:

In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation
- the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality
- the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness

4.35 Paragraph 193 of the NPPF states that:

*When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.'*

4.36 Paragraph 194 states that:

*'Any harm to, or loss of the Significance of a heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of:*

*a) grade II listed building, park or garden should be exceptional.*

*b) assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, battlefields, grade I and II\* listed buildings, grade I and II\* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional.'*

4.37 Paragraph 170 of the NPPF states that:

*'Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:*

- a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);*
- b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland; '*

## 5.0 The Appellants Statement of Case

5.1 This part of the Statement sets out the Appellants statement of case against the Council's decision. Given the reasons for refusal, this part of the statement will focus on the following matters:

- Reason 1 - The Principle of Development
- Reason 2 – Impact on Heritage Assets
- Reason 3 - Legal Agreement

5.2 Following an assessment of the above matters, the statement addresses the 'Planning Balance' in Section 6 considering the benefits of the scheme against any environmental harm.

### **Reason 1 - The Principle of Development**

#### Housing Need and Five Year Supply Position

5.3 The first reason for refusal, detailed in section 2 above, considers that the appeal site proposes residential development beyond its established built-up limits and outside the settlement confines for the village, which the Council consider to be contrary to Policies SA, S1, S3 and R1 of the JCS and Policies SS1, SS2 and LH1 of the adopted Local Plan.

5.4 Policy S3: Scale and Distribution of Housing Development of the Joint Core Strategy make provision for 42,620 dwellings in the plan area during the period 2011 to 2029. Within South Northamptonshire, the annual local housing requirement is 516. The draft standard methodology, which has recently been consulted upon, increases the local housing need to 864. This increase results in the Council being required to provide additional houses which could create a shortfall in the future.

5.5 The most recent Housing Land Availability Study (July 2020) considers that the Council can demonstrate 8.26 years supply of deliverable housing. It should be noted that this calculation deducts the oversupply provided in previous years. However, an Inspector rejects that oversupply should be deducted from future supply as it is out of step with the overall national objective to boost the supply of housing. (Paragraph 14 of appeal reference 3206346 provided at Appendix D).

5.6 In recognition of the above appeal decision, the Council have provided a housing land supply figure with no oversupply from previous years deducted. This calculation demonstrates that the Council have 5.18 years of deliverable housing land supply, which is only slightly above the five-year housing land supply requirement. It should be noted that neither calculation includes

the Northampton Related Development Area (NRDA), which includes several areas of South Northamptonshire. The NRDA is subject to its own calculated supply.

- 5.7 Whilst the Council currently consider they can demonstrate a 5-year deliverable supply of housing, the 5-year requirement is not a ceiling, as demonstrated in a number of appeals including a recovered appeal (Appeal Ref: 3214377, provided in full at Appendix D) which at Paragraph 53, the Secretary of State confirms that *“Although the local authority can now demonstrate a supply of housing land above 5 years, this figures is a baseline and not a ceiling.”* In addition, the Secretary of State also gave significant weight to the housing delivery the proposal could provide, due to the Governments objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, in spite of the Councils ability to demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply (Paragraph 53). This approach was taken again in another recently recovered appeal (Appeal Ref: 3198996, provided in full at Appendix D) where the Secretary of State gives significant weight to the proposals’ supply of housing and associated affordable housing, despite agreeing that the local authority in question could demonstrate a deliverable five-year housing land supply, due to the boosting of the supply of housing being a key Government objective. (Paragraph 43).
- 5.8 South Northamptonshire District Council should therefore be actively approving development proposals, which means that this is an opportune time to move forward with the proposed residential development.
- 5.9 Irrespective of whether the Council have a five-year supply or not, greater weight should be given to the most recently adopted planning policy of the 2019 NPPF and paragraph 59 which maintains that it is the Government’s stated objective to significantly boost the supply of housing. This is a significant material consideration.
- 5.10 With regards to the current Covid-19 pandemic, the Inspector cites in paragraphs 109 - 111 of appeal ref: 3238048 that it is likely to have implications for the housebuilding industry as with other sectors of the economy. The lockdown has resulted in a number of developers temporarily closing their construction sites to protect employee and customer welfare. The economic effects of Covid-19 are unknown at this stage. The Inspector also cites that customer confidence is also likely to be reduced with a consequent effect on the buying and selling of property. In the above appeal, the Appellant contended that the effects would be felt for a 3 to 6 month period in which the Inspector concluded that this does not seem unreasonable. As a result, the recent pandemic would impact upon the Council’s deliverability on the 5-year housing land supply and upon the accuracy of the Council’s trajectory. The Council acknowledge that impacts of the Pandemic will need to be monitored and adds further weight to the fragile 5 year housing land supply position of 5.18 years.

5.11 The appeal scheme gives rise to social, environmental and economic benefits which are material considerations in the determination of this appeal. The benefits of the scheme are set out in section 6 of this statement.

#### Landscape and Character Impacts

5.12 Reason for refusal 1 of the decision also considers that *“the application site is detached from the village and does not integrate well with the existing built form of the village, the site surrounds and the character of the area and would therefore result in moderate adverse landscape and visual effects”*. The proposed development is considered to be contrary to JCS Policies R1 and S1(D) and Policy SS2 of the Part 2 Local Plan. The relevant elements of those policies have been provided below:

- Policy R1: Spatial Strategy in the Rural Areas

- b) not affect open land which is of particular significance to the form and character of the village;

- c) preserve and enhance historic buildings and areas of historic or environmental importance including those identified in conservation area appraisals and village design statements;

- e) be of an appropriate scale to the existing settlement

- Policy S1: The Distribution of Development

- (D) new development in the rural areas will be limited with the emphasis being on:

- 1) enhancing and maintaining the distinctive character and vitality of rural communities;

- 4) respecting the quality of tranquillity.

- Policy SS2: General Development and Design Principles

- a) maintains the individual identity of towns and villages and their distinct parts, does not result in physical coalescence that would harm this identity and does not result in the unacceptable loss of undeveloped land, open spaces and locally important views of particular significance to the form and character of a settlement;

5.13 The Officers report at paragraph 9.24 concludes that *“there will be adverse visual and landscape effects within the site itself, within its immediate surrounding context and further away from the site at a distance in common with all development where a greenfield site*

*changes to a residential development. However, in this case the applicant's own LVIA identifies adverse effects from several receptors and from different viewpoints. The landscape and visual impacts are adverse in varying degrees and in contravention of the Local Plan policy SS2 and R1 of the Joint Core Strategy".*

- 5.14 A Landscape Visual Appraisal dated January 2020 and Landscape Response to Pre-Application Enquiry dated May 2020 produced by AAH Planning Consultants submitted with the planning application is included within the appeal submission documents.
- 5.15 The aim of the Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) is to assess both the potential landscape character and visual amenity effects of the development. The assessment also takes into account a series of comprehensive landscape mitigation measures which are considered material to the findings and predications set out within Tables 3 and 4 of the submitted LVA.
- 5.16 The LVA includes a review of the landscape character at Chapter 3.0 where it notes that although the landscape displays a mixture of arable and pasture farming, it is relatively well settled with numerous villages scattered throughout the area bordering the River Tove and its tributaries. The landscape characteristics are defined by the landform as it rises along High Street and Courteenhall Road where glimpses can also be seen of the landscape beyond offering a more rural context to the settlement.
- 5.17 The LVA at Table 4 assesses the potential effects of the development on key views to provide an overall understanding of the impacts on visual amenity and how the rural context of the settlement might potentially be affected. The findings show that the landscape is generally considered to show limited levels of visibility and has a number of individual positive benefits that contribute to the containment across the area. To the south, the site is contained by the built form of Blisworth, which is generally dense and restricts views, especially to the south west of High Street where the buildings are significantly elevated on higher ground.
- 5.18 The rolling character of the outlying landscape is also evident in the settlement itself with High Street rising from the canal and peripheral roads dipping at the northern edge, which all serve to contain the site in its southern context. To the north, there is the West Coast Main Line Railway, which forms an embankment clothed in dense tree cover, which provides a high level of containment. Furthermore, there is a strong hedgerow on the northern boundary of the site, which in combination with the planting within gardens on Station Road, provide further containment. To the west, the site is contained by the strong vegetation cover along the land drain and by the tall hedgerow bordering the Grand Union Canal and then the rising land towards Gayton Road at Hill Farm. To the east, the site is contained by the strong tree cover along Northampton Road and the land rising towards Blisworth Lodge. The landscape is

influenced by the open landscape to the west and the east due to loss of hedgerows from intensive agriculture, however, given the landform falls towards the Site and that these areas support a limited number of footpaths the effects would be less apparent due to the reduced extent of visual receptors.

- 5.19 In terms of the rural setting of the village, the LVA notes that the settlement of Blisworth occupies an undulating area with a gentle rise in topography along Courteenhall Road to the east that occupies a broad spur. The land then rises to the far west towards the A43 Towcester Bypass and towards the south east at Stoke Road towards Blisworth Lodge. Chapter 3.0 (Table 1) also notes that the built form characteristics of the character area (LSA 01) are typified by the northern section of the settlement of Blisworth that dominates the landscape in views from the west where residential areas have expanded following a linear pattern along the route of the Grand Union Canal, Northampton Road and streams to the east. These residential areas have taken the form of cul-de-sacs and self-contained estates that are largely devoid of tree cover giving a relatively 'harsh' setting to this extent of the settlement. In terms of any associations with the outlying landscape, Table 1 also notes that Blisworth is a generally dense settlement that restricts views, especially to the south west of the High Street where the buildings are elevated on higher ground.
- 5.20 Chapter 3.0 of the LVA also notes that the site has 'wide-set' native hedgerows (or narrow tree belts up to 4m wide) and these hedgerows define the north and east boundaries which border Northampton Road and Station Road. To the east of Northampton Road, the land then rises sharply to form open grassland fields that are framed on the horizon by dense hedgerow boundaries (also containing a high level of tree cover). The LVA also notes that the land to the immediate north of the West Coast Mainline Railway is particularly well wooded and this section of railway line is on raised embankment. The gardens to the residential properties also add to the tree cover particularly to the north of the site at Grafton Villas. The LVA at Figure 5 provides a Landscape Strategy Plan to show how the site hedgerows would be retained and enhanced with new native planting.
- 5.21 The LVA at Chapter 4.0 provides an appraisal of visual amenity taking into account a number of key views from the Study Area, such as residential properties, road users, recreational routes and recreational places of value and heritage assets. These views include:
- VP01: Station Road
  - VP02: Northampton Road at Junction with Station Road
  - VP03: Northampton Road
  - VP04: Station Road West
  - VP5A: Grand Union Canal South

- VP5B: Grand Union Canal Central
- VP5C: Grand Union Canal North
- VP06: Chapel Lane in Blisworth
- VP07: Gayton Road at Hill Farm
- VP08: Gayton Road at Milton Malsor

5.22 With regards to visual amenity effects, the LVA findings at Table 4 provides ten representative viewpoints taken at both close and mid-distant locations. Of these ten viewpoints, there are just two (VP01 and VP02) that yield moderate adverse effects, which are reduced to a moderate to minor adverse level (with landscape mitigation).

5.23 Of the remaining views, this would yield minor adverse (VP03), minor adverse to negligible (VP04) and negligible effects (VP5A, VP5B, VP5C, VP06, VP07 and VP08). Viewpoint VP06 is taken from Chapel Lane and shows how built form and vegetation close down views towards the site, although the field to the south of the site can be seen in views along Chapel Lane. The Accurate Visual Representations (Appendix C of the LVA) show how the development would be set behind the planting behind intervening gardens along Chapel Lane and would hardly be visible, even during the winter season. It is acknowledged that since the site is a greenfield site, some adverse landscape effects are to be expected. The LVA, therefore, predicts minor adverse effects on landscape character for each of the three landscape character sub-areas (LSA01, LSA02 and LSA03) assessed.

5.24 On balance, of the representative viewpoints provided, two would yield minor adverse effects, and the six that would yield negligible effects are mostly mid-distant views since the site affords a very tight visual envelope. Taking the two remaining views that would yield moderate to minor adverse effects, these are close range where the baseline situation would hardly change since the development would be well set back from the site boundaries and would only be partially visible to the right of the view in each case. Furthermore, the development would be almost screened by the existing hedgerow in the foreground of the view. The Council's judgement on moderate adverse effects (that underpins the reason for refusal) is weighted towards only two views (VP01 and VP02), which appears to be wholly unrepresentative and misleading.

5.25 The Council's judgement on adverse visual effects also implies that the development would be perceived as being harmful away from the site at a distance, which is not the case, as detailed within the LVA. The LVA predicts there are no adverse effects from a distance, even of a minor level. The site affords a very tight visual envelope as evidenced by the assessment work presented within the LVA that includes a desktop study to identify potential viewpoints and ZTV analysis (Figure 4) which seek to show the broad visual extent of the Site and the

Development. The illustrative visibility is then verified on-site through detailed field survey work. Finally, the LVA includes Accurate Visual Representations (AVRs) that are fully survey verified, presented as wireframe images and undertaken in accordance with Landscape Institute best practice guidance *Visual Representation of Development Proposals Technical Guidance Note 06/19, 17th September 2019*. The AVRs are found within Appendix C of the submitted LVA.

- 5.26 It is the Appellants view that the Council's judgement is misleading with a tilted balance towards the site's visibility when the site is hardly visible save for close-range views from Station Road and Northampton Road. The predicted effects on landscape character, in the main, give rise to only minor adverse effects. Whilst the findings of the LVA give some adverse effects, they are not of sufficient merit to substantiate reason a reason refusal alone, since overall, the effects would not give rise to a significant level of harm.
- 5.27 In summary, the LVA concludes that through careful analysis and evaluation during the initial site selection stages consideration has been given to means of enhancing the landscape character and visual amenity of the development. The site is located at the edge of the existing settlement of Blisworth and is largely influenced by its close built proximity. Furthermore, through careful planning, siting and design during the assessment process, additional mitigation measures have been considered to ensure the development will be sympathetic to local character including the surrounding built environment as well as its immediate landscape setting.
- 5.28 The development notes the importance of good design and includes measures that will add to the overall quality of the area by providing visually attractive and good architecture, an appropriate layout and effective landscape design, and this is presented as part of a Landscape Strategy Plan (Figure 05 of the LVA).
- 5.29 The development will seek to improve the landscape character and visual amenity of the application site and its wider landscape setting beyond its baseline condition by sustaining an appropriate amount and mix of housing types that will include important green space and linkages to the wider green infrastructure network of the Northamptonshire District.
- 5.30 It is therefore considered that the proposed development would not result in any significant adverse impacts on the landscape that would be sufficient enough to outweigh the benefits of the scheme.

## **Reason 2: Heritage Assets**

- 5.31 The second reason for refusal relates to harm to the setting of heritage assets and reads:

*The proposal will harm the setting of designated Heritage Asset (the Grade II Listed Building at 25-27 (Grafton Villas) Northampton Road due to the loss of the rural agrarian setting; this identified harm is significant, albeit less than substantial. The public benefits of the scheme are not considered to outweigh the harm to the setting of the Listed Building and the proposal is also contrary to Policies HE1, HE5 and HE6 of the adopted South Northamptonshire Local Plan (Part 2).*

- 5.32 National guidance on Heritage Assets is contained within Chapter 16 of the NPPF. Paragraph 189 of the NPPF states that: *“In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary.”* This is supported by paragraph 190 of the NPPF.
- 5.33 Further to this, Paragraphs 193 and 194 of the NPPF states *“When considering the impact of a Proposed Development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance. Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.”*
- 5.34 Paragraph 196 stipulates that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use. Paragraph 197 goes on to state that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage assets.
- 5.35 As detailed within the Planning Statement which accompanies this appeal submission, there are two listed buildings within 100 metres north of the site, and these are:
- 25-27 Grafton Villas (II), a pair of semi-detached cottages;
  - Railway Bridge (II), a single arched bridge spanning Main Road to Northampton

- 5.36 The outline planning application was accompanied by a combined Archaeology and Heritage Statement. The chartered heritage consultant concluded that the topography and existing development, trees and hedgerows screen the proposed development from the Conservation Areas to the west and south and ensure that the impact would be neutral to Blisworth Conservation Area to the south and west. The harm to the setting and significance of the Grafton Villas Grade II Listed Building is assessed as being *less than substantial* as the existing hedgerows to the south and west, along with enhanced planting, provide screening to minimise the impact of the development.
- 5.37 The Council's Conservation Officer considers that any harm to the setting of the Grade II Listed Building on Northampton Road is less than substantial. However, further concludes that "*...the development does have a harmful impact on the setting of the listed building. However, the correct test to apply first is set out in Para 196 this requires consideration of whether the public benefits of the scheme outweigh the harm, in this instance whether the proposal will fulfil the economic, social or environmental objectives of the NPPF. Only when the public benefit is considered to outweigh the harm should consideration be given as to how the development can mitigate the effects of the development of the setting*".
- 5.38 To support this appeal, a Heritage Appeal Statement has been carried out by Lanpro (December 2020) which is provided at Appendix D. This has been prepared to assess the potential impact on the historic built environment arising from the proposed development.
- 5.39 This statement establishes that there are significant social, economic and environmental benefits of the proposed development and that these benefits are material considerations that should be given substantial weight.
- 5.40 The heritage appeal statement has assessed the potential heritage impacts of the proposed development and has addressed the key heritage issues raised by the Council. It is considered that the Conservation Officer comments cited in the reasons for refusal, are flawed as they have not made a full assessment of the way in which setting contributes to the significance of the designated heritage assets identified, or defined how they might be sensitive to development.
- 5.41 The heritage appeal statement provided at Appendix D has assessed the aspects of setting that make a contribution to the significance of the designated heritage assets and has found that the appeal site does not make any appreciable contribution to that significance and as such it is contended that paragraph 196 of the NPPF does not apply as there is no harm to be balanced. Furthermore, development within the appeal site will not result in any harm to the significance of any designated heritage asset in the vicinity.

- 5.42 With regards to the other designated assets around the site such as the Blisworth Conservation Area, Grand Union Canal and listed buildings within the main village of Blisworth, the Conservation Officer accepts that the topography and existing development, trees and hedgerows screen the proposed development from the Conservation Area to the west and south would ensure that the impact would be neutral to nearby Heritage Assets.
- 5.43 It is therefore considered that the proposed development does not make any appreciable contribution to the significance of nearby heritage assets and there are no heritage reasons why the appeal cannot be allowed.

### **Reason 3: Legal Agreement**

- 5.44 Reason for refusal 3 relates to planning obligations and states:

*Policies INF 1 and INF 2 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy 2014 are concerned with infrastructure and developer contributions, and state that 'developers will be expected, in negotiation with the Local Planning Authority to make provision for related infrastructure and community facilities the need for which arises from the development'. This is consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework. In the absence of a signed legal undertaking the Council cannot be satisfied that the development proposal would make sufficient provision to mitigate the impacts of the development on existing community services and infrastructure serving the development including early years and primary education infrastructure; affordable housing; public open space; refuse/recycling infrastructure; libraries and primary healthcare infrastructure. The application is therefore contrary to Policies H2, INF 1 and INF 2 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy 2014, Policies LH8, INF1 and GS1 of the South Northamptonshire Local Plan (Part 2) and the adopted Supplementary Planning Document 'Developer Contributions' (December 2010).*

- 5.45 The NPPF requires that: *"Plans should set out the contributions expected from development. This should include setting out the levels and types of affordable housing provision required, along with other infrastructure (such as that needed for education, health, transport, flood and water management, green and digital infrastructure). Such policies should not undermine the deliverability of the plan"* (Paragraph 34).
- 5.46 Core Strategy Policy INF1: Approach to Infrastructure Delivery seeks contributions towards new or improved transport, health, education, open space and green infrastructure in relation to the development proposed. This policy is supported by the Framework in paragraphs 54 and 56. The Appellant is committed to delivering the required developer contributions which can be summarised as follows:

- 50% affordable housing provision
- £139,020 toward Early Years Provision
- £139,020 towards Primary School Provision
- £8,365 towards Library provision
- £17,794.16 towards Healthcare provision
- £70 per dwelling towards refuse and recycling

5.47 The Indicative layout shows the required areas of open space, and the appellant is willing to make the necessary contributions towards off-site children's play / allotments as is reasonable to and related to the development proposed.

5.48 The maintenance of the proposed public open spaces, provision of equipment and the upkeep of other key existing open spaces will be secured by obligations as part of a Unilateral Undertaking.

5.49 It is considered that any required contributions for open space, education, highway works and affordable housing can be agreed as part of the appeal process and will form part of the Unilateral Undertaking to be submitted. This will address reason for refusal 3.

## 6.0 The Planning Balance

6.1 This part of the statement considers the Planning Balance. Whilst the Council consider they have a demonstrable five-year housing land supply. The Appellant considers that oversupply from previous years should not be deducted evidenced by appeal decisions. The requirement to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply should not be seen as a ceiling also evidenced by appeal decisions. The need to boost the supply of housing is a material consideration along with the social, economic and environmental benefits capable of outweighing the provisions of the Development Plan as evidenced by recent appeal decisions.

6.2 The proposal provides a number of key benefits, including affordable housing which in recently recovered appeals, has been afforded significant weight by the Secretary of State against other councils who also can demonstrate a five-year supply of housing. The Economic, Social and Environmental benefits are a material consideration.

### The Benefits

6.3 The benefits of the proposal are considered to be:

#### The Delivery of Housing

6.4 A key benefit, and consideration of this appeal, is the contribution the development will make to the delivery of housing in the District. The 'Housing White Paper: Fixing Our Broken Housing Market' (February 2017) makes clear that this country is in a housing crisis now. The Prime Minister's Foreword to the Housing White Paper is unequivocal:

*"Our broken housing market is one of the greatest barriers to progress in Britain today...*

*The starting point is to build more homes...we need to build many more houses, of the type people want to live in, in the places they want to live. To do so requires a comprehensive approach that tackles failure at every point in the system".*

6.5 The Secretary of State's Foreword goes on to state:

*"This country doesn't have enough homes. That's not a personal opinion or a political calculation. It's a simple statement of fact.*

*For decades the pace of house building has been sluggish at best. As a result, the number of new homes has not kept pace with a growing population. And that, in turn, has created a market which fails to work for far too many people. That has to change. We need radical, lasting reform that will get more built right now and for many years to come".*

6.6 The consideration and determination of the Planning Appeal must be taken in the context of the Housing White Paper.

6.7 The aims of the Housing White Paper are mirrored in the NPPF, which at Paragraph 59 states that:

*“To support the Government’s objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed and that land with permission is developed without unnecessary delay.”*

6.8 Given the nature of the scheme delivering new housing, this site not only plays a vital role to meeting the housing need for the District but also in meeting the Government’s aim to address the housing crises and maintaining the housing supply nationally.

6.9 As advised in the NPPF, the Government’s objective is to significantly boost the supply of housing. Therefore, it is considered that significant weight should be given to the contribution the proposals would make to the delivery housing and boosting housing supply across the District.

#### Affordable Housing

6.10 In addition to the delivery of housing generally, it is also relevant to give weight to the delivery of affordable housing achieved by the proposals. Section 5 of the NPPF addresses delivering a sufficient supply of homes. This includes meeting the housing need of different groups.

6.11 Paragraph 61 of the NPPF identifies the need to deliver a wide choice of high-quality homes, widen opportunities for homeownership and create sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities. With respect to affordable housing, paragraph 62 of the NPPF advises that policies should specify the type of affordable housing required. It expects for such need to be met on-site, unless an appropriate financial contribution towards off-site provision can be justified or if there is an objective in creating a mixed and balanced community. Paragraph 64 also explains how planning policies and decisions should expect at least 10% of homes to be available for affordable homeownership unless this would exceed the level of affordable housing required in the area.

6.12 The Council’s affordable housing policy is set out in Policy LH8 of the South Northamptonshire Part 2 Plan. This policy seeks proposals of 10 or more dwellings, or on sites of 0.5 ha or more, to achieve 50% affordable housing, if located within the rural areas, such as the application site.

- 6.13 South Northamptonshire Council Housing Strategy 2019-2022 identifies the need for housing in the District, including the need for affordable housing. It is noted that there has been a shortfall of 303 affordable homes delivered during the period 2013-2018 and therefore the Council will need to give consideration to increase housing delivery as a means to promote additional affordable housing delivery.
- 6.14 In terms of housing tenure, this will be negotiated on a site-by-site basis to reflect the nature of the development and local needs as set out in Policy LH8 of the South Northamptonshire Part 2 Plan, in order to meet the needs of all sectors of housing demands from within the community.
- 6.15 Affordable housing is an integral element of the proposed development, which the Appellant is committed to deliver. The outline planning application and now this appeal would deliver a 50% provision of affordable housing equating to 18 affordable dwellings promoting sustainable and balanced communities and would make a significant contribution towards the Council meeting the local need for affordable housing in the District.
- 6.16 The Council's Strategic Housing Team supports the delivery of 50% affordable housing and acknowledges that there is a demand for housing in the village of Blisworth. This on-site provision of affordable housing is to be secured via a Unilateral Undertaking, and the delivery of affordable housing in this District should be a significant weight in favour of granting planning permission.

#### Open Space

- 6.17 Joint Core Strategy Policy RC2, 'Community Needs', stipulates that open spaces should be structured and be of high design quality in new developments.
- 6.18 As detailed on the indicative layout plan, the scheme has been designed to provide 0.72 hectares of recreational open space for use by the existing and future residents. The open space provision would provide a valuable contribution towards equipped play/open space within the village.
- 6.19 Through appropriate planning conditions or through other means, this could be used to deliver further benefits, such as greater landscape / planting benefits, ecological benefits through habitat creation or be used for Public Open Space. In this context, it is considered that moderate weight should be given in favour to social and environmental impacts of the proposals.

## Achieving Sustainable Development

- 6.20 In terms of the sustainability of the site, Policy SS1 'The Settlement Hierarchy' of the South Northamptonshire Part 2 Local Plan identifies Blisworth as a 'Secondary Service Village (A), which are villages with a more limited range of services than primary Service Villages, but still provide scope to meet some local needs for housing, employment and service provision.
- 6.21 Blisworth has a wide range of facilities including numerous bus stops, a primary school, places of worship, local shop and a doctors surgery. There is an existing public footpath along the eastern boundary of the site along Northampton Road, which provides safe pedestrian access opportunities to the services/facilities on offer within the village. The nearest bus stops to the site are located on Northampton Road, approximately 100m from the proposed site access which provide an hourly service to Northampton and Towcester. Due to its proximity to local services and its access to public transport, it would reduce the need to travel by car.
- 6.22 Section 2 of the NPPF seeks to achieve sustainable development. Paragraph 7 states that 'the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development'. Paragraph 8 states that achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually achieved ways. The objectives are: a) an economic objective; b) a social objective; c) an environmental objective.
- 6.23 Taking each objective of Sustainable Development in turn, the benefits of the scheme are summarised below:

### **Economic Objective**

- The creation of a significant number of jobs (108) broken down into 37 direct, 28 indirect and 29 induced jobs through the construction phase of the site in areas such as site management, skilled trades and ground labour; and potential employment opportunities for local residents
- Resident Expenditure Benefits generated by the new housing development and the support to existing local services and the local economy with increased spending power to South Northamptonshire District Council estimated to be £921,872.
- On completion, there are Local Authority Revenue Benefits i.e. the benefits that house building development brings in terms of local authority financial receipts from New Homes Bonus and Council Tax.

6.23 It is considered that the proposed development can support growth and innovation and includes the provision of the required infrastructure. As a result, the development satisfies the economic requirements of sustainability as set out in paragraph 8 of the NPPF.

### **Social Objective**

- Delivery of houses that contributes towards housing requirement for the Village, the housing land supply position now and over the plan period. The Inspector in appeal ref: 3206346 states that the provision of affordable housing attracts significant weight in favour of the proposal (paragraph 43).
- Delivery of up to 18 affordable dwellings promoting sustainable and balanced communities and would make a significant contribution to the Council Meeting Objectively Assessed Need for affordable housing in the District. The Inspector in appeal ref: 3206346 states that the provision of affordable housing attracts significant weight in favour of the proposal (paragraph 43).
- Provision of high-quality homes in an accessible location which has good access to shops, services and facilities
- Delivery of a safe and accessible environment for all to enjoy, and a secure layout which minimises conflicts between traffic, cyclists and pedestrians including new pedestrian links providing access from the site to the surrounding area
- The provision of open space on site providing opportunities for social interaction, and will contribute to improving the health and wellbeing of the community
- Education Contribution towards early years services of £139,020, local primary school provision of £139,020 and secondary school provision of £161,000
- Primary Healthcare Contribution of £17,794.16
- Library Contributions of £8,365
- Refuse and recycling contribution of £70 per dwelling

### **Environmental Objective**

6.24 In addition to the economic and social role, the NPPF also sets out that developments should contribute to protecting and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment; helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.

- The proposal would deliver biodiversity and landscape gains
- The site is also not situated within an area at risk of flooding, therefore contributing towards the climate change agenda.
- Due to its proximity to local services and its access to public transport, it would reduce the need to travel by car.
- The construction of the dwellings would contribute towards carbon savings and the move to a low carbon economy contributing towards the climate change agenda.

6.25 In accordance with Paragraph 8 of the NPPF, the sum of net gains across each of the objectives of sustainable development summarised above amount to significant social, economic and environmental benefits as a direct result of the development of this site have been sought jointly and simultaneously through the planning system.

6.26 It is therefore considered that the proposed scheme would support strong, vibrant and healthy communities and would constitute sustainable development in this context.

### **The Harm**

6.27 Overall, the level of harm resulting from the development is limited. It is noted that the application received no objections from the technical consultees on the following matters:

- Archaeology
- Trees
- Ecology
- Environmental Health
- Highway Authority
- Lead Local Flood Authority
- Minerals and Waste Policy Team
- Strategic Housing Team

6.28 Evidenced by recent appeal decisions, the delivery of affordable and market housing carries substantial weight – Inspectors have confirmed that this is the weightiest factor in the overall planning balance.

6.29 Proposals for housing should be considered against the three dimensions of sustainable development and not just against the tests of the Development Plan. As detailed above, there are significant social, environmental and economic benefits in regards to the proposed housing development which are material considerations. Therefore, the appeal should be

allowed unless the conflict with the Development Plan is not outweighed by material considerations.

## 7.0 Conclusion

- 7.1 The Council has refused the outline planning application for residential development at Land South of Station Road, Blisworth. As a result, the appellant has appealed against this decision.
- 7.2 The NPPF is clear in its direction that the overriding planning aim is to support sustainable development. The NPPF provides clear guidance that proposals for housing applications should be considered against the three dimensions of sustainable development and not just against the tests of the Development Plan. It is clear in advising that the sustainability benefits of a housing development are a material consideration which should be given due-regard and weighting by the determining authority.
- 7.3 Taking the above into consideration, this statement has identified that the proposal comprises sustainable development despite conflict with the Development Plan on the appeal proposals location outside of development limits and that it would not result in any significant adverse impacts that demonstrably outweigh the benefits which arise from the scheme.
- 7.4 This statement confirms that oversupply from previous years should not be deducted and therefore the 5-year housing land supply position is marginally above at 5.18 years. The requirement to maintain a 5-year housing land supply position is a minimum requirement and it has been upheld at numerous appeals that it is not a ceiling. The need to significantly boost the supply of housing (paragraph 59 of the Framework) is a further significant material consideration.
- 7.5 This statement establishes that there are significant social, economic and environmental benefits of the proposed development and that these benefits are material considerations that should be given substantial weight. We submit that the above material considerations including the significant social, economic and environmental benefits of the appeal proposals are sufficient to outweigh the development Plan conflict. The proposed development, comprises sustainable development in accordance with the NPPF when taken as a whole and there are material considerations of sufficient weight to outweigh the conflict with the Development Plan.
- 7.6 The Inspector is therefore respectfully requested to allow the appeal.

**APPENDICES**