

SOUTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

INTERNAL M E M O R A N D U M

**To: Samuel Dix
Development Management**

**From: William Anstey
Strategic Housing Team**

Date: 1 July 2020

Application No: S/2020/0930/MAO

Proposal: Outline Planning Application for up to 35 (maximum) residential dwellings including access with all other Matters Reserved

Location: Land South of Station Road Blisworth, Northamptonshire NN7 3DN

Dear Sam

Please find below my response to the above proposal. In summary I have the following **comments** on the proposal:

- The application proposes 50% of the units will be affordable tenures. This is policy compliant and should be secured through a S106 agreement.
- The affordable housing mix should be split 70% social/affordable rented and 30% intermediate products. This is not offered as part of the application but should be secured through a S106 agreement if consent is to be granted.
- At least 5% of the proposed units should be bungalows.

The Strategic Housing Team would be happy to discuss how to address these issues with the applicant.

Strategic Fit

South Northamptonshire Council's 2020-21 Corporate Plan explains that *'home ownership is out of reach for households on low and average incomes. Private rental prices in the district are also expensive. Social housing is the only truly affordable housing option for some people in our district'*. In response to these issues, the Corporate Plan sets a goal to *'deliver a range of housing that people who live and work in South Northants need and can afford to live in'*. This is consistent with the first priority of the Council's Housing Strategy 2019-2022 which 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 for residential development 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. An 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 Blisworth was undertaken in 2009 which showed a need for 32 units for rent and 2 units for shared ownership. However, the survey data is now 11 years old and therefore cannot be considered up to date. As such it would be inappropriate to rely on this data.

I have therefore looked at the council's Housing register to give an indication of affordable housing need from applicants approaching the council for re-housing. The register includes those eligible for affordable rented housing, but not those interested in shared ownership. This is a "live" register which is constantly updated. This shows that, as of 30 June 2020, there are 50 households that have identified Blisworth as a suitable location to be housed and 7 of those households have a local connection. This indicates that there is in principle enough affordable housing need to warrant new affordable housing delivery in Blisworth.

The register held by the Homebuy agent (Help to Buy Midlands and London) shows strong demand for shared ownership housing in the South Northamptonshire district, although this does not record demand for individual parishes.

Affordable Housing Provision

Paragraph 63 of the NPPF states that affordable housing should be sought from developments of 10 or more dwellings. On such developments Policy H2 of the Joint Core Strategy and policy LH8 of the emerging Part 2 Local Plan require 50% of new dwellings in rural areas to be affordable.

Paragraphs 6.7 and 6.8 of the applicant's Planning Statement acknowledges the requirement to provide 50% affordable units and confirm that the proposal will comply with this requirement. For clarity, if 35 dwellings are proposed, a minimum of 18 of these should be affordable. Any fewer would not be policy compliant.

The Planning Statement notes that the affordable housing would be secured via a S106 agreement. This is required as part of this outline planning application.

Affordable Housing Type and Mix

Policy LH8 of the emerging Part 2 Local Plan explains that the Council will seek to provide the following tenure split: 70% social/affordable rented provision and 30% other affordable routes to home ownership. At least 10% of the total number of homes should be available for low cost home ownership.

The Planning Statement acknowledges policy LH8 but makes no reference to the required tenure split. If consent is to be granted for this application, it is necessary to secure the tenure split as part of a S106 agreement.

If consent is granted for the development, it is recommended that a clause is added to the S106 agreement requiring submission of an affordable housing scheme prior to commencement of development. This should provide further details of the affordable units

such as their type, location, tenure and external appearance along with the construction timing and occupancy criteria amongst other matters.

As the current application seeks outline planning permission, with all matters except access reserved, a housing mix has not been proposed. To assist the developer moving forward, based on current housing need for this area of the district established from the housing register and the relevant planning policies, our preferred affordable housing mix at the present time is as follows:

Property Type	Rent	Intermediate Tenures*
1 bed flat	6	0
2 bed house	4	3
3 bed house	2	2
4 bed house	1	0
Total	13	5

*e.g. shared ownership etc.

Because the above housing mix is based off data from the live housing list, it may be subject to change. The final affordable housing mix should be a balance of house types and reflect the overall housing need for this area of the district.

Market Housing

The Housing Team do not have access to data to allow a market housing mix to be formally recommended however we are aware of demand for smaller units both for first time buyers and renters and those looking to downsize in older age. There is also significant demand for bungalows which is reflected in policy LH10 of the emerging Part 2 Local Plan which requires at least 5% of new units to be bungalows on developments of 10 or more dwellings. This would equate to 2 bungalows on a 35 unit scheme.

Viability

A viability appraisal has not been submitted as part of this application.

Site Layout and Design

On a mixed tenure development, the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (Policy H2) and the emerging Part 2 Local Plan (policy LH8) states that affordable units should be an integral part of a development to promote community cohesion. Affordable housing should be arranged in groups of no more than 10 units and pepper potted throughout the development.

An indicative layout has been provided with the application, however consent is not sought for layout at this stage and therefore no further comments are necessary now. Detailed assessment of the layout will be completed at reserved matters stage, if consent is granted for the current application.

Any development should also be tenure blind as required by policy LH8 of the emerging part 2 Local Plan. This should include not only the appearance of the dwellings themselves, but also the parking provision, with a mixture of on-plot spaces and courtyard parking. Again, this will be considered in detail at reserved matters stage as consent is not sought for appearance in the application.

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, creates

better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities’.

In 2015 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.

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 encounter difficulty in contracting with a registered provider if these standards are not met.

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’.*

The Planning Statement makes reference to relevant policies surrounding climate change and notes that application site is not at risk of flooding. The Statement also explains that *‘the construction of the dwellings would contribute towards carbon savings and the move to a low carbon economy contributing towards the climate change agenda’* though no explanation of how any carbon savings would be achieved has been given.

The NPPF is clear that the impacts of climate change go far beyond flood risk; paragraph 149 also identifies implications for water supply, biodiversity and landscapes, and the risk of overheating from rising temperatures.

It is accepted that the application is only for outline consent and therefore whilst further consideration of climate change would have been welcomed, it is to be expected that some details are yet to be drawn up. However, if outline planning permission is granted for the development, full details of the measures to be adopted in response to climate change will be expected at reserved matters stage.

Conclusion

Notwithstanding whether the principle of residential development in this location is considered acceptable, the Strategic Housing Team currently **provide comments** to the proposal for the reasons given above. We are willing to work with the applicant to address the matters raised.